



## 2024 OUR WORLD, A FAMILY OF FAMILIES.

### MARFAM DAILY THOUGHTS FOR MARCH AND LENT PART 2

#### Theme: HUMAN RIGHTS ARE FAMILY RIGHTS – BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES - A LENTEN PROGRAMME



THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY are published daily on [www.marfam.org.za](http://www.marfam.org.za), facebook, X. and emailed to subscribers. To receive by email send request to [info@marfam.org.za](mailto:info@marfam.org.za). Tel +27 82 552 1275 **Abbreviations:** Pope Francis: LS = Laudato Si. AL = Amoris Laetitia FT = Fratelli Tutti. EG = Evangelii Gaudium LD = Laudate Deum. MM = Misericordia et Misera.

**NOTICE.** The 2024 FAMILY YEAR PLANNER, an OVERVIEW OF THE MONTHLY THEMES for the year and the THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY for March, some Lenten prayers and practices can be downloaded from [www.marfam.org.za](http://www.marfam.org.za) or ordered from us. The booklet *FAMILIES CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION* and STATIONS OF THE CROSS FOR FAMILIES can be ordered.

**MARCH. Lent, Holy Week and Easter. Human Rights are Family Rights.** 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 thread within the 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*

**Setting the scene.** Lent is a particularly appropriate time for families to focus on their spirituality, both together and individually. The eco-friendly focus on care of creation can be kept in mind constantly. They could come together at least once a week to share about their journey and pray for and with one another. The synodality "Conversation in the Spirit" is a new approach to family faith sharing. It consists of open sharing and listening from the heart, interspersed with prayer or Scripture. Different activities can be added in family groups of different types and ages. Becoming eco-friendly means keeping

**Suggested family activities for the season.** Making palm crosses. veneration of the cross, remembering our baptism, making an easter garden, painting and decorating eggs See. <https://marfam.org.za/2022/04/03/holy-week-easter-and-the-family/for> Stations of the Cross for Families. Holding a Family Prayer/Paschal Meal, Family Reconciliation service.

### **BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES with prayer, fasting and almsgiving.**

**THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY** continue as usual, built on the daily scripture readings with an anecdote and quotation from Pope Francis and/or a reference to one of the LS Action Platform goals. It is also recommended during this season to read the longer scripture passage for the day, not just the short extract and spend more time with an appropriate prayer.

#### **Laudato Si' Action Platform goals.**

1. Response to the cry of the earth.
2. Response to the cry of the poor.
3. Ecological economics
4. Adoption of sustainable lifestyles
5. Ecological education
6. Ecological spirituality
7. Community resilience and empowerment.

**Ecological spirituality LSAP goal 6 is the Lent 2024 primary goal.** For family's ecological spirituality the 2023 Synod on Synodality's listening and sharing approach, now known as "Conversation in the Spirit" is recommended and can be

learned and practiced daily, weekly or whenever possible with the THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY. A very simple family introduction to the Spirit-led process consists of each participant's preliminary reflection on the topic, prayerful speaking from the heart by each speaker, attentive listening to the speaker, silent reflection and sharing on the key points. Families could include an activity e.g. drawing, singing, as appropriate and end with spontaneous or shared prayer.

The focus on climate change has become more and more urgent as noted by Pope Francis in *LAUDATE DEUM*, his Apostolic Exhortation in preparation for COP 28 the UN climate conference in Dubai in 2023. This focused strongly on the need to cut down on the use of fossil fuels. However on a more personal spiritual level LD writes on a spirituality of nature as well as efforts made by households to reduce pollution and waste and create a new ecological awareness culture. LD 71. **Adoption of sustainable lifestyles Goal 4 can also be a general Lenten objective towards BECOMING AN ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILY.** Other LSAP goals are built into the THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY.

The encyclical *LAUDATO SI* remains the major reference source on the subject of ecological conversion and makes many references to all of creation. *Fratelli Tutti* the 2022 encyclical on social friendship focuses more on the human aspect. All these writings are valuable sources for faith sharing for the LSAP sector for families and individuals. Some prayers are taken from the Laudato Si Prayer Book. Reference is also made to the 2023 MARFAM booklet *FAMILIES CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION* which unpacks the LSAP goals and contains writing and sayings of Pope Francis from other documents.

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## DAILY LENTEN ACTS OF LOVE AND SACRIFICE

1. BE conscious of God in a stranger.
2. BE a good neighbour helping when needed.
3. BE a peacemaker or a peacekeeper
4. BE generous with someone in need.
5. BE patient with an old person or a child
6. BE eco—conscious, plant a tree for nature.
7. BE willing to forgive even when it hurts to do so.
8. BE eco-conscious start a vegetable patch
9. BE frugal. Have a meatless meal.
10. BE waterwise. Save, don't waste water
11. BE present with someone who is lonely.
12. BE generous with a beggar.. Look in his face.
13. BE health-conscious. Give up fizzy drinks for Lent.
14. BE polite to everyone, even people you don't like.
15. BE prayerful with Jesus at home or in church.
16. BE punctual and not make other people late or wait.
17. BE eco-conscious. Recycle what you can.
18. BE willing to share your belongings in the family.
19. BE animal and nature conscious.
20. BE caring, give food and drink to a hungry person.
21. Don't BE rude or cheeky to a parent or other adult.
22. Don't BE a bully to someone weaker than you.
23. Don't BE greedy when others are hungry.
24. Don't BE lazy, clean up your neighbourhood
25. Don't BE violent, hitting or hurting someone.
26. Don't BE wasteful, save electricity where you can.
27. Don't BE selfish and refuse to help others.
28. Don't BE dishonest in thought, word or deed .
29. Don't BE angry or sulk if you don't get your way
30. Don't BE judgemental about differences in others.
31. Don't BE a substance abuser.
32. Don't BE ungrateful for what you have received.
33. Don't BE unforgiving.
34. Don't BE a couch-potato. Go do some exercise.
35. Don't BE neglectful. Think of other's needs
36. Don't BE argumentative, learn to discuss sensibly.
37. Don't BE impatient.
38. Don't BE mean. Be willing to sacrifice for others.
39. Don't BE unaware of the problems in society.
40. Don't BE self-centred and refuse to help others.

