



**Program for the  
Third Year of Basic Formation**



**The Year of  
Sanctity in Marriage**

**Family Branch  
Schoenstatt Apostolic Movement**

**2014**



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UNIT 1: MARRIAGE AS VOCATION TO HOLINESS  
Topic 1: We are called to live Sanctity in Marriage

## UNIT ONE: MARRIAGE AS A VOCATION TO HOLINESS

### Topic 1 We are Called to Live Sanctity in Marriage

**Objective:** To show “marriage life” as a *“new path of sanctity in the Church.”*

#### a) **What do we think holiness is?**

Do we think it is unreachable? Do we feel that it is not for us? Have a group discussion about what comes to mind when we speak of holiness.



**Notes:**



## **The Vocation to Holiness**

Every child of the Church must understand that he is called to be a saint.

It is none other than the Lord Jesus who invites us to follow His path to fullness.

The Second Vatican Council has been very clear about this, dedicating an entire chapter of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*. In it we read a fundamental passage worthy of reflection: **“It is, therefore, completely clear that all of the faithful, in every state and condition, are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity, and this sanctity promotes a more human quality of life, even in earthly society. To achieve this perfection, the faithful employ power doled out by Christ so that, following His footsteps and deeds, and obeying the will of the Father in all, they give themselves, with all their soul, for God’s glory and in the service of their neighbor.”**

The vocation to the Christian life and the call to holiness are the same, since all of the faithful are called to holiness. Holiness is conforming ourselves with Him who is the Teacher and Model of sanctity.

**Nobody, then, who truly desires to be Christian could consider himself exempt from the imperative to aspire to holiness.** No excuse, such as the difficulty of this path, or the attractions and complexities of modern life, could be argued to avoid the fate of joy to which God calls humanity.

There are no valid excuses for not hearing the call to journey to fullness, to utter joy. The freedom to say “no” exists. That possibility always exists, yet by saying “no,” that person is closing himself off from the plan that God has prepared for him; he is, in other words, renouncing his happiness.

While holiness in the Church is the same for all, it does not manifest itself in a single form. Hence the insistence that everyone must sanctify himself in the life to which he or she has been called, following, in that path, our Lord Jesus, model of all holiness.

Everyone, in his state of life and occupation, from his own concrete circumstances, “must journey the path of lively faith, which creates hope and translates into an act of love.” Thus, a bishop must sanctify himself as a concrete bishop, the priest as a concrete priest, the deacon as such, those called to different categories of consecrated life as such, lay married people as matrimones, and single lay people aspiring to perfection of charity as lay people. Therefore, everyone must seek to sanctify themselves according to their state of life and concrete circumstances.

Sanctity is the greatest gift for the human being.



This sanctity is therefore decisive for the happiness of the human being. It is a fundamental goal that must be reached for in order to reach its fullness. It is not superfluous at all, yet it is free. **It is always due to God's initiative and grace, yet it requires our enthusiastic and effective cooperation. The desire to become a saint is something that must naturally be a part of Christian life. Every believer must allow himself to be overcome by an intense ardor to achieve holiness.** Every baptized person must become aware of what it means to be truly baptized and to value this magnificent treasure, thinking, feeling, and acting like a Christian. It is, then, necessary that everyone pay great attention and dedicate the best of himself to this grace by offering his full cooperation to live in a Christian manner, and thus abide in the divine plan. Thus will he become sainted, and achieve happiness.

Suggested links of the lives of Catholic Saints:

[www.americancatholic.org](http://www.americancatholic.org)  
[www.officialcatholicdirectory.com](http://www.officialcatholicdirectory.com)

## b) Sanctity in Marriage: Called to the Sacrament of Matrimony

### “LOVE HER”

*A husband went to visit a wise counselor and told him that he no longer loved his wife and was thinking about a separation. The wise man listened, looked into his eyes, and told him only one thing: “Love her.” He then remained silent. “But I no longer have feelings for her,” replied the man. “Love her,” replied the wise man. And to the dismay of the man, after a measured silence, he added the following:*

*“To love is a decision, not a feeling; love is dedication and surrender. To love is a verb, and the fruit of that action is love. Love is a gardening task: pull out what is damaging, prepare the soil, plant seeds, be patient, water, and tend. Be prepared, because there will be diseases, droughts, and floods, but do not abandon your garden because of them. Love your other; in other words, accept her, value her, give her affection and tenderness, admire her, and understand her. **That is all...love her.**”*

In matrimony, God has given man the path and a life of vocation to love. And, therefore, the married person has the security of having received from God all that is needed to live this mission in the marriage.



## UNIT 1: MARRIAGE AS VOCATION TO HOLINESS

### Topic 1: We are called to live Sanctity in Marriage

“Since God has equipped all of mankind with the vocation to love, and freely given them the end and the means to do so, so has He placed each person in his state, which is the place and form in which he must reach for his destiny.”

*Hans Urs Von Balthasar*

*Hans Urs Von Balthasar. Born in Lucerne, Switzerland, on August 12, 1905. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council, he received practically unanimous recognition for his intellectual prowess and the depth of his thought. He founded, with Henri de Lubac and Joseph Ratzinger, the periodical *Communio*. In 1975 he received the Gottfried Keller Prize, the most prestigious literary award granted in Switzerland. HH John Paul II made him a Cardinal, but he died two days before the ceremony, on June 28, 1988. Along with Karl Rahner, he was one of the great contemporary Christian thinkers and, because of that, on June 23, 1984, he received the Paul VI Prize from HH John Paul II.*



As spouses, what we do is to consecrate ourselves jointly every day in a *Covenant of Love, body and soul for God*. We also feel, daily, “**the sting of death and its consequences.**” This is why we are able to turn to **the renewing power and grace of Christ**, which we are given in flowing streams **in each Sacrament (most especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation)**, and “**in our daily prayer, our authentic school of love.**”

By our baptismal reality, through which we are redeemed by Christ, we are called to be holy, as He is the Holy One. Every baptized person implicitly has, in his nature, “**the call to the holy life;**” this is the point of the death and resurrection of Christ, which has made this reality possible in us. This call of Christ has been planted and developed in the life of the Church, throughout her history, with noteworthy points of emphasis during certain periods.



## UNIT 1: MARRIAGE AS VOCATION TO HOLINESS

### Topic 1: We are called to live Sanctity in Marriage

During the days of the early church, **martyrdom** was heavily emphasized “**as an expression of holiness, and as following Christ.**” Later, **the virginal life** was strongly valued, and it was considered that whomever wanted to be holy must choose virginity, and consecrate themselves to God in this way, renouncing matrimony.

Since the Second Vatican Council, the Church has placed a strong emphasis on the Vocation to Sanctity to which the lay person is called in the midst of the world.



*Saint Peter's Basilica*

*In the context of this call to holiness, our Father and Founder invites us, with much clarity and urgency, to embark, as a new and original pathway, to matrimonial and conjugal sanctity.*

### **Sanctity in Marriage EXPLAINED**

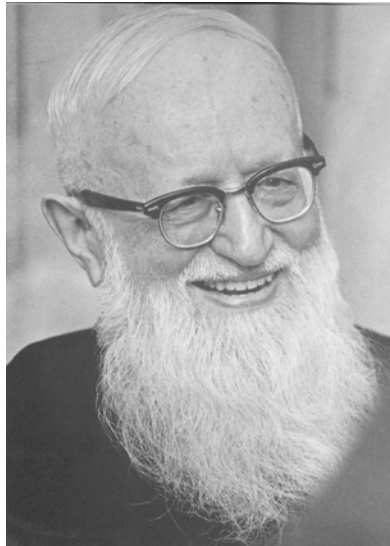
The Church has defined matrimony as a “**Lifelong Covenant.**” This Biblical term, used so often in the Old Testament to describe God’s loving relationship with His people, was reclaimed by Fr. Kentenich, making it an essential pillar of our spirituality. **Applied to married life, the term speaks of a Covenant of Holy Love.** Father Kentenich understands this Covenant of Love to be an attachment in three dimensions:





## UNIT 1: MARRIAGE AS VOCATION TO HOLINESS

Topic 1: We are called to live Sanctity in Marriage



**The first attachment is the indissoluble unity between the man and the woman,** who leave their home to become one single flesh. God has wanted spouses to intensely live this unity of body and soul in order to form a true family.

**REMEMBER: INDISSOLUBLE UNITY OF BODY AND SOUL**

**The second attachment is the polarity between the man and the woman,** who are thereby called to attract and complement each other. Their physical and psychic differences are not the products of culture or education, but rather are differences of the natural order, and are cherished by God. Both must learn to know, respect, help each other, and learn about these differences in order to joyfully enrich each other.

**REMEMBER: JOYFULLY ENRICH EACH OTHER**

**The third attachment is the Sacrament of Matrimony,** or, in other words, the sacramental attachment of love. As the Church is intimately united with Christ, so too must the Christian marriage restate this communion of life.

**REMEMBER: SACRAMENTAL ATTACHMENT**

***This triple attachment of love is the fount from which the family is fed.***



The deepest core of holiness is ***achieving the fullness of life, the fullness of love***, in accordance with God's wishes and in accordance with each person's state in life. Therefore, **the core of holiness is love and its development, with all that comes with it**. In this context, we must not forget that **the cross** belongs in all human love. In married life, this is expressed often in self-denial, in disappointments, in misunderstandings, and in the painful situations that God desires or permits.

**These are all natural parts of life and love that married couples must know how to use as a path to redemption, as steps that lead us to holiness, to the fullness of love, and to true happiness.**

**Day to day, our efforts to achieve holiness as a couple shall therefore consist of making ourselves grow, develop, and perfect our love**

**We must perfect our love for God specifically in and through the person of our spouse, since he or she is primarily, for us, our personal path to holiness.**

At the end of our life, God will not ask us how much we prayed, but rather whether we loved our spouse with a heroic, servile, and faithful love. ***“Nevertheless, I have this complaint to make: you have less love now than formerly.”*** (Rev 2: 4)

As married people we have a duty and a mission. We must show to the Church and to the world that marital sanctity **is a valid, possible, and urgent path by which we fully respond to the Holy Father's call to a new evangelization.**

These days, in light of the reigning relativism, currents of divorce, permissiveness, etc. are more than ever common responses to the problems facing marriages and families. It is therefore our duty to make sure that, in our Church, we promote this path to holiness, and thereby become holy marriages that give testimony of it in our environment.

**REFLECTION: The desire for Sanctity in Marriage demands a new way of thinking, loving, and acting from us as spouses.**

“We will now have a group activity to share out what we understand Sanctity in Marriage to mean.”



**GROUP ACTIVITY**

Every person answers the following question on paper:

**What do you think Sanctity in Marriage is? Describe it in the first three words that come to mind.**

(Allow a few minutes for everyone to think and write.)

Afterwards, every group member shares their answers. The group comments on all of them and comes to a shared answer.

**In our daily lives, in what concrete way will we, as a couple, attempt to achieve Sanctity in Marriage?**

**In what ways can we identify the attachments described above in our marriage?**



### **COMMITMENT**

Each couple should make a list of daily details of life that make it difficult or that help to live out their matrimonial love. They should bring the list to the next meeting.

### **7. BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR THIS YEAR:**

*“On Monday Evenings”* Fr. Joseph Kentenich

Vol. 20

*“The Family at the Service of Life”*

*Recollection days for couples*

*Fr. Joseph Kentenich*

### ***For the next meeting:***

Read Attachment 1, Paragraphs from *“On Monday Evenings,”* Fr. Joseph Kentenich



## **UNIT ONE: MARRIAGE AS A VOCATION TO HOLINESS**

### **Topic 2 Covenant of Love and Sanctity in Marriage**

**Objective:**

Deepen the relationship between the **Covenant of Love** with Mary and **Sanctity in Marriage**

**PROMPT:** To create the proper mood, listen to the following story. You may ask a group member to read it. After the story, summarize the content for the prompt.

#### **“INNER PEACE”**

A famous artist was asked to paint a picture to represent true peace. He took his brush and on the canvas painted an ocean rocked by a violent storm. The waves arose in a gigantic, overwhelming way. Towering over the furious waters was an immense and immovable rock, and one of its outcrops held a small nest. In the nest was laying, serene and calm, a bird that offered warmth and protection to its chicks.

Addressing the crowd’s discontent, the artist explained, “The tranquility of the nest, in the middle of a storming sea, is the most eloquent way of explaining peace, and this peace is enjoyed by all who have confidence in their inner world.”





## **COVENANT OF LOVE AND SANCTITY IN MARRIAGE**

This simple story speaks of our “**Covenant of Love.**” The Covenant of Love with the Blessed Mother **is the great gift that God has given us** in Schoenstatt, to help us to fully live our reality of Christian marriages and family, our vocation to love.

We underwent a preparation that culminated on the day we sealed our Covenant of Love with Mary at the Shrine, and we committed to live our daily lives with her, by her hand, and to give her all of our love, expressed by our contributions to the Capital of Grace.

Pope John Paul II, in his Encyclical **Familiaris Consortio**, speaks beautifully of how man and woman are called to love:

*“God has created man in His image and likeness; calling him into being from love, He calls him, at the same time, to love. God is love (1 Jn 4:8), and lives in Himself the mystery of the personal communion of love. Creating her in his image, and holding her always in Himself, God has written into the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and consequently the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion. Love is therefore the fundamental, innate vocation of every human being.” (FC 11)*

### **Reflection:**

This year we wish to continue to feed our life of Covenant, in such a way that it leads us to re-order and enrich our Spousal Covenant, conducting it in an organic way towards **holiness.**

***The Covenant of Love sealed with our beloved Mater helps us to live our matrimonial Sacrament and our marital love in all their fullness, in every way, to all degrees to the fullness that God wants of us.*** The Covenant of Love with our Mother and our Spousal Covenant are mutually conditioned and strengthened, for which



reason we wish to intertwine them, conscious that we live in times in which marriage is under assault from all sides.

Fr. Kentenich, addressing the couples, said:

*“Examine the panorama of the matrimonial topic. There are so many distinct currents swirling about what marriage is! In the first place, the “trial marriage” exists: Are we compatible or not? If we are not, goodbye! If I knew you, I’ve forgotten! And then there is divorce... you know better than I how many divorces there are these days. And there is also the issue of birth control. What does this all mean? These are all blows that accost marriage. **In order to be in tune with the approach of modern life, I believe we should place utmost importance on the second goal of marriage mentioned above: mutuum adiutorium, or, in other words, mutual support.** Matrimony is a community of love and of the most profound and durable life possible. I emphasize that above all, **it is a community of love.**”*

(On Monday Evenings, Fr. K., p. 33)

## GROUP DISCUSSION

The goal of the following group discussion is to find common ground about the Covenant of Love sealed with the Blessed Mother up to this point in our lives.

According to the number of group members, the large group should be divided into 2 or 3 small groups that will discuss the following questions:

- What did we feel when we sealed the Covenant of Love? What did it mean to us?
- How have we lived, in day to day life, the Covenant of Love with the Blessed Mother?
- What have we given to the Blessed Mother?
- What has she given to us?



- In what ways have we felt that the Covenant of Love has helped us grow our love as spouses?
- How has the Covenant of Love helped me grow as a person?

Each person will reflect in silence for approximately 5 minutes, and then will share their comments in small groups for approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

Following the small group sharing, each small group will share with the larger group.

The group moderator will then summarize what has been discussed, and add any points that need to be made.

## **COMMITMENT**

Each couple should take time before the next meeting to think about the following questions:

Think about what concrete expressions of love for the Blessed Mother have helped us grow together since we made our Covenant of Love with her. With this in mind, think of how we can improve.

## **SUGGESTION FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Unit II

Matrimonial Love. Topic: Conjugal Love is a Singular Force of Love

The following readings are suggested to prepare for the next meeting:

### **Paragraphs from the book “Family at the Service of Life”**

Recollection days for couples

Fr. Joseph Kenterich

(pp. 51-62)

### **Paragraphs from the book “On Monday Evenings”**

Vol. 1

(pp. 115-124)





**UNIT 2**  
**MARRIAGE LOVE**

**Topic 1**

Marriage Love is a Singular Force of Love

**Topic 2**

Dimensions of Matrimonial Love

**Topic 3**

Complementing Each Other: Man and Woman  
Fatherhood and Motherhood



## UNIT 2

### MATRIMONIAL LOVE

#### Topic 1

#### Married Love is a Singular Force of Love

**Objective:** Renew ourselves, placing love at the center of our marriage.

#### OPENING PRAYER AND REVIEW OF PAST COMMITMENT

Share the lists that each couple made about the difficulties or things that help us to live our marital love.

