



2022 MARFAM FAMILY YEAR PLANNER

Theme: OUR WORLD, A FAMILY OF FAMILIES

JUNE THEME: CHILDREN BELONG IN FAMILIES

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Abbreviations: Pope Francis: LS = Laudato Si. AL = Amoris Laetitia FT = Fratelli Tutti. EG = Evangelii Gaudium. FS – Families and Synod. CCC = Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Introduction. While the theme for this month should focus on children in families it has been overtaken by important events in the Church. The most important event in June will be the **WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES**. This had been a 3 yearly international meeting held in different countries since 1994. Due to the Covid pandemic the 2021 meeting was postponed and in 2022 it will be hosted in Rome from 22 – 26 June, with a limited number of attendees. A special year AMORIS LAETITIA year will end with the closure of this meeting. Each episcopal conference and diocese in the world has been invited to celebrate “at home” in the most appropriate way. The Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference is adding its own contribution to the resources provided.

FAMILY PRAYER from Amoris Laetitia year. “Family Love: Vocation and Path to Holiness”

Heavenly Father,

We come before You to praise You and to thank You for the great gift of the family.

We pray to You for all families consecrated by the Sacrament of Matrimony.

May they rediscover each day the grace they have received, and as small domestic Churches, may they know how to witness to Your presence and to the love with which Christ loves the Church.

We pray to You for all families faced with difficulty and suffering caused by illness or circumstances of which only You know.

Sustain them and make them aware of the path to holiness upon which You call them, so that they might experience Your infinite mercy and find new ways to grow in love.

We pray to You for children and young people: may they encounter You and respond joyfully to the vocation You have in mind for them;

We pray for parents and grandparents: may they be aware that they are signs of the fatherhood and motherhood of God in caring for the children who, in body and spirit, You entrust to them;

and for the experience of fraternity that the family can give to the world.

Lord, grant that each family might live their specific vocation to holiness in the Church

as a call to become missionary disciples, in the service of life and peace,

in communion with our priests, religious, and all vocations in the Church.

Bless the upcoming World Meeting of Families. Amen.

Other important times are **Church Unity Week** continuing from 29th May to 5th June Pentecost Sunday. Some resources have been supplied by the South African Church Unity Commission. Other special days: **SA Youth Day 16th**, **Fathers Day on 19th** June. **Setting the scene:** Due to these extra events there are different focuses during this month, some that can be adopted by parishes and others by families at home, not forgetting the focus on children, youth and creation.

JUNE OVERVIEW. Children belong in Families. Birth, childhood and growth during adolescence are the most vibrant stages of life in all of creation, human, animal and plant as we recognise that family relationships exist too in the animal kingdom. Vigorous growth and regrowth happen in phases that can often be stressful and conflict-filled. However, ideally in a family, the young need conscious protection, care and support to monitor and direct their youthful energy towards full and responsible maturity.

Pope Francis tells youth in his letter “Christus Vivit,”: Young people intensely feel the call to love; they dream of meeting the right person with whom they can form a family and build a life together. God himself makes this known to them through their feelings, desires and dreams. CV 259. Difficulties they experience in their own family can lead the young to ask whether it is worthwhile to start a new family, to be faithful, to be generous. I say that it is worth your every effort to invest in the family, there you will find the best incentives to mature and the greatest joys to experience and share. Don't let yourselves be led astray by those who propose a life of rampant individualism that in the end leads to isolation and the worst sort of loneliness. CV263. Young people feel the hurt of past failures, frustrated desires, experiences of discrimination and injustice, of feeling

unloved and unaccepted. There are moral wounds, the burden of past errors and guilt for having made mistakes. Jesus makes his presence felt amongst these crosses and offers them his friendship. CV 83

Good habits need to be developed. It is essential to help children and adolescents to realise that misbehaviour has consequence. They need to be encouraged to put themselves in other people's shoes and to acknowledge the hurt they have caused. AL 268.

CHRISTIAN UNITY WEEK (INTERNATIONAL AND CHURCH UNITY COMMISSION SOUTH AFRICA?)

Resources from <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/>

Prayer from <http://www.churchunitycommission.org/> available in various South African languages.

“In the power of the Spirit.” The Christians of the Middle East offer these resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity conscious that the world shares many of the travails and difficulties that they experience, and yearns for a light to lead the way to the Saviour who can overcome darkness. The COVID-19 global pandemic, the ensuing economic crisis, and the failure of political, economic and social structures to protect the weakest and most vulnerable, have underlined the global need for a light to shine in the darkness. The star that shone in the east, the Middle East, two thousand years ago still calls us to the manger, to where Christ is born. It draws us to where the Spirit of God is alive and active, to the reality of our baptism, and to the transformation of our hearts. After encountering the Saviour and worshipping him together, the Magi return to their countries.

CHRISTIAN UNITY 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.



