

Just between Us....

Newsletter of the Bethany Family Institute
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Funerals are not just for the dead!

Life is full of surprises, but so it seems is death. We had a *huge* surprise when we realised just how significant death was in the faith experiences of ordinary families. We were expecting people to mention birth, maybe even prayer, mass or other family celebrations, most specifically 'good' times. But death? However, respondent after respondent mentioned sickness, death, funerals, mourning, and bereavement as moments when they felt closest to God. They weren't the only times by any means, but the preponderance of this type of response was stunning - and it wasn't limited to the older generation.

Since we launched Bethany Family Institute last year, our primary work has been listening to the voices of parents and children about how God is part of their family life. We now want to share what we have discovered. As you may already know, we enquired into three areas that we judged to be central to the spiritual life of the family. First, we asked people how their faith helped them in their family life. Second, we asked them to describe family moments when they felt close to God. And finally we invited them to share their thoughts on how the wider church might help them in their family life. We asked open-ended questions. We wanted to give people freedom to answer in whatever way they felt best.

A living faith

In response to our first question we learned that faith as described by our respondents is a *living* faith that provides needed help in times of difficulty. Families survive by forgiving, by being more tolerant of differences, by being strengthened for whatever is being asked at a particular moment. Faith goes right into the middle of family relationships and provides whatever is necessary for survival.

Our results give no indication so far that faith 'sugar coats' real life, nor does it offer an escape from the hard facts of everyday family life. In fact, it's just the opposite. It pushes people to connect, engage and deal with what's at hand. It opens them up to life as it comes to them, and straightens them to do whatever they can to make their life together better.

Relationships are fundamental

While some mentioned attending mass together, or praying together as a family, as important, the majority chose to respond to our question by applying faith directly to family relationships. It will be important to see if this emphasis remains strong as we continue our research. There is somewhat of a bias in our research based on the type of people who chose to

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Visit us at: www.bethanyfamilyinstitute.com

Diary Dates.....

- August 15th-18th Marriage and Family Life: Enduring truths, changing realities
NCCB/USCC & NACFLM Conference, Hyatt Regency Crystal City, Arlington,
Virginia. Enquiries & bookings: go to www.nacflm.org
- August 25th-27th Christian unity: why ? Association of Inter-Church Families.
Swanwick, Derbyshire. Email: aife@msn.com
- August 26th -
Sept 6th INTAMS Postgraduate Summer Course, Sint-Ginesius-Rode (Brussels)
Email: intams@skynet.be or visit the INTAMS website
- Sept 29th/30th National Meeting of M&FLM Co-ordinators. Hinsley Hall, Leeds.
- Oct 22nd-28th Parents Week. This years theme: Listening to parents. Information packs
available from the National Family & Parenting Institute. 430 Highgate
Studios, 53-79 Highgate Road, London, NW5 1TL. Telephone 020 7424 3460
Fax 020 7485 3590 Email: info@nfpi.org
- Oct 26th-28th Living life's changes: a weekend of encouragement and affirmation for
divorced & separated, with Fr Alban Byron, SJ & Frances Trotman
Loyola Hall, Rainhill, Merseyside L35 9NZ. Contact The Retreat Secretary.
Tel: 0151 426 4137 E-mail: loyola@clara.net
- Nov 2nd-4th 2001 Beginning Experience weekend. Marie Repatrice Centre, Wimbledon
Tel: Pat Mawer 020 8660 3112
- Nov 3rd 2001 Rainbows Continuing Professional Development. Hallam Pastoral Centre,
Sheffield. Contact Robin Cooper/Tia Dcaccia, at Rainbows National Office,
17 Market Square, Higham Ferrars, Northants, NN10 8DJ
- Nov 22nd 2001 20th anniversary of Familiaris Consortio: The Christian Family in the Modern
World

We are on the move...

Yes, the Bethany Family Institute is leaving Wales and heading north for the English Midlands. It is with great regret and a certain amount of reluctance that Co-Director, Elizabeth Davies, is saying farewell to Carmarthen to return (after 20 years absence) to her roots in Wolverhampton. We hope that any disruption of Bethany work will be minimal but be warned ! Until we find a safe haven our PO Box mail will be forwarded so please keep in touch. And say a prayer for smooth transitions !

Nazareth transformed

Our Nazareth Pages have been re-formatted and are now available as a Word 2000 document. Consisting of family-style reflections on each Sunday's gospel reading, they can be distributed a week ahead with the Sunday bulletin or used as a take-home piece for children's liturgy. Schools too may find them invaluable to send home as a resource for evangelising families. Individual subscriptions cost £15 a year. The school/parish photocopiable resource costs £35 a year. Read a free copy on page 7.
Subscribe to the Nazareth Pages on the back page

respond. Those who answered our questions were already people of faith. However we can observe how their faith fits in as part of everyday life.

