

## TEAMS OF OUR LADY

### STUDY TOPIC 2018

# RECONCILIATION, SIGN OF LOVE



This painting belongs to the mural of the greater chapel of the Augustinian Sisters from the Monastery of the Conversion in Beceril de Campos (Palencia). This painting was done by one of them, Sister Francis.

On the occasion of Easter 2010, in the apse of the chapel of the monastery of Palencia, the Priors entrusted the work to Sr. Francis, who in just three days designed and finished the magnificent work. This is a mural painting, made with acrylics, of narrative type that represents the parable of the prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11-32). This work has great expressive power, influenced by the Hispano American paintings from the second half of the twentieth century from Ecuadorian Oswaldo Guayasamin, in which we can see a sequencing of large-format scenes and perceive some similarity with the works of The Age of Tenderness. This serves as an inspiration to the young artist in the main scene where the father bends down to embrace his son kneeling before him. It is an original work in its composition, innovative and rejuvenating to the topic, intimate, recognizable and understandable for the viewer.

Fco. Javier Borda

**TEAMS OF OUR LADY**  
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Dear members and collaborators: The study topic that we present to the movement today, and that has as its title the same motto of the XII International Meeting, "RECONCILIATION, SIGN OF LOVE", echoes that short but intense week where we were able to live the grace and the profound meaning of our divine filiation, its gratuity and above all, the immeasurable mercy of the Father.

This Parable of the Merciful Father and the Prodigal Son, on which the theme is developed, is perhaps the most poignant of all the parables accounted in the Gospels, and in particular the Evangelist Luke, the only one who include it.

The story, which is simple and understandable to any reader, is used by Jesus to take us to the spiritual depth of divine love. This is contrasted with the attitudes of all the characters in this story and leads us to realize our own incarnated reflection on which, without doubt, we can see ourselves reflected in the mirror of its plot.

Throughout these nine chapters that make up the text of this book, it is the same Father in Heaven, represented in the father of the parable, who comes to meet us and engage in a personal dialogue, lived in the context of our reality, of our joys and sufferings, like those that are generously shared in the powerful testimonies that are included in the book. The enrichment of the exchange that happens in the team meeting, will take us to expand, from our weaknesses, our condition of beloved children. As stated clearly in the dogmatic constitution on divine revelation, *Dei Verbum*, Vatican 2: *"In the Sacred Books, the Father who is in Heaven comes lovingly to meet his children and talks to them."*

The readers of this study topic, prepared by a team from Ecuador to whom we express our gratitude, will find in this book what Pope Francis invites us to recover: *"the grammar of simplicity, capable of giving warmth to the heart of the people"*. The study takes us through that simplicity and through discernment in the community of the team, to reach a great theological and spiritual depth.

In addition to the reflection of each chapter, the testimonies of life, and some quotations from the catechism and other Church documents, the authors have included a "hidden treasure" for many team members around the world: the text of reflection on the parable of the Prodigal Son, from our founder, Father Henri Caffarel.

As it was presented on the letter to the Fatima Meeting, we the members of Teams of Our Lady, are not perfect: this perfect gift of the movement, the charisma of Conjugal Spirituality, is conveyed by us, imperfect men and woman, that in our adherence to this gift, we have and manifest our own strengths and weaknesses.

At the same time that we assume the missionary and healing role to which the Church and the world call us, the study of this book will help us develop a critical and merciful look on our own frailties. These frailties are in need of healing by experimenting the mercy of the Father, making us disciples with greater capacity to forgive and heal, because only *“he who has experienced the joy, peace and inner freedom that comes from being forgiven, can open himself to the possibility of forgiveness”*

We wish you an enriching and fruitful journey of reflection.

International Responsible Team

## TEAMS OF OUR LADY

### STUDY TOPIC 2018

# RECONCILIATION, SIGN OF LOVE

## INTRODUCTION TO STUDY TOPIC 2018 - 2019

### *The Prodigal Son*

*And He said, "A man had two sons. "The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. "Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. "So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. "And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'" "So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' "But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.*

*"Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. "And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. "And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.' "But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. "But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.' "And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'" Luke 15:11-32*

This parable of the Gospel of Luke, known as the parable of the "prodigal son," should rather be called the "good father" or better yet the "merciful or compassionate father." It could also be known as the parable of the "lost son", because it is preceded by two other parables that deal with loss: "the lost sheep" (Luke 15: 4-7) and "the lost coin" (Luke 15: 8-10), but independent of the name, this parable has been qualified as the masterpiece of all the parables of Jesus, in which the evangelist comments on situations that contain varied human and family attitudes, such as freedom, responsibility, longing, return, joy, celebration, reconciliation, grace, etc., which are universal features of life.

Luke, who writes the Gospel of the marginalized, gives a key interpretation with a very characteristic theme for him which is forgiveness, represented in the father as a symbol of God's own love, with an unconditional, open, unlimited mercy that does not only turns to the sinner (younger son), as He goes out in person to meet him, but also to the eldest son, the stubborn critic, obstinate in not wanting to understand his love. However, he remains preached to insist on his generosity, especially when it comes to opening wide the doors of the Kingdom to a sinner who has decided to return to Him.

Through the eight chapters of the book, we have broken down the parable into themes that we consider to be of deep reflection for spiritual growth, both individually, as a couple and as a team.

The First Chapter: refers to the Christian meaning of freedom.

The Second Chapter: reflects on the purpose of the gifts received.

The Third Chapter: raises the crisis as an opportunity for conversion.

The Fourth Chapter: focuses in recognizing our fragility.

The Fifth Chapter: deals with the pain of our faults.

The Sixth Chapter: addresses mercy and forgiveness as signs of love.

The Seventh Chapter: compares the sense of human justice versus divine justice.

The Eight Chapter: by consciously changing the order of the verses focuses on the joy of the reunion.

The study ends with the Balance Meeting.

As a novelty, the life testimonies, generously shared by two couples of the Movement, are broken down and presented throughout the first eight chapters of the book. They narrate their experiences and feelings, related to each study topic. In the same way, Father Caffarel's homily on the prodigal son, "*Le Fils Prodigue*", has been transcribed, almost in its entirety, through the nine chapters, coinciding with the topic of each chapter.

The layout of each chapter obeys to the general structure of the study topics of Teams of Our Lady. It consists of five parts, the first four parts are for the couple's monthly assignments at home, and the fifth part for the team meeting. During the month each married couple will have texts for listening to the Word, for the introduction of the chapter, for reflection, and guidelines for prayer and dialogue. They will also have clues and guidelines for the team meeting. Each chapter has an annex of bibliographical references, for those who wish to delve into the topic.

We thank God for having called us to serve and love more through this book.

The Editing Team

# TEAMS OF OUR LADY

## STUDY TOPIC 2018

### RECONCILIATION, SIGN OF LOVE

#### CHAPTER 1

##### THE CHRISTIAN SENSE OF FREEDOM

###### 1. - LISTENING TO THE WORD.

*And He said, "A man had two sons. "The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. "*

*Luke 15, 11-12*

###### MEDITATION

In the time of Jesus, the Jewish law established, in the case of this parable, that the firstborn was to receive two-thirds of the inheritance, while the youngest was to receive one-third (Deuteronomy 21:17), and the benefit of the inheritance corresponded to the father, who could establish the distribution however and whenever he wanted (Galatians 4,1-3).

The young man in the parable, without caring about the customs of his ancestors and the pain he caused to his father when asking for his inheritance in life, makes use of his free will and strips himself and his family of a part of their means of sustenance and enjoyment of the safety of their home.

This is an unprecedented and contradictory fact with the tradition in that time. The way he requests his inheritance and then leaves was equivalent to wishing the death of the father.

The father, probably with a deep sorrow for the attitude of his youngest son, who did not care about his life, respects his desire for freedom and not only shares the inheritance, but freely gives something that should remain under his benefit until his death. What a great disappointment it must have meant that his son wanted to separate himself from the family bond, to depart, leaving the warmth and love of the family without considering the consequences. However, the father agrees to give him that requested freedom, without knowing the consequences, thus demonstrating a love

greater than the pain of seeing him leave.

The desire to make the right to freedom a reality requires a preparation in order to take responsibility for the acts that derive from acquiring that freedom.

## **2. - INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER AND ELEMENTS FOR REFLECTION**

**The objective of this chapter is to reflect on the true meaning of freedom in making fundamental decisions in our personal and conjugal life project.**

At the present time, humanity is deceived and confused with mistaken concepts of freedom, human dignity and truth, abusing them to induce individualism, and manipulating them at will to obtain interests for the benefit of a few, political ideologies or powerful economic groups. Those who think and act according to Christian principles and values, accepted morally and universally, those who shed their passions and freely discern their decisions to seek the truth, are now, unfortunately, a minority.

Spiritual discernment is a tool that every Christian must know and use permanently in his life. *“For St. Ignatius, discernment is a process whose purpose is to choose, in prayer, from several good choices, the one that most leads us to the service and praise of our Lord, and our salvation. Discerning is not choosing between good and evil, but between the good and the best -”*. The conditions for a good discernment are: A sincere desire to follow Jesus; achieve inner freedom; cultivate a life of prayer; recognize the action of spirits: consolation and desolation; define the subject of discernment and get informed to better know our possible options; and, then make a choice. (Gustavo Calderón, S.J., School of the Central Province of the SR Hispano-America of the ENS, Bogotá, January 29, 2016).

With respect to marriage, it must be borne in mind that from the moment a couple gets married, their life is not the same. They must therefore learn to discern, especially in regard to behaviors and decisions, always respecting the freedom of the other, thus maintaining the trust that gives stability to the relationship.

If in practice we consider how freedom develops within the conjugal life, we must first be aware that decisions no longer belong to one, but belong to both, everything will need to be agreed upon. There are obviously actions of minor moral importance, which do not require mutual agreement. The relationship must seek that both parts know how to share their projects or desires in order to be able to identify anything that might not be a good decision. If we take unilateral actions we commit an act of injustice with the other, because we would be taking advantage of something that no longer belongs to us in its entirety.



### 3. – DOCUMENTS FOR REFLECTION

EXCERPT FROM THE HOMILY OF FATHER CAFFAREL ON THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON "L'ENFANT PRODIGUE"

#### PART 1

I am going to slowly comment on a passage of the Gospel that you know very well. However, the Gospel must always be read as if it were the first time. It always contains new discoveries.

This passage is the parable of the Prodigal Son. Perhaps it is better to call it "the parable of the Father's generosity", "of the Father's mercy". And I love to read this page of the Gospel from this perspective. It is Christ who reveals to us what He thinks of the Father. And making use of all the resources of his imagination, because He has an extraordinary imagination, Christ calls on all his ingenuity so that, developing his gift as a narrator, he talks to us about what most reaches his heart.

We are going to try, reading this parable, verse after verse, to keep ourselves within this perspective. May this prayer always be in our interior: "Lord, make me understand a little, let me glimpse a bit of your greatness and your Father's love".

It is necessary to be sure that Jesus Christ is there in our midst and is willing to see that we open ourselves to his great confidence.

**"He said: A man had two children."** They were undoubtedly less than eighteen years of age, since in general the Jews married at the latest at eighteen years of age and left their father's house.

**"Father, give me the part of the farm that belongs to me."** This was something that was commonly done. You could have donations or inheritances between living people: the eldest was entitled to 2/3 of the inheritance and was in charge of the house, to take care of his mother, his sisters and brothers; and the youngest was entitled to only 1/3. Normally the father donated the properties, but the profits were for him, and he arranged them. Children could not make use of the capital either.

The youngest son expects his father to consent and proceed beyond what was customary, that is, to allow him to dispose of the estate, of the part of his inheritance. It was a bit discourteous, we could say that he was even insolent and disrespectful of the father, it meant truly telling him that as a son he wanted his freedom, in short, that he wanted to end his dependence. But the father does not protest, he distributes his property to him.

You will see throughout this passage that Christ is brief, He goes to the essentials, does not do any literature or speaks with eloquence, says just what is imposed, what is necessary.

## TESTIMONY OF BIANCA AND ANTONIO

### PART 1

**Bianca and Antonio.** We are a couple with six children, whom we educated in love and faith, always trying to develop their freedom and self-esteem, so that, when they reached adulthood, they could choose the path of their vocation and their life.

Our eldest son, however, at the end of his high school education and after academic and behavioral struggles, began to surround himself with bad friendships. His life seemed to have no direction and little by little began to make wrong decisions, which led him to drug and alcohol consumption. This situation produced a change in his personality, in his personal confidence; his relationship with us and his brothers deteriorated, causing more and more problems; until one day he left our house, taking with him the inheritance of love, values and faith that we had transmitted to him.

**Bianca.** We began to understand the disease of addiction. We consulted specialized doctors to understand the situation of our son and the diagnoses were getting worse. As he was diagnosed with bipolarity and dual personality disorder the prognosis was not good; the scenario would become worse over time. He was cataloged as a psychiatric patient whose medication had to be dosed for him being because he was unable to take it personally. It was a disheartening picture.

But next to this, we also began to live, above all, the profound experience of discovering a truly unconditional love towards him. It was very hard for me to get used to not knowing about my son, to think about him without knowing if he was okay or not. Yet, that circumstance lasted for many years in our lives.

The vulnerability of the child who lives an emotional and affective maladjustment promotes the greatest compassion from a mother. However, in the moments of consumption our son became violent and many times we also assumed attitudes of anger or resentment, because we did not know how to handle those situations that were beyond our control. Constant prayer was the only thing that fueled our hope.

**Antonio** As a father, I had generated expectations regarding what my eldest son could conquer as an adult man; I had many plans for him, university studies, work, sports, somehow I saw myself projected in him. As I understood the problems he was having, I had to put aside all my expectations and focus on the love I had and have for him, to try to help him. Before his decision to leave, I just told him not to worry about being different from me, but to be faithful to the values received and to see them as a valuable inheritance that should not be wasted. In use of his freedom, he left and we could only pray for him.

## TESTIMONY OF MARIO AND MARITZA

### PART 1

**Mario and Maritza.** When we decided to unite ourselves and receive the Sacrament of Matrimony, we did so by our own and free decision, the love of two young people of nineteen and twenty-one years old. We had little courtship time, just less than two years and we were already expecting our first daughter. We started a life with economic limitations, without experience, beginning our university, marriage and parent stages altogether. At that time our parents did not agree with our union, even more because we were pregnant, which brought confusion or doubt about our decision and the real reason for getting married. After the years, we clearly confirmed that the real reason for our union was our love, and that it was a decision that was made for the rest of our life.

**Maritza.** We did not know the true meaning of marriage it was just a fulfillment. However, I was sure that I loved my husband, full of illusions, emotions, and convinced that it was the right thing to do.

Unfortunately over the years and as two young and inexperienced persons who decided to join in Marriage, we were presented with a series of problems, challenges in our married life; distant from God, as we with great effort went to the Eucharist, we did not pray or put our life in His hands. Mario dedicated his life to work and work, left the house early and arrived very late, almost only to sleep. I was dedicated to our daughters. We distanced ourselves more and more and unfortunately we did not know how to communicate, or resolve our differences through dialogue, and leaving aside the one who could sustain us, GOD. The freedom that He gave us we misunderstood, we distanced ourselves and we did not trust in Him.

GAUDIUM ET SPES CONSTITUTION. VATICAN COUNCIL II. 1965

Excellence of freedom

17. Man's orientation towards good is only achieved through the use of freedom, which has a value that our contemporaries extol with enthusiasm. And with all reason. Frequently, however, they foment it in a depraved way, as if it were pure license to do anything, as long as it delights, even if it is bad.

True freedom is an eminent sign of the divine image in man. God has wanted to leave man in the hands of his own decision so that he will spontaneously look for his Creator and, adhering freely to it, reach the full and blissful perfection.

Human dignity requires, therefore, that man act according to his conscience and free choice that is, moved and induced by personal inner conviction and not under the pressure of a blind inner impulse or of mere external coercion.

31. The human problems most debated and resolved in a diverse way in contemporary moral reflection are related, albeit in a different way, to a crucial problem: the freedom of man.