June 1. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Guided by the one Lord. *“Ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising” (Mt 2:9) Reflect, share, act.* Again and again the scriptures tell us how the Lord God walks with his people, protects them, and watches over them day and night. The path may not always be straight: sometimes we are led to retrace our steps, and at other times to return by a different route. But in all our journeying through life, we can be confident that God, who neither “sleeps nor slumbers,” protects us lest our feet slip and we fall. Even in the greatest darkness, God’s light is with us, shining through the prophets sent to guide God’s people on the way and to remind them of the covenant. Most perfectly, in the fullness of time, God sends His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as the guiding light for all nations. The way ahead into unity with one another, and so into closer union with Christ, is not always clear. It is all too easy to lose sight of this fundamental message of the scriptures: that God does not abandon his people even in their failures and divisiveness. This message is hope for Christians, but also for the whole world. As the story of the Magi reminds us, God guides people of all kinds, with the light of the star. God sends the Holy Spirit whose light enables us to see with the eyes of faith the call to unity and the reconciliation of all things in Him. It is this Spirit that leads us from darkness and tragedy into Christ’s light and life.
Pray the Prayer for Christian Unity. Pray for Presbyterian/congregational Churches

June 2. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Gathered in worship around the One Lord: *Matt 2:11 “ They saw the child with Mary, his mother and they knelt down and paid him homage.” Reflect, share, act.* When the Magi from their far-away countries arrived at Bethlehem and saw the child with his mother, they worshipped him. In the presence of this revelation of God among us, eyes are cast down and knees are bent. Similarly at the sight of the burning bush, Moses hid his face, afraid to look at God. When the disciples saw the risen Christ on the mountain in Galilee, they were amazed and troubled. Yet they worshipped him. In the heavenly liturgy, the twenty-four elders fall before Him who sits on the throne. Encountering God’s presence, we respond thus: gazing, followed by amazement, leading to worship. Do we see? Are we amazed? Are we truly worshipping? How many times do we see without perceiving, our eyes remaining blind to God’s presence? How can we worship in truth if we do not see first? In our narrow vision, too often we see only our tangled disagreements, forgetting that the one Lord has given his saving grace to us all, and that we share in the one Spirit who draws us into unity. Often in our pride we follow our own laws and human traditions, whilst disregarding the love we are called to share as one people with a common faith in Jesus as our Saviour. As communities enlivened by the Holy Spirit, our churches call us to walk together towards the Christ-Child to offer him homage as one people. The Spirit of compassion guides us to each other, and together guides us all to our one Lord. Only by following this guide will we be able to “worship in spirit and truth”. Our future in God is a future of unity and love; our way to this destination must reflect that same truth of one-ness in Christ.

Pope Francis: *In the family we learn closeness, care and respect for others. We break out of our fatal self-absorption and come to realise that we are living with and alongside others who are worthy of our concern, our kindness and our affection.* AL 276. **Pray the Prayer for Christian Unity. Pray for Methodist Churches**

June 3. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The gifts of Communion: *Matt 2:11 "they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh."* **Reflect, share, act.** The wise men who came to pay homage to the Christ-child opened their treasures, and offered the new-born king their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Our historical divisions, our wrong-headed fixation with rules and rituals, and preoccupation with worldly matters, have broken us apart. What gifts have we prepared to offer to the king who comes to illuminate our lives and lead us to the grace of unity? We know that God does not want our riches or burnt offerings, but rather that his power works through our poverty: "I have no silver or gold". The Lord desires our beating and loving hearts: hearts full of love for Him and our brothers and sisters in Christ from whom we are separated; hearts flowing with acts of mercy; truly penitent and desiring change. Let us prepare the gift of a heart full of love. Kneeling in worship requires hearts that are contrite for the sin that divides us and obedient to the One we serve. This obedience revives, heals and reconciles everything that is broken or wounded in us, around us, and among us as Christians. Christ has already given the gift of unity to his Church. We grow in communion as we share the graces our different traditions have received, acknowledging that the source of all our gifts is the Lord.

Pope Francis: *In the family we can rethink our habits of consumption and join in caring for the environment as our common home. The family is the principal agent of an integral ecology, because it is the primary social subject which contains the two fundamental principles of human civilization on earth, the principle of communion and of fruitfulness. AL277. Pray the Prayer for Christian Unity. Pray for Baptist/Pentecostal Churches*

June 4. Beyond the familiar routes of separation to God's new paths: *Matt 2:12 "They left for their own country by another road."* **Reflect, share, act.** We do not know what the wise men thought - they who were experts in astronomy and navigation - when they were warned to return by another road. They may have been very confused, but the same light that illumined their journey showed them that there was another road, another possibility. They were called to change direction. We often find ourselves bound by our familiar ways of doing things and of seeing the world. When these ways or 'roads' are closed, we wonder how to proceed and continue the journey. God's divine providence is always there to show us that there is another way prepared for us. God is there to renew His covenant and lift us up from the frustration we experience when we meet an obstacle. We only have to trust that the everlasting One who gave us the light, can always find a way forward when our ways and paths are blocked. A fresh start is always possible when we are willing and open to the work of the Spirit. As churches we look to the past and find illumination. We look to the future in search of new ways, so that we can continue to shine the light of the Gospel with renewed fervour, and welcome each other as Christ welcomed us for the glory of God. On the old familiar roads Christian communities have walked apart from one another. On the new roads to which God calls us, Christians walk together and become pilgrim companions. Finding these new roads demands discernment, humility and courage. Now is the time for conversion and reconciliation.

Pope Francis: *In the family we can rethink our habits of consumption and join in caring for the environment as our common home. AL277. Pope Francis: Pray the Prayer for Christian Unity. Pray for Orthodox Churches*

June 5. Pentecost. Also World Environment Day.