Holidays, outings and love-making

Our second question provided an entrance into the religious imagination and worldview of our respondents. Most spoke of sensing God's presence in times of difficulty more than in times of ease. Times of sickness, times of dealing with alcohol and addiction in the family, and as we mentioned earlier, times of death were the most mentioned occasions where God was felt to be there.

Birthdays and other family celebrations were also mentioned. So too were holidays, family outings and love making. Many responses mentioned the event of a new child entering the family. The repeated mentioning of birth moments along with times of terminal illness and death has something to say as to how the church responds to families both pastorally and liturgically.

Realism essential

The most common response to our third question was a request that the church be more *realistic* about families today. Families come in all kinds of shapes and sizes. One size does not fit all. In practical terms this response asks church leaders to know their parish people and know the range of families. With a more nuanced understanding, families of all kinds will be touched and will open themselves to hearing the word of God coming from the church.

Compassion and encouragement

People also asked for more compassion from the church especially toward the divorced and separated, those caring for children with special needs, those struggling in a difficult marriage and those families who are straining to simply stay alive. Lets be honest, every person wants a great marriage and family life. Sometimes even the best of efforts fail to reach these results. Rarely is failure in this area a matter of immorality. It's more related to human ability and human frailty and let's face it, to the enormous difficulty of the task. And because the achievement of even a modicum of family harmony and peace is difficult, families ask for encouragement. A simple word of support and understanding from the church can go

a long way to help when there's a family hurdle to negotiate.

Aide-memoir

Another idea cropping up was that of the church offering *reminders* of how important family life really is in the eyes of the church and of God. People asked for help in their day-to-day struggle to decide what's really important and what's not. In the spiritual life in general, memory plays a decisive role. We tend to forget. We get distracted. So we need to pull back to the things which are most important. We all need reminders.

Already mentioned was that families experience God particularly around the time of birth and death. The church offers sacramental rituals connected with these times. When people talked about being close to God at church, these were the two times most frequently mentioned. Baptisms and funerals, however, are usually scheduled during the in-between time of parish life. But here's the point. For family people, *these are the big moments*. This is when lasting impressions and memories are formed. This is when people are really open to God's grace driving deeply into their consciousness.

Our findings indicate that the Christian life is definitely a part of the life of many families. It survives largely on its own. The language it uses is mostly home-grown. But we believe it could be so much better if parishes and dioceses were more attuned to what happens in ordinary families. We found no complaints about the church in our survey. But we did find a hope that the church be more understanding, more supportive and simply more aware of its families, both in their celebrations and their struggles.

On this rock...

With the renewed emphasis on mission in this new millennium, it behoves us all to take stock of the role of families in this mission. The Lord advised building on rock. The church has been called a family of families. It will only survive if it serves and strengthens its own foundational building blocks, which are its messy, yet ultimately magnificent families.

Our survey is on-going. Contact us for copies of the questionnaire or download one from our website.

Anita Dowsing is Co-ordinator of the Norwich Deanery Religious Education Team and a member of East Anglia Diocesan Religious Education Commission. Her book 'A Marriage in Our Time' reflects on the challenges of 'mixed marriages' and is published by Darton, Longman & Todd at £15.99

'Have you considered the whole business of going to church alone?' a fellow-Catholic warned me, when I had just got engaged to my non-believing boyfriend.

By making me think, and pray, even more deeply, about my decision, her question confirmed me in my conviction that I was called to this particular marriage with this particular man. So I set out, in trust, along a path which turned out to be largely unmarked.

That was thirty years ago. It has been a happy marriage, but also a marriage in which we are continually challenged to live in loving respect for each other's religious stance. It is still a believer/non-believer marriage.

As such it reflects the situation in many (most?) of today's marriages involving a Catholic or other Christian believer. Sharing my experience might therefore be helpful to many others in my situation.

Preparation

In spite of the frequency of believer/non-believer marriages (there must have been many, even when we got married), the main thrust of our marriage preparation was to protect me from the presumed 'danger' of my future husband's influence.

The 'danger' was twofold: (1) my falling away from the faith and (2) any children not being brought up as Catholics. Since my husband was full of respect for my religion and willing for our children to be brought up in it, neither question presented a fundamental problem.

As for the practicalities of living such a marriage, I suspect that 'the powers that be' simply had not thought about them, so we were

left to find our own way.

Experience

In my experience, tacit assumptions (but of course my parents will come to stay for 6 weeks every summer ...!) are the hardest to deal with in any marriage, precisely because they are tacit, unspoken, perhaps even to the person who holds them.

In the early days of our marriage I had the, barely acknowledged, assumption that 'surely my husband will come to believe after a few years' marriage to me!' and, even more deeply buried, 'Once he believes, I will be able to share myself with him much more fully'.

