

Just between Us...

Newsletter of the Bethany Family Institute
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WV3 0AB
Edited and published by Elizabeth Davies, MA



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Images of families is the theme of this years Parents' Week, organised each October by the National Family & Parenting Institute. We thought it was too good a title to pass on. Our image of family life not only informs all we do but how we do it, both personally and professionally. From a faith perspective, sharing the Christian image of family is essential. Back in 1981 John Paul II wrote that "it is an eminent form of love to give (the family) back it's reasons for confidence in itself, in the riches that it possesses by nature and grace, and in the mission that God has entrusted to it" (*Familiaris Consortio* 86). It is in response to this call that we have put together a new discussion booklet: *Seeing God in Love With Your Family*. We hope it will help the churches at home everywhere.



GOD PLACES
THE LONELY IN
FAMILIES
(PSALM 68:6)

It's quality not quantity that matters in this issue! Yes, we have dropped a few pages but that's not necessarily because you have less reading time in the holiday season. It's so that we can make room for a free copy of this new resource especially created for Parents Week. The weight of this package is crucial to controlling our overhead costs. So in order to include 'Seeing God' in this mailing we had to downsize 'Just between Us' slightly. We'll be back to our usual length in the autumn.

Finally we want to welcome John Anthony, the newly appointed National Co-ordinator of Marriage and Family Life in England and Wales. John took up his new post on July 1st and will be based in Eccleston Square. We hope to have more news about who he is and what he hopes to achieve in our next issue. In the meantime, we celebrate his appointment and look forward to witnessing the fruits of his labours!

In this Issue

Bringing Young
People & Married
People Together 3

What do you
do when your
child says
'I'm gay?' 5

Finding God
in the Chaos
of Family Life 7

Family @
Crossroads? 8

Reviews 9

Seeing God
in Love With
Your Family 11

Visit us at: www.bethanyfamilyinstitute.com

Diary dates

- July 13th ASDC National AGM Marillac Nursing Home Hall, Brentwood. Tel: Isobel on 01277 214792 for further details.
- 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
- Aug 25th- Sept 7th A Time for Us: Tracing Time's Textures in Marriage. INTAMS Postgraduate Summer Course. Sint-Genesius-Rode, Brussels. Tel: #32 2 3599202 Fax: #32 2 3585790. Email: intams@skynet.be www.intams.com
- Sept 28th-29th Meeting of Diocesan Co-ordinators (England & Wales) Network. Hinsley Hall Leeds.
- 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 15th/16th Churches Together For Families Residential Meeting. High Leigh. Topic: Refugee families. Contact Sue Burrridge for details: sue.burrridge@c-of-e.org.uk
- Oct 21st-27th Parents Week: Images of Families.
- Oct 25th-27th Living Life' Changes with Fr Alban Byron SJ & Frances Trotman. Loyola Hall, Warrington Road, Rainhill, Prescot L35 6NZ. Tel 0151 426 4137. Email: loyola@clara.net

Seeing God in Love with Your Family : A Parents' Week Resource

I would like to order _____ copies of *Seeing God in Love With Your Family*. I understand that I will be invoiced on delivery and that postage and packing are extra. (See page 11 for further information)

Name..... Email.....

Address.....

..... Postcode

Send to: Bethany Family Institute. PO Box 2858, Wolverhampton, WV3 0XL West Midlands or email quantities and address to ElizabethDavies@bethanyfamilyinstitute.com

BT brings people together to chat; Students Exploring Marriage (SEM) brings two specific sorts of people together, young people and married couples, to explore the experience of being married. The charity SEM has been offering this opportunity in schools and colleges in different parts of England over the past five years; interest has also come from groups in Wales and Scotland. What makes people take part and what does it achieve?