Jock said, "Pentecost has always and traditionally been celebrated as the birthday of the Church. It was the day on which in such a dramatic way, through the tongues of fire, the apostles received the gift of the Holy Spirit as guide, counsellor and comforter, as Jesus had promised. In our post-Confirmation programme we were studying Church history and I found it very interesting how throughout the ages the Holy Spirit seemed to have been given whatever job needed to be done, evangelizing, sustaining the Church, fighting heretics, leading councils. In the 20th century the Holy Spirit as healer and builder of faith became popular. Now here in our 21st century world, with our current need for ecological conversion, it is as if Pope Francis has given him a different task again. I find the passage in his *Laudato Si'* 80 most interesting. Pope Francis writes, 'God, who wishes to work with us and who counts on our cooperation can also bring good out of the evil we have done. The Holy Spirit can be said to possess an infinite creativity, proper to the divine mind, which knows how to loosen the knots of human affairs, including the most complex. The Spirit of God has filled the universe with possibilities and therefore from the very heart of things, something new can always emerge.' " Jock added, "That is certainly good news for us as we face many difficult choices to overcome the harmful aspects of climate change. I do think that issue is able to bring Christians and other believers together."

Scripture: *Jesus said, "The counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." John 14:23-26*

Pope Francis: *The Father is the ultimate source of everything. 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 present 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 but each performed this work in accordance with his own personal property. When we contemplate with wonder the universe in all its grandeur and beauty, we must praise the whole Trinity. LS238. Pray the Prayer for Christian Unity. Pray for Anglican/Episcopal Churches*

June 6. MARY MOTHER OF THE CHURCH. Mrs Davies shared in her prayer group, "What has happened to the strong devotion to Mary that was so much part of Church life and also in families. We used to pray the Rosary together when I was

a child but that now seems to be done mainly women, or people on their own. Occasionally some families do pray the Rosary. I'm happy that Pope Francis has added a new feastday of Mary, as Mother of the Church." Others agreed that it was a very good thing to promote devotion to Our Lady in their families, in a way that suited their own family, as a little church of the home and taking the children and youth into consideration. They decided to make this into a group project, sharing their suggestions with families and others outside the prayer group.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *After Jesus had been taken up into heaven, they returned to Jerusalem and went to the upper room where they were staying. All the apostles devoted themselves to prayer with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus. Acts 1:12-14* **Pope Francis:** *The decree on the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church reads, "the joyous veneration given to the Mother of God by the contemporary church, in the light of reflection on the mystery of Christ and on his nature, cannot ignore the Virgin Mary, who is both the Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church." This veneration dates from the days of the early church. St. Augustine said, "Mary is the mother of the members of Christ, because she cooperated in the rebirth of the faithful into the Church" while St. Leo said "the birth of the Head is also the birth of the body, indicating that Mary is at once Mother of Christ and mother of the members of his Mystical Body, which is the Church." From Decree. Holy Mary pray for the Church and all her members.*

June 7. "Do you think those old ladies in the church are 'salt of the earth' people? Mary asked her son Patrick. He said, "Maybe, but when I hear them complaining it makes me wonder if they've lost their saltiness. I prefer to look at the SVP who you don't see in church all the time but they are out there doing stuff for others." "Maybe the light of the world people are those who lead the organisations helping others, or teaching." "During the recent terrible floods in KZN you could see a lot of such women, men and some of our youth, like me and Joanne too, getting involved collecting food and clothes."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste how shall its saltiness be restored? You are the light of the world, a city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Matt 5:13-16. Pope Francis: Self-improvement on the part of individuals will not by itself remedy the extremely complex situation facing our world today. Social problems must be addressed by community networks. The work of dominating the world calls for a union of skills and a unity of achievement that can only grow from a mindset of ecological conversion. This is also a community conversion. LS219*

June 8. Mary said to her son Patrick, "you've been confirmed and are at university now, so you should be cleverer than me. At the Synods on the Family in 2014 and 2015, and in the Church in general, there seem to be two groups, one who insist on strictly sticking to the laws and teachings of the Church and the other who are looking more at the needs and real-life situations of the people. Pope Francis himself asks, 'How can we be merciful to them?' What would that mean? Which way would be correct, also for young people?"

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *"I have not come to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfil them. Matthew 5:17-19* **Pope Francis:** *Countless studies have been made of marriage and the family, their current problems and challenges. We do well to focus on concrete realities, since the call and the demands of the Spirit resound in the events of history. AL31*

June 9. Patrick said to his mom, "Hey Mom, you adults always lecture us on how to treat each other, but I think we can also lecture you at times. I want to ask you, why don't you go and make peace with your sister? I've watched you sometimes and I know you miss each other. It's been 5 years that you haven't spoken to each other. In a way she might as well be dead."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brothers has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go first be reconciled to you brother. Matt 5:20-26. Pope Francis: Children do need to be patiently taught to treat one another as brothers and sisters. This training is at times quite demanding. AL195*

June 10. Mary and Patrick continued their discussions, this time on Church's laws about divorce and remarriage, but they spoke of adultery too. She shared, "I know this is a painful subject for both of us, but I believe you are old enough to understand. I divorced your father because of his adultery, not once but many times. I felt very betrayed but chose never to remarry. Many others do, some that were innocent and others not. Should those who divorce and remarry be excluded from the sacraments forever? That was the type of discussion the bishops had at the Synods in 2014/5. Pope Francis tends to take a more pastoral and merciful approach."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *"I say to you that whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery." Matt 5:27-32. 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 her shoes get soiled in the mud of the street. AL308*

June 11. Patrick laughed and said, "When we were kids we used to swear blood oaths of everlasting friendship to each other, and now I never see those kids any more. I do believe in keeping promises and saying what I mean, but it worries me a lot when you hear of false preachers and even satanist practices, where oaths are sworn and promises forced on you, like having to kill someone. Mary was quite serious and added, "Don't we also see government ministers sworn in and taking an oath to act justly and honestly, and later find they get charged with corruption. Isn't that what is happening in our country?"

