



The Christian couple  
leaven of renewal  
for the family and society

TEAMS OF OUR LADY  
INTERNATIONAL LEADING TEAM



## INTRODUCTION

Dear members of the Teams

In the plan that the Leading Team set out at the International Gathering at Fatima in 2018, we set the general theme "Do not be afraid, let us go out".

Within this, we gave different annual themes. So far, the stages of our journey are:

- 2018-2019 "Let us go out to serve, assuming our weaknesses"
- 2019-2020 "Called to be holy"
- 2020-2021 "Marriage, sacrament of mission"
- 2021-2022 "The Christian couple, leaven of renewal for the family and society"

To encourage reflection on being agents of renewal, we think that we could not have a better background than the Encyclical "Laudato Si"<sup>1</sup>. In it, Pope Francis states: "Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal." (LS 202).

The Teams Movement, on its journey with the Church, of which we are a part, has always listened attentively to the voice and guidance of our Popes, and this is why in the ERI we believe that we cannot allow the Encyclical "Laudato Si" to remain outside our formation journey. Importantly, "Laudato Si" develops the concept of integral ecology, as a model for expressing the fundamental relationships of the person: with God, with himself, with other human beings and with creation. Team members, like all humanity, must be careful not to fall into the danger of "anthropocentrism", making a dichotomy between our human and spiritual growth, and the natural and non-human world. "Nothing of this world is indifferent to us" (LS) because everything is part of the Gospel of creation.

With this framework in mind, in January 2020, we invited SR Portugal to write the study topic. Our proposal was received with great enthusiasm and generosity by its Responsible Couple, Margarida and José Machado da Silva. They formed a working group and immediately began writing this study topic. We send our thanks and appreciation to all of them for the conscientious and enriching work carried out. This study topic will undoubtedly make a great contribution to our formation journey.

When we in the ERI agreed on the direction for this year and the writing of this study topic, we could not have guessed the impact that the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the cause of the disease known as COVID-19, would have on the lives of all the inhabitants of our "common home". Words like pandemic, epidemic, quarantine, lockdown, second wave, asymptomatic or coronavirus, rarely used before, have become the words most commonly used across the world and in all daily searches on the internet.

In his encyclical "Laudato Si", published in June 2015, Pope Francis could not have anticipated what we would experience five years later. However, with deep insight, Pope Francis outlined the need for the protection of nature, for the care of our common home, for an awareness of a common origin, of a mutual belonging and of a future shared by all. Only this sense of responsibility, shared by all, can lead us to build a sustainable future for the next generations.

During the writing of this study topic everything changed. The world was subjected to the destructive advances of a previously unknown virus, which in a few weeks changed our lives, our plans, the orientation plans of our beloved movement, and the agendas of our meetings. The World Meeting of Families, which was to be a preamble to the regional meeting in Rome where we would hand over this

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<sup>1</sup> In the dialect of medieval Italian Umbria: Praise be to you.

study topic, was cancelled by the Vatican, as was the international meeting of Regional Couples itself, which was cancelled after discernment and decision by the ERI.

Despite all this, the relevance of this study topic has not changed at all, but in our present circumstances has become even more relevant! At the beginning of last year, before the spread of COVID 19, Pope Francis invited all Catholics and all well-intentioned people, to celebrate the fifth anniversary of this important encyclical and take steps to better care for our common home. This was another particularly good reason for having this encyclical as a reference for our annual study topic. In 2020, Pope Francis also issued the Apostolic Exhortation "Querida Amazonia" (Beloved Amazon), which was largely based on his encyclical "Laudato Si" and on the reflections of the participants in the Special Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazonian Region held in October 2019. This exhortation is not only local in character, but is wider reaching, enriching our thoughts on the preservation of the environment and our joint responsibility to help each other globally.

Dear family of the Teams of Our Lady, it is with great joy, in these difficult times in which we are living, that we invite you to immerse yourself in personal and couple reading, to exchange thoughts and ideas as a team, and to put into practice the actions that this wonderful topic will awaken in you. Enjoy studying the nine chapters that make it up, keep referring to the encyclical "Laudato Si" and the exhortation "Querida Amazonia", with the reassurance that this will be a precious way of helping us to be Christian couples, the leaven that renews the family and society.

Under the protection of Our Mother Mary and enlightened by the Spirit, we ask that this be so.

CLARITA and EDGARDO BERNAL FANDIÑO  
International Responsible Couple

## The Christian couple, the leaven of renewal for the family and society.

In the study topic for the year 2021-22, "The Christian couple, leaven of renewal for the family and society," we are invited to reflect on the importance of God in our families. We must do this not merely by strictly observing God's law, but by recognising ourselves first and foremost as children and seekers of God. Recognising ourselves in this way transforms mankind's relationship with the world. We become people immersed in the wonder of divine creation and see everything differently: nature, spouse, family, the society in which we live.

At this time in human history, in order to safeguard our "common home", both spiritually and physically, Christians must be steadfast in their contemplation of and commitment to the Word of God. We are all called to carry out God's will for each one of us and for our families. "... *the Lord speaks and summons the earth ... from the rising of the sun to its setting. ... Our God comes and does not keep silence!* "

(Ps 50:1-3) The family, in God's plan, is *co-creator of the renewal* of this common home.

For us, couples, widows, widowers and team spiritual counsellors, there is only one way, to grow together towards holiness, because the Lord has explicitly asked it, "that they may be one as we are ONE: " ... *I in them, and You in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that You have sent me, and that You have loved them as You have loved me.* "(Jn 17:22-23).

### General structure

The plan which we propose for the study of "The Christian couple, leaven of renewal for the family and society" is based, fundamentally, on the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si*, on the words of Father Henri Caffarel and on other documents of the Catholic Church. The course of study will take a comprehensive approach to the Teams couple's view of their relationship with God, with the world, and how they can renew and change their world.

In the first and second meetings we reflect on God's view of mankind; in the third, fourth, and fifth meetings we evaluate the family's relationship with the world; in the sixth, seventh, and eighth meetings we consider the effect of the Christian family as an agent of change in this world; and in the ninth meeting we reflect on the end of family life, God. In the tenth meeting, by way of conclusion, the previous nine meetings are reviewed, and each couple and Team is invited to identify new attitudes and/or forms of action.