The answer to that lies in the answer to another question, 'What place has marriage in our society today and tomorrow?' because people now wonder what sort of a future marriage has. The rate for first-time marriages in the population is reported as being at its lowest for 100 years, yet young people as well as the majority in the country regard marriage as having an enduring place in their lives. A MORI poll in 1995 discovered that 83% of 10-17 year olds 'expect to marry'; the Soul of Britain survey for BBC TV in May 2000 revealed that 80% of people believe marriage is still relevant in society today; and an ICM poll for The Observer in January 2001 showed that 86% of those questioned would expect 'if married today', to stay married to the same person for life. High expectations for marriage; low rate of actual marriage. The discrepancy suggests that something needs to be teased out, something between the hope and aspiration for what marriage may bring, and the reality

Imagine a setting in which the realities of marriage can be talked about openly. Imagine, too, that the talking is driven by the need of those for whom marriage is a possible future choice and who are bubbling with questions to put to those who have made the commitment and are living by it. Suppose that that setting can be made acceptably safe for all involved and at the same time limited in scope only by the range of the young peoples' questions and the confidence of the couple to respond with their personal experience. SEM takes the initiative to bring together these two parties in dialogue, the young people with their desire for getting life and love right and the couples who can witness to the power of commitment, and not only by what they say. Here is how the sessions affected one young person:

'I believe that seeing the couples still together and very happy does have a positive and lasting effect on society. I know that when I see people like these couples still together, it reinforces my belief that marriage is a special thing, not to be taken lightly, or for selfish reasons, and that it really can work and last for ever'

That student reflected as much the dynamic presence of the couple's commitment to each other as whatever they might have said.

The students who volunteer do so for their own reasons, and many express contrary views. For example:

'If I'm to be totally honest I can't honestly say that this workshop changed my opinion of considering marriage as an option in my adult life, but it did teach me a lot about how to resolve problems which may arise in a relationship, how to adapt to change, problematic stages in a marriage and so on.'

The SEM project is about genuine inquiry, is not prescriptive and, as that young person discovered, encourages a learning that could not be taught. It is the result of the young people taking responsibility

for the sessions, not only acting as the hosts to the couples, but also in directing the dialogue. Typically they begin by getting the story from the couple, and then open up areas that meet their concerns and curiosity. For example, young people frequently ask their visitors how their becoming a couple affected their other friendships; once together, did they live together before getting married, and what helped them decide one way or another? SEM's contribution is to coordinate the involvement of schools and colleges with the volunteers who offer their story to the young people. An SEM volunteer in the role of Adviser-Coach is responsible for ensuring the running of the groups in a secure and responsible manner.

In addition to the Workshop, in which a group of six to a dozen young people meet three couples 3 times each, the project also offers a Half-day Conference to schools which allows students in a whole Year group to look at their attitudes, hopes and fears about marriage. Local SEM groups work in their community to approach schools and organisations to find volunteer couples and to manage development of the project locally. They are supported at every stage by a national team who provide resources. Anyone interested in finding out more can send for publicity to the address below.

Does marriage have a place in our society? It clearly is not an automatic path into adulthood but it does remain an option that the majority of people hold as desirable, both for their personal happiness and for the good of society. SEM offers its work as a unique opportunity to find out what really lies behind this option. The organisation is indebted to the couples who take the risk to let others see into their lives. It is also grateful to the young people who have recorded their experience in articles, many of which can be read on the SEM website This excerpt gives just the recommendation the project needs:

'If anybody who reads this (*the young person's article*) has the opportunity to take part in the SEM Workshop I strongly recommend that you do so. Even if you personally hate the idea of marriage, this workshop is a real eye opener. The workshop will give you an insight into the real lives of real people, which is something we can never really learn at school'

For further information and literature, please contact:

