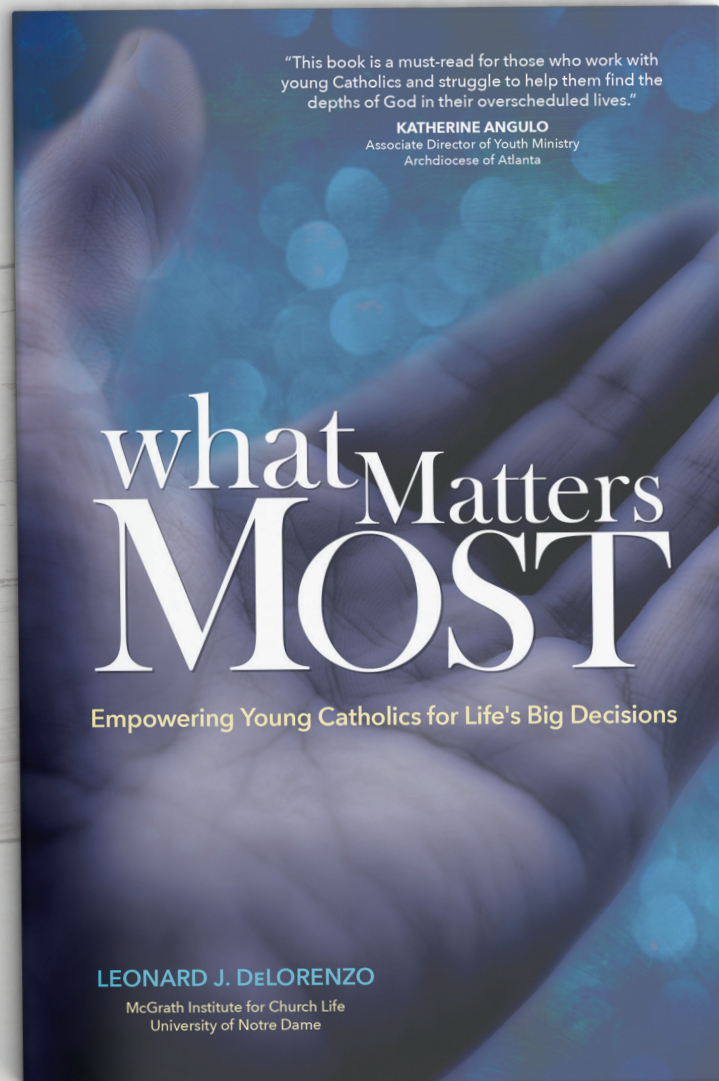


# Empowering Young Catholics for Life's Big Decisions



Companion Study Guide for Parents,  
Parish, and Diocesan Groups

This guide is intended for adult Catholics, though it may be adapted for young adults or even teenagers. In crafting the group sessions, I had in mind adults who are raising, will raise, or have raised kids. At the same time, though, this book is not only for those who are or will be parents, but also for those who form and guide young people as Catholic educators or as campus or parish ministers. Likewise, it is appropriate for anyone who is now or might someday be in a position—whether professional or not—to mentor and accompany younger people in the faith. As you'll see in the conclusion of the book, there is no way around the priority of those who are more mature in faith becoming witnesses for those who come after us. This is how we communicate the joy of the Gospel and empower newer disciples in the life of Jesus Christ.

So this study guide—just like the book—is intended for the renewal and nourishment of mature, adult disciples who become wellsprings of wisdom, comfort, and courage for those whom we are called to empower. I hope the journey through this book alongside the other members of your group is at once challenging, enriching, meaningful, and ultimately inspiring. If I can help in any way as you go along, I am only an email or phone call away ([witnesssevangalization@gmail.com](mailto:witnesssevangalization@gmail.com) or (574) 631-2915). If the opportunity arises and schedules work out, I am also happy to join a group via Skype for a session.