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. "Let your yes be yes and your no simply no. Anything more than this comes from the Evil One. Matt 5:33-37. **Pope Francis:** We should not think that political efforts or the force of law will be sufficient to prevent actions which affect the environment, because when the culture itself is corrupt and objective truth and universally valid principles are no longer upheld, then laws can only be seen as arbitrary impositions or obstacles to be avoided. LS123 When human beings place themselves at the centre, they give absolute priority to immediate convenience and all else becomes relative, which sees everything as irrelevant unless it serves one's own immediate interests. LS122.

June 12. Trinity Sunday . Fr Joseph looked around the church. In his parish the men sat on one side, women on another and children all together. He thought to himself, "How can I relate this situation to the Blessed Trinity. Maybe I should encourage them at least once a month to sit as family units, as best they can, to be more of a real symbol of a community of love." In his homily he brought out the well-known images of the Trinity, the perfect community of love and then added that loving married couples and loving families should recognize their calling to imitate this, especially leading up to the important World Meeting of Families celebration happening soon with the theme, "Family Love as a Vocation and the way to Holiness."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. to God who is, who was, and who is to come. Rev 1:8. Pope Francis.* 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. When we contemplate with wonder the universe in all its grandeur and beauty we must praise the whole Trinity .LS 238-239. *Mary, lead us in praise and thanksgiving to the Trinity*

World Meeting of Families 22-26 June. A 9 day Family Novena with added eco-family-friendly Daily Thoughts in preparation for the meeting.

June 13. St Anthony of Padua. WMOF Novena day 1. Focus on Youth. Giving names to children is a cultural thing, names of relatives or any name that sounds nice or has other significance related to the time of the birth. In Genesis 2 we read how Adam named the animals. This indicates a degree of relationship with them. At baptism the Church expects babies to have a Christian or saint's name. Children could explore who their name saint is. That was what Sibusiso Anthony Moloi did and he studied the life of St Anthony of Padua, remembering a little rhyme from his early childhood. "St. Anthony, please look around; something is lost and must be found." As the story goes, St Anthony prayed intensely for an important book he needed that was lost and it did get found. As a child he wanted to be a missionary but his health was not good enough. He was shipwrecked and ended up in Italy as a humble Franciscan brother and follower of St Francis. By chance his preaching skill was discovered and that became his life's work, turning many people away from their sins. A fellow monk found him one night in his room, miraculously holding the baby Jesus, and that is the image we often see of him. This intense love for Jesus can be a real model for all young people but especially for the Anthonys and Antonettes and the other versions of the name.

Reflect, share and act on WMOF catechesis 1. Scripture "God saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works but according to his own design and the grace bestowed on us in Christ Jesus before time began, but now made manifest through the appearance of our savior Christ Jesus, who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel». 2 Tim 1:9-10. **WMOF.** God called us before time began. We are called by the name given to us by our parents and God himself calls us by that name too. When reading the Bible it is obvious that God continually calls men and women in various ways to establish a relationship with Him and to welcome Him into their lives. Today the Father calls us to follow Jesus, to a life that, regardless of difficulties, is worth living because it leads towards eternal life. With the strength of the Holy Spirit, we can respond to God's calling, which is unique to each of us. Let us listen for our calling.

June 14. WMOF Novena day 2. Focus on Parents. Benny had been a gang member since his early teens He had felt abandoned by his alcoholic mother, didn't know his father, and his sister who had been looking after the younger siblings had run away. Patrick and his mom had heard about the case and had been praying for this boy for some time when they discussed inviting him to come to a mission for young people at their church. During the mission just one sentence "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" had touched Bennie as he shared with Patrick. "I think I will be able to change my ways, but please carry on praying for me and please will you and your mom too be my friends. It didn't feel as if I have any parents of my own but I would like to try to find my mother and forgive her and start over."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Matt 5:43-48. **Pope Francis:** The real question is not where our children are physically or whom they are with but rather where they stand in terms of their convictions, goals, desires and dreams. AL 261.

Violence within families breeds new forms of social aggression, since "family relationships can also explain the tendency to a violent personality. This is often the case with families where communication is lacking, defensive attitudes predominate, the members are not supportive of one another, family activities that encourage participation are absent, the parental relationship is frequently conflictual and violent, and relationships between parents and children are marked by hostility. (AL 51)

June 15. WMFO Novena Day 3. Focus on Grandparents, praying for our grandchildren.