MEETINGS	OBJECTIVES - CHALLENGES AND ATTITUDES	Word of God
		Endeavours
		Laudato Si
1 Beauty of Creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Contemplate</b> nature as a gift and reflection of God and <b>praise the Lord</b></li> <li>• <b>Be aware of</b> the common purpose to which all beings in the Universe contribute</li> <li>• <b>Proclaim</b> the primacy of the human being <b>by respecting and defending the dignity</b> of each and every species in the hierarchy of Creation.</li> </ul>	Acts 17, 24-28
		[Personal prayer]
		LS, 1-16
2 The Family in God's design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fight against individualism and a culture centred on "the me"</b></li> <li>• <b>Care for those excluded by assisting them and helping them integrate into society.</b></li> </ul>	Song of Solomon 2, 10-12. 17 ; 8, 6 -7
		[Conjugal prayer]

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Adopt behaviours that lead to harmony in the family in different contexts (school environment, work, family life balance, parish community, ...).</b></li> <li>• <b>Live Family as the Sanctuary of Life</b></li> <li>• <b>Be present</b> in situations where human dignity and the vulnerability of life are being questioned.</li> </ul>	LS, 17-61
<b>3</b> <b>The dialogue between Faith and Reason</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reflect on the</b> reality of the Human Being, made up of body and soul, and to find in it the depths of reason and faith.</li> <li>• <b>Think</b> how faith must collaborate with reason to better understand the extent of the problems facing mankind.</li> <li>• <b>Understand</b> how faith and reason influence the choices of the couple and family and thus,</li> <li>• <b>Give meaning to</b> the harmonious evolution of God's work.</li> </ul>	Rev 21, 5-6
		[Listening to the Word]
		LS, 62-88
<b>4</b> <b>Joint responsibility for the common good</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Look at what is</b> happening in the world and <b>take</b> responsibility for the contribution that each person can give to society from their personal and family life.</li> <li>• <b>Exercise your citizenship</b> as a political response and participate responsibly in the service of the common good, in sectors such as education, media, health, work and employment, promotion of life, peace, social inclusion, environment, management of global resources, etc.</li> <li>• <b>Commit yourself with</b> clear actions, to build up the community where your family is living, by taking care of the environment, community groups and communal spaces.</li> <li>• <b>Develop</b> a strong sense of responsibility in your family for your role in society, now and for future generations.</li> </ul>	Acts 2, 42-47
		[Sit down]
		LS, 89-100
<b>5</b> <b>Technology: creativity and power</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>See</b> how technology contributes to the well-being of people in areas such as health, education and communications.</li> <li>• <b>Consider</b> and critically <b>reflect</b> on the objectives, context, consequences and ethical limits of technology.</li> <li>• <b>Transform</b> communication possibilities into opportunities for encounters and solidarity among all, thus contributing to a culture that celebrates "living together" on the planet.</li> </ul>	Eccl 3, 9-15
		[Retreat]
		LS,101-136
<b>6</b> <b>An Economy with a Soul</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Consume</b> responsibly, recognising that we are protagonists of an economy which is attentive to both its people and to the environment in which we live.</li> <li>• <b>Contribute, in a</b> positive way, with intelligence, creativity and generosity, to create a society where both goods and people are valued and social justice reigns in institutions and in the workplace.</li> <li>• <b>Optimise</b> the use of natural resources (water, energy, ...) and adopt a culture where nothing is wasted.</li> <li>• <b>Share</b> our wealth and possessions with those in need.</li> </ul>	1 Pet 1, 22-23
		[Sit down]
		LS,137-162
<b>7</b> <b>A society based on Love</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Overcome</b> indifference and <b>be sensitive</b> to the problems of the world and society.</li> <li>• <b>Take care of people who are</b> excluded, <b>accompanying</b> them and helping them <b>integrate</b> into society.</li> </ul>	Jn 15, 9-11
		[Rule of Life]
		LS,163-201

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dare to</b> go out and meet those in material or spiritual need and <b>be</b> for them an <b>instrument of the Mercy of Christ</b> and of the Church.</li> <li>• <b>Welcome, care for</b> and <b>accompany</b> couples and families, especially those who are going through difficult times or in situations of greater need.</li> </ul>	
8 Education for a new lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Live as a</b> family, with joy and sobriety and <b>act</b> responsibly towards the environment.</li> <li>• <b>Contribute with</b> real acts of kindness and service to a happy family life.</li> <li>• <b>Pray as a</b> family, recognising the presence of God, Father and Creator of life, and <b>participate in</b> Sunday Mass and in the life of the Church, developing over time and in community our relationship with God.</li> <li>• <b>Educate for</b> a new attitude and a new way of living in our "Common Home".</li> </ul>	2 Peter 1, 2-7
		[Conjugal and family prayer]
9 Beyond the Sun... the infinite Beauty of God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Contemplate</b> the universe, <b>give</b> thanks and <b>praise</b> God for everything and for everyone.</li> <li>• <b>Root</b> our faith in the Risen Jesus and find in Him the grace and strength for life.</li> <li>• <b>Propagate</b> Christian hope through our welcome, our smile and our loving ways.</li> <li>• <b>Surrender ourselves, as a</b> couple, to God, led by the example of Our Lady.</li> </ul>	LS,202-237
		Rev 1, 8.17
10 Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Look back on</b> the year that is ending and <b>reflect deeply</b>, individually, as a couple and as a team, on the <b>Way</b> travelled towards <b>Holiness</b> through the <b>care of your Common Home</b>.</li> </ul>	[Listening to the Word]
		LS,238-245
		Dt 6, 4, 6-9
		[Personal prayer]
		LS, 246 and Prayers

### Themes for each Monthly Meeting

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### For the preparation of the first meeting

- Read the prologue to the Encyclical Letter Laudato Si [LS, 1-16].
- Contemplate as a couple the path you have already lived together and, in personal prayer, give thanks and praise to the Lord
- Prayerfully read (Lectio Divina) the biblical text for the next meeting (Acts 17, 24-28)

# Meeting 1 - The Beauty of Creation

## Introduction

"In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the word "creation" has a broader meaning than "nature", for it has to do with God's loving plan in which every creature has its own value and significance. Nature is usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood and controlled, whereas creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by the love which calls us together into universal communion."(LS, 76) In other words, we and all the beings of the universe are created by the same Father, we are united, and we form a kind of universal family, which impels us to a sacred, loving and humble respect." (LS, 77)

We are asked to contemplate creation, to let ourselves be enveloped by its beauty and to give way in wonder, seeing in it the very presence of God. "When we can see God reflected in all that exists, our hearts are moved to praise the Lord for all his creatures and to worship him in union with them."(LS, 87)

**Reading of the Word of God and Meditation [Acts 17:24-28].**

**Liturgical Prayer - [PS 8, 4-10]**

***O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!***

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars that you have established;  
what are human beings that you are mindful of them,  
mortals that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than God,  
and crowned them with glory and honour.  
You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;  
you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen,  
and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,  
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

***O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!***

## Sharing on Endeavours

this meeting we give priority to **Personal Prayer**, which leads us to intimacy with the Creator and with Creation, the work of His hands.

