



WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES

2015 Philadelphia

Grades 9 - 12
LESSON PLANS

based on

PREPARATORY CATECHESIS FOR THE VIII WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES

**Love Is Our Mission:
The Family Fully Alive**

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Every attempt has been made to ensure that the activities and material contained in these lessons accurately convey the teachings of the catechesis *Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive* and that outside sources utilized are properly cited.

Possible supplemental lesson resources were selected for each lesson. Inclusion of the resources is not intended as an endorsement of a particular author, work, or organization by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia or the VIII World Meeting of Families.

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What is the World Meeting of Families?

- The World Meeting of Families is a gathering of Catholic families from around the world for days of prayer, catechesis, and celebration of the gift of family.
- We are preparing for the 8th World Meeting of Families, which is the first to take place in the United States. It will be held in Philadelphia from September 22 - 27, 2015. All are encouraged to attend.
- The pope usually attends the World Meeting of Families. Pope Francis has been invited!
- Prior to a World Meeting of Families, a "preparatory catechesis" related to the theme of the gathering, is released. Catholics are encouraged to study this catechesis and to join the universal Church in prayer for God's blessing on the event. The lesson plans in this booklet are based on the preparatory catechesis and are offered as a way to help communities prepare for the upcoming World Meeting of Families.

Visit the World Meeting of Families website!

www.WorldMeeting2015.org



Dear Teacher or Catechist,

The upcoming gathering of the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia provides an opportunity for the entire Church, and particularly the Church in the United States, to reflect upon the great gift of family.

The lesson plans in this booklet are based on the preparatory catechesis for the VIII World Meeting of Families, *Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive*. We invite you to read the preparatory catechesis, and then refer to the lessons for ideas on presenting the material to your students. The sections in the [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*](#) on marriage and family are succinct and accessible, and would also be helpful to study in preparation for teaching these topics.¹

Catechesis takes place in the context of a particular culture and in particular circumstances. Thus, while the lessons presented in this booklet convey the content of the catechesis, local needs will likely require that you modify the methodology or language used in order to better help your students come to understand the Church's teaching. As Pope Francis wrote in [*Evangelii Gaudium*](#),

"[T]he task of evangelization operates within the limits of language and of circumstances. It constantly seeks to communicate more effectively the truth of the Gospel in a specific context, without renouncing the truth, the goodness and the light which it can bring..." (45)

Likewise, some of the content presented in the high school lesson plans may not be appropriate for lower classmen. Here too, prudent study and adaptation are needed as well as consultation with appropriate supervisors.

- Throughout the lesson plans you will see references to LIOM, which is an abbreviation for the preparatory catechesis, *Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive*.
- Hyperlinks throughout the text provide possible supplemental materials.

Let us pray for each other and for a renewal of family life in our country and world!

¹ cf. paragraphs 2197 - 2257 (on family), 2331 - 2400 (on human sexuality), and 1601 - 1666 (on marriage)



Schools and religious education programs are encouraged to include parents in study and preparation for the VIII World Meeting of Families. The following letter could be adapted and customized for use in a school newsletter or parish bulletin. It would be helpful for teachers or catechetists to provide updates on the content being covered in particular lessons so that parents could continue the discussion at home.

Dear Parents,

Next year, from September 22 - 27, 2015, the United States is hosting an exciting event, the VIII World Meeting of Families, an international gathering of Catholic families for days of prayer, catechesis, and celebration of the gift of family. Pope Francis has been invited to attend this gathering. This World Meeting of Families will be held in Philadelphia, and you are invited to attend!

Since it is a special occasion of grace for the whole Church and for our country in a particular way, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the Pontifical Council for the Family have made available a preparatory catechesis entitled *Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive* which draws its title from the theme for the gathering. This catechesis brings together in ten simple lessons the Catholic Church's teachings on marriage and family.

This catechesis has been adapted to lessons for elementary and high school students and we will be using these lessons with your child. We will keep you updated on the content being covered in class so that you can continue these important conversations at home with your children.

As you may also have heard from news reports, two meetings will discuss the Church's pastoral care of the family: first, in an extraordinary Synod of Bishops (or gathering of bishops from around the world with the Holy Father) which will be held in Rome in October 2014; and second, in the ordinary assembly of the Synod of Bishops which will be held in Rome in October 2015. Truly, it is a time when the Church wants to support families and to help families in their indispensable mission!

Let us join together in prayer that God would be help, strength, healing, and hope to families in our country, and around the world, through the World Meeting of Families. God bless you and your family.

Grades 9 – 12

LESSON 1: CREATED FOR JOY

Note: While this lesson conveys the content of the preparatory catechesis, teachers and catechists may need to adapt the language and methodology of the lesson out of sensitivity to issues and circumstances the students may be facing.

LESSON OVERVIEW

“We are more than an accident of evolution. We are greater than the sum of our biology. God exists. He is good. He loves us. He made us in his image to share in his joy. He takes an active hand in our lives. He sent his only Son to restore our dignity and lead us home to him” (Preparatory Catechesis for the VIII World Meeting of Families, *Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive*, Introduction to Part I).

OBJECTIVES

Students will

1. Discuss humanity’s search for a higher meaning
2. List reasons why Jesus gives trustworthy answers to our questions about our purpose
3. Understand themselves as having dignity because they are created in the image of God
4. Connect being made in the image of a loving God to their call to love and live in joy

MATERIALS

Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive (Part I), newspapers with headlines as described below, whiteboard or poster board for Bible verse, paper and pens, *Lesson 1 Handout*, *Lesson 1 Bible References*

PROCEDURE (40 MINUTES)

1. Preparation:

Make the following visible on a slide, board, or projector:

“For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11 RSVCE).

2. Opening Prayer (*See Lesson 1 Handout*):

Go around the class and let students mention situations around the country or world where people suffer. After each situation is mentioned, pray the verse from Jeremiah together.

Leader: Let us pray for all those who suffer in the world or who seek for a sense of purpose.

Student #1: For those who struggle with depression...

Leader (with students): *For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*

Student #2: For all the homeless in our city...

Leader (with students): *For I know the plans...*

[Continue as long as students can think of people who suffer or as long as seems reasonable.]

3. Introduction:

God cares about us and about our future. One of the ways God cares for us is by giving us one another, especially our families. So, coming up is a wonderful international event that will be hosted in the United States in September 2015: The World Meeting of Families! And you and your family are invited!

- a. The World Meeting of Families (WMOF) was started by Saint John Paul II in 1994 as a way to strengthen and support families around the world.
- b. The meeting in 2015 will be the 8th WMOF and the first to be held in the United States.
- c. The pope usually comes to the WMOF, and it is hoped that Pope Francis will be coming to this event.
- d. Children and parents from around the world will be invited to come to Philadelphia from September 22 – 27, 2015, to join in this celebration.
- e. This is a special gift for our country to host the WMOF, and we want to pray for its success and that God will bless families in our country and around the world.

In preparation for the WMOF, we will have these special sessions on love and family.

4. Pre-Assessment:

Ask the students to answer the following questions on a slip of paper or journal:

- a. Is there a plan for human existence? Does our life have a higher meaning or only the one we create for ourselves?
- b. Imagine that the only things that exist in the world are the things you yourselves could understand and make. What would that world look like?
- c. Imagine that you could ask God any question you want and he would answer during this religion class. What do you want to ask him? Write it down.

5. Motivator:

Why does this matter to the students? How could you capture their interest?

- a. A recent cartoon showed a girl asking her pet cat, "How did we get here?" Over the cartoon was the caption, "Good question." The cat answers with a scientific theory shown in diagram. The next cartoon had the caption, "Better question." There the girl asks, "Why are we here?" The cat doesn't answer.
- b. In Jesus' time, many religions had answers to the good question and the better question. The Greek, Roman, Hebrew and other cultures offered different answers to life's basic questions.
- c. In our time, many philosophies offer "different visions of what makes a good

life. At the same time, suffering and poverty" are everywhere, as we saw in the opening prayer (LIOM 5). That suffering has caused many people to be cynical about finding the answers to their life's meaning. Whom can we trust? To whom do we commit our lives?

6. Content & Key Points (See Lesson 1 Handout):

a. A plan for life which sustains and strengthens us

We can trust Jesus and commit our lives to Him. Why? Because Jesus is trustworthy. His answers are true. He has revealed our purpose and his work. He comes as love and mercy. Why can we trust Jesus? We have met him in the words of the Bible and in the sacraments, and we have met those who have met him—the saints. Their lives and their writings show us the reality of Jesus, just as the lives of Christians throughout history continue to do the same. Christians in every age have prayed and served the poor, have worshiped with their family and friends.

b. Jesus reveals God and so the story can unfold

How does Jesus answer the question of suffering? Jesus suffered, becoming man so that he could suffer, die, and rise for us. He is the light of the world, and he shines light within the darkness of suffering. He reveals that God is above us, so he is able to create a greater world than we could even imagine had we been left in charge. God is also intimately dwelling among us, "vulnerable as a baby in a manger or a man on a cross," so he suffers our pains with us (LIOM 10). "God loves us and reaches out to us" (LIOM 12).

c. Jesus reveals our human identity and destiny

We are made in the image of God, which no abuse can erase nor failures reduce. God's goodness in making us and his love for us existed before ever any man or woman sinned. God *planned* to make us, out of sheer love. What is his plan for us? He made us to love and serve each other on this earth and to enter into relationship with him, beginning now and continuing for all eternity!

- Jesus reveals to us our dignity. The root reason for our human dignity is that we are called to communion with God, in and through God, for love. God is a Trinitarian communion of love. The Father sent the Son, the Son reveals the Father to the world, and the Son of the Father sent the Holy Spirit as the covenant of communion which we are invited to enter.
- As images of the Trinitarian God, who is in community, we are to be interdependent, in relation to the other.
- As God's children we become more deeply human in relationships of love and service to neighbor and in worship of God.
- Catholic revelation is needed to complete scientific knowledge regarding men. The greatest truth of who we are, completing the answer that modern science is too limited to give, is that, most essentially, *we belong to God*. Our identity, complete with all the unrest, uncertainty, weakness, sin, life, and death, is known as we draw near to Christ.

d. Love is the family mission

The family fully alive makes God's love visible and radiant! "The family is most fully alive when we embrace God's invitation to be the sons and daughters he created us to be" (LIOM 19). For we are invited to be members of his family, his sons and daughters. This is our highest purpose, the best answer to the best question, "What will I be when I grow up?" When we grow up and become the persons God intended when he created each of us, we will be filled with the joy he created us to enjoy! His plan for us is our great hope!

- Marriage is a part of God's plan in our loving service in relationship with others.
- Marriage flows from Christ's answers about God and human nature.
- God lives in a personal loving communion—the Father knows himself so fully that his knowledge (the Word he thinks about himself) is a complete infinite Person, the Son, and the perfect love between Father and Son is a complete infinite Person, the Holy Spirit.
- We, images of God, are called to live in a personal loving communion, first as children, the fruit of our parents' love, and then, for those called to marriage, as two, a man and a woman, who become one in the marriage bond.

7. Methods & Strategies That Develop the Lesson:

- a. Take headlines of newspapers that point out various failed philosophies of life, such as articles about converted drug users, scientists who try to disprove religious truths, etc. and give them to the students. Then have them write the question that the person was trying to solve, write the answer that the person came to, and then see if the answer was ultimately satisfying.
- b. List the confusions and uncertainties of our time. See the *Lesson 1 Bible References* for answers that Jesus offers to these confusions and uncertainties.
- c. Begin these sentences and invite students to complete the statements orally:
Because Jesus became man...[I have dignity as a human person]
Because Jesus suffered...[I can...]
Because Jesus offered answers...[I can follow his commands]
Because Jesus prays for me...[I can overcome...]

8. Conclusion & Reinforcement Closure:

Think/write about these questions, or use the questions in the *Lesson 1 Handout*

"In Jesus, we meet ... God who reaches out to us, who creates communion and who invites us to share in His joy" (LIOM 20). How and when does God reach out to man? How and when does God create communion in our families? How does entering into a relationship of love with other persons help us share in His joy?

9. Closing Prayer (See Lesson 1 Handout):

Lord Jesus, we trust in you because you came to be one of us, to teach us our dignity, to lead us to the Father. Help us know the things that distract us from you. Give us the

grace to become more familiar and close to you, as close as friends, or even as close as a husband to his wife. Let us live in communion with you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and with our families, so that we may fulfill the plans you have for us, giving us a future and hope, and filling us with the joy of eternity. Amen.

ADAPTATIONS:

If your time is limited:

Read the lesson content and key points to yourself, but just use the Introduction to the World Meeting of Families and the *Lesson 1 Handout* with the students.

EVALUATION

Answer the following questions (from LIOM Part I Questions for Discussion) for discussion or for journal reflections:

- a. What is it about Jesus that makes him trustworthy?
- b. What things in your life distract you from Jesus? What would help you to become more familiar or even intimate with him?
- c. What does it mean to be “created in the image of God”? Is it possible to understand human identity without God? Why or why not?
- d. “Love Is Our Mission” is the theme of this class. What does “love” mean in your life? How might a mission to love affect your choices, priorities, and ambitions?

BRINGING THE LESSON HOME TO THE FAMILY:

Encourage students to share the information about the WMOF with their parents and siblings. Ask them to consider the possibility of attending as a family.

Suggest that the students initiate a conversation (at the dinner table, for instance) where each member of the family can say one thing that God did to bless him or her, and one event that was difficult. They might ask these two questions:

1. What have you been most grateful for today?
2. What has been the most difficult thing that has happened to you today?

In sharing these events, the members of the family can offer God gratitude for the blessings and pray for the difficult situations.

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES:

The Problem of Pain by C. S. Lewis

This book takes the two premises: God is love and God is good and asks, “If God is love, willing what is good for me, why do I suffer?” Lewis answers that our ideas of goodness and love may be inadequate and that Jesus gives the deeper answer. This book is logical rather than theological, so it may help those who have turned away from God because of their sufferings.

Grades 9 – 12 LESSON 1 HANDOUT

Jesus' Answer: We are Created for Joy

Bible Reference: Jeremiah 29:11

INTRODUCTION:

Imagine that the only things that exist in the world are the things you yourselves could understand and make. What would that world look like? What are the biggest questions you would have to solve? In the face of so much pain and suffering in the world, so much scientific questioning, how can we bring about a meaningful life for everyone?

OPENING PRAYER: *Go around the class and let students mention situations around the country or world where people suffer. After each situation is mentioned, pray the verse from Jeremiah together.*

Leader: Let us pray for all those who suffer in the world or who seek for a sense of purpose.

Student #1: For those who struggle with depression...

Leader (with students): *For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*

Student #2: For all the homeless in our city...

Leader (with students): *For I know the plans...*

[Continue as long as students can think of people who suffer or as long as seems reasonable.]

APPLICATION:

1. Recount the story of a person who found the answer to the purpose of his/her life in loving and serving others.
2. Where did that person find the strength to commit so deeply to bringing a meaning to self and the to other?

PROCLAMATION:

"For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11 RSVCE).

1. What is the Lord's plan for us?
2. What is the good that God can bring out of evil?
3. What is our ultimate hope for the future?

EXPLANATION:

- 1. We can trust Jesus and commit our lives to Him.** Why? Because Jesus is trustworthy. His answers are true. He has revealed our purpose and his work. He comes as love and mercy. Why can we trust Jesus? We have met him in the words of the Bible and in the sacraments, and we have met those who have met him—the saints. Their lives and their writings show us the reality of Jesus, just as the lives of Christians throughout history continue to do the same. Christians in every age have prayed and served the poor, have worshiped with their family and friends.
- 2. How does Jesus answer the question of suffering?** Jesus suffered, becoming man so that he could suffer, die, and rise for us. He is the light of the world, and he shines light within the darkness of suffering. He reveals that God is above us, so he is able to create a greater world than we could even imagine had we been left in charge. God is also intimately dwelling among us, “vulnerable as a baby in a manger or a man on a cross,” so he suffers our pains with us (LIOM 10). “God loves us and reaches out to us” (LIOM 12).
- 3. We are made in the *image of God*,** which no abuse can erase nor failures reduce. God’s goodness in making us and his love for us existed before ever any man or woman sinned. God *planned* to make us, out of sheer love. What is his plan for us? He made us to love and serve each other on this earth, and to enter into relationship with him, beginning now and continuing for all eternity!
- 4. The family fully alive makes God’s love visible and *radiant*!** “The family is most fully alive when we embrace God’s invitation to be the sons and daughters he created us to be” (LIOM 19). For we are invited to be members of his family, his sons and daughters. This is our highest purpose, the best answer to the best question, “What will I be when I grow up?” When we grow up and become the persons God intended when he created each of us, we will be filled with the joy he created us to enjoy! His plan for us is our great hope!