**PROMPT:**

- To create the proper mood, we suggest reading the following story.
- You may ask a group member to read it.
- Summarize the content as a prompt.

#### “Giving One’s Self”

*A rich man said, “let us speak of giving.” The other answered, “You give very little when you give what you have. When you give of yourself is when you truly give. What are possessions but things that you have accumulated for fear of needing them tomorrow? Tomorrow – what will tomorrow bring? When your well is full, is it not fear of thirst that makes your thirst insatiable? There are those who give very little of the wealth they have, and they give it seeking gratitude. Their hidden desire spoils their gifts. And there are those who possess little and give it all. These are the ones who believe in life and in the grandeur of life, and their coffers are never empty.”*

Khalil Gibran



## The Originality of our Married Love

In the previous meeting, we examined the importance of Sanctity in Marriage as a new path in the Church. Today we will analyze the makeup of the originality of our spousal love, as a singular force of love.

We have stated that sanctity is contained in love, because there is no sanctity apart from love, and **therefore our aspiration to love shall consist of educating our love, developing it, and carrying it out to its ultimate end.**

Humans have such a sublime vocation! **We are called to love.** But **what does it mean "to love"?** **To love is to seek what is good for the beloved, as they are.** In other words, to seek what is good because he or she is a person. Love is not to simply desire good for others. It is not enough to desire it. **One must seek this good, and work for it.** Loving means to strive to give of myself to those whom I claim to love.

**Love, then, is an act of will, not a mere desire or feeling.** That act must be free and voluntary. It must be an act that is born in our inner self. If God has made us because of love, this means that He, freely and voluntarily, has thought of each and every one of us, has sought our good, which is why He has called us into existence. On top of all this, God has called us to love.

**In other words, He has invited us to live in love, which He is Himself. God is Love.** Saint Augustine, in his book *Confessions*, said, *"You made us, Lord, for You. Our hearts will remain restless until they rest in You."*

What a sublime vocation, to be created because of love, and to be called to live in love! If such is the nature of love, what must the love of spouses be like?



**Blessed John Paul II speaks of this in the Encyclical *Familiaris Consortio*, 11:**

*“As incarnate spirit, in other words as spirit expressed in flesh, man is called to love in totality. Love also encompasses the human body, and the body participates in spiritual love... Consequently, human sexuality, through which man and woman give themselves to each other by appropriate and exclusive spousal acts, is not purely biological. Rather, it affects the intimate core of the human person. The act is carried out in a truly human way only when it is an integral part of the love with which the man and woman commit themselves totally to each other until death.”*



**What is conjugal love?**

Conjugal love is a mutual love, which becomes **ONE**: **“you give yourself entirely to me and I give myself entirely to you.”** This is love that encompasses all of the fibers and spheres of a person, from the most instinctive and corporal to the most spiritual and supernatural. Everyone, man and woman, expends their total **CAPACITY TO LOVE**.

It is this mutual love that must be sanctified, and is the most effective path to the constitution of a holy matrimony. **Matrimony is the only state in life where all forms of love are given. Conjugal love represents a BI-UNITY of body and soul between the ones who love each other.**



This is a lofty goal, yet extremely beautiful; this is a TASK of utmost importance in a world that each day the disjoining, disintegration, and rupture of conjugal love becomes more pronounced. The society in which we live, enthralled by all things modern, destroys the unifying force of love.

Let us think of the image of the family that we received through media, through laws, etc. A new and mechanistic culture, characterized by relative values, is separating God from man, splitting marriages and families. We, who live in this environment, due to the wound of separation brought about by Original Sin, are in constant danger of rupture, of disassociating what should be united, of this mechanism infecting us to the bone.

#### **When does this happen to us?**

- *When we separate our love for God from our love for our spouse*
- *When we separate sexual love from spiritual love*
- *When we separate the conjugal act from our love for God*
- *When we separate our love for our spouse from our love for our children*
- *When we separate our freedom from the giving of love*

**We must not separate the nature of marriage love from the grace given us by the Sacrament of Matrimony.** The Sacrament guarantees us that we may count on God's help to overcome any obstacle or crisis that are normally found in our matrimonial lives.





**The beautiful challenge before us is to make the entirety of our conjugal life a pathway to an encounter with God.** As Dante spoke, admiringly, of the woman he loved, “I gazed at Beatriz, and Beatriz gazed at God.” For spouses, there is only one way to love God: through their own spouse.

**I approach God through my spouse. God shows me His love through my spouse. This is organic: here is where we find the originality of our conjugal love.** Seen in this way, the attachment of conjugal love is the closest image of God’s Trinitarian love: **three people and ONE God, the community of perfect love.** A marriage is two people who, as they truly give themselves to each other, receive a child who is fruit of that love, and thus form a “trinity”: father, mother, and child.

Father Kentenich means to approach the mystery of perfect love, speaking to a group of married couples, saying:

“The Trinity is the embrace of the Father with the Son in an eternal kiss of love, in which that kiss is the Holy Spirit.”

Mary, through the Covenant of Love that we have sealed with her, has made a commitment to us to make of our conjugal love a sign, an incarnation of fullness and holiness.

In the words of Fr. Kentenich:

*“We have to break this attitude. We consciously strive toward a spirituality proper to lay persons, even more, spirituality proper to married couples. Yes, I would say, not even as a natural family but specifically as married couples. You see, therefore: everything which is permitted to married couples that is not allowed to others. That is, the conjugal act is at issue for us: how do I use everything to become holy? Yes, must I in order to become holy, renounce it constantly? Is the conjugal act with its pleasure and joy a concession to the weakness which I bear? Or is it something which I may and should use to really become holy?”* (On Monday Evenings, Vol. 20, p. 43)

## **GROUP DISCUSSION**

Divide the large group into two smaller groups. The groups should reflect on divisive or unifying things we are exposed to by social communication media, and select, among these, some text or proposition to examine, using 30 minutes.

Afterwards, the large group gathers and shares what they discussed.



**Suggested Media to Examine:**

❖ SONGS

❖ TELEVISION SHOWS

❖ MOVIES

❖ MAGAZINES

**COMMITMENT**

Integrate something that we have learned about Conjugal Love as a Singular Force of Love into our daily lives.

**READING**

On Monday Evenings # 20, Fr. Kentenich

The Gift of Purity, Fr. Kentenich

**Read Attachment 2**

TOPIC: We are the Image of God

Chapter 2 from the book "Preparation for Matrimony," Jesus Ginés O.



## **UNIT 2**

# **MATRIMONIAL LOVE**

### **Topic 2**

### **Dimensions of Matrimonial Love**

- a) **True Sexual Love**
- b) **True Eros, or Erotic Love**
- c) **Spiritual Love**
- d) **Supernatural Love**





- *To prepare for this topic, see Attachment # 3: Christopher West, “The Gift” Series videos.*

## UNIT 2 MATRIMONIAL LOVE

### Topic 2 Dimensions of Matrimonial Love

#### a) True Sexual Love

**Objective:**

Discover and evaluate the importance of true sexual love in our marriage life, as a path, expression, and guarantee of the fullness of love and Sanctity in Marriage.

#### 1. OPENING PRAYER AND COMMITMENT REVIEW

#### 2. PROMPT

In order to create the proper mood, read the following story:

#### “True Love”

I was in class, facing a group of youths who declared that they were against marriage. The youth argued that **romanticism constitutes the true sustenance of couples**, and that it would be preferable to terminate a relationship when it dies out, rather than



endure the hollow monotony of marriage. I listened to them attentively, and then gave them my own personal testimony:

My own parents remained married for 55 years. One morning my mother was coming down the stairs to prepare breakfast for my father, when she suffered a heart attack and fell. My father went to her, picked her up as best he could, and somehow managed to drag her to the car. At full speed, he drove to the hospital as his heart broke in profound agony. By the time he arrived, unfortunately, she had already passed away. During the funeral my father did not speak, and he looked lost. That evening his children stayed with him.

In a sorrowful and nostalgic mood, we remembered wonderful stories. He asked my brother, the theologian, to speak about death and eternity. My brother began to speak about life after death. My father listened attentively. Suddenly, he asked, "take me to the cemetery." "Father," we responded, "it's 11:00 at night! We cannot go to the cemetery now!" He raised his voice, and with a glassy stare he said, "Please do not argue with me, don't argue with the man who just lost his wife of 55 years."

There was a moment of respectful silence. We argued no more. We went to the cemetery, and asked the night watchman for permission, and, carrying a lantern, arrived at the gravesite. My father caressed the headstone, cried, and told his children, who were moved to tears by watching him, **"They were 55 good years, you know? Nobody can speak of true love if they don't know what it is like to share their life with a woman like this."**

He paused and wiped his face. "She and I were together in everything. Joys and sorrows. When you were born, when I was fired from my job, when you were sick," he said. "We were always together. We shared the joy of seeing our children finish school, we cried together when loved ones passed, we prayed together in the waiting rooms of many hospitals, we supported each other in painful times, and we forgave many faults..."

"My children, now that she is gone, I am content. Do you know why? Because she went before I did, and did not have to agonize and bear pain of burying me and being left alone at my passing. It will be me who goes through that, and I thank God for that. I love her so much that I would not have wanted her to suffer through that.



When my father finished speaking, the faces of my siblings and I were drenched with tears. We hugged him, and he consoled us, saying, “It’s fine, my children. We can go home now. It has been a good day.”

My dear students, that night I understood what **true love** is.

## TRUE SEXUAL LOVE

Love differs greatly from mere romanticism, and has to do with much more than eroticism. Rather, love is a **communion of hearts**, which becomes possible because we are the image of God. It is a covenant that goes way beyond feelings, and it is capable of suffering and of denying anything to the self in favor of the other.

**Matrimonial sexuality is a barometer of the holiness and matrimonial joy of the spouses.** Today a diseased sexuality abounds, which is an enemy of our joy: it is a sexuality that separates erotic love from spiritual and supernatural love. And if we remain only in the realm of sexual instinct, if we fail to integrate sexuality with the higher forms of love, we will never attain a healthy and ordered sexuality. Somehow, women have become denigrated, sullied, and their image has been misused as pornography has grown explosively.



All this, which is the world in which we live, produces a relativism in everything that refers to love and sex. Everything has become easier and more permissible.

As Schoenstatt community, we are called to adopt a different attitude and take a long and hard look at this aspect of love.



In animals, everything is done instinctively. Its sexuality is a simple function that works well. In us, the instinctive life must be accepted and **regulated by the higher sphere of our being, since it would not work well otherwise.** This is especially true when we consider the fact that our sexuality is wounded by Original Sin.

Previously, sexuality had been considered to be something unholy. Even today, the perception is that sexuality borders the sphere of the sinful, of the dark side. However, it is no longer taboo, as it had been a couple of decades ago. Today we can speak with relative ease about the subject, but it remains hard to think of sexuality as something holy, pure and noble.



**Fr. Kantenich refers to sexual love as the maximum expression of the matrimonial union. Sexual love is the *path, expression, and guarantee* of all other forms of erotic, spiritual, and supernatural love. **God has given us a sexual instinct that expresses love, and makes human life possible.****

This sexual instinct is constituted of three elements:

1. **It is a physical instinct** (tending to the body), corporal, of feeling the other at my side, of closeness to the loved one. It is a natural necessity if we are to become one flesh.
2. **It is an instinct of the soul** (tending to the *you*), that responds to the need for companionship, of a complementing soul, and is abiding. It is the instinct of feeling loved, valuing, of not being alone, of having a *you* to love.
3. **It is a creating instinct** (tending to the child), that reaches its maximum expression in the birth of a child. In this sphere, man cooperates in an admirable way in God's creation. The opportunity of giving life is an instinct that develops unknown facets in man, and makes possible the maturity of love.



**For sexual love to be complete and loved by God, it must accompany the other forms of love that have been discussed previously, and it must be carried out by respecting the dignity of the persons involved, respecting their body and soul. *In this way, the sexual relationship between spouses becomes a pathway of Sanctity in Marriage.***



### **3. GROUP DISCUSSION**

**We suggest discussion about the following questions:**

Take approximately 15 minutes for each person to think about, and respond to the following questions:



- 1)What was my sexual education at home like?**
- 2)What type of sexual education did I receive at school?**
- 3)What type of sexual education do I want to give my children?**
- 4)What have I been taught to make this a part of my daily life?**

After reflection, thoughts will be discussed in groups divided into men and women, speaking about both negatives and positives of personal experiences.

### **4. COMMITMENT**



Couples should think and share about the following questions: (to take full advantage of this sharing, we recommend that it be done using the Exercise of 4 R, in the one they consider to be most appropriate)

- a. **Does the conjugal act make me happy? Do I feel like I make my spouse happy?**
  
- b. **Is the conjugal act an expression of our spiritual union?**
  
- c. **What should we change, or retain?**

#### **5. READING FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

- **On Monday Evenings #20:** pp. 92-103. Fr. Kentenich
- **Attachment 4:** Freshness of Spousal Love (article from "*El Apostol*" Magazine, Fr. Rafael Fernandez)



**UNIT 2**  
**MATRIMONIAL LOVE**

Topic 2  
Dimensions of Matrimonial Love

a) True Eros or Erotic Love

**Objective:**

Discover and evaluate the importance of true erotic love in our married life, as path, expression and guarantee of the fullness of love and of Sanctity in Marriage

**1. OPENING PRAYER AND COMMITMENT REVIEW**

**2. PROMPT**

**What is love?**

A group of professionals asked a variety of children, ages 4 to 8, what is the meaning of love?

The responses given were broader and deeper than any of them would have imagined:

- Love is the feeling you get just before bad things go away.
- When my grandmother got arthritis she couldn't paint her toenails anymore, so my grandfather painted them for her all the time, even when he got arthritis. That's love.



- When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You know that your name is safe in their mouth.
- Love is when someone hurts you, and you get really mad, but you don't yell at them because you know it would hurt their feelings.
- Love is what makes you smile even though you're tired.
- Love is when mommy makes coffee for daddy and she tries it first before giving it to him, to make sure that it tastes good.
- Love is when you tell a boy that you like his shirt and he wears it every day.
- Love is like an old man and an old lady still being friends after knowing each other really, really well.
- Love is when mommy gives daddy the biggest piece of chicken.
- Someone shouldn't say "I love you" when they really don't... but if you really love someone you should tell them, because maybe that person forgot.

**If a child were to ask us what love is, what would we tell them?**

### **EROTIC LOVE**

The value and importance of erotic love, the second component of our conjugal love, is quite disregarded. Today, sadly, the word "erotic" has negative connotations, and is understood to be an exaltation of the sensual and the sexual. Normally, "eroticism" in movies or literature is likened to pornography.

To understand Fr. Kentenich's wishes about this kind of love, we must set aside the connotations evoked by the word. Ancient Greek literature about the mythology of Eros is full of delicate beauty, quite different from the "erotic."

**Eros** falls in love with **Psyche** (soul), who possessed extraordinary beauty, and is crippled by his love for her. They finally marry, and Psyche, by Zeus's grace, becomes





immortal and together they represent the story of the love of soul mates. Fr. Kentenich wishes to recapture the spirit of the **original Eros**.

### **WHAT DO WE UNDERSTAND BY EROTIC LOVE?**

**It is the satisfaction (due to appearance) in full (total) harmony of the couple. Their primary objective is not sexual, but the person itself. It is total fascination by the beauty of the other.**

By way of illustration, Fr. Kentenich makes the following comment:

“Yesterday a young betrothed couple that will soon marry came to see me. You can imagine how they behaved. You should have seen how they looked at each other! How, you ask? Well, just as you did when you were in the same situation. Each one’s gaze was like a sun that shone on the other. They took each other’s hands and embraced with such affection! Afterwards I discovered that the young man, before his betrothal, knew nothing about tender gestures. Do you see? This is the eros love I was referring to. It is the fascination by the beauty of the other. While it is possible that I could be told that this other is not objectively beautiful, but for me, she is.”

***Fr. Kentenich tells us again and again that we should return to the time of betrothal, of dating.***

What would happen in those days? The young man would spend a great deal of time thinking: “how should I dress, how do I look, etc.” The young lady, for her part, would examine herself in the mirror, preparing herself for hours for the date. But later, on the other hand, during married life, there is so little care and delicacy! Something so graceless is incapable of inviting and maintaining love. It should not be so.

