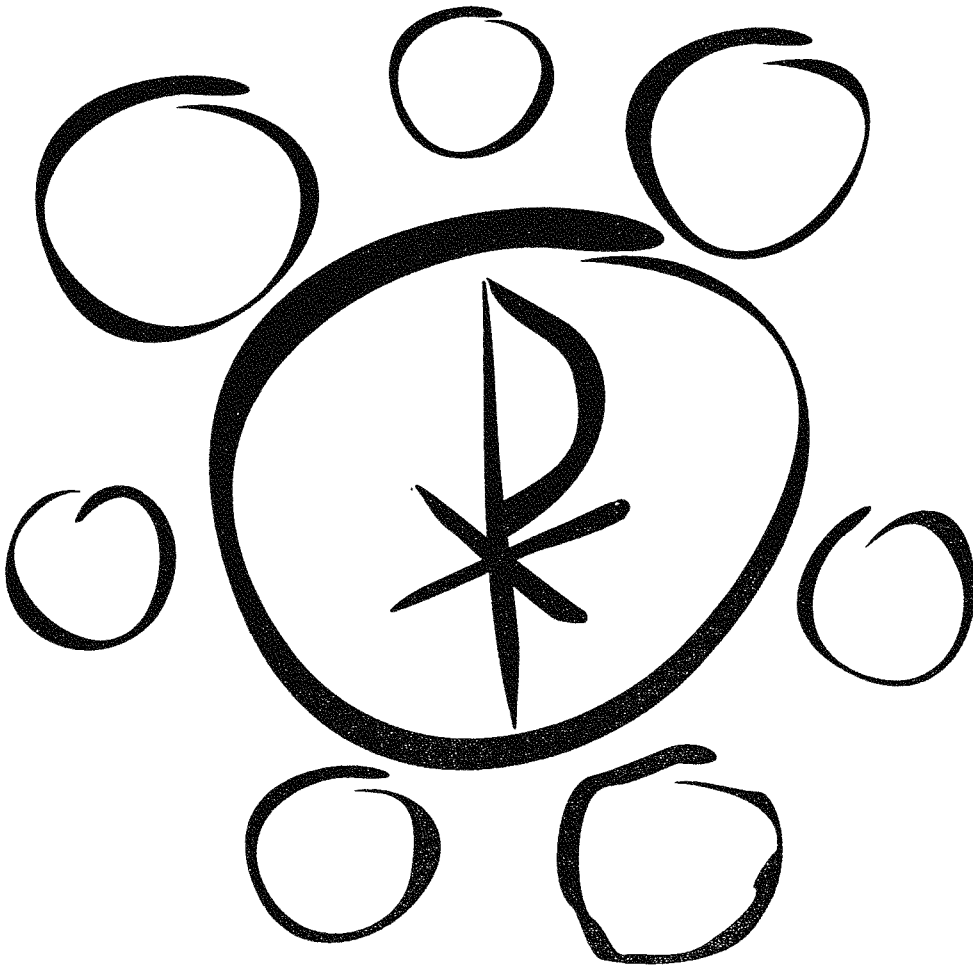


Family



A
Feast
of
Love

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

Celebrating Family Life

In a nutshell

World Meeting of Families

October 5th 1997

What:

An International gathering of families with John Paul II - instigated in 1994 and to be held every 3 years.

Where:

- * In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- * Also celebrated in parishes throughout the world.

1997 Theme:

The Family: Gift and Commitment, Hope for Humanity.

Australian strategy:

Focus on strengthening family meals.

Goal:

To highlight mealtimes as a vital source of nourishment in family life.

- * a time when we gather
- * a time to pray
- * a time to listen
- * a time when 'two or three are gathered in my name...'

