



Diocesan Centre for
Marriage, Life and Family



ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

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Message from the Co-Directors	2
Message from Archbishop Lépine	4
Meet the Team	4
Learning and Adapting	6
Marriage	8
Family	12
Life	18
Encounters, Dialogue & Formation	22
Our Year at a Glance	27
Coming in 2021-2022	28

A Year Full of Challenges... and Many Blessings



Ellen Roderick
Co-Director



Katerine Perrault
Co-Director

What a year!

Once the initial surprise of the pandemic wore off, we were able to approach the year more *proactively* than *reactively*.

Throughout 2020-2021, we continued to adapt to the realities of confinement impacting couples and families in order to improve our response to their needs. Each challenge became a stepping stone calling forth our creativity and allowing us to be more effective in our mission.

The Lord was in effect encouraging us to step out of our comfort zones and transform our limits into opportunities to reach out and connect with people.

For example, using new means of communication, we have been able to develop a hybrid pastoral approach (offering activities in-person and/or online, etc.) which allowed us to be welcomed into the intimacy of people's homes rather than have them come to us, as we did pre-pandemic. Adopting the latest technology made our outreach more effective: in other words, we were able to live our mission in new and creative ways.

We also realized that our own resilience in confronting the pandemic could be of use to others. For example, instead of abandoning our marriage preparation programs, we moved them online. We wanted to show engaged couples that the Church was not about to allow these challenges to prevent it from accompanying them in one of the most important experiences of their lives.

Although we initially imagined that virtual activities would be somewhat distant and cold, we were continually surprised by the real depth of exchanges and the vulnerability of the participants. The online sessions became opportunities to become aware of people's real –as opposed to merely imagined– needs.

Finally, we were able to connect with numerous other local and national organizations dedicated to marriage, life and family. We will be working with some of them in the coming year. All of this elicits our deep gratitude for the great generosity shown by our benefactors and collaborators!

Through this Annual Report, our deepest hope is to communicate to you both the joy that came from seeing our limits transformed into opportunities for evangelization, and the enthusiasm we feel for our mission in the year ahead!

Ellen Roderick

Katerine Perrault

« Thank you for the amazing and valuable work you are doing for our diocese. I pray for you, and I tell others about what you do, for in the Kingdom of God there is much great work still to be done! Carry on in your mission! »

- Teacher, private Catholic school

« Dear Team Members,
Thank you for all the work you do supporting families,
which is so important to us. »

- Famille Myriam de la Miséricorde



The Family:

The Indispensable Unit of Society

For the past year and a half, all of humanity has been grappling with the threat of COVID-19. Around the world, individuals and institutions have been stretched to the breaking point. What remains certain, then, when we are confronted by an uncertain future, the loss of a loved one, the onset of illness or unemployment, when everything seems up in the air?

God remains, whose works never cease and for whom our heart continuously desires. Dignity remains, the dignity of every human being that must be honoured no matter how fragile his or her condition may be. The family remains, whether living under the same roof or not, and its unique history of personal connections to be sustained and nurtured.

The family is the basic unit of society. It is through the family that life comes into being, that we learn how to relate to one another, to give and to receive, to mature as human beings. The family is the basic unit of the Church; it is the domestic Church. It is through the family that we learn about faith and prayer, to be in communion with people and actively engaged in the world.

The family is the indispensable unit on which society depends to promote a sense of the common good and social harmony. God himself established the family unit through which the Church remains at the service of God's Plan for the world.

In this Annual Report, you will learn about many activities, special devotions and enriching initiatives to help us put family first.

I salute all those who believe in the family and in their family. I thank the team of the Diocesan Centre for Marriage, Life and Family. I invite everyone to join together to love the family – in all its woundedness – and to serve the family as we proclaim its dignity and grace.

Together in Jesus Christ,
† Christian Lépine



+ Christian Lépine

The Centre's Team Members



Bernadette St Paul
Administrative Assistant



Ellen Roderick
Co-director



Katerine Perrault
Co-director



Bridget Bagshaw
Coordinator
From This Day Forward
(Marriage preparation)

Our team is growing!

In the midst of the pandemic, Bernadette St Paul joined the Centre's team as Administrative Assistant. With her background in communications (she is also trilingual), Bernadette has assisted the Centre stay connected with the community as we faced the current challenges and strengthened our relations with parishes, couples and families.



Bernadette St Paul
Administrative Assistant

« When I joined the team in February 2021, I was immediately struck by everyone's dedication to providing couples and families with spiritually enriching resources and activities. As a wife, a mother, and now a team member, I am grateful for all we have been able to accomplish this year! »

The Diocesan Council for Marriage, Life and Family

The *Diocesan Council for Marriage, Life and Family* (comprising parents, doctors and teachers, among others) held six online meetings during the course of this year. Council members shared their experiences of living family and parish life through the pandemic in order to assist Archbishop Lépine and the Centre in fulfilling their mission.

