



# 2022 MARFAM FAMILY YEAR PLANNER

Theme: OUR WORLD, A FAMILY OF FAMILIES

## MAY THEME: PARENTS FORM FAMILIES

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**Abbreviations:** Pope Francis: LS = Laudato Si. AL = Amoris Laetitia FT = Fratelli Tutti. EG = Evangelii Gaudium. FS – Families and Synod.

**Introduction.** During May and June the Church is holding special commemorations for family and ecology as well as Church Unity Week from the feasts of Ascension to Pentecost. Resources have been made available by the Vatican's the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life for the **WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES** June 22-25, and **A SYNODAL JOURNEY WITH FAMILIES** focusing on family. The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development has provided input for **LAUDATO SI WEEK** 22 – 29 May on ecology. References and quotations on these topics are included. The SA Church Unity Commission has provided resources for **Church Unity Week** beginning on 29 May.

As Mary's month, devotion and prayers to Our Lady are encouraged and each day an intercession from a **Family Litany to Our Lady for today** is included.

**May Overview.** Whether it is a study of anatomy, botany, biology, human physiology or spirituality, the gift of co-creation with God, in nature, should be recognized as one of God's greatest gifts. It is the male and female in areas of nature, a man and woman, ideally through a loving committed relationship, who continue God's work of creation, sustenance and nurturance.

Parents, human and animal, have the task of forming and educating their offspring. It can have taken different forms throughout history and in various species. An intimate bond is created in parenting figures with their children. The ideal of the love of their father and mother for each other too is an important gift to children.

Effective human parenting is amongst the most important, yet complex relationships today, because of changing conditions and values, yet little training is provided. We dare not also forget the human capacity for good and evil seen so clearly in intimate relationships.

*The gift of a new child entrusted by the Lord to a father and a mother, begins with acceptance, continues with lifelong protection and has as its final goal the joy of eternal life. God allows parents to choose the name by which he himself will call their child for all eternity. AL166. Only if we devote time to our children, speaking of important things with simplicity and concern and finding healthy ways for them to spend their time will we be able to shield them from harm. Vigilance is always necessary and neglect is never beneficial. Parents have to help prepare their children and adolescents to confront the risks of aggression, abuse or drug addiction. AL 260. In assessing the environmental impact of any project few careful studies are made of its impact on biodiversity. Little attention is paid to studying the reproductive patterns of species to prevent their depletion and imbalance of the ecosystem. LS 35.*

**Setting the scene.** Parish family faith sharing groups were encouraged during this month to focus on parenting, a recognition of difficulties but especially to promote positive parenting. All families in nature, especially human as well as animal families can be taken into account.

**May 1. Sunday Easter 3C.** Fr Peter told the congregation, "Like all the stories in the gospels there are so many messages, but let's pick up just two from today's gospel that paint a wonderful picture for our imagination. After the resurrection the apostles were still lost and confused, so one thing they did was go back to their work, fishing for some, but that day they had little success. Jesus arrived and, understanding this, encouraged them to cast their net out again, and this time they caught a large number, 153, big fish. When they had come to the shore they found Jesus cooking breakfast for them, but still they felt unsure about him. Do we ever feel like that, how real is Jesus for us?"

The other reflection sees Jesus speaking to Peter. "Do you love me?" he asked, three times. Peter gets annoyed, but Jesus may have been driving the point home that Peter denied him three times, and now he is called to confirm his love three times. Then Jesus says, "feed my lambs," and again "feed my sheep." For us, is it love of Jesus and for Jesus, that empowers us, as families, to care for our little lambs and our older sheep?"

**Reflect, share, act., Scripture.** Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. Truly I say to you when you were young you fastened your own belt and walked where you would, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will fasten your belt and bring you where you do not wish to go." John 21: 1-19. **Pope Francis:** In a family, parents, grandparents and children all feel

at home, no one is excluded. If someone has a problem even a serious one, even if he brought it upon himself the rest of the family comes to his assistance. FT 230. "The experience of love in families is a perennial source of strength for the life of the Church". (AL 88) We were conceived in the heart of God and for this reason each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary. LS 65. **Pray.** Mary, mother most caring, concerned for all in need, pray for us.

**May 2. Workers' Day, transferred from May 1. St Joseph the Worker.** Workers Day has for more than a century been a battle for the rights of workers, a battle involving employers, employees and trade unions. The Church has been involved on questions of workers' rights too during this time. Rights of women workers had only come up years later. Maternity leave had been an issue and more recently paternity leave had also been addressed. A fatherhood group had spearheaded this campaign for mothers and fathers to be able to bond with a new baby. In parishes this had also been discussed. Some dads had welcomed it while others had said, "I don't want to be with my wife when she gives birth. It's against our culture." One man said, "I was with my partner when she gave birth and it was a very special experience." St Joseph was a worker, a tradesman, a simple country man likely, given a tremendous task to support his young wife, Mary, when she gave birth to Jesus. So in one family group the question of childbirth came up, and dad said, "These days we don't work on farms much and don't live close to nature any more. I think it is still good for children to witness birth in some way like when our dog gave birth to her puppies my little daughter was amazed and we talked about the wonder of it together."

**Reflect, share and act. Scripture.** Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward, you are serving the Lord Christ. Col 3:23-24. **Pope Francis:** We were created with a vocation to work. Work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development and personal fulfillment. LS128. **Pray.** Mary, loving wife of Joseph, together you worked to build your family, pray for us.

**May 3.** The post-confirmation group were studying history of religion. The catechist led the discussion. "St Stephen is the first Christian martyr, stoned to death for his bravery and conviction about his beliefs. In today's world there has been an increase in violence. Many people are killed because of their religious beliefs, in other parts because of politics that also causes wars, or people are killed over race or ethnicity. A serious problem is family violence, even femicide and the number of women killed, often by a partner or a husband. Shockingly in the recent war in Ukraine there were hundreds of thousands of deaths, civilians, women, children, men as well as soldiers on both sides. Were they killed defending a country or over an ideology, or just obeying orders? What is a true martyr? Would you really be prepared to die for your beliefs or your country?"

