

Just between Us...

Newsletter of the Bethany Family Institute
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Volume 2, Issue 2
ISSN: 1473-7035
Apr 2001

Easter is the season of hope. Hope is a great gift in anyone's language but especially in the language of love. Our family relationships can be hard. Intimacy brings the possibility of deep pain as well as pure delight. Is there anyone who has not experienced exhaustion and frustration in their family life? We are only human after all. In this Easter season we pray for strength, to seek for and nourish the divine gift of hope, so that love will prevail even in the midst of family turmoil.



"The Lord is calling you to be leaders of a new season of hope"

A second UN Year of the Family has been announced for 2004. In 1994 Pope John Paul made the following invitation: "To you, Families, I repeat: Be not afraid: The Lord is calling you to be leaders of a new season of hope in the Christian community and in the world." Much has happened since then as you can see from this issue. On page three we have a review of the progress made in Ireland. On page seven we have a vision statement produced in England and Wales. It's clear that we now have a developing theology as well as experience in the area of family ministry. So we all should be much better placed to utilise the profile that the 2nd UN year will offer. But there is still a long way to go before families feel affirmed as leaders of this new season of hope.

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Thanks for your positive response

to our National Marriage Week material included in the last issue. We intend to offer more resources along these lines. Already on the drawing board are resources for Parenting Week and for the Bishops Day For Life. So watch this space, as they say! Happy Easter!

Visit us at: www.bethanyfamilyinstitute.com

Diary Dates

- April 22nd Rainbows Fund Raising Fortnight! (Until May 3rd) Please can you help? Contact Tia Dcaccia for a copy of the fund raising pack at RAINBOWS National Office, 17 Market Square, Higham Ferrers, Northants NN10 8DJ. Tel: 01933 355175 Fax: 01933 355181 email: rainbows.dc@virgin.net
- April 27th How to 'Do' Family Life Ministry. Facilitator: Elizabeth Davies. (Diocese of Menevia Parish Family Ministers meeting. St Mary's Parish Centre, Carmarthen. Contact: Peter Macpherson Tel: 01792 644017. Email: peter.macpherson@barbicanmarketing.co.uk
- May 11th Finding God in the Chaos of Family Life. Facilitator: Dr David M. Thomas. Bethany Seminar for the Diocese of Shrewsbury. St Thomas More High School, Crewe. Contact: Clara Donnelly Tel/Fax: 0151 691 2811. Email: cc@donnelly-grosvenor.freereserve.co.uk
- July 4th-7th God is in our House: Christian Family Movement US National Convention. Miami, Florida. For more information, contact Bob and Anne Tomonto via e-mail at vicepresident@cfm.org.
- July 5th-7th The Family Web: a weekend residential conference to explore issues that affect family relationships. The Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, Derbyshire. Contact: FLAME, 60 Marsham St, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1EW Email: flame@csr.org.uk Web: www.flame.ukfamily.com
- July 14th-18th Rainbows Registered Director Training. Thornton College, Buckinghamshire. For further information contact Robin Cooper or Tia Dcaccia at RAINBOWS National Office, 17 Market Square, Higham Ferrers, Northants NN10 8DJ. Tel: 01933 355175 Fax: 01933 355181 email: rainbows.dc@virgin.net
- Sept 29th - Oct 1st NACFLM Pre-Conference Training: Ministry with Families. Kansas City, KS www.nacflm.org
- Oct 2nd-5th Rhythms of the Heart. NACFLM 22nd Annual Conference. Kansas City, Missouri. Presenters: J. Glenn Murray, SJ, Arun Gandhi, Eileen Raffaniello Barbella. www.nacflm.org
- Oct 21st-27th Parents Week: Images of Families. See page 6 for further information.
- Nov 2nd-3rd Rainbows Continuing Professional Development Training for Registered Directors

Have you any dates for us ? Please let us know - we would be pleased to advertise them in *Just between Us* and on our website - for free!!

The following report on the current position of family ministry in Ireland was compiled for the Irish Bishops. We are therefore very grateful for the opportunity to reprint it here and to reflect on all the work of has been accomplished to support family life in that part of the world.

Prelude: Recent Church Responses to Family

There was a growing sense of void in the Church in the 1960s and 70s as Sodalties and traditional devotions became less popular. Into the void came movements like Cursillo, Focolare, Christian Family Movement, Marriage Encounter, and Teams of Our Lady. They served, and continue to serve, a useful purpose, and were good examples of the ministry of like to like which had been encouraged by Vatican II. They also brought their own tensions, however, in that they did not fit into parish or diocesan structures, so there was often a danger of a cocoon developing in which people talked the same jargon and the organisation almost became the members' church. But these movements did highlight needs which had now surfaced for a deeper, more relevant spirituality; needs which were not being catered for by official church structures.

This was recognised in the United States by the Call to Action in 1975 – the first large-scale consultation of the Catholic laity in the world. The responses to this consultation, however, were unexpected. The Church had expected support for its traditional priorities – Catholic education and the fight against abortion. Neither of these two figured in the top eight priorities of the laity. People were asking instead for things like support in bringing up children and support for single parents. It became obvious that the definition of family now needed to be widened to include single parents, widowed, separated and divorced people – also the elderly, and single people who were not parents. It also became obvious that there was a serious imbalance in 90% of church funds being spent on child-centred education.