There is no doubt that today there is a particularly lively awareness of freedom. "The men of our time have a growing awareness of the dignity of the human person," as the conciliar declaration **Dignitatis humanae**, stated about religious freedom [52]. Hence the vindication of the possibility that men "act according to their own criteria and make use of a responsible freedom, not moved by coercion, but guided by the conscience of duty"

**Other recommended readings can be found in Annex 1.**

#### **4. QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE COUPLE REFLECTION/SIT DOWN**

What differences do we find between liberty and libertinism? Do we ask our children what freedom means to them?

Do we feel free to make our own decisions within our marriage and family, or are we coerced or influenced by current individualistic currents? How far should we admit a space of freedom from the other?

What difference do we think there is between making decisions with and without our Lord Jesus Christ?

#### **5. TEAM MEETING**

##### **A. - GENERAL SHARING**

We suggest, for this moment at the team meeting, to comment on a time when we have not felt free to make an important decision, be it personal, as a couple or family or in the workplace.

##### **B. - PRAYER TIME**

PROCLAMATION.

Galatians 5: 1; 13-15

***It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.***

***You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to***

*indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.*

#### PERSONAL REFLECTION.

After reading the Word, we recommend a few minutes of silence so that we meditate and then freely share what the Lord has spoken to us, how he challenges us, and how this affects our lives.

It is proposed that we reflect if there is a concern to make our gifts fruitful.

#### COMMUNITY PRAYER.

We suggest for each couple to make a brief prayer. It can be done according to personal or community needs or by choosing a segment of the biblical passage.

At each request that is freely made, we will respond: "Lord, hear our prayer."

#### **C. - PARTICIPATION**

Every path of holiness requires efforts and surrenders, not only as an offering to God, but also as a personal good that strengthens our self-control and helps us to improve as individuals, in our conjugal relationship and in all areas of our life, while being close and in permanent relationship with God, having him as the center of our lives.

Therefore we ask: Are we willing to live all the endeavors, in a free way and as an expression of love for God and our spouses?

We recommend during this month, to emphasize "Listening to the Word" and suggest to begin with the reading of the Parable of the Merciful Father of Luke 15: 11 - 32, considering that the entire book will be based on this Gospel passage.

We also recommend reading the letter of St. Paul to Galatians 5, 1; 13-15 that is related to the theme of this first chapter, and that will be meditated on at the team meeting.

#### **D. - QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERCHANGE ON THE TOPIC STUDY**

They are the same ones that we recommend for couple reflection in point 4 of this chapter.

It is important to recognize if we are living a true freedom.

**E. - LITURGICAL PRAYER**

Ecclesiastical 15, 11 – 18

*R / How great is the wisdom of the Lord*

*"Do not say: "For the Lord I have departed ", that what he detests, he does not.  
Do not say: "He has lost me," because he has not needed the sinner. R /.  
Every abomination hates the Lord, nor do those who fear him hate it.  
He was the one who at first made man, and left him in the hands of his own will. R /.*

*If you want, you will keep the commandments, to remain faithful to their good  
pleasure.  
He has put you before fire and water, wherever you want you can take your hand. R /.  
Before men life is and death, what each one prefers, will be given to him.  
How great is the wisdom of the Lord, strong is his power, all he sees "R /.*

**F. - FINAL PRAYERS:**

FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF THE SERVANT OF GOD, HENRI CAFFAREL AND THE  
MAGNIFICAT

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS**

SPEECH BY PAUL VI TO THE TEAMS OF OUR LADY.

“ WALK IN LOVE” MAY 4, 1970. IN THE BASILICA OF SAN PEDRO DE ROMA.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. No. 1739, 1740 and 1744

PUEBLA DOCUMENT. III GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE LATIN AMERICAN EPISCOPATE.  
Nº 321, ABOUT FREEDOM

***321. The Christian image of men must be re-evaluated among us; he has to rethink that word in which a lofty ideal of our peoples has been collecting for some time now: FREEDOM. Freedom that is both gift and task. Freedom that is not really attained without integral liberation and that is, in a valid sense, the goal of man according to our faith, since "for freedom, Christ has freed us" (Gal 5,1) so that we have life and we have it in abundance as "children of God and co-heirs with Christ himself" (Rom 8,17).***

**TEAMS OF OUR LADY**  
**STUDY TOPIC 2018**  
**RECONCILIATION, SIGN OF LOVE**

**CHAPTER 2**

**THE PURPOSE OF THE GIFTS RECEIVED**

**1. - LISTENING TO THE WORD**

*“After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation.”* Luke 15: 13

MEDITATION

Although this text does not describe the reasons for the decision of the youngest son to leave to a distant country, it is worth reflecting why he wanted to get away so much, what ideas he had to withdraw, ask for his inheritance and waste it. We can ask ourselves, could it be that he never felt free? Did he want to know what it was like to have his own resources? Why did he live like a libertine? Was it just a lack of maturity? What did he want to prove others and himself? There are so many situations that are not narrated and we cannot know them with certainty, but what can be recognized is the grief and pain of a father who loses a child.

This type of situation is not very far from the reality of a family life, not only between parents and children, but also between spouses.

The message of this gospel is very profound and is based on the actions and consequences that are generated by our estrangement from God, which obfuscates us and makes us, lose sight of the true motives of unity, stability and permanence in relationships.

Saint Ignatius wrote: *“Changing places does not change behavior: as long as the imperfect person does not leave himself, it will hardly be better elsewhere.”*

We can identify in this verse four verbs that can guide us in this meditation:

**Met.** The youngest son gathered all the goods that his father had freely given him. We



can, by analogy, identify the goods of the inheritance with the gifts that we receive from the Holy Spirit by the grace of the Lord. We all receive gifts, some receive many, others few and others less. On multiple occasions, we are possessors of gifts or charismas that we have yet not discovered or learned to identify, or believe we have them when in reality we don't. It is important that each one of us, through time, with the help of the Lord, with the practice of assiduous prayer, works of mercy and the sacraments, could know and gather in our hearts, our own gifts and charismas.

**Marched.** The son, says Lucas in the parable, left for a distant country, with all the goods he received. He made the decision to leave, that is, he undertook an action.

In the same way, when we discover the gifts that the Lord has given us, when we know the many things we can do with them, we will have to make the decision to take an action in order to take advantage of the talents freely received.

**Wasted.** Unfortunately the youngest son misused his property, chose the path of evil, distanced himself from God and squandered his property.

By becoming aware of the graces received from the Lord, we Christians have to take an action, which can be directed towards doing good or, on the contrary, doing evil; but in this dualism of good and evil, there is a position that is also bad, that could cause in us a sense of comfort and false security, that is, not doing anything, not using those gifts. This leads us to think of another parable, that of the talents and the servant who buried the gold talent and then how his master chastened him for his inactivity.

**Living.** The path chosen to use the inheritance was clearly the worst, the debauchery, and the false sensation of freedom for worldly pleasure. The son could have used his inheritance to invest it in a way that would be fruitful, that would make him a good man for the pride of his father and his family.

In our case, whether as individuals or as married couples, we must, once discovered our gifts and charismas, decide what kind of life we want to live; a life together with God, taking advantage of these graces and putting them at the service of others, or at the other end, a life away from Him, using these gifts for evil, or just being comfortable, wasting them, doing nothing. The decision is ours.

## **2. - INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER AND ELEMENTS FOR REFLECTION**

**The objectives of this chapter are to recognize that, through the grace of God, we all receive gifts, personal and conjugal, and to consider the Christian meaning of the good use of them.**

It is intended that we learn to recognize the goods, talents and potentials that we have, based on the knowledge that we Christians have of a heavenly Father who aids us, who fills us with graces and opportunities, and who never abandons us. However, we do not always recognize His closeness and His love, looking for Him only when in need, as support to our human insecurity, but then forgetting about Him until a new need arises.

In these conditions, man lives immersed in spiritual nothingness, with an existential vacuum that fills him with capricious feelings and confused decisions, which reveal the fragility of his faith and uncertain hope.

But God is always with us, he seeks our fullness and by his grace he freely gives us tools of life that we know as gifts or talents that manifest in our diverse capacities and abilities, but for whatever circumstances, many times, we do not develop them or we are indifferent to them.

In the passage we read, the father makes reference to God and gives the child an inheritance that represents a gift received. The son moves away from the father, begins to live like a libertine and wastes the gift freely received.

All gifts are grace and their deep meaning is to put them at the service of others. It is a priority to offer them and distribute them, supporting each other until we become true witness of the Christian life.

The gifts are valuable resources that should be used in all situations of our life and with greater reason in the conjugal relationship, always living them as a service to the other, and helping the spouse to discover and use them, without selfishness.

It is important to have a clear concept of what selfishness is, since it is one of the main sources of marital crisis and for this it has to be considered.

Selfishness is the attitude of one who manifests an excessive love for himself and who only deals with what is for his own interest and benefit, without taking care or mending the needs of others. ***"Let no one seek his own interests but those of his neighbor"*** 1 Co 10:24

It is related to ambition, greed, self-centeredness and disrespect; it feeds on roots of bitterness, individualism, materialism, ambition, and anxiety and, above all, spiritual weakness. Usually this attitude is unconscious in the one who has it, however, it is evident to the one who sees it and the one who suffers it.

Aristotle says that selfishness is not self-love, but an inordinate passion for oneself.

Selfishness can destroy marriage, because it makes us insensitive to the needs and desires of our spouse, in order to put emphasis on ours, for example, we do not listen or pay attention to our spouse, we start doing something else when our spouse is talking to us; we disrespect and criticize our spouse's point of view and impose our criteria by force, without real arguments. We do not understand our spouse's interests, desires and needs we only satisfy ours. We criticize our spouse's family and we oppose giving them some financial help; we make decisions without consulting with our spouses and impose our will; we become greedy, we distrust what our spouse spends and we

consider ourselves the owners of everything. This is particularly important, especially when it comes to material goods. It is worth mentioning the criterion referring to money in 1 Timothy 6: 10: ***“for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many grieves.”***

All these manifestations of selfishness often generate resentment, hurt, emotional separation and even hatred and violence. ***“Do to no one what you yourself hate.”*** Tobit 4: 15. Therefore, it is very important to recognize this negative attitude and work to control it.

Also, within the Teams, it is fundamental that we practice mutual spiritual help in order to be able to inquire, help discover and develop the gifts that the Lord has bestowed upon us.

In all grace from God, the Holy Spirit acts and when we receive the gifts from him, he expects them to bear fruit.

### **3. - DOCUMENTS FOR REFLECTION**

Let's read what the NEW TESTAMENT tells us about the gifts.

***“As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”*** 1 Pet 4: 10

***“...So we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another.”*** Rom 12:5-6

***“In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”*** Gal 5: 22-23

EXCERPT FROM THE HOMILY OF FATHER CAFFAREL ON THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON "L'ENFANT PRODIGUE"

PART 2

**"A few days later".** It might seem contradictory to what we have said, but if this is how Christ says it, is to help us see into the psychology of the son; Christ does not speak with abstract language; to address everyone, from the simplest to the most knowledgeable, He speaks in a concrete way and we understand what that means: the child wants independence after a few days. He is weighed by his dependence on his father and wants to be free as soon as possible.

He sells houses, fields, and livestock. Surely a good amount of money is amounted. And putting it all together, the younger son leaves. He is young, strong and healthy, has on his heels the wings of freedom and many miles to go. Since he is rich, he stays in hotels during the night and leaves the next day. It seems to him that his happiness grows as the kilometers traveled multiply, and that the distance becomes greater between his father's house and him. Finally he is free!

**"And he left for a distant country."** Why to a distant country? He could have gone to the neighboring town or the nearest town. Nevertheless, he does not. He is impatient to have total independence. In the neighboring town, his brother could come and teach him a moral lesson.

**"Where he squandered his farm, living like a libertine."** A young man from a good family, that has a lot of money and has made many friends, numerous friends. This is how things are when we have a lot of money. He organizes dances, parties, banquets, and is the king of youth in the far away land. At least, he has the quality of generosity. He is not greedy. This is written in his favor, but there are many other things written against him. He lives luxuriously.

TESTIMONY OF BIANCA AND ANTONIO

PART 2

**Bianca and Antonio.** Our son went to live in a tourist resort for young people, where he was surrounded by people his age, whose only plan was to "have a good time". He used his social, intellectual and emotional skills to conquer new friendships and get free food and shelter, that is, to live off the effort of others. But little by little those who helped him began to realize that he did not collaborate, he did not have the discipline to work and so his status in the community began to deteriorate. He was wasting his inheritance. One day we went to see him, to persuade him to leave that life and return to the house. He mentioned that his job was to contact tourists, make friends with them and then persuade them to stay in a specific hotel or dine in a certain restaurant this, in

exchange for food and some money. However, he told us that at that time he had already lost his two previous jobs.

**Bianca.** The marriages of our Team in TOOL were, for a long time, the only ones with whom we shared this grief. We did not talk about it except with them and our intimate family. They were good listeners and supportive, sympathetic and mutual helpers. Then, close friends joined our prayers, our pleadings. All the intercessors in heaven have received petitions for this cause and that was the greatest support. These were the bonds that sustained us during this trial before the return of our son, not only to the paternal home, but also to reconciliation with God.

**Antonio.** The crisis that we lived as a family due to the estrangement of our son and the concern for his future, caused problems among us. Many times we blamed ourselves for the faults of our son, recriminating one another. Over time we understood and were grateful for how much we had received as children of God, as parents and as a family. This feeling of gratitude was a force that sustained us so that we did not lose our joy or hope.

#### MARIO AND MARITZA'S TESTIMONY PART 2

**Maritza.** As a result of the differences and the situations that we faced during our first years of married life, we lost a little love, respect, and the beautiful coexistence that God had given us. This unfortunately open the doors to a series of things that should had never entered our life: jealousy, distrust, differences, disrespect, lack of courtesies, lies, to the point of facing a year of separation from marriage caused by Mario's infidelity.

I was devastated, I could not understand what was happening, because I was sure that he loved me, and I could not understand why he did not wanted to fight and decided to take the easiest way: to abandon us. I cried a lot, our daughters suffered and they asked Mario not to do it, they asked him to first go to therapy and find help, but he said no. That hurt them deeply and they decided to not to talk to him again. At that time I was not well; I did not want to eat, I did not want to get up, I wanted to die. They had to take me to a psychiatrist, because I wanted death and every time I saw my husband I will ask him to return to our home and his response was the same: I no longer love you.

With this, all the expectations of our life together were broken, the promise made before God, the plans we had and the trust we had in Mario as a husband, as a father, as part of a wonderful family and a life project we had undertaken, was lost.

**Mario.** I left our home looking for things that, according to my understanding at that selfish moment, were considered just, they were the right things, confusing passing

illusions with true love and above all, leaving behind everything we had built in our married life.

In spite of the difficulty, of the pain to have to face my family asking me to reconsider and to look for another option; to our friends trying to advise me, to make me react, I left one day my home, leaving everything behind, and looking for a new life, without knowing the damage and pain I left behind and the consequences of this bad decision I made in my life.

I started living a life very different from the one I was used to with my family. Different things starting to appear, other customs, other ways of seeing and living life, other responsibilities that I assumed with this new chosen life which little by little changed the decision I had made, and changed my perspective, the illusion that I was looking for and what my existence had become.

ENCICLYCAL DIVES IN MISERICORDIA. JOHN PAUL II. 1980. NUMERAL 5

*That son, who receives from the father the portion of the inheritance that is due to him and leaves home to squander it in a far country "in loose living," in a certain sense is the man of every period, beginning with the one who was the first to lose the inheritance of grace and original justice. The analogy at this point is very wide-ranging. The parable indirectly touches upon every breach of the covenant of love, every loss of grace, every sin.*

**Other recommended readings can be found in annex 2.**

#### **4. QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE COUPLE REFLECTION /SIT DOWN**

If everything is by twos, how do we manage the resources?

Which of the gifts of the Spirit do we consider a priority in ourselves?

Do we know the gifts and graces of our spouses and children?

How are we using those gifts in marriage, in the family and in our environment?

#### **5. TEAM MEETING**

##### **A. - GENERAL SHARING**

We suggest for this moment at the team meeting, to share our reflections on the most relevant gifts that we consider to have and how we apply them in our conjugal and

family lives. Also, if we have managed to identify hidden talents that we did not know we had them.

