



# Stand with Children Faith & Action Circles Lent, 2012



The New Evangelization and the Evangelization of Culture for Marriage and Family

## INTRODUCTION

Catholics for the Common Good Institute is offering a special Lenten program for new and existing *Stand with Children* Faith & Action Circles that will acquaint participants with the current Church thinking about the New Evangelization and how it is connected with the laity's responsibility for evangelization of culture, particularly as it relates to marriage and family.

This year will be very significant for the Church as she prepares for the next world-wide Synod of Bishops in October on the New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith. The Synod will conclude with the beginning of the "Year of Faith," which was proclaimed by the Holy Father late last year. Synods usually result in a definitive teaching by the Pope on the issue discussed by the bishops.

The following six weekly sessions for group reflection and meditation draw on excerpts from two important documents of the Church. The first is the *Lineamenta*, a document issued by an *ad hoc* Vatican committee for world-wide discernment and consideration by the bishops in preparation for the Synod. The edited excerpts are included to enable Faith & Action Circles to understand some of the latest thinking of the Church on the New Evangelization.

For those who have participated in CCGI trainings, seminars, or Faith & Action Circles, you may be surprised to see how closely the aims, philosophy, and goals of CCGI and *Stand with Children* are aligned with the current thinking of the Church.

The second document is excerpted from Chapter 5 of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church: The Family, the Vital Cell of Society*. The compendium, an important book for Catholic homes, was requested by Pope John Paul II and the bishops of the world and was issued by the Pontifical Congregation for Justice and Peace. This is a document produced for teachers of the faith and as a guide for the laity in fulfilling their secular role in the mission of the Church—the organization of secular society.

These documents are the direct result and consequence of the Second Vatican Council, which posed the question, "How will the Church address the Gospel to a world so changed by world-view, science, and technology?" This is the time for the practical application of the Church's wisdom to our concrete opportunities and challenges.

The edited excerpts from each document are presented in tandem for comparison and relate to the New Evangelization with a particular focus on evangelization of culture related to the beauty and centrality of marriage and the family. Between the excerpts you will find a short commentary illustrating the connection between the two passages and pointing to the main themes of the week's reading.

At the beginning of each session (six in total) there are a few reflection questions to prompt personal reflection in reaction to the two documents, which will become the norm for the New Evangelization, especially as concerns marriage and family.

The entire text of both documents can be found on the CCG website at [http://ccgaction.org/spiritual\\_life/newevang/lineamenta2011](http://ccgaction.org/spiritual_life/newevang/lineamenta2011), and [http://ccgaction.org/spiritual\\_life/socialteaching/family](http://ccgaction.org/spiritual_life/socialteaching/family).

*Stand with Children* is a project of CCGI promoting the centrality and integrity of marriage and family.  
PO Box 320038, San Francisco, CA 94132 [www.standwithchildren.org](http://www.standwithchildren.org)

# Faith & Action Circle Meeting

## Sample Agenda

<p>The faith and action circle meeting is divided into two parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• study and faith sharing, and</li> <li>• action and business.</li> </ul>	Approximate Time	Elapsed Time
<p>(See moderator’s script for more guidance—Page 6)</p>		
<p>1. Gathering and welcome, especially for new people or visitors</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a. Opening Prayer: Memorare</p>	<p>1 minute</p> <p>1 minute</p>	<p>0:00-0:01</p> <p>0:01-0:02</p>
<p><u>STUDY AND FAITH SHARING</u></p>		
<p>2. Introduction (see Moderator’s Script of details—Page 6)</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a. Review the mission to promote the centrality and integrity of marriage for children and society and its objective of building, forming, and training an army to rebuild a marriage culture.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">b. Remind participants of the “reframing” approach of Stand with Children and the two conflicting definitions of marriage</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">i. A committed relationship between adults for their benefit</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">ii. Unites a man and a woman with each other and any children that come from their relationship</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">The real debate must be about what is the public interest for each definition.</p>	<p>4 minutes</p>	<p>0:02-0:06</p>
<p>3. Reading and reflection for learning and formation (see guidelines and moderator’s script)</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a. Read opening statement for the reading and reflection</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">b. Read the content for the meeting and let participants share reflections about how the reading spoke to them</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">c. Conclusion and summary by leader</p>	<p>58 minutes</p> <p>2 minutes</p>	<p>0:06-1:05</p> <p>1:05-1:07</p>
<p><u>BUSINESS and ACTION</u></p>		
<p>4. Committee reports; announcements; planning for activities; group problem solving</p>	<p>20 minutes</p>	<p>1:07-1:25</p>
<p>5. Collect and provide an accounting of donations for the “Common Fund”</p>	<p>4 minutes</p>	<p>1:25-1:29</p>
<p>6. Review priorities and assignments</p> <p>7. Sending forth for mission prayer: Prayer for the Evangelization of Culture</p>	<p>1 minute</p>	<p>1:29-1:30</p>

## Week 1:

### The call to Evangelization Begins in the Family

#### Questions for Communal Reflection

*At the beginning of each week's reading, a few questions will be offered for personal reflection. These are not "quiz questions", nor are they questions for discussion. Rather, these are meant to help the reader wade through the sometimes difficult language of the documents and focus reflections on the main themes.*

*From Lineamenta*

- I. *How significant is evangelization for us and our families?*
- II. *How significant is the concept of the human person for evangelization*

*From Compendium: The Family, the Vital Cell of Society*

- I. *How does the teaching on the family square or support the points made in the Lineamenta?*
- II. *What is the relationship between the family and society and how crucial is the family for it?*

#### LINEAMENTA

Preface: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age' (Mt 28:19,20).

