

Passing on Faith in the Year of Faith

By **Janette Davidson**, Diocesan Co-ordinator Family Life Ministries

Pope Benedict XVI has declared a Year of Faith which began on 11 October 2012, coinciding with the anniversaries of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and the promulgation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

It is hoped there will be a renewed commitment to our faith during this year in individuals and families which will enrich our relationships with God and neighbour, at home, in our parishes and schools and in the broader community.

Opportunities that the Year of Faith presents to all of us include: to investigate, renew and deepen our faith; to grow in knowledge and understanding of our faith; to help appreciate the gift of faith and deepen our relationship with God; to reach out to those who are returning to the practice of their faith; to offer a response to those who are searching for meaning; to strengthen our commitment to sharing our faith with others.

Families and Faith

Passing on the faith is a privileged and joyful task of parents and also grandparents (who often play a key role), but it can seem daunting at times. During this Year of Faith the whole

Church focuses on nurturing the gift of faith we received at baptism. For most of us our faith was nurtured through our families and it is in our families that we most live out our faith.

The Year of Faith provides an opportunity for us to pause and reflect and renew our own faith and to recapture in our own hearts that which gives life its fullness. The family (the church of the home) is sacred because it is our first community – where we first find experiences of faith. It is within the home that the fullness of God's life and love, of acceptance, mercy, forgiveness, trust and hope are concretely experienced.

Bishop David has made the following observations about faith:

"There is an interplay between our intellect (knowledge of Jesus), will (commitment to Jesus) and behaviour (how our relationship with Jesus is modelled/witnessed).

Passing on the faith to our children involves this interplay and is the shared task of the family, parish and school; each has a complimentary and diverse role and responsibility. Whilst many parents are concerned about the faith practice of their children, we need to remember that faith needs to be modelled in the family. There are

many opportunities in our families to reflect on, celebrate, nurture and put our faith into action including: Praying with your children; Reading bible stories; *Lectio Divina* Scripture for Families Advent readings; Setting up a Sacred Space and having religious symbols on display; Offering personal gifts and talents to your parish community (getting more involved); Attending Mass and Reconciliation; Rediscovering and deepening the quality of relationships in the family; Seeing good in difficult family members; Taking advantage of opportunities provided by the Diocese to join parent spirituality and prayer sessions; Respecting other people; Being aware of the many caring acts that take place in families; Taking up the opportunity to reflect on what faith really is and how it can be passed on; Helping someone in need; Being joyful.

Advent is a season of waiting, of preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus our Saviour. Christmas is typically a holiday time when families come together and when we can see our faith in action in our family rituals of sharing a Christmas meal, gift giving, attending Mass and other services and reconciling with estranged family members.



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