**Reflect, share and act. Scripture.** Stephen said to the people and the elders and scribes, "You stiff-necked people, you always resist the Holy Spirit." They were enraged and cast him out of the city and stoned him. Acts 7:51-8:1. **Pope Francis:** Faith means believing in God, believing that he truly loves us, that he is alive and that he is mysteriously capable of intervening, does not abandon us and brings good out of evil by his power and his infinite creativity. It means believing that he marches triumphantly in history with those who are called and chosen and faithful. EG278. **Pray.** Holy Mary, Queen of martyrs, pray for us.

**May 4.** All the parents in the groups were heard to express concern that so many of the youth were making friends with other youth and attending services in Pentecostal churches because they seemed more lively. One mom said, "In a way I think it is OK if they go there to pray and worship and for fellowship but what worries me is that there is no true communion. Jesus did say, 'I am the bread of life' and I believe we need to be fed with his body and blood." "Not having been able to go to Mass and receive communion for these last two years months hasn't helped either." "But for our family, prayer and faith sharing at home has helped us, especially this focus on nature and climate has been good."

**Scripture.** Jesus said to the crowds, "I am the bread of life. I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but to do the will of him who sent me. This is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. John: 6:35-40. **Pope Francis:** One Person of the Trinity entered into the created cosmos, throwing in his lot with it, even to the cross. From the beginning of the world, but particularly throughout the incarnation the mystery of Christ is at work in a hidden manner in the natural world as a whole. LS 99. **Reflect, share,** How has our understanding of the incarnation, i.e. Jesus becoming man, grown through faith reflection? **pray.** Mary, Mother of the Holy Family and model for all families, pray for us.

**May 5.** The parents continued their discussion. "That story of Philip and him sharing the story of Jesus in such a way that the Ethiopian was convinced enough to ask for baptism is really powerful. In the Catholic church do we have such preachers that can hold our and the kids' attention? Since lockdown and church-hopping we could find preachers and liturgies we found more enjoyable than our own old parish back home." "It is a problem that the style in other denominations' churches can be more dynamic." "We need to explore more as there are programmes, some for youth, like Theology of the Body or for adult too like Charismatic or Encounter movements that do grab people with new insight of spirituality."

**Scripture.** An Ethiopian, a eunuch, a minister to the queen had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning in his chariot while reading the prophet Isaiah, "Like a sheep, led to the slaughter, or a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opened not

his mouth." The Spirit told Philip to join him and Philip explained the passage and told him the good news of Jesus. As they came to some water the eunuch asked to be baptized. After that the Spirit took Philip away and, passing on, he preached the gospel to all the towns. Acts 8:26-40. **Pope Francis:** The Gospel of the Family responds to the deepest expectations of the human person: a response to each one's dignity and fulfilment in reciprocity, communion and fruitfulness. This consists not merely in presenting a set of rules but in proposing values that are clearly needed today. AL201. **Reflect, share** Do I make enough efforts to renew and enrich my faith experience? **Pray.** Mary, full of grace, always filled with God's presence.

**May 6.** Conversion experiences was one of Marie's favourite topics and she had written a whole little booklet on it. She shared, "I have discovered much about my own faith through these conversion stories, about people throughout the centuries even. Some were life-changing events, like Saul's, others were more like a process of change. Some men and women felt called to start or join a religious congregation. Turning away from an addiction to drugs, alcohol or gambling can be a conversion too. Most of us, young and old, have small conversion experiences, possibly during a time of fasting or moment in one's life. Childbirth can be a such a moment. A conversion towards interreligious dialogue or an ecological conversion are strong features of our time." Antony added, "it's funny, conversion is an individual reality, but there is also the conversion away from an individualist view, towards seeing the family as the way to be church. This is an ongoing process."

**Scripture.** Saul still breathing threats and murder against the disciples went to Damascus to look for and arrest disciples. As he journeyed suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?" and he said, "Who are you?" **Pope Francis:** St Francis did not wage a war of words aimed at imposing doctrines; he simply spread the love of God. He understood that God is love and those who abide in love abide in God. In this way he became the father to all and inspired the vision of a fraternal society. FT4. The Second Vatican Council renewed the image of the family as a "domestic Church" (LG 11; AL 11), which was present in the first centuries of Christianity. (cf. St. John Chrysostom) The family is "the way of the Church". (Gratissimam sane 2) From "The Family and the Synod. **Reflect, share.** Which kind of conversion can I relate to? **Pray.** Mary, Mother most hopeful, trusting in the goodness of the Father, pray for us.

**May 7.** Jennifer began, "There is a nursery rhyme that starts, "Mary, Mary quite contrary, how does your garden grow?" "It is not just because I am a teacher, but as a thinking human being I know that we have to reflect on what makes things happen, what makes a garden grow? Right physical conditions for sure, but also a caring attitude and the right actions. Pope Francis, speaking about peace and social friendship as a basis for communion and good relationships within a group or between groups, calls it a *culture of encounter* and proposes dialogue. Approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understand one another and to find common ground is dialogue and leads to another important concept, the common good." Macy added, "And of course, all this applies to families across nature and as intergenerational communities in a particular way too."

**Scripture.** In those days the Church had peace and was built up, and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it was multiplied. Peter found a man, Aeneas, who had been bedridden and was paralysed. Peter said to him. "Jesus Christ heals you. Rise and make your bed." And immediately he rose. In Joppa there was a woman disciple named Tabitha, full of good works who fell sick and died. Peter came, put all the widows who stood there outside, and knelt down and prayed. Turning to the body he said, "Tabitha arise". Acts 9:31-42. **Pope Francis:** Life for all its confrontations is the art of encounter. I have often called for the growth of a culture of encounter capable of transcending our differences and division. Each of us can learn something from others. No one is useless and no one is expendable. FT215 **Reflect, share, act.** In what ways can our particular Church look to the family to fully understand itself, its mystery? **Pray.** Mary, Blessed are you among women, the great who ever lived, pray for us.

