2022 MARFAM FAMILY YEAR PLANNER

Theme: OUR WORLD, A FAMILY OF FAMILIES

APRIL THEME: GOD AND FAMILY

LENTEN THOUGHTS FOCUS : FAMILY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

Part 2 LENTEN AND EASTER DAILY THOUGHTS.

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Abbreviations: Pope Francis: LS = Laudato Si. AL = Amoris Laetitia FT = Fratelli Tutti. EG = Evangelii Gaudium.

Introduction. Part 1 contained Lenten Thoughts for March. Part 2 continues with **Lenten Daily Thoughts** and includes **Holy Week and the beginning of the Easter season.** The Lenten theme of RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES continues until Holy Week.

The **MARFAM LENTEN FAMILY CALENDAR** can be downloaded from www.marfam.org.za/lent. ACTS OF LOVE AND SACRIFICE can be chosen daily or as appropriate to do individually or together towards becoming an eco-friendly family. They are relevant in the many different contexts of families. The general suggestions below are appropriate at any time.

General Suggestions: Study and Read: subscribe to eco-friendly newsletters on-line. Select topics of interest to study further on climate, biodiversity and living a simpler lifestyle. Read up on biomimicry. Read up on water saving, electricity saving, carbon footprints, healthy diets. Watch TV series and programmes on climate action and protection of creation around the world. Read up St Francis and his way of life and study Pope Francis' writings especially *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti* as well as suggestions for the *Amoris Laetitia* Family Year.
Do: Do a family project on becoming eco-friendly: pray privately and together, do faith sharing, ideally together. Hold family fast days. Before Easter hold a Family Reconciliation service and if possible go to Confession. Have a Family Prayer Meal. Pray STATIONS OF THE CROSS for Families from MARFAM which are in various languages. Check your family carbon footprint and make adjustments to reduce it. Save energy and water, grow herbs, vegetables, trees, eat more healthily – less meat, more vegetables. Support conservation projects for wild life, birds, bees, insects. Lobby about chosen issues – plastic pollution, environmental clean-up. Donate unused items to charity. Knit, sew, make items to donate to charity. Hold regular family fast days (Friday fast) to save money and donate to feeding projects. Exercise to keep fit and healthy.
Save money: Cut down on alcohol, smoking, fizzy drinks, junk food, bottled water, car use. Think twice before you spend, do clothes-swop rather than buy, buy in bulk and share. Have a meatless day. Donate money saved to Bishops' Lenten Appeal. ,
Waste reduction: Recycle. Reuse. Avoid single use plastics, styrofoam, avoid wasting food, compost food wastage.
Energy Saving: Do energy use check, switch off unnecessary and unused lights, TV and plugs. Use solar power, solar lights and rechargeable batteries. Cut time on TV, computer and cellphone to save energy and data.
Water saving: Use "grey" water from bath, shower and washing for toilets and garden. Don't run taps when not needed. Collect rain water, use drip irrigation in garden or veggie patch.
Recycle: Join in recycling projects, plastic, paper, glass, make ecobricks out of plastic 2l bottles stuffed with plastic, computer and phone parts and batteries.
General: clean up environment, plant trees, support ecological campaigns in church, school and society. Make time for relationships and relaxation by cutting time on-line on games and on cellphones.
Care for others: Befriend, share, give to poor and beggars, give away unused items, show care for elderly, sick and lonely.
Donate. MARFAM's Easter cards can be bought from www.marfam.org.za/shop for a donation and sent on to loved ones.

More Resources used in these **DAILY THOUGHTS** for promoting family spirituality during Lent: SA Government **BILL OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE YOUTH OF SA**. www.gov.za/about-government/government-programmes/bill-responsibilities. **MORAL REGENERATION MOVEMENT** https://static.pmg.org.za/150324MRM_Charter_of_Positive_Values.pdf

STATIONS OF THE CROSS FOR FAMILIES, for widowed and bereaved and a children's book, **THE RESURRECTION STORY** are available from www.marfam.org.za/shop

APRIL OVERVIEW. God, as Trinity is family, the perfect community of love, and every human family, not only as individuals but as a unit, is an image of God and is called to mirror the relationship of the Trinity. St Francis in his Canticle of the Creatures praises God in these words: *"Most High, omnipotent good Lord, to thee be praise and glory, honour and blessing. We praise you Lord for all your creatures, for brother sun, sister moon, brother fire, sister water, mother earth and all creation. To you O Lord do they belong, you created them and they bear your likeness."*

All creatures, including inanimate animals and plants, through their being, offer their praise. Humankind is especially gifted with the additional power of understanding, to love, but to hurt and to forgive, because of love. Through bearing pain, in a unique way we share in the Paschal mystery of Jesus and honour the Trinity. How has the image of the Trinity been disfigured in our day as fire, water and wind have now become such destructive forces? How does war disfigure every aspect of creation? How have we contributed to this? Are we willing and ready to repair the damage?

Within the family which could be called a domestic church individuals enter upon an ecclesial experience of communion among persons which reflects, through grace, the mystery of the Holy Trinity. AL86. The Father is the ultimate source of everything, the loving and self-communicating foundation of all that exists. The Son, his reflection, through whom all things were created, united himself to this earth when he was formed in the womb of Mary. The Spirit, infinite bond of love, is intimately at the very heart of the universe, inspiring and bringing new pathways. The world was created by the three persons, acting as a single divine principle leaving its mark on all creation. LS 238-239

***Pope Francis**. There is a general feeling of powerlessness in the face of sociocultural realities that often times end up crushing families. Families often feel abandoned due to a lack of interest and attention on the part of institutions. AL 43. Ethics has come to be viewed with a certain scornful derision. It is seen as counterproductive, too human. It is felt to be a threat since it condemns the manipulation and debasement of the person. EG 56. A JOURNEY OF PEACE IS POSSIBLE BETWEEN RELIGIONS. Its point of departure must be God's way of seeing things. God does not see with his eyes, God sees with his heart. And God's love is the same for everyone, regardless of religion, even atheists. When the last day comes, and there is sufficient light to see things as they really are, we are going to find ourselves quite surprised! FT281.*

Setting the Scene. The reflections are set in families or groups of families engaged in a Lenten journey. Encourage using these in faith sharing at home during these special weeks. During Holy week participate in special liturgies and share at home. Do age-appropriate activities at home and pray together.