CONNECTION:

1. Follow Jesus’ example by loving and serving members of your family.
2. Trust God’s plans for you as you live as his son or daughter.
3. Smile every day, especially when you suffer some inconvenience or make some sacrifice to help a member of your family.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, we trust in you because you came to be one of us, to teach us our dignity, to lead us to the Father. Help us know the things that distract us from you. Give us the grace to become more familiar and close to you, as close as friends, or even as close as a husband to his wife. Let us live in communion with you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and with our families, so that we may fulfill the plans you have for us, giving us a future and hope, and filling us with the joy of eternity. Amen.

Grades 9 – 12

LESSON 1 BIBLE REFERENCES

“For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

Jeremiah 29:11 Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (RSVCE)

Lord, help me to find a future and a hope in Jesus, who gives trustworthy answers.

Loss of family members: *Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up. (Psalm 71:20)*

If God is for us, who can be against us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or the sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8: 31b, 35, 37-39)

Loss of faith: *When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears, and rescues them from all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord rescues them from them all. (Psalm 34:17-19)*

Suffering from disease: *Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. (1 Peter 5: 7-10)*

Suffering from natural disasters: *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident. One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock. (Psalm 27:1,3-5)*

Worrying: *Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? (Luke 12:25-26)*

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:6-8)

Growing in hope: *Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God. By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life. (Psalm 42:5,8)*

Growing in charity: *Those who love me, I will deliver; I will protect those who know my name. When they call to me, I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue them and honor them. With long life I will satisfy them and show them my salvation. (Psalm 91:14-16)*

When I said, 'My foot is slipping,' your love, O Lord, supported me. When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul. (Psalm 94:18-19)

I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness. (Jeremiah 31:3)

Growing in chastity and purity: *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. (Psalm 51:10-12)*

Growing in joy: *Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. (Nehemiah 8:10b)*

Praise the Lord! Happy are those who fear the Lord. They are not afraid of evil tidings; their hearts are firm, secure in the Lord. Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid. (Psalm 112:1a,7-8a)

Growing in peace: *Those of steadfast mind you keep in peace--because they trust in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord God you have an everlasting rock. (Isaiah 26:3-4)*

Lord, you establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished you have done for us. (Isaiah 26:12)

In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength. (Isaiah 30:15)

Grades 9 – 12

LESSON 2: THE MISSION OF LOVE

Note: While this lesson conveys the content of the preparatory catechesis, teachers and catechists may need to adapt the language and methodology of the lesson out of sensitivity to issues and circumstances the students may be facing.

LESSON OVERVIEW

“God works through us. We have a mission. We are in the world for a purpose - to receive God’s love ourselves and to show God’s love to others. God seeks to heal a broken universe. He asks us to be his witnesses and helpers in that work” (Preparatory Catechesis for the VIII World Meeting of Families, *Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive*, Introduction to Part II).

OBJECTIVES

Students will

1. Define love as described in the Scriptures
2. Explain how marriage is an essential Biblical image for God’s love
3. Distinguish between romantic and real ideas of marital love
4. Compare marital love to Christ’s sacrifice on the cross

MATERIALS

Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive (Part II), *Lesson 2 Handout*, *Lesson 2 Bible References*, paper for three drawings, crucifix or icon of Christ the Bridegroom

PROCEDURE (45 MINUTES)

1. Preparation:

Make the Bible verse below visible to all students (See *Lesson 2 Handout*). If possible, display a crucifix or an image of Christ the Bridegroom with the Bible verse.

“Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:21-25).

2. Opening Prayer (See *Lesson 2 Handout*):

Heavenly Father, give us your Word so that we may understand the divine language of love. Help us to love you and our families. Bless all married couples to become witnesses of your power to heal the wounded world. Amen.

3. Pre-Assessment (See *Lesson 2 Handout*):

Write down a time when you sacrificed your time, comfort or money to help another person. What was the result for the other person? How did you feel after the event?

4. Motivator (See *Lesson 2 Handout*):

Raise your hand if you hope to have a happy marriage. Now raise your hand if you hope to have a real relationship with God. Did you know that the same qualities needed for a happy marriage are needed for a deep relationship with God? Let's find out how.

5. Content & Key Points (See *Lesson 2 Handout*):a. Scripture gives content and shape to what love means

- We learned in the first lesson what we are made for: God creates man to enter a covenantal relationship with him, teaching us to love by his loving us first. He related to us as a people, first in Israel, and then through Christ and the Church.
- Our mission is to love. We exist as a result of the gift of God's love. In fact, God's love is the measure (or standard) of human love. So, we must measure ourselves and our interactions in the world by God's love and see the world through his eyes.
- In the Scriptures, we learn how God sees love. (See *Lesson 2 Bible References*)

b. Marriage is an essential Biblical image for God's love

- One key image of Biblical love is the love story. A religious sister (a nun) once said to Jesus that she felt her life with him was like being "a warrior in training." Disappointed, Jesus replied, "What I really had in mind was a love story." Marriage is a symbol of God's covenantal relationship of love with us.
- God's love is *exclusive* (admitting no other lover), and *definitive* (completely given forever). Married love is also exclusive and definitive. Thus marriage is the *icon* of the exclusive, definitive relationship of God with His people.
- In fact, God created the universe, says Pope Benedict XVI, so that *love could exist*. "God created the universe ... to be able to become a human being and pour out his love upon us and to invite us to love Him in return" (quoted in LIOM 26). Before sin, God planned to create the universe and to bring all things into one in Christ. Union in love is not God's answer to sin, but His original plan and still His only plan. (See *Sketch 2*).
- The images of God's intense love in terms of a marriage are seen in the Old Testament. (See *Lesson 2 Bible References*)

c. In the difficulties of marriage, God's faithfulness teaches us true love and fidelity

- Marriage can be difficult. In times of difficulty, God teaches us how to be faithful to love. Sin is described in the Bible as adultery and prostitution, because when we sin, we love another person or self in place of God or we fail to worship God. We can also fail to be faithful to our God-given responsibility to love and serve our neighbor.
- Yet God remains faithful. A wonderful word in the Psalms (106, 107, many others) is *hesed*, which is used to mean *God's love is mercy, and it endures forever*. God remains faithful even in our sin, our forgetting Him. God stays with us and offers mercy, calling us to repent so he can forgive. (See *Lesson 2 Bible References*)

- Humans are called to love like God, requiring us to make a sustained act of the will. God loves us, desiring *union* with us, and suffering with us (*compassion*), and waiting for us (*patience*). This is true love, the love that God shows us.
- d. Marriage needs a love like Christ's sacrifice on the cross
- In the New Testament, Christ's love for the Church is seen as a marriage in St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians. As Christ loves the Church, so husband and wife are to share a mutual, self-giving love. (Refer to the Bible verse on the board or projector or the *Lesson 2 Bible References*.) This leaves no place for a marriage that allows the husband's *machismo* or exploitation to harm or ignore his wife as a person. Couples are called to a *cruciform* (like the cross, reaching up to God and out to each other), *self-sacrificial* (forgetting self to give to the other) *communion* (joining together in a bond of love and understanding). (See *Sketch 1*)
 - Jesus, God's love and Word made flesh, teaches the language of love to all mankind. His "unselfish love—proven in blood on the cross—sets the model for ... Christian marriage" (LIOM 33). Husband and wife are called to love and serve each other in the same way.
 - When we contemplate the pierced side of Christ, we understand that God is love. He died for us. I ask myself: Christ loves me. Do I love you? You serve me. Do I serve you? (See *icon of Christ the Bridegroom or crucifix*)
 - Real love, as opposed to emotional or romantic love, grows by giving to the other, not taking for oneself. Christ died to save us. That "radical, liberating selflessness is the thread that unites all Catholic teaching on marriage and the family" (LIOM 35). Whoever will lose his life has nothing to fear, for love casts out fear.

6. Methods & Strategies:

- a. Turn to the *Lesson 2 Bible References* at the given points in the lesson. Let the students read the references aloud if they have Bibles.
- b. Students can create a picture or diagram that reflects the following paragraph:
In fact, God created the universe, says Pope Benedict XVI, so that love could exist. He created the universe to be able to become a human being and pour out his love upon us and to invite us to love Him in return! Before sin, God planned to create the universe and to bring all things into one in Christ. Union in love is not God's answer to sin, but His original plan and still His only plan. (See *Sketch 2* for an example)
- c. Students can create a picture or diagram that reflects the following idea:
Couples are called to a cruciform self-sacrificial communion.
(See *Sketch 1* for an example)
- d. Students can look at a crucifix or icon of Christ the Bridegroom and reflect on

the following questions: (See *Lesson 2 Handout*)

When we contemplate the pierced side of Christ, we understand that God is love. He died for us. Seeing the Crucified Savior of Love, I ask myself: Christ loves me. Do I love him? Do I love others? Christ serves me. Do I serve him? Do I serve others?

7. Conclusion & Reinforcement Closure::

In Scripture, we see many images of God's love, "but marriage is foremost among them" (LIOM 36). How is the covenant between God and His people like a marriage? How does God keep the marriage together even when we humans fall and try to live without God? Jesus Christ, who draws all men and women with Him to the Father, gives us new possibilities for living—giving selflessly, thinking of others, loving and serving them. He shows us how to live free from fear, because "perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:8).

8. Closing Prayer (See Lesson 2 Handout)

Psalm 106: "Praise the Lord! O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever! Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, 'Amen!'" Praise the Lord!"

ADAPTATIONS

If your time is limited:

Read the lesson content and key points to yourself, but just use the *Lesson 2 Handout* and *Lesson 2 Bible References*, then answer the evaluation questions.

EVALUATION

Answer the following questions (from LIOM Part II Questions for Discussion) for discussion or for journal reflections.

1. Why is God's love compared to a marriage?
2. How is God's way of loving different from our human way of loving?
3. What is true love and how do we recognize it? What are some similarities and differences between your culture's notion of romantic love and God's covenant love?
4. Can you think of a time when God's love helped you to love in a more honest and better way?

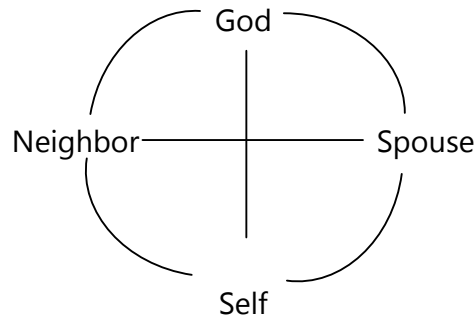
BRINGING THE LESSON HOME TO THE FAMILY

Interview one or more members of your own family, asking: "Can you think of a time when God's love helped you to love in a more honest and better way?" (LIOM 36). Write a post-interview reflection.

SKETCH 1

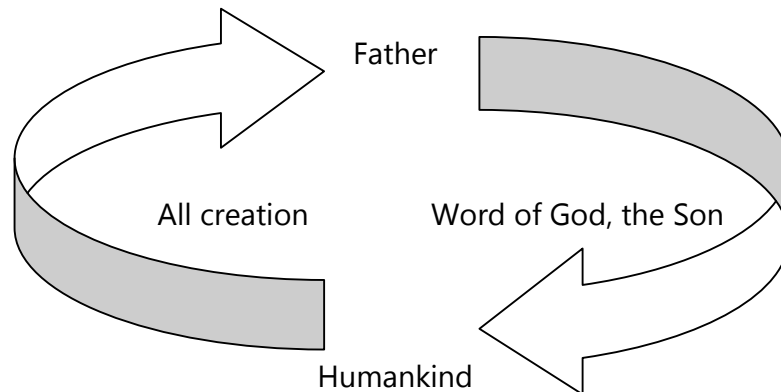
Cruciform, self-sacrificial, communion

Draw a line from top (God) to bottom (Self). Draw a line from side (Neighbor) to side (Spouse). This is the form of the cross = cruciform



Self is at the bottom of the sketch = self - sacrificial

Then draw arcs between the four points. This shows the communion, the coming into unity in the family with each other and God.

SKETCH 2**SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES**

[*FAMILY: Forget About Me; I Love You*](#)

Father Stan Fortuna, C.F.R., song

Grades 9 – 12 LESSON 2 HANDOUT

Mission of Love

Bible Reference: Ephesians 5:21 – 25

INTRODUCTION:

God created the universe, says Pope Benedict XVI, so that “love could exist. “God created the universe in order to be able to become a human being and pour out his love upon us and to invite us to love him in return” (LIOM 20). Before sin, God planned to create the universe and to bring all things into one in Christ. Union in love is not God’s answer to sin, but his original plan and still his only plan.

OPENING PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, give us your Word so that we may understand the divine language of love. Help us to love you and our families. Bless all married couples to become witnesses of your power to heal the wounded world. Amen.

APPLICATION:

1. Think of an occasion when you sacrificed your time, comfort or money to help another person. What was the result for the other person? How did you feel after this sacrifice?
2. Raise your hand if you hope to have a happy marriage. Now raise your hand if you hope to have a real relationship with God. Did you know that the same qualities needed for a happy marriage are needed for a deep relationship with God? Let’s find out how.

BIBLICAL WISDOM:

“Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” (Ephesians 5:21-25)

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

1. In Scripture, we see many images of God’s love, but marriage is foremost among them. How does Christ show His love for the Church through His death on the cross? (See John 3:16; John 19:34)
2. How does God keep the marriage together even when we humans fall and try to live without God? (See Isaiah 54:6-8)
3. How would a deep love of God and one’s spouse remove fear from the marriage? (See 1 John 4:18)

EXPLANATION:

- 1. God loves us so our mission is to love.** We exist as a result of the gift of God's love. In fact, God's love is the measure (or standard) of human love. So, we must measure ourselves and our interactions in the world by God's love and see the world through his eyes. In the Scriptures, we learn how God sees love. (See *Lesson 2 Bible References*.)
- 2. One key image of Biblical love is the love story.** A religious sister (a nun) once said to Jesus that she felt her life with him was like being "a warrior in training." Disappointed, Jesus replied, "What I really had in mind was a love story." Marriage is a symbol of God's covenantal relationship of love with us. God's love is *exclusive* (admitting no other lover), and *definitive* (completely given forever). Married love is also exclusive and definitive. Thus marriage is the *icon* of the exclusive, definitive relationship of God with His people.
- 3. In times of difficulty God teaches us how to be faithful to love.** Sin is described in the Bible as adultery and prostitution because we love another person or self in place of God, or we fail to worship God. We can also fail to love and serve our neighbor. Yet God remains faithful even in our sin, our forgetting Him. God waits with us in our suffering and offers mercy, calling us to repent so He can forgive. Humans are called to love like God, willing to forgive, to wait, to suffer with others.
- 4. Jesus Christ teaches us new possibilities for living.** His example is full of giving selflessly, thinking of others, loving and serving them. He shows us how to live free from fear, because perfect love casts out fear. Couples are called to a *cruciform* (reaching up to God and out to each other) *self-sacrificial* (forgetting self to give to the other) *communion* (joining together in a bond of love and understanding).

JOURNAL REFLECTION:

1. Look at Christ on the cross. When we contemplate the pierced side of Christ, we understand that God is love. He died for us.
2. Seeing the Crucified Savior of Love, I ask myself: Christ loves me. Do I love him? Do I love others? Christ serves me. Do I serve him? Do I serve others?

CLOSING PRAYER:

"Praise the Lord! O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever! Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, 'Amen!' Praise the Lord!" (Psalm 106)

Grades 9 – 12

LESSON 2 BIBLE REFERENCES

Biblical Images of God's Love:

1. God is like a merciful father hosting a feast to welcome home his prodigal son. (Luke 15:11-32)
2. God is like a shepherd searching for his lost sheep. (Luke 15:3-7)
3. God is like a mother who comforts her children. (Isaiah 66:13)
4. God is like a friend who lays down his life for others and who weeps when his friends suffer. (John 11:35)
5. God is like a teacher, leading us to love and serve one another as neighbors. (Matthew 22:39)
6. God is like a gardener, tending us until we bear good fruit. (John 15:1)
7. God is like a king inviting us to his son's wedding banquet. (Matthew 22:1-14)
8. God hears a blind man's cry and stops to ask: what do you want me to do for you? (Mark 10:46-52)
9. God is welcoming, filled with compassion for his people when they are hungry, offering them food (Matthew 14:13-21, also Matthew 15:32-39, Mark 6:31-44 and 8:1-9, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:5-15) and offering them himself. (Matthew 26:26)

The privileged symbol of God's love for us is marriage: *Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.* (Ephesians 5:21-25)

God's relationship with Israel is described using the metaphors of betrothal and marriage (cf. *Deus Caritas Est* 9 quoted in LIOM 28): *I spread the edge of my cloak over you and covered your nakedness; I pledged myself to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became mine. Then I bathed you with water...and anointed you with oil...You grew exceptionally beautiful, fit to be a queen.* (Ezekiel 16:7-13)

The marriage between God and his people can be rocky (LIOM 28): [As God says to Hosea,] *Go, love a woman who has a lover and is an adulteress, just as the Lord loves the people of Israel, though they turn to other gods.* (Hosea 3:1)

God perseveres in love for his people, ... even when we insist on trying to live without him (LIOM 30): *For the Lord has called you like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, like the wife of a man's youth when she is cast off, says your God. For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will gather you...with everlasting love I will have compassion on you.* (Isaiah 54:6-8)

Grades 9 – 12

LESSON 3: THE MEANING OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

Note: While this lesson conveys the content of the preparatory catechesis, teachers and catechists may need to adapt the language and methodology of the lesson out of sensitivity to issues and circumstances the students may be facing.