**May 8. Sunday Easter 4C, Mothers' Day. Vocations Day and Good Shepherd Sunday.** On this day Fr Peter decided to link all the themes for the day in his homily. He asked, "how many of you have ever met a shepherd? How many of you have been one? In an urban setting it isn't likely that many have, but in a rural setting many men will have been herdboys and many young boys are still caring for sheep and cattle. In some countries women and girls have that task too. Sheep stealing is still a problem and who would be willing to die for their sheep? But maybe many of us would be more devoted to a cat or a dog. That is the kind of love Jesus expressed and showed for those he loved. More than anyone else in a family, caring for another person to such an extent is truly a mother's natural maternal vocation. How many mothers wouldn't die for their children? But mothers need protection too. Are they being cared for and protected by others in their families?

**Reflect, share and act. Scripture.** These are they who have come out of the great tribulation, they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They are before the throne of God and serve him day and night and he will shelter them with his presence. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." **Pope Francis:** Mothers are the strongest antidote to the spread of self-centred individualism. It is they who testify to the beauty of life. A society without mothers

would be dehumanised for even in the worst of times they are witness to tenderness, dedication and moral strength. AL 174.  
**Pray:** Mary, model of commitment and love for mothers and children, pray for us.

**May 9.** Even before they got married Paolo and Teresa had decided they wanted a large family. They each had four siblings and there were always plenty of pets in the house and an openness to the community, a general love of nature and environmental awareness. Although there certainly had been all kinds of problems, financial, medical and at times relationship problems they had enjoyed the richness and fun as well as the security of family togetherness. "You can't be selfish when there are so many of you." Teresa shared. Paolo added, "Our favourite Bible verse will still be the same one, speaking of the abundance of life.

**Scripture.** Jesus said, "I am the door of the sheep. If anyone enters by me he will find pasture. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." John 10:10. **Pope Francis:** "The family is thus an agent of pastoral activity through its explicit proclamation of the Gospel and its legacy of varied forms of witness, namely solidarity with the poor, openness to a diversity of people, the protection of creation, moral and material solidarity with other families, including those most in need, commitment to the promotion of the common good and the transformation of unjust social structures, beginning in the territory in which the family lives, through the practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy"(AL 290) **Reflect, share, act.** How do parents, children, siblings and relatives try to love each other with their frailties, vulnerabilities, conflicts and different points of view? **Pray.** Mary, mother of the domestic church of the home, pray for us.

**May 10.** When Mavis first recognized, after they had moved to the city where she had access to a pediatrician, that her little baby was blind she worried terribly how badly this would affect her life. She soon realised that other senses of hearing and touch would have to take over in how she would be able to communicate and understand her world. "It has been a most unusual experience in many ways," she explained. "I have learned to talk to her all the time, about everything I see or do. As she too was learning to talk she would ask lots of questions too. 'What do you and daddy look like, or what does this fluffy kitty look like? What does "fluffy" mean?'"

**Reflect, share, act. Scripture.** My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. John 10:22-30. **Pope Francis:** If the family, in the light of faith, accepts the presence of persons with special needs, they will be able to recognize and ensure the quality and value of every human life with its proper needs, rights and opportunities. They render the Church and society a gift and an invaluable witness. AL 47. Every family should look to the Holy Family. Its daily life had its share of burdens and even nightmares, as when they met with Herod's violence. Like Mary we are asked to face the family's challenges with courage and serenity in good times and in bad and to keep in our hearts the great things which God has done. AL 30. **Pray.** Mary, Mother of the afflicted, pray for us.

**May 11.** For years Granny Gloria had been an activist about some issue that concerned her. Politics, race, religion all had to do with justice and rights. Her message, "People should have the right to be free in their choices, but they have to consider the common good and treat everyone and everything with respect. This year's International Day of Families theme includes urbanization as well as migration. Both of these can create situations that lead to gender-based violence, even trafficking of persons, particularly women. We need to welcome newcomers into our churches and urban communities wherever they come from and give them the support they need to deal with the traumas of their past."

**Reflect, share and act. Scripture.** Jesus said, "the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and I know that his commandment is eternal life. John 12: 44-50. **Pope Francis:** Migration is particularly dramatic and devastating to families and individuals when it takes place illegally. It is supported by international networks of human trafficking and involves women or unaccompanied children who may be forced to endure periods in refugee camps. Concern shown to migrants is a sign of the Spirit and serves as a test of our commitment to show mercy in welcoming others to be fully part of our communities. AL 47-8. **Pray.** Mary, mother of migrants pray for us.

**May 12.** Joan said, "Why are there so many floods all over the world these days? Hurricanes, cyclones, monsoons have got stronger, bigger and more destructive. Climate change is blamed on our human destructive actions towards the environment. It makes me think of Noah's ark times, when innocent animals also had to suffer, because of the wickedness of the people. There are actually many stories like The Flood in other cultures too. But history also repeated itself, and we know that it was necessary for God to intervene again, and so God sent the Messiah. And still looking into the message, isn't history repeating itself again today, with the most vulnerable members of creation suffering the effects the most?"

