



NEWSLETTER

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Family Solidarity

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EDITORIAL

In October, we sent an open letter to every bishop in Ireland expressing our disappointment about the process and the provisional outcomes of the synodal pathway in Ireland. Of all bishops, only two have replied to us and addressed our concerns: Bishop Ray Browne of the diocese of Kerry and Bishop Kevin Doran of the diocese of Delphin. Archbishop Eamonn Martin of the diocese of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland sent an acknowledgment. The silence from the other bishops confirms our disappointment.

The Synodal Pathway Steering Committee also sent a reply, which you will find in this newsletter.

The Synod currently ongoing in Ireland and the universal church is still at the centre of our reflections. It was the topic of the excellent talk given by the theologian Dr John Murray at our AGM in December. A video recording of the talk can be found on our website.

At the end of this newsletter, you will find an article about the family and Benedict XVI, the text of the prayer composed in 2010 by pope Benedict and a short extract from his pastoral letter to the Catholics of Ireland. This is a modest way to honour the death of pope Ratzinger, an extraordinary theologian who greatly influenced the Second Vatican Council and defended its authentic interpretation. He worked alongside Saint John Paul II and then guided the Church for almost eight years, leaving a profound heritage.

May his life and teachings be an inspiration for us all.

Angelo Bottone

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THE RESPONSE FROM THE SYNODAL PATHWAY STEERING COMMITTEE TO OUR LETTER TO THE IRISH BISHOPS

21st December 2022

Dear Angelo,

We write in response to your letter to bishops of 24th October, which was copied to the National Steering Committee for the Synodal Pathway of the Catholic Church in Ireland.

We are grateful to Family Solidarity for your engagement with the synodal process through your webinars and events, including the outreach to our Steering Committee. We wish to assure you that there was no intention to exclude Family Solidarity from the process leading up to the pre-Synodal Assembly and to offer some clarification in relation to that process.

Participants in the Pre-Synodal Assembly were all present in a representative, rather than individual, capacity coming either from dioceses (bishops and diocesan committee members) or congregations, lay movements and associations. Invitations were issued to those who had engaged with the training and resources offered by

the synodal Task Group, and then organised synodal listening processes and produced a synthesis document in line with the guidance issued by the Vatican's General Secretariat of the Synod. It is regrettable that there has been confusion around the proceedings and participation in the pre-synodal assembly and the process leading up to it. We would be most grateful for your assistance in clarifying this process to your members.

We are grateful that members of Family Solidarity participated in parish and diocesan events and we would encourage you to continue this engagement as the local church context will be the priority focus of the long-term work of synodality. In addition, we would be happy to advise you of any future opportunities that may arise for Family Solidarity to participate as an organisation.

In the meantime if you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

With every good wish,

Dr Nicola Brady
Co-Chair

Fr Declan Hurley
Co-Chair

AN IRELAND WITHOUT DOWN SYNDROME



The Master of the Rotunda, Professor Fergal Malone, has revealed that up to 95pc of parents who are informed by the hospital that their unborn babies have Down Syndrome (DS) opt for abortion. This is a horrifying figure that appears to have soared since the abortion referendum even though the terminations in these instances are performed mostly in England.

What is happening is, of course, a modern-day version of eugenics. We are creating an Ireland without Down Syndrome and it is provoking almost no debate or reaction.

Professor Malone mentioned the figure of 95pc to the Irish Independent last November, but in the run-up to the 2018 referendum, he told RTE's Liveline that the

figure was 56pc. This is a massive increase in a short period.

Rather than being shocked at what is happening, pro-choice activists want the abortion law changed so that unborn babies with non-fatal abnormalities can be aborted for that reason specifically.

These figures refer to the Rotunda, one of the biggest maternity hospitals in the country, where Malone is the Master, but there are no reasons to suppose rates being substantially different in other hospitals. We don't know for sure if a similar percentage of parents from other maternity hospitals abort these babies, but it would not be at all surprising if it was also very high. The latest figure for England is 88pc.

In 2018, Dr Rhona Mahony, who was then Master of the National Maternity Hospital on Holles Street, was asked whether there would be an increase in abortions of babies with Down Syndrome if the 8th amendment was repealed. She didn't give a clear answer, but she said that in her hospital at the time about half of the women told their unborn baby had DS opted to go to England for a termination.

