



MARFAM JUBILEE 2025, IN OUR WORLD, A FAMILY OF FAMILIES THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY - FEBRUARY: LOVE GIVES FAMILIES LIFE

with an overall focus on Becoming Eco-Friendly Families as Jubilee Pilgrims of Hope.



NOTES:

- **Abbreviations for resources:** Pope Francis: LS = Laudato Si. AL = Amoris Laetitia. FT = Fratelli Tutti. LD = Laudate Deum. DN = Dilexit Nos. SNC Jub25 = Jubilee 2025 Spes non confundit MM = Misericordia Misera. EG = Evangelii Gaudium
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- **2025 FAMILY YEAR PLANNER** calendar can be downloaded from www.marfam.org.za or ordered in printed format.

Extracts from **POPE FRANCIS: JUBILEE 2025 SPES NON CONFUNDIT/Hope does not disappoint.**

Hope does not disappoint. Here we see the reason why this hope perseveres in the midst of trials: founded on faith and nurtured by charity, it enables us to press forward in life.

Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. Even so, uncertainty about the future may at times give rise to conflicting feelings, ranging from confident trust to apprehensiveness, from serenity to anxiety, from firm conviction to hesitation and doubt. Often we come across people who are discouraged, pessimistic and cynical about the future, as if nothing could possibly bring them happiness. For all of us, may the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope. God's word helps us find reasons for that hope. Hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. (Rom 5:1-2.5).

Hope is born of love and based on the love springing from the pierced heart of Jesus upon the cross: "For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life" (Rom 5:19). That life becomes manifest in our own life of faith, which begins with Baptism, develops in openness to God's grace and is enlivened by a hope constantly renewed and confirmed by the working of the Holy Spirit. Jubilee 2025 2-3.

A FAMILY PRAYER FOR CREATION from LAUDATO SI. God of love show us our place in this world as families and as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth for not one of them is forgotten in your sight. Help us to protect all life, to prepare for a better future for the final coming of your Kingdom, of justice, peace, love and beauty. Praise be to you! Amen.

Introduction. February. Love gives Families life. Hope, built on faith is sustained by love. God creates out of love for love. As God is Trinity, God's love is life-giving, creating, sustaining and renewing creation. Our task and gift as humans and life-givers is co-creation with God, from conception to natural death, nurturing relationships and caring for children. There is a strong focus on marriage, the ideal love relationship in this month's reflections but loving relationships are one of the essential aspects of what family is all about, total, lifelong commitment. Love of nature and of creation sustain life in all of creation. The human and divine love of the Sacred Heart can teach us the way of love. **Pope Francis:** *Love always gives life. The couple in giving themselves to one another, give not just themselves, but also the reality of children, a living reflection of their love. AL165. Loving human relationships are mirrored and carried forward in care for creation. Caring for trees and rhinos and rejecting unborn human life and the cry of the poor are not loving and fully lifegiving. Every creature is the object of the Father's tenderness. LS 77. JUBILEE 2025. Hope is born of love and based on the love springing from the pierced heart of Jesus upon the cross. That life becomes manifest in our own life of faith, which begins with Baptism, develops in openness to God's grace and is enlivened by a hope constantly renewed and confirmed by the working of the Holy Spirit. SNC/DN*

Setting the scene. With the theme for the month in mind parishes were asked to focus most strongly on marriage but also on other forms of family life. Parish liturgy teams, catechists and all prayer groups and sodalities were invited to include marriage in their programmes and sessions as it is a Sacrament of the Church for the Church and not only for married couples. Hold a special celebration on World Marriage Day.

February 1. Blessed Benedict Daswa. A respected school principal and family man, Daswa was stoned and killed by fellow-villagers in Venda on 2 February 1990 because of their jealousy and his opposition to witchcraft. One of Benedict's friends, a principal, spoke about his attitude towards family life, "When men were at a District meeting, Benedict said, 'Men should help their wives. For example, if there is a baby at home and the Mother is busy, the Father should take care of the baby. The time has come for men to realise that we can do women's work.' Some men used to laugh at him, saying that he was overpowered by his wife. Benedict Daswa's response. 'You will be looked down on if you are the boss in the family, yet do not help your wife, and expect that the women will do everything for you. Biologically, we are meant to help one another.'" He was beatified as South Africa's 1st martyr in September 2015. Visit www.benedictdaswa.org.za for info.

Reflect, share. Scripture: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, ⁴⁶ who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it." Matthew 13:45-46. **Pope Francis.** By their witness as well as their words families speak to others of Jesus. They pass on the faith, arouse a desire for God and reflect the beauty of the Gospel and its way of life. AL 184. JUBILEE The most convincing testimony to hope is provided by the martyrs. Steadfast in their faith in the risen Christ, they renounced life itself here below, rather than betray their Lord. Martyrs, as confessors of the life that knows no end, are present and numerous in every age, and perhaps even more so in our own day. We need to treasure their testimony, in order to confirm our hope and allow it to bear good fruit. SNC20. **Prayer and action:** reflect seriously on your personal response and take what action is possible.

