

# Made for Greater Things!



## Questions for Discussion for Parish Life, Justice, and Peace Ministries

### Introduction:

We are called to announce this good news to every person: That we are made for greater things! That every human life is precious! Your life! My life! Every creature has a reason in God's creation. And every person has a purpose under heaven.

In his Pastoral Letter, *For Greater Things You Were Born*, Archbishop José H. Gomez gets to the heart of the matter—examining who we are as persons and what we are created for. Currently, we are experiencing a crisis of anthropology. What does that mean? That we have lost the understanding of what it means to be persons created in love and for love, created in God's image to reflect this love to the world.

This pastoral letter invites each person into deeper communion with God and with every person in the world. Archbishop José H. Gomez is laying out the foundation for bringing people together to work for the common good of society. This vision, this transformation, this new way of thinking begins in ourselves first.

Archbishop Gomez asks that we “read these pages slowly and prayerfully. A little at a time.” He would like this reflection to inform our own spiritual lives as



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well as guide us in ministry and evangelization. More than anything, he hopes prayerfully reading this pastoral letter will “help all of us to find God, to know and love him more, and to spread his love to every corner of the earth”.

You can read the Pastoral Letter from Most Reverend José H. Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles, *For Greater Things You Were Born* by scanning the QR Code.



Following are questions for discussion. Parish ministries and small groups are encouraged to read the pastoral letter and reflect on its meaning. Together, parishioners can discuss practical application in their ministries, families, and the parish as a whole.

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1. The pastoral letter opens with the lines, “Every one of us is created by God and for God. This is the beautiful mystery that lies at the heart of human existence, at the heart of your life and mine.” How is the source and meaning of our creation a mystery? Why is it important to understand what we are made for? How does that knowledge change us? How can it change others? In what ways could we include this truth positively in our ministry?

2. Jesus asked his disciples, “what are you looking for”? Archbishop Gomez writes, “I think all of us are looking for joy and for love, for a sense of wholeness and integrity, for friendships and loves that endure.” How would you answer that question? What do you think would be the answer from most of our culture? Is it an appropriate answer? How should we find what we are looking for?

3. Archbishop Gomez writes, “Let us examine our ministries and apostolates, all our efforts in our parishes and schools. Let us seek creative and bold new ways to make the call to holiness and the work of sanctification a basic aspect of” all of our ministries. What does it mean to be a prophetic witness to life, justice and peace in a de-Christianized culture that has forgotten who we are and what we

are made for? Is it possible to share the truth of the human person with someone who does not believe in Jesus or God? What words do we use? What actions? What can we point to as signs of the reality of God and the reality of the human person?

4. Archbishop Gomez writes, “So many of our neighbors seem to be not really living but only existing. Many are just getting by and seem uncertain about the meaning of their lives and afraid, not hopeful, for the future. So many do not seem to know the love of God, do not hear his voice, do not seem to feel his tenderness and care in their lives.” Do you agree with this statement? How are people “just getting by”? Materially speaking, or is there something more? What can you or your ministry do to help fellow parishioners do more than just get by? Is there a way to combine material help with spiritual help?

5. Central to our faith is the great mystery of Jesus’ incarnation. In the Nicene Creed we pray, “For us men and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.” We know that, by Jesus’ coming into the world, all of creation was redeemed and made holy. Nature and ordinary life are transfigured to become “signs and pathways that bring us into the presence of God”. How can we use the natural holiness in the world to bring others closer to God and his plan for life? Are there ways to share this understanding that might help younger adults or those who are away from the Church better know God and the beauty and dignity he has given to every human life?

6. Archbishop Gomez writes, “Jesus goes so far as to tell us that our love for God will be judged by our love for him in the bodies of those brothers and sisters who are most burdensome to us and most reviled by our society.” This is a call to our consciences, for “we cannot claim to love the God we do not see if we do not love the neighbor we do see”. Who would you consider the most burdensome and reviled in our society? Any members of our family or parish? As tough questions of your ministry—are you actively loving your neighbors? Do other people see this love when they see you? Are you building community with those who are burdensome and reviled?

7. It seems that today everyone is looking for meaning. People spend so much time creating an online “profile” to portray the very best possible version of themselves to the world. But, we learn that our true meaning comes from being created in God’s image and likeness. Jesus Christ “chose us in him before the foundation of the world” to be like him—to be saints. Is your ministry focused on caring for people’s material needs or helping people reach salvation? Or both? Is your ministry leading you toward sanctity? How so? How can you refocus your ministry more intentionally toward leading people to Christ, to sanctity?

8. We know that the family is the most important component of our society. It is where we learn to love and to be human. Archbishop Gomez writes, “In God’s plan, there is something sacred, something wonderful and irreplaceable, about the permanent, life-giving relationship between man and woman in marriage.” Strong families reduce poverty, illiteracy, drug abuse, gang involvement, incarceration rates and teen pregnancy. Strong families protect children and lead to greater social stability. What is our parish ministry doing to support marriages and family life? Are we reaching out to families? Are we supporting them through our actions? What more can we do? How can we positively help people preparing for marriage? Children in foster care? Single parents? Large families? People with no family near by?

9. “The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the most radical doctrine in the history of ideas. If everyone believed what Jesus proclaimed — that God is our Father, and we are all brothers and sisters created in his image with God-given dignity and a transcendent destiny — I cannot help but think that every society could be transformed overnight. How different our lives would be if we truly believed that we are beloved sons and beloved daughters of our Creator! How different Los Angeles would be if we all got up every morning and looked into the mirror and said, ‘I am a child of God and everyone I will meet this day is my brother or sister, one of God’s beloved, and worthy of my attention, my care and my love.’” Nothing is as important as human life. All of creation points to the wonder that is each person created out of love and for love. Our responsibility as parish leaders is to build a community in our families, parishes and beyond that is worthy of the sanctity and dignity of every person. What are some

practical steps that we can take to make our parish more aware that we are all created in love? Think beyond coffee and donuts! What should a parish community look like? How can that be achieved? Where do we start? How can we get more families involved?

10. Archbishop Gomez offers some simple, practical tips by which we should live, including, “We need to begin and end each day by making contact with God in simple prayer. Throughout the day, try to be aware of ‘the sacrament of the present moment.’ Our goal is to be conscious that we are always alive in God’s loving gaze and that it is possible with his grace to do everything out of love for him.” In the midst of our busy schedules, how can we make living in this conscious way possible? Would doing so help us in our ministry? Would sharing this with others help make others’ lives better? How does consciousness of God’s sustaining love transform lives?

