

## MEETING 1 THE COMMUNITY AND THE JOY OF LOVE

### Meeting Goals:

- *To evaluate our participation in the small group study of Book 1 and our resulting personal growth.*
- *To transfer the positive experiences that we have in the family to the group, and in the group to the family.*

### 1. OPENING PRAYER

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in you we envision the glory of true love; to you we turn with trust. Grant that our homes may be places of love and prayer, schools of the faith and true domestic churches. May our communities not experience violence, rejection or division; may all who have been hurt among us find comfort and healing. Make us more mindful of the sacredness of the family and its beauty in God's plan. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer. Amen.

(Adapted from the "Prayer to the Holy Family" by Pope Francis)

### 2. EVALUATION

One aim of this first meeting is to evaluate our group experience on the first CFM book, *We Are the Family of God*. Studying in community is a great occasion for sharing, conversing, making friends and loving others. In a world where individualism and loneliness are common, it is an opportunity to have a group of friends growing together in the faith and in life awareness. Go over the questions and rate your overall performance on the scale of 1-10.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10

- Did I contribute to create an atmosphere of openness and friendship in the group?
- Did I speak at the meetings or did I almost never participate, or did I monopolize the conversation?
- Did I discuss some of the topics with my spouse after the meetings?
- Did I put into practice the actions as concrete commitments?
- Did my spirituality and life awareness grow at a personal and at a marital level?

Are you satisfied with your participation and growth? No matter how you rated the previous year, again you have the opportunity of working as part of a Catholic community. Prepare for this task with an open and positive attitude.

### 3. BIBLE SHARING (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

#### **Leviticus 19:15-18**

*15 "Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great but judge your neighbor fairly. 16 Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. . . 18 Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people but love your neighbor as yourself."*

#### **John 15:9-11**

*<sup>9</sup>"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. <sup>12</sup>My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.*

- Comment or share your insights on the passage/s or on any part of it/them.

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

After last year's group meetings, we can appreciate the opportunity of being together with brothers and sisters with the same ideals, which is a good occasion for exploring ideas and for learning. This opportunity as gift from God for us to grow as persons, as couples and as families.

Jesus is our inspiration for having a community. He also lived with people who suffered and “was moved with pity” for them. He visited families faced with difficulties and oppression and helped alleviate their sufferings. “This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35)

### *Amoris Laetitia*

Pope Francis says that his goal in writing this encyclical is to offer “help and encouragement to families in their daily commitments and challenges” (AL, 4).

“The Joy of Love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church. . . for all the many signs of crisis in the institution of marriage, ‘the desire to marry and form a family remains vibrant, especially among young people, and this is an inspiration to the Church. As a response to that desire, the Christian proclamation on the family is good news indeed.’” (AL, 1)

“This Exhortation (*Amoris Laetitia*) . . . represents an invitation to Christian families to value the gifts of marriage and the family, and to persevere in a love strengthened by the virtues of generosity, commitment, fidelity, and patience . . . it seeks to encourage everyone to be a sign of mercy and closeness wherever family life remains imperfect or lacks peace and joy.” (AL, 5)

“It is my hope that, in reading this text, all will feel called to love and to cherish family life, for families are not a problem; they are first and foremost an opportunity’.” (AL, 7)

#### a. Observe

- In what particular areas do families in your circle need help and encouragement?
- What evidence of unity, harmony and helpfulness do you see in your community?
- What are some factors that make otherwise decent people individualistic, egoistical, competitive or aggressive?

#### b. Judge

- Can you point to a person or a family who is a “sign of mercy and closeness” when your family was facing a problem? How?
- How do you think you or your family has been a “sign of mercy and closeness” to another family in need of help? Support with an example.
- What one or two important things have you learned from your group learning experience of the past year?

#### c. Act (Choose one action to work on this month.)\*

- Identify a family in your community that may be in crisis. Spend time with them to listen, empathize and offer help and encouragement.
- Identify cultural values in your country that affect your family. Discuss with your spouse their positive or negative effects on your family and share how you dealt with a specific problem.
- Do a specific service to cultivate a spirit of friendship in your community.

\*You will report on your chosen action at the next meeting.

5. CHAPLAIN'S REMARKS (a priest, a sister or a spiritually mature lay person)

6. NEXT MEETING (scheduling and assigning a leader for the next meeting)

#### 7. CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, teach me to love! Help me see each person as a brother or a sister. Help me to accept and respect others with their differences and imperfections. Help me to give and to receive, to be grateful for my blessings and to be compassionate to those who suffer. Lord, teach me to be humble, to serve as you serve, to forgive as you forgive and to love as you love. Free me from selfishness and help me to understand others, to be a source of communication and joy among your children. Amen.

## MEETING 2 THE REALITIES AND CHALLENGES OF FAMILIES

### **Meeting Goals:**

- **To identify causes and effects of family problems and seek solutions for them.**
- **To understand how the welfare of the family is crucial to the future of the world.**

### 1. OPENING PRAYER

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in you we envision the glory of true love; to you we turn with trust. Grant that our homes may be places of love and prayer, schools of the faith and true domestic churches. May our communities not experience violence, rejection or division; may all who have been hurt among us find comfort and healing. Make us more mindful of the sacredness of the family and its beauty in God's plan. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer. Amen.

(Adapted from the "Prayer to the Holy Family" by Pope Francis)

### 2. REPORTS OF ACTION (Were you able to do your chosen action from last meeting?)

- Take time to reflect on your marriage and family life, individually or as a couple, to identify moments when God was truly present, "wiping away every tear from your eyes."
- Do an act of kindness for a family which, due to a situation of poverty or injustice, is deprived of one or other basic human right.
- Invite a family member or a friend to attend Mass, to visit a temple or to make merit, and help them fulfil a fundamental human obligation in recognition of a higher power in life.

### 3. BIBLE SHARING (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

#### **Luke 7:11-17**

*11 Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. 12 As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. 13 When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry."*

*14 Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" 15 The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.*

- Comment or share your insights on the passage/s or on any part of it/them.

### 4. SOCIAL INQUIRY

The Church denounces the contradiction that poverty, migration, inequality, corruption and injustice thrive in the Christian world brought up in the values of love of God and love of neighbor. Poverty and suffering destroy persons and families. Would it be possible to speak of a loving God in the midst of misery? For instance, millions of people leave their families for a better job in another country. Their children grow up with only one parent or with a relative, and the long separation of spouses is conducive to infidelity. The growing gap between the rich and the poor is the result of economic, social and political situations and structures, for which the church and the state require our peaceful collaboration to change.

Violence in the home is more common than outwardly realized, turning the home that ought to be a place of peace and love into a dangerous place for vulnerable family members: children, women, the sick and the elderly. Alcoholism and drug use can lead to violence, lies, adultery, lack of money, fighting and even the separation of spouses. Children suffer greatly to see the persons they love most in life fighting and separating. In separations, the practical problems of reorganizing the family into two are extremely devastating to all family members.

The present crisis caused by the decline of family and moral values is alarming. We cannot participate passively, by doing nothing, in the breakdown of the family, the institution in which persons who form the social fabric of the country live and grow. Protecting and strengthening the family is an urgent duty of both church and state.

