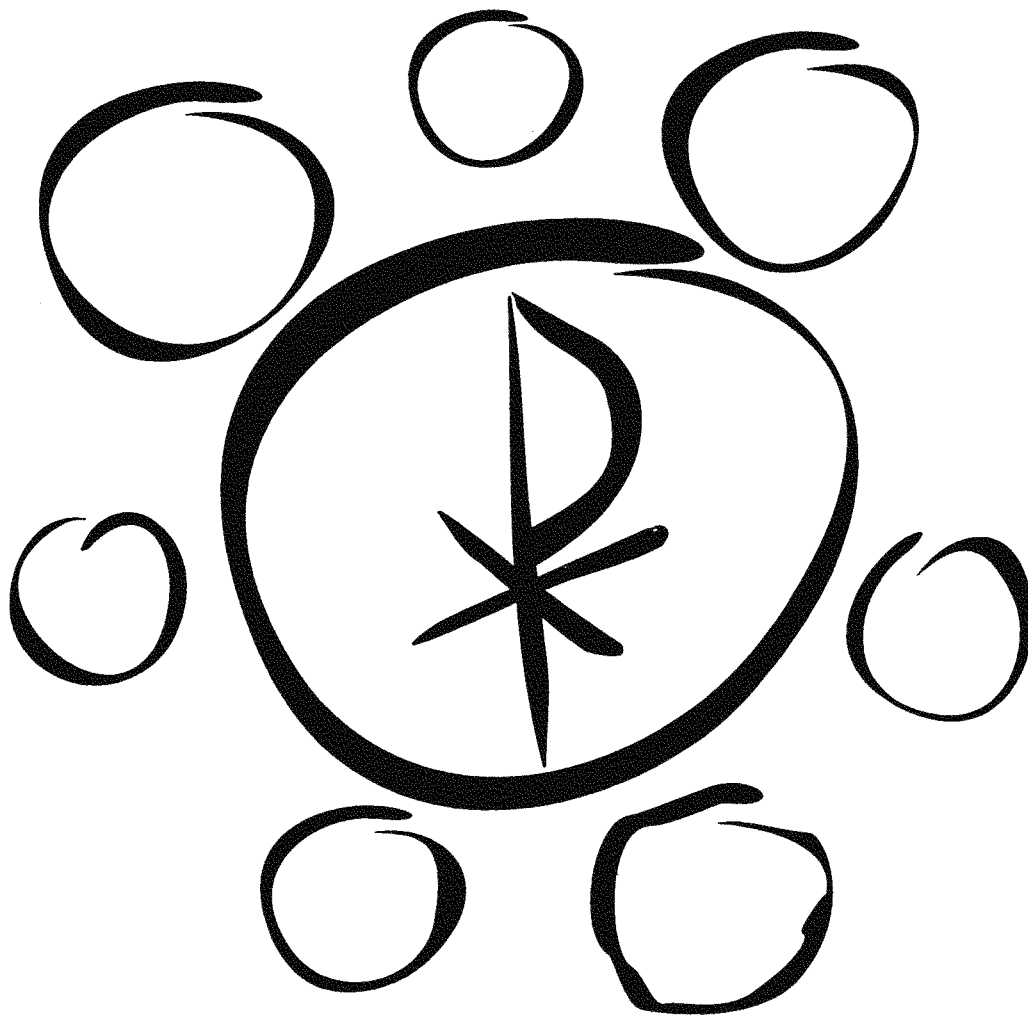


Family



Celebrating Fatherhood

A parish kit for Father's Day

*The
Gift
of*
FATHERS

A resource from the
Bishops' Committee for
Family and for Life

In a nutshell

Father's Day

Background:

- * Preparation for the Great Jubilee and the start of the third millennium.
- * Development of a 'family perspective' for evangelization.

