

MOTHERS' FLAME OF LOVE DISCUSSION GROUP

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

Mothers are extremely important. Jesus said to Elizabeth, "Your work is not of less value than that of persons raised to the highest priestly dignity. (I guess that means the pope). He also said, "You have the greatest work... the task of leading a multitude of souls to eternal salvation."

So, Flame of Love has put together a four week discussion booklet so small groups of mothers can rejoice in helping each other.

One or more should assume responsibility for the group. The meeting includes the recitation of the rosary (if you wish, you can separate the decades over the course of the meeting).

The discussion questions will help you to share experiences. Also, don't forget to pray often. When someone mentions a need, lift this up to the Lord.

TOO MUCH MATERIAL

The booklet deliberately contains "too much" material for one session. The leader should preview each session and mark off the more important sections which could be done first.

1. A MOTHER WHO SUFFERS

A Sufferings in the Home

1. *We begin in her home, the scene will be familiar to any parent with some married children.*

I had to make many sacrifices within the family responsibility. Since my youngest child lived with me, the meaning and importance of these sacrifices were not clear to me. In my house, I had to tighten still further to make room for my children who raised their families. This was very difficult. I had a four bedroom home with modern conveniences. I still had the large dining room at my disposal. Nevertheless, I gave it up also, even though it came at a great cost.

Discuss those moments when you had to make sacrifices.

2. *The sacrifices were only beginning. An open heart does not draw any line. God takes whatever He wants. Also, she tried to cover up how poor she was – always providing food.*

She records her inner feelings:

As I gave up the dining room, both happy and sad memories invaded my thoughts. Many familiar memories came to mind. There were the Christmas nights, the weddings and the baptisms of the grandchildren. I remembered the poor food in my years of need. For several years, we had only a piece of bread smeared with butter for breakfast, or vegetables without sauce. For years, the poor vegetable platter remained very plain, but I took care to place a nice shiny apple next to each plate. I made the table with great care so the children would not think we were poor.

Discuss your inner feelings in difficult moments.

3. *She sacrificed even the dining room.*

I had enjoyed being with them and was always preoccupied with their food. The dining room was difficult to give up because it was a part of my heart. I moved to the children's room, thinking I would have a place filled with memories and my soul would be at peace. I would be changing my room for the last time.

4. *Although very generous, she could not hold back the painful memories attached to these places.*

Quickly, she sacrificed even the children's room. Whatever was needed, she did: Shortly before, however, my youngest boy got married. Now, I had to help him get a bedroom. So, I gave up the children's room. I felt that the Lord was asking for this sacrifice, so I would be totally poor. Many memories came to mind- the nights that I spent at the bed of a sick child, the joyous moments, the prayers at night and the intimate family readings. When I thought of these, I experienced great pain, like something being ripped from your heart.

Discuss your family prayer and devotions.

5. *Finally, came the complete surrender. All the other steps led to this.*

All of these sacrifices, led her to the great moment of complete surrender: After this, I placed my daughter C in charge of the house. I said: "From now on, you will be the little owner of this house and I will not cook any more." She was surprised and asked what I would do. "Whatever you ask, I will do and I will eat whatever you give to me." "Mother", she said, "you are acting like a hermit."

Discuss the greatest moments of sacrifice.

6. *The household sacrifices were not enough. God wanted to take her job away.*

The sacrifices continued, even to giving up her job to care for grandchildren: At that moment, my youngest daughter M, the mother of two small children, came in. She said: "I have to look for work because one salary is not enough" (her husband is a teacher). I decided to help her. I gave up my good paying work at the cooperative (which consisted of painting plastics), so that she did not have to leave the two small children alone in the house. This was my final sacrifice. All of this happened in just a few days. I made these sacrifices because the Lord urged me."

Discuss your giving up outside activities for the sake of the family.

7. *It all happened so fast. When you open your heart, God does not delay, nor does He hesitate to take everything.*

This entire renunciation of self-interest for the good of the family was completed in a very short period of time: I completed all these urgent sacrifices on Saturday, February 10, 1962. The

following day was the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. Early in the afternoon, my soul longed for silence, so I fled the noise of family life. Now, I had no home and the Lord Jesus desired this.

Discuss those moments when you feel you just need some silence with the Lord.