### *Amoris Laetitia*

“The tensions created by an overly individualistic culture, caught up with possessions and pleasures, leads to intolerance and hostility in families. . . The ideal of marriage, marked by a commitment to exclusivity and stability, is swept aside whenever it proves inconvenient or tiresome. . . we live in a culture which pressures young people not to start a family, because they lack possibilities for the future. . . The lack of a dignified or affordable housing often leads to the postponement of formal relationships. . . Marital problems are often confronted in haste and without the courage to have patience and reflect, to make sacrifices and to forgive one another. . . . Consumerism may also deter people from having children. . . The weakening of faith and religious practice in some societies has an effect on families, leaving them more isolated amid their difficulties.” (AL, 33-43)

“Migration is another sign of the times to be faced and understood in terms of its negative effects on family life. . . I would like to mention the situations of families living in dire poverty and great limitations. . . Drug use was also mentioned as one of the scourges of our time, causing immense suffering and even breakup for many families. The same is true of alcoholism, gambling and other addictions.” (AL, 46-51)

“Many people feel that the Church’s message on marriage and the family does not clearly reflect the preaching and attitudes of Jesus, who set forth a demanding ideal yet never failed to show compassion and closeness to the frailty of individuals, like the Samaritan woman, or the woman caught in adultery.” (AL, 38)

“If we see any number of problems, these should be. . . a summons to revive our hope and to make it the source of . . . transformative actions and creative forms of charity.” (AL, 57)

#### a. Observe

- What are the positive and negative realities of marriage and the family in your community?
- Have church and the state worked to address the problems or have they ignored them?
- Do families in your community educate your children with a social conscience?

#### b. Judge

- How have you helped people to value marriage and family life, or how may you have discouraged some? Explain.
- Some families suffer from work migration, violence, alcoholism, infidelity, unemployment and other problems. How can you help a family suffering from any of these problems?
- Share a situation in which your ability to “trust in God’s grace” in your marriage and family has been a blessing.

#### c. Act (Choose one action to work on this month.) \*

- Organize a family activity that will increase family love and unity, such as playing a game or doing a charitable service together.
- Think of new policies you would like to see enacted that will help you and your family.
- Talk to your children about a relatable issue that will develop their social conscience.

\*You will report on your chosen action at the next meeting.

5. CHAPLAIN’S REMARKS (a priest, a sister or a spiritually mature lay person)

6. NEXT MEETING (scheduling and assigning a leader for the next meeting)

#### 7. CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, teach me to love! Help me see each person as a brother or a sister. Help me to accept and respect others with their differences and imperfections. Help me to give and to receive, to be grateful for my blessings and to be compassionate to those who suffer. Lord, teach me to be humble, to serve as you serve, to forgive as you forgive and to love as you love. Free me from selfishness and help me to understand others, to be a source of communication and joy among your children. Amen.

## MEETING 3 THE FAMILY IN THE LIGHT OF THE WORD

### **Meeting Goals:**

- **To realize that family is a living relationship and a human value to be protected.**
- **To appreciate the word of God as an affirmation and an endorsement of the family.**

### 1. OPENING PRAYER

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in you we envision the glory of true love; to you we turn with trust. Grant that our homes may be places of love and prayer, schools of the faith and true domestic churches. May our communities not experience violence, rejection or division; may all who have been hurt among us find comfort and healing. Make us more mindful of the sacredness of the family and its beauty in God's plan. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer. Amen.

(Adapted from the "Prayer to the Holy Family" by Pope Francis)

### 2. REPORTS OF ACTION (Were you able to do your chosen action from last meeting?)

- Identify a family in your community that may be in crisis. Spend time with them to listen, empathize and offer help and encouragement.
- Identify cultural values in your country that affect your family. Discuss with your spouse their positive or negative effects on your family and share how you dealt with a specific problem.
- Do a specific service to cultivate a spirit of friendship in your community.

### 3. BIBLE SHARING (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

#### **Psalm 128:1-4**

*"Happy is everyone who fears the LORD, who walks in his ways. You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be happy, and it shall go well with you. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD."*

#### **James 4:9-17**

*<sup>11</sup> Brothers and Sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. <sup>12</sup> There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?*

- Comment or share your insights on the passage/s or on any part of it/them.

### 4. SOCIAL INQUIRY

The institution of marriage and the family is the comprehensive setting for the growth and development of persons. In the family we receive the best attention, form permanent relationships and build our character. A united and stable family, despite its imperfections and limitations, strives to live a righteous life, promotes emotional support and preserves human values that are necessary for human stability.

Though troubled and broken families are a painful reality, there are also many other families who know how to face the challenges of family life by adapting to the new times with wisdom and courage and without losing essential values.

The family promotes essential moral and social values: respect for the dignity of each person; love of family; a sense of community that celebrates life; an appreciation God's gift of life and a concept of time that allows them to enjoy this gift. Furthermore, Catholic family is blessed with a firm love and devotion to our Blessed Mother Mary, who completes the family identity.

We are living in times of judgment and identity crisis, and we need human wisdom to have a clear concept of family to defend its essential values. Though the family has its problems, God takes care of its integrity.

### *Amoris Laetitia*

“The Bible is full of families, births, love stories and family crises.” (AL, 8)

“A bitter truth is found throughout sacred Scripture, that is, the presence of pain, evil and violence that break up families and their communion of life and love.” (AL, 19)

“Jesus himself was born into a modest family that soon had to flee to a foreign land. He visits the home of Peter, whose mother-in-law is ill, and shows sympathy upon hearing of deaths in the homes of Jairus and Lazarus . . . Jesus knows the anxieties and tensions experienced by families and he weaves them into his parables: children who leave home to seek adventure or who prove troublesome, or fall prey to violence. He is also sensitive to the embarrassment caused by the lack of wine at a wedding feast, the failure of guests to come to a banquet and the anxiety of a poor family over the loss of a coin.” (AL, 21)

“The word of God is not a series of abstract ideas but rather a source of comfort and companionship for every family that experiences difficulties or suffering. For it shows them the goal of their journey, when God ‘will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore.’” (AL, 22)

#### a. Observe

- Many stories depict Jesus’ care for families. Do any of these stories parallel your own family experience?
- What opportunities for growth do you have in your family in these modern times?
- Is the value of the family growing, diminishing or remaining constant today?

#### b. Judge

- How have you experienced family life as a unity of love even if there have been challenges?
- What principal qualities or strengths do you find in your family? What principal qualities or strengths can you contribute to your family?
- How do you make use of the opportunities that modernity offers in order to grow as a person? Give a specific example.

#### c. Act (Choose one action to work on this month.) \*

- Take time to reflect on your marriage and family life, individually or as a couple, to identify moments when God was truly present, “wiping away every tear from your eyes.”
- Do an act of kindness for a family which, due to a situation of poverty or injustice, is deprived of one or other basic human right.
- Invite a family member or a friend to attend Mass, to visit a temple or to make merit, and help them fulfil a fundamental human obligation in recognition of a higher power in life.

\*You will report on your chosen action at the next meeting.

5. CHAPLAIN’S REMARKS (a priest, a sister or a spiritually mature lay person)

6. NEXT MEETING (scheduling and assigning a leader for the next meeting)

#### 7. CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, teach me to love! Help me see each person as a brother or a sister. Help me to accept and respect others with their differences and imperfections. Help me to give and to receive, to be grateful for my blessings and to be compassionate to those who suffer. Lord, teach me to be humble, to serve as you serve, to forgive as you forgive and to love as you love. Free me from selfishness and help me to understand others, to be a source of communication and joy among your children. Amen.

