

VIEWPOINT  
by  
THE RIGHT REV'D  
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*Already it is June and the International Year of the Family has hardly become known, let alone become an event.*

*This is unfortunate, since many of us value our experience of family, whether that one we come from or that one we have created. Thereby we have learnt deep-down how much such bonds have contributed positively to our own development, our exploration of what makes up life and equipped us for participation in that wider family we call society.*

*Perhaps one reason why 'the year' has flagged is that there is no common agreement about the definition of 'family'. For many of us it suggests immediately the limited and limiting model of the 'nuclear' family viz. mother, father and 2.2(!) children.*

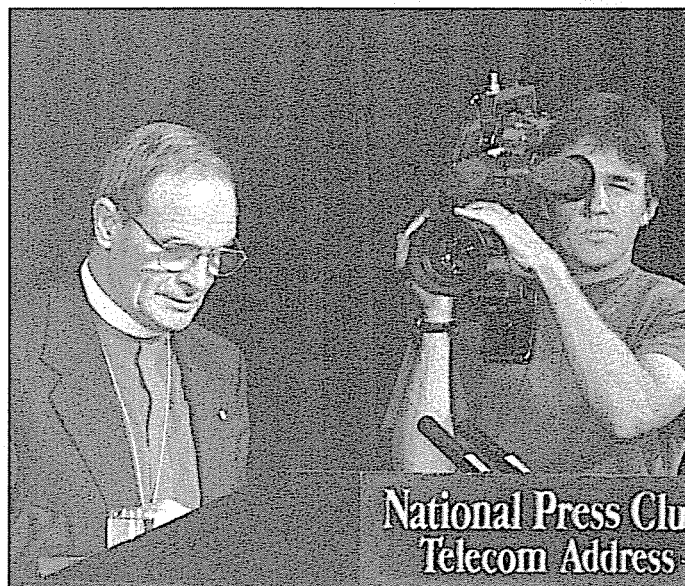
*However, that model does not reflect the current situation in our society. Furthermore, such a pattern probably arose in the 1950s with both the post war expansion of cities and motor cars becoming more common causing physical displacement and mobility. The Judeo-Christian tradition thinks of 'family' more in terms of 'the people of God' and 'household of faith' with the common belief in God bringing diverse individuals together into an identifiable and caring fellowship. The Bible in fact does not restrict its understanding to this recent phenomenon of the nuclear family.*

*Through this year may I suggest we need to be affirming and promoting three interconnected principles of family life:*

- 1. People take responsibility for the on-going care and nurture of one another.*
- 2. People do so through committed and positive relationships.*
- 3. People in so doing allow themselves to be caught up in the unitive and undergirding dynamic of sacrificial love.*

+M B Challen

## A turning point for unemployment?



*Bishop Challen spoke at the National Press Club in Canberra about the importance of a workable strategy for reducing unemployment*

The Brotherhood of St Laurence believes that the recently released White Paper on Employment set its sights too low. Campaigning heavily on behalf of disadvantaged people prior to the White Paper release (Bishop Challen received a strong reception when he spoke at the National Press Club in April), the Brotherhood's main concern was that initiatives be substantial enough to reverse the long-term trend of higher unemployment levels.

'Much will depend on the quality of implementation over the next three years. But in terms of total spending, there is no doubt that this is a very modest response to Australia's appalling level of unemployment,' Challen said. 'The White Paper contains very welcome proposals to improve the training opportunities and the assistance available to unemployed people,' he continued. 'However, it fails to deliver on the other side of the equation: positive action to accelerate and sustain jobs growth.'

The Brotherhood commended the increased assistance to low-income families; a restructuring of CES operations to provide more individual treatment of unemployed people; an integrated approach to assist unemployed people by linking labour market programs to accredited training; more consultation with local communities in planning and delivery of employment and enterprise development programs; and opportunities for people to take up more part-time and casual work without being penalised by withdrawal of unemployment allowances.

The Brotherhood stated that the most important element of the recent Federal Budget was the Government guarantee that spending on White Paper initiatives would be sustained for the next four years. 'Spending will provide real benefits to both a large number of unemployed households and low-income families, though it is still below the levels we believe necessary. It is clearly within our capacity as a community to pay for this level of spending - and more,' said Bishop Challen.