** Some of the content presented in this lesson might not be appropriate for lower classmen. For these students, it is recommended that this lesson be adapted or eliminated, depending on the judgement of the appropriate supervisor and the local curriculum guidelines.**

LESSON OVERVIEW

“The material world is more than dead matter or modeling clay for the human will. Creation is sacred. It has sacramental meaning. It reflects God’s glory. That includes our bodies. Our sexuality has the power to procreate, and shares in the dignity of being created in the image of God. We need to live accordingly” (Preparatory Catechesis for the VIII World Meeting of Families, Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive, Introduction to Part III).

OBJECTIVES

Students will

1. Recognize the spiritual significance of the physical world
2. Identify the human body as a revelation (or physical manifestation) of man’s mission to love
3. Recognize the great dignity and beauty of the conjugal act as an expression of self-giving love
4. Identify the two vocations of marriage and celibacy as unique ways to fulfill man’s mission to love
5. Compare and contrast chastity and lust

MATERIALS

Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive (Part III), whiteboard or poster board for key words, paper and pens, these four images with corresponding numbers next to them (printed large enough for all to see or projected on a wall/screen): 1) an American flag; 2) a rose bud; 3) a mountain; 4) a goldfish in a bowl

PROCEDURE (50 MINUTES)

1. **Preparation:** Before students arrive, write on the whiteboard (or on a poster board) the title of the lesson “The Meaning of Human Sexuality” along with these key words: physical signs, the human body, man and woman, marriage and celibacy, chastity. As the lesson unfolds you will turn each key word into a simple sentence in order to reinforce the lesson’s main ideas. In the end the board will say:
 - **Physical signs** point to spiritual realities.
 - **The human body** reveals the person’s mission to love.

- **Man and woman** are made for each other.
- **Marriage and celibacy** express self-giving love.
- **Lust** is using another person for my own pleasure.
- **Chastity** is living our sexuality with dignity and grace, according to right reason.

2. **Gathering Activity:**

As students gather, pass out paper and pens and invite them to number their paper 1 through 4 and describe next to each number what each of the signs represents: 1) an American flag; 2) a rose bud; 3) a mountain; 4) a goldfish in a bowl

3. **Opening Prayer:**

Invite the students to take a few moments and think about something in the world that makes them think of God. Explain that during the prayer they will be invited thank the Lord for that sign of his love. Begin with these words from Psalm 19 or with your own words:

"The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The sky proclaims the work of his hands... He has pitched in [the skies] a tent for the sun. It comes forth like a bridegroom from its canopy and like a hero joyfully runs its course."

God, we thank you and praise you for your beauty manifest in the world around us. Thank you for ... (allow the students to name aloud or in silence the places where they see God). Thank you, Lord, for all of this beauty! Open our hearts to see you surrounding us with your love. Open our hearts to love others as you do. Amen.

4. **Content and Key Points:**

- a. Introduce the lesson with reference to the key words on the board. Begin the discussion on signs by explaining that a sign points to a deeper meaning. For example, what is the deeper meaning of the first sign, the American flag? Share responses [freedom, strength, tradition, loyalty, bravery, etc.]. Invite students to discuss the deeper meaning of each of the other three signs in order [the rose-bud (love, youth, fragility, beauty, etc.); the mountain (grandeur, distance, challenge, exhilaration, etc.); the goldfish in a bowl (intimidation, feeling of being trapped or watched constantly, paranoia, etc.)]. Explain that the entire created world is pointing us to a deeper spiritual meaning. It is pointing us to God and particularly to his love for us. The physical world reveals that God loves us and invites us to experience his love. As you finish add the words "point to spiritual realities" after the words "Physical signs" on the board.
- b. While the world is full of signs, the clearest and most eloquent sign is humanity. And, just as other signs reveal meaning, our bodies reveal the meaning of our lives; they reveal our mission. Ask the students to recall from previous lessons what is the mission of our lives (emphasize self-giving love). Ask the students to specify various ways our bodies are important in living our mission to love. The students may begin with obvious gestures such as a hug or a smile. As the discussion unfolds, guide the students to include acts of service, such as the

corporal works of mercy, and sacrifices, perhaps even martyrdom. Because our bodies are important to our mission of love, we cannot think of them as mere shells or prisons of our souls. They are integrally part of us and so we must not abuse them. We must treat our own bodies and the bodies of others with the dignity they deserve. As you finish write the words "reveals the person's mission to love" after "The human body".

- c. Next point out to the students that while we are all made in God's image, we are not all made the same. When God made us, he made either male or female. Our bodies are unique and are a physical expression of a man and woman's call to communion with each other. We see this when we enter our family as a son or daughter and form unique relationships with our father and mother. But we see this in a particularly beautiful way in the love of a husband and wife. They complete each other. Only with each other can a man and a woman help to create new life, a new human person. The sexual difference between men and women is more than a physical or even emotional difference. It reveals that we are made for self-gift to another. Man and woman are made for each other. Just as God's love is fruitful, when a husband and wife are united by the act of self-giving love (sexual intercourse), their love bears abundant fruit by bringing forth new life, a baby. Write the words "are made for each other" after "Man and woman." Two vocations honor God's plan to love as male and female: marriage and celibacy. Ask the students to consider/discuss the definitions of each term.
- Marriage: "A covenant or partnership of life between a man and a woman, which is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church Glossary*)
 - Celibacy: "The state or condition of those who have chosen to remain unmarried for the sake of the kingdom of heaven in order to give themselves entirely to God and to the service of his people." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church Glossary*)
- d. You can offer the parish priest and/or a religious sister as examples of people who live celibacy. Invite the students to compare how people in each vocation live out the mission to love as male and female. How do husbands and wives give themselves to the other in love? How do priests and sisters give themselves to the Church? Add the words "express self-giving love" after "Marriage and celibacy."
- e. God's beautiful plan of love is very different from the world's ideas of love. Invite the students to turn to a neighbor or small group of peers and on their paper write down in their own words the world's definition of love (sexual urge, attraction, emotional feelings, sentiment, desire, good will, friendship, betrothed love, sacrifice for the other). After a few minutes have the students read their definitions aloud allowing groups to add other key words to their own definition. Emphasize that the world often tells us love is to make us feel good. This

leads to people using others for their own pleasure which is called lust. Add the words "is using another person for my own pleasure" after "Lust."

- f. Next have the students return to their partners to compare and contrast the world's definition of love with God's definition of love as self-gift. After a few minutes have the groups share their ideas. In relation to God's definition of love, emphasize words such as self-gift, sacrifice, communion, and fruitful. Explain that no matter each person's age or vocation, we are all called to love according to God's plan; this is called chastity. Write the words "is living our sexuality with dignity and grace, according to right reason" after the word "Chastity" on the board. Ask the students what chastity looks like for a high school student. What does it look like for a priest? What does it look like for a husband and wife?

5. Conclusion and Reinforcement:

Choose six students to read a sentence off the board or have all the students read them aloud together. Then erase the sentences so only the key words remain. Without looking at notes they may have taken, ask the students to explain what was learned today about each word. Ask the students if they can think of any key words or phrases to add the list.

6. Closing prayer:

End with a prayer that returns to the theme of our bodies as a sign of God's love. You may use these words or your own:

Lord, we thank you that you reveal your love to us in so many ways. We thank you especially that you have written into our bodies our mission to love. Help us always to love according to your plan. Give us the courage and grace to love like you. Amen.

ADAPTATIONS

If your time is limited:

Marriage and celibacy are covered in depth in the next three lessons. Focus on (1) the human body as a sign of our mission to love and on (2) the sexual difference of men and women as an expression of the person's call to self-giving love.

EVALUATION

Use the discussion questions throughout the lesson and the closure exercise to assess that the students have understood the major themes of the lesson.

BRINGING THE LESSON HOME TO THE FAMILY

Option 1: Our bodies express our mission to love. Challenge the students to go home and perform acts of love that are wordless, such as giving mom an extra hug, setting the table without being asked, spending extra time with a sibling. Ask them to notice how long it takes for their love to bear fruit or become contagious.

Option 2: Picture Project: Many Catholics hang crucifixes in their homes as a reminder of God's love. Family love is meant to be a sign of God's love, too. Have the students go home and gather the family for a snapshot. In each room where there is a crucifix, invite them to hang (or simply tuck behind the cross) the new family picture. They may wish to write these words from 1 John 4:16 on the bottom of the picture: "Those who abide in love, abide in God."

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

[Theology of His Body/Theology of Her Body](#)

Jason Evert, Ascension Press, 2009

This double-sided book offers a fresh and concise introduction to sexual difference. Written for teens, the text presents the beauty of sexuality while answering some of teens' most pressing questions.

[Chastity Project website](#)

Jason and Crystalina Evert's website with many excellent videos, explanations, questions, and answers for abiding in love and honesty.

Grades 9 – 12

LESSON 4: TWO BECOME ONE

Note: While this lesson conveys the content of the preparatory catechesis, teachers and catechists may need to adapt the language and methodology of the lesson out of sensitivity to issues and circumstances the students may be facing.

LESSON OVERVIEW

"We are not made to be alone. Human beings need and complete each other. Friendship and community satisfy that longing with bonds of common interest and love. Marriage is a uniquely intimate form of friendship that calls a man and a woman to love each other in the manner of God's covenant. Marriage is a Sacrament. Married love is fruitful and offered without reservation. This love is in the image of Jesus's faithfulness to the Church" (Preparatory Catechesis for the VIII World Meeting of Families, *Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive*, Introduction to Part IV).

OBJECTIVES

Students will

1. Compare and contrast the love expressed in popular love songs with 1 Corinthians 13
2. Identify the four traits of married love as free, total, faithful, and fruitful
3. Identify God's central role in the sacramental bond of marriage as the source of strength and grace needed for lasting commitment and faithfulness
4. Relate Jesus' merciful love on the cross to the merciful love which is the foundation of marriage
5. Analyze the marriage vows for evidence of the four traits of married love

MATERIALS

Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive (Part IV), paper and pens, Bibles (or copied text of 1 Corinthians 13), copies of the [text of the Rite of Marriage](#), whiteboard (or poster board/ butcher paper as a substitute)

PROCEDURE (50 MINUTES)

1. Preparation:

If you see the students regularly, have them bring lyrics to their favorite love song. Make copies of the [text of the Rite of Marriage](#) worksheet to distribute for the end of class activity. Write the name of the lesson "Two Become One" on the board along with these key topics as a road map for the students: The Four Traits of Married Love, The Grace of the Sacraments, The Foundation of Mercy. If desired, write the response to today's prayer on the board: *Those who abide in love abide in God.* (1 John 4:16)

2. Gathering Activity:

As the students gather, invite them to look at (or think through) the lyrics of a love song. Have them create a list of the characteristics of love as mentioned (or alluded to) in the song.

3. Opening Prayer:

The response is taken from 1 John 4:16 and the remainder of the prayer is from 1 Corinthians 13. You may ask a student to read the Leader part or read it yourself.

Leader: The Response is: *Those who abide in love abide in God.*

All: *Those who abide in love abide in God.*

Leader: Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious, or boastful, or arrogant, or rude.

All: *Those who abide in love abide in God.*

Leader: Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful.

All: *Those who abide in love abide in God.*

Leader: Love does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.

All: *Those who abide in love abide in God.*

Leader: Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

All: *Those who abide in love abide in God.*

4. Content and Key Points:

- a. Introduce the lesson by pointing out the title and key topics to be covered written on the board. Invite the students to share the key words or phrases they pulled from songs about love. After writing several of the key words on the board, invite the class to help you categorize them into four main groups:
 - *Free* (words about love being a choice, a freely given gift, not forced)
 - *Total* (words about giving your whole self to another person)
 - *Faithful* (words about love lasting through good times and bad and words about love being exclusive)
 - *Fruitful* (words about the good things that come from love, words about new life—children)
- b. Explain that these categories are the four characteristics of married love. Even popular music recognizes some of these qualities of real love because the vocation to love is written on the heart of every person. As Christians, we know that our love for others is meant to mirror God's love for us, so we can add a few key words to the list using a "Hymn to Love" from St. Paul. Have the students look at 1 Corinthians 13 in their Bibles (or printed on a handout if Bibles are not available). As a group, add the characteristics of love from Scripture to the appropriate category (free, total, faithful, or fruitful). Many of the words will fit in more than one place. Invite the students to explain their reasons for putting a word in a certain category. This will help them to develop a deeper understanding of each of the four traits.

- c. Ask the students why they think these traits are important in married love. Emphasize that marriage is meant to be an image of God's covenant love and so it is important that married love is freely given, without reservation, with complete faithfulness, and with positive fruits. Secondly, marriage is between two imperfect people; these qualities must be evident so that in the tough moments of life, each spouse can trust in the total and committed love of the other.
- d. If two imperfect people were the only participants in a marriage, total faithfulness and self-gift might seem impossible. This is why it is so important to remember God's central role in a marriage. It is hard to be married because sometimes life isn't romantic.
- e. Write on the whiteboard (or on a poster board) two columns labeled as follows:
- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>(Left Column):</i> | <i>(Right Column):</i> |
| Romantic-Passionate Love | Deeper Human Love (God's Love) |

Ask the students to start naming characteristics of Romantic-Passionate Love; as they name characteristics, write them on the board. (*Fun, happy, exciting, butterflies, desire, may be possessive, full of emotions, self-conscious, etc.*) If you need to further prompt the students, ask what kinds of things Romantic-Passionate Love concentrates on or thinks about. (*Can be superficial, self-centered, thinks about how to dress and how I look, could be lustful, could be demanding of the other person, etc.*)

Ask the students to think about how God, their best friends, and their parents love them. How does a couple that has been happily married for 30 years love each other? So, what are the characteristics of Deeper Human Love? (*Patient, forgiving, self-sacrificing, serving/helping the other, knows and accepts the other as they are, accepts bad habits and all, faithful, merciful, caring, puts the one they love before themselves.*) If you need to further prompt the students, ask how does Jesus love us? How does that older married couple love each other? What are things that they would have in common with the way Jesus loves us? (*Suffers for the other, accepts difficult things, is not demanding, does not complain or fight for "what I deserve", generous, gives until it hurts, doesn't give up, is willing to die for the other, full of a deeper joy, strong, courageous.*) Continue to try to prompt the discussion until you have most of the answers in italics above.

Discussion questions:

- Which one of these kinds of love (Romantic-Passionate or Deeper Human Love) could serve as a foundation for a life-long marriage and a healthy family life?
- Why?

- Do you remember being forgiven by someone and understanding through that forgiveness how much they love you? (Would anyone be willing to share an example? Or, the teacher may share an example.)
 - Which kind of love do you want to receive?
 - Which kind of love will make you happier longer?
 - Which kind of love did God make you for ultimately?
- f. When a couple gets married, they give themselves totally to the other without knowing what will be asked of them in the years to come. Relying on our own abilities, this may seem a bit too risky. We must remember that the Sacrament of Marriage gives us God's help, his grace, to remain totally faithful to our spouse in good times and in bad. Not only do couples receive this grace on their wedding day, but it lasts until the end of their lives. Additional grace is also available to them in the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and in Reconciliation throughout their lives.
- g. Remind the students that the love between man and woman is an image of God's love for us, of Christ's love for the Church. Ask them what God's love looks like. (They may answer God becoming man, inviting us into a covenant relationship, or giving up his life on the cross.) Emphasize that God's love for us is clearly seen on the crucifix; his love is a merciful and forgiving love. Married love must have that same foundation of mercy. Pope Francis even said that the three most important phrases to remember are "Please, thank you, and I'm sorry." Ask the students why Pope Francis chose those words. In their own family life and their friendships, how have these words (and thus the foundation of mercy) played an important role?
- h. Read and discuss together paragraphs 56 - 57 from *Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive*:
- "Saint John Paul II's 'Theology of the Body' speaks of a certain 'interior freedom' and 'self-mastery' which spouses need in order to truly make a gift of themselves to one another. A person tied too tightly to romantic expectations, without the leaven of interior freedom and the capacity for self-gift, will lack flexibility. To live the sacramentality of marriage and to follow the way of the covenant, husbands and wives need the capacity to transcend resentment, to lay aside entitlements, and to step forward in generosity. Without this interior freedom and power, serious problems are bound to arise, because life puts husbands and wives in situations that are very often not romantic at all. ...The marital promise to love steadfastly as God does helps to create and protect this vital space. The sacramental commitment to do the work of love, even when loving is tough, is an essential ingredient in God's covenant."*

5. Closing Activity:

Provide students with a copy of the text of the [Rite for Celebrating Marriage During Mass](#). Review with the students the four traits of married love. Explain that the words

they will read and analyze are taken directly from a Rite of Marriage, the words used in a Catholic wedding. As they read through the rite they will mark the references to the four traits of married love. If the class is small enough, form a circle with the desks and complete the activity together. If the class is large, assign the students to smaller groups.