## ECO-FRIENDLY LENTEN PRAYERS.

**Morning prayer.** Loving Creator, As I begin this new day, I ask for the grace of loving attention as I make decisions throughout the day. Open my heart to remember that the ultimate goal of my life is to be in a loving relationship with You, myself, my neighbor, and the earth. Amen

From Laudato Si' prayer book.

## PEACE PRAYER OF ST FRANCIS.

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;  
and where there is sadness, joy.  
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 is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying (to self) that we are born to eternal life.  
Amen

## **PRAYER FOR OUR EARTH.** *Pope Francis, Laudato Si', 2015.*

All-powerful God, 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 life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it,  
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation,  
to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

## **OUR WORLD, A FAMILY OF FAMILIES PRAYER.**

*God of Love, creator of all, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You are a family, a community of love, model and inspiration for us, the human family. To us you have given dominion over your creation with the task of caring for all species, plant, animal and human,*

*We have grown and laboured, but have failed by not always pursuing the common good. We have abused the members of our families, destroyed many areas of our common home and neglected the good of all out of self-interest and greed. We were not always aware of the gravity of our lack of love, but we hear the cry and recognize and acknowledge our sinfulness and guilt.*

*God of Mercy, we praise and thank you for your love. Forgive us our failures as we learn to forgive others, so that your Kingdom of love, joy, peace, justice and freedom may come to fulfillment. Holy Spirit by your light guide us on our way, teach us to guard the earth and care for the poor of all families of creation with the love, integrity and care they deserve. May our family always have the strength and commitment to follow Jesus' way. Mary, Mother and Queen of all Creation pray with us and for us. Amen*

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**March 1.** The history of Human Rights month and HR Day in South Africa involves a commemoration of Sharpeville, a sad incident in South African history when many innocent people protesting over their rights, were killed by police. In today's bible account Joseph, the favourite son of his father, Jacob, was also an innocent victim. He was abused by his brothers as they were jealous of him being his father's favourite and given a special multi-coloured coat. His brothers wanted to kill him to get rid of him but later relented and decided to just throw him in a pit. He was later rescued, sold to travelling Ishmaelites and taken to Egypt. How do we treat foreigners amongst us and do we respect their rights?

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Read the relevant scripture passages. Genesis chapter 37 tells this part of the story of Joseph and his brothers. Matthew 21:33-45 tells a story of the son of the vineyard owner who was killed by the tenants out of greed. **Pope Francis:** Nowadays what do certain words like democracy, freedom, justice or unity really mean? They have been bent and shaped to serve as tools for domination that can justify any action. FT 14. The worship of the ancient golden calf has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose. EG55. Laudato Si Action Platform goal 3. Ecological Economics. **Pray a Lenten prayer** for families today, wherever innocent members are abused while there is a striving for wealth and power. Choose an appropriate action.

**March 2.** Georgina was happy that she was allowed to read the whole parable in their group. After she had finished her mom commented, "Is it about the prodigal son or the forgiving father? That is one of the questions and lessons. Another lesson is on the subject of rights. There was the wasteful son who demanded his inheritance, or the forgiving father patiently waiting to welcome his son back. The older brother also had rights to be respected but what about the mother? There is no mention in this parable or many others about the role of women or in fact of the family as a unit made up of different people, each having individual and also family rights. It does bother me sometimes that so many bible stories are told from the perspective of men, or must we just take for granted that "man" stands for family?"

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Read the parable in Luke 15:1-32. "Father I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son." **Pope Francis:** It is important to insist on the rights of the family and not only those

of individuals. The family is a good which society cannot do without and it ought to be protected.. AL44. LSAP Goal 5. Ecological education. **Pray a Lenten prayer:** that children and parents in families will respect each others' rights and responsibilities with love and mercy. Choose an appropriate action.

**March 3. Sunday Lent 3B.** Fr Obed began in his usual straight-to-the-point manner. "All scripture readings give us food for thought and action. The season of Lent also reminds us of the need to make sacrifices and purify ourselves. In the 1st reading from the book of Exodus the Ten Commandments are presented. Living according to them and using them as an Examination of Conscience before going to Confession is a helpful way of purifying ourselves in our Lenten commitment. The gospel is the very dramatic story of the purification of the temple, giving us a different picture of Jesus than we usually see. Here he shows anger, evicts the traders and even overturns their tables. I would like you to consider who Jesus is to you, a gentle preacher, an activist, a compassionate healer? Share on this at home and if you're planning your Lenten confession consider how good it would be to have a Family Reconciliation moment at home too."

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Read the relevant scripture passages. 1. Exodus 20:1-17, the commandments. 2. "Take these things away, you shall not make my Father's house a house of trade." His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." John 2:13-25. **Pope Francis** It should be acknowledged that among the most important causes of the crises of the modern world are a desensitized moral conscience, a distancing from religious values, individualism and materialism in place of supreme and transcendental principles. FT 275. LSAP goal 6. Ecological spirituality. **Pray a Lenten prayer** acknowledging our need for self-purification. . Choose an appropriate action.

**March 4.** Lucky explained to the family that leprosy in those biblical times was like HIV/AIDS was for us. She told the story of Namaan, a highly-placed foreigner, a proud and arrogant man, who suffered from leprosy. When he asked for help the prophet Elisha treated him with some disdain and just sent a message for him to go and wash in the Jordan river. At first Namaan was too proud but he listened to his servants' advice and having washed found that he was cured. He came back, thanked Elisha and acknowledged the greatness of the God of Israel. There are psychological issues around serious illnesses like leprosy and HIV/AIDS that affect the one infected and those affected in families too. All have a right and responsibility towards one another to deal with the condition in the most life-giving way for all. Illness is a serious reality in animal and plant families too. Do we consider how they suffer, or only think of the inconvenience to us?

