

## Global Day of Parents

Tomorrow, 1<sup>st</sup> June, is the Global Day of Parents. This annual observation was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2012 and honours parents throughout the world.

To quote the official website it “provides an opportunity to appreciate all parents in all parts of the world for their selfless commitment to children and their lifelong sacrifice towards nurturing this relationship. ... Emphasizing the critical role of parents in the rearing of children, the Global Day of Parents recognizes also that the family has the primary responsibility for the nurturing and protection of children. For the full and harmonious development of their personality, children should grow up in a family environment and in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. ... Families remain at the centre of social life ensuring the well-being of their members, educating and socializing children and youth and caring for young and old.”

I imagine we can only support and endorse those aims. However, at the same time we recognize that many throughout the world do not enjoy the stable and loving family environment to which the United Nations rightly aspires.

There are of course many reasons for this, not least war and conflict, and poverty – issues that must be resolved if ours is to become a better world. Yet there are also breakdowns in relationships within families, and even cruelty and abuse. Some parents cannot simply cope. Which makes the need for practical support all so important.

As we heard in our Bible reading just now (Ephesians 5.1-2, 33; 6.1-4) St Paul offers advice on family relationships, within the context of the love of God shown in his Son Jesus Christ and of the love we in turn are to show to one another.

It may or may not be a coincidence that the Global Day of Parents is observed the day after the Church celebrates the visit of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Elizabeth. In St Luke’s account we are told of two holy families: that of Elizabeth, Zechariah and John the Baptist, on the one hand, and of Mary, Joseph and Jesus, on the other – and the meeting between the two expectant mothers.

In many ways these are seen to be model parents, who will go on to nurture sons who in their own ways will challenge and change the world – a great responsibility, but one that they take on willingly and with great love.

And so we pray for God’s blessing on all parents and on their essential contribution to the life of our world.

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