



2024 OUR WORLD, FAMILY OF FAMILIES –

MARFAM THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY

NOVEMBER – FAMILY LOSSES AND ENDINGS



THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY download from www.marfam.org.za, on facebook and X info@marfam.org.za request for email
Pope Francis: LS = Laudato Si. LD = Laudate Deum AL = Amoris Laetitia FT = Fratelli Tutti. EG = Evangelii Gaudium. MV= The Face of Mercy.

NOVEMBER Introduction. 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. 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. Our loved ones are not lost in the shades of nothingness; hope assures us that they are in the good strong hands of God. AL 256. For human beings to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation, these are sins against the natural world, ourselves and against God. LS8.*

Setting the Scene for the THOUGHTS. Faith sharing groups and families are encouraged to use the Conversations in the Spirit method of synodal dialogue and to reflect, share deeply from the heart and listen attentively as they deal with subjects of loss, life and death.

A Family Bereavement Prayer. *God our Father, we remember in prayer those we have loved, who have had a special place in our hearts and in our lives and are now no longer here with us. We thank you Lord for the time you have given us to share together the gift of life. We pray for your pardon and a willingness to forgive one another for the hurt we caused. Help us to be at peace with the imperfections of our human relationship knowing that you accept us as we are. Comfort us through the memories our loved ones leave us. May those memories give us courage for our journey into the future. Grant them a place of peace and joy in your kingdom where there is no more suffering and no more grief. And when each of us is called to depart from this life may we be reunited with them in eternal happiness. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

November 1. The Narrow Door. The matriarchs discussed. “I don't think that Luke is very “merciful” in this gospel. If you don't buy into the values of this Kingdom of God, you're out in the cold.” “Plus the only way in is through a narrow door. Is that because only a few would wish to enter or to make it difficult for people?” Their teacher shared an insight. “There is a very small door into the church in Bethlehem's Manger Square, that reminds one about the “narrow door.” I was told it was like that because the big main entrance was bricked up to prevent soldiers on horseback from riding in. Makes one think.” Mr Bozzoli said, “Jesus taught that the wedding feast of Life or of the Kingdom, presided over by the Master of the House, is open to all peoples of all nations. We must seek diligently however to enter by the narrow door.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Strive to enter by the narrow door, for many I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. Luke 13:22-30. Pope Francis:* Whether believers or not we agree that the earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone. For believers this becomes a question of fidelity to the Creator, since God created the world for everyone. Every ecological approach needs to incorporate rights to the poor and the underprivileged. LS93. **Eco-tip and prayer:** What are the difficulties and obstacles facing you on your journey? Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.

November 2. Commemoration of the Faithful Departed. They gathered at the parish early in the morning to start their pilgrimage, as they called it, to the cemetery as usual on November 2nd. Men, women and children, all who had lost a dearly beloved family member or close friend made the short journey, but it was the company of others that comforted them. John had recently lost a son in an accident, Paul's son had been killed during an armed robbery while Mavis's daughter had succumbed to AIDS. As parents they came to share their grief and offer one another support. Fr George prayed a special prayer for grieving parents and reminded them of the support offered by The Compassionate Friends.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful ones. Psalm 116:15. "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Revelations 21:4.* **Pope Francis:** . Our loved ones are not lost in the shades of nothingness; hope assures us that they are in the good strong hands of God. AL 256 *We cannot fail to offer the light of faith as a support to families going through the experience of a death of a loved one. To turn our backs on a grieving family would show a lack of mercy, be the loss of a pastoral opportunity and close the door to other efforts at evangelisation.* AL 253. **Eco-tip and prayer:** Bring to mind some of the losses in your life and pray. *Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.*

November 3. Sunday All Saints. Fr Teddy asked the congregation, "Why do you suppose the gospel for this feast is the Beatitudes? I thought about that and realised that the qualities of those mentioned there are in fact the qualities of saints. You know that St Paul called his people saints while they were still alive, but we tend to think of saints only after death and a process of canonisation. But our task is to try to be saints in the way Paul saw it and live the beatitudes in our lives, our family lives. Reflecting on the lives of the saints in heaven is using them as models to imitate and relate to. Who is your favourite? Mine is.....