## The Basic Plan

I wrote this study guide to include seven sessions, with the first session being optional. I like meeting this number of times because there are plenty of sessions to really dig into the material and into conversation with one another, but not so many that it feels like an onerous commitment. It could even fit in a liturgical season, like Lent or Easter. The agenda for each meeting follows this basic plan:

1. Opening prayer, including Intercessions and the Lord's Prayer
2. Option for paired conversation, or "mini-group" conversation
3. Group discussion, with suggested questions provided for each session
4. Short period of individual journaling or reflection
5. Closing prayer

The anticipated total time for a group meeting is 75–90 minutes, which is adjustable according to your needs, of course. Groups might consider gathering for Mass before or after their meetings, or sharing a meal together.

## How to Get Started

1. Order copies of *What Matters Most* directly from Ave Maria Press or from another vendor, like Amazon or Barnes and Noble. Depending on the size of your order, Ave Maria Press offers group and bulk discounts. Please contact Kay Luther at Ave Maria Press for group orders: [kluther@nd.edu](mailto:kluther@nd.edu).
2. Personally invite members to the group. Invite those people to invite other people. Put a blurb in your parish bulletin. Use Facebook invites. Tell people why you think this is important and what you hope to gain from this experience.
3. Set a schedule for meetings, which are probably best at the same time each week for seven consecutive weeks. Send reminders to the group members each week. If someone misses a session, personally contact them to invite them to come the next time.

## Session One: Preliminary Meeting

- Introduce members of the group.
- Distribute books to group members.
- Invite each person to say a little about why they became interested in this group reading and discussion.
- Finalize the schedule for the group.
- Invite group members to keep a reading journal, writing out their own thoughts as they read.
- Consider other people whom each person might invite to join the group.
- Assign the group to read the preface and chapter 1 for the next session.

# Session Two: Preface and Chapter 1

## “From My Daughter to the Blessed Mother”

### Opening Prayer

**Leader:** O God, come to our assistance.

**All:** O Lord, make haste to help us.

**Leader:** Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

**All:** As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

**Leader:** Lord Jesus, we gather today in your name, hoping to grow in your love and to become stronger witnesses for those who look to us for guidance. Be with us in our prayer, in our conversation, in our reflection, and in all we do together. You have given us your mother as our Blessed Mother to teach us how to become your disciples. Help us to entrust ourselves to her care as she shows us how to follow you freely and bravely. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

### Intercessions<sup>1</sup>

**Leader:** Let us praise God our almighty Father, who wished that Mary, his Son's mother, be celebrated by each generation. Now in need we ask:

**All:** Mary, full of grace, intercede for us.

**Leader:** O God, worker of miracles, you made the Immaculate Virgin Mary share, body and soul, in your Son's glory in heaven,

**All:** direct the hearts of your children to that same glory.

**Leader:** You made Mary our mother. Through her intercession grant strength to the weak, comfort to the sorrowing, pardon to sinners,

**All:** salvation and peace to all.

**Leader:** You made Mary full of grace,

**All:** grant us all the joyful abundance of your grace.

**Leader:** Make your Church of one mind and one heart in love,

**All:** and help those who believe to be one in prayer with Mary, the mother of Jesus.

**Leader:** You crowned Mary queen of heaven,

**All:** may all the dead rejoice in your kingdom with the saints forever.

**Leader:** For what else shall we pray? (People may offer intentions aloud, or call them to mind silently.)

**Leader:** Gathering all our prayers into one, let us pray as Jesus taught us: Our Father...

<sup>1</sup> From Evening Prayer I for the Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in *Christian Prayer: The Liturgy of the Hours* (New York: Catholic Book, 1976), 1371.



# Session Two: Preface and Chapter 1

## “From My Daughter to the Blessed Mother”

### Discussion Questions

The facilitator may choose—either as a regular practice or from session to session—to include paired conversations or mini-group conversations at the beginning of the discussion. It is sometimes easier for people to just talk with one other person or in a smaller group before engaging as a whole group. “Mini-groups” are three to four people. Paired conversations and mini-groups may focus on just a couple questions.

