



Catholic Welfare Australia

International Day of Families

15 May 2003

National Families week: 11-17 May 2003

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES 2003 - SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE

Since 1993, the 15th of May has been recognised by the United Nations as the *International Day of Families*. Also, Sunday 11th of May is Mother's Day so there is even more reason to celebrate!

Catholic Welfare Australia invites you to participate in the Week and particularly in the International Day of Families on 15th of May in a way that celebrates the unique and special way that Catholic Welfare Australia member organisations value and support families.

So, we invite you to undertake some activity on Thursday the **15th of May** to celebrate the *International Day of Families*. As an act of solidarity with all member organisations, we encourage every agency to undertake an activity at **11:00am**. The activity chosen can be anything that suits your agency, your staff and your clients. The important thing is to do something!

What about?

Organising a short reflection time to focus on the importance of families and to pray for families in your locality and around the world?

Attached to this resource page, are some possible reflections you might like to use.

Holding a morning tea with staff and clients?

Asking for a gold coin donation and using the money raised to buy some toys or other resources for your family programs?

Making the morning tea a cultural experience – with staff bringing dishes from their family's country of origin or from countries that represent where many of your clients come from?

Decorating your agency waiting area with a families theme with posters and pictures reflecting different images of families?

Inviting local media to your agency or writing a press release on activities being undertaken in your agency as part of National Families Week or the International Day of Families? (See Page 6 for some tips!)

REFLECTION FOR INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES

Setting the scene:

Have a focal point set in centre of circle of chairs – with a coloured cloth; an appropriate symbol – flowers; pictures; candle.

Also have some reflective music playing in the background.

Organise a leader; two readers people to read the prayers; and copies of this page for each person attending.

>>>>>

Leader:

As we gather today – The International Day of Families – we reflect on the meaning and importance of families; what values and gifts are found in families and the role they play in the wider community.

Reader 1:

Families, whether biological or chosen, are what gives most people their shape. They produce enormous pain and joy and all the emotions in between for their members. (Pipher, Mary 1996, *The Shelter of Each Other*. Vermilion, London. P.235)



Leader:

Let us reflect for a moment:

Recalling the members of our own family - (give a few minutes for people to silently remember)

Recalling the various families we have walked with; supported and encouraged through our work - (give a few minutes for people to silently remember)

Recalling the many families in our world who are struggling at this time because of conflict and war; death and injury; homelessness; destruction. (Give a few minutes for people to silently remember.)

Recalling that through our faith we know and trust that God is with us no matter what our experiences – God is one with us – our source of life; hope and joy. (Give a few minutes for people to silently remember.)

Reader 2:

Australia's families need to be supported at different levels. This support for family members, ideally, comes from within the family itself with members reaching out to one another providing valuable mutual help in living out their vocation. Also there is an emerging awareness of the commitment by many individuals and organisations such as those in the network of Catholic Welfare Australia who have a key role in maintaining and upholding family life thus assuring the well-being of many Australian families. For as the Scriptures reminds us - Jesus came among us so that we might have life, and have it to the full (John 10:10).

Leader:

Spend a few minutes reflecting on these words and the needs of families; the organisation's involvement with families and how each of us as individuals fulfil our commitment to our own families and those we minister to. How are we like Jesus enabling life to be had and had to the full? You may like to share a few thoughts with the person beside you OR sit in silent reflection.



Prayers of the Community: *a leader could read the prayers OR the prayers could be read by various people.*

Leader: Let us bring our prayers before God from whom every family draws life and love.

Response: God our hope and faith is in You.

Leader: That the leaders of our Church family may respond to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Response: God our hope and faith is in You.

Leader: May our local community benefit from the richness and variety of gifts each family brings.

Response: God our hope and faith is in You.

Leader: Consider our needs, Creator God, and the needs of all families who belong to our network – Help us to respond with love to the call to care for those we meet.

Response: God our hope and faith is in You.

Leader: For those families across our nation who are experiencing difficulties, sickness, troubles and traumas. Be with them God in their need.