6. Closing Prayer:

The following prayer is one of the collects used in Catholic weddings. Invite the students to think of their own parents or other married couples as you pray together.

*O God, who in creating the human race willed
that man and wife should be one,
join, we pray, in a bond of inseparable love
[those united by] the covenant of Marriage,
so that, as you make their love fruitful,
they may become, by your grace,
witnesses to charity itself.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

(from [Rite for Celebrating Marriage During Mass](http://www.ibreviary.com), www.ibreviary.com)

ADAPTATIONS

If your time is limited:

Simplify the popular music activity by beginning with the four traits of married love already on the board. Briefly explain each and then ask the students to offer words or phrases that fit into each category.

Because this lesson includes a discussion of fruitful love, you may be able to combine it with *Lesson 5*.

EVALUATION

Collect the student worksheet to assess their application of the lesson's content.

BRINGING THE LESSON HOME TO THE FAMILY

Option 1: Reliving the Marriage Rite

Invite the students to take home the text of the [Marriage Rite](#) and stage a reenactment of their parents' wedding. Tell the students they can read the part of the deacon while their parents renew their vows.

Option 2: Marriage interview

Have the students sit down with their parents (or another married couple they admire, such as grandparents) and ask the following questions about their experience of living married love. It would be ideal if the couple has been married for at least 15 years. Each spouse

should respond to each question.

1. Married love is free. This means it isn't forced but is freely given. What made you decide to give yourself freely to each other? Now that you've been married for a while, how do you continue to make a free gift of yourself each day?
2. Married love is total. This means that you give every part of yourself. What does this look like on a day-to-day basis?
3. Married love is faithful. This means you are committed to your spouse in good times and bad. What is the most helpful advice you could give on loving faithfully?
4. Married love is fruitful. This means it is open to life and bears fruit in the lives of the spouses. What are some of the blessings that have come from your marriage?

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

[*A Basic Theology of Marriage*](#)

by Christopher West

This article walks through the basic definition of marriage and analyzes it line by line to uncover the beauty of marriage.

[*Rite for Celebrating Marriage During Mass*](#) available on iBreviary

The various prayers of the Marriage Rite offer a beautiful catechesis on married love. The complete text of the rite is available online at the link above.

Grades 9 – 12

LESSON 5: CREATING THE FUTURE

Note: While this lesson conveys the content of the preparatory catechesis, teachers and catechists may need to adapt the language and methodology of the lesson out of sensitivity to issues and circumstances the students may be facing.

LESSON OVERVIEW

“Marriage is meant to be fertile and welcome new life. Children shape the future, just as they themselves are shaped in their families. Without children, there can be no future. Children reared with love and guidance are the foundation for a loving future. Wounded children portend a wounded future. Families are the bedrock for all larger communities. Families are domestic churches, places where parents help children discover that God loves them and has a plan for each child’s life” (Preparatory Catechesis for the VIII World Meeting of Families, Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive, Introduction to Part V).

OBJECTIVES

Students will

1. Explain the importance of parents in the lives of children in both daily life and faith
2. Describe the concept of the domestic church
3. Reflect on their own family life to find how their own families are a domestic church and what they can do to help build up this domestic church
4. Consider the importance of attentiveness to family members as a beginning for being attentive to God and His plan for their lives

MATERIALS

Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive (Part V), image of the painting [First Steps](#) by Vincent Van Gogh, [Lumen Gentium](#) #11, Bible, Lesson 5 Handout

PROCEDURE (40-50 MINUTES)

Part I: The Domestic Church

1. Opening Prayer:

Read from Deuteronomy 6:4-7. (See *Lesson 5 Handout*)

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.”

2. Motivator:

Show students a copy of the painting, *First Steps*, by Vincent Van Gogh. Ask students

what the key parts of the painting are.

- The child is trying to walk.
- She is being assisted by her mother.
- Father (who has set aside his own work) is waiting with open arms.

3. Pre-Assessment:

a. Initial Brainstorming on the Family (See *Lesson 5 Handout*)

Make a list of 20 ways that parents help their children as they grow up. Share as a class, helping students to think broadly.

- How to do things (walk, read, ride a bike)
- How to interact with people (sharing, manners, taking turns, not making fun of people)
- How to love people (helping, doing works of service [cleaning, cooking, mowing the lawn] saying I'm sorry, forgiving, celebrating birthdays, graduations)
- How to love God (praying, going to Mass, loving what God loves, keeping the Commandments)

b. Methods for Learning (See *Lesson 5 Handout*)

Walking, Loving Neighbor, Loving God. On the board, write "How Parents Help Their Children" and make three columns.

- Title the 1st column: "learn to walk." Leave the columns blank for now. Brainstorm what parents do for their child who is learning how to walk (holding hands, picking up when they fall, encouraging words, setting example by walking around house, practice). Fill in the column as the discussion progresses.
- Title the 2nd column: "learn to love neighbor" (See *Lesson 5 Handout*). Discuss how to fill in this column. This column should focus on self-giving, peaceful and joyful relationships. Emphasize the *personal*, relational aspect if possible, since there is always a temptation for some to hide behind work. Ask students to give some specific examples. Discuss how each one of these lessons is similar to learning to walk. You may refer back to 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 from Lesson 4. What does it look like to teach a child that "love is patient, love is kind?" Fill in the column as the discussion progresses.
- Leave 3rd column blank for the moment.

4. Content & Key Points:

- a. Read the following selection of #11 of *Lumen Gentium* (the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*) from the Second Vatican Council on the role of the family. ***"The family is...the domestic church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children; they should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care vocation to a sacred state."***

- b. Point out the key phrase that the family is the domestic church. Synonyms for

domestic are “home” and “family.” So, the family is “the home church” or “the family church.” The church is where we learn to love God. It refers to the place where we go to worship and to learn about God and also about the people who are there with us for the same reason. Our home is supposed to be the first place where we learn to love God. Our family members are those who support us in learning and doing these important works.

- c. Title the third column “learn to love God” (See *Lesson 5 Handout*). Discuss how to fill in this column.
- Parents offer a model through going to Mass, praying outside of Mass, living a virtuous life, loving one another, reading Scripture and other spiritual books, etc. They teach and encourage their children to pray and to learn about their faith. They answer their questions about God as best as they can and help them to find answers.
 - They pray with their children. They pray for their children, and the children pray for their parents.
 - They remind each other that God loves them and is caring for them no matter what they are going through. (Fill in the column as the discussion progresses.)
- d. Discussion Questions for Part I: (See *Lesson 5 Handout*)
- “How does the marriage of a man and a woman differ from other close friendships?” (from LIOM Part V Questions for Discussion)
 - How do parents teach their children differently from the way a day care worker or a babysitter would? Do you remember specific ways your parents taught/helped you when you were little?
 - What is a domestic church? What are some examples of the domestic church?
 - Have you ever prayed with your parents? Or read the Bible with them? Or talked with them about faith? What happened? What might hold you back?
 - How can teens help to build up the faith of their parents? Of their siblings?
 - If someone’s parents are not supportive of their faith, who might that person look to for guidance in their relationship with God? How can that person be a witness to their parents of the importance of a relationship with God? How can you and your family support that person in their faith journey?
 - Name an adult in your life to whom you look up for their faith. What is it about their life that makes you look up to them?

Part II: Vocational Discernment

- a. A second key phrase from *Lumen Gentium* states that within this “domestic church,” parents have the obligation to encourage their children to follow the specific vocation (or calling in life) that God has offered as an invitation to share in God’s holiness (cf. 11).
- It is within our families that we learn to be attentive to God so that we know

to what vocation he is leading us – to marriage, to the priesthood/religious life, or to a life of service as a single person.

- We can learn to be attentive to God by being attentive to other people, like our family members.
 - Ask students to brainstorm on a sheet of paper. Choose one person in their family and identify as many of the following things as they can: a favorite food, favorite kind of music, favorite TV show or movie, favorite vacation spot. Then take it a step deeper with the following questions to the students. How do you know that person has had a bad day? A good day? What helps to cheer them up? How can you make them laugh? What do you do that gets on their nerves? What is something you have done that really makes them happy? Learning to recognize and respond to these things about the people with whom we live can help us to love them and have an overall better relationship with them.
 - Our parents can help us to begin to learn how to have good relationships with other people both in terms of what to do and what not to do. It takes real humility to learn to accept their corrections (like about what we do that gets on their nerves), but it will help us to have better relationships with people overall.
 - The first step of recognizing the vocation that God is calling us to is being attentive to him. We begin to learn how to have a good relationship with God by talking to him in prayer, listening to him--especially through reading Scripture, and by coming to understand what makes him happy and what makes us happy in our relationship with him.
 - Parents can help us to understand how to have a good relationship with God and to what vocation God might be leading us. Sometimes our parents know us better than we even know ourselves. On the other hand, teenagers can help their parents to have a good relationship with God, too, by word and example. All of us need help on our journey to heaven.
- b. Discussion Questions for Part II: (See *Lesson 5 Handout*)
- In your family, which person is most attentive to the needs of others? How can you be more attentive? What makes it difficult to be attentive?
 - What keeps people from being attentive to God? How can they increase their faith in God? What steps might they take to grow in their prayer life?
 - How could parents help their children to think about the different vocations in life– to marriage, to the priesthood/religious life, or to a life of service as a single person?

5. Closing Prayer:

“For I know well the plans I have in mind for you—plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope. When you call me, and come and pray to me, I will listen to you. When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me” (Jeremiah 29:11-14a).

Lord, we thank you that you love each one of us and have a plan for our lives. Help us to

seek you with all of our hearts and help us to encourage our family members to seek you with all of their hearts. Lord, we love you, and want to love you more each day.

ADAPTATIONS

If your time is limited:

Consider omitting Part II on discernment.

EVALUATION

Ask the students to write a journal entry reflecting on the following questions:

1. What are the similarities and differences between helping a child learn to walk and helping them learn to love God and neighbor?
2. What is the domestic church?
3. How can a person learn to be more attentive to the people in his or her family?
4. How can a person learn to be more attentive to God?

BRINGING THE LESSON HOME TO THE FAMILY

Option 1: Interview a member of your family about his or her own experiences of faith. Use the following questions and add your own: Who taught you about God? What helps you to strengthen your faith? What is your favorite passage from the Gospels about Jesus? What is your favorite way to pray? What is one piece of advice you could give to people my age about faith? Add your own questions.

Option 2: Invite your family members to pray with you in an out-of-the-ordinary way. Here are a few ideas (choose one that you have never done together as a family): pray together before a meal; go to Sunday Mass together; go to a daily Mass together; go to a church for Eucharistic Adoration together; visit a particularly beautiful or historic church or shrine together; pray the Rosary (or a decade of the Rosary) or the Divine Mercy Chaplet together; read the Sunday Gospel (or daily Gospel) together aloud and then discuss it.

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

["Welcome Home: Your Family, the Catholic Church"](#)

Lifeteen.com blog post by Michelle Neitzke

A clear explanation of the domestic church for teens.

[Lighthouse Catholic Media](#) offers many talks on CD and/or MP3 to help teenagers and their families to grow in faith.

[Fellowship of Catholic University Students \(FOCUS\)](#) will send a free "audio talk of the week" by popular speakers to your inbox.

Grades 9 – 12 LESSON 5 HANDOUT

Opening Prayer: Read from Deuteronomy 6:4-7.

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.”

Brainstorming on the Family		
How Parents Help Their Children...		
learn to walk:	learn to love neighbor:	learn to love God:

“The family is...the domestic church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children; they should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care vocation to a sacred state” (Lumen Gentium 11).

**Discussion Questions Part I** (adapted from LIOM Part V Questions for Discussion)

1. How does the marriage of a man and a woman differ from other close friendships?
2. How do parents teach their children differently from the way a day care worker or a babysitter would? Do you remember specific ways your parents taught/helped you when you were little?
3. What is a domestic church? What are some examples of the domestic church?
4. Have you ever prayed with your parents? Or read the Bible with them? Or talked with them about faith? What happened? What might hold you back?
5. How can teens help to build up the faith of their parents? Of their siblings?
6. If someone's parents are not supportive of their faith, who might that person look to for guidance in their relationship with God? How can that person be a witness to their parents of the importance of a relationship with God? How can you and your family support that person in their faith journey?
7. Name an adult in your life whom you look up to for their faith. What is it about their life that makes you look up to them?

Discussion Questions Part II

1. In your family, which person is most attentive to the needs of others? How can you be more attentive? What makes it difficult to be attentive?
2. What keeps people from being attentive to God? How can they increase their faith in God? What steps might they take to grow in their prayer life?
3. How could parents help their children to think about the different vocations in life— to marriage, to the priesthood/religious life, or to a life of service as a single person?

Closing Prayer:

"For I know well the plans I have in mind for you--plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope. When you call me, and come and pray to me, I will listen to you. When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me" (Jeremiah 29:11-14a).

Lord, we thank you that you love each one of us and have a plan for our lives. Help us to seek you with all of our hearts and help us to encourage our family members to seek you with all of their hearts. Lord, we love you, and want to love you more each day.

Grades 9 – 12

LESSON 6: ALL LOVE BEARS FRUIT

Note: While this lesson conveys the content of the preparatory catechesis, teachers and catechists may need to adapt the language and methodology of the lesson out of sensitivity to issues and circumstances the students may be facing.

LESSON OVERVIEW

“Not everyone is called to marriage. But every life is meant to be fertile. Every life has the power and the need to nurture new life – if not through bearing and raising children, then through other vital forms of self-giving, building and service. The Church is an extended family of different vocations, each distinct but each needing and supporting the others. Priesthood, religious life and the celibate lay vocation enrich, and are enriched by, the witness of the married state. The different ways of being chaste and celibate outside of marriage are ways of donating one’s life to God’s service and the human community” (Preparatory Catechesis for the VIII World Meeting of Families, *Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive*, Introduction to Part VI).

OBJECTIVES

Students will

1. Define the universal call to holiness
2. Compare and contrast different vocations
3. Define and give examples of spiritual motherhood and spiritual fatherhood
4. Identify concrete ways for a young person to discern their vocation

MATERIALS

Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive (Part VI), whiteboard (or poster board/butcher paper as a substitute), markers, *Lesson 6 Handout*

PROCEDURE (50 MINUTES)

1. Preparation:

Before the students arrive, write the word “Holiness” on the board in large letters. Have a song about holiness playing in the background (suggestions: *Refiner’s Fire*, *Come Into My Heart*, *In the Secret*, *Open the Eyes of My Heart*).

As the students gather, invite them to think of a person they know whom they consider to be holy. They need not share the names, but ask them to think about what makes that person holy.

2. Opening Prayer (See Lesson 6 Handout):

Pray the following prayer from St. Augustine with the students:
Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.
Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.

*Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love only what is holy.
Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.
Guard me so, O Holy Spirit, that I may always be holy. Amen.*

3. Introduction:

Introduce the lesson by explaining to the students that one of the key ideas from Vatican II was the idea of the universal call to holiness (Chapter V of [Lumen Gentium](#)). Holiness isn't something only for a few chosen people. Rather, each and every person is called to be holy. Everyone is called to become a saint. There is no one way to become a saint, but there is a common quality all saints share—they each make a gift of themselves to God out of love (See *Lesson 6 Handout*).

4. Pre-Assessment (See *Lesson 6 Handout*):

Invite the students to each write on the board one word or phrase that characterizes the word "Holiness," using for examples the lives of the individuals they had previously thought about. Have the students identify any common qualities. Qualities listed can include selflessness, love, joy, and generosity. Be sure to make a connection between holiness and a deep joy or happiness (even in difficult situations or sufferings).

5. Content & Key Points (See *Lesson 6 Handout*):

- a. Explain that holiness is only possible in a communion with others. In order to be holy, we must love, and in order to love, we must have someone to love. Actually, three things are necessary for love to exist: the one loving, the one being loved, and the love itself (see the connection to the Trinity – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). Holiness always involves a complete self-gift, living one's life for another. The word that we can use to describe the means by which we live out this calling to make a gift of self is "*vocation*". Every person has a *vocation*, a certain calling from God, by which he or she can give themselves fully to another in order to become holy.
- b. The most common communion of love is found in the family, as a husband and wife love each other and their children selflessly, making a gift of themselves to the other members of the family. Marriage is one vocation that people are called to. Have students identify other vocations. They should include:
 - *Marriage*
 - *Holy Orders (Ordained)*—this includes bishops, priests, and deacons
 - *Consecrated Life (Religious)*—this includes nuns, monks, sisters, fathers, and brothers
 - *Dedicated Single Life*—this is often a temporary vocation; for a few it will be a permanent vocation
- c. Ask students to compare and contrast these different vocations. The most important common trait is that all are called to holiness, to become saints. Each involves a self-gift to others. This is done in different ways, however. In marriage, a couple makes a self-gift to one another. In Holy Orders, the self-gift is

made to Christ's Church. In consecrated life, the self-gift is made to Jesus himself, especially by serving others. The important common quality to emphasize is that *all* are called to selflessly give themselves to another, in order to live in a communion of love.