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Blessed are the poor in Spirit. Blessed are the merciful, those that mourn, those that hunger and thirst for justice. Blessed are the peacemakers and the pure in heart. Matthew 5.* **Pope Francis:** *Blessed are the open hands that bring hope, that reach beyond every barrier of culture, religion and nationality and pour the balm of consolation over the wounds of humanity. Blessed are the open hands that ask nothing in exchange; they are hands that call down God's blessing.* From Message World Day of the Poor 2017 *"These new saints lived Jesus' way: service," Pope Francis said on canonisation day. "They made themselves servants of their brothers and sisters, creative in doing good, steadfast in difficulties, and generous to the end."* **Eco-tip and prayer:** No one is excluded from the Father's heart, for in his eyes, we are all poor and needy." World Day of the Poor Message 2024.

November 4. Joyce and Pat had both grown up in poor families who had struggled for survival. Education was a great value, but the education in positive values taught at home was equally important. "Even though we are not poor now, so much of what we were taught through poverty is still very valuable. Our children know our doors are always open to those in need."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *When you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just. Luke 14:12-14* **Pope Francis:** *The new evangelisation is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in the lives of the poor and to put them at the centre of the Church's pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes but also to be their friends to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.* EG 198. **Eco-tip and prayer:** *Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death and of the poor comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.*

November 5. Mrs Dlamini, the parish's volunteer psychologist shared with Fr Michael, "Isn't it strange how often people avoid what needs to be addressed, whether it is a terminal illness and approaching death, a marriage running into difficulties and fears about divorce or issues with children, other family members or

work related matters. Is there a great fear of loss, so much so that we manage to hide it and pretend it doesn't exist?" "Or even refuse any help that is offered," he responded. That always saddens me."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *A man gave a great banquet and invited many. When the time came he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited. "Come for all is now ready." But they all began to make excuses.* Luke: 14: 15-24. **Pope Francis:** *The life of every family is marked by all kinds of crises, yet they are also part of its dramatic beauty. Couples should be helped to realise that surmounting a crisis need not weaken their relationship, instead it can improve, settle and mature the wine of their union.* AL 232. **Eco-tip and prayer:** *Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.*

November 6. "What on earth could Jesus mean by saying we have to hate everything and everyone and take up one's own cross to follow him?" Jasmine had often pondered over this statement. "Can he really mean hate, or is he using exaggerated language to make his point?" When her husband left her for another woman she was devastated. There were times when she felt as if she hated him and even the whole world. Gradually as she came to see Jesus' statement differently she realised that for her not having that earthly attachment could be a way forward on her own spiritual journey.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple."* Luke 14:25-33. **Pope Francis:** *The life of every family is marked by all kinds of crises. Each crisis has a lesson to teach us; we need to learn how to listen for it with the ear of the heart.* AL232. **God is some way sought to limit himself in such a way that many of the things we think of as evils, dangers or sources of suffering, are in reality part of the pains of childbirth which he uses to draw us into the act of cooperation with the Creator.** LS 80. **Eco-tip and prayer:** *Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.*

November 7. "Have you seen those adverts on street poles or been given leaflets at traffic lights about some healing ministry in our country these days. Is it really possible to "Bring back lost lover" with muti or other practices or is there an element of witchcraft involved there and something we should be concerned about? Loss is a natural part of life, a consequence of original sin one could say. It can cause much heartache and does need to be dealt with, but in appropriate ways. Some of us pray to St Anthony to find things like car keys or ID books we have lost. Others go to Retrouvaille, a programme for troubled marriages hoping to "rediscover" their love that they think they may have lost. Jesus told stories of God's care for everyone of us including for sinners. He tells of the shepherd who goes after one of the 100 sheep who was lost and the woman searches for one lost coin of ten.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *The woman said, "rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost."* Just so I tell you there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Luke 15:3-10: **Pope Francis:** *Joy grows through pain and sorrow. After suffering and struggling together spouses are able to experience that it was worth it, because they achieved some good, learned something as a couple or came to appreciate what they have.* AL130. **God who wishes to work with us and who counts on our cooperation can also bring good out of the evil we have done.** LS 80 **Eco-tip and prayer:** *Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.*