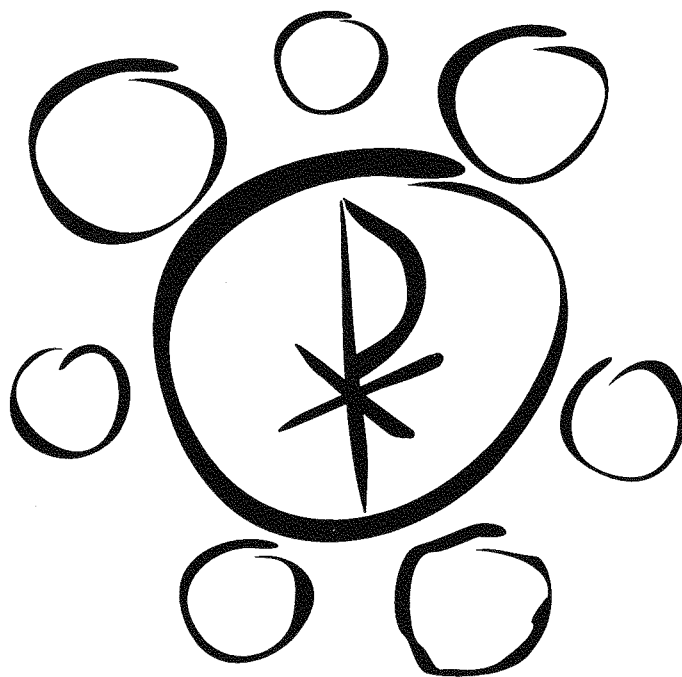
Meals are a natural part of life. Strengthening our time together around the table is a way of growing together as the body of Christ and deepening our appreciation of the Eucharistic meal shared on Sundays.

This kit contains:

1. A reproducible leaflet: *Family: A Feast of Love.*
2. Bulletin clip material
3. Notes for the liturgy
4. Poster
5. A copy of *Landmarks.*

Thank you for celebrating the gift of family.

Family



A
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A letter to parish personnel

Dear Friends,

We live in the fast-food age.

The pace of modern living has, to a large extent, deprived people of simple, human pleasures: like sharing a family meal.

To mark the Second World-wide Gathering of Families, we are asking people of all ages to rediscover the gospel power of sharing regular family meals and to make them a priority in their family's lifestyle.

By a 'family meal' we mean a regular meal where as many members of the household as possible participate; a meal that is more than an eat-and-run affair, where communication and prayer are developed and where family members and visitors feel accepted and *enjoyed* for who they are.

With so many competing activities, the prioritising of the family meal is no small challenge. Families who are already doing this must be commended. They are special witnesses to what it means to belong to one another in Christ's love.

On October 5th Pope John Paul II will be gathering with families of the world in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Your parish is invited to unite with their celebrations by acknowledging the gift of family life. The enclosed parish kit is offered as a resource in this task. It is the fruit of a committee of family people from many parts of Australia. In view of the workload of parishes the kit has been kept simple and easy to use.

We know that it is often in the 'ordinary' things that we discover the sacred and the profound. Our faith gives us 'new eyes', the vision to see Christ present in ordinary things.

It is with 'new eyes' for family life that we wish to enter into the Eucharistic celebration on October 5th.

Thank you for your ongoing support of families.

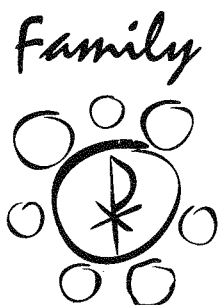
Yours in Christ,

Leonard A Faulkner

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

Bulletin Clipboard

Encouraging family meals during Advent



Family
A Feast of Love

An Advent Suggestion

Work on making your Family Meals 'a feast of love'.

Table topics

- # The biggest event for me in 1997 has been...
- # The funniest thing that happened to me this week was...
- # If I could invite anyone in the world to dinner tonight it would be...
- # One of my favourite Christmas memories was when...

A mealtime prayer

Lord, bless our life together, the food we eat, the work we do, the celebrations we have. May we always be thankful for what we have, willing to share our food, welcoming to visitors And never hungry because you are near.

Family Meals & Single People

- # Host a special 'Advent meal' with friends.
- # Drop in on 'the family' for a meal.
- # Join forces with a family with young children and help them to enjoy their mealtimes.

Mealtimes in Advent

Make your own Advent wreath and light it with a prayer at each family meal during Advent.

Advent table topic

Who will our household invite to our Christmas meal? Think especially of somebody without a family to go to.

How to use this kit


The basics:

1. Photocopy the leaflet *Family: A Feast of Love* and distribute at Sunday Mass.
2. Place the poster in the church foyer.
3. Include bulletin items.
4. Consult the Liturgy notes.

Additional suggestions:

- Invite 'an enthusiast' for family life to help organise families to be involved in the liturgy on Oct 5th. e.g.
- Greet people as they enter the church and hand out the leaflet *Family: A Feast of Love*.
 - Dress the altar.
 - Offertory procession.
 - At the end of Mass, a brief sharing by parishioners about their family meals.
 - Host coffee/brunch after Mass.

Additional reading:

Distribute *Landmarks* (No.5 titled 'Family: An Adventure in Love') on the day or as follow-up. A sample copy is included in the kit. Multiple copies are available from The Story Source  Australia Tel/Fax (02) 9314 0867.