When, during the campaign to save the 8th amendment, the pro-life side highlighted the fact that in countries with liberal abortion laws a very high percentage of babies with

DS are aborted, we were accused of using these children for political purposes.

Prominent pro-repeal advocates were in denial.

Simon Harris, who was then the Minister for Health, said: “I do not believe women in this country adopt that approach when they have a diagnosis of a child with a disability. ... I think it is somewhat offensive to suggest women in Ireland are seeking abortions for that reason.”

Irish Times columnist, Fintan O’Toole, wrote: “It is not true that the increase in screening has wiped out the births of DS children. ... Admittedly access to screening in Ireland is problematic, but even so the numbers of Irish women taking this option is strikingly small.” He was wrong then, and even more nowadays, as the figures from Prof. Malone prove.

What has increased since the referendum is not only the percentage of DS diagnoses ending in terminations but obviously their absolute number as well. This is driven in part by the fact that it has become easier to detect chromosomal or genetic anomalies through earlier prenatal testing.

In the UK, the number of babies born with Down Syndrome has fallen by 30pc in NHS hospitals that have introduced early screening.

Prenatal tests are becoming more common and affordable. Their number in Holles Street maternity hospital went from 1,005 in 2012 to 2,515 in 2021.

Irish women still go to England when they want to abort a baby with a non-fatal abnormality, unless it detected before 12 weeks, when abortions can take place for any reason. We don't have absolute figures of abortions for non-fatal disabilities in Ireland, but Irish women generally go abroad because this kind of termination is permitted here only before the 12-week limit and most of diagnoses of foetal abnormality happen afterwards.

In 2021, 59 Irish babies with Down Syndrome were aborted in England, 24 more than the year before (35). This number continues to grow, as predicted by the prolife activists who were accused of scaremongering. The figures were 27 in 2019 and 17 in 2018. Would Down Syndrome Ireland and other similar organisations have anything to say?

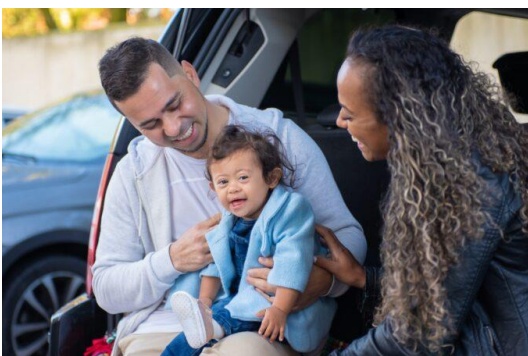
The current law in Ireland allows abortions at any gestational age when the baby has a condition that could cause its death within 28 days from birth, or earlier. Before 12 weeks, abortion is allowed for any reason.

Dr Aoife Mullally, who leads the HSE's abortion services, wants a relaxation of the law and allow abortion for not life-threatening disabilities after 12 weeks. This is eugenics for disabled babies. It is not clear if she would accept any time limits.

Prof. Malone supports such relaxation but acknowledges that this can only happen by legislating for abortion on grounds of disability. He believes that if this was proposed before the 2018 referendum, as per the recommendation of the Citizens' Assembly, the vote in favour of repeal would not have been so high.

Liberals will always ask for more relaxations. For them, abortion for disabilities is not a taboo anymore. They might not like the word, but this is pure eugenics, the selection of the fittest.

HOW PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH DOWN SYNDROME ARE SUBTLY DIRECTED TOWARD ABORTION



There has been little reaction to the news that 95pc of babies diagnosed with Down Syndrome before birth at the Rotunda hospital are subsequently aborted in England.

The response to these horrendous figures has been silence or fatalism. For some, it is an individual “choice” to be respected. There is nothing to be worried about or, even when people find the figures regrettable, little can be done.

“I don’t have a view on whether that is the right thing. We don’t advocate for it, that is just the lived experience”, said prof Fergal Malone, master of the Rotunda.

Is it true? Is it really a purely personal choice, without outside influence or expectations from others? Two recent studies on the experience of parents of children with DS indicate otherwise.

Irish research published last year interviewed eight people following the birth of a child with DS. Some praised the doctors and nurses, but others said the information they received was too medically focused and too negative. It is very hard to believe the same does not happen to couples who are told their baby has DS before it is born.