November 8. Bryan had spoken to a few couples who had described the pain of a miscarriage after awaiting a new birth with excitement. Bruce and Eliza admitted their sadness but also acknowledged that when they had discovered that their baby would have been badly deformed they were at peace accepting that she would not be able to survive. After some time they shared a quiet joy knowing that Hope, their innocent treasure, was already at home with God.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Our commonwealth is in heaven and from it we await a saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ who will change our lowly bodies to be like a glorious body. Phil. 3:17- 4:1.* **Pope Francis:** *By serenely contemplating the ultimate fulfilment of each human person, parents will be even more aware of the precious gift entrusted to them. God allows parents to choose the name by which he himself will call their child for all eternity. AL 166.* **Eco-tip and prayer:** *Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.*

November 9. There is a back-to-front saying these days: “less is more.” What could that possibly mean? Charles sat down with the children when they were quite young. “You know that my father lost everything he owned when his land was taken away from him and with that his source of income. We children had to learn to manage with very little. We were able to rebuild our lives but I am proud to say that father never allowed us to cheat anyone. Our experience had taught us to be more generous with the poor. I believe that small moneys used faithfully can help to teach us wisdom in our use of greater wealth in money or other possessions. God who sees the heart knows where our primary love is.”

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much. You can't serve both God and money. Luke 16:9-15.* **Pope Francis:** *Do not fall into the terrible trap of thinking that life depends on money and that in comparison with money anything else is devoid of value or dignity. We cannot take money with us into the life beyond. MV19. It has become countercultural to choose a lifestyle whose goals are even partly independent of technology of its costs and its power to globalise and make us all the same. LS 108* **Eco-tip and prayer:** *Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.*

November 10. Sunday 32B. God in whom we trust. When Mrs Mondlana's husband died unexpectedly he left her with two teenage children and obviously many expenses. Besides dealing with her own grief and that of the children she was very upset and shocked at the way his family treated her after the funeral. They blamed her for his death, saying she had bewitched him and then his brothers came and told her to leave the house as it belonged to their family. She didn't know what to do except turn to the women in the sodality for help. She knew the other poor widows would be there for her.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Elijah asked, “bring me a morsel of bread”. She said, “As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar and a little oil in a pitcher and now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.” 1 Kings 17:10-16.* **Pope Francis:** *For the poor to overcome their oppressive situation, they need to sense the presence of brothers and sisters who are concerned for them and, by opening the doors of their hearts and lives, make them feel like friends and family. Only in this way can the poor discover “the saving power at work in their lives”* **Message for the 2nd World Day of the Poor 6.** **Eco-tip and prayer:** *Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.*

November 11. We hear a lot about child trafficking, how these traffickers groom children to become prostitutes. There are complex questions there to be considered. Is that sinful for the children or for the traffickers? Or what about those men who use prostitutes, surely that is sinful? The children are tempted with sweets, cell phones, clothes and are given drugs to make them addicts. As they were not free to choose could their behaviour then be regarded as sinful? The school had sent a notice to families to talk to their children about trafficking and its risks, but of course the aspect of temptation and sin was not something the school addressed. Parents, as the first educators of their children, dare not lose out on doing their obligation to deal with the problem in a meaningful and merciful way. Temptations are not sins.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *“But anyone who tempts children does a great wrong,” says Jesus. “Such people should be thrown away.” Luke 17:1-6.* **Pope Francis:** *Jesus affirms that mercy is not only an action of the Father, it becomes a criterion for ascertaining who his true children are. MV9. Good education plants seeds when we are young and these continue to bear fruit throughout life. The family is the place in which life as the*

gift of God can be properly welcome and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed. LS 213.

Eco-tip and prayer: Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.

November 12. Anthony shared, "At the West Park cemetery whenever I visit my parents' grave I pass a tombstone of a young air force pilot presumably killed in action. On the stone is written. 'He did his duty.' In the great wars of the 20th century millions of young men died "doing their duty." What was their own view about this at the time? Their country and their families do take pride in their sacrifice. One can only hope that they themselves too would have felt that as they lay wounded and dying."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: Jesus said, "when you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'we are unworthy servants, we have only done what was our duty.'" Luke 17:7-10. **Pope Francis:** Many things have to change course when it comes to ecological education and spirituality, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging and of a future to be shared with everyone. LS 202. **Eco-tip and prayer:** Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.