The concerns of the laity were listened to and taken seriously. As a result of the consultation, the US bishops came up with the Decade of the Family in the 1980s. It was obvious by now that this area of ministry was vast, so the bishops

attempted to cope with this vastness by setting out six major areas of family ministry

1. **Ministry for Married Couples**
2. **Ministry for Premarrieds and Single People**
3. **Ministry for Parents**
4. **Ministry for 'Developing' Families**
5. **Ministry for Leadership Couples & Families**
6. **Ministry for 'Hurting' Families**

The Decade of the Family led to considerable new thinking about effective family ministry (reflected in publications of the US Catholic Conference such as *Family-Centred Catechesis* and *A Family Perspective in Church and Society*.) Many people are now employed to work in family ministry at parish and diocesan level and there is a national co-ordinating body, the *National Association of Family Life Ministers* (NACFLM) which provides resources, inspiration and mutual support as well as organising a vibrant annual Conference. There is also a growing consensus between the Christian Churches in the US about what constitutes effective family ministry and what its implications are. This is reflected in Dr Diana Garland's recent book, 'Family Ministry,' which is already widely accepted as a blueprint for ministry to families and may be essential reading for people engaged in this ministry. A fundamental concept in her book is that family ministry needs to be driven by family spirituality.

The Irish Situation

There was no similar lay consultation in Ireland, but it became obvious that there were also dramatic changes affecting family life in this country. The most significant church response was in the area of marriage preparation and the provision of counselling for couples through CMAC (now Accord). The history of this initiative is well documented in Philip Leonard's book on the subject.

The response to other family needs was slower. Many schools, with the support of diocesan RE advisers, provided talks for parents in preparation for First Communion and Confirmation. A mere talk without good adult education involvement, however, can only have limited effect. The powerful blueprint for living contained in the teaching of Vatican II and *Familiaris Consortio* (particularly in

the concept of 'church of the home') has filtered down only to very few families.

In the 1980s new Church initiatives began to emerge. In Cork and Ross, for example, Sr Mary Dineen was appointed director of family ministry and began training lay people to run parenting courses and minister to bereaved families. She was remarkably successful in reaching families both in the county towns and in rural areas of west Cork. She has now been succeeded by lay people working part-time who have been well trained and receive some funding from the diocese to co-ordinate family ministry.

Other dioceses also began appointing people to family ministry and some of them, particularly religious sisters, showed great initiative in involving and training lay people to respond to many of the family needs detailed above, including counselling, family therapy, drugs education and (more recently) accredited training of lay people. The vast majority of those involved work voluntarily as there is little funding available, but in some dioceses (like Galway) parents are charged for parenting courses so that facilitators can be paid to run them. Fourteen of the 26 Irish dioceses are now affiliated to the Association of Family Ministry Directors of Ireland - and some of the other dioceses are also doing important work for families.

The support provided by some of these initiatives was so professional that they began to attract State funds. Today, for example, the four Family Centres in Elphin, with Fr. Brian Conlon at the helm of the flagship in Boyle, receive considerable State funding. But most family ministry projects are poorly funded and are co-ordinated by part-time people, often a priest or religious sister who already has a full-time job and feels frustrated by time restrictions in responding to obvious needs. Apart from support for Accord's marriage education and counselling and a few notable exceptions, there seems to be a reluctance to make adequate funding available for employment and training of co-coordinators to develop a full-blown family ministry. Experience at diocesan or parish level shows that things tend to happen only when there is a committed, competent and trained person co-ordinating an initiative and particularly when this work is recognised by adequate funding.

The reluctance to fund family ministry may in part be a reflection of the tension between what are perceived to be 'spiritual' and 'secular' family needs. The State is now showing interest in saving

money on remedial care of the family by increasingly providing for the preventive care of families. This raises the question as to whether the 'secular' care of the family (like support for parenting and bereavement and the fostering of good relationships between the members of a family) should be left to the State alone. Some people argue that the role of the Church is best limited to the religious needs of the family. This false dichotomy between the secular and the spiritual seems to exclude a holistic both/and approach.

What is happening today

This overview of the current situation and the background to it concludes with a brief summary of the work currently being done by Diocesan Family Ministry Directors throughout Ireland. We would like to emphasise that this is only a brief summary: a fuller picture of the considerable work being done may be obtained from the individual dioceses.

PARENTING

In almost all of the Irish dioceses parenting courses are being provided, mainly to parents of children attending Catholic schools - to parents of preschoolers, of national school children and of teenagers. In the past decade over 80,000 parents have taken a course. This is vastly more than Health Board initiatives or voluntary organisations like Barnardos have provided. Lack of finance for co-ordination and for adequate training of facilitators has undermined this initiative, however, and led to a gradual fall-off in interest in many areas of the country. A diocesan Family Ministry office has often been the only effective mechanism for maintaining the impetus, for example through an organisation like 'Families First' in Down and Connor which operates under the umbrella of the Family Ministry office. In the Dublin archdiocese, tens of thousands of parents have attended courses thanks to the initiative of the Diocesan RE Advisers, but there was no family ministry office to offer in-service or follow-up support and co-ordination. Sadly, there is now much less parent education happening in Dublin because individual schools and volunteers lacked support and gradually lost energy and enthusiasm. Many parenting courses are still being offered where there is adequate co-ordination, as in Cork and Ross, Kildare and Leighlin, Down and Connor, Galway and a few other dioceses.

