Small Group Study For
*Go Make Disciples: Building a Culture of Conversion and Discipleship for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City*

LEADER GUIDE
Special High School Youth Group Edition
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Archbishop Coakley released his second Pastoral Letter for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, January 25, 2019. He states in the opening of this letter its intended purpose:

“The purpose of this pastoral letter is to refocus the vision and consider what the Lord has been doing in our archdiocese and where the Holy Spirit is leading us over the course of the next few years. Our fundamental vision to ‘go make disciples’ has not changed. We are called to be disciples; called to pursue holiness and mission; called to become saints. We are still called to evangelize, to be witnesses, and to live authentic lives as missionary disciples. After five years, we have greater clarity and alignment in our mission.”

Our Archbishop is articulating a spiritual vision for us as an Archdiocese, and is writing a letter to us as our spiritual father to lay that vision out before us. This study guide is meant as a tool to help our youth understand and engage with the content of this very important Pastoral Letter and realize that the archbishop’s message is relevant to them.

This Leader’s Guide is for the small group facilitator only. The Participant Guide is available as a separate download.

The study session is NOT a time to read through the Archbishop’s new Pastoral Letter. It is recommended that all leaders read the letter prior to the session. There are Leader notes in the study encouraging the youth as well to read the letter ahead of time, which is highly recommended. If possible, hand out copies of the Pastoral Letter to all the youth at the meeting prior to when the letter will be discussed. Encourage them to read it and bring it to the next meeting for discussion. Even if someone has not read the new letter in its entirety, this study session will give them access to the main themes and highlights of the letter and hopefully will draw them into a fuller desire to go back and read the whole thing.
The study is broken into a series of sections, all based on the theme of planting and growing. All planting requires preparation of the soil. *Dig In* does just this, but for the soil of the heart. *Plant Seeds* is a quick capture of the main points of the study, the points you want to keep holding on to long after the study is finished. Pay close attention during this section, and prayerfully listen and hear these key lines from the Pastoral Letter. *Sink Roots* allows these key points to take root in our hearts and begin to grow within us. This section is the main content of the study. *Live It* moves into life application. We begin to ask questions like, “So what? What does all this have to do with my life? And how do I start putting it into practice?” *Take it to Prayer* gives several practical ways that the content of the study can be meditated upon further in prayer after the study. And *Bear Fruit* provides several tangible ways that one could put the content of the study into practice to bear fruit in their lives and for the kingdom of God.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Section Overview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td><em>Dig In</em></td>
<td>A quick travel themed relay game among small groups. Light discussion using the Archbishop’s analogy of the Camino and hiking to the spiritual life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td><em>Plant Seeds</em></td>
<td>A Series of key lines from the Pastoral Letter that capture the letter’s central theme, “Be Disciples Yourselves, Go Make more Disciples of others!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td><em>Sink Roots</em></td>
<td>Broken into two sections, this part of the study looks at the various kinds of soil we all find in our hearts, and the things we experience that prevent growth, what we could call “enemies to growth”: the world, the flesh and the devil as well as the “allies to growth”: community, virtue, and God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 minutes</td>
<td><em>Live It!</em></td>
<td>This part addresses the universal call to holiness and helps us understand what God provides to assist us, and ways we can tangibly respond to the call God has given.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 minutes</td>
<td><em>Take It to Prayer</em></td>
<td>Several tangible ways you can take the content of this study into prayer for deeper reflection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td><em>Bear Fruit</em></td>
<td>Several practical ideas for how you can put the content of this study into real action and let it bear fruit in your life and for others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUPPLIES NEEDED:
- Copies of the new Pastoral Letter, one for each person
- Bibles
- Simple prizes for opening relay race, optional (see Leader Note in Dig In)

PREPARE IN ADVANCE:
- Read through the entire study to become familiar with all that it will entail
- There will be a number of times where you will be reading sections from the Pastoral Letter. It will be helpful to read these directly from the Letter, rather than from the Leaders Guide. It will be helpful to you to mark these sections ahead of time, maybe even highlighting them for quick reference
- It would also be very helpful if everyone in the youth group was able to read the Pastoral Letter before the actual study
DIG IN

Small Group Discussion

**SAY:**
Quick Game – Everyone line up in their small groups at one end of the room. Your small group leader will have 5 things for the first volunteer in your small group to put on (large t-shirt, hat, sunglasses, cross body bag, roller bag). Now you must run to the other side of the room, touch the wall, and then run back to your small group and pass those 5 things off to the next person. The first small group to have every person complete the relay wins!