With these words, Jesus Christ, before he ascended to heaven to take his place at the right hand of God the Father (cf. Eph 1:20), sent his disciples forth to proclaim the Good News to the whole world. They were a small group who were called to be witnesses of Jesus of Nazareth, his earthly life, his teaching, his death and above all his resurrection (cf. Acts 1:22). Though this great task seemed an impossibility, the Lord Jesus offered them encouragement by promising the gift of the Paraclete, whom the Father will send in his name (cf. Jn 14:26) and who 'will guide [them]... into all the truth' (Jn 16:13). In addition, he assured them of his abiding presence: 'and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age' (Mt 28:20).

2. In proclaiming and transmitting the faith, the Church imitates God who communicates himself through the gift of his Son to humanity, who lives in Trinitarian communion and who pours out the Holy Spirit so as to carry on a dialogue with humanity. So that evangelization might mirror this divine communication, the Church must allow herself to be

formed by the Spirit and make herself configured to Christ crucified, who reveals to the world the features of God's love and communion. In this way, the Church will rediscover her vocation as Ecclesia mater, who begets children for the Lord by transmitting the faith to them and teaching them the love, which generates and nourishes her children.

The centre of proclamation is Jesus Christ, who is believed and to whom a person bears witness. Transmitting the faith essentially means to transmit the Scriptures, primarily the Gospel, which give a person the opportunity of knowing Jesus, the Lord.

Pope Paul VI, in reemphasizing for the faithful the primacy of evangelization, stated: 'It would be useful if every Christian and every evangelizer were to pray about the following thought: through God's mercy, people can gain salvation in other ways besides our preaching the Gospel to them; but as for us, can we gain salvation, if through negligence, fear, shame—what St. Paul called "shrinking from the Gospel"—or as a result of false ideas, we fail to preach it?'

5. [The New Evangelization] is the courage to forge new paths in responding to the changing circumstances and conditions facing the Church in her call to proclaim and live the Gospel today.

Pope John Paul II clarified his idea of a new evangelization: "The Church today ought to take a giant step forward in her evangelization effort, and enter into a new stage of history in her missionary dynamism. In a world where the lessening of distance makes the world increasingly smaller, the Church community ought to strengthen the bonds among its members, exchange vital energies and means, and commit itself as a group to a unique and common mission of proclaiming and living the Gospel."

[T]he expression ("new evangelization") can now be applied to the Church's renewed efforts to meet the challenges which today's society and cultures, in view of the significant changes taking place, are posing to the Christian faith, its proclamation and its witness. In facing these challenges, the Church does not give up or retreat into herself; instead, she undertakes a project to revitalize herself. She makes the Person of Jesus Christ and a personal encounter with him central to her thinking, knowing that he will give his Spirit and provide the force to announce and proclaim the Gospel in new ways which can speak to today's cultures.

6. The new evangelization is a frame-of-mind, a courageous manner of acting and Christianity's capacity to know how to read and interpret the new situations in human history which, in recent decades, have become the places to proclaim and witness to the Gospel.

The first sector calling for the new evangelization is culture. In our times, we find ourselves in an era of a profound secularism which has led to a loss in the capacity to listen and understand the words of the Gospel as a living and life-giving message. In our cultures, many view the secularizing trend, in a positive sense, as a liberation from the things of the past or as the way completely to separate any idea of the transcendent from the world and humanity. Although anti-Christian, anti-religious and anti-clerical references are sometimes heard today, secularism, in recent times, has not taken the form of a direct, outright denial of God, religion or Christianity. Instead, the secularizing movement has taken a more subtle tone in cultural forms which invade people's everyday lives and foster a mentality in which God is completely or partially left out of life and human consciousness. In this way, secularism has entered the Christian life and ecclesial communities and has become not simply an external threat for believers but something to be faced each day in life in the various manifestations of the so-called culture of relativism. Furthermore, this tendency is having serious anthropological implications which put in question basic human experiences, for example, the relation between man and woman as well as the meaning of reproduction and death itself.

Traces of a secularized way of looking at life can be seen in the daily lives of many Christians, who are oftentimes influenced, if not completely conditioned, by the culture of images with its models and opposing forces. Temptations to superficiality and self-centeredness, arising from a predominating hedonistic and consumer-oriented mentality, are not easily overcome. [T]he new evangelization is seen as the needed impetus for weary and worn-out communities to help them rediscover the joy of the Christian experience, to find again 'the love you had at first' which was lost (Rev. 2:4) and to emphasize the true meaning of freedom in the search for truth.

*At the heart of the call to evangelization is an understanding of the human person, unique to Christianity, that recognizes the dignity and incomparable value of each individual. It is because of this dignity, of having been created in the image*

*and likeness of God for an eternal destiny, that each person deserves to hear the Gospel message and be provided the opportunity to receive the love that has been given, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, to each and every person. To deny a person the chance to know and love Jesus is to deny their participation in the human community, to deny their worth as a human being, to deny their transcendental nature and eternal destiny. As such, the Christian understanding of the human person is a key component to a true understanding of the call to evangelization.*

*In today's society, thanks to Descartes, Darwin, Freud, and Karl Marx, the concept of the human person has become degraded and uncertain. The dignity of each and every person is no longer clearly understood by the culture. Persons have become disposable, replaceable, manipulable. Therefore, the call to evangelize, to introduce another to a personal relationship with Jesus, is seen often as an imposition of one's private views on another.*

*This is where the critical role of the family most clearly comes into focus. It is in the family that the authentic understanding of the human person is first nurtured and recognized. With the destruction of marriage and family, the understanding of the intrinsic dignity of the human person gets lost and people become defined by their ability, usefulness, status, and material possessions. The promotion of marriage and family, then, is the most fundamental work of evangelization—an essential part of the New Evangelization.*

COMPENDIUM: "The Family, the Vital Cell of Society"

211. Enlightened by the radiance of the biblical message, the Church considers the family as the first natural society, with underived rights that are proper to it, and places it at the centre of social life. Relegating the family 'to a subordinate or secondary role, excluding it from its rightful position in society, would be to inflict grave harm on the authentic growth of society as a whole'. The family, in fact, is born of the intimate communion of life and love founded on the marriage between one man and one woman. It possesses its own specific and original social dimension, in that it is the principal place of interpersonal relationships, the first and vital cell of society. The family is a divine institution that stands at the foundation of life of the human person as the prototype of every social order.