“Don’t come in with a list of negatives, all the negatives that were put in your head initially we never expected her to be this good now”, said one of the interviewed mothers. She recalls: “We received purely negative information that she could have this or that, ...”

A father said, “Doctors should show compassion when they are delivering the news, have patience and don’t be rushing in and out”.

A Danish study spoke to parents who were told their babies had Down Syndrome before they were born. In Denmark, almost all children with DS are aborted.

The study notes: “Following the diagnosis, the couples were generally critical of the information provided by the hospital. Some felt that the health professionals had painted an unnecessarily grim picture of Down Syndrome based on what couples perceived as outdated information. ... Some felt that there was an unnecessary focus on potential diseases and additional diagnoses when the couple was more interested in their potential for living a fulfilling life.”

Participants in the study report feeling pressure from health professionals they encountered to abort, or else that they were presented with overly negative information about their babies.

The research found that “couples felt that termination of pregnancy had been taken for granted following the diagnosis: ‘As the obstetrician sat down, she put those abortion application forms on the table in front of her’”, recalls a mother.

Even conveying apparently neutral information, such as presenting what other couples generally do, can condition parents. We tend to imitate others. Social expectations can be subtle and unconscious. “Maybe there’s something wrong with me since I don’t just do what 98pc of all people would do”, said a Danish mother in the study, who decided to have the baby.

“The high percentage of terminations in Denmark was a source of doubt and uncertainty during the decision-making process. This left the couples feeling vulnerable”, the article notes.

“Why is Down Syndrome the disability [considered] socially acceptable to terminate? And how do we come back from that?”, asks actress Sally Phillips in her documentary “Prenatal Genetic Testing” where she investigates how Non-Invasive Prenatal Tests have increased the number of babies with DS, and other genetic or chromosomal anomalies, who are being aborted. Phillips has a son with Down Syndrome.

These tests, which can take place in the first trimester of pregnancy, are becoming more affordable and available. They can be used to prepare families to welcome a child with medical anomalies, or they can be used to get rid of them, as almost always happens when a diagnosis of DS is

given. A proper ethical debate about those prenatal tests has still to happen in Ireland.

In a society that has normalised abortion, the main way to fight the progressive elimination of children with DS is for doctors to portray life with the condition, and life for the parents of such a child, in far more positive terms than seems to be the case at the moment. The medical professionals claim to be neutral about their use, but being not directive isn't enough when society goes in one direction only.

Certainly, a national debate is called for.

GOVERNMENT RECOGNISING COMMERCIAL SURROGACY IN ALL BUT NAME



The Government has approved a legislative proposal to recognise and facilitate what amounts to commercial surrogacy abroad, a practice banned almost everywhere in Europe because it commodifies babies and exploits low-

income women. The Government denies it will recognise overseas commercial surrogacy, but this simply isn't true.

Once drafted, the new provisions will be part of the Assisted Human Reproduction (AHR) Bill, presented in March and currently still at Committee Stage in the Dáil. Crucially, the law will allow a surrogate mother to be paid "reasonable expenses". This includes a payment for earnings foregone, which is a fee in all but name. If a woman makes a living by being a surrogate, that makes it a commercial enterprise, especially when you add in other fees including those paid to the facilitating agency.

Notably, the law will not allow agencies in Ireland to be paid a fee, but will allow it overseas. This sort of payment falls under the definition of "commercial surrogacy", according to the AHR Bill. (section 54) How is that not a huge double standard?

The new legislation will also recognise past surrogacy arrangements, applying criteria that are less demanding compared to those required for future contracts.

Commercial surrogacy is not recognised, or else is expressly banned, in all EU countries because it commodifies children and women. It can also create identity problems for the child also it divides the role of mother into several women (the egg donor, if there is one, the woman who gives birth and the woman who

raises the child). Before the war, Ukraine was the main destination for many Europeans, including Irish, looking to hire surrogates. Others went to Russia. Some of the business has now moved to Georgia and Belorussia.