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Read the relevant scripture passages. Elisha sent a messenger saying, "go and wash in the Jordan seven times. But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, "Behold I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord." Kings 5:1-15. **Pope Francis:** If the family in the light of the faith accepts the presence of persons with special needs they will be able to recognise and ensure the quality and value of every human life with its proper needs, rights and opportunities. AL 47. LSAP 1. Response to the cry of the earth. **Pray a Lenten prayer.** "All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love that we may protect life and beauty and cherish the worth of each being. Laudato Si. Choose an appropriate action.

**March 5.** Geoff was studying economics at school. He shared, "There is an awful lot of blaming and shaming going on these days. If it is not shady business deals or state capture it is sexual harassment. I've always thought that justice should be done but it seems that deals are being made to write off debts or to pay money to prevent charges being laid. Was it always like that one wonders or is society just becoming more dishonest." His brother was quick to answer. "Read the gospel of the servants to whom money was owed. One was generous and wrote off the debt and the other wanted his "pound of flesh." "Sure," their dad said, " but what God expects ultimately is to be merciful and forgiving. Isn't that even going beyond what is fair?"

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Read the relevant scripture passages. Matthew 18:21-35. I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you?" **Pope Francis:** In marriage and family life unexpected situations occur disrupting family life and requiring forgiveness and reconciliation. In resolving sincerely to forgive, each one has to ask quietly and humbly if he or she has not somehow created the conditions that led to the other's mistake. To know how to forgive and feel forgiven is a basic experience in family life. AL236, LSAP 6 Ecological spirituality.. **Pray a Lenten prayer.** For willingness and openness to make peace and forgive one another even after a major break-down. Choose appropriate action.

**March 6.** Jonathan had done his homework. “The Constitution of a country does not belong to any political party but to every citizen. I think that might be forgotten when elections come up and with all political parties lobbying for their own policies and interpretations of the law. Our bishops should dialogue with the state to promote pro-family, pro-life policies for the good of the whole of our society. In deciding on their vote Catholics, especially young first-time voters, are also challenged to take this into account, when the concern is youth unemployment.”

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Read the relevant scripture passages. Moses said, “I have taught you statutes and ordinances as the Lord my God commanded me. Keep them and do them for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples.” Deut 4:2-3. **Pope Francis:** Families have a right to be able to count on an adequate family policy on the part of public authorities. At times families suffer terribly when faced with the illness of a loved one they lack access to adequate health care or struggle to find dignified employment. Families suffer from problems related to work, where young people have few possibilities. AL 44 LSAP 7. Community resilience and empowerment. **Pray a Lenten prayer.** For a successful and peaceful election and that the political parties will keep the best interests of the whole country in mind. Choose an appropriate action.

**March 7.** The girls were getting a bit fed up with what they saw to be too much political talk. “Are human rights and family rights always about politics?” Susan asked. Dad responded with, “Well, yes and no, because politics is also about life. We have politics in our own family too on a mini-level – you tend to side with mom and Patricia more with me. We all have rights, but it is the question of truth and of acceptance of discipline that really matters here. As parents we try to instill discipline in our home but also expect you kids to be accepting if we ban outings, cut pocket money or use of cellphones, or impose sacrifices. All that can even relate to doing penance during Lent.”

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Read the relevant scripture passages. This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the Lord and their God and did not accept discipline; truth has perished; it is cut off from their lips. Jeremiah 7:28. **Pope Francis:** How do we ensure that discipline is a constructive limit placed on a child's actions and not a barrier standing in the way of his or her growth? Moral education entails asking what does not involve a disproportionate sacrifice. AL270-1. LSAP 4. Promote sustainable living. **Pray a Lenten prayer.** Pray for a positive attitude towards discipline as a necessary aspect of family life. Choose an appropriate action.

**March 8.** As the senior member in the family, around the half-way mark through Lent, Hosea led the sharing. He first explained the sharing technique they could use, where each one has a chance to share from the heart while the rest listen without comment or questions. Then at the end we together consider if there is any action we can take. He started by saying, “I don't know whether we really value what God has to offer. He continues to beg us to come back to him, telling us he has more to offer than the “idols” we make for ourselves. Are glamour, money, rich friends, going to parties really what people want? I've been thinking that my own particular idol is being a workaholic.” Pope Francis recommends that this be a time to promote the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Read the relevant scripture passages. O Ephraim what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. Whoever is wise let him understand and know, for the ways of the Lord are right and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them. Hosea 14:1-9. **Pope Francis:** One of the most important tasks of families is to provide an education in hope. This does not mean preventing children from getting the latest electronic devices but rather finding ways to help them develop their critical abilities and not to think that digital speed can apply to everything. Postponing desires does not mean denying them. When children are not helped to realise that some things have to be waited for they can become obsessed with satisfying their immediate needs. AL 275. LSAP 6. Ecological spirituality. **Pray a Lenten prayer.** God of Love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are a family, a community of love. Be our model and inspiration in caring for all of creation. Choose an appropriate action.

**March 9.** You know, I wonder whether we make too much of a fuss about liturgy, making things nice in church and singing beautifully,” Mercy shared. “Why would that be a problem” others asked, “Isn't our first task as Church to offer worship?” “And doesn't God love beauty too.” “Maybe we have to consider our priorities, when there are families struggling with life issues, relationships, people out of work, abuse and poverty.” Why does God say to the prophet Hosea, “I desire mercy not sacrifice?” Pope Francis recommends this as a time for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Read the relevant scripture passages. “I desire mercy and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.” Hosea 6:6. **Pope Francis:** “Let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth.” John spells out God’s way clearly. It stands on two pillars: God loved us first and he loved us by giving completely of himself, even to laying down his life. Message for 1st World Day of the Poor. The great sages of the past run the risk of going unheard amid the noise and distraction of an information overload. Efforts need to be made to help the media become sources for new cultural progress for humanity. LS 47. There is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, a mountain trail a dewdrop and in a poor person’s face. LD65. LSAP 6. Ecological spirituality. **Pray a Lenten prayer.** O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Choose an appropriate action.