**Reflect, share and act. Scripture.** Paul stood up and said, "Men of Israel, and you that fear God, listen. God chose our father and made the people great. He led them out of Egypt. He bore with them in the wilderness, gave them their land, kings and prophets. Of this posterity God has brought to Israel a Saviour Jesus. Acts 13:13-25. **Pope Francis:** The lack of historical memory is a serious shortcoming in our society. A mentality that says, "then was then and now is now" is ultimately

*immature. Knowing and judging past events is the only way to build a meaningful future. AL193. Pray. Mary, Mother of the suffering due to climate change, pray for us.*

**May 13. Our lady of Fatima.** Moyra wondered, “Our Lady of Fatima appeared to three little children with her message, a call to pray for peace. How many parents really talk with their children about social reality and the problem issues of today. Or maybe the kids should inform their parents, or whoever their carers are, as they learn far more about these matters at school than we ever knew. In many ways kids the young are better informed, more capable technologically and make us older people feel quite inadequate at times. However we must not forget how vulnerable young people also are to abuse, e.g. pornography, through their cellphones. Those are really important issues for family consideration. Have we lost our advantage over the youth? Does the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment to honour your parents still apply? Are we still to be respected or do we parents and children each have to reconsider our place in the scheme of things?”

**Reflect, share and act. Scripture.** *Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me. John 14:1-6* **Pope Francis:** *Nowadays authority is often considered suspect and adults are treated with impertinence. They themselves become uncertain and so fail to offer sure and solid guidance to their children. AL176. From FAMILIES AND THE SYNOD. What role can the family play in the process of building a more synodal Church? How can this synodal process help us to better understand, promote and empower the mission of the family within the Church and in the world, as “a leaven of evangelization in society?”. (AL 290) Pray. Mary, Mother most caring, pray for us.*

**May 14.** Joan was shattered when she discovered that her husband, after 15 years of a difficult and sometimes abusive marriage had also been unfaithful since they moved into town from their rural family homestead. She was bitter and angry and at first refused to talk to him. She just wanted him out of the house and out of her life. She was fortunate that she had a good friend who listened and counselled her. “What about the children?” she asked. “At least for their sake can you try to see if the relationship can be mended.” Her friend encouraged Joan and her husband to participate in the hurting marriage programme she knew about. It wasn’t an easy journey to recovery. They had talked and listened and come to realise how they had both contributed to the breakdown, in part when adjusting to the new environment. “It’s strange” Joan shared with her friend later, “your advice and the words of Jesus about a new commandment to love one another as he loved us were a real wake-up call for us. Working with the *UN INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES MAY 15 theme: Families and the Impact of Urbanisation* also helped me.”

**Reflect, share and act. Scripture.** *Whatever you ask in my name I will do it that the Father may be glorified in the Son. John 14:7-14. Pope Francis:* *Some families break up when spouses engage in mutual recrimination but experience shows that with proper assistance and acts of reconciliation through grace, a great percentage of troubled marriages find a solution. The arduous art of reconciliation which requires the support of grace needs the generous cooperation of others even outside help and professional assistance. AL236. Pray. Mary, forgiving mother, pray for us.*

**May 15. Sunday 5C. UN International Day of Families.** Fr Peter told the congregation, “Today is a special day: the United Nations International Day of Families, with a focus on urbanization and migration. I want to tell you about a family in our community. The Mambus are a three generation migrant family. Mr and Mrs Mambu were fortunate that during a very troubled time they were able to leave the DRC with their younger daughter Lily, taking her with them especially for her safety and protection from any harm. However, their older boys were left with their maternal grandparents who had decided to remain in their village. It was difficult for them being separated like that and safety was still everyone’s concern. They had all hoped that the conflict would end soon, so that they could be reunited. Imagine everyone’s delight when through the intervention of our parish Justice and Peace group the whole family has finally been able to be safe and happy together in their new home. Let us welcome them warmly in our community on this special day for them too.

**Reflect, share and act. Scripture.** *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. John 13:33-35. Pope Francis:* *Forced migration of families resulting from situations of war, persecution, poverty and injustice and marked by the difficulties of a journey that puts lives at risk traumatizes people and destabilizes families. In accompanying migrants the Church needs a pastoral programme addressed to families that migrate but also to those members who remain behind. Respect for their cultures, for the human and religious formation from which they come and the spiritual richness of their rites and traditions require special pastoral care. AL 46. Pray. Mary, Caring mother of all families, pray for us.*

**May 16.** Parenting one’s own older parents is a reality that many families experience these days and it is not the easiest thing on earth. Older people still want to be independent and can be very set in their ways and quite stubborn and mean too, even if they are not suffering from some form of dementia which is fairly common in older people. George and Paula thought, “Maybe it is anxiety that they won’t have enough money to last them, and I accept that their values are different to

ours. They're really hung up about their money and their possessions. They'd be much happier if they would loosen up a bit and maybe even feel fulfilled if they gave us a hand with varsity fees for our kids."

**Reflect, share and act. Scripture.** *We bring you good news that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. Acts 14:5-18, Pope Francis: Support of the elderly is a challenge to families. The church cannot and does not want to conform to a mentality of impatience, and much less indifference and contempt towards old age. AL191. From FAMILIES AND THE SYNOD: How are families a key point of communion in the Church - on the one hand, within themselves and, on the other, beyond themselves in the larger community? o How is communion experienced within the family? How do families contribute to the building communion in the Church? Pray. Mary, mother and ancestor, pray for us.*

**May 17.** James and George had been in a relationship for three years when they came to the realisation that they wanted to make their relationship permanent and even have a child. They shared with an understanding priest friend who explained that a marriage of gay men was not possible in the Catholic Church. So they settled for a pastor to witness their commitment in a same- sex union. A while later they began to explore the ways that they could have a child. They considered in vitro fertilisation with a surrogate mother or adoption. With the help of a counsellor they finally settled for adoption. A year later they were proud parents showing off their daughter to delighted grandparents, who were nevertheless still somewhat bemused. James and George smiled as they considered, "this whole business would have been much easier in animal families don't you agree?"

