



Catholic Families for Life NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 5 DECEMBER 2024



Thinking of Family at Christmas *by Bishop John*

President of National Commission for Marriage, Family and Life

As we journey through Advent and see Christmastime coming into sight, our eyes go to the Stable at Bethlehem and the little scene of the Holy Family of Mary and Joseph and the Baby Jesus in the manger. Even though it was a ramshackle place, it attracted choirs of angels and kings from the East alongside the shepherds and their sheep. You could say that Heaven and earth, the world near and far gathered around that simple family which, for a moment, was recognized as the axis around which the world revolved. In the subsequent years in Nazareth, unknown to the world, that little family proved to be the seedbed of the salvation of the world. In fact the world lives today because of that family.



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This is the central and vital importance of the family in the Church and society. As we will read later in this edition, 'as goes the family, so goes the world'. Or, where family life is health all is well with the world but whenever it is weakened nothing is right anywhere. That is why our Commission is working to support family homes so they can be what we call 'domestic churches' and the first school of Christian life and a school for human enrichment.

It is why we want to help our young people to be formed and prepared for marriage and family life through good relationships formation and strong marriage preparation courses that help them to see marriage as a covenant, vocation and sacrament. It is also why we need to support couples in the early years of their married lives with spiritual, practical and community accompaniment. The family supports our world from cradle to grave and, just as the Holy Family was threatened by the armies of Herod so, today, family life is threatened by terrible assisted suicide bills that do untold damage to the elderly, disabled and vulnerable when we should be supporting good palliative care. This Christmas we pray to work hard as a Church to protect and prosper family life, the home where the world welcomed our Messiah.

"Wishing you and your family a Blessed and Holy Christmas" +John

My Home - A Holy Place

Pope John Paul II said: The great task of Christians today us to “form the family as a ‘domestic church’, a church in the home as it were, where God is honoured, his law is respected, prayer is a normal event, virtue is transmitted by word and example, and everyone shares the hopes, the problems and sufferings of everyone else. All this is not to advocate a return to some outdated style of living: It is to return to the roots of human development and human happiness!”

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church we read that the domestic church is where the parents and the children exercise the priesthood of the baptised. It is the first school of Christian life and a school for human enrichment where all members of the family learn endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, and generous forgiveness.



“Form the family as a ‘domestic church”

“Family is Sacred” - a Resource for Married Couples and Families



The holiness and the beauty of family love finds its inspiration in the Holy Family of Nazareth. Jesus, who was coming to build a new world, spent many years with Mary and Joseph, trying to live the new ideal of the Christian family and He only preached in public for three years. The Lord Himself shows us the importance of our family and our home, as a holy place.

The “Family is Sacred” resource wants to support married couples and families to become what God has created them to be. St John Paul II was well known for his special love for the family. He famously said while on an apostolic visit to Australia, “As the family goes, so goes the nation, and so goes the whole world in which we live.”

And as Father Stan Fortuna - a Friar of the Renewal - reminds people, **“F-A-M-I-L-Y”** stands for **Forget About Me, I Love You.**



Pope Francis on Family and Poverty

“The prevailing economy is often concentrated on the enjoyment of individual well-being, but it largely exploits family ties. This is a serious contradiction! The boundless work of the family is not quoted in financial statements, obviously! Indeed, economics and politics are misers with regard to acknowledging this. Yet, the interior formation of the person and the social flow of affections have their mainstay precisely there. Should it be removed, everything would fall apart.”

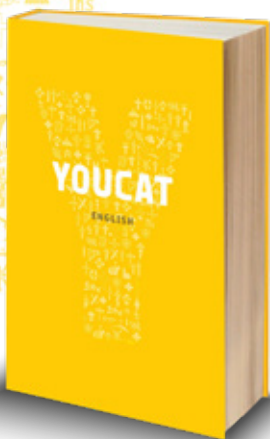
Commission Group – Remote Preparation

One of our aims is to introduce children, young adults and single people of all ages, to Christian anthropology and the vocational perspective implicit in Baptism which will lead to marriage or consecrated life.

To offer a journey of human and spiritual growth to overcome immaturity, fears, and resistance, in order to open themselves to relationships of friendship and love which are neither possessive nor narcissistic, but are rather free, generous, and self-giving.

We are reviewing the work by Frs Nicholas and Duncan and their team on the marriage preparation course based on the three principles, marriage as covenant, vocation and sacrament.