## **B. - PRAYER TIME**

PROCLAMATION. Mt 25, 14-30

### *The Parable of the Talents*

*“It will be as when a man who was going on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents; to another, two; to a third, one—to each according to his ability. Then he went away. Immediately the one who received five talents went and traded with them, and made another five. Likewise, the one who received two made another two. But the man who received one went off and dug a hole in the ground and buried his master’s money. After a long time the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the additional five. He said, ‘Master, you gave me five talents. See, I have made five more.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master’s joy.’ [Then] the one who had received two talents also came forward and said, ‘Master, you gave me two talents. See, I have made two more.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master’s joy.’ Then the one who had received the one talent came forward and said, ‘Master, I knew you were a demanding person, harvesting where you did not plant and gathering where you did not scatter; so out of fear I went off and buried your talent in the ground. Here it is back.’ His master said to him in reply, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I did not plant and gather where I did not scatter? Should you not then have put my money in the bank so that I could have got it back with interest on my return? Now then! Take the talent from him and give it to the one with ten. For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.*

*And throw this useless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.’*

PERSONAL REFLECTION.

After reading the Word, we recommend a few minutes of silence so that we meditate and then freely share what the Lord has spoken to us, how he challenges us, and how this affects our lives.

It is proposed that we reflect if there is a concern to make our gifts fruitful.

#### COMMUNITY PRAYER.

We suggest for each couple to make a brief prayer. It can be done according to personal or community needs or by choosing a segment of the biblical passage.

At each request that is freely made, we will respond: "Lord, hear our prayer."

#### **C. - PARTICIPATION**

We propose, to work during the month, the endeavor "The Rule of Life", since the subject dealt with is to apply the graces and gifts received from God for the service to our spouse and to others.

It would be very valuable too, that we do not neglect other endeavors such as personal prayer, conjugal prayer and dialogue, in order to ask God for enlightenment to discover the gifts that help us enrich our marriage and our family and apply them to our life project.

#### **D. - QUESTIONS FOR THE EXCHANGE ON THE STUDY TOPIC**

Do I know the gifts of my Team members?

How are we using the gifts received in the different areas of our life? (Movement/TOOL and Church)

#### **E. - PRAYER**

*Lord, our God, if the sky is wonderful and the moon and stars are incredible,  
I am the work of your hands; I was created in your image and likeness,  
How will I be? How will I be inside?  
You have placed the goods (gifts) in my hands so that I can share them with men.  
You have made me responsible for my brother,  
You have given me to share,  
You want me friend to all.*

Psalms for a young man like you  
Compiled by Father Jorge Galéaz S.J.



"Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>my memory, my understanding, <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>and my entire will, <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>All I have and call my own.

You have given all to me. <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>To you, Lord, I return it.

Everything is yours; do with it what you will. <sup>[L]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>Give me only your love and your grace, that is enough for me. "

Amen

San Ignacio de Loyola

**F. - FINAL PRAYERS:**

FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF THE SERVANT OF GOD, HENRI CAFFAREL AND THE MAGNIFICAT

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS**

CONFERENCE OF Fr. CAFFAREL TO THE PILGRIMS OF LOURDES (JUNE 7, 1965). OUR LADY'S TEAMS AT THE SERVICE OF THE NEW COMMANDMENT

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON. HENRI NOUWEN 2011, PPC, Madrid, pp. 39-41. 43-49

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION. The Parables of Mercy (2015), Ed. San Pablo, Bogotá Colombia, pp.45.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. GIFTS AND FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. No. 1830 and 1831

DECREE APOSTOLICAM ACTUOSITATEM. ON THE APOSTOLATE OF THE LAITY. No.3 and 4

**TEAMS OF OUR LADY**  
**STUDY TOPIC 2018**  
**RECONCILIATION, SIGN OF LOVE**

**CHAPTER 3**

**CRISIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CONVERSION**

**1. - LISTENING TO THE WORD.**

*"Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him."* Luke 15:14-16

**MEDITATION**

The prodigal son did not take advantage of the goods he had received, nor was he proactive when facing difficult times, the prodigal son wasted everything he had. To aggravate the situation there was a great shortage in the region and his reality became so difficult, that his life changed radically, from abundance to scarcity. His supposed joy transformed into sadness and his life fell into a deep crisis. He did not even have anything to eat. He had lost everything.

The same can happen in our lives, when we believe that everything is going well, we can think that God is not needed and that we are capable of it all. When we use sand instead of rock (Matthew 7:24-27) as the foundation of our lives it is certain that when facing any difficulty that comes our way, falling, failure and crisis will follow.

This is how this character begins his way, undertaking a pilgrimage through a world of hardship, hunger, mockery, abuse, falling into a very humiliating situation for a Jew, having to take care of pigs, an impure and despicable animal that was better fed and was better treated than him. How dishonourable!

Have we ever felt this way when we distanced ourselves from the Lord, without thinking about our neighbour, our spouse, our family, friends or our colleagues? Have we committed injustices against them to the point that we have lost our honour and our respect for ourselves?

## 2. – INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER AND ELEMENTS FOR REFLECTION

**The objective of this chapter is to motivate us to understand that crises often arise in our personal and family life projects that may cause us anxiety, anguish and suffering. We can take advantage of these circumstances as an opportunity to reflect, value and reorient our way of life towards God and our relationship with our neighbour.**

One thing is clear; pain enters into God's plan. That is the reality, although it is difficult for us to understand it, it is also true that God our Lord does not cause the pain to his creatures, but he tolerates it because after original sin, it is part of the human condition.

We start from the fact that a crisis is a difficult condition, unexpected or not, that endangers the development of a process or affects human beings. They are inevitable and painful in the lives of all people and their families.

We could describe three reactions to a crisis: the first is to try to avoid it when we see it coming; the second is the attitude with which we face it when it presents itself, and the third, discovering the positive that we have learned from it.

In the first case, success will depend on whether we can identify the crisis in advance. It is the equivalent of a vaccine in medicine. In family relationships, it is to recognize that there is a difficulty and the fundamental thing is to pay due attention to it so that it does not prosper.

In the second case, in our married lives, circumstances that can lead to a crisis will almost inevitably arise. Some appear as a consequence of the family life cycle: marital responsibilities, customs and habits, family politics, the arrival of children and with them schooling, adolescence, professional choices, courtship and marriage, to the empty nest, old age and widowhood.

There are also other crises that appear unpredictably, such as infidelity, divorce, unemployment, disability, illness, premature death, violence, addictions, etc.

The social and cultural deterioration in which we live today could lead us to a crisis within the family. The family nucleus is being strongly attacked with easy divorce, abortion, gender ideology, legalisation of homosexual unions, lack of freedom for the education of children, etc.

The attitude we should undertake should always be with our gaze on God, surrendering to his infinite mercy, asking him to strengthen us to face any situation serenely, without despair, adapting ourselves to what is coming and taking action. In cases where we do not find immediate solution or there is no solution, we can understand and accept reality, try to make changes, try to maintain family cohesion, supporting each other, and

seeking professional help, support within the team or with friends of the family, and never losing hope.

Finally, in the third case, we try to take advantage of the crises, which is not always easy, taking them as an opportunity to grow and mature. This allows us to value the resources we have to solve them, hidden capacities and resources appear, bonds are strengthened when challenged appropriately, and we become a testimony for others who live similar situations.

To expand on this third case, we transcribe some thoughts from Chapter 2 of the book 'Meditations on Faith' by Fr. Tadeusz Dajczer, which we include later in the Other Recommended Readings section:

*God expects us to look at all the situations we live in, and in particular the difficult ones, with the eyes of faith. In the parable of the talents, Jesus warns us not to close ourselves to the divine knowledge that flows from faith.*

*Talent is not only having something, but also the lacking of something. In the light of faith, health is a talent, but it is also a talent to endure diseases. Jesus, in each case, asks you: What do you do with this gift, because you can waste your health, as much as you can waste the lack of it. Everything is a gift; and talent is also a gift.*

*The man of faith cannot fail to see the deepest meaning of his own experiences, and evidently, the search for that meaning is already in itself a way to use talent. For example, if you feel fear of suffering or death, you find yourself faced with an opportunity.*

*If there are certain situations that cause you tension, that means that, framed within them, there is a diamond covered by ashes, that diamond is your talent. What will you do with it? How will you take advantage of it? Everything must serve for your sanctification, and in that sense, everything is grace. The suffering that overwhelms you, or the unpleasant circumstances that you face, everything is a set of talents. But we, often, act like blind people, like little children who do not understand many things.*

*Talents can have a lot of or little value. If something goes well for you, if you have achieved something you have undoubtedly made good use of a talent, but if something does not go well for you, you are facing an even more valuable talent.*

*You have to look at your own life in a different way; you have to look at it with the eyes of faith. Only then will you notice the constant gift that God gives you, you will notice that your whole life is a complex of hidden opportunities, to help you achieve continuous interior transformation, in which everything is grace.*

*"Pain is the megaphone that God uses to awaken a world of deaf people." C.S. Lewis (Lands of Penumbra).*

### 3. - REFLECTION DOCUMENTS

EXCERPT FROM THE HOMILY OF FATHER CAFFAREL ON THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

"L'ENFANT PRODIGUE"

#### PART 3

But as the youngest son had spent everything in a few weeks, in a few months, he squandered his fortune in the name of the enjoyment of freedom. No restrictions! When he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that country and he begins to live a series of deprivations. The people of that country live on their reserves, but he does not have any reserves. What does he do? We cannot imagine it quickly. He is going to knock on the door of his cheerful friends and colleagues. A door opens half way. They recognise him, they know that he no longer has money, but neither does he have friends. The door closes, once, twice, three times. He has finally understood, but he has to eat anyway. After having visited many friends, he has only one alternative left, which is a countryman who offers him services in the slums and praises himself as a worker, as a servant, as a mercenary.

Once departed, leaving the city for the countryside, he clings to one of the citizens of that country and our boy, proud of his independence, being a family child, is reduced to carrying out the most humiliating activities. This citizen of a faraway country, who probably was not in need of another worker, takes pity on him and sends him to his fields to feed the pigs. Once again I am referring to the sobriety of the story of Christ. This detail is very interesting. Feed pigs ... Why not goats? Why not sheep? Why not lambs? Again, there is an intention of Christ. It should be known that, for the Jews, the pig was the impure animal. You do not eat pork. So, being reduced to keeping pigs is the ultimate baseness. In fact, being a pastor is a great shame, because Jewish pastors could not really practice the law, especially the law of the Sabbath. It is necessary that, in spite of Saturday, the animals drink and eat. But if it is already a low situation to be a pastor, how much lower to be a pig keeper! Christ wants to show us that the desired independence finally leads to the most atrocious slavery.

The Gospel continues, ***“And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating...”*** Notice the frankness with which Christ speaks: I remember the reaction of a mother who was here during a week of prayer and who told me: Father, you were right when you said that Christ does not have false modesty; when I was in boarding school with the nuns, it was not permitted to say that one had stomach pain, it was necessary to say: I have pain under the apron. But Christ has much more freedom of words, without prudery.

The youngest son did not even have the right to the pigs' food. He, the son of a family has become jealous of pigs. Obviously, he did not dare to put his arm in the feeder of the pigs to remove the carob. He asked the master, but he was not given any. That the pigs were big and fat, in fact, was the master's greatest ambition. If his employee was as thin as a bicycle wheel, it did not bother him too much. He did not give any crumbs to his worker.

## BIANCA AND ANTONIO'S TESTIMONY

### PART 3

**Bianca and Antonio.** As our son used his gifts to live from others and those who helped him realised this, our son began to have problems in his personal relationships. He lost his self-esteem, his consumption of alcohol and drugs increased, he became even more irresponsible, and until one night several people gave him a severe beating. All beaten up he show up at our house and agreed to enter a rehabilitation centre. Unfortunately, this was not enough for him, after short periods in which he tried to stay free of drugs, he returned to his old bad habits. He had many problems, he accepted a new therapy treatment only to repeat the cycle, and with each new try, things became worst.

This status lasted for ten years, until finally, one day he was at the wrong party and with the wrong people and he was accused of a crime. Even though, he had not committed the crime, his previous behaviour made him look like the main suspect.

**Bianca.** God heard our prayer and gave us the grace to grant us extraordinary strength in an alternate way, so when one of us was down emotionally or spiritually and did not feel strong enough to face a new episode of rescue and rehabilitation, the other one took the post and took charge of the situation: with peace, courage and integrity. It was solidary work that united us, that made us admire and thank one another.

**Antonio.** During this time the whole family was put to the test. Our other children tried to take in, each in their own way, the harsh reality of seeing their older brother, making mistake after mistake. They lived through difficult circumstances, going through internal anger, constant complaint, the anxiety before his arrival at home, the social shame, avoidance in public places, intense pain paired with the pity of seeing their brother leaving and returning again and again, and watching their parents fight and fight.

**Bianca and Antonio.** However, we learned to better experience love in our home, understanding that love was greater than our problems. Despite the multiple and diverse crises of violence and humiliation that we lived as parents and siblings with our son, we made sure he knew how much we loved him; despite his performance, his using of drugs, his abandonment of school. God and only He, allowed us not to fall into the co-dependency that would have complicated even more the circumstances. God gave us the strength not to be dependent on his illness.

MARIO AND MARITZA'S TESTIMONY  
PART 3

**Mario.** My life began to be difficult, to be sad. To begin with, the relationship with my wife was filled with very embarrassing moments of complaints, misunderstandings and on top the great sadness of losing my daughters. My two older daughters did not to speak to me and did not want anything to do with their father. I only had contact with my youngest daughter, whom they almost forced to be the link between my family and me. A link I had chosen to leave behind in search of new illusions.

Somehow I had squandered the gifts from God in my life, in our marriage, in our family. I had also squandered the confidence and security created we had. When I left my home, I left everything; I left with the clothes on my back and nothing else. This is how I went out to face a new life, without knowing what the future would hold for me.

The days passed and changes began to occur to the things that once were normal and I was accustomed to. I no longer had a home of my own; I no longer had our daughters by my side, I had left this responsibility to my wife.

**Maritza.** I had to change my life too. I had to look for work and take charge of the business that we had, in order to be able to handle the expenses of the family. God is so great because even though I had not worked in many years, I got a job within month of searching. It was a very difficult stage. I had to get up at 3:30 in the morning to go and distribute the bread and then come back home, take a shower and go to the office. When I returned home, I had to take care of our daughters who were suffering and not doing very well in school. My heart was broken and the life I knew was destroyed. Life continued and I had this immense pain and the sense of not understanding what had happened.

I also had to leave the Movement, because I no longer had a husband and I asked God why he had taken away the two loves of my life, "my husband and the Movement". I cried a lot and when there was an event of the Movement, I hid in the kitchen to feel close to all of them, my brothers in Christ, who, of course, held my hand and were always with me in the midst of so much pain.

I was waiting for the day when Mario would come and ask if he could come back, and I was going to say: NO! It's too late you have lost everything.

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*That son, who receives from the father the portion of the inheritance that is due to him and leaves home to squander it in a far country "in loose living," in a certain sense is the man of every period, beginning with the one who was the first to lose the inheritance of*



*grace and original justice. The analogy at this point is very wide- ranging. The parable indirectly touches upon every breach of the covenant of love, every loss of grace, every sin.*

*The analogy turns clearly towards man's interior. The inheritance that the son had received from his father was a quantity of material goods, but more important than these goods was his dignity as a son in his father's house. The situation in which he found himself when he lost the material goods should have made him aware of the loss of that dignity.*

**Other recommended readings can be read in Annex 3**

#### **4. QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE COUPLE REFLECTION/SIT DOWN**

What has been the criteria used to deal with our marital and family crises?

What crisis can we identify in our married life?

Have we been able to look at our crises as an opportunity for conjugal growth?

#### **5. THE TEAM MEETING**

##### **A. - GENERAL SHARING**

The issue of crises is something very important to consider within marital life, since it can generate decisions that seriously affect the relationship. As such it would be very enriching for the team that in this part of the meeting, one or several couples share some crisis that they experienced during their married life and how they dealt with it.

It is necessary that the couples have previously talked about it and agreed to share it, trying to be as concrete as possible.