## Sharing Reflections on the Study Topic

Based on the challenges and attitudes proposed at the beginning of this meeting, it is suggested that the couple prepare the study topic based on these questions. The important thing is to focus on the reality and not the theory.

1. How do we look at Creation? Do we welcome it as a reflection and gift from God or do we use it only as a benefit that we have at our disposal? Reflect on our daily attitudes.
2. Has the enforced standstill that humanity has experienced during the coronavirus pandemic changed my/our relationship with the creation that God has prepared for me/us?
3. In these times when the place and dignity of the human being in creation seems to have been weakened, how do I proclaim daily the values of the Gospel in relation to ecology?



## Final Prayer

This is the time when the team members pray for their intentions and for everything that has come into their hearts during the meeting. To begin the final prayer of this meeting we call upon a deeply Catholic Portuguese writer, **Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen**.

"I call You because everything is still in the beginning.  
And to endure is the longest of times  
I beg You to come and give me freedom,  
May one of Your glances purify me and finish me.  
There are a lot of things I do not want to see.  
I ask You to be the present.  
I ask You to flood everything.  
And may Thy kingdom before time come  
And be spread over the Earth  
Like a ferocious Spring in a hurry."

## Suggestions for the month

*Yet we are called to be instruments of God our Father, so that our planet might be what he desired when he created it and correspond with his plan for peace, beauty and fullness. [LS, 53]*

- Read the first chapter of the Encyclical Letter Laudato Si [LS, 17-61].
- Share as a couple, during conjugal prayer, on how you see God's dream for your family and how you can be, every day, instruments of God the Father in the realisation of this dream.

## Meeting 2 - The Family in God's Design

### Introduction

Human beings reach their fullness when they are connected to God and the world around them. And both are indispensable. Pope Francis warns us, in *Laudato Si*, against a crisis of excessive and obsessive individualism, when he states that "If the present ecological crisis is one small sign of the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity, we cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships." LS, 119].

Human ecology means recreating a world where we can all reach the fullness of life. And it means creating a dignified environment for all people, that is, one that excludes no one, and at the same time, one that is dignified for humanity in all its dimensions, fully respecting its own nature.

### Prayer and Meditation of the Word

During the month and based on the biblical text, the couple follow the four stages of Prayerful Reading (Lectio Divina) - reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation.

*My beloved speaks and says to me:*

*"Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away:  
for lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.*

*The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come,  
and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land.*

*My beloved is mine and I am his, he pastures his flock among the lilies.  
Until the day breathes and the shadows flee,.....*

*Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm;  
for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave.  
Its flashes are flashes of fire, a most vehement flame.*

*Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it.  
If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly scorned.*

*Song of Solomon 2:10*

**Reading of the Word of God and meditation [Cor 2, 10-12, 17; Cor 8, 6-7].**

**Liturgical Prayer - [Ps 44 (45), 3:8-12; 17:18].**

***My heart overflows with a goodly theme; I address my verses to the king;***

You are the most handsome of men;  
grace is poured upon your lips;  
therefore God has blessed you for ever.

You love righteousness and hate wickedness.  
Therefore God, your God, has anointed you

with the oil of gladness beyond your companions;  
your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia.  
From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad;  
daughters of kings are among your ladies of honour;  
at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.

Hear, O daughter, consider and incline your ear;  
forget your people and your father's house,  
and the king will desire your beauty.  
Since he is your lord, bow to him;

In the place of ancestors you, O king, shall have sons ;  
you will make them princes in all the earth.  
I will cause your name to be celebrated in all generations;  
therefore the peoples will praise you for ever and ever.

***My heart overflows with a goodly theme; I address my verses to the king;***

### **Sharing on the Endeavours**

In this meeting the focus is on **Conjugal Prayer**, which is the means above all to let the Spirit who loves us enter into our family, social and religious way of life.

### **Sharing Reflections on the Study Topic**

Based on the challenges and attitudes proposed at the beginning of this meeting, it is suggested that the couple prepare the study topic based on the following questions:

1. What aspects are closest to God's plan in our family? And which ones are further away?
2. To what extent do we care for harmony in our marital, family and professional relationships? Do we realise the importance of kindness, respect, gentle affirmation of opinions, etc. in all areas of our lives?
3. Have we tried to be attentive and informed about the Church's thinking in relation to sensitive subjects that require us to take clear and bold positions?

### **Preparations during the next month**

*Science and religion, with their distinctive approaches to understanding reality, can enter into an intense dialogue fruitful for both [LS, 62].*

- Read the first part of the second chapter of the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si* [LS, 62-88].
- As a couple read and listen to the Word of God, truly seeking the Truth. It would be good to meditate on the arguments (economic, human, technical, ethical, ...) that are usually considered in every decision in life. Do we strive to let faith illuminate our decisions? Do we frequently give space to God, inviting him to be present in every decision?
- Prayerful reading (*Lectio Divina*) of the biblical text for the next meeting. [Rev 21,5-6]

## Meeting 3 - The Dialogue between Faith and Reason

### Introduction

Faith and religion have often been presented as antagonistic and restricting to science and scientific progress. Indeed, history shows us that faith and reason have sometimes been in conflict. From Ancient Greece to the Enlightenment, various philosophers and scientists have defended the need to verify the truth in order to believe in it, and for the overcoming of unfounded beliefs. The promise of a better future based only on evolution and progress gradually took hold.

However, today this is not entirely true. Mankind dominates nature, but not its passions, its special interests, its thirst for power. Another belief is coming to the fore that promises freedom through work and an alienating dependence on technology. Mankind consciously or unconsciously exploits natural resources in a selfish way, and devastates the world it inhabits, favouring the enrichment of a dominant class.

The balance between faith and science is fundamental for man to adequately relate to himself and to the world around him. *"Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves (cf. Ex.33:18; Psalm 27:8-9; 63:2-3; Jn14:8;1 Jn3:2)".* Fides et Ratio, 1, John Paul II.