Response: God our hope and faith is in You.

Leader: We remember all those who have died especially ... *either mention people who have died recently or give some silent time for people to remember...* May they share in your eternal joy.

Response: God our hope and faith is in You.

Closing prayer:

Leader: Let us pray together for the needs of all families across our network.

All: God we bring before You all families across our network. As they go about their daily tasks may they remember Your presence and abiding love. We pray that those families experiencing trauma and difficulties may be strengthened and supported by our prayers, our actions and the knowledge of your unconditional love. We make this prayer through Jesus, who is your Son, forever and ever. Amen.

Prayers

A Prayer for the Whole Human Family

O God,
you made us in your own image
and redeemed us through Jesus your Son:
Look with compassion on the whole human family;
take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our
hearts;
break down the walls that separate us;
unite us in bonds of love;
and work through our struggle and confusion
to accomplish your purpose on earth;
that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve
you in harmony around your heavenly throne;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.



Book of Common Prayer, Episcopal Church of the USA

Family Commitment Prayer

God you bless us with the fit of life and love so powerfully present in our midst through families.

In praise of your gifts we offer you in return our commitment to love one another as family, as church family and as part of the great human family.

In whatever state of life we find ourselves, whether married or single, widowed or divorced, priest or religious, young or elderly, we commit ourselves to the task of loving one another, bearing with one another, forgiving hurts and calling each other on to the fullness of your plan for our lives.

God our world is in great need of the witness of loving families.

Amidst all our joys and struggles may we never give up on your extraordinary gift of family life.

We ask this in your name. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- What sort of support networks can local communities provide families facing difficulties?
- What role can the church/community/government play in caring for families?
- How can families best influence church/community/government to adequately care for families?
- What message of hope would you like to give to Australian families and why?

Tips for Families

- Make a **special time** with your spouse once a week to keep your relationship a priority.
- Organise **family story** nights. Retell your favourite childhood memory or ask an older family member to share a story.

- Make **prayer** time creative. Take turns in the family to organise this. This could mean chaotic time with lots of laughter or a little more serious. Dinner time is a great time to pray but some families might prefer bed-time or before school in the mornings.



- **Affirm life** through your language and behaviour. Look for peaceful ways of resolving conflict. Watch the language used when you are angry. Positive language provides a positive attitude in the family and children feel less threatened.
- **Family resiliency:** families who communicate well, identify and feel a sense of belonging as family, share things together, love and support each other, and are accepting of each other make **family work for them.**
- Have time **without TV.** Have time together, playing outside, playing cards or board games, puzzles etc. Allow each other to find time to relax without having to watch TV.
- Instigate **family rituals** such as the special way your family celebrates birthdays, other special occasions, a Sunday meal etc.



Writing a Media Release - The Fundamentals

Catholic Welfare Australia

With a Media Release – you must grab the reader’s attention straight away. Therefore your headline and first paragraph are crucial! The release in its entirety must be newsworthy, timely, easy to understand and deal with no more than one subject matter.

Key rules:

- Use simple and concise language;
- First paragraph should contain main point/s of your message;
- If applicable, answer the 5 W’s (Who, What, Where, When, Why) in the first para.;
- Keep paragraphs short – preferably no more than four lines;
- Media Releases should be no more than one page in length;
- Publish Media Release on Organisational Letterhead;
- Your spokesperson must be authoritative, credible and AVAILABLE for any subsequent media interviews!

Some tips:

- Write your headline last;
- Use the active rather than the passive voice;
- Be sure to check release is grammatically correct;
- Simplify complex issues;
- Once written, read the media release as if you know nothing about its subject matter – is it interesting from an outsiders point of view – does it make sense?

Basic format of media release:

Company/Organisation logo

Date of Release

Headline

First para - most import - what exactly is your message?

Second para - background information (if applicable)

Third, Fourth and Fifth paragraph - fleshing out your message

Sixth para - point to the future

Contact person and contact details