***A task of my Sanctity in Marriage, of BOTH, is to woo my spouse, over and over again, on each and every day of our marriage.***



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO CULTIVATE EROS-LOVE OR A PROPER EROTICISM IN MATRIMONIAL LIFE?

It means to **recover the youthfulness of love**; mutually rediscovering ourselves means once again admiring the *you, rediscovering his or her charms; and to be “charming” to the other*, attractive. It means to be capable of attracting and winning the heart of the other by my way of being, of speaking, of dressing... I must captivate my spouse and make his or her heart beat anew with love for me.

Father Kentenich perceives three distinct stages in this type of love:

**The first stage** begins due to **physical beauty as the expression and symbol of the soul’s beauty**. The eyes, the smile, the words show on the exterior the riches of the heart, and the couple, admiring each other, begin to find how they complement each other.

**The second stage is disappointment**. When spouses know each other better, they begin to realize that not all that glittered was gold. They begin to see the darker side of the soul, the weaknesses, the egoism, the defects, the inherent faults that every human being has. It is natural, in this process, to feel a certain disappointment in our loved one. **The maturity of love means to rediscover the good in the other, and to love them exactly as limited as they are.**

**The third stage is mature spousal love**. One knows the body and soul of the spouse, their virtues and faults, is discovering the greatness and smallness of their soul, but always returns to a new hope in them that is more real, and therefore deeper.

This is when a true process of complementing each other begins. One truly loves the whole person: their body, their intelligence, their feelings, their faith, their will, their kindness, their generosity, their solidarity, their sensibility, etc.

We must fire up our imaginations, and not allow ourselves to be caught up in the traps of stress, of draining work, of becoming dry and boxed in. We sometimes fall into these traps because we have inherited them, or feel that we must play certain roles due to social rules, even though these do not allow us to express our love. ***We must cultivate a true erotic love, that pleasing love. We must recognize its value and importance, because this love guards and protects our love, so that we may have a healthy and happy matrimonial life.***





According to the Encyclical *DEUS CARITAS*, by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, “eros” is interpreted thus:

Eros is rooted in the very nature of man; Adam goes to search and “abandons his father and mother” to unite with his woman; together, only they represent all of humanity, and become “one flesh.” Of no lesser importance is the second aspect: from the perspective founded on creation, eros steers man to matrimony, an attachment marked by a unique and definitive type; this way, and only this way, does he fulfill his intimate destiny. Monogamous matrimony corresponds to the image of Monotheistic God. Marriage based on an exclusive and definitive love becomes an icon of the relationship of God with His people, and vice-versa, the way of loving God becomes the measure of human love. This tight relationship between eros and matrimony presented in the Bible has no parallel in literature, or outside of it.

### 3. GROUP DISCUSSION

Take approximately 15 minutes for each person to think about, and respond to the following questions:



- **How did we meet?**
- **What were our circumstances at the time?**
- **What did we use (words, gestures, etc.) to express love during our dating?**
- **How do we express it today?**
- **What would we like to do again of what we used to do? Which of those things do we miss?**

After reflecting, individual couples share what they thought. Together they will create a summary of the most important aspects of their love story to share with the group. The entire group gets together for each couple to share their short love story.



#### 4. **COMMITMENT:**

Couples should think and talk about:

**What aspects of erotic love do I feel we have neglected?**

If I want to fall in love with you all over again, if I want to recover the youthfulness of our love, **what is it that I need for you to grow or develop?**

#### 5. **READING FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

- **On Monday Evenings # 20:** pp. 16-29, 64-77, 134-140 (Spiritual Love), Fr. Kenterich



## **UNIT 2**

# **MATRIMONIAL LOVE**

Topic 2  
Dimensions of Matrimonial Love

a) Spiritual Love



**Topic 2**  
**Dimensions of Matrimonial Love**

c) Spiritual Love

**Objective:**

**Discover and evaluate the importance of truly spiritual love in our matrimonial life, as path, expression, and guarantee of the fullness of love and Sanctity in Marriage.**

**1. OPENING PRAYER AND COMMITMENT REVIEW**

**2. PROMPT**

We suggest reading the following motivational story to set the proper mood.

***“Blown Kisses”***

We often learn a lot from our children. A while ago, a friend punished his three year old daughter because she wasted an entire roll of gold gift-wrapping paper. They were short on money, and he became furious when the girl tried to decorate a box to be placed under the Christmas tree.

In spite of her punishment, the little girl gave the present to her father the following morning, and told him, “This is for you, Daddy.” He felt ashamed to his previous reaction, but his anger returned when he saw that the box was empty. He yelled at her, “Don’t you know that when you give a gift, there is supposed to be something inside?” The little girl looked at him with tears in her eyes, and said, “It’s not empty, I blew kisses



into the box, all of them for you, Daddy.” The father was crushed, put his arms around his little girl, and begged her to forgive him.

My friend told me that he kept that golden box next to his bed for years. Whenever his spirits were low, he would take one of those blown kisses out of the box and remember the love the girl had poured into the box.

## **SPIRITUAL LOVE**

This is an example of the meaning of spiritual love, the topic that we will address in this meeting, which will complement all that we have discussed to this point about the degrees and forms of human love.

**Spiritual love is a fundamental form of human love, which essentially tends towards the fusion of hearts.** Biblical tradition speaks clearly that God is love, and therefore, man is made in his image and likeness, essentially living for love.

We cannot exist, much less be happy without love. **Spiritual love is that love that always strives to love its partner for what he or she is; it loves him or her for him or herself, not because it can more or less complement them, or because it produces satisfaction or greater personal fulfillment.**

Nothing develops personality as much as true love does, there is nothing as marvelous in life, as knowing that someone loves me freely, that I am important and valued, that the beloved *you* cannot live without me, nor could I live without him or her.

***This form of love is characterized by two things: respect for, and admiration for the other.***

The attitude of respect envelops the totality of the interpersonal relationship in its aura. When this love is elevated by grace, this respect acquires an even greater fullness. It no longer considers the *you* as someone worth loving for him or herself, but rather it considers him or her as a Temple of God, member of the Christ. When Father Kentenich refers to this spiritual love, he expounds on three issues:

### **A. *Mutually striving for happiness***



Personal love, as opposed to the love of things, is essentially characterized by the longing of making the loved one happy. **Referring in this case to conjugal love, mutual love should move spouses to a state of permanently seeking ways to make each other happy.**

B. **Respect for the Dignity of the Other**

This second point that we wish to highlight is also fundamental. Father Kenterich establishes it so: ***“the natural foundation of marriage is that mutual giving that culminates in the fusion of hearts. That is the love which loves the other for who he is, and which constantly seeks to make him happy, and which, therefore, will always protect and exalt the dignity of the other.”***

C. **Seeks to Complement, Mutual Acceptance, and Faithfulness**

True spiritual love accepts and loves the entire heart of the person. On the one hand, it does not idolize the person, but loves the reality of him or her; on the other hand, it does not seek to make it equal to itself. **This love always seeks to allow the person to be him or herself, to develop his or her talents and virtues, and to bring them to fullness, to become, every day, a more complete, individual, and unique person.**

Together they seek the path to **positive complementation and mutual enrichment**. They see their differences as an opportunity to grow in generosity and mutual service. **A truly happy marriage will be the one where both attempt to improve themselves for the good of the other, where one helps and encourages the other to grow further, to develop more.** This attitude brings them to **discover and develop a world of values** that God has given to them as matrimony and family. Finally, spiritual love, which seeks to dignify and make the **you** happy, that accepts and complements the **you**, creating an intimate **communion of hearts**, is a faithful love.

**Faithful love** is that love that maintains its freshness, and has remained ever youthful, in spite of disappointments or being put to the test often.

**Spiritual love seeks to make the Greatest Commandment a reality in the daily lives of the marriage and family.** As I love God with all my soul, all my heart, and all my body, so do I love you with all my soul, all my heart, and all my body.





### 3. GROUP DISCUSSION

Give each couple one of the following quotes, pertaining to a characteristic of spiritual love, for them to discuss for approximately 10 minutes. They should ask of themselves, “How does this quote speak to us? How does it reflect our own reality?”

Afterwards, they should share what they wish with the larger group.



#### SUGGESTED QUOTES

- ◆ Remember that the cultivation of this attitude is the **job of both spouses**. Man tends, by his nature, to seek his happiness through his wife, and **does not expend as much effort on making his wife happy**. Therefore, when a man does not deeply “coach” his love, he is inclined to expect everything from his wife without reciprocating.
  
- ◆ Mutually growing in love means to develop the following attitude: **“My main interest is the good of the other.”** The achievement of a joint discipline and cultivation of conjugal life is an important spiritual height.
  
- ◆ How often do we bury affections and feelings deeply in the lower levels of our hearts, and never bring them to light? Why? Why do we not make the time to share? Is it because we have to go to a party, because we have a job to do, because the children...? **We never have the chance to express the most delicate, sensitive feelings that we keep deep in our hearts, or perhaps we do not share because we feel disrespected or vulnerable.** Should we not cultivate a special sensitivity in order to perceive, or even guess at what is happening inside the other’s heart?
  
- ◆ So many marriages live in constant rivalry and competition! In so many others, one of the spouses overshadows, and even manages to “void” the other! **Consciously or unconsciously, we can diminish the personality of the you with our own attitudes, words, or gestures.**



◆ These days little homage is paid to faithful love. Unfaithfulness does not merely refer to being with another man or woman. **Unfaithfulness also means to no longer give my heart entirely or generously to my spouse, to no longer have time for him or her, to spend time on my own favorite interests instead of on my spouse, to be more interested in everything else and less in my spouse and children.**

◆ **Striving for complementation also implies the willingness to accept one's spouse in totality.** Spiritual spousal love brings us to love the other in their existential, concrete reality. One does not love a fancied image, nor an idealized vision that does not truly exist. Rather, one says "yes" to the **you**, to his or her positives as well as to his or her natural limitations, or even his or her bad habits.

#### 4. COMMITMENT

We suggest that couples hold this reflection in an appropriate place. Each member of the couple should individually reflect on the following questions:

- **When have I felt you holding me in your heart?**
  
- **When have I been most happy with you?**
  
- **What are our common goals as a couple?**
  
- **How are we working on those goals?**
  
- **Is there something about our day to day life that is hindering our goal of complementing each other, and making each other happy?**

After a deep and dedicated examination of these issues, we write a short **love letter** to our spouse. The letters can be exchanged then and there, or at the next meeting.

#### 5. READING FOR THE NEXT MEETING:



**Unit 2: MATRIMONIAL LOVE**  
Topic 2: Dimensions of Matrimonial Love  
d) Supernatural Love

- **On Monday Evenings # 20:** pp. 134-147, (Supernatural Love), Father Kenterich
- **Read Attachment 5: Letter from a woman to her husband.**



## **UNIT 2**

# **MATRIMONIAL LOVE**

Topic 2

Dimensions of Matrimonial Love

b) Supernatural Love



## Topic 2

### Dimensions of Matrimonial Love

#### d) Supernatural Love

**Objective:**

**Evaluate the importance of supernatural love in our conjugal life, as its foundation**

**1. OPENING PRAYER AND COMMITMENT REVIEW**

**2. PROMPT**

We suggest seeing the following video in youtube:

Unconditional Love

<http://youtu.be/u42aNav4LVs>

### **SUPERNATURAL LOVE**

**Every facet of spousal love is sustained by supernatural love**, that love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit at our Baptism.

Supernatural love essentially speaks of the **you as a child of God, member of the Body of Christ, and temple of the Holy Spirit**. At its core it is the love that Saint Paul speaks of as the image of the mysterious union of Christ with His Church. This fullness of love has been elevated by Christ to the category of Sacrament.

**The Sacrament of Matrimony immerses conjugal love into the mystery of the mutual love between Christ and the Church**. He chose to make present in the Sacrament of Matrimony the community of redeeming love, which He founded and



continues to live between Him and the Church. **A husband is, to his wife, another Christ, and the wife is, to her husband, another Mary, image of the Church.** Thus spousal love is a reflection of the saving bi-unity between Christ and Mary, which each married couple is called to re-make.

**This is the mission of the Sacrament of Matrimony, and it contains the necessary grace to carry it out. Without visible signs of this love, the world would have neither the image nor the experience of the quality of God's love.**

### **ADVICE FROM FR. KENTENICH**

We should not appreciate, in each other, only their body, their beauty, their spiritual values, but we must also **admire each other as children of God, temples of the Holy Spirit.**

**The need to cultivate our inner life** is aided by our participation in the Eucharist, our Sacramental lives, spiritual reading, meditation about the life and ascetic resources of Schoenstatt: Holy Hours and Personal Examinations. If we strive to love God in an extraordinary way, we will overcome the difficulties that matrimonial life poses in our daily lives.

Father Kentenich states that if spouses do not expressly aspire to sanctity, **in the long run it will be impossible to meet the demands of marriage. Conjugal life is an incomparable school of love,** of perfect and heroic love for God.

**The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1642)** contains these wonderful words of Tertulian, Father of the Church, about the grandeur of Christian marriage:

“How can I ever express the happiness of a marriage joined by the Church, strengthened by an offering, sealed by a blessing, announced by angels, and ratified by the Father? . . . How wonderful the bond between two believers, now one in hope, one in desire, one in discipline, one in the same service! They are both children of one



Father and servants of the same Master, undivided in spirit and flesh, truly two in one flesh. Where the flesh is one, one also is the spirit.”

### 3. **GROUP DISCUSSION**

Distribute the following questions for each individual to ponder for 10 minutes. Afterwards, share in the large group thoughts about one of the questions that each member wants to talk about.

- What graces have I received through the Sacrament of Matrimony? In what concrete moments of our lives have I experienced them?
- Do we show by our actions and our expressions of love that we consider our spouses as a “child of God?” Is this always on our mind and actions?
- How can we further cultivate our interior life, our prayer life, so that our marriage does not lack the power of supernatural love?

### 4. **COMMITMENT**

Together, as a couple, read the story “**Little Virtues**” that Fr. Kentenich describes in the book “Schoenstatt’s Everyday Spirituality” (pp. 90-91) which details expressions of love in daily life and the small things. This is how and where love is proven.

## **Little Virtues**

### **A Love Elevated by Grace**

It was evident to Saint Paul that matrimonial life must be sustained by a Covenant of Love. Hence his great vision: man should love his wife as Christ loves the Church. As a husband I should always model my love after the example of Christ’s love for His Church.



What is this love like? He gave his life and blood for the Church. I must do this myself for my spouse. If we should ask yet again exactly how Christ values and protects love for one's neighbor, we must consider what the standards we will be held accountable for at the Final Judgment will be.



There we will be asked, "Were you humble?" You will not be asked, "Were you chaste or impure?" This does not mean that those virtues are not also required. But they will be considered as an expression of love for God and for our neighbor.

Perhaps we should adapt and apply these little virtues to our marriage:

- **Tolerance** of the faults of others, and **haste to forgive them**, even when they have no right to ask these things of you.
- **Willingness to overlook** certain notable deficiencies, rather the opposite of the **sad over-awareness** of those who seek to find hidden deficiencies.
- **A compassion** that brings us to take on the suffering of others, as if it were our own.
- **Joy** in sharing the happiness of others, which makes the joy even greater.
- A certain **spiritual flexibility** that understands how to find reason and truth in the opinions of others, even when we do not understand at first, and which also acknowledges, selflessly, the **recognition** that the others are more correct.
- **Attentiveness** to the needs of others, and which spares them the pain of needing, and spares them the shame of asking for help.







- **Kindness of heart**, which constantly does as much as possible to be useful and pleasing to others, and, even when it can only do a little, wishes to do more.
- **Attentive manner**, which knows how to listen to those we don't like without showing it, and instructs the ignorant without them feeling as if they've been corrected.
- A certain **courtesy**, which shows the manners of a good upbringing without using the false amiability of the world, but rather shows a sincere and Christian cordiality.

## 5. READING FOR THE NEXT MEETING

### Unit 2, Matrimonial Love

### Topic 3: Complementing Each Other: Man and Woman, Fatherhood and Motherhood

#### Read Attachment 6

TOPIC: Man and Woman in God's Plan

From the book "Preparation for Marriage" Chapter II, by Jesus Gines O.