The Canadian bioethicist, Winifred Badaiki, writes: “Surrogates in Georgia are typically low-income earners, and the intending parents are often middle-class foreigners. The Georgian surrogacy industry has taken advantage of this dynamic to build a thriving industry rife with exploitation. The victims, unfortunately, are the gestational carriers. For some women, in the absence of other options to break free from precarious situations, becoming gestational carriers appears to be their best option at escaping poverty, even if only for a short period”. It is the same in Ukraine and elsewhere.

The AHR Bill’s list of “reasonable expenses” (section 55) includes any loss of income for a period of up to twelve months due to being unable to work; expenses for accommodation and travelling, for payment of childcare and housework undertaken by other persons; payments for legal advice, counselling, and more.

Such “reasonable expenses” would be a substantial source of income for less wealthy women. What the Bill calls “altruistic surrogacy” can easily be a commercial arrangement in disguise. This is even truer for women

living in poor countries, where the Irish state has no means to set and attest standards.

Ireland will become the only country in the world with specific legislation for citizens engaging in surrogacy in other jurisdictions. Currently, there is no international framework to rely on, as for international adoptions for instance, and it is extremely complicated to control standards and regulations abroad. When legal difficulties for the parental recognition of babies born from surrogacy arrangements abroad arise, they are addressed according to the domestic family law, generally through some form of adoption. Ireland will be unique in facilitating with specific legislation such arrangements abroad.

Last year, the Norwegian Minister for Children and Families compared this practice to human trafficking and proposed to make foreign surrogacy a criminal offence, as it is the case for the domestic one.

The Italian Prime Minister has also promised to legislate in the same direction.

POOR MENTAL HEALTH AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE LINKED TO DECLINE OF RELIGION



The well-being of young adults aged 18-25 in America has significantly declined, compared to older age groups, according to new research from the Human Flourishing Programme at Harvard University. This is due to the lockdowns but also to a decline in religious practice. The same phenomenon has occurred in Ireland.

The study used data from a nationally representative sample of US adults to examine well-being scores by age group across numerous domains such as happiness, health, relationships, financial stability, etc.

Data were collected in January 2022, after almost two years of the Covid pandemic. It emerged that well-being improves with age. In other words, the younger age groups tend to have worse mental health. Similar research

conducted about 20 years ago revealed instead that happiness and life satisfaction were higher among young adults than in the middle-aged cohort.

Commenting on the results, Jenet Erickson a Senior Fellow of the Institute for Family Studies, speculates that decline in mental health among young people is connected with the decline in religious practice among that age group and an overarching sense of meaning and purpose.

The positive contribution of religious practice to mental health and well-being has been shown in numerous studies.

Other research from the Human Flourishing Programme found that, compared to adolescents and young adults who never attend religious services, those who practice at least once a week have “greater life satisfaction and positive affect, greater volunteering, greater sense of mission, more forgiveness, and lower probabilities of drug use and early sexual initiation” They also have “fewer depressive symptoms and lower probabilities of probable posttraumatic stress disorder, cigarette smoking, prescription drug misuse, history of STIs”. Similar results were found in those who pray or meditate regularly.

Jenet Erickson, from the Institute for Family Studies, notes that religion shapes young people through the families in which they grew up and the religious practices of the

parents is the strongest influences on the devotional behaviour of their children.

The passage of faith from one to the next generation is weakening. The decline of religious practice, which is a common occurrence in the Western world, has inevitable long-term consequences on the mental health of the younger generations.

But its ill effects have been amplified by the Covid pandemic when, in many countries, churches were closed and people could not to socialise.

The convergence of long-term religious decline and the short-term, but intense, Covid crisis explains why now we see young adults suffering more than others.

YET ANOTHER STUDY LINKS RELIGIOUS PRACTICE AND WELL-BEING



New research shows that the full benefits of religion are experienced more by those who actively engage in home-centred practices, in addition to regularly attending public worship.

Home-worshippers report higher levels of meaning in

their lives, personal happiness and intimate satisfaction with their relationships.

Many previous studies have shown the positive effect that religious practice has on mental wellbeing and life satisfaction. However, it might be claimed that the good outcomes derive not from religion itself, but rather from being part of a community, meeting similar minded people, receiving mutual support, etc. These social factors, rather than the religious element, could explain the positive effects of attending worship.