April 1. *Let us lie in wait for the righteous man.* Portia's aunt was visiting their family for a few days and asked to share when they participated in a sharing group. "This reading from the book of Wisdom has for years been a comfort to me. You know that my husband, Samuel, was a policeman and he was a really good honest cop. He had wanted to be a crime-fighter from when he was a child but the family couldn't afford for him to be a lawyer or a judge so he became a policeman. His station was noted for fairness and honesty and dedication to duty. His anti-poaching programme was proving to be very successful. But, you know the story, the criminals were after him. He was killed in a car accident 10 years ago but I am convinced that it wasn't just an accident. It's been very hard to bear, but my faith in Jesus and reading my Bible have helped me."

***Reflect, share and act. Scripture:** Ungodly men reasoned unsoundly, saying to themselves, "Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions. Wis 2:1. **Pope Francis:** The writings of the prophets invite us to find renewed strength in times of trial by contemplating the all-powerful God who created the universe. Yet God's infinite power does not lead us to flee his fatherly tenderness, because in him affection and strength are joined.LS 73. **MRM Positive Values 5.** We dedicate ourselves to upholding honesty, integrity and loyalty as key social values to be upheld in good governance. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, published at** www.marfam.org.za/lent*

April 2. *Is the Christ to come from Galilee?* Boetie was in his final year before Confirmation and he told the family the task the catechism teacher had given them. "I think I need your help too," he said. "This gospel today shows how confused some of the people were about who Jesus really was and whether he could be the Messiah. We aren't waiting for a Messiah like that today, but quite a lot of young people, especially, seem to be confused about which church they want to belong to and why. Why do we belong to the Catholic church and is God really on our side? I'm supposed to do a project to answer those questions."

***Reflect, share and act. Scripture:** At that time when they heard the words of Jesus some of the people said, "This is really the prophet." Others said, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee?" John 7:40-41. **Pope Francis:** Through the Church, marriage and the family receive the grace of the Holy Spirit from Christ in order to bear witness to the Gospel of God's love. AL71. **SA Youth Responsibilities Bill 9:** The right to freedom of conscience requires me to allow others to choose and practice the religion of*

their choice and to hold their own beliefs without fear or prejudice. ***Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list published at*** **www.marfam.org.za/lent**

April 3 Sunday Lent 5C. *"Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her."* After he read the gospel Fr Oliver waited for a few moments and then stood up to preach. "Adultery, adultery, another of these sexual abuse stories, but one that we don't hear much about these days do we? It's clerical abuse of children mostly in the news, but how many children are abused in their own homes. Men, women, blessers and teens, young boys and girls, priests, nuns, pastors, seminarians. It is not all gender-based violence as some is consensual. But where are our moral standards in this important area of life. Who is guilty or not guilty? If a woman is caught in adultery, where is the man? What is the way forward for our sex-saturated society? Jesus challenged the leaders to come forward and cast the first stone at the woman. No one did. Were they all guilty?"

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *"Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her. Then he said to the woman, "I don't condemn you either, Go and sin no more." John 8:1-11*. Was that God's mercy? Is that his message to each of us? *"* ***Pope Francis:*** *Jesus looked that woman in the eye and read in her heart a desire to be understood, forgiven and set free. The misery of sin was clothed with the mercy of love. To those who wished to judge and condemn her his response was to let God's voice be heard in the conscience of the accusers. One by one they left. Misericordia Misera 1 .* ***SA Youth Responsibilities Bill 2:*** *The right to human dignity places on me the responsibility to treat people with reverence , respect and dignity.* ***Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list published at*** **www.marfam.org.za/lent**

April 4. Susanna. *Have you condemned her without learning the facts?* Beauty, like any typical teenager, enjoyed the story from the book of Daniel of Susanna and the randy, lascivious, lying judges. This beautiful woman was quite innocently bathing in her husband's roof-top garden when the two old men tried to seduce her and when she refused they falsely accused her. The people turned against her until Daniel, just a committed young man, was inspired by God to intervene and was able to prove them guilty instead. Even the boys were fascinated by the story and the family discussed how this type of situation is as old as the hills. "What is the answer to gender-based violence for our generation? How often are people of standing in the community guilty of such abuse?" However, this happens all the time at all levels of society, with boys and sometimes girls too being instigators. What really is the answer? "

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *The Lord God aroused the holy spirit of a young lad named Daniel, and he cried with a loud voice, "I am innocent of the blood of this woman. Are you such fools? Have you condemned a daughter of Israel without examination and without learning the facts?" From Daniel 13.* ***Pope Francis:*** *Even though significant advances have been made in the recognition of women's rights in some countries much remains to be done to promote these rights. History is burdened by the excesses of patriarchal cultures that considered women inferior. AL 54.* ***MRM Positive Values 5.*** *We dedicate ourselves to upholding honesty, integrity and loyalty as key social values to be upheld in good governance.* ***Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, published at*** **www.marfam.org.za/lent**