**Unit 2: MATRIMONIAL LOVE**

Topic 3: Complementing Each Other: Man and Woman, Fatherhood and Motherhood

## **UNIT 2**

# **MATRIMONIAL LOVE**

### **Topic 3**

## **Complementing Each Other: Man and Woman, Fatherhood and Motherhood**

(May be covered in 2 meetings)



## **UNIT 2**

# **MATRIMONIAL LOVE**

### **Topic 3**

## **COMPLEMENTING EACH OTHER: MAN AND WOMAN, FATHERHOOD AND MOTHERHOOD**

**General Objective: Knowing ourselves helps to do our job well: to love each other and be good parents.**

**1. Prompt:**

The following video will help to bring out all that we think about being a woman or man, father or mother.

**A Tale of two Brains**

<http://youtu.be/3XjUFYxSxDk>



## 2. GROUP DISCUSSION

- What did you think about the video? Do you, or people around you feel the same way?
- What else might you add to expand on the theme of Man-Woman, Father/Mother?
- Men: quickly write a list of traits of women.
- Women: quickly write down all that you can think of about men.
- Read aloud, and notice what people think. *(This is guaranteed to be a successful exercise).*

***The following optional sources (3 - 8) are provided to enrich the discussion, if needed.***

## 3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION FROM AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW

**General psychological information regarding man and woman helps us to know ourselves and the other better.**



- Men are more moved than women by physical, impulsive, pleasant, immediate, and repetitive love. Men tend not to be exclusive nor excluding over time. He tends more to contact than to affective relationship.
- Women are more move by affectivity, giving, permanence, and the integration of their entire lives. Her love is ideally “eternal.”
- “Ideal” love for both men and women, in order to be fulfilling, must be expressed physically, environmentally, spiritually, and transcendentally.



## Unit 2: MATRIMONIAL LOVE

### Topic 3: Complementing Each Other: Man and Woman, Fatherhood and Motherhood

- The “environment” that is conducive to love implies thought, preparation, communication, and evaluation. Without a proper environment or mood, intimacy, modesty, and gratification are lost.
- In every act of love, neither the man nor woman suspends their rational faculties, their willingness, or their affective and passionate tendencies. Rather, it is the balance between all of these elements that produce the satisfaction, unity, and peace that we so desire.

***Generous parents produce materialistic children, weak parents produce insecure children, “best friend” parents produce children with no judgment, and authoritarian parents produce rebellious and anti-social children.***

#### 4. THE DOCTRINE THAT ILLUMINATES THE TOPIC: SACRED SCRIPTURE

##### Sacred Scripture from the Old Testament



The fundamental fact about man and woman in the Bible is that both are created by God in a singular dignity: in his image and likeness, with both sharing equal dignity. ***“God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.”*** (Gen 1: 27)

From the very beginning, Biblical literature reveals the reason for being of this mutual encounter. Man and woman are made for each other. ***“It is not right that the man should be alone. I shall make him a helper.”*** (Gen 2: 18)

The exclusivity of this relationship between man and woman, united in marriage is also clearly exposed: ***“Never sit down with a married woman, or sit at table with her drinking wine, in case you let your heart succumb to her and you lose all self-control and slide to disaster.”*** (Sir 9: 9)



## Unit 2: MATRIMONIAL LOVE

### Topic 3: Complementing Each Other: Man and Woman, Fatherhood and Motherhood

Sacred Scripture points to the especially prominent and lovely characteristics of women, quite poetically: **“Like the sun rising over the mountains of the Lord, such is the beauty of a good wife in a well-run house. Like a lamp shining on the sacred lamp-stand, such is a beautiful face on a well-proportioned body.”** (Sir 26: 16-17)

We find references to tender maternal and paternal love, which unravel a more comprehensible image of the love God has for His people. Isaiah and Hosea are particularly lovely: **“Can a woman forget her baby at the breast, feel no pity for the child she has borne? Even if these were to forget, I shall not forget you.”** (Is 49: 15)

**“When Israel was a child I loved him, and I called my son out of Egypt. But the more I called, the further they went away from me; they offered sacrifice to Baal and burnt incense to idols. I myself taught Ephraim to walk, I myself took them by the arm, but they did not know that I was the one caring for them.”** (Hos 11:1-3)

**“As a mother comforts a child, so I shall comfort you; you will be comforted in Jerusalem.”** (Is 66:13)

Both men and women acquire a special dignity through the Fatherhood and Motherhood that they exercise before their children: **“Long life comes to anyone who honors a father, whoever obeys the Lord makes a mother happy. Such a one serves parents as well as the Lord. Whoever deserts a father is no better than a blasphemer, and whoever distresses a mother is accursed of the Lord.”** (Sir 3: 6-7, 16)

**“Honor your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land that Yahweh your God is giving you.”** (Ex 20:12)

The roles of fathers and mothers revolve around the physical and spiritual well-being of their children and grandchildren. **“But take care, as you value your lives! Do not forget the things which you yourselves have seen, or let them slip from your heart as long as you live; teach them, rather, to your children and to your children's children.”** (Dt 4:9)

The natural and supernatural filial relationship, as well as Fatherhood and Motherhood, are known to be fundamental to maintain the order that God has desired for all eternity. **“I too was once a child with a father, in my mother's eyes a tender child, unique.”**



***This was what he used to teach me, 'Let your heart treasure what I have to say, keep my principles and you will live.'***" (Prov 4: 3-4)

The state of our children is a cause for joy or sadness: ***"A wise child is a father's joy, a foolish child a mother's grief."*** (Prov 10:1) ***"A foolish child is a father's sorrow, and the grief of her who gave the child birth."*** (Prov 17:25)

### **Sacred Scripture from the New Testament**

Saint Paul established the permanent doctrine handed down by the Lord. Equal dignity, equal responsibilities in the mutual relationship and in that with the children. ***"However, in the Lord, though woman is nothing without man, man is nothing without woman; and though woman came from man, so does every man come from a woman, and everything comes from God."*** (1Cor 11:11-12) ***"Husbands should love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her."*** (Eph 5:25)

The Gospel envisions the paternal role as elevated to a higher plane, according to St. Paul: ***"...kneeling before the Father, from whom every fatherhood, in heaven or on earth, takes its name."*** (Eph 3:15)

In accordance with the commandment of the ancient law, the Lord Himself reiterates the maternal and paternal relationships, as well as the filial relationship: ***"For God said, 'Honor your father and your mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother will be put to death.'"*** (Mt 15:4)

In the letter to the Colossians, Paul summarizes the topic: ***"Wives, be subject to your husbands, as you should in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be sharp with them. Children, be obedient to your parents always, because that is what will please the Lord. Parents, do not irritate your children or they will lose heart."*** (Col 3: 18-21)



## 5. The Church Magisterium Clarifies the Revelation

Since its beginnings, the Church has held woman on the same pedestal as men. One finds the inclination to hold woman even higher in the particular veneration of the Mother of God, Daughter of the Father, and Wife of the Holy Spirit. Mary is the paradigm of humanity redeemed from original sin, as she was the one who, from the moment of her conception, was immaculate of all sin.

**The elected people of God are one: “There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism”** (Eph 4:5), **one common dignity of its members by their regeneration through Christ, one common grace of childhood, one common vocation to perfection, one salvation, one hope, and one indivisible charity.**

**“No inequality exists in Christ and in the Church due to lineage or birth, social condition or gender, because *‘there can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither slave nor freeman, there can be neither male nor female -- for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’*”** (Gal 3:28 – see also Col 3:11)  
*LG32, Of the Laity, Concilio Vaticano II*

Pope John Paul II, in his condition of Master of Human Doctrine, expounded and highlighted the down to earth content of this posture that proceeds from the Gospel and from the secular tradition of the Church:



**“If this century of liberal society is characterized by a growing feminism, one may suppose that this is a reaction to the lack of respect owed to all women. I held all that I wrote about this topic in *“Mulieris dignitatem”* in me from a very young age, even, in a certain sense, since infancy. Perhaps I was influenced by the environment of the times in which I was reared, which was characterized by a great respect and consideration for women, especially for the woman-mother.”** (John Paul II, *“On the Threshold of Hope”*)

**“When they become parents, spouse receive from God the gift of a new responsibility. Their parental love is called to be, for the children, the visible sign of the same love of God, from Whom all parenthood on heaven and earth proceeds.”** (*Familiaris Consortio*, #14)





## **Laic Magisterium: Testimony of Faith and Reason**

While this “magisterium” has no proper theological connotation and therefore may not acquire universal validity, it is important to submit ourselves to them, since learned people who honestly give all of their reason and faith can help facilitate our thinking. Here is one who can help with our topic:

**Every day there are more voices that point out that the sexual condition is related to what is most intimate in the human being, their spirit, their person. Among them are those who assert that “the deepest, most hidden structures of the empirical world correspond to the laws of the spirit... everything physiological and psychic depends on the spirit, serving it and expressing it. Woman is not maternal because, by her body, she is capable of giving birth, – states Evdokimov – but rather, her physiological faculties and corresponding anatomical ones proceed from her spirit,” and if the male has more physical power, it is because this is how his spirit is expressed.**

**It is also affirmed that the person expresses himself through sexuality, or, in other words, “the body is an expression of the person.” In his writings, John Paul II succinctly states that “sex is a constituent of the person, not a simple attribute.”**

**Blanca Castilla, from “*Feminine Person, Masculine Person*” Eunsa, 1996, p. 26**

### **6. Rational Thinking Founded on Faith**

If we truly learn to be mother and father, husband and wife by practicing and paying attention to good examples, then we must take this matter seriously. If we are willing to sacrifice our time to learn the attendant skills of a job or life skill that we are interested in, such as a profession by which we earn our daily bread, then how much more should we do this with something as important as being responsible fathers, mothers, and spouses?

There is nobody better than God to teach us how to parent. The Holy Trinity along with its incarnate image of the Holy Family are our models. Through contemplation of the Father and the Holy Spirit, we access the Son who, being made flesh by Mary and led by Joseph, reveals not only divinity, but also human perfection.



Christians learn how to carry out our Fatherhood and Motherhood from Joseph and Mary, in the sense of the correspondence between physical and spiritual growth of children.

The apostle Saint John was doubtlessly the one who was affectively closest to the Lord and to Mary. The Lord charged him with taking Mary into his home and she herself took the charge of taking John as a son. Reading John's Gospel, Letters, and Revelation reveals an abundance of things to know about divine Fatherhood and Christian brotherhood. The main point of his message is this: "This is the commandment of the Lord: that you love one another as He loved us." This is the synthesis of spousality, Fatherhood, and Motherhood.

#### **7. The Schoenstatt Flavor Regarding Spousal and Parental Relationship**

- The three "Graces of the Shrine" directly lead us to spousality and Fatherhood/Motherhood in the abiding, sheltering style of Mary. The Shrine will always lead us to a strengthening of human and divine attachments that transform us into apostles of family life, both physical and spiritual.
- In a world that is materialistic, disjointed, and with a waning human hope, the Schoenstatt movement urges us to be spiritual, to form attachments, and to give evidence of our full confidence in our Mater, who will be our faithful companion in the mission to a weak humanity that she has charge us with, as ordered by the Lord and under the guidance of our Founder.
- From the teachings of our Father and of our advisors, we learn these values that all good fathers and good mothers should possess:



### The Good Wife and Mother

- ***“Her husband's heart has confidence in her, from her he will derive no little profit.”*** (Prov 31:11)
- ***“Her children stand up and proclaim her blessed, her husband, too, sings her praises.”*** (Prov 31:28)
- She reveals the Father's love for His children.
- She reveals her children's hearts to the Father.
- She is the heart of the home: warm, sheltering, selfless, and illuminating.
- She stirs the love of each and every one for each other.
- She is the tether that keeps the man grounded.
- She feeds the spirituality of love.
- She is closest to life and to God.

*Fr. Horacio Rivas – Preparation for Matrimony*

### The Good Husband and Father

- ***“If you, then, evil as you are, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”*** (Mt 7:11) ***“The Father himself loves you for loving me, and believing that I came from God.”*** (Jn 16:27)
- He reflects the omnipotence, omnipresence, wisdom, and mercy of God.
- He is the agent of life, responsible for the home and its surroundings.
- He discovers, demonstrates, and accompanies his children in the world.
- He is a good shepherd who knows, forgives, and heals.
- He fosters a harmonious growth of intelligence and will.
- He shows how to live in and with freedom.
- He shows the children who their mother is.

*Fr. Horacio Rivas – op.cit.*



**Unit 2: MATRIMONIAL LOVE**

**Topic 3: Complementing Each Other: Man and Woman, Fatherhood and Motherhood**

**8. Suggested Homework**

- a) **Observe and comment about different models of spouses and parents that are around us, that have earned our respect and confidence. Perhaps invite some of them to our meeting.**
- b) **Formulate our ideal behavior as spouses and parents: What can we commit to do today so as to achieve it tomorrow?**
- c) **Together examine one of the following characteristics of men and women:**



- a. Clearly express the strengths of each other, as well as our compatibility;
- b. What qualities of yours am I willing to encourage, and which faults will I help you to overcome?
- c. What can we improve in each other, beginning with our strengths and feelings?
- d. Comment on the phrase: “The man builds the house, and the woman turns it into a home.”



**UNIT 3**

**RENEWING THE MARRIAGE**

**Topic 1**

The Stages of Love

**Topic 2**

Going Deeper into the 5<sup>th</sup> Stage of Love



## UNIT 3 RENEWING THE MARRIAGE

### Topic 1 The Stages of Love

**Objective:**

Aid in the decision to take steps towards the growth of love to renew our marital vows

1. **REVIEW COMMITMENT AND READINGS**

2. **PROMPT**

- To set the mood, watch the following video.

<http://youtu.be/u3HajdopTDo>

### **THE STAGES OF LOVE**

All love is, in its first stage, is a primitive love. In other words, **it is the “me” that takes center stage**, wanting my own happiness, which is natural. However, for love to remain in all its power and vitality, it must develop into a mature love in which **the “you” takes center stage**.



Fr. Kentenich speaks of this:

*“We find, in all love, first the love that clearly focuses on the **me**. Primitive love seeks itself. I wish to get something from my partner. But, in the end, selfish love must become a love that places the **you** first.*

*Strictly speaking, in its first stage, all love is selfish. This primitive, selfish love slowly converts into a mature love. Therefore, we must ask ourselves, thinking about ourselves, regardless of how long we’ve been married: What is our conjugal love like? Is it a mature love? Or is it stuck in the first stage, the primitive stage? If we consider our conjugal life according to how it developed historically, we should probably be able to perceive this evolution.”*

*Fr. J. Kentenich, 4/8/1961*

The great challenge before us is to make our marriage a school of love, meaning that we must continually and permanently grow in love. To better understand the meaning of the development of love, we may **compare it to the stages of love for God:**

**The first stage** is the will to **avoid grave offenses**, of avoidance of mortal sin.

**The second stage** consists of trying to **not commit venial sins**, meaning not to fall into a state of mediocrity or being lukewarm in our love for God.

**The third stage** leads us to **overcome our imperfections**.

**The fourth stage** refers to the love that seeks **to do God’s will in everything we do**.

**The fifth stage** consists of **placing ourselves at the disposal of His will, in everything**. Specifically, **we say “yes” to every cross that He has for us in life**, because we know that, being His will, they will help us to grow and will make us fruitful.



We will now compare these stages of love to our matrimonial love. In this meeting, we will focus on the first four.

**First stage: avoid grave offenses.**

If we think of our own marriages, the battle is not frequently fought on this level. There are times when we allow ourselves to be tempted, and engage in verbal aggression. We might gravely offend each other, but it is not the norm.

**Second stage: avoid mediocrity and being lukewarm in our love.**

This is when love has lost its tenderness, its attentiveness, its deference. It is when we fail to reach out to the other, when we fall into a routine. We treat ourselves with a bit of coldness or indifference.

We do not do anything wrong, but we have become accustomed to coldness and disinterest, and we put forth minimum effort.

**Third stage: overcoming imperfections.**

Cultivating our matrimonial love leads us to maintain the kindness of love, to be attentive to the needs of the other. We sensitively show our love in the small details, with small gifts, and with service that are expressions of the liveliness of our love.

**Fourth stage: knowing and accepting the will of the other.**

This means to be sincerely willing to put our spouse first, to joyfully give of ourselves, and to place the *me* second.

This **knowing and accepting the will of the other**, accepting him for all he is and has, is what Father Kentenich calls an attitude of a “Blank Check.” This is a mutual surrender that we undertook at the moment of marriage.

