

2024 MARFAM FAMILY YEAR PLANNER for MARFAM + 30 Theme: OUR WORLD, A FAMILY OF FAMILIES



OVERVIEW AND EXPLANATIONS OF MONTHLY THEMES.

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Abbrev: Pope Francis: LS = Laudato Si. AL = Amoris Laetitia FT = Fratelli Tutti. LD = Laudate Deum

OVERVIEW of YEAR THEME: 2024 has once again been a difficult year for many families. The economy and crime, resulting in poverty and insecurity are perpetual issues of concern. Gender-based violence is not just a women's issue but impacts on everyone. War in different parts of the world affects us in different ways, directly or indirectly. Weather-related disasters stare us in the face. The 2024 election is so far not producing real excitement for a new future. Is all this negativity challenging our faith? Hope is needed, a gift, but also a decision that calls for action. On a family focused level, all these issues require prayer and action in and for families. The vision of The Church as a Family and The Family as the little Church still underpins our ministry with an ecological note added in the year's theme OUR WORLD, A FAMILY OF FAMILIES. Quotations from Pope Francis on marriage and family *Amoris Laetitia - The Joy of Love* and integral ecology *Laudato Si - on Care of our Common Home, Laudato Deum* and *Fratelli Tutti* on *Social Friendship* are included in DAILY THOUGHTS.

The **LAUDATO SI ACTION PLATFORM** with its 7 goals and our particular family sector is built in with the goals acting as formation vehicles for family spirituality. **The Laudato Si' Goals: 1. A Response to the Cry of the Earth. 2. A Response to the Cry of the Poor, 3. Ecological Economics. 4. The Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles. 5 Ecological Education. 6. Ecological Spirituality, 7. Community empowerment.**

MONTHLY THEMES address areas of family life, e.g. love and marriage, parenting, grandparents, youth, sexuality, heritage and loss. They link with the liturgical year, daily readings and popular commemorations. Family themes are developed daily with an ecological awareness of God and creation, human, animal and plant families. **THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY** use the **SEE-JUDGE-ACT** approach as a form of faith sharing for individuals, families, groups and a synodal journey of community engagement using the listening and sharing technique. 1. look at life, 2. scripture & relevant quotation, 3. Action and Prayer. **RESOURCES:** Weekly e-newsletters, some booklets on particular family topics and for liturgical seasons. Workshops and programmes offered on request on **CARING FOR PARISH FAMILIES**, in general or specific themes. The monthly calendar themes can be used in parishes in general, for family ministry, J&P, catechetics etc.

A WORD ABOUT MARFAM 30+. Founded in 1994 during the 1st UN International Year of the Family we share a 30th anniversary with IYF30. **FAMILY MATTERS** is still applied widely to families of all kinds, as many societal changes have resulted in growing diversity of family forms, marriage, parenting and sexuality. Pope Francis recognises all people and families everywhere, Christian and of other religions. He places great emphasis on ecology. These are all taken up in MARFAM's resources, programmes, Radio Veritas, parish visits and retreats with an emphasis on family spirituality at home.

JANUARY. Family Beginnings. AI. In the beginning, before the world, the sun, moon, stars, animals, plants and humankind were created there was only God, as Trinity, a community of love. God had a passion to create, to share, to love and so every created thing came into being. The desire for creation, co-creation and re-creation was implanted into every creature and through this ability our world has evolved. Humankind with the task of being stewards of creation we take responsibility for our own and all the families of creation. We reflect on the particular topic of family beginnings in all of creation. How can

we respond to the impact of our harmful behaviour on biodiversity? How can we begin again in every area of our lives? **Pope Francis:** *As never before common destiny begs us to seek a new beginning. Let ours be a time remembered for awakening a new reverence for life, a firm resolve to achieve sustainability, quickening of the struggle for justice and peace and the joyful celebration of life. LS207 Earth Charter*