April 5. A fiery serpent. *Moses made a bronze serpent and set it up as a sign.* Kuan did some research on the fascinating story from the Old Testament of Moses and the bronze serpent and its connection with the symbol for medicine. He shared, "During their time in the desert, because the people disobeyed God once again, their punishment was a plague of fiery serpents. When Moses pleaded with God he was told to make a bronze serpent and raise it up on a pole for people to look at and be healed. It was to be a sign of God's healing power. In the gospel Jesus also refers to himself being raised up. I find it interesting that this medical symbol has such a long history."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it up as a sign and if a serpent bit any man he would look at it and live. Numbers 21:9. Read more about the rod at* *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Rod_of_Asclepius2.svg* ***Pope Francis:*** *Each creature has its own purpose. None is superfluous. The entire material universe speaks of God's love. LS84.* ***MRM Charter of Positive Values 6.*** *We dedicate ourselves to ensure harmony, culture, belief and conscience to inspire and sustain the values of the Charter.* ***Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, published at*** **www.marfam.org.za/lent**

April 6. fiery furnace. *Our God, whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning furnace.* "From fiery serpents to a fiery furnace," Mrs Kay laughed and then turned more serious. "The Old Testament stories at this time really do talk about God's power over the elements. Today's story is of three brave young men condemned to death by King Nebuchadnezzar

because of their faithfulness to God and their refusal to worship other gods. Earthly kings and even idols will always tempt us, try to rule us or take us away from the one true God. Can a strong faith and humility go hand in hand?"

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and he will deliver us out of your hand, O King. Daniel 3:17.* ***Pope Francis.*** *It is important that people experience the Gospel of the family as a joy that fills hearts and lives because in Christ we have been set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. AL200.****SA Youth Responsibilities Bill 9:*** *The right to freedom of conscience requires me to allow everyone to choose and practice the religion of their choice and to hold their own beliefs without fear or prejudice.* ***Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list published at*** **www.marfam.org.za/lent**

April 7. Glory. *If I glorify myself my glory is nothing.* Grandmother Josie took her turn and said, "I would like us to go back to what Jesus himself is saying in all these readings around this time from John's gospel, chapter 8. He continually disputes with the Jewish leaders about God, his relationship with his Father, his work of glorifying God and how God glorifies him. All this was one of the main reasons for his conflict with them as they believed this was blasphemy. Could they understand this term and concept, and how do we understand it in our more scientific age? I find this kind of language very difficult too. Self-glorification doesn't seem like humility. What do you think?

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *If I glorify myself my glory is nothing, it is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say that he is your God. But you have not known him. I know him. John 8: 54-55* ***Pope Francis****: We are called to recognize that other living beings have a value of their own in God's eyes, by their mere existence they bless him and give him glory. LS 59.* ***MRM Positive Values 8.*** *We dedicate ourselves to strive for justice, fairness and peaceful co-existence as well as mutual respect as a basis for national reconciliation.* ***Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, published at*** **www.marfam.org.za/lent**

April 8. *The Lord is with me as a dread warrior, therefore my persecutors will stumble they will not overcome me.* When young Jerry saw the name of the prophet Jeremiah he wanted to share. "I don't understand it all," he said, " but my prophet seems to be calling for revenge because he is being persecuted. It even calls God a warrior who will definitely win. I like that, but you folks never let me have revenge when Joe steals my things. Why is that?" Mom felt obliged to help. "There are definitely stories in the Old Testament about God and revenge as we heard quite a lot, but then Jesus said, "You have heard it said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say to you love your enemies ….. " so there is a new way of looking at life, one that we should try to copy." ***Reflect, share and act. Scripture:*** *O Lord of hosts, who tests the righteous who sees the heart and the mind let me see your vengeance upon them, for to you have I committed my cause. Sing to the Lord, praise the Lord. For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evildoers." Jer 20:10-13* ***Pope Francis:*** *A journey of peace is possible between religions. Its point of departure must be God's way of seeing things. "God does not see with his eyes, God sees with his heart. And God's love is the same for everyone. FT 281.* ***SA Youth Responsibilities Bill 7:*** *My responsibility in ensuring the right to freedom and security of the person is upheld by solving any conflict in a peaceful manner.* ***Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list published at*** **www.marfam.org.za/lent**

April 9. *'It is expedient that one man should die for the people.*" Bernadette asked, "The Jews were really worried about the Romans, their oppressors. Did they see Jesus as causing trouble that would make the Romans oppress them even more? We've had a gutful of politics and even war recently, but I don't believe we ever get the whole picture. Different TV or radio or newspapers and social media paint different pictures of the same events. Governments are known to conspire to unjustly even do away with someone who is a trouble-maker for them. In organisations and even within our families we don't all see things in the same way or who decides what is the right way.*"*

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation should not perish. John 11:50.* ***Pope Francis****: The Church today is a church of martyrs. They give their lives for us and we receive from God the blessing of their witness. Like Stephen who antagonised the Jews they gave their lives. We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world and that good and decency are worth it. LS229.* ***SA Youth Responsibilities Bill 8:*** *We dedicate ourselves to peaceful co-existence which requires justice. The healing of past prejudices and divisions is required to ensure the promotion of democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights for all.* ***Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list published at*** **www.marfam.org.za/lent**

HOLY WEEK REFLECTIONS with imaginative prayer.

There are various ways to reflect on the events of Holy Week as recorded in the gospels. Following Jesus is the business of our lives. To follow him we must know him, and we get to know him through our imagination. Imaginative Ignatian prayer teaches us things about Jesus that we would not learn through scripture study or theological reflection. It allows the person of Christ to penetrate into places that the intellect does not touch. It brings Jesus into our hearts. It engages our feelings. It enflames us with ideals of generous service. Imaginative reflection is placing oneself inside the story as an observer or participant and becoming especially conscious of the experience of Jesus, giving full rein to our imagination. With this method we follow Jesus and get to know and understand him in our hearts and through our feelings. The Holy Week reflections below use this method and follow Jesus with and through the angels, his constant companions.