This is when we solemnly proclaim, *“I take you as my spouse and I promise to be faithful to you in the good and the bad, in health and in illness, and so to love you and respect you all the days of my life.”*

At that moment we seal a Covenant of Love with our spouse at the level of a Blank Check.





Have we retained our attitude of openness, acceptance and mutual service? Have we incorporated this into our daily lives? Does our mutual treatment reflect an internal disposition to bring joy to each other, to seek the other's good in everything?



If we cultivate this attitude, we develop a mutual way of living that rewards us both and feeds us.

All of this **requires a conscious and serious self-education** in order to cooperate with the proper graces of the Sacrament of Matrimony, and so overcome our faults and develop the gift of love that has been entrusted to us.

### **THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, Article 2365**

The Catechism contains a beautiful quote from the Fathers of the Church directed to spouses:

*“St. John Chrysostom suggests that young husbands should say to their wives: I have taken you in my arms, and I love you, and I prefer you to my life itself. For the present life is nothing, and my most ardent dream is to spend it with you in such a way that we may be assured of not being separated in the life reserved for us.... I place your love above all things, and nothing would be more bitter or painful to me than to be of a different mind than you.”*



### 3. GROUP DISCUSSION

Answer the following questions in the large group:



**What helps us to develop and mature our love?**

**What stands in the way of developing and maturing our love?**

•Record answers on a chart divided into two columns: [1] What Helps, and [2] What is in the Way?

Example: activities get in the way, prayer helps, etc.

- Highlight the responses that the group considers most important.
- Divide the group into 2 or 3 small groups and divide the highlighted responses among them.
- Each group will work on ways to cultivate the things that help us to mature in love, and ways to combat the things that stand in our way.
- Afterwards, discuss the results of the activity in the larger group.

### 4. COMMITMENT

Suggestion: Each couple will commit to adopting one of the above habits or tasks in order to grow in their matrimonial love.

### 5. READING FOR THE FOLLOWING MEETING

*On Monday Evenings Vol. 20, pp. 80-89: "Growth of marital love", Fr. Kentenich*



## **UNIT 3**

# **RENEWING THE MARRIAGE**

### **Topic 2**

## Going Deeper into the 5<sup>th</sup> Stage of Love

#### **Objective:**

Delve deeper into the stages of love, concentrating on the **fifth stage**, the acceptance of the crosses that come with true love, and their significance.

#### **1. REVIEW COMMITMENT AND READINGS**

#### **2. PROMPT**

To set the proper mood, read the following thoughts of Mother Teresa of Calcutta:



*“At the moment of death, we shall not be judged by the amount of work we have done,*

*But rather by the amount of love we have put into our work. This love must come from sacrificing ourselves, and it must reach the point of being painful.”*

*“The less we have, the more we can give. This seems impossible, but it is not. This is the logic of love.”*

*“I know well, and each of my sisters knows, that what we do is far less than a drop in the ocean. But if the drop was missing, the ocean would lack something.”*



*“Both peace and war begin in the home. If we truly wish for peace in the world, we must begin by loving each other in the bosom of our own families. If we wish to sow happiness around us, we must be sure that all families live happily.”*

### 3. CONTENT: STAGES OF LOVE

We have been comparing the development of our conjugal love with the stages of our love for God. We stated that the first step was to overcome mortal sin, the second was to overcome the state of mediocrity and being lukewarm, the third stage was to overcome our imperfections, and the fourth stage was to seek to do God’s will, which we of Schoenstatt call surrender in the spirit of the Blank Check.

We will now concentrate on the **fifth stage of love for God**, which means to be **at God’s disposal in all that He wants, specifically the crosses that He has for us in life**, since we know that we cannot pass through life without a cross. We say “yes” to our crosses because they will help us to grow, they bring us closer to Him, and they will make us fruitful. We therefore lose any fear of the cross based on our unlimited confidence in God the Father. Fr. Kentenich calls this stage of love *“inscriptio,”* or love for the cross.

If we compare this to the development or maturation of our conjugal love, **this means to positively accept the crosses that come to us through our spouses**. We must come to accept them with peace, knowing that they present the opportunity to grow in our love for Him.

These crosses may be:

- **Great crosses** that may come through illness, loss of a family member or someone very close, difficulties with children, economic hardships, etc. There are very harsh realities that can be very difficult to overcome, but we must be prepared for these moments of pain in our married lives. Our love must rise to that level.

There will also be:

- **Lesser crosses**, which bring about a slow emptying of ourselves; small crosses that come from our way of being, from the character of our spouse, that ask each one of us to look heavenwards and strive to bring a greater dimension to our love. These bring us to a discovery of the deepest mystery of our marriage.



**We understand that, as a couple, we make up a saving community in the image of Christ and Mary: we are responsible, as a small home Church, for the redemption of our own. Together, as a couple, we are each responsible for the holiness of the other.**

In a prayer from *Heavenwards*, Father Kentenich prays:



*We are closely united in Christ Jesus,  
deeply united in his holy wounds-  
we, his members, and He, the mighty Head:  
this is the message which no one can take from us.  
As members of his Body we can merit  
and gain a right to grace and glory.  
As long as we are his true members  
the Father will always look on us with kindness.*

This means to take seriously our responsibility for the holiness of the other **through my contributions to the Capital of Grace, through my most faithful fulfillment of my duty.** This is how I help my spouse to become holy, and make myself responsible for his or her holiness.

This means that **my spouse is a path to holiness for me, and I am the same for her.** Acceptance of these small crosses of our daily lives, these small crosses that may be products of my spouse's character, have a **redeeming effect.**



To accept them, to assume them, means to transform them **into a service of love that overflows into a mutual holiness.** This is how to make sense of mutual complementation, helping and accepting each other, to endure and support each other.

**We are both responsible for the sanctity of our children and grandchildren.** This responsibility never ends: “I sanctify myself for them.” Thus, our love acquires a redemptive quality.

Fr. Kentenich, in another prayer from *Heavenwards* (p. 129):

*“So it is that family love will give us wings,  
motivating us to discipline our evil passions  
and strive for the heights of sanctity  
in sacrificial spirit and simple joy.  
Our own striving for sanctity will then become  
family love  
and help the family joyfully bear all sorrow,  
drawing down on it the Father’s joyful gaze  
and becoming its sure and permanent staff and shield.  
It has its place in the framework of our apostolate  
and helps enkindle our zeal for souls.  
It is a bond which can never be broken,  
uniting us in the city or on the land.”*

Striving for holiness takes on a **face and sense**: the face and interest of mine, those I love. We understand that something like this is only possible in the power of the Holy Spirit. In no other way would we be able, in our married life, to reach our fullness of freedom as children of God.

Whenever we have problems, whenever we face the difficulties of life in our days, when living together becomes painful, that is when our love is tested and refined.

#### 4. **GROUP DISCUSSION**

- Allow 10 minutes for each person to think about and answer, in writing, the questions below.
- Afterwards, group members will share whatever they choose to in the large group.



**Questions:**

*What difficulties or crosses has God placed in our conjugal or family life?*

*How have we overcome them?*

*Have they helped us to grow and mature our love?*

*How has that growth shown itself?*

*Have I offered those crosses up for the sanctification of my own, of the world?*

*What crosses would I like to offer up right now for my own?*

*For which of them?*

1. Conclude by giving each couple an image of the unity cross. The moderator or prayer leader concludes with a prayer, in which a moment of silence is held so that each member may offer up the cross that the Lord is asking them to carry, for a specific person. Finally, all pray:

*We are closely united in Christ Jesus,  
deeply united in his holy wounds-  
we, his members, and He, the mighty Head:  
this is the message which no one can take from us.  
As members of his Body we can merit  
and gain a right to grace and glory.  
As long as we are his true members  
the Father will always look on us with kindness.*

**5. COMMITMENT**

Together, read Attachment # 7. As a couple, reflect on the content and take a look at how each fails, and how they can help each other to adopt a new attitude.



## CONCLUSION OF THE THIRD YEAR

The year comes to a climax with a liturgy of Renewal of the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Opening prayer:

Leader: We have come together so that the Lord may renew and strengthen our love. Christ abundantly blesses this love. He has already consecrated us in our baptism and now he enriches and strengthens us so that we may assume the duties of marriage in mutual and lasting fidelity. And so, in the presence of the Church, let us state our intentions.



### Consent

*They join hands.*

*Husband:*

I, *(Name)*, take you, *(Name)*, for my lawful wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.

*Wife:*

I, *(Name)*, take you, *(Name)*, for my lawful husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.

Leader: We have renewed our consent. May the Lord in his goodness strengthen our consent and fill us with his blessings. What God has joined, men must not divide.





*Response:* Amen.

### **Blessing and Exchange of Rings**

*Leader:*

Lord, bless these rings which we bless in your name.  
Grant that those who wear them  
may always have a deep faith in each other.  
May they do your will  
and always live together  
in peace, good will, and love.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

*Response:*

Amen.

*The husband places his wife's ring on her ring finger.*

*He may say:*

*(Name)*, take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

*The wife places her husband's ring on his ring finger.*

*She may say:*

*(Name)*, take this ring as a sign of my love and fidelity. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.



## ATTACHMENT 1

### **MARRIED LIFE: PATHWAY TO GOD**

From the book *ON MONDAY EVENINGS*

Paragraphs from the Conference of January 16, 1961

Vol. 20, pp. 15-29

#### **The Wedding at Cana: Sanctification of Marriage and Family**

It is often asked what Jesus and Mary were doing at a wedding feast – exactly why were they participating in a marriage? We might better understand why they would go together to a synagogue, or fast together. A third point is that it is made is that the Lord uses this opportunity to perform the first miracle, the first tangible wonder, thus marking the beginning of His public ministry.

We may already know the current response given to these questions: Jesus wanted to sanctify matrimonial life and to express His respect for the married state of life. This response is evidently correct. We must also consider that up until this point, Jesus had spent thirty years of His life in the bosom of the Sacred Family. Keeping these things in mind demonstrates that Jesus sanctified matrimony at that time, or at least gives testimony of His respect for marriage in itself, not only for the marriage, but also for the married person.

These are the fundamental elements of the family: on one side are the spouses, who constitute a family. Jesus never married, and his mother virginally lived her conjugal commitment to Joseph. But the Lord, in turn, manifests his assessment of marriage, of spouses, and of the natural consequence of marriage: the family.

The Lord's gaze rests fully on the primordial core of human society, marriage and family, and we are married. Therefore, from an objective point of view, our topic hits the most intimate nerve of our lives. If we examine the present currents of thought in the Catholic world today, we will perceive the same clamor all over the world: We must save the family! We must concentrate on the family! Truly, our apostolate must extend to all facets of life, but the greatest apostolate is to the family. In other words, we must save our own families.

#### **Our Topic: Specifically Married Life**

This evening I believe I must concentrate on some difficulties that you face in your own lives. Therefore I will formally set aside the topic of family life, and focus on the conjugal life.



As parents, we may see ourselves from two different angles: first as husbands and wives, and then as fathers and mothers. As fathers and mothers we are related to our children, and as husbands and wives we are one in front of the other, especially from the perspective of a specifically matrimonial life – more specifically put, from the perspective of the conjugal act.

### **PREDOMINANT OPINIONS IN CATHOLICISM UNTIL NOW: OVERVALUATION OF THE VIRGINAL LIFE**

I wish to remind you of a famous phrase: About 100 years ago Frederic Ozanam, *founder of the Vicentians Conference*, was dying. We associate his name with beneficent works, for which he accomplished so much. He died in 1853, and the news spread throughout all of Catholic Germany, throughout the entire Catholic world, and naturally throughout Italy. In this latter country there was a young bishop with the surname Pecci. He would later be elevated to the Papacy with the name Leo XIII. He received the news of Frederic's death. One day he was at a meeting where opinions about Ozanam were exchanged. All of those in attendance agreed that he had been a great man, a saint. However, one of those present added, "What a shame that he could not free himself from the trap of marriage!" What could he have meant by these words? That if Ozanam had not been married, he would have been a perfect man. It was a comment that clearly expressed a certain point of view. Bishop Pecci – who at the time was a bishop who would later become Pope – answered in this way: "Do you know what you are saying? You feel that Jesus instituted six Sacraments and a trap?" While this answer sounds fairly jocular, it is very true.

A commonly held attitude in many Catholic circles underlies in the comment made to Bishop Pecci, an attitude that remains current even in our times. In general, it is felt that it is most important that man remain unmarried, conserving the virginal state and style of life, that all else is weakness.

Logically, man seeks to possess something... for example, a woman. This constitutes, at its core, a concession to human weakness, but in reality, it should not be so. He who seeks holiness opts for virginity, and becomes a priest, a nun, or something similar. He who marries loses that opportunity. He may go to heaven, of course, but will be there in a corner... but not close to God, beneath the veil of the Blessed Mother. No, that privilege is not for those who marry...

I wish to expand on this a bit more. I am exaggerating, but this point of view about these things exists in Catholicism. The idea that sustains it is this: If we, the



married people – not as the laity, but formally as the married people – want to be saints, what must we do? We must imitate the religious, and there is no other valid alternative. Thus, what is proposed to us is a monastic spirituality. Therefore, the more we imitate the monastic spirituality, more surely may we get to Heaven.

## **CONTEMPT FOR THE WORLD**

This point of view treats the world in a similar way. It is not only distressed by marriage, but by the entire world. We live in the world – it is shame enough that we must live in it – and we should, on the one hand, separate ourselves from this world, and, on the other hand, we should partly enter the monastic world. This brings on a tremendous insecurity.

## **RE-ESTABLISHING THE VALUE OF TEMPORAL THINGS**

A new feeling about life is appearing among Catholics all over the world. It is a feeling of human vitality that is beginning to spread throughout Catholic ranks. The idea is that we must place utmost importance on earthly things, and to point the laity to the paths to follow to use and value earthly things as a path to holiness *through them*.

See for yourselves if our laic spirituality is not, generally speaking, a copy of the spirituality of the religious orders. This constitutes a contradiction. The vocation of the monastic religious is to remove themselves from earthly things to the greatest degree possible. However, we, the laity, are called to move towards the earthly, to immerse ourselves into it. We must necessarily deal with the earthly. We have not been created, in our laic state, to flee from the earthly.

We must, even more so, learn to love the earthly. Yes, to love it. Including money, material goods, the beauty of human nature, the arts, and the sciences. We must love them precisely because we must deal with them.

In this sense, a particular and strong movement of reappraisal exists in today's Church as never before in its history.

## **MATRIMONY IS A SACRAMENT**

What I wish to highlight this evening, since we have begun to examine this topic, is the study of the specifically laic spirituality in relation to the specifically conjugal life. I should not consider conjugal life to be a trap for me. Family is not a Sacrament, but matrimony is. Therefore, I must learn to take advantage of my specifically conjugal life to immerse myself more deeply in God. Allow me to ask you: what do you understand the meaning and end of matrimony to be?



What is the meaning and end, not of the family, but of matrimony? Let us set the family aside for the moment. Let us recall all that we know about the subject. What have we learned already about this topic? Have we been able to integrate that knowledge into the context of today's marital problems?

We were always told that marriage, the conjugal life, had three goals. I will cite them primarily in their Latin version, and will add pertinent interpretations:

### **THE GOALS OF MARRIAGE**

The goals of marriage are: *procreatio prolis*, the engendering and raising of children; *mutuum adiutorium*, mutual support of spouses; and the pacification of instinct.

Examine the panorama of the matrimonial topic. There are so many distinct currents swirling about what marriage is! In the first place, the "trial marriage" exists: Are we compatible or not? If we are not, goodbye! If I knew you, I've forgotten! And then there is divorce... you know better than I how many divorces there are these days. And there is also the issue of birth control. What does this all mean? These are all blows that accost marriage.

All of these tendencies of today's world arouse, in each Catholic and among the leaders of the Church, the following question: What exactly is the profile of the Catholic marriage? What is its meaning? In order to be in tune with the approach of modern life, I believe we should place utmost importance on the second goal of marriage mentioned above: *mutuum adiutorium*, or, in other words, mutual support. I like to pose this thought in the following way: matrimony is the deepest and most lasting community of love and life possible.

I highlight that it is, above all, a community of love. For example, suppose that we are stricken with a fertility problem, and we cannot have children. What is then left?

We are left with the marital community of love. Greater still, it is a permanent community of love. The other goal, satisfaction of instinct, will remain in effect.

Among Catholics, there also exists the feeling that satisfaction of one's instinct is merely a concession to human weakness. A closer look reveals that this is, once again, contempt for the values of nature. There is also value underlying the satisfaction of the sexual appetite, and in matrimony we concede a mutual right to it. We must create a new way of looking at these things.

