



## Listening 2004 in the Diocese of East Anglia – Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2004



### **“Keep the Home Flames Burning!”**

On May 15<sup>th</sup> over 50 parishioners from the Diocese of East Anglia met in Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk to participate in the first Diocesan Family Listening Day. The Listening day, which happened to coincide with the International Day of Families, helped to facilitate dialogue on key concerns regarding marriage and family life in the Church.

Bishop Michael Evans and Bishop John Hine opened the day with prayer and introductions. Bishop Evans told the gathering, “Your family life should be a burning bush, a place where people encounter the fire of God's love. That includes your children. That includes each other. That includes all those who visit you in your home.”

The participants represented over 75% of parishes within the diocese and included representatives from Marriage Care, Marriage Encounter, the Saint Vincent de Paul Society, the Diocesan Child Protection Commission and the Catholic Children's Society. During discussions, participants described a need for more support for couples, specifically in marriage preparation for engaged couples and couples' counselling, as well as fostering a greater awareness of family planning resources and support services. Many also expressed a need for support in raising their children in the Faith and keeping young people involved in the Church.

Participants also offered several suggestions for increasing support and inclusion within each parish. Some parishes had successfully used mentor couples to help counsel young couples, and others suggested that the diocese focus on presenting marriage and parenting as vocations. Parishioners also suggested increased catechesis as a way to raise young people in the faith.

At the end of the day of conversations, Bishop Evans announced that a "dynamic and forward-looking" Diocesan Commission for Marriage and Family Life would be re-established in the near future. He also reminded the participants that it was in the homes where the important ministry work would take place. "It is up to you," said Bishop Evans, "in your homes, in your families, in your parish communities to live the vocation that each one of us has."