

Chapter 5

The Christian Family

Getting Started

Assign the students to read Chapter 5, “The Christian Family.” Use the following questions from the Student Text to guide a discussion of the chapter:

- What are some issues that you believe it would be difficult to compromise on in a marriage?
- What issues do you believe cause the most lasting difficulties in a marriage?
- Imagine that you married a person with mostly different interests, talent, and personality than you. What would that person be like? What would it be like to be married to that person?
- How many children do you think you would like to have after you are married?
- What are some traditions and practices of family life that you might incorporate into your family when you are married?
- How has your family life been a model of the domestic church?

(See the Student Text for additional questions.) Then ask the students to read the following article.

Application Reading

<http://www.godspy.com/life/NaturalWoman.cfm>

LIKE A NATURAL WOMAN

Month after month, my temperature rose and fell and my hormones marched in perfect harmony. I had no idea I was so beautiful.

By Elizabeth Wirth

I always assumed I would go on the pill when I got married. The fact that I was a practicing and believing Catholic posed no contradiction. Certainly, I was aware of the Church's teaching about contraception, more or less—but I had never actually been taught it. I didn't know anyone who believed the doctrine, much less practiced it, and far from challenging my beliefs, no one had ever even brought up the subject. The only thing I knew was the statistic that approximately 90 percent of Catholics ignore the teaching. That, and the ubiquitous jokes: What do you call a woman on the rhythm method? Mommy.

Discussion

Lead the students in a discussion of the following questions:

- What first prompted the author to question her decision to use artificial contraception? (The extensive list of side effects caused by birth control pills led her to examine alternatives.)
- What was the “turning point” in the author’s attitude toward NFP? (“The turning point came for me as I watched, month after month, as my temperature rose and fell and my hormones marched in perfect harmony. I had no idea I was so beautiful. . . . My fertility is not a disease to be treated. It is a wonderful gift. I am a wonderful gift.”)
- Why is the author reconsidering her previous assumptions about the moral neutrality of contraception? (The author was moved to reconsider her position “mostly because I have tasted the goodness of life and marriage without it.” She also questioned whether her previous position had been informed by faith or just something she accepted from the culture.)
- What was wrong about how people treated the author as she tried to learn about NFP? (They presumed to know what was best for her even though they did not know her.)
- What do you think is the most surprising or interesting aspect of the author’s story?
- Of all the reasons the author gives for choosing NFP, which do you agree with most?

Activity

A letter to future children

- In this activity, students clarify their own values and goals with regard to family issues by composing a message to their future children.
- Each student will need paper and a writing instrument. Optionally, you may provide creative art materials as well—old magazines for collages, construction paper, markers, scrapbooking materials, and so on—as well as background music suitable for quiet reflection and writing.
- As a “warm up” for this activity, divide the students into small groups of three to four people each. Ask them to discuss these questions: What have you learned from your parents about how to raise children? In what ways would you imitate their parenting style, and in what ways would you do something different? Tell the students that they will be asked to share some of their responses with the whole group.
- After the students have had sufficient time to discuss the questions, gather them together again. Ask for volunteers to share some of the responses from their group. As necessary, challenge the students to think about how their ideas reflect Catholic belief about the nature and purpose of the Christian family.
- Tell the students that they will now have the opportunity to further clarify their ideas about parenting by composing a message to their future children. In this message, they should express what they hope to provide for their children. The students may find it helpful to address some or all of the following categories in their message: physical needs, emotional needs, values, virtues, faith, culture, traditions, discipline, and education.
- Note that even if the students do not plan to get married, they can address the message more generally to the children they will encounter in their lives.
- Tell the students that they may compose their message however they like. They may write a letter to their future children, or a poem, or a song. Alternatively, they may prefer to communicate their message through drawing or other artwork.
- When the students have had sufficient time to complete the activity, call them together as a group. Ask for volunteers to share their messages. Ask each volunteer to talk about how Catholic belief influenced his or her message, if at all. When a number of students have shared their messages, extend the discussion by asking the students to consider how their parenting styles might be influenced by a spouse. What would they be willing to compromise on? How would they reach consensus with a spouse on parenting issues?

Extending the activity

Randomly pair the students as “couples,” and have them spend several minutes discussing how their parenting styles would work together.

Additional Activities

- Have the students write a prayer for newly married couples as described in the “A Prayer for Newly Married Couples” activity on page 145 of the Student Textbook.
- Have the students complete the “Rate Yourself As a Listener” activity on page 146 of the Student Textbook.
- Have the students develop billboard slogans about marriage as described in assignment #4 in the Assignments and Applications section of the Student Textbook (page 163).
- Have the students bring and share three-minute home videos as described in assignment #5 in the Assignments and Applications section of the Student Textbook (page 163).
- Have the students list social values that do not support family life, as described in #4 of the Bell Ringers activity in “The Family Is the Domestic Church” (page 165 of the Teacher’s Wraparound Edition).
- Have the students complete handout Handout 31, “Recipe for a Compatible Marriage,” in the Teacher’s Wraparound Edition.
- Have the students complete handout Handout 35. “Parenthood!” in the Teacher’s Wraparound Edition.

Additional Resources

For Internet resources, see the Teacher’s Wraparound Edition.

The following videos are appropriate for use with this chapter:

- “NFP: Safe, Healthy, Effective” (Couple to Couple League)