### Prayer and meditation of the Word

For Lectio Divina

*Then the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

*Then he said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning, and the end. To the thirsty, I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life." Rev 21:5-6*

### Reading of the Word of God and meditation [Rev 21:5-6].

#### Liturgical Prayer - [Psalm 48 (49), 4-8]

***Hear this, all you peoples, give ear, all inhabitants of the world.***

I will incline my ear to a proverb;  
I will solve my riddle to the music of the lyre.

Why should I fear in times of trouble,  
when the iniquity of my persecutors surrounds me,  
men who trust in their wealth  
and boast of the abundance of their riches?

Truly no man can ransom himself,  
or give to God the price of his life,  
for the ransom of his life is costly,  
and can never suffice,

***Hear this, all you peoples, give ear, all inhabitants of the world.***

### Sharing on the Endeavours

In this meeting emphasis will be placed on **Listening to the Word of God**, which is the foundation for a complete understanding of the truth about God's purposes for mankind.

## Sharing Reflections on the Study Topic

Based on the challenges and attitudes proposed at the beginning of this meeting, it is suggested that the couple prepare the study topic based on the following questions.

1. Do we feel that science and progress have conditioned our faith or are they in conflict with our understanding of worldly things? Is our faith evident in our life choices?
2. Are we aware that as Christians we need to keep up to date with and study Church documents in order to be able to offer others a correct perspective on events?
3. Do we encourage our children to study? How do we guide their choices?
4. Do we fearlessly express our opinions, even if they differ from those of the majority?

## Final Prayer

This is the time when the team members pray for their intentions and for everything that came into their hearts during the meeting.

To begin the final prayer of this meeting, we invoke the words of Pope Francis.

Loving God,  
Creator of heaven and earth and all that is in them,  
You created us in your own image and made us stewards of all your creation.  
You blessed us with the sun, water and bountiful land  
so that all might be nourished.  
Open our minds and touch our hearts,  
so that we may attend to your gift of creation.  
Help us to be conscious that our common home belongs not only to us,  
but to all of your creatures and to all future generations,  
and that it is our responsibility to preserve it.  
May we help each person secure the food and resources  
that they need.  
Be present to those in need in these trying times,  
especially the poorest and those most at risk of being left behind.

Transform our fear and feelings of isolation into hope  
and fraternity so that we may experience a true conversion of the heart.  
Help us to show creative solidarity in addressing the consequences of this global pandemic,  
Make us courageous to embrace the changes that are needed in search of the common good.  
Now more than ever may we feel that we are all interconnected and interdependent.  
Enable us to listen and respond to the cry of the earth  
and the cry of the poor.  
May the present sufferings be the birth pangs of  
a more fraternal and sustainable world.  
Under the loving gaze of Mary Help of Christians,  
we make this prayer through Christ our Lord.  
Amen

*[Pope Francis prayer for the 5th anniversary of the Encyclical Letter Laudato Si]*

## Suggestions for the month

*... when our hearts are authentically open to universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one. [LS, 92]*

- Continue reading the second chapter of the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si* "The Gospel of Creation" [LS, 89-100].
- Discuss as a couple, during the Sit down, how you live out your responsibility in solidarity with those close to you. Who and which families around you are in a situation of suffering, unemployment, poverty, illness? Do you dare as a couple and as a family, to do more, to go out to meet and accompany these families, with discretion and generosity?
- Prayerful reading (Lectio Divina) of the biblical text for the next meeting. (Acts 2:42-47)

## Meeting 4 - Joint Responsibility for the Common Good

### Introduction

Integral ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good. "The common good is respect for the human person as such, endowed with basic and inalienable rights ordered to his or her integral development." [LS, 157]. All groups and institutions, from the Family to the State, must be active champions for the defence and promotion of the common good. In the same way, and because everything is interrelated, we all have a responsibility, as citizens, to contribute to such a goal through solidarity.

In today's society, where social inequalities persist and people are deprived of their basic rights, the principle of the common good is revealed as a call for solidarity, first and foremost towards the poorest, and towards the common destiny of the goods and resources of the planet.

### Lectio Divina

*"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common. They would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved." Acts 2:42-47*

### Liturgical Prayer - [Psalm 132 (133), 1-3]

#### How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!

It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes.

It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion.  
For there the LORD ordained his blessing, life forevermore.

#### How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!

### Endeavours

In this meeting the focus is on the **Sit Down**, as a way to build a new common good based on the relationship between spiritual and material gifts.

### Sharing Reflections on the Study Topic

Based on the challenges and attitudes proposed at the beginning of this meeting, it is suggested that the couple prepare the study topic based on the following questions.

1. In a time when everything points to individual well-being, how do we live out our responsibility in solidarity with those close to us? From an environmental point of view what are the most pressing needs (*Laudato Si* Ch 4) for the improvement of the areas in which we live?
2. What is our attitude in the face of the challenges in our daily family life? In front of our children do we show ourselves as peace builders and defenders of our responsibility to contribute to the common good?
3. Do we live out the values of the Gospel in all areas of our own life? Give some examples from your own experience.
4. In real life, what do we do to care for the common good, at work and as global citizens?

## Final Prayer

This is the time when the team members pray for their intentions and for everything that came into their hearts during the meeting.

*Mary, Virgin and Mother,  
you who, moved by the Holy Spirit,  
welcomed the word of life  
in the depths of your humble faith:  
as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal  
One,  
help us to say our own "yes"  
to the urgent call, as pressing as ever,  
to proclaim the good news of Jesus.*

*Filled with Christ's presence,  
you brought joy to John the Baptist,  
making him exult in the womb of his mother.  
Brimming over with joy,  
you sang of the great things done by God.  
Standing at the foot of the cross  
with unyielding faith,  
you received the joyful comfort of the  
resurrection,  
and joined the disciples in awaiting the Spirit  
so that the evangelizing Church might be born.*

*Obtain for us now a new ardour born of the  
resurrection,  
that we may bring to all the Gospel of life*

*which triumphs over death.  
Give us a holy courage to seek new paths,  
that the gift of unfading beauty  
may reach every man and woman.*

*Virgin of listening and contemplation,  
Mother of love, Bride of the eternal wedding  
feast,  
pray for the Church, whose pure icon you are,  
that she may never be closed in on herself  
or lose her passion for establishing God's  
kingdom.*

*Star of the new evangelization,  
help us to bear radiant witness to communion,  
service, ardent and generous faith,  
justice and love of the poor,  
that the joy of the Gospel  
may reach to the ends of the earth,  
illuminating even the fringes of our world.*

