



## Strengthening Families: Reducing Poverty

*"Economic and social policies as well as the organization of work should be continually evaluated in light of their impact on the strength and stability of family life." – US Catholic Bishops, Economic Justice for All*

## Supporting Families: Personal & Social Responsibility

The undeniable fact is that our children's future is shaped both by the values of their parents and the policies of our nation. Families are undermined by parental irresponsibility *and* discrimination and poverty. Children's lives are enriched by their parents' sacrifices and by economic policies that help mothers and fathers meet the demands of parenthood. It is time to move beyond rigid ideologies and political posturing to focus on the real needs of families. We believe parental responsibility *and* broader social responsibility, changed behavior *and* changed policies are complementary requirements to help families.

Responsibility, unselfishness, concern for others, fidelity in marriage, and commitment to children are the building blocks of a creative and satisfying life and a just and decent society. They ought to be recognized in our public policies, encouraged in our media, and supported by our community institutions. ... And increasingly, experts and organizations including marriage and family counselors have shown signs of rethinking the positive values of stable marriage, the human costs of easy divorce laws, the social costs of excessive individualism, and the consequences of economic pressures on families.

Many single-parent families overcome huge economic and social obstacles, but others are overwhelmed by these forces. Government efforts need to help families stay together and overcome the

many pressures that pull families apart. We owe special help to those parents—mothers or fathers—who face family life alone, knowing how discrimination and other forces make a difficult job even tougher. This is especially true when single parenthood is

combined with poverty, as it often is. ...

While much is appropriately said about how the lives of women and children are bound so closely together, we wish to say a specific word about the importance of fathers. A crucial measure of a man is the manner in which he cares for his family—whether children see his love, respect, and care for their mother; and whether he is involved in their daily care, emotional support, spiritual growth, education, and development. For too many women, the care of children is a lonely commitment lack-

ing the full and active participation of fathers. In these cases, children lose vital emotional support, and fathers miss one of the richest and most challenging human experiences. Parenting should be a partnership of love and mutual support—fully involving both mother and father.

*Excerpted from "Putting Children & Families First, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1991*