One-to-one counselling of parents is also provided in some areas (like Achonry). In Dowdstown House (Meath diocese) there is a full year's course for a hundred parents run by the diocese, and many hundreds of parents attend courses in the Family Centres in Elphin and Tuam.

BEREAVEMENT

Another major Church initiative has been in the area of bereavement. Many dioceses have:

- sponsored the BEGINNING EXPERIENCE for widowed/separated people.
- trained facilitators for RAINBOWS offered to bereaved children in many parts of the country - for example in five centres annually in Kilmore. (Kilmore also provides counselling for children affected by the splitting up of parents.)
- set up bereavement support groups for adults (including groups for those bereaved by suicide)
- trained and supported parish-based bereavement groups (16 people, for example, have recently been trained in Raphoe)
- offered CRUSE-trained one-to-one bereavement counselling and care (Tuam, for example, offers the latter in 5 centres throughout the archdiocese).
- Provided a bereavement helpline, notably in Kilmore.

MARRIAGE

The Family Ministry Association complements the work of Accord, sometimes closely linked with it as in Ferns and in Ardagh and Clonmacnoise, sometimes co-operating loosely with it (Tuam runs marriage enrichment days for about 70 couples in co-operation with Accord). In some diocesan Family Centres, for example, pre-marriage courses are offered to people with complicated issues, or counselling is offered after marriage breakdown. A few dioceses also offer Marriage Enrichment courses (Cork and Ross, Down and Connor).

A number of dioceses, thanks to a Dublin diocesan initiative under Fr Martin Tierney, offer Retrouvaille Weekends (plus the follow-up programme) for couples who have difficulties or who have separated and now want to reconsider. Achonry offers Couples Therapy, Meath has a Prism group for separated parents, Elphin has an annual celebration of marriage anniversaries in Boyle. Down and Connor has supported the devel-

opment of parish-based marriage preparation teams.

COUNSELLING

- A professional counselling service (employing psychologists and trained counsellors) is provided in a number of dioceses (including Tuam, Elphin, Achonry, Clonfert and Raphoe)
- Counselling is also offered at a more local level or as a parish initiative in some areas like Ardoyne in Belfast and in Waterford and Lismore.
- A counselling course is run in Dowdstown House (Meath diocese) to train people in basic listening skills.
- The 'Hope Alive' Programme is being offered in Derry and Kilmore.

FAMILY SPIRITUALITY

There is a reluctance to 'poach' on the territory of Diocesan RE Advisers, but there are also a growing number of initiatives to offer family spirituality.

- Many dioceses offer short courses or retreats for parents. Raphoe, for example, offers a *Preparing for Easter* course and a *Reflective Living - for Christmas* course as well as a *Twilight Retreat* (attended by 250 people in the past year). Elphin, in addition to lectures, offers spiritual direction, courses in meditation, Advent and Lenten prayer courses and occasional prayer services. Other dioceses offer spiritual direction, courses (and training) in Lectio Divina and in praying with Scripture.
- Armagh diocese, in co-operation with other diocesan ministries and the Diocesan RE Adviser, has developed a 4-session Family Spirituality course for parents of children making their Confirmation. This is currently being piloted and Kerry diocese has already committed itself to training facilitators to run it next year. Armagh diocese also provides ideas for family enrichment through a bi monthly newsletter to parishes.

DRUGS EDUCATION AND PREVENTION

In some dioceses, notably Kerry and Tuam, there is an effective link between Health Boards and the diocesan family ministry office in offering drugs education. (In Kerry, drugs education is also offered as part of some parenting programmes.) In Meath, the Aisling Drugs Awareness Group pro-

vides support for parents and counselling for those who are addicted.

Addiction counselling is offered in Kilmore through local schools, and in a number of dioceses (Armagh, Down and Connor) the Pioneer Association provides workshops on alcohol for young people in post primary schools.

TRAINING

All these initiatives require extensive training, so training is a major area of concern for family ministry co-ordinators, particularly training for facilitators of parenting programmes and for bereavement support - and the very extensive training for 'Hope Alive.' A vital aspect of this is in-service training for all volunteers. To date only some dioceses have the resources to provide in-service.

A particularly interesting development in Down and Connor is the Certificate in Family Ministry currently being run at St Mary's University College, Belfast - to be followed soon with the launch of a Higher Certificate. It is hoped through this to train lay people, not just to facilitate individual programmes but to undertake professional family ministry in the Church. Down and Connor will shortly be offering training in family life vision too, targeting pastoral councils, individuals and teams.

Appendix: The six areas of family ministry targeted by the US bishops (in more detail)

It is more than twenty years since the US bishops and their advisers drew up the six areas of family ministry below. In the intervening years, awareness of needs has increased and, for example, ministry to hurting families below would obviously include gay and lesbian people.

1. Ministry for Married Couples (Newlyweds; anniversary programmes; Natural Family Planning; marriage enrichment; spiritual direction; retreats; marriage and retirement.)

2. Ministry for Premarrieds and Single People (including support groups, retreats and programmes.)

3. Ministry for Parents (Parent education at the different stages of the family life cycle, including single parenting and grand parenting; sacramental preparation, parent-school associations, pregnancy counselling.)

4. Ministry for 'Developing' Families. Parent-infant education; preventive approach to problems;

Family weekends/retreats; enrichment programmes, family spirituality development programmes, family networks & growth groups, family liturgies, sex-education, ageing family programmes.