*Mother of the living Gospel,  
wellspring of happiness for God's little ones,  
pray for us.  
Amen. Alleluia!*

(Pope Francis: Prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013))

## Suggestions for the month

*The technological paradigm has become so dominant that it would be difficult to do without its resources and even more difficult to utilise them without being dominated by their internal logic. [LS, 108]*

- Read chapter 3 of the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si* [LS, 101-136].
  - Make or schedule a retreat as a couple, in silence, as a way of regaining inner freedom, by creating the space and the time where, with phones disconnected and away from daily life, calm dialogue with God is possible!
  - Prayerful reading (Lectio Divina) of the biblical text for the following meeting [Eccl 3,9-15].
-

## Meeting 5 - Technology: Creativity and Power

### Introduction

"In our time humanity is experiencing a turning-point in its history, as we can see from the advances being made in so many fields. We can only praise the steps being taken to improve people's welfare in areas such as health care, education and communications. At the same time, we have to remember that the majority of our contemporaries are barely living from day to day, with dire consequences. A number of diseases are spreading. The hearts of many people are gripped by fear and desperation, even in the so-called rich countries. The joy of living frequently fades, lack of respect for others and violence are on the rise, and inequality is increasingly evident. It is a struggle to live and, often, to live with precious little dignity. This epochal change has been set in motion by the enormous qualitative, quantitative, rapid and cumulative advances occurring in the sciences and in technology, and by their instant application in different areas of nature and of life. We are in an age of knowledge and information, which has led to new and often anonymous kinds of power." [EG, 52]. This power presents many risks, and it is therefore necessary to consider the effects, the context and ethical limits of technology.

Moreover, in these times when social networks and other means of human communication allow us all to be constantly connected, the challenge is to rediscover the profoundly human character of face-to-face encounters and friendship, to transmit the "mystique" of living together, to transform the possibilities for communication into opportunities for encounter and solidarity. "To go out of ourselves and to join others is healthy for us. To be self-enclosed is to taste the bitter poison of immanence, and humanity will be worse for every selfish choice we make." [EG, 87].

### Prayer and meditation of the Word

It is suggested that each person and couple follow the four stages of Prayerful Reading (Lectio Divina) - reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation during the month and based on the biblical text.

*What gain have the workers from their toil? I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover, he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil knowing that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this, so that all should stand in awe before him. That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already is; and God seeks out what has gone by. (Ecclesiastes 3, 9-15)*

**Reading of the Word of God and meditation** [Eccl 3:9-15].

**Liturgical Prayer** - [Psalm 64 (65), 4-9]

***Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion.***

*Happy are those whom you choose and bring near to live in your courts.  
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, your holy temple.  
By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation;  
you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.  
By your strength you established the mountains; you are girded with might.  
You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples.  
Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs;  
you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.*

***Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion.***



## Sharing on the Endeavours

Sharing on our experience of the Endeavours is a special time of mutual spiritual support during the team meeting. It is a time to check out our progress on the path of conjugal and individual holiness. In this meeting the emphasis will be on the **Retreat** as a way of praising God in individual and marital intimacy, away from daily life.

## Sharing Reflections on the Study Topic

Based on the challenges and attitudes proposed at the beginning of this meeting, it is suggested that the couple prepare the study topic based on the following questions.

1. Technological means are becoming more and more indispensable and invasive in daily life. How do we, as a family, balance the use of technology and interpersonal relationships? Give some real examples.
2. How do we, as parents, balance respect for our children's privacy with the accompaniment of our children in their use of social networks?
3. How do we use technology in our relationship with our Team and the Teams movement?
4. Give examples of how the use of technology has been fundamental to celebrating the "encounter" during the 2020 pandemic.

## Final Prayer

This is the time when the team members pray for their intentions and for everything that came to their hearts during the meeting. To begin the final prayer of this meeting, we invoke the words of the very old Akathist hymn.

Rejoice, O seer of the ineffable Will.

Rejoice, O surety of those praying in silence.

Rejoice, you the Preface of Christ's miracles.

Rejoice, you the Pinnacle of His commandments.

Rejoice, O heavenly Ladder, by which God descended.

Rejoice, O Bridge leading those from earth to Heaven.

Rejoice, O Miracle, much marvelled of Angels.

Rejoice, O trauma, much dirged of demons.

Rejoice, you who ineffably gave birth to the Light.

Rejoice, you who revealed the mystery to none.

Rejoice, O knowledge superseding the wise.

Rejoice, You who enlighten the minds of the faithful.

Rejoice, O Bride Ever-Virgin

Rejoice, Vessel of the Wisdom of God.

<http://www.orthodoxa.org/GB/orthodoxy/spirituality/AkathistMotherGodGB.htm>

Rejoice, Treasury of His providence.

Rejoice, you who prove the philosophers fools.

Rejoice, you who prove the logicians illogical.

Rejoice, for the subtle debaters are confounded.

Rejoice, for the inventors of myths are faded away.

Rejoice, you who break the webs of the Athenians.

Rejoice, you who fill the nets of the Fishermen.

Rejoice, you who draw us from the depths of ignorance.

Rejoice, you who enlighten many with knowledge.

Rejoice, Raft for those who desire to be saved.

Rejoice, Haven for those who fare on the sea of life.

Rejoice, O Bride Ever-Virgin.

## Suggestions for the month

*"These settings influence the way we think, feel and act. In our rooms, our homes, our workplaces and neighbourhoods, we use our environment as a way of expressing our identity." [LS, 147]*

- Read chapter 4 of the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si* [LS, 137-162].
- During the Sit-down, consider the environment you seek to build at home, in your work, and all your other situations. How can you overcome limitations, constraints and difficulties? In these environments do you help each other to develop fully?
- Prayerful reading (Lectio Divina) of the biblical text for the following meeting [1 Pt 1, 22-23].

## Meeting 6 - An Economy with a Soul

### Introduction

In this meeting we are going to discuss and lay the foundations for a different economy, one that, “sustains and does not kill, includes and does not exclude, humanises and does not dehumanise, takes care of creation and does not pollute it”, according to the invitation of Pope Francis in his letter to young entrepreneurs for the conference "The Economy of Francis" <sup>2</sup> in 2020. The Pope goes on to say that it is necessary to "change our present economy and give a soul to the economy of the future" so that it will be more just, sustainable and inclusive.

