

## AUGUST 2018

Early on in the month, I had a helpful meeting with Fr Gary Brassington at Holy Family parish in Swindon together with his baptism preparation catechist, Brenda. It was useful to hear how they offer baptism preparation sessions to parents every 6-8 weeks. It just goes to show that we all find a way that suits our parish family. During our lovely conversation, I was impressed to learn that every September an RCIA course starts. Well done you guys, it was inspiring to meet you!

Our training begins on 30<sup>th</sup> September with St Edmund's, Calne and may have a couple of folk from Chippenham. In fact, anyone reading this who is interested in being trained to deliver baptism preparation for parents, please get in touch with me via my email: [anitra.rawlins@cliftdiocese.com](mailto:anitra.rawlins@cliftdiocese.com). I 'm waiting on a date to start at St Teresa's, Filton and Fr Jeremy will be in touch on how we progress at St Mary's, Bath.

I am happy to report that four teams have so far been trained, two are very active, and I know of at least another four parishes in our diocese who are offering baptism preparation on a regular basis. We have developed training materials to form the teams, a booklet for priests explaining the training, and we also have handouts for parents to take away after each session. These are in addition to the original material and complement it very well. The word is spreading and I have a Deanery meeting to attend in Cheltenham in early October and am looking forward to presenting the project there.

Of course, the World Meeting of Families took place in Dublin on 21-26 August 2018. What a celebration of love and solidarity, teeming with people, queues at every turn, but a truly joyful and loving atmosphere. People from every corner of the world just getting along, chatting to each other, it really did feel like a big family party – or a 'clan gathering' as it's known in the Rawlins' house! Pope Francis' presence in Ireland was well received from where I was standing and both the Festival of Families and the Papal Mass were crammed with excited people, eager to catch a glimpse of the Holy Father and to hear what he had to say. The whole week was themed around 'The Joy of Love' and the sessions on offer during the pastoral congress were an unpacking of that document. Two speakers that stick in my mind are Bishop Robert Barron and Fr James Martin SJ. I urge all of you to make it to Rome in 2021 for the Tenth World Meeting of Families – you will have a most wonderful experience of what it feels like to be a part of the humongous family of God! Take a look at [www.wmof2018.ie](http://www.wmof2018.ie) to read Pope Francis' homilies, and a newsy Blog.



Here's what Pope Francis had to say about baptism at this World Meeting of Families ...  
'... A family in which we care for everyone, for God our Father has made all of us his children in Baptism. That is one reason why I keep encouraging parents to baptise their children as soon as possible, so that they can become part of this great family of God. We need to invite everyone to the party, even the smallest child! That is why children should be baptised soon after birth. There is something else: if a child is baptised as a baby, the Holy Spirit enters that child's heart. Let's make a comparison [between] a child who is unbaptised, because the parents say: "No, wait till he or she grows up", and a baby who is baptised and has the Holy Spirit within. That child is stronger, because he or she has the strength of God within!' *Pope Francis, Croke Park Stadium, Dublin, 25 August 2018*

**Don't forget – we have some beautiful baptism anniversary cards available to buy at just 5p each. If you would like some, just send me an email and I'll pop them in the post to you - [anitra.rawlins@cliftdiocese.com](mailto:anitra.rawlins@cliftdiocese.com) – a great way to stay in touch with your families!**