Pope Francis: *As part of the universe, called into being by one Father, all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family. God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment. LS 89*

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY: One may wish to visualize the scene, read the reflection, read the relevant scripture passage/s from one of the gospels, take time to explore one's feelings in response and then speak to Jesus. If done in a family or other group, one person could read the reflection out loud, allow some personal quiet time, invite members to share if they wish and close with spontaneous prayer.

Other activities: have a family prayer /Passover meal. Family Reconciliation moment. Stations of the Cross for families, make hot cross buns, remember our baptism on Easter Saturday. Paint or make easter eggs, make an Easter garden with sweets, biscuits, paper. Visit www.marfam.org.za/lent for ideas. .

Holy Week. Introduction. Read, reflect, share, pray.
There was always an army of angels surrounding the Son of God. After all they were his angels, messengers from God to mankind, but also to give glory, worship and praise to God.
On a human level Jesus felt their presence, a warmth, a protective field. He could hardly be expected to remember Gabriel who had appeared to his mother, or the angel who had spoken with Joseph, or the host who accompanied the shepherds at his birth. However, there were times when they'd had an opportunity to be very real to him. At the start of his public ministry, when searching for direction, he was tempted by Satan, the fallen angel, to choose the easier, miracle-worker route, or the popular hero one, but he resisted these temptations and his angels came and ministered to him.
The time came when the whole heavenly host knew that Jesus' time on earth was nearing an end and that the days ahead would be a time of severe trial and suffering, and legions of angels were at hand, watching and waiting, filled with love and awe for the great sacrifice God would make for His creatures. *Read from the Passion narratives in each of the gospels.*

Palm Sunday. April 10.
Angels naturally love processions, so they were there in full force flanking the palm-waving crowd, with Jesus humbly mounted on a donkey, as they made their way towards Jerusalem. They rejoiced at his public acceptance but noted the disapproving eyes of the Pharisees. Choirs of angels enthusiastically joined in the praise-singing, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heavens!" ***Read, reflect, share, pray.*** *Read the account in any of the gospels. Matt 21:1-11. Make palm crosses and display at home. Cover crucifixes with purple.*

Monday of Holy Week. April 11
Angels watched and listened intently when at supper in the house of Lazarus Mary poured costly ointment over his feet and wiped them with her hair. "This is for my burial" Jesus said sending a flutter of anxiety to the listening angels. This deepened as they accompanied him going into the Temple, God's house, and watched with concern as he overturned the tables of the money-changers and chased the traders away. They knew well the honour and respect that was due to God's house and how it was being desecrated by human greed and they were proud to be his companions and nodded in agreement as he accused the traders, "You have made my Father's house into a den of thieves." ***Read, reflect, share, pray.*** *John 12:1-11. Matt21:12-13*

Tuesday. April 12
During the next days the angels stood by, watching and listening as the story unfolded. They felt proud, but increasingly concerned as they saw the resistance mounting. Jesus came boldly into the temple, preaching, healing and disputing with the chief priests and elders, showing his authority and power but building up the store of anger and resentment of the chief priests to fever-pitch causing them to plot against him.
Angels listened with deep concentration and even fear to the parables Jesus told to the Pharisees. The parable of the vineyard, how the wicked tenants killed all the messengers, even the owner's son, was a clear condemnation of the Pharisees' hypocrisy and prediction of their punishment. "How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees!. You

hypocrites!" "hypocrite! Hypocrite!" they chanted but asked themselves, "Does he not know what trouble he is bringing on himself?" ***Read, reflect, share, pray.*** *Luke 20*

Wednesday. April 13

Early one morning the angels accompanied Jesus and his disciples to the Mount of Olives. They wept with him as he mourned over the city; "How many times have I wanted to put my arms around your people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not let me!"

They listened in horror as he described the troubles and persecutions that were to come before the end times.

They were aroused by the glorious vision of the Son of Man appearing in the sky with power and great glory, knowing they would be there, accompanying him too. The trumpet would sound and they would be sent to the four corners of the earth to gather the chosen people and bring them back to enjoy their eternal reward.

And yet, when he issued the call to be ready and be prepared for the final judgement they could sense his great disappointment and sadness that some would not be able to answer, "Yes Lord, I did see you hungry, thirsty, naked and a stranger and I helped you." These would be sent to eternal punishment and all the angels joined Jesus in mourning their loss. ***Read, reflect, share, pray.*** *Luke 19:41-44. 21:5-37*

Maundy Thursday. April 14

Great concern and fear spread through the heavenly host when Jesus said to his disciples. "In two days it will be the Passover and the Son of man will be handed over to be crucified."

They remembered with a mixture of joy and sadness the first Passover when so many young Egyptians were killed because their fathers had oppressed the Israelites. The Israelite homes were spared by the angel of death because angels had been sent to warn them to paint the blood of their passover lamb on the lintels of their doors.

Then they thought back over the whole testing time in the desert and how they had joined in the commemoration of the Passover on so many occasions through the centuries.

They recognised too that this occasion would be different. The sacrifice was so much greater, God's Son himself, having become human was the sacrifice. God so loved the world, and they bowed their heads in awe, overwhelmed by such a love.

They observed the plot to betray Jesus and stood by in silent adoration as the Passover meal was eaten and the new Covenant was instituted. They honoured Jesus as the eternal High Priest, and the apostles who would be the new priests.