5. Ministry for Leadership Couples & Families

Leadership training and development, skills training, burnout prevention programmes, clergy-lay teamwork support groups.

6. Ministry for 'Hurting' Families Programmes for bereavement; family reconciliation; support for disabled, ageing, separated, divorced widowed families, for drugs/alcohol abuse, poverty and deprivation (family to family).

Parents' Week 2002

Parents' Week 2002 runs from Monday 21 October to Sunday 27 October 2002. The theme for the third national Parents' Week is "Images of Families" and the week aims to look at the ways in which families are perceived and portrayed in Britain today.

Parents' Week is for everyone involved with families: carers, parents, grandparents and children, local and regional groups, and national organisations. Parents' Week is an annual campaign to raise awareness of parents and families, recognising and celebrating the importance of bringing up children. With widespread attention in the media, and from policymakers and professionals, Parents' Week focuses attention on the needs and concerns of parents, and aims to make Britain more family-friendly.

The week gives people working with families the chance to highlight the work they do, bringing their services to the attention of those who need them, and attracting support from their local community. If you would like to register to take part, please contact the NFPI. Later in the year they will be distributing Parents' Week 2002 packs which will include display materials, templates and tips to use with the press and media, plus facts and figures on the family.

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THIS IS WHAT WE ARE ABOUT

A STATEMENT BY THE MARRIAGE & FAMILY LIFE MINISTRY CO-ORDINATORS
OF THE NORTHERN REGION OF ENGLAND AND WALES

INTRODUCTION

We see Marriage and Family Life Ministry as a significant and transforming movement in the Church and a catalyst for the renewal of Christian community and the world. In essence, this ministry is the ministry of Christian relationship. Its theological foundation is: "Love one another as I have loved you." We recognise that family - how ever family is defined - is where we learn to relate, whether well or poorly, to self, to others, to God and so we place pro-active, pastoral care of the family at the heart of this ministry.

VISION STATEMENT

***Family Life Ministry is at the service of all families,
supporting the growth of loving, life-enhancing relationships.***

AIMS OF FAMILY LIFE MINISTRY

1. To raise awareness of the sacramental nature and mission of Christian marriage and the importance of the "domestic church" as the basic cell of Christian community.
2. To raise awareness of the realities now facing families and seek appropriate pastoral response.
3. To help family members develop their potential for nurturing and healing Christian relationships and for witnessing the good news of family in their homes and in the wider community.
4. To call families to active ministry in the service of marriage and family life and thereby in the service of evangelisation and to see that this is adequately supported and formed.
5. To promote structures at all levels of church life to facilitate marriage and family life ministry

TOWARDS A STRUCTURE

We support Pope John Paul's conviction: "It is especially necessary to recognise the unique place that, in this field, belongs to the mission of married couples and Christian families, by virtue of the grace received in the sacrament. This mission must be placed at the service of the building up of the church, the establishing of the Kingdom of God in history." F.C.71

The family is, before all, the basic, vital cell of Christian life and love. Our sense is that if we get family right, we get church right. Our experience tells us that affirmed, celebrated and missioned family ministers have great energising potential for leading families towards a new appreciation of themselves, their worth and their mission and towards community building and church renewal.

M & FL Ministry invites family people - husbands, wives, parents, children - to believe in their own goodness and to **recognise the mission of family** "to form persons in love and also to practise love in all its relationships, so that it does not live closed in on itself but remains open to the community, moved by a sense of justice and concern for others, as well as by a consciousness of its responsibility towards the whole of society." F.C.64

The ministry structures opportunities for families to **realise their mission** through sharing their gifts of married love, parenting wisdom and family faith, in ministry to family, to the Christian community and in the world.

Marriage and Family Life Ministry

- is essentially collaborative in character.
- invites appropriate and responsible lay participation and leadership in ministry, thus helping to redress the burdensome imbalance of clerical leadership/lay followership, with its damaging consequences for both groups.
- fosters respect for every person and calls people to identify, acknowledge and share their unique gifts in ministry to others.
- thrives on like-to-like ministry.

"The future of the world and of the church passes through the family." F.C.75

Repeatedly, Pope John Paul emphasises "the pastoral intervention of the Church in support of family is a matter of urgency. Every effort should be made to strengthen and develop pastoral care for the family, which should be treated as a real matter of priority, **in the certainty that future evangelisation depends largely on the Domestic Church.**" F.C.65

Present political, economic and cultural systems fail in many respects to support family life.

Now is a particularly opportune time for the Church:

- to adopt a very public role as Christian advocate for the family
- to raise awareness of the realities now facing families
- to proffer highly identifiable and solid pastoral care centred on the importance of family, "centre and heart of the civilisation of love"
- to foster collaborative action to promote a pro-marriage, pro-parent and pro-family culture.

This is what we are about. This is what Marriage and Family Life Ministry is about.

The Bethany Beaker Award 2002

In our last issue we were pleased to announce the award of the first Bethany 'Beaker' for an outstanding contribution to family and family life ministry to Michael and Terri Quinn of the Family Caring Trust, Newry, Co Down. In actual fact Terri and Mickey will receive a beaker each as befits their individual worthiness! The following articles will, we hope, illustrate just why Mickey & Terri's work is so deserving of our attention, gratitude and recognition. We begin with two personal profiles of the Quinns, followed by a summary of the work of Family Caring.