With these notions at the back of my mind I asked him to come to church with me a few times, but he clearly felt so uncomfortable that I stopped.

When religious topics came up in conversation, we tended to get to a point when I thought, 'perhaps this argument will make him believe' and he promptly changed the subject!

It took time for me to realise that faith is God's gift, not mine. Slowly it dawned on me that the best way to share my faith with him was to love and care for our home and the world around us as fully as possible, for instance by gardening together or walking in the mountains -or selling fairly traded goods.

Sharing everything I could with him *as a believer* meant a challenge for me to grow in the faith, to try to live it not just on Sundays, but all the time.

Two Ditches

It came to me that there were two ditches that I, as the believing partner, could fall into: There was the ditch of constant (subconscious!?) conversion attempts and the ditch of never talking about religion and acting as if I could only share myself fully with him after his conversion. The even path of a

believer/non-believer marriage runs between these two ditches.

It took me years to understand that it was perfectly possible to have a discussion about religion, in which each of us respected the other's point of view, but neither tried to 'convert' the other.

It was even possible to share the pain of not sharing! There was the occasion when I came home from church and burst into tears, because it had been so hard going alone. When I told my husband why I was crying, he put his arms around me to share, and ease, my pain.

Hope

Respecting my husband's point of view is not the same as giving up hope that he will come to believe. I don't think it is possible to love someone and not want the gift of faith for them.

But equally, I can't love someone and not respect their integrity, which means respecting their stance on religious belief and acknowledging, to myself too, that this stance may never change. It also means acknowledging just how difficult it must be for a non-believer to be 'exposed' to belief all the time.

Non-believer

As it happens, there has never been a time in my life when I did not believe, so I don't know what it feels like. But I think I got a 'flavour' of what it must be like for my husband to live with a believer, when a friend of mine came back from a visit to a Hindu family in India.

She told me that she was forever doing 'the wrong thing', like touching food that had been near the puja (prayer) room or forgetting to take her shoes off in the appropriate places. It was like negotiating unknown territory without any signposts, or, at any rate, signposts that were intelligible to her.

That must be the kind of unease that my husband feels when faced with any kind of religious ceremony. I now know what an act of faith our marriage must be, on his part too!

Believer

'We are all missionaries', a South American missionary said to me recently. What he meant was that, as believers, we are all called to share our faith with others. I have talked about sharing faith in action with my husband, but I think there is a deeper perspective to a marriage like ours.

During his visit to Britain in 1982 Pope John Paul spoke of inter-church marriages as images of the relationship between the different Christian Churches. Similarly, I feel that I relate to my husband as the Church does to the World. So I must not become indifferent to his non-belief, but I must not try to force him into conversion either.

One of the joys of the development in the Church since Vatican II is its greater openness to and respect for the world around it. The Church has a message to the World, but the World also has something to say to the Church. Like my husband and I, they need each other.

On Good Friday the Catholic Church prays for those who do not believe in God 'that they may find him by sincerely following all that is right'. Believers and non-believers can work together for 'all that is right', without sharing faith.

I can take this one step further. Since all goodness comes from God, someone who deliberately chooses to do what is right can be described as an 'Anonymous Christian', as the German theologian Karl Rahner put it. They may not believe in Christ or God, but, seen with the eyes of a believer, they are acting according to the mind of Christ.

For me this means that, when I put my faith into action together with my husband, perhaps by inviting someone who is lonely, then I am in a sense already sharing faith with him. He has often urged me to act in a more Christian way than I might otherwise have done. Mission is by no means a one-way process.

Practical Considerations

What would I say to a couple like us

planning to get married today? First of all, plan beyond the wedding day! It is the *first* of a whole life of days together!

Where there are considerable differences between the partners, as in the case of a Christian marrying someone who does not believe, *talk* to each other about how you plan to live your marriage.

For instance, will the non-believer have to re-organise his or her weekend because of Sunday mass? Has he or she been used to frequent weekends in the hills, far from any church?

Does the non-believer (already!) feel threatened by attempts on the part of their fiancé(e), or the in-laws, to convert them? If so this must be voiced.

What about the religious upbringing of any children? Does the Catholic feel (as I did) that they must be brought up as Catholics, because the faith is too precious not to share with one's child?

Summing up

One cannot plan for everything, but it is important to have discussed the fundamentals (especially the difficult ones!) before committing oneself to marriage. For instance, total disagreement about the religious upbringing of the children might mean that it would be better to reconsider whether to marry at all.

A Final Word

It would be unrealistic to think that a believer/non-believer marriage does not have its own special difficulties. But I would say to any couple considering this much trodden but strangely unmarked path, 'Trust in each other and in God, respect each other and *keep talking*. Then it will be an exciting and sometimes surprising road of discovery, not least for the Christian!'