- d. Have students discuss why they think anyone would want to become a priest or a nun. Is this a natural calling? Discuss how this is a *supernatural* calling, which means that it's a special gift from God that comes with special graces from God. A religious vocation is an invitation from God to freely enter into a special relationship with him.
- e. Ask the students what the differences are that they see between the world's idea of "not being married" and the Church's idea of celibacy? Point out that in the eyes of the world celibacy is about what you don't have – a spouse or children. But in truth, celibacy is about commitment to Christ and bearing fruit through love of neighbor. Celibacy is not about looking out for only myself as the world might suggest, but about giving oneself totally to all God's children. Pope Francis is a wonderful example of this. When we truly understand celibacy, we see that it is not about an individual alone but about a gift to others. Celibacy is not about loneliness and isolation; it is about being a gift to others.
- f. Just as those who are celibate give their lives to serving God and others, mothers and fathers give their lives to serving God and specifically their children. God intended mothers and fathers to be heroes to their children. In our fallen world, we acknowledge that this is not always the case, but we keep our eyes set on the ideal. We are each called to be in a relationship of motherhood or fatherhood. Some are called to physical motherhood or fatherhood, in a family setting. Others, such as priests or religious, are called to spiritual motherhood or spiritual fatherhood. Have students first think of (and name, if they wish) people in their lives who have been a spiritual mother/father to them. What are characteristics of spiritual motherhood/fatherhood? List them on the board as the discussion progresses.

6. Conclusion & Reinforcement Closure: (See Lesson 6 Handout):

Write on the board: "Our hearts are restless until they rest in you" (from Saint Augustine). Have students discuss what this means (*We will find our joy in living out the vocation that God has planned out for us*), then brainstorm how they can discover their unique vocation. Students can list their ideas on the board. Possible responses: prayer, Eucharistic Adoration, talking to priests/religious/married couples, pray three Hail Mary's every day to know their vocation, keep a prayer journal, spiritual direction, etc.

7. Closing Prayer (See Lesson 6 Handout):

The following is an excerpt from an address by Saint John Paul II, from World Youth Day 2000. This can be used as a closing prayer, perhaps adding a few lines at the end to ask Jesus to give each young person present the ability to know his or her vocation with clarity and to follow that call with courage and generosity, responding with a total gift of self.

*"It is Jesus that you seek when you dream of happiness;
he is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you;
he is the beauty to which you are so attracted;
it is he who provoked you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for com-
promise; it is he who urges you to shed the masks of a false life;
it is he who reads in your heart your most genuine choices,
the choices that others try to stifle.
It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives,
the will to follow an ideal,
the refusal to allow yourselves to be ground down by mediocrity,
the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently
to improving yourselves and society,
making the world more human and more fraternal. Amen."*

ADAPTATIONS

If your time is limited:

Focus on the *Lesson 6 Handout* together.

If you have more time:

Students can write letters to their own parents (or to someone who has been a spiritual mother or father to them), thanking them for their gift of self.

EVALUATION

Informally assess students by observing their participation throughout the lesson.

BRINGING THE LESSON HOME TO THE FAMILY

Option 1: Students interview a parent, grandparent, or family member who is married/priest/religious about the role of self-gift in their own life.

Option 2: Students interview a priest or religious about spiritual fatherhood or motherhood. Responses can be gathered either in writing or in video format to share with the class.

Option 3: As a family, pray three Hail Mary's every night for the vocation of each of the children in the family.

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

[*Re-Gifted: Universal Call to Holiness*](#)

By Life Teen

This lesson plan takes one through an evening event for high school students on the universal call to holiness and vocation.

Grades 9 – 12 LESSON 6 HANDOUT

All Love Bears Fruit—Holiness

Bible Reference: 1 Peter 1: 14-16

INTRODUCTION:

Holiness isn't something only for a few chosen people. Rather, each and every person is called to be holy. Everyone is called to become a saint. There is no one way to become a saint, but there is a common quality all saints share—they each make a gift of themselves to God out of love.

OPENING PRAYER:

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.

Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.

Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love only what is holy.

Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.

Guard me so, O Holy Spirit, that I may always be holy. Amen. (St. Augustine)

APPLICATION:

1. Think of someone you consider to be holy.
2. What makes that person holy?
3. What link exists between holiness and happiness?

BIBLICAL WISDOM:

"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourself also in your behavior; because it is written, 'YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY'" (1 Peter 1:14-16).

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

- How is obedience a key to holiness?
- How does holiness imply that we must love God and others?
- Since holiness means being like God, and God is love, how will becoming more loving help us to become more holy?

EXPLANATION:

1. The universal call to holiness. Every person has a *vocation*, a certain calling from God, by which they can give themselves fully to another in order to become holy. In order to be holy, we must love, and in order to love, we must have someone to love. Actually, three

things are necessary for love to exist: the one loving, the one being loved, and the love itself (see the connection to the Trinity – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit). Holiness always involves a complete self-gift, living one's life for another. The word that we can use to describe the means by which we live out this calling to make a gift of self is "vocation".

- 2. Each vocation is a calling to share in a communion of love.** The most common vocation is to marriage and being open to a family. Some other vocations or callings are God's invitation to Holy Orders as deacons, priests and bishops; to religious life as sisters, fathers, or brothers; and to the dedicated single life perhaps for a time or for life. Each involves a self-gift to others. This is done in different ways, however. In marriage, a couple makes a self-gift to one another. In Holy Orders, the self-gift is made to Christ's Church. In Consecrated Life, the self-gift is made to Jesus Himself, especially by serving others. *All* are called to selflessly give themselves to another, in order to live in a communion of love.
- 3. The supernatural life of a religious sister, father, or brother leads to spiritual fatherhood or motherhood.** God intended mothers and fathers to be heroes to their children. In our fallen world, we acknowledge that this is not always the case, but we keep our eyes set on the ideal. We are each called to be in a relationship of motherhood or fatherhood. Some are called to physical motherhood or fatherhood, in a family setting. Others, such as priests or religious, are called to spiritual motherhood or spiritual fatherhood. Who are the people in your life who have been a spiritual mother/father to you? What are characteristics of spiritual motherhood/fatherhood?

CLASS REFLECTION:

1. "Our hearts are restless until they rest in you" (from St. Augustine). What does this quote mean to you?
2. How can each person listen to and hear God's call or vocation for them personally?

CLOSING PRAYER:

From Saint John Paul II, World Youth Day 2000, Rome:

*"It is Jesus that you seek when you dream of happiness;
he is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you;
he is the beauty to which you are so attracted;
it is he who provoked you with that thirst for fullness that will not let you settle for compromise; it is he who urges you to shed the masks of a false life;
it is he who reads in your heart your most genuine choices,
the choices that others try to stifle.
It is Jesus who stirs in you the desire to do something great with your lives,
the will to follow an ideal,
the refusal to allow yourselves to be ground down by mediocrity,
the courage to commit yourselves humbly and patiently
to improving yourselves and society,
making the world more human and more fraternal. Amen."*

Grades 9 – 12

LESSON 7: LIGHT IN A DARK WORLD

Note: While this lesson conveys the content of the preparatory catechesis, teachers and catechists may need to adapt the language and methodology of the lesson out of sensitivity to issues and circumstances the students may be facing.

** Some of the content presented in this lesson might not be appropriate for lower classmen. For these students, it is recommended that this lesson be adapted or eliminated, depending on the judgment of the appropriate supervisor and the local curriculum guidelines.**

LESSON OVERVIEW

*“At its best, the family is a school of love, justice, compassion, forgiveness, mutual respect, patience and humility in the midst of a world darkened by selfishness and conflict. In these ways, the family teaches what it means to be human. However, many temptations arise which try to coax us into forgetting that male and female are created for covenant and communion. For example, poverty, affluence, pornography, contraception and philosophical mistakes can all create contexts that challenge or threaten healthy family life. The Church resists these things for the sake of protecting the family” (Preparatory Catechesis for the VIII World Meeting of Families, *Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive*, Introduction to Part VII).*

OBJECTIVES

Students will

1. Identify how both poverty and affluence can be a strain on the family
2. Identify the reasons that pornography is wrong
3. Compare and contrast contraception and natural family planning
4. Compare and contrast how the Church views marriage versus the secular view of marriage in society today

MATERIALS

Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive (Part VII), Holy Bible, paper and pens, Lesson 7 Handout

PROCEDURE (45 MINUTES)

1. Preparation:

Read and prepare the lesson content before the class begins. **Note that the sentences in bold are the main ideas and key points of the lesson.** These sentences will help to answer the evaluation questions at the end of the lesson.

2. Opening Prayer (See Lesson 7 Handout):

Read Matthew 5:14-16.

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your

Father who is in heaven."

3. **Pre-Assessment:**

The title of this lesson is "Light in a Dark World." What are some things that darken this world and can make it a difficult place to live? (*Wait for answers such as sin, suffering, hatred, selfishness, and conflict.*) What are some ways that you think the family can be a "light" that shines in this darkness? (*Wait for answers such as love, justice, compassion, forgiveness, mutual respect, patience, and humility.*)

4. **OPTIONAL Opening Activity** (if you have 15 additional minutes or more):

Invite students to work with a small group to complete the following:

Imagine that one of your ancestors was part of the secret service responsible for protecting the gold at Fort Knox when it was first shipped there in 1937. What would they have done to protect the gold from being stolen? Who were they trying to protect the gold from? Who would want to steal or destroy the gold and why?

Give students 2-3 minutes to brainstorm and then allow students to share their best ideas briefly. Discuss together *why* they ought to protect the gold? Why is it at Fort Knox and not elsewhere?

Next, shift the conversation to the faith. What might be the gold of our faith? Why? Give the students freedom to express their ideas (perhaps they will say the Eucharist, or the Bible). If no one suggests the family, suggest it yourself and then explain ask them why it might be a treasure worth protecting. Lead them throughout the discussion and finally point out that: *the family is an icon of the Trinity*. The family is an image of God in the world. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The family is father, mother, and child(ren). Both are communions of love.

Ask the students: What are some ways that the good of family and family life are attacked? Answers may include: divorce, adultery, substance abuse and addiction, physical abuse, etc. Discuss the factors the students brought forward, asking them to explain why each distorts marriage and family. Some other difficulties that are not so obvious but are worth our consideration include:

- *Poverty*—worry about money can stress family bonds
- *Pornography*—divides families because instead of faithfully loving only your spouse you are "loving" pictures instead of each other

In our lives, we are called to protect something incredibly precious—the self-giving love in marriage and family!

5. **Motivator:**

All of us want a healthy family now and a healthy family if we get married and begin our own new families. We can all see the benefits of a healthy family life. **The family teaches us what it means to be truly human, and in this way, the family enlightens us.** However, there are many things in this world that can tempt us and darken this light. Poverty, affluence, pornography, contraception, and philosophical mistakes

can all threaten healthy family life. We are going to look at each of these things and discuss not only how they threaten the family, but also how the family can be a light to the world in the midst of such darkness.

6. Content & Key Points:

- a. Because we are fallen creatures, sometimes we sin and we do not love others the way we should. This can lead to cultural situations and global issues that threaten the family. Poverty is one of these issues. Ask the students, What are some ways that “poverty and economic hardship undermine marriage and family life” (LIOM 115)? (Wait for answers.) “It is difficult to bring up a family” (LIOM 115) if there is not enough money for food, education, or a house to live in. Poverty works against stable marriages and families. At the same time, **“stable marriages and families help to overcome poverty. We must care for the poor and help families become healthy and strong. Strong marriages and families create hope, and hope leads to purpose and achievement....** If we say we care about the family, we need to care for the poor. If we care for the poor, we will be serving families” (LIOM 116, 118).
- b. **Just as poverty can be a threat to healthy families, so can affluence and an abundance of wealth, but this is a much more subtle threat.** We see advertisements and marketing everywhere. **Living in such a perpetual marketplace can tempt us to think that if we want something, and we can afford it, then we are entitled to it.** This is a destructive mentality because it makes us slaves to our desires and passions. When we become slaves to our desires, then we cannot be free. It becomes much more difficult to live the virtuous and holy life we were made to live. Always feeding our appetites and passions causes many problems. One particularly terrible problem is that we begin to see other people as objects that satisfy our desires, rather than as human persons.
- c. This is especially true in the case of pornography. **With pornography, sex becomes a commodity, a product to satisfy our desires.** Pornography promotes selfishness because it leads its users “to see other people as objects” that are there to satisfy their appetites (cf. LIOM 120). Pornography is especially destructive because it can seem so private, but it has serious effects on other people. Pornography can attack the vocations of priests and religious who are called to live a celibate life. Pornography can lead to broken marriages because the person has conditioned himself or herself to see the spouse as an object to gratify sexual desires. Pornography can lead to broken families, and it can even lead to even greater evils, such as human trafficking.
- d. **Like pornography, “contraception also leads us to see sexual desire as an entitlement”**(LIOM 122) **something to which we all have a right.** Some married couples may use contraception with good intentions, and they may think that it helps their marriage, or that it is harmless. However, happiness in marriage is founded on mutual respect between the spouses, which comes through

mutual self-giving and self-sacrificial love. The use of contraception actually harms marriages even though spouses may not be aware of this. **In the use of contraception, sexual desires can be “treated as entitlements or desires that can never be postponed”** (LIOM 126). There is often a lack of self-mastery or self-discipline, and it is difficult for the married couple to live a life of interior freedom, mutual self-giving, and self-sacrificial love. Sexual intimacy should be an expression of personal love between the spouses, and therefore a responsible mastery of human sexuality is needed. **With both pornography and contraception true freedom is diminished.**

- e. This of course leads to the question of what a married couple should do if they are not ready to have children because of serious physical, economic, psychological, or social reasons. Couples “who find themselves in this situation need teachers...and friends who can train and support them in [using] natural family planning (NFP)” (LIOM 128). Natural family planning is a method that couples can use to determine when they are physically able to conceive a child. If a married couple, after much prayer and reflection, discerns that God is not calling them to have additional children at this point in their lives, then the practice of natural family planning will require them to abstain from sexual relations from time to time. In this way, **the spouses make a sacrifice of their short term sexual desires in order to fulfill God’s call in their lives as a married couple. Unlike contraception, NFP leads “couples to communication and self-mastery”, and it “shapes and disciplines sexual desire”** (LIOM 130). It is an intimate and demanding way of following the Lord in marriage, and as a result it can deepen the commitment that the husband and wife have made to each other. **Through the practice of NFP, men and women “learn to treat a spouse with generosity and fidelity”** (LIOM 130).
- f. The widespread use of “contraception means that few [people] are in the habit of [practicing] abstinence and sexual self-control” (LIOM 131). It makes sex outside of marriage, even in adulterous relationships, seem acceptable because it gives the false impression that sexual intimacy can exist without consequences. **Through the use of contraception, sex is separated from the procreation of children, and therefore, contraception encourages a culture that views marriage as only an emotional and sexual companionship. This disordered view of marriage contributes greatly to our society’s “confusion about what marriage really is”, and divorce becomes much more common because this view reduces marriage to merely “a contract that [can] be broken and renegotiated”** (LIOM 132). Pope Francis writes in *Evangelii Gaudium* (#66) that “Marriage now tends to be viewed as a form of mere emotional satisfaction that can be constructed in any way or modified at will. But the indispensable contribution of marriage to society transcends the feelings and momentary needs of the couple.”
- g. Separating sex and procreation results in the perception of marriage as simply

sexual or emotional satisfaction, and this logically leads to the acceptance of same-sex unions. Now, let's clarify a few things about the Church's view on this issue. First of all, "everyone is called to give and receive love. Committed, sacrificial, chaste, same sex friendships should be esteemed" (LIOM 134), admired, and valued. While the Catholic Church will not approve same sex "marriages," the Church does appreciate and acknowledge the importance of chaste same-sex friendships. The Church wants to nurture and support opportunities for chaste friendship, especially for "those who, for whatever reason, are unable to marry. True friendship is... honorable...and... the desire for a friend arises from deep within [our] soul" (LIOM 134-135). True friends help the each other respond to God and encourage one another in living a virtuous and holy life. Marriage, however, is *more* than a friendship. Marriage is significantly more than an emotional bond or a contract between two people. As was seen in previous lessons (especially Lessons 4 and 5), marriage is a Sacrament and a covenant of mercy. Marriage exists for the sake of a family. A relationship may have a deep and intense self sacrificing love, but that alone does not make it a marriage. Many of us could probably think of people whom we love intensely, perhaps among our family and friends, but that does not make the relationship a marriage.