February 2. Presentation, Candlemas. Sunday 4C. Fr Shaun always kept the spirit of Christmas alive until this feast, 40 days after Christmas which commemorates the parents of Jesus coming to Jerusalem for their purification. Traditions whether religious, tribal or family play an important role in society giving people a sense of their identity. However, today some traditions are frowned upon as maybe being sexist, racist or anti one religion or another. If they discriminate in some way they can even be hurtful to some. Purification can be seen to be discriminatory to women. "In the interest of being fully loving should families have a choice in what traditions they will keep?" was a question posed for reflection in the prayer group.

Reflect, share. Scripture: This child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign of contradiction. And a sword will pierce through your own soul also. Luke 2:22-40. **Pope Francis.** The lack of historical memory is a serious shortcoming in our society. A mentality that says, "then was then, now is now is ultimately immature; Knowing and judging past events is the only way to build a meaningful future. AL 193 JUBILEE Hope is born of love and based on the love springing from the pierced heart of Jesus upon the cross: SNC 3. **Prayer and action :** Pray about meaningful traditions that are important in your family. Choose appropriate action.

February 3. Doing the loving thing in relationships can be hard and challenging at times. That is what Marissa found when her husband had a serious fallout over a financial deal with her brother. He had refused to speak to her brother saying it was too hard to forgive but she nevertheless continued to pray that there could be forgiveness and reconciliation.

Reflect, share. Scripture: Jesus called out, "Come out of the man you unclean spirits." The unclean spirits came out and entered the herd of swine who rushed down into the sea and were drowned. Those who had seen and told what had happened to the demoniac and to the swine began to beg Jesus to depart from their neighbourhood because they were afraid. Mark 5:1-20. **Pope Francis.** When we have been offended or let down forgiveness is possible and desirable but no one can say that it is easy. The truth is that "family communion can only be preserved and perfected through a great spirit of sacrifice. AL106. JUBILEE. The men and women of our time often find themselves confused and torn apart, almost bereft of an inner principle that can create unity and harmony in their lives and actions. Models of behaviour that, sadly, are now widespread exaggerate our rational-technological dimension or, on the contrary, that of our instincts". No room is left for the heart. DN 9. **Prayer and action :** Pray for clarity and willingness to live Jesus' way. Choose appropriate action.

February 4. Those involved in living the Jubilee Year of Hope are aware that what is expected is a new ardour, a stronger and more expressive faith built on a deeper relationship with Jesus. This is particularly clear in Pope Francis' document on the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Faith and love are closely related with hope being built on faith and sustained by love. "I wish that my faith was strong like that," Johannes said to himself and he prayed each day. "My hope is that I can make my faith and relationship with Jesus grow and at the same time with Gloria my wife too?"

Reflect, share. Scripture: There was a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years. She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. Jesus asked, "who touched me,"

and then added, “Woman your faith has healed you.” Mark 5:21-43. **Pope Francis:** Love does realise that though things may not always turn out as we wish God may well make crooked lines straight and draw some good from the evil we endure in this world. AL 116. **JUBILEE** Many people feel safer constructing their systems of thought in the more readily controllable domain of intelligence and will. The failure to make room for the heart, as distinct from our human powers and passions viewed in isolation from one another, has resulted in a stunting of the idea of a personal centre, in which love, in the end, is the one reality that can unify all the others. DN 10. **Prayer and action :** Pray for an increase in faith and love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Choose appropriate action.

February 5. Beauty had been a catechist for a number of years. While she loved the ministry she also felt quite sad that she was finding herself growing away from her own family. “It seems as if they think I’m some kind of religious nut,” she shared, “and all I wish is for Peter and the kids to understand what I am gaining from this growing spirituality, especially my eco-spirituality. It isn’t only about God and me, but affects the family too.”

Reflect, share. Scripture: Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honour, except in his own country and among his own kin and in his own house.” Mark 6:1-6. **Pope Francis.** Those who have deep spiritual aspirations should not feel that the family detracts from their growth in the life of the Spirit, but rather see it as a path which the Lord is using to lead them to the heights of mystical union. AL 316. **JUBILEE:** St Paul can write: “We boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope” (Rom 5:3-4). For the Apostle, trials and tribulations mark the lives of those who preach the Gospel amid incomprehension and persecution. We learn to practise a virtue closely linked to hope, namely patience. In our fast-paced world, we are used to wanting everything now. SNC 4. **Prayer and action :** Pray for confidence and consolation in living one’s particular calling. Choose appropriate action.