« A true friendship sprang up among Council members. The participation of each member was a real asset in helping get through the pandemic. »

- A Council member



(From top left)

Benoît Thibault, Ellen Roderick, Katerine Perrault, Karl Santaguida and Bridget Bagshaw,
Fr. Yohann Leroux, Maude Boivin and Serge Boulianne, Marc Beauchamp and Caroline Girouard,
Mgr. Christian Lépine, Bernadette St Paul, John Zucchi and Cecilia Grava,
Absent: Caroline Tanguay, Erika Jacinto, Rosy and David Lombardi

Learning and Adapting

Lessons drawn from the pandemic

The pandemic gave us an opportunity to develop our relations with couples and families and to be more receptive to them, which in turn helped us serve them better in their day-to-day realities. The following are the individual lessons each of us learned:

Ellen's Lesson



On account of the pandemic, I became more sensitive to those contacting us seeking support. As we were all living in isolation, I could more readily understand what their needs were, and I could be present to them. Paradoxically, although the pandemic may have kept us apart, I now feel closer to the individuals and families whom we accompany.

Katerine's Lesson



To enhance our outreach to couples and families, I came to understand how important it is to have an array of approaches and projects available that not only meet their various needs, but that can also be adapted to personal preferences (such as activities and resources offered in-person or online, guided or self-study, etc.).

Bernadette's Lesson



The pandemic has taught us empathy and solidarity. More than ever, we felt that real happiness comes from caring for those around us and for their well-being. We also learned to be flexible, adapting to the unexpected and discovering previously unknown strengths in ourselves.

Bridget's Lesson



The pandemic showed me that couples preparing for marriage were eager to meet and forge connections with other couples living similar experiences. Giving them time to discuss among themselves, listening to them and accompanying them is a lesson that I will continue to use in our future encounters.

Continuing Education

The Centre devoted over 80 hours to training its members in numerous topics, from social media and video creation to hybrid pastoral ministry and transformational leadership, in order to enhance our efforts in accompanying couples and families.



88

hours of
continuing
education



MARRIAGE

Marriage Preparation

**Despite the many challenges,
this year was a real success.**

We accompanied more than 200 couples who were eager to learn about God's plan for their marriage and discover the riches of married life.

« We had lots of questions about marriage in the Church and what that really means. Our preconceived notions changed bit by bit as we got to learn more. »

- An engaged couple

Marriage Preparation

« Amazing presentations that encouraged us to really think about deep topics from a faith perspective. It gave us an experience of community with other couples and an intimacy with my future spouse and with my faith that I had never experienced before. » - A participant

Participants greatly appreciated the time they spent together, and being invited to discuss and discover what their future family life has in store.



204
couples
participated in
the program

World Marriage Day

Saturday, February 13, 2021
Mary Queen of the World Cathedral

For this occasion, the Centre provided parishes with resources for couples to renew their marriage vows as they celebrated Valentine's Day.

In collaboration with Worldwide Marriage Encounter, Archbishop Lépine celebrated a special Mass which was livestreamed.

780
views of the
online Mass

Daisy and Tino Forte, local leaders
of *Worldwide Marriage Encounter*
(English-language branch of
Vivre et aimer).





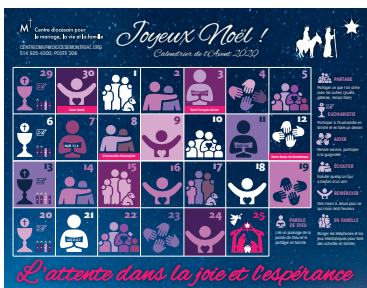
FAMILY

Advent Calendar

Once again this year, the Centre was proud to offer its traditional Advent Calendar to young families in three languages (English, French and Spanish). Young and old alike appreciated this resource to help them prepare spiritually for Christmas. The calendar was also made available for families in the Archdiocese of Saint Boniface, Manitoba.



