

Home is a Holy Place Resource Pack

What's happened? How has it been received?

Who's been using it?

The resource has worked well with all age groups, from **children** of ten years old at a Diocesan Vocations Day to **over-70's** at a parish after-noon club.

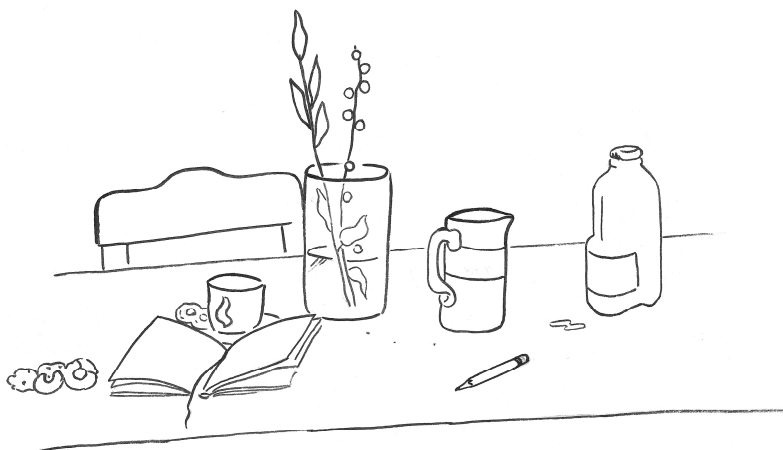
It reported to have worked really well with **people on the margins** or thinking of returning, because 'it affirms them as they are, they can see that they haven't been far from the love of God at all.'

It also works well across language barriers because it's very visual and has been used effectively with **asylum seeker/ refugee families**.

It's been used both to supplement and as the basis of sacramental preparation at **Baptism, First Reconciliation, First Eucharist, Confirmation and Marriage**.

It's been used with **intergenerational groups**, groups of **married couples, parents** and **young people**.

It's been adapted for use by groups with **special needs** and their families.



We've learned the importance of...

Preparation, particularly within the parish, both in terms of facilitators truly knowing, understanding and appropriating the vision of Home is a Holy Place for themselves, but also in terms of taking time to raise awareness in the parish before announcing opportunities to reflect on Home is a Holy Place. In one parish the newsletter raised awareness for nearly two months before group sessions commenced.

Communicating the initiative carefully. There is often a reluctance among families to claim their domestic lives as holy and so, as one person observed, the phrase 'Home is a Holy Place' needs almost to be seen as a sub-title. It needs a prelude. The word holiness is very often associated with perfection and can give the wrong impression and be off-putting.

Courage Some said the Resource Pack would not 'work' with certain age groups but others had gone ahead, discovering that actually it did. Another fear is that the Resource Pack will bring to light some very painful experiences. This fear had been realised during a session hosted by one parish. However, it seemed not to have been detrimental to either the individual concerned or to the group. Good, calm, listening without attempting to solve the problem clearly helped. The person involved had returned for subsequent sessions.

"Holiness does not consist in not making mistakes or never sinning. Holiness grows with the capacity for conversion, repentance, willingness to begin again, and above all with the capacity for reconciliation and forgiveness. And we can all learn this way of holiness." Pope Benedict XVI. 31.1.07



Caveats

In one diocese, the DVD is now introduced with three caveats:

You will not necessarily see your own family situation in this DVD. It simply wasn't possible to include every kind of family there is. Besides which, every family is unique. Even if structure or stage looks the same what goes on may be very different.

This may be a painful film clip to watch. In the course of the filming we feature families who have experienced Alzheimer's, suicide, severe disability, separation and divorce, adoption, discrimination, emigration, single-parenthood and loneliness. There are many untold stories behind the faces you see. Home is not always a pretty place - so be prepared.

Listen carefully to the words spoken while you are watching. The DVD doesn't show the real messiness of family life because we feature real families not actors. None of them were prepared to have a massive row in front of the film crew. Would you? So to be aware that the hurt and challenge of family life is there you must listen carefully to what the parents, friends and children are saying, and watch for the body language of those who don't speak verbally.

To think about

The need to consider What Next? may be important. This might include ways of continuing to celebrate family life, promote relationship support and family spirituality and also ways to enable groups to continue meeting and deepen the relationships that develop in sharing life and faith in this way. Family Groups is one option for this.

Another aspect of What Next? may be to provide catechetical back up for those on the margins who will begin to renew their faith in God through this resource. "Home is a Holy Place works, I do believe it works, it does make a difference in many different ways. It does change views and it liberates people, it takes them into a different mindset but it's only the beginning." was one comment we've heard.

Feedback

"It brings to the forefront of everyday life that God is with us through all good times and bad times."

"I will especially think about holiness next time I share a bottle of red wine with my husband!"

"I found it encouraging and inspiring to know that all the millions of things I do for my children is a form of serving."

"It has helped me to recognise what we do already to create the atmosphere and what can be further improved on."

"I took charge of the Home is a Holy Place pack last October for my parish, we have had several meetings with groups such as parents of children about to make their first communion, some groups, prayer groups etc. The DVD is useful for the purpose of the meeting, but the discussions that follow is the most important."

"We don't pray together at home. It's made me think about this."