1. Chapter 1 begins with the author recalling a memory of his daughter when she witnessed a boy in a wheelchair and ended up praying with St. Thérèse for that boy later that night. He eventually writes about how this was a moment when he was struck by his daughter’s beauty: “this is what I want for my children; this is who they ought to be. They should see others and remember them; they should care about what others are going through; they should be bold in wanting to do something for others, know how to do it, and actually take the giant leap into actually making it happen” (2). When has the beauty of your own children or young people whom you’ve taught or mentored struck you? When have you seen their goodness, glimpsed what you hope for them?
2. In the middle of chapter 1, the question of “What are you going through?” receives a lot of attention. What gets in the way for you in paying attention to the needs of others? How well do you listen to others... like, really listen?
3. A meditative reading of the Annunciation narrative comes at the end of the chapter and sets the pattern for the rest of the book. What did you learn about Mary or the Annunciation that you did not know? What particular aspects do you think are really significant, or do you want to think about more? Feel free to look at the Scripture passage(s) together.
4. What are your hopes and expectations going forward with this book and this discussion group? What kind of things do you want to talk about or learn more about?

“Homework” for next time: read chapter 2 and come prepared to discuss. Maybe even keep a reading journal for yourself.

Short Period for Personal Reflection and/or Journaling

### Closing Prayer (recite together):

**Option 1:** St. Gianna Beretta Molla’s daily prayer to the Blessed Mother (from end of chapter 5)

O Mary, in your maternal hands I commend and abandon myself entirely, sure of obtaining what I request. I rely upon you because you are my sweet mother; I confide in you because you are Mother of Jesus; I entrust myself to you.

In this trust I rest sure of being heard in everything, with this trust in my heart I greet you *Mater mea, fiducia mea* [my mother, my confidence]; I consecrate myself entirely to you, begging you to remember that I am your own, guard me and defend me, sweet Mary, and in every instant of my life present me yourself to your Son, Jesus.

**Option 2:** Joe Lazzara’s daily prayer (from end of chapter 3)

My Lord and my God,  
I adore thee my Jesus,  
I adore you.  
I love you my Jesus,  
I love you.  
Grant to me and all my family  
a holy life and a happy death.  
Amen.

<sup>2</sup> Pietro Molla and Elio Guerriero, *Saint Gianna Molla: Wife, Mother, Doctor*, trans. James Colbert (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004), 136.

## Session Three: Chapter 2

### “Pondering and the Meaning of Time”

## Opening Prayer

**Leader:** O God, come to our assistance.

**All:** O Lord, make haste to help us.

**Leader:** Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

**All:** As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

**Leader:** Lord Jesus, we gather today in your name, hoping to grow in your love and to become stronger witnesses for those who look to us for guidance. Be with us in our prayer, in our conversation, in our reflection, and in all we do together. You have given us your mother as our Blessed Mother to teach us how to become your disciples. Help us to entrust ourselves to her care as she shows us how to follow you freely and bravely. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

## Intercessions<sup>3</sup>

**Leader:** Let us glorify our Savior, who chose the Virgin Mary for his mother. Let us ask him:

**All:** May your mother intercede for us, Lord.

**Leader:** Savior of the world, by your redeeming might you preserved your mother beforehand from all stain of sin,

**All:** keep watch over us lest we sin.

**Leader:** You are our redeemer, who made the immaculate Virgin Mary your purest home and the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit,

**All:** make us temples of your Spirit forever.

**Leader:** Eternal Word, you taught your mother to choose the better part,

**All:** grant that in imitating her we might seek the food that brings life everlasting.

**Leader:** King of kings, you lifted up your mother, body and soul, into heaven;

**All:** help us fix our thoughts on things above.

**Leader:** Lord of heaven and earth, you crowned Mary and set her at your right hand as queen,

**All:** make us worthy to share this glory.

**Leader:** For what else shall we pray?(People may offer intentions aloud, or call them to mind silently.)

**Leader:** Gathering all our prayers into one, let us pray as Jesus taught us: Our Father...

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<sup>3</sup> From Morning Prayer for the Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in *Liturgy of the Hours*, 1374.