## MEETING 4 THE VOCATION OF THE FAMILY

### Meeting Goals:

- *To appreciate and communicate the beauty of an enduring marriage commitment.*
- *To understand spirituality and express it in family life through prayer and study.*

### 1. OPENING PRAYER

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in you we envision the glory of true love; to you we turn with trust. Grant that our homes may be places of love and prayer, schools of the faith and true domestic churches. May our communities not experience violence, rejection or division; may all who have been hurt among us find comfort and healing. Make us more mindful of the sacredness of the family and its beauty in God's plan. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer. Amen.

(Adapted from the "Prayer to the Holy Family" by Pope Francis)

### 2. REPORTS OF ACTION (Were you able to do your chosen action from last meeting?)

- Organize a family activity that will increase family love and unity, such as playing a game or doing a charitable service together.
- Think of new policies you would like to see enacted that will help you and your family.
- Talk to your children about a relatable issue that will develop their social conscience.

### 3. BIBLE SHARING (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

#### **John 2:1-11**

*On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, <sup>2</sup> and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. <sup>3</sup> When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."*

*<sup>4</sup> "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come."*

*<sup>5</sup> His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."*

*<sup>6</sup> Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. <sup>8</sup> Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."*

*They did so, <sup>9</sup> and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside <sup>10</sup> and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."*

*<sup>11</sup> What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.*

- Comment or share your ideas on the passage/s or on any part of it/them.

### 4. SOCIAL INQUIRY

Jesus' presence and his first miracle at the wedding at Cana proclaims that marriage is blessed by God. Just as Jesus saved the celebration by changing water into wine, his presence in our marriage and our family gives a new significance to conjugal and family love.

Marriage is a permanent commitment which involves the total person—body, feeling, intellect and free will. It aims at a personal unity between two persons, a unity that leads to forming one body, heart and soul. God himself is the author of matrimony since he created man and woman as sexual persons, different and complementary, with an overwhelming mutual attraction that induces them to leave father and mother to become one flesh, in a lifelong union of love. The intimate love achieves its greatest realization in the marital relation, which the most complete human relation possible.

Although marriage is the normal option of most human beings, it is not necessarily the easiest path. It requires psychological maturity and a proven capacity to love another person for

life. Conjugal love is a special form of friendship that develops persons, in a union that normally results in creating a family through which humanity continues.

Marriage and the family require a true spirituality. Spirituality may sound like something separate from humanity, like life in a monastery. Others may think of spirituality as something opposed to sexuality and pleasure. Or it may mean sacrificing life on earth to gain eternal joy in heaven. True spirituality must be cleared of these incomplete meanings because it embraces all the spheres of human life for Jesus came to save the whole human being.

Christian spirituality is inspired by following Jesus. The source of Christian spirituality is a personal relationship with the three Divine Persons: the Son, the Holy Spirit and the Father—to converse with Jesus, to listen to the Holy Spirit and to enjoy the love of the all-powerful Father who understands us fully. Developing this personal relationship needs study, since one cannot love what one does not know, and prayer, speaking with God.

### *Amoris Laetitia*

“In and among families, the Gospel message should always resound . . . ”(AL, 58)

“The indissolubility of marriage--‘what God has joined together, let no man put asunder’ should not be viewed as a ‘yoke’ imposed on humanity, but as a ‘gift’ granted to those who are joined in marriage. . . . Consequently, the Church looks to married couples as the heart of the entire family, which, in turn looks to Jesus.” (AL, 62, 73)

“The experience of love in families is a perennial source of strength for the life of the Church. . . . In this love, they celebrate their happy moments and support each other in the difficult passages of their life together. . . . The beauty of this mutual, gratuitous gift, the joy which comes from a life that is born and the loving care of all family members—from toddlers to seniors—are just a few of the fruits which make the response to the vocation of the family unique and irreplaceable, both for the Church and for society as a whole.” (AL, 88)

#### a. Observe

- Is marriage by tradition and practice considered permanent in your country?
- In what way is Jesus present in your marriage and your family life?
- Do you know spirituality? What strongest experience have you had of God in your life?

#### b. Judge

- Is love not enough for getting married? Why is there a need for a civil contract and a religious blessing?
- Do you have a personal relationship with the Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Father? Give an example to illustrate such personal relationship.
- What can your experience of love in the family teach you about God’s love?

#### c. Act (Choose one action to work on this month.) \*

- Discuss with the family the why a religious ceremony is an important part of a wedding.
- Devote a part of your day in prayer to deepen your personal relationship with Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Father.
- Listen sympathetically to a friend experiencing a family problem to help ease the emotional burden.

\*You will report on your chosen action at the next meeting.

5. CHAPLAIN’S REMARKS (a priest, a sister or a spiritually mature lay person)

6. NEXT MEETING (scheduling and assigning a leader for the next meeting)

#### 7. CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, teach me to love! Help me see each person as a brother or a sister. Help me to accept and respect others with their differences and imperfections. Help me to give and to receive, to be grateful for my blessings and to be compassionate to those who suffer. Lord, teach me to be humble, to serve as you serve, to forgive as you forgive and to love as you love. Free me from selfishness and help me to understand others, to be a source of communication and joy among your children. Amen.

## MEETING 5 FROM SELF LOVE TO DYNAMIC LOVE

### **Meeting Goals:**

- **To reflect on the need of self-knowledge as a basis for personal growth.**
- **To develop a psychologically healthy self-love so as to properly love others.**

### 1. OPENING PRAYER

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in you we envision the glory of true love; to you we turn with trust. Grant that our homes may be places of love and prayer, schools of the faith and true domestic churches. May our communities not experience violence, rejection or division; may all who have been hurt among us find comfort and healing. Make us more mindful of the sacredness of the family and its beauty in God's plan. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer. Amen.

(Adapted from the "Prayer to the Holy Family" by Pope Francis)

### 2. REPORTS OF ACTION (Were you able to do your chosen action from last meeting?)

- Work on a current relationship in your married life that needs healing through forgiveness.
- Point out the endearing traits of your spouse to each other at a special couple time.
- Help another couple by word or by example to appreciate and value each other more.

### 3. BIBLE SHARING (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

#### **Psalm 139:13-15**

*13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful; I know that full well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.*

#### **Genesis 28:14-16**

*14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. 15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go . . ."*

- Comment or share your ideas on the passage/s or on any part of it/them.

### 4. SOCIAL INQUIRY

In the Bible to "love yourself" is the foundation and measure of how to love others. Before assuming our respective roles in the family—father, mother, child, etc.—people are "selves." Thus the best way to build the family is by starting to build ourselves. This complex self-building involves self-knowledge, self-acceptance and self-love. Do I know myself, my talents and my limitations, whom I want to be and can be? Do I accept myself, my past and my present, and aim for a better future? Do I love myself and believe in my potential, love others and feel loved by others?

Making a plan to realize our vocation and utilizing our God-given talents and potential are essential. We must learn to diagnose our strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. We should set challenging, achievable and measurable goals for ourselves, both short-term and long-term, and work on achieving them. Finally, we should assess our goal achievement and work on higher goals with greater wisdom gained from experience and reflection.

Our life vocation, which for most of us is marriage and family, is undoubtedly an essential life goal. God created us to be happy, and for that, he gave us intelligence and freedom. It is his will that we become fully responsible for our self-realization and life vocation by correctly choosing our distinctive way to live a full life.

