



**BUILDING A CULTURE
OF LIFE AND THE FAMILY
IN CANADA**

**CCCB Pastoral Initiative for Life and the Family
Preparatory Year 2012**

Introduction

More than ever, Christians need to be encouraged and sustained as they strive to create an authentic culture of life and family. The family is the key to the New Evangelization, the leaven of transformation for a world desperately in need of the Good News. It is precisely in the context of the New Evangelization—and as part of a still-developing long-term initiative – that this *Pastoral Initiative for Life and the Family (Preparatory Year 2012)* is proposed.

We are aware of the major challenges that we face in building a culture of life and family in our country. If we are to be effective in our efforts, we must act in a concerted way. For this reason, the CCCB proposes the following suggestions to the bishops of Canada in the development of their own diocesan pastoral plans this coming year, in order that we might better prepare for the official launch of the National Pastoral Initiative in 2013.

2012

January

- Letter of every Canadian Bishop to his priests:
 1. Thanking them for their support and their past collaborations;
 2. Presenting the *Pastoral Initiative for Life and the Family (Preparatory Year 2012)*, as well as the National Long-Term Pastoral Initiative;
 3. Underlining the necessity and vital importance of working together (bishop and priests) to implement the proposed initiatives in support of life and the family.
 4. Inviting them to visit the website of the Catholic Organization for Life and Family (COLF).

Suggestion:

- On this occasion, each pastor could also receive from his bishop three COLF publications accompanied by workshop guides. The bishop's letter could request that, during the upcoming year, the pastor promote life and the family by organizing workshops on the proposed themes and that he make the following COLF materials available to parishioners.

➤ ***World Peace: a family recipe!***

“Teaching our children to love Jesus, to recognize Him in each person they meet and especially in victims of injustice means gently awakening their thirst for justice and solidarity towards all humans, who are their brothers and sisters in God” (from *World Peace: a family recipe!*).

➤ ***Families, did you know? Love is calling your children***

It would be particularly appropriate to use this publication in conjunction with Vocation Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Easter), April 29, 2012.

“In God’s great plan—a plan of love and unity—each person has a role to play. That person and no other, at a precise moment in the history of humanity, will be able to fulfill this role by answering “yes” to God’s call . . . Christ will call every single one of our children to a very personal vocation. Their answer will depend to a great extent on the openness of heart acquired in the family” (from *Families, did you know? Love is calling your children*).

➤ ***Work + Love = Holiness!***

It would be particularly appropriate to use this publication on Labour Day Weekend.

"It is within families, among other places, that children, teenagers, and young adults learn about the meaning of life; it is within families that they also understand the importance and meaning of work . . . Christians know that the main ingredient that gives any labour its value . . . is the love with which it is performed . . . “ (from *Work + Love = Holiness!*).

- A letter from each Canadian Bishop to his seminarians briefly introducing the renewed focus of the Church in Canada on Life and the Family and warmly anticipating a collaborative ministry in support of these vital causes.

March 22-23

COLF Seminar on the Family

- Held in Ottawa, COLF's 2012 seminar will focus on the couple and parenting. The following topics will be discussed: the male-female couple as foundational to the family; the theology of marriage and family; the family as Domestic Church; the specific roles and gifts of fatherhood and motherhood; the emotional and social needs of children; and finally, family life and the transmission of the faith (raising up collaborators with Christ).

April 8

Easter Sunday

- Homily notes on the subject of Easter as the Feast of Life and Faith *par excellence* will be made available to Dioceses interested in having them. This could be an opportunity to reflect on the Resurrection as a mystery of faith and its meaning for families. Prayers of the Faithful encouraging the faithful to respect human life and dignity from conception to natural death will also be made available.

November 3 or December 1

Get-together with Pro-life and Pro-family Movements and Associations

- The theme of this meeting in Ottawa could be: "Working Together to Build a Culture of Life".
- The focus would be:
 1. The Mission of the Laity
 2. The Bishop, shepherd of Unity
- This get-together will be attended by the President of the CCCB (or a delegated representative from the Executive Committee of the CCCB), and the two Bishops serving on the Board of COLF.