**March 10. Lent 4B. Laetare Sunday.** Fr Obed said, “I’ve been preaching that we should focus on God’s love and mercy even in the light of punishment. The readings today do that. The 1st reading from the book of Chronicles tells how God attempted to call the leaders of the people to turn from their corrupt ways. As they refuse to listen God punishes the people and they are taken away into exile. After a time God uses Cyrus a new king to allow them to return. Corrupt leaders are a serious problem in our day too. Will God again punish the people because of corrupt leaders? Is God doing so? As we face an election in the near future, this is the time for the people to call the leaders to account. However, in the reading God’s mercy and love are also shown. God’s own son, Jesus is given to us to save us. Read those passages carefully and share your response to God’s great love in spite of human wickedness. Thank the Father and thank Jesus too for their commitment to us. This is the joyful, true message of this Sunday we call Laetare Sunday. Pope Francis also recommends that this be a time to promote the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Read the relevant scripture passages. God so loved the world that he gave his only –begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16. **Pope Francis:** We are called to be instruments of God, our Father, so that our planet might be what he desired. The problem is that we still lack the culture needed and we lack leadership capable of striking out on new paths and meeting the needs of the present with concern for all and without prejudice towards coming generations. LS 53. In all families the Good News needs to resound in good times and in bad as a source of light on the way. All of us should be able to say, “thanks to the experience of our life in the family we come to believe in the love that God has for us.” AL 290 LSAP 6. Ecological spirituality **Pray a Lenten prayer.** . God of love, we were not always aware of the gravity of our lack of love, but now we hear the cry of the earth and of the poor and acknowledge our sinfulness and guilt. God of Mercy, we praise and thank you for your love Choose an appropriate action.

**March 11.** When the family read the encouraging passage from Isaiah Joy shared she was feeling confused. “I thought Lent was about sackcloth and ashes, and repentance and being more or less miserable with long faces, and here we are reading about God creating new things.” “That is true,” her mom said, “the passage shows a picture of the time when we have repented and all has been completed according to God’s plan. Isn’t that what we are hoping for?” She added, “I think we should plan soon for our family Reconciliation time and for going to confession, don’t you agree?”

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Read the relevant scripture passages. Thus says the Lord, Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth and the former things shall not be remembered. Be glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create. Is 65:17-21. **Pope Francis:** I invite priests once more to prepare carefully for the ministry of confession. I ask you to be welcoming to all, witnesses of fatherly love whatever the gravity of the sin involved, attentive in helping penitents to reflect on the evil they have done, clear in presenting moral principles, willing to walk patiently beside the faithful on their penitential journey, far-sighted in discerning individual cases and generous in dispensing God’s forgiveness. MM 10 LSAP 6. Ecological spirituality. **Pray a Lenten prayer.** God of Mercy, we praise and thank you for your love. Forgive us our failures as we learn to forgive others, so that your Kingdom of love, joy, peace, justice and freedom may come to fulfillment. Holy Spirit by your light guide us on our way. Choose appropriate action.

**March 12.** Marisa shared in her family group. “I read a post on facebook that someone discovered that the river Nile did originate in South Africa. The town Nylstroom, now called Modimolle, in Limpopo is built alongside the river and the Egyptian government is going to build a big resort there especially for Egyptian tourists.” “You lie,” “Nonsense,” “Can’t be.

Why would Egyptians want to come here?" "Ha, ha, caught you, April Fools!" she laughed, and continued, "I know not everyone enjoys being made fun of or believes April Fool is OK. But the issue around water delivery is no joke it is. Let's think just how precious water is and has been throughout the ages. Is it not a miracle? But how we all, rich and poor, waste and pollute this precious resource is a sin."

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Read the relevant scripture passages about water and its healing properties. On the banks on both sides of the river there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Eze 47: 8-9. **Pope Francis:** Fresh drinking water is an issue of primary importance, since it is indispensable for human life and for supporting terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. LS 28. Access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, Our world has a great social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity. LS 30. LSAP 2. The cry of the poor. **Pray a Lenten prayer.** All-powerful God, pour out upon us the living water of your love that we may protect and sustain all life and beauty. Choose an appropriate action.

**March 13.** "I envy people who always seem to have really strong faith in God," Fr Jim shared. "During the Year of Mercy I heard some very sad stories and I admit I have found it hard sometimes to be honest in encouraging people. Like the young mother who had been gang-raped and shared that she had no energy for her expected baby. I couldn't blame her but shared the passage from Isaiah that gives me hope. First God promises to save them, then he tells them to rejoice, but the people remain sceptical. Finally God replies again with the famous saying about a woman and her baby. It is helpful to observe how the people dialogue with God. I think that is part of our new Conversation in the Spirit, a listening and dialogue approach that helps people to examine their real situation and make the best possible decisions.

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Read the relevant scripture passages of the day. "Sing for joy O heaven, for the Lord has comforted his people. But Zion said, "the Lord has forgotten me." The Lord replies "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget yet I will not forget you. Is 49:8-15. **Pope Francis:** Conscience can do more than recognise that a given situation does not correspond objectively to the overall demands of the Gospel. It can also recognise with sincerity and honesty what for now is the most generous response which can be given to God and see that it is what God himself is asking. AL303. LSAP 4. Adopting sustainable lifestyles. **Pray a Lenten prayer.** Loving Creator, I ask for the grace of loving attention as I make decisions throughout the day. Open my heart to remember that the ultimate goal of my life is to be in a loving relationship with You, myself, my neighbor, and the earth. From *Laudato Si'* prayer book. Choose appropriate action.

**March 14.** Many parents these days are seriously concerned about their children, the way they live and how they flout family rules on all sorts of issues. The social worker didn't have to tell them, "Whether it is drugs, sex or bullying or stealing it seems the youth have forgotten what is right. Are you parents responsible, and enforce punishment, even have your children arrested if necessary? But then do you then ask for lenience or try to get them off? Of course the other aspect is that children threaten their parents if they do try to make them toe the line. What is really the answer to this problem behaviour when both sides want to claim their rights? Are there enough opportunities given to families to learn and practice behaviour skills within the larger issue of rights and responsibilities?"