Use- ful material for small group sharing which confronts situations similar to the one Anita describes, can be found in:

Family Matters: a study pack based on 'Something to Celebrate—Valuing Families in Church and Society'. Lichfield Diocese: Family Care Association, 1999.

'When a Family Member Doesn't Share your Faith' discusses the differences and tensions which may arise within family life when faith divides rather than unites. Costing £1.50, the booklet is available from:

*CARIS Office, Shallowford House, Shallowford, Stone, Staffs ST15 0NZ
Tel: 01785 761763, Fax: 01785 761764.
Email: justicecare@gn.apc.org*

The booklet also contains material for four other sessions titled respectively: Family; Marriage & cohabitation; Divorce, single parents, stepfamilies; Singles of all ages. It's certainly well worth a look. If you missed the Church of England document Something to Celebrate, the Church Times website has a summary briefing you can download : www.churchtimes.co.uk

Annette Barker is a member of the INTAMS Board

The Nazareth Page
A gospel thought for ordinary parents
August 26th, 2001 - 21st Sunday of Ordinary Time
Luke 13: 22-30



Luke's gospel is sometimes called "the gospel for everyone." Luke must have been very alert when Jesus talked about the kingdom of God being for everyone. You were invited to be a part of God's kingdom because you were a human being, loved by God. You accepted God's love for you and you pledged to live the *way* Jesus did. No one "got in" just because of family connections or nationality. This was a hard message for the Jews (and all others who continue to think something similar today) who believed that they alone were God's chosen ones.

The key passage in the gospel this week is that people will come from all directions (all kinds of history) and still enter the kingdom and "recline at table." Eating with others at the same table is the great unifier, the great equalizer.

I grew up in a large family. When our family celebrated the great feasts (Christmas, Easter and so forth), the elders sat at one table and the children at another. When I reached a certain age, I was invited to eat with the big people. As much as any other event in my life, that was a major passage.

Eating together with others is an affirmation that we are family. Who is invited to our family table, and who isn't, is a matter of great significance. Hospitality is one of the great virtues of the Christian family. For parents, treasure every meal you enjoy with your children. There will most likely come a time when they will be elsewhere and you will miss them especially at dinnertime. Families do well to think of inviting the lonely, the elderly or anyone who by circumstance usually eats alone.

It is a great act of Christian virtue to offer a place to an "outsider" at your family table. In a sense, this is the family Eucharist. This is what Jesus wanted. He wanted us all to sit around one great table and enjoy each other. Everyone!

Dr. David M. Thomas
Bethany Family Institute

Peter and his wife Alison are parents to a young son David and live in the north of England.

Families enjoy Christmas Day. And even if there are challenges, we wouldn't miss it for the world. We value Christ's birth in Bethlehem to such an extent that we are willing to take time off from work and from school to celebrate. And what a celebration we have. The same is true of Easter Day, and even Sundays have their own character.

So what is it that makes these celebrations of our faith so special? What is it about them that enables us to celebrate so fully? I believe that one of the answers is found in the word 'holiday'. One of the reasons why they are holy days is because we set them apart. If we are working fulltime then we take the day off as a holiday. If we are at home, we refrain from our normal domestic tasks. We need to spend time and energy in order to celebrate and worship God.

But why should taking time off work to celebrate and worship God be limited to Christmas, Easter and Sundays? When England was a Catholic country, people took holidays on a whole host of religious occasions throughout the year. Eamonn Duffy in his book *The Stripping of the Altar*, describes how many such Catholic practices were lost to England during the Reformation. In 1536 people were forbidden from taking holidays on feast days falling in harvest time. Of course, people were still allowed to attend mass on those days, but they were not allowed to refrain from work. In this case economic concerns were deemed more important than faith.

Henry VIII clearly has a lot to answer for, but his legacy need not rob us of our chance to really celebrate such great feasts as Ascension, Corpus Christi, St Peter and Paul and the Assumption of Our Lady. We are, in principle, free to choose to celebrate our faith by refraining from work and by throwing ourselves into celebrating our faith.

But how much do we value this freedom? Some Christians under Henry VIII were willing to die for their right to spend a whole day celebrating the mystery of their faith. They believed that their faith should order their work, not that their work should order their faith. Many of those who marched in the Pilgrimage of Grace against Henry VIII - and who were killed for so doing, marched for the privilege of expressing their faith in the way they rested from work. They recognised that true celebrations require time.

We now have the freedom to restore what was once taken from us. We can again marry our lives with our faith. Why should habit, foreign travel, convenience, or economics determine how we spend our holidays?

So on the next major feast that falls during the working week, take the day off work. Refrain from regular household tasks. Go to mass. Go for a walk. Get your children to dramatise the feast in a play. Explain to them the mysteries you are celebrating. Pray in the morning and in the evening. Invite some friends around for a meal. Celebrate in style!

Of course, not everyone will have jobs or lives that are quite this flexible. But many of us are able to take the great feasts as holidays. As they say, where there is a will there is a way.