## Week 2: Marriage as Witness to Truth

### Questions for Communal Reflection

#### *From Lineamenta*

- I. *How does the Church see the “educational” problem in the light of the New Evangelization?*
- II. *Is the New Evangelization connected with the re-evangelization of Church members?*

#### *From Compendium: The Family, the Vital Cell of Society*

- I. *What importance does the Church place on the family?*
- II. *Who has the power over marriage? Its definition and goals?*

#### LINEAMENTA

22. The present ‘educational emergency’ gives particular meaning to the words of Pope Paul VI: “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.” [...] It is therefore primarily by her conduct and by her life that the Church will evangelize the world, in other words, by her living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus—the witness of poverty and detachment, of freedom in the face of the powers of this world, in short, the witness of sanctity.’ No matter what the proposal in the ‘new evangelization’ and no matter what the pastoral project of proclamation and transmission of the faith, there is no escaping the fact that people's lives give force to their efforts at evangelization.

For the Church today, this means providing support and formation for the many people who have long been engaged in the work of evangelization and education (bishops, priests, catechists, educators, teachers and parents).

Sustaining and nourishing the faith necessarily begins in the family, the basic unit of society and the prime place for learning to pray. Teaching the faith essentially takes place in the family in the form of teaching children how to pray. In praying together with their children, parents accustom them to be conscious of the loving presence of the Lord and, at the same time, they themselves become credible witnesses to their children.

The formation and concern needed to sustain those already engaged in evangelization and recruiting new

212. The family has central importance in reference to the person. It is in this cradle of life and love that people are born and grow; when a child is conceived, society receives the gift of a new person who is called ‘from the innermost depths of self to communion with others and to the giving of self to others’. It is in the family, therefore, that the mutual giving of self on the part of man and woman united in marriage creates an environment of life in which children ‘develop their potentialities, become aware of their dignity and prepare to face their unique and individual destiny’.

In the climate of natural affection which unites the members of a family unit, persons are recognized and learn responsibility in the wholeness of their personhood. ‘The first and fundamental structure for “human ecology” is the family, in which man receives his first formative ideas about truth and goodness, and learns what it means to love and to be loved, and thus what it actually means to be a person’. The obligations of its members, in fact, are not limited by the terms of a contract but derive from the very essence of the family, founded on the irrevocable marriage covenant and given structure in the relationships that arise within it following the generation or adoption of children.

213. The family, the natural community in which human social nature is experienced, makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the good of society. The family unit, in fact, is born from the communion of persons. ““Communion” has to do with the personal relationship between the “I” and the “thou”. “Community” on the other hand transcends this framework and moves towards a “society”, a “we”. The family, as a community of persons, is thus the first human “society””.

A society built on a family scale is the best guarantee against drifting off course into individualism or collectivism, because within the family the person is always at the centre of attention as an end and never as a means. It is patently clear that the good of persons and the proper functioning of society are closely connected ‘with the healthy state of conjugal and family life’. Without families that are strong in their communion and stable in their commitment peoples grow weak. In the family, moral values are taught starting from the very first years of life, the spiritual heritage of the religious community and the cultural legacy of the nation are transmitted. In the family one learns social responsibility and solidarity.

forces should not be limited simply to practical preparation, albeit necessary. Instead, formation and pastoral care is predominantly to be spiritual in nature, namely, a school of faith, enlightened by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and under the guidance of the Spirit, which teaches people the implications of experiencing the Fatherhood of God. People are able to evangelize only when they have been evangelized and allow themselves to be evangelized, that is, renewed spiritually through a personal encounter and lived communion with Jesus Christ. Such people have the power to transmit the faith, as St. Paul the Apostle testifies: 'I believed, and so I spoke' (2 Cor 4:13).

*Evangelization often means speaking truth to a culture that does not accept it, being counter-cultural. Not only does this include speaking with language, it is most powerfully accomplished when speaking with our actions and our lives.*

*Through the promotion of the reality of marriage, we are evangelizing the culture for marriage and family—promoting marriage to a culture that no longer accepts its reality. As participants in the marriage movement, each person and each family must examine, through prayer and reflection, their witness to the reality of marriage and primacy of the family. Are we living examples of what we proclaim? Are we good ambassadors for God's plan for marriage and family in the world?*

COMPENDIUM: "The Family, the Vital Cell of Society"

215. The family has its foundation in the free choice of the spouses to unite themselves in marriage, in respect for the meaning and values of this institution that does not depend on man but on God himself: 'For the good of the spouses and their offspring as well as of society, this sacred bond no longer depends on human decision alone. For God himself is the author of marriage and has endowed it with various benefits and purposes'. Therefore, the institution of marriage—'intimate partnership of life and love ... established by the Creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws'—is not the result of human conventions or of legislative prescriptions but acquires its stability from divine disposition. It is an institution born, even in the eyes of society, 'from the human act by which the partners mutually surrender themselves to each other', and is founded on the very nature of that conjugal love which, as a total and exclusive gift of person to person, entails a definitive commitment expressed by mutual, irrevocable and public consent. This commitment

means that the relationships among family members are marked also by a sense of justice and, therefore, by respect for mutual rights and duties.