Printed version
(above) and
online versions
(to the right)

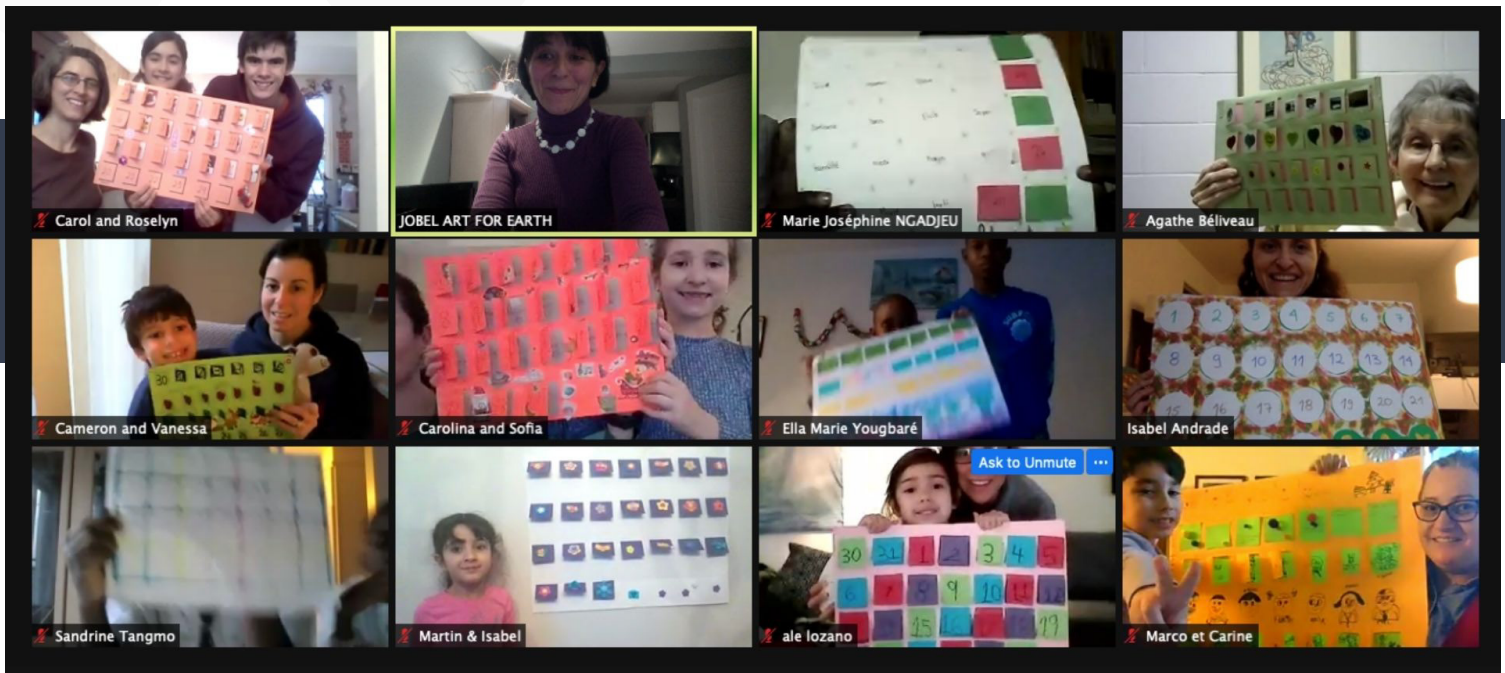


« I am delighted to receive these two beautiful and charming Advent 2020 calendars with the logo of our Diocese. Very beautiful! »

- Archdiocese of Saint Boniface, Manitoba

Follow the Star / Suivez l'étoile

The goal of the "Follow the Star" workshop was to bring families together in the time of pandemic to develop their resilience and sense of family unity while meditating on the meaning of the season of Advent. Animated by Gruppo Jobel – Art for Earth, the initiative combined games, drama, prayer, crafts (an Advent calendar) and reflection. Inspired by Catholic Social Teaching, the mission of Gruppo Jobel – Art for Earth is to use drama and art to communicate messages that benefit both the earth and society.