Have you got something you want to get off your chest? We are keen to publish our members viewpoints and to establish some dialogue. Please keep your contributions short, respectful and to the point—space may be limited. Our contact details are on the inside front-page....

of Trustees and is the Director of Education for Parish Service in the Archdiocese of Southwark.

The International Academy for Marital Spirituality, (INTAMS), a Belgium foundation, is an international institute for interdisciplinary research dedicated to the study of the values, attitudes and social conditions essential to a fulfilled marriage relationship.

Originally, INTAMS expressed a desire to help the Roman Catholic Church articulate its understanding of marriage in a way which gives priority to the foundational marital relationship, rather than considering marriage as a contract which is fulfilled with procreation. The dynamic interaction of the husband and wife is central to marriage and pivotal for family life.

Beginnings

The idea for the INTAMS was born in 1987. Subsequent reflection, consultation and research resulted in the first international symposium in January 1994. The Academy was recognised as an international association according to Belgian law in December 1994. It was felt that there is a continuing need for dialogue and conversation between theoreticians, who interpret the Roman Catholic traditions and teaching on marriage and those concerned with the professional and practical aspects, including marriage couples themselves.

By continuing to provide a forum for discussion it is hoped that the resultant understanding and empathy between the disciplines will spread throughout the Church and the wider community.

Symposia

With the above desire in mind, INTAMS regularly organises international colloquia and symposia to facilitate dialogue between

various disciplines, including theology, human and natural sciences. In a formal setting papers are presented and discussed. International contributors have chosen wide ranging topics including, for example, *"Psychological Differences between Women and Men in Marriage"* a paper presented by Dr. Alfons Vansteenberghe, who is president of the Institute of Family and Sexuality Studies at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. Moral theologians have contributed a re-assessment of marriage as relationship rather than contract and Enda McDonagh, for example, considered *"Friendship, Marriage and the Risk of God"*, emphasising marriage as a personal, social and religiously meaningful relationship.

Publications

Many of the papers have been published in the bi-annual INTAMS Review - a journal dedicated to reflection on Christian marriage within the context of contemporary culture. This Review is an international periodical committed to deepening and improving the quality of married life. It is based on interdisciplinary research in an ecumenical perspective and accepts contributions in four languages (English, French, German and Italian) followed by extended summaries in translations. The INTAMS Review also includes testimonies from literature and art, biblical meditations, book reviews and various notices in the field of marital spirituality. The topics in the current INTAMS Review include, *"Discovering the Extraordinary in the Ordinary: Towards a Christian Marital Spirituality"*; (Donna Orsuto); *"The Sacramentality of Marriage as Primary Model of Discipleship"* (Thomas M Kelly); and *"Civil Same-Sex Unions: A Threat to Marriage?"* - a debate: (Mgr. A. Vingt-Trois, S. Keil et al and G. Moore). The debate considers issues around the 1994 European Parliament's resolution

urging its member states to implement legislation providing "homosexuals and lesbians" access to "marriage or an equivalent legal framework."

The aim of INTAMS is not, in the first place, to be controversial but rather to stimulate conversations between different disciplines regarding marriage in the context of Christian faith.

Collections

Closely associated with INTAMS is LIBISMA, The Library for the Interdisciplinary Study of Marriage. This library contains over 9000 books, over 100 periodicals, journals and audio-visual materials in English, German, French, Italian and Dutch. The books focus on outstanding scholarly works including anthropology, art, ethics, history, law, literature, medicine, philosophy, psychology, the social sciences and theology. There is an on-line catalogue and a thesaurus to facilitate the full use of the library's potential.

Developments

Since the inception of INTAMS many aspects have developed. In the beginning German theologians, mostly priests and a few married couples appreciated the vision of what INTAMS could become. Now the Board has seven married couples, priests and single people, from six European countries, with a vast array of academic, professional and practical expertise who are delighted to encourage the meeting of others interested in marital issues.

Cardinal Daneels, regularly visits the INTAMS meeting, as he says, "To listen so that I may learn". When his busy schedule allows he is pleased to celebrate Mass with the participants in the symposium.

Whether lay or cleric, married or not, those associated with INTAMS are deeply committed to keeping issues relating to the reality of married life in the forefront of Church and

society.

Summer School

Another contribution to this aim is achieved through the Summer School. In collaboration with Boston College, USA, the Theology Faculty of Catholic University Leuven and The Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, INTAMS is organising its second postgraduate summer course. The theme of the course this year is, *"For Love's sake? - Rethinking the Basis of Marriage"* This programme is addressed to postgraduate students from all disciplines, who are interested in an international, academic dialogue on marriage today. From 26th August to 6th September 01, participants will be in dialogue from a variety of perspectives (in English) with tutors, including Klaus Demmer and Donna Orsuto on theological, spiritual, psychological and philosophical issues relating to marriage.