Nigel Fenner, Kathy Moore or John Murphy

Students Exploring Marriage

The EWR Centre

Cloudesley Street

London N1 0HU

tel 020 7278 0699 fax 020 7278 0589

e-mail: sem@exploring-marriage.org.uk

website: www.exploring-marriage.org.uk

Moving Forward Together

As we go to press, reports from the LCD (Lord Chancellors Department) Seminar on Marriage & Relationship Support are coming in. The meeting on June 26th discussed the proposed strategy for 2002 and beyond as well as the 2003/04 grant programme. We would strongly advise anyone interested to keep abreast of developments by registering an interest with the LCD themselves and by signing up for the 2-in-2-1 email newsletter at www.2-in-2-1.co.uk. It appears the LCD are revamping their MARS database—all forms to be returned by July 29th. So don't miss out on being included if you feel you should be.....! Its certainly worth while checking their priorities in the Moving Forward Together document, available on their website: www.lcd.gov.uk. Contact; Jean Bailey, Marriage & Relationship Support Branch, Family Policy Division 1, Lord Chancellor's Department, Southside, 105 Victoria St, London SW1E 6QT. Email: family.policy@lcdhq.gsi.gov.uk. Tel: 020 7210 0726

What Do You Do When Your Son or Daughter is Gay?

Margaret Rogers. Archdiocese of Liverpool

When parents begin to realize, often after a long and bewildering period of time, that their son or daughter is gay, some feel confused, distressed and often at a loss as to how to best respond. Advice and support services are available in some areas but are often not widely known and some people find them difficult to approach. The Churches themselves are in disarray about their approach to homosexuality and lesbianism. I think I am right in saying that no overall consensus of opinion has been reached in any of the mainstream Churches. It is a challenging area for contemporary Christianity and important conversation is taking place among many people. Meanwhile it is at the sharp edge i.e. in individual lives and families that attitudes and responses need to be worked out in an urgent "here and now" way if we are to avoid more suffering than is already being experienced.

There is a growing awareness of the painful limitations that low self-esteem (a common experience for gay people) places on an individual's life. Growing up in an environment where being gay is not the norm means that a gay youngster has the task of integrating a stigmatised identity. Imagine hearing all that "skitting," mocking, hatred and bullying so familiar to gays and slowly realizing that it is being applied to you. No wonder defensive barriers go up to protect the vulnerable self from such harshness. If you are heterosexual, imagine what it would be like to live out your daily life, hiding your true nature from many of your fellows. Not easy.

Increasingly too we know that those who have not successfully integrated their sexuality (again a more complex procedure for gay people, given society's norms) often suffer considerable personal distress and are more at risk of mental ill health.

Gay youngsters have an alarmingly high incidence of attempted suicide. They often suffer from acute loneliness and isolation even in loving families as well as in the tough world of the adolescent peer group. Many carry enormous burdens of guilt and shame simply for being who they are. This can lead to a destructive self-hatred and sometimes a failure to realize potential both at work and in the area of personal relationships.

Some heart-breaking quotations from gay youngsters illustrate the point:

"I do not like what I am." "I feel unworthy and unimportant" "Will God only love me if I agree to become someone else?" "I'd like to come to Church but your God doesn't want me" "I wish I had never been born"
As a parent there is a lot you can do. Here are some ideas gathered from people for whom this is a matter of intense personal concern.

- First, ask yourself some key questions.: What is my principal God-given task as a parent? What messages about self worth, sexuality and relationships do I want to give my son or daughter? In what ways can my approach help or hinder my son or daughter from accepting himself and integrating his sexuality? Most parents of good will know instinctively that their first task is to totally accept their child, affirm him and celebrate who he is. On this is based much of the human capacity for growth into healthy and successful maturity. Christians see such all-embracing love as a direct reflection of and participation in God's love.
- Parents will also need to become informed, read, listen, talk and sometimes examine previously held convictions in the light of their experience. As one Catholic mother of a lesbian daughter said "I have lived all my life believing this one truth, one world view. My daughter's being lesbian has opened my eyes to other truths, to other world views. I have never witnessed anything so sacred, been able to pray so well or known such love and community..." (as among this lesbian group) .
- Try to understand that "Coming Out" can be a very significant step, marking a key stage in the long

journey towards self-acceptance, a taking ownership of and claiming of one's identity before God - almost a sacramental moment.