**Reflect, share and act. Scripture.** *Paul and Barnabas continued, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. Acts 14:19-28. Pope Francis: Every person regardless of sexual orientation ought to be respected in their dignity. Those who manifest a homosexual orientation should be given respectful pastoral guidance so that they can receive the assistance they need to understand and fully carry out God's will in their lives. AL 251. From FAMILIES AND THE SYNOD: Are families listened to within the Church? How can they be heard in this synodal process? Pray. Mary, mother most wise pray for us*

**May 18.** It seemed to the parish family team that almost everywhere there were differences in religious traditions and practice in families. Most couples marry a partner belonging to another church, either a mainline church or a Pentecostal or African independent church. Christians marry Hindu, Jewish, or Muslim partners. Within one religion and one family there are also differences in practice and beliefs. Devotion to Mary and the rosary, different types of worship or music, acceptance of teaching on contraception and Mass attendance are some differences that the team realized should be encouraged to be talked about as a couple from the start and over time with their children. Jason asked, "Was it always like this amongst human families or is this non-conformist attitude more recent? There is surely more conformity in nature."

**Reflect, share and act. Scripture.** *. Some men came down from Judea and were teaching, "unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Paul and Barnabas were appointed to go up to Jerusalem about this question. Acts 15:1-6. Pope Francis: Marriages involving spouses of different religions present special difficulties regarding both the Christian identity of the family and the religious upbringing of children. We reiterate the necessity that the religious freedom of all must be respected. AL 248. Human beings cannot be expected to feel responsibility for the world unless at the same time their unique capacities of knowledge, will, freedom and responsibility are recognized and valued. LS 118 Pray. Mary, mother of peace, calling us to overcome conflict, pray for us.*

**May 19.** When his daughter started bringing black friends home from school Jonathan realised he had to examine his own views and values quite seriously. "It's Ok for little kids to play together" he thought but when our white teenagers start mixing with black guys and girls it is more serious. He decided to share with some of his friends. Gideon agreed, but shared that as a black Zimbabwean living in South Africa there were other black-on-black issues too. "Xenophobia can flare up at any time, and that issue of social relations is one of my great concerns. Our kids do also still experience that."

**Reflect, share and act. Scripture.** *Why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus just as they will. Acts 15:7-2. 1. Pope Francis Benedict XVI observed that the world cannot be analysed by isolating only one of its aspects since the book of nature is one and indivisible and includes the environment, life, sexuality, the family, social relations and so forth. The natural environment has been gravely damaged by our irresponsible behaviour. The social environment has also suffered damage. These are due to the same evil, the notion that there are no indisputable truths to guide our lives and human freedom is limitless. LS 6. When we live out a spirituality of drawing nearer to others and seeking their welfare, our hearts are opened wide to the Lord's greatest and most beautiful gifts. When we encounter another person in love we learn something new about God. EG 272. Pray. Holy Mary, always following God's way, pray for us.*

**May 20.** "Is there anything a parent will not do for his kids?" Jabu didn't hesitate at all when it was discovered that their daughter was in need of a kidney transplant. "Of course, I'm open to donating mine. And while I'm about it I want to make a

pledge that any body parts of mine can be donated should that be possible at any stage, before or after my death. I wish I could help someone in that way even before I die.”

**Reflect, share, act. Scripture.** *Greater love has no one than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. John 15:12-17.*

**Pope Francis:** *Our body establishes us in a direct relationship with the environment and with other living beings. The acceptance of our bodies as God's gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home. LS 155. I families everyone contributes to the common purpose: everyone works for the common good, not denying each person's individuality but encouraging and supporting it. The joys and sorrows of each member are felt by all. FT230. Pray. Mary, mother of the sick pray for us.*

**May 21.** Andrew explained that when pope Francis presented his letter about the family, *Amoris Laetitia*, to the people there were almost two factions. Some bishops, theologians and laity followed his pastoral approach to many of the issues around divorce, remarriage and receiving communion as well as contraception and acknowledging the place of conscience in moral decisionmaking by the people and families. Another group disagreed and wanted a much more strict approach to upholding traditional teaching. There clearly was conflict between them. Andrew concluded, “does the approach to conscience today lie at the heart of this conflict. Wasn't its supremacy already taught by theologians long ago in the Church's history?” Maureen added quietly, “But it can still be a very difficult matter, as a parent too, to listen with openness to one's inner voice of right and wrong.”

**Reflect, share and act. Scripture.** *If the world hates you know that it has hated me before it hated you. They do not know him who sent me. John 15:18-21. Pope Francis:* *We find it hard to make room for the consciences of the faithful, who very 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. AL37. What we call truth is not only reporting of facts and events such as we find in the daily papers. It is primarily the search for the solid foundations sustaining our decisions and our laws. This call for acknowledging that the human mind is capable of transcending immediate concerns and grasping certain truths that are unchanging as true now as in the past. As it peers into human nature reason discovers universal values derived from that same nature. FT 208. Pray. Mary, mother of law-makers pray for us.*

**LAUDATO SI WEEK 22-29 MAY.** Offered at the request of Pope Francis and facilitated overall by the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development. Some resources offered through [www.laudatosiactionplatform.org](http://www.laudatosiactionplatform.org) family sector are taken from the LAUDATO SI MOVEMENT, CAFOD STUDY GUIDE, IMBISA manual and more.

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**DAILY LAUDATO SI' PRAYER:** Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love, teach us to contemplate you in the beauty of the universe, for all things speak of you. Awaken our praise and thankfulness for every being that you have made. Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined to everything that is" (LS 246). Mary Queen of creation, pray for us.