December 25

Christmas

- Homily notes and prayers of the faithful will be made available to Dioceses interested in having them. This could be an opportunity to reflect on the Incarnation as a mystery of faith and its meaning for families. The theme will be “Bethlehem: House of Bread”, emphasizing:
 1. Christ, the Prince of Peace, comes to become our food so that, in Him and with Him, we are empowered to give of ourselves.
 2. The home is the first place where we can experience and live out the call to be Eucharistic people.

(See also COLF’s publication entitled *World peace: a family recipe!*, which could be ordered and distributed after masses during the Christmas season.)

Into the Deep

As the year unfolds it will be necessary to monitor ongoing political and cultural developments relative to life and family—at both the national and provincial levels—in order to respond appropriately and in order to seize teaching moments when they present themselves. The spokesperson of the CCCB could be either the president of the CCCB or the president of the Board of Directors of COLF (speaking in the name of the CCCB).

2013

The Pastoral Initiative for 2013 will incorporate all of the activities implemented in 2012 with the important addition of the first National Week for Life and the Family. As each member of the CCCB continues to promote life and family within his own diocese during the year 2012, he can start giving thought to the 2013 National Week for Life and the Family.

May 12-19

National Week for Life and the Family

It is in the family that we first encounter love — the love of mother and of father, love which is a reflection of God's tender love. For the Christian, the love that we give – to our family, to our friends, and to the world – is in large measure, a reflection of the human/divine love that we have received in the context of the family, that is, within the Domestic Church. Yet, no human family is perfect; for many, family life has entailed great suffering. For these individuals and families, God the loving Father, promises compassion and healing through the agency of the Church.

Theme: *The Family — A Witness to God's Love*

- Pastoral Letter from each Canadian Bishop to his flock, launching the CCCB's long-term Pastoral Initiative for Life and the Family. The letter could be read from the pulpit and/or referred to and distributed in the pews.
- A Liturgy Guide and homily notes will be provided for the two Sundays embraced by the week which will begin with Mother's Day, Sunday, May 12, and conclude on Sunday, May 19. It is suggested that, during masses, on the weekend of May 18-19 some opportunity be provided for a couple or family to give a public witness to how their faith has impacted their life (as a couple or as a family).
- Activity Kit including a poster, a Liturgy Guide, leaflets on relevant topics (e.g. the beauty of nascent human life; respect for the life of people facing suffering and death; natural family planning; theology of the body), and planning strategies for family and parish-based activities will be provided well in advance.
- Suggested activities include (1) a Parish barbecue; (2) a public viewing (hosted in the parish hall or in a more secular environment) of Salt and Light's film "Love is a Choice" on St. Gianna Beretta Molla (1922-1962), and (3) a Mass for couples celebrating significant wedding anniversaries (10th, 20th, 25th, 30th etc), etc.
- Bulletin inserts will be provided for inclusion during the three weeks preceding "the week." In addition to promoting participation in the week's activities, one or more of these insertions will stress the importance of supporting – with our presence where possible but, in every instance, with our prayers – the National March for Life on Thursday, May 9 (as well as *local* pro-life marches and events). Ideally, each Bishop will join his flock for the March for Life.

- The Week for Life and Family will most probably receive an enthusiastic response from the Catholic Women's League of Canada and the Knights of Columbus. Where possible, it could also be co-sponsored by local members of new ecclesial communities.

Other possible activities for 2013

- Provision of homily notes and prayers of the faithful for Vocations' Sunday
- National Call to Prayer for Life and the Family (during the week preceding the Week for Life and the Family)
- A round table event on "Family and the Media"
- Introduction of Theology of the Body programs for teens
- Provision of homily notes and prayers of the faithful on the theme of work and the family (for Labour Day weekend).