They were close to Jesus when he went to the garden of Gethsemane and held him up in love and understanding as he sweated blood in his agony, and so they watched as he prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, take this cup of suffering away from me! But not my will but yours be done."

There was even a tiny moment of excitement when Judas kissed his master and Jesus' followers in a passion of anguish tried to defend him and cut off the ear of one of the servants of the high priest.

But Jesus stepped in saying "Do you think I cannot ask my Father to send twelve legions of angels to defend me?" "Oh Son of God, we are here in your defence, use us, let us save you from this passion." But no. The plan must be fulfilled.

Read, reflect, share, pray. *Read the accounts in one or all the gospels.*

Good Friday. April 15

And so through the night the angels again kept watch as Jesus was dragged before Caiaphas, the high priest to be questioned. They watched Peter's denial, Judas' despair and Pilate's half-hearted attempts at "justice." Much as they tried to bend an ear, wanting to help, they knew the task had to be completed.

Being pure spirits with no physical bodies they couldn't really, physically, imagine the agony of being scourged and beaten, the mockery of being made to wear a crown of thorns and carry a cross - what kind of throne is that - for his own execution, but they could see and sense his desolation and suffered at his side.

At last a glimmer of hope, through the hands of Simon, the man, they helped to carry the weight, through the hands of the woman, Veronica, they were able to wipe his bloody wounded face. They almost had to hold Mary, his mother, their queen, as he passed her by in the crowd and they shared an intimate look of love.

While some mocked and others wept and darkness fell over the land, many legions of angels surrounded the cross with its inscription "this is Jesus, the king of the Jews." "He is our king too, and yours", they wanted to shout to the world, "and we know he will conquer all."

It seemed to them that, as he hung there, the cross formed a link between heaven and earth and his arms, opened wide, embraced the whole world in an all-encompassing embrace.

They waited with bated breath when he cried out in a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you deserted me!" and as he yielded up his spirit they bowed low, worshipping, thanking, loving him.

There was much to be done. In a burst of frantic activity the temple veil was torn, the earth quaked and people were released from their tombs and then, finally, silence descended. The soldiers, having taken down his body, briefly placed it in the arms of his mother. Her companions with good Joseph took his body away and laid it to rest in a rocky tomb with a large

stone rolled across its entrance to be sure no one would steal the body. And so the angels once more kept watch, silently, waiting. ***Read, reflect, share, pray.*** *Read the accounts in one or all the gospels.*

Holy Saturday. April 16

All through the day the angels continued their watch, close to where Jesus' broken body lay, while the disciples and the women gathered together where they had met just days before. And then, on that most holy night, Jesus Christ, Son of God, passed from death to life and the earth joined the whole heavenly host in singing the great Easter Proclamation. (paraphrased)

Exult! Let them exult, the hosts of heaven, exult, let angel ministers of God exult,
let the trumpet of salvation sound aloud our mighty King's triumph!
Be glad, let earth be glad, as glory floods her, ablaze with light from her eternal King,
Let all corners of the earth be glad, knowing an end to gloom and darkness.
Rejoice, let Mother Church also rejoice, arrayed with the lighting of his glory,
Let this holy building shake with joy, filled with the mighty voices of the peoples.

It is truly right and just, with ardent love of mind and heart
And with devoted service of our voice, to acclaim our God invisible, the almighty Father,
And Jesus Christ, our Lord, his Son, his Only Begotten.
Who for our sake paid Adam's debt to the eternal Father, and pouring out his own dear Blood,
Wiped clean the record of our ancient sinfulness.

O truly blessed night, when things of heaven are wedded to those of earth and divine to the human.
The power of this holy night dispels all evil, washes guilt away, restores lost innocence, brings mourners joy;
It casts out hatred, brings us peace and humbles earthly pride.

Accept this Easter candle, a flame divided but undimmed, A pillar of fire that glows to the honour of God.
Let it mingle with the lights of heaven and continue bravely burning to dispel the darkness of this night!

Receive it as a pleasing fragrance and let it mingle with the lights of heaven.
May this flame be found still burning by the Morning Star
The one Morning Star who never sets, Christ your Son, who coming back from death's domain
Has sent his peaceful light on humanity and lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen

And the sky was radiant and pulsated with heavenly harmony as the host of angels celebrated the conquest of Satan and welcomed Jesus home. ***Read, reflect, share, pray.*** *Read the accounts in one or all the gospels.*

EASTER SUNDAY. April 17.

It was strange that after the tempestuous wonders of the night the morning dawned so calmly. Mary Magdalen and the other Mary went to the tomb, wondering who would roll the stone away. But then a violent earthquake shook the earth and the designated angel appeared shining bright like lightning, rolled the stone away and sat on it.
Of course the guards were petrified but the angel reassured the women, "Do not be afraid. He is not here, he has been raised just as he had said. Go and tell the others." Then imagine the excitement and wonder when Jesus himself appeared and all the angels worshipped him.
The angel throng, having witnessed the unfolding events of the past week filled the heavens with their jubilation.
"Our God reigns and Satan has been overcome." ***Read, reflect, share, pray.*** *Read the accounts in Matthew or all the gospels.*

Concluding Prayer.

Tuesday 22 March. At this time of publishing these reflections the world is at war. In Ukraine in particular, an evil power has been unleashed, Satan is at work once more, committing evil acts, wanton destruction and violent death. Other wars rage around the world over land and power, for freedom and in defence of just rights. We pray that in time to come the threat of war and mass destruction will no longer control us and that true peace will be experienced through dialogue and acceptance.
In a message to a congress of educators Pope Francis said, "Do I pray? Do I fast? Do I do penance? Or do I live carefree, as we normally live through distant wars? A war is always - always! - the defeat of humanity, always. We, the educated, who work in education, are defeated by this war, because on another side we are responsible. There is no such thing as a just war: they do not exist!"