Patrick said to his gran, "You know what, in the mission Fr G told us fasting and almsgiving isn't only for Lent, it is for any time and you shouldn't show off how much weight you have lost, pretending you're on diet. Do it as a sacrifice for some special intention." Granny told Patrick, "for me it is continuing to pray for each of our grandchildren, and also for other young people that might be in trouble. At the same time I find I am more conscious of the needs of other elderly people too, and not forget to thank God every day for Brutus our faithful old dog, our companion for 15 years."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *When you fast anoint your head and wash your face that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who sees in secret and will reward you. Matt 6:16-18.* **Pope Francis:** *Grandparents and the elderly are also part of our families. Today, a throwaway culture tends to consider the elderly unimportant or even insignificant to society. Instead, old age is a new opportunity to respond to God's call. The vocation to love is a call at every stage of our lives. The call is two-fold: what they can offer through experience, patience and wisdom and what they can receive. WMOF.*

June 16. Youth Day SA. WMFO Novena Day 4. Focus on extended families. Deacon Morris had been one of the young people involved in the Soweto uprising of 1976. At this time as a grandfather and, in a sense the patriarch in the wider family, he looked back over the years, at the present reality for the youth and the future for the Church and the world. He shared with the parishioners on the many changes he had experienced, political, economic, social and spiritual too. "As today we consider the importance of caring for our close and wider families, a new more recent awareness is the need for Care for our Common Home as Pope Francis wrote in his letter *LAUDATO SI.*' I can ask this question of everyone, older, and you young people too who are still on the threshold of life. 'What kind of world do we want to leave to our children?' Let us pray every day that God will always find a place in this, his, earthly home."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *Our Father, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Mat 6:7-15.* **Pope Francis** *The sheer vitality and strength of personality combine in the hearts of young people to make them constantly aim higher. This exuberance will be tempered by time and painful experiences but it is important for this youthful and still untested yearning for the infinite to encounter the unconditional friendship that Jesus offers. Christus Vivit letter to youth 190.* **From WMOF CATECHESIS 4. We all need each other.**

When children are young, they need us. Their everyday lives depend on us: food, clothes, body care, communicating, learning to live in the world. Even as adults, however, we all have the experience of depending on something and someone. We are always in need of help, love and forgiveness! The blessing that God, in Jesus Christ, pours out on this bond of fraternity, expands in an unimaginable way. He renders it capable of overcoming all differences of nationality, language, culture and even religion. History has shown well enough, after all, that even freedom and equality, without brotherhood, can be full of individualism and conformism, and even personal interests 3.

June 17. WMFO Novena Day 5. Focus on Family Violence.

The YCS group, to which Patrick belonged, had members who came from rich families as well as poor families, with most of them in between. Their chaplain led a meditation on the topic of "treasure." "From one perspective we find Jesus asking us not to be attached to our worldly belongings, cellphone, xbox, etc. From another perspective Jesus could be acknowledging how important peace in the home and good and strong relationships are. It can be said that breakdown of relationship and family violence are like the thieves, stealing the harmony, peace and joy that are the real treasure in our lives. Just like working for the material things we want, we have to work at achieving that different kind of treasure. "

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. Where your treasure is there will your heart be also. Matt 6:19-23.* **Pope Francis and Catechesis 7.** *Three expressions: may I, thank you, pardon me, open up the way to living well in your family, to living in peace. They are simple expressions, but not so simple to put into practice! Sometimes it is because they struggle to live together, sometimes because their relationships are not always easy and carefree, sometimes because the couple's relationship goes through a thousand forms of abuse and subjugation, even the most dramatic and violent kind. By embracing these three words - may I, thank you, pardon me - each member of the family is in a position to recognize his or her own limits. Acknowledging one's own weakness leads each of us not to dominate but rather to be respectful.*

June 18. WMFO Novena Day 6. Focus on Poverty.

Which girl, or boy, for that matter, hasn't stood in front of their cupboard before a party and said, "I've got nothing to wear?" It's funny that Jesus chose practical examples, but maybe in an exaggerated way, to make his point. Whether we are well-off or poor, clothes have become so much part of one's identity it is hard to detach oneself from spending money and energy on appearances, and so we end up neglecting the things of God's kingdom. There are people who are more or less desperate for clothes and food and money for school books. Should we not all examine our priorities, first seek the things of God's kingdom and will this then make us understand that material things are not the most important? At the same time examine our faith and consider which of us really trusts in God to provide as Jesus promises?"

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *Do not be anxious saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or what shall we wear? The Gentiles seek all these things and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom*

and his righteousness and all these things shall be yours as well. Matt 6:24–34. **Pope Francis:** *The emptier a person's heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume. Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little. It is a return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities to be spiritually detached from what we possess and not to succumb to sadness for what we lack. LS222. From Catechesis 3: The time when Jesus lived in Nazareth, within the Holy Family, illuminates the life of each of our families in a new way: the daily routine of everyday life, apparently insignificant and meaningless, can become a new way of fulfilling the specific call of the family: to render love normal and so each of our families can make an irreplaceable contribution to the world. No other school can teach authentic, genuine, trustworthy, and credible love the way a family can.*

June 19. WMFO Novena Day 7. Focus on widows and widowers.

Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. Fathers' Day. Peter was delighted to be invited to the 1st Communion Mass. "It's my 29th," he told his daughter Rose. "Five children and fifteen grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. Each little one feels so close to Jesus at that moment. But what happens down the line? Do they forget his love, the nourishment for their souls, or don't they any longer experience the sense of communion, the life he brings to them? For me, this day is the first such occasion since my beloved wife Joyce died, but I know that she is with us on this special day and I do entrust all our family to her prayers and continuing love. It is all I can do. I'm sad even as I feel really close to her and to Jesus. I ask her every night to help our grandchildren remain close to him too. Rose squeezed his hand and whispered, "Thanks Dad, I understand."
Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *Jesus, taking up the five loaves and two fish looked up to heaven and blessed and broke them and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And all ate and were satisfied."* From Luke 9:11-17 **Pope Francis:** *Jesus knocks on the door of families to share in the Eucharistic supper. It is the sacrament of the new covenant where Christ's redemptive work is carried out. The close bond between married life and the Eucharist becomes all the more clear. AL318. Ordinarily the grieving process takes a fair amount of time and is filled with questions. It consoles us to know that those who die do not completely pass away. "Although the certainty of death saddens us, we are consoled by the promise of future immortality. For the life, of those who believe in you, Lord, is not ended but changed."* From Liturgy of the Dead. *One way of maintaining fellowship with our loved ones is to pray for them. Our prayer for them is capable not only of helping them, but also making their intercession for us effective. AL 255-257*

June 20. WMOF Novena day 8. Focus on divorce and separation.

Mrs Mbambana got very annoyed with the behaviour of a group of Grade 11s. They were constantly in trouble and acted defiantly when she called them to order. "I think I should call your parents in," she shouted one day in frustration. "What parent?" Mavis replied. "I am the parent in my family and have to feed and care for 3 little siblings." Mrs Mbambana was shocked and quickly changed her tune, recognising the need for a much more merciful response. When she conducted a survey she realized that more than half of the learners did not live with both biological parents. Some lived with a single parent and many lived between two homes, with their parents divorced and sometimes remarried. She realized there were many difficulties for the parents and for her learners. When she arranged a series of parents' sessions with the school psychologist, many expressed their appreciation and a support group was started.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *"Judge not and you will not be judged."* Matt 7:1-18. **Pope Francis:** *The way of the Church is not to condemn anyone forever, it is to pour out the balm of God's mercy on all those who ask for it with a sincere heart. No one can be condemned for ever. In considering a pastoral approach towards people who have contracted a civil marriage, who are divorced and remarried, or simply living together, the Church has the responsibility of helping them understand the divine pedagogy of grace in their lives and offering them assistance so they can reach the fullness of God's plan for them, something which is always possible by the power of the Holy Spirit. AL296-7 I like to contemplate the holiness present in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families and in the sick. Very often it is a holiness found in our "next-door neighbours", those who, living in our midst, reflect God's presence. We might call them "the middle class of holiness" (Gaudete et Exsultate 7).*

June 21. WMOF Novena 9. Unity in Families. Bernadette thought to herself, "Much of what the church is teaching us seems to be kind of negative, "don't do this, or look at the problem side." When I was confirmed I decided to put this positive message on my wall in my room, and also on my facebook wall. The Golden Rule is, **WHATEVER YOU WISH THAT PEOPLE WOULD DO TO YOU, DO SO FOR THEM.**" It has been my motto for 5 years now and I started sharing it with the rest of my family too. And it works, most of the time. George says his motto for the family is "UNITY IS OUR GOAL." Mom put up hers too. "PRAISE GOD FOR ALL HIS CREATURES."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *Whatever you wish that people would do to you, do so for them, for this is the law and the prophets. Enter by the narrow gate for the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. The gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life and those who find it are few. Matt 7:12-14. Pope Francis:* *family life, entwined with relationships, sometimes complicated, and with relationships that are not always easy, becomes a particularly suitable and favorable context for contemplating the action of the Spirit of God, who can convert human hearts, change their attitudes and make the members of the family capable of loving as Christ loves. Perhaps we are not always aware of it, but the family itself introduces fraternity into the world! Beginning with this first experience of*

fraternity, nourished by affection and education at home, the style of fraternity radiates like a promise upon the whole of society and on its relations among peoples. WMOF Catechesis 4

WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES 22-26 JUNE. Family love as a vocation and as a way of holiness,

The days of June 22-25 are enriched by theological-pastoral conferences which will be attended in person only by leadership teams from bishops' conferences around the world and can be followed on line. The DAILY THOUGHTS for these days, following the usual format, are developed from the conference themes and guidelines, with brief anecdotes and the scripture readings of the day.

June 22. World Meeting of Families opening day. Conference 1. Family love. Families and pastors together on mission

Fr Sylvester always took a very serious line when he began his homily on the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ. "This is one of the most important feasts in the Church, because it teaches us about the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Do you really believe that, or is it something you don't really think about and take for granted? As a priest it is something that challenges me too. It helps me to remind myself that God can also be present in the sacramental love relationship of married couples, which we should treat with much more reverence than we do, as we should with parental relationships too. We all, priests and couples, parents too, should value and worship the Eucharist. Teach this to your children and do not desecrate it by unbecoming behaviour. There have been recognized Eucharistic miracles over the centuries when the bread and wine changed in appearance to human flesh and blood. I wonder if every truly sacramental marriage is also a miracle in itself. Do we see Jesus really present in our married couples?"

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *My flesh is real food; my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells continually in me and I dwell in him. John 6:56-57. Jesus said to his disciples: Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. Mat 7:15-20. Pope Francis: In addition to and together with the sacrament of Holy Orders, spouses and families are a sacrament for mission (CCC n. 1534). Their apostolic impulse stems from Baptism and the grace of marriage, and by virtue of this identity they can bear witness, evangelize and bestow a spirit of ecclesial communion. AL 201. On the one hand, it is necessary to "wake up" families, and convey to them the awareness of the gift they represent within the Church. On the other hand, it is important that the Church learn to value the gifts that the Spirit bestows on the family, AL 290. From Conference 1.*

June 23. World Meeting of Families. Conference 2. Theme: Family love in times of difficulty.