## Session Three: Chapter 2

# “Pondering and the Meaning of Time”

### Discussion Questions

The facilitator may choose—either as a regular practice or from session to session—to include paired conversations or mini-group conversations at the beginning of the discussion. It is sometimes easier for people to just talk with one other person or in a smaller group before engaging as a whole group. “Mini-groups” are three to four people. Paired conversations and mini-groups may focus on just a couple questions.

1. As an activity either leading into or going away from this session, you might study your own weekly schedule, maybe even looking at your schedule for several consecutive weeks. Pay attention to how you spend your time. What actually directs how you spend most of your energy or give most of your attention?
2. How do you feel about your own or your family’s weekly schedule?
3. If someone were to read your—or your children’s—schedule objectively, what would they say just on the basis of your schedule that you value most? What do your kids’ schedules say they value most, or they’re being taught to value most?
4. Do you observe leisure time, Sabbath time? How and when? How not?
5. What are your—or your children’s—digital habits? You may find it helpful to use an app like “Moment” or “Quality Time” to track your phone usage and the like. What controls your time?
6. The “turning point” of this chapter is on “strategic patience.” What kind of intentional practices do you think you could take on to strengthen the virtue of patience in your life? What about for your kids? Do your kids—or other young people—have the opportunity to be forced to learn patience? In the home, in school, in the parish?

“Homework” for next time: read chapter 3 and come prepared to discuss. Maybe even keep a reading journal for yourself.

Short Period for Personal Reflection and/or Journaling

### Closing Prayer (recite together):

**Option 1:** St. Gianna Beretta Molla’s daily prayer to the Blessed Mother (from end of chapter 5)

O Mary, in your maternal hands I commend and abandon myself entirely, sure of obtaining what I request. I rely upon you because you are my sweet mother; I confide in you because you are Mother of Jesus; I entrust myself to you.

In this trust I rest sure of being heard in everything, with this trust in my heart I greet you *Mater mea, fiducia mea* [my mother, my confidence]; I consecrate myself entirely to you, begging you to remember that I am your own, guard me and defend me, sweet Mary, and in every instant of my life present me yourself to your Son, Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

**Option 2:** Joe Lazzara’s daily prayer (from end of chapter 3)

My Lord and my God,  
I adore thee my Jesus,  
I adore you.  
I love you my Jesus,  
I love you.  
Grant to me and all my family  
a holy life and a happy death.  
Amen.

<sup>4</sup> Molla and Guerriero, *Saint Gianna Molla*, 136.

## Session Four: Chapter 3

# “Memory and the Authority of Hidden Assumptions”

## Opening Prayer

**Leader:** O God, come to our assistance.

**All:** O Lord, make haste to help us.

**Leader:** Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

**All:** As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

**Leader:** Lord Jesus, we gather today in your name, hoping to grow in your love and to become stronger witnesses for those who look to us for guidance. Be with us in our prayer, in our conversation, in our reflection, and in all we do together. You have given us your mother as our Blessed Mother to teach us how to become your disciples. Help us to entrust ourselves to her care as she shows us how to follow you freely and bravely. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

## Intercessions<sup>5</sup>

**Leader:** Let us glorify our Savior, who chose the Virgin Mary for his mother. Let us ask him:

**All:** May your mother intercede for us, Lord.

**Leader:** Sun of Justice, the immaculate Virgin was the white dawn announcing your rising,

**All:** grant that we may always live in the light of your coming.

**Leader:** Eternal Word, you chose Mary as the uncorrupted ark of your dwelling place,

**All:** free us from the corruption of sin.

**Leader:** Savior of humanity, your mother stood at the foot of your cross,

**All:** grant, through her intercession, that we might rejoice to share in your passion.

**Leader:** With ultimate generosity and love, you gave Mary as a mother to your beloved disciple,

**All:** help us to live as worthy sons and daughters of so noble a mother.

**Leader:** For what else shall we pray? (People may offer intentions aloud, or call them to mind silently.)

**Leader:** Gathering all our prayers into one, let us pray as Jesus taught us: Our Father...

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<sup>5</sup> From Morning Prayer for the Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in *Liturgy of the Hours*, 1373–74.