November 13. All illness, physical and mental, results in a loss in the quality of life. Some are fatal. Some diseases cause a loss in dignity too as sufferers are discriminated against and stigmatised such as many infected with HIV and die from AIDS-related diseases. They have suffered serious psychological and emotional pain too. Leprosy was a terminal disease until recent times and in Jesus' day sufferers lived as outcasts from the community. Jesus' gift of his healing ministry extended to anyone, outcasts and foreigners but he still, and rightfully, expected some recognition and thanks. As a family activity why not consider the stories of all ten of the lepers, the one who did give thanks and those who maybe took this for granted. Give them names. Use your own imagination: How would you react if suddenly you were ill and then later on restored to life and community: What did you miss while you were excluded?

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: One of the lepers when he saw he was healed turned back praising God. Jesus asked, "Were not ten lepers cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except his foreigner?" Luke 17:11-19. **Pope Francis:** In some countries there are positive examples of environmental improvements: rivers have been cleaned, advances made in the production of non-polluting energy. These achievements do not solve global problems but they do show that men and women are still capable of intervening positively. For all our limitations gestures of generosity, solidarity and care cannot but well up within us since we were made for love. LS58. **Eco-tip and prayer:** Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.

November 14. The Kingdom. From Jesus' own time until now people keep asking about the coming of the Kingdom. "Where is it, what does it look like?" they asked him. Different churches and theologians using the Bible and external signs as described in the Book of Revelation have tried to identify when the end will come. We do think of those who have died already experiencing it for themselves. How do we relate to the words of Jesus himself, when he said, "Behold the kingdom of God is in your midst?" Do those words continue to confuse us? Is it within each one, in the Church, in Christianity, wherever the values of the Kingdom are lived?

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: Jesus said, "the kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed nor will they say, 'here it is,' for God's kingdom is in your midst." Luke 17:20-25: **Pope Francis:** By their witness as well as their words, families speak to others of Jesus. They pass on the faith, they arouse a desire for God and they reflect the beauty of the Gospel and its way of life. AL 184. All Christian communities have an important role to play in ecological education. LS 214 **Eco-tip and prayer:** Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.

November 15. Action. Isn't it true that in spite of all the terrible wars and disasters that we see on TV every day many of us carry on living as normal. We may give some money to a disaster fund or a charity out of a sense of obligation, maybe guilt or compassion. It does seem that when people have suffered a loss or are suffering from a particular disease they are prepared to take some action, maybe form or join a support group like COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS for those who have lost a child or SUICIDES ANONYMOUS.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *"As it was in the days of Noah so will it be in the days of the Son of man. They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all."* Luke 17:26-37. **Pope Francis:** We note the rise of a false or superficial ecology which bolsters complacency and a cheerful recklessness. As it occurs in periods of deep crisis which require bold decisions we are tempted to think that what is happening is not entirely clear. Human beings feed their self-destructive vices, try not to see them, acknowledge them, pretend nothing will happen. LS 59. **Eco-tip and prayer:** Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.

November 16. Widowhood. Widows are commonly mentioned in the Bible, primarily because of their vulnerability, rather than the fact that they are widows, have lost a spouse and maybe mourning that loss and learning to deal with the life experience. Widowers too have to work through a process. For some this results initially in a state of confusion, a sense of helplessness and inadequacy at least for a time. Gradually they may recover a sense of justice, seek compensation if there has been wrongdoing and become more confident in their demands.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *"In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man and there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, "Vindicate me against my enemy, give me justice."* The judge said to himself, because this widow bothers me, I will give her what she wants or she will wear me out be her continual coming. Luke 18:1-8. **Pope Francis:** 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. AL 256-8. **Disinterested concern for others, and the rejection of every form of self-centredness and self-absorption are essential if we truly wish to care for our brothers and sisters and for the natural environment.** LS 208. **Eco-tip and prayer:** Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.