FEBRUARY. Love gives Families life. God, the creator, is a lover and it is God's love, as Trinity, that is life-giving, creating life continually and sustaining and renewing creation. Our task and gift as human beings and life-givers is co-creation, with God, from conception to natural death, nurturing relationships and caring for children. By its nature, of total and lifelong commitment, marriage is the ideal love relationship. Love of nature and creation is a way to sustain life in its various forms. Life and love are very vulnerable and the lifegiving theme can be taken up during Lent for reflection and action. **Pope Francis:** *Love always gives life. The couple in giving themselves to one another, give not just themselves but also the reality of children, a living reflection of their love. AL165. God's indulgent love always accompanies our human journey; through grace it heals and transforms hardened hearts, leading them back to the beginning, even through the way of the cross. AL62. Loving human relationships are mirrored and carried forward in care for creation. Caring for trees and rhinos and yet rejecting unborn human life and the needs of the destitute and poor is not fully lifegiving. Every creature is the object of the Father's tenderness.. LS 77.*

MARCH. Human Rights are Family Rights. Lenten, Holy Week and Easter. The right to life should be paramount and in some form it is present in most Constitutions: the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the Church's Charter of Family Rights. Human life, as individuals, but also as family units, is precious from the first moment of existence until natural death. Rights extend to safety and protection from harm for all. Concern for animal and plant life has become a growing issue for biodiversity as we understand that "Extinction means forever". A "culture of life" approach focuses on the perspective of justice, but also of love and positive relationships, as everything is connected. This focus on the common good can be a Lenten and Easter focus. **Pope Francis:** *Families and homes go together. We insist on the rights of the family and not only of individuals. Families have the right to count on an adequate family policy from public authorities. LS 44. The rights of some to free enterprise and market freedom cannot supersede the rights of peoples and the dignity of the poor, or respect for the natural environment, for to make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all. FT 122*

APRIL. God is Family. Eastertime. God, as Trinity is family, the perfect community of love. Every human family, as individuals and a unit, is an image of God, called to mirror the relationship of the Trinity. St Francis in his Canticle to the Sun, praises God: "We praise you Lord for all your creatures, brother sun, sister moon, brother fire, sister water, mother earth and all creation. To you O Lord do they belong, you created them and they bear your likeness." How has the image of the Trinity been disfigured as fire, water and wind are today such destructive forces? Humankind is especially gifted with the power of understanding, to love but to hurt and to forgive, because of love. **Pope Francis:** *The ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God already attained by the risen Christ. All creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival which is God. LS83.*

Within the family which could be called a domestic church individuals enter upon an ecclesial experience of communion among persons which reflects, through grace, the mystery of the Holy Trinity. AL86

MAY. Parents form Families. Whether it is a study of biology, human physiology or spirituality, the gift of co-creation with God, everywhere in nature, should be recognized as one of God's greatest gifts. The male and female in nature, a man and woman, ideally through a loving committed relationship, continue God's creation and its sustenance and nurturance. Laudato Si week and Christian Unity week between Ascension and Pentecost this month can incorporate a co-creation theme. All parents have the task of forming and educating their offspring to prepare them for adulthood. 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 complex relationships today, recognizing good and evil clearly in family relationships.

Pope Francis: 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. Parents have to help prepare their children and adolescents to confront the risks of aggression, abuse or drug addiction. AL 260.

JUNE. Children belong in Families. Birth, childhood and growth into adolescence are the most vibrant stages in all of creation, human, animal and plant. Growth and regrowth can often be stressful and conflict-filled. However, ideally in any family, the young need conscious protection, love, care and support to monitor and direct their youthful energy towards full and responsible maturity. *Pope Francis: It is true that the difficulties the youth experience in their own family can lead the young to ask whether it is worthwhile to start a new family, to be faithful and 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. Letter to youth*

JULY. Grandparents are families' roots. Although this is changing old age is recognized with respect in many cultures and families, guarded by their offspring and the wider community, in animal as well as human society. Grandparents belong in families and are its historical memory. Not all grandparents are elderly, many are active in their own lives, while many others play a great role in the lives of their children, practically and spiritually. Celebrate with them during this month, conscious that violence towards the elderly is all too common. Pope Francis has chosen the 3rd Sunday in July as a special day of celebration of Grandparents and the Elderly. *Pope Francis: Very often it is grandparents who ensure that the most important values are passed down to their grandchildren and many people testify that they owe their initiation into the Christian life to their grandparents. AL 192.*