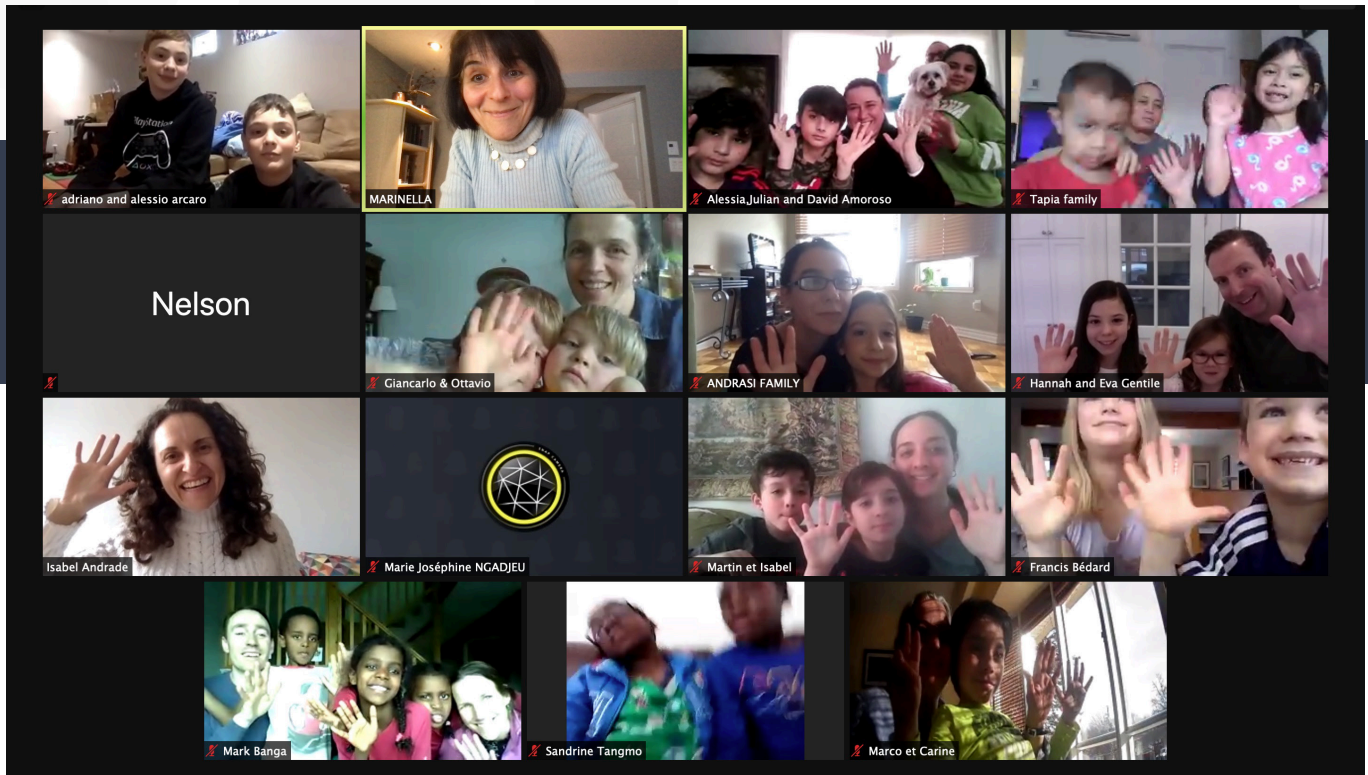
« Our family was able to spend some quality time together during these activities. Acting out the Christmas story brought back its true meaning to us: preparing ourselves for the coming of Jesus and reflecting on the hope and love He brings to us. »

- A mother

39
participants
including 26 children,
ages 3 to 15

Come and See / Venez et vous verrez

The workshop "Come and see" was offered during Lent by Gruppo Jobel - Art for Earth. It helped many families prepare spiritually for Easter. Through theatre, games and prayer, families grew closer through this time spent together and rediscovered the importance of each member of the family.



« We loved the program. It helped us experience family life in spiritual terms. »

- A parent

« This activity brought our family together in a meaningful way as a team. »

- A parent

62
participants
including 38 children,
ages 5 to 14

Microsites

The Centre set up two microsite projects in collaboration with other diocesan offices in preparation for Christmas and Easter, respectively. While churches remained closed, these websites provided families and parishes a variety of resources to help them prepare at home for these important seasons.

