



Marriage & Family Life E-Bulletin No 32 January 2009

Marriage & Family Life Project Office,
Department of Christian Responsibility & Citizenship,
Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

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Resource Pack Launch Dates

28th Jan Our Lady Star of the
Sea, Ellesmere Port. 7.30pm
Contact: [Helen Bassirat](#).

[Jan 31st: Christian Education
Centre, Tooting](#) Contact: Lisette
Blanchet Ball

9th Feb. Hazel Grove. Contact:

The first MFL ebulletin of the new year traditionally features extracts from the pastoral letters written by many of our bishops for the Feast of the Holy Family. This year is no exception.

NB: In last month's ebulletin the date of the first Home is a Holy Place review day was given as January 19th. Please note that this event takes place on January 29th. Apologies for any confusion.

More Urgent Than Ever

We need to support families: I don't mean the abstract notion of family life, but actual families in our parishes, families struggling with the demands of work, with economic difficulties, with children, especially at awkward ages.If our own young people don't have an experience of family life, then how can they pass it on? And if we don't show what the broader family looks like, then where will people see it? It's more urgent than ever, when greater and greater strains are being placed on families in this fragile economic climate. It's not enough for the Church to say in various documents that we support family life. If we were to ask some families if they feel supported, I suspect that the answer might be embarrassing... If they don't feel supported, then they're not supported. *Bishop Kieran Conry in Arundel and Brighton.* [Read more.](#)

God is With Us

God is on our side and God is present with us in our loving and being loved. God is love. We are made in the image and likeness of love and our hearts will not rest until we live fully in the love that God has for us. The love of God opens our horizons so we become aware that our relationships are not restricted to our immediate families. We have friends who are very important to us and who play a significant part in our lives. But we are also part of the human family. ...Recently our horizons have further widened to realise that when we talk about home we are talking about more than human relationships....The word "ecology" comes from the Greek root "oikos" meaning "home". The earth is our home and like all homes we have a responsibility for its well being. *Bishop Declan Lang in Clifton.* [Read more](#)

Love and Care

God's real love for us, as shown by Jesus in His own life, sufferings and death, spurs us on to love and care for each other. Were we simply and conveniently to extinguish life at will we would create an intolerable desert of inhumanity, totally lacking in love and care. That is not the way of Christ nor of His followers. Death is a reality that awaits us all. Some of you, at this Mass today, are more aware of that than others, and you have my prayers, as well as those of your family and this community. One day, death is something we shall all have to face. But with Christ and our families and our communities we shall not face it

[Helen Bassirat.](#)

4th April. St Bernard's School
Rotherham. Contact: [Susan Tym](#)

25th April. Archdiocese of Cardiff
launch. Contact [Anne Ballard](#)

Diary Dates

**Jan 29th and Feb 27th. Sharing
the Experience of Home is a
Holy Place.** [Further details.](#)

Feb 7-14 2009 [National Marriage
Week](#)

**March 13th. Love and Work in
the Adult Lifecycle.** [FAMILIAS](#)
and the Marriage and Family Life
Project Office are delighted to
offer a timely day of reflection on
March 13th 2009 with Br James
Zullo FSC, PhD, to explore more
fully why the balance of love and
work is such a critical issue for
our selves, for our families and for
all those with whom we minister.
[More details.](#)

Mar 13-14. [INTAMS colloquium.
More Than Just Being Together](#)

May 25-31 [National Family Week](#)

October 19-25 2009 [Parents
Week](#) Theme: the Changing Face
of Families

Project Resources available:

**Home is a Holy Place:
Resource Pack.** [Further details](#)

What is Life Like? leaflets to
support welcoming families in
challenging circumstances. £2 a
set or free [online](#).

Credit Crunch – Help for Families

**FAMILIAS, the Association for
Catholic Diocesan Marriage
and Family Life Ministry,** has
highlighted on their website some

alone. *Bishop Arthur Roche in Leeds.* [Read more.](#)

The Environment of Our Hearts

God has always put his trust in human beings, in you and in me. In the first place, he has given us this wonderful world. More and more of us are recognising that we are stewards of our world, and we are trying to be more responsible about our environment. The proper care of our world is vital for life. But so, too, are good relationships – in our homes and in our neighbourhoods where we are a mix of different nationalities, cultures, traditions and religions. If we have a care for our natural environment, we must also work hard in the area of our relationships, in the environment of our hearts - on how we get on with one another. *Bishop Peter Doyle in Northampton.* [Read more](#)

The Gift of God's Presence

Our homes are called 'Holy' to indicate the gift of God's presence to us in our domestic setting. It highlights our calling to live as one who is fashioned in the image and likeness of God, and therefore of Christ. The love that God shares with us must shape the love that is present in any family at its best. This means giving way to each other in love and letting love be the instrument of all formation in Christ.... Family relationships are not always all we would like them to be. In this situation we need a love that forgives. The path of forgiveness and repentance can be long and difficult but, if driven by love, it also can justify the description of our homes as 'Holy'. *Bishop Christopher Budd in Plymouth.* [Read more](#)