News item: ...in families that spent mealtimes gathered around the table and promoted discussion during this time, the children emerged with a higher level of communication and a greater success rate in both their academic and personal lives.

D Edgar, *Adolescent Competence and Sexual Disadvantage*, La Trobe University

Further Ideas for promoting family meals:

- Suggest to families a table topic for their next family meal. e.g. My favourite 'meal memory' was when...
- Ask the local bakery if it will supply 500 donuts (in return for some appropriate advertising) and serve them with coffee after Mass on Sunday 5th Oct.
- Suggest that we make Advent a 'meal month' and that we all invite someone over for a meal.
- Talk about the evangelising power of family meals.
- Periodically print new ideas and prayers for mealtimes in the parish bulletin.
- From time to time, invite parishioners to share on their family meal efforts (e.g. at the end of Mass or at a parish meeting).
- Invite a group of single people to come together to discuss specific ways they can help build family meals.
- Put a blank poster at the back of your church. In the centre add a photo of a memorable parish Eucharist. Invite families to add their own photos of 'memorable meals'.
- Refer to the story 'Queen Emily' in the *Landmarks* leaflet (a copy is included with this kit). Suggest to young people that they 'dress up' for their little brother or sister on the eve of his/her First Communion.

Notes for the Liturgy

Homily ideas

Recall the 'big picture' bank advertisements on TV. A young couple walk despondently through a gutted apartment. The look of 'What's the use?' is written all over their faces. We sense the tension between them. Then a chance view from the window of a young father being greeted by his child reminds them of the 'bigger picture' - what all their efforts and sacrifices are ultimately about. They smile, they embrace, they re-member.

'Is it against the law for a man to divorce his wife?'

In a sense, today's Gospel holds a 'bigger picture' message. While the Pharisees remain embroiled in the legalistic details of the debate about divorce, Jesus responds by raising their question to a higher plane. The big picture he points to is God's beautiful, bold vision for marriage. A vision of unity, equality, fidelity and joy.

We too can get caught up in the complexities of issues (e.g. debates about definitions of 'family'). Yet the Gospel continues to hold out to us a beautiful vision of the power of love to unite male and female in marriage, to bond, to heal and to give life.

'...and the two become one body.'

Marital love is an enormous gift - and an enormous risk. Loving is always a risk.

- Some people have courageously taken that risk and have been hurt.
- Others have experienced marriage as a tremendous joy. The fruits of their love are all around us.
- Still others have never been married, yet with big-heartedness they recognise its goodness and affirm its value.

Whatever state of life we find ourselves, the Gospel calls us to courageously celebrate the 'big picture' of marital love and the lifegiving extension of that love in the gift of children and extended family. No matter what our hurts and struggles, let's never give up on God's vision for marriage and family. Let's never lose sight of the bigger picture.

'What God has joined, no one must divide.'

Today we are asked to do something very specific and practical to build **unity** in our homes. We are asked to work on the quality of our family meals; that is, to make them a priority in our family lifestyle.

The importance of this 'ordinary' event cannot be under-estimated. Family meals have the power to unite us as a family. They are a time to: re-connect with each other, listen to each other, pray together. They are a way of offering stability to our children and hospitality to outsiders. They help us to understand what the Eucharist is all about.

(To illustrate the value of family meals, share a positive 'meal memory', either from your own family or a time when you were included in a family's mealtime and what it meant to you.)

The challenge is to address all the distractions which prevent us from coming together for meals (TV, work schedules, studies, the Internet...) There is a leaflet "Family: A Feast of Love" available today which offers some practical suggestions.

In one way or another we are *all* members of a family. The challenge to work on our family meals is equally a challenge for single people flatting together and for people living in religious communities. Even if we

Introduction

In our celebration today we rejoice in God's gift of marriage and family life. Our God is a very practical God, who meets us in the depths of our humanity. Through our relationships with one another, Jesus calls us to become one with him.

Penitential Rite

We cannot fully love Jesus without loving his body, the people of the Church and so we pray:

Lord, you show us your face in the face of our loved ones. Lord, have mercy.

You love us in the tangible embrace of those who have brought us to life. Christ, have mercy.

You call us to a lifestyle of forgiveness and hope. Lord, have mercy.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction: As a faith family we come to God with confidence as we express our deepest needs and desires.

Intercessions:

We pray that we will never stop believing in the God-given gift of marriage and family.

We pray that we will pass on our values and faith to our children

We pray that our homes will build memories of love, especially through the times we share around the table.