I have thus presented an entire series of problems in our present times. What shall our response be?



## **WE ARE THE IMAGE OF GOD**

### **God with Her and with Him**

*Excerpted from **Preparation for Matrimony, Chapter 2, Jesus Gines O.***

#### **1. General Theme**

The love of a human couple is the incarnate reflection of God's love, because the product of creation, man and woman, reflect, according to Revelation, the image of God.

When God created the world, it came about as an act of the will of the Creator, without the intervention of any other power or will. God, who is One, yet is also Trinity, decided to put the world in motion, reigned over by a pair of creatures, who would reflect His presence and His management. Man and woman have been created to give sense to the world. This decision of God will be perpetuated in their descendants, who will populate the earth as the stars in the sky and the sands in the oceans.

It is through the family, begotten and sustained by the love of man and woman who leave their parents to become one flesh, where the miracle of representing God vicariously in the world occurs. Man and woman, united in love, carry out the great Eucharist of the cosmos by ordering all creatures to "proclaim the glory of God." The heavens proclaim the glory of God to the degree in which man, who is gifted with reason and will, carries out this destiny. Therefore, man has received God's mandate to praise, recognize, and adore his Creator. This is the aim of creation, and this mission is carried out, both physically and spiritually, through consecrated love in the family, in accordance with God's plan.

#### **2. What people believe**

*a) In the materialistic world view, man and woman have no other purpose than that of their physical-chemical biology, which trumps any other considerations. Man and woman are attracted to each other, but are not bound for life by this attraction. Any imposition of permanence in their union is merely the fruit of social conventions.*

*b) In the hedonistic world view, the man/woman relationship is dependent of the successful awakening and acceptance of pleasure in one another. According to this way of thinking, the familiar dogma is: The union lasts as long as the attraction does.*



*Therefore, the human condition does not differ from the animal condition, which necessarily is a slave to instinct*

c) *In the world view influenced by behaviorist psychology, it is held that man and woman must respond to instinct in order for their affective relationship to develop. This brings about separations and new unions every time one or the other desires to “remake” their lives, which is considered to be the driving force in the conduct of the human couple.*

### 3. The Doctrine that Illuminates the Topic

#### OLD TESTAMENT

***“God said, 'Let us make man in our own image, in the likeness of ourselves, and let them be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven, the cattle, all the wild animals and all the creatures that creep along the ground.' God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.”*** (Gen 1: 26-27)

The psalmist, privileged witness to the theological and mystical thought of Israel, further confirms the heightened dignity of man:

***“What are human beings that you spare a thought for them, or the child of Adam that you care for him? Yet you have made him little less than a god, you have crowned him with glory and beauty, made him lord of the works of your hands, put all things under his feet.”*** (Psalm 8: 4-6)

At the same time, and from a more existential perspective, the sacred author will show us the precarious nature of man before the unfathomable mystery of God (which does not preclude that this same creature be essentially superior to the rest of creation):

***“Why then quarrel with him for not replying to you, word for word? God speaks first in one way, and then in another, although we do not realize it.”***(Job 33: 13-14)



## Unit 2: MATRIMONIAL LOVE

Topic 1: Conjugal Love is a Singular Force of Love  
Attachment 2: We are the Image of God

### NEW TESTAMENT

The Gospel does not merely ratify the truth about man contained in the Ancient Law, but it deepens the dignity that brings us to identify with the Son of God. Redeemed man is somehow son in the Son:

***"In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me."*** (Mt 25:40)

By his actions, the man who lives in faith in Christ shall come to perform the miracles and give the same testimony before men:

***"In all truth I tell you, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, and will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father."*** (John 14:12)

While it is true that there is no explicit word regarding the power of these words regarding conjugality, there is no doubt that what is affirmed by the follower applies equally to the couple, regarding both spiritual fruitfulness and communal life, which includes marriage:

***"It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit and be my disciples."*** (John 15:8)

***"As God's dear children, then, take him as your pattern, <sup>2</sup> and follow Christ by loving as he loved you, giving himself up for us as an offering and a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God."*** (Eph 5:1-2)

### THE MAGISTERIUM OF THE CHURCH

***"God is love, and in Himself lives the mystery of a personal communion of love. Creating it in His image, and holding it continuously in His Being, God etches into the humanity of man and woman the vocation to, and consequently to capacity for and the responsibility to, love and communion. Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being."*** (*Familiaris Consortio*, John Paul II, #11)





## Unit 2: MATRIMONIAL LOVE

Topic 1: Conjugal Love is a Singular Force of Love  
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*“Conjugal love is a totality into which all the elements of a person enter - call of the body and of the instinct, force of feeling and affectivity, aspiration of the spirit and of the will – it seeks a profoundly personal unity that, beyond the union of one sole flesh, takes us to more than one sole heart and one sole soul: it requires the indissolubility and fidelity of definitive reciprocal giving, and it opens itself up to fruitfulness.” (Humanae Vitae, Paul VI, #9)*

### 4. Theological and Rational Thought

A couple’s love, destined to found a family, is the strongest commitment that can be made by human beings. It is greater than the simple friendship that can come to life among all kinds of people, without distinction of age, gender, or social condition. Friendship clearly exemplifies the absolute gratuity of love, which is an essential starting point of a mature couple’s relationship.

When adult men and women commit to love, they do it under the essential condition of the divine vocation granted by God as an indestructible seal in the hearts of both. This is where we understand the meaning of “image and likeness” of the Creator. God created man and woman in a vocational bi-unity that is only brought about by the matrimonial commitment. This is both men and women abandon that which is most sacred, the home of their belonging – their fathers and mothers – to fuse into “one sole flesh,” meaning into one sole spirit: the matrimonial spirit.

This message is so important that it is uncovered since the beginning of Revelation, which has been, to the Christian world, the main reference of holiness for all men. Even while personal vocations to holiness, such as that of those consecrated to the service of the Kingdom, exist, these conditions exist as exceptions which are certainly extolled by the Lord. However, holiness is most commonly found in a couple’s love when they create a family-centered, creative, and apostolic existence, characterized in every way by the blessings of, and by praise for the Creator.

If, then, each person is called to develop his or her life in God’s image, it is the couple, united in matrimony, that more broadly expresses the mysterious dimension held deep within each gender, with both reflecting the divine essence.



## 5. Response to what People Think from the Perspective of Reasoned Faith

a) Nothing is more opposed to Christian faith than the materialist vision held by many men today, for whom human existence is no different from that of a plant or an animal. In this point of view, man is nobody's image except of himself or perhaps of the more developed anthropomorphic animals. What difference could there be between a man and a gorilla? And, now that we know from deciphering the human genome that we are so barely different from a fly, what could we, as humans, deserve more than the rest of creation? In the materialist vision of nature, the life of the human couple is undoubtedly extremely insignificant. This is far removed from the triumphant vision of man with a soul, with an eternal destiny, made by love and made for love!

b) Pleasure is, in man, no merely the fruit of his instinct, but also the result of his will, controlled by intelligence. A truly essential difference between man and beast is that the latter acts as a necessary function of its instinct, while man is the lord of his instinct, which is a necessary function of his final destiny, which is world dominion and service and praise for the Creator. Naturally, man does not cast aside pleasure of the senses – he would no longer be human if he could – but he does not live enslaved to instinct. Instinct is a blind impulse, and its ordering belongs to reason aimed at good, both of the person who feels it, and of the other or others who are needed for this pleasure to awaken. Self-control and man's social sense prevent the production of chaos, if the instinct of every person were the only norm of social living. A human life based on the principle of "maximum pleasure" at any cost is undoubtedly an inhuman life, even anti-human. In our Revelation of both the Old and New Testaments, frequent mention is made to this control that men and women must have over themselves. Not everything that man think or feels can be accepted, since this conduct leads to adultery, fornication, thievery, violence, and in general to the destruction of social life.

c) The behavioral theory necessarily leads to moral irresponsibility, as a consequence of the excision between man's psychic being and his spiritual and transcendent dimension. Following biological-affective logic, behaviorism is consistent with its limited and limiting vision of concrete man, who is stripped of his superior tendencies, of his intelligence that is open to the Truth, and of a will capable of overcoming itself and of keeping its primary instincts in line.

The moral commitment that a couple makes by promising to love for their entire lives cannot be annulled by the arguments of instinct, of pleasure, or of convenience. Man lives his existence in different spheres of action: physical, affective, spiritual, and transcendent. As man's moral action is a totality, we could not recommend that a



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person assume different types of conduct regarding his visceral movements. All of man acts under the moral imperative that his own understanding imposes, illuminated by all valid sources of knowledge of the Truth. Divine Revelation is, doubtlessly, the most powerful and clarifying of all.

### 6. Commitments

1. Since God is love, creation, mercy and kindness, what can we do as a couple to reflect each of these conditions? Make a joint plan of action to develop the different virtues that will allow us to resemble God.
2. In the face of today's materialism and hedonism, we must try to give testimony about our vision of a love that is open to transcendence.



### **ATTACHMENT 3**

**Christopher West**  
**The Gift Series**

**1. Training for Love**

**<http://youtu.be/npUFkoi-IH4>**

**2. Marriage is an Icon of Heaven**

**<http://youtu.be/eC45pUjmHw0>**

**3. The truth about love**

**[http://www.youtube.com/watch?](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKKOQhb0ab0&feature=share&list=PL2A700BC207BD6780&index=5)**

**[v=tKKOQhb0ab0&feature=share&list=PL2A700BC207BD6780&index=5](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKKOQhb0ab0&feature=share&list=PL2A700BC207BD6780&index=5)**





## ATTACHMENT 4

A. CHRISTOPHER WEST  
“Purity is NOT puritanism”  
<http://youtu.be/URcW9x-vrBk>

### B. THE PURITY OF SPOUSAL LOVE Types of Love

One might think that in a marriage, sexuality is a source of happiness. However, those who listen to confidential information from married people (psychologist, psychiatrists, spiritual counselors, etc.) often report a very different reality. Many times it is not a source of happiness, but of conflict, deception, and discord. Why does this happen? There may be many different reasons for this. In this article, we will highlight one of special importance. We speak of the lack of a culture of caresses in the spousal relationship.

All types of love come together and are fused (which is ideal) in spousal love: ***spiritual love, instinctive sexual love, affective-feeling love, and supernatural love.*** ***The love of spouses is a love in which the spiritual side is made flesh and the carnal side is made spiritual.*** The animalistic sexual instinct knows not of this treasure. It is one-dimensional. It is also unknown by the same spiritual love of angelic beings. Only human beings can enjoy the fullness of this love.

#### **Bringing Complexity into Harmony**

Wherever lies the richness of spousal love, **there also lies the problem.** It is not easy to fuse and bring all the dimensions of spousal love into harmony. Those who are called to love and be loved like this often endure the tensions and extrapolations found in that endeavor. The intimate relationship of spouses tends to be reduced solely to the quest for sexual-genital enjoyment, instinctive and passionate, without the sufficient integration of the spiritual-personal dimension of love. There also exists a possible



tendency to the other extreme, where highlighting the “spiritual” or “supernatural” side at the expense or exclusion of the carnal dimension may undervalue that dimension to the point of making it seem sinful or “impure.”

This origin of this lack of harmony is derivative of our ontological condition: the human being is a complex being, as he is both spirit and flesh. The harmony of a being is always a work in progress. On top of this, man is burdened by the consequences and wounds that Original Sin has burnt into his nature.

For these reasons, spousal love implies a continuous task of self-formation, of rectification, of undergoing a constant process of self-integration. Those who do not undertake the task must count on the fact that symptoms of disintegration will soon be felt in their matrimonial lives.

## Eros

In order to measure the degree of harmony, the quality and fullness of spousal love, **perhaps it would be best to observe the condition of the affective-feelings relationship in mutual love.**

Instinctive-sexual love, spiritual love, and supernatural love can all be given, so to say, in a “pure” state. The love of friendship, the animalistic sexual love, or the love of charity can all be, in some way, “complete” loves in and of themselves. When these loves become integrated and take each other on, the result is a typically human love. It is the scope of affective-feelings love, expressed in caresses and gentleness, **that makes spiritual love into a notably warm love, makes supernatural love into a manifestation of the deepness and closeness of the love of The Word Made Flesh who came to live among us.**

We call this love “eros,” or “erotic love,” in the best sense of the word. Through this form of love, the person loves someone in their physical-spiritual totality. **Spiritual love becomes a gesture of the senses, ardent love, in which that which nests in the soul of the lover is manifested. It is expressed by caresses, which are not strictly sexual.** Loving caresses protect and strengthen spiritual love. Without them, spiritual love could lose its force and ardor.

If spouses cultivate eros, the sexual dimension of their spousal love **has a support that guarantees its human quality, and avoids that fall into a purely instinctive and passionate genital sexuality.** A marriage that has a place for gentleness, for selfless caresses, for small gestures of love, for loving embraces, for kind words, for dating, will experience a flowering of its love and will remain young and pure. **Erotic love is a protective shelter; it raises sexuality to a higher plain, and keeps it healthy. It is**



**therefore capable of making sexuality a source of lasting happiness, not merely a passing fancy.**

### **The Great Challenge**

**Cultivating erotic love is a great challenge for spouses.** Why is that? Because we generally move between two extremes: that of genital-sexual and spiritual-supernatural, but we tend to become careless in the area of eros. We might leave it behind, relegating it to our past: it should not be a relic of the days of falling in love and mutual enchantment.

**Love for the *you* must be expressed through the senses in order to deliver the message that awakens and captivates the spouse, making their heart beat anew.** This is how we overcome that nefarious lack of hope held by spouses who no longer dream, or who have forgotten the poetry of their lives. It would be sad to think that our dreams should become buried in our personal diaries or love letters from long ago. **It would be a shame if our dreams were to fade.** Sadly, it is common for our hyperkinetic stressful, and materialistic lifestyles to wilt the delicate plant of conjugal love.

### **Making Each Other's Lives Wonderful**

What can we do to awaken and cultivate our love? **We must rediscover those traces of enchantment that our spouse certainly has, and were the ones that made us fall in love in the first place.** We must not let these be covered in dust and become pale. We must healthily seduce our spouse anew, being courteous, affable, attentive, and obsequious, always making an effort to please her.

We must recover the youthfulness of love; admiring the ***you*** once again and rediscovering her bewitching quality, being at the same time “enchanted,” attractive, capable of captivating her love with our way of being, of talking, of dressing... Both spouses must dedicate themselves to this beautiful task.

If we wake in the mornings with that lack of energy, and we don't bother tending to our appearance, if we don't care about how we seem to the other, if we only think of ourselves or of whatever we have to do, and we don't stop to think about what our spouse feels or thinks, things will certainly not work out well. **If we think that our spouse is a “sure thing” and become too comfortable with the way things are, sooner or later our mutual relationship will cool.**



## Cultivating Caresses

***In summary: erotic love is related to the realm of tenderness and of caressing the inner life of the marriage.*** A caress is a gesture (a look, a word, an expression, a way of treating someone, etc.) that displays love freely given to the **you**. It is a gesture that lets the loved one know that we like her just as she is, that she pleases us, that we are happy that she exists, and that she deserves all of our love and admiration.

These days, sadly, the caress that expresses eros is hardly given; rather, caresses are used as a kind of “sexual excitation mechanism.” This latter is rejected by the noble person who does not wish to be loved nor sought only for pleasure, but wishes, instead, to be loved for who he or she is.

A caress may indeed include what is sexual-genital, but it is a huge mistake to think that every caress carries that connotation. For example, when we embrace a child, it would be absurd to think that the hug could be libidinous. Of course it is not. It is simply a manifestation of our love that seeks to express itself through the senses. It would be equally absurd to think that the caresses of the woman who approached Jesus and ***“waited behind him at his feet, weeping, and her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them away with her hair; then she covered his feet with kisses and anointed them with the ointment.”*** (Lk 7:38) had any other intent other than to express her love and repentance.

Let us think about what caresses mean to a child, and what the psychological consequences are of their absence. For a child to develop a healthy self-esteem, he or she absolutely needs the caresses of his or her parents, because they carry a message: “we are happy that you are who you are; you interest us; we care for you because we love you.” This is how the child experiences in a subconscious and living way, that his or her existence is a good thing, that he or she is not alone, that someone is there to shelter and care for him or her. Parents do not explain all of this with words. Rather, it is the fruit of the living experience of being sheltered, cared for, and held tight in the arms of the mother or father.

