



Report on *FAMILY MATTERS* day

Newark

January 2008



Mark Dutton from Shrewsbury Diocese led the day hosted by Holy Trinity Church, Newark and attended by thirty six people from around the diocese. He led reflections focused around the theme of the holiness of the home and gave many ideas which have been developed by his diocese to support marriage and the family. Shrewsbury Diocese employs people to further this aspect of pastoral ministry.

Towards the end of the day, Fr. John Sherrington asked the participants to identify actions which they could begin to take at parish, deanery and county level to support this vital aspect of Christian life. The lack of financial resources at diocesan level means that initiatives will have to be financed locally whether at parish and deanery levels.

The feedback from groups is brought together in the following list:

Parish

1. Identify a named person in each parish- contact with PP and PPC, similar in approach to justice and peace and ecumenical and liturgical groups in parish. Find coordinators at parish and deanery levels
2. Carry out self-assessment based on *Everybody's welcome* document. Implement any findings
3. Develop the 'Family' Theme at parish level (e.g. more social activities) as a basis (Home is a Holy Place) – Home is a loving place.
4. Start doing it in your parishes now (e.g. Marriage Mass in February)
5. Practical parenting groups – possibly with Churches Together; also parenting preparation linked to prayer and sacraments. Help is available from *Family Life* in Nottingham and Steve Hargrave at Catholic Children's Society. Possibly consider the ECHOES programme written from Maryvale, Birmingham and distributed by CTS.
6. Parenting groups
7. Rainbow groups

8. Start a group to talk about children's faith; make available prayers and booklets for family use; advertise celebrate family – leaflets around the parish, ecumenical project. Link into HOPE08 project.
9. Portable crib at christmas with a night in each family
10. Could there be a mass focused on children and their faith
11. Need to develop youth; not just confirmation groups; team ideal – where is there good practice to be shared around the diocese; Youth Cafe, world youth day ambassadors, work with diocesan youth service, ReachOut team; need to engage years 8-12; peer mentoring and leadership for those who do not go to church; involve school chaplains
12. Many groups to be catered for; committed parishioners, mass attendees, those more distant from the church, all ages and states of life.
13. Try to set a good example – deepen our own spirituality and prayer
14. Many Catholic family units have only one adult who is a Catholic; faith is not caught not taught, grow into faith
15. Encourage the young who come to church – pray for them, greet and talk to them at mass; involving children in ministries; improve catechesis of young people
16. Do not enforce or push
17. All senior school children need reasons for continuing to go to church; link to schools and RE programmes. 80% of children at schools do not see parish.
18. How to compete with peer pressure, football ideals etc, the need to develop a understanding of vocation
19. ALPHA course may lead people into faith; gifts of the spirit

Deanery / Pastoral Area

1. Joint initiatives across parishes
2. Support for engaged couples
3. Marriage preparation – coordination and delivery; there is need for more understanding of the sacramentality of marriage. Offer support and on-going formation to those involved in parish marriage preparation.
4. Instruction for other things, e.g. parenting
5. Annual mass to celebrate marriage. (This year it is being held on 13th February in National Marriage Week at the Cathedral).

County

1. County representations at least on some form of commission

2. Resources need to be made available
3. Involve the Episcopal vicars
4. Days like this day!

Diocese

1. Desire for a 'policy' for marriage preparation
2. Talk to young people about marriage – Briars, schools, VIth form
3. Set the priorities for the commission
4. Website needs to be developed of this theme
5. Commission – materials, ideas, initiatives, a communications person

Practical ways forward:

1. At parish level, the pastoral support of marriage and family can be developed at the PPC and in the parish pastoral plan. Identify the next steps at parish level and at deanery level.
2. Each parish is asked to have a named contact person. Please send this information to Fr. John Sherrington. Email is the preferable means of contact but addresses, skills and interests are needed as well. A communications network can then be established.
3. Contact school chaplains and the youth service to take forward some ideas.
4. Two suggested deanery events are support for those preparing others for marriage and a celebration of marriage and family each year, whether at deanery or county level.
5. A further event will be held on Saturday 10th May at Mickleover, Derby. A possible theme will be *Supporting those involved in marriage preparation*.
6. Subscribe to the free Marriage and Family Life E-Bulletin available from **email** elizabeth.davies@cbcew.org.uk
7. Useful websites to look at:

www.celebratingfamily.org.uk

www.everybodyswelcome.org.uk

www.homeisaholyplace.org.uk

www.passingonthefaith.org.uk

Fr. John Sherrington
February 7th 2008