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Read the relevant scripture passages. The Lord said to Moses, "I have seen this stiff-necked people now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn against them. But Moses begged the Lord, "why does your wrath burn hot against your people? Turn from your fierce wrath and repent of this evil against your people. And the Lord repented. Read Exodus 32:7-14. **Pope Francis:** Justice and mercy are not two contradictory realities but two dimensions of a single reality that unfolds progressively until it culminates in the fullness of love. Jesus goes beyond the law and affirms that the rule for life must place mercy at the centre. FM 20. LSAP 4. Adopting a sustainable lifestyle. **Pray a Lenten prayer.** Choose appropriate action.

#### PEACE PRAYER OF ST FRANCIS.

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;  
and where there is sadness, joy.

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 is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying (to self) that we are born to eternal life.  
Amen



**March 15.** Aunt Mabel was visiting the family for a few days and asked to share. "This reading from the book of Wisdom has for years been a comfort to me. You know that my husband, Samuel, was a policeman and he was a really good honest cop. He had wanted to be a crime-fighter from when he was a child but the family couldn't afford for him to be a lawyer or a judge so he became a policeman. His station was noted for fairness and honesty and dedication to duty. But, you know the story, the criminals were after him. He was killed in a car accident 10 years ago but I know it wasn't just an accident. It's been very hard to bear but you all know my faith in Jesus and reading and reflecting with the Bible have helped me."

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Read the relevant scripture passages. *Ungodly men reasoned unsoundly, saying to themselves, "Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions. Wis 2:1. Pope Francis: Sincere and humble worship of God bears fruit not in discrimination, hatred and violence, but in respect for the sacredness of life, respect for the dignity and freedom of others and loving commitment to the welfare of all. Truly "whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love." (1 John 4-8) For this reason terrorism is deplorable and threatens the security of people. This is not due to religion even when terrorists instrumentalise it. It is due to an accumulation of incorrect interpretations of religious texts and to policies linked to injustice and oppression. It is so necessary to stop supporting terrorist movements fuelled by financing, provision of weapons and by attempts to justify these movements even using the media. Extracts from FT 283. LSAP 7. Community resilience and empowerment. Pray a Lenten prayer. Make me an instrument of your peace..... Choose appropriate action.*

**March 16.** Boetie was in his final year before Confirmation and he told the family the task the teacher had given them to do. "I think I need your help too," he said. "This gospel today shows how confused some of the people were about who Jesus really was and whether he could be the Messiah. I don't think we aren't waiting for a Messiah like that now, but young people, especially, seem to be confused about which church they want to belong to and why. Why are we Catholics and is God really on our side? I'm supposed to do a project to answer those questions."

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Read the relevant scripture passages. *At that time when they heard the words of Jesus some of the people said, "This is really the prophet." Others said, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee?" John 7:40-41. Pope Francis: The Church esteems the ways in which God works in other religions and rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. Others drink from other sources. For us 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. Through the Church, marriage and the family receive the grace of the Holy Spirit from Christ in order to bear witness to the Gospel of God's love. AL71 LSAP 5. Ecological education. Pray a Lenten prayer. God of Love, creator of all, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. You are a family, a community of love, model and inspiration for us, the human family. Choose appropriate action.*

**March 17. Lent 5B.** Fr Obed was beginning to look forward to Holy Week and all the ceremonies, but he realised that there should be a clear awareness that the central focus and figure should be Jesus, his love and commitment in the sacrifice of his life. He shared the explanation given in the Missal. "The gospel today sees the death of Jesus as the manifestation of his love. A human being fulfils his goal and grows to maturity only when he is capable of love and when he gives his life for others. The world might see this gift of life as a defeat but we see it as a victory." He then quoted from the 1st reading, a favourite passage of his, "I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts. I know that Pope Francis also often stresses this aspect. That is a message for every parent to pass on to their children. It is a family right and their responsibility. Let us pray that they will have the will and ability to do so with Jesus' help."

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Read the relevant scripture passages. *God speaks to Jeremiah saying, "I will put my law within them and I will write it upon their hearts. I will be their God and they shall be my people." Jer 31:33 Pope Francis: the work of handing on the faith to children in the sense of facilitating its expression and growth helps the whole family in its evangelising mission. It naturally begins to spread the faith even outside the family circle. AL 289. The Church does not claim to compete with earthly powers, but to offer herself as a family among families, open to bearing witness in today's world, FT 276 LSAP 5. Ecological education. Pray a Lenten prayer of faith. God of love, I believe..... Choose appropriate action.*



**March 18.** Ernestina shared with her friends, “I got quite a shock when I read the story of Susanna in the book of Daniel the other day. Was abuse of women and lying officials already common in those Biblical times and even with important people in the community.” “For sure society hasn’t really changed has it, but isn’t that why Jesus came too to call people to repent and to practise justice and mercy. He had a great concern for women that was unusual at the time.” “But he wasn’t exactly merciful with those men who tried to accuse a woman of adultery.” “I’m also not sure about mercy in this type of case. It is a very big challenge in our day to deal with gbv.” .

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Read the story in the book of Daniel chapter 13 of Susanna who was falsely accused. **Pope Francis:** Mercy is not opposed to justice, but rather expresses God’s way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert and believe. The Face of Mercy 21. The continuing forms of domination, arrogance, abuse, sexual perversion and violence are a product of a warped understanding of sexuality. Every form of sexual submission must be clearly rejected. This includes the improper interpretations of the passage in Ephesians which mirrors the cultural mentality of the time. AL 153-6. **Pray a Lenten prayer of faith.** God of love, thank you for the gift of sexuality and love expressed most deeply in marriage. May this gift of life in all of creation be appreciated and not abused. Choose an appropriate action.

**March 19.** St Joseph was a honourable man and Joe, himself an honourable young married man, shared his thoughts in his men's group. “Although they were betrothed, not being married to Mary when she was found to be pregnant by right he could have left her. She could even have been severely punished. I’ve learned from Pope Francis during the Year of Mercy and of St Joseph, reinforced from these reflections that the responsibility to love and mercy override such legalistic rights. But I can’t help but wonder if mercy can be applied all the time or only some of the time. Even on the issue of an unplanned pregnancy isn’t there often anger, abandonment, rejection, punishment. How can a young couple and even their parents always be loving and merciful in these cases or how much is it to do with rights?

