

THE GOSPEL OF LIFE

Study Guide by the SISTERS OF LIFE

CHAPTER 2, PART 1: QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. "The *Gospel of life* is not simply a reflection, however new and profound, on human life... the *Gospel of life* is something concrete and personal, for it consists in the proclamation of the very person of Jesus" (*Evangelium Vitae* paragraph 29). How does this reality transcend merely political or social dimensions?
2. John Paul II asserts that the truth of the dignity of human life can be known through reason. (*cf. EV 29*) Reflect on this.
3. How does our "physical and spiritual life" acquire "its full value and meaning" (*EV 30*)?
4. "Israel's life is the object of God's gentle and intense love" (*EV 31*). How can we see in the experience of Israel's history, an experience of our own lives? How does God reveal to us the preciousness of our lives? How does God reveal to me the preciousness of my life?
5. "Freedom from slavery meant the gift of an identity, the recognition of an indestructible dignity and the *beginning of a new history*, in which the discovery God and discovery of self go hand in hand" (*EV 31*). Are there places in my life that I am in bondage? Am I willing to let God into those places, to heal my identity and to set me free?
6. John Paul II says that "in coming to know the value of its own existence as a people, Israel also grows in its perception of the meaning and value of life itself" (*EV 31*). Can I recognize a similar dynamic in my own life? Where were particularly memorable times that I experienced my own goodness? Did that open my heart to a new understanding of others, and to the meaning of life?
7. "Jesus sets forth the meaning of his own mission: all who suffer because their lives are in some way 'diminished' thus hear from him the "good news" of God's concern for them, and they know for certain that their lives too are a gift carefully guarded in the hands of the Father (*cf. Mt 6:25-34*)" (*EV 32*). Think: your life is a gift carefully guarded in the hands of the Father. Does this change the way you see yourself? Your future?
8. John Paul II says that "only those who recognize that their life is marked by the evil of sin can discover in an encounter with Jesus the Saviour the truth and the authenticity of their own existence" (*EV 32*). Bringing our failures into the light of God's merciful love actually heals us and fortifies our identity. Reflect: when is the last time I went to confession? Is there something I need to bring to the Lord in this sacrament? Be not afraid! He is waiting for you

with love and tenderness.

9. Jesus took on the poverty of our human condition, from His birth in the stable to His death on the Cross. All of “life’s contradictions and risks were fully accepted by Jesus: ‘though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich’(2 Cor 8:9)” (EV 33). In this, he shows us that we no longer have to be afraid of our weakness and spiritual poverty. Reflect on this. Does this affect your understanding of your places of need?

10. “Life is always a good” (EV 34). Your life is *always* a good. Does this challenge you? Console you? Why or why not?

11. Human beings are different from all other creatures, “a manifestation of God in the world, a sign of His presence, a trace of His glory (cf. Gen 1:26-27; Ps 8:6)” (EV 34). We have a “sublime dignity”, “based on the intimate bond which unites [us] to [our] Creator” (EV 34). Is this a reality I ponder regularly? What would happen if I lived continually conscious of this truth?

12. “Because he is made by God and bears within himself an indelible imprint of God, man is naturally drawn to God” (EV 34). We ache for infinite love, and spend our lives in search of this love. How can I see in my activities and relationships my intrinsic yearning for God?

13. St. Ambrose says that “God rested in the depths of man” (EV 35) on the seventh day. Do I allow God to rest in me? Do I take personal daily prayer time? Do I set aside Sundays as a day of rest?

14. John Paul II says that “when God is not acknowledged as God, the profound meaning of man is betrayed and communion between people compromised” (EV 36). We are made to worship; if we don’t worship God, then we end up worshipping creatures, and our hearts and relationships are thrown into imbalance. Have you ever had this experience in your life? If so, have you experienced Jesus restoring and renewing you in His image?

15. Eternal life begins now. “To know God and his Son is to accept the mystery of the loving communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit into one’s own life, which *even now* is open to eternal life because it *shares in the life of God*” (EV 37). God wants me to live forever in heaven with Him. Have I opened myself to sharing the life of God now? Do I frequent the Sacraments?

16. “The dignity of life is linked not only to its beginning, to the fact that it comes from God, but also to its final end, to its destiny of fellowship with God in knowledge and love of Him” (EV 38). Do I have a hunger for heaven?

17. We do not belong to ourselves; we belong to God’s love. “God therefore is the *sole Lord of this life*: man cannot do with it as he wills” (EV 39). Am I willing to give God permission in my life?