Over
37,000
visits
to the Holy Week
microsite



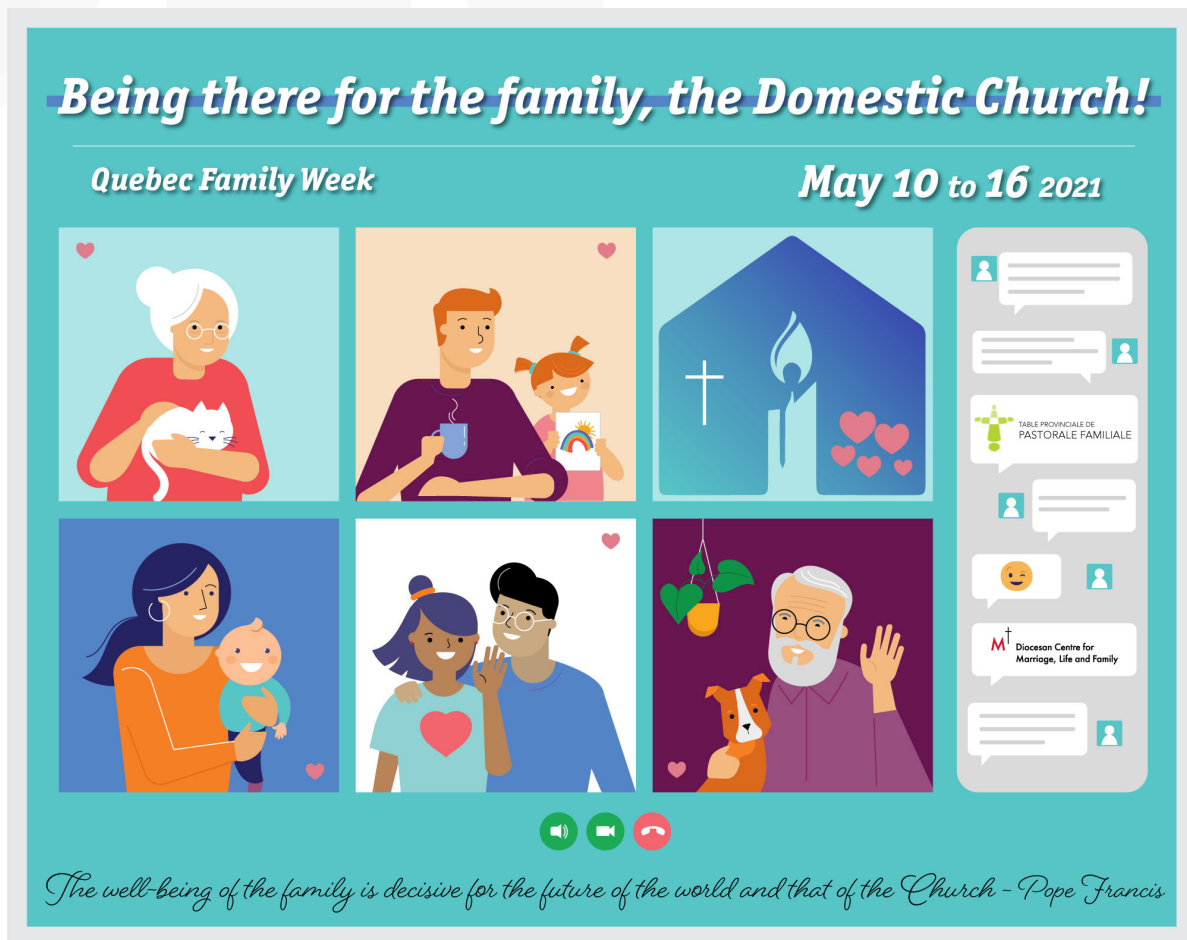
I wanted to tell you about the Resurrection Garden that my son constructed based on the projects on the microsite. It is very difficult to find crafts interesting for boys his age. He loved making this one with his father. - A mom

« The microsite activities provided families with opportunities for authentic dialogue and fostered a culture of encounter. They brought family members together, seeing and hearing one another as they established common ground within the family. »

- St. Elzéar Parish pastoral team

Quebec Family Week

For Quebec Family Week 2021, the Centre humbly accepted the opportunity to provide families, not only in Montreal but across many Canadian dioceses as well, with original resources, available in both French and English, in order to celebrate family life.



Over
600
contacts
across Canada

« What you have built is beautiful! »

- A colleague



LIFE

Choosing to Hope and to Live

With Bill C-7 proposing the expansion of access to medical aid in dying, Archbishop Lépine invited a number of individuals to think about an intervention of a pastoral nature. Inspired by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's letter "*Samaritanus Bonus*," (the Good Samaritan) this group asked the Centre to organize an evening of witnesses presenting the Christian view of the dignity of all life, especially in its most fragile stages, and of respect for life until natural death.

« Thank you for the presentation on Bill C-7. I came away better informed, better equipped and more aware of the issues. »

- A participant



Choosing Hope and Life
in view of Bill C-7:
Expanding Access to Assisted Death

November 12 at 8:30pm on our YouTube channel!

« I am glad that I took part in this major reflection with you on the serious issues of "medical assistance in dying" and the need to reinvolve the sacred dimension of life. »

- A participant

Mass to Celebrate the Dignity of Human Life

"We find meaning in our life when we find someone to give our life for, when we find a reason to give our life (...). We find meaning in our life the day we find meaning in our death."

- Mgr. Christian Lépine

In his homily on April 25, 2021 (which attracted 285 views on YouTube), Archbishop Christian Lépine offered a spiritual perspective on death.



World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly

The first World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, as declared by Pope Francis, was held on July 25, 2021 with, as its theme, the message "I am with you every day." Encouraging families to honour their grandparents and elderly loved ones, the Centre provided many related resources. The message issued for the occasion by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops' Standing Committee for Family and Life was also widely distributed by the Centre.





ENCOUNTERS, DIALOGUE & FORMATION

Newsletters

Throughout the course of the year, the Centre sent 16 newsletters to its many subscribers, in which we shared more than 35 resources, 20 activities, and information about numerous organizations and communities supporting marriage, life and family.