### *Amoris Laetitia*

“Each child has a place in God’s heart from all eternity; once he or she is conceived, the Creator’s eternal dream comes true.” (AL, 168)

“We do well to remember that each one of us is a son or daughter. Even if one becomes an adult, or an elderly person, even if one becomes a parent, if one occupies a position of responsibility, underneath all of this is still the identity of a child. We are all sons and daughters. And this always brings us back to the fact that we did not give ourselves life but that we received it.” (AL, 188)

“Love always gives life. Conjugal love ‘does not end with the couple.... The couple, in giving themselves to one another, give not just themselves but also the reality of children, who are a living reflection of their love, a permanent sign of their conjugal unity and a living and inseparable synthesis of their being a father and a mother. . . The family is the setting in which a new life is not only born but also welcomed as a gift of God . . . Here we see a reflection of the primacy of the love of God, who always takes the initiative, for children are loved before having done anything to deserve it.” (AL, 165-166)

“In the family, we learn how to live as one. Perhaps we do not always think about this, but the family itself introduces fraternity into the world. From this initial experience of fraternity, nourished by affection and education at home, the style of fraternity radiates like a promise upon the whole society. . . In addition to the small circle of the couple and their children, there is the larger family, which cannot be overlooked. . . Friends and other families are part of this larger family, as well as communities of families who support one another in their difficulties, their social commitments and their faith.” (AL, 194-196)

#### a. Observe

- Do we know, accept, esteem, love and value ourselves as God’s creation?
- Do we believe in ourselves? Do we have a personal and family short-term and long-term plans of life with clear goals?
- In what ways do we as parents show our love for and our appreciation of our children?

#### b. Judge

- What modern means do we have to make it possible to know ourselves despite so many distractions and so much rush?
- Explain or illustrate: “Only if I decide to change myself, will my family and the world change.”
- How has your parents’ love for you influenced your understanding of God’s love? How has becoming a parent changed your understanding of love?

#### d. Act (Choose one action to work on this month.) \*

- Discuss with your spouse your self-knowledge has developed since you married.
- If you haven’t done so, set short-term and long-term goals for yourself and your family, by yourself or with your spouse.
- Make the words “please,” “thank you,” and “sorry” a natural part of your family life and share how they strengthen the bonds of love in your family.

\*You will report on your chosen action at the next meeting.

5. CHAPLAIN’S REMARKS (a priest, a sister or a spiritually mature lay person)

6. NEXT MEETING (scheduling and assigning a leader for the next meeting)

#### 7. CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, teach me to love! Help me see each person as a brother or a sister. Help me to accept and respect others with their differences and imperfections. Help me to give and to receive, to be grateful for my blessings and to be compassionate to those who suffer. Lord, teach me to be humble, to serve as you serve, to forgive as you forgive and to love as you love. Free me from selfishness and help me to understand others, to be a source of communication and joy among your children. Amen.

## MEETING 6 SEXUALITY AND FRIENDSHIP IN MARITAL LOVE

### Meeting Goals:

- *To appreciate the importance of sexuality in the marriage relationship.*
- *To appreciate the importance friendship in married life.*

### 1. OPENING PRAYER

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in you we envision the glory of true love; to you we turn with trust. Grant that our homes may be places of love and prayer, schools of the faith and true domestic churches. May our communities not experience violence, rejection or division; may all who have been hurt among us find comfort and healing. Make us more mindful of the sacredness of the family and its beauty in God's plan. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer. Amen.

(Adapted from the "Prayer to the Holy Family" by Pope Francis)

### 2. REPORTS OF ACTION (Were you able to do your chosen action from last meeting?)

- Discuss with the family the why a religious ceremony is an important part of a wedding.
- Devote a part of your day in prayer to deepen your personal relationship with Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Father.
- Listen sympathetically to a friend experiencing a family problem and help ease the emotional burden.

### 3. BIBLE SHARING (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

#### **Genesis 2:18, 21-24**

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

<sup>21</sup> *So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup> The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."*

<sup>24</sup> *That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.*

- Comment or share your ideas on the passage/s or on any part of it/them.

### 4. SOCIAL INQUIRY

"Marital love is above all a fully human love, that is, sensitive and spiritual at the same time. . . it is also primarily an act of free will, intended to stay and grow through the joys and sorrows of everyday life, so that husband and wife become one in heart and soul and together attain their human perfection." (*Humanae Vitae*, 9).

Sexuality is the expression of love which is a source of joy and pleasure in married life, with the capacity to transmit life, making couples co-creators with God.

A healthy and active sexual life does not happen by itself but must be cared for and cultivated. It is very important, for example, to know the functioning of the male body and the female body. Sexual maturity requires that the couple maintain a delicate and sincere dialogue of what the other prefers, expects and needs. To live a full sexual life is to stay healthy and attractive in order to win and love your partner every day. It is creating spaces of privacy and defending them without being invaded by children or overrun by the rush of daily life.

Friendship is based on an attraction and an understanding between spouses because they have an affinity of tastes, ways of being and life plans. Couples must learn to handle differences and conflicts through dialog, without aggression, where one yields at times and gives in at other times. Regardless of the feelings that come and go, true love means to commit oneself to the happiness of the other.

## *Amoris Laetitia*

“Let us look at feelings and sexuality in marriage. “Desires, feelings, emotions . . . the passions, all have an important place in married life. They are awakened whenever ‘another’ becomes present and part of a person’s life.” (AL, 143)

“God himself created sexuality, which is a marvelous gift to his creatures. . . Sexual desire is not something to be looked down upon . . . In no way, then, can we consider the erotic dimension of love simply as a permissible evil or a burden to be tolerated for the good of the family. Rather, it must be seen as gift from God that enriches the relationship of the spouses.” (AL, 150- 152)

“Conjugal love is the ‘greatest form of friendship’. It is a union possessing all the traits of a good friendship: concern for the good of the other, reciprocity, intimacy, warmth, stability . . . an indissoluble exclusivity expressed in the stable commitment to share and shape together the whole of life. . . Marriage is likewise a friendship marked by passion, but a passion always directed to an ever more stable and intense union.” (AL, 123- 125)

“The love of friendship unifies all aspects of marital life and helps family members to grow constantly. This love must be freely and generously expressed in words and acts. In the family, ‘three words need to be used. . . Three words: “Please”, “Thank you”, “Sorry” . . . Let us not be stingy about using these words, but keep repeating them, day after day. . . The right words, spoken at the right time, daily protect and nurture love.” (AL, 133)

“Take time, quality time. This means being ready to listen patiently and attentively to everything the other person wants to say. . . Develop the habit of giving real importance to the other person. . . Keep an open mind. Don’t get bogged down in your own limited ideas and opinions but be prepared to change or expand them. . . Show affection and concern for the other person. Love surmounts even the worst barriers. When we love someone, or when we feel loved by them, we can better understand what they are trying to communicate.” (AL, 137-140)

### a. Observe

- Do you care for your spouse’s attaining the greatest sexual satisfaction?
- Do you dedicate the time so that you can have moments of intimacy together?
- Do you feel guilty about harsh words you may have spoken to your spouse? How can you become more patient and forgiving?

### b. Judge

- Is it possible to achieve sexual intimacy at night when there is no affection and emotion during the day?
- When you have problems in your marriage, do you face them and talk about them? Do you take the necessary measures to correct them?
- Why do many modern couples immediately think about divorce when they enter a crisis in their marriage?

### c. Act (Choose one action to work on this month.) \*

- Work on a current relationship in your married life that needs healing through forgiveness.
- Point out the endearing traits of your spouse to each other at a special couple time.
- Help another couple by word or by example to appreciate and value each other more.