# Session Four: Chapter 3

## “Memory and the Authority of Hidden Assumptions”

### Discussion Questions

The facilitator may choose—either as a regular practice or from session to session—to include paired conversations or mini-group conversations at the beginning of the discussion. It is sometimes easier for people to just talk with one other person or in a smaller group before engaging as a whole group. “Mini-groups” are three to four people. Paired conversations and mini-groups may focus on just a couple questions.

1. “Destination obsession” is a primary issue in the beginning of this chapter, whether it is for a “field of dreams,” heaven, or college admissions. When or in which ways in your own life have you seen forms of “destination obsession” working? Do you have any symptoms of this in your life now? How about in the lives of young people with whom you interact?
2. In the middle of this chapter, the author makes the claim that “‘college preparatory’ is the code name for modern American childhood” (70). How do you understand that claim, and what do you think about it? What did you take from the three testimonials that followed (pp. 73–76)?
3. The story of the two (would-be) disciples on the Road to Emmaus reappears in this chapter, under the heading “The Road is Not Neutral.” How are these two travelers transformed into missionary disciples according to Mary’s pattern of discipleship? (See 86–88; cf. 4–6, 25–27.)
4. Mary’s memory is a scriptural memory. The renewal of the biblical imagination is key to forming missionary disciples capable of true vocational discernment. Some practices for engaging scripture are presented in this chapter (see 88–95). What is a specific scriptural practice that you engage in now or would like to engage in, for your own good and maybe for the good of your kids or others?
5. This chapter ends with the stories of two parishioners from the author’s own parish: Robert, who suffered from ALS, and Joe, the longtime parishioner whose daily prayer was revealed at his funeral Mass. Who are the people from your parish that witness to long-suffering, committed faithfulness of discipleship? Talk about these witnesses with each other.

“Homework” for next time: read chapter 4 and come prepared to discuss. Maybe even keep a reading journal for yourself.

Short Period for Personal Reflection and/or Journaling

### Closing Prayer (recite together):

**Option 1:** St. Gianna Beretta Molla’s daily prayer to the Blessed Mother (from end of chapter 5)

O Mary, in your maternal hands I commend and abandon myself entirely, sure of obtaining what I request. I rely upon you because you are my sweet mother; I confide in you because you are Mother of Jesus; I entrust myself to you.

In this trust I rest sure of being heard in everything, with this trust in my heart I greet you *Mater mea, fiducia mea* [my mother, my confidence]; I consecrate myself entirely to you, begging you to remember that I am your own, guard me and defend me, sweet Mary, and in every instant of my life present me yourself to your Son, Jesus.<sup>6</sup>

**Option 2:** Joe Lazzara’s daily prayer (from end of chapter 3)

My Lord and my God,  
I adore thee my Jesus,  
I adore you.  
I love you my Jesus,  
I love you.  
Grant to me and all my family  
a holy life and a happy death.  
Amen.

<sup>6</sup> Molla and Guerriero, *Saint Gianna Molla*, 136.



## Session Five: Chapter 4

# “Prophecy and the Cultures of Mercy”

### Opening Prayer

**Leader:** O God, come to our assistance.

**All:** O Lord, make haste to help us.

**Leader:** Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

**All:** As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

**Leader:** Lord Jesus, we gather today in your name, hoping to grow in your love and to become stronger witnesses for those who look to us for guidance. Be with us in our prayer, in our conversation, in our reflection, and in all we do together. You have given us your mother as our Blessed Mother, to teach us how to become your disciples. Help us to entrust ourselves to her care as she shows us how to follow you freely and bravely. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

### Intercessions<sup>7</sup>

**Leader:** Let us praise God our almighty Father, who wished that Mary, his Son’s mother, be celebrated by each generation. Now in need we ask:

**All:** Mary, full of grace, intercede for us.

**Leader:** You made Mary the mother of mercy,

**All:** may all who are faced with trials feel her motherly love.

**Leader:** You wished Mary to be the mother of the family in the home of Jesus and Joseph,

**All:** may all mothers of families foster love and holiness through her intercession.

**Leader:** You gave Mary strength at the foot of the cross and filled her with joy at the resurrection of your son,

**All:** lighten the hardships of those who are burdened and deepen their sense of hope.

**Leader:** You made Mary open to your word and faithful as your servant,

**All:** through her intercession make us servants and true followers of your Son.

**Leader:** You crowned Mary as queen of heaven,

**All:** may all the dead rejoice in your kingdom with the saints for ever.

**Leader:** For what else shall we pray? (People may offer intentions aloud, or call them to mind silently.)

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<sup>7</sup> From Evening Prayer I for the Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in *Liturgy of the Hours*, 1371–72.

