

June

Proposed Theme: All Fathers

The Joy of Love: Pope Francis

A father helps the child to perceive the limits of life, to be open to the challenges of the wider world, and to see the need for hard work and strenuous effort. A father possessed of a clear and serene masculine identity who demonstrates affection and concern for his wife is just as necessary as a caring mother. (175)

We often hear that ours is 'a society without fathers'. In Western culture the father figure is said to be symbolically absent, missing or vanished. Manhood itself seems to be called into question. The result has been an understandable confusion. At first, this was seen as a liberation, a liberation from the father as master, from the father as the representative of a law imposed from without, from the father as the arbiter of his children's happiness and an obstacle to the emancipation and the autonomy of young people..... Yet, as often happens one goes from one extreme to the other. In our day, the problem no longer seems to be the overbearing presence of the father so much as his absence, his not being there. (176)

Some Thoughts:

- Sunday June 20th is Fathers' Day.
- It is not nearly as commercialised as Mothers' Day in March and that in itself is significant
- But it is often a good family occasion. Children are busy making special cards for their fathers. Plans are made to have a special meal to celebrate each father, and so on
- How do we, as the Church/parish, celebrate this occasion? Maybe we should take it a lot further than the commercial world does and begin celebrating **June as the Month of Fathers.**

The relationship of a father with his children is very different from the relationship of a mother. But it is equally important for the development of children as they grow into adulthood.

- The mother is usually the one who tells the father that they are expecting a baby. He generally accepts this news, often with very mixed emotions, as indeed does the mother.
- The mother carries the baby in her womb for nine months. The father is largely on the outside. One of the good developments of more recent times is that fathers are encouraged to get involved at the various stages of pregnancy.
- The mother gives birth to the baby she has been carrying. Again, one good development is that fathers are encouraged to be present at the birth. But again, they are largely on the outside and naturally so.
- As a child grows from baby to young child and beyond the mother is very often seen as the main carer. The place of the father can continue to be secondary unless real efforts are made for him to become involved in all that is necessary for the

physical, emotional, and spiritual development of their child. Things are better now than in former times in this regard, but a lot more needs to be done by both mother and father to help him to be a full father of his children.

- All along this journey of parenting the father has to continue to make decisions to care for his child, and for the child's mother, in every way that will lead to a life of love in the home.

Questions:

1. How do we, as Christians, value the gift of fatherhood?
2. How can we help fathers to share their experiences of being fathers?
3. How can we raise the level of appreciation for the gift of fatherhood in a society that plays down the value of self-giving?
4. How can we, as a parish, celebrate the importance of men, and consequently, fathers in transforming the world in which we live?

Suggested actions:

- Establish June as Fathers' Month.
- Encourage children and young people to write a letter of appreciation to their father as well as making a card.
- Encourage mothers, where this is possible, to also write a letter of appreciation to their husbands/partners.
- Include something online and in the weekend Masses each week of June about fathers and the great contribution they make to family and parish.
- Make fathers a focus for the monthly day of prayer for Marriage & Family life.

Points for the organising group to keep in mind

- A full day of Prayer for Marriage & Family Life every month is a very significant event in a parish.
- Because it is a quiet event it could easily go unnoticed. That is why preparing for it each month is so important.
- A notice should be put into the Parish Newsletter on the weekend before the date for your parish.
- This notice should be an appreciation of the generosity of those who have taken on an hour of prayer for that day. It should also be an invitation to others to sign up for an hour, with clear instructions on how to do so.
- This notice should also be a call to focus all the prayer of the parish on Marriage & Family Life for that day.
- Each month you receive a document with a particular focus for the month. This is meant to open us up to developments in parish support for various aspects of Marriage & Family Life.
- These developments need planning; they need people who will lead them; they need resources to support them. But they are coming from, and are grounded in, the on-going monthly day of prayer. The Organising Group has a special place in initiating these developments and in getting other people to help to implement them.
- One or two initiatives each year, even small ones, will eventually make a real difference to our homes and to the whole parish.

Parish Prayer Day for Marriage and Family Life

On the of each month, our parish of prays for the 24 hours for Marriage & Family Life. This is part of a Movement of Continuous Prayer for Marriage & Family Life as other parishes and groups take on the prayer for the other days of the month.

To make this prayer continuous, many people in our parish have committed themselves to a specific hour of prayer on in such a way that the whole day and night are covered.

Everyone is invited to join in this prayer, either by taking on an hour, or by including this intention in your own prayer during that day; by including it in the prayers of the Masses celebrated on that day; by inviting the schools of the parish to involve the children and young people in praying for it; by asking any prayer groups that are meeting on that day to also include a prayer for it.