On 20 March 2022 Pope Francis prayed, “Forgive us for the war, Lord. Lord Jesus, son of God, have mercy on us sinners. Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, we implore you to stop the hand of Cain, enlighten our conscience, let not our will be done, do not abandon us to our own doing. Stop us, Lord, stop us, and when you have stopped the hand of Cain, take care of him also. He is our brother. O Lord, stop the violence. Stop us, Lord. Amen

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April 18. Easter Monday, Family Day SA. A **story for today**

The Greek owner at the Spar greeted all the customers who came in to buy Easter eggs by saying, “The Lord is risen, Alleluia.”

Instead of saying, “Thanks be to God, Alleluia,” which is the right reply, most of them looked at him funnily and went on to get their eggs.

That is what worried Jesus in heaven with the Father, the Holy Spirit, all the choirs of angels and many, many people who had died and come to heaven.

“What can you see happening over there,” Jesus asked. An old man spirit said, “Same as always, same as yesterday, today and tomorrow, wars here and there, floods, people going shopping, going on holiday, lots of accidents, tut-tut, and the floods and snow from last winter is just easing up. Talk about global warming I say! ”

Jesus answered, “You're right, but in some way people can also learn from their experiences. Didn't some of those awful things that nature brought bring any of those people closer to God?” But he still looked sad.

A little girl spirit said, “look over there, aren't there lots and lots of children running around their gardens, looking under bushes and even climbing trees. I remember we used to do that before I got sick. We were looking for Easter eggs and it was so exciting.” Jesus smiled, but still in a kind of a sad way. “I wonder whether they're thinking of me, of us, my Father and I, how we planned this whole business to help them. They were sinners and did many bad things. Even children fought with each other, stole things and bullied each other and lots of other stuff.

So we decided that they needed a new kind of life. I went to them and many angels came too. I came as a baby, grew up and started teaching them and eventually their leaders didn't like what I was saying, so they took me and killed me. OK, it was awful and very painful but that was part of the plan. The best part was that the Father raised me up again, brought me back to life and that is where the new life came in. All those Easter eggs, and bunnies and chickens are about new life, sure, but is it my kind of new life, a life of greater kindness, more love, less fighting and wars we were planning for? Do those chocolate goodies really help to remind people of that? And when they've eaten so much chocolate that they're feeling sick have they thought about other children who don't even get to eat a piece of bread? I think we have a long way to go to get people to hear the real message. It's also not about the things they give each other but the gift that I gave them. You see it is all about love and joy.

I think I'll have to get the Spirit to go over there and remind them and give a special blessing to that Greek man at the Spar for doing his bit. That's what everyone should be doing. Tell the people, “The Lord is risen, Alleluia. Be filled with joy and happiness and share it with everyone around you.” Then they can all reply. “Thanks be to God, Alleluia. I will share your joy and your peace in my world.”

And Jesus said to himself and to the Spirit, “So let them enjoy their Easter, enjoy their Easter eggs, but remind them not to eat too much chocolate. It's really not good for them and they might end up here in heaven sooner than they think.” TR

Reflect, share and act. Scripture *This Jesus God raised up and of that we are all witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit he has poured out this which you see and hear. Acts 2:33.* ***Pope Francis.*** *If a family is centred on Christ he will unify and illumine its entire life. Moments of pain and difficulty will be experienced in union with the Lord’s cross. Family prayer is a special way of expressing and strengthening this paschal faith. Moments of joy, relaxation, celebration and even sexuality can be experienced as a sharing in the full life of the resurrection. AL 317.*

April 19. Tuesday of Easter week. *Mary Magdalene said to him,” Sir if you have carried him away tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away.* Families were encouraged to continue sharing as they had done before Easter. Magdalene liked the story how on Easter morning while her name sake, Mary Magdalene, was weeping over the fact that Jesus’ body had disappeared she saw a strange man in the garden. Young Magdalene shared, “Once when I was quite little you, mom, told me that Jesus was everywhere and I must look around to see him. I didn't know what he looked like, but now I have different pictures of him in my heart. It seems that if Mary Magdalene also didn't recognise him how different might he look to different people and at different times*.”*

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *Supposing him to be the gardener Mary Magdalene said to him,” Sir if you have carried him away tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away. “ Jesus said to her, “Mary”. She turned and said to him “Rabboni, Teacher.” Read John 20:11-18.* ***Pope Francis:*** *The Lord’s presence dwells in real and concrete families, with all their daily troubles and struggles, joys and hopes. Living in a family makes it hard for us to feign or lie; we cannot hide behind a mask. AL315.*

April 20. Wednesday of Easter week. *He went in to stay with them and their eyes were opened and they recognized him* "Hey, that's my story," Peter said. "Mom, did you tell us all the same stories when we were little or maybe sometimes a little bit different. Like, why did those two disciples that were walking to Emmaus not recognise him or why didn't they have names? Were they not important? I like to think that Jesus is there for me even if I am not as important as Pope Francis or the bishop. Is that being "unhumble?" John said, "What I like is that there were a pair together, maybe a husband and wife, maybe with their kids and that Jesus took his time to walk and talk with them. Walk and talk, that is nice don't you think? We should do that more often too, together."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture *Beginning with Moses and all the prophets he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. He went in to stay with them and their eyes were opened and they recognized him. Read Luke 24:13-35.* ***Pope Francis.*** *In talking with his disciples Jesus would invite them to recognize the paternal relationship God has with all his creatures. With moving tenderness he would remind them that each one of the is important in God's eyes, "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God." LS 96*