\*You will report on your chosen action at the next meeting.

## 5. CHAPLAIN’S REMARKS (a priest, a sister or a spiritually mature lay person)

## 6. NEXT MEETING (scheduling and assigning a leader for the next meeting)

## 7. CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, teach me to love! Help me see each person as a brother or a sister. Help me to accept and respect others with their differences and imperfections. Help me to give and to receive, to be grateful for my blessings and to be compassionate to those who suffer. Lord, teach me to be humble, to serve as you serve, to forgive as you forgive and to love as you love. Free me from selfishness and help me to understand others, to be a source of communication and joy among your children. Amen.

## MEETING 7 WORK AND MONEY IN THE FAMILY

### **Meeting Goals:**

- **To appreciate work as a means of personal realization, of livelihood and of social development.**
- **To reflect on our personal situation about the value we attach to work and money.**

### 1. OPENING PRAYER

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in you we envision the glory of true love; to you we turn with trust. Grant that our homes may be places of love and prayer, schools of the faith and true domestic churches. May our communities not experience violence, rejection or division; may all who have been hurt among us find comfort and healing. Make us more mindful of the sacredness of the family and its beauty in God's plan. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer. Amen.

(Adapted from the "Prayer to the Holy Family" by Pope Francis)

### 2. REPORTS OF ACTION (Were you able to do your chosen action from last meeting?)

- Discuss with your spouse your self-knowledge has developed since you married.
- If you haven't done so, set short-term and long-term goals for yourself and your family, by yourself or with your spouse.
- Make the words "please," "thank you," and "sorry" a natural part of your family life and share how they strengthen the bonds of love in your family.

### 3. BIBLE SHARING (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

#### **Ecclesiastes 5:18-19**

*18 This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given them—for this is their lot. 19 Moreover, when God gives someone wealth and possessions, and the ability to enjoy them, to accept their lot and be happy in their toil—this is a gift of God.*

#### **2 Thessalonians 3:10-12**

*10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat." 11 We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. 12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat.*

- Comment or share your ideas on the passage/s or on any part of it/them.

### 4. SOCIAL INQUIRY

We live in an economically developed society that churns out multitudes of goods, both necessary and superfluous. Money has become the core life value, and powerful propaganda invites consumerism: buy, buy, buy. This ideology penetrates families; parents work long hours and have no time for the family, and children choose careers that make the most money.

What is God's plan for human activity? In the Old Testament God was an active worker during the metaphorical six days of creation. As God willed, man has the mission to work: "God took the man and put him in the garden to tend to it and take care of it." (*Genesis 2:15*) Because of sin, the meaning of work was destroyed, turning it into punishment: "By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread." (*Genesis 3:19*)

In the New Testament, Jesus was a carpenter and a teacher, our supreme example of the worker. His parable of the talents reminds us that we should develop the gifts God has given us by working hard and gaining profit. The New Testament also teaches that sin destroys the meaning of work when making money is considered as the purpose of life: "You cannot serve both God and money." (*Matthew 6:24*)

Work is a fundamental value and is a form of self-realization, a means to live and a service to society. But work is also tedious, difficult and burdensome. The farmer who labors

under the hot sun is exhausted. The factory worker who tightens screws all day ends up angry and tired. The rich businessman who generates jobs for others cannot sleep because of company pressures.

Then there is unpaid work. The housewife does her household chores. Children have school as their first job, combining the joy of learning with the burden of getting up early, following rules, doing homework and tolerating difficult teachers. Volunteer service to the needy is another kind of work, teaching kindness and generosity. Sports, music, art and hobbies are forms of unpaid work, also requiring great effort and leading to personal development and enjoyment of life.

Parents work hard to ensure that their family can live with dignity, but work should not completely absorb them. They should give themselves time for family life. Children should learn the value of money learn to manage their allowance. They must also be responsible in school and develop in all aspects to become responsible adults.

Work is a medium of holiness that makes us like God, co-creators with him, teachers of humanity and educators in the faith. We have the obligation to develop our God-given talents that we may earn a good living for our families and share with others in need and to contribute to the progress of society. "To whom much is given, much will be required; and from the one who has been entrusted much, much more will be asked." (Luke 12:48)

#### a. Observe

- Do most people realize that work is not just a means of livelihood but a form of self-fulfilment and a service to others?
- Is economic necessity the main reason for both parents to work outside the home?
- Are domestic helpers treated with respect and kindness and paid fairly?

#### b. Judge

- Are you stressed out with work or do you keep a balance among work, rest, family life and religious formation in your life?
- Do the family and the school educate children about the dignity of labor and help them develop the right values towards work and money? Give examples.
- Why are there still many poor families despite the present stage of development?

#### c. Act (Choose one action to work on this month.) \*

- As a parent, tell your children about the jobs you have had—during summer, as a student, etc., and communicate to them the dignity of work.
- Talk to your children about school and explore ideas about their future careers.
- Treat your household helpers with kindness and compensate them fairly for their work.

\*You will report on your chosen action at the next meeting.

5. CHAPLAIN'S REMARKS (a priest, a sister or a spiritually mature lay person)

6. NEXT MEETING (scheduling and assigning a leader for the next meeting)

#### 7. CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, teach me to love! Help me see each person as a brother or a sister. Help me to accept and respect others with their differences and imperfections. Help me to give and to receive, to be grateful for my blessings and to be compassionate to those who suffer. Lord, teach me to be humble, to serve as you serve, to forgive as you forgive and to love as you love. Free me from selfishness and help me to understand others, to be a source of communication and joy among your children. Amen.

## MEETING 8 EDUCATION IN VALUES

### **Meeting Goals:**

- **To be aware of the values crisis facing the family today.**
- **To learn from each other how to effectively communicate values to our children.**

### 1. OPENING PRAYER

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in you we envision the glory of true love; to you we turn with trust. Grant that our homes may be places of love and prayer, schools of the faith and true domestic churches. May our communities not experience violence, rejection or division; may all who have been hurt among us find comfort and healing. Make us more mindful of the sacredness of the family and its beauty in God's plan. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer. Amen.

(Adapted from the "Prayer to the Holy Family" by Pope Francis)

### 2. REPORTS OF ACTION (Were you able to do your chosen action from last meeting?)

- As a parent, tell your children about the jobs you have had—during summer, as a student, etc., and communicate to them the dignity of work.
- Talk to your children about school and explore ideas about their future careers.
- Treat your household helpers with kindness and compensate them fairly for their work.

### 3. BIBLE SHARING (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

#### **Proverbs 29:17**

<sup>17</sup> *Discipline your children, and they will give you peace; they will bring you happiness.*

#### **Matthew 18:5-6**

<sup>5</sup> *And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.* <sup>6</sup> *But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to have a large millstone hung around your neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea.*

- Comment or share your ideas on the passage/s or on any part of it/them.