##### **B. - PRAYER TIME**

READING OF THE WORD

Mark 4: 35-41

*On that day, as evening drew on, he said to them, "Let us cross to the other side. "Leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat just as he was. And other boats were with him. A violent squall came up and waves were breaking over the boat, so that it was already filling up. Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a cushion. They woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Quiet! Be still!"\* The wind ceased and*

*there was great calm. Then he asked them, "Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?" They were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey?"*

#### PERSONAL REFLECTION.

After reading the Word, we recommend a few minutes of silence so that we meditate and then freely share what the Lord spoken to us, how this challenges us, and how this affects our lives.

It is proposed that we reflect if there is a concern to make our gifts fruitful.

#### COMMUNITY PRAYER.

We suggest that each couple undertake a brief prayer. It can be done according to personal or community needs or by choosing a segment of the biblical passage.

At each request that is freely made, we will respond: "Lord, hear our prayer."

#### **C. - PARTICIPATION**

In the introduction to the chapter it was mentioned the importance of knowing how to identify a situation to anticipate a crisis, and that when facing a crisis we should have an attitude that reflects our gaze on God. We should also surrender ourselves to his divine mercy, asking him to strengthen us to face any situation serenely. That is why we propose conjugal dialogue (sit down), as a concrete endeavour for this month, to be able to converse and remember the crises that we have experienced in our marriage, how we faced them and resolved them and what positive experiences we have learn from these difficult situations.

#### **D. - QUESTION FOR THE EXCHANGE OF THE STUDY TOPIC**

How should the Team react to the crisis of a couple?

#### **E. - LITURGICAL PRAYER**

Psalm 31, 8-11; 15-17

***R / In you, O Lord, I seek refuge.***

*I will rejoice and be glad in your mercy,  
once you have seen my misery,  
[and] gotten to know the distress of my soul.  
You will not abandon me into enemy hands,  
but will set my feet in a free and open space. R/.*

*Be gracious to me, LORD, for I am in distress;  
affliction is wearing down my eyes,  
my throat and my insides. R/.*

*My life is worn out by sorrow,  
and my years by sighing.  
My strength fails in my affliction;  
my bones are wearing down. R/.*

*But I trust in you, LORD;  
I say, "You are my God."  
My destiny is in your hands;  
rescue me from my enemies,  
from the hands of my pursuers.  
Let your face shine on your servant;  
save me in your mercy. R/.*

## **F. - FINAL PRAYERS**

FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF THE SERVANT OF GOD, HENRI CAFFAREL AND THE  
MAGNIFICAT

## **ANNEX 3**

### **OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS**

POPE FRANCIS: OPENING SPEECH TO THE CONGRESS "THE JOY OF LOVE, THE PATH OF FAMILIES"

MEDITATIONS ON FAITH FR. TADEUSZ DAJCZER. CHAPTER 2

TO THE SOURCES OF OUR LADY'S TEAMS. INITIATION AND PROGRESS (1959).  
SPONSORED BY THE SANTA MARÍA FOUNDATION. NOVEMBER 1987  
Introduction (Jean Allemand) (Translation Annie Hurlot)

**TEAMS OF OUR LADY  
STUDY TOPIC 2018  
RECONCILIATION, SIGN OF LOVE**

**CHAPTER 4**

**RECOGNIZING OUR FRAGILITY**

**1. - LISTENING TO THE WORD**

*“But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! Luke 1:17*

**MEDITATION**

The evangelist, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, initiates this verse with the phrase *"but when he comes to his senses"*, making reference to the fact that the son, in his desperation, paused to reflect on the situation to which he had arrived. It seems that he had to lose everything, even his filial bond to enter the depths of his being.

*"He came to his senses"* is to do a self-analysis. Many times, it is a painful situation that leads us to reflect on our life, questioning ourselves about what we have done and the consequences of our decisions, whether they were good, bad or inconsequential and also if we have hurt someone with them. In this process we also reflect on our talents, if we have taken advantage of them or wasted them and if they made us grow or we have used them only for pleasure, fun and convenience.

In the second part of the verse, the youngest son regrets being hungry, while in his father's house, even day laborers enjoy abundance. This allows him to reflect upon his actions and value what he had, with the possibility of rectifying and recovering what he has lost. Another positive fruit of the recognition of his fragility is the opportunity to return home after having abandoned it.

The beginning of a conversion is the result of deep reflections that we make in the face of different circumstances in our lives, which allow us to recognize our shortcomings, weaknesses, limitations, and even more, our mistakes or failed plans. Like the youngest son, are we repentant sinners of our behavior, we willing to convert?

Let us meditate on the actions of our lives. Let us not wait to lose what is really valuable which we have received from the Lord: love, family, health, our talents, work, property, dignity, etc., to realize what we have wasted. Let us keep in mind

that, even if we lose everything, we will continue to be children of the Father. This awareness of the trust in his love, although blurred, gives us the strength to resume the condition of children, even if it was not based on any merit. From our fragility we understand better the greatness of redemption and divine filiation. We are children of God!

## **2. - INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER AND ELEMENTS FOR REFLECTION**

**The objective of this chapter is to promote self-knowledge of our weaknesses as a first step to help us as individuals and couples, to discover and overcome the limitations we have.**

The ultimate natural end of our existence, as persons, is our encounter with the Creator. This journey implies growing in all the aspects of our life, as children, spouses, parents, friends, but above all as good children of God. We accomplish this by developing ourselves as individuals, discovering our interiority and personality, becoming aware of our abilities, gifts and limitations, and living a life of virtue by being humble, generous, responsible, respectful, faithful, etc.

Unfortunately, human frailty is currently aggravated by a hedonistic culture that influences people as it promotes anti-values such as pride, disrespect and infidelity, among others. This creates lifestyles that produce profound damage to our relationships. Therefore, the challenge is to get closer to God, knowing his infinite greatness and thus achieving a positive change in human coexistence that will help us overcome our miseries.

In married life, it is necessary that the spouses accept each other as they are, helping each other to improve in those aspects that are within our reach, to attain love, happiness and holiness.

Frailty can also be turned into a gift, which can serve to strengthen and make fertile the conjugal and family life, with the help of each other (even of the children in cases where these are affected by the problems that may arise). The living image of the fragility that fructifies and becomes an incessant source of grace, is that of Mary, mother of Jesus and our mother.

To recognize the weaknesses of one another, takes time and we are not always prepared to cope with situations that may arise along the way, such as: obsessions, failures not overcome, lack of reception and acceptance of others, types of personality, immaturity, resentments, anger, contempt, vulnerabilities, not opening to the other, hatred, insecurities, fears, harm to one another, lies, etc.

There are three aspects that can help us to overcome frailties within marriage.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the book "Virir en Pareja", P. Manuel Iceta. Chapter 2, Asuming Frailties.

-Recognize that each of the spouses arrives at marriage with their own burdens, needs and fears, or even failures, errors and limitations not aware of, low self-esteem, among others.

-Accept that together in life, we can hurt each other, have frictions and disagreements, endure great sufferings and hopelessness, experience fear of loneliness and that all these situations could become irreversible.

-Conclude that conjugal love is capable of overcoming all fragility and allows us to affirm that we know ourselves, we love each other, we respect ourselves and we assume our weaknesses.

For this help to become effective, we must take advantage of all the moments and opportunities to improve our relationship, through marital dialogue, communicating our feelings, always keeping in mind the desire to make each other happy.

## 2. - REFLECTION DOCUMENTS

EXCERPT FROM THE HOMILY OF FATHER CAFFAREL ON THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

"L'ENFANT PRODIGUE"

### PART 4

***"When he came to his senses."*** This was a path he had never followed, he lived on the periphery of himself, on a corporal level, on an emotional level, but in the depths of his heart it is clear that he had never reached this path in order to reach the depths of his being, but here he was, coming out of his misery to rediscover himself.

***"He said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!'"*** However, it amazes us that the memory of his family home which perhaps had never been present to him for weeks and months, and especially the memory of his father's workers and the abundance in which he used to live, is what motivates him, more than the suffering of his father who had seen his son leave in an insolent way. Well, yes. Christ wants to show us a child who returns to his father's home, with better feelings, but he also wants to show us a child who only has a mediocre repentance.

For sometime while reading this passage, I asked the Lord: but, Lord, why have you given us the example of a sinner who has a mediocre contrition? In fact, he plans to return mainly because he is hungry. And Christ told me and made me understand: "do not think that I have visions or revelations"; imagine that he presents a son crying all the tears of his heart, thinking of his father's pain, what would have happened? By reading this passage those who are not capable of true contrition for their sins, would have

closed the Gospel saying: this is not for me, I can not cry warm tears for my faults and my sins. Well, I just wanted each sinner to reach the end of the parable, so I presented exactly what is needed: a sinner who is first motivated by his interest, but who has, nevertheless, a certain repentance.

#### BIANCA AND ANTONIO'S TESTIMONY PART 4

**Bianca and Antonio.** The accusation of the crime to our son was very serious; He tried to explain that he was not guilty, but he could not find anyone to believe him. At that moment he realized that he meant nothing to the people around him, that they were also taking advantage of him and that he was just a guy with whom they could spend time, but without any commitment, without affection, without feelings of solidarity and worse of all without mercy. He understood then, how far he had fallen, how he had lost all his credibility and that everyone saw him incapable of doing anything. The life he led was totally different from the life he wanted and had had when he was in our home.

**Bianca.** Our son understood then, that he could not continue living as he was, now he calls it living like a "troll", a selfish person who only saw others as providers of his needs, without giving anything in return. That experience was very hard for everyone, but he did understand the seriousness of his situation.

**Antonio.** I did not know whether or not to believe in his innocence with regard to the accusation against him. He swore to me that he had not done it, but I could not be sure and the circumstances accused him. I thought then, that first of all, he was my son and that if someone was going to judge him, it would not be me; so I decided to help him defend himself against the accusations.

#### MARIO AND MARITZA'S TESTIMONY PART 4

**Maritza.** I was able to understand that God was with me, and that He was the true love in my life. I realized I had failed a lot too, because I was a person obsessed with jealousy, who was constantly complaining to my husband about things that were not true; I had to take responsibility and start healing. I searched for a priest to confess and tell him all the pain that was inside, because I still did not understand why my husband had left me. He explained to me and helped me see how this trial was also going to help me; and I began to pray more and ask Dearest God to heal my heart. I faithfully believed that even though I was far from God He was going to help me, because I never questioned the love we had for me, and God is faithful in love. I started to dedicate more time to the Lord and of course to my daughters. I joined them more and I spoke to them so that



they understood that there is only one father, that even though he had left the house, he loved them because they were his daughters and they had to forgive him.

**Mario.** My life began to become difficult again, because the decision I had made, new situations arised that were not easy to live and cope with.

I still remember with great sadness leaving my youngest daughter at home and receiving the rejection of our other daughters. The grief of going back the same way, alone, hurt and with tears in my eyes, thinking why I had made that bad decision.

I knew inside me that I had made a mistake, that the decision made was not the right one and that this could only lead to failure in my future life. I began to understand the damage it had caused in the lives of my wife and daughters. I put Maritza at risk, having to take on a job in a business that involved getting out at dawn and facing possible dangers. I put at risk the studies of our oldest daughter, who, as a kind of revenge, decided to fail her last year of high school, which was very hard to overcome, but with the help of God was achieved.

I thought to myself about how my future would be as an older adult, perhaps alone, without my wife, without my daughters, with no one to accompany me and who could support me in some needs that I would eventually have to face.

I also thought, why I had to assume a double commitment, a double family, if in fact I already had mine and for what reason I wanted to sink deeper into a life without a future.

All this was weighing in the balance of my existence, in the decision I had made and I came to understand that I had made a mistake; that I had left, of my own free will, a wife who did love me and whom I also loved, daughters whom I loved very much and who had chosen not to love me anymore.

For obvious reasons I ended up leaving the person with whom I had left. From my mother's house I started a new phase that opened the doors for me and helped me find and recover what used to be part of my life.

**Other recommended readings can be read in Annex 4**

#### **4. QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE COUPLE REFLECTION/SIT DOWN**

Do we know our defects and weaknesses and those of our spouse?

How do we suggest a change or improvement to our spouse, without offending him or her?

Do we deal with the issue of fragility within our conjugal dialogues?

Is God always present in our decisions?

## **5. THE TEAM MEETING**

### **A. - GENERAL SHARING**

We suggest, for this moment of the team meeting, that couples comment on their experiences of how they have learned to accept each other's frailties and to improve as individuals and marriages on the road to happiness, holiness and love.

Knowing that the testimonies are very enriching within the meetings, it would be important for one or two couples to comment on how they overcame some fragility in their lives. It is necessary that the couples have previously discussed and agreed on the subject, before sharing it in the meeting.

### **B. - PRAYER TIME**

PROCLAMATION.

2 Corinthians 12: 9-10, 15

*"...but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses,\* in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

*I will most gladly spend and be utterly spent for your sakes. If I love you more, am I to be loved less?"*

PERSONAL REFLECTION

After reading the Word, we recommend a few minutes of silence to be meditated and then to freely share what the Lord has spoken to us, how he challenges us and how this affects our lives.

COMMUNITY PRAYER

We propose that each participating couple make a brief prayer. It can be done according to personal needs or by choosing a segment of the biblical passage. At each request that is freely made, we will respond: "Lord, hear to our prayer."

### **C. - PARTICIPATION**

This chapter involves the reflection of the couple in a direct way, this is why we recommend putting emphasis, for this month, on three concrete endeavours: conjugal prayer, conjugal dialogue (sit down) and the rule of life.

### **D. - QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERCHANGE ON THE TOPIC STUDY**

Has team life helped us turn our weaknesses into grace?

What help from the Movement have been useful for us to know ourselves, our spouses and the members of our team?

### **E. – LITURGICAL PRAYER**

Psalm 103, 8-14

Praise for the blessings of God. Psalm of David.

**R / Bless, the Lord, my soul.**

*Merciful and gracious is the LORD,  
slow to anger, abounding in mercy.  
He will not always accuse,  
and nurses no lasting anger;  
He has not dealt with us as our sins merit,  
nor requited us as our wrongs deserve. R/.*

*For as the heavens tower over the earth,  
so his mercy towers over those who fear him.  
As far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our sins from us. R/.*

*As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.  
For he knows how we are formed,  
remembers that we are dust. R/.*

### **F. - FINAL PRAYERS:**

FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF THE SERVANT OF GOD, HENRI CAFFAREL AND THE  
MAGNIFICAT

**APPENDIX 4**  
**OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS**

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION FAMILIARIS CONSORTIUM OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II ON THE MISSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY IN THE CURRENT WORLD. No. 8

ENCYCLICAL LETTER DIVES IN MERCY OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF JOHN PAUL II ON DIVINE MERCY. No. 11 NOVEMBER 30 1980

JOY OF BELIEVING, JOY OF LIVING. FRANCOIS VARILLON, S.J. BIBLIOTECA DE TEOLOGIA, VOL. 10. MESSENGER, 1999

REFLECTION OF BENEDICT XVI. SERIES OF MEDITATIONS REGARDING THE PSALMS AND CHANNELS OF THE BIBLE. SECTION "WEDNESDAY HEARING", ZENIT AGENCY, JANUARY 11, 2006

REFLECTIONS APPLIED BASED ON THE TEXT OF LOWNEY CHRIS, THE LEADERSHIP TO THE STYLE OF THE JESUIT, EDITORIAL NORMA, 2004, PAGES. 109-129

**TEAMS OF OUR LADY  
STUDY TOPIC 2018  
RECONCILIATION, SIGN OF LOVE**

**CHAPTER 5**

**THE PAIN OF OUR FAULTS**

**1. - LISTENING TO THE WORD.**

***“I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men. “So he got up and came to his father.” Luke 15: 18-20***

**MEDITATION**

The son makes the decision to return to his father and begins to prepare what he will say to his father so that he will take him back. He wants to appeal to the filial paternal bond, dormant source of love and mercy; a new hope arises as he considers returning to the father who is a person that would give the best to his children regardless of the sacrifice. *“Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asks for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asks for a fish?” (Mathew 7:9-10)*

Deep inside he knows the father loves him, because he showed it to him at the moment in which he handed over the inheritance and let him go.

He recognizes that his past actions, the result of his own immaturity, have caused his father great disappointment and deep pain. Therefore, the decision is made, plans to return, without excuses or attempts to justify, willing to accept any penance that might be imposed; there is a change of mind in the son. Aware of his own limitations, he begins to develop an attitude of humility, he no longer feels important, or better than others, he does not aspire to have any privilege, he just wants to be received in his old home.