**May 22. Sunday Easter 6C.** Fr Peter was a family life supporter and had become increasingly excited about The World as a Family of Families and how it put into practice the teaching of Pope Francis. He started his homily by saying, “👉 The **#LaudatoSiWeek** with the theme "Listen and Walk Together" is here! 📅 May 22 - 29, 2022 🌐 [laudatosiweek.org](http://laudatosiweek.org) **#LaudatoSi7**. This year Catholics on six continents will work on “bringing the human family together to protect our common home” (LS 13), which is the guiding Laudato Si' quote for the weeklong celebration. As Catholics across the globe work to unite their communities in action they will learn more about how *Laudato Si'* offers a blueprint for prayer and action on tackling the climate crisis. Since Pope Francis issued his encyclical in 2015 there has been a growing movement of awareness-raising and action. The [www.laudatosiactionplatform.org](http://www.laudatosiactionplatform.org) was launched in 2021 with specific goals, each of which will be a focus for one of the days of this week and different sectors are invited to enroll in the platform. The sector “families and individuals” is particularly relevant on this Sunday in the light of today's gospel. In our day our thinking has been broadened too with a use of inclusive language. It is not only a man who is invited to love Jesus so that he and the Father will make their home with him, nor is it a woman, but the invitation is to a family, in whose home God will live and make a home. The concept of home and family is broadened even more with the understanding of the earth as our common home. In that sense it includes all the ecosystems of animals and plants too. As I love to say, “the earth in all its fullness is God's home.”

**Reflect, share and act. Scripture.** *Jesus said, “if a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him. The Counsellor, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things. John 14:23-29. Pope Francis:* *Families and homes go together. This makes us see how important it is to insist on the rights of the family and not only those of individuals. AL44. The urgent challenge to protect, the earth, our common home, includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change. LS 13 What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up? LS 160. Pray the daily Laudato Si' prayer.*

**May 23. Monday Laudato Si week theme: Response to the cry of the earth. Reflect, share and act. CAFOD, Witness from Brazil.** *Davi Kopenawa Yanomami is founder and President of the Hutukara Yanomami Association, which defends the rights of the threatened Yanomami and Ye'kuana indigenous people of the Brazilian Amazon. "Our country, Brazil, is very beautiful," says Davi Kopenawa passionately, "full of harmony, trees, it has lots of clean water. But the Brazilian Government does not want to protect and preserve nature. It wants to take the wealth from the land. It will destroy the forest, it will destroy the indigenous people... So that is why I am worried and angry, very angry."* Small-scale illegal gold miners and farmers have repeatedly invaded our Yanomami indigenous territory, burning down the forest and polluting rivers. On top of this, the Yanomami and Ye'kuana people are increasingly feeling the impacts of climate change, affecting their health and environment. Like all his people, Davi is deeply attuned to the natural world, and the changes he perceives are profound. "We, indigenous communities, are saying, "look at the sky, it's changing, the sun is changing, the rain is changing." Davi warns that the world will suffer if the rainforest is destroyed. "The people in the cities, we want them to listen and believe us. They don't see how things are changing." From his home in Watoriki, 'The Mountain of the Wind', he urges us to act: "Think of the earth. It is life. The forest is life. Water is life." Can you relate this story to your own environment in any way? What action could you take?

**Reflect, share, act. Scripture.** *The Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me, and you also are witnesses. They will put you out of the synagogues, indeed the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. John 15:26-27. Pope Francis: It is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. When they remain on the land they care for it best. LS146. Saint Francis, faithful to Scripture, invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. LS12 Pray the daily Laudato Si' prayer.*

**May 24. Laudato Si' week. Tuesday theme: Response to the cry of the poor. Reflect, share and act. CAFOD Witness.** *An Easter pilgrimage in the diocese of Northampton brought parishioners from five churches together to contemplate the beauty of creation and the dangers of climate change. "This pilgrimage was something we wanted to do to make a difference," explains Alban MacDonald, who helped organise a fifty-mile walk through the beautiful Bedfordshire countryside. "The climate change theme was spot on for us," says Alban. "We need to think not just of ourselves right now, but what's going to happen to future generations."*

The pilgrimage took place as part of CAFOD's *One Climate, One World* campaign, which is calling on politicians to work together to tackle climate change and support the transition to sustainable energy. Tessa Wiseman, who took part in the pilgrimage, points out "We are all affected by a changing climate, whether here or overseas. People in countries such as Peru, Kenya, and Bangladesh are already feeling the effects and it's the most vulnerable communities that are at risk."

After each walk, the group sat down over well-earned tea and cake to reflect, using topics suggested by CAFOD's postcard reflections. They signed action cards urging Britain's political leaders to stop climate change pushing people deeper into poverty. As Alban explains: "My message to political leaders is to take climate change seriously, and reflect carefully on what climate change is doing, not just to our own communities but really to the poorest communities in the world."

**Reflect, share, act. Scripture.** *Jesus said, "I will send the counsellor and when he comes he will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgement. John 16: 7. Pope Francis: "Love makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world" LS231. In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of the common good immediately becomes, logically and inevitably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters. LS158. Pray the daily Laudato Si' prayer.*

**May 25. Laudato Si week Wednesday theme: Ecological economics Reflect, share and act. CAFOD witness.**

*"The Lord gave me strength to swim." In November 2013, one of the most powerful cyclones ever to make landfall hit the Philippines. During Typhoon Haiyan, known locally as Yolanda, the wind gusted up to 235km an hour, whipping up the sea and tearing over a million houses apart.*

Edzil was out at sea in a fishing boat when Typhoon Haiyan struck. "There were big waves," remembers the young fisherman from Leyte Island. "The boat rocked and went over. I held onto anything I could. I swam for three hours. The water felt freezing. My mind was confused. I thought I would die that day. I did not know how I could keep swimming. The Lord gave me the strength to swim."

Edzil didn't know it then, but over 6,000 people lost their lives in the storm and 14 million were affected. "There were many people on our boat," he says, "and all the others died. I was worried about my parents because I love them." Back on land, a 12-foot-high wall of fast-moving water obliterated everything in its path – including Edzil's home. Luckily, his parents took refuge in a stronger house: "Thank God the house had a second floor" he

says. "They were safe. There were many people there - tight like sardines."