B. **Spiritual Sufferings**

8. *Elizabeth's sufferings extended even to her prayer experiences. She has walked with Jesus but doesn't know where she is.*

As Elizabeth allowed God to lead her more deeply into the Flame of Love, she often wondered what was happening to her: I spent the whole day filled with anxieties. At night, as I went to adore the Lord, I thought in the midst of my uncertainty: "My God, what is going on with me? Where have I allowed myself to be led? What is true? What is now in me or what was there before?"

Discuss any moments that you felt abandoned by God.

9. *She experiences great torment from Jesus' call to leave all behind, words that she tried to get out of her mind.*

After Jesus demanded that she "leave all behind", Elizabeth suffered great torment: Ever since then, I heard Jesus' demand many times in my soul. However, I did not write it down. But rather, I tried to remove from my mind the idea to leave all behind. This torment is such that I never experienced anything similar in all my life.

Discuss some demands that Jesus has asked of you.

Please note that these are very special spiritual sufferings, not experienced by many, but can lead to fervent discussion.

10. *The sufferings were spiritual and bodily – a blinding darkness and bodily torment.*

Bodily and spiritual sufferings were frequently combined: in the previous few days, a blinding darkness had come over me. Every moment was for me not only a corporal torment, but above all, a spiritual one.

Discuss some of the bodily sufferings in your life.

11. *Although loving God with all her heart, Elizabeth thought she was always offending Him. She thinks Jesus experiences revulsion and that she is lying to her confessors.*

Many times, devout souls serve God with the greatest fidelity, but believe that they are deeply offending Him. By allowing this, God purifies the soul of all imperfections. Elizabeth writes: What a terrible life! I live always knowing that I am offending God and He has no desire to come to me. In this way, He helps me to understand how our unworthy union pains Him and how He experiences revulsion because of my sins. In this great spiritual torment, it is no surprise that I only want to die. Then I will be free of these continual lies which confuse even my confessors.

If you wish, discuss any spiritual trials for which you needed a priest's help.

12. *She stayed away from weekday mass that she loved so much. All is dark – seemingly no purpose.*

These torments led Elizabeth to stay away from Mass which she loved so much. Because I am living without God, my life has no purpose. For two weeks, I have not attended Holy Mass, except on Sunday, because of the obligation. I nourish my soul only with spiritual communion. All is dark and without any purpose. Life is strange for me. How can I live for God...without God? This does not work at all.

Discuss any times when you felt alienated and far away from God.

13. *The sufferings came from every side – doubts from within and personal suffering to save the dying.*

The great trials came from inner doubts and from suffering for others: After a holy confession, the Lord Jesus filled me with great alternating torments. I once had to suffer because doubts were overcoming me. Another time, at the request of the Blessed Virgin, I had to suffer the agony of the dying and their fight against Satan.

If you wish, discuss moments when you suffered from Satan's torments.

14. *Guilt, great spiritual trials and the daily struggle seemed to kill her spiritual life.*

Guilt filled her: I suffer infernal torments and I cannot free myself from the misery of my guilt. The burden of work caused more trials: Little by little, I distanced myself from God. The continuous task to survive consumed my soul. After a long battle, my spiritual life faded. Even my faith itself was endangered.

If you wish – Discuss the moment or situation when you felt despair or hopelessness.

2. A MOTHER SEVING HER FAMILY

15. *Her greatest pain came from her own children. She sacrificed everything and they seemed to take it all for granted. Sounds familiar?*

In spite of these sacrifices, her adult children disappointed her with a lack of response. Jesus said, "My little Carmelite, remember when you became a widow and your children were growing up, you would ask each one to help you for just an hour. What a great help that would have been for you. How sad you were when they excused themselves with every kind of pretext. You did your tasks alone and abandoned."

Prudently discuss your own children's lack of response.

16. *You might think that a saint's house is perfect. Well, think again. Elizabeth was pained by constant quarrels.*

Elizabeth suffered much from a disagreement over the house (which she owned). She does not reveal the exact nature of the dispute but she suffered greatly:

In the morning, the family again discussed the house. This depressed me. At the Lord's request, I went for adoration from noon to 3:00 p.m. I was so upset that I could hardly walk. This family disagreement keeps getting repeated and it disturbs my soul.

Discuss the daily disputes that cause you sorrow.