During our personal and conjugal life, we can often fall into temptation or commit faults. It is very important that we recognize them and instead of feeling defeated or incapable, we must decide to get up, find a solution and move on.

To recognize that we have fallen, to put aside pride, to accept our weakness and bad actions committed for lack of character and love, is the beginning of our conversion, of our reconciliation with God.

We must be willing to accept the consequences of our faults, they offend God and many times leave wounds in the people who were affected by them, so it is necessary to compensate, in some way, the damage caused.

In this process of conversion, the son decides to move away from the path that he had previously chosen and that led him to live in sin.

As Catholics, we must always have the image of God as Father. He is our refuge and strength, to whom we can go with the certainty that he will listen to us. It is He with whom we can converse, tell him our faults and hardships and vent our feelings and thoughts at any time, knowing that he will always welcome us with infinite love. This is the attitude that God the Father expects of his children.

## **2. - INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER AND ELEMENTS FOR REFLECTION**

**The purpose of this chapter is to lead us to meditate on remorse, repentance, the path to conversion and reconciliation.**

In this passage of the parable of the prodigal son, Luke leaves open the possibility of multiple interpretations in relation to the attitude of the son. The fact that the son wants to approach the father, was it only convenience because of hunger and his deteriorated conditions?

As we will see later on, in the reflection documents, the Catechism of the Catholic Church (No. 1439), a direct reference to the parable is made, object of this study topic and in which it is recognized that the son reflects, repents, pleads guilty, accepts a penance and decides to return to his father's house. It is a process, a journey to conversion.

Recognizing our capabilities and limitations allows us to accept and correct our faults, which is why this chapter invites us to reflect on hasty decisions made without consensus, which usually cause damage, problems and much pain or sorrow in the conjugal and family environment.

Faced with our faults, the first thing expected is the acceptance from the one who commits them and then the correction; the starting point of acceptance is self-knowing, self-possessing, and then surrendering, thus initiating a personal change that implies remorse, repentance and conversion. Let's ask ourselves then, what prevents us from recognizing our faults?

It is worth mentioning that the only recognition and determination to correct a fault, does not solve it, this only happens until the purpose of a decided amendment is put into practice.

The process of conversion necessarily needs prayer and deep reflection enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to find the **way**, seek the **truth** and reach the fullness of our **life**.

Another element to consider is damage, self inflicted or caused by another person from which sadness and pain can emerge. Within the conjugal relationship, the errors and mistakes we make, along with attitudes that do not seek the happiness of our spouse, but only to satisfy our selfishness, will cause pain. The rejection and resistance to recognize an evil caused, could increase, to the point of seizing all our being (body and soul).

An offense is more painful when it comes from a loved one; this confirms that the capacity for suffering is directly related to the capacity to love. This allows us to affirm that the remedy against pain and sadness is love.

Something that each one of us has to discover is the meaning that pain has in one's life. Suffering is not made to be understood, but to be fought. When we do not get an answer, the best way to find it is to look at the Cross, which is the strength of God, as St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1: 18: "*The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*"

Pain and sadness can be overcome in the family like nowhere else. And it is not only for the compassion of the relatives, but because the same person that suffers feels more secure in the environment where is welcomed and loved. This allows the person to resist the deepest pain.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church gives us some elements to work and reflect on the pain of our faults. This leads us to consider the sacrament of Reconciliation, which is also called the sacrament of conversion, penance, confession and forgiveness; given to us by Jesus in order to radically reorient our lives and have a conversion to God.

The conversion of the heart - inner penance - is oriented towards the desire and resolution to change one's life; it is the work of God's grace, which gives us the strength to begin anew.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, we have other forms of penance in the Christian life: fasting, prayer and almsgiving, which express conversion in relation to oneself, in relation to God and in relation to others.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church. Numerals 1430 to 1433

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Numerals 1434 and 1435

### 3. - REFLECTION DOCUMENTS

#### CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Numeral 1439

*The process of conversion and repentance was described by Jesus in the parable of the prodigal son, the center of which is the merciful father: <sup>37</sup> the fascination of illusory freedom, the abandonment of the father's house; the extreme misery in which the son finds himself after squandering his fortune; his deep humiliation at finding himself obliged to feed swine, and still worse, at wanting to feed on the husks the pigs ate; his reflection on all he has lost; his repentance and decision to declare himself guilty before his father; the journey back; the father's generous welcome; the father's joy - all these are characteristic of the process of conversion. The beautiful robe, the ring, and the festive banquet are symbols of that new life - pure worthy, and joyful - of anyone who returns to God and to the bosom of his family, which is the Church. Only the heart Of Christ Who knows the depths of his Father's love could reveal to us the abyss of his mercy in so simple and beautiful a way.*

EXCERPT FROM THE HOMILY OF FATHER CAFFAREL ON THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

"L'ENFANT PRODIGUE"

PART 5

**"I will rise, I will go to my father and I will say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you".** Then, you see, he is on the path of repentance. But the deep motivation is rooted in interest. *"I no longer deserve to be called your son, treat me like one of your day laborers."* He says to himself: my father is a good man, I really can not ask him the impossible to get my place back as a son in the house, but he will not refuse to treat me like one his workers. This young man, is a "primary", we see it well in his character, that is, someone who, as soon as thinks about something, does it. Having thought that, he gets up, grabs his staff, maybe even a saddlebag and leaves the pigs and sets out on the road.

**"And getting up."** This is what is good in him, he does not despair, and he does not abandon himself. There is abundance at home. He is going to the father, yes, to his father; it is so easy to say. After a few kilometers, he can no longer continue, has not eaten for ten days. He lies down in a ditch, resumes the way with the help of his staff. But very quickly again, he is exhausted. At night he does not even know if he can find a stable to sleep on the hay. Neither if someone will give him a crust of bread. He has no idea how many miles he has traveled between the family home and the country where he had stationary. Oh! It is that at first, he had the wings of freedom on his heels to go



to this distant country, but now on the way back, he has the stomach on his heels; it is quite different. He wonders if he will ever reach his father's house.

***"And, getting up, he left for his father."*** Christ, showing us the misery of this son, wants us to understand that sin is precisely giving oneself to misery, sin, which may have a glorious appearance at the beginning but takes us away from dependence on God. We want to conquer our freedom, we cannot bear the yoke, we do not want to depend on God, and we just want to depend on ourselves. How many of our contemporaries are here! And that is what separates them from God! To say goodbye to God is to dedicate us to misery! This is what Christ wants to show us here! He also wants to show us that not everything is lost! And we will see this later on.

#### BIANCA AND ANTONIO'S TESTIMONY PART 5

**Bianca and Antonio.** The shame of the accusation and the fear of being imprisoned made our son seek our help, this time he was serious. He put himself in our hands and agreed to do what we said to be rehabilitated and he returned to be the young man who had left the house; TO BE THE MAN WHO HE WAS INTENDED TO BE, BY GOD.

**Bianca.** On each occasion, we relied on his will to enter the rehabilitation centers and that allowed him to advance, each time, a little more. This could only be possible because of God's mercy to us. Every time he entered a therapeutic community, we let him know how brave he was and how much we value his strength. This occasion was no exception. Sometimes, it was difficult to see the light in him, because his dark sides obscured that brightness. Occasionally, we even thought that the light of God did not shine at all on him. But we kept alive the hope that our son had been called by Him for a purpose he would later find. Meanwhile, we had to keep fighting and praying.

**Antonio** On the other hand, we as parents, with the help of the therapies received and the professionals visited, had undergone a conversion process. The look on our son was more compassionate than before, we could see that despite living under the same roof as his brothers and sisters, and receiving the same care and admonishments, he had a unique personal story that had marked him differently. We understood then that he was our special son and we began to amend the mistakes we had made with him.

#### MARIO AND MARITZA'S TESTIMONY PART 5

**Mario.** I understood the mistake I made; thinking of a passing illusion, I left what I from the beginning had chosen for my life and with it I made suffer those I loved most and I suffered too; I caused pain to many people who loved me and, above all, I betrayed the trust that God had placed in me.

I began to change my life, I began to approach my wife and daughters again, in a way that could create back some trust in me. I did not know if I was going to achieve it or if they could forgive my mistakes and the suffering I inflicted on them.

At that time, I let my wife know I was aware of my mistake, of my intention to change and my hope to rebuild our lives. I understood the chance of not getting a positive result, but with faith and humility I tried. I did not know what our daughters' response would ultimately be, for they too, had suffered a great deal and had lost the trust they once had in their father. As our eldest daughter once said: "I had my father on a pedestal, he fell and broke into pieces, and now, how can I rebuild him?"

Today, I also know that at this difficult stage in our lives we were not alone; that many of the people who knew us and loved us, were praying for us, giving support to Maritza and asking God for my conversion.

**Other recommended readings can be read in Annex 5**

#### **4. QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE COUPLE REFLECTION/SIT DOWN**

What behavior do we assume when our spouse is experiencing pain and sadness due to a fault committed?

What faults from our spouse have caused us pain? How do we overcome it?

Does remorse necessarily imply repentance?

#### **5. THE TEAM MEETING**

##### **A. - GENERAL SHARING**

Couples must have previously conversed at home, before sharing during the team meeting, some episode of pain - conversion - repentance, that they had during their married life and that can serve as testimony to help others in a similar situation.

##### **B. - PRAYER TIME**

PROCLAMATION.

1 John 3: 1-6

*"See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be*

*like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure, as he is pure.*

*Everyone who commits sin commits lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness. You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who remains in him sins; no one who sins has seen him or known him”.*

#### PERSONAL REFLECTION

This reading invites us to recognize the love of the Father, to become like him, and to take care of each other and not to cause any evil to one another, which can occur in any circumstance of our personal life and conjugal life.

We recommend a few minutes of silence so that we meditate and then freely share what the Lord has spoken to us, how he challenges us, and how this affects our lives.

#### COMMUNITY PRAYER

We propose that each participating couple make a brief prayer. It can be done according to personal needs or by choosing a segment of the biblical passage. At each request that is freely made, we will respond: "Lord, hear to our prayer."

#### C. – PARTICIPATION

As we review this chapter on remorse, repentance, the journey of conversion and penance, we suggest that during the month there be a lot of personal and conjugal prayer and a dialogue. Reflect on your journey of conversion while members of TOOL and come up with endeavours as a result of this dialogue. We also propose to attend an Eucharistic celebration during the week and take the opportunity to go to confession.

#### D. - QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERCHANGE ON THE TOPIC STUDY

How are we living the sacrament of Reconciliation? Do we go often?

Team life, is it useful for your way of conversion? In what way?

#### E. – LITURGICAL PRAYER

Psalm 51: 2-13

**R / Create in me, oh God, a clean heart.**

*When Nathan the prophet came to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba.  
Have mercy on me, God, in accord with your merciful love; in your abundant  
compassion blot out my transgressions.  
Thoroughly wash away my guilt; and from my sin cleanse me. R/.*

*For I know my transgressions;  
my sin is always before me.  
Against you, you alone have I sinned;  
I have done what is evil in your eyes*

*So that you are just in your word,  
and without reproach in your judgment. R/.*

*Behold, I was born in guilt,  
in sin my mother conceived me.  
Behold, you desire true sincerity;  
and secretly you teach me wisdom. R/.*

*Cleanse me with hyssop, that I may be pure;  
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.  
You will let me hear gladness and joy;  
the bones you have crushed will rejoice. R/.*

*Turn away your face from my sins;  
blot out all my iniquities.  
A clean heart create for me, God;  
renew within me a steadfast spirit.  
Do not drive me from before your face,  
nor take from me your holy spirit. R/.*

**F.- FINAL PRAYERS:**

FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF THE SERVANT OF GOD, HENRI CAFFAREL AND THE  
MAGNIFICAT

## **ANNEX 5**

### **OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS**

EXCERPT FROM THE HOMILY OF POPE FRANCIS. CUSTODY THE HEART. CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS OF SINS. ACIPRENSA, 22 FEBRUARY 2015.

RICARDO YEPES STORK. "UNDERSTAND THE WORLD OF TODAY". ED. RIAL, 4th EDITION, 2001, PAGE 133-134.

ENRIQUE ROJAS. "REMEDIES FOR THE DESAMOR". ED. PLANET, ARGENTINA. APRIL 2000. 7TH EDITION, PAGE. 85.

MIGUEL ÁNGEL MONGE SÁNCHEZ - JOSÉ LUIS LEÓN. "THE SENSE OF SUFFERING". ED. PALABRA, S.A., 1ª EDICIÓN, 1998, PÁG. 19.

JUAN LUIS LORDA. "TO BE CHRISTIAN". EDICIONES RIALP, S.A. 1991. PAGE 43.

**TEAMS OF OUR LADY  
STUDY TOPIC 2018  
RECONCILIATION, SIGN OF LOVE**

**CHAPTER 6**

**MERCY AND FORGIVENESS, SIGNS OF LOVE**

**1. - LISTENING TO THE WORD.**

*“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. “And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ “But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet;” Luke 15: 20-22*

**MEDITATION**

This moving text highlights the compassionate and merciful attitude of the father as he sees his son return. The Sacred Scriptures reveal to us two of the attributes of God; first, is Compassion: *“ If someone who has worldly means sees a brother in need and refuses him compassion, how can the love of God remain in him?”* (1 John 3:17); and the second, is Mercy: *“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ (by grace you have been saved),”* (Ephesians 2:4-5).

Let us meditate on this attitude full of feelings, which allows us to know the response of God our Father, who full of compassion and mercy, despite our faults, is always on the lookout, anxiously awaiting our return and when he sees us, he runs to give us an effusive welcome kiss. It is a great consolation to see that God is shown to us as a true Father, and it fills us with joy to know that this will always be his answer, because the essence of his being is to BE LOVE; *“Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.”* (1 John 4: 8). Could we aspire to be and act, as a reflection of our heavenly Father, with our neighbor?

**2. - INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER AND ELEMENTS FOR REFLECTION**

**The purpose of this chapter is to recognize that God always awaits all sinners with open arms and comes out to meet us. It is the heart of the merciful Father who always forgives us, welcomes us and gives us back our dignity, redeeming us. We are forgiven**

**by the grace of God and not by our merits. In the image of the Father, love in the different areas of our life and particularly in the life of the couple, should resemble the attitude of welcoming and forgiving without conditions.**

The prodigal son had the courage to admit his guilt, repent, decide to humbly return to his father and even tell him that he was unworthy to be treated as a son and accept the conditions imposed on him; However, despite his bad behavior, the surprising thing is that his father reacts totally different to what he expected, he goes out to meet him, to forgive him, accepting him and without any conditions, also giving him back his dignity as a son.

As Fr. Henri Caffarel says, *"God is not in search of those whose values are worthy of his love; he seeks the poor, in the biblical sense of the term, that is, the sinner, the fool, the weak, in a word, the one in whom he finds a void to fill. But behold, the sinner, as he ignores that quality of divine love, thinks that God is going to despise him, and as St. Peter says to him: 'Get away from me, Lord, I am a sinner!' Well, God is never going to withdraw, and the misery of the sinner will be like a monstrosity in which His Love is manifested."* (In the Presence of God, PPC Publishing, 2nd edition, 2015. P.49, 2nd paragraph.)

In the image of the Father, love in the different areas of our personal and couple life should be similar to the Lord's attitude of welcoming and forgiving without limitations. In family life, the spouses are called, out of love, to help each other in sanctification and salvation. Therefore, when one of them commits a serious or minor offense, in order to achieve true reconciliation, it is first necessary for the spouse to recognize his fault and have sincere repentance, to forgive himself and then ask for forgiveness from his spouse. This has two conditions: the first is absolute forgiveness, without any reservations, and the other is the determination to not commit this fault again.

This is an opportunity to dialogue and strengthen the marriage relationship. We can reflect with what signs we manifest love to our spouse or what prevents us from expressing it. Many times we assume our spouse knows he is loved, but he may be feeling different. Take the example of the father who went out to meet the son, threw himself on his neck and kissed him effusively. How many times have we been enthusiastic by the efforts of our spouse to alleviate a situation that caused us pain? Have we acknowledged our spouse and manifested our joy because the "return" is greater than the pain caused to us by the "departure"? With this attitude we would be demonstrating that we are able to feel true love for our spouse.