AUGUST. Sexuality, a Family Gift. God looked on his creation and was pleased. Particularly good was the ability for creation in almost every life form which continues and evolves through its sexual reproductive capability. Because of the special attributes of humans, including free will, human sexuality is a special gift and blessing, in its most profound expression in marriage. As an ideal it is often poorly presented and understood. Sex and sexuality are still often a taboo subject or seen negatively. The consequences of sin have resulted in many situations such as gender-based violence and abuse. Complementary and equality of men and women is of growing importance in every society. Gender-related changes and the presence of LGBTIQ+ persons is a social reality today which is not always accepted. *Pope Francis: In assessing the environmental impact of any project, little attention is paid to studying reproductive patterns*

and some species face extinction. LS35. Each person, regardless of sexual orientation ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration, while every sign of unjust discrimination is to be avoided, particularly any form of aggression and violence. AL 250

SEPTEMBER. Our World of Families. Newer insights in Church thinking are the awareness of creation and our responsibility for the CARE OF OUR COMMON HOME as outlined by Pope Francis in his encyclical *LAUDATO SI* and reinforced in *LAUDATE DEUM*. This is taken up in the MARFAM theme OUR WORLD, A FAMILY OF FAMILIES. We, the various forms of the human family, with different religions, political ideologies and experiences of wealth and poverty are the greatest threat to our world's security and stability today. Every other family in creation will suffer because of our actions. Is this the heritage we want to leave to our children? How can this harmful attitude be redeemed during this Season of Creation from 1 September to 4 October. *Pope Francis: Culture is more than what we have inherited from the past; it is also, a living dynamic and participatory present reality, which cannot be excluded as we rethink the relationship between human beings and the environment. LS143.*

OCTOBER. Family on Mission. Every single family of any description, human, plant or animal has a role to play to sustain our world, as a family of families. As the human family, we have the power to deliberately choose our sense of mission. As Catholic Christians we are "baptized and sent." We cannot afford selfish greed, or hurtful violence, but are called to adopt God's mission of love, love of creation and of all its creatures. St Francis, the patron saint of ecology is our inspiration on our mission. *Pope Francis: The family is an agent of pastoral activity through the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, their witness, solidarity with the poor, openness to diversity of people, protection of creation, moral and material solidarity with other families and commitment to the common good. AL 290*

NOVEMBER. Family Losses and Endings. Losses big and small are inevitable experiences of daily life. Birth, growth, decline and death are the natural cycle of every element of creation. For inanimate creatures it may be a painless letting go, or a cataclysmic event. Death and decay are in some instances also a source of renewal of the land. Extinction is a serious concern for the animal and plant kingdoms. For us as humans, created with special capabilities and gifts to love and hurt and forgive, this time of the year is a special gift to remember life and death and their Creator as well as ultimate resurrection and reunion with our loved ones. *Pope Francis: If we accept death we can prepare ourselves for it. The better we live on this earth, the greater the happiness we will be able to share with our loved ones in heaven. AL 258. For human beings to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation, these are sins against the natural world, ourselves and against God. LS8.*

DECEMBER. Family, still Hope for the Future. What does it mean to be a family of families and hope for the future? Each family is unique with our own special relationships, our love, joys and anxieties. We thank our Creator for the inbuilt sense of family, of belonging to one another and to our God. This family-mindedness can be a reason for our hope. St Francis and Pope Francis speak of all the creatures, animal and plant that make up OUR WORLD, A FAMILY OF FAMILIES, paying homage to their Creator. We acknowledge that we humans alone can address the challenges and fulfill the hope for a future filled with peace and joy. *Pope Francis: A PRAYER FOR OUR EARTH from Laudato Si. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Blessed Trinity, community of infinite love. You are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love that we may protect all life and beauty. Fill us with humility, peace and joy that we may live as brothers and sisters harming no one. Encourage us in our struggle for justice, love and peace. Praise be to you! Amen*