**LEADER TIPS**
You can have a small prize for the winning small group – it could be something as simple as cookies or brownies. If the study is done during Lent, maybe stay away from food items and instead use something like a prayer card, a rosary, a meditation, etc.

**SAY:**
All of us have been on some type of special trip, vacation, or journey whether it be small or large. Hopefully, you were not running around and looking as crazy as you just were in our opening game! Today we are going to talk about the Archbishop’s Pastoral Letter: Go Make Disciples! In the opening of his Pastoral Letter, the Archbishop shares how he has hiked the Camino de Compostela a number of times. This is a special religious trip you can go on in Spain where you walk hundreds of miles to where the remains of the apostle St. James are located and where a beautiful Cathedral is built in his honor. The Archbishop shares how these trips for him have been somewhat of an analogy to the larger journey of life.
SAY:

Life is a journey, and it is one that we all are on. Like the Archbishop said, “We all are pilgrims on a journey, a Camino, to heaven . . . it’s a path marked with hills and valleys, over smooth and rocky terrain.”

SAY:

Let’s close our eyes and focus all of our attention as I read several selected statements from Archbishop Coakley’s letter to us.

READ:

• “I call you to be disciples and go make disciples! This is why we are here! This is our mission.” – pg. 6

• “The deepest desire of my heart is to see the Church of central and western Oklahoma flourish as a community of faith that nurtures and raises up fervent missionary disciples. Our task is to prepare good soil to receive the seed of faith.” – pg. 8

• “Missionary discipleship is the fruit of good soil. If the goal throughout our archdiocese is to make more disciples, then we must address these kinds of obstacles, and do all we can to prepare good soil in our hearts.” – pg. 15

• “Till the soil of your heart, be generous in your response to Christ. Say ‘yes’ to him and embrace the call to holiness. Be a disciple and accept his challenge to go and make more disciples!” – pg. 21

SAY:
The central theme or the main message one finds throughout the whole of this Pastoral Letter is this: Be Disciples Yourselves, Go Make more Disciples of others!

PRAY:

Lord Jesus, we pray that you would help our hearts to be open to the power of these words, and give us the grace of your Holy Spirit to respond generously to all that you are asking of us through our shepherd.
Good Soil

SAY:

How many of you have ever planted something? Most of us can at least remember planting a bean seed when we were in elementary school. Even if you’ve never planted anything, we all understand that you need good soil if you want to grow something. It was a great analogy back in Jesus’ time, and it still works for us today. The powerful lesson for us is the translation of all this to the spiritual life and growth in our faith. If you want to grow spiritual fruit, you need good soil! Listen to this exhortation from the Archbishop’s Letter:

READ:

“. . .we are invited to constantly cooperate with grace to expand our receptivity to God’s Word in our hearts. Indeed, the primary work of a spiritual life is to cooperate with God’s grace and cultivate the good soil in our hearts to rid ourselves of those things that compete, distract and hinder our receptivity to God’s life-giving Word. The more good soil in our hearts, the greater our capacity to bear fruit for the Kingdom. Bearing fruit is the evidence of authentic discipleship.” – pg. 11

SAY:

Follow along in your Bibles as I read the parable of the sower in the seed found in Matthew 13:1-9 and 18-23

The Parable of the Sower

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: “Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on
good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!"

**The Parable of the Sower Explained**

“Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

**LEADER TIPS**

Lead a discussion here where you explain what happens to each of the seeds and what each represent. Have the teens fill in their table from their Participant Guide for the study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Soil</th>
<th>What Happens to the Seed</th>
<th>What Does it Represent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hard Path</td>
<td>Birds come and eat the seed, the seed has nowhere to grow</td>
<td>Those who hear the word of God and does not understand it - the enemy comes and steals away what was sown in his heart before it ever sinks in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky Soil</td>
<td>Seed sprouts quickly, but doesn’t survive because there is no depth and the sun scorches it</td>
<td>Person does not have deep roots so when trials and persecutions come they do not survive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thorny Soil</td>
<td>The seed takes root, but grows up alongside thorns and weeds, which choke off growth</td>
<td>The cares of the world and the delight in riches choke the word and it can’t bear fruit in the person’s life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Soil</td>
<td>The seed sinks in and takes root, and the plant grows</td>
<td>The person bears fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some a hundredfold</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Enemies to Growth

SAY:

If the aim is to get more good soil in our heart, then it makes sense to see anything that prevents us from doing that as an “enemy to growth”. The Archbishop uses this section of the Pastoral Letter to talk about our main enemies, defined by the Church as the world, the flesh, and the devil.