Amy was shattered when she discovered that her husband, after 15 years of a difficult and sometimes abusive marriage, had been unfaithful to her since they had moved from their rural village to a house in town. Having borne a variety of hardships over the years, even many arguments over family planning, she was very bitter at this further betrayal and at first refused to speak to him. She just wanted him out of the house and out of her life. "I've had more than enough," she told her friend Violet, who was a marriage counsellor. "What about the children?" Violet asked, "is this the best for them?" Violet encouraged Amy and her husband to participate in the Retrouvaille hurting marriage programme she knew about. They agreed to go and it was not an easy journey but they had talked and listened and come to realise how they had each contributed to the breakdown, also in adjusting to the new environment. Amy later shared with Violet, "your wisdom and faith and our own faith helped us to reconcile and rebuild our relationship. I knew there was still something there, and this has been particularly good for the children."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock. Matt 7:21-29. 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. AL317. With inner joy and deep comfort, the Church looks to the families who remain faithful to the teachings of the Gospel, encouraging them and thanking them for the testimony they offer. For they bear witness, in a credible way, to the beauty of marriage as indissoluble and perpetually faithful». AL 86. From Conference 2.*

June 24. World Meeting of Families. Conference 3. Theme: Being a Christian family in the digital age.

The confirmation catechist had organized a joint session with parents and youth with the intention of facilitating their listening to one another in response to the question. "Is the digital world a good thing or harmful for you personally?" Mixed responses came from both the older and younger participants, listing the benefits of access to information, opportunities to interact with others, keep in touch for safety's sake, but also the concerns over exploitation, addiction, pornography, and especially cyberbullying for the youth. Jacques asked, "What role does it play in your spiritual life?" Surprisingly both generations agreed there was some potential, but hardly any of them had found it helpful for them as a family to pray or share a faith message. "Something more should be done there, don't you agree?" Jacques concluded.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *When Jesus came down from the mountain great crowds followed him and a leper came to him and asked, "Lord if you will, you can make me clean." And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will, be clean." Matt 8:1-4. Pope Francis: Raising children calls for an orderly process of handing on the faith. This is made difficult by current lifestyles, work schedules and the complexity of today's world, where many people keep up a frenetic pace just to*

survive. Even so, the home must continue to be the place where we learn to appreciate the meaning and beauty of the faith". AL 287 "In the family we can also learn to be critical about certain messages sent by the various media". AL 274. From Conference 3.

June 25. World Meeting of Families. Conference 4. Theme: Formation and accompaniment for marriage and family life.

Judy and Mike had been exposed to both Marriage Encounter and the Focolare New Families Movement. At meetings of the diocesan parish family ministry teams they had frequently voiced their disappointment that the care and support for all aspects of family life had received minimal attention. A few sessions of marriage preparation with the priest was sometimes all that was offered and as he noted, "the priest has often had very little formation beyond his lectures on doctrine and moral theology. We, as married couples also need good formation, beyond our own life experience. Widowed people and the divorced too have many insights that they can share. One priest we worked with years ago, used to say, 'Marriage and family ministry should be the No 1 priority in the Church.' " Judy added her opinion too, "There is something else. In today's world of climate change issues, what Pope Francis calls, Care of our Common Home, should be built into the family curriculum too."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *The centurion said, "I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word and my servant will be healed." When Jesus heard him he marveled and said, "Not even in Israel have I found such faith. Many will come from east and west and sit at the table while the sons of kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness." Matt 8:5-17.* **Pope Francis:** *This shows the need for "a more adequate formation... of priests, deacons, men and women religious, catechists and other pastoral workers". In the replies given to the worldwide consultation, it became clear that ordained ministers often lack the training needed to deal with the complex problems currently facing families. AL 202. Consolidated pastoral experiences highlight the urgency and necessity of always accompanying spouses, especially in the most critical moments of family life. The presence of the community is essential and it is necessary to train lay people and spouses to ensure this accompaniment. From Conference 4.*

June 26th 13th Sunday C. World Meeting of Families closing. Theme: Family a Path to Holiness. At the conclusion of the World Meeting of Families each of the bishops with their teams gathered to take stock. "What has been your most powerful experience," they were asked. Bishop Joe smiled into his beard and said, "what it means to be a holy family. I have often meditated on the Holy Family of Nazareth in a general sort of way, but while we have been here I looked around and listened and thought about the Holy Family and realized they were not exactly typical or ideal and yet they are our model of holiness. There are many families in my diocese that are not your ideal married couple with half a dozen children all busily involved in parish life. Those may well be holy too, but I think of one young mother not in good health and abandoned by her husband but devoted to her two little boys who are really such kind little chaps. Holy means wholesome and yet there are cases too where there is woundedness because of a child going off the rails. I wonder, maybe holiness can be partial too, and not have to include everyone."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *A man said, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head." To another Jesus said, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead, but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Luke 9:51-62* **Pope Francis:** *The Lord's presence dwells in real and concrete families, with all their daily troubles and struggles, joys and hopes. The spirituality of family love is made up of thousands of small but real gestures. AL 315. Those who have deep spiritual aspirations should not feel that the family detracts from their growth in the life of the Spirit, but rather see it as a path which the Lord is using to lead them to the heights of mystical union. AL 316.*