216. No power can abolish the natural right to marriage or modify its traits and purpose. Marriage in fact is endowed with its own proper, innate and permanent characteristics. Notwithstanding the numerous changes that have taken place in the course of the centuries in the various cultures and in different social structures and spiritual attitudes, in every culture there exists a certain sense of the dignity of the marriage union, although this is not evident everywhere with the same clarity. This dignity must be respected in its specific characteristics and must be safeguarded against any attempt to undermine it. Society cannot freely legislate with regard to the marriage bond by which the two spouses promise each other fidelity, assistance and acceptance of children, but it is authorized to regulate its civil effects.

217. The characteristic traits of marriage are: totality, by which the spouses give themselves to each other mutually in every aspect of their person, physical and spiritual; unity which makes them "one flesh" (Gen 2:24); indissolubility and fidelity which the definitive mutual giving of self requires; the fruitfulness to which this naturally opens itself. God's wise plan for marriage—a plan accessible to human reason notwithstanding the difficulties arising from 'hardness of heart' (cf. Mt 19:8; Mk 10:5)—cannot be evaluated exclusively in light of the de facto behavior and concrete situations that are at divergence with it. A radical denial of God's original plan is found in polygamy, 'because it is contrary to the equal personal dignity of men and women who in matrimony give themselves with a love that is total and therefore unique and exclusive'.

219. By Christ's institution, the baptized live the inherent human reality of marriage in the supernatural form of a sacrament, a sign and instrument of grace. At the centre of the revelation of the divine plan of love is the gift that God makes to humanity in his Son, Jesus Christ, 'the Bridegroom who loves and gives himself as the Saviour of humanity, uniting it to himself as his body. He reveals the original truth of marriage, the truth of the "beginning" (cf. Gen 2:24; Mt 19:5), and, freeing man from his hardness of heart, he makes man capable of realizing this truth in its entirety'. It is in the spousal love of Christ for the Church, which shows its fullness in the offering made on the cross that the sacramentality of marriage originates. The

grace of this sacrament conforms the love of the spouses to the love of Christ for the Church. Marriage, as a sacrament, is a covenant in love between a man and a woman.

220. Intimately united to the Church by virtue of the sacrament that makes it a 'domestic Church' or a 'little Church', the Christian family is called therefore 'to be a sign of unity for the world and in this way to exercise its prophetic role by bearing witness to the Kingdom and peace of Christ, towards which the whole world is journeying'.

"Conjugal charity, which flows from the very charity of Christ, offered through the sacrament, makes Christian spouses witnesses to a new social consciousness inspired by the Gospel and the Paschal Mystery. The natural dimension of their love is constantly purified, strengthened and elevated by sacramental grace. In this manner, besides offering each other mutual help on the path to holiness, Christian spouses become a sign and an instrument of Christ's love in the world. By their very lives they are called to bear witness to and proclaim the religious meaning of marriage, which modern society has ever greater difficulty recognizing, especially as it accepts relativistic perspectives of the natural foundation itself of the institution of marriage.

### **Week 3: The Call to Communion Begins with a Relationship with Christ**

#### Questions for Communal Reflection

*From Lineamenta*

- I. How does the Church see the personal encounter with Christ as essential for being or becoming Christian? Why?

*From Compendium: The Family, the Vital Cell of Society*

- I. How does the Church see the relationship of communion of persons and love to the core of marriage and family?
- II. How is the stability of marriage and a definition of marriage that corresponds to reality related? What are the consequences of the failure of the above?

#### LINEAMENTA

11. Transmitting the faith means to create in every place and time the conditions for this personal

encounter of individuals with Jesus Christ. The faith-encounter with the person of Jesus Christ is a relationship with him, "remembering him" (in the Eucharist) and, through the grace of the Spirit, having in us the mind of Jesus Christ. Pope Benedict XVI stated: 'Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. [...] Since God has first loved us (cf. 1 Jn 4:10), love is now no longer a mere "command"; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us.' The Church realizes herself precisely from carrying out her task of proclaiming the Gospel and transmitting the Christian faith.

This personal encounter allows individuals to share in the Son's relationship with his Father and to experience the power of the Spirit. The aim of transmitting the faith and the goal of evangelization is to bring us 'through him [Christ] in one Spirit to the Father' (Eph 2:18). This is the newness of the Christian God. From this perspective, transmitting the faith in Christ means to create the conditions for a faith which is thought-out, celebrated, lived and prayed; in short, this means participating in the life of the Church. This way of transmitting the faith is very much grounded in Church Tradition. Reference to it is found in The Catechism of the Catholic Church and its Compendium, both of which take up the subject of the new evangelization so as to encourage, explain and re-propose it.