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Her husband being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame resolved to send her away quietly. But as he considered this an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. Mat 1:16 – 24. **Pope Francis:** In a new Apostolic Letter entitled **Patris corde** (“With a Father’s Heart”), Pope Francis describes Saint Joseph as a beloved father, a tender and loving father, an obedient father, an accepting father; a father who is creatively courageous, a working father, a father in the shadows. . LSAP 4. Towards Sustainable lifestyles. **Prayer to St Joseph.** Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary. To you God entrusted his only Son; in you Mary placed her trust; with you Christ became man. Blessed Joseph, to us too, show yourself a father and guide us in the path of life. Obtain for us grace, mercy, and courage, and defend us from every evil. Amen. Choose appropriate action

**March 20.** Priscilla asked, “Are there really still people who are so committed to their faith that they really think God will save them from harm?” “Well isn’t that what martyrdom is?” “No, because martyrs die.” “We only hear about them because they die, like Benedict Daswa. What about others? Are Palestinian people in Gaza, some of whom are Christians while most are Muslims, praying to be safe, or are they just waiting to die? “It must be a great challenge to their faith and trust in God, whichever God they believe in.” “We need to pray much harder and fast this Lent, for a peaceful conclusion to that and all the current wars, like we did in the beginning and then we just gave up.”

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** Read the relevant scripture passages. King Nebuchadnezzar said to Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego. “When you hear every kind of music you must fall down and worship the image which I have made. If you do not you shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. They said, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace. If not, we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up. Daniel 3:14-28. **Pope Francis:** The heart of the Church is also full of young saints who devoted their lives to Christ, many of them even dying a martyr’s death. The Synod for the Youth pointed out that many young saints in their day were prophets of change. Their example shows what the young are capable of when they open themselves to encounter Christ. St Sebastian – Italy, St Joan of Arc - France, Bl Andrew Phu Yen – Vietnam, St Kateri Tekakwitha – US, St Kizito – Uganda and many more were witnesses to Jesus. Pope Francis to the Youth. LSAP 6. Ecological spirituality. **Fast and Pray a Lenten prayer** for faith, courage and commitment by youth in our families, the Church and all Families of Creation. . Choose appropriate action.

**March 21. Human Rights Day.** Fr Obed reminded the congregation that Human Rights Day is not just a national secular event but should have a religious aspect too, especially as the country is so close to the elections and is also commemorating an important milestone in May, the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the International Year of the Family. At the

special early morning Mass he made reference to and quoted from **The Church's Charter of Family Rights**. The Charter promotes the right to life, to marry, have children, work, shelter and more. In our world which is becoming more and more individualistic we must note that not only individuals but families have rights. Providing to meet these rights is the responsibility of governments. However, it cannot be left only to them to pass laws and protect us, but we are expected to pursue our rights and live out our responsibilities too. This is no easy task and demands commitment from everyone. "The family is much more than a mere legal, social and economic unit, but is a community of love and solidarity. It is uniquely suited to teach and transmit cultural, ethical, social, spiritual and religious values, essential for the development and well-being of its own members and of society." **Charter of Family Rights. E.**

**Reflect, share.** Human rights are also family rights. Looking In the special Eucharistic prayer, "Jesus, the Way to the Father," the priest prays the words, "*grant that the faithful of the Church looking into the signs of the times by the light of faith may constantly devote themselves to the service of the Gospel.*" **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. The Church has always promoted marriage and the family to defend them against those who attack them. Families have the right to be able to count on an adequate family policy on the part of public authorities in the juridical, economic, social and fiscal domains.* AL44. LSAP 5. Ecological education. **Pray a Lenten prayer of faith and commitment to family rights in all of creation.** Choose appropriate action.

**March 22.** When young Jerry saw the name of the prophet Jeremiah he wanted to share. "I don't understand it all," he said, "but my prophet seems to be asking for revenge because he is persecuted. He even calls God a warrior who will definitely win. I do like that, but you folks never let me have revenge when Joe steals my things. All my games are about warriors and winning battles too." Mom felt obliged to help. "There are definitely stories in the Old Testament about God and revenge as we heard quite a lot, but that is not Jesus' way. Jesus said, "You have heard it said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say to you ....." so he is showing us a new way, a way of mercy and love and forgiveness. Don't you think we should try to copy that? She added to the more grown-up family members, "the Jews didn't like his new way either at that time and now, what about the horrific acts happening in the wars between Israel and Hamas or Russia and Ukraine or Sudan and other countries at war?"

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** *Read the relevant scripture passages. The Lord is with me as a dread warrior, therefore my persecutors will stumble. Jer 20:10-13* **Pope Francis:** *There are those who seek solutions in war, frequently fueled by a breakdown in relations, hegemonic ambitions, abuses of power, fear of others and a tendency to see diversity as an obstacle. War is the negation of all rights and a dramatic assault on the environment. Never again war! FT 258 We must retain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world and that good and decency are worth it.* LS 229. LSAP 7. Promoting Community resilience and empowerment, **Pray St Francis Prayer for Peace.** Choose appropriate action.

**March 23** Bernadette asked, "How worried were the Jewish leaders about pacifying the Romans, their oppressors, and did they see Jesus as causing trouble in the political sense and therefore wanted to do away with him? In our day we've had a gutful of politics especially the Israeli-Hamas war which is about the same land but a very different situation and of course a modern form of war. I wonder if one ever gets the whole picture. Different parties and media, TV or radio or newspapers paint different pictures of the same events, making it almost impossible to make sense of what is really going on. The prophets also presented a variety of images over the centuries about war and peace. Today within our country, party and family we don't all see things in the same way, do we?" Is peace, true peace the only answer? Pope Francis frequently preaches and prays for peace.