The future

Fifteen years is a short time to influence the cultural inclinations of a tradition stretching back to Canaanite times. INTAMS continues to attempt to keep Gospel values fresh and alive in the contemporary culture, by emphasising the positive contribution many disciplines can make to an enriched understanding of human relationships lived out, from a faith position, in married couples' lives.

For further information about:- INTAMS, THE INTAMS REVIEW and the SUMMER SCHOOL please contact:
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E-mail: intams@skynet.be.
<http://www.intams.com>
Tel: (32) 2/359.92.02

Campaign to help families talk

The Catholic Children's Society (Westminster) has produced a resource pack 'Stop. Listen. Talk' aimed at helping family members talk with each other. The pack includes communication tips for families, compiled by family therapists and child psychotherapists from the society.

Director Jim Richards said: "In this busy world, it is hard to find time for ourselves and for each other, and quite possible to live our lives alongside our nearest and dearest, but yet not know as much about them or their concerns as we think we do.

This may work for us until we encounter problems, but overcoming problems experienced by an individual within a family or by the whole family can be far more difficult when even the most basic communication has broken down."

Besides the communication tips, the pack includes fundraising ideas to bring families together with a common purpose - that of raising money for those families in need who approach the society for help each year.

The society also points out that 'families' can comprise immediate and extended families or the family of the workplace/parish/leisure activity.

For more information or for a copy of the pack, please contact Patricia Hatton at the Catholic Children's Society on e-mail: patriciah@cathchild.org.uk

On the move...or not ?

We are pleased to hear that Sr Anne Conway is remaining as Co-ordinator of Family Life Ministry in the Diocese of Leeds for the time being. However, Sr Mairead Hourigan, Co-ordinator in the Diocese of Menevia for the past three years has returned to Ireland to take up a new post. She will be sorely

missed, not least for her warmth, generosity and stoicism.

Family-Faith Study

A full research report (initial findings summarized in this issue) should be available in mid/late October. We are planning to incorporate some material for study or reflection purposes which will relate findings with the church document *On The Family*. All fully paid up members should receive a free copy, but we will keep you posted on that one !

Celebrating Family Life

Are you planning to mark the 20th anniversary of *Familiaris Consortio* at all ? We heard that in Hallam, Sue Tym and Martin Harpham are putting together a special family edition of the Diocesan news-paper that month.

We'd like to hear about anything you are planning, whether large or small scale. It could help give others ideas. Think back to the Jubilee of families and do something similar—or adapt a National Marriage Week idea to encompass the whole family. We'll put all ideas up on our web-site.

"Thanks to love within the family, the Church can and ought to take on a more homelike and family dimension, developing a more human and fraternal style of relationships."

John Paul II, *On the Family*

Additional news items
supplied courtesy of
Independent Catholic News
www.indcatholicnews.com

Familiarity breeds contempt - or does it?

David Mackey

David and his wife Maggie are parents of four; one of David's many occupations involves supporting marriage and family life in the Diocese of Galloway, Scotland.

Watching a television inter-school quiz competition with the kids the other day, this question was asked, "What does 'familiarity' mean?" My daughter and her friend said, "That's something to do with families, isn't it?" The schoolboy didn't know the answer. The quiz-master told him "It means close knowledge or acquaintance with." That set me thinking.

'Familiarity' does come from the same word as 'family', so of course it is about closeness and knowledge and friendship. But why do we say it 'breeds contempt'?

Virtually always we take important things in our lives for granted - our parents, our families, our friends, our community etc. But 'taking things for granted' demeans them and treats them with disdain or even contempt. Jesus said "The poor are always with us" - so we just accept they are there and do nothing about their plight!

I wondered how, if push came to shove, we would really treat our families - with contempt or with the respect they really deserve?

A family we know has just adopted a six-year-old boy. He came from a very difficult background and had stayed with them for about nine months before they went to the Sheriff for the adoption to be confirmed. It was the lad's BIG DAY - how big none of us realised until a little later!

He went to a party and wanted the toilet (all 6-year-olds do!). A friend took him and making conversation on the way back said to him, "I hear you saw the Sheriff the other day?" "Yes," "What did he say?" The boy beamed, "He said I could stay with Mum and Dad for ever and ever." Our friend filled up at these words.

Perhaps that child is teaching us all a huge lesson - how to value what we have. Surely our family (warts and all) is one of the most important things we have. So let **our** family breed love, compassion, sharing and belonging for all its members. And let's show the world what that really means.



We've seen a pre-publication copy of a new resource called "Everybody's Welcome". It's produced by Churches Together for Families and is really useful for helping churches become more family-friendly. It contains tools for them to examine what they already do, and can begin to do, to support families, plus case studies for small group discussion, a list of characteristics of family friendly churches, and steps to take on the journey. It also provides leads to other resources that would be of use. Definitely worth a look.