### 4. SOCIAL INQUIRY

New times have led to a values crisis because of the rapidly changing world situation. To think of "the good old days" as the best times shows a lack of ability to adapt to reality. New values have become necessary, both positive and negative. Among the destructive values that have arisen in modern times are *relativism*, which rejects truth and morality because everything is relative; *individualism*, which leads to self-centeredness; and *consumerism*, which places accumulating material things as the main goal in life. Education in values has thus become very important, and the family is the first place where values are learned. "Even amid difficulties, often compounded today, of educational activities, parents should educate their children with confidence and courage in the essential values of human life." (FC, 37)

*Familiaris Consortio* points out five aspects of values education. First, parents should assure that their children can live a fully human life by developing the whole person—physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Next, parents must teach their children the value of life, especially now when the culture of death is increasingly seen in war, violence, abortion, euthanasia, destruction of nature and even in poverty. Third, parents should promote the social development of their children, teaching them interpersonal skills that they may relate effectively with others. Parents should also teach their children social responsibility, cultivating in them a sense of justice and genuine solidarity with the poor. Finally, parents must educate their children in the faith through religious instruction and family worship. (FC, 18-62)

*Amoris Laetitia*

“Parents always influence the moral development of their children, for better or for worse. It follows that they should take up this essential role and carry it out consciously, enthusiastically, reasonably, and appropriately.” (AL, 259)

“When children realize that they have to be responsible for themselves, their self-esteem is enriched. This in turn teaches them to respect the freedom of others.” (AL, 275)

“The family is the primary setting for socialization, since it is where we first learn to relate to others, to listen and share, to be patient and show respect, to help one another and live as one. The task of education is to make us sense that the world and society are also our home; it trains us how to live together in this greater home. In the family, we learn closeness, care and respect for others. We break out of our fatal self-absorption and come to realize that we are living with and alongside others who are worthy of our concern, our kindness and our affection.” (AL, 276)

“Raising children calls for an orderly process of handing on the faith. . . the home must continue to be the place where we learn to appreciate the meaning and beauty of the faith, to pray and to serve our neighbour.” (AL, 287)

“Education in the faith has to adapt to each child, since older resources and recipes do not always work. . . It is essential that children actually see that, for their parents, prayer is something truly important. Hence, moments of family prayer and acts of devotion can be more powerful for evangelization than any catechism class or sermon.” (AL, 288)

It is essential that children actually see that, for their parents, prayer is something truly important. Hence, moments of family prayer and acts of devotion can be more powerful for evangelization than any catechism class or sermon.” (AL, 288)

#### a. Observe

- What "old family values" have been lost and what "new family values" have arisen today?
- Do parents take responsibility in educating their children or do they leave it to the school?
- Are the values of relativism, individualism and consumerism predominant in today's youth?

#### b. Judge

- Name one traditional and one modern value that your children need to succeed in modern times.
- What parenting styles (e.g. permissive, authoritarian, participatory, etc.) have you observed among your friends and how effective are they?
- What values work well in creating an atmosphere of love and religious faith in families?

#### c. Act (Choose one action to work on this month.) \*

- Let each family member write down their three most valuable things in life and discuss them.
- Identify and show your appreciation of one unique value of each member of your family.
- As a family, do something to support the education of poor children near you.

\*You will report on your chosen action at the next meeting.

5. CHAPLAIN'S REMARKS (a priest, a sister or a spiritually mature lay person)

6. NEXT MEETING (scheduling and assigning a leader for the next meeting)

#### 7. CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, teach me to love! Help me see each person as a brother or a sister. Help me to accept and respect others with their differences and imperfections. Help me to give and to receive, to be grateful for my blessings and to be compassionate to those who suffer. Lord, teach me to be humble, to serve as you serve, to forgive as you forgive and to love as you love. Free me from selfishness and help me to understand others, to be a source of communication and joy among your children. Amen.

## MEETING 9 HOME AND FAMILY ORGANIZATION

### **Meeting Goals:**

- **To value home organization as essential for the family to fulfill its functions.**
- **To find concrete ways to promote nuclear family organization and harmonious relationships with extended family and neighbors.**

### 1. OPENING PRAYER

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in you we envision the glory of true love; to you we turn with trust. Grant that our homes may be places of love and prayer, schools of the faith and true domestic churches. May our communities not experience violence, rejection or division; may all who have been hurt among us find comfort and healing. Make us more mindful of the sacredness of the family and its beauty in God's plan. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer. Amen.

(Adapted from the "Prayer to the Holy Family" by Pope Francis)

### 2. REPORTS OF ACTION (Were you able to do your chosen action from last meeting?)

- Let each family member write down their three most valuable things in life and discuss them.
- Identify and show your appreciation of one unique value of each member of your family.
- As a family, do something to support the education of poor children near you.

### 3. BIBLE SHARING (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

#### **Proverbs 24: 3-4**

*3 By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; 4 through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.*

#### **Romans 12:16-19**

*16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.*

- Comment or share your ideas on the passage/s or on any part of it/them.

### 4. SOCIAL INQUIRY

To have a home is our basic need and fundamental right. Do we own our home? Is it functional and suited to our needs? Do we keep it neat, orderly and beautiful? Do we love living in it? What are our plans and dreams for it?

Important as our material house is, more so is the internal organization of our home. A contented day-to-day living creates the environment of love and security essential in family life. Home organization is important to foster the harmonious coexistence, mutual support and overall development of persons. Through respect and dialog, family members reach minimum agreements which gradually become habits that lead to a favorable and happy "family spirit." Home is the place of safety, privacy and individuality, where we can be as we really are. Outside we may wear "masks" when we need to, but home is the place where we can behave naturally and spontaneously without fear of being misinterpreted.

The ideal of home organization is a balance between rules and flexibility. With this condition, the family functions harmoniously and everyone feels "at home" in an atmosphere of respect, affection, tolerance and sociability, with room for silence, privacy and prayer. It is natural that there will be disagreements, conflicts of interest, friction, etc., but effective home organization generates an intelligent handling of conflicts with a willingness to compromise and to forgive.

Power and authority are another vital area of family organization. When the children are young, parents have authority over them. But as children grow older, they should be involved in family decisions and management. Sharing responsibility develops their mental and social skills, enabling them to make wise decisions and to learn such values as independence, equality, lawfulness, dialog, freedom of expression, tolerance and others.

When only the nuclear family lives at home, tasks are more easily organized. However, when other persons such as grandparents or other extended family are part of the family home, they should be received with love and respect, appreciated for their contribution to family life. On their part, persons integrated into a nuclear family must be respectful of the internal dynamics of the home and adapt to its rules and customs.

Households with domestic helpers must reward them fairly, appreciate their work and treat them with respect and affection. The family has responsibility both for their economic welfare and their development as people.

**a. Observe**

- How important is the house—its size, its furnishings, its comfort, its beauty, etc.—to most families today?
- Is the typical Thai family organization democratic or authoritarian? Is the relationship generally harmonious?
- What attitudes (selfishness, disrespect, stubbornness, indifference, etc.) make family life difficult?

**b. Judge**

- Is the internal organization in your family the same as in your original family? Are you happy with how your family is organized and live as a family? Why or why not?
- Are the internal rules in your family appropriate and flexible, or are they vague, subjective and inflexible? What do you want to change?
- How do third parties affect the nuclear family? Explain and think of a solution if needed.

**c. Act (Choose one action to work on this month.) \***

- Spend time to tidy and beautify your home space and give away something you do not need.
- Agree on one useful daily or weekly rule to improve family organization and implement it.
- Give a small gift or make a helpful suggestion to a friend or a family that can improve the organization of their home or their family relationship.

\*You will report on your chosen action at the next meeting.

5. CHAPLAIN'S REMARKS (a priest, a sister or a spiritually mature lay person)

6. NEXT MEETING (scheduling and assigning a leader for the next meeting)

**7. CLOSING PRAYER**

Lord, teach me to love! Help me see each person as a brother or a sister. Help me to accept and respect others with their differences and imperfections. Help me to give and to receive, to be grateful for my blessings and to be compassionate to those who suffer. Lord, teach me to be humble, to serve as you serve, to forgive as you forgive and to love as you love. Free me from selfishness and help me to understand others, to be a source of communication and joy among your children. Amen.