November 17. Sunday 33B. 2nd WORLD DAY OF THE POOR. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him Fr Peter, first chose the message of the gospel where Jesus spoke of the great tribulation and that he will gather the elect from the ends of the earth. He then also included, as a warning, two message from the book of Daniel which referred to the final judgement. Some will wake to everlasting life and some to everlasting shame. But the piece that he emphasized most were the words, "those who turn many to righteousness will shine like the stars for ever and ever. He said, "I want to connect this passage with the importance of the healing ministry. Yes there are those involved in exorcism, others in deliverance but the healing ministry of ordinary lay men and women to care and support those who are depressed and dealing with loss is invaluable. Why? Because that is where the majority of our suffering lies. In fact all families have to face losses and death at some stage and some will unfortunately suffer breakdown of some kind. Being the listening ear and the helping hand is recognised as being the work of God.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars for ever and ever.* Daniel 12:1-3. **Pope Francis:** We are always capable of going out of ourselves towards the other. Turning our backs on a grieving family would show a lack of mercy, be the loss of a pastoral opportunity and close the door to other efforts at evangelisation. AL 253. **Eco-tip and prayer:** Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.

November 18. The diocese had organised a pilgrimage to Lourdes for a number of families who had members with disabilities. They had met beforehand to pray together, and all became very excited. Would they or any of them be healed? The trip was quite arduous for the families, but it was a most spiritually uplifting experience. "Was anyone healed?" Bryan asked after they had come back. "In a way, I can say that not one of us was completely cured from a disability but almost every one of us was healed

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: "Son of David, have mercy on me." Jesus asked him, "What do you want?". "Lord let me receive my sight." From Luke 18:35-41. **Pope Francis:** If the family, in the light of 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. **Eco-tip and prayer:** Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.

November 19. When Stuart lost his job it seemed like the end of the world to him. The retrenchment package was only going to help the family for a few months and he was the main breadwinner. He went into depression and for a time wouldn't talk to anyone. Even when the family prayed together he kept away, feeling abandoned. It was little Belinda who came to him one evening and jumped on his lap, put her arms around him and hugged him and said, "Why are you sad, Daddy. I love you and Jesus loves you too. I wish you would come and play like we used to." That shook him out of his depression and he was able to start looking for a job again.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any one hears my voice and opens the door I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me. He who conquers I will grant him to sit with me on my throne. From Rev 3:1-6, 14-22. **Pope Francis:** We can appreciate the suffering creating by unemployment and the lack of steady work. The lack of employment opportunities takes its toll on the serenity of family life. AL25. **Each of us is the result of a thought of God, each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary.** LS 65 **Eco-tip and prayer:** Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.

November 20. The Bible study group was quite shocked when they read Luke's version that had seemed similar to Matthew's parable of Talents. How could Jesus be talking about slaying the man who didn't make any profit? They carefully studied the two versions and some commentaries and came to realise that in Luke's version Jesus was portraying a cruel, tyrannical ruler who would readily kill someone. Is this any different to our society today, in the world, the country or even in homes? How much unacceptable violence is taking place and why? Farm workers are beaten and killed and so are farmers. Police kill and are killed. Can any of the wars being waged today even vaguely be considered as "just?"

Reflect, share, act. Scripture "But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them before me." Luke 19:11-28. **Pope Francis:** In 2018 Pope Francis approved changes to Catholic teaching. "The death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person," reads the Catechism of the Catholic Church now on the death penalty, with the addition that the Church "works with determination for its abolition worldwide." He also condemns all war as a failure, stating that there is no "just war" FT. God is always ready to forgive and he never tires of forgiving in ways that are continually new and surprising. MV21, **Eco-tip and prayer:** Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.

November 21. Jesus' Concern. Pilgrimages to the Holy Land have been popular for many centuries. Nowadays Jerusalem doesn't look like it did in Jesus' time as it was already partly destroyed by the Romans only 30 years after his death. It was captured and fought over in many wars over the centuries. Would Jesus

still weep over Jerusalem today and the fate of its children? How many other cities in the world would he weep over? Would he weep over ours and our children's lives?