In the same letter he also states that “we must correct the models for growth that do not guarantee respect for the environment, respect for life, care for the family, social justice, the dignity of workers, and the rights of future generations.” In the face of this emergency, all of us, without exception, are called to re-examine our ways of thinking and our moral ethics. We must endeavour to create an "economy attentive to both its people and the environment” which is in keeping with the expectation of justice for all and in line with God’s Plan.

### Prayer and meditation of the Word

During the month and based on biblical text, we suggest that each person and each couple follow the four stages of Lectio Divina - reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation.

*Now that you have purified yourselves by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply, from the heart. You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. [1 Peter 1, 22-23]*

### Reading of the Word of God and meditation [Jn 15:9-11].

#### Liturgical Prayer - [Psalm 33,4-5, 12-15, 20-22]

##### ***Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous.***

*For the word of the LORD is upright;  
and all his work is done in faithfulness.  
He loves righteousness and justice;  
the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD.  
Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,  
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!*

*The LORD looks down from heaven,  
he sees all humankind;  
from where he sits enthroned, he looks forth  
on all the inhabitants of the earth,  
he who fashions the hearts of them all,  
and observes all their deeds.*

*Our soul waits for the LORD;  
he is our help and shield.  
Our heart is glad in him,  
because we trust in his holy name.*

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*Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,  
even as we hope in you.*

***Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous.***

## **Sharing on the Endeavours**

Sharing on our experience of the Endeavours is a special time of mutual spiritual support during the team meeting. It is a time to check out our progress on the path to conjugal and individual holiness. In this meeting the emphasis will be on the **Sit Down**.

## **Sharing Reflections on the Study Topic**

Based on the challenges and attitudes proposed at the beginning of this meeting, it is suggested that the couple prepare the study topic based on the following questions.

1. How do we look after the material goods that God gives us? Are we aware that the Lord asks us to use our goods responsibly in all areas of our lives?
2. How do we organise our family budget? Is there a real communion and a real sharing of views as a couple and as a family on this subject?
3. Do we often waste money? Are we economical consumers? Do we have concern for the environment?
4. Do we regularly share our goods with our neighbour?

## **Final Prayer**

This is the time when the team members pray for their intentions and for everything that came to their hearts during the meeting. To begin the final prayer of this meeting, we call on Mary to help us in the words of Pope Francis.

*Mary, woman of listening, open our ears;  
grant us to know how to listen to the word of your Son Jesus among the thousands of words of this world;  
grant that we may listen to the reality in which we live, to every person we encounter, especially those  
who are poor, in need, in hardship.*

*Mary, woman of decision,  
illuminate our mind and our heart, so that we may obey, unhesitating, the word of your Son Jesus; give us  
the courage to decide, not to let ourselves be dragged along, letting others direct our life.*

*Mary, woman of action,  
grant that our hands and feet move "with haste" toward others, to bring them the charity and love of your  
Son Jesus, to bring the light of the Gospel to the world, as you did. Amen.  
[Pope Francis - St. Peter's Square, May 31, 2013].*

## **Suggestions for the month**

*They need to be encouraged to be ever open to God's grace and to draw constantly from their deepest convictions about love, justice and peace. [LS, 200]*

- Read the fifth chapter of the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si* [LS, 163-201].
- Establish a rule of life, personal or couple, that responds to the challenge of being an instrument of peace, either in our conjugal relationship, in the family or in social life. Then, with God's grace, commit to the fulfilment of this purpose.
- Read prayerfully (Lectio Divina) the biblical text for the next meeting [Jn, 15, 9-11].

## Meeting 7 A Society Based on Love

### Introduction

Renewing society implies rediscovering the capacity to live together and in communion with each other. Jesus reminds us that God is our common Father and that this makes us brothers and sisters. Now "when our hearts are authentically open to a universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes no one" [LS, 92]. It is necessary to feel once again that we all need each other and that we all have a responsibility towards each other and towards the world. Nothing and no one can be indifferent to us.

"Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world... In this framework, along with the importance of little everyday gestures, social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a "culture of care" which permeates all of society. When we feel that God is calling us to intervene with others in these social dynamics, we should realise that this too is part of our spirituality, which is an exercise of charity and, as such, matures and sanctifies us. " [LS, 231].

### Prayer and Meditation of the Word

During the month we suggest that couples read the biblical text, following the four steps of Prayerful Reading of the Word (Lectio Divina) - Reading, Meditation, Prayer and Contemplation.

*As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. [Jn 15:9-11].*

### Reading of the Word of God and Meditation [Jn 15:9-11]

#### Liturgical Prayer [Psalm 111 (112), 2-9]

***Happy are those who fear the LORD, who greatly delight in his commandments.***

*Their descendants will be mighty in the land, the generation of the upright will be blessed.  
Wealth and riches are in their houses, and their righteousness endures forever.  
They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright; they are gracious, merciful, and righteous.*

*It is well with those who deal generously and lend, who conduct their affairs with justice.  
For the righteous will never be moved; they will be remembered forever.*

*They are not afraid of evil tidings; their hearts are firm, secure in the LORD.  
Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid; in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.*

*They have distributed freely; they have given to the poor;  
their righteousness endures forever; their horn is exalted in honour.*

***Happy are those who fear the LORD, who greatly delight in his commandments.***

### Sharing on Endeavours

Sharing on our experience of the Endeavours is a special time of mutual spiritual support during the team meeting. It is a time to check out our progress on the path of conjugal and individual holiness. In this meeting the emphasis will be on the **Rule of Life**.

## Sharing Reflections on the Study Topic

Based on the challenges and attitudes proposed at the beginning of this meeting, it is suggested that the couple prepare the study topic from the following questions:

1. What do we actually do to ensure that love is present in our family and in the environment in which we live?
2. What care do we take of all the members of our family? Young couples? Other family members in situations of need?
3. A Christian cannot be content only with words when it comes to loving his neighbour. What examples do I know, locally, nationally or worldwide, of new attitudes, initiatives, practices that constitute real steps towards a new social ecology?

## Final Prayer

At this moment, the team members pray for their intentions and for everything that has come into their hearts during the meeting. To begin the final prayer of this meeting we invite the words of Pope Francis.