- h. In some countries, there is a movement to "redefine marriage as if it were any strong [emotional] or sexual relationship between any consenting adults" (LIOM 133). The movement to redefine marriage is a threat to healthy family life. The family is the foundation of society. "Society does not invent or [create] the family; rather...the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society" (LIOM 138-139). Because the family is so foundational to society, public authority has "the duty to protect and serve the family" (LIOM 138). However, as the attempt is made to redefine marriage as simply a matter of personal preference, and as a contract between people, the family must also be redefined. This is causing great confusion, especially among young people. Rather than support the family as a foundational unit that builds society and the state, the state now claims to supervise the family and even to decide what comprises marriage and the family unit. Instead of the nature of a man, a woman, and the children they procreate defining marriage and the family, the state (conceding to pressure from various groups) is trying to create a new definition of marriage and family. **In order to protect families, marriages, and children, it is necessary to resist this movement to give the state the power to redefine and reconstruct marriage and the family.**

7. Conclusion & Reinforcement Closure:

"When the true nature of marriage is undermined or poorly understood," when it is misunderstood or challenged, "the family is weakened. When the family is weak," we are more easily tempted to give in to selfishness, and we "lose the habit of Christ's gentleness" (LIOM 144). **In a strong family, the husband, wife, and children practice the self-giving love modeled on the love of Christ in his passion, death and resur-**

rection. When families are strong in this way, “then light enters a dark world. In this light [provided by strong families], the true nature of humanity can be seen. That is why the Church resists the shadows [of poverty, affluence, pornography, contraception, and philosophical mistakes that threaten the family]” (LIOM 144). All of the Church’s teachings about marriage, the family and sexuality flow from Jesus. It is not always easy to follow them, just as it is not always easy to be a disciple of Jesus. Don’t forget that Jesus himself was crucified for our sins, but in three days he rose again! **We have the promise of the resurrection. It is true that these teachings require sacrifice on our part, but they also will help us to be the virtuous people that God called us to be. They will open up new opportunities for beauty and human flourishing. They will help us to be truly human.**

8. Closing Prayer:

Re-read Matthew 5:14-16.

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

Lord Jesus, through you we have the promise of the resurrection. It is true that these teachings require sacrifice on our part, but they also will help us to be the virtuous people that God called us to be. They will open up new opportunities for beauty and human flourishing. They will help us to be truly human. Help us, Lord, to protect our families and to bring light to the world. Amen.

ADAPTATIONS

If your time is limited:

Go through the evaluation questions (below) together as a class and teach the concepts while discussing and answering the questions. Note that the sentences in bold are the key points of the lesson. These sentences will help to answer the evaluation questions.

OR Read the entire lesson yourself, but use the *Lesson 7 Handout* with the class. This handout has most of the bold sentences (giving the key points of the lesson). Then, answer the evaluation questions together.

EVALUATION

Answer the following questions (from LIOM Part VII Questions for Discussion) either through a class dialogue or through journal reflections.

1. Explain the connections between the Church’s care for the poor and the Church’s teaching about sex and chastity.
2. What is the difference between contraception and Natural Family Planning?
3. What is the common denominator between divorce, contraception, and same-sex

marriage?

4. Many people think they know what Catholics are against. How would you explain what the Church is for?
5. What challenges to chastity exist in your community, and where should a person in your parish go to learn about the Church's perspective?

Begin brainstorming and making a list of ideas for the assignment under the section "Bringing the Lesson Home to the Family" (see below). What are some practical ways that your family can be a light in the midst of a dark world? Make a list of things you can do together as a family to promote growth in mutual respect, compassion, and love.

BRINGING THE LESSON HOME TO THE FAMILY

How can your family be a light in the midst of a dark world? Make a list of things you can do together as a family to promote growth in mutual respect, compassion, and love. Discuss your ideas with your parents. It could be something as simple as a family game night, a special family dinner, or helping the poor by performing a service project together as a family. Remember that these activities may require sacrifice and self-giving love, but that is what makes a family strong.

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

[Courage](#)

Courage is an apostolate of the Catholic Church that ministers to persons with same-sex attraction and their family and friends.

[The Third Way: Homosexuality and the Catholic Church](#)

Blackstone Films, 2014

This documentary presents the Church's teaching on homosexuality in a way that can be received by contemporary audiences. It shows how the Church's teaching is based on both truth and love.

[Bought With A Price](#)

Pastoral letter of Most Rev. Paul S. Loverde, 2014

This letter confronts the contemporary prevalence of pornography and provides four clear arguments on its dangers, concluding with a meditation on the gift of sight.



Grades 9 – 12 LESSON 7 HANDOUT

Light in a Dark World

Bible Reference: Matthew 5:14-16

INTRODUCTION:

All of us want a healthy family now and a healthy family if we get married and begin our own new families. The family teaches us what it means to be truly human, and in this way, the family enlightens us. However, poverty, affluence, pornography, contraception, and philosophical mistakes darken the truth about the family. We are going to look at each of these areas of darkness and discuss how they threaten the family, and how the family can pierce the darkness by bringing light to the world.

OPENING PRAYER:

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16, RSVCE).

PROCLAMATION:

In a strong family, the husband, wife, and children practice the self-giving love modeled on the love of Christ in his passion, death and resurrection. In the light provided by strong families, the true nature of humanity is visible.

DARKNESS AND LIGHT:

1. **Being poor can harm families but so can being rich.** Why? Poverty makes stable marriages and families difficult to support. At the same time, stable marriages and families help to *overcome* poverty. We must care for the poor and help families become healthy and strong. "Strong marriages and families create hope, and hope leads to purpose and achievement" (LIOM 116). Just as poverty can be a threat to healthy families, so can affluence and an abundance of wealth, but this is a much more subtle threat. Living in such a perpetual marketplace can tempt us to think that if we want something, and we can afford it, then we are entitled to it. This is a destructive mentality because it makes us slaves to our desires and passions.
2. **Pornography makes us begin to see other people as objects** that satisfy our desires, rather than as human persons. Pornography makes sex a commodity, a product to satisfy our desires. Pornography is especially destructive because it can seem so private, but it has serious effects on other people. Pornography can attack the voca-

tions of priests and religious who are called to live a celibate life. Pornography can lead to broken marriages because the person has conditioned himself or herself to see the spouse as an object to gratify sexual desires, leading to broken families and even greater evils, such as human trafficking.

3. **“Contraception also leads us to see sexual desire as an entitlement”**(LIOM 122), something to which we all have a right. In the use of contraception, “sexual desires [can be] treated as entitlements, or desires that can never be postponed” (LIOM 126). Sexual intimacy should be an expression of personal love between the spouses, and therefore a responsible mastery of human sexuality is needed. With both pornography and contraception, true freedom is diminished.

If, because of serious physical, economic, psychological, or social reasons, a couple ought not have children for a time, these couples “need teachers, mentors, and friends who can train and support them in using **natural family planning** (NFP)” (LIOM 128), which requires them to sacrifice their short term sexual desires in order to fulfill God’s call in their lives as a married couple. Unlike contraception, NFP leads couples to “communication and self-mastery” (LIOM 130). Through the practice of NFP, men and women “learn to treat a spouse with generosity and fidelity” (LIOM 130).

4. **Redefining marriage.** Through the use of contraception, sex is separated from the procreation of children, and therefore, contraception encourages a culture that views marriage as only an emotional and sexual companionship. When marriage is seen only as a means of sexual or emotional fulfillment, divorces and same-sex unions seem to be acceptable. In order to protect families, marriages, and children, it is necessary to resist this movement to give the state the power to redefine and reconstruct marriage and the family.

CONNECTION:

How can your family be a light in the midst of a dark world? Make a list of things you can do together as a family to promote growth in mutual respect, compassion, and love. Discuss your ideas with your parents, or ask them what they think. It could be something as simple as a family game night, a special family dinner, or helping the poor by performing a service project together as a family. Remember that these activities may require sacrifice and self-giving love, but that is what makes a family strong.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, through you we have the promise of the resurrection. It is true that these teachings require sacrifice on our part, but they also will help us to be the virtuous people that God called us to be. They will open up new opportunities for beauty and human flourishing. They will help us to be truly human. Help us, Lord, to protect our families and to bring light to the world. Amen.

Grades 9 – 12

LESSON 8: A HOME FOR THE WOUNDED HEART

Note: While this lesson conveys the content of the preparatory catechesis, teachers and catechists may need to adapt the language and methodology of the lesson out of sensitivity to issues and circumstances the students may be facing.

LESSON OVERVIEW

“Many people, especially today, face painful situations resulting from poverty, disability, illness and addictions, unemployment, and the loneliness of advanced age. But divorce and same-sex attraction impact the intimate life of the family in especially powerful ways. Christian families and networks of families should be sources of mercy, safety, friendship and support for those struggling with these issues” (Preparatory Catechesis for the VIII World Meeting of Families, *Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive*, Introduction to Part VIII).

OBJECTIVES

Students will

1. Reflect on the story of the Good Samaritan as the ideal response to those who are wounded and as Christ’s response to us
2. See that Christ is the Good Samaritan and that the Church (through Christ) and all of its members are called to be like the Good Samaritan to all those who are wounded or hurting in any way
3. Explain what it means to love a neighbor whom they or others do not “like”, a neighbor who is not living a Christian life, or a neighbor who is going through a difficult time

MATERIALS

Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive (Part VIII), image of the painting *The Good Samaritan* by Vincent van Gogh, Bible

PROCEDURE

1. Gathering Activity:

Display for students Van Gogh’s *The Good Samaritan* (without displaying the name of the painting). See if they can identify what is happening before you tell them the title of the painting or remind them of the parable.

2. Opening Prayer:

Read the story of the Good Samaritan from Luke 10:29-37.

“But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’ Jesus replied, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed mercy on him.' And Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'"

Jesus, we thank you for teaching us through the example of the Good Samaritan. We ask for your help that we might be a Good Samaritan when we see people who have been wounded. We also ask that you would provide many people whose hearts are full of love for all those who are hurting. Fill our hearts with love that we might overflow with love for others. Amen.

3. Motivator:

- a. Ask students to look at the painting and to identify the aspects of the Bible passage that they recognize (*examples: the Good Samaritan, the wounded man, the "animal" onto which the wounded man is being lifted, the treasure box of wine and oil opened, the two men walking down the path*).
- b. Which character in the parable represents Jesus? (*Traditionally, Jesus is seen as represented either in the Good Samaritan [because Jesus picks us up when we are beaten down], or in the man beaten by the robbers [because Jesus was beaten and crucified by sinners].*)
- c. Which character in the parable represents us? (*Traditionally, we are represented in the man beaten up by robbers [because we are wounded not only by our own sin and selfishness but also by the sin and selfishness of others], or in the Good Samaritan [because when we care for those who need mercy, we are like the Good Samaritan].*)
- d. The Good Samaritan seems to have gone through much effort to take care of the man beaten up: caring for his wounds, putting him on his animal, taking him to the inn, caring for him at the inn, and planning on coming back to the inn again. Why are all these details in the parable? (*To show how much Jesus cares for us and how much we are to care for others.*)

4. Introduction:

- a. A Good Samaritan of the 20th Century: Share with students the life of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta. She is a Good Samaritan; she is like Jesus. She was able to care for people who were overlooked and abandoned by others. Choose one of the following options:
 - Show this [10 minute video](#) from Fr. James Martin, S.J. (or another video) to introduce her life.
 - OR read with them a brief biographical excerpt such as [this one from the Vatican website](#).

- b. After the above, begin a further discussion. How are Mother Teresa and the Missionaries of Charity like the Good Samaritan? (For example, you can add the additional fact that Mother Teresa also began a hospice for AIDS patients in New York in 1985. Her response to the AIDS epidemic was to care for the wounded bodies and souls of the people with AIDS).
- Who would Mother Teresa want to care for at your high school? In your parish? In your city? In your family?
 - How is Mother Teresa like Jesus?
 - Mother Teresa was a very active member of the Catholic Church. She lived like Jesus, like the Good Samaritan. How can the Church and we as members of the Church be Good Samaritans?

5. Content & Key Points:

Continue the discussion centering on the following four points.

- a. Jesus is known for giving us "hard sayings". Can you think of examples of these "hard sayings" from the Scriptures? Answers/discussion could include the following:
- The hard saying about the Eucharist, that we must eat his flesh and drink his blood to have eternal life.
 - Some of Christ's hardest sayings deal with marriage, sexual desire and the family. Jesus' teaching about the indissolubility of marriage shocks not only the Pharisees but his own followers: 'If that is the case...it is better not to marry,' murmur the disciples. (Mt 19:10)
 - In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus not only deepens the teaching of the Decalogue, but, as the New Moses, he calls his followers to a radical transformation of their hearts: 'You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you everyone who looks at a woman in lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart' (Mt 5:27-28)" (LIOM 147).
 - Why doesn't Jesus just change his teaching? "The Church continues the mission of Jesus in the world. 'Whoever listens to you, listens to me,'... Thus it should surprise no one that some Church teachings are also perceived as 'hard sayings,' out of step with current culture especially on marriage, sexual expression, and the family" (LIOM 149).
 - Jesus said, "I am the Truth" (cf. John 14:6) and "The truth will set you free" (John 8:32). Can you think of a time that you or someone you know experienced the truth setting them free? The truths Jesus gives us set us free, even though some of them are very difficult.
 - When human beings don't live according to the truth about themselves and others, it leads to people being wounded. A child is wounded when parents don't respect the truth and so physically abuse that child. A person is wounded in a car accident when others don't respect the truth and drink and drive. A person is wounded when they don't respect the truth and abuse drugs and become addicted. "Men, women, and children can be wounded by promiscuous sexual behavior (their own and that of oth-

ers), pornography and other forms of objectification, rape, prostitution and human trafficking, divorce, and the fear of commitment created by an increasingly post-marriage culture... broken relationships within the family leave bitterly painful injuries" (LIOM 151).

- We are the wounded ones. Jesus' grace is greater than all our wounds and all our sins. He wants to come and bind up our wounds and take care of us. Where does he come to us especially? Through the Church.

b. "The Church is a field hospital" (LIOM 150-157)

- To explain the Church's mission, Pope Francis explained that the Church is like "a field hospital after battle." The Church is full of wounded people and invites all who are wounded to come and receive care and healing. In this field hospital, the Holy Father says: "It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars! You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds....And you have to start from the ground up" (LIOM 150).
- "Starting from the ground up" means starting from an encounter with Christ—letting Christ take care of you, letting Christ take care of the other wounded person you know. Saint Augustine explains: Christ is the Good Samaritan, the "Divine Physician," and the inn is the Church. It is within the Church that Christ can spend more time with each person, healing them.
- So that every person could encounter Jesus Christ, God established the Church. The Church has one purpose: "that each person may be able to find Christ, in order that Christ may walk with each person the path of life" (LIOM 156). The Church is "a house of healing where the wounded can recover under the care of Christ" (LIOM 154).

c. "With patience and forgiveness, the Church helps us heal and grow" (LIOM 158-163)

- We know that Jesus is the Good Samaritan. He is full of patience and forgiveness. He pours oil and wine on our wounds. What do you think the oil and wine symbolize? (The sacraments of Confession and Eucharist; the "healing power of God's grace...the Holy Spirit...the Word of God...the sacramental life...a life of prayer" [LIOM 159].)
- Notice how the Good Samaritan, Jesus, does not heal us instantly. He allows the healing to take place gradually. He first comes to us when we are wounded by sin, then he begins to heal us, and we begin to recover. In the process of recovery what happens? (We begin to go to the sacraments, to pray more, to love others more, to be accountable to others and to receive support from friends. As we "recover from the wounds of sin," we "grow in holiness in every area of [our] lives, including [our] sexuality" [LIOM 160].)
- The same Jesus who challenges us to live the hard sayings shows us

his mercy. He says to the woman caught in adultery: "Has no one condemned you?... Neither do I condemn you. Go and do not sin anymore" (John 8:10-11). In the same way, he wants to welcome us, forgive us, heal us, but he does not want us to sin anymore. This is his attitude toward us and every single sinner, no matter how far away they may be from him. His mercy gives us the strength to live according to the truth he gives us. He doesn't change the truth or water it down. He stays with us, giving us the strength to live it out. He stays with us especially through the Church and the members of the Church.