February 6. Pauline shared, “This ‘two by two’ is one of my favourite images of marriage. When we think along Biblical lines and the term “two by two” comes up it is natural to think of Noah and the animals, going into the ark two by two. “But going even further back what about the creation story. God created man and woman to live side by side or two by two in their own relationship and with others. In addition in Genesis we learn they will be “two in one flesh.” That aspect of intimacy is intended to be even more powerful than two people side by side.”

Reflect, share. Scripture: Jesus began to send the Twelve out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. Mark 6:7-13. **Pope Francis.** Whenever we encounter another person in love we learn something new about God. EG272. **JUBILEE** The interplay of hope and patience makes us see clearly that the Christian life is a journey calling for moments of greater intensity to encourage and sustain hope as the constant companion that guides our steps towards the goal of our encounter with the Lord Jesus. SNC 5. **Prayer and action :** Pray for clarity and willingness to live Jesus’ way. Choose appropriate action.

February 7. One night as the family were discussing commitment Jocely commented about faithfulness and adultery. “Many people don’t seem to care, but others are prepared to stand up for what is right. Some believe it is not their business what other people do. Doesn’t that give a bad example to the youth and cheapen what true love and commitment are really meant to be?” “There could be a fine line drawn there,” her brother said. “I don’t believe in speaking up about others.” “When I think about responsible parenthood I also think of animals, even birds, as I have been fascinated how often I have seen them operating together as couples. That is an example one could share.”

Reflect, share. Scripture: Herod had seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Phillip’s wife because he had married her. John said to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” Mark 6:14-29. **Pope Francis.** Marriage is a friendship marked by passion but a passion directed to an ever more stable and intense union that is all-encompassing, exclusive, faithful and open to new life. Such a love, bringing together the human and the divine, leads the partners to a free and mutual self-giving experienced in tenderness and action, permeating their entire lives. AL 125. **JUBILEE.** Openness to life and responsible parenthood is the design that the Creator has implanted in the hearts and bodies of men and women, a mission that the Lord has entrusted to spouses and to their love. The desire of young people to give birth to new sons and daughters as a sign of the fruitfulness of their love ensures a future for every society. This is a matter of hope: it is a sign of hope, born of hope and it generates hope. SNC 9. **Prayer and action :** Pray for faithfulness and commitment for all marriages, especially the young. Choose appropriate action.

February 8. Josephine Bakhita. As a young girl she was sold on slave-markets in North Africa several times. Like other slaves she suffered indignity and abuse. Eventually she was taken to Italy by a caring family where she converted to Christianity and later became a nun. Because of and through their suffering some people are blessed with a particularly strong love of God, something for which she has been canonised. Although there is much more awareness of human dignity and rights today human trafficking is a modern form of slavery conducted for financial gain in many countries and in many forms. Women and girls mainly who are exploited and used as sex slaves are particularly vulnerable and do suffer from the experience. Suffering helps us to identify with Jesus and brings us closer to God. However we are called to work for alleviation of all suffering.

Reflect, share. Scripture: *O God, who led Saint Josephine Bakhita from abject slavery to the dignity of being your daughter and a bride of Christ, grant, we pray, that by her example we may show constant love for the Lord Jesus crucified, remaining steadfast in charity and prompt to show compassion. Collect for feast of St Josephine Bakhita.*

Pope Francis: *The experience of mercy enables us to regard all human problems from the standpoint of God's love. MM 14. JUBILEE. Before the heart of Jesus, living and present, our mind, enlightened by the Spirit, grows in the understanding of his words and our will is moved to put them into practice. This could easily remain on the level of a kind of self-reliant moralism. Hearing and tasting the Lord, and paying him due honour, however, is a matter of the heart. Only the heart is capable of setting our other powers and passions, and our entire person, in a stance of reverence and loving obedience before the Lord. DN 27* **Prayer and action :** Pray for a growing commitment to the love of Jesus and willingness to live his way. Choose appropriate action.

February 9. The parish marriage and family team had been planning a special liturgical event for this special World Marriage Day to focus on the value of good marriages as had been done for over 30 years by Worldwide Marriage Encounter. But they had found the response not what they had hoped for. "Couples don't seem to be very interested. Are we doing this the right way, or planning the wrong kind of event?" James asked so they gathered to pray about it. "Why don't we open it up wider and make it 'Marriage Moments, past, present and future.' That way we can involve everyone, the young who we hope are looking forward to it and elderly – widowed, even divorced who will have experienced married love in their own ways." Suddenly the project took off in a big way.