## MEETING 10 JUSTICE AND PEACE

### **Meeting Goals:**

- ***To deplore the lack of justice and peace in the world today and find concrete ways to instill them.***
- ***To become aware of our social responsibility and learn to live in solidarity with the poor.***

### 1. OPENING PRAYER

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in you we envision the glory of true love; to you we turn with trust. Grant that our homes may be places of love and prayer, schools of the faith and true domestic churches. May our communities not experience violence, rejection or division; may all who have been hurt among us find comfort and healing. Make us more mindful of the sacredness of the family and its beauty in God's plan. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer. Amen.

(Adapted from the "Prayer to the Holy Family" by Pope Francis)

### 2. REPORTS OF ACTION (Were you able to do your chosen action from last meeting?)

- Spend time to tidy and beautify your home space and give away something you do not need.
- Agree on one useful daily or weekly rule to improve family organization and implement it.
- Give a small gift or make a helpful suggestion to a friend or a family that can improve the organization of their home or their family relationship.

### 3. BIBLE SHARING (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

#### ***Zechariah 7:9-10***

*9 This is what the Lord Almighty said: "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. 10 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other."*

#### ***Matthew 25:34-37, 40***

*34 Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." . . . 40 "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'*

- Comment or share your ideas on the passage/s or on any part of it/them.

### 4. SOCIAL INQUIRY

We live in an unjust and unequal world, where the majority of people live in poverty. "A study by the World Institute for Development Economics Research at United Nations University reports that the richest 1% of adults alone owned 40% of global assets in the year 2000, and that the richest 10% of adults accounted for 85% of the world total. The bottom half of the world adult population owned 1% of global wealth. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distribution\\_of\\_wealth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Distribution_of_wealth)) It is possible to overcome poverty with the resources available in the world, but the selfishness and greed of man remain the greatest obstacles.

God's will is that all humanity live together as loving neighbors or as a big human family. However, this community is impossible without justice and peace. Jesus revealed his mission when he declared, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, . . ." (Luke 4:18) As human beings we are directed to build a just society in which work generates wealth that is distributed evenly, in justice and peace, without destroying nature which is under our care.

Justice and peace begin in the family home where we experience and develop them since childhood.

“Founded on love and open to the gift of life, the family contains in itself the very future of society; its most special task is to contribute effectively to a future of peace. . .

Furthermore, true love always goes together with justice, so necessary for peace. It reaches out to those experiencing hardship: those who have no family, children who lack guidance and affection, the lonely and the outcast. The family which lives this love, however imperfectly, and opens itself generously to the rest of society, is the primary agent of a future of peace.” (Pope John Paul II)

The sad reality about poverty and inequality in the world requires our sensitive response. We should be compassionate like Jesus who empathized with the sick, the sinners, the poor and the sorrowful. We should be educated in social justice, with the awareness that justice is imperative, not elective. We cannot be indifferent and insensitive to the suffering of the poor, but we must examine the causes of poverty to find real solutions. We must also have the same critical awareness that led Jesus to defy a religion that gave more importance to the law than to love and mercy.

Finally, we must learn to live in solidarity with the poor. Solidarity is not a trivial and transitory feeling towards our suffering neighbor, but it is an empathy with the poor in the spirit of brotherly love. "Solidarity is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, that is, for the good of each and every one, that we are all really responsible for all." (Pope John Paul II).

a. Observe

- Are Thai children taught to be in solidarity with the poor and to share their things with others?
- Do families around you teach and model social responsibility to their children?
- Are poverty and inequality a problem in Thailand, a country rich in natural resources?

b. Judge

- Is your family sensitive to the social problems of poverty and inequality and doing something to help the poor? Give an example.
- What can you do to raise awareness of social justice at home and in the workplace?
- Do you encourage your children to study and be successful, both to be rich and to share with others, especially the needy? How?

c. Act (Choose one action to work on this month.) \*

- With your family, reflect on what social justice and social responsibility mean.
- When a conflict arises at home, discuss and apply a peaceful solution to it.
- Visit an orphanage or a poor family and teach your children solidarity by sharing food or a gift which is not an unwanted item and giving without condescension or superiority.

\*You will report on your chosen action at the next meeting.

5. CHAPLAIN'S REMARKS (a priest, a sister or a spiritually mature lay person)

6. NEXT MEETING (scheduling and assigning a leader for the next meeting)

7. CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, teach me to love! Help me see each person as a brother or a sister. Help me to accept and respect others with their differences and imperfections. Help me to give and to receive, to be grateful for my blessings and to be compassionate to those who suffer. Lord, teach me to be humble, to serve as you serve, to forgive as you forgive and to love as you love. Free me from selfishness and help me to understand others, to be a source of communication and joy among your children. Amen.

## MEETING 11 THY KINGDOM COME

### **Meeting Goals:**

- **To value a personal relationship with God as one of life's greatest privileges.**
- **To understand that our whole life can be and should be prayer, because we need God at every moment of our existence.**

### 1. OPENING PRAYER

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in you we envision the glory of true love; to you we turn with trust. Grant that our homes may be places of love and prayer, schools of the faith and true domestic churches. May our communities not experience violence, rejection or division; may all who have been hurt among us find comfort and healing. Make us more mindful of the sacredness of the family and its beauty in God's plan. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer. Amen.

(Adapted from the "Prayer to the Holy Family" by Pope Francis)

### 2. REPORTS OF ACTION (Were you able to do your chosen action from last meeting?)

- With your family, reflect on what social justice and social responsibility mean.
- When a conflict arises at home, discuss and apply a peaceful solution to it.
- Visit an orphanage or a poor family and teach your children solidarity by sharing food or a gift which is not an unwanted item and giving without condescension or superiority.

### 3. BIBLE SHARING (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

#### **Matthew 6:4-8**

*5 "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

#### **Philippians 4:6**

*6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*

- Comment or share your ideas on the passage/s or on any part of it/them.

### 4. SOCIAL INQUIRY

"Our Christian communities must become genuine schools of prayer, where the encounter with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help but also in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening and ardent devotion, until we achieve the 'outburst of the heart.'"(Pope John Paul II)

Some people may think that prayer is for man to call upon a Higher Power (God) in times of need and to make requests: "that I may pass the exam; that I may find a good husband/wife; that I may be promoted in my job, that I may win the lottery! This is a wrong concept of prayer. The essence of prayer is to be in the presence of our loving God, full of faith, trust and love. Whoever wants to pray may pray—prayer is an intentional, loving and trusting encounter with God, essential in the life of a human being. It is not to put God in our plans but to put ourselves in God's plans.

In prayer God speaks. His word in the Bible is the main source of our prayer. The Holy Mass embodies this prayer: in the first half we hear two or three Bible readings; in the second half, we encounter and receive Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

In prayer we listen. We pay attention to what God tells us in his word, through the Church and through the events of our life. We open ourselves to his word and put them to practice. Jesus is our model in this active and transforming prayer, focused on doing God's will. Through

prayer and dialog, God transforms us, gradually shaping us. Prayer is the action of God within us.

How effective is prayer? We see God's power in the miracles granted through prayer, both in the Old and the New Testament: the escape of the Israelites from Egypt, the triumph of the shepherd boy David over the giant Goliath; Jesus' healing of the sick, the multiplication of the loaves and so on. Even today miracles are still happening, wrought through our prayer and our faith. Indeed, if we pray together in Jesus, we get whatever we ask in his name, and even more than we ask.