READ:

“Continued growth as a disciple calls for an understanding of the enemies and dangers we will encounter along the way, so we can protect ourselves against them. The Parable of the Sower captures the effects of these enemies as Jesus talks about the rocky soil, and the soil filled with thorns. This soil limits fruitfulness and can prevent it altogether. Missionary discipleship is the fruit of good soil. If the goal throughout our archdiocese is to make more disciples, then we must address these kinds of obstacles, and do all we can to prepare good soil in our hearts.” – pg. 15

SAY:

Let’s talk a bit about these enemies from our own experience as well as what are the allies for growth that help us to fight the enemies.

LEADER TIPS

Take time for the group to share about these various enemies and allies, fleshing out the details about them with personal examples. Direct the youth to the Participant Guide for the study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enemy</th>
<th>Examples of how these 3 work against us</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The World</strong></td>
<td>Busyness, Distractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legitimate responsibilities – school, jobs, families, involvements, extracurricular activities, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noise – TV, technology, activities, entertainment, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secular mentality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Flesh</strong></td>
<td>Excessive value on our own comfort and ease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neglecting prayer, skipping Mass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temptations – food, entertainment, sexuality, etc.; not mastering our passions and becoming enslaved to them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Devil</strong></td>
<td>The enemy of our human nature, because he literally makes us “less human” with every sin he tempts us to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He looks for the “weak places” in us and there he tempts us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ally</strong></td>
<td>Examples of how these 3 work to help us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
<td>Experience of community with other believers, accountability, support, encouragement, support of those with like-minded values and beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtue/ Grounded in the Church?</td>
<td>The Sacred Scriptures; the teachings of the Church and the study of our faith God's Life – grace; given first in baptism, and offered again and again through the Sacraments, particularly the Eucharist and Reconciliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>The invitation to relationship with Him, experienced primarily through the gift of prayer The Holy Spirit, active in our relationship with God and in our experience of prayer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How have I experienced these “enemies” myself?
2. Is there a particular “weak place” where the enemy seems to be tempting me? How could I strengthen that area?
3. How have I experienced these “allies” myself?
4. Is there a particular ally that could help me more? How can I work to make that happen?
Tilling Good Soil

SAY:

One of the most important lessons of the Pastoral Letter is that spiritual growth and the pursuit of discipleship won’t happen by accident. It requires intentionality and planning. If the evidence of discipleship is good fruit, and good fruit only grows in good soil, then it makes sense that the key to discipleship is to till more good soil.

READ:

“For fruitful discipleship to be a reality in our parishes, schools and homes, it requires intentional effort. The good soil needs to be cultivated and tilled. Every person, by virtue of their baptism, is called to the pursuit of holiness. This pursuit is the path of discipleship, and fruitful discipleship is rooted in good soil. In addition to dealing with these enemies to our holiness, we must cooperate with God’s grace to till the good soil in our hearts.” – pg. 15

Here are some examples of ways you can respond and live it!
- Giving of our time – for prayer, for Church, for study, for service and love of others, etc.
- Growing in virtue in our life, tempering vice; rooting out sin in our lives, particularly regular sin and sinful habits
- Detachment from the things that can separate us from God – money, possessions, simple pleasures, etc.
TAKE IT TO PRAYER

[Direct participants to the Participant Guide for the study and review the Prayer Activity. This brief time of prayer will incorporate all that has been discussed in this study session. There also are several other prayer and further reflection activities. Encourage them to take time during the next week to enter into one of these prayer experiences.]

SAY:

Earlier we talked about how time in prayer, as well as the experience of community with others can be ways to till good soil in our hearts. As we end our study together, we are going to experience a little of both at the same time by praying together. You can refer to your Talk Sheet to follow along.

For this time of prayer, we are going to imagine that we are Jesus’ disciples, and are with him as he is speaking these words to his disciples. Let’s quiet ourselves, and come into His presence for this time of prayer.