It is important to analyze attitudes of coexistence contrary to love, such as selfishness and to distinguish false love, as Von Gebattel says, *"under the banner of love, many frigates of selfishness sail"*. *"Often this love is simple vanity or a form of self-formation, or a way of satisfying an affective or sexual need, or a kind of compensation for other*

*needs. The happiness of the other is not intended, but fundamentally the own happiness and the own narcissist splendor.* "4

It is advisable to work every day to acquire these divine attributes in order to apply them in all aspects of our lives, remembering that love without compassion or mercy is interest and that the one who really wants to love must necessarily respond to the needs of the other.

### 3. - REFLECTION DOCUMENTS

EXCERPT FROM THE HOMILY OF FATHER CAFFAREL ON THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

"L'ENFANT PRODIGUE"

#### PART 6

The main character of this part will no longer be the son but the father. And it is there where Christ will unfold all the resources of his imagination and his heart, and will try to make us discover something about his admirable father.

**"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him".** This suggests that the father, for months, went every day at the bend of the road, from where you could see the valley all the way down to the horizon, always hoping to see a small silhouette in the distance; at dawn he returned home.

It is to reveal to us the God Almighty that Christ shows us this Father who, every day, watches on the horizon, hoping to see the son return, the lost son.

This small silhouette on the horizon is that of the prodigal son, any other person would not have been able to recognize it. Someone said: love is the ability to predict. The father, immediately, without any hesitation, said: This is my son. *"That small blurred figure on the horizon, wobbly, not because he was drunk, poor boy, but because he was exhausted by fatigue, is my son."*

**"And felt compassion for him, and ran."** If now it surprises us, how much more must it have surprised Jesus listeners, especially since among the Jews it was quite unusual to see a father running. He was giving up his dignity. With this he incites us to say: You are old in age! You risk a heart attack! It's not edifying! Wait for him! It is not reasonable! It could be. But love is never reasonable! The father runs. He does this to make us understand the tenderness of God the Father towards a poor and sorrowful sinner.

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<sup>4</sup> Rafael Llanos Cifuentes -Egoísmo y Amor, Minos publishing house, 2000 edition



Then, the father runs to his son. I, instead of the father, assuming I could run, with both fists on my hips I would have said: So! What happened! But the father instead embraces him, as if he were the one asking his son for forgiveness. "*He embraced him*". This is what Christ says to tell us about the God Almighty with respect to the poor sinner. And he embraced him for a long time. The son did not expect that at all, poor boy, he was very surprised.

A father who goes down to the street to receive a child who returns from afar is not common. That the father runs to meet his son, in some cultures: never, it is crazy. This is not conceivable for us. Maybe in the case of a mom, she would often run to the street to receive her son but a dad, very rarely.

It means that Christ has made quite unusual comments. He may even have scandalized his audience, but he does not regret it. This is the way in which Christ makes us discover the unimaginable and scandalous love of the Father in Heaven.

**And the Gospel continues: "*But the father said to his slaves*".** The father and son take the road again and head to the house. They see the servants in the fields around the house and the father calls them. When they arrive, the servants who probably do not recognize this young boy, emaciated, smelly, who may seem like a vagabond of the lowest condition, listen to the father tell them to bring the best robe for him. This was the way in which guests and distinguished visitants were welcomed and honored. And it was also very pleasant for the traveler who had sweated his clothing and was full of dust, to have fresh and clean clothes to put on after his trip.

Although! Be attentive! Before that, the father said to the servants: quickly! That reminds me of what we view at the beginning: after a few days, the youngest son left, he was eager to conquer his independence. It draws our attention that the father seems impatient as he is shown saying this unpleasant expression, because he is eager to see his son regain his place in the family. And that's why the servants should bring the robe. And listen; do not let any words escape. And the most beautiful thing: I think the servants had to be quite amazed and confused: some might have said, "*This is still a disaster*". Having behaved like a pig, we are giving this young man the most beautiful robe in the wardrobe! That is not reasonable, but love is not reasonable. It is a parable to speak to us about the Father in Heaven welcoming a sinner.

**"Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him."** The most surprised is still the son; he really did not expect that.

**"Put a ring on his hand."** The ring, thorough, is not a common ring like you or anyone else can use. It is a seal ring, the kind that was used to sign documents. The servants are not wrong if they think: "*and if the father ceased to exist, the young man can sell the house, the stables, the fields, and the older brother will sleep on the straw and so will we. It is not reasonable to put the ring in this son's hand.*"

"Put the ring in his hand." Yes! The Lord Jesus Christ only wants us to understand something: to forgive is to return all trust. This is what Jesus did with Peter. When he forgave him, he restored the Church: "*Feed my lambs, feed my sheep*".

Look at his poor feet "**and sandals on his feet.**" Not the sandals of the servants, but the shoes worn by the masters. "Put shoes on your feet," his poor feet bloody, covered with dust.

## BIANCA AND ANTONIO'S TESTIMONY

### PART 6

**Bianca and Antonio.** Regretful and with all the desire to change, our son accepted to enter again to rehabilitation; but this time his attitude was different, he seemed certain of his recovery and asked not to have a prolonged internment because he knew he did not need it. There was a change in him and both doctors, us as his parents, agreed to his request. He left the rehabilitation with a different attitude, much more mature and apologizing for everything his family had gone through.

**Bianca.** When our son returned, I was surprised that Antonio asked to prepare a lunch with the best that was in the house, to celebrate his return and even toasted with wine and contagious all with his joy. The table was more decorated than usual; his return was a good reason. I could perceive a light in my husband, but I did not understand well how this contradiction was happening in which after giving us so much suffering, we were now celebrating his return. He raised his glass and gave our son a welcome home, confirming how much he loved him and wished him to remain here safe and sound. His brothers did not understand yet how the return of the son who had caused so much pain was celebrated. They respected our conviction that was shown in their behavior, but we knew that they did not understand it.

## MARIO AND MARITZA'S TESTIMONY

### PART 6

**Maritza.** God gave us the grace and the gift of forgiveness. Mario had to work hard so we could forgive him. Every time I had feelings against my husband, I prayed a lot asking my great God to heal my heart, and give me the strength to show our daughters that our love was true, that Mario recognized that he was wrong and deserved that forgiveness. Our daughters, little by little were seeing in his father that change, that surrender and that love towards them, the repentance of what he had done, that he loved them with all his heart and that he wanted to recover his lost home.

**Mario.** The most significant and wonderful part of this situation was the response of my wife Maritza, who, based on love, mercy and the strength of God's forgiveness, accepted that we could resume a life and a marriage that had been shattered. The love, the hope and the confidence deposited by Maritza, were so great that they allowed us

to recover a marriage, a family, which was lost. The strength of prayer, supplications to God and the good advice of many people, bear its fruits. We finally managed to rebuild our lives, recover our family, and today, after many years, we are living a wonderful phase and a very different stage in our marriage.

**Other recommended readings can be read in Annex 6**

#### **4. QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE COUPLE REFLECTION/SIT DOWN**

Do I consider myself compassionate or rather am I indifferent to the sufferings of the other?

In what ways has God come to meet us in our married life?

How do we manifest love to our spouse or what prevents us from expressing it?

#### **5. THE TEAM MEETING**

##### **A. - GENERAL SHARING**

The content of this chapter invites couples to make an assessment regarding love and forgiveness: in what have we fail, know how to forgive, how much we love and if we express it.

##### **B. - PRAYER TIME**

PROCLAMATION.

**Mateo 18, 21-35**

*“Then Peter approaching asked him, “Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus answered, “I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.’ Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and*

*I will pay you back.’ But he refused. Instead, he had him put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?’ Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart.”*

#### PERSONAL REFLECTION

We recommend emphasizing mercy, love and forgiveness.

After reading the Word, we invite you to take a few minutes of silence so that we meditate and then freely share what the Lord spoken told us, how he challenges us, and how this affects our lives.

#### COMMUNITY PRAYER

We propose that each participating couple make a brief prayer. It can be done according to personal needs or by choosing a segment of the biblical passage.

At each request that is freely made, we will respond: "Lord, hear to our prayer."

#### **C. – PARTICIPATION**

There are so many questions that we can ask ourselves in relation to love, forgiveness, selfishness, etc., but it is worth highlighting the importance of the sit down and to strength it with conjugal prayer and the rule of life.

#### **D. - QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERCHANGE ON THE TOPIC STUDY**

If God is merciful, does it mean that he can forgive everything or is there any condition?

Is it possible to have a concern of love?

#### **E. - LITURGICAL PRAYER**

**Psalm 103: 2-13**

*R / Clement and compassionate is the Lord*

*Bless the LORD, my soul;  
and do not forget all his gifts,  
Who pardons all your sins, and heals all your ills,  
Who redeems your life from the pit,  
and crowns you with mercy and compassion,  
Who fills your days with good things,  
so your youth is renewed like the eagle's. R/.*

*The LORD does righteous deeds,  
brings justice to all the oppressed.  
He made known his ways to Moses,  
to the Israelites his deeds. R/.*

*Merciful and gracious is the LORD,  
slow to anger, abounding in mercy.  
He will not always accuse,  
and nurses no lasting anger;  
He has not dealt with us as our sins merit,  
nor requited us as our wrongs deserve. R/.*

*For as the heavens tower over the earth,  
so his mercy towers over those who fear him.  
As far as the east is from the west,  
far has he removed our sins from us.  
As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him. R/.*

**F. - FINAL PRAYERS:**

FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF THE SERVANT OF GOD, HENRI CAFFAREL AND THE  
MAGNIFICAT

## **ANNEX 6**

### **OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS**

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION AMORIS LAETITIA. POPE FRANCISCO. 19 MARCH 2016. No. 106 to 108 and 113.

MISERICORDIAE VULTUS. BULLE OF CONVOCATION OF THE EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY. POPE FRANCIS, APRIL 11, 2015.

FATHER HENRI CAFFAREL. IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD. HUNDRED LETTERS ON PRAYER. PAGE 49. TRANSLATION OF MERCEDES LOZANO. PPC, EDITORIAL Y DISTRIBUIDORA, S.A. PRINTERS. 2015

RAFAEL LLANOS CIFUENTES. SELFISHNESS AND LOVE. EDITORIAL MINOS. EDITION YEAR 2000. PAGE 94.

**TEAMS OF OUR LADY  
STUDY TOPIC 2018  
RECONCILIATION, SIGN OF LOVE**

**CHAPTER 7**

**THE SENSE OF HUMAN JUSTICE FACING DIVINE JUSTICE**

**1. - LISTENING TO THE WORD.**

*“Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. “And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. “And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.’ “But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. “But he answered and said to his father, ‘Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.’ “And he said to him, ‘Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.’” Luke 15:25-32*

**MEDITATION**

In this part of the parable, Luke shows us some details about the older brother. We see him as a hard-working man who returns home after a day of work and finds himself surprised that his father has had a party to celebrate the return of his younger brother. This, instead of making him happy, irritates him, showing us a facet of resentment and denial towards both father and brother.

Resentment against the father because, until that moment, he had not received from him a recognition for his loyalty and his efforts at work, nor had he allowed him to enjoy his assets with his friends.

He is also resentful towards his younger brother, whom he unsympathetically refers to as "*that son of yours*", because, despite having squandered his heirloom living licentiously, he is received on his return home with all the honors he has never received.

The father implies the assumption that his firstborn did not need incentives or rewards, because he had to know that everything already belonged to him; in addition, in relation to the youngest son, what greatly pleased him was knowing that he was not dead or lost, it did not matter how bad he had acted, the substantial thing was that he had returned to the father.

These verses narrate situations of life that many may disagree with, in regards to the decisions made by the eldest son and the father. Within the order of human justice, what the eldest son expected is for his younger brother to receive a reprimand or a punishment, but not a party to welcome him for his return.

It is worth to meditate also that he does not resort to his Father to ask him the reason for the music and dance, instead he asks a servant, showing a lack of confidence towards his father.

In response to his father's actions, his resentments surface, insisting on his loyalty and obedience, but if we reflect on these values, we realize that they are superficial, because he expected a reward for them; it turns out to be a false love, a "*love with interest*".

The father's response is true love, does not require even explanations or apologies, it is the perfect example of the merciful love of God. This wonderful story teaches us that in spite of all our offenses, what he seeks is to recover his son, the only thing that matters is that he is by his side to help him rediscover himself, to mature and achieve his conversion.

To this teaching of the love of God many can label it as unjust, but it serves as a reference in situations that can occur in the family environment, where the practice must always be to rescue the one who was "dead" and then bring back to life, without ever despising, or censoring, or pushing away. The divine criterion about justice is contrary to the human one.

## **2. - INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER AND ELEMENTS FOR REFLECTION**

**The objective of this chapter is to become aware of the difference between human and divine justice. Divine justice rejoices for the lost son who returns. However, within human justice, despite having joy, product of forgiveness, some, out of envy, discontent, jealousy, etc., they feel disgusted because the other has been forgiven. It is about showing that forgiveness is synonymous with love and that we should be happy to recover the lost brother.**

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "*Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. Justice toward God is called the "virtue of religion." Justice toward men disposes one to respect*



*the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good.”* (No. 1807)

For Plato and Aristotle, justice was not a virtue anymore, but the synthesis of all virtues. In the Old Testament, righteous is the man who is faithful to the covenant and fulfills the will of God, inscribed in the books of the Bible. On the other side, God is right when He pacts with Israel, through the covenant, to free it and guarantee its future, but it is also just when it punishes the infidelity of the Jews as individuals and as a the chosen people.

The fulfillment of the Law (Torah) was not only aimed to the divine plan, but it also contained a set of precepts to form a social and community order, with a theocentric concept of justice and government, understanding the divine law equally as the earthly law.

In the New Testament, on the other hand, justice is given by faith in Jesus Christ, by the gratuitous redemption that man receives as the fruit of his life, passion, death and resurrection, which is the sacrifice that God offers for the salvation of humanity. It is the New Covenant, in which he gives his own Son as expiatory offering.

The new law that Jesus Christ establishes in the world, as the basis of justice, is the love to God and neighbor, which is engraved in the heart of all humanity, and which we Christians strengthen through the action of the Holy Spirit in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.

In the reference verses in this chapter, Luke 15: 25-32, the father and the eldest son, are the two sides of the coin with which we can differentiate divine justice and human justice.

In divine justice there is love for neighbor, mercy, forgiveness, and welcome. It is oriented to God and has been revealed by the Father through the prophets and above all, through the life, passion and death of his Son, Jesus Christ. It is resorted, and sometimes as a last resort, to any fault or lack of injustice and produces rest and peace in the soul of the one who asks for it. In return, demands to the person to be guided in life by love and mercy.

Human justice, on the other hand, is world-oriented, imperfect, acts in society, where it is considered that all guilt must be sanctioned and, in some cases, marks an indelible stain on the affected person as an antecedent that will accompany the person for a lifetime becoming subject to discrimination and relegation.

We find it difficult, many times, to try to locate certain situations of life within the supernatural context of divine justice, because our resources and natural dimensions are limited and we cannot understand them. Therefore, we are going to resort to the moral teaching of the Church with the purpose of addressing the virtue of justice.

St. Thomas Aquinas defines virtue as "*good operative habits*" and the opposite as "*bad operative habits*" that he calls "*vices*." All virtues have excesses or shortcomings, for example, in the virtue of order, the lack is called "disorder" and its excess, "mania or obsession with order."

The virtue of justice, whose absence is injustice, is the only one that does not have excesses, because justice is based on giving each one what corresponds each one and can not, therefore, receive more. This is the great difference that exists and where you can identify the action of divine justice, proper to God, which goes beyond what corresponds to human justice, surpassing any criterion and always identifying itself with a response of love. From this understanding of justice, the lesson of God is always to seek and exhaust all means for the salvation of his children.

Within conjugal and family life, we must question and analyze each of our decisions when, by bad habit, we judge the other for any divergence or conflict. This does not favor the solution to a situation, but rather, it can enlarge the problem, due to the reproaches and resentments that are generated, damaging the relationship.

Therefore, we must ask ourselves, how should marriages act when faced with apparently unjust situations? When judging the other, what is it that we intend? Do we want to show that we are always right, and with that, what do we gain?

