



Portsmouth Diocese Marriage and Family Life Newsletter

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New Diocesan Marriage and Family Life Advisor



Katja Babei is the new Marriage and Family Life Advisor for our Diocese. Her role is to develop the 'Celebrating Family' projects of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales: 'Everybody's Welcome', 'Home is a Holy Place' and 'Passing on the Faith' and to provide coordinated diocesan support for marriage preparation and enrichment, bereavement groups, family spirituality, parenting programmes, mental health, and ministry of welcome.

A graduate in Theology, Katja has extensive experience working with children and families as a support worker and in crisis situations. She has also completed training as a teacher in adult education. Katja has previously been involved in work at parish level, including the Church Parent and Toddler Group, RCIA, First Holy Communion preparation, and has been a member of the Mothers' Prayer Group for a number of years. She has two boys, aged nine and five.

Celebrating Marriage 2010

Over the last few years, a number of dioceses have celebrated the Sacrament of Marriage through a diocesan Mass, bringing couples together who have reached significant wedding anniversaries.

Bishop Crispian will be celebrating a special mass at 11.00am on Saturday 12th June at St Bede's Church, Popley Way, Basingstoke for those celebrating their Silver, Ruby, Golden, Diamond and Diamond plus (ie above 60) wedding anniversaries in 2010. This mass is not only for Catholics married to Catholics but for all married couples in our diocesan community celebrating one of the anniversaries listed above.

Attendance at the Mass is by invitation only. If you are celebrating a significant wedding anniversary this year, and would like to receive an invitation, please contact Katja Babei kbabei@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk tel 01329 835583. A mailing will be sent to parishes with more information within the next few weeks.

The Diocese's Celebrating Marriage 2009 was a highly enjoyable and very popular event with 150 couples and their guests filling the Church and we look forward to making this year's event equally significant.

A Marriage Refresher

Last year, a one day Marriage Refresher Course was trialled in Basingstoke and Fleet and this year the course will be rolled out across the Diocese. One couple wrote: *"Thank you so much for organizing the Marriage Refresher Day, we both enjoyed it. You have clearly identified an important need and have succeeded in packing a lot into a short period of time, which is needed when so many are unable to make commitments to courses over several evenings or days. We pray that your initiative will grow and flourish."* The course is for committed couples who want to spend a day reflecting on their relationship away from the hustle and bustle of daily life. During the day, couples are encouraged to think and to share privately as couples how they are handling change, communication, conflict and marital spirituality in their relationship. There is no group sharing. The day is not designed for couples experiencing serious difficulties who would benefit from counselling.

The first two courses for 2010 are already scheduled:

Winchester, 17th April 10.00am-4.00pm (refreshments from 9.30am)

Bournemouth, 8th May 10.00am-4.00pm (refreshments from 9.30am)

For details, please see the attached posters or contact Pip Redding on 01962 827705 for the Winchester day, or Eileen Stephenson on 01329 835583 for the Bournemouth day.

Catholic Marriage Preparation Survey

Bishop John Hine, Chair of the Bishops' Committee for Marriage and Family Life, launched a Catholic Marriage Preparation Survey during Marriage Week UK (February 8-14). All those involved in preparing couples for marriage are invited to take part in the survey, including priests, deacons, marriage preparation providers, and of course the couples themselves.

It is envisaged that the data gathered will better inform diocesan strategic planning and the Committee's recommendations for the pastoral care of marriage and family life by:

- highlighting particular examples of good practice,
- affirming the provision of good quality marriage preparation,

- pointing to gaps and overlaps,
- articulating the value of marriage preparation including its public benefit, and
- alerting pastoral teams to possible issues affecting future provision of marriage preparation

Since these surveys are only of real value if large numbers participate, please start filling in the surveys if you are involved in any way. The short surveys can be filled in online at www.catholicmarriage.org.uk.

Retrouvaille

Retrouvaille is for couples with troubled relationships, even for couples who may have already separated. Created by a Canadian couple in 1977, Retrouvaille -- French for "rediscovery" -- is a program that works to help heal marriages in crisis by bringing together troubled couples and couples who have overcome serious difficulties. In Sept. 2009 Pope Benedict addressed 300 people participating in a Retrouvaille international council meeting at the papal villa in Castel Gandolfo. The Holy Father said a troubled marriage can seem like a failure, "proof that the dream is over or that it has turned into a nightmare". When a relationship deteriorates, he said, the man and woman often "sink into solitude" and lose a sense of having any communion with God, the church and other people.

Pope Benedict said those who help these troubled couples through Retrouvaille represent solid, positive points of reference and offer "a foothold" for others so they can gradually regain trust and hope after experiencing dark, desperate times. He reminded his audience that every Christian marriage, "even the most miserable and faltering" of unions, is a sacrament of Christ's new alliance with humanity. All that is needed is "to find, in humility, the courage to ask the Lord for help," he said. Together with the help of other couples in Retrouvaille, a troubled couple can "rediscover the hidden treasure of their marriage, the fire left buried beneath the ashes."

With the help of the Westminster Diocese, it is hoped that there will be program run this Autumn in the South-East. www.retrouvaille.org.uk

Home is a Holy Place

Home is a Holy Place is about recognising and responding to God's presence at home with our families, in the ordinary events of our daily lives, in the deep joys and sorrows we experience together and in our relationships with one another, whether we are children, siblings, parents, spouses, friends or neighbours. *"God calls people to lead holy lives within the ordinary circumstances in which they find themselves."*

John Paul II, address to the Scottish bishops. Rome 2003

Home is a Holy Place aims to raise greater awareness of God's presence at home not just among families but among all those who serve them in any way within our Catholic community.

The resources that accompanied "Home is a Holy Place" (www.homeisaholyplace.org.uk) have been available for more than a year now, has your Parish been influenced by this way of thinking. If so, tell us how it went; if not ask us how these resources could be used.

DVD exploring Spirituality and Dementia

The DVD by CSAN, Catholic Social Action Network, is divided into five modules which can be selected depending on the interests of the group involved. These are: introduction, the effects of dementia, understanding and assessing spiritual needs, meeting spiritual needs in care settings and the welcoming parish.

CSAN hope that it will become a useful resource for those with responsibilities of caring for people with dementia and their carers (including Eucharistic Ministers) and a way of raising awareness of the importance of meeting spiritual needs. A copy of the DVD is being distributed to every parish in the country. If you would like an extra copy (for a suggested donation of £7.50), phone 020 7901 4877 or go to www.caritas-socialaction.org.uk/data/files/dvd_order_form1.doc.

And Finally

If you know anyone else who would like to receive this newsletter, please let me know their name and email (or address if they don't have email), thank you.