

NETWORKING FOR HEALTHY MARRIAGES AND STRONG FAMILIES

March 2016

On January 21, 2016, the offices of the Archdiocese of Saint-Boniface hosted a group of representatives from surrounding parishes who came to discuss marriage and family issues, at the invitation of the Archdiocese's Marriage, Family and Life Service. The parishes represented were Mary, Mother of the Church, St. Timothy and Saint-Malo/Blessed Margaret. The focus of the meeting was to draw inspiration from each parish's experience.

From the parish to the Archdiocese

Parishes that offer services dealing with married and family life receive support and resources from the Archdiocese's Service. In this case, the Archdiocese provided support by gathering together these parish representatives. According to Marie Brunet, Interim Coordinator of Marriage, Family, and Life Service, "The Archdiocese serves as a link between its parishes."

The meeting brought together Shawnda Muir, Margaret Marshall, Donald and Alesa Sutherland, and Monique Catellier, all of whom are volunteers involved in programs related to marriage and family in their respective parishes. The participants explained their particular approach to serving the members of their community. Indeed, the idea behind this meeting was to share ideas.

Mutual enrichment

As a means for enhancing services offered in the parishes, the discussion brought a number of new ideas to the table.

Saint-Malo presented its *Baby Bag* initiative, which consists of visiting the home of new parents and offering a gift bag with baby supplies and Catholic materials.

St. Timothy described two of its activities aimed at enriching married and family life: their *Parish Family Picnic* and *Table for Two*.



Evening: *Table for Two*

Mary, Mother of the Church presented *Friends in Faith*, a program of support and discussion for adults. The parish also offers other resources for individuals, couples and families, including informative articles which it posts on the Web or publishes in-house. As Shawnda Muir, from Mary Mother of the Church, explains, “We help each other in order to enhance the quality of our services. We look at what others have to offer, take what we find useful and try to apply it to our own parish. And better yet, if an idea interests us, we now have a resource person we can contact.”

An invitation

This meeting was the first of its kind organized by the Marriage, Family and Life Service of the Archdiocese of Saint-Boniface. According to Marie Brunet, “This is a first step; but much more can be done.”

Indeed, not all parishes offer support services for married and family life. For Shawnda Muir, “Strong marriages make for strong families, and ultimately for a strong society.” Thus, she hopes, other parishes will feel called to set up similar programs.

The Archdiocese also invites other parishes to consider the possibility of providing support and enrichment for marriages and families in their faith community.

For information on resources available, and on how to start up a ministry of this kind in your parish, please contact:

Marie Brunet, Interim Coordinator,
Marriage, Family, and Life Service
Archdiocese of Saint-Boniface
Tel. : (204) 594-0274
Email: mfl@archsaintboniface.ca