April 21. Thursday of Easter week. Bryan, who saw himself as a budding forensic pathologist wondered, "I am fascinated by Jesus and his resurrected body, in fact in the whole issue of spirits. How could Jesus not be a spirit and appear and disappear at will? It must really have been very confusing for the disciples to believe. Touching something does make it far more real and I suppose once you have crossed the barrier of trust in this new Jesus you can also take seriously what he said."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture *Jesus said to them "Why are you troubled? See my hands and my feet that it is I myself. Touch me and see, for a spirit as no flesh and bones as I have. Read Luke 24:35-48* ***Pope Francis.*** *The New Testament does not only tell us of the earthly Jesus and his tangible and loving relationship with the world. It also shows him risen and glorious, present throughout creation by his universal Lordship. This leads us to direct our gaze to the end of time when the Son will deliver all things to the Father. The creatures of this world will no longer appear to us under merely natural guise. LS 100*

April 22. Friday of Easter week. Mom who loved picnics shared some thoughts. "It must have been a very strange breakfast picnic there on the shore of the sea of Tiberias with the disciples being sceptical about going out again in their boat after having caught nothing all night. Even at the end when they came with their 153 fish and Jesus was cooking breakfast for them they were uncertain. I wonder who said what in the end. I also sometimes don't know what to say to Jesus. Does anyone else feel like that? There is a story about an old man who would come into church every day and sit down in the back row for a long time. One day an usher asked him what he was doing just sitting there. The old man replied, "I just look at Jesus, and he looks at me."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture" *They went out in the boat but that night they caught nothing. As day was breaking Jesus stood on the beach yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. He said to them, cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some fish." So they cast it and now they were not able to haul it in. Read John 21:1-14.* ***Pope Francis.*** *We can be fully present to others only by giving fully of ourselves and forgetting all else. Jesus is our model in this. Our loved ones merit our complete attention since he or she possesses infinite dignity as an object of the Father's immense love. This gives rise to a tenderness which stirs in the other the joy of being loved. AL 323*

April 23. Saturday of Easter Week. *he appeared to the Eleven themselves as they sat at table and he upbraided them for their unbelief.* The two brothers were having an argument. Percy shouted, "How often have I told you, shown you, nagged you and how often are you so thick you just don't understand or choose to understand." They hadn't really started their faith sharing yet and of course Percy would not have talked to his younger brother like that if they had. Aunt Norah was clever to use the opportunity to say that Jesus must also have felt frustrated and irritated at times with the "thickness" of the disciples. "Do we really always try hard enough to listen and understand what we are being told and especially what we need to know," she added.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalen and then to two others but the Eleven did not believe. Afterwards he appeared to the Eleven themselves as they sat at table and he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. And he said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. From Mark 16:9-15* ***Pope Francis.*** *When a family is welcoming and reaches out to others, especially the poor and the neglected, it is a symbol, witness and participant in the Church's motherhood. Social love is a reflection of the Trinity. The family lives its spirituality precisely by being at one and the same time a domestic church and a vital cell for transforming the world. AL 324*

April 24. Easter 2A. Divine Mercy Sunday. *do not be faithless but believe.* Fr Sylvester had a few thoughts to share with the people on this Sunday. "How did the early church grow?" he asked. "Were the disciples all fired up immediately? No. They needed extra help, right, like we all do, all the time." You could say that Divine Mercy Sunday is celebrating God's mercy as that extra something, but something that is always available to us. There is the special Divine Mercy devotion attached to this which is practiced in many countries. It focuses on God's mercy and our trust in God as we acknowledge ourselves as sinners in need of mercy and forgiveness. We priests have been given special sacramental powers to forgive sins in the name of God. In all humility I really wish more people would appreciate what that can mean for them. It can be a real way of 'touching' Jesus who heals and forgives."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *"Put your finger here and see my hands and put out your hand and place it in my side; do not be faithless but believe." Thomas answered, "My Lord and my God." Read John 20:19-31.* ***Pope Francis.*** *The Church is commissioned to proclaim the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the mind and heart of every person. The Bride of Christ must pattern her behaviour after the Son of God who goes out to ever one without exception. It will become possible for the balm of mercy to reach everyone, believers and those far away, as a sign that the kingdom of God is already present in our midst. AL309.*

April 25. *Grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness* Mabel posed a question that was bothering her. "Do we still believe in miracles today, or do we depend on our own powers, knowledge and expertise? Look at the reality of COVID-19 the pandemic that has been raging for more than two years all over the world. Medical science has had a field-day working tirelessly to develop vaccines, even in competition with one another, because it is also a lucrative business. In responding to the whole pandemic there has been much very good work but also much fraud, theft and misinformation. But when it comes to prayer and trust and dependence on God's intervention how much has there been? I often think we've become too independent of God." Others added their thoughts. "But God does work in the situation, through the hands of those medical staff and carers who sacrificed much for their patients." "When people are infected and very sick, many prayers for healing are offered and when there is suffering and death people do turn to God and pray for consolation." "I'm not convinced that we have recognized God sufficiently."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture *The disciples prayed, "Now Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." When they had prayed, the place was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness. Acts 4:23-31.* ***Pope Francis:*** *The weakening of faith and religious practice in some societies has had an effect on families, leaving them more isolated amid their difficulties. One symptom of the great poverty of contemporary culture is loneliness arising from the absence of God in a person's life and the fragility of relationships. AL43*