This new study focuses on those who practice religion at home through prayer, meditation, Scripture studies, etc. It is based on a sample of more than sixteen thousand respondents from eleven countries, including Ireland. Generally, researchers measure the level of religiosity in term of frequency of worship services while this new study takes into consideration home-centred religious practices as well.

The authors divide the sample into four groups: the “Secular”, who don’t practice religion; the “Nominals”, who might believe but do not regularly attend religious services; the “Attenders”, who go to church weekly but do not practice regularly at home; and the “Home-Worshippers”, who not only attend public worship

regularly but are also engaged in some home practice (prayer, Bible study, etc.) at least three times a week.

The study found a strong correlation between home-centred religious worship patterns and measures of positive mental health and individual well-being.

In all the eleven countries sampled, the levels of religious involvement are associated with a greater sense of meaning and purpose. Moreover, Home-Worshippers are much more likely to report high levels of life meaning than any other group.

Respondents were asked to rate their current overall life happiness. It was discovered that with more religious involvement, happiness also increased. “Home Worshipper men are more than twice as likely to report a high level of happiness than are men with no religious involvement and nearly 40% higher than Attender men”, according to the study.

The researcher investigated not only individuals but also couples. They found that: “Women and men in the Home Worshipper category were significantly more likely to report experiencing a highly satisfied and stable relationship than less religious or nonreligious individuals. Women in Home Worshipper relationships are nearly twice as likely as women in Secular and Attender relationships to report high relationship quality”.

Home-Worshippers who pray together and couples in the Attenders group are significantly more likely to be in a relationship with deep emotional closeness than are women in Secular or Nominal relationships.

The study also suggests that regular home religious practices by couples create spiritual but also physical intimacy between the spouses, which can be measured in terms of sexual satisfaction. Only 25pc of Secular women report being highly satisfied sexually, whereas 34pc of Nominal and Attender women are highly satisfied sexually and almost half (49%) of Home-Worshipper women are highly satisfied sexually, according to the research.

Overall, this study not only confirms the positive effects of religious practice and public worship, but it highlights how previous studies that grouped participants according to church attendance, underestimated the importance of private home-based religiosity.

THE “EU PARENTHOOD CERTIFICATE” INITIATIVE

A new proposal of the European Commission aims at ensuring that “parenthood” established in one EU country be recognised across the EU. The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, declared in

her 2020 State of the Union speech that *“if you are parent in one country, you are parent in every country.”*

The initiative is solely focused on the recognition of “parenthood” (the term replaces the legal and biological term of “filiation”) between a child and his/her “parents”. This initiative does not impact the law on marriage or civil union of EU Member-States.

However, it means that the legal effects of traditional filiation would be granted to same-sex "parenthood" legally acquired in one member state, including through adoption or surrogacy, in all EU Member-States uniformly.

The European Commission published the proposal on the 7th of December 2022. The next step is that the Commission’s proposal must be adopted unanimously by the Council of the EU, after consulting the European Parliament.

A public hearing was held in the European Parliament on January 9th, where the Commission announced that it would do everything possible to achieve a regulation, i.e. with legal direct effects, and not only enhanced cooperation between Member-States.

So far, Poland and Hungary have announced that they will veto a such initiative within the Council of the EU.

LAUNCH OF THE FIRST EDITION OF THE FAFCE EUROPEAN ART CONTEST



The Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe invites artists to reflect on the figure of Saints of yesterday to think and create together for today. How do we see in 2023 Patrons saints of the Catholic Church? The aim of this European Art Contest is also to promote the artists, and give them an opportunity to join in a different way of the international market of art.

2023 THEME

WHO IS SAINT JOSEPH FOR ME?



The EAC is an opportunity for artists to:

Win a cash prize:

- For each of the 6 categories: 500 euros for the first prize, 300 euros for the second prize, and 200 euros for the third prize.

CATEGORIES

1. PAINTING – DRAWING – GRAPHIC ARTS
2. SCULPTURE – CERAMIC – STAINED GLASS
3. VIDEO – PERFORMING ARTS - DANCE
4. PHOTOGRAPHY
5. MUSIC
6. COMICS

Promote their art through a variety of channels:

- Exhibition of the selected artworks at the European Parliament in Brussels in May 2023 (date to be confirmed);
- Meeting with other finalists and critics, curators, gallery owners, public and private art institutions that will have access to this important exhibition;
- Publication of the selected artworks on the electronic catalogue of the contest Website;
- Possibility of additional exhibitions throughout Europe following the event.

