

**Turn off your TV's & Telephones and sit down for a family meal on Sunday 5 October!**

The Bishops' Committee for the Family and for Life asks all Australian families to take time out to rediscover the joy of the family meal on Sunday 5 October 1997.

The call from the Bishops' Committee coincides with the final day of the Holy Father's II World Meeting of Families being held in Rio de Janeiro from 1-5 October.

Chairman of the Bishops' Committee for Family and for Life, Archbishop Leonard Faulkner, explains, "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".

Recent literacy levels have sparked outrage directed towards the education sector, but can it be completely to blame? In his book "Adolescent Competence and Sexual Disadvantage", Dr D Edgar, former Director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies, found that "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".

The family is often described as the basic living cell of society. We continually hear of reports in society and the media that the Australian family is breaking down - eroding society. The Bishops' Committee for Family and for Life asks that all Australian families take this opportunity to analyse and evaluate the amount and quality of time given to the family and the level of priority it holds in their lives.

"Focussing on the family meal as a core activity in life may not solve all problems experienced by families," said Archbishop Faulkner. "But we all have to eat so why not do it together with laughter, happiness and a sense of belonging, not only to one another as a family but to God's family as well."Backgrounder

The preceding Press Release highlights the focus of the II World Meeting of Families from the Australian perspective. The ways in which organisers hope that a meeting on the other side of the world may have some causal affect on our every day lives in Australia.

Please find outlined below the details of the Meeting itself and Australia's participation in it.

The theme for the II World Meeting of Families, convened by Pope John Paul II, is "The Family: Gift and Commitment, Hope and Humanity". It will be held in Rio de Janeiro from 4-5 October and will be preceded by a Theological-Pastoral Congress from 1-3 October.

On Saturday, 4 October the Festive Meeting for Giving Witness of families from around the Holy Father will be held. During this 'Ceremony of Testimonials', families from different continents and cultures will present experiences of Christian life together with artistic and musical performances. This is the ceremony in which Mr Kevin Andrews, MP and his wife Margaret will participate.

On Sunday, the Mass will be held in Aterro de Flamengo, in the heart of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

The International Congress is limited to 1,800 delegates of Bishops' Conference and lay movements from around the world. Australia, because of its distance from Rio, enjoys 'favoured nation' status and is entitled to send delegates from each diocese.

A number of Australians will be both attending and participating in the World Meeting. They are:

Archbishop Leonard Faulkner The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC)

Mr Garry and Mrs Moira Eastman The ACBC

Mr Michael and Mrs Patricia Brad Adelaide Archdiocese

Mr Russell and Mrs Gwen Winterscheidt Brisbane Archdiocese

Mr Keith and Mrs Anna Linnar Canberra/Goulburn Archdiocese

Mr Carey and Mrs Judy McIver Hobart Archdiocese

Mr Kevin Andrews, MP and his wife Margaret Mebourne Archdiocese

MR John and Mrs Kathleen Collins Melbourne Archdiocese

Mr John and Mrs Cavell Farley Sydney Archdiocese

Mr Malcolm and Mrs Barbara MacKenzie (and children) Wagga Wagga Diocese

Mr Laurie and Mrs Jose Scully Antioch Movement

Mr Daniel and Mrs Irene O'Connell NeoCatechumate Movement

Mrs Kathleen Harrigan Right to Life Association

Father Francisco Rojas Schoenstatt Movement

Dr Ron and Mrs Mavis Pirola Pontifical Council for the Family -----  
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Bishops' Committee for Family & for Life P/R: 29.09.97 Australians will also be involved in various formal meetings, presentations and occasions:

Archbishop Faulkner will attend a Meeting with other bishops and the Pope. Keith and Anna Linnard will lead a workshop on "Domestic Church: Fruit of Evangelisation and called to Evangelise". Kevin and Margaret Andrews will bear witness on "Fidelity and Love in Contemporary Society" during the Ceremony of Testimonials on 4 October 1997. Ron Pirola will read at the closing mass concelebrated by the Pope.

The First World Meeting took place in Rome during the International Year of the Family in 1994. That event represented the culmination of family celebrations around the world and was one of the biggest gatherings ever held in Rome. It was at this time that the Holy Father decided to continue these meetings on a periodical basis - entrusting its organisation to the Pontifical Council for the Family.

The Pontifical Council has emphasised that the gathering in Rio represents an important part of the Pope's vision for a New Evangelisation on the threshold of the Year 2000