Over
600
families, parishes
and other
subscribers



Requests for Assistance and Resources

Always prepared to listen, and offer our supportive presence, we responded to many calls and requests for assistance and resources from couples planning to marry, families in crisis, concerned parents and separated or divorced persons, among others.

« Thank you so much for your sincere understanding of the difficult situation I am going through. You really guided me in the right direction and I am grateful to you. I believe my situation will get better. »

- A mother who sought a listening ear

« Many thanks for the references and for your efficient assistance: a real team effort. »

- A priest

Formation

Sharing God's dream for love, marriage, life and family is the core of the Centre's mission. This year, we were invited to address the following aspects, through presentations, interviews, etc.: the purpose and mission of the human person, the theology of marriage and family, the Christian vision of friendship and love, co-parenting, and infertility, among others.



Dieu, le sexe, et des questions!

Les soirées foi et raison
November 24, 2020
Offered in French

Panelists Alex Deschênes, PhD,
Anne-Sophie Richard and
Ellen Roderick, PhD



Vision chrétienne de l'amour et de l'amitié

Institut de formation théologique de Montréal
April 12, 19, 26 and May 3, 2021
Offered in French

Ellen Roderick, PhD

53
hours
of formation
offered

« Thank you for this rediscovery of the theology of the body. I thoroughly enjoyed learning more through your perspective and your way of teaching. You have such a warm, welcoming, prayerful and serene presence. It is rare to find these qualities in a teacher. »

- A participant

Decoding Love 101 / Décoder l'amour 101

Decoding Love 101, offered during the past four years in collaboration with Youth Ministry, was made available this fall for the first time online in response to a continually growing desire on the part of people wishing to discover God's plan for human love. One of the participants took the course while in Rome, in the middle of the night!



Decoding Love 101

Introductory Sessions on the Theology of the Body according to Saint John Paul II

The theology of the body presents God's dream for all of us as human beings and the call to love that He has written in the depths of our very hearts and bodies. This vocation to love is a part of every human being. It is also the inspiration of all the Centre's projects.

« I enjoyed the session very much. I have held onto that wonder which should always be part of us, helping us to recognize who we are, to recognize others and to experience our bodies as Christians. Once again, thank you for everything. »

- A participant

33
participants
(French and English)

Social Media Presence

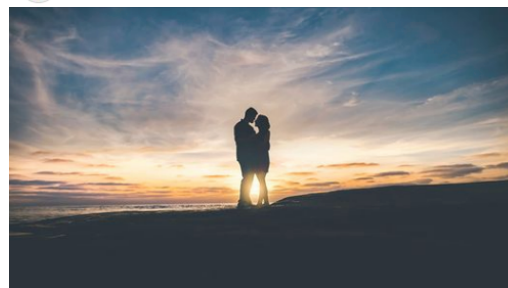
The pandemic presented us with the opportunity to formulate and enhance our social media presence, enabling us to reach more couples and families.



Vision chrétienne de l'amour et de l'amitié

Online course offered in French through the Institut de formation théologique de Montréal

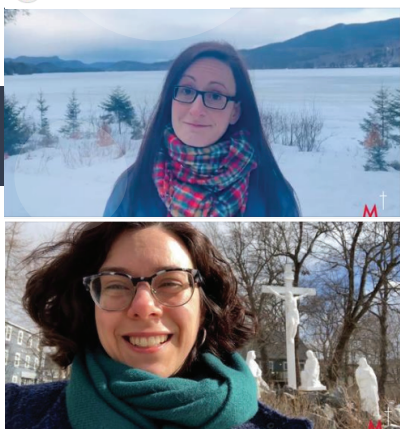
Église catholique à Montréal
February 10 ·



World Marriage Day

Featured on YouTube

Église catholique à Montréal
March 25 ·



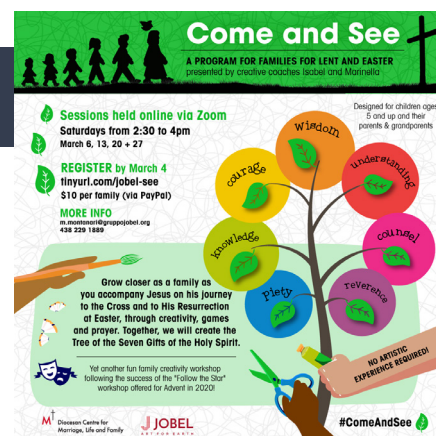
Presentation of the Holy Week and Easter microsites