The Contest is open to all artists or groups of artists and professionals from any country.

More information here: www.europeanartcontest.com

The Deadline for applications is the 3rd of March 2023

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY: A MAYOR THEME FOR POPE BENEDICT

by David Gibson



Falling in love is a wonderful thing,” Pope Benedict XVI told the World Meeting of Families last spring in Milan, Italy. However, the pope described falling in love as the start of a couple’s journey, not its highest point. Something “more wonderful still” awaits the couple, he said.

Responding to a question asked during a June 2 “evening of witness” in Milan by an engaged couple from Madagascar, the pope said: “I often think of the wedding feast of Cana. The first wine is very fine: This is falling in

love. But it does not last until the end: A second wine has to come later, it has to ferment and grow, to mature.

“The definitive love that can truly become this ‘second wine is more wonderful still; it is better than the first wine. And this is what we must seek.”

So this is a pope who spoke about falling in love? Yes, and he wanted the world to recognize not only the needs of married couples, but the strengths they bring to their homes and surrounding world.

And he called attention repeatedly to the specific ways children grow at home into precisely the kinds of adults society needs. The family “is fruitful for society because family life is the first and irreplaceable school of social virtues,” he said in Milan.

Time after time since becoming pope in April 2005 Pope Benedict turned attention to the sacrament of marriage and family life. I came to consider his manner of esteeming marriage and the family as themes of his papacy.

He hoped the world would learn through couples – see in them – that genuine marital commitment remains possible in the 21st century.

Pope Benedict's retirement presents an opportune moment to revisit his thoughts on marriage and the building blocks of family life.

Dignity of Marriage

“Discover the greatness and beauty of marriage,” Pope Benedict said to young people participating in the March 2010 International Youth Forum in Rocca di Papa south of Rome. In a message to the forum, he wrote: “The relationship between the man and the woman reflects divine love in a quite special way; therefore the conjugal bond acquires an immense dignity.”

Because “human beings are made for love,” the pope said, “their lives are completely fulfilled only if they are lived in love.” He explained that “the vocation to love takes different forms according to the state of life,” one being marriage.

Over the years, at different times and speaking from different perspectives, Pope Benedict directed attention both to marriage's “greatness and beauty” and to family life's essential roles. For example, he said:

— “Matrimony is a Gospel in itself, a good news for the world of today, especially the de-Christianized world.” (He said that in a homily opening the October 2012 world Synod of Bishops on the new evangelization.)

— “Called to live a Christlike love each day, the Christian family is a privileged expression of the church’s presence and mission in the world.” (This point, reflecting the pope’s accent on the family as a “domestic church,” appeared in his 2012 apostolic exhortation on the church in the Middle East.)

— “Your vocation is not easy to live, especially today, but the vocation to love is a wonderful thing, it is the only force that can truly transform the cosmos, the world.” (That comment on married and family life came during the June 2012 World Meeting of Families in Milan.)

Pope Benedict realized that couples encounter all-too-real challenges in marriage and family life. “Conjugal love is not a fleeting event, but the patient project of a lifetime,” his apostolic exhortation on the Middle East stated.

This is a pope who wanted couples to receive support, including religious educational support, from parishes, their extended families, friends and others. Moreover, he

wanted spouses to seize moments to focus together on their marriage.

A July 2012 message sent in his name to the international meeting in Brazil of the Teams of Our Lady invited couples to set time aside each day to talk with each other. “Sincere and constant dialogue between the spouses is essential for avoiding the emergence of misunderstandings that grow and harden,” the papal message said.

Families: Schools of Virtue

When he spoke of the family’s role as a school of virtues, particularly for children, Pope Benedict tended to name rather precisely the virtues he had in mind.

In a May 2009 homily in Nazareth, the Holy Family’s hometown, Pope Benedict suggested that children need the benefits of a “human ecology,” need to be raised in “a milieu” where they learn:

- “To love and to cherish others.
- “To be honest and respectful to all.
- “To practice the virtues of mercy and forgiveness.”

Women fulfill invaluable roles in creating such environments, he said.