Broad Strategy:

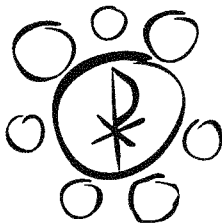
- * Strengthen family life
- * Affirm the family as a major resource for evangelization.

Two aims of *this* communication:

- * Affirmation of fathers, specifically on Father's Day: the Gift of Fathers.
- * Promote '*Family: dare to dream*' - a national gathering to celebrate the gifts of the family.

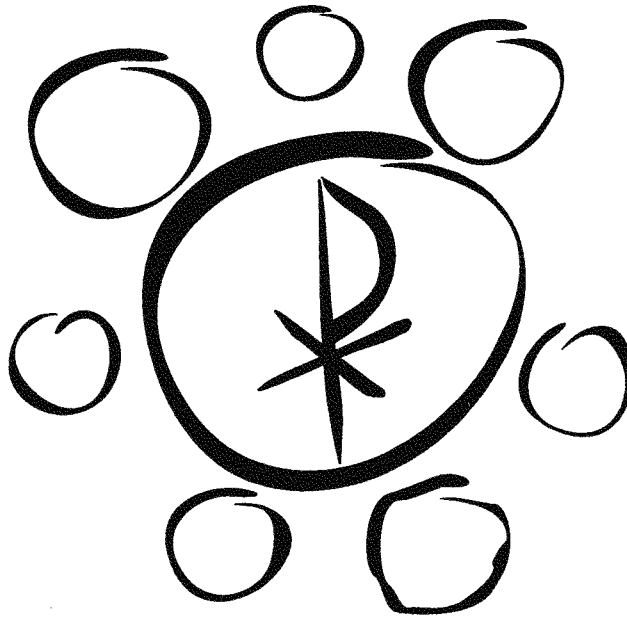
This kit contains:

1. A reproducible leaflet: '*Thinking about Fatherhood*'.
2. Notes for the liturgy on Father's Day.
3. Bulletin clip material.



Thank you for celebrating
the gift of family life

Family



The Gift of Fathers

A letter to parish personnel

Dear Friends,

Fathers have been in the news more than usual this year.

There was considerable interest in the resignation of the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Tim Fischer, to allow more time for his children. There have also been tragic stories about the problems that families face when fathers are absent or unable to meet their responsibilities or have given up hope.

Our faith gives us new hope and 'new eyes' to see Christ present in the ordinary events of daily life. It is often in the 'ordinary' things that we discover the sacred and the profound.

It is with such 'new eyes' that we appreciate the contributions that the father makes to family life. He is more than just 'another parent.' Through his male presence and his relationship with the mother, he complements her unique parental role in a special way.

Recent sociological studies confirm that at every stage of child development, the father has a specific role to

play. It is important that this role is appropriately developed and supported.

The enclosed parish kit is offered for use on Father's Day. It is simple and practical. It is one of a number of nationwide initiatives to strengthen family life as we prepare for the Great Jubilee 2000 and the start of the third millennium.

Another initiative is '*Family: dare to dream*', a national gathering to celebrate family life and its role in evangelization. A 'date-claimer' for this conference is enclosed. It will be held in Melbourne on 28-30 April, 2000.

Our hope is that parishes will encourage families to participate in this unique Australian gathering.

Thank you for your ongoing support for families.

Yours in Christ,

+ Leonard A. Faulkner

Archbishop Leonard Faulkner
Chairman, Bishops' Committee for
Family and for Life

Bulletin Clipboard:

Further thoughts for Father's Day... and beyond

Thank God for fathers!

Fatherhood – like motherhood – is all about creation. Let's be creative ourselves as we celebrate Father's Day. See handout '*Thinking about Fatherhood*' for suggestions ... see if we can expand on these.

A Father's Day suggestion

Choose three photos of yourself with your father at different stages of your life. On the back, write a few words about how the photo reminds you of some quality that you appreciate in your father.

Abba, Father!