## Session Five: Chapter 4

# “Prophecy and the Cultures of Mercy”

### Discussion Questions

The facilitator may choose—either as a regular practice or from session to session—to include paired conversations or mini-group conversations at the beginning of the discussion. It is sometimes easier for people to just talk with one other person or in a smaller group before engaging as a whole group. “Mini-groups” are three to four people. Paired conversations and mini-groups may focus on just a couple questions.

1. What areas of your home are focal points of attention? What do these areas communicate? What kind of activities or engagement do these areas promote?
2. According to Christian Smith and Justin Bartkus’s study of religious parenting cited in this chapter, “The crucial location where youth’s religious outcomes are largely decided is not the congregation or the parish, but the home.” How did your childhood home help shape you in the faith, or not? How does your home now offer an atmosphere of faith with images and rituals? How might you enrich this environment through symbols and practices?
3. A key to forming young people in the Catholic faith is forming parents and future parents to become “initiators of miniature cultures conducive to holiness, with the habits of mercy integral to the whole pattern” (115). How does your parish help form and prepare future parents? How does your parish accompany and support current parents? What kind of support would you like to receive and who could give you that support? How could you help support or mentor younger parents, newly married couples, or even young adults who are not yet married?
4. The author makes the claim—on the authority of some outstanding Christian witnesses like Dorothy Day and Teresa of Calcutta—that the Works of Mercy are essential to the Christian life and for vocational discernment. How do you currently practice the Works of Mercy? How do your kids or young people with whom you work practice them? How might you more regularly, consistently, weekly practice the Works of Mercy? (See Lisa DeLorenzo’s ingenious “chalkboard” approach to practicing these Works on p. 126.)
5. What are the wounds in your own home or in your own family that might get neglected? Maybe some of these wounds or forms of suffering are your own. Name them.

“Homework” for next time: read chapter 5 and come prepared to discuss. Maybe even keep a reading journal for yourself.

Short Period for Personal Reflection and/or Journaling

### Closing Prayer (recite together):

**Option 1:** St. Gianna Beretta Molla’s daily prayer to the Blessed Mother (from end of chapter 5)

O Mary, in your maternal hands I commend and abandon myself entirely, sure of obtaining what I request. I rely upon you because you are my sweet mother; I confide in you because you are Mother of Jesus; I entrust myself to you.

In this trust I rest sure of being heard in everything, with this trust in my heart I greet you *Mater mea, fiducia mea* [my mother, my confidence]; I consecrate myself entirely to you, begging you to remember that I am your own, guard me and defend me, sweet Mary, and in every instant of my life present me yourself to your Son, Jesus.<sup>8</sup>

**Option 2:** Joe Lazzara’s daily prayer (from end of chapter 3)

My Lord and my God,  
I adore thee my Jesus,  
I adore you.  
I love you my Jesus,  
I love you.  
Grant to me and all my family  
a holy life and a happy death.  
Amen.

<sup>8</sup> Molla and Guerriero, *Saint Gianna Molla*, 136.