Following his extraordinary survival, Edzil has new plans: "I have a mission now – to look after my parents. I want to go back to school and become an engineer. I have a good brain, like Albert Einstein!"

He puts on a cheerful face, but his relationship with the sea has changed forever. "I don't want to be a fisherman," he says. "Our sea is not clean, it is dirty. There are dead people in it. When I look at the sea I can't forget my memories of Typhoon Yolanda."

**Reflect, share, act. Scripture.** *The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man, nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything. Acts. 17:25. Pope Francis: Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day. LS25. Pray the daily Laudato Si' prayer.*

**May 26. Laudato Si week. Thursday theme: Adoption of sustainable lifestyles. Reflect, share and act. CAFOD**

**WITNESS.** *Travelling the livesimply journey. Brenda Underwood is livesimply co-ordinator at the Brentwood Cathedral parish of St Mary and St Helen's. The parish was the first Cathedral in the UK to win this national award for living simply, sustainably, and in solidarity with people in poverty. Brenda tells us her story:*

To be honest, the idea of becoming a *livesimply* parish was a little daunting at first. But nevertheless we took up the challenge and started to ponder about where this journey might take us. Engaging the parish community has to be the foundation of *livesimply*. Recognising this, we used the parish newsletter to inform everyone about the exciting possibility of becoming a *livesimply* parish. We invited parishioners to share their ideas.

Lots has happened since then. We now hold an annual 'livesimply week' where we take up a different challenge each day. This year included a walk, Mass and picnic, a prayer vigil, and a food bank collection.

The challenges people set themselves range from walking to church, to just making someone smile! We also did an environmental audit of the parish buildings and changed hundreds of light bulbs to low energy alternatives. We are applying to become a Fairtrade parish. *Livesimply* provides a real opportunity to pause for thought and to consider the impact of our actions and inactions.

We were delighted to be told that after months of hard work we had won the award! However, we know that the award is but a step along the way. They say that travel broadens the mind – certainly the *livesimply* journey has opened our eyes to the endless opportunities available for us all to make a difference.

**Reflect, share, act. Scripture.** *Paul found a Jew named Aquila and his wife Priscilla and he stayed with them and they worked for by trade they were tentmakers. And he argued in the synagogue every sabbath. When Silas and Timothy opposed him Paul said, 'from now on I will go to the Gentiles.'" Acts 18:1-8 Pope Francis: We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less is there room for the globalisation of indifference. LS52 Pray the daily Laudato Si' prayer.*

**May 27 Laudato Si week. . Friday theme: Ecological Education. Reflect, share, act and pray. Ecological education can take place in a variety of settings: at school, in families, in the media, in catechesis and elsewhere. Good education plants seeds when we are young, and these continue to bear fruit throughout life. (LS 213)** How often do we say, "Energy, through fossil fuel or renewable sources, is the government's problem, or Eskom's, or the big banks to supply the money? Have we considered the possibility of renewable energy at a local level? Read Veronica's story and discuss.

**CAFOD POWERPOINT PRESENTATION FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL AND FAMILIES.** See [www.cafod.org.uk/education](http://www.cafod.org.uk/education)

**VERONICA'S STORY about renewable energy in Kenya.** Veronica lives at home with her family in Kenya. Veronica's father didn't have the opportunity to go to school when he was young, so he wants her to succeed. In the evening, Veronica helps her mother prepare a meal before studying for her exams. She wants to become a politician. Veronica's hopes of finishing school were starting to become a distant dream. Now she has hope because of the power of the sun. Solar panels were fitted to her school, bringing light to her classroom. Now she can go to evening classes. Veronica also now has a solar lamp at home. Through local, renewable energy, Veronica has the power to study and build a bright future for herself. Veronica says: Now that we have the solar panels at school, I'll be able to do the extra school work I need to. It's important to have this time, as I have big exams coming up. School empowers me to achieve my plans for the future."

**Reflect, share, act. Scripture:** *Jesus said, "you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice and no one will take away your joy from you. John 16: 23. Pope Francis: We have the freedom to direct technology and put it at the service of a progress which is healthier, more human more social, more integral than the total technocratic paradigm. LS112 We have a sort of superdevelopment of a wasteful and consumerist kind which forms an unacceptable contrast with the ongoing situations of dehumanizing deprivation. We are too slow in developing economic institutions and social initiatives which can give the poor regular access to basic resources. LS 109. Pray the daily Laudato Si' prayer.*

**May 28. Laudato Si week. Saturday theme: Ecological Spirituality. Festival at Assisi. Reflect, share, act and pray.** Assisi will always be associated with St Francis, the 12<sup>th</sup> century saint, who Pope Francis continually uses as his patron and model for the eco-spirituality in his encyclicals, *Laudato Si* and social love in *Fratelli Tutti*. Francis who was born and lived his short life and ministry in Assisi, which has become a centre for eco-spirituality and peace. Francis was no highly educated theologian and never became a priest. He intensely experienced God's love in the Incarnate and Crucified Jesus. While travelling, preaching and teaching his growing community of friars and Claire's community of sisters, Francis lived a life of ongoing conversion, humbly and in peace with every person and all creatures. He came to see everything as his family, called the elements of creation by name as Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Mother Earth, also Brother wolf and Sister dove. In his final years his love became so intense and he identified so closely with Jesus that he was gifted with the stigmata, the five wounds of Jesus on his body. His final days were filled with praise, joy and love. His Canticle of the Creatures was composed during this time. "Praised be you, my Lord, with all your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun..... Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks and serve him with great humility."

