



Catholic Families for Life

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 1 DECEMBER 2023



Welcome Message from Bishop John Keenan

President of National Commission for Marriage, Family and Life

Today as much as ever our married couples and families are the bedrock of our life of faith in Scotland. It is in our family homes that our young people learn about GOD and His loving plan for them and it is from our homes that they grow into the life of the Church that surrounds them in our parishes and schools. It is here that new life is conceived and welcomed as a precious gift from GOD and regarded as sacred. It is here that our elderly find love to the very end.

Without lives of faith lived out in our families and the witness of parents and grandparents, the faith in Scotland would wither away very soon. And yet, families know that there are growing challenges and threats to their peaceful home life from the many influencers of our secular world.



Families need the pastoral closeness and care of our Church if they are to keep Jesus at the heart and centre of their family communities. Our Marriage, Family and Life Commission is working to provide that concrete support to our Catholic families and to reach out to wider Scottish society with an attractive and convincing vision of the value of marriage and family life to our nation, and of the good of holding fast to the sanctity of life from the womb to the tomb.

I hope our families will find this quarterly newsletter to be a friend and guide and that it will help to build up our families, in the knowledge that 'as goes the family, so goes the world'.

John Keenan

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NATIONAL WEBSITE LAUNCHED

www.marriagefamilyandlife.org.uk

The National Commission for Marriage, Family and Life is delighted to now have an online presence with this newly-launched website. The website brings together diocesan, national and international resources, as well as information promoting family values and pro-life issues. It also aims to highlight upcoming events and encourage greater participation.



Work of the Commission

Last year the Bishops' Conference of Scotland formally established a Commission for Marriage, Family and Life. Whilst this has always been an area of concern for the Church in Scotland, the ever-mounting challenges in this area of life require a more dedicated response.

The Commission is composed of representatives from across the dioceses of Scotland with a range of clergy and couples, each selected for their experience in the areas of marriage, the family and life issues, all able to bring their experience and knowledge to help the Church develop resources and advise the bishops.

The Commission has the task of taking forward the recent document published by the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life at the initiative of Pope Francis, on renewing the marriage preparation process to become something more akin to a pre-marriage catechumenate aimed at reviving the faith. To this end, the Commission has split into different groups, each looking at, in turn, young people and singles and their calling, couples, family life, and life issues.

St John Paul II summed up the task this way: 'The future of the world and of the Church passes through the family'.



“Look at the existing faith and learning experience”

Remote Preparation

This phase is designed to examine the foundation of faith developed prior to engagement to be married. Its purpose is to look at the existing faith and learning experience of those born into the faith and those who convert later in life. Activity has focused on preparation for the initial sacraments; how God's plan of salvation is unfolded and being made able in order for children to make informed choices about God's plans for them.

Work continues to familiarise ourselves with the education curriculum in Catholic schools. Also included is resourcing books and articles by the Catholic Truth Society and talks provided to Catholic societies and youth groups. We study adult formation publications like *Evangelium*. There is a rich and varied supply of materials and courses which are delivered by dedicated and inspirational teachers and helpers.

An initial conclusion is that it would be good to have a focal point in each diocese for the vocations of marriage and the single life, similar to existing vocations directors, where advice, training and resource materials can be found. The group is working to design a page on our website to make this information more accessible.



Proximate Preparation

Informed by the *Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life* document, we are seeking to build upon current marriage preparation courses that already exist in Scotland by establishing an additional enhanced pathway of preparation for couples seeking this opportunity.

We envision this *Catechumenal Pathway* as a more intensive program of preparation which will draw couples more fully into the life of the Church. At the centre of these regular meetings will be spiritual experiences, catechetical formation and social time, with the emphasis on inviting couples to walk with Christ in their discernment, encounter him in their life of prayer, and place him at the centre of their relationship.



The Domestic Church

The family home as a “domestic church” is a place of prayer, a place to discern the “signs” of Christ’s presence in family relationships and also a place where, in family members accepting each other, conflicts can be resolved and the bonds of love strengthened. Couples surrender their own personal freedom to each other and realise “that the other is now a part of my life.”

The pleasure of belonging to one another leads to seeing life as a common project, putting others’ happiness ahead of my own, and realising with joy that this marriage and family enriches society. As love matures, it also learns to ‘negotiate.’