Featured on YouTube and Facebook

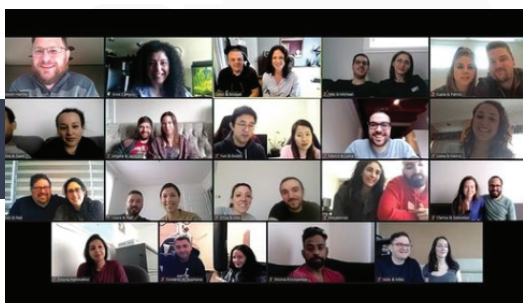
Come and See

Online family program during Lent, including games, sharing, drama and crafts

Featured on Facebook and Instagram



Église catholique à Montréal
June 16 at 5:56 AM ·



An interview on marriage preparation in a time of pandemic

Featured in the diocesan newsletter and social media

OUR YEAR AT A GLANCE



Venez et vous verrez

UN PROGRAMME POUR LES FAMILLES
PENDANT LE CARÊME

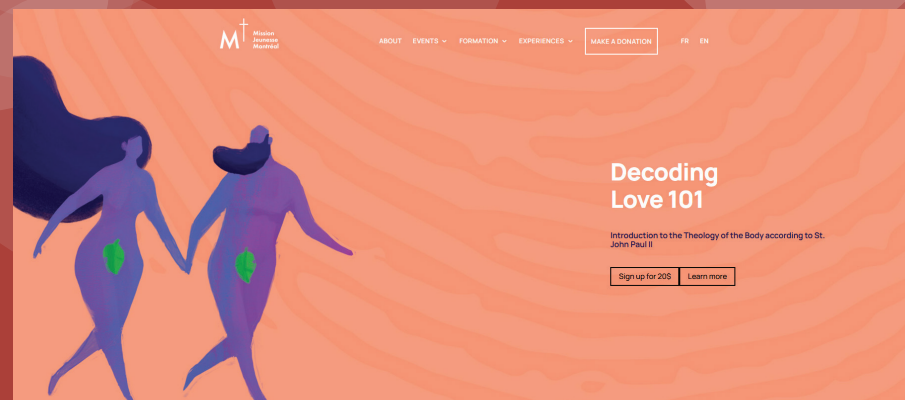
animé par / presented by
Isabel & Marinella



Come and See

A PROGRAM FOR FAMILIES FOR THE TIME OF LENT

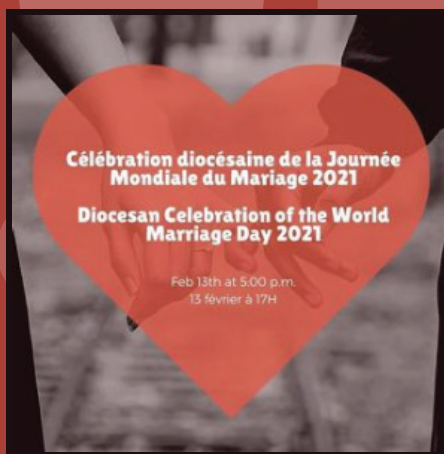
Centre diocésain pour le mariage, la vie et la famille
JOBEL ART FOR EARTH



Decoding Love 101

Introduction to the Theology of the Body according to St. John Paul II

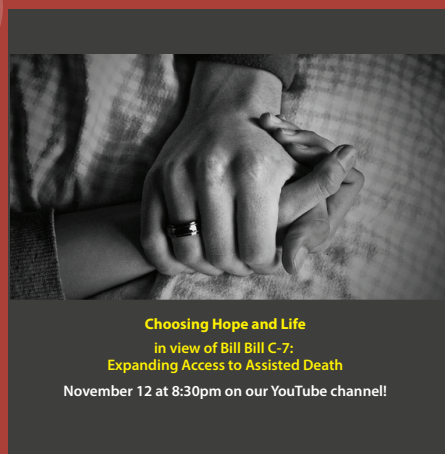
Sign up for 208 Learn more



Célébration diocésaine de la Journée Mondiale du Mariage 2021

Diocesan Celebration of the World Marriage Day 2021

Feb 13th at 5:00 p.m.
13 février à 17H



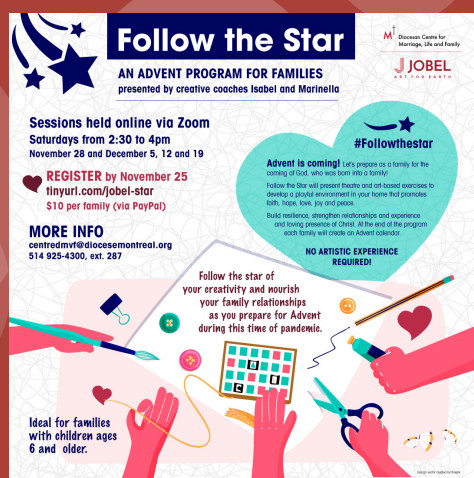
Choosing Hope and Life

in view of Bill Bill C-7:
Expanding Access to Assisted Death

November 12 at 8:30pm on our YouTube channel!