*Jesus, Mary and Joseph,  
in you we contemplate  
the splendour of true love,  
to you we turn with trust.*

*Holy Family of Nazareth,  
grant that our families too  
may be places of communion and prayer,  
authentic schools of the Gospel  
and small domestic Churches.*

*Holy Family of Nazareth,  
may families never again*

[Pope Francis Angelus, 29 December 2013-adapted]

*experience violence, rejection and division:  
may all who have been hurt or scandalised  
find ready comfort and healing.*

*Holy Family of Nazareth,  
may you awaken an awareness in all  
of the sacredness and inviolability of the family,  
and its beauty in God's plan.*

*Jesus, Mary and Joseph,  
graciously hear our prayer.*

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## Suggestions for the following month

*Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption.... It is the conviction that "less is more". [LS, 222].*

- Read the first part of chapter 6 of the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* - "Ecological Education and Spirituality" [LS, 202 to 237].
  - Create the habit of family prayer, before and after the main meal, during which parents (or grandparents) say grace and give thanks for the food they are going to eat and the work of those who have provided it, in solidarity with the most needy.
  - Prayerful Reading (Lectio Divina) of the biblical text for the following meeting [2 Pet 1:2-7]
-

## Meeting 8 Education for a New Lifestyle

### Introduction

"Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal." [LS, 202].

Taking care of our "Common home" as well as of Mankind is, nowadays, a good educational project. But for us Christians, the ecological sense has a deeper origin. When we contemplate Creation and its beauty, above all we acknowledge God's work, which simultaneously encourages us to respond personally to the vocation of being children of God. Thus, adopting a more sober, generous and grateful lifestyle, embracing a "*less is more*" attitude [LS, 222] is a requirement for living out our vocation as guardians of God's work, attentive to God, to the world and to others.

### Prayer and Meditation of the Word

We suggest that during the month, each couple uses the biblical text and follows the four steps of Prayerful Reading of the Word (Lectio Divina) - Reading, Meditation, Prayer and Contemplation.

*"May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Thus, he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature. For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love."* [2 Pet 1:2-7].

### Reading the Word of God and Meditation [2 Pet 1:2-7]

#### Liturgical Prayer [Psalm 14 (15), 2-5]

***O Lord, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill?***

Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right,  
and speak the truth from their heart,  
who do not slander with their tongue,  
and do no evil to their friends,  
nor take up a reproach against their neighbours,  
in whose eyes the wicked are despised,  
but who honour those who fear the LORD;  
who stand by their oath even to their hurt,  
who do not lend money at interest,  
and do not take a bribe against the innocent.  
Those who do these things shall never be moved.

***O Lord, who may abide in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy hill?***

## Sharing on Endeavours

Sharing on how you experienced the Endeavours is a special time of spiritual mutual help in the team meeting. Here we evaluate the steps taken on the path to conjugal and individual holiness. In this meeting, **Conjugal and Family Prayer** will be highlighted.

## Sharing Reflections on the Study Topic

Based on the challenges and attitudes proposed at the beginning of this meeting, it is suggested that the couple prepare the study topic using the following questions:

1. In our daily life what testimony do we give in caring for our Common Home?
2. As a couple and as a family, do we truly care for and cherish our close relationship with God? How is this relationship obvious in our family habits and traditions? Give examples.
3. Am I aware that being pleasant and kind in my married and family relationships contributes to building harmony? How do I achieve this in reality?
4. In the environments we frequent, do we try to be an example of the sobriety that true Christians should have?

## Final Prayer

This is when the team members pray for their intentions and for everything that has come into their hearts during the meeting. For the meeting's final prayer, we use the words of Cardinal José Tolentino Mendonça.

### What I ask of You, Lord, is the Grace of Being

I am not asking you for shoes, I am asking you for paths.  
The taste of the paths resumed, with their surprises and their changes.  
I am not asking you for things to support,  
but let my empty hands be enthusiastic in building life.  
I am not asking you to stop time on my favourite image,  
but that You teach my eyes to see every moment as a new opportunity.  
Drive away from me the words that serve only to evoke tiredness, discouragement, distance.  
That I do not think I already know everything about myself and others.  
Even when I am not able or when I have nothing,  
I know I can simply be.

That is what I ask of you, Lord:  
Once more, the grace of being.

[Cardinal José Tolentino Mendonça]

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## Suggestions for the Following Month

*We can ask her (Mary, Mother and Queen of all Creation)  
to enable us to look at this world with eyes of wisdom. [LS, 241]*

- Finish reading Chapter 6 of the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* [LS, 238 to 240].
- As each couple reads the Word of God, they should listen to it with the idea of contemplating in their hearts how God calls them on a daily basis to a generous self-giving; how God has given them light and strength to find new paths; how their faith is founded on the anticipation of eternal life.
- Prayerful Reading (Lectio Divina) of the biblical text for the next meeting [Rev 1:8, 17].

## Meeting 9 Beyond the Sun ... the Infinite Beauty of God

### Introduction

*"At the end, we will find ourselves face to face with the infinite beauty of God (cf.1 Cor13:12) and be able to read with admiration and happiness the mystery of the universe, which with us will share in unending plenitude. (...) Eternal life will be a shared experience of awe, in which each creature, resplendently transfigured, will take its rightful place and have something to give those poor men and women who will have been liberated once and for all."* [LS, 243].

We are made for heaven, for eternal life, to live forever. But if this earthly passage contains a sense of learning and of transmitting values, it is fundamental that mankind should be concerned with the duty of leaving the following generations a home as good as or better than the one they inherited from their parents. Everyone is responsible for the future. We are called to launch ourselves boldly into the great mission of renewing society. And with the grace and strength of the Risen Jesus, as we walk here on earth, there will be moments when we anticipate the supreme encounter of the day when we will see God and our happiness will be complete.

### Prayer and Meditation of the Word

We suggest that during the month, each couple uses the biblical text and follows the four steps of Prayerful Reading of the Word (Lectio Divina) - Reading, Meditation, Prayer and Contemplation.

*" 'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is, who was and who is to come.' ... 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one.' "* [Rev 1:8,17].

### Reading the Word of God and Meditation [Rev 1:8,17]

#### Liturgical Prayer [Psalm 144 (145), 8-10 and 15,17-18]

##### ***The Lord is good to all.***

*The LORD is gracious and merciful,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.  
The LORD is good to all,  
and his compassion is over all that he has made.  
All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD,  
and all your faithful shall bless you.  
The eyes of all look to you,  
and you give them their food in due season.*

*The LORD is just in all his ways,  
and kind in all his doings.  
The LORD is near to all who call on him,  
to all who call on him in truth.*

##### ***The Lord is good to all.***

### Sharing on Endeavours

Sharing on how you experienced the Endeavours is a special time of mutual spiritual help in the team meeting. Here we evaluate the steps taken on the path to conjugal and individual holiness. In this meeting, **Listening to the Word of God** is highlighted.