**Reflect, share. Scripture:** *Read the relevant scripture passages. Behold I will take the sons of Israel from the nations among which they have gone and will gather them from all sides and bring them to their own land and I will make them one nation and one king. They shall not defile themselves any more with their idols and detestable things. I will make a covenant of peace with them. Ezekiel 37:21-28.* **Pope Francis:** *War is the negation of all rights and a dramatic assault on the environment. If we want true integral human development for all, we must work tirelessly to avoid war between nations and peoples. FT 256 In the name of justice and mercy the foundations of prosperity and the cornerstone of faith we declare the adoption of a culture of dialogue as the path, mutual cooperation as the code of conduct, reciprocal understanding as the method and standard. From Document on Human Fraternity. 2019 LSAP 7. Community resilience and empowerment. Pray with the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together. Abu Dhabi 2019 as a Lenten prayer for peace.* Choose appropriate action.

## HOLY WEEK - JESUS – THE WAY OF UBUNTU AND FRATERNITY.

**Introduction.** The late Anglican Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu put it in a nutshell. *“Ubuntu speaks of the very essence of being human. We say, 'Hey, so-and-so has ubuntu.' Then you are generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, 'My humanity is inextricably bound up, in yours.' We belong in a bundle of life. We say, 'A person is a person through other persons.' From No Future without Forgiveness. Ubuntu is African fraternity and synodality. Africans feel it in their bones, others have learned to understand it is akin to true discipleship, Jesus' way.*

In the more than 10 years of his papacy Pope Francis on numerous occasions called for peace in the world, prayed for peace, visited countries at war and met with leaders of Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other religions searching for a way of peace. In 2019, at a meeting he and the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb in Abu Dhabi, together formulated a declaration: *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*. Its various statements all begin: “In the name of..... and invite all people of good will:

- *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 make known the values of goodness, love and peace.*
- *In the name of innocent human life, .....the poor,..... the destitute,.... orphans and widows,.... victims of war and many other aspects of human fraternity that embraces all human beings, unites them and renders them equal;*

*we declare the adoption of a culture of dialogue, mutual cooperation and reciprocal understanding. From the Statement.*

The spirit of synodality features in this declaration which is not only a call to follow a leader but to become active sharers on the common journey. The African ubuntu awareness of belonging is present in fraternity too.

Although we believe Jesus spent most of his life in fairly remote small towns the country of Israel at that time was in a state of political turmoil much as it is today. Are Jewish people still expecting a saviour who will be a liberator, or have they taken the matter into their own hands?

Imagine if Jesus lived in today's world would he be living in Soweto, Khayelitsha, a village in Limpopo, one of our big inner cities or in a country such as Nigeria or Nicaragua, Iraq or Ireland or Mexico or Makwhakhwa? There are many “prophets” and powerful preachers today of all kinds of denominations and thousands of people flock to hear them. Are they promoting Jesus' way, the way of mercy and love? Which nation today would recognise him, accept him, honour him as a leader for justice, or imprison and kill him as a revolutionary? As a leader would he welcome migrants and refugees or bar them from their midst? What is the impact of the prevailing culture of the power-hungry and of violence on all of creation and human interpersonal relationships? The reflections for Holy Week and Easter try to picture Jesus in a modern context. Quotations from the Songs of the Servant in Chapters 42, 49, 50 and 53 of Isaiah are used.

**March 24 PALM SUNDAY.** A strange thing happened. The Imbavati region had been in turmoil for months, faction fighting was the norm, every man carried his weapons with him and even women were armed against the risk of being attacked. Leaders had come and gone, some with their own private army seeking control and power. Other leaders had come from one faction or another but had not been able to bring the people together. Towns and villages lay devastated with fields untended as people fled in mistrust of one another. But quietly in a faraway corner of the land a group had been galvanised by a young preacher. He did not preach of wealth nor of revolution but of concern for others, universal peace not war, respect for life and property and acknowledgement that some greater being, whom he called Father, held their ultimate destiny in his hand as one people. Battle-weary and longing to live his way, a fraternal way of social friendship, somehow ready to share, people listened. More and more listened and as they lived their daily family lives in harmony their numbers grew. One day they gathered for a mass rally. Would they elect him as their leader? Would he take the throne? Would the whole nation be willing to be converted and follow him or were they too stuck in their traditional and ritualistic churchy ways? *The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught that I may know how to sustain with a word him that is weary. Is 50:4 the 3rd Song of the Servant of the Lord. Pope Francis: We lack leadership capable of striking out on new paths. LS 53*

**March 25. Monday of Holy Week.** Do our lawyers, our politicians, our law-enforcement officers and the army of security guards stand for true justice? Who among them has an ethical approach to life and lives by personal moral standards or are they open to corruption or convenient solutions? Are they purely administrators or interpreters of the law? Are they captured by visions of wealth and power or true justice? These were questions young would-be lawyers were asked to

debate. Not easy questions with no easy answers. Did Judas, who followed Jesus with the others and learned his way and finally betrayed his Master, not, or never believe in justice? *Why was this ointment not sold and the money given to the poor? This he said not because he cared for the poor but because he was a thief. John 12:1-11. Behold my servant whom I uphold, my chosen in whom my soul delights I have put my Spirit upon him he will bring forth justice to the nations. Is 42:1 1st Song of the Servant. Pope Francis: The establishment of a legal framework which can set clear boundaries and ensure the protection of ecosystems has become indispensable. LS 53*

**March 26. Tuesday of Holy Week.** "I will love you and honour you all the days of my life." These words of faithfulness and commitment are expressed at every wedding and expected to be lived out every future day. As all couples examine their conscience they can ask, "Was I faithful in word and in deed? Was my mouth like the sharp sword of Isaiah's Servant of God or were my words idle words, spoken with blunted feelings and a closed mind?" Our religion can too easily become a series of rituals not embedded into daily lives. *He made my mouth like a sharp sword. And he said, "you are my servant Israel in whom I will be glorified. But I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity. Yet surely my right is with the Lord. Is 49: 1-6 the 2nd Song of the Servant. Peter said, "I will lay down my life for you. Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? I say to you the cock will not crow till you have denied me 3 times. John 13:38. Pope Francis: After the love that unites us to God, marital love is the greatest form of friendship. AL 123*

**March 27. Wednesday of Holy Week.** While much of the worldwide turmoil of today is about power and greed much is also ideological. Different and conflicting perspectives determine how we act, often in the name of religion, claiming that God is on my side, even a Christian, Jewish or Muslim God. Opposing sides inflict horrific injuries and are prepared to sacrifice even their own lives for a cause, or as suicide bombers. Is this truly God-centred, fraternal, ubuntu, true religion?