ESPECIALLY WONDERFUL PEOPLE

There is something very inspiring about unassuming people, who see a need, form a vision of what might be a useful response and then work selflessly to make that vision a reality.

Michael and Terri Quinn are such people. My seventeen year old career in Family Life Ministry has been nourished by their caring and commitment and my ministry and I owe a great debt to their on-going and generous support in the good times and the bad. Indeed, one of the qualities that makes them so special is their awareness and affirmation of those of us who work at the coalface of Family Ministry.

The birth of the Quinns' Family Caring Trust marked a watershed in the history of family ministry in the British Isles. It introduced a pro-active attitude towards family relationship education, which continues to affirm, inform and enrich family life.

FCT's range of family relationship programmes remains the most valuable resource in my Family Ministry "tool-box". (Clearly designed and user-friendly, engaging participants in a variety of adult learning methods, these programmes lead couples/parents to recognise their strengths and promote peer ministry, through reflection and discussion on couple/parent-child relationships.)

The greatest joy of my Family Ministry involvement has been to see so many parents recognise their worth and grow in self-confidence, through participation in a FCT parenting programme. The fruits of these programmes are truly wonderful. When I say this to Michael, with his typical simplicity and gentleness, he says thank you and then turns the compliment around to say that FCT would go nowhere, if there weren't workers, like me, in the field, using FCT resources. All I can say is how great it is, as a worker in the field, to have such tested, tried and relevant resources to bring to people.

The success of FCT undoubtedly lies in the authenticity of the materials produced by Michael and Terri, who have put their own experience of marriage and family at the service of enriching family relationships and promoting family life. This gift of themselves, with all the love, faith, energy and dedication involved, has had a profound influence on thousands of families, not only in the British Isles but also around the world.

I am delighted to acknowledge Michael and Terri's highly significant and pro-active contribution towards acknowledging, affirming and supporting the value of family life. It is my great pleasure to congratulate them on being first recipients of the Bethany Beaker Award.

Anne Conway, OSU
Diocese of Leeds Family Life Ministry

Michael and Terri Quinn: An appreciation by two friends.

Mary and Pat Cunningham, Newry , Co. Down

We have known Michael and Terri for over twenty five years. During this time they have graced our lives with their friendship. Initially, through their pioneering work in Marriage Encounter they introduced us to the relevance of the sacrament of matrimony in our church. They encouraged us, and many others to work for the support of married couples. They worked tirelessly at this time for the spread of Marriage Encounter and the support programmes for single young adults and teenagers.

Gradually they became aware, through listening to couples, of the need of support for parents. They began to devise parenting programmes dealing with the various stages of child development. During this period, though they had heavy family commitments, they found time to take a Masters Degree in Family Ministry. A vast amount of time was spent on the research as they tapped into the latest thinking on family systems and child development. Groups of parents and professionals were invited to run pilot schemes. We live close to the Quinns so we were usually invited to the pilot programmes. We really enjoyed learning new skills, but our growing family were usually a bit sceptical about what we would "try out on them next". I remember they loved the idea of negotiating their pocket money and bedtime but weren't happy about taking more responsibility in the area of chores. The programmes are about real life situations and are skills based while stating that there is no one "right way" to bring up children as each child is different and each family is different.

Pat and I found the programmes invaluable as we were often floundering ourselves in our attempts to parent a growing family. The lovely thing for us personally was that we knew that the Quinns were the first to acknowledge that they were not the perfect parents nor had they the perfect family. We sensed that we were all journeying together. We were able to share our disappointments and our joys with them and feel accepted and understood. They would always say that they too were struggling to be "good enough parents." In recent years I (Mary) have been privileged to facilitate Family Caring Trust Training Seminars with Michael. What has struck me forcibly each time is his humility and respect for people and their ideas.

Some years ago they invited us to their home to hear about Ignatian Spirituality. From this meeting with people who were trained in this form of spirituality, Terri gathered a core group and organised training sessions with the Jesuits. Out of this was born a prayer ministry, which offered guided retreats and adult faith development in parishes. We were aware of the huge amount of time and energy that Terri expended in this work. We loved the way she gathered people and delegated authority while remaining very much in the background. People began to take on leadership roles as they became empowered by her leadership. In fact this empowering of people has been the hallmark of Terri and Michael's life.

One of Michael's gifts is his sense of fun. His teasing and joking has kept us all from taking ourselves, or him too seriously. He is a brilliant story-teller and writer of satirical prose and songs. We have lovely memories of various celebration nights in their home when there was no shortage of singers, songs and laughter. Terri has been a very special friend to me (Mary) for many years. If she had a penny for every cup of coffee she gave me she'd be a rich woman now. She is extremely intuitive and can know instinctively when someone needs to be listened to. She has also introduced me to many personal development courses that I would not have been aware of but for her. Recently Pat and I were away from home for a long time. When we arrived back there was a vase of flowers and a card from Terri and Michael to welcome us home. That thoughtful caring touch sums up their friendship with us.

We are proud to be friends of Terri and Michael. We know that as well as their loving support they will never let us get too comfortable and withdraw into our own wee world. With them there is always more.