- Be aware that involvement with other gay people and/or a gay community can be a great relief and support after years of alienation, can provide positive gay role models and help a confused youngster towards a more positive view of self.
- If you have worries over some sexual behaviour, try to believe that after messy (hetero- and homo-sexual) adolescences, most people who have been helped towards self-acceptance desire mature intimacy and settle into mutually supportive adult relationships.
- Affirm your son or daughter's right and increasing ability to take control of their own life, make their own choices and determine their own future as an adult.
- Accept and listen to any negative or despairing feelings (your child's or your own) with empathic concern and understanding.
- Realise that these journeys, like all human journeys are long, complex and take a lot of working out. Be patient.
- Remember Gospel principles and don't judge, devalue, stereotype or exclude.
- Help identify the good things about being gay. (My gay friends tell me there are many of them)
- Don't see being gay as always a problem. See it too as a gift, but don't underestimate the struggle some gay people have towards integration.
- Don't limit a person to or define a person by his/her sexuality
- Be supportive and always maintain loving contact as far as it is up to you.
- Be prepared to discuss with respect whatever your child may wish to discuss but respect his/her privacy and do not be intrusive.
- Try not to blame anyone - self, child, God, society ...accept that this is how it is and in the words of Scripture "it is good"
- If you are finding it difficult, seek support for yourself from a wise and informed person.

I have been enormously helped in my own journey of understanding by a number of gay friends and colleagues who have trusted me enough to share their experience, also by people who have come for counselling and with whom it was a privilege to work. The thinking of Fr. Kevin Kelly, particularly the chapter "Denying the Good News to Gay Men and Lesbian Women" in his book, New Directions in Sexual Ethics and the writing of James Alison in Faith Beyond Resentment have been an inspiration. Pink Therapy, edited by Dominic Davies and Charles Neal has taught me much about the costly reality of being gay. I am so grateful to all these who further our understanding of the situation of our gay brothers and sisters. Always Our Children is a warm and compassionate address to Catholics by The National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the USA

Fflag (Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) exists as a support service. Contact them at PO Box 153, Manchester M60 1LP. Help line 01454 852 418 Web: www.fflag.org.uk Email: info@fflag.org.uk

Look out for.....

No Ordinary Child: A Christian mother's acceptance of her gay son.

Jacqueline M. Ley. Wild Goose Publications, 2002 ISBN: 1901557618 £7.99

When Jacqueline Ley's 23-year-old son told her that he was gay, she was shocked and hurt. Her fundamentalist Christian background told her that homosexuality was sinful and that her son had placed himself beyond the pale. One of the things that she came to learn, however, was that 'beyond the pale' is where we will find Christ in the deepest and most compassionate sense: that God incarnate chose to suffer outside a city wall.

This book of reflections on a mothers journey from craving 'normality' for her child to celebrating him as a blessedly extraordinary creature of God is not only a chronicle of a remarkable change of attitude. It is also an argument for letting go of our preconceptions about other people.....

Finding God in the Chaos of Family Life.

A Bethany Seminar for the Diocese of Shrewsbury. Crewe, May 11th 2002

A Mother's Experience

"Well, will we find God there mum?" I had been trying to explain to Daniel, 8, what I expected "Finding God in the chaos of family life" would entail, on the drive from Chester to Crewe on May 11th. He found the whole concept a little difficult to comprehend. Had I made a mistake bringing my two children, ages 8 and 15, to a whole day's conference?

As soon as we arrived my fears were immediately allayed - every possible need seemed to have been addressed, crèche, children's club, youth group, refreshments. Children settled, safe and secure (with the help of a Harry Potter Video released that day!) adults were able to relax and I, personally, soon became totally enthralled with the day's speaker - Dr David Thomas. The whole day was riveting, thought provoking and entertaining. He was a 'real person' who understood family problems in a real chaotic world.

Sometimes being a busy parent (I'm a single parent) can seem a bit undermining spiritually, it can be difficult to find God in the chaotic rush, day after day, but Dr David Thomas made one realise the importance of 'family life', its relevance, its links with God, religion and the church.