To find a way to solve problems, the essential thing is to seek the help of God in the light of the Gospel, which is Christ himself who speaks to us and helps us to be just and merciful. In addition, we must remember that one of the blessings that our Movement has, is to have a counselor priest or a spiritual companion, who will give us his support and enlightenment to find solutions. Another support will also be the mutual help of the team.

It is worth remembering what Paul mentioned about the theological virtues in his letter to the Corinthians "***So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.***" (1Cor 13:13). Applying this to conjugal life means, that out of love, my answers will be those of the Father and I will not have to judge or question, but rather, have the capacity to live loving, as He loves.

To apply divine justice in our conjugal and family relationship, it is advisable to practice the human virtues of respect, fidelity, generosity and humility, in order to improve our daily behavior, seek the good of the other and maintain a happy coexistence in order to achieve the sanctification of the other, as the Gospel tells us in 1 Corinthians 7: 16: "***For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband; or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?***" and in 1 Peter 3: 1: "***Likewise, you wives should be subordinate to your husbands so that, even if some disobey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives' conduct.***"

### 3. - REFLECTION DOCUMENTS

EXCERPT FROM THE HOMILY OF FATHER CAFFAREL ON THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

"L'ENFANT PRODIGUE"

PART 7

The last part of the parable will show us God's attitude towards the righteous, that is, towards those who are not mayor sinners and also the Pharisees.

***"Now his older son was in the field "***, and since returning after working, he goes home with his tools on his shoulder and as he approaches, he hears music and dances. It is not possible, he says to himself. He gets closer, and that is precisely what is happening; music and dances. Then his heart turns evil. How? He encounters one of the servants, probably one of those who left the banquet room to go find a piece of firewood or a bottle of wine. He calls him and asks what is happening? We must recognize that this servant is not a great psychologist or a diplomat. He responds quickly: ***"Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound."*** He did not want to say it was because he recovered him alive.

***"But he became angry and was not willing to go in."*** Then the Gospel does not tell us anything else, but it is necessary to provide the missing words. The servant came to the house, went to the father, bowed, whispered to his ear and said, *"You know that your eldest son is really the utmost."* In his joy, the father had forgotten that he had an older son. And it happens that he does not want to enter the house, he is furious. I, instead of the father, would have told the servant: listen, you will go and look for him and tell him that if he is jealous, like a twelve-year-old child, he should just stay where he is. But that is not our father.

***"And his father came out and began pleading with him."*** He begged him, which really is not reasonable, but love is not reasonable. He begged to his irritated and angry older son. . ***"But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours.'"*** It does not matter who this eldest son was. He believed his stand was really "just", he had been a virtuous man and for this the father never gave him something to celebrate with his friends. He gets aggressive with his father: ***"but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes. "*** He is not aware, but he is also humiliating his brother. He also tells him: *"that son of yours"*, he does not say: *"my brother"*. He does not want to have anything to do with his brother; ***"you killed the fattened calf for him!"***

But then the father, almost insulted by his eldest son, says *"my son"*, almost the same words used by the Virgin Mary when she meets Jesus in the temple. This is how he

speaks to this eldest son who has insulted him and who shows no contrition, but who has a bitter loyalty to the father.

***“Son, you have always been with me.”*** This father seems naive because he considers it to be the supreme happiness of a son to be always with his father. Here, Christ wants to tell us about the happiness of men to be with God, to share the life of God.

***“You have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.”*** That was something I had never suspected. This verse speaks to us of a God in relation to men, of God who wants us to know his intention to offer us all his riches. ***“But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.”***

We have the feeling that the eldest son remains in his bitter and hostile attitude. It does not change and it's over. But no, the story is not over. There is still the final point that tells us many things. Only this small and simple point: The rest of the story propounds, what became of the eldest son? Did he return to the banquet hall? We do not know. The parable is truncated, mutilated, but full of meaning. And to understand this final point, one should think that at Jesus' public hearings there were not only good people listening. All these men and women, who had the joy of listening to Jesus, seem very simple people, people of the town, but there were also scribes, Pharisees, wrapped in their virtuous dignity, who tried to trap Jesus, who did not forgive "His impiety", because Jesus was considered ungodly as he sat at the table with sinners. A story like this could only have a not so happy ending.

Jesus speaks. If there is an endpoint, we do not know, the probabilities are not assured. For Jesus, the eldest son represents the Pharisees and Jesus does not decide if the eldest son came back or stayed outside. But we know the story oh! The Pharisees did not return to the banquet hall!

#### BIANCA AND ANTONIO'S TESTIMONY PART 7

**Bianca and Antonio.** Our son changed to a life free of consumption of drugs. He was healed, mostly from the wounds that led him to that situation. He became an ally of the Blessed Sacrament and found in Him his greatest benefactor. He established a relationship with God and affirms that it was He who gave him the idea of the work he does, which today has made him mature, feel a useful and functional person, and has managed to contribute to the family, psychologically, materially and spiritually. His light is already visible and although there is still some more to shine, we believe that by persevering in prayer, our son will be a faithful apostle of the Lord, and if He allows it, he will keep on his daily healing. However, it took a while for his brothers to believe that this was true. Although they were happy for the change, they feared that he would fail again.

**Bianca.** From this process, which we knew our children were enduring, I remember a painful moment when I came to realize that one of them, perhaps the one who most wanted to rationalize this drama, had fallen into despair. He had the sad belief that his older brother would never change. I remember my pain at his words, which were said during a family therapy and before all his siblings.

#### MARIO AND MARITZA'S TESTIMONY PART 7

**Mario.** The joy of receiving the forgiveness and mercy of God through my wife and daughters had its complicated moments, because there were people who reprimand Maritza on how was it possible for her to return with a man who had cheated and left her, who did not deserve forgiveness; she was making a mistake.

The return home was not easy at all. At the beginning it was very difficult to regain confidence and sometimes very painful. It was logical for things to be this way, because a life had been broken, a relationship of many years. But I was not alone; I had the help of God, with prayer and with a good deal of humility to accept many questions, many moments of bad memories and crying.

**Maritza.** It was not easy for me to tell my husband to come back, I had my friends and family against me, they were by my side in such pain and could not understand why I made the decision to forgive him and start over. They told me that he was going to betray me again; that if I returned with Mario, I would not count on their support and that they would not let him into their homes, that they would not talk to him, and so on, among many other things.

I decided to move on to rebuild our marriage; trusting in God I said, I believe in you and I trust in you, help me to be happy next to my husband and daughters, for as long as you want; what you want to give me I accept, but I need to heal my heart to be able to forgive him; every time the doubt came to me, I would squeeze my heart with my hand and say to the Lord, heal me, heal me. And so he did.

**Other recommended readings can be read in Annex 7**

#### **4. QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE COUPLE REFLECTION/SIT DOWN**

Do I recognize myself as capable of having the merciful attitude of the Father?

What can we do to have the merciful attitude of the Father?

Do I identify with some of the attitudes of the older son?

What virtues do we need in our conjugal life?

## **5. THE TEAM MEETING**

### **A. - GENERAL SHARING**

We invite couples to share, previously agreeing, an episode in their lives involving justice and mercy, within or outside of their marriage.

### **B. - PRAYER TIME**

PROCLAMATION.

Mathew 20:1-16

*“The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. Going out about nine o’clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them, ‘You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just. So they went off. [And] he went out again around noon, and around three o’clock, and did likewise. Going out about five o’clock, he found others standing around, and said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ They answered, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You too go into my vineyard.’ When it was evening the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Summon the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and ending with the first.’ When those who had started about five o’clock came, each received the usual daily wage. So when the first came, they thought that they would receive more, but each of them also got the usual wage. And on receiving it they grumbled against the landowner, saying, ‘These last ones worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who bore the day’s burden and the heat.’ He said to one of them in reply, ‘My friend, I am not cheating you.\* Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what is yours and go. What if I wish to give this last one the same as you? [Or] am I not free to do as I wish with my own money? Are you envious because I am generous?’ Thus, the last will be first, and the first will be last.”*

PERSONAL REFLECTION

After reading the Word, we invite you to take a few minutes of silence to meditate and then freely share what the Lord has spoken to us, how he challenges us and how it affects our lives. We recommend emphasizing in justice and mercy.

## COMMUNITY PRAYER

We propose that each participating couple make a brief prayer. It can be done according to personal needs or by choosing a segment of the biblical passage. At each request that is freely made, we will respond: "Lord, hear to our prayer."

### **C.- PARTICIPATION**

A spiritual retreat would be the propitious moment to reflect on the injustices that we have committed in our lives, both individually and in marriage. If a retreat were not possible, personal and conjugal prayer, along with the rule of life, would be a good alternative. Let us dispose our hearts to participate to our teammates the feelings that have emerged from the practice of these specific endeavors.

### **D. - QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERCHANGE ON THE TOPIC**

To be able to have the merciful attitude of God before the difficulties that come our way in life, seems at first very difficult to fulfill, but as Christians in search of truth and good, it motivates us to seek Him and listen to Him in order to act like Him. Then we question ourselves:

If I cannot be merciful, is it because of lack of faith?

What virtues are we missing or in which we are weak and how can we strengthen them to be merciful?

Given the faults of our spouse, does human justice or mercy prevail?

### **E. – LITURGICAL PRAYER**

Psalm 51: 3-17

**R / In your mercy, Lord, have mercy on me.**

*Have mercy on me, God, in accord with your merciful love; in your abundant compassion blot out my transgressions.*

*Thoroughly wash away my guilt; and from my sin cleanse me. R/.*

*For I know my transgressions;*

*my sin is always before me.*

*Against you, you alone have I sinned; R/.*

*I have done what is evil in your eyes  
So that you are just in your word,  
and without reproach in your judgment. R/.*

*Behold, I was born in guilt,  
in sin my mother conceived me.  
Behold, you desire true sincerity;  
and secretly you teach me wisdom. R/.*

*Cleanse me with hyssop, that I may be pure;  
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.  
You will let me hear gladness and joy;  
the bones you have crushed will rejoice. R/.*

*Turn away your face from my sins;  
blot out all my iniquities.  
A clean heart create for me, God;  
renew within me a steadfast spirit.  
Do not drive me from before your face,  
nor take from me your holy spirit. R/.*

*Restore to me the gladness of your salvation;  
uphold me with a willing spirit.  
I will teach the wicked your ways,  
that sinners may return to you. R/.*

*Rescue me from violent bloodshed, God, my saving God,  
and my tongue will sing joyfully of your justice.  
Lord, you will open my lips;  
and my mouth will proclaim your praise. R/.*

**F. - FINAL PRAYERS:**

FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF THE SERVANT OF GOD, HENRI CAFFAREL AND THE  
MAGNIFICAT



## **ANNEX 7**

### **OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS**

TAKEN FROM THE CATECHESIS OF POPE FRANCIS ON PERFECT JUSTICE AND INFINITE MERCY. FEBRUARY 3, 2016. ZENIT.ORG

ENCYCLICAL LETTER DIVES IN MERCY OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF JOHN PAUL II ON DIVINE MERCY. NOVEMBER 30, 1980. NUMERAL 5, 5º PARAGRAPH.

ENCYCLICAL LETTER DIVES IN MERCY OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF JOHN PAUL II ON DIVINE MERCY. NOVEMBER 30, 1980. NUMERAL 4, 11th PARAGRAPH .

JOACHIM JEREMÍAS. ABBA AND THE CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. BIBLICAL STUDIES LIBRARY. EDICIONES CRISTIANDAD, 1977.

**TEAMS OF OUR LADY  
STUDY TOPIC 2018  
RECONCILIATION, SIGN OF LOVE**

**CHAPTER 8**

**THE JOY OF THE REUNION**

**1.- LISTENING TO THE WORD**

***“Bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found. And they began to celebrate.”*** Luke 15: 23-24

**MEDITATION**

Every festivity is synonymous with celebration, in this case, the passage shows us the reason: ***“for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found”***. How much joy this father shows that he wants to celebrate, and that is the natural attitude of every father who finds a lost son, and the way to manifest it is through a gathering whose meaning is to participate and share with others of his joy. The gospel relates joy and happiness with hope because happiness is the fruit of joy and joy, the fruit of hope. ***“ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”*** Romans 15:13.

Hope as the mother of the " await ", translates into wanting something to happen and with the sustenance of faith is believing that it will happen. This is what keeps alive an illusion, a longing, a cure, an aspiration, and a return. ***“ Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer.”*** Romans 12: 12.

Then, beginning from faith, to hope we remain in it, because we already know that true love never abandons and never fails. It is the aid of these three theological virtues, infused by the same Spirit, which allows us to live in permanent joy, keep our feelings intact before what we love, wait with open arms, and participate in the joy of reunion.

In addition, the action of the Spirit of God is manifested in us through its fruits and one of them is joy, which commits us to be its bearers and to be witness at all times of our lives, especially within the family. These fruits are mentioned in Galatians 5: 22-23: ***“In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”***

## 2. - INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER AND ELEMENTS FOR REFLECTION

**The objective of this chapter is to motivate us to live fully the joy of reunion. We also celebrate the joy of return, the feeling of welcome, the value of repentance, the conquest of conversion, the joy of forgiveness, the grace of mercy, the beginning of a new life in true freedom. Definitely, we celebrate Love.**

*“Joy is a natural movement of the soul that is known to possess goods. According to the assets that are possessed, so will be the joy they produce. There is a joy that comes from satisfying elementary needs such as eating or drinking. Another that occurs when we are given a gift or we acquire a material good: a house, a car, when we get paid for a job, when they raise our salary, etc. But none is as strong and as elevated as that produced by love: knowing oneself loved and understood. Love is the greatest good that man can possess. That's why love is what produces most joy.*

*And within love, the most stable, the firmest, the most faithful and the most powerful is the love of God. We Christians know we are loved by God, who treats us as his children. For this reason, joy is the natural tone of Christian life: joy is the necessary consequence of divine filiation, of knowing that we are loved with predilection by God our Father, who welcomes us, helps us and forgives us. If we feel as the favorite children of our Father in heaven, which we are! How can we not always be joyful? Think about it ”.<sup>5</sup>*

Within the conjugal life, there are situations in which a tense relationship is lived and others in which a relationship of joy and happiness is lived. This gives us a guideline that there are different types of personalities that reflect varied moods; it is good to clarify that not all moods are due to the personal structure, as some can be generated by diverse causes, such as illness, grief, loss of work, among others. But it is worth questioning about certain attitudes of discouragement that should not be part of our condition as Christians and, being the only ones responsible for being able to change them, we should ask ourselves, why do we show sadness and do not feel joy regularly? The causes could be many, but considering their effect on conjugal living, in most cases they are presented by disappointments, lack of respect, unresolved resentments, permanent incomprehension, feeling abandoned, unloved, unvalued and others.

Providentially and taking it as a gift of grace, we have had to analyze the wonderful development of the parable of the prodigal son, which is a true teaching of the way God acts and who God is, where we can find answers to complex difficulties and situations within our family surroundings.

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<sup>5</sup> Juan Luis Lorda- "To Be a Christian". Fourteenth edition. Ediciones Rialp, S.A. Theme · 10 " La Alegría " pages. 109 to 111.

Finally, we are called to remain faithful to the love of God by living with the two commandments that the Lord left us: ***“The first is this: ‘Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”*** Mark 12: 29-31.

However, we can ask ourselves how can we love like that? In our human nature, weakened by original sin, this seems very difficult to achieve. Although, experience allows us to affirm that it can be done, an answer supported by Jesus himself and by the saints, who achieved it not only because of their knowledge, lighting or decision, but, above their limitations, contributed efforts and perseverance to understanding that we are all called to participate in the joy of the Kingdom of God and be missionaries, to fulfill his plan that we all be saved. ***“I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance.”*** Luke 15:7.

In the conjugal living, to become a testimony of a joyful and happy Christian marriage, it is convenient to develop attitudes of not judging, not separating, not condemning, and rather develop attitudes of respecting, welcoming and celebrating the other, making it clear that these attitudes do not refer to the acceptance of sin or an evil act, but of the unconditional acceptance of the person. This is the way to celebrate the return of the loved one, the reunion, and also seek our holiness that is achieved in "live loving but as God loves" because for God we are all his children and He will never stop loving us.