## What Caresses Express

Something very similar is found in the caresses of spouses. They have a therapeutic and revitalizing power. Von Gagern explains, in his book *For Spouses*, **“The most basic form of all caresses is bodily proximity.** A newborn child needs the bodily radiation of the mother, the simple presence of the living creature, to experience the sensation of shelter. We know how important the desire to be sheltered is, even in





adults. A child receives the feeling, **but adults also need to feel sheltered...** When two human beings who love each other rest together in physical proximity, they experience tranquility, serenity, warmth, and a feeling of shelter as they listen to the beating of the other's heart and perceive the living rhythm of the breathing the beloved's body. Presumably, prenatal memories of the sheltering experience of the womb awaken in the primitive subconscious."

In the deepest part of our being, we continue to be creatures, children... Therefore it important that the spiritual devaluation that we all come to feel, the existential helplessness that we all are subject to at times, that originates in our personal limitations, failures, ailments, or circumstances, undergo therapy from someone who can make us feel, with our senses: *I will shelter you, I am near you, I hold you in my heart.* This sheltering, from the supernatural perspective, is an expression of, and path to, the sheltering experienced in the heart of God the Father.

Do we feel, as spouses, that sheltering that comes from the physical proximity of our spouse? Do we experience that peace or mutual rest as we listen to the beating heart of the other? These are tremendously important realities that determine, to a great degree, the quality of our conjugal life.

What are spouses telling each other when they take each other's hands? "I walk with you, I am your companion, you can count on me, and we go together!" **We must express these things through the senses.**

**Our matrimonial joy (and sanctity), to a great degree, is the result of the cultivation of these freely given manifestations of tenderness and care.** These caresses range from a loving look, to placing one's arms around the shoulders or waist of the other, to playing with the hair of our spouse, to giving the other a flower, and include so many other things that are apparently "unnecessary," that only love understands and knows to invent.

"I love how you look." "That dress looks great on you." "That meal was delicious!" With these and other expressions I am acknowledging the receipt of a caress, of the tenderness that my spouse has shown me by dressing up or making my favorite dessert. I acknowledge receipt, and that renews me and makes me happy.

This opens a whole new world to discovery: a world that is *path, expression, and guarantee* of our joy and Sanctity in Marriage. Spouses, through their vocation are called to live and demonstrate this sanctity. They must redeem the sensible expression of caring, and give it the meaning desired by God. This is also an important part of rearing children. If they are not taught by their parents, they will be guided by the role models that are found in the movies, television, and the practices of their school mates.



Von Gagern makes the following summary: “In summary, we can say that **well intentioned caresses have, in and of themselves, an *intrinsic sense of self-worth*; namely, of manifesting mutual love, affirming the *you* with an approving “yes,” enjoying physical proximity, and finally, by personal contact, to want to do good for each other, giving of themselves, helping each other, and proving, in the loving game, that they love each other, thus feeding the soul’s smile, fruit of joy. We do not only express something by these, but *something occurs* in this communion.** Since everything that is done together creates community, the *me* is freed from its isolation, creating a relationship with the *you* as if with itself, leading to the *we*, which is redemption. I experience, in a living way, the closeness, human warmth, vitality, vigor, and kindness of the *you*.

However, as *we*, we experience each other, play together, converse in lively interchanges of calls and answers, we make each other happy, and, through each other, we make ourselves happy. This happening determines that inner place from where caresses come, and, more importantly, defines whether an act is one of conjugal chastity or of abandonment.

Do we realize the importance and ramifications of eros love?

*(Fr. Rafael Fernandez)*



## ATTACHMENT 5

### LETTER FROM A WOMAN TO HER HUSBAND

***My love:***

*With immense love I keep a box of your love letters, because they are an invaluable treasure to me. I think they are proof of our desire to communicate beyond what words can say. That is why, even though we have been married for seven years, I write to you once more, to tell you about something that makes me very sad.*

*You always ask me if the children are tiring me out, and I tell you that they are, a little bit. It's true: a little bit. But what has me "out of sorts," as you say, is something that I have recently seen more clearly. I plan every step that I take around you, everything that I do around you, I don't do a thing that would alter your schedule or plans. To would say that this is good and this makes us a united marriage, but I feel like I am nothing but an extension of you, and that everything that I could expect of life depends on you.*

*I understand that you do different things and talk about different things than I do. ON the other hand, I don't know what to do when you are not around... I don't know if I can or should be involved in other things, and I am always waiting all day long to see if our joint plans will come to be. You told me the other day that it is healthy to live day to day, and not make too many long range plans. I wish that you, my best friend, would help me to better live day to day. Please don't diminish this by thinking that this is about me "finding myself," "making my own life," "becoming my own person..." It's not that at all. I just feel immature, incomplete.*

*Please don't laugh.*



## **THE HUSBAND'S RESPONSE:**

### ***My little darling:***

*After reading your little note, so full of feelings, I have to make a quick stop in this rat race of daily life. I've always taken your notes to be your way of purging, and, in this case, I realize that I can't possibly think I'm too tired or busy to stop and concentrate on what is happening on the inside of the person that I love more than anything in the world – and who I admire the most, also.*

*I realize that I have set what is important – you – aside for what is pressing. If I have been able to study, work, and make plans, it is all thanks to you. So please get the idea that you are dependent out of your head, because the invalid here is me.*

*A thousand times I've looked back at myself years ago, and saw myself as an unassembled puzzle. I felt exactly as you do now. I don't want you to ever change, and to have confidence that all the plans that we've made together will come to be. But day by day, we will fix this starting with what's most important: we are going to talk more about you and less about me. We are going to start today.*

*You don't know how happy your letter made me. It left me with that same tickling in the belly that a child feels when he goes to sleep on the night before Christmas.*

*Adoringly, your husband*



## **ATTACHMENT 6: Background for Topic 3, Unit 2**

**TOPIC: Man and Woman in God's Plan**

**From "Preparation for Marriage," Chapter 2,  
Jesus Gines O., Instituto Berit de la Familia.**



### **MAN AND WOMAN: Differences that Strengthen the Union**

#### **1. General Topic**

In order for a perfect spousal union to exist, there is a starting point that cannot be taken for granted. There are differences between him and her. Not only physical differences, but also affective, psychic differences, and even in their perception and expression of values. When faced with the same event, a man and a woman do not feel or express the same things, nor do they perceive them the same way. Their feelings, their faith, their convictions are essentially different.

Knowing the woman and the man is an indispensable step for the present and future relationship of the couple to be successful. Biological science presents us with one vision, and psychology and the social sciences present another, which complement each other and allow us to discover a broader and deeper knowledge regarding masculine and feminine realities. This more complete knowledge will doubtlessly facilitate a better present and future relationship. Shepherds of souls, along with psychologists, advisors, and educators all give us abundant knowledge and experiences about this. Common sense tells us to value the empirically based thinking of those who have closely studied the phenomenon of relationship.



An accurate understanding about what makes a woman and what makes a man will surely allow us to better understand the human mystery of spousal relationship.

## **2. Problems that People Have:**

*a) According to ideas spread by today's news media, apparently there is no longer any difference between men and women. They would have us believe that there is, rather, an accumulation of cultural prejudices that have been imposed on our times by religious points of view, reactionary fundamentalists, and male chauvinism, which should no longer hold sway in our times.*

*b) As today's woman has gained access to greater knowledge and greater control over her sexuality, thanks to the "pill," she confronts man with a more competitive and independent attitude. This has been called sexual liberation, due to which man is no longer the only one who frequently acts irresponsibly when faced with the consequences of the carnal act. Now women may indulge without "facing the consequences." Woman has liberated herself from chauvinistic adultery from a prostitution in which she was merely a disposable object of desire. Women, according to this school of thought, now may be equally irresponsible thanks to "safe sex," without suffering the consequence of an undesired pregnancy.*

*c) Another place where women have been discriminated against has been the workplace, where gender is still considered in the determination of salary, and to avoid hiring due to possible pregnancy. According to the broadest interpretation, men and women should be considered equal in every way, so that there be no discrimination due to gender.*

*d) The gravest consequence of the new egalitarianism between men and women is that it implies the volatility of marriage, the devaluation of Motherhood, a transitory quality of love that has been supplanted by a sexual game with the sole goal of self-gratification of each of the couple, without any intention of permanence, and without any valuation of fidelity. Marriage has become a parlor game in which one either wins or loses, without meaningful consequences.*



### 3. The Doctrine that Sheds Light on the Topic: Sacred Scripture and Magisterium

#### Sacred Scripture

Our sacred texts, both Old and New Testaments, shed abundant light on the topic of men and women. There is a wide variety of circumstances in which Biblical history speaks of behaviors and establishes thoughts, judgments, and ideas regarding male or female specificity. Many of these ideas are shared by other past, present, and latter sources than the Bible.

Beyond the revealed truth that the Bible offers to the believer, the sacred books offer abundant popular, universal wisdom regarding the topic. We can, in this way, affirm that the data of modern psychology, as well as sociology, can be greatly enriched by certain events taken from the Old and New Testaments. It is interesting to review the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Sirach, and Wisdom.

#### Old Testament

The fundamental truth about man and woman in the Bible is that both are created by God with a singular dignity, in His image and likeness, with each enjoying an equal dignity.

***“God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.”*** (Gen 1:27)

From the very first moment, Biblical literature reveals the reason for our mutual existence: man and woman are made for each other.

***“Yahweh God said, ‘It is not right that the man should be alone. I shall make him a helper.’”*** (Gen 2:18)

And so, both man and woman acquire a special dignity from the Fatherhood and Motherhood that they enjoy:

***“Long life comes to anyone who honors a father, whoever obeys the Lord makes a mother happy. Such a one serves parents as well as the Lord.”*** (Sir 3:6-7)

***“Whoever deserts a father is no better than a blasphemer, and whoever distresses a mother is accursed of the Lord.”*** (Sir 3:16)

There is also a clear indication of the exclusive characteristic of man and woman united in matrimony:

***“Never sit down with a married woman, or sit at table with her drinking wine, in case you let your heart succumb to her and you lose all self-control and slide to disaster.”*** (Sir 9:9)



Finally, in Sacred Scripture we discover the particularly lovely character of woman:

***“Like a lamp shining on the sacred lamp-stand, such is a beautiful face on a well-proportioned body. Like golden pillars on a silver base, such are shapely legs on firm-set heels.”*** (Sir 26:17-18)

### **New Testament**

In the New Testament we discover a special dignity acquired by men in Christ and by women in Mary, deriving from them, the Son of God and the Virgin Mother designated as supreme models of creation, our redemption. ***“Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favor! The Lord is with you... do not be afraid; you have won God's favor. Behold! You are to conceive in your womb and bear***

***a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High.”*** (Lk 1:28, 30-31)

God invites man to a role that is especially conducive to the new humanity: that of the apostolate by means of the spreading of the Gospel and the running of the Church. The principally male role of Ministry is strongly underlined in the actions of Jesus:

***“When day came he summoned his disciples and picked out twelve of them; he called them ‘apostles’”*** (Lk 6:13)

The Word of Christ is equally definitive regarding the equal dignity of woman, apart from her condition as mother and wife, both conditions being equally demanded of men:

***“Let the one among you who is guiltless be the first to throw a stone at her.”*** (Jn 8:7)

Finally, St. Paul established the permanent doctrine received from the Lord. Both equal, both equally responsible one for the other, and both creatures and grace of the Lord:

***“Husbands should love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her.”*** (Eph 5:25)

### **The Magisterium of the Church**

Since its beginnings, the Church has held women on the same pedestal of recognition as men. One finds the inclination to hold woman even higher in the particular veneration of the Mother of God, Daughter of the Father, and Wife of the Holy Spirit. Mary is the paradigm of humanity redeemed from original sin, as she was the one who, from the moment of her conception, was immaculate of all sin.





**The elected people of God are one: “There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph 4:5), one common dignity of its members by their regeneration through Christ, one common grace of childhood, one common vocation to perfection, one salvation, one hope, and one indivisible charity. No inequality exists in Christ and in the Church due to lineage or birth, social condition or gender, because ‘there can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither slave nor freeman, there can be neither male nor female -- for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’” (Gal 3:28 – see also Col 3:11)**  
*LG32, Of the Laity, Concilio Vaticano II*

Once again, it is Pope John Paul II, in his condition of Master of Human Doctrine, who broadens and highlights the down to earth content of this posture which emanates from the Gospel and from the secular tradition of the Church:

**“If this century of liberal society is characterized by a growing feminism, one may suppose that this is a reaction to the lack of respect owed to all women. I held all that I wrote about this topic in “*Mulieris dignitatem*” in me from a very young age, even, in a certain sense, since infancy. Perhaps I was influenced by the environment of the times in which I was reared, which was characterized by a great respect and consideration for women, especially for the woman-mother.”** (*John Paul II, “On the Threshold of Hope”*)

#### **4. Views of the Rational Order**

God's plan for men and women has been clear throughout the history of salvation as recorded in the Old and New Testaments. From these we discover that the male's preferred purview includes the management of the world, care of his surroundings, productive work, and the search for goods required by the family for survival, while the woman's primary responsibilities are maintenance of the household, care of the children, and all of the day to day details of the lives of all family members.

Certainly men and women have similar intelligence, passions, and dreams, and so the development of these should always be undertaken by the couple. Both must seek the mutual good, and the good of their loved ones. While the types of tasks may be naturally divided by gender, they are certainly not to be considered exclusive to one or the other. The man or the woman will necessarily have to supplement each other's efforts to care for and develop the household, especially when one or the other is missing, or otherwise incapacitated.

“His” or “her” activities cannot be considered a competitive battleground, but rather as a team task, in which the common objective is to carry out the multiple duties that God puts in our lives. Some of the differences that science notes about men and women follow:

*Women: perceive things as a big picture: Husband, children, home, and work.*



*Men: perceive the world as parts of a whole: House, work, wife, games, and children.*

*Women: are more inclined to concrete reality, to the senses, to the lovely.*

*Men: are more inclined to the abstract, the global, the intellectual, and the theoretical.*

*Women: are concerned with details: gifts, kisses, communication, health, friendship.*

*Men: are concerned with business, gatherings, the news, and politics.*

*Women: are more vain, jealous, superficial, warm, and irritable.*

*Men: are more prideful, cold, insensitive, calculating.*

### **Notes about masculine and feminine personalities:**

*Every day there are more voices that point out that the sexual condition is related to what is most intimate in the human being, their spirit, their person. Among them are those who assert that "the deepest, most hidden structures of the empirical world correspond to the laws of the spirit... everything physiological and psychic depends on the spirit, serving it and expressing it. Woman is not maternal because, by her body, she is capable of giving birth, – states Evdokimov – but rather, her physiological faculties and corresponding anatomical ones proceed from her spirit," and if the male has more physical power, it is because this is how his spirit is expressed.*

*It is also affirmed that the person expresses himself through sexuality, or, in other words, "the body is an expression of the person." In his writings, John Paul II succinctly states that "sex is a constituent of the person, not a simple attribute."*

Blanca Castilla, from "Feminine Person, Masculine Person" Eunsa, 1996, p. 26

## **5. Responses to the problem from a dual perspective: rational and Christian**

**a)** No matter how much the species spreads and grows, the truth is that women and men are still, and will always be, human beings, different people. What is evident in biology is also scientifically demonstrable in affective life and in all types of intelligence – which is neither greater nor lesser than in the other gender – we are different, in our natural expressions of moral and religious life, and even including our perception of and expression of our cultures.

There is much fantastic literature on this topic, which seem have its origins in revisionist attitudes that lack objectivity. It is laughable to maintain that many male-chauvinistic



postures have been caused by certain moral or religious doctrines of the Judeo-Christian world view, and those wishing to place blame here are quite far from both ideological and historic truth.

The medieval historian Regine Pernoud, in her many works about women in the Middle Ages, has recently maintained that it was precisely the Church, in her moments of maximum splendor in the faith, that elevated women to a social category that was later lost with the advent of Renaissance humanism, mostly because of the predominance of rationalism and materialism. Suffice it to read the abundant historic testimonies cited by the recently deceased French historian to dispose of a great many of the prejudices blamed on Catholicism, as a cause of the disenfranchisement of women.

The Catholic Church is most happy about the current movement to reposition women to their rightful place in society, starting with their roles of mother and wife, as participants in our culture and promoters of life values in these times in which our supposedly egalitarian society is bringing about the death of society.