PRAY:

“Lord Jesus, we invite your presence here with us today. Come with your Holy Spirit and inspire our imagination in this time of prayer. Open our hearts so we can be receptive to you and all that you desire to speak to us.”
[Have one person from the group read this passage from Matthew 13:10-17]

READ:

**The Commissioning of the Disciples**

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

SAY:

As we imagine ourselves sitting with Jesus, and hearing his words to our question, what stirs in your heart? How does it feel to be in this inner circle with our Lord? Stay close to the Lord, sitting in his presence and soaking in this moment. What is Jesus asking of you specifically? How are you to go out and make disciples? Spend a few minutes talking with Jesus. What is he asking you to give? How is he asking you to grow? What is he telling you to detach from?

[Allow several minutes of quiet for everyone to reflect and pray. Afterward, take time for each person to share what they experienced in prayer, if time allows.]

SAY:

There are several other prayer experiences in your Participant Guide. These are things you could do during the coming week to continue praying with the content of this study and the Archbishop’s new Pastoral Letter.
Additional Prayer Experiences

1. Take a prayer hike outdoors, where you will be surrounded by things that are growing, living. Invite the Lord to walk with you and speak into your heart about how he is desiring you to grow and be more alive. Let the content of this study be in the backdrop as you take this time to pray. Talk with Jesus about all you learned, and what ways you feel called to respond to what he has taught you.

2. One of the times the Parable of the Sower appears in the Mass readings schedule, it is coupled with Isaiah 55 as the Old Testament reading. Take time to prayerfully read Isaiah 55:10-13.

   Questions to prayerfully reflect on: This message from Isaiah gives us great hope. God’s word, which we can also think of as the “seed of faith” from all we have heard from the Parable of the Sower, never goes forth and returns empty, or void. “It shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”

3. How have I seen the seed of faith (God’s word) bear fruit in my life over time? How has that seed of faith had effect despite the condition of the soil of my heart? What kind of hope does this give me for other areas in my life?

4. There is a good article on the Parable of the Sower on Aletia.org. The link to the article is: https://aleteia.org/2017/07/15/how-the-parable-of-the-sower-can-change-your-life/ [I could not get this link to work – is this applicable to teens?]

5. Take time to prayerfully read the article and meditate on the questions at the end of the article:
   - How does reading the Parable of the Sower as a call to conversion challenge you?
   - What are signs that the Word of God has taken root and is growing inside a person?
   - How is the Word of God “alive and active” in the Church? In you?
6. Pope Francis developed a beautiful prayer for Young people and Vocations. Take time this week to very intentionally join your prayers to those of the Holy Father and pray for young people. Make your prayer specific and personal if possible and pray for the other young people in your own parish community, offering this prayer up for them:

LORD OF THE HARVEST,

BLESS young people with the gift of courage to respond to your call. Open their hearts to great ideals, to great things.

INSPIRE all of your disciples to mutual love and giving—for vocations blossom in the good soil of faithful people.

INSTILL those in religious life, parish ministries, and families with the confidence and grace to invite others to embrace the bold and noble path of a life consecrated to you.

UNITE us to Jesus through prayer and sacrament, so that we may cooperate with you in building your reign of mercy and truth, of justice and peace.

AMEN.
BEAR FRUIT

SAY:

This last section of the study makes us think about some practical ways we can put what we have learned and have been talking about into real action in our daily lives – practical ways to bear fruit with what has been discussed throughout the study today. Each of us need to pick one activity to do as a follow up to our study today. Here are some ideas (refer to your Participant Guide):

1. Go (whether alone or with your family, or with a group of friends) to serve in some way: Catholic Charities, a food pantry, a soup kitchen, Meals on Wheels, Sister BJ’s Pantry, etc. The Archbishop speaks in several places in his letter about how these kinds of corporal works of mercy are signs of the fruitfulness of discipleship.

2. Go serve another person or family in some way – make them a meal, help them with some project, show a random act of kindness, tutor someone in a school subject, invite a teen who sits alone to come join your table at lunch, take out the trash at home without being asked, etc. Little ways of showing love to others and serving their needs can be a powerful expression of discipleship in action.