## Sharing Reflections on the Study Topic

Based on the challenges and attitudes proposed at the beginning of this meeting, it is suggested that the couple prepare the study topic using the following questions:

1. Do we try to express ourselves through prayers of praise and thanksgiving for the gifts God gives us?
2. Through our attitudes as a couple, do others understand the indissolubility and eternity of the Sacrament of Marriage?
3. Do we ever consider preparing our souls for future times of suffering and death? For example, by the prayerful reading of the Word of God which reasserts the certainty of eternity?

## Final Prayer

This is when the team members pray for their intentions and for everything that has come into their hearts during the meeting. For the meeting's final prayer, we use the words of Cardinal José Tolentino Mendonça.

"In God everything is God"  
A simple blade of grass  
Is not less than infinity.

It is You, who is waiting for us on city corners  
and who raises warning lamplights as soon as the day dips into shade.

Yours is the name we say if the wind wounds us with fear  
and our gaze oscillates in the loneliness of the abysses.

For You we sow the seeds and await the fruit of the fields  
which extend over the hills.

For You our face becomes joyful  
and our eyes seem made of smiles.

It is true that You collect our days when autumn arrives  
but Your word is the silver thread that guides the leaves through the wind.

[Cardinal José Tolentino Mendonça]

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## Suggestions for the Following Month

*"(May) we Christians ask for inspiration to take up the commitment to creation set before us by the Gospel of Jesus." [LS, 246]*

- Read the last point and the prayers at the end of the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* [LS, 246 and Prayers]
- Each Team member composes their own Personal Prayer, using the two prayers at the end of the Encyclical Letter as a basis and evaluating whether: on a personal level, as a couple and as a family, they have been able to assume new attitudes, create new habits, throughout the year? How have they helped each other as a team to live in greater harmony with creation and in greater solidarity with those closest to them?
- Prayerful Reading (Lectio Divina) of the biblical text for the following meeting [Deut 6, 4, 6-9]

## Meeting 10 Review

### Introduction

At the end of this year of journeying together as a team, it's time to take stock. We reflect on the road we have travelled together as a team, the dialogue and sharing we have made on the journey, always believing in God's infinite forgiveness in the face of our mistakes, but knowing that above all what saddens God is what we could have done but have left undone. It is also a commitment to the future and, in this sense, the Review must be a lever that makes each couple take a leap and go further towards holiness. Without fear, let us place ourselves before God.

“A love that is generous and outgoing, that acts and takes risks, may at times make mistakes. Here we may find timely the witness of Maria Gabriella Perin, who lost her father shortly after her birth: she reflects on how this influenced her life, in a relationship that did not last but that left her a mother and now a grandmother. ‘What I know is that God makes stories. In his genius and mercy, he takes our triumphs and our failures and weaves beautiful tapestries that are full of irony. The reverse of the fabric may look messy with its tangled threads – the events of our life – and maybe this is the side we dwell on when we doubt. But the right side of the tapestry displays a magnificent story, and this is the side that God sees’. When older people look at life closely, often they instinctively know what lies behind the tangled threads, and they recognize what God can create even out of our mistakes.” (Christus Vivit, 198)

### Prayer and meditation of the Word

During the month we suggest that each and every couple reads the biblical text following the four steps of Prayerful Reading of the Word (Lectio Divina) - Reading, Meditation, Prayer and Contemplation.

*“Hear, O Israel: Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” [Deut. 6:4, 6-9].*

### Liturgical Prayer

**O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever!**

Let Israel say, “His steadfast love endures forever.”

Let the house of Aaron say, “His steadfast love endures forever.”

Let those who fear the LORD say, “His steadfast love endures forever.”

It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to put confidence in mortals.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.

There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous:

“The right hand of the LORD does valiantly; the right hand of the LORD is exalted;  
the right hand of LORD does valiantly.”

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD.<sup>1</sup>

We bless you from the house of the LORD.

The LORD is God, and he has given us light.

Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.

You are my God, and I will give thanks to you;

you are my God, I will extol you.

**O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever!**

## Sharing on the Endeavours

Sharing on our experience of the Endeavours is a special time of mutual spiritual support during the team meeting. It is a time to check out our progress on the path to conjugal and individual holiness. In this meeting, **Personal Prayer** will be highlighted. Our personal intimacy with the Lord is always the beginning and the end of our entire life as Christians.

## Sharing Reflections on the Study Topic

At this review meeting we will try to answer a fundamental question raised by our founder.

1. In my home, in my parish, in my profession, in my country, in the Church, am I a “parasite” (someone who takes and does not give back) or a good worker (someone who works for the good of all)? [Fr. Henri Caffarel, Monthly Letter, December 1948]
2. Let us ask ourselves this same question as a couple.
3. And finally, let us talk about the response we give as a team.

## Final Prayer

At this moment the members of the Team pray for their intentions and for everything that has come into their hearts during the meeting. To begin the final prayer of this meeting we invite you to use the Laudato Si' final prayer

### A Christian prayer in union with creation

Father, we praise you with all your creatures.  
They came forth from your all-powerful hand;  
they are yours, filled with your presence and  
your tender love.  
Praise be to you!

Son of God, Jesus,  
through you all things were made.  
You were formed in the womb of Mary our  
Mother,  
you became part of this earth,  
and you gazed upon this world with human  
eyes.  
Today you are alive in every creature in your  
risen glory.  
Praise be to you!

Holy Spirit, by your light  
you guide this world towards the Father's love  
and accompany creation as it groans in travail.  
You also dwell in our hearts  
and you inspire us to do what is good.  
Praise be to you!

Triune Lord,  
wondrous community of infinite love,

teach us to contemplate you  
in the beauty of the universe,  
for all things speak of you.  
Awaken our praise and thankfulness  
for every being that you have made.  
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined  
to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world  
as channels of your love  
for all the creatures of this earth,  
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.  
Enlighten those who possess power and money  
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,  
that they may love the common good,  
advance the weak,  
and care for this world in which we live.  
The poor and the earth are crying out.  
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,  
help us to protect all life,  
to prepare for a better future,  
for the coming of your Kingdom  
of justice, peace, love and beauty.  
Praise be to you!  
Amen.

[Pope Francis, at Saint Peter's, Rome on 24 May 2015, on the Solemnity of Pentecost.]

**During the holiday period ahead**, let us seek to see God as the Alpha and Omega of our spiritual and earthly life.

That, through the hands of Mary and Joseph, the eternal Father may bless every time and every space that we live in.



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