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: Jesus wept over Jerusalem saying, *The days are coming when your enemies will hem you in on every side and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you because you did not know the time of your visitation.* Luke 19:41-44. **Pope Francis:** *From the first moments of their lives, many children are rejected, abandoned and robbed of their childhood and future. This is shameful!* AL166. **Eco tip and prayer:** *Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.*

November 22. Jesus. Margaret once challenged the Sacred Heart Sodality members about the wording on their T-shirts. "Yes, we do see Jesus as meek, mild and humble but I ask myself is that your favourite image of him? There are different images and sometimes I can relate better to the one where he overturns the tables of the money-changers and chases those selling sacrificial animals away. I want the Jesus I hope to meet one day to be a powerful kingly figure." They had to agree that everyone has their own favourite image of Jesus.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Jesus entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, saying to them, "it is written, 'my house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have it a den of robbers.* Luke 19:45-48. **Pope Francis:** *It is a profound spiritual experience to contemplate our loved ones with the eyes of God and to see Christ in them. Our loved ones merit our complete attention. Jesus is our model in this, for whenever people approached to speak with him, he would meet their gaze, directly and lovingly.* AL323. **Eco-tip and prayer:** *Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.*

November 23. Continuing Bonds. At the widowed retreat the group prayed the Stations of the Cross for Widowed People. "You know why we have a 15th Station," Antonette asked. "Because for all of us, who miss our spouses so much we have a need to see them again, to know that death is not the end and that they are with God, waiting for us and to be reunited with us."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture *Those who are accounted worthy to attain to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage for they cannot die any more, being sons of the resurrection.* Luke 20:27-40. **Pope Francis:** *Indeed for your faithful people Lord, life is changed not ended, and when this earthly dwelling turns to dust an eternal dwelling is made ready for them in heaven. From Preface for the Dead. We will prepare ourselves to meet once more our loved ones who have died. The better we live on this earth, the greater the happiness we will be able to share with our loved ones in heaven.* AL 256-8 **Eco-tip and prayer:** *Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.*

November 24. Sunday Christ the King B. There are many parishes dedicated to Christ the King, but at St Damian's Fr Peter had put a crown on the figure on the cross for all to see. He spoke of kings and queens, princes and princesses who hold a rather confusing place in society today. We admire them for their status but many of us don't really want them to rule over us. We prefer democratically elected leaders. Even Jesus hardly presented an admirable kingly figure as he stood before Pilate, but yet he embodied the true kingly qualities of dedication and giving his life for his people. However, at his 2nd coming he will be the universal king of all who are on the side of truth and listen to his voice. "Will you be among his subjects?" he will ask.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Let us pray, almighty and merciful God, you break the power of evil and make all things new in your son Jesus Christ, the King of the universe. May all in heaven and earth acclaim your glory and never cease to praise you. Opening prayer of the Mass.* **Pope Francis:** *The primary reason for evangelising is the love of Jesus which we have received, the experience of salvation which urges us to ever greater love of him. Jesus' whole life, his way of dealing with the poor, his actions, his integrity his simple daily acts of generosity and finally his complete self-giving is precious and reveals the mystery of his divine life.* EG

265. Eco-tip and prayer: *Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.*

November 25. Widows and orphans are commonly mentioned in the Bible as being poor and needy. We often think of grandmothers caring for grandchildren who are orphaned, having lost one or both parents. That isn't always the case and there are also child-headed families of orphans who have lost the love and support of a parent, financially, psychologically, emotionally and spiritually. Do we in our extended families and parishes offer the support they need so that they will remain close to God and not feel angry and rejected in their hardship? *16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILD ABUSE begins on this day*

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasure and he saw a poor widow put in two copper coins. He said, "this poor widow has put in more than all of these; out of her poverty she put in all the living that she had. Luke 21:1-4.* **Pope Francis:** *In addition to the small circle of the couple and their children there is the larger family. This family should provide love and support to teenage mothers, children without parents, single mothers, persons with disabilities, young people struggling with addiction, the unmarried, separated or widowed who are alone and the elderly and infirm who lack the support of their children.* **AL197. Eco-tip and prayer:** *Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.*

November 26. In very recent times there have been many of the events that Jesus mentioned when he spoke of the end times. Earthquakes, fires, famines and disease happen and there is a constant state of war somewhere in the world. But these things have also been happening for the last 2000 years and people have always debated whether the end is near. What is becoming more marked today is a greater awareness of how we, humankind, are contributing to these events by our actions and lifestyles, and in particular the destruction of our environment. Pope Francis in his encyclical *LAUDATO SI* calls on us to look ahead and protect our environment. He speaks of **THE WORLD OUR COMMON HOME**, irrespective of how long it will remain our home before the 2nd Coming.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *"When you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for this must first take place, but the end will not be at once."* From Luke 21:5-11. **Pope Francis:** *When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities, it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is connected.* **LS 117 Eco-tip and prayer:** *Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.*