### *Familiaris Consortio*

"Family prayer has for its very own object family life itself, which in all its varying circumstances is seen as a call from God and lived as a filial response to His call. Joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments, births and birthday celebrations, wedding anniversaries of the parents, departures, separations and homecomings, important and far-reaching decisions, the death of those who are dear, etc.—all of these mark God's loving intervention in the family's history. (FC, 59)

"The fruitfulness of the Christian family in its specific service to human advancement, which of itself cannot help leading to the transformation of the world, derives from its living union with Christ, nourished by Liturgy, by self-oblation and by prayer." (FC, 62)

#### a. Observe

- Do most people pray with the right attitude or do they have the misconception that prayer is mainly for asking help from a Higher Power?
- Is family prayer practiced in Thai families and do parents teach their children to pray?
- Is the pace of modern times an obstacle to prayer or has it little relevance? What benefits or blessings do families that pray together get?

#### b. Judge

- How are you teaching your children to make prayer a basic part of their lives?
- In what moments of your life have you felt the closeness of God and in what moments have you felt his remoteness? Does your faith ever falter? Why or why not?
- Do you walk by yourself in life, trusting in your own strength, or do you involve God in your personal, family and social problems? Explain.

#### c. Act (Choose one action to work on this month.) \*

- Take time for a simple prayer with your children, before bed and upon waking up.
- Listen to a friend in difficulty and encourage him or her to pray and trust in a Higher Power.
- Make prayer an essential part of your life by offering your day to God every morning.

\*You will report on your chosen action at the beginning of next meeting.

5. CHAPLAIN'S REMARKS (a priest, a sister or a spiritually mature lay person)

6. NEXT MEETING (scheduling and assigning a leader for the next meeting)

#### 7. CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, teach me to love! Help me see each person as a brother or a sister. Help me to accept and respect others with their differences and imperfections. Help me to give and to receive, to be grateful for my blessings and to be compassionate to those who suffer. Lord, teach me to be humble, to serve as you serve, to forgive as you forgive and to love as you love. Free me from selfishness and help me to understand others, to be a source of communication and joy among your children. Amen.

## MEETING 12 HOPE OF HUMANITY

### **Meeting Goals:**

- ***To understand why human hope needs active engagement and to appreciate the concept of Christian hope.***
- ***To recognize the vital role and the functions of the family as hope of humanity.***

### 1. OPENING PRAYER

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in you we envision the glory of true love; to you we turn with trust. Grant that our homes may be places of love and prayer, schools of the faith and true domestic churches. May our communities not experience violence, rejection or division; may all who have been hurt among us find comfort and healing. Make us more mindful of the sacredness of the family and its beauty in God's plan. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer. Amen.

(Adapted from the "Prayer to the Holy Family" by Pope Francis)

### 2. REPORTS OF ACTION (Were you able to do your chosen action from last meeting?)

- Take time for a simple prayer with your children, before bed and upon waking up.
- Listen to a friend in difficulty and encourage him or her to pray and trust in a Higher Power.
- Make prayer an essential part of your life by offering your day to God every morning.

### 3. BIBLE SHARING (slowly read aloud by one or more persons)

#### **Jeremiah 29:11**

*11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.*

#### **1 John 3:2-3**

*"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when he is revealed, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure."*

- Comment or share your ideas on the passage/s or on any part of it/them.

### 4. SOCIAL INQUIRY

No matter how imperfect life is, God is in control. Human beings imbued with a spiritual soul destined for an afterlife with the Creator has no reason to lose hope.

We all hope for happiness—as individuals, as families and as members of society. We have bright expectations for the future, as human beings on our way to perfection, so hope is as natural as the air we breathe. We have ideals to attain, defined in different ways by different religions, but all leading to a joyful afterlife or heaven. For us Christians, our destiny is eternal life with God because Jesus, God the Son, became man, suffered, died and rose from the dead, to save us.

To achieve our human goals, we need confidence in ourselves and support from others through recognition, affirmation and love. In Christian hope we center our trust in God, mighty, loving and merciful. God's presence changes our concept of hope because God never fails.

Because we are sinful and imperfect, hope requires patience with ourselves and others. True hope is active and creative; it is to work hard to overcome obstacles and to achieve the cherished objectives. Christian hope needs spiritual endurance, but it comes with joy and strength despite difficulties, a response to the Holy Spirit in us which moves us with a divine force.

Christian hope does not negate the concept of human hope but refines it. Hope is for all and achievable by all. For Christians, it is both a matter of reason and of faith, a virtue that begins and ends in God. It is the action of the Holy Spirit in all human beings. All of us hope, Christian or not. We hope for a happy future for ourselves, for our families and for society.

Do we hope actively? Do we listen to the Holy Spirit within us? Are we working to make our hope a reality?

We hope for our children to live in a happy world. We hope that they find good life partners, that they live in a society where nature is cared for, where wars, fear and insecurity are minimized. We hope that they enjoy progress that does not create poverty and that they live as responsible members of the human family, recognizing the goodness and the fatherhood of God.

### *Amoris Laetitia*

“A positive experience of family communion is a true path to daily sanctification and mystical growth, a means for deeper union with God. The fraternal and communal demands of family life are an incentive to growth in openness of heart and thus to an ever fuller encounter with the Lord. . .” (AL, 316)

“Led by the Spirit, the family circle is not only open to life by generating it within itself, but also by going forth and spreading life by caring for others and seeking their happiness. . . When a family is welcoming and reaches out to others, especially the poor and the neglected, it is ‘a symbol, witness and participant in the Church’s motherhood’. . .” (AL, 324)

“As this Exhortation has often noted, no family drops down from heaven perfectly formed; families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love. . . Let us make this journey as families, let us keep walking together. What we have been promised is greater than we can imagine. May we never lose heart because of our limitations, or ever stop seeking that fullness of love and communion which God holds out before us.” (AL, 325)

#### a. Observe

- What do people hope for or expect in life for themselves and their families?
- Is there difference between human hope and Christian hope, or are they basically the same?
- Do modern times offer a brighter hope for parents to make a better world for their children?

#### b. Judge

- What do you hope for from your spouse? Are you patient with and do you trust each other? Explain.
- Do you feel confidence and joy that God is with you and your family in your daily life? Give an example.
- Why is it important to remember that there is no such thing as a “perfect family” and that we will never finish growing in our ability to love and to hope?

#### c. Act (Choose one action to work on this month.) \*

- Discuss a problem with your spouse and work together to address it with Christian hope.
- Do at least one concrete thing to improve yourself on your journey towards perfection.
- As a family, reach out to another family in kindness to give them hope in the goodness of people.

\*You will report on your chosen action at the next meeting.

5. CHAPLAIN’S REMARKS (a priest, a sister or a spiritually mature lay person)

6. NEXT MEETING (scheduling and assigning a leader for the next meeting)

#### 7. CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, teach me to love! Help me see each person as a brother or a sister. Help me to accept and respect others with their differences and imperfections. Help me to give and to receive, to be grateful for my blessings and to be compassionate to those who suffer. Lord, teach me to be humble, to serve as you serve, to forgive as you forgive and to love as you love. Free me from selfishness and help me to understand others, to be a source of communication and joy among your children. Amen.



# **THE FAMILY, HOPE OF HUMANITY**

## **Book Two**

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