Both my children, Emma and Daniel, thoroughly enjoyed their day. Both got a great deal from their individual groups. We all joined together at the close of the day for a lovely prayer service which each group of children were involved with.

Driving back to Chester my thoughts were once again disturbed by Daniel.

"Well, did we find Him Mum?"

"Yes Daniel, I do believe we did" was my honest answer.

The Bethany Experience

One of the great privileges of working with David in furthering the Bethany vision is the opportunity we share of visiting many different dioceses and meeting many extraordinary people. So far our work has taken us to Hexham & Newcastle, Brentwood, Cardiff, Menevia, Leeds and now Shrewsbury.

It's always wonderful to put names to faces and make many new friends. It's always invigorating to rediscover what pro-active commitment to family life can mean.

Our visit to Crewe was wonderful for many reasons. Firstly the people we met and spoke with. The commitment of the team—the Family Life Commission—was completely in evidence—from Bishop Brian to the ladies in the kitchen. The whole day appeared to have been planned to the last detail—and if there were any hiccups, I didn't see any. The children, grouped according to age, had activities planned and there was a rota of people to look after them. Every possible organisation involved with family life in the diocese displayed their work in the main hall. The focal point—a huge display that perfectly mirrored the nuts and bolts of family life (from loo roll to roller blades to the washing line) - was something that only family people with a sense of humour could have put together! It was simply fantastic.

So, I would like to thank Clara Donnelly and her many colleagues for their welcome and for the great way they exploited the day to maximise its impact on those who gave up their Saturday. Certainly they must have been pleased the feedback which included the following comments:
"It has helped me see things I hadn't seen before"
"It has helped me look at my life in a different way"
"It has helped me put positive spirituality into family life—which is easy to lose in the general chaos"
"I will look with new eyes on the ordinary things in the lives of my families. I feel affirmed in my job as mum and housewife. Where else would be my opportunity for sanctity? This is where I am."

If you would like to organise a similar day with the Bethany Family Institute, please don't hesitate to contact us. The charges are still very reasonable (from £75-£300) and there are a number of topics to choose from. We usually plan them for the autumn or spring/early summer which creates an ideal opportunity to mark National Marriage Week (Feb) or Parents Week (Oct).

FAMILY@CROSSROADS ? Report on a Dundalk conference, April 27/8, 2002

Denis Bradley, Diocese of Armagh Family Life Ministry

There are occasions when we are fortunate to be in the right place at the right time. This was true for those who attended the Family@crossroads? conference organised by the Family of God Catholic Community and held in the Fairways Conference Centre, Dundalk.

The tone of the conference was set by the warm and encouraging welcome received by all from the organisers. The freedom to choose and change workshops, if desired, indicated a user-friendly conference, willing to meet the needs of its participants. Family and it's related issues touch all of us in a very personal way. Our experiences are individual, sometimes uplifting, sometimes challenging.

The main speakers gave us food for thought. Dr. Finola Kennedy, economist, explored the changes in family life, across Europe and particularly in Ireland, that have come about by economic forces. She sought to outline the impact that this has on the attitudes and expectations of individuals and society towards the role of family.

Mr David Quinn, editor of the *Irish Catholic*, posed the question: do we allow the media to influence our lives without critical appraisal? We live in a world that presents life and its questions in short time slots and five sentence paragraphs and panders to the prevailing popular want rather than enduring truths. We need to be more aware personally and as a society to what is being presented.

Dr Tony Humphreys, psychologist, offered a keynote speech and workshop on the Sunday. An evaluation of his role and impact is best explained by quoting another participant: Beware, this man is dangerous!' It is difficult, if not impossible, to engage with Tony Humphreys and not come away unchallenged about your perceptions of self, life and society. At the same time you feel refreshed and reassured that your life is in your hands, we have the power to change - it is the power of God within us. He explained this by simply saying: 'We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within each of us and within all of us.'

For many the challenge of apparent hopelessness, the exploration of helplessness and feeling of isola-

tion with family issues were examined during the many workshops over the two days. These were not theoretical explorations of problems but practical, realistic, hope filled and empowering occasions to help deal with the stress and strains of modern living in families, regardless of their diversity of shape.