17. *Her frustration and sufferings have borne good fruit. Jesus commends her vigilance and promises the Flame of Love.*

Jesus explained that Elizabeth's task as mother extended even to her young adult children. "It is to the warm solidarity of the family sanctuary that souls come back to, after having strayed far. It is there that they come to find themselves and they once more return to God. It is necessary for you, mothers, to extend the warm understanding of your hearts to your children even after they have established their own homes. Great is the responsibility which falls upon you. Do not think that once a child has become an adult, he no longer needs his parents. My Mother accompanied Me everywhere with her love, her sacrifices and her prayers. You must do the same, and I will bless your efforts. My beloved mother obliges Me to that. By her powerful intercession, she obtained from Me for families this great effusion of grace, which she also

wants to extend to the whole world. As she said: ‘Nothing comparable to this has happened ever since the Word became Flesh.’”

Discuss your grown children and efforts you have made to keep them close to the family.

18. *Every Catholic parent wants one goal – that the family be reunited in heaven. Such is Jesus’ promise.*

Jesus gave her a great promise for her dying children. “When you are in Heaven and from up there you contemplate the death of one of your children, you will be by his bed. Your drop of oil will fall on the empty lamp and the Flame of Love of the Blessed Virgin will be lit. This great outpouring of graces will save souls from damnation. They will experience your motherly hand caressing them. Also, you will feel the great power which your many sufferings possess. These souls will also experience your hand which will help them at the moment of death. They will see your meritorious life on earth which they do not now appreciate.”

Discuss your dreams that the whole family will be with you in heaven.

19. *Our Lady is greatly concerned with the breakdown of family life and Elizabeth is the first to feel this effect.*

Our Lady’s Maternal Heart

Mary said, “Through you, my little Carmelite, I want all to know the anguish that springs up from the boundless love of my maternal heart because of the danger threatening the entire world by the disintegration of the family sanctuaries. I direct my maternal cry to all of you, and in union with you, I want to save the world. I allow you, my little one, to be the first to feel this immense effort I am beginning to deploy in order to blind Satan.”

Discuss the dangers that cause you to worry about your children.

20. *Interestingly, Elizabeth’s work could begin only after the family was raised. An important word for all of us.*

Only when her family was raised, could Elizabeth’s mission begin. Jesus said, “Don’t forget, your principal missionary work will always be your own family. I could not entrust you with that

before, because I did not want you to stop halfway. Your family is the point of departure for your mission. This work is not yet finished. Be interested principally in priestly vocations.”

Is this a new thought – that you will begin serving Jesus after your children are grown?

21. *Our Lady again complains about the disintegration of family life and the evils coming from destroyed families.*

Mary’s Complaints About Family Life

The diary records many complaints of Mary concerning the disintegration of family life.

“Endure these sufferings for your family and those of the whole country. You know that Satan, foaming with rage, wants to destroy families. You are a mother of a family and you are aware of the several forms of family disintegration. To save families, throw yourself into the furnace of suffering. Oh, how much sinning is done against Me by destroyed families!”

The American family is disintegrating? What can you and your group do to strengthen it?

22. *The doubts became a violent hopelessness. Her only chance seemed to turn back – to forget the Flame of Love – to end all her lies. What torment!*

This insecurity kept growing and causing waves in my soul. Then a violent hopelessness made me decide to radically end my continual lies, because if I do not do that, I will be damned. This thought caused me to shake. I do not want to sin. Once and for all, I uproot from my heart my deceitful imaginings. I leave behind all that deals with my lies. I will not speak with anyone who knows me. I will not speak any more with the Sister who has been assigned to me. I will never go to my confessor. I have the feeling that he is too easy on me and allows me to go on with my imaginary lies.

Like Elizabeth, do you ever feel that you have failed God?

23. *Elizabeth's detachment had begun years before as she sacrificed her home for her children.*

The Early Renunciation

As the diary begins, Elizabeth describes all the events that happened so quickly, and resulted in a complete detachment from her home. She gave everything over to her married children who, with their families, moved back in with her: So that nothing would tie me to this world, I gave away everything to my children. Later on, I felt I had done the right thing. Now I had nowhere to rest my head peacefully. Yet Our Lord kept urging me, "Renounce yourself completely."