Reflect, share. Scripture *Jesus said to Simon, "Put out in the deep and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered, Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." And they enclosed a great shoal of fish. Luke 5:1-11. Pope Francis:* *As a social institution marriage protects and shapes a shared commitment to deeper growth in love and commitment to one another, for the good of society as a whole. That is why marriage is more than a fleeting fashion; it is of enduring importance. AL 131. JUBILEE. We see, then, that in the heart of each person there is a mysterious connection between self-knowledge and openness to others, between the encounter with one's personal uniqueness and the willingness to give oneself to others. We become ourselves only to the extent that we acquire the ability to acknowledge others, while only those who can acknowledge and accept themselves are then able to encounter others. SNC9. Prayer and action* Pray for your and other marriages that genuine consideration for one another will help build couple love. Choose appropriate action.

February 10. Grandad mused, "There have been different theories about the creation from all different faiths. Some people do literally believe the Biblical account that God created in 7 days while science continues to research into the origin of the whole universe. Science and religion with their distinct approaches contribute much to our growing understanding, especially of our role as human beings. I love to read and reflect on all that. God was there, the spirit of God was there and God was pleased with what he had made. I just wish we could say that about everything we have made too."

Reflect, share. Scripture: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. GENESIS 1:1-19. Pope Francis:* *The creation accounts in the book of Genesis contain in their own symbolic and narrative language profound teaching about human existence and its historical reality. They suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental relationships; with God, with our neighbour and with the earth. LS 66. JUBILEE. May the Jubilee be a Holy Year marked by the hope that does not fade, our hope in God. May it help us to recover trust that we require, in the Church and in society, in our interpersonal relationships, in international relations, and in our task of promoting the dignity of all persons and respect for God's gift of creation. SNC 25. Prayer and action.* Express gratitude for the gift of creation. Choose appropriate action.

February 11. Our Lady of Lourdes. Day of Prayer for the Sick. Jim and Joan had been married for some years when after much prayer they were finally blessed with a baby. Little did they know that she could be born with Down's syndrome and could be a burden for them all their lives. It took many months for them to decide as they considered an abortion. They prayed even harder. "Let us go to Lourdes as we have been wanting to do for some time and ask Our Lady to heal our infant and our pain too." Their pilgrimage was supported by their wider family and everyone was delighted when not long after their return a bright, bouncing, baby girl was born.

Reflect, share. Scripture: *Genesis 1: 20 – 2-4a. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."* **Pope Francis.** *Expectant parents need to ask God for the wisdom fully to know their children and to accept them as they are.* AL 170. AL 165. **JUBILEE.** *The Christian community should be at the forefront in pointing out the need for a social covenant to support and foster hope, working for a future filled with the laughter of babies and children in order to fill the empty cradles in so many parts of the world.* SNC 9. **Prayer and action.** Thank God for the gift of children. Choose appropriate action.

February 12. Jeannette and David had tried unsuccessfully for some years to become pregnant. She said, "Have you thought about it that after God created mankind as male and female he blessed them. Then he told them to be fruitful, but that hasn't happened to us yet. Do we ever ask God to bless our love-making so that it can be fruitful?" "That is a great idea, even though it feels a bit strange," David replied. "Maybe our fertility treatment has become too technical and theoretical. Maybe we could rely more on God's providence. What is really God's will for us?"

Reflect, share. Scripture: *Genesis 2:4b-9. The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man saying, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden' but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."* **Pope Francis to Pontifical Academy for Life.** *The many extraordinary resources made available to human beings by scientific and technological research could overshadow the joy of fraternal sharing and the beauty of common undertakings, unless they find their meaning in advancing that joy and beauty.* **Prayer and action.** Pray for guidance in all decisions regarding children. Choose appropriate action.

February 13. David mused, "Of course Valentine's day is all about love but is there something special and unique about God choosing an appropriate helper. How can we really judge whether two people fit well together, or are made for one another? It often feels like that in the beginning of a relationship but why doesn't it last? I once saw a series of pictures about being a good fit. Two nice round balls don't necessarily fit well together. It wasn't two perfect halves of an apple but sometimes quite jagged with rough edges that need to be smoothed out. Maybe that is why roses have thorns too."

Reflect, share. Scripture: *Genesis 2: 18-25. "It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him." "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh."* **Pope Francis.** *Loving another person involves the joy of contemplating and appreciating their innate beauty and sacredness which is greater than my needs.* AL 127. **JUBILEE.** *It is only by starting from the heart that our communities will succeed in uniting and reconciling differing minds and wills, so that the Spirit can guide us in unity as brothers and sisters. Reconciliation and peace are also born of the heart. The heart of Christ is "ecstasy", openness, gift and encounter. In that heart, we learn to relate to one another in wholesome and happy ways, and to build up in this world God's kingdom of love and justice. Our hearts, united with the heart of Christ, are capable of working this social miracle.* DN29. **Prayer and action.** Pray a couple prayer together or pray for couples. Choose appropriate action.