## Session Six: Chapter 5

### “Sacrifice and the Joy of Trust”

## Opening Prayer

**Leader:** O God, come to our assistance.

**All:** O Lord, make haste to help us.

**Leader:** Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

**All:** As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

**Leader:** Lord Jesus, we gather today in your name, hoping to grow in your love and to become stronger witnesses for those who look to us for guidance. Be with us in our prayer, in our conversation, in our reflection, and in all we do together. You have given us your mother as our Blessed Mother to teach us how to become your disciples. Help us to entrust ourselves to her care as she shows us how to follow you freely and bravely. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

## Intercessions<sup>9</sup>

**Leader:** Let us pray to the Father, the source of all holiness, and ask him to lead us to holiness of life through the example and intercession of our saints:

**All:** May we be holy as you are holy.

**Leader:** Holy Father, you want us to be called your children and truly to be such,

**All:** grant that your holy Church may proclaim you throughout the world.

**Leader:** Holy Father, you want us to walk worthily and please you in all we do,

**All:** let us abound in doing good works.

**Leader:** Holy Father, you have reconciled us to yourself through Christ,

**All:** preserve us in your name so that all may be one.

**Leader:** Holy Father, you have called us to a heavenly banquet,

**All:** through the bread that came down from heaven make us worthy to grow in perfect love.

**Leader:** Holy Father, forgive the offenses of every sinner,

**All:** let the dead perceive the light of your countenance.

**Leader:** For what else shall we pray? (People may offer intentions aloud, or call them to mind silently.)

**Leader:** Gathering all our prayers into one, let us pray as Jesus taught us: Our Father...

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<sup>9</sup> From the Evening Prayer for the Common of Holy Men, in *Liturgy of the Hours*, 1458.

# Session Six: Chapter 5

## “Sacrifice and the Joy of Trust”

### Discussion Questions

The facilitator may choose—either as a regular practice or from session to session—to include paired conversations or mini-group conversations at the beginning of the discussion. It is sometimes easier for people to just talk with one other person or in a smaller group before engaging as a whole group. “Mini-groups” are three to four people. Paired conversations and mini-groups may focus on just a couple questions.

1. “Something like ‘muscle memory’ is necessary for making, claiming, and living into vocational commitments,” (138). The author identifies two “muscles” or disciplines: solitude (making deep listening possible) and community (living with and among others, being really present). How are we forming our young people to develop these “muscles” or disciplines? How can we help them to develop them more fully?
2. In the end, vocational discernment leads a person to the point of making a commitment and taking responsibility for that commitment. How well are we teaching and forming our young people to value commitments, even in small things? How can we better foster in them the clarity of vision, courage, and willingness to sacrifice in order for them to live into and fulfill commitments?
3. The witnesses of three saints complete this chapter: Thomas More, Franz Jägerstätter, and Gianna Beretta Molla. What about their witnesses caught your attention or sparked your imagination?
4. What kind of persons do we have to be in order to form young people well in the Catholic faith? What do we have to practice, regularly? What sacrifices do we have to accept?

“Homework” for next time: read the epilogue and come prepared to discuss. Also reflect on your “take-aways” from reading this book and engaging in these conversations for the past several weeks.

Short Period for Personal Reflection and/or Journaling

### Closing Prayer (recite together):

**Option 1:** St. Gianna Beretta Molla’s daily prayer to the Blessed Mother (from end of chapter 5)

O Mary, in your maternal hands I commend and abandon myself entirely, sure of obtaining what I request. I rely upon you because you are my sweet mother; I confide in you because you are Mother of Jesus; I entrust myself to you.

In this trust I rest sure of being heard in everything, with this trust in my heart I greet you *Mater mea, fiducia mea* [my mother, my confidence]; I consecrate myself entirely to you, begging you to remember that I am your own, guard me and defend me, sweet Mary, and in every instant of my life present me yourself to your Son, Jesus.<sup>10</sup>

**Option 2:** Joe Lazzara’s daily prayer (from end of chapter 3)

My Lord and my God,  
I adore thee my Jesus,  
I adore you.  
I love you my Jesus,  
I love you.  
Grant to me and all my family  
a holy life and a happy death.  
Amen.

<sup>10</sup> Molla and Guerriero, *Saint Gianna Molla*, 136.