However, we are not quite sure when or how this is to be published so you will just have to watch out for it. Try contacting Sue Burrige, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ. Tel: 020 7898 1000

Book Reviews

The Fourth R for the Third Millennium: Education in Religion and Values for the Global Future, edited by Leslie J. Francis, Jeff Astley and Mandy Robbins on behalf of The International Seminar on Religious Education and Values (ISREV). Lindisfarne Books, 2001

The ISREV (an international ecumenical group) has been meeting at two yearly intervals and seeks to raise the quality of research into religious education and to influence the development of the subject in the various countries represented. This is the edited highlights of the 1998 gathering and is a collection of academic papers, a description which should act as a health warning to anyone seeking insights into what actually may be happening within the classroom RE setting. Its title, taken from a Church of England report *The Fourth R* (1970), seeks to resurrect the main thesis of that document that religious education has intrinsic worth for the education of all children and young people even in the *post-modern* age.

Leslie Francis reworks his data from an earlier well known piece of research but does so in a way that uses his very substantial data base to demonstrate that the religious tradition, attitudes and values of modern society prevail through *religious affiliation* which still renders religion as socially significant.

Francis' is one of the few examples where empirical research has informed the argument. Jeff Astley's own contribution argues that quality religious education can make a contribution to scientific understanding in the search for "meaningfulness". My own experience of Jeff Astley's work is that he is at his best in this kind of synthesis from a diversity of sources. An essay of seventeen pages with ten pages of bibliography is surely a triumph of academic synthesis, even at this kind of intellectual Olympics.

I mention these important contributions but remain divided between Brian V. Hill's "God and Youth in the Global Village: an Update" and Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore's "Richness in Religious Education: Ethnic, Religious and Bio-Diversity" as the most important contributions to this crystal ball type of

exercise. Hill looks at the implications for RE of "Generation X" or the "NetGen", that generation that looks disdainfully at any adult who requires help to programme a video machine but which, critically, has a global outlook fuelled by access to and the ability to assimilate the exponential explosion of knowledge. He does not lose sight of those who are excluded from the knowledge. Moore alludes to this diversity among the many that exists on our planet and seeks to re-engage our Religious Education with the "cries of pain of the neglected". Her own cry is that we learn to "*dance with difference ... and respect the richness of divine creation*" by "*seeking convergence, building community and acting boldly*." One rarely expects such inspirational contributions in such a volume.

This book is not for light reading, nor will it provide answers to the more obvious questions about Religious Education but it will nevertheless reward the student of Religious Education who is seeking to make sense of the challenges that face the RE teacher in the Third Millennium. Perhaps it should be compulsory reading for those tempted to underestimate the task of Religious Education in the Third Millennium.

Willie Slavin, Assistant Editor,
Networking: Catholic Education Today

On the Body: A Contemporary Theology of the Human Person, by Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, (Cardinal of the Diocese of Milan and former rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute and the Gregorian University in Rome) New York, The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2000

Human life comes into existence, and remains so, through the power of love. At its root, we find God's love and human love mysteriously and wonderfully bound together through God's powerful grace. This principle of origin and survival relates to all the aspects of our life.

This work focuses on bodily part of our life. It offers us a rich and nourishing meal of theological delights focused on the meaning of our human body.

Living and ministering as he does from what some call the fashion capital of the world, Milan, Italy, Cardinal Martini is acutely aware of the adornments created for the body, and the meaning of body in a superficial and all too secularised culture. Against this background, he sketches a beautiful portrait of the human body as created by God.

He is concerned about *meaning* and how our contemporary world is losing an appreciation and understanding of the importance of the body as well as its God-intended role for our sanctification and happiness.

Allow me to give you a couple of starters (to continue the meal metaphor) which, I hope, will motivate you to pick up this work.

"What I can say is that my body, and my face in particular, are like the outline and the history of my spirit." (page 35)

"Clay and breath are thus bound together in a state of tension because the spirit needs the flesh to express itself, and the flesh, the body, cannot transcend itself without the breath of life." (page 38)

"For just as the body of Jesus is a revelation of glory, the Invisible made visible, the narration of God among humankind, so our body, a totality comprised of flesh and spirit, is meant to be a mirror in which divine beauty is reflected." (page 39)

Martini is not writing for the fashion designers, but for Christians who seek a deeper appreciation of their lives. He does a masterful job of combining the sensual, the human and the spiritual dimensions of our lives. And the human body has all these dimensions too.

I particularly like how he outlines the extremes of understanding the body, which have confused us down through the centuries. Spiritualism saw the body as if in a prison, an enemy, and a part of us that was only part of the world, but not part of our Christian life. At the other extreme he describes materialism which sees the human body as not much more than a sophisticated machine.