February 14. Valentine's Day. Jeanette smiled to herself and thought, "Funny that. God made the man first but she was the one who took the initiative and fed him something very good to eat. That is certainly still her lot and being a good cook making attractive dishes is a pleasure many women still enjoy, but of course men do too. It must have been quite a temptation to eat from a desirable tree. That is how it is with temptation and nice food, a permanent challenge. I wonder when it comes to Valentine's Day what will the choices be."

Reflect, share. Scripture *When the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruits and ate and she also gave some to her husband and he ate.* Gene 3:1-8. **Pope Francis.** *The spirituality of family love is made up of thousands of small but*

real gestures. In that variety of gifts and encounters which deepen communion god has his dwelling place. AL 315. JUBILEE. We need to "abound in hope" (cf. Rom 15:13), so that we may bear credible and attractive witness to the faith and love that dwell in our hearts; that our faith may be joyful and our charity enthusiastic; and that each of us may be able to offer a smile, a small gesture of friendship, a kind look, a ready ear, a good deed, in the knowledge that, in the spirit of Jesus, these can become, for those who receive them, rich seeds of hope. SNC 18 **Prayer and action.** Pray that married couples' love will be sustained through their commitment. Choose appropriate action.

February 15. Jeannette and David continued their discussion with others in their group. "Sexuality has been a complex, enjoyable but difficult matter throughout history." "We learned through Marriage Encounter that God's plan is for joy, for couples the deepest form of communication of oneself. And yet even in good marriages there is the pain not only of childbirth but of personality clashes and conflict. On top of that the issue of sexual abuse and domestic violence in all families, which is spoken about so much today, is a scourge in society.

Reflect, share. Scripture *To the woman the Lord said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing, in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you. From Genesis 3:9-24* **Pope Francis:** *Sex can often become depersonalised and unhealthy; as a result it becomes the occasion and instrument for self-assertion and selfish satisfaction of personal desires and instincts. Sexuality risks being poisoned by the mentality of use and discard. AL 153. JUBILEE] We, however, by virtue of the hope in which we were saved, can view the passage of time with the certainty that the history of humanity and our own individual history are not doomed to a dead end or a dark abyss, but directed to an encounter with the Lord of glory. SNC 19.* **Prayer and action.** Thank God for the gift of sexuality and pray not to abuse this gift. Choose appropriate action.

February 16. Sunday. 6C. Looking around at the elderly Fr George said, "I just read an article about life in a simple, rural setting where materialism and consumerism had not yet reared their ugly head. Loving families were genuinely happier than in our modern urban society where there are always demands for more, more land, more jobs, more money." Others responded, "We do forget, but is it possible?" "What have we done to ourselves that has taken away our sense of blessedness? Can we ever recover it?"

Reflect, share. Scripture *Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you that weep now for you shall laugh. Luke 6:20-26* **Pope Francis.** *In a consumerist society the sense of beauty is impoverished and so joy fades. Everything is there to be purchased, possessed or consumed, including people. Tenderness is a sign of a love free of selfish possessiveness. AL 127. JUBILEE. The elderly, who frequently feel lonely and abandoned, also deserve signs of hope. Esteem for the treasure that they are, their life experiences, their accumulated wisdom and the contribution that they can still make, is incumbent on the Christian community and civil society, which are called to cooperate in strengthening the covenant between generations. SNC14.* **Prayer and action.** Pray for the elderly in your family. Choose appropriate action towards the elderly.

February 17. "What is really behind the story of Cain and Abel? I've always found it confusing," Frank said. "Was Cain's sacrifice to God not good enough and therefore rejected?" "Was his sin jealousy of his brother whose sacrifice was accepted?" "Is the message, that we have to be aware of our negative traits, like jealousy, and work to overcome them?" Apart from family violence, family murders do come up in the news and there too one wonders what it is that drives a father, or a mother to kill those they are meant to love and where their love has turned sour?"

Reflect, share. Scripture *The Lord said to Cain, "why are you angry? If you do well will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door, its desire is for you but you must master it. Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Genesis 4:1-15.* **Pope Francis.** *Envy is a form of sadness provoked by another's prosperity; it shows that we are not concerned for the happiness of others but only with our own well-being. Love makes us rise above ourselves, envy closes us in on ourselves. AL 95. JUBILEE. Happiness is our human vocation, a goal to which all aspire. We aspire to a happiness that is definitively found in the one thing that can bring us fulfilment, which is love. Thus, we will be able to say even now: I am loved, therefore I exist; and I will live forever in the love that does not disappoint, the love from which nothing can ever separate me. SNC 21.* **Prayer and action.** Pray for wisdom to avoid the sin of envy. Choose appropriate action.

