

Reflection and Discussion Guide for

The Gift of Saint John Paul II: A Celebration of His Enduring Legacy

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This guide for prayerful reflection and fruitful discussion is intended as a way for parishioners, in small groups, to deepen their appreciation of John Paul II including the relevance of his thought and teaching well in to our third millennium of Christian life and faith. May all who use this guide follow John Paul's example as a bold and loving disciple of Jesus and enthusiastic participant in His holy, Catholic Church.

Introduction p.11

What did you learn about John Paul II that deepens your admiration for him?

Chapter 1 p.25

How is it not insensitive but rather loving to declare that Jesus is the one Savior of the world—that all redemption of humanity ultimately occurs because of and through Jesus Christ?

Chapter 2 p.41

In the face of relativism—moral relativism and all assaults on objective truth—what does it mean to you to have a teaching Church?

Chapter 3 p.47

How might your life change if you celebrated the Sacrament of Penance about once per month (if you don't already do so; if you do—how is your life different due to this practice?)? What would your family, neighborhood, parish, community etc. look like if more folks celebrated this sacrament much more frequently—again, about once per month?

Chapter 4 p.63

Recalling that what's legal isn't necessarily moral, what are some mutual obligations between employers and employees? What are some examples of what's legal not being moral in labor and management? In additional areas of life?

Chapter 5 p.77

Rather than turn to alternatives as a new normal, how can we advocate for and support marriage and family as it comes to us from God?

Chapter 6 p.85

Given that losing a sense of sin has proven unhealthy, what is a healthy sense of sin and how does it help you as well as others?

Chapter 7 p.93

Inculturation means putting what's good in culture to good use while purifying what's contrary to God's will. What in our culture can you use to help others know God? What can you help purify and how?

Chapter 8 p.101

"I'm spiritual but not religious." Given what you know about the **Holy** Spirit and His drawing people to the Church where they find guidance, healing and joy in Jesus, how might you encourage people to be both spiritual and religious?

Chapter 9 p.109

When you recall your childhood friends you're probably able to recall their moms. It's unusual to have a lifelong relationship with someone and not know her or his mom—even asking about her occasionally. How's your relationship with the mom of your lifelong friend Jesus?

Chapter 10 p.119

Catholic Social Teaching acknowledges the tension between manifesting God's kingdom now and knowing that it won't be completely fulfilled till Jesus comes again in glory. How do you manage this tension in your life and that of your various communities?

Chapter 11 p.127

Knowing that laity and clergy play complementary—not adversarial—roles in the great drama of salvation history, what unique contribution can you make in bringing Jesus and His Church to those you meet at home, work and recreation?

Chapter 12 p.135

Given the negative ways that men in general and dads specifically are often portrayed by the entertainment industry, what does Saint Joseph tell us about how to be a real man, a loving husband and a truly good father?

Chapter 13 p.143

What would your parish be like if it had a lively evangelization team persistently and prayerfully inviting each person within the parish boundaries to a "renewed appreciation and understanding of penance, the Eucharist, and catechesis"? (p.149) Will you form this team? If it's already active, how can you start or enhance your participation?

Chapter 14 p.151

How do Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic moral teaching in general complement each other? In other words, rather than taking an either/or approach, why must Catholics commit both to the moral principles that directly reflect their personal values and the body of teaching focused on our life in society?

Chapter 15 p.165

Every priest you know needs ongoing priestly formation. Based on pp.174-176 what are some efforts you can put forth to help priests you know—and priests in general—with this aspect of ministry? (What are your parish priest's thoughts on ongoing priestly formation?)

Chapter 16 p.179

What are the dangers of living as if there's no such thing as absolute truth? What are the benefits of embracing the truths that God in His great love reveals to us? How do you keep from laughing when someone says "There's no such thing as absolute truth. And that's the absolute truth!"?

Chapter 17 p.189

This encyclical speaks of changing the culture of death and building a civilization of love by proclaiming (and living, by God's grace!) the Gospel of life. Prayerfully reflect on and lovingly discuss the three phrases: culture of death, civilization of love, Gospel of life—along with other aspects of this chapter that touch your heart.

Chapter 18 p.209

Knowing that false ecumenism ignores or minimizes doctrinal differences whereas true ecumenism wrestles honestly with them while cooperating and collaborating when feasible, how can you—according to Ut Unum Sint—contribute to the ecumenical movement?

Chapter 19 p.217

What value does our culture place on simple living? On sexual purity both in and outside of marriage? On submission to legitimate authority? How does our culture see time spent in prayerful reflection instead of producing a tangible good or marketable service? How can a consecrated life be a Christian witness today?

Chapter 20 p.225

Knowing that science professors as a group tend to be more religious than their counterparts in several other subjects, why do you think the false separation between faith and reason has become so prominent in our culture? Bonus: catholicleague.org/galileo-and-the-catholic-church/

Chapter 21 p.235

What are conversion, communion and solidarity according to what you read? How are they interrelated? What role does properly understanding conversion, communion and solidarity play in helping you encounter the living Jesus Christ?

Chapter 22 p.249

“I’m not in to the rosary.” Based on this chapter, role-play some conversations with folks who don’t currently number the Most Holy Rosary among their prayer arsenal; encourage them to do so! 😊

Chapter 23 p.261

The Eucharist is both a sign of unity and a cause of unity. Prayerfully reflect on and discuss this both/and mystery in light of what strikes you in this chapter—referring to the chapter in your discussion.

Chapter 24 p.269

Bishops in a special way serve us as priest, prophet and king. How can you help your bishop in his roles of sanctifying, teaching and shepherding? (Please keep your bishop in prayer as he faithfully continues praying for you.)

Final note, and a prayer:

It’s great to keep up with papal writings—especially the writings themselves rather than media sound bites about them. Writings of our Holy Fathers are readily available at vatican.va. May God bless your prayerful reading, reflection and discussion of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.

“Saint John Paul, you answered God’s call to lead His holy, Catholic Church with clear vision and consistent invitation. You listened to many while encouraging all to embrace their full humanity as God lovingly reveals the human person to us—most fully in His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, true God and true man.

Pray for us, Saint John Paul, that we always embrace the truth revealed by God; that we defend life, work for justice and seek the peace that only Jesus can give. Implore our heavenly Father to fill us with the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth, peace and unity.

Pray for the Church you served so faithfully; may she follow the example our Blessed Mother, who you love so deeply, always pointing to Jesus and helping women and men on their journey to the Father, through the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”