(Amoris Laetitia, 220)

The raising of children involves parents, as the first and most important educators of the faith in their own family, in passing on to them the treasures of the faith. Every couple and family are called to develop their own mission, which flows from the sacrament, and to make their own specific contribution to the life of the Church.

“Before I
formed you
in the womb
I knew you”
(Jeremiah 1:5)

Life Issues Working Group

For the Catholic Church in Scotland “pro-life” covers issues at the beginning and end of life and focusses on the groups most threatened by abortion, embryo experimentation and euthanasia. Pro-Life issues are the most important social concern for the Church today.

There are over 16,000 abortions per year in Scotland. In recent years, abortion rates in poorer areas have increased by 25% while those for wealthier parts have fallen by 1%.

The Scottish Bishops have highlighted Pro-Life as “the most basic and fundamental human right” and Pope Francis regularly speaks strongly on the issue.

The Life Issues Working Group works with Dioceses, clergy and lay people to build a positive culture of life making pro-life a natural part of parish life.

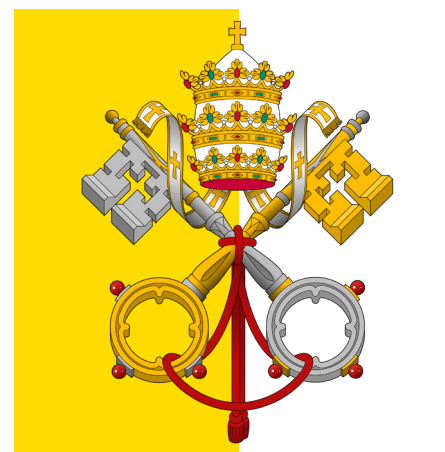
Contact the Life Issues Working Group to find out about pro-life work in your Diocese by emailing:

info@marriagefamilyandlife.org.uk

Vatican Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life

The Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life enhances the apostolate of the lay faithful, the pastoral care of young people, the family and its mission according to God’s plan, the elderly, and the promotion and protection of life.

In carrying out its responsibilities, the Dicastery maintains relationships with the particular Churches, with Episcopal Conferences, their regional and continental groupings, the hierarchical structures of the Eastern Churches and other ecclesial entities, promoting exchanges between them and offering its cooperation so that the values and initiatives connected to these matters may be promoted.





Parliamentary Summary / Future Events

Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) (Scotland) Bill

This Bill will criminalise prayer and offers of help to women near abortion centres. Similar laws in England have seen lay people and a priest arrested for silent prayer. Media reporting of this issue is extremely misleading and Police Scotland have not called for more powers. The Bill is unnecessary, disproportionate and a threat to prayer and fundamental freedoms.

Please respond to the Consultation here:

<https://bit.ly/f2pshortsurvey>

• PLEASE RESPOND BY 20TH DECEMBER •

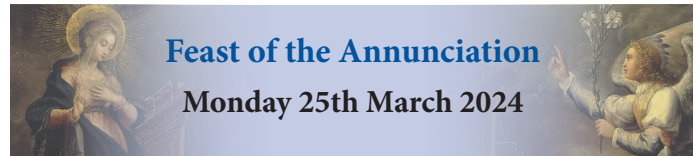
Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill

This Bill proposes to legalise assisted suicide. It will undermine the right to life and put vulnerable people at risk of coming under pressure to end their lives prematurely. The Bill is opposed by doctors' groups, disability rights groups and the Glasgow Disability Alliance, which has warned that no amount of safeguarding will offer "enough protections and guarantees to stop disabled people being helped or pressured to die".

Contact the Catholic Parliamentary Office to learn more:

Email : office@rcpolitics.org

• MORE DETAILS TO FOLLOW EARLY 2024 •



National Office for Marriage, Family and Life

The Bishops' Conference of Scotland has recently established a National Office for Marriage, Family and Life.

This recognises the need to support the Sacrament of Marriage, promote family values, and protect the sanctity of life from the womb to the tomb.

The Office liaises with the National Commission for Marriage, Family and Life, as well as the Catholic Parliamentary Office, ensuring that Catholic values are promoted within society.

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Wishing you and your family a Blessed and Holy Christmas