- d. Living "Catholic teaching depends upon Catholic community" (LIOM 164-173)
- Jesus' teachings are challenging, and so he gives us a Catholic community to help us live them. We help each other to follow Jesus more and more closely. We support and encourage each other. We even correct each other and hold each other up. Together we live as friends of Jesus. We "confess that he is Lord" and we want "his grace to shape [our] lives," so we help "each other respond to him" (LIOM 164). We need other people. This is why Jesus, the Good Samaritan, takes us to the inn of the Church.
 - Just as Jesus welcomes into the Church those who struggle with same-sex attraction, he wants them to be welcomed in the Church by others so that they can thrive there and find the support and love they need. Every single Christian is called not only to "shun unjust discrimination" but also to "to face their disordered sexual inclinations and to grow in chastity" (LIOM 165). No Christian is exempt from this call to turn away from misusing sexuality and to turn toward loving chastely. In a family, parish, and Christian community where there is mutual support, hospitality, and genuine friendship, this struggle of all Christians together is made both easier and more joyful.
 - Jesus teaches us about the indissolubility of marriage, but mercy is "at the heart of his ministry" (LIOM 168). So, we Catholics are to show those who are divorced and remarried the love and acceptance Jesus wants them to receive. Pope Benedict XVI pleaded with us to care for the divorced and remarried:

I see here a great task for a parish, a Catholic community, to do whatever is possible to help [divorced men and women] to feel loved and accepted, to feel that they are not "excluded"...This is very important, so that they see that they are accompanied and guided....They need to realize that this suffering is not just a physical or psychological pain, but something that is experienced within the Church community for the sake of the great values of our faith. I am convinced that their suffering, if truly accepted from within, is a gift to the Church. They need to know this, to realize that this is their way of serving the Church; that they are in the heart of the Church (quoted in LIOM 168).

- In the Church, no one should be alone. Jesus calls each of us to live a life of integrity, chaste love, nobility, holiness, and even heroism. There are members of the Church who live heroic lives (for instance, those who persevere in difficult family situations or difficult marriages). We owe them much gratitude. Their example encourages us. As we grow in love, patience, and holiness, we help each other on this road of the Christian life—we “bear one another’s burdens” (cf. Galatians 6:2), help each other to carry our crosses, “accompany each other in the work of spiritual growth...not [giving] in to frustrations or fears” (LIOM 171), allow ourselves to be healed and thus “extend the invitation of healing to others” (LIOM 171) by drawing them to Jesus and his Church. Friendship and community—relying on and helping each other—make the fullness of a holy Christian life possible and lovable.

6. Conclusion & Reinforcement Closure::

Return to the picture of the Good Samaritan. Ask the students to write a journal entry reflecting on this question:

In what ways did this discussion lead you to see Jesus, the Church, and yourself in a different light?

7. Closing Prayer:

Lord, we thank you that you love us in the moments when we are most wounded. Thank you for picking us up to heal us and for allowing us to reach out to others so that you might heal them too. Amen.

ADAPTATIONS

If your time is limited:

Omit as many of the following as needed: the detailed discussion of the Good Samaritan; the video; and the Conclusion & Reinforcement Closure.

EVALUATION

Read the journal entries.

BRINGING THE LESSON HOME TO THE FAMILY

The Church is a communion of love with Jesus Christ at the center. Your family is a domestic church, “a little home church.” What can you do to build up the love and friendship between the members of your family? Do something concrete (for instance, make a family-building event possible, whether it is a dinner, an outing, or a group conversation). Or, do something concrete that gets your family more involved in your parish. It would be excellent if you as a family could somehow extend hospitality to those who may feel on the fringes of the parish community.

**SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES**

Find a book about Mother Teresa or do an internet search for quotes from her. She offers simple, straightforward advice on loving people with the love of Christ.

Grades 9 – 12

LESSON 9: MOTHER, TEACHER, FAMILY: THE NATURE AND ROLE OF THE CHURCH

Note: While this lesson conveys the content of the preparatory catechesis, teachers and catechists may need to adapt the language and methodology of the lesson out of sensitivity to issues and circumstances the students may be facing.

LESSON OVERVIEW

“The Church has institutional forms because she must work in the world. But that does not exhaust her essence. The Church is the Bride of Christ, a ‘she,’ not an ‘it.’ In the words of Saint John XXIII, she is our mother and teacher; our comforter and guide; our family of faith. Even when her people and leaders sin, we still need the Church’s wisdom, sacraments, support and proclamation of the truth, because she is the body of Jesus himself in the world; the family of God’s people writ large” (Preparatory Catechesis for the VIII World Meeting of Families, *Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive*, Introduction to Part IX).

OBJECTIVES

Students will

1. Identify and describe the Church as both bride and mother
2. Discuss how the Church can be holy even when her members are sinful
3. Explain why the Church, as a mother, is compelled to teach the truth
4. Recognize that the grace received in the Sacrament of Marriage gives the married couple the strength and courage they need to witness to the truth in their married and family life

MATERIALS

Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive (Part IX), Bible, paper and pens, *Lesson 9 Handout*

PROCEDURE (45 MINUTES)

1. Preparation:

Read and prepare the lesson content before the class begins. Note that the sentences in bold are the main ideas and key points of the lesson. These sentences will help to answer the evaluation questions at the end of the lesson.

2. Opening Prayer:

Read Revelation 21:2-4.

“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any

more, for the former things have passed away.”

3. Pre-Assessment (See *Lesson 9 Handout*):

There are many different images and descriptions of the Church. How would you describe the Catholic Church? What are some images or descriptions of the Church that you have heard or read?

4. Motivator:

When you were baptized, you became a member of the Church. What does that mean? What exactly is the Church? What does it mean to say that you are a member of the Church? What difference does that make in your life? Throughout this lesson, we will find the answers to these questions. We will discuss how amazing the Church is and how blessed we are to belong to her. (See *Lesson 9 Handout*)

5. OPTIONAL Opening Activity:

(Use this activity if you have 10 additional minutes or more)

- a. Write these true-or-false statements on the board, along with the heading:

TRUE or FALSE?

- The Church is best described as a building.
- The Church is a man-made institution.
- The Church is the Body of Christ.
- The Church is the Bride of Christ.
- The Church is our mother.

- b. Discuss each together and why they are either true or false. Why are the last three accurate images of the Church? Then, focus in on the image of the Church as mother:

- The world gives us many conflicting images of “mother.” Think of the fairy tales you encountered as a child. There is the “fairy godmother.” How would you describe her? There is the “wicked step mother.” How would you describe her? How would you describe simply “a mother”?
- We are aware of all that is tied up with the ideal of truly being a “mother.” The Blessed Virgin Mary is a perfect mother, and so is the Church. Mother is one of main images given to us for understanding the Church. How? Why? Sometimes we hear or see people characterizing the Church more as a wicked step-mother forcing rules on us. But, this is not the type of mother the Church is.
- It would better for us to look to the example of another holy mother who was first and foremost a daughter of Mother Church: Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Father Robert Barron (in his *Catholicism* series) tells this story: Mother Teresa took a starving child with her into a bakery and asked the baker for a loaf of bread for the starving child. The baker looked at Mother Teresa, and instead of giving her bread, spat in her face. Mother Teresa did not get angry or look away but said, “Thank you for that gift for me; now do you have any bread for the child?”

- This is what it means to be a mother! To care for the needs of the children even when it is messy. We know the Church is sometimes messy, but she is our mother, looking out for our needs, picking us up when we are dying on the streets and tending our wounds.
- When Mother Teresa died, there was an outpouring of gratitude for her. Countless people were touched by her example of strong motherly love. We too need to show our gratitude for all that the Church—our Mother has given and continues to give to us.

6. Content & Key Points:

- a. There are many images and descriptions of the Church in the Bible and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. **The Church has always been described in feminine terms, as a “she,” and not simply an “it.”** The relationship of the People of God to Christ is that of a bride to a bridegroom (cf. CCC 796). **The Church is the Bride of Christ, but the Church is also described as a mother (cf. CCC 796, 757).** Baptism is a sacrament of the Church. Through baptism “the Church, ... Christ’s Virgin Bride, gives birth to sons and daughters who are... ‘born of water and the Spirit’ (John 3:5)” (LIOM 174). The People of God are born from the waters of baptism (cf. LIOM 175). This Body of Christ, the Church, is not limited to certain nations, cultures, races and sexes. **We are all baptized into the body of Christ and we become sons and daughters of the Church and therefore we have a new identity. This new identity goes beyond nature—it is supernatural. The Church has both earthly and heavenly aspects. She is a visible society in this world, but she is a society that is not defined by anything that is of this world.** This new identity we have as members of the Church transcends all the natural and earthly ways that human beings identify themselves. It does not matter how old or young we are, how smart we are, what nationality we are, how efficient, organized, or virtuous we are. The Church is not defined by, or limited to, any human qualities. **In becoming a son or daughter of the Church through baptism, we receive a great gift, a new identity in Christ. This is a gift that can only come from Christ and his Church. It is not a gift that we can give ourselves.**
- b. The Church was created because of the love of Christ the Bridegroom: **“The Church is born... [from] Christ’s total self-giving [love and sacrifice] for our salvation....** As Eve was formed from the sleeping Adam’s side, so the Church was born from the pierced heart of Christ hanging dead on the cross” (LIOM 177). **What makes the Church holy is the self-giving love of Christ.** Just as the Church was born from the total “self-giving love of Christ.... [so] when we are born of the Church as of our Mother, we are [also] born of this love of Christ. This love [of Christ] gives the Church her identity, not as one nation, or grouping or club..., but as **the “Bride,” the “Spouse,” who is “one flesh” with Christ, and so one Body** (LIOM 178). The book of Genesis states that a husband and wife are united and become “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). **The Church is the Bride of Christ, so she becomes “one flesh” with Christ her**

Bridegroom, and therefore she is also the Body of Christ because she is “one flesh” with him.

- c. Each Sunday when we pray the Creed, we acknowledge that the Church is holy. What does this mean? How can the Church be holy when not all her members are holy? We are all sinful human beings, so how can the Church be holy if we are sons and daughters of the Church? **When we say that the Church is holy, we are not ignoring the sinfulness of her members. “Her holiness is the holiness of Christ, her Spouse” and her Head (LIOM 177). Because of sin, the members of the Church are in constant need of purification and renewal. The love of Christ purifies us and “the Church... is always being transformed in Christ’s love until Christ is fully formed in all of us” (LIOM 179).** It is only Christ’s love that makes the Church perfect. Her holiness does not depend on the holiness of her members, or even her ministers. **Because the Church comes from the love of Christ, any sinfulness in the Church cannot take away her identity or her holiness. Even sinfulness in priests, bishops, or other leaders of the Church cannot lessen her holiness. Why? Because the holiness and “identity of the Church does not come from...us. It comes from Christ” (LIOM 181). In the Old Testament, God was faithful to his covenant with the chosen people of Israel even when they sinned. “God’s covenant [faithfulness] applies also to the Church. [In this way, the Church is a kind of miracle because] the love of Christ that defines her cannot be erased by any sin of her members” (LIOM 181).**
- d. We have already mentioned that the Church is our mother and through baptism we are made her sons and daughters. As a mother she gives us a new identity in the love and holiness of Christ. **As a mother, she also has the responsibility to teach us and form us into this new identity we have received.** Think of some of the things your own mother has taught you. What are some of the rules and guidelines she has made for you? She made those rules to help and protect you. A mother may have a rule that her young children are not allowed to play in the street. The children may not understand the rule, and they may feel that the rule is unfair and that it is taking away their freedom. In reality, the rule is allowing the children to be truly free by protecting them and keeping them safe so that they don’t get hit by a car. It is the same way with the Church. **The Church is a good mother who provides us with rules and guidelines to protect us and keep us safe from evil and slavery to sin. In this way, our mother the Church helps us to be truly free.**
- e. The Church teaches us and forms us through her teaching authority. **“The teaching authority of the Church serves the whole people of God by preserving the truth of the Gospel [and] all of the moral teachings revealed... in the Gospel that nurture human freedom. These [truths preserved and taught by the Church, our mother, include] the dignity of human persons, the goodness of creation, [and] the nobility of the married state [as] a life-giv-**

ing communion of love” (LIOM 184). There may be many sins against these truths and the dignity they proclaim, but that is simply a sign that the Church must continue to proclaim these truths even more urgently. **The members of the Church should proclaim these truths even while at the same time they may need to seek purification, penance, and renewal.** The members of the Church do not have to be perfectly holy in order to proclaim the truths of the Gospel. **We don’t have to wait for perfect people to be created before we can believe in the Church. We can believe in the Church because we believe in Jesus, and the Church comes from Jesus, from His loving sacrifice on the cross for our salvation.**

- f. **Christian married couples and families have a key role in proclaiming these truths.** These truths are best proclaimed in lives that are continually transformed by the love the couple received in the sacrament of marriage and which continues to define their communion as husband and wife. Marriage and family life can be difficult, but that is why marriage is a sacrament. **Married couples need grace, the grace that comes from the sacrament. The grace given in the Sacrament of Marriage gives the married couple the strength and courage they will need for their married and family life.** Pope Francis once remarked that, “Christians celebrate the Sacrament of Marriage because they know they need it!” (LIOM 185). **Christian spouses need grace in order to be strong witnesses and to bring light to the world. People will listen to Christian families if they not only proclaim the truth, but actually live and witness to the truth.** We are all called to live out the truths that we proclaim. Christian spouses are called to be the kind of teachers who teach by the witness of their lives as they follow the truth that is taught to us by the Church, our mother.

7. Conclusion & Reinforcement Closure:

It is true that “[t]he Church is an institution, but [she] is always [so much] more than an institution. She is a mother, a bride, a body, a family and a covenant. All the baptized are her sons and daughters, giving Christians our most fundamental... identity, [a new identity in Christ]. Just [as] our... sinfulness never erases our creation in God’s image and our membership in God’s family, [so also, our sinfulness] does not erase the Church’s holiness,” because her holiness is the holiness of Jesus (LIOM 188). The Church has a secure foundation in the love of Christ, from which she receives her very essence and identity. As a mother, the Church has the responsibility to preach the Gospel for the sake of all mankind. As members of the Church, we must seek continual penance and renewal as we strive to proclaim the Gospel through the witness of our lives.

8. Closing Prayer (See Lesson 9 Handout):

Jesus, please give Christian married couples and Christian families the strength and courage they need to be faithful witnesses to your love. We especially ask this for our own families. Help us to become convincing teachers of the truth to all those we meet.

ADAPTATIONS

If your time is limited:

Use the *Lesson 9 Handout* which contains the main ideas and key points of the lesson. Go through the evaluation questions together as a class and teach the concepts while discussing and answering the questions.

EVALUATION

Answer the following questions (of which *a – c* are from LIOM Part IX Questions for Discussion) aloud or as a journal reflection.

1. How is the Church a mother?
2. How does God's covenant protect us, even when we sin?
3. Everyone sins, even Catholic leaders. Why do we say that the Church is holy anyway?
4. What does Jesus want us to do when members of the Church fail to live according to the truths of the Gospel?
5. Begin brainstorming and making a list of ideas for the assignment under the section "Bringing the Lesson Home to the Family" (see below). List some of the ways in which your family is already an active witness to the truth, and list some aspects of your family life that might be in need of renewal.

BRINGING THE LESSON HOME TO THE FAMILY

Option 1: Do something to thank your parents for their witness to faithful married life and an active family life. You could do one of the following or come up with your own idea: write them a card, prepare them a breakfast in bed, cook a special dinner, or offer special prayers or sacrifices for them. Let them know what you are expressing gratitude for in this way.

Option 2: At the dinner table (or at another family gathering time), discuss with your family how the Church can have sinners and be holy at the same time. Use what you've learned in this lesson to unpack this mystery with your family members. You may also want to discuss how you as a family can take a more active part in sharing the Gospel with others in your parish or larger community.

Grades 9 – 12 LESSON 9 HANDOUT

Mother, Teacher, Family: The Nature and Role of the Church

Bible Reference: Revelation 21:2-4

INTRODUCTION:

When you were baptized, you became a member of the Church. What does that mean? What exactly is the Church? What does it mean to say that you are a member of the Church? What difference does that make in your life? Throughout this lesson, we will find the answers to these questions. We will discuss how amazing the Church is and how blessed we are to belong to her.

OPENING PRAYER:

“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away’” (Revelation 21:2-4).

APPLICATION:

1. There are many different images and descriptions of the Church. How would you describe the Catholic Church?
2. What are some images or descriptions of the Church that you have heard or read?

EXPLANATION:

1. **The Church is the mother of the faithful.** The Church has always been described in feminine terms, as a “she,” and not simply an “it.” “She is a mother, a bride, a body, a family and a covenant. All the baptized are her sons and daughters, giving Christians our most fundamental... identity, [a new identity in Christ]” (LIOM 188). This is a gift that can only come from Christ and his Church, not a gift that we can give ourselves. The Church is born from Christ’s self-giving love and total sacrifice for our salvation. What makes the Church holy is the self-giving love of Christ.
2. **How can the Church be holy when not all her members are holy?** When we say that the Church is holy, we are not ignoring the sinfulness of her members. “Her holiness is the holiness of Christ, her Spouse” and her Head (LIOM 177). The love of Christ purifies us and “the Church... is always being transformed in Christ’s love until Christ is fully formed in all of us” (LIOM 179). Because the Church comes from the love of Christ, any sinfulness in the Church cannot take away her identity or her holiness. Even sinfulness in priests, bishops, or other leaders of the Church cannot lessen her holiness. Why? Because the holiness and “identity of the Church does not come from...us. It comes

from Christ” (LIOM 181). In the Old Testament, God was faithful to his covenant with the chosen people of Israel even when they sinned. “God’s covenant [faithfulness] applies also to the Church. [In this way, the Church is a kind of miracle because] the love of Christ that defines her cannot be erased by any sin of her members” (LIOM 181).