February 18. These origin stories in the first books of Genesis are stories of theology, teaching stories, sometimes even quite simplistic. Would God really have said, "I'm sorry I made man and will blot him out." Or is it an exaggerated message about how bad people had become? Is the story using a natural event like a great flood to

teach a life lesson? Some people could say that the natural disasters of today, fires, hurricanes, floods and even the scourge of HIV/AIDS or Covid are punishments from God for the wickedness of mankind. But how does our image of a loving forgiving God fit this scenario?

Reflect, share. Scripture Gen 6:5-8. *The Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the ground, man and beast and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them. But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord.* **Pope Francis.** *According to human logic it seems reasonable for God to think of rejecting an unfaithful people; they had not observed their pact and covenant with God and therefore deserved just punishment. St Augustine says, "It is easier for God to hold back anger than mercy." God's anger lasts but a moment, his mercy forever. MV21 JUBILEE. Taking the heart seriously, then, has consequences for society as a whole. Vatican II teaches us that, "every one of us needs a change of heart; we must set our gaze on the whole world and look to those tasks we can all perform together in order to bring about the betterment of our race". For "the imbalances affecting the world today are in fact a symptom of a deeper imbalance rooted in the human heart". In pondering the tragedies afflicting our world, the Council explains that human beings "by their interior life, transcend the entire material universe; they experience this deep interiority when they enter into their own heart, where God, who probes the heart, awaits them, and where they decide their own destiny in the sight of God". DN 29. **Prayer and action.** Pray for your needed "change of heart." Choose appropriate action.*

February 19. The Scripture scholar explained that the Bible is a library of books of different types. Although we believe that the writers were inspired by God's Spirit there are some limitations as they were written within the context of the time. Context is important in all things also in our family structures and behaviour patterns. It can be hard even for a loving family to accept the weaknesses of its members.

Reflect, share. Scripture *The Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. Gen 8:6-13, 20-22. **Pope Francis.** God does not deny justice. He rather envelopes it and surpasses it with an even greater event in which we experience love as the foundation of true justice. MV21. JUBILEE. This in no way implies an undue reliance on our own abilities. Let us never forget that our hearts are not self-sufficient, but frail and wounded. They possess an ontological dignity, yet at the same time must seek an ever more dignified life. To live in accordance with this dignity, it is not enough to know the Gospel or to carry out mechanically its demands. We need the help of God's love. Let us turn, then, to the heart of Christ, that core of his being, which is a blazing furnace of divine and human love and the most sublime fulfilment to which humanity can aspire. There, in that heart, we truly come at last to know ourselves and we learn how to love. DN30. **Prayer and action.** Pray for deeper love of the heart of Jesus. Choose appropriate action.*

February 20. Welcoming the rainbow after the storm David wondered, "South Africa likes to see itself as the Rainbow Nation and we have borrowed the image from this Bible story about Noah and the Flood. What is its message? That God has made a pact with us that he will always be present? But can it also strike one that a rainbow is made up of different colours each having their place, some maybe even more attractive than others to different people. Is some of our battle over racism bogged down in refusing to recognise and accept that differences are real?

Reflect, share. Scripture *This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, I set my bow in the cloud and it shall be a sign. Gen 9:1-13. **Pope Francis.** Christian morality is not a form of stoicism, or self-denial, or merely a practical philosophy or a catalogue of sins and faults. Before all else the Gospel invites us to respond to the God of love who saves us, to see God in others and to go forth from ourselves to seek the good of others. EG39. JUBILEE. Let us never forget that our hearts are not self-sufficient, but frail and wounded. They possess an ontological dignity, yet at the same time must seek an ever more dignified life. The ferment of the Gospel has aroused and continues to arouse in human hearts an unquenchable thirst for human dignity". Let us turn to the heart of Chris where we truly come at last to know ourselves and we learn how to love. DN 30. **Prayer and action.** Pray for deeper love of the heart of Jesus. Choose appropriate action.*

February 21. David suggested, "Like the rainbow story there are lessons for reflection in the Tower of Babel story too. Here their unity is seen as almost a gangster mentality while power is the motivation. Is it that when we get too proud and big for our boots we need to be cut down to size? Just looking at society today in dozens of ways there certainly seems to be a problem with accepting even legitimate authority like traffic rules, but gangsterism is a serious growing problem."