The history of the Jews is the story of a loving God and his people. However, Jesus brought a new dimension to this relationship, calling God by the affectionate term 'Abba'. Through Jesus, we too share in this special relationship. *Rom 8:15*

Dads do make a difference

For Father's Day, write down some of the specific times in your life when something your father said or did affected the direction of your life positively.

Every father is different

'Designer cards': The best Father's Day card is the one *you* write for him, telling him of his particular qualities that are important to you.

How to use this kit

The basics:

1. Photocopy the handout *Thinking about Fatherhood* and distribute at Sunday Mass on Father's Day.
2. Consult liturgy notes for Father's Day.
3. Consider adding clipboard items in bulletin on Father's Day ... and beyond

Additional suggestions:

Invite an 'enthusiast' for fatherhood or for family life to help organise the celebration of Father's Day in the parish e.g.

- Greet people as they enter church and hand out the leaflet *Thinking about Fatherhood*.
- Dress the altar.
- Offertory procession.
- At the end of Mass, a brief sharing by 2-4 parishioners about their fathers.
- Host coffee/brunch after Mass.

Further ideas for parishes:

- Guest speaker to speak on fatherhood in the week before or after Father's Day.
- A 'father and daughter dance' in the parish (or organised through the school with parish support)
- Ask parishioners to bring a favourite photo of their father for placing on notice board at back of church.
- Prior to Father's Day, suggest parishioners invite their father to join them for Mass on Father's Day.
- Encourage parishioners to serve meals in home for homeless men on Father's Day.



Notes for the Liturgy

Homily Ideas

A recent TV advertisement stirs up our sense of belonging to our home country. It shows Australian children's choirs in different locations all over the world singing 'I still call Australia home'. It reminds us that despite all the problems of our nation, no matter how far away we go, deep down we still have a sense of belonging to our home country.

'You must love your neighbour as yourself'

Today's readings also contain reminders about belonging. All of us face problems in our families, in the Church and in society. Wherever there are two or more people, there can be hurts and divisions. Yet it is also through people that we come to know God and to be fulfilled personally. In the second reading St. Paul tells us that love is the one thing that cannot hurt our neighbour. Love is the summation of all the commandments. Our closest neighbours are our family. No matter how far we 'roam', home is the house where our family lives.

'where two or three gather in my name, I shall be there'

Today's Gospel reminds us that the Church is us - the community of believers in Christ. As his disciples, we live out his prime command of love and so create the people that we call the Church. And we must bring the forgiving, loving presence of God into our lives when we unite in his name to forgive and to pray.

Father's Day

Today, Father's Day, is a good time to pause to appreciate a unique person that God has put in our lives - our father.

It is easy to take our fathers for granted. The natural hurts that arise in all families can cause us to forget the wealth of goodness and commitment that is also there.

Today is an opportunity to recall and affirm the particular gifts that fathers bring to families. This includes our own personal fathers, grandfathers, single parent fathers, and children or brothers who are fathers.

(Share some positive memories of your own father and include some ways in which you have shown, or intend to show, your appreciation of your father.)

There is no one 'right' way of showing appreciation of one's father. The important thing is to do it. When expressing thanks to your dad it is a good idea to connect it with something specific - a specific quality or a specific incident in the past that typified your father's care or commitment. People can give presents if they want to but the most important gift is the gift of appreciation. Every father knows that he is human and didn't always do it perfectly. He needs to hear from his children that he 'must have done something right' - maybe magnificently.

Introduction

In our celebration today, we rejoice in God's gift of fatherhood. We experience God especially through the people in our lives. Fatherhood is one particular expression of that.

Penitential Rite

We come to the Father through Jesus, so as members of his body, the Church, we pray:

Lord, you show your love in the caring of those who gave us life. Lord, have mercy.

Lord, you make us sons and daughters of the Father. Christ have mercy.

Lord, you call us to share your forgiveness and hope. Lord, have mercy.

Prayers of the Faithful

Introduction: As adopted children of the Father, with confidence let us express our deepest needs.