The Family Caring Trust

Family Caring Trust is a Charity founded in 1986 to support and empower parents by providing practical, skill-based resources to improve family relationships. For over a decade, these resources have been the most popular parenting materials in Britain and Ireland - almost a third of a million parents have experienced at least one of the courses. They have also been translated into Danish, Icelandic, Latvian, Russian, Spanish and Welsh and are currently being translated into Arabic and Thai. In addition to being widely used by social services, and by well over a thousand schools and adult education bodies, the books and videos have been adopted or endorsed by the following organisations

- **The Health Visitors' Association (CPHVA)**
- **Barnardos**
- **National Children's Homes**
- **The Children's Society**
- **Homestart**
- **All the mainstream Christian Churches**
- **NSPCC**
- **The Marriage Enrichment Association**
- **The Psychological Services in Scotland**

The materials are constantly being revised and added to, and the Trust is grateful to Barnardos and the Department of Health for their contribution to the development and production of some of these resources. The Trust's resources are considered to be the most cost-effective in the UK and Ireland - they are much less expensive than most other parenting materials because the Trust operates on a client-oriented, non-profit basis and is committed to never owning property.

Michael Quinn, founder and executive director of Family Caring Trust, completed a Master's Degree in Community Development and Family Studies in 1984 and is currently doing an Action Research Ph. D. on the development of a community-based adult education programme. Mr Quinn has developed eight community programmes of which the most popular is the "Noughts to Sixes" Parenting Programme. His books, co-authored with his wife, Terri, have sold almost two million copies. In a recent article in the *Guardian*, Mary Daly, professional officer for the Health Visitors' Association for England Wales and Northern Ireland, is quoted as saying that parenting gurus often make parents feel more guilty, and she adds, "If you were to ask me who was doing the most effective work in helping parents, it would have to be Michael Quinn, The Director of Family Caring Trust."

How do the Family Caring Trust courses work?

All are easy-to-run, flexible, courses for groups of 8-12 participants. For each course there is a Leader's Guide with simple, clear instructions for each session (including a script which facilitators may use if they wish). Secondly, there is a Participant's Handbook (with case studies, skill-practice ideas, simple exercises and short chapters written in simple, jargon-free language). Each participant needs a copy of the Handbook - this needs to be borne in mind when ordering, as only one copy is included in the kit. In most of the courses there is also a video cassette presenting typical family situations.

Where do the programmes come from?

The programmes, designed to provide support at all stages of the family life-cycle, have been developed and tested by Family Caring Trust (except for the Stepfamilies Programme which was developed by the National Stepfamilies Association). Participants in the groups are enabled to improve their skills and develop more honest, respectful relationships in their families. (Continued on Page 15)

Optional Religious Dimensions

HEALING IN MARRIAGE: IS IT POSSIBLE?

Tony & Betty Dady. Catholic Centre for Healing in Marriage.

Through a sequence of quite extraordinary circumstances we were led, in 1986, to buy a small hotel in Porthmadog, a small town in the heart of North Wales, an area renowned for its beautiful mountains, lakes and sandy beaches. Looking back over the events that brought us here, we both felt quite sure that the hand of the Lord was in it, and for His own good purposes the hotel would eventually be for His work. So we prayed that we might know His will.

Some four years later we heard words spoken by Fr. Pat Lynch of the Sion Community to a conference in Birmingham in 1990, which were to fan into flame a unique ministry for marriage some two years later, which would meet the need he saw. He said: "Is there one single Catholic Centre in this country that we can call a healing centre for Catholic marriages? Is there a place that we can send couples to, where they're not just going to get psychology and therapeutic advice - which is necessary also - but from a Catholic and Christian perspective, that's solely dedicated to the saving of Catholic marriages or Christian marriages?" We knew then, that this was the call from God, we had been waiting to hear.

That there was a need, for such a Centre, was not difficult to recognise with one in three marriages currently breaking up. However, there were already a number of Christian organisations running marriage enrichment courses, usually over weekends, dealing basically with good, stable marriages, usually by giving teaching accompanied by workshops. These, we discovered however, often attracted couples desperately seeking help but unfortunately unable to receive it; no fault, of course, of the particular organisations involved. At the other end of the scale there were widespread national marriage counselling services available, usually in the form of hourly sessions over a period of some weeks, these however seemed to be very largely secular. There was certainly no permanent residential Centre to help save marriages in crisis.

It seemed to us that we were being called to provide what was apparently not currently available for couples: *teaching, counselling and prayer ministry*. So months of prayer, training, research and

hard graft resulted in a small but successful hotel being transformed into a Catholic Centre for Healing in Marriage, which was able to offer couples a unique formula to help heal their marriages. A blend of teachings, workshops, counselling, meditations, prayer, liturgy and video presentations, all set in the comfortable, relaxed, peaceful atmosphere of an attractive building in its own grounds. A number of variously structured weeklong courses were provided for married couples that wished to enrich, repair or rebuild their marriages and bring a lasting peace into their homes. They could decide from whichever they felt most suited the needs of their marriage. We firmly believed that if both partners were willing to cooperate, they would open themselves to the healing power of God's Holy Spirit, and hopefully we could be His humble instruments in helping them rebuild their relationship and fulfilling God's original plan for their sacrament of marriage.