*Authentic communion with others can only flourish when one is in authentic communion with Christ. We are created in communion in the womb; we are born into communion; we live in communion. No person is alone or can choose to live separately from the human community. The Second Vatican Council fathers teach that it is only through a true gift of self that we come to know ourselves. The family is the place to learn and practice this. Overcoming the cultural forces prompting each one of us toward the use of others for our own benefit requires thoughtful and diligent examination of our own relationships with Jesus and how that relationship is affecting our lives on a daily basis. When looked at through the lens of our relationship with Christ, our response to cultural problems of the day, and problems that arise in our own families, takes on a very different attitude. How does our relationship with Christ affect the choices we make each day?*

*The family is by definition a community of life and love. It is where the authentic meaning of love,*

*willing the good of the other and recognizing the other's infinite value, is first communicated through the love of spouses and the love of parents for their children. In our culture, love is often equated with happiness. It is seen as an emotion, ephemeral. In reality, love is a commitment; it is a matter of the will. True love often comes with suffering, but emerges from trial stronger than ever. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in the family. Yet, even within families there is the temptation to reduce persons to objects that either add to or detract from our personal happiness. This is why families must be vigilant and remain close to Christ.*

COMPENDIUM: "The Family, the Vital Cell of Society"

221. The family is present as the place where communion—that communion so necessary for a society that is increasingly individualistic—is brought about. It is the place where an authentic community of persons develops and grows, thanks to the endless dynamism of love, which is the fundamental dimension of human experience and which finds in the family the privileged place for making itself known. 'Love causes man to find fulfillment through the sincere gift of self. To love means to give and to receive something which can be neither bought nor sold, but only given freely and mutually'.

It is thanks to love, the essential reality for defining marriage and the family, that every person—man and woman—is recognized, accepted and respected in his dignity. From love arise relationships lived in gratuitousness, which 'by respecting and fostering personal dignity in each and every one as the only basis for value ... takes the form of heartfelt acceptance, encounter and dialogue, disinterested availability, generous service and deep solidarity'. The existence of families living this way exposes the failings and contradictions of a society that is for the most part, even if not exclusively, based on efficiency and functionality. By constructing daily a network of interpersonal relationships, both internal and external, the family is instead 'the first and irreplaceable school of social life, and example and stimulus for the broader community relationships marked by respect, justice, dialogue and love'.

223. The human being is made for love and cannot live without love. When it is manifested as the total gift of two persons in their complementarities, love cannot be reduced to emotions or feelings, much less to mere sexual expression. In a society that tends more and more to relativize and trivialize the very

experience of love and sexuality, exalting its fleeting aspects and obscuring its fundamental values, it is more urgent than ever to proclaim and bear witness that the truth of conjugal love and sexuality exist where there is a full and total gift of persons, with the characteristics of unity and fidelity. This truth, a source of joy, hope and life, remains impenetrable and unattainable as long as people close themselves off in relativism and skepticism.

225. The nature of conjugal love requires the stability of the married relationship and its indissolubility. The absence of these characteristics compromises the relationship of exclusive and total love that is proper to the marriage bond, bringing great pain to the children and damaging repercussions also on the fabric of society.

The stability and indissolubility of the marriage union must not be entrusted solely to the intention and effort of the individual persons involved. The responsibility for protecting and promoting the family as a fundamental natural institution, precisely in consideration of its vital and essential aspects, falls to the whole of society. The need to confer an institutional character on marriage, basing this on a public act that is socially and legally recognized, arises from the basic requirements of social nature.

The introduction of divorce into civil legislation has fueled a relativistic vision of the marriage bond and is broadly manifested as it becomes 'truly a plague on society'. Couples who preserve and develop the value of indissolubility 'in a humble and courageous manner ... perform the role committed to them of being in the world a "sign"—a small and precious sign, sometimes also subjected to temptation, but always renewed—of the unfailing fidelity with which God and Jesus Christ love each and every human being'.

229. The solidity of the family nucleus is a decisive resource for the quality of life in society, therefore the civil community cannot remain indifferent to the destabilizing tendencies that threaten its foundations at their very roots. Although legislation may sometimes tolerate morally unacceptable behavior, it must never weaken the recognition of indissoluble monogamous marriage as the only authentic form of the family. It is therefore necessary that the public authorities 'resist these tendencies which divide society and are harmful to the dignity, security and welfare of the citizens as individuals, and they must try to ensure that public opinion is not led to

undervalue the institutional importance of marriage and the family’.

It is the task of the Christian community and of all who have the good of society at heart to reaffirm that ‘the family constitutes, much more than a mere juridical, social and economic unit, a community of love and solidarity, which is uniquely suited to teach and transmit cultural, ethical, social, spiritual and religious values, essential for the development and well-being of its own members and of society’.

#### **Week 4: Transmitting the Faith Requires Adherence to the Faith**

##### Questions for Communal Reflection

*From Lineamenta*

- I. *How does the Church define evangelization? Its relationship to living the Faith?*
- II. *How are the laity and particularly the family part of the New Evangelization?*

*From Compendium: The Family, the Vital Cell of Society*

- I. *How does the family benefit children? Why is the family so key to the begetting, fostering, and societal protection of children?*

#### LINEAMENTA

12. The transmission of the faith is a very complex, dynamic process which totally involves the faith of Christians and the life of the Church. What is not believed or lived cannot be transmitted. The sign of a well-founded, mature faith is the natural way we communicate it to others.

The Church's fundamental activity of transmitting the faith is the foundation of the model and activity of Christian communities. Proclaiming and spreading the Gospel requires that the Church do everything possible to ensure that Christian communities are capable of intensely manifesting the basic elements of a life of faith, namely, charity, witness, proclamation, celebration, listening and sharing. Evangelization needs to be seen as the process through which the Church, moved by the Spirit, proclaims and spreads the Gospel in the whole world, in conformity with magisterial teaching which has been summarized in the following manner:

‘urged on by charity [evangelization] penetrates and transforms the entire temporal order, acquiring and renewing cultures, and is a witness among peoples of the new way of being and living, which is basic to the Christian identity. Evangelization openly proclaims the Gospel, through an initial proclamation which calls persons to conversion; then, through catechesis and the Sacraments of Initiation, it initiates in the faith and the Christian life not only those who are converted to Christ but also those who have returned to the path of following him, incorporating both into the Christian community. Likewise, evangelization continually nourishes in the faithful their gift of communion, through ongoing instruction in the faith (homilies and other forms of catechesis), through the sacraments and through works of charity, and always leads them to undertake the Church's mission which sends all Christ's disciples to announce the Gospel to the entire world through their words and deeds’.

