

Vocation of Marriage and Parenting

By **Jannette Davidson**

As part of our ongoing celebration of the vocation of marriage and parenting the Diocese sponsored 26 participants to attend the World Congress of Families in Sydney from 15 – 18 May.

The Congress explored how business, government, education, law, health and the media have the capacity to strengthen families for the benefit of society.

Diocesan participants have shared with us various insights about their experience including:

“Last Friday I had the privilege of attending a day of the World Congress of families (WCF)... It was a highly organised Congress with excellent local and international speakers. The attendees were Christians of different denominations, like-minded people who want to protect traditional family values.

“The Congress allowed me to reaffirm some of my values. Sometimes we all need to stand with likeminded people and gain strength from each other... This Congress reaffirmed to me the importance of God and that Christian values are still very relevant and gave me a dose of fortitude: God needs to be at the centre of our work and play and active in our families.

“A good point was raised in an open Q&A session: when people oppose our values – don’t answer their anger with anger. Many of them are hurt and suffering. Try compassion, try to listen and pray for them.” (*Catechist from Chatswood Parish*)

“Attending part of the ‘World Congress of

Families’ last week afforded me an opportunity to be refreshed by inspirational speakers who presented compelling data and evidence to stir me to action.

“Whilst evidence and predictions were rather startling, it was sobering that solutions were presented to avert self-obsession in society; interestingly, most of the solutions centred on all of us rekindling healthy families. Following are several suggestions for all of us to consider initiating:

- Recommit and model our own values in our families and workplaces
- Engage in reasoned and evidenced-based debate around the dinner table and in our workplaces
- Remember who we are fighting for ... ie for our children
- Engage in debate in a relevant manner – (People trust and relate to personal stories in particular)
- Don’t ever forget the human stories of pain and breakdown.

A final quote that resonated beautifully for me:

‘Family is where you are accepted for who you are, not what you’re worth.’ (*School Principal*)

“We were moved by the expertise of the speakers who shared the results of their research

and life experience on issues related to the family including proposed legislative amendments, the economy, culture and media, faith, contraception, divorce, abortion, forgiveness, home-making, religious education, and ways to improve mothering and fathering. Some of the more moving talks included ... Australian economist Ian Harper who said that healthy families are needed for healthy economies. Healthy families teach children good values, social skills and self-control, all of which are essential attributes for young people to contribute to a healthy economy... The material presented calls all Christians to a fuller participation in family life and to be more active in the protection of the traditional family structure and values within society as a whole.” (*Family from Ku-ring-gai Chase Parish*)

“The experience was a great pick-me-up for me. Even now I am feeling more sure of the great need we have in all our lives and in any situation as believers to speak for and about and uphold pro-life and family values, for our own families and for all young people in particular and indeed for all families throughout the world.” (*Couple from Hornsby Cathedral Parish*)

“As a starting point the Congress underscored the importance of the family in the raising and formation of children and as the place where they experience love and discover their dignity and worth. The family exercises a role of great significance to society.

“The place of marriage as the foundation upon which the family is formed was highlighted.

“We came away with an enhanced appreciation of the capacity of humans to rise to heights of nobility and love and the significance of marriage and family life. But we also came away with no doubt in our minds that Christians and all right thinking people need to stand up and be counted or we will soon find ourselves living in a society in which Christian values have been supplanted by a secular humanism that will be forced upon us without regard to our values and beliefs.” (*Couple from Chatswood Parish*)

“All the speakers were wonderful and affirmed the importance of our role as married couples and as parents. We were particularly impressed by Ted Baehr from USA. He spoke on how to uphold Christian Values in a mass media world. He told us that we must make wise choices about the mass media and entertainment to help safeguard our families.” (*Parishioner from Pennant Hills Parish*)

All who attended expressed their appreciation to Bishop David and the Diocese for the wonderful opportunity to attend and be encouraged by the World Congress of Families.

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