November 27. We live in very troubled times in different parts of the world. Many people in war zones lose everything and are killed. It might be because they are on a different side in the war, or for their beliefs, especially where some are Muslims, some Christians, while some fight amongst themselves as tribes or clans. However, this has been happening again and again for many centuries and we know there are millions of martyrs who did not or were not able to resist when being challenged to abandon their faith. We have to believe in a special way in life after death for the sake of all who were martyred.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and kinsmen and friends and some of you they will put to death, for my name's sake, but not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives.* Luke 21: 12-19. **Pope Francis:** *Interreligious dialogue is a necessary condition for peace in the world and so it is a duty for Christians as well as other religions. This dialogue is in the first place a conversation about human existence or being open to people, sharing their joys and sorrows. We learn to accept others and their different ways of living, thinking and speaking.* **EG 250. Eco-tip and prayer:** *Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.*

November 28. Groups discussed the so-called last things which come up a lot in the readings of the time. “In almost every generation there are people who believe the end of the world is nigh. We call that millennialism. Some people interpret the book of Revelation and speak about The Rapture, when they believe they – if they have lived righteous lives – will get taken straight up into heaven. Some Old Testament books like Daniel and Ezekiel also wrote in that style. Even Paul wrote about the end times to the Thessalonians. Pope Francis has drawn attention to the abuse of the environment as a sign of our present times. Will that contribute to the end? Jesus himself told us that only the Father knows. Does that give you hope and comfort or not?

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity. Luke 21: 20-28.* **Pope Francis:** *Patriarch Bartholomew has drawn attention to the ethic and spiritual roots of environmental problems which require that we look for solutions not only in technology but in a change of humanity; otherwise we would be dealing merely with symptoms. LS 9. We direct our gaze to the end of time, when the Son will deliver all things to the Father so that “God may be everything to everyone.” LS 100* **Eco-tip and prayer:** *Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.*

November 29. Was Jesus a lover of nature? He used birds, seeds, plants and trees in his teaching and parables, recognising these ordinary natural parts of life. When pets die we and our children often feel very sad. There was a time when it was taught that animals do not have a soul. That thinking is not common today and we do suggest to our children they will see Fluffy the cat, or Munchkin the hamster again as we teach them about the process of life and death. Watching growth of plants and flowers too reminds us of the fact that life is a journey towards eternity.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they come out in leaf know the summer is near. Luke 21:29-33.* **Pope Francis:** *St Francis takes us to the heart of what it is to be human. Just as happens when we fall in love whenever he would gaze at the sun, the moon or the smallest of animals he burst into song, drawing all other creatures into his praise. His response to the world around him was much more than intellectual appreciation for to him each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection. Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise. LS11-12.* **Eco-tip and prayer:** *Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.*

November 30. St Andrew. Was Andrew the “also ran” in the team, just as there are many children in families who are seen as the “also rans.” They may not be great achievers, or the most beautiful, or talented in any particular way, but may be a steady follower, a loyal friend, a good person to depend on and trust. Was Andrew the steadier man, when Peter, who became the leader and the rock, is yet regarded as a more impetuous and impulsive man. In difficult circumstances what kind of person would be the most supportive one to call on and to take action. How do we each see ourselves in this context? In the Conversation in the Spirit synodal dialogue process share on this subject.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.* ¹⁹ *“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.”* ²⁰ *At once they left their nets and followed him. Matt. 4:18-22.* **Pope Francis:** *Enforceable international agreements are urgently needed, since local authorities are not always capable of effective interventions. Relations between states must be respectful of each other’s sovereignty but must also lay down mutually agreed means of averting regional disasters which would eventually affect everyone. Global regulatory norms are needed to impose obligations and prevent unacceptable actions, e.g. when powerful companies dump contaminated waste or offshore polluting industries in other countries. LS 173.* **Eco-tip and prayer:** *Creator God in this month of commemoration of loss and death comfort us in our pain and strengthen us in our understanding that you never abandon us and care for each of your creatures day by day.*

ADVENT AND LITURGICAL YEAR C BEGIN ON 1 DECEMBER.