April 26. *No one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own,* Jason had a turn to lead the sharing. "Be honest everyone, "he said "are you all prepared to not only share your things within our family, but for us to sell what we have and be prepared to share with everyone in the whole world? Isn't that pretty excessive? I think it is." It was a very big challenge for all of them to consider. "I don't think that even Pope Francis expects us to go that far, but I know and believe that there are still people like the missionaries and other religious who have given up all their possessions." "But they don't have kids to send to school." So they threw the idea around. "But look at a current reality. The example of the horrific war in Ukraine and the millions of people dispossessed and becoming refugees has highlighted the horrors of war but also how incredibly hospitable and generous people can be when a serious need arises."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture *The company of those who believed were of one heart and soul and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common. There was not any one needy among them. Acts 4:32, 34.* ***Pope Francis.*** *God continues to sow abundant seeds of goodness in our human family. The pandemic enabled us to recognize and appreciate all those, who in the midst of fear, responded by putting their lives on the line. Our lives are interwoven with and sustained by ordinary people valiantly shaping events of our shared history; doctors, nurses and workers of all kinds. I invite everyone to renewed hope which speaks to us of something deeply rooted in every human heart, a thirst, a longing for fulfillment. FT 55*

April 27th. Friday. Freedom Day SA. *Liberty is directed above all to love and the common good.* The speaker began, "What does freedom mean to you as an individual and a member of a family and community? It can even mean different things at different times and in these different contexts. On this holiday celebrating and commemorating the day in 1994 when the first fully democratic election was held in South Africa we do celebrate freedom and commemorate the new Constitution. Freedom is precious. It was and always is hard-bought and should be greatly appreciated. But it is not for free. It was bought at a price and still costs for many people. We as families can consider the cost of freedom and let us discuss the history of the day with those too young to remember the past." The packed hall applauded his speech. Would they go and do more?

Reflect, share and act. Scripture *It is truly right and just that we should give you thanks and praise O God, almighty Father for all you do in this world, through our Lord Jesus Christ. For though the human race is divided by dissension and discord, yet we know that by testing us you change our hearts to prepare them for reconciliation. Even more by your Spirit you move human hearts that enemies may speak to each other again, adversaries may join hands and peoples seek to meet together. By the working of your power it comes about, O Lord, that hatred is overcome by love, revenge gives way to forgiveness and discord is changed to mutual respect.* ***Preface for Reconciliation. Pope Francis:*** *Fraternity is born not only of a climate of respect for individual liberties or administrative equality. Fraternity calls for something greater. When it is not consciously cultivated and without political will and through dialogue and recognition of values of reciprocity, it becomes nothing more than living as we will, completely free to choose to whom or what we will belong. Liberty is directed above all to love and the common good. FT 103. What is most needed today is God's saving love which precedes moral and religious obligations and be marked by joy, encouragement and balance. EG 165.*

April 28. *We must obey God rather than men.* Sophie was a nurse working in a public hospital. She shared a real concern. "I wonder what would happen if I refused to do some procedures that are against my religion, like performing an abortion. If I say, 'I must obey God rather than men, will I lose my job? I know of some nurses that did get fired and then it's not easy to get another post. And it is a big worry about one's own children. "It is a real dilemma in some professions, I know," Mrs Adams said. "But somehow we pray for courage to obey our conscience because after all we're answerable to God in the end. You can also discuss it with Father if you want to or with another priest, but you might also get different opinions from different priests. I like what Pope Francis had to say. "

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *Peter and the apostles said to the council. "We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him. We are witnesses of these things. From Acts 5:27-33.* ***Pope Francis:*** *We find it hard to make room for the consciences of the faithful who often respond as best they can to the Gospel amid their limitations and are capable of carrying out their own discernment in complex situations. We have been called to form consciences not to replace them. AL 37*

April 29. "I*f this plan or this undertaking is of men it will fail; but if it is of God you will not be able to overthrow them.* ou know what happened in our prayer group?" Ma Jozie asked when she got home. "These two women started arguing about whether a divorced and remarried woman should be allowed to go to communion. It really got quite vicious as if both of them were really convinced they were right. Mr Percival was able to defuse the situation and said that this was one of those questions the Church considered at length in the Synods of the Family. Strictly speaking according to Church law it is not allowed and some bishops insist on that. However Pope Francis preaches mercy and others, some theologians and bishops, have also said that the Church should practise mercy."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *Gamaliel a teacher of the law said, "in the present case I tell you let these men alone; for if this plan or this undertaking is of men it will fail; but if it is of God you will not be able to overthrow them. From Acts 5:34-42.* ***Pope Francis****. "I understand those who prefer a more rigorous pastoral care which leaves no room for confusion. But I sincerely believe that Jesus wants a Church attentive to the goodness which the Holy Spirit sows in the midst of human weakness, a Mother who while clearly expressing her objective teaching always does what good she can even if in the process her shoes get soiled by the mud of the street.AL 308.*

April 30. T*he Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.* When Moss and James met at the Sunday soccer venue they sometimes complained that their wives were always busy with sodality matters. "I want her home on Sunday morning to cook for me," Moss said and James nodded his agreement. But Daniel overhearing their conversation chipped in, "I'm sorry that my wife has died, because now what am I supposed to do. My children have their own families or sodalities to be worried about. One day I asked them all to come together so we could talk things through. I asked them, "How can we look after all our different interests so that no one feels left out. They really listened and things are much better now."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *When the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. And the Twelve said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore pick out from among you seven men of good repute whom we may appoint to this duty." Acts 6:1-7.* ***Pope Francis.*** *The Bishops of South Africa have pointed out that true reconciliation is achieved proactively, by forming a new society, a society based on service to others, rather than the desire to dominate; a society based on sharing what one has with others, rather than the selfish scramble by each for as much wealth as possible, a society in which the value of being together as human beings is ultimately more important than any lesser group whether it be family, nation, race of culture. FT 229.*