Added to his Nazareth list of virtues absorbed at home are virtues of generosity, trust, responsibility, solidarity and cooperation – all mentioned in the pope's June 2012 homily to the Milan World Meeting of Families.

In his World Day of Peace message Jan. 1, 2013, Pope Benedict shared his conviction that the world depends on families for its future peacemakers. "It is in the family that peacemakers, tomorrow's promoters of a culture of life and love, are born and nurtured," he said.

How do families grow in love? Specifically, how are families built up? In Milan, Pope Benedict laid out a considerable list of building blocks for families, starting with "a constant relationship with God" and participation in the church's life, and concluding with efforts by each family to become a "true domestic church."

Families are built up, said the pope, when they cultivate dialogue and respect each member's point of view. His list of family building blocks also included:

- Readiness "for service."
- Patience "with the failings of others."
- An ability "to forgive and to seek forgiveness."
- The willingness to try — intelligently and humbly — to overcome "conflicts that may arise."

Finally, Pope Benedict believed a family is strengthened when the parents agree “on principles of upbringing,” when it is “open to other families” and “attentive toward the poor,” and when it exercises responsibility “within civil society.”



PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH IN IRELAND BY POPE BENEDICT XVI

God of our fathers,
renew us in the faith which is our life and salvation,
the hope which promises forgiveness and interior
renewal,

the charity which purifies and opens our hearts
to love you, and in you, each of our brothers and sisters.

Lord Jesus Christ,
may the Church in Ireland renew her age-old commitment
to the education of our young people in the way of truth
and goodness, holiness and generous service to society.

Holy Spirit, comforter, advocate and guide,
inspire a new springtime of holiness and apostolic zeal
for the Church in Ireland.

May our sorrow and our tears,
our sincere effort to redress past wrongs,
and our firm purpose of amendment
bear an abundant harvest of grace
for the deepening of the faith
in our families, parishes, schools and communities,
for the spiritual progress of Irish society,
and the growth of charity, justice, joy and peace
within the whole human family.

To you, Triune God,
confident in the loving protection of Mary,
Queen of Ireland, our Mother,
and of Saint Patrick, Saint Brigid and all the saints,
do we entrust ourselves, our children,
and the needs of the Church in Ireland. Amen.

FROM THE PASTORAL LETTER OF HIS FATHER BENEDICT XVI TO THE CATHOLICS IN IRELAND (19/3/2010)

... A young person's experience of the Church should always bear fruit in a personal and life-giving encounter with Jesus Christ within a loving, nourishing community. In this environment, young people should be encouraged to grow to their full human and spiritual stature, to aspire to high ideals of holiness, charity and truth, and to draw inspiration from the riches of a great religious and cultural tradition.

In our increasingly secularized society, where even we Christians often find it difficult to speak of the transcendent dimension of our existence, we need to find new ways to pass on to young people the beauty and richness of friendship with Jesus Christ in the communion of his Church.

In confronting the present crisis, measures to deal justly with individual crimes are essential, yet on their own they are not enough: a new vision is needed, to inspire present and future generations to treasure the gift of our common faith. By treading the path marked out by the Gospel, by observing the commandments and by conforming your lives ever more closely to the figure of Jesus Christ, you

will surely experience the profound renewal that is so urgently needed at this time. I invite you all to persevere along this path.

At the World Meeting of Families in Valencia in 2006, Pope Benedict recalled that it was Pope John Paul II who originally convoked the World Meeting. Expressing his desire to share in the same deep, pastoral care as his predecessor, the Holy Father showed the joy with which he looked forward to celebrating the closing Mass of the World Meeting with all of the many participants and people of Spain. "In union with all taking part, I will implore from the Lord, through the intercession of our Most Holy Mother and the Apostle Saint James, plentiful graces for the families of Spain and of the whole world."

Thank you all who have paid their subscriptions and made donations to further our aims. We have put a return envelope with a subscription slip with all copies of the Newsletter as it is simpler than selecting those from whom we have not heard.

Reminder: We would be pleased to hear any records of our early days of Family Solidarity that you might have, and if considered sufficiently important or an only copy, permission to borrow it and copy it for return to you as you wish. We may be advised of any materials or recollections you may have by email or by post.