The beauty of the countryside and the tangible sense of tranquillity felt by all who come to this oasis plays no small part in helping to relax and bring calm to couples, so often wounded, hurt and tormented by their problems. In addition, they are often anxious and apprehensive at the thought of having to share these with counsellors. The provision of a 'home from home' atmosphere, meeting and providing the couples needs, with enjoyable meals and comfortable surroundings, enables them to concentrate on their relationship with their spouse for a week, with none of the distractions of their own home environment. The presence of the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the small oratory adds a strong sense of love, calm, compassion and protection to the Centre, generating an awareness of profound peace.

At present the Centre, and all the courses, are run and serviced by ourselves. We are fully qualified in Christian Counselling and Spiritual Direction. We believe strongly in the efficacy of ministering like to like, so all counselling is either man to man, woman to woman, but mostly couple to couple. This has proved a powerful element in the healing process.

Prayer and answer to prayer has been the constant underlying dimension in the history, development,

structure and the direction of both the Centre and the courses it runs. It would be true to say in fact that very little is done without prayer! In addition to in-house prayer, the nearby Carmelite Convent pray daily for our couples by name, and in addition other prayer-warriors help to storm heaven on their behalf! For those on the course prayer is kept at a low key for the commencement of the week, as many are too hurting to feel comfortable with it. However, as the week progresses, prayer for inner healing, breaking of bonds and healing of relationships is offered and invariably accepted.

Workshops linked to the teachings, have proved valuable in getting spouses to actually communicate on how they really feel about all those areas which are usually too difficult, too sensitive or too volatile to bring up. Being able to share in this way, perhaps for the first time, may itself bring healing; and certainly prepares areas for the counsellors to work on. Interspersed with teachings, workshops and 'time off' are these all-important counselling sessions. Couples are accepted where they are with love and without judgement, and helped at the same time to see where they are themselves. In the context that the ethos of all the courses is ultimately the spirituality of marriage, and given that it is the vertical dimension with God, which so often requires attention; counselling is often more 'direct' than 'indirect'. So often couples or perhaps one partner, come in and feel daunted at the seemingly insurmountable task they are being challenged to undertake. However, the joy of each week is to witness their healing, as God, in answer to prayer picks them gently up and guides them forward. This is always a very humbling experience for us.

The Centre receives no financial support from church or state, so suggested donations to meet the costs involved in running the establishment are requested; although those unable to pay are always welcome. However, these contributions from couples are not sufficient to meet the considerable overhead costs, and we rely on God's providence through the generosity of those who give in His name. We have not been financially viable since we started, and yet we are not beholden to any bank!

It is a sad fact that considering the crisis in the family today, this Centre is still considerably under-used. It seems that couples allow their relationship to deteriorate to a point where they lose

hope of ever finding healing in their marriage. Our prayer is that those couples, who are struggling, will make the commitment to do their utmost to take advantage of the resources available at this Centre. With God's help, everything is possible!

Marriage Care launches new Relationship Education Programme

On 20 March Rosie Winterton MP, Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, launched the *Marriage Care* Relationship Education and Emotional Literacy programme including the "Foundations for a Good Life" resource. The event took place at The Speaker's House, House of Commons.

Marriage Care's Education and Emotional Literacy programme will be implemented nationally by a team of highly-trained *Marriage Care* educational specialists, working within schools to introduce the new materials and train teachers on site. *Marriage Care* will also be looking to tailor courses to schools individual needs in this area of work.

"Foundations for a Good Life" is an attractive and unique teaching resource for schools, colleges and communities, based upon extensive professional experience. It is designed to engage young people from about 12 upwards, and, where appropriate older people, and their teacher-leaders, in the fascinating and challenging dynamics of human development. This channels and extends their relational and emotional capabilities as a crucial life foundation.

(courtesy of www.marriagecare.org.uk)

Can you help Bethany grow?

We need to build up our membership base? We produce this magazine in our spare time and on a shoestring. We depend totally on subscriptions to survive, never mind build up the work that needs to be done. Whilst we have plenty of good feedback we don't always get the cash response we need to continue. All good ideas gratefully received.....

What Do You Ask of Gods Church ? and What Does God's Church Ask of You? A Parent Enrichment Program for Infant Baptism. Charles Balsam. Liguori, 2001. 0 764 80688 2

This American resource is a parent enrichment programme for infant baptism, written by Charles Balsam who is the co-ordinator of Adult and Family Ministry at St Louis Catholic Church, Austin, Texas.

When I first heard of this resource I thought "what an excellent (if not entirely new) idea". To offer parents some opportunity to discuss issues can never be a bad thing, especially at a time of change such as the birth of a child.

The four programme sessions follow a set pattern, each working through a segment of the Baptismal Rite, followed by two sections that encourage participants to discuss faith and catechetical issues such as "What do you most hope for your children?", "What does the Church ask of you as parents", and "Why do we read Scripture at the Rite of Baptism?" The final section gives opportunities for both couples and single parents to write their thoughts about a series of set questions, and then share these with each other or, for single parents, with the "class instructor" or another single parent. "Homework" in the form of a further set of questions is suggested, with, in the case of couples, an invocation to talk about any issues that arise.

The format and structure of the course is well presented, and all necessary photocopying for OHP's etc. is provided. I would however, prefer to see a larger variety of delivery methods to engage differing learning preferences. The style and content leans towards the evangelical and there are many references for follow up reading.