17. The results of this ongoing project of evangelization, which are generated in the Church as a sign of the life-giving power of the Gospel, take concrete form in the responses given to the challenges of our times. Families need to become true and real signs of love and sharing, with a capacity to hope in virtue of their openness to life. Forces are needed in building communities which have a true ecumenical spirit and are capable of dialogue with other religions. Courage is needed to sustain initiatives of social justice and solidarity, which put the poor at the centre of the Church's concern. Joy needs to be more evident in the dedication of one's life to a vocation to the priesthood or the consecrated life. A Church which transmits her faith, a Church of the ‘new evangelization’, is capable in every situation of demonstrating that the Spirit guides her and transforms the history of the Church, of individual Christians and of entire peoples and their culture.

*In order to evangelize, one must accept and live the entirety of the faith. Evangelization is always a task of witness. And, while no one is a perfect example of Christian living, with our constant striving to live more fully the Gospel message, we are nourished in our faith at the same time that we are evangelizing through our living example.*

*Through evangelization, we plant the seed of faith in others. Marriages open to life and love witness to the reality of God's plan for man and woman and are blessed with fruitfulness—sometimes through children and sometimes through other graces.*

*In our culture, living a marriage and family life adhering to God's plan for marriage is an act of heroism. Cultural influences that treat children as objects to possess, treat sexual unions as mere pleasure and therefore relationships of mutual use, and laud the increase of alternative families in which children are separated from their mothers or fathers or both, have a perverse effect on all of us and our children, no matter how well we seek to insulate ourselves and our families. Authentically evangelizing the culture for marriage and family requires each of us to reflect upon the call to life and love for families and examine our own shortcomings in this area. Are we living our family life led by the Spirit or the culture?*

COMPENDIUM: "The Family, the Vital Cell of Society"

230. Procreation expresses the social subjectivity of the family and sets in motion a dynamism of love and solidarity between the generations upon which society is founded. It is necessary to rediscover the social value of that portion of the common good inherent in each new human being. Every child 'becomes a gift to its brothers, sisters, parents and entire family. Its life becomes a gift for the very people who were givers of life and who cannot help but feel its presence, its sharing in their life and its contribution to their common good and to that of the community of the family'.

231. The family founded on marriage is truly the sanctuary of life, 'the place in which life—the gift of God—can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed, and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth'. Its role in promoting and building the culture of life against 'the possibility of a destructive "anti-civilization", as so many present trends and situations confirm', is decisive and irreplaceable.

Christian families have then, in virtue of the sacrament received, a particular mission that makes them witnesses and proclaimers of the Gospel of life. This is a commitment which in society takes on the value of true and courageous prophecy.

235. The desire to be a mother or a father does not justify any 'right to children', whereas the rights of the unborn child are evident. The unborn child must be guaranteed the best possible conditions of existence through the stability of a family founded on marriage, through the complementarities of the two persons, father and mother.

It must be repeated that the ethical unacceptability of all reproductive techniques—such as the donation of sperm or ova, surrogate motherhood, heterologous artificial fertilization—that make use of the uterus of another woman or of gametes of persons other than the married couple, injuring the right of the child to be born of one father and one mother who are father and mother both from a biological and from a legal point of view.

239. The family has a completely original and irreplaceable role in raising children. The parents' love, placing itself at the service of children to draw forth from them ("e-ducere") the best that is in them, finds its fullest expression precisely in the task of educating. 'As well as being a source, the parents' love is also the animating principle and therefore the norm inspiring and guiding all concrete educational activity, enriching it with the values of kindness, constancy, goodness, service, disinterestedness and self-sacrifice that are the most precious fruit of love'.

244. The Church's social doctrine constantly points out the need to respect the dignity of children. 'In the family, which is a community of persons, special attention must be devoted to the children by developing a profound esteem for their personal dignity, and a great respect and generous concern for their rights. This is true for every child, but it becomes all the more urgent the smaller the child is and the more it is in need of everything, when it is sick, suffering or handicapped'.

The rights of children must be legally protected within juridical systems. In the first place, it is necessary that the social value of childhood be publicly recognized in all countries: 'No country on earth, no political system can think of its own future otherwise than through the image of these new generations that will receive from their parents the manifold heritage of values, duties and aspirations of the nation to which they belong and of the whole human family'. The first right of the child is to 'be born in a real family', a right that has not always been respected and that today is subject to new violations because of developments in genetic technology.

## Week 5: The Family as Evangelizers of Future Generations

### Questions for Communal Reflection

#### *From Lineamenta*

- I. *How is the family crucial to the transmission and evangelization of faith to future generations?*
- II. *How does “relativism” contribute to the “educational emergency”?*

#### *From Compendium: The Family, the Vital Cell of Society*

- I. *How does the family and its family associations (like CCG) contribute to social and political life for the protection and fostering of marriage and family?*
- II. *Why is joy so key to the evangelizing effort of spreading the Gospel even in social action, not an area conspicuous for joy?*

#### LINEAMENTA

13: The synod fathers gave particular attention to proclaiming the Word of God to future generations. ‘Often we encounter in them a spontaneous openness to hearing the Word of God and a sincere desire to know Jesus [...] Concern for young people calls for courage and clarity in the message we proclaim; we need to help young people to gain confidence and familiarity with Sacred Scripture, so it can become a compass pointing out the path to follow. Young people need witnesses and teachers who can walk with them, teaching them to love the Gospel and to share it, especially with their peers, and thus to become authentic and credible messengers.’