Conclusion:

God of love, you have created marriage and family to give life to us and glory to you. May married couples, parents and all members of our extended families show us the path of intimacy that leads us to your love. Amen.

Introduction to the Lord's Prayer

As one family united around the table of the Lord, let us pray with the same words Jesus used to pray to his Father in heaven:

Final blessing

May your eyes be opened to the extraordinary in the 'ordinary'.

May your life with your loved ones be a feast of love.

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

live alone there are ways we can collaborate with other households on their mealtimes. There is no 'one way' to do this. The most important thing is to make a start.

Remember: Before you dismiss the idea of regular family meals as being impossible or impractical - stop and think: of the priority of your family/community life...of 'the bigger picture': ☐

Creating a lifestyle

There was a time when our family meals were 15-minute bickersome affairs. The kids' manners and my wanting to fix them were the main obstacles. Inevitably the two forces would clash and the meal disintegrate. Step by step, we began to change. We consciously built slow menus. I learnt to stop criticising. We verbalised our goal of better meal communications. We invited the help of the older children. When possible, I prepare the meal...

Our meals have now become a highlight of our family life. We rarely even think about trying to prolong them. They naturally last 45 minutes to one hour and often we have to peel the participants away. (Mark)

Mealtime tips

- Be there!
- Don't rush the meal. Allow time.
- Turn off the TV and mobile phone.
- Be imaginative. Experiment with the menu, table setting, time and place.
- If you are not normally involved in the cooking and mealtime tasks, get involved.
- If the kitchen is normally your domain, practise giving up control.
- Say together a prayer of thanksgiving.
- Keep the conversation person-focussed. If it helps, choose a table topic. e.g. What was the best thing that happened to you today?
- Listen to each other. Don't allow one person to dominate.
- No criticism. This is not the time for picking on table manners or report cards. Affirm gifts and qualities.
- If you are a single person living alone, collaborate regularly with other households on their meals - and host your own.
- Be flexible. Hold meals at a time and place that suit most members.
- Invite, don't demand.
- Be patient. Persevere. It takes time to develop a 'family meal' lifestyle.
- Even the smallest of steps is a great start. Focus on the positives.
- Enjoy!

And they recognised him in the breaking of the bread....

Lk 24:35



Sunday 5th October 1997 is the 2nd World Meeting of Families with John Paul II held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The theme of this celebration is *Family: Gift and Commitment, Hope for Humanity*. To mark this event in Australia, parishes and schools are invited to affirm the value of family meals. Communities are welcome to copy this leaflet which is the fruit of the discussions of family people around Australia.

Produced by *The Story Source* for the Bishops' Committee For Family and For Life.

Picnics

Barbecues

Beer & snags

Coffee &

Croissants

Breakfast

Brunch

Sunday lunch

Potluck dinner

Leftovers

Marshmallows

over the fire

Bring-a-plate or

Cook up a storm

Birthdays

Anniversaries

What's the name

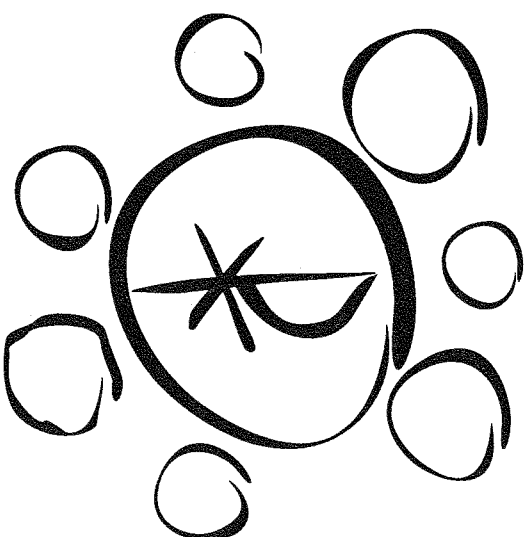
of that new res-

taurant ? Toast &

Vegeterie . A freshly baked loaf . Red wine . Pizza & pies . In the park . On the beach . In the kitchen . On the verandah . Cater for the crowd or just the three of us . Finishing the day . Facing the day . Formal dining . Or come as you are...

Whichever way you look at it, MEALTIMES are part of life . Every family has them . Everyday, ordinary events ... with extraordinary potential . As a long term investment in the quality of your family life ...

Family



A Feast of Love

Build a lifetime of memorable meals.

