

The Inclusive Family

Anne Loughman reflects on the Pope's intention for June. Anne is married to Mike and has four children. She has worked as a chaplain in St Colmcille's Community School for fourteen years.



Pope's Intention: We pray for Christian families around the world. May they embody and experience unconditional love and advance in holiness in their daily lives.

tions and people deepens our love and brings us to God.

Jesus had a vision that all people are 'children of God'. When he met someone, he believed that God

was present in that person.

Recently I was listening to a homily on the holy family. The priest said that there was nothing normal about the holy family. Every family has its own unique nature. Sometimes it is dealing with the 'unholy' family that teaches us how to love. The challenge of dealing with different situa-

He looked for that presence through all the contradictions, until he found it. The intention of the family is to include everyone. The Bible is full of families, births and love stories. Different societies see families in different ways. We had a Maasai man



Jesus was told, 'Your mother and your brothers want to see you.' Jesus replied, 'Who are my mother and my brothers? Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, my sister, and mother.'

from Tanzania stay with us in 1986. His name was Shomet. When Shomet was going home he gave us a lovely card and signed it, 'from your brother Shomet'. A family member looked at it and said, 'What does he mean? He's not your brother.' I thought, 'Yes, he is our brother.'

A few years ago, our son, his wife and child stayed with us, having come back from abroad. About three years later, they found their own accommodation. My little grandson a few weeks later told his parents, 'I want to see my family.' They were perplexed. He meant us, his grandparents. He saw us as part of that unit. Since then he has had a regular sleepover with us. This is a blessing for us and also gives his parents some precious time alone.

Jesus was told, 'Your mother and your brothers want to see you.' Jesus replied, 'Who are my mother and my brothers? Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, my sister, and mother.' I'm conscious that when Jesus taught us to pray, he gave us the Our Father. We say *our father* because we are brothers and sisters, on this journey together. They say it takes a village to raise a child, and I truly believe this. It is not a job parents can do on their own.

In referring to the pandemic Pope Francis said that couples had experienced uncertainty, loneliness and the loss of loved ones. They had to leave behind their certainties, their comfort zones, familiar ways of doing things to work for the welfare of their families and of society.

In war time we have seen family units broken up as we see parents say goodbye to their children for their safety. So many people leave their homes with trepidation and fear of the unknown. Our Christian faith says we are not alone, that God dwells in us, with us and among us. We recognise our own weakness and powerlessness in the face of so many situations all around us.

Family life needs support from our Church, our workplaces and our government. It is in the family that we learn about forgiveness, trust and unconditional love not only from the God who created us but also from those closest to us, parents, family, guardians and grandparents.

May the Holy Spirit inspire in all families the gift of courage so essential for these times of change. We pray that no amount of difficulty will take away the joy of those who know that they walk with the Lord always at their side. 