Intercessions:

- We pray that we may find ways to show our appreciation of our fathers.
- We pray for all fathers - may they be gentle and strong in their fatherhood.

Conclusion:

God of love, you gave us fathers to give life to us and glory to you. May we learn to develop that love with all members of our families and to share that love with others. Amen.

Introduction to the Lord's Prayer

Jesus called his Father 'Abba'. In the same intimate way, let us pray to the Father using his words:

Final Blessing

May your relationships with your fathers be marked by appreciation and love. Amen.

May the intimate love of Jesus for the Father lead you to be a sign of his love for others. Amen.

And may the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be upon you and your family forever. Amen.

Also, it doesn't have to stop with Father's day. You can continue to thank and affirm your father for his fatherhood - on his birthday, his feast day, or at times of special events in your or his life.

Thank God for fathers

Heavenly Father, we praise you for the gift of our fathers and those who have been father-figures to us. We thank you for the life and love they have brought to our world.

May we raise our boys to use their masculine qualities for the glory and honour of your name. Amen.

At your next family gathering

Listen to the stories of the fathers in your midst - their growing up years, early work years, sporting stories, their first parish or faith memory, what they did on Sundays as boy... Perhaps reminisce over old photographs.

Get together with your siblings and gift your Dad with a *This is Your Life* presentation, full of memories of family events and your interpretation of stories of your Dad's youth.

In 1999, *Year of God the Father*, pray the *Our Father* with a little extra care.

Gifts for Father's Day (or any time)

Invite your Dad out for the day - e.g. to a football game or fishing - doing something that *he'd* like to do.

Write down ten positive childhood memories of your Dad. Present the list to him.

Get into cheer-leading mode. Make up a family 'war-cry' that champions your Dad's best qualities.

Write a special prayer for your Dad and pray it often.

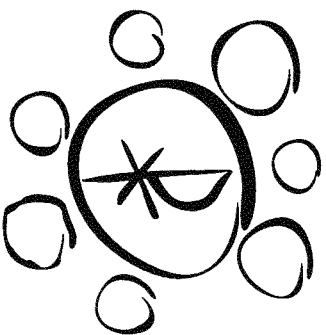


Table topics

My earliest / funniest / most cherished memory of my Dad.

How did my Dad react when I was born?

What memories of my early childhood has Dad shared with me?

One thing I appreciate about my Dad is...

One way my Dad has influenced my faith is...

Acknowledgements

The reflections and ideas in this leaflet are contributed by families associated with the work of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Committee For the Family and For Life, The Story Source and the Ministry of Family Development Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn.

Thinking About

Fatherhood

The gift of fathers in the human mystery of love and life

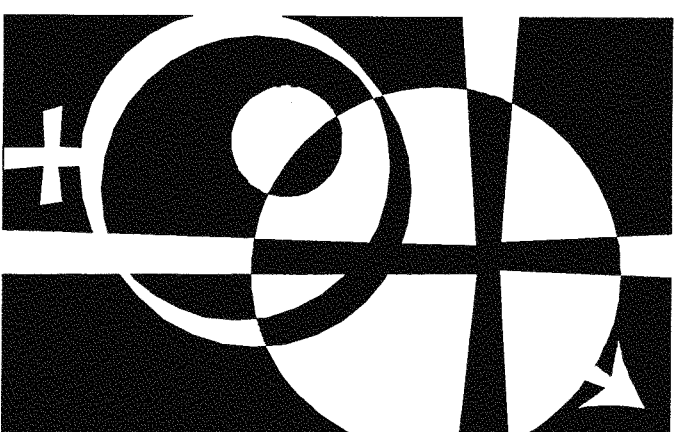
Fatherhood is undergoing a renewal.

Whereas once we presumed a lot of things about fatherhood and perhaps overlooked its need for closer attention, today there is a growing interest in the irreplaceable contribution men offer families in their role as father.