Making memories

My brother Ben was leaving home to live in another city. On the night before he left we gathered for a meal together. At the end of the meal each of us said a prayer for Ben. There were tears and laughter as, one by one, we shared a special memory of Ben and asked God to be with him. Now when those of us at home gather for our meal each evening, we pray for Ben and other absent family members and I recall how close we felt that night. (Lisa)

Time together

Mum and Dad split up 18 months ago. Living without Dad has been hard. One thing that helps is when we have Sunday brunch together. We have coffee and croissants and just 'hang' together a bit. I know it's important to the younger kids - and to Mum, too - to feel that sense of 'togetherness'. (Chris)

Passing on values

Growing up I remember my father nearly always being home in time for dinner. Only years later did I realise that this was a conscious decision on his part: a decision to always put the family before the job. (Anna)

In today's fast-paced, fast-food, disposable everything society, the Family Meal is a radical gospel witness; and the families who host them, prophets in our midst.

The family meal:

an ordinary event with extraordinary possibilities

A family meal is more than a physical feed. It is a time when we, as family members of whatever age or state of life, *deepen our love* for each other. We eat not just to nourish our bodies, but to *nourish our relationship as a family*. We 'feed' each other by...

- # Spending time together.
- # Listening to each other's stories.
- # Saying a prayer of thanksgiving.
- # Sharing mealtime tasks.

In doing so we welcome the presence of Jesus in our midst and recognise ourselves to be *the body of Christ*.

A family meal doesn't have to be flash. It doesn't have to be 'perfect'. It doesn't have to be 'done' a certain way. It just has to be a sincere attempt to 'say' certain things. Things like:

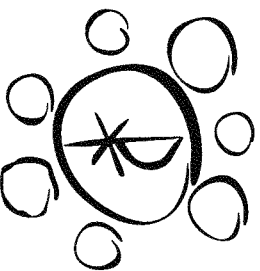
- I love you.
- We belong.
- We believe.

Above all, family meals need to be a *priority*.

Not just for families with young children, but for all of us.

Not just on special occasions but on the 'ordinary' days as well.

Without prioritising, planning and effort, this precious part of our family life can easily be swapped by work, studies, sport, television shows, computer games and a host of other activities that fill our lives.



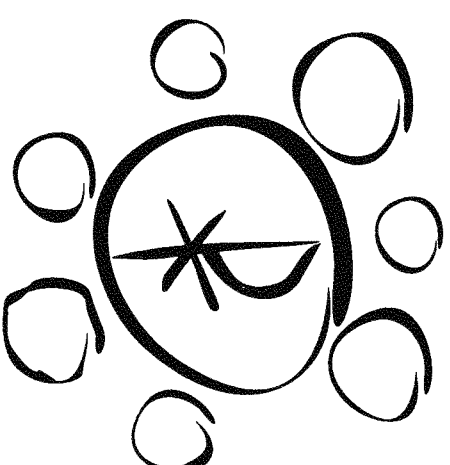
The power of a meal

A family meal can...

- # Re-introduce us to the most important people in our lives.
- # Remind us of our goodness and that we 'belong'.
- # Pass on our faith and values.
- # Make us laugh when we feel 'blah'.
- # Give our children a sense of stability.
- # Remind us of those who 'have not'.
- # Encircle a neighbour with our warmth.
- # Make us think about our roots.
- # Put us in touch with the presence of Jesus.
- # Be a tangible experience of 'being church'.
- # Draw us to pray together.
- # Envelop a non-believer with our faith.
- # Unleash our creative gifts!
- # Provide a 'safe space' and a 'sacred space' in a difficult world.
- # Reveal to us the meaning of the Eucharist.
- # Be a lot of fun!

A mealtime prayer

Bless us Lord of all creation as we share this meal. We thank you for our food, for the labour of love that has gone into its preparation, for the gift of our family and our visitors here tonight (*name*). May our conversation be filled with peace and draw us closer to you. Amen.



'Yes, but...'

There are 1001 objections we can have to the idea of making family meals a priority. For instance...

- # Our schedules don't fit.
- # Our family doesn't 'get on'.
- # I live on my own.
- # We don't have kids.
- # Last time we tried it...
- # But I end up doing all the work!
- # We'll have to do it 'her' way (or 'his').

Developing a habit of family meals may call for a change of lifestyle. That's hard! The difficulties only highlight the importance of the family meal as well as the sad fact that, in too many households today, families are fragmented and meal times are a TV-controlled, eat-and-run affair.

The *good news* is that many families are rediscovering the special power of a family meal to bond, to heal and to give life.