**b)** It has doubtlessly been a blessing for the world, and therefore for the Church, that women have been incorporated into our cultural and social life in a resounding way. Although this leveling has been accompanied by certain adjustments to the structure of past society, this cannot be minimized as a result of so-called sexual liberation or the reign of the birth control pill. Neither one nor the other are essential to women. This is akin to placing women in an undignified role, reducing her to a sexual expression, as if she were not primarily an intelligent, free person, capable of love and of extending her spirit into the world. It is a poor defense of woman to attempt to reduce her to her reproductive capacity in relation to man.

Both feminism and male chauvinism are myopic views of female and male realities, because they simply reduce the soul to the level of sex, humanity to the level of reproduction, and love to the level of simple desire or immediate gratification.

**c)** The fact that women have acceded, *en masse*, to the rental of their labor by companies and services is nothing other than a cultural change in which their work has moved from within the four walls of the home to the four walls of the office. This does not constitute a Copernican revolution of human labor, both male and female. In olden days, as now, both men and women have had to undertake activities that are conducive to earning their daily bread by the sweat of their brows, at the same time as raising and educating their children and caring for other family members. That in today's society, more organized to satisfy all types of health, education, and feeding issues, the loads carried by men and women have changed is not a novelty (with the exception of the physical absence of one or the other parent in the home), but rather a new distribution of responsibilities in the family and in the organization of the modern State.

It is true that change in the amount of time spent in the home and in the workplace has brought about some serious collateral consequences, such as the deterioration in the



quality of parent-child relationships and an excessive competition between males and females due to the scarcity of jobs. This has caused social, labor, political, and even economic imbalances. Perhaps these are problems that will work out over time, as long as we don't believe that the situation will bring about a deterioration of masculinity or femininity. From the rational point of view, none of this should be expected. On the contrary, the so-called female outpouring into the workplace has contributed to its humanization, while at the same time men are discovering a greater interest in domestic life. This can be nothing but good news for a growing harmony between men and women, even though there may be unaccustomed costs to pay, as long as we become used to the sharing of tasks and responsibilities.

**d)** Without a doubt, the worst thing about today's "battle of the sexes" is that of certain collateral effects that have come with the change of activity and the greater access to cultural goods on the part of women. A certain tendency to relativism in marriage, of developing premarital and extramarital relations without restrictions, has become tolerable in our society, mocking fidelity and the indissolubility of marriage.

This means that, to the degree in which such standards spread through the communications media, there will be ever more people who get carried away by this tendency, which is doubtlessly more tempting than an attitude of effort, perseverance, and sacrifice required by the human condition subject to faith and helped by the grace of God. No doubt the world, which has never been a virtuous outfit, will be an obstacle to those who have principles, who aspire to be leaders, fathers and mothers, spiritual guides and apostles to their brothers.

We must recognize that it is not certain that any time in the past was better. These times were simply different from ours; at times the environment of faith was more favorable, and at other time less so. Our times are, without a doubt, difficult, but not worse than other times in history. It is our job to respond from our faith, with our convictions, and with our attitudes. This is the Gospel that will always be a lofty goal, while being, at the same time, a path of hope.

Love shall always make what is difficult possible. Love performs miracles. We have been called to show the love by which God has elected us, loving each other in God's way, not man's way.

## **6. Activities for Reflection**

- Together, examine the characteristics of men and women
- Clearly state the strengths of one and the other, as well as the compatibility of these strengths



- Which of your qualities am I willing to promote, and which defects will I help you to overcome?
- In what ways can we help each other to improve, starting from strengths and feelings?
- Comment of the phrase "Man builds the house, woman turns it into a home."

## 1. MAN AND WOMAN: DIFFERENCES? SIMILARITIES?

### Some physical differences:

- *Different bodies, bone structure, profiles, skin quality, sensitivity, hand/foot size*
- *Women have a greater angle of peripheral vision and better color perception*
- *Women have greater hearing and tactile perception*

### Some psychic differences

- *Women like to be listened to; men simplifies and solves*
- *Women are more interested in sharing with friends than men*
- *Women use a richer vocabulary, and their speech is more organized than men*
- *Women have larger memory capacity and fixate on problems; they carry grudges more often than men*

### Problems with people

- *Cultural prejudices affect women more than men*
- *Today's woman is competitive and independent; freed from chauvinism and exploitation*
- *Women do not discriminate, neither in a negative or positive sense*
- *She is not a wife nor mother; rather, she is "equal"*

### Rational Criteria

- *Man tends to the abstract, politics, production, defense (macros)*



- *Woman tends to the home, children, managing goods (micros)*
- *Male and female spouses both seek mutual good, and the good of the children*
- *They do not compete; rather, they converge*

### **Psychological Criteria**

- *Man breaks his world down*
- *Woman unifies her world*
- *Man uses cold intelligence*
- *Woman uses emotional intelligence*
- *Man takes charge of business*
- *Woman takes charge of details*
- *Man is arrogant, woman is vain*

### **Response to Problems**

- *Differences due to biology, yet also to psychology and perception*
- *The Church is the cultural entity that displays the most esteem for women: Mary is the human being who leads all of humanity.*
- *Ministries do not improve the person; they merely uphold him or her.*
- *Woman cannot be reduced to an object of male desire.*
- *Feminism is as deplorable as male chauvinism.*
- *Woman's presence in the workplace has humanized economic life.*
- *Neither man nor woman "own" their children. They conceive them, but do not decide their fate.*
- *There is no battle of the sexes; there are only battles of people.*
- *The so-called progressivism is really a return to primitivism, to irrational impulses, to egoism.*
- *Man finds in woman something that he lacks, and vice versa. They complement each other by nature, not by culture.*

***Jesus Gines is a theologian and philosopher, who with his wife is a member of the Family Branch of the Zona Cordillera.***



## **ATTACHMENT 7**

**(We suggest using this text as a complement to the meeting,  
and it could be used as a third meeting, as a review of the topic)**

### **The Seasons of Love**



A relationship is like a garden. To thrive, it must be watered regularly. It must be tended, taking the seasons into account, as well as other random weather phenomena. New seeds must be planted, and weeds must be removed. In the same way, to maintain the magic of our love, we must understand its seasons and feed its special needs.

#### **The Spring of Love**

Falling in love is like spring. We think that we will be happy forever. We cannot imagine that we might stop loving our partner someday. It is a time of innocence. Love seems eternal. It is a magical time in which everything seems perfect and effortless. Our partner seems to be the perfect complement. We dance effortlessly together in harmony, and we rejoice in our good fortune.



### **The Summer of Love**

During the summer of our love we realize that our partner is not as perfect as we had thought, and that we must work on our relationship. Not only is our partner from another planet, but he or she is also a human being who makes mistakes and is, in some way, imperfect.

Frustration and deception emerge; these weeds must be removed by their roots, and the plants require some additional watering under a scorching sun. It is no longer so easy to give love and to receive the love we need. We find that we are not always happy, and we do not always feel affectionate. This situation does not match our image of love.

Many couples become disappointed during this stage. They do not want to work on their relationship. They unreasonably expect it to be spring.

They constantly blame their partner and give up. They do not realize that love is not always easy; sometimes a strong effort is required under the scorching sun. In the summertime season of love, we need to stimulate our partner's needs, as well as to ask for the love that we need. It does not happen automatically.

### **The Autumn of Love**

As a result of tending the garden during the summer, we harvest the fruits of our hard work. Autumn has arrived. It is a golden period, rich and satisfying. We experience a more mature love that accepts and understands the imperfections of our partner, as well as our own. It is a season of thanksgiving and of participation. Having worked so much during the summer, we can relax and enjoy the love that we have cultivated.

### **The Winter of Love**

The climate changes again, and winter arrives. During the cold and infertile months of winter, all of nature collapses upon itself. It is a time of rest, reflection, and renewal. It is a time of relationship in which we experience our own unresolved pain or our own somber personality. At this time, our restrictions fall, and our painful feelings emerge. It is a time of solitary growth, during which we look more at ourselves in search of love and satisfaction than at our partner. It is a time for solutions. It is the time during which men hibernate in their caves and women immerse themselves in their wells.

After loving ourselves and relieving ourselves throughout the dark winter of love, spring inevitably returns. Once more we receive the blessing of feelings of hope, love, and limitless possibilities. Based on our inner healing, and on the soul searching of our winter journey, we are now able to open our hearts up to feel the springtime of love.





## ATTACHMENT 8

### GUIDE FOR GROUP PRAYER

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#### I. SOME OBSERVATIONS:

1. Do not forget to create an adequate environment (*light, images, etc.*).
2. Carry out prayer so that it is not interrupted. For example, begin the meeting with fellowship and food (*sandwich, coffee, etc.*). That way, the meeting begins at 8:30 and the prayer at 9:00. A group consciousness of the necessity of prayer is paramount, so that everyone arrives before the opening prayer.
3. The prayer should be directed to the Lord or to the Mother Thrice Admirable; this makes it more personal and intimate. (*we are conversing with them*). Therefore, we avoid saying things like "now we'll sing," "so and so will read the Gospel," or "whomever has a petition may present it now," etc. It is more intimate, and creates a more prayerful environment to say, "Lord, we wish to praise you by singing," "Lord, open our hearts to your Word," or "Lord (or *dear Mother Thrice Admirable*), receive our petitions and thanks," etc.
4. It is quite easy to move from listening to the Word to personal reflection on the Scripture. After a few minutes of silent reflection, each group member can express, in a simple and short way, what Word, phrase, or image, touched their heart. The idea is to arrive at a reception of, and abiding in, the Word, more than a reflection upon It. A full meditation or breaking open of the Word can be held at another time.
5. It is not always necessary to select the Gospel for the coming Sunday. It is perfectly acceptable to choose a text that seems most adequate according to the wishes and circumstances of the group.
6. Avoid saying, after each petition, "We pray to the Lord," or "thanks be to God." Our prayer becomes richer when, after three people have presented their petitions or thanksgiving, an antiphon is sung, repeated twice.



As you can see, the idea is to accentuate the personal character of prayer. We wish to create a moment of real communion with the Lord and with the Mother Thrice Admirable, in a calm environment of intimacy and depth. Such is the goal of these latter observations.

## II. GUIDE FOR GROUP PRAYER:

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We feel that our group prayer should **last 20 minutes or more**. The meeting should begin with spirituality, with a time of calm communion with our Lord and with Mary.

This guide is offered to bring this spirituality about. This is not a "type of prayer," but rather a thread, or a **channel**, to a peaceful and personal prayer, not merely "rote" or "formal." The group may certainly adopt their own prayerful rites that flow from their own lives that personalize the prayer even further.

**The host family should prepare the environment prior to the start of the meeting**, so that prayer is carried out more effortlessly: they should assure that there is an image of the Mother Thrice Admirable, a Unity Cross, a lit candle, and flowers. Indirect light is preferred to create a more intimate and cozy setting.

**Prayer is carried out with all member seated.** Previously, **a prayer leader has been designated** to lead the prayer. This is the person who invites member into the prayer, and who guides the group through the steps of the prayer. Since antiphons will be blended into the prayer (*this will be explained later*), it is recommended to sing them previously to rehearse them. **The prayer leader will prepare copies of the songs, antiphons, and Gospel Reading that will be sung and read.**

### **1. Open with a song (perhaps to the Holy Spirit). 2. Prayer**

The prayer leader prays an opening prayer. This should be a simple prayer. Generally, throughout the prayer session, we should try to speak in a personal and spontaneous manner, avoiding the use of florid and overly formal language. If our language is imperfect... it doesn't matter. Our Lord asks us to be as children before our Father when we pray. What follows is **merely an example** of a possible opening prayer (*done freely, simply, and spontaneously*):



*Dear Mother Thrice Admirable, we gather together next to you and your Son, Jesus, to begin our prayer. Pray for us to the Holy Spirit, that He show us to pray with simplicity and depth. We bring to you everything we are and everything we have, our desires of the day, our children, our marriages. We wish to abide in you and in our Lord, to renew our faith and our love. Mary, be with us and show us how to speak with you and with your Son, Jesus. Amen.*

**3. Read, slowly, a Gospel passage,** preferably for the following Sunday. (*another passage, pertaining to the group's circumstances or needs could certainly be used*). Before Reading, ask each member to listen for **a word, phrase, or image** that grabs their attention, and touches their heart. The *passage should be read twice, slowly, so as to better listen for God's Word.*

**4. Remain in silence for at least two minutes to allow each member to reflect on what they have heard.**

**5. Each member then shares the Word, phrase, or image that came to them, and briefly adds what they think the Lord is saying to them in the Scripture.**

It is important to clarify, especially when first doing this as a group, that this is not about initiating a group reflection on the Scripture, nor to explore the difficulties of the passage. This is done at other times. The importance of this type of prayer is to discover how the Lord speaks to each of us in a personal way through a word, phrase, or image. It is important to keep this in mind; otherwise, we could lose the prayerful atmosphere that we seek. Scripture studies and meditation can be done at other times. Next, the prayer leader calls for a hymn.

**6. Hymn**

**A hymn is sung to the Lord or to Mary. If the group has no members who can play an instrument or lead the song, there is no need to worry. Simply sing a song known to all.**

**7. Next spontaneous prayers of thanksgiving, petition, or praise are offered, according to the desires of group members. The antiphon is sung twice after each third person has prayed.**

**8.** This is a **personal prayer**, from the heart, in which intentions should not be general or broad, that do not touch the personal situation of the people praying. To create a certain rhythm, antiphons are sung after every third person has prayed. Possible examples are "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," "Lord, send down your Spirit, and renew the face of the Earth," or other similar ones, well known to all. Before the prayer, the prayer leader



asks the group **not to repeat the usual group prayer responses** such as “Lord, hear our prayer, etc., explaining that the antiphon will be sung instead after every third prayer. Either the leader, or someone from the group, will introduce the antiphon. After all prayers are presented, the prayer leader will guide the group to read the selected group prayer or psalm.

**9. The group prays a Psalm or a prayer from *Heavenwards*.**

It is recommended that each measure of verses be read alternately by the men and women of the group. The prayer leader should provide copies at the beginning of the meeting.

**10. In conclusion, the Consecration Prayer *My Queen, my Mother*, is prayed as a group, and a hymn is sung.**



## ATTACHMENT 9

### SCHOENSTATT PRAYERS



(HEAVENWARDS, Fr. Joseph Kentenich)

#### **TRUST**

I trust you might, your kindness,

Mother dear,

I do believe that you are always  
near.

Schoenstatt's great Queen,

O Mother mild,

I blindly trust in you and in your  
child.

#### **CONSECRATION**

My Queen, my Mother,

I give myself entirely to you,

And to show my devotion to you,

I consecrate to you this day

My eyes, my ears, my mouth, my



heart,

My entire self without reserve.

As I am your own, my good Mother,

Guard me and defend me

As your property and possession.

Amen.

### **HOLY SPIRIT**

Holy Spirit,

You are the soul of my soul.

I humbly adore you.

Enlighten me, strengthen me,

Guide me, and comfort me.

Reveal your wishes to me

As far as this is in accordance

With the will of the Eternal Father.

Show me what Eternal Love wants  
of me.

Show me what I should do.

Show me what I should suffer.

Show me what I should humbly and

Thoughtfully accept, bear, and  
endure.

Holy Spirit, show me your will

And the will of the Father,



For I want my whole life to be  
nothing else  
Than a continuous, and everlasting  
yes  
To the wishes, to the will of God,  
The Eternal Father.

### **GOOD INTENTION**

All I experience today,  
What I say and what I dare,  
All my thoughts and all my actions,  
What I love and what I merit,  
All that I direct and conquer,  
All my joys and all my sorrows,  
All that I am and have,  
I give to you as a gift of love.  
  
Use it so the holy stream of grace Flows richly from the shrine  
To win hearts for Schoenstatt.  
Lead there all those whom you have chosen  
  
That the work we offer to the Triune God  
May be fruitful.

### **IMITATION OF MARY**

Let us walk like you through life,  
Let us mirror you forever:  
Strong and noble, meek and mild,  
Peace and love be our endeavor.



Walk in us through our world,  
Make it ready for the Lord.  
Think in me, O Mother,  
That my thoughts be clear and bright;  
Speak in me, O Mother,  
That my speech be true and bright; Work in me, O Mother,  
My work is then well done;  
Then holy is my labor,  
My rest a holy one.  
You penetrate my being,  
Fill every part of me,  
That all your ways and conduct  
In me each one can see.