

What Does **Home** Mean to **You**?

'Those who love me will keep my word and my Father will love them and we will come to them and make our home with them.'

JOHN 14:23

Every Home is Different

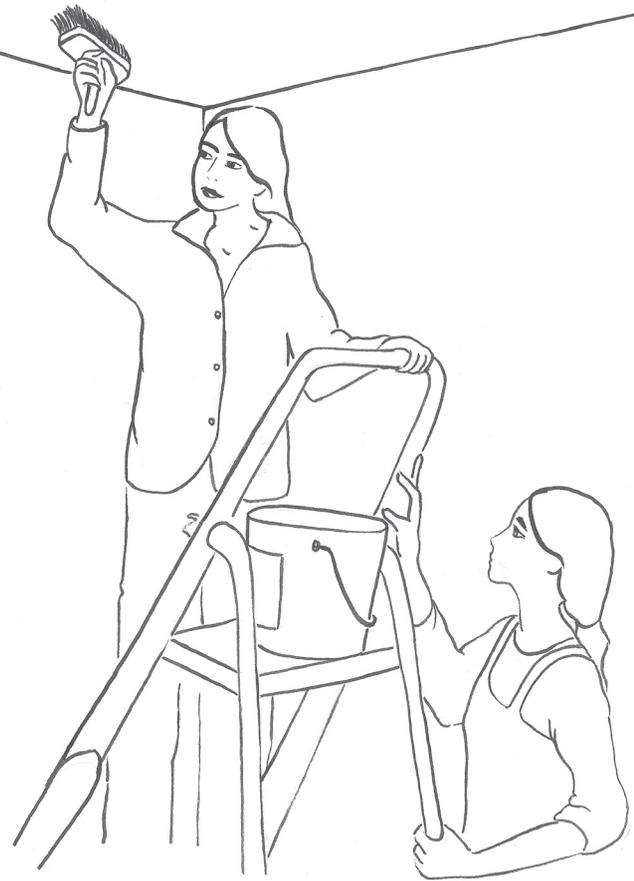
'You will describe the homes and families that are yours in different ways... Your homes will be equally different in appearance. Most of you will have moved many times... Very few of you are smiling all the time... your relationships stretched unbearably by the pull of contemporary life... oppressed by the pressures of succeeding or of simply getting by... Despite all this, most of you will also look to your home and family as a primary source of nurture and meaning... The concept of home has been explored as a powerful and primal image in which our deepest being is rooted. The home as an image... contains within itself a clue to the way we understand ourselves and our world. The term home has religious associations for us as well. In most faiths home connotes a place of ultimate rest and comfort, of belonging and identity, of being with God.'
(Extract from *Sacred Dwelling* by Wendy Wright. Darton, Longman and Todd, 2007)

- What does the word home mean to you?
- Who do you associate with home?
- What sounds, tastes, smells, images, feelings come to mind when you think about home?
- Where is home for you?

Home Means...

'Home is a refuge and a place where I feel full. I don't really care so much about what goes on outside because there is enough joy and pain and struggle going on here. I think my world has shrunk since having children. Home seems like a smaller place in a way. And yet I care more about things like the environment. So it's a kind of weird shrinking and expanding at the same time.'

Nancy, mother of two adopted children.



Talking it Through:

Does Home Matter?

Opinion polls regularly report on how much home and family matter to us. In October 2007 for example, a poll of 1001 adults for the BBC showed that family life was important for the overwhelming majority (96%) of those quizzed. More than nine in 10 said they were very or fairly happy with their family life. Just under 75 % said they feel *happiest* around their families. This compares to just 17% who said they are happiest around friends. The Church too recognises the importance of home as this extract from the Bishops' 2004 teaching document *Cherishing Life* shows:

'In order to love another person it is necessary to have that security that comes from having been loved. This is why the love of parents is so important for a child's personal development and growth... It is from our first carers that we learn how to love ourselves and how to love others in the right way.'

- Why else does home matter?
- Why does home matter to you?

Responding to the challenge

Our feelings about home may be ambivalent. Some of us have no place to call home. Others have been badly hurt at home. Many more of us are often simply too exhausted or stressed to fully enjoy being at home. It's important to recognise and accept all these experiences whilst still celebrating the blessings of home: of hope in the face of adversity, laughter among the tears, the struggles with 'grit' that we hope, with God's grace, will one day be transformed into pearls of great price. When have you ever felt ambivalent about your home?

'The ordinary acts we practice every day at home are of more importance to the soul than their simplicity might suggest.'
(Thomas More)

Let us Pray

Thank you, Lord, for each person in our family.
(Name your family members).

We thank you for our home, and for all those who are a part of our life together.
(Mention someone in your family for whom you are especially thankful.)

Loving God, you have made us a family so that we can learn about your love for us.

Thank you for the times we are able to laugh and cry together, for giving us time to talk and listen to one another and for all the ways we know we are loved.

We ask pardon for the times we have hurt one another. Help us to be a sign to others of your unconditional love for us. Please give your special protection and love to those who feel alone, especially children. Help us to remember that we are all family and to share our blessings with others. We ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen.

From Faith & Fest in Family. Family Life Office, Archdiocese of Omaha. <http://dev.archomaha.org>

For Groups:

I Family Focal Point

Invite your guests to bring an object from home that symbolises their life there as it is right now (eg quiet, lonely, noisy, chaotic, new, old, struggling). 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 having a home.

More Questions

- **The DVD shows a number of different types of home from Gypsy caravans to a Community hospital. Thinking about different experiences of home you have had, what it is that makes particular spaces or places 'home' for you?**
- **In John's gospel two disciples ask Jesus where he lives and he responds by inviting them to 'Come and see'. How does it feel to invite others to come and see where you live? How do you feel when others invite you to share their homes, even for a short time?**
- **What does the word holy mean to you? What images or feelings come to mind when you think about holiness?**
- **In the DVD Archbishop Vincent Nichols describes some ways in which families become holy at home: through kindness, patience, forbearance; through the search for fairness and peace; through the struggle for understanding and tolerance; in faithfulness and honesty, in self-sacrificing love. When have you experienced these qualities in your family life? Have any been more important than others for you and your family? How have they helped you to grow in holiness?**

Further resources available:

www.homeisaholyplace.org.uk