THE FINAL BLESSING and MANDATE from WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES 2022

*We praise and bless you, O Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.
Grant to us that through your Son Jesus Christ, born of a woman by the power of the Holy Spirit,
that every family may become a true sanctuary of life and love for the generations that are ever renewed.
Let your Spirit direct the thoughts and works of husbands and wives toward the good of their families
and of all the families of the world.
Grant that in the domestic community children may find strong support for their human and Christian growth.
Let love, consecrated by the bond of marriage prove stronger than every weakness and every crisis.
Grant that Your Church fulfill her mission for the family and with the family in all the nations of the earth.
For Christ our Lord. Amen.*

MANDATE: From Pope Francis at the concluding service. "What the Lord has given to each family, at the conclusion of these days, I say 'what I have given to you, now go and give it to others.'"

Although she constantly holds up the call to perfection and asks for a fuller response to God, "the Church must accompany with attention and care the weakest of her children, who show signs of a wounded and troubled love, by restoring in them hope and confidence, like the beacon of a lighthouse in a port or a torch carried among the people to enlighten those who have lost their way or who are in the midst of a storm. AL 291

June 27. The Biblical students in the group explained how the prophets were always sent by God to speak to the people at a particular time. Brendan told them “Studying “the signs of the times” is still a common understanding in working for justice in society. Amos is one of the prophets called to speak on justice. “He was called to warn the people that some transgressions of abusing the poor and living immoral lives would not be excused. God's punishment would be stronger and swifter than man's. Looking at the way of the world today makes one wonder if God will punish our generation too. He has certainly seen much evil in our day, abuse of the poor and immorality leading to violence too. What can we do except to be the best examples where we can.”

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *Thus says the Lord, “I will not revoke the punishment because they sell the righteous for silver. Behold I will press you down in your place. Flight will perish from the swift and the strong shall not retain his strength., Amos 2:6-16. **Pope Francis:** Unless we recover the shared passion to create a community of belonging and solidarity worthy of our time, our energy and our resources, the global illusion that misled us will collapse and leave many in the grip of anguish and emptiness. The notion of “every person for himself” will rapidly degenerate into a free-for-all that would prove worse than any pandemic. FT36*

June 28. St Irenaeus. Antonette shared, “whenever I think of St Irenaeus, who was recently honoured with the title of Doctor of the Church, I think of a famous statement of his, “*The glory of God is man fully alive.*” Many programmes and books have taken up that statement too as a psycho-spiritual concept. But the use of inclusive language brought out more strongly that he wasn't speaking of men only but of mankind, or all of humankind including our youth. More recently after studying Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* I'm seriously inclined to say, “*the glory of God is all of creation fully alive.*” That is how theology has evolved over time, since the days of St Irenaeus until today.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them that they may be one even as we are one. I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and has loved them even as thou hast love me. John 17:20-26. **Pope Francis:** Eternal life will be a shared experience of awe in which each creature resplendently transfigured will take its rightful place and have something to give those poor men and women who will have been liberated once and for all. LS 243*

June 29th St Peter and Paul. It's hard for us with internet and cell phones to imagine how it was 2000 years ago in the very early days of the Church. Peter had been with Jesus from the beginning, and here was this upstart Paul, who had been persecuting the followers of “the Way,” and was now preaching with such a loud voice what he believed and was inspired to say. It took some time for the two men to meet and discuss their differences and reach an amicable solution. Today, in our different leadership crises at any level do we try to reach a consensus, or start a war? The Reformation in the 1500s started over a theological difference and since then 1000s of break-away churches have started up. But Christian unity has now again become an important goal.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *Jesus said, I tell you, you are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. Mat 16:13-19. I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. Gal 1:19-20. **Pope Francis:** The word of God constantly testifies to that sombre dimension already present at the beginning, when through sin, the relationship of love and purity between man and woman turned into domination. The thread of suffering runs through numerous pages of the Bible beginning with Cain's murder of his brother Abel. The word of God is not a series of abstract ideas but a source of comfort and companionship for families experiencing difficulties or suffering. AL 19-22*

June 30. God uses all kinds of people young and old, educated and simple people, to spread his message and send out warnings. Amos was a herdsman but called by God to warn the people of the time about their evil ways. It can be frightening to look into the signs of the times and speak out. Student movements have sprung up in different places and they often protest about rights. Young people in movements such as YCS are being trained to read the signs of the times today, to act, not just to react and demand their own way. Together with their leaders and guides they have an important role to play

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. “The Lord said to me, “Go and prophesy to my people Israel! Amos 7: 10 - 17. **Pope Francis:** Being Church means being God's people in accordance with the great plan of fatherly love.

“I would like to reiterate the appeal for peace, justice and fraternity that I and the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb made together. In the name of God who has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and who has called them to live together as brothers and sisters, to fill the earth and make known the values of goodness, love and peace in the name of innocent human life, the poor, destitute and those most in need, orphans, widows, refugees and exiles, victims of war,..... and in the name of human fraternity and freedom we declare the adoption of a culture of dialogue, mutual cooperation and reciprocal understanding.” From 2019 Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together. 285.

The important thing is that each believer discern his or her own path, that they bring out the very best of themselves, the most personal gifts that God has placed in their hearts (Cf. 1 Cor 12:7) rather than hopelessly trying to imitate something not meant for them. (Gaudete et Exsultate 11).