24. *All she had was a cubicle.*

Elizabeth spent her remaining 23 years living in a small cubicle in her garden. This became a very special place where Our Lord and Our Lady visited her frequently.

3. A MOTHER WHO BRINGS BLESSINGS

25. *Jesus was not going to abandon His precious soul. He asked for greater confidence.*

Jesus responded to my sorrow, "I feel compassion for you. My little one. I see your great efforts. Do not think they are in vain. I bless your family greatly. I free them from the Evil One who disturbs the family peace. Just trust in Me." I responded, "O Lord, the family discord is so great that only a miracle will help." Jesus asked, "Cannot I work a miracle?" "But I am not worthy, Lord." "Nevertheless, I will work a miracle. I will so bless the problem which seems impossible that all will be straightened out."

How has God (surprisingly) blessed your motherhood?

26. *Our Lady doesn't wait for heaven. She provides earthly signs.*

Our Lady, also, gave signs of her love. Two grandchildren were born on Our Lady's feast days: I must write about what happened in the family. In a short period of time, two grandchildren were born. One on August 22, feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and the other on September 8, the feast of her birthday.

Please share any blessings that were Our Lady's signs to you.

27. *Jesus calls us to suffering but He removes it when it interferes with our daily responsibilities.*

For two weeks, Elizabeth received extraordinary physical strength to help her family: And so, for my little strength, the work was excessive. I felt that I could not carry on. I begged the Lord in His kindness to give me strength because I could not manage to help my two daughters-in-law. When I awoke the next day, I possessed an amazing vitality. I worked all day with no tiredness. This lasted for two weeks. This extraordinary strength, I realized, distanced me from the Lord. I even thought that if it continued this way and if I remained in this great physical shape, I could even go back to work. I entertained these thoughts because I had regained my bodily strength.

Can you recall any parts of your life when God came to your aid in a special way?

28. *Sometimes, God's blessings deter our spiritual growth. So, God removes them.*

Jesus said that He gave her strength only for the family's good.

"Now, you will understand even better why I stripped you of your bodily strength. You see, while you were weak, you served Me with all your strength. Now that I have increased your strength, you do not serve Me as before. Your thoughts are distracted and you give Me less time. Moreover, you do not stay with Me as you did before. This strength will remain just a few days before I take it away. I only gave it for the good of your family."

Did you ever experience a bodily weakness and later saw that it was God's blessing in disguise?

29. *A mother always rejoices when the children are blessed. So, believe that participating in Flame of Love is the greatest source of family blessings.*

Blessings for Her Family

Elizabeth delighted in the blessings given to her family: The Blessed Virgin revealed that the light of her Flame of Love filled not only me, but all my family members, and the Evil One could not lead them into sin. That is why their souls are strengthened and prepared to receive even more graces.

Where can you see God's graces working in your children?

30. *How often Jesus visits our homes. Let's watch for Him.*

Jesus also spoke of family blessings, "I was here during the night and I blessed every member of your family because of the prayer of our dear Mother. She is the one who fills your whole family with the effect of grace of her Flame of Love. How much we love you, My little one!"

Once, Elizabeth prayed, "My adored Jesus, the Blessed Virgin planted her Flame of Love in a sinful family, where You receive so many offenses." The Lord Jesus answered with sweet consoling words.

When have you experienced the special presence of Jesus and Mary in your home?

31. *How wonderful to hear from Our Lady herself that the children will be in heaven.*

Mary told Elizabeth that her children would be in heaven. “As you see, I am honoring you again. At your request, I come to bless your family and the whole neighborhood. I have brought My peace. Trust! Do not give way to discouragement! I unite your sufferings to my merits. Your children’s salvation is assured.

Discuss your deepest desires – that your children would be in heaven forever.

32. *Some moments were very special. Jesus stays a long time at her home and recalls the virtues and the fervent prayers. He notes the family consecration to His Sacred Heart and leaves His special blessing.*

Jesus Blessing Her Home

Many times Jesus blessed her family and her home:

While we were talking in the silence of a summer night, the conversation suddenly ended. Before He left, He stayed a long time in front of our house and made me sense that He was thinking about our house. He began to list the merits of our family, those virtues which I made the children practice when they were small. He emphasized how meritorious were the fervent night prayer. He said how much He appreciated the small ejaculations that we added to those prayers. He also noted that our family was consecrated to His Sacred Heart. I experienced His blessed presence and was deeply moved. We constantly hurt Him by our many sins. He, in spite of everything, is always kind. He said: “I bless this house that is consecrated to My Sacred Heart.”