The strength of this course lies in the first parts of each session, the material that helps parents in a direct understanding of what Baptism means. The weakness lies in the "enrichment" parts. There are many useful concepts, clarifications, and discussion starters about Sacraments in general and Baptism in particular. I would have liked to

see a bit more emphasis on Resurrection and a bit less on sin, and quite a lot more on positive parenting. There is a large section on the family life cycle giving six transition points in life, with the psychological tasks to be undertaken at each stage if relationships are ultimately to be healthy. Whilst this is informative and interesting and no doubt creates a lot of group discussion, I wonder what actual effect it would have on people who "divorce after twenty years" because "they haven't dealt effectively with the earlier stages". Most people who work in relationship education know that to change these deep-seated issues is virtually impossible without substantial effort, effort that may not be forthcoming with this programme. Having said that, there will be many parents who are not in such need, and would enjoy exploring these and other issues at a more everyday level.

On the whole the language travels well, and only the occasional word would raise an eyebrow (e.g. being "reoriented" towards Jesus Christ). The culture maybe less so. Whilst there is a genuine attempt to involve both spouses in a "mixed marriage" (haven't heard that for a long time!), clearly the assumption is that both will be Catholic - probably a fair assumption in America, but less valid here. Of course, there is the inevitable attempt to restate the view "NFP good anything else bad" - an unnecessary element that adds nothing to the programme.

Overall a fair attempt at enabling both couples and single parents to understand Baptism at a deeper level. I am left with many questions as to how much benefit the relationship enrichment would be five years down the line.

An interesting resource for generating ideas, but perhaps it is time to revitalise our own versions of this concept. Baptism is an excellent opportunity to access parents and to offer help and enrichment at a potentially stressful time in life, provided that people are not hoodwinked into relationship enrichment when they are expecting something else.

Martin Harpham,
Hallam Caring Services

Escaping the Family Time Trap; a practical guide for over-busy families

Barbara DeGrote Sorensen and David Allen Sorensen. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress 2001 ISBN 0-8066-3813-3

This book is aimed at busy families who, under pressure from a never-ending stream of activities and commitments seem to be less a family than a group of people who happen to share a front door. We are invited to take a step back, to re-evaluate what really matters to us, to consider who we are as a family and what we want from our lives together. So far, so good.

The problem is that, for a British market, the book is just too American. The language, being chatty and colloquial, is sometimes incomprehensible to British readers. And for a family devoted to simple and healthy living, it is ironic that nearly all family events seem to include a car journey or a 'favorite family snack'

More significantly, it assumes communication skills quite alien, I suspect, to most British families, just as many of us would feel uncomfortable organising family brainstorming sessions or discussing 'why shared work can be fun'. Irritatingly, it is stuffed full of irrelevant anecdotes about friends and family members which serve more to obfuscate the more relevant points than to illuminate them, or entertain the reader - a bit like chatting with a boring stranger on a bus.

Some people like this kind of thing, and for them it's a great book. If you don't it's still worth a try, because it does contain a lot of valuable common sense suggestions for making time to spend together, and for using to the full the time that you have. If you're *really* busy, get someone to read it for you and tell you the useful bits.

Alison Bath,
Todmorden, Lancs

From every human being there rises a light that reaches straight to heaven. And when two souls that are destined to be together find each other their streams of light flow together and a single brighter light goes forth from their united being.

Baal Sleem Tov

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The situations presented in the books and videos come out of a variety of age ranges and different social and ethnic backgrounds. Authors are the husband and wife team, Michael and Terri Quinn, whose books have sold almost two million copies world-wide.

The Trust has no links with any religious organisation but there is an optional Christian dimension and an optional Islamic dimension for each of the courses, written by committed people from within those faiths.

Books Available (£5.95 each - group kits extra)

From Pram to Primary: Parenting small children from birth to age six or seven.

What Can a Parent Do? Practical skills to help parents (of children aged 5-15) be happier and more effective.

What Can Parents of a Teenager Do? How and when and where do you draw the line with teenagers?

Being Assertive: Deal more effectively with all those awkward situations, learn to stand up for yourself.

Parenting and Sex: Support for parents at all stages - from birth until beyond adolescence.

Learning to Step Together: Building and Strengthening Stepfamilies.

Couple Alive: Effective support for couples of all ages, with practical skills to make your love last - or to renew it!

Growing in Love: Effective support for your marriage.

Taking Charge of Your Life: A book to help teenagers enjoy life more.

Contact: Family Caring, 8 Ashtree Enterprise Park, Newry, Co. Down, BT34 1BY

Email: office@familycaring.co.uk

Tel: 028 3026 4174 Fax: 028 3026 9077

Coming in our next issue...due out July 2002:

Exploring marriage: what happens when young people quiz couples.

John Murphy. National SEM Organiser

When your child is gay. Margaret Rogers, Diocese of Liverpool.

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The Bethany Family Institute was created:

- To identify and describe the spiritual experiences and needs of families where one or both partners are Catholic
- To offer a means of connecting workers in, and supporters of, marriage and family life ministry in the UK & Ireland & elsewhere
- To highlight and create quality resources for families in supporting their spiritual lives
- To assist clergy, pastoral leaders, educators and catechists in serving families more effectively
- To offer educational opportunities for leadership in family ministry

For further information please contact Elizabeth Davies, PO Box 2858, Wolverhampton WV3 0XL

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Just between Us... Quarterly newsletter with a cross-section of articles on family spirituality and ministry, for both professionals and parents.

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