



# **FAMILYWORKS**

*Newsletter of the Australian Catholic Marriage and Family Council  
(formerly Family Working Group) Number 1/2007*

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## **Marriage in the Catholic Church – Frequently Asked Questions**

This pastoral guide, recently published by the former Bishops Committee for the Family and for Life, continues to be well received. It provides concise answers to relevant questions and is published in an attractive format. We are keen to have it distributed widely and especially to all couples contemplating marriage. The cost is \$2.00. Contact the Secretariat for Pastoral Life: [pastoral.life@catholic.org.au](mailto:pastoral.life@catholic.org.au), telephone (02) 6201 9845. The electronic version can be downloaded from <http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/documents/20061024972.pdf>

The following is the text of the first Q&A:

1. Why does marriage matter so much to the Church?

*Because marriage is so important to human beings it is important to the Church. Jesus established the Church to be his intimate, his precious one, his bride (cf. Eph 5:25). The Church in turn wants to share with the world what she has learnt about love. By loving well—loving as Jesus loved (Jn 15:12)—we can become more like God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who give to each other without holding back. By failing in love, on the other hand, as when we sin sexually or against our marriage vows, we obscure the image of God in ourselves. We abuse the great gifts of our bodies and of our freedom. We can blind ourselves to the truth about love, life, sexuality, our future. We can hurt each other and ourselves. The good news is that in Jesus there is forgiveness and healing. In Jesus there is a new start and a new direction. He has the power to transform us into children of light and love, into persons who love as the Persons of the Trinity love.*

*The Church wants to help couples fully appreciate the significance of marriage. Between Christians marriage is a sacred reality, a “sacrament”, or effective sign of God’s love and fidelity, which strengthens and divinizes the natural union of marriage. It is also the beginning of a family, the basic unit of society and the smallest instance of the Christian community (a “domestic church”). So as “the bulwark of truth” the Church seeks to proclaim the truth and meaning of married love as revealed in Christ. As an “expert in humanity” she seeks to support people in living out their married lives in happiness. As the “bride of Christ” she tries to be an image of that committed, faithful, fruitful love in action.*

A second booklet on ‘Divorce and the Catholic Church – Frequently Asked Questions’ is in preparation and will be published in 2007.

## **Meeting of Past Delegates to World Meetings of Families (WMFs)**

A number of past delegates to WMFs gathered together with Bishop Eugene Hurley in Sydney in February. It was an opportunity to renew friendships, relive experiences and to share on our common vision of promoting the concept of evangelisation through the family. Bernie and Pauline Victory regaled participants over dinner with a slide show of the Valencia WMF and the subsequent pilgrimage.

The following day began with an examination of trends in marriage and family life. This was followed by an opportunity for individuals to share on specific areas of activity about which they felt ‘passionate’. These ranged widely and included supporting fathers in their fatherhood, political lobbying for the family, promotion of prayer for families and new approaches to marriage preparation. The group then brainstormed on ways in which families can support evangelisation at parish level. The focus was on sharing simple ideas that had worked. A large number of ideas were collected (see below).

## **“Best practice” guide on evangelisation through the family – a request to readers**

As previously reported, the Australian Marriage & Family Council is collating a database of good ideas and success stories of evangelisation at parish level. Please join us in this endeavour by sharing your experience; the simpler the idea the better.

The list of possibilities is endless. Areas to be considered include: creating a culture of hospitality, reaching out to those distanced from the community, recognising special needs, renewal of marriage vows, family cycling outings, mentoring of young couples, etc.

To assist in collation, please summarise your idea briefly under the following headings: Description, Objective, Target Group, Frequency, Key Steps, Resources Needed and Contact Details, and email to [familyworks@catholic.org.au](mailto:familyworks@catholic.org.au).

### **Inaugural meeting of Sydney Archdiocesan Family and Life Network**

Sydney Archdiocese has established an Archdiocesan Family and Life Network. Each parish has been invited to send two 'parish contacts'. The aim is to promote consultation, formation, mutual support and communication between parishes on Family and Life issues. The network is a joint initiative of the Archdiocesan Family and Life Offices, directed by Chris Meney and Brigid McKenna respectively.

The first meeting got off to an enthusiastic start on 27 March. Meetings will incorporate a sharing of ideas, input by a guest speaker and news of coming events. The meetings will be held four times a year with email contact across the network between meetings.

### **Good news! Not bad news!**

At a press conference late last year Pope Benedict XVI gave a timely reminder that the Church should not be seen as a "collection of prohibitions". He went on to say that, "We've heard so much about what is not allowed that now it's time to say: we have positive ideas to offer." He went on to give the example of abortion, where it should be presumed that it is obvious that we should not kill, but we should "always stress that the human person begins in the mother's womb and remains a human person until his or her last breath." It seems from his many other statements that he believes that the same principle should apply to family ministry. Christian family life is a great way to live!

### **Vth World Meeting of Families**

It is not too soon to start thinking about the next WMF – Mexico City, 2009!

### **Australian Catholic Disability Council**

A small gathering in Sydney in February marked an important first for the Catholic Church in Australia, with the inaugural meeting of the Australian Catholic Disability Council (ACDC). The Council was formed as part of the restructure of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. It is responsible for advising the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life in the promotion of full participation and inclusion of people with disability and their families in the life of the Church. The Council has its roots with the Evangelisation Through the Family Group. You can read more about the Council and its work at <http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/councils/acdc/index.asp>.

***WE WISH ALL OUR READERS AND FAMILIES THE JOYS AND BLESSINGS OF THIS EASTER SEASON***

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