**Reflect, share and act. Scripture.** *Jesus said to his disciples, "You will ask in my name and I do not say to you that I shall ask the Father for you for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed. John 16:23. Pope Francis: The created things of this world are not free of ownership. "for they are yours, O Lord, who love the living." This is the basis of our conviction that 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. LS89. Each creature has its own purpose. The entire material universe speaks of God's love and boundless affection. Soil, water, mountains, everything is a caress of God. LS84. Pray the daily Laudato Si' prayer.*

**May 29. Sunday Ascension. Living Laudato Si' in our daily lives.** As he opened the Laudato Si week on 22<sup>nd</sup> so Pope Francis will also close the week with a gathering and a sending forth on the theme : **Community resilience and empowerment.** This 7<sup>th</sup> goal of LS envisages a synodal journey of community engagement and participatory action at various levels. Actions could include promoting, advocacy and developing people's campaigns, encouraging rootedness and a sense of belonging in local communities and neighbourhood ecosystems. The LS Movement formed early on was recently followed by the more structured LS Action Platform with 7 goals and 7 sectors for implementation. The Laudato Si' Action Platform is offered by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, one of the key offices at the Vatican. While essentially a Catholic initiative offered as a service to the universal Catholic Church it is also offered to "all men and women of goodwill" as has been done in recent papal documents. This is most appropriate at this time as all Christian churches enter a week of prayer for Christian unity, celebrated in the southern hemisphere between Ascension and Pentecost.

**Reflect, share and act. Scripture.** *May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints. Eph 1:17-23. Pope Francis: As Christians, we are called "to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbours on a global scale." LS 9. Others drink from other sources. For us, Christians the wellspring of human dignity and fraternity is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. From it there arises, for Christian thought and for the action of the Church, the primacy given to relationship, to the encounter with the sacred mystery of the other, to universal communion with the entire human family as a vocation of all. FT 277. Pray the daily Laudato Si' prayer.*

## CHRISTIAN UNITY WEEK CHURCH UNITY COMMISSION SOUTH AFRICA

### PRAYER

Lord God, who set the moon and the stars in place  
and gave us your only begotten Son, the Light of the world.  
Through the light of his presence, heal our wounds and renew our strength.  
Let the fire of Pentecost melt our stubbornness,  
reveal all that divides, and set us in the path of unity;  
to the glory of your mighty name. Amen.



**May 30. Week of Prayer for Christian unity.** <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/> Theme: **The presence of Christ, turning the world upside down: Matt 2:3 "When king Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him"**  
**Reflect, share, act.** Today, we are invited to commit ourselves to the constructive action of making justice a reality in our world. This implies the need to reflect and acknowledge the instances when our ways are not God's ways of justice and peace. When Christians work together for justice and peace our efforts are more powerful. And when Christians work together in this way, the answer to our prayer for Christian unity is made visible such that others recognise in us Christ's presence in the world today. Through our words and actions, we can bring the light of hope to so many who are still living in

the darkness of political unrest, social poverty, and structural discrimination. The Good News is that God is faithful, and He is always the one strengthening us and protecting us from harm, and inspiring us to work for the good of others, especially those living in the darkness of suffering, hatred, violence and pain. **Pray for Reformed Churches**

**May 31. Week of Prayer for Christian unity. *Though small and suffering, we lack nothing:* Matt 2:6 "And you, Bethlehem... are by no means least"**

**Reflect, share, act.** Though of little significance among the great clans of Judah, Bethlehem was made great because of the birth of the Shepherd of all shepherds, the King of all kings. Bethlehem, a name that means the "house of bread", can be a metaphor for the Church that brings to the world the bread of life. The Church, the Bethlehem of today, continues to be the place where the weak, the powerless and the small are welcome because in her each has a place. The gathering of these grains becomes the harvest. The united yeast becomes a powerful force. The concentrated rays become a guiding light. In the midst of political turmoil, a growing culture of greed, and the abuse of power in this world, Christians, like others in the Middle East, suffer persecution and experience a sense of marginalisation, living in fear of violence and injustice. Yet, they are not afraid because the Shepherd walks with them, gathering them into one fold and making them a sign of his loving presence. United, they are the yeast that leavens the batch. In Christ they find a model of humility, and from him they hear a call to overcome divisions and to be united in one flock. Though they are few, in their suffering they follow in the steps of the Lamb who suffered for the world's salvation. Though few they are sure in hope, lacking nothing. **Pray for Lutheran /Moravian Churches**

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS.** (25 April 2022, 2 months into Russia-Ukraine war)

The Young Adults group discussed, "How can there be so many wars in our day that claim to be about religious beliefs? Surely there is misunderstanding there when the essence of every religion is to preach peace and harmony. How many millions of families are broken up during a war such as this, with fathers on the battlefield, mothers and children and elderly displaced and become refugees, and thousands of children orphaned." After their discussion the group members made a resolution that in their own personal lives, in their present and future families, as parents, they would encourage that the Peace Prayer of St Francis be an inspiration and St Francis himself would be a guide.

Lord make Me an instrument of Your peace  
Where there is hatred let me sow love.  
Where there is injury, pardon.  
Where there is doubt, faith.  
Where there is despair, hope.  
Where there is darkness, light.  
Where there is sadness joy.  
O Divine master grant that I may  
Not so much seek to be consoled as to console  
To be understood, as to understand.  
To be loved. as to love  
For it's in giving that we receive  
And it's in pardoning that we are pardoned  
And it's in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.



**Pope Francis:** *Never has humanity had such power over itself, yet nothing ensures that it will be used wisely. We can no longer think of war as a solution, because its risks will probably always be greater than its supposed benefits. In view of this it is very difficult nowadays to invoke the rationale criteria elaborated in earlier centuries to speak of the possibility of a just war. Never again war!" FT 258.*

**WHAT KIND OF WORLD DO WE WANT TO LEAVE TO THOSE WHO COME AFTER US,  
TO CHILDREN WHO ARE NOW GROWING UP? LS 160.**