Recall the devotions in your home and your attempts to consecrate the family to Jesus and Mary.

33. *Elizabeth describes her own feelings about those moments when Jesus stayed in her home and she felt His overwhelming presence.*

Sometimes, Jesus’ presence upon the house remained for a long time: What a sublime experience was this blessing He gave to our family when He stayed for a long time before our house. Yet, even afterwards, he did not move. For a long time, He allowed me to feel His presence filled with goodness and majesty. As an insignificant person, really less than nothing, I felt great emotion. I could only babble: “Depart from me, O Lord, I am a great sinner.”

When were the moments of your feeling Jesus’ presence?

34. *Jesus explained what He was doing. The more Elizabeth experienced darkness and anguish, the more Jesus could give light and relief to others.*

Jesus explained how he used her sacrifices for other souls. "Are you suffering much? Let your sacrificial suffering not stop! Do you know why? The same way I let the darkness of doubts and the spiritual anguish comes over you, to the same extent I will put light and relief in the souls who are going to set into motion what I am communicating through you."

Discuss how you sacrificed spiritually for your children?

35. *Because Elizabeth responded quickly, Jesus could triumph in others. That is why He asked this favor.*

Her promptness helped others, "Now, beloved, you understand fully the value of your sufferings. Your promptitude will lead others to act rapidly, and My graces will soon triumph in those souls for whom you accepted martyrdom, with all its consequences." He asked a favor of her, "My Elizabeth, suffer with heroism, with perseverance and constancy."

Are you aware that your sufferings help others?

36. *Jesus' special goal was the conversion of sinners. Soon, His voice would be very loud in her soul.*

On so many occasions, Jesus asked for sacrifices to convert sinners. "Do not deny Me your sufferings, and help for the conversion of sinners. If you act this way, you will have a great reward. A time will come when you will not just hear My voice quietly in your soul, you will hear it aloud and it will bless you. My daughter, you will have to suffer much."

Do you pray and sacrifice for the conversion of sinners (an important goal of Jesus)?

4. A MOTHER SERVING THE CHURCH

37. *Jesus explains the great mystery. Elizabeth did not need to enter a convent to prepare her for ministry. She matured in the family setting.*

Jesus used her years as a mother to prepare her for her mission. “You also had to mature in the holy enclosure of the family. As you were an orphan, it is in your home as a married couple that your soul was prepared for your great vocation, which could only mature in a family setting. I know your qualities and that’s why My Divine Providence ordered everything to make you ready to communicate My message to the world. It is from the family sanctuary that all of you set out for the difficult struggles of life.”

Do you see your years of motherhood preparing you for a wider task in the whole Church?

38. *Only within the family could she be an example to others.*

At another time Jesus said, “I placed you in a family setting, so others could see how they can and ought to live. You serve both the family and God at the same time.”

Do you see that being a mother gives you credibility to serve?

39. *Jesus taught Elizabeth that a mother’s work was of the greatest dignity. Mothers populate the Kingdom and lead a multitude of souls to heaven.*

Jesus stressed that the tasks of a mother are very important for the Church. “What I am saying now is for you and all mothers who work according to My Heart. Your work is not of less value than that of persons raised to the highest priestly dignity. Mothers of families, you must understand your sublime vocation to populate My Kingdom and to fill the places left vacant by the fallen angels. Each step of My Holy Mother the Church starts from your heart and your lap. My Kingdom grows in as much as you, mothers, nurture these created souls. You have the greatest work requiring a heightened sense of responsibility. Be fully aware that I have placed in your hands the task of leading a multitude of souls to eternal salvation.”

We think of preparing children for worldly careers, but is it not more important that they want to serve the Kingdom (even as good children to mothers)?

40. *Our Lady continued the same theme. Motherhood is saturated with sufferings and prepares for a heavenly reward.*

Mary spoke of the dignity of Elizabeth's maternal vocation. "Ponder deeply this vocation to which you were raised due solely to the dignity of being a mother. Maternal dignity is at the same time a vocation saturated with sufferings, and that is what I share with you. I thank you, my little one, for your participation that is continual and filled with sacrifices. I, as a loving Mother, can assure you of your heavenly reward."