19. Today’s world oftentimes poses another challenge in the work of evaluating the program of initiating people in the faith, namely, the increasing difficulty of men and women today to listen to others speaking about God and to encounter places and experiences which open them to the subject of God. The Church has been dealing with this question for some time by not only pointing out the difficulty but also providing various ways of responding. In fact, Pope Paul VI, taking this challenge into account, urgently proposed that the Church search for new ways to present the Christian faith.

20. In employing the term ‘educational emergency’, the Pope intends to refer to the increasing difficulty which is encountered today by not only Christian

educational activity but also educational activity in general. Transmitting to new generations the basic values for living and right conduct is becoming more arduous. Such is the case with not only parents, who witness a steady erosion of their ability to influence the educational process, but also those professionally engaged in educational activity, beginning with the school.

Such a situation was somewhat predictable in societies and cultures that are oftentimes dominated by relativism, which lacks the light of truth. Many consider speaking of truth as too onerous and too ‘authoritarian’. Such thinking leads to doubting the goodness of life—‘Is it good to be a human being?’ ‘Is it good to be alive?’—and the validity of relationships and commitments which make up life. In such a context, how is it possible to propose to young people and transmit to generation-after-generation—both as individuals and communities—even the most basic elements of stability and certitude, rules for living, the authentic meaning of human existence and goals to be pursued? As a result, education increasingly tends to be reduced to simply communicating to persons determined skills and teaching succeeding generations to gratify their desire for happiness through the products of consumerism or through a short-lived self-gratification. In light of this, parents and teachers are easily tempted to relinquish their proper educational task and, no longer understanding what their role might be, the mission entrusted to them.

This constitutes the ‘educational emergency’: we are no longer able to offer to the young and new generations all that we are supposed to transmit to them. We are also debtors in their regard concerning the true values which serve as the foundation for living. In this way, the essential purpose of education ends up unfulfilled and forgotten, namely, forming individuals capable of living life to the full and of making their unique contribution to the common good. In various places, the question of authentic education is increasingly being raised as well as the need for those who are truly educators. Parents (concerned and oftentimes in anguish about the future of their children) are requesting the same of teachers (who live the sad experience of the degradation of school) and society itself, where the very basis for living together is being threatened.

In this situation, the Church’s duty in instruction in the faith, in discipleship and witness to the Lord becomes, more than ever, a real contribution, which permits our society to emerge from the affliction

caused by the educational crisis, by dispelling mistrust and the alienating "hatred of self", not to mention other forms of self-degradation so characteristic of certain cultures. The Church's duty in this regard can provide Christians with the opportunity to venture forth into the public spaces of our societies and, in these places, speak again about God and bring the Church's gift of a tradition of proper educational activity, which Christian communities, guided by the Spirit, have exercised for centuries.

*Pope Benedict has identified an "educational emergency" in our culture, which not only accounts for poor education in certain subject areas, but also leads to an incomplete understanding of the human person and his role in forming a just society. Authentic education, forming persons for virtue, is virtually missing today.*

*This is one of the particular areas of concern for lay Catholics raising families in our culture. It is also an area where families have the greatest ability to affect change through evangelization as families. Through the witness of Christian family life, we can begin to provide the culture with an alternative way of acting. Working with social and civic organizations, we can bring that witness to the public square, acting on behalf of all families.*

COMPENDIUM: "The Family, the Vital Cell of Society"

246. The social subjectivity of the family, both as a single unit and associated in a group, is expressed as well in the demonstrations of solidarity and sharing not only among families themselves but also in the various forms of participation in social and political life. This is what happens when the reality of the family is founded on love: being born in love and growing in love, solidarity belongs to the family as a constitutive and structural element.

This is a solidarity that can take on the features of service and attention to those who live in poverty and need, to orphans, the handicapped, the sick, the elderly, to those who are in mourning, to those with doubts, to those who live in loneliness or who have been abandoned. It is a solidarity that opens itself to acceptance, to guardianship, to adoption; it is able to bring every situation of distress to the attention of institutions so that, according to their specific competence, they can intervene.

247. Far from being only objects of political action, families can and must become active subjects, working "to see that the laws and institutions of the State not only do not offend but support and positively defend the rights and duties of the family. Along these lines, families should grow in awareness of being "protagonists" of what is known as "family politics" and assume responsibility for transforming society'. To this end, family associations must be promoted and strengthened. 'Families have the right to form associations with other families and institutions, in order to fulfill the family's role suitably and effectively, as well as to protect the rights, foster the good and represent the interests of the family. On the economic, social, juridical and cultural levels, the rightful role of families and family associations must be recognized in the planning and development of programs which touch on family life'.

## **Week 6:**

### **The Joy of Effective Evangelization**

#### Questions for Communal Reflection

*From Lineamenta*

- I. *What did John Paul II and the Church wish to recover from her beginnings?*
- II. *Can you characterize the joy and enthusiasm of the approach to evangelization?*

*From Compendium: The Family, the Vital Cell of Society*

- I. *How does the Church see the relationship of the family to society?*
- II. *What is the priority of the family in relationship to the State?*

#### LINEAMENTA

23. In his coming among us, Jesus Christ made us sharers in his divine life which renews the face of the earth and makes all things new (cf. Rev 21:5). His revelation made us not only recipients of the gift of salvation but also its proclaimers and witnesses. In order to fulfill this task, the Spirit of the Risen Christ brings effectiveness to our proclamation of the Gospel in every part of the world. This was the experience of the first Christian community which saw the Word of God spread through preaching and witness (cf. Acts 6:7).