Highly acclaimed facilitators in their own field took the workshops. They dealt with issues that are real to all but often seem as taboo or sensitive. They covered: suicide, bereavement and loss, trauma, addiction, homosexuality, teenage sexuality and unwanted pregnancy, media and family and family spirituality.

This conference, hope filled and God centred, was an oasis for some, a ray of sunshine to many and a wellspring of hope to all. We are not alone. We can overcome because we are 'held in the palm of God's hand'. We are, as the title suggests, a family at the crossroads.

What road now? The answer was given in our celebration of the Eucharist. We are one in Jesus, he sustains us and we are reassured by his words: "I am the way".

True Life Stories wanted!

With a new book currently in preparation (provisionally titled: Loving, Caring Family: a family-centred process for parish renewal) I am looking for first hand accounts of launching family ministry or a family-centred parish project, to include as illustrative material. If you can help and can write about 750 words max. about what you did, how you did it, who with, the difficulties you faced and how you overcame them, I would be very grateful. Besides practical ways of 'doing it' most people want to know what others have done... If you can help, please contact me—details on the back page. Many thanks in anticipation.

Elizabeth Davies

Book and Video Reviews

'Guilt-Free Parenting' : you, your children and their Catholic Faith. Set of seven videos. Presented by David Wells (Director of Religious Education, Diocese of Plymouth) Available from Catholic Evangelisation Services

This is a set of seven 35 minute talks to a live audience. The presenter, David Wells, is a truly gifted speaker, combining the timing of a stand-up comic with a beguiling gentleness. He talks from his own experience as a parent and as a teacher, and draws on works ranging from Vatican documents to children's books - all made equally accessible by his uncomplicated but never patronising explanations. Serious moments and profound ideas are leavened by hilarious or poignant anecdotes. The result is very watchable, but leaves plenty to reflect on.

Wells goes to great lengths to avoid sounding preachy or judgemental, and - although I haven't tested this - I suspect that these videos would be pretty accessible to non-Catholics or non-practising Catholics. They are marketed as 'ideal for parents bringing their children to the Sacraments' but are designed to appeal to as wide an audience as possible. Several talks (nos. 1,5,6 and 7) discuss parenting and spirituality in a broad sense. These would be interesting for any parents who wanted to raise their children in a context of religious faith.

In the three 'sacramental' talks - on Baptism, Reconciliation and the Mass - David Wells draws on his experience of family life to illuminate the topics, but talks less about parenting itself. Thus parishes might also find these videos useful for groups such as RCIA. However, while these three talks are very interesting and profound, they do not always leave a clear impression of the basic doctrinal underpinnings. Wells is so keen to avoid anything that smells of the pre-Vatican II Church that we are sometimes left in a bit of a hole as to the meaning, the necessity of it all. We are given beautiful thoughts, we see things in a new light, but we are sometimes left thinking, as my 4 year-old would say 'But *why?*' This need not be a bad thing, if questions can be responded to by someone who knows their stuff, but, particularly in a group setting, questions are often not asked, or not answered. The talks are not intended as catechesis,

but I think we need to be aware of the level of ignorance of basic Catholic doctrine often found even among those in the pews every Sunday, let alone among the families who only turn up for First Communion. It seems a shame to neglect a rare chance to offer some solid food.

This one criticism aside, I recommend the whole set very highly, for individuals and for parishes. Top marks go to video no. 3, 'Confession - do they still do that?' (despite the comments above), and no. 5 'How do children believe' - two very useful topics, expertly handled.

The other talks are 1 - Who would be a parent?, 2 - Baptism (the weakest, in my opinion) 4 - The Mass - do we need it? 6- How can parents help? and 7- Parents for life! (a bit of cheery summing-up) There is also a leader's manual, which I haven't seen.

Available from Catholic Evangelisation Services.
PO Box 333, St Albans, Herts, AL2 1EL.
Tel. 01727 823803; Fax. 01727 822837;
www.catholic-evangel.org.