We are conscious too of the constant message of Pope Francis, of mercy and justice for the poor and disadvantaged. He preaches tolerance of differences but peaceful resolutions to conflict as the only answer in our time. On the domestic front, at this time of campaigning for a political party in the runup to the election, a culture of violence cannot be God's will. Are we striving for peace, justice and greater tolerance? *Morning by morning he awakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. The Lord God has opened my ear and I was not rebellious. I turned not backward. I gave my back to those who struck me and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard. I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God helps me. From Isaiah 50:4-9 the 3rd Song of the Servant. Pope Francis: The effort to seek God with a sincere heart, provided it is never sullied by ideological or self-serving aims, helps us to recognize one another as travelling companions. FT 274*

**March 28. Holy Thursday.** Are the days of offering sacrifice according to tradition past? Is there a new way of self-giving to come? They had wanted to make him their leader and king but he had refused. "I am no leader of a rebel army," he told them. "My way is different and for this I will be made to suffer. These words are my message to you. 'Greater love has no one than to lay down his life for his friends. Be one as the Father and I am one. Love one another as I have loved you. Know that I will be with you. Call it a people's way, a fraternal, synodal way.'" They knew his life was at risk and he would not be with them much longer. He could be arrested, tortured, killed when the agents of the power-hungry found him. Those men saw him as a trouble-maker, who was taking up the cause of the poor and dispossessed against abuse by the wealthy. striving for the value, dignity and rights of each human person. His way was against control of the strong over the weak. He pleaded for the concern of the rich and strong for the poor, marginalised and hurting ones, for families old and young.

He had given them his vision, given them himself, this motley bunch from all sectors of society, young families, middle-aged and old men and women, sick and healthy, rich and poor. "Blessed are the pure in heart, the merciful, those who hunger and thirst for justice, the poor in spirit. Blessed are you when from the love you experience you can reach out and share my love with others." They knew they were still at the beginning of a journey for life, but they were ready to live out his manifesto, his beatitudes. *Where true love is dwelling God is present there. So when we are gathered together let us strive to keep our minds free of division. May there be an end to malice, strife and quarrels and let Christ our God be dwelling here among us. Ubi Caritas. Pope Francis: creation is of the order of love. God's love is the fundamental moving force in all created things. LS 77.*

**March 29. Good Friday.** But why did the mob want him to die? A mob is the ugliest creature in the world, indoctrinated but mindless, having lost its inhibitions and even its sense of justice other than mob justice. Do we not see that repeated

time after time today in protests for causes that may even be just or unjust? Chosen leaders are vulnerable too as their cause is overtaken by another power group.

What would Jesus do today? What would he do in all those violence-ridden protests for rights wrongfully denied or selfishly demanded, at times overriding equal rights of others? Would he bring an army no matter what their weapons? Would he argue his case through the best lawyers in town? Would he stand before a judge unjustly condemned? Would he be deserted by those who believed in him, losing face and faith in the desolation of his lonely conviction of truth above all else? Would he be another martyr in the cause of justice, emptying himself even of his divinity? Would his final message be, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do?" His last pathetic cry, "Father into your hands." And yet, "having received the vinegar," with his last breath: "It is complete."

The future of the world hangs in the balance more urgently than ever. What are we, his followers, to do? *He was wounded for our transgression, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray we have turned every one to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isa 53:5-6 from the 4th Song of the Servant. Pope Francis: by enduring the toil of work in union with Christ crucified for us, man in a way collaborates with the Son of God for the redemption of humanity. LS 98*

**March 30. Easter vigil.** A vigil of hope is an enigma, a strange phenomenon to preserve one's sanity in the midst of loss and desolation, but hardly practised enough in life today where times of trauma and grief are too often times of bitterness and anger. A vigil can be a time apart, a time away as some will know who have experienced their personal trauma of loss that marks so many lives. Anger yes, with denial, guilt, remorse and acceptance are human emotions, needing to be expressed as they are in themselves gifts from God. Hope for the future is God's special gift that may lead one to quiet acceptance or spur one to action. Is it possible to be grateful for these gifts of life in the midst of death, any death? The Easter vigil differs as it precedes the Resurrection, but did his followers or yesterday and those of today remember that? *"On this sacred night in which Our Lord Jesus Christ passed over from death to life the Church calls her sons and daughter scattered throughout the world to come together to watch and pray. Then we shall have the sure hope of sharing his triumph over death and living with him in God."* *From the Opening of the Easter Vigil rite. Pope Francis: Hope in letter to Jews. We must never lose hope for a possible peace and we must do everything possible to promote it, rejecting every form of defeatism and mistrust. We must look to God, the only source of certain hope.*

**March 31. EASTER – RESURRECTION.** There are many religions and belief systems among the people of this world. Less than one third are professed Christians. Christianity is unique in its belief in a personal God who created out of love, for love. This God was denied and rejected many times, but in time he himself became human to show once more the way to love. In love God's Son lived and died, atoning for our human lack of love. Love remains our byword, a watchword, a password, fraternity, ubuntu. Family life and love designed by God, the creator, is a unique expression and way to spread his love with joy. As Jesus was raised from death to life his followers experienced the unbounded joy of love and friendship, giving and sharing life. May every believer and family following Christ shout with joy. *"THE LORD IS RISEN, ALLELUIA!" They departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy and ran to tell his disciples. And behold Jesus met them and said "Hail!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshipped him. Mat 28:8-9. Pope Francis: The New Testament shows us Jesus risen and glorious, present throughout creation by his universal Lordship. In him the fullness of God was pleased to dwell and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. Col 1:19-20 LS 99.*

**CLOSING REFLECTION PRAYER** O God of love, grant that we, Christians, may live the Gospel discovering Christ in each human being, recognizing him crucified in the sufferings of the abandoned and forgotten, and risen in each brother or sister who makes a new start. Come Holy Spirit show us your beauty reflected in all the creatures of this earth created by God out of love, for love. Amen. Adapted from FRATELLI TUTTI.