It is our intention to see how that work could be adapted to serve as a course for young and not so young, adult, single people, as part of our remit for remote preparation and also to guide us in a similar task for perhaps adapting the excellent YOUCAT publications for younger people.



Commission Group – Early Years of Married Life

In response to the growing needs of young married couples, the “Action Plan for the Early Years of Married Life” offers a structured and spiritually enriching program aimed at supporting marriages from the outset. This initiative is rooted in the “Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life” and emphasises building a solid foundation for married life through spiritual catechesis, a focus on marital love, and community support.

Key components include sessions on vital themes such as sacramental nature of marriage, communication, sexuality, and mutual respect, alongside practical support through mentorship and community gatherings. Piloting in 2025, this program encourages each diocese to implement local support structures and group activities, such as Mass participation, retreats, and family celebrations, fostering an environment where couples can thrive in faith and commitment. This initiative promises to be a transformative journey, nurturing the grace of marriage and strengthening family bonds within the Catholic Church community.

“This initiative promises to be a transformative journey”

Palliative Care – Scottish Government Consultation

From the Consultation Foreword by Jenni Minto MSP -

“Many of us – professionals and members of the public – still think palliative care only means care in the last weeks or days of life, when the reality is that some adults and children can benefit from palliative care over many years.

By focusing, in this strategy, on deliverable outcomes and actions, we aim to ensure that across the country, adults and children who need palliative care services have equal access to it, and that they, their families, and carers are provided with flexible support based on their individual needs.”



[Palliative Care Matters for All: strategy consultation - Scottish Government consultations - Citizen Space](#)

This consultation contains 16 questions across four sections, with space for comments –

PLEASE RESPOND BY 10TH JANUARY 2025



Assisted Suicide

Both the Scottish and UK Parliaments have been discussing assisted suicide bills. If passed, these laws will severely affect NHS end of life care and leave vulnerable people feeling they have no choice but to die.

In other countries "strict safeguards" have failed those who need it most.

In Canada, Christine Gauthier, a former soldier and Paralympian, was offered assisted death by the Veterans Affairs department after she requested help with a wheelchair ramp.

Also, in Canada, the Daily Telegraph recently reported the case of a woman about to have a mastectomy who was offered assisted suicide by doctors as she was about to enter the operating room.

The Netherlands permitted euthanasia for newborn children only 3 years after introducing assisted suicide for adults and, in 2023, the Dutch parliament released a statement that arrangements will be made to end the lives of children aged 1 to 12.

The 'slippery slope' is real.

Marie Curie, the cancer charity, estimates that 90% of us will need palliative care at the end of our lives so it is important that we share our concerns with MPs & MSPs now.

The easiest way is <https://writetothem.com> which will send an email to all your politicians in one go. **ACT NOW!**



• Upcoming Events •

THE BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF SCOTLAND

• World Day for Marriage 2025 • Sunday 9th February

For all married couples:

May they strive daily to faithfully and lovingly live out their marriage promises, bearing witness to the love God has for each of us.

For all those discerning a vocation to marriage:

May they recognise the Holy Spirit working in their hearts and respond generously to the call of God.



• 2025 First Fridays For Life Novena •



DIOCESE OF PAISLEY

St. Mary's RC Church Greenock
Friday 3rd January : 7pm

St. Joseph's RC Church Clarkston
Friday 7th February : 7pm

St. John the Evangelist RC Church Barrhead
Friday 7th March : 7pm

DIOCESE OF PAISLEY

• Marriage Preparation Courses in 2025 •

Wednesday 22nd January : 7pm

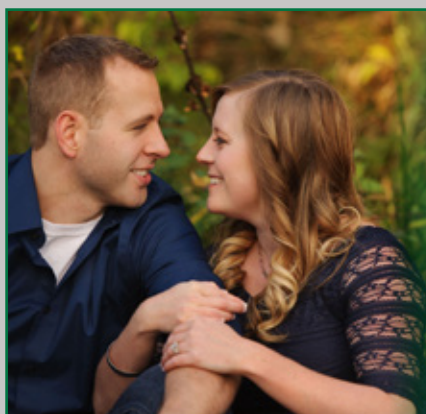
Wednesday 29th January : 7pm

Saturday 8th February : 10am - 2pm

VENUE: St. Mirin's Cathedral Hall
Cathedral Precincts, Incle St, Paisley PA1 1HR

For further information visit:

<https://rcdop.org.uk/marriage-preparation>



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