

**BEFORE
YOU BEGIN**

Why is **awareness** of marital and family spirituality so **low**?

Home is a Holy Place aims to raise awareness of the graced, blessed and holy reality of Christian marriage and family life. But why is there a need for this and why is it so important?

Talking it Through:

Why Are We Asleep to God's Presence at Home?

Throughout *Listening 2004: My Family My Church* families spoke little about marital or family spirituality. Awareness of marriage and parenthood as vocations and of the specific spirituality of marriage and family life was low. Conversations about spirituality focussed on church-going or prayer at home, rather than the daily living out of family life in response to the Gospel of Jesus. Why do you think this is so?



Here are some possible answers...

Which do you think are likely explanations?
What would you add to this list?

- Holiness is traditionally associated with perfection, order, quietness
- Jesus said some hard things about family life
- Celibacy is viewed as a superior calling
- The holiness of family life is difficult to express
- Little is spoken in church about marriage and family life
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Talking it Through:

Does Awareness Matter?

Understanding marriage and family life as a vocation or as a spiritual journey or as graced by God's continued presence can change everything, as these examples on the right show. Awareness can turn drudgery into discipleship, the banal into the blessed and repetitive routine into spiritual discipline. Seeing God in the midst of the mess gives family life deeper meaning, purpose, hope, encouragement and freedom. Why does *Home is a Holy Place* matter to you?

When Awareness is Raised

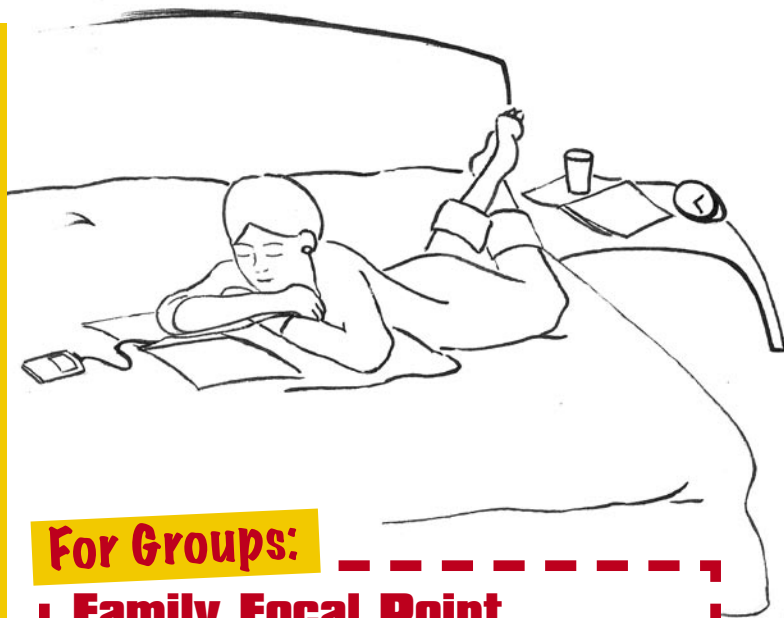
'As a parent of two young children I feel liberated and supported by the sense that the Holy Spirit is moving among us in our daily lives.'

'Knowing that God is present during those times of anger, sorrow, pain and frustration can encourage and strengthen us to imitate the example of Christ and his patience, tolerance and loving-kindness.'

'One of my friends felt guilty for not doing enough within the parish after her baby was born. She eventually realised that by attending Sunday Mass and living by the sacraments with her family at home she is continuing to serve God in a huge way. This is something she can take great pride and encouragement from.'

Raising Awareness In the Parish

- Insert some quotes from *Introducing Home is a Holy Place* or from the website into each Sunday's parish newsletter over the next few months
- Distribute *Home is a Holy Place* prayer cards
- Incorporate a viewing of the *Home is a Holy Place* DVD into sacramental preparation programmes
- Use the group resources in this pack together with the DVD as the basis of house group meetings in Advent or Lent
- Offer a House Blessing to all parishioners
- Give a copy of *Family – An Adventure in Love* to every family
- Include regularly in homilies thoughts from the perspective of family spirituality - see the website for ideas



For Groups:

Family Focal Point

Invite your guests to bring an object from home that best symbolises who they are at home (eg peacemaker, organiser, breadwinner, comedian, storyteller). Cover a small table with an ordinary tablecloth. Light a candle that is usually found at home - the small, squat variety are best. Invite everyone to place their object on the table and to say a few words about their choice and what it means to them. Say a short prayer of thanks to God for each person's gifts and talents.

Challenges when Working with Groups

The *Home is a Holy Place* Working Group is very keen to see this resource being used with groups of ordinary family people. However, our experience suggests that a number of responses to the DVD will be encountered. You will need to view the DVD for yourself at least twice to prepare for what families that you know may say about it; here are a few points for you to consider as you do so.

- Although the DVD covers a range of family experience it does not cover everything. Criticism in this respect is justified.
- At least one person in every group might have had some really painful

family experiences. It's very important that the environment in which conversations take place is open to sharing and respectful of privacy.

- Some viewers have questioned whether this vision of *Home is a Holy Place* is really Catholic: these families could be any families. What do you think?
- Questions have arisen about the meaning of holiness and grace. How would you define these? A good orientation session will give participants a chance to share what the words home, holy and family mean to them.
- You may be asked how we as families can become more holy if this is what holiness looks like at home. Another group conversation sheet in this pack, *What Next?*, address this question.

Further resources available:

www.homeisaholyplace.org.uk