Reflect, share. Scripture: God said, “Behold they are one people and they have all one language and this is only the beginning of what they will do and nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come let us go down and confuse their language.” Gen 11:1-9. **Pope Francis.** Freedom of choice makes it possible to plan our lives and to make the most of ourselves. Yet if this freedom lacks noble goals or personal discipline it degenerates into an inability to give oneself generously to others. This can be seen in marriage where more and more people are choosing to live alone or simply spend time together. A family can come to be seen as a way station. AL 34. JUBILEE. Judgement concerns the salvation in which we hope and which Jesus has won for us by his death and resurrection. The evil we have done cannot remain hidden; it needs to be purified in order to enable this encounter with God’s love. We begin to see the need of our prayers for all those who have ended their earthly pilgrimage, that is effective by virtue of the communion of the saints, and the shared bond that makes us one in Christ, the firstborn of all creation. The Jubilee indulgence, thanks to the power of prayer, is intended in a particular way for those who have gone before us, so that they may obtain full mercy. SNC 22. **Prayer and action.** Pray for and offer indulgences for those who have gone before us. Choose appropriate action.

February 22. Eish! The tongue really is a mixed blessing. Bullying at any age or in any circumstance and saying nasty things about others can be very destructive. It hurts a person but also harms social interaction. How many of us are hypocritical, praising something or someone and yet stabbing them in the back. We pray to God and at the same time destroy a person’s good name. Every family can think of many examples and should also think of how this can be avoided or hurtful situations resolved. Loving families in order to be happy should have the will to do so.

Reflect, share. Scripture: The tongue is a fire. The tongue is an unrighteous world among our members staining the whole body. No human being can tame the tongue. With it we bless the Lord and Father and with it we curse men. James 3:1-10. **Pope Francis** JUBILEE. To speak ill of others puts them in a bad light, undermines their reputation and leaves them prey to the whims of gossip. To refrain from judgement and condemnation means to know how to accept the good in every person and to spare him any suffering caused by a partial judgement. If we find it hard to trust others because we have been hurt by lies, injuries and disappointments, the Lord whispers in our ear: “Take heart, son!” (Mt 9:2), “Take heart, daughter!” (Mt 9:22). He encourages us to overcome our fear and to realize that, with him at our side, we have nothing to lose. Nor should you be afraid. Let him draw near and sit at your side. There may be many people we distrust, but not him. Do not hesitate because of your sins. Keep in mind that many sinners “came and sat with him” (Mt 9:10), yet Jesus was scandalized by none of them. DN 37. **Prayer and action.** Pray for an non-judgmental attitude towards others. Choose appropriate action.

February 23. The Marriage Enrichment group with Fr Andrew had been meeting regularly during this month as they had decided to make a special effort to work on their relationships many of which were experiencing difficulties. It had been a job to get the men to come but as they had got to know and trust each other they all valued the support they received. George shared, “I’ve never quite understood why it is that we hurt the most those we love the most. I have never raised my hand to anyone at work.” They all thought about this and Teresa commented, “Maybe it has something to do with intimacy not well understood. We are close in so many ways, but this can get under my skin too, no matter how much I pray about it.” Carmel added, “I hate to think what we were like before this enrichment programme. Were we enemies?” Jack concluded, “I have learned that we need to respect each other and give each other space. As our president said the other day, ‘A woman is not your football!’”

Reflect, share. Scripture Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. Luke 6:27-38. **Pope Francis.** Some families break up when spouses engage in mutual recrimination but experience shows that with proper assistance and acts of reconciliation through grace a great percentage of troubled marriages find a solution. To know how to forgive and to feel forgiven is a basic experience in family life. AL 236 JUBILEE.. We should indeed prepare ourselves consciously and soberly for the moment when our lives will be judged, but we must always do this from the standpoint of hope, the theological virtue that sustains our lives and shields them from groundless fear. The judgement of God, who is love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8.16), will surely be based on love, and in particular on all that we have done or failed to do with regard to those in need. SNC 22. **Prayer and action.** Pray for those you love and have wronged. Choose appropriate action.

February 24. Over the years Jeannette had tried hard to build a relationship with her daughters-in-law. “This isn’t easy in our African families today as the younger generation does not appear to have the same respect we had for our elders. But still I will always remember the words of my own mother. ‘Go out of your way to make the new members of the family welcome. They come from a different background and now belong to our family.’”

Reflect, share. Scripture. *Beloved, who is wise and understanding among you? By his good life let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts do not boast and be false to the truth. Jas 3-13-18* **Pope Francis:** *A particular delicate aspect of love is learning not to view in-laws as somehow competitors, threats or intruders. Being willing to do so is an exquisite expression of love. AL 198. JUBILEE. If Jesus calls you and summons you for a mission, he first looks at you, plumbs the depths of your heart and, knowing everything about you, fixes his gaze upon you. So it was when, "as he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers... and as he went from there, he saw two other brothers" (Mt 4:18,21). Many a page of the Gospel illustrates how attentive Jesus was to individuals and above all to their problems and needs. Precisely out of concern for us, Jesus knows every one of our good intentions and small acts of charity. DN 39-41. **Prayer and action.** Pray for deeper love of the heart of Jesus. Choose appropriate action.*

February 25. "Do you think a truly loving family is one where there is no conflict?" the school psychologist asked the parents. "No, definitely not. It is one where the adults know how to manage conflict and have a way of passing that skill on to their children, teenagers but younger kids too. It's not easy and one has to start young. Parents can be too strict or too lenient. Neither way is God's way. I think it would be a valuable experience to run a parent-teenager course. Do you agree?"