# Session Seven: Epilogue

## “The Ones Who Give Life” and Final Thoughts

### Opening Prayer

**Leader:** O God, come to our assistance.

**All:** O Lord, make haste to help us.

**Leader:** Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

**All:** As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

**Leader:** Lord Jesus, we gather today in your name, hoping to grow in your love and to become stronger witnesses for those who look to us for guidance. Be with us in our prayer, in our conversation, in our reflection, and in all we do together. You have given us your mother as our Blessed Mother to teach us how to become your disciples. Help us to entrust ourselves to her care as she shows us how to follow you freely and bravely. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

### Intercessions<sup>11</sup>

**Leader:** Through the intercession of holy men and women, let us pray for the Church in these words:

**All:** Be mindful of your Church, Lord.

**Leader:** Through all the martyrs who conquered bodily death by their courage,

**All:** strengthen your Church in the hour of trial.

**Leader:** Through married men and women who have advanced in grace by holy matrimony,

**All:** make the apostolic mission of your Church fruitful.

**Leader:** Through the widows and widowers who eased their loneliness and sanctified it by prayer and hospitality,

**All:** help your Church reveal the mystery of your love to the world.

**Leader:** Through mothers and fathers who have borne and raised children for the kingdom of God and the human community,

**All:** help your Church bring all men and women to a rebirth in life and salvation.

**Leader:** Through all your holy men and women who have been worthy to contemplate the light of your countenance,

**All:** let the deceased members of your Church exult in that same vision forever.

**Leader:** For what else shall we pray? (People may offer intentions aloud, or call them to mind silently.)

**Leader:** Gathering all our prayers into one, let us pray as Jesus taught us: Our Father...

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<sup>11</sup> Adapted (slightly) from Evening Prayer for the Common of Holy Women, in *Liturgy of the Hours*, 1469.

# Session Seven: Epilogue

## “The Ones Who Give Life” and Final Thoughts

### Discussion Questions

The facilitator may choose—either as a regular practice or from session to session—to include paired conversations or mini-group conversations at the beginning of the discussion. It is sometimes easier for people to just talk with one other person or in a smaller group before engaging as a whole group. “Mini-groups” are three to four people. Paired conversations and mini-groups may focus on just a couple questions.

1. What do the young people in your life need? What are they going through? What do they need from you? And how do you need help and support?
2. What is the greatest hope you dare to hope for those entrusted to your care in your vocation as parent, teacher, mentor, minister, pastor, or confidant?
3. What are some of your most significant “take-aways” from these weeks of reading the book and engaging in conversation with this group?
4. How will what you have learned or experienced impact your prayer?
5. How will what you have learned or experienced impact your practices?

“Homework” forever: pray, practice, witness, repeat.

Short Period for Personal Reflection and/or Journaling

### Closing Prayer (recite together):

**Option 1:** St. Gianna Beretta Molla’s daily prayer to the Blessed Mother (from end of chapter 5)

O Mary, in your maternal hands I commend and abandon myself entirely, sure of obtaining what I request. I rely upon you because you are my sweet mother; I confide in you because you are Mother of Jesus; I entrust myself to you.

In this trust I rest sure of being heard in everything, with this trust in my heart I greet you *Mater mea, fiducia mea* [my mother, my confidence]; I consecrate myself entirely to you, begging you to remember that I am your own, guard me and defend me, sweet Mary, and in every instant of my life present me yourself to your Son, Jesus.<sup>12</sup>

**Option 2:** Joe Lazzara’s daily prayer (from end of chapter 3)

My Lord and my God,

I adore thee my Jesus,

I adore you.

I love you my Jesus,

I love you.

Grant to me and all my family  
a holy life and a happy death.

Amen.

### FINAL NOTES:

- If any members of the group feel so inclined, please write reviews of *What Matters Most* on the Amazon page for the book. This helps others learn about the book and it also helps the book get noticed in searches.
- If you are interested in a comparable book from Leonard J. DeLorenzo, check out *Witness: Learning to Tell the Stories of Grace that Illumine Our Lives*, also available from Ave Maria Press.
- If you think of any additional resources you would like to see or if you have any feedback or questions, please feel free to contact Leonard DeLorenzo directly at [witness evangelization@gmail.com](mailto:witness evangelization@gmail.com) or (574) 631-2915, or visit his website at [leonardjdelorenzo.com](http://leonardjdelorenzo.com).

<sup>12</sup> Molla and Guerriero, *Saint Gianna Molla*, 136.