



FAMILYWORKS

Newsletter of the Family Working Group

Number 3/2005

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WMF 2006 Valencia Website: www.wmf2006.org

The World Meeting of Families (6-9 July 2006) in Valencia is continuing to attract widespread interest around the nation. Harvest Pilgrimages is currently preparing an itinerary for a group pilgrimage from Australia to the Gathering. The WMF2006 Valencia website contains updates and a facility for registration for their newsletter for extra information as it becomes available.

In his letter of welcome, the Archbishop of Valencia has expressed his hope that WMF 2006 will be a forum for ecumenism and inter-religious and intercultural dialogue for world peace. Music has been composed for a promotional video. Provision of accommodation for such a large meeting is a major challenge. In addition to the 15,000 hotel beds normally available, local families will be asked to host visitors and consideration is being given to the use of 'boat-hotels'.

At the World Meeting there will be a Theological Congress to which all Australian Dioceses are encouraged to send a delegate couple or family. There will also be a Fair and the highlights will be a Family Vigil Celebration on the evening of Saturday 8th and the concluding Holy Mass on the morning of 9th July.

A Movement of Continuous Prayer for Marriage and Family Life

This is a simple way to promote prayer for marriage and family life. Members of a family, parish, group or indeed any organisation are invited to join a 'chain' of people who will pray for one hour at a time once a month. Normally a group will nominate one particular day and members of the chain can pray wherever they find themselves at their rostered hour. The format is completely flexible but most use a booklet entitled 'Ask Search Knock' which has a very inclusive style. The booklet costs \$3.00 and copies can be obtained from the Pastoral and Matrimonial Renewal Centre, 27 Cuzco Street, South Coogee NSW 2034 (Tel 02 9349 1710).

Most people involved in this Movement of prayer comment that they find being part of a chain helps them to set aside extra time for prayer than would otherwise be the case. They are also delighted by the way in which the booklet tends to remind them of the many friends and contacts for whose families they might wish to pray.

Diocesan Family Councils

The Bishops Committee for the Family and for Life received a paper at their recent meeting, prepared by the Family Working Group (FWG), proposing that each Australian diocese set up a Diocesan Council for the Family, or a similar alternative structure. The purpose would be that such bodies foster the role of families as agents of evangelisation in society, as proposed in the document, *Familiaris Consortio* of Pope John Paul II. The Committee supported the proposal and commended it to bishops for consideration, while recognising that the needs and resources of individual dioceses will govern the responses that may be adopted.

The concept of Diocesan Family Councils has been gradually gathering momentum for some years with either Diocesan Family Committees or Family Offices being established. The FWG is accordingly pleased to acknowledge the groups or offices established, or being set up, in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth and Townsville. At the July meeting of the FWG a working session was held with three representatives of the Council for Marriage and Family of the Melbourne Archdiocese. It is hoped to hold further such meetings with other Groups to ensure the mutual support of each others initiatives.

Twenty-One Reasons WHY MARRIAGE MATTERS

This is the title of a booklet published in 2004 by the Fatherhood Foundation in co-operation with the National Marriage Coalition - Strengthening and Supporting Australian Marriages. Based on extensive social sciences research in Australia, and the US, it draws some powerful conclusions under the headings of Family, Economics, Education, Physical Health and Longevity, Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being, Crime and Domestic Violence. The value of the report lies in its provision of sturdy data to support much of the conventional wisdom of family life and to counter some of the misleading slants provided by the media. Amongst the 21 reasons 'why marriage matters' are:

1. Marriage increases the likelihood that fathers have good relationships with their children.
10. Children who live with their own two married parents enjoy better physical health, on average, than do children in other families.
17. Married mothers have lower rates of depression than do single or cohabiting mothers.

To obtain a copy of *Why Marriage Matters* go to the website www.marriage.org.au and click-on "*Why Marriage Matters*" for a PDF of the document.

Taskforce on Pastoral Responses to Abortion

In November 2004 the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) announced the appointment of a taskforce to investigate and propose ways of increasing human, material and spiritual support for those facing the dilemma of abortion. This was to involve an investigation of the nature and scope of current Church activities, assessment of the reasons women seek abortions, identifying gaps in current services for pregnant women, and proposals for new initiatives which the Church or its agencies might undertake. Reports to the ACBC were envisaged in May and November 2005.

In the course of the ongoing activity, Trish Mowbray, Disability Consultant for the Bishops Committee for the Family and for Life (BCFL), presented an extensive workshop on disability for Taskforce members at its meeting in Sydney on the 11th July. Workshop papers can now be accessed by the link to <http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/org/fwg/index.asp>.

Coming Event

Introduction to Theology of the Body – Melbourne – 13th September

A pilot program to be presented to parishes of the Yarra Deanery at St Gregory the Great's, Doncaster, on 13th September, by Anne-Maree Quinn, Project Officer for the Melbourne Council for Marriage and the Family. The program, based on the work of the US scholar Mary Shivanandam, is pitched at both engaged and married couples, in fact anyone interested in marriage and family. A good response will see it lead into a six week program. For further information go to: www.melbourne.catholic.org.au/cmfi.

Family Working Group Web Site

Reminding you that there is a lot more information to interest you on the FWG website at <http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/org/fwg/index.asp>

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