

A message from Bishop John Hine,
Chair of the Bishops' Committee
for Marriage and Family Life.

A Parish Prayer for Families

All praise and thanks are yours, heavenly Father:
you have created families in your image
and have chosen us to be followers
of Jesus your Son.

Look with mercy on all here present
and those with whom we live at home.

Help us to see and give thanks for the formidable
energy with which you have graced family life.

May we work together in harmony
and grow in love by all we do.

Loving Father, we ask this grace
in the name of Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

"I am delighted that **National Family Week** is being launched with a call to celebrate family life because for the last three years we in the Catholic community have been doing just that: Celebrating Family: Blessed, Broken, Living Love. We recognise the importance of taking time to celebrate the blessings of family life. Families tell us these are the time they spend together and the love they share. Families are at the very heart of both life and love. As such they are also very close to the heart of God. That's certainly something to celebrate!"

Find out more about Home is a Holy Place at
www.homeisaholyplace.org.uk



Welcome to
National Family Week
25th to 31st May 2009
Celebrating Home is a Holy Place

National Family Week is a new annual event to celebrate and affirm the benefits of healthy family life. Celebration is key to the very idea of **Home is a Holy Place**. The report of the Listening 2004 project, *Not Easy But Full of Meaning*, contains many stories that are good news both for families and for the Church. Participants requested that more attention and energy should be focused on celebrating this good news.

The **Home is a Holy Place** Working Group would like to invite families, groups and parish communities to affirm the blessings, while also recognising the brokenness, in our marriage and family life. Celebration is an essential aspect of our recognising and affirming God in the life-giving, loving, healthy relationships of married, parental and family life and also in the times and seasons of family pain and broken relationships.



Time together

Many families will be spending time together during the May bank holiday and school half-term. Spending time together as a family is very important: it strengthens the bonds between us. Even when we disagree or fall out we are getting to know one another better.

But hopefully we will all create some good family memories this week – memories that will become a treasured chapter in our family story, reinforcing our sense of belonging together and having a safe place to call our home.

Take some time this week, perhaps when you are out with your family, to simply stop and give thanks to God for the many blessings of family life. For many families who took part in Listening 2004 the time they spent together was their biggest blessing. Perhaps it's the same for you.

"What you do in your family life is very close to the heart of the Church and therefore to the heart of Christ. I want to thank all those involved in the building up of marriage and family life, bringing life to one another. Family is the cement of society, the cradle of the church."

Rt Rev Arthur Roche. Leeds. 13th June 2004

What's holy for you at home?

Here's what families told us:

"If nothing else the incarnation points out that what is holy is part of the everyday. Everything in life is holy or ought to be. God in everything and everything in God."

"Good question – it's probably my wife more than anything. Why? Because we are pretty much a team, doing things together and if I lost her it wouldn't be whole and so the two together seem to make it holy."

"What I would call holy is the family itself, the children - they're gifts from God - and the relationships. My wife is a gift."

"Holy is definitely when we are all together. It's really when we share meals together - that's when it most comes out. It's when we all stop and gaze across the table at each other - in whatever way! And we all talk."

"When you hear the word holy you automatically think of some really extraordinary things and you think, well, we don't do any of that. But if you think about the ministry of Jesus a lot of the time he was actually doing quite ordinary things such as eating, drinking, healing people, talking to people, teaching them, spending time with friends and family. So when that became clear to me today I realised that everything I'm doing is holy. That had never ever occurred to me before. And it's really helped me."

God is with you

"Your home is a holy place. Please do keep this phrase in mind. In your home God is with you. In your family life God is inviting you to know him, love him and serve him. There, in everything that happens between you, are the opportunities to please God in all that you do."

We are not saying that all must be well for home to be holy. Holiness is not about having successful children, a tidy house, or even a very solid marriage. Nor is holiness simply about having a routine of family prayer, although that helps.

You walk the path of holiness in your kindness, patience, forbearance; in your search for fairness and peace between you; in your struggle for understanding and tolerance; in your faithfulness and honesty; in your self-sacrificing love, each time you give up something you want personally for the good of the family. Everyone in a family has their part to play, as a parent or a grandparent, as a child or brother or sister. In all these ways God is drawing you to himself in holiness."

*Archbishop Vincent Nichols.
Pastoral Letter on the Feast of the Holy Family 2006*