Alison Bath,
Todmorden, Lancs.

A Daring Promise by Richard Gaillardetz.
Crossroad, 2002 ISBN: 0-8245 1935-3

As its title suggests this book is written in the belief that the promises of married life engage us in a daring undertaking. Gaillardetz, concludes that "To remain faithful to these promises is to risk everything. It is to walk a tightrope of marital commitment without a net. It means giving up security, comfort, autonomy, control. To marry ... is to choose a very particular and demanding way of salvation." He argues that marriage is as much an ascetic vocation as the life of the consecrated religious. It is also a life of self-sacrifice, a way of the cross.

There is much that is enriching and helpful in this book. His reflection on the ordinariness of the life of Jesus in Nazareth and so the holiness of ordinary life lived well is effective and thought-

provoking, as is his insistence that married spirituality is not about praying but an awareness that "to be in a committed, intimate relationship is to clear the space in one's heart for another, a space that becomes at the same time an interior temple in which God abides"

Gaillardetz writes well about marital sexuality and his discussion of birth control manages to make sense of the Church's teaching in a way that is also sensitive to the problems it can create for couples struggling to keep their promise to love one another wholeheartedly. He writes about parenthood as the father of four young children, charting the path to accepting that he could not be an ideal or perfect parent and movingly about couples trying to keep their promise in the face of desperate problems and strains.

Good and useful though this book could be, it is pretty cerebral in spite of its personal insights. A couple approaching marriage might well find it pretty intimidating. I would be more likely to put Michael and Terri Quinn's reflection on the Christian family as one, holy catholic and apostolic (in I Have a Million Things to do) in the hands of a married person or a Christian parent. I think they would find it more immediately helpful and it would connect more with their family life.

Perhaps it is because I am twenty years further than the author in trying to live the "daring promise" that I am not altogether happy with the insistence that marriage is an ascetic vocation. There is self-sacrifice in marriage and parenthood and in life-long marriage there will be grief and heartaches of many kinds, but if we are blessed with the marital communion of which he writes so well, we are certainly not giving up comfort and security and the joys and delights of loving spouse and children as they are.

Roberta Canning
Bangor, North Wales

Family Prayers. Nick Aiken & Rowan Williams. SPCK, 2002. ISBN: 0281054614 £7.99

Not another family prayer book, I hear you ask? Well yes, but this one is really rather good. For the price you get a nice wipe-clean hardback and some good illustrations—realistic ones, reflecting the

diversity of family life these days. This diversity is reflected in the prayers too, which are divided into two sections: some for moments (breakfast, tea-time, feast days etc.) and some for situations (e.g. when our families drive us mad, when children are missing a parent, when we feel unloved, lonely or misunderstood).

The prayers range in simplicity, style and length so there should be something here that fits your family. Here's one of those for 'when we are stressed' (when are we not?):

Lord, there is never enough time. Not enough time for my marriage, for my kids, my work and all that I have to do. At times I feel as if I'm just surviving. I feel as if I'm barely holding on, but what I do feel is that you need to hold on to me. Amen.

Above all, I appreciated the realistic tone of the introduction: "Make it (prayer) work for you and don't think it has to be done in a certain way. .. Go for what is possible". This is a good example of a family prayer book, not at all patronising or schmaltzy. My only concern is the price, which may deter a potential purchaser of limited means. But maybe a caring parish could help?

Elizabeth Davies
Bethany Family Institute

Story Cards: Introducing the Bible to Children in a Fun and Informative Style. Glenys Murch & Paula Knight. Redemptorist Publications 2002. ISBN: 0852312601 £6.95

As the title suggests, this is a pack of 12 cards that introduce bible stories. Each card however is an A4 sized, wipe-clean, double-sided, resource for the very young or possibly even, those with special needs.

On one side is the story in picture form. I really liked these illustrations and so did my young children. The use of colour and uncluttered outlines combine to make very attractive (and therefore readily accessible) pictures. There's also plenty in the pictures beyond the initial story —the one about the loaves and fishes for example includes a modern family picnicking. Jairus' daughter in her bed with a thermometer in her mouth is another very familiar sight!