Example is more Powerful than Exhortation

The ideals of Christian family life set the highest standards. They challenge us in their fulfilment and they challenge us in the giving of example and encouragement to others. But these ideals are crucial for the well-being of the community as a whole. They are Christian ideals and we, who are Christians, have a great responsibility to demonstrate convincingly that they are not beyond our reach. Remember always that example is more powerful than exhortation. Reach out for these values yourselves and encourage others to do so, praying and remembering all the time that "nothing is impossible to God." *Bishop Crispian Hollis in Portsmouth.* [Read more.](#)

A Special Source of Grace

Today, I am particularly aware of the special challenges that face so many families in today's climate of economic and social difficulty. Like the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, every family is a suffering family at some stage or another. But I believe that the family is the foundation of our society today and, in particular, our Catholic families are a special source of grace and witness within the Church and to the wider world. So today, on this feast of the Holy Family, there is an opportunity for married couples to renew their vows of fidelity and love. May God help each one of you in your family situation and bring about a renewal in family life. I love those words of St. Paul in his letter to the Colossians: "Be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another: forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you, now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, put on love". (Col. 3:12-15). *Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor in Westminster.* [Read more](#)

[resources for families](#) struggling as a result of the downturn in the economy. Please check it out, share it with anyone who might make use of it and highlight it in your parish bulletin and website.

Family Spirituality Online

An online short course introducing Marital and Family Spirituality, offered by [Ushaw College](#) in Durham, starts again very shortly. This is a very flexible way to study from home over 8-10 weeks and would be ideal for anyone intending to work extensively with the Resource Pack. The module costs £55 per person. For more information or to register contact courses@ushaw.ac.uk as soon as possible. [Read more...](#)

Scientists discover true love.

Brain scans have proved that a small number of couples can respond with as much passion after 20 years as most people exhibit only in the first flush of love. The findings overturn the conventional view that love and sexual desire peak at the start of a relationship and then decline as the years pass. [Read more](#)

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Please feel free to reproduce anything in this bulletin and to forward it to anyone you think would be interested.

Home is a Holy Place: Sharing the Experiences



Are you excited about using the Pack and want to let others know? Or wondering where to start? How best to interest others? Why not join us at the first of two opportunities to share how the pack is being received in parishes, local pastoral areas, deaneries, dioceses, schools and associations. Plans for the first Home is a Holy Place Review days are shaping up nicely with speakers from

Hexham & Newcastle, Liverpool, Nottingham, Plymouth, Portsmouth and Southwark bringing materials and stories of what they have learned. They will be joined by Bishop John Hine, Chair of the Bishops Committee for Marriage and Family Life on Thursday, **January 29th at Carrs Lane Church Centre** in Birmingham. You can download [more details and the draft programme for the day here](#). Please let us know by January 22nd if you intend to come along so that we can be sure to cater for you. If that date is not convenient, there will be a second opportunity to share experiences on Friday, **February 27th at the Grimshaw Room** in St Chad's Cathedral House in Birmingham. The programme will be slightly different that day but just as exciting. Please let us know by February 20th if you wish to come along to St Chad's.

National Marriage Week

Dates for National Marriage Week next month have been confirmed as February 7th to 14th. The theme of Marriage Week in 2009 is "Celebrating Commitment", reflecting both the way that many couples see marriage, and the need for society at large to continue to celebrate the stability that married families bring to society. In Cardiff Archbishop Peter Smith will be celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage with Mass at All Hallows Parish, Miskin, Llantrisant on Saturday, February 14th at 11.00am. In [Nottingham](#), Mass will be offered in St. Barnabas Cathedral at 7:30pm on Monday, February 9th. In Shrewsbury Diocese Bishop Brian Noble will be celebrating the annual [Celebration of Married Life](#) at St Columba's Parish Church, Chester on Saturday, February 7th at 2pm. In Westminster, the week is being used to [launch and highlight](#) the Engage marriage preparation programme on February 11th. Please let us know how you intend to celebrate marriage during National Marriage Week. If you haven't visited the website recently you may not have noticed that it has moved to www.marriage-week.org.uk Resources and ideas for marking the week can be found on the [Home is a Holy Place website here](#).

Recent Publications

Parent Know How: working together, supporting families. A DSCF easy reference guide to services for families in a poster/leaflet format. For copies email dcsf@prolog.uk.com or tel 0845 6022260. [More info](#)
Supervising family and parenting workers; a short guide. Family and Parenting Institute, 2008. [Download here](#).

Families in Britain: an evidence paper. Department for Children, Schools and Families, December 2008. This paper assembles key trends, aims to provide a framework to take stock of family life in Britain, as well as explore future pressures on families. [Read more](#)