Do you see motherhood as a vocation given by heaven?

41. *By suffering as a mother, Elizabeth could understand Mary's heart. She knew the pains of a family. Her suffering was not in vain. Mary's sorrow is exactly the same.*

Necessity of Being a Mother

On numerous occasions, Our Lady explained the absolute necessity of Elizabeth being a mother so she could understand Mary's heart." Listen, my daughter, you are also the mother of a large family. Through your children you know all the pains and problems of a family. Many times you were close to falling beneath the cross of difficult trials, and you still experience many sorrows over your children. Bearing such ordeals is meritorious for you and for any mother. By Divine Will, these experiences that affected your life have not been in vain. I have taken them all into consideration. I know you understand me, and this is why I shared with you how I feel in my motherly heart. My sorrow is just like your sorrow."

Can you see your maternal trials preparing you for a new vocation?

42. *Mary goes even further. Only a mother can fully share Our Lady's sorrows. Only a mother can understand Mary's anguish.*

Again, Our Lady said, "I first entrusted to you the abundance of my graces. Only a mother can truly share my sorrows. I am the Mother of Sorrows, I suffer greatly because of the souls being lost. I am tortured in pain as I grieve for the suffering of my Divine Son. Never despise any tiredness. Be my eternal companion helping me bear my sufferings. This is what I ask of you." Again, Our Lady spoke, "My little one, only a mother can understand the anguish and sorrow of my soul. That is why I am speaking to you. You know about anguish and you understand me. Oh, how many of my children are damned! I crumble under the weight of the pain and I want

to share it with you just so you hasten to set into motion my Holy Cause. You are also a mother and the anguish of my heart is also yours.”

Do you see your motherly experiences (especially the sorrows) bringing you to a deeper devotion to Mary (Our Lady of Sorrows)?

43. *Mary’s greatest sorrow is the loss of souls, a great anguish of heart.*

Elizabeth writes: While this motherly pain was growing within my heart, she asked me again not to refuse any fatigue and not to neglect her request that will go forth through me.

44. *Because Elizabeth suffered, she could better sympathize with Our Lady and, therefore, she appreciated her mission.*

Elizabeth’s sufferings as a mother served a purpose. “My little daughter, this maternal suffering and the injury that you must endure from others are another opportunity for you to see why I chose a mother to transmit my message. Only a mother is able to sympathize with me. These multiple sufferings have matured you, and through your experience, you understand better the supreme importance of your participation in the work of my Divine Son.”

If, as a mother, you understand Mary’s goals, can you not share more easily in her works?

45. *Because Elizabeth’s sufferings helped so many souls, Jesus made sure that she stayed on earth. She is His favorite.*

Suffering gained an even greater gift of suffering. Jesus said, “Suffer with Me. I will increase the suffering of your soul and will deprive you of My word.” Elizabeth wrote: Whenever I hear this, I shake from sorrow. Jesus wanted her to remain on earth and be a burning victim. “your burning sacrifice of love will lead souls to the knowledge and love of God. This is My delight. That is why I keep you on earth so you can be a burning victim of love. With My Divine Eyes, I look upon you with favor.”

Discuss how your motherly suffering prepared you to be a “burning victim of love.”

46. *The more that Elizabeth did for Jesus the more extraordinary pains He sent to her.*

Jesus responded to her extraordinary generosity. "You must suffer all the way to martyrdom. Accept My words as a definitive and irrevocable proof of the Divine Love." I honor you with the extraordinary pains in My Body and Soul. In truth, this suffering means that you participate more deeply in My work of Redemption."

Do you wish to share more deeply in Jesus redeeming the world?

47. *Jesus needed her whole heart so she could serve without reserve.*

Jesus needed her abandonment so she could serve Him. "Do you want to give yourself to Me entirely and without reserve? I, the Man-God, ask this of you. I need you for My work of Salvation. What I am asking you now is a total abandonment. Therefore, renounce yourself completely with all your strength and all your will. You must serve only Me. No one else and nothing else now exist for you. Only I."

Are you ready to abandon yourself? To give all to Jesus and Mary?

CONCLUSION

Hope you enjoyed these 4 weeks. Please let us know your experiences. Would you want another 4 week group?