Turning the cards over reveals three parts to the written side: a brief account of the story in child-friendly language, some 'things to do' and a prayer to say together.

The stories included in this set are: Easter, Flowers in the Field, Good Friday, House on the Rocks, Loaves and Fishes, Lost Sheep, Martha and Mary, A New Star, Noah, The Widow's Mite, Candlemas and Jairus' Daughter.

There are several things that strike me about these story cards: firstly that they are very user friendly. Sharing an attractive book between a few youngsters can be a challenge. These story cards are easily distributed -though you may not always get them back.

Then there is the attraction of having cards themselves. Every parent knows there are many permutations in card-games and these would be no exception. I can imagine a great deal of fun could be had with these and isn't that half the point in teaching children? I can even see them stuck up somewhere as a modern day version of our holy pictures.

These story cards are a welcome and innovative addition to the range of resources available for sharing faith with children—whether at home, in the parish or school, for any group where children are present.

Elizabeth Davies
Bethany Family Institute

New on our Bookshelf

In the Middle of our Street: Community Development and the Catholic Church in England and Wales. A Report from the Catholic Agency for Social Concern, researched by Jenny Rossiter. CASC 2002 ISBN: 0953640035

Communities of Hope: Developing Collaborative Ministry in the Local Church—A Practical Workbook. Christine Dodd & Frank McDermott. Matthew James Publishing, 2000. ISBN: 1898366683

Christian family in the teaching of John Paul II St Paul's Publications (Australia), 1990 ISBN: 0949080136 £4.95

To help you celebrate
Parents' Week (October 21-27) we have produced a



booklet called *Seeing God in Love With Your Family*. Your free copy is included with this issue. We hope it will help parents and others to see how important they are in the development of their children's relationship with God, and how they are graced in their family life.

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. From a faith perspective it's important for families to take time to examine how they perceive themselves and their role, in the broader context of church. We hope our booklet will be a useful starting point in this process.

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. As a faith-community that places family at the centre of humanity, we need to make our voice heard in this campaign.

Our booklet has been deliberately priced at just 20p a copy to enable parishes and diocese to make it widely available to the families they care for. Orders of 100+ will receive a 10% discount. Postage & packing will be invoiced at cost (e.g.: 100 booklets will be £4 and 200 will be £5) Send us your order by email or post. See page 2 for details. We will invoice you on delivery.

Please ensure your order reaches us by the end of September or we may not be able to guarantee supply in time. Diocesan Coordinators may collect their copies post free in Leeds, at the September meeting, provided orders are received by Sept 1st.

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

My Fabulous Career.. A Retrospective by Sr Anne Conway

National Co-ordinator for Marriage & Family Life: Introducing John Anthony

Plus news, views and book reviews, plus much more...

Make sure of your copy—subscribe today !

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

Email: ElizabethDavies@bethanyfamilyinstitute.com or DavidThomas@bethanyfamilyinstitute.com

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

Subscriptions: Individuals : £15 or €25 per year
Groups : as above, but 20% reduction on every 5 orders, 25 % reduction on every 10 orders, 30% reduction on every 15+ orders (5 subs = £60, 10 = £112.50, 15 = £157.50)
Libraries/Institutions : £35 per year

The Nazareth Programme A lectionary based family programme to prepare for the Sunday mass.

Monthly. Subscriptions: Individuals : £15 or €25 per year
Parish/School photocopiable resource: £35 per year

Bethany Briefings An electronically-delivered quarterly current awareness service for family ministry/spirituality. Subscriptions: £15/€25 per year. (£10/€15 if subscribing also to JbU or Nazareth)

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I would like to subscribe to Just between Us / The Nazareth Programme / Bethany Briefings (please delete whichever does not apply) and enclose a cheque for £___ made out to the Bethany Family Institute.

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We can accept cheques in £ sterling, € or US \$!