This renewal is something in which we can all take part by reflecting on our own experience of fatherhood.

Our reflections will no doubt be a mixed bag: joyful for others, painful for some, a mix of positive and negative emotions for most. Healing and forgiveness, as much as celebration, must be part of our reflections.

The stories and ideas in this leaflet are offered as a stimulus to your own journey as you think about fatherhood.



So God created man in his image.. male and female he created them
Gen 1:27

The Story Source
PO Box 1106
Maroubra NSW 2035



Father facts and reflections

'My Dad would talk to us around the dinner table, sharing his life experience, his understanding of people, his views and wisdom. Dad was never in a hurry to conclude the meal.'

The research of American sociologist Paul Amato finds that the self-esteem of children is greater when their fathers are involved in their formation.¹

'The first thing I would say about Dad is that he loved Mum. He just adored her. This has taught me is that, first and foremost, a father is a lover.'

The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother. Where husband and wife are estranged, the most important thing a father can do for his children is to forgive their mother, and to seek her forgiveness.

'My parents have divorced, but it has not compromised my Dad's love for me. I think Dad realises he made mistakes and is able to understand my own mistakes. Our relationship has grown stronger. Now we can talk about anything.'

The wellbeing of young people correlates with their freedom to confide in their fathers.²



In families affected by divorce, non-resident fathers continue to be vitally important for the general development of their children.³

'When I was growing up, Dad would pray with us each day - the family rosary, grace before meals, Sunday Mass, confession. Prayer and sacraments were built into our lifestyle, largely through Dad's commitment to God and Church.'

Fathers have a particular influence on the formation of their child's image of God, not only in childhood, but throughout life.

'When Dad had a heart attack at age sixty, everybody said things like "He works too hard" or "Stress brought it on." It occurred to me that I had never thanked Dad for "working so hard" for me. When I was growing up, his work - and all the security and education it provided for the whole family - was just something I took for granted.'

References

1. Amato, Paul: 'Father Involvement and the Self-esteem of Children and Adolescents', *Australian Journal of Sex, Marriage and the Family* (1986) 7:6-16.
2. Weston, Ruth: 'Turning to Fathers', *Family Matters*, (1987) 48:11-14.
3. Amato, Paul: 'Non-resident Fathers and Children's Wellbeing'. Presented at National Forum on Relationship Support for Men, Canberra, 1998.

Things we do with Dad

Family rituals - the things families do together that express their love - are one way to express the gift of fatherhood.

'On Saturdays my father would come to my soccer games. It was great, although sometimes it was embarrassing because he was so vocal. At critical moments he would yell *Ba Boom!* So the team nicknamed me *Ba Boom*.'

'When I left home to go to Uni we had a special celebration at home - a family meal with all the best gear. Dad read out a blessing for me and we talked about Uni.'

'On the anniversary of my father's death we get out the photo album and tell stories about the special times we had together. Everyone remembers a different aspect of Dad. This time is very important for all of us.'

'My father travels from the Philippines each year to spend some time with us. We have the custom of lighting a candle for him while he is travelling to our house and then again when he travels back to his house.'

'During my growing-up years, whenever Dad and I weren't "conning" he would start turning up to my netball games. I really liked it when he came.'

'My husband has instituted "silly time" in our household which basically means he and our three little ones go nuts for 15 minutes - running and tickling each other amidst squeals of laughter. The kids love it.

Sometimes I join in, sometimes I just watch with delight.'

'The best thing about going away for the Christmas holidays with our family is that Dad makes a big deal of breakfast. He cooks bacon and eggs and then we sit around and help him with the crossword puzzle.'

'My son is a single Dad who has raised five boys. One of their household institutions is Friday night pizza. Many fond memories have been built on those Friday night pizza gatherings. Even now, his boys, their wives and girlfriends and mates, will often drop by for Friday night pizza.'

Describe one of your unique family rituals (past or present) expressing your relationship with your Dad.