Like the fine theologian he is, he finds the truth combining body and spirit by showing not only the importance of both in our lives, but he also gives a persuasive explanation of why the Word of God became flesh. He concludes his book with some profound thoughts of the resurrection of the body, the body of Jesus and ours. If you want a rich, nourishing and highly satisfying discussion of the bodily aspect of our Christian life, here is a place where it's wonderfully presently. Like a beautiful Italian meal.

David M. Thomas
Director: Bethany Family Institute.

Sowing the Seeds of Love: Spirituality for young children by Josephine Feeney
Lion, 1999, ISBN 07459 3911 2

Simple and accessible enough even for sleep-deprived parents, Josephine Feeney offers a personal viewpoint which brings a spiritual approach to issues such as tantrums, sleepless nights and toilet-training, and a practical approach to church-going and prayer, emphasising gentleness, simplicity and joy.

While brevity and a personal, anecdotal approach make for a very easy read, this does mean, I feel, that issues are sometimes skated over, and the subjects picked for discussion are only a random selection out of the many possibilities.

The detailed analysis of provision for children in the author's local churches, for instance, is interesting for those of us who are concerned with organising such provision, but may be of questionable relevance to parents who have to put up with whatever there is - or isn't!

Nevertheless, for anyone new to parenthood or feeling uncertain about the place of faith in their family life this book could provide ideas, encouragement, and some very valuable insights.

Alison Bath
(Mother of three), Todmorden

Spirituality @ Work: 10 Ways to Balance Your Life on-the-Job, by Gregory F. A. Pierce. Chicago, Illinois, USA: Loyola Press. ISBN 0-8294-1349-9.

Gregory Pierce is a businessman who takes his faith to work at Chicago's ACTA Publications. He writes *Spirituality @ Work* for those whose workplaces fail comparison to cathedrals or hermitages.

Shunning theological jargon, Pierce describes a "spirituality for the piety impaired," ten strategies for finding God (encountering God's real presence) during the workday. They rely on simple tools like the smattering of old metal printer's blocks Pierce positions in a desktop corner to remind him of the integrity and history of his publishing profession. His strategies are disciplined daily routines that balance acceptance of imperfection with persistent striving for quality, justice, and a sense of shared redemption. In so many of his parables about workers and workplaces (for instance, vineyards) says Pierce, "Jesus seemed to be saying that if we think we have done enough, we have not, and if we think we have not done enough, we already have."

Dan Gast,
Associate Director of Catechetical Services,
Loyola Press, Chicago

Engaged to be Married: A gift book, edited by Joanna Bogle. Leominster: Gracewing Publishing, 2001 ISBN: 0852444974

The book consists of six chapters; each written by a different person. It is full of information and is presented as a gift book for engaged couples.

As you would expect, each chapter is written in a very different style. The first and last chapters we found rather hard going. Although both contained a lot of good insights, each was written in a rather factual 'encyclical' way.

The middle chapters, on 'The Domestic Church', 'Sexuality' and 'Natural Family Planning' were good and much easier to read. They put over well the Church's mentality and teachings. To me (Pauline) the best chapter was the fifth written by

Elizabeth Gawor. This covered the area of Marriage and Family with an emphasis on parenting. It was down to earth, livened up by personal experiences and made informative and enjoyable reading. On the other hand, Patrick found the chapter on NFP to be excellent, since it put the subject over in a clear but honest way. This chapter would be very helpful to those covering NFP in engaged preparation courses.

On the whole however, in our view, the book, although good, would not appeal to the majority of today's worldly wise engaged couples. We very much doubt whether they would persevere beyond the first chapter. Yet for those couples who are of a more devout nature or well educated and eager to learn all they can, the book would have considerable appeal and make good and informative reading.

Patrick & Pauline Haynes
Marriage Preparation Facilitators,
Diocese of Westminster (Herts Area)

New on our bookshelf.....

Sex and love in the home. David Matzko McCarthy. London, SCM Press, 2001 ISBN: 0334028426

Review on child protection in the Catholic Church in England and Wales: First report. (Nolan Report—no bibliographic citation provided)

Escaping the family time trap: a practical guide for over-busy families. Barbara DeGrote-Sorensen and David Allen Sorensen. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2001 ISBN:0806638133

Embracing sexuality. Edited by Joseph Selling. Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2001 ; ISBN: 0754617165

Guilt-free parenting: you, your children and their Catholic faith. A series on video and audio by David Wells, DRE Plymouth Diocese. Catholic Evangelisation Services. (Set of 7 videos)

Forthcoming in December 2001:

Celebrating Christian Marriage, edited by Adrian Thatcher. Continuum International Publishing Group - Academic and Professional; ISBN: 0567088200

Coming in our next issue...due out Oct 2001:

A special report from the international Marriage & Family Life symposium, Enduring Truths, Changing Realities

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