3. Participate in youth group and other special youth events happening at your parish.

You might be interested in digging even deeper than this one-session study was able to. Check out the additional study guide resources online, at ArchOKC.org/2030.
4. Get involved in some way at your parish: volunteer with some ministry, become an altar server or lector, volunteer for babysitting or other service opportunities at your parish, etc. Most parishes have multitudes of options for how you could get involved. Check out what is needed at your parish.

**SAY:**

*How about we brainstorm some more ideas of our own?*

[Take some time to come up with some more ideas as a group.]

**SAY:**

*Would you want to commit to doing one of these in the next several weeks?*

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**CLOSING PRAYER**

**SAY:**

*Let’s close our time together by praying the prayer that Jesus taught us, His friends, to pray:*

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy Name
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.
Other Adaptations:

- For the opening “Dig in” section for a smaller group, you could keep the game more simple and do a few “Travel Trivia” questions (What city is the Eiffel Tower located? What state is Mount Rushmore in? etc.)

- To enhance the environment, have volunteers bring in some plants to use in the front of your meeting space.

- When reading the parable of the sower and the seed, prepare a short power point to show pictures of what the various situations would look like or have a few pots at the front with different soils that you can reference. You could also bring in a plant in a clear pot where you can see the roots in the soil to show what good soil looks like and how it helps a plant grow.

- For the “Take it to Prayer” section, you could provide small pieces of paper for the teens to write what Jesus is asking them to do and have them take it with them as a concrete reminder.

- Depending on your time constraints, you can offer more or less time for group discussion in the various sections.
GLOSSARY

ACCOMPANIMENT – The act of spiritually walking alongside another on a faith journey based on genuine care and concern for that person.

ACCOMPANY – From the letter: “…as missionary disciples, we are called to love and accept all people in a way that invites each person to a deeper relationship with Christ and a greater alignment of their lives with his teachings.” LMD

COMMUNITY – From the letter: “…relationship with everyone else who is in relationship with him (Jesus)...the Church...brought together by the unique work of the Holy Spirit.

CONVERSION – A spiritual turning away from sin in repentance and to Christ in faith. Conversion is the change of our lives that comes about through the power of the Holy Spirit. All who accept the Gospel undergo change as we continually put on the mind of Christ by rejecting

DISCIPLE – The term originally means a pupil (of a teacher) or an apprentice (to a master craftsman). It is the name given in the New Testament to all those men and women who followed Christ and were taught by him, and who helped spread the Gospel. Contemporary members of the Church, as followers of Jesus, are also referred to as disciples. A disciple of Jesus enters a life-long learning process to live the same life as Jesus lived.

ENCOUNTER – A meeting with the person of Jesus Christ that involves a perceptible experience of his love, peace, truth, beauty, goodness, and or power, in such a way that it transforms a person's life, giving it a new horizon and a decisive direction. Encounters are marked by joy, conversion, and evangelistic zeal. They come about through the Sacraments, prayer, the witness of Christians and sovereign acts of God.
EVANGELIZATION – The ministry and mission of proclaiming and witnessing Christ and his Gospel with the intention of deepening the faith of believers and inviting others to be baptized and initiated into the Church. It is bringing the Good News of Jesus into every human situation and seeking to convert individuals and society by the divine power of the Gospel itself.

GRACE – From the letter: “Grace is literally “God’s life” at work within us, sanctifying us and healing us, perfecting us and elevating us to participate in God’s divine life. This grace is given to us first at our baptism, and it is the same grace we receive every time we receive any of the Sacraments from the Church.”

HOLINESS – A state of goodness in which a person, with the help of God’s grace – the action of the Holy Spirit, and a life of prayer – is freed from sin and evil. Such a person, when gifted with holiness, must still resist temptation, repent of sins that may be committed, and realize that remaining holy is a lifelong journey with many spiritual and moral challenges.

MISSIONARY – A person who responds to the baptismal call to share their gifts in faith to build up the Body of Christ and to make the name of Jesus known and loved in our time.

PASCHAL MYSTERY – Christ’s Passion, Death, and Resurrection as one, inseparable event. It is paschal because it is Christ’s passing into death and passing over into new life. It is a mystery, because it is a visible sign of an invisible act of God.

SEND – The divine call to actively participate in building the Kingdom of God.

SIN – From the letter: “Sin is an offense against reason, truth and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity.” (CCC 1849-1850)