Reflect, share. Scripture Reflect, share. Scripture: *Jesus said, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me." Mark 9:30-3. **Pope Francis.** JUBILEE. Signs of hope are needed by those who are the very embodiment of hope, namely, the young. Sadly, they often see their dreams and aspirations frustrated. We must not disappoint them, for the future depends on their enthusiasm. It is gratifying to see the energy they demonstrate, by rolling up their sleeves and volunteering to help. Yet it is sad to see those without hope, who face an uncertain and unpromising future, who lack employment or job security, or realistic prospects. after finishing school. Without the hope that their dreams can come true, they will inevitably grow discouraged and listless. Escaping into drugs, risk-taking and the pursuit of momentary pleasure does greater harm to them in particular, since it closes them to life's beauty and richness, and can lead to depression and even self-destructive actions. SNC12. **Prayer and action.** Pray for tolerance and acceptance the youth and hope for their future. Choose appropriate action.*

February 26. The parish had a number of LGBTI couples and families. The parish priest had chosen to be as supportive as he could but not all the parishioners felt the same. Some families were openly hostile while the majority were tolerant to varying degrees. "When you have had to accept such a reality in your own family and realise you still love your son in the same way it does affect your attitude," Mrs Jefferson shared in the women's group. "I wonder what many of us would make of this saying of Jesus about who is "for us" and apply it in our own lives."

Reflect, share. Scripture: *Jesus said, he that is not against us is for us. Mark 9:38-40. **Pope Francis:** Families should be given respectful pastoral guidance so that those who manifest a homosexual orientation can receive the assistance they need to understand and fully carry out God's will in their lives. AL 250. JUBILEE. We need to recognize the immense goodness present in our world, lest we be tempted to think ourselves overwhelmed by evil and violence. The signs of the times, which include the yearning of human hearts in need of God's saving presence, ought to become signs of hope. SNC 7. **Prayer and action.** Pray for tolerance and acceptance for those with different sexual orientation. Choose appropriate action.*

February 27. Fr Pierre had been experiencing a deep sense of guilt in recent months. "I don't do it any more," he was tempted to excuse himself, "but I did do harm, maybe even life-long harm, to families and those little boys, those altar servers, who really trusted me. But I'm not the only one, and it isn't only us priests who did this. I've heard plenty of confessions from men who are struggling with this same temptation. Shouldn't they also speak up as Pope Francis is expecting us to do." There were days when this question really weighed him down but he was able to share with a fellow priest, a good friend of many years who listened and supported him while he strove to come to terms with his decision to speak up about himself.

Reflect, share. Scripture *Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung round his neck and he were thrown into the sea. Mark 9:41-50. **Pope Francis":** "The Church asks that people not be silent... since the greater scandal in this matter is that of cloaking the truth," He said, "To those who abuse minors I would say this -- convert and hand yourself over to human justice and prepare for divine justice." Address December 2018. JUBILEE. In the words of Benedict XVI: "At the moment of judgement we*

*experience and we absorb the overwhelming power of his love over all the evil in the world and in ourselves. The pain of love becomes our salvation and our joy". SNC 22. **Prayer and action.** Pray for healing and forgiveness found in the heart of Jesus. Choose appropriate action.*

February 28. At the end of the month of February and reflecting on the theme "Love gives families life." Boris and Juanita who had both been divorced and had remarried shared their thoughts in their prayer group. "I did believe in love when I married very young and Jane was pregnant. But our decision, more or less forced on us by her family, did not work out. I think we did still believe in love, as Juanita and I do now, and we accept that our remarriage is not recognised by the Church. It has been painful but we can understand that we still belong." **Reflect, share.**

Scripture: *Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery. Mk 10:1-12. **Pope Francis:** the baptised who are divorced and civilly remarried need to be more fully integrated into Christian communities in the variety of ways possible while avoiding occasions of scandal. The logic of integration is the key to their pastoral care which would allow them to realise that they belong and can have a joyful experience. AL 299 JUBILEE. Although the Scriptures preserve Jesus' words, ever alive and timely, there are moments when he speaks to us inwardly, calls us and leads us to a better place. That better place is his heart. There he invites us to find fresh strength and peace: "Come to me, all who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28). DN 43-44. **Prayer and action.** Pray for the divorced and remarried that they may experience the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Choose appropriate action.*