Being there for the family, the Domestic Church!

Quebec Family Week May 10 to 16 2021

Follow the Star

AN ADVENT PROGRAM FOR FAMILIES
presented by creative coaches Isabel and Marinella

Sessions held online via Zoom
Saturdays from 2:30 to 4pm
November 28 and December 5, 12 and 19

REGISTER by November 25
tinyurl.com/jobel-star
\$10 per family (via PayPal)

MORE INFO
centredmvt@diocesemontreal.org
514 925-4300, ext. 287

Advent is coming! Let's prepare as a family for the coming of God, who was born into a family. Follow the Star with prayer, beauty and on-line courses to develop a joyful environment in your home that promotes faith, hope, love, joy and peace. Build resilience, strengthen relationships and experience and loving presence of Christ. At the end of the program with family will make an advent calendar.

#Followthestar

NO ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE REQUIRED!

Follow the star of your creativity and nourish your family relationships as you prepare for Advent during this time of pandemic.

Ideal for families with children ages 6 and older.



Le mariage : signe visible de l'amour de Dieu

Sessions de préparation au mariage 2020-2021

TRANSFORM YOUR FAMILY CULTURE



Group Reflections Leading Research Personal Activities

LET'S CELEBRATE QUEBEC FAMILY WEEK!

"No family drops down from heaven perfectly formed families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love." Pope Francis

The pandemic brought with it many changes to our family life and redefined our work/life balance. Are you looking to improve your home environment? Come discover the role and power of family culture in this online 2-hour workshop. We will explore how to create a constructive family culture in your home. All parents are welcome.

Tuesday May 11th, 7:00pm - 9:00pm
Registration: <https://tinyurl.com/7m95a2k>
For more information please contact: talithac@koum.ca

Talitha Cere, owner of Koum, is a culture consultant and internationally certified coach for organizations and families. With over 15 years experience in culture consulting and business leadership, Talitha's mission is to empower communities to own their culture.


Sponsored by the Diocesan Centre for Marriage, Life and Family

Diocesan Centre for Marriage, Life and Family
KOUK
WWW.KOUK.CA
Amoris Laetitia
Family
2015-2021



LOOKING AHEAD

Coming in 2021-2022

A photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a patterned top, smiling and looking down at a young girl. The girl is also smiling and looking down at something in her hands. They are in a room with a brick wall in the background. There are several semi-transparent circles of different sizes overlaid on the right side of the image.

With increasing deconfinement, we will return to a certain semblance of "normality" in 2021-2022. However, we hope that this new year will bear the imprint of the discoveries made during the pandemic that helped us to broaden our pastoral horizons: hybrid pastoral ministry, relationships with new collaborators, and the diversification of our projects.

Amoris laetitia (The Joy of Love) Family Year

Decreed by Pope Francis, the Year of *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love) began March 19, 2021 and will conclude with the World Meeting of Families in Rome in June 2022. Through the resources offered by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, we will collaborate in caring for couples and families in our diocese. On the diocesan level, the Centre also prepared a special webpage dedicated to resources and activities to support couples and families throughout the year!

www.diocesemontreal.org/en/amoris-laetitia



Marriage Enrichment Workshops

A healthy family is based on a strong marriage. Therefore, the Centre will be offering a series of 10 marriage enrichment workshops, held in both French and English, led by married couples, Christian counsellors/therapists, as well as by Archbishop Christian Lépine.



Family Enrichment Workshops

Inspired by the success of our first collaborative efforts with Gruppo Jobel - Art for Earth, we will be offering a new series of “hands-on” workshops on enriching and bringing the family closer together.



Parents and Kids Fair 2022

This year, we will once again be reaching out to meet new parents and help them discover how God wants to involve Himself personally in the success of their family lives. We provide them with a space of dialogue and some craft activities for the children in attendance as well as with resources on faith and family life and the sacrament of baptism.



Testimonials from Families

Witness is among the most effective elements of evangelization, revealing the Christian life as accessible and attractive, in spite of our individual imperfections. We will be inviting families to share their daily-life experiences of faith through a series of short online videos.



Spiritual Retreat for Those Who are Separated or Divorced

Continuing a long-standing diocesan tradition, we will be offering persons who are separated or divorced a day of retreat with Archbishop Lépine. In addition, a longer program of spiritual accompaniment will be launched this year.



Promotion of Other Movements and Organizations

Each month, we will offer a brief introduction of an organization or movement dedicated to marriage, family and life active in our diocese and present the services they offer and/or the particular demographic they serve (marriage enrichment, infertility, single mothers, accompaniment, etc.).

And so
much
more!

*Stay tuned for more
information on our activities
and projects!*



