

Amoris Laetitia, Chapter 7 – Discussion and Reflection Guide

Diocese of Broken Bow, New Zealand

Chapter Seven:

“Towards a Better Education of Children”

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(AL 259-290)

This chapter looks at a number of aspects in the education of children. It begins by noting the need of parents to be vigilant and aware of what their children are exposed to but also warns parents not to become obsessive and controlling. The ethical formation of children is discussed and parents are called to play a major role in “fostering good habits and a natural inclination to goodness” (AL 264).

It is within the family that children first learn about human values and the “wise use of freedom” (AL 274). The family is also where children are socialised, learn to relate to and care for others, and it is here that they are educated in the sense that “the world and society are also our home” (AL 276). The need to school families in care for the environment is also noted, in continuity with the Pope’s encyclical *Laudato Si’*, and the chapter emphasises the need to manage sophisticated technology and entertainment media that can impinge on family life (AL 278). Importantly, *Amoris Laetitia* also emphasises the vital role that Catholic schools play in assisting parents in raising their children and in encouraging students to understand life as a call to serve God (AL 279).

Pope Francis discusses the need for sex education, especially in a time when sexuality is often trivialised (AL 280-286). He advocates an “education for love, for mutual self-giving” (AL 280) to overcome self-centredness and self-absorption and in order to prepare young people for a “great and generous love” (AL 284).

The chapter closes with the challenge of passing on the faith to children, noting parents as the evangelisers of their own family (AL 287-290). Pope Francis acknowledges that education in the faith has to adapt to each child and it is important that “spiritual experience is not imposed but freely proposed” (AL 288). The family is ultimately an agent of evangelisation through its explicit proclamation of the Gospel and “its legacy of varied forms of witness”, including solidarity with the poor, openness to a diversity of people, protection of creation, promotion of the common good, and through its practice of works of mercy (AL 290).

1) What kinds of formation are advocated by Pope Francis for the integral growth and education of children (AL 259-290)?

2) How might parents provide their children with an “education in hope” (AL 275)?

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3) What does Pope Francis make of the role of technology and entertainment media in family life (AL 278)?

4) What are the principles of sex education promoted by *Amoris Laetitia* and how are these related to the total commitment of marriage (AL 280-286)?

5) Pope Francis affirms the primary gift and responsibility of parents to raise their children in the faith (AL 287-290). What does this responsibility demand of parents and how can the community of faith better support this task?

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