

seeks to facilitate the choice of mothers who wish especially to care for the needs of the family and the home. Contrary to some recent commentary, the present constitutional provision emphatically does not state that "a woman's place is in the home". Neither does it excuse men of their duties to the home and family.

It is reasonable to ask what benefit is it to Irish society to delete the terms 'woman' and 'mother' from the Constitution of Ireland? People generally recognise the enormous commitment that women in Ireland have given, and continue to give, in relation to care, love and affection in the home. Pope Francis has said "Families and homes go together"(AL44). We therefore have similar concerns about the removal of the term 'home' from this article.

In contemporary society there now exists a welcome co-responsibility between women and men for every aspect of domestic life, including the provision of care in the home. We believe that, rather than removing the present acknowledgement of the role of women and the place of the home, it would be preferable and consistent with contemporary social values that the State would recognise the provision of care by women and men alike. Care, both inside and outside the home, is at the core of compassion. Without such care in the family, the common good of society cannot be achieved. The State has to date failed to financially acknowledge the role of women in the home; once again there is no indication that there will be provision for the adequate financial remuneration of carers. The proposed term 'strive to support' appears to weaken the state's constitutional responsibility to materially and legislatively support such care. Indeed, the proposed new Article 42B does not actually confer any enforceable rights for carers or for those being cared for.

It is right to recognise that care within the family and the wider community takes many forms and is provided by a wide variety of people. In the words of Pope Francis speaking at the Festival of Families in Croke Park on 25 August 2018 "*in any family celebration, everyone's presence is felt: fathers, mothers, grandparents, grandchildren, uncles and aunts, cousins, those who cannot come and those who live too far away*".

The proposed amendment would have the effect of abolishing all reference to motherhood in the Constitution and leave unacknowledged the particular and incalculable societal contribution that mothers in the home have made and continue to make in Ireland. The present constitutional wording does not in any way inhibit women from working or taking their proper place in social and public life. It does, however, respect the complementary and distinct qualities that arise naturally within the Family. The role of mothers should continue to be cherished in our Constitution.

### **The Importance of voting**

Pope St John Paul II said in Ireland back in 1979: "*The family is the true measure of the greatness of a nation*". In a democracy that guarantees the freedom to vote, it is important that citizens cast their ballot on March 8th with matters of such importance at stake. As pastors, concerned for the common good as well as the moral and spiritual well-being of God's People, we offer these reflections in order to help inform the consciences of Christians and others who are concerned to preserve and foster the dignity and value of family life and motherhood.