### **3. - REFLECTION DOCUMENTS**

EXCERPT FROM THE HOMILY OF FATHER CAFFAREL ON THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

"L'ENFANT PRODIGUE"

PART 8

*And the servants want to leave, go back to the field to work. The father stops them and asks them to: " **bring the fattened calf** ". This may not mean anything to readers of the twentieth century and city dwellers. But we should know that, on a farm in Palestine at that time, the fattened calf was a great character, it was destined for the next big celebration, for example, the marriage of the eldest son. This is why; the servants feel this request is a sacrilege, to kill the fattening calf for this young man?*

***“Bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate.”*** What is the idea of a celebration? The father will invite flutists, tambourine players, will offer a great banquet, but do not get me wrong. The celebration is not the kind of festivity that takes place outdoors, the celebration, in this case, is in the heart of the father. And it is because in

*his heart there is a celebration that he wants the whole house to become a celebration where everyone will rejoice with him. This is to show us how God welcomes a sinner. "There is more joy in heaven for a returning sinner," Christ said in another passage.*

*A rabbi once told the following story: "I want to make you understand that, through sin, man cuts the link that connects him with God. But when the man repents and returns to God, the latter takes the two ends of the tie and makes a knot to have the sinner tied, but the interesting thing is that as you tie a knot, you shorten the rope. This is done so that the sinner is closer to God after his sin than before his sin. If we have committed many sins, then we have a real rope of knots to go to God. Sounds logical. As the servants are so confused, the father gives them an explanation: "Because my son was dead and revived..." he wants to say emphatically: "He was dead, he was dead..." he was not in good condition, that was for sure. Because of sin he is considered a dead man. It is as if Christ forgot the symbolism and the parable, to tell us about reality. In fact, a sinner is a dead man. A body without a soul is a corpse, but a body and a soul without the Holy Spirit is a dead person, a spiritual corpse. He was lost, he was found and then they began to celebrate. "*

#### BIANCA AND ANTONIO'S TESTIMONY PART 8

**Bianca and Antonio.** When he left his addiction, his brothers and we were also different and we started a new family life with this son who had been renewed to truly live.

We believe that after this experience, he will be able to explain what it means to live in love. We can do the same. The Lord gave us this opportunity. We remain in expectation of what God wants for him and we trust that he will be merciful, as he always has, along this loving journey.

After a while, a man of God contacted to us. He proposed us to join in some solidarity projects in favor of a vulnerable sector. Later, we discover that the true and great project for which God had called us was our son. The most vulnerable was with us and was our priority at that time. This wise man led our son back to the Father's House, he lived a very profound healing experience with him, met God, understood his own wounds and was able to work on them. It was a time of waiting to see what was the next step we had to take together; to continue in this dynamic that already seemed to come to an end.

We never stop doing something for him. When we waited in silence because of his absence, we felt it was part of his freedom. A freedom that our son was using, although it hurt the way he had chosen to use it. We kept praying tirelessly. This was the source of tranquility that allowed us to redeploy resources to restart the various attempts to save our son. In the months of his absence we recharged our soul to be able to start over.

We understood that our life was not a drama that it was a life full of blessings and this pain was part of it. We both knew it. God never got tired of showing us how much He loved us. Now we know that our existence would not be the same if we had not lived this experience. In connection with the suffering that was incorporated naturally, we also had the acceptance that this was part of the decisions that our son took, again and again. We knew about the transforming power of suffering, we allowed ourselves to live it and in some way enjoy it for the good of our family, trying to incorporate it with the greatest joy that the spirit allowed us.

We never lost hope. We thought about our son as "great". God had to have designed a plan for him to go through this *via crucis*, perhaps so that all of us would learn the greatest lesson of our lives: to love unconditionally without dissipate anything for Him.

#### MARIO AND MARITZA'S TESTIMONY PART 8

**Mario and Maritza.** Actually, God our Father is and has been wonderful with us, he loved us and he loves us so much that he was happy to bring us back together, to make us grow as a couple, as a family, as Christians.

We are completely sure that to accomplish this He used many people who surrounded us, who did not leave us alone, whom we know were praying for us, fasting, making efforts. The Lord listened to everything and so He celebrated a great feast with us and for us.

Today we see ourselves - like the phoenix bird that rose from the ashes and took flight - being testimony and help for many people who for various reasons experience the same or similar situations that we did. We have disposed our lives to the service of Teams of Our Lady, to the service of the Church, to the service of marriages.

Our daughters, who lived the pain of separation and then the wonderful experience of conversion and forgiveness between us, when they made the decision to join their husbands in marriage, they did it in the Catholic Church, trusting in the grace of the Sacrament of Marriage, as a gift from God.

Today, we have clarity that things must be resolved as they arise, we can not let problems grow, we need dialogue, good communication, respect, humility, and above all, a lot of love. And it is what we do today to be happy.

**Other recommended readings can be read in Annex 8**

#### **4. QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE COUPLE REFLECTION/SIT DOWN**

Have we celebrated a reconciliation?

When we have moments of sadness, are we able to discern what is the root of these feeling?

Do we consider our spouse optimistic and cheerful?

For us, where does true joy come from?

#### **5. THE TEAM MEETING**

##### **A. - GENERAL SHARING**

We invite couples to share , previously agreeing, on any life situation that involves joy, within marriage or family life, considering that the chapter invites us to celebrate reunion.

##### **B. - PRAYER TIME**

PROCLAMATION.

Luke 15:4-10

*“What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it? And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance.”*

*“Or what woman having ten coins and losing one would not light a lamp and sweep the house, searching carefully until she finds it? And when she does find it, she calls together her friends and neighbors and says to them, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found the coin that I lost.’ In just the same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*

## PERSONAL REFLECTION

After reading the Word, we invite you to take a few minutes of silence to meditate and then freely share what the Lord has spoken to us, how he challenges us and how it affects our lives.

## COMMUNITY PRAYER

We propose that each participating couple make a brief prayer. It can be done according to personal needs or by choosing a segment of the biblical passage. At each request that is freely made, we will respond: "Lord, hear to our prayer."

## C.- PARTICIPATION

The content and objective of this chapter invites us to carry out a conjugal dialogue during the month, accompanied by personal and conjugal prayer. As a result we must be able to implement the rules of life that will help us be joyful and live a happy marriage. We invite couples to be generous and share their feelings, within the meeting.

## D. - QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERCHANGE ON THE TOPIC

How do we experience the joy of reconciliation?

How do the fruits of the Holy Spirit compromise our lives?

## E. – LITURGICAL PRAYER

Psalm 126:1-6

**R / The Lord has done great things for us.**

*When the LORD restored the captives of Zion,  
we thought we were dreaming.  
Then our mouths were filled with laughter;  
our tongues sang for joy. R/.*



*Then it was said among the nations,  
"The LORD had done great things for them."  
The LORD has done great things for us;  
Oh, how happy we were! R/.*

*Restore our captives, LORD,  
like the dry stream beds of the Negeb.  
Those who sow in tears  
will reap with cries of joy. R/.*

*Those who go forth weeping,  
carrying sacks of seed,  
Will return with cries of joy,  
carrying their bundled sheaves. R/.*

**F. - FINAL PRAYERS:**

FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF THE SERVANT OF GOD, HENRI CAFFAREL AND THE  
MAGNIFICAT

## **ANNEX 8**

### **OTHER RECOMMENDED READINGS**

APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION POSTSINODAL AMORIS LAETITIA. ABOUT LOVE IN THE FAMILY. POPE FRANCISCO. 2016

EXCERPT FROM HENRY J. M. NOUWEN. THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON. PPC, EDITORIAL Y DISTRIBUIDORA, SA. MADRID, 2011, PAGES 121 A 125.

EXCERPT FROM JUAN LUIS LORDA. " TO BE CHRISTIAN ". EDICIONES RIALP, S.A., 1991. PAGES 110 AND 111.

**TEAMS OF OUR LADY**  
**STUDY TOPIC 2018**  
**RECONCILIATION, SIGN OF LOVE**

**CHAPTER 9**

**BALANCE REUNION**

**OBJECTIVE**

Have an evaluation within the team, in light of this study topic, reflecting on each one of the verses of the parable. Pondering on the influence they have in our lives and collecting the fruits of this great teaching of the "Merciful Father", so that each marriage and team may find a way to imitate this father, which is a reflection of God's love.

**INTRODUCTION**

*"Be merciful, just as [also] your Father is merciful. Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven."* Luke 6: 36-37.

While studying this theme, our feelings sometimes were closer to the experience lived by the youngest son, and in other reflections, to the attitude demonstrated by the eldest son. Nevertheless, the difficult part was to identify with the father and his main attitude; mercy.

At the end of life and of our times we will be judged by the love and mercy that we gave. The parable of the prodigal son leads us to acknowledge the greatness of the Merciful Father and his invitation to stop being the youngest son, hedonistic, or the oldest son, proud, and become from forgiven sinners to merciful Christians, just like the father was with his children. *"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;"* Mathew 6:12.

This parable calls us to become the father who loves, forgives, welcomes and returns the lost dignity. We are the image of God on earth and we are asked to be holy as God our Father is Holy. *"So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect."* Mathew 5:48. This sanctification is only achieved by loving, *"misericordando"*<sup>6</sup>, from a converted heart that has experienced the closeness to the Father.

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<sup>6</sup> Papa Francisco (being merciful)

Jesus invitation to sinners, represented by both the younger son and the eldest son, is to convert their hearts to love and mercy.

The study topic we have reviewed throughout this year shows us that mercy and love are inseparable. God continually manifests his love by showing us his infinite mercy<sup>7</sup>. This is very clearly expressed by Father Manuel Iceta in his book, "Love, Who Are You?" On chapter four of this book he defines: "*Love is the ability to cope with the miseries of the other ... The feelings and sensations that are awakened when discovering the wounds and weaknesses of the other, could be recapped in one word: mercy.*"

## LISTENING TO THE WORD

***" While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat with Jesus and his disciples. The Pharisees saw this and said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" He heard this and said, "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn the meaning of the words 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."***  
Mathew 9:10-13.

After reading the Word, we invite you to take a few minutes of silence to meditate and then freely share what the Lord has spoken to us. Following, we invite each participating couple to make a brief prayer of petition, thanksgiving and/or praise.

## MEDITATION

Matthew's words tell us what happens just after his own conversion as he accepts Jesus' call to follow him. We can say this is an example of a day in the public life of Jesus: welcoming and meeting with the "excluded", with the "different", evangelizing at every moment with his Word and above all with his actions. He is a sign of contradiction for the supporters of the "status quo" and for those who remain only following the law based on their own interpretation, but, above all, He carries out his activities with a clear mission: to convert sinners and take them to the Father.

If we are Christians, it is because we are followers of Jesus, we have made our own his Word, his Gospel, and we try to live according to his message. We are called to bear witness with our actions, the mercy and love that He has first offered us. This path can be difficult to follow in the reality of everyday and is precisely because this way, which for us, is Jesus, that we must commit to always travel by His side throughout our life; what is important is our intention to exercise love for our neighbor the way He loved us: ***" I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another."*** John 13: 34.

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<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 2: 4 "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us".

## REFLECTION DOCUMENTS

### EXCERPT FROM THE HOMILY OF FATHER CAFFAREL ON THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

"L'ENFANT PRODIGUE"

***"And felt compassion for him."***

*"What is compassion? The best definition of compassion I can not find in my dictionary, but in the letter from Madame de Sévigné to her daughter, who had bronchitis, I find compassion as she exclaims: "My daughter, I have chest pains" because of your illness. That is compassion. The pain of the other hurts me. The Father condoles with and for the evil of his son, and Christ wants us to understand that Almighty God, Father of Mercy, is ill because of the illness of his sinful son. Because the sinner is first of all someone hurt before the eyes of God. He is a child who has hurt himself and that is what He finds unbearable. He feels pain in the pain of his son. "*

*"To this boy, we'll give him the most beautiful dress in our wardrobe. And that is not reasonable. But love is not reasonable. This gesture is to speak to us about our Father in Heaven, welcoming a sinner. "*

*"I also think, I'm sure, that the youngest son is upset with himself because the love of his father, which he had never suspected, becomes evident; the festive events are necessary for him to discover how much he is loved. He has a true revelation of love the day he is welcomed back. This is our story; it is the day we come to God with our poor sin and God forgives us. This is the greatness of the sacrament of reconciliation ...I have seen people upset with themselves who do not dare to believe that after terrible sins, they can still be beloved children ... He discovers his father's love, the unimaginable love of his father. And as a result, he never felt so intimate; he never felt so close to his father! "*

*"I would like to point out in conclusion, that the youngest son and the eldest son, who have mediocre feelings, who are sinners, each in their own way, have committed the same sin. Both have a mediocre idea of their father's love. And that is a very serious sin. I understood it one day when I opened the door of my office in Paris and found myself in the presence of a woman whom I almost did not recognize because her face was devastated by pain. She came in, and sat in the chair in front of me. This may have been the only time in my life when I saw someone tell the truth with so much pain: her throat was tense she could not speak. Then she hands me a letter from inside her purse. I look at the letter, I look at the signature, it was from her daughter Helen, and I read: 'Mama, when you find this letter it will be midnight, maybe two in the morning in my room, I know by this time I will be at the bottom of the canal. I committed an unforgivable sin. Bye, Mom.'*

*This woman was deeply hurt. She made me understand, I would not have guessed this by myself, that what troubled her deeply was to realize that her daughter Helen had such a small idea of her mother's heart, that she could imagine that under her eyes there was an unforgivable sin and that one day she, as a mother would close her door and her heart. That's what hurt this woman.*

*Well, I think that it is also one of the most serious sins we can commit against God, to have a small idea of his heart. The younger son had a small idea of the father's heart; he thought he would only accept him as a servant. The elder, however, did not dare to ask the Father about the younger brother, he also had a small idea of the father's heart.*

*Having a small idea of the heart of God is precisely what offends the heart of God. To have a great idea of the heart of God in all mediocre and sinful circumstances of our life allows us to be able to glorify God. We must ask ourselves from time to time: do I have a great idea of God's heart, of his love? Of His paternal love for me? Of His mercy?*

*This is what Christ wants us to understand...he hopes for each one of us, as we read this parable again, that we would be able to share in awe the unimaginable love of his Father. I firmly believe that there can be no greater joy for Christ and the Father that for us to have a great idea of his love.*

## **QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE BALANCE MEETING AS COUPLES AND TEAM**

We invite you to do a sit-down, first each couple and then, in the monthly meeting, as a team, in order to evaluate the path traveled during this year, in light of this study topic, and your participation in the activities of the Life of the Team and the Movement.

Let us ask the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and our minds, as we look back, so that we can make decisions to help us live more deeply our marriages as a sacrament and towards our future path in the team.

In this part, we want to emphasize, as our Movement has been proposing, to set in motion our mission within the Church, for which Jesus and Mary, our Mother, have prepared us with much love.

1. If we have learned to accept the other, do we accept with love the freedom that others have to make their own decisions, even to make mistakes?
2. If we are aware of the gifts received, do we use mutual help to put these gifts at the service of the team, of other married couples and of the Church?

3. If we have faith in the power of personal, conjugal and team prayer, especially in times of crisis, how have we practiced it? How has the power of prayer been manifested? Do we pray for marriages? Do we pray with faith?
4. If we consider that one of the most difficult endeavors is conjugal dialogue or the sit down, do we set clear goals, prepare ourselves to do the sit down well and obtain the expected results? Do we set ourselves rules of life, as a couple, as a result of conjugal dialogue, that allow us to fulfill our mission?
5. If we recognize that we have been forgiven by God and have learned to ask for forgiveness and to forgive, are we able to carry this message of mercy to other people and couples who are experiencing difficulties?
6. Are we really convinced that there is no love without mercy?
7. What has it meant for us, as a couple and as team members, to read this study topic?

#### **FINAL PRAYER**

Prayer to Our lady of Fatima

Oh Most Holy Virgin, you appeared repeatedly to the little children; I would also like to see you, hear your voice and tell you: my Mother, take me to heaven. Trusting in your love, I ask you to obtain for me through your Son Jesus a living faith, intelligence to know Him and love Him, patience and grace to serve Him and my brothers, and for one day to join you in heaven. Amen.

**FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF THE SERVANT OF GOD, HENRI CAFFAREL AND THE  
MAGNIFICAT**