



FAMILYWORKS

Newsletter of the Family Working Group

Number 3/2006

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Restructuring of Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Committees

Major structural changes have been introduced into the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference in an effort to reduce administrative commitments and to allow more time for discussion of pastoral issues. The previous 19 Bishops' Committees have been replaced with 12 Bishops' Commissions. These in turn will be supported by Advisory Councils, consisting largely of lay advisers.

Consequently, the previous Bishops Committee for the Family and for Life (BCFL) has been replaced by the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life. The latter will be responsible for: Marriage and Family, Natural Family Planning, Abortion Task Force and Pro-Life Strategy, Migrants and Refugees, Disabilities, Military Chaplaincies, Apostolate of the Sea and some aspects of Youth.

The Chairman of this new Commission is Bishop Eugene Hurley, who was formerly Chairman of the BCFL. The other Bishops on this Commission are: Bishop Jeremiah Coffey of Sale Diocese, Bishop Justin Bianchini of Geraldton Diocese, Bishop Joe Grech of Sandhurst Diocese, Bishop Gerard Hanna of Wagga Wagga Diocese and Bishop Max Davis of the Military Ordinariate.

The Family Working Group (FWG) will also change – at least its name!

The FWG has been a group of married couples with a prime purpose of promoting the concept of 'evangelisation through the family'. It acts as an executive body for the wider 'Evangelisation Through the Family Group' (ETTFG). The latter consists of former delegates to World Meetings of Families with a common vision to promote the family as an instrument of evangelisation and not merely a recipient of evangelising activity.

With the passage of time the ETTFG has evolved into a sounding board for ideas and a primary resource for maintaining contact networks throughout Australia. At the same time, the FWG has evolved into an advisory body to the BCFL under whose auspices it has initiated a number of activities and carried them out using its own resources or with the participation of members of the ETTFG.

With the restructuring of the Bishops Conference, the FWG is expected to become an Advisory Council to the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life. At this stage it appears likely that its role will remain much the same with a focus on the evangelising power of marriage and family.

Australian Catholic Disability Council

One major milestone in the life of the FWG is the proposal by the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life to split off its activities in the area of disability and to place these under a new Advisory Council. Trish Mowbray is expected to play a major part on this new Advisory Council, which will advise the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life through Bishop Max Davis, who has been appointed as Bishops' Delegate for Disability Issues. The efforts of Trish and Glenn Mowbray, with the background encouragement of the rest of the FWG, have been impressive. They have introduced an effective networking system to encourage parishes to be aware of the potential contributions of their members with disability. They have maintained awareness that families coping with disability are not only in considerable need of support but are also very gifted in what they bring to parish life.

Launch of 'We have a Story'

A special achievement has been the publication of the above book. This will be launched in Canberra on Monday 4 December at 10.30am by Bishops Eugene Hurley and Max Davis at St Peter Chanel's Parish, 49 Weston Street, Yarralumla, ACT. A new hymn, "One Body in Christ" will be sung by the composer, Amanda McKenna. We encourage you to attend or to help to make this landmark book well known in your parishes and amongst your contacts.



The book contains “101 stories (101 reasons why people with disability and their families can and should participate in the life of our Church!).” It represents the experiences of many racial groups and ages around the country. “I gained so much, just from receiving all these stories,” commented Trish Mowbray. “They provide great encouragement and deep insights from which all could benefit.” For more information, download the information leaflet from <http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/documents/20061113214.pdf>.

Newsletter of the National Network for Disability and Spirituality

The Spring Edition of this newsletter, which contains many informative articles on disability issues, is available at <http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/documents/200609171562.pdf>

25th Anniversary of Familiaris Consortio – celebrated Sunday 19th November

The publication of this document a quarter of a century ago provided a wealth of pastoral material arising from the Synod on the Family. To encourage people to revisit its insights and to encourage marriage and family life in general, the FWG has sent each parish a ‘kit’ for Sunday 19th November.

We ask readers to assist in making this kit more effective. Please note:

- The key part is a user-friendly leaflet for parishioners entitled ‘Family, an Adventure in Love’. It is simple, motivational and has action points for daily life.
- It is designed to a) encourage families, b) provide tips and insights about marriage and family life, c) suggest further reading.
- To be effective, the leaflet needs to be photocopied and distributed to parishioners, rather than left at the porch door for collection. *It would be great if you could offer to do this for your own parish, or to organise it, even if only for one Mass; our aim always is to support the parish priest and staff, without adding to their work load.*
- The kit also contains suggestions for the liturgy and homily notes.

5th World Meeting of Families, Valencia, Spain.

A delegation of fifty was privileged to represent the Australian church at Valencia, including five members of the FWG.

The WMF was an inspirational meeting of families from around the globe, with 9,000 attending the Pastoral and Theological Congress which ran from the afternoon of Tuesday 4th until the evening of Friday 7th July. The weekend which followed was dominated by the visit to Valencia of Pope Benedict XVI who demonstrated the same commitment to the family, its role in Church and society, as did his predecessor the late Pope John Paul II. The Festive Celebrations on the Saturday evening and the Papal Mass on Sunday morning each attracted a million people to the City of Arts and Sciences precinct. Bernie and Pauline Victory of Adelaide, who have joined the FWG on their return, welcomed the Holy Father on behalf of Oceania, and the FWG Chair-couple Ron and Mavis Pirola presented a testimony of family life during the Festive Celebration.

The Congress on “the transmission of faith in the family” did two principal things. It clearly enunciated Church teaching - on the sanctity of life, the gift of children, parental responsibility for nurturing children in the faith, sacramental marriage, and rejected opposing secular views. It gave appropriate recognition to the role of Church organizations and lay movements which are at the forefront in meeting secular challenges. It was an occasion to appreciate the formula of reinforcing truth and promoting best resources which has been fundamental to the world meetings, and was therefore the approach adopted in 2000 and 2004 by the FWG in presenting two National Catholic Family Gatherings for Australia.

Detailed coverage of the 5th WMF is available in two issues of the Vatican newspaper “L’Osservatore Romano”; broad coverage of the event in the Weekly English Edition dated 12 July 2006 and the Conclusions of the Pastoral and Theological Congress in the Edition dated 9/16 August. The Pope’s main addresses are accessible on www.zenit.org via *Documents* of 9th July referring to:

- ZE06070907 Pope Benedict’s Homily at the Closing Mass
- ZE06070903 Pope Benedict’s Discourse at the Vigil

The 6th WMF will be in Mexico City in 2009.

Best practice guide on evangelisation through the family – a request to parishes

Appreciating as we do how the family has great potential as an instrument for evangelisation we want to establish a database of good ideas or success stories from the parishes, that can be shared and developed more widely than the initiating parish can achieve. You might require anything from a few lines to a paragraph or a page to set out your contribution, which you can Email us via familyworks@catholic.org.au. If we need more information we will get back to you in due course.



WE WISH ALL OUR READERS AND FAMILIES THE JOYS AND BLESSINGS OF CHRISTMAS

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