The new evangelization does not mean a 'new Gospel', because 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever' (Heb 13:8), but rather, a new response to the needs of humanity and people today in a manner adapted to the signs of the times and to the new situations in cultures, which are the basis of our personal identity and the places where we seek the meaning of our existence. Consequently, a 'new evangelization' means to promote a culture more deeply grounded in the Gospel and to discover the new man who is in us through the Spirit given us by Jesus Christ and the Father."

24. In these pages, we have spoken many times of a new evangelization. In closing, we can better understand the profound meaning of the expression and its inherent appeal by turning to Pope John Paul II, who greatly supported and propagated this idea. He insisted that a 'new evangelization' means 'to rekindle in ourselves the impetus of the Church's beginnings and allow ourselves to be filled with the ardor of the apostolic preaching which followed Pentecost. We must revive in ourselves the burning conviction of Paul, who cried out: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel" (1 Cor 9:16). This passion will not fail to stir in the Church a new sense of mission, which cannot be left to a group of "specialists" but must involve the responsibility of all the members of the People of God. Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves; they must proclaim him. A new apostolic outreach is needed, which will be lived as the everyday commitment of Christian communities and groups.'

The present text also made reference to changes and developments. We are facing situations which are signs of massive changes, often causing apprehension and fear. These situations require a new vision, which allows us to look to the future with eyes full of hope and not with tears of despair. As 'Church', we already have this vision, namely, the Kingdom to come, which was announced to us by Christ and described in his parables. This Kingdom is already communicated to us through his preaching and, above all, through his death and resurrection. Nevertheless, we oftentimes feel unable to en flesh this vision, in other words, to 'make it our own' and to 'bring it to life' for ourselves and the people we meet everyday, and to make it the basis for the Church's life and all her pastoral activities.

25. A new evangelization means to share the world's deep desire for salvation and render our faith intelligible by communicating the logos of hope (cf.

1 Pt 3:15). Humanity needs hope to live in these present times. The content of this hope is 'God, who has a human face and who 'has loved us to the end'. For this reason, the Church is, by her very nature, missionary. We cannot selfishly keep for ourselves the words of eternal life, which we received in our personally encountering Jesus Christ. They are destined for each and every person. Each person today, whether he knows it or not, needs this proclamation.

To be unaware of this need creates a desert and an emptiness. In fact, the obstacles to the new evangelization are precisely a lack of joy and hope among people, caused and spread by various situations in our world today. Oftentimes, this lack of joy and hope is so strong that it affects the very tenor of our Christian communities. This is the reason for renewing the appeal for a new evangelization, not simply as an added responsibility but as a way to restore joy and life to situations imprisoned in fear.

We therefore approach the new evangelization with a sense of enthusiasm. We will learn the sweet and comforting joy of evangelizing, even at times when proclamation might seem like a seed sown among tears (cf. Ps 126:6). 'May it mean for us—as it did for John the Baptist, for Peter and Paul, for the other apostles and for a multitude of splendid evangelizers all through the Church's history—an interior enthusiasm that nobody and nothing can quench. May it be the great joy of our consecrated lives. And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the Good News not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervor, who have first received the joy of Christ, and who are willing to risk their lives so that the Kingdom may be proclaimed and the Church established in the midst of the world.'

*It is so important to keep in mind that the call to evangelization is made to every baptized person. It comes in many forms. And takes on many situations. Some, such as Mother Teresa, answer the call in an astonishing way. Others, such as St. Therese of Lisieux, answer the call in a quieter way. Families, today, are asked to evangelize the culture in a way that is unique to them. Within the daily aspect of family life, witnessing the Gospel takes place. At certain times during family life, this quiet evangelization is all that one can do. At other times, families may be called to witness to a broader*

*community through participation in civic organizations or public policy.*

*Evangelization begins and ends with the person of Christ. If our Christian witness is based on a personal relationship with Jesus, he will make it efficacious. It is our job to be faithful to the call that we have at each stage of our lives, not to worry about the end result. Through our faithfulness we experience joy and transmit that joy of faithfulness to future generations.*

COMPENDIUM: "The Family, the Vital Cell of Society"

252. The starting point for a correct and constructive relationship between the family and society is the recognition of the subjectivity and the social priority of the family. Their intimate relationship requires that 'society should never fail in its fundamental task of respecting and fostering the family'. Society, and in particular State institutions, respecting the priority and 'antecedence' of the family, is called to guarantee and foster the genuine identity of family life and to avoid and fight all that alters or wounds it. This requires political and legislative action to safeguard family values, from the promotion of intimacy and harmony within families to the respect for unborn life and to the effective freedom of choice in educating children. Therefore, neither society nor the State may absorb, substitute or reduce the social dimension of the family; rather, they must honor it, recognize it, respect it and promote it according to the principle of subsidiarity.

253. Society's service of the family becomes concrete in recognizing, respecting and promoting the rights of the family. This means that authentic and effective family policies must be brought about with specific interventions that are able to meet the needs arising from the rights of the family as such. In this sense, there is a necessary prerequisite, one that is essential and indispensable: the recognition—which entails protecting, appreciating and promoting—the identity of the family, the natural society founded on marriage. This recognition represents a clear line of demarcation between the family, understood correctly, and all other forms of cohabitation which, by their very nature, deserve neither the name nor the status of family.

254. The recognition on the part of civil society and the State of the priority of the family over every other community, and even over the reality of the State, means overcoming merely individualistic conceptions and accepting the family dimension as

the indispensable cultural and political perspective in the consideration of persons. This is not offered as an alternative, but rather as a support and defense of the very rights that people have as individuals. This perspective makes it possible to draw up normative criteria for a correct solution to different social problems, because people must not be considered only as individuals but also in relation to the family nucleus to which they belong, the specific values and needs of which must be taken into due account.