3. **A good mother teaches her children, as the Church teaches believers.** The Church is a good mother who provides us with rules and guidelines to protect us and keep us safe from evil and slavery to sin. In this way, our mother the Church helps us to be truly free. “The teaching authority of the Church [the Magisterium] serves the whole people of God by preserving the truth of the Gospel [and] all of the moral teachings revealed... in the Gospel that nurture human freedom. These truths... [include] the dignity of human persons, the goodness of creation, [and] the nobility of the married state [as] a life-giving communion of love” (LIOM 184). The members of the Church should proclaim these truths even while they need to seek purification, penance, and renewal. We don’t have to wait for perfect people to be created before we can believe in the Church. We can believe in the Church because we believe in Jesus, and the Church comes from Jesus, from His loving sacrifice on the cross for our salvation.
4. **Christian families have a key role in proclaiming Gospel truths.** Married couples need grace, the grace that comes from the sacrament. The grace given in the sacrament of marriage gives the married couple the strength and courage they will need for their married and family life. Pope Francis once remarked that, “Christians celebrate the sacrament of marriage because they know they need it!” (LIOM 185). Christian spouses need grace in order to be strong witnesses and to bring light to the world. People will listen to Christian families if they not only proclaim the truth, but actually live and witness to the truth.

LIVING THE LESSON:

Option 1: Do something to thank your parents for their witness to faithful married life and an active family life. You could do one of the following or come up with your own idea: write them a card, prepare them a breakfast in bed, cook a special dinner, or, offer special prayers or sacrifices for them. Let them know what you are expressing gratitude for in this way.

Option 2: At the dinner table (or at another family gathering time), discuss with your family how the Church can have sinners and be holy at the same time. Use what you’ve learned in this lesson to unpack this mystery with your family members. You may also want to discuss how you as a family can take a more active part in sharing the Gospel with others in your parish or larger community.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Jesus, please give Christian married couples and Christian families the strength and courage they need to be faithful witnesses to your love. We especially ask this for our own families. Help us to become convincing teachers of the truth to all those we meet. Amen.

Grades 9 – 12

LESSON 10: CHOOSING LIFE

Note: While this lesson conveys the content of the preparatory catechesis, teachers and catechists may need to adapt the language and methodology of the lesson out of sensitivity to issues and circumstances the students may be facing.

LESSON OVERVIEW

“God made us for a reason. His love is our life mission. This mission changes our identity. If we choose to embrace this mission, we will have a new perspective on many issues, not just the family. To live the mission of the domestic church means that Catholic families will sometimes live as minorities, with different values than their surrounding culture. Our mission of love will require courage and fortitude. Jesus is calling, and we can respond, choosing lives of hope, joy, service, and mission” (Preparatory Catechesis for the VIII World Meeting of Families, *Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive*, Introduction to Part X).

OBJECTIVES

Students will

1. State how the mission of the family can impact all aspects of everyday life
2. List ways that Christian families can be an effective, creative minority in societies that are not Christian
3. Articulate the missionary call for each Christian family to build up the Church
4. Show the vocation of each Christian family to take part in spreading life and love throughout the world

MATERIALS

Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive (Part X), bulletin board or space to post photos, push pins or other means to display photos, whiteboard (or poster board/butcher paper as a substitute), marker, slips of blank paper for each student, pencils or pens, image or statue of Mary, *Lesson 10 Handout*, internet connection, means of viewing online videos together

PROCEDURE (50 MINUTES)

1. Preparation:

Ask students to bring in a photo of themselves and/or a photo of their family (either immediate or extended). Prepare a space to display photos, including the heading: “The Family: Where Christians Choose Life.” Post the students’ family photos here. Place a cross or an image of Mary at the center of the photo display.

2. Introduction (See *Lesson 10 Handout*):

The family of faith—“[t]he domestic church—is not an abstract concept. It is a reality, a vocation and a mission, founded on the Sacrament of Marriage. [This vocation to faithful family life] is being lived by many [today]. Christ is still calling: Christian families, the

Church needs you; the world needs you" (LIOM 205).

3. Opening Prayer (See Lesson 10 Handout):

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him" (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

4. Pre-Assessment (See Lesson 10 Handout):

Ask the students to answer the following questions on a slip of paper or in a journal:

- a. Has anyone made a difference in this world, helping it become a place more filled with love, hope, joy, and service?
- b. Can I make a real difference in the world?
- c. How can I choose life that will help me and my descendants?

5. Motivator:

Think about your younger siblings or younger children you babysit. They are probably familiar with this story as you also may be.

The Parr family, in the movie, *The Incredibles* (2004), has a mission to carry out in the world. To make their marriage work, Helen tells Bob he has to be more than incredible. He has to give himself to her and to their children. At first they live in hiding, a creative minority of the population. Later, they serve the society by using their gifts together to get rid of Syndrome's rocket. Their life and love in their family built up their society. *Why do kids love this movie? What spiritual messages about marriage and family might they receive from this movie (even though they can't articulate them)?*

6. Content & Key Points (See Lesson 10 Handout):

- a. *"Our mission for the whole of life"* (LIOM 189-191)

The love of families can affect the world. God made us for a reason, to live each aspect of life in God's love. God's love is this, that we keep His commandments. By restraining the use of our bodies and using the material world around us as befits stewards of God's love, we know how to approach questions of ecology, technology and medicine with renewed humility. Since God is love, and love is stronger than death, we can stand with those who grieve or hurt. Since all humans are made in the image of God, each has dignity beyond compare, so we love and value every person, even those who are dependent on others. So this catechesis on the family is for the whole of life, not just one "compartment" of it.

- b. *"Living as a creative minority"* (LIOM 192-196)

Christian families can contribute to every society. As "Christendom" fades, Christians are learning to live as a creative religious minority, like Christians in Africa or Asia. Though a minority, we are still able to be creative, active members of society, gathering "to seek the common good together" (LIOM 193). Jews

have always done this in every age and society. Daniel and his Jewish friends served the pagan king of Babylon, and were helpful to him “in so far as they remained faithful Jews” (LIOM 194) in diet, belief, and worship. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego “knew how to be in a particular social world but not of it,” (LIOM 195) not compromising even when their fidelity to God led to the lions’ den and the fiery furnace. Catholics in this age are founded on God’s creative and sustaining love “the same love which animates our marriages, our families, our homes and our Church” (LIOM 196). If we suffer, following this love to the cross, we know we will still have victory in the Lord, whose promises are trustworthy.

- c. “We are all missionaries”, the domestic church serving the universal Church (LIOM 197-201)

The person who loves God builds the Church. If the entire family loves God together, they reveal the intimate community of life and love that helps all humanity become what it should be. This life and love is basic to the family. As the husband and the wife give themselves to each other, their unity and fidelity form an indissoluble communion. Children receive this self gift from their parents, then return it to their parents and share it with others. Their faithful living of the marriage covenant forms a household of faith, a domestic church. (Domestic comes from *domus*, the Latin word for “home”.) From the earliest days of the Church, households of families formed the core of the Church. Lives of holy families, such as the first Holy Family, Mary, Joseph and Jesus; the family of St. Bernard of Clairvaux; Louis and Zélie Martin, the parents of St. Therese; and others show the power of a family, a domestic church, to transform each member of the family, thereby building up the Church. Not only should the family be built up and supported by the Church, but the family builds up the Church by proclaiming the Gospel—living according to Christ’s words and loving as Christ loved.

- d. “The family will find its fulfillment in the mission to love” (LIOM 201-206)

The love of families can save the world. The vocation of marriage is a vocation to become a center of living, radiant faith. The father and mother, by word and example, preach the faith to their children, encouraging them to live out the vocation to which God has called each of them. The domestic Church, the Church in the home, can be part of the *mission* of the Church by placing itself, in prayers, love, sacrifice, and faithfulness, at the service of the Church and of society. Each truly Christian family thus becomes a missionary force that spreads God’s life and love to all the people in their society. The Christian family has the power to bring its love to serve the common good of society by showing society the good of their common life together as a family. (Note: In this context, “common” does not mean “simple” or “ordinary,” but rather “communal,” referring to the family’s life together as a small community. They live a life “in common”; they live a life together.) St. John of Cross said, “Where there is no love, pour in love, and you will draw out love.” This is the power and the mission

of the family. "Love is your mission...a profound adventure in service, beauty and truth" (LIOM 206).

7. Methods & Strategies That Develop the Lesson:

- a. Pass out slips of paper to all students. Ask each student to write the names of their family members on the piece of paper. (They may write either immediate or extended family members' names.) They should also include their own name. At the top or bottom, ask the students to write the name of one or two saints of the student's choice and the invocation, "Pray for us." (For example, "Saint Francis and Saint Clare, Pray for us.") The students may then bring the papers and place them underneath the cross (in the photo display area) or at the feet of the statue of Mary (symbolizing our asking her intercession also for our families). If you are teaching this lesson in a church or chapel, you may invite students to go to a statue of Mary (or other appropriate place) in the church to place their papers there.
- b. Remind students: You and your family are invited to share in the Church's mission of bringing Jesus to the world. That begins in the family, but it also goes out—even to the ends of the earth. Here is a small snapshot of some ways the Catholic Church (and young people like you in it) brings Jesus' love all over the world:
 - Catholic Relief Services—Overview [video](#) [aimed at all Catholics]
 - [Catholic Family Missions Company](#) (this organization helps entire families as well as individual young adults to give through mission work) [aimed specifically at young people]

8. Conclusion & Reinforcement Closure::

- a. Invite the students to reflect in their journals by answering these questions: (See *Lesson 10 Handout*)
 - Living the mission of love in the family will mark us as different from others in our society. How will I help my family stand firm in that mission and grow in it?
 - "To live [my] witness of love will require spiritual commitment and discipline, but [I] do not fear" (LIOM 206). How is the Church with me? How is the Lord with me?
 - How has the Lord shown me that he is faithful to me?
 - What fruit do I hope to bear by being faithful to him?

9. Closing Prayer:

Standing in front of the photos of the students' families, with the Cross or image of Mary in the center, pray for the grace for all families to remain close to Christ and to become saints.

***Prayer for the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, 2015
(as found in LIOM)***

*God and Father of us all,
in Jesus, your Son and our Savior,
you have made us
your sons and daughters
in the family of the Church.
May your grace and love
help our families
in every part of the world
be united to one another
in fidelity to the Gospel.*

*May the example of the Holy Family,
with the aid of your Holy Spirit,
guide all families, especially those most troubled,
to be homes of communion and prayer
and to always seek your truth and live in your love.*

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, pray for us!

ADAPTATIONS

If your time is limited:

Read the lesson content and key points to yourself, but just use the *Lesson 10 Handout*.

EVALUATION

Answer the following questions (from LIOM Part X Questions for Discussion) either through a class dialogue or through journal reflections.

1. In what way is a catechesis on the family actually a catechesis for the whole of life? In what ways do Catholic teachings about human nature, sex, marriage and the family connect with other aspects of life?
2. Do the values and habits in your [family or] community make it easier or harder to be Catholic? In your culture, are you free to be fully Catholic, or is there pressure to compromise the faith? How can you participate in your culture while remaining faithful?
3. Does your family think of itself as a domestic church? What values are visible in the way your household lives? What steps can you take to be better missionaries?
4. What support does your family need from the Church? How can the Church help you? How can you help the Church and other families?

BRINGING THE LESSON HOME TO THE FAMILY

Option 1: Watch one or both of the videos (seen in class) with your family. Discuss your family mission to each other, to your parish, and to the world.

Option 2: Choose a family saint from one of the resources listed below. Read about that saint (and perhaps find a picture of the saint) and then share that saint's life with your family. Discuss your family mission to each other, to your parish, and to the world.

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

Students may enjoy learning more about married saints and their families. The following are some examples:

[St. Gianna Molla](#), wife, mother, and doctor

[St. Joseph Moscatti](#), doctor

[St. Manuel Moralez](#), husband, father, political activist, martyr

[Bl. Giuseppe Tovini](#), husband, father, lawyer, politician

[Bl. Franz Jagerstatter](#), husband, father, conscientious objector

[Bl. Carlos Manuel Rodríguez Santiago](#), lay apostle, promoter of liturgical renewal

[Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati](#), engineer, sportsman, lover of the poor, lay apostle

[Bl. Chiara Badano](#), teenager

[Bl. Marcel Callo](#), worker, sportsman, martyr

[Bl. Luigi Beltrame Quattrocchi & Bl. Maria Corsini Quattrocchi](#), married couple, parents

[Bl. Louis and Zelig Martin](#), married couple, parents of St. Therese

[Bl. Alberto Marvelli](#), sportsman, engineer, politician, lay apostle, lover of the poor

[Bl. Ivan Merz](#), scholar, teacher, lay apostle, promoter of liturgical renewal

[Ven. Elisabeth Leseur](#), wife, lay apostle

[Ven. Maria Theresa Gonzalez-Quevedo](#), teenager

[St. Thomas More](#), husband, father, lawyer, martyr

Grades 9 – 12 LESSON 10 HANDOUT

Family Mission: Choosing Life

Bible Reference: Deuteronomy 30: 19-20

INTRODUCTION:

The family of faith—"[t]he domestic church—is not an abstract concept. It is a reality, a vocation and a mission, founded on the Sacrament of Marriage. [This vocation to faithful family life] is being lived by many [today]. Christ is still calling: Christian families, the Church needs you; the world needs you" (LIOM 205).

OPENING PRAYER:

"I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him" (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

REFLECTION:

1. Has anyone made a difference in this world, helping it become a place more filled with love, hope, joy, and service?
2. Can I make a real difference in the world?
3. How can I choose life that will help me and my descendants?

EXPLANATION:

- 1. The love of families can affect the world.** God made us for a reason, to live each aspect of life in God's love. God's love is this, that we keep His commandments. By restraining the use of our bodies and using the material world around us as befits stewards of God's love, we know how to approach questions of ecology, technology and medicine with renewed humility. Since God is love, and love is stronger than death, we can stand with those who grieve or hurt. Since all humans are made in the image of God, each has dignity beyond compare, so we love and value every person, even those who are dependent on others. So this catechesis on the family is for the whole of life, not just one "compartment" of it.
- 2. Christian families can contribute to every society.** As "Christendom" fades, Christians are learning to live as a creative religious minority, like Christians in Africa or Asia. Jews have always done this in every age and society. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego "knew how to be in a particular social world but not of it," (LIOM 195) not compromising even when their fidelity to God led to the lions' den and the fiery furnace. Catholics in this age are founded on God's creative and sustaining love. If we suffer, following this love to the cross, we know we will still have victory in the Lord, whose promises are trustworthy.
- 3. The person who loves God builds the Church.** If the entire family loves God to-

gether, they reveal the intimate community of life and love that helps all humanity become what it should be. This life and love is basic to the family. As the husband and the wife give themselves to each other, their unity and fidelity form an indissoluble communion. Children receive this self gift from their parents, then return it to their parents and share it with others. Their faithful living of the marriage covenant forms a household of faith, a domestic church. (Domestic comes from *domus*, the Latin word for "home".) From the earliest days of the Church, households of families formed the core of the Church. Not only should the family be built up and supported by the Church, but the family builds up the Church by proclaiming the Gospel—living according to Christ's words and loving as Christ loved.

- 4. Love of families can save the world.** The vocation of marriage is a vocation to become a center of living, radiant faith. The father and mother, by word and example, preach the faith to their children, encouraging them to live out the vocation to which God has called each of them to placing themselves--in prayers, love, sacrifice, and faithfulness--at the service of the Church and of society. Each truly Christian family thus becomes a missionary force that spreads God's life and love to all the people in their society. The Christian family has the power to bring its love to serve the common good of society by showing society the good of their common life together as a family. St. John of Cross said, "Where there is no love, pour in love, and you will draw out love."

CONNECTION:

This is the power and the mission of the family: "Love is your mission, ...a profound adventure in service, beauty and truth" (LIOM 206).

1. Living the mission of love in the family will mark us as different from others in our society. How will I help my family stand firm in that mission and grow in it?
2. "To live [my] witness of love will require spiritual commitment and discipline, but [I] do not fear" (LIOM 206). How is the Church with me? How is the Lord with me?
3. How has the Lord shown me that he is faithful to me?
4. What fruit do I hope to bear by being faithful to him?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Prayer for the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, 2015 (as found in LIOM)

*God and Father of us all, in Jesus, your Son and our Savior,
you have made us your sons and daughters in the family of the Church.
May your grace and love help our families in every part of the world
be united to one another in fidelity to the Gospel.*

*May the example of the Holy Family, with the aid of your Holy Spirit,
guide all families, especially those most troubled, to be homes of communion and prayer and
to always seek your truth and live in your love.*

*Through Christ our Lord. Amen.
Jesus, Mary and Joseph, pray for us!*



Prayer for the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, 2015

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Jesus, Mary and Joseph, pray for us!

~ from ***Love Is Our Mission: The Family Fully Alive*** ~