



2025 MARFAM JUBILEE YEAR FAMILY YEAR PLANNER

Theme: OUR WORLD, A FAMILY OF FAMILIES

MARCH THEME: HUMAN RIGHTS ARE FAMILY RIGHTS

LENTEN JUBILEE THEME : FAMILIES RIGHTS for PILGRIMS OF HOPE and SIGNS OF HOPE. Part 1. THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY



MARFAM – MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE RENEWAL MINISTRY. NPO 103-814
Toni Rowland tel 082 552 1275. info@marfam.org.za. www.marfam.org.za

Abbreviations: **Pope Francis:** LS = Laudato Si. AL = Amoris Laetitia FT = Fratelli Tutti. EG = Evangelii Gaudium. MV= Face of Mercy. Spes non confundit- Hope does not disappoint. Dilexit Nos – We are Loved.

Introduction. March Thoughts for the Day include Lent which begins on 5 March and continues until Holy Week and Easter from 13-20 April. Part 1 Lenten Reflections are included here and Part 2 will follow in April Thoughts for the Day. Extracts from the Jubilee document and the document on the Sacred Heart of Jesus are included daily. Other lists of suggestions for Lent are attached or downloadable from www.marfam.org.za/lent_2025.

MARCH overview. Human Rights and Family Rights. Lent. In this Jubilee year of hope the right to life should be recognized. It is contained in the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the Catholic Charter of Family Rights and many other constitutions. Human life, as individuals, and as family units, is precious from the first moment of existence until natural death. Rights extend to safety and protection from harm for all. In addition to human rights concern for biodiversity, animal and plant life is growing, we are aware that “Extinction means forever”. A “culture of life” approach uses perspectives of justice, love, hope, positive relationships and the common good for all of creation. Such an eco-friendly family focus is built into the reflections for families as Pilgrims of Hope creating and supporting Signs of Hope.

Pope Francis: *Hope does not disappoint, 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. Hope is born of love and based on the love springing from the pierced heart of Jesus upon the cross: SNC 2-3. Families and homes go together. We insist on the rights of the family and not only of individuals. Families have the right to count on an adequate family policy from public authorities. LS 44. The rights to free enterprise and market freedom cannot supersede the rights of peoples, dignity of the poor & respect for the natural environment, for to make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all. FT 122*

Setting the scene. For the March focus on family rights and Lent with the special Jubilee focus of Families as Pilgrims of Hope and Signs of Hope families are invited to begin a process of stock-taking, conversion and revisiting their relationships. The three Catholic practices of Lent are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Prayer, personal or communal, makes room for God in our lives. Fasting can mean denying ourselves, possibly something we particularly like, to share with others in need, or just as self-denial. Almsgiving is sharing with others some of our gifts, time, talents, money or other possessions. Resources are attached or downloadable from www.marfam.org.za/lent

1. Thoughts of the Day with the monthly focus on rights and the Jubilee theme of hope.
2. Acts of Love and Sacrifice from list of 40 suggestions to choose as individuals or together.
3. Hold a Family Prayer Meal and a Family Reconciliation Service. Text available.
4. Use Family Year Planner as reference.
5. Use images and symbols and create a Lenten family prayer shrine. Sacred Heart, Luce - the Jubilee mascot as a symbol for Pilgrims of Hope, a Bible, crucifix, palm leaves etc.
6. Study and act on Laudato si’ Action Platform goals for eco-family friendly ideas.

The THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY for faith sharing with a family focus use a modified SEE-JUDGE-ACT method.

1. A look at a life situation, built on the daily scripture passage and the monthly theme.
2. Read from scripture of the day and Church teaching (extracts from Pope Francis writings)
3. Reflect, share, pray, act.

The primary intention is to promote a spirituality of family life, as the normal way of living for most people in their various family forms, and with the different experiences. The THOUGHTS can be used by individuals or together.

Signs of Hope in and by the community, signs that exist and signs to create. From the Jubilee document *Spes Non Confundit*

1. The **desire for peace** in the world. Peacemakers are called “children of God.” Mt 5:9.
2. **Enthusiasm for life**; “a social covenant to support and foster hope that is inclusive and not ideological, working for future filled with the laughter of babies and children.”
3. **Recovering the joy of living.** Created in God’s image we cannot be content with getting along one day at a time and seeking fulfilment in material realities alone.
4. Tangible signs of hope are needed for **prisoners**, deprived of their freedom and feeling the harshness of detention, restrictions, lack of affection and respect.
5. **The Sick** at home or hospital. Works of mercy, affection and closeness to them, gratitude offered to their carers and inclusive attention to those with **disabilities** are signs of hope and respect for human dignity.
6. **Young people** volunteering help is a sign of hope, but all our efforts to reach out and draw close to them are essential for them as the joy and hope for the future.
7. **Migrants, exiles, refugees and displaced persons.** A spirit of welcome and respect for their dignity by everyone and practical needs addressed by authorities.
8. **The elderly, lonely and grandparents** deserve the esteem and gratitude shown for their contributions, wisdom and the treasure they are for families and society.
9. **The poor** who are often forgotten need recognition and awareness from everyone all as signs of hope in their daily needs.
10. May the Christian community always be prepared to defend the rights of **those who are most vulnerable**, opening wide its doors to welcome them.

Dilexit Nos 21. Love and the Sacred Heart of Jesus. “Everything finds its unity in the heart, which can be the dwelling-place of love in all its spiritual, psychic and even physical dimensions. In a word, if love reigns in our heart, we become, in a complete way, the persons we are meant to be, for every human being is created above all else for love.”

Underlying the principle of the common good is respect for the human person endowed with basic and inalienable rights. It has also to do with the overall welfare of society and the development of a variety of intermediate groups, especially the family as the basic cell of society. It calls for the welfare of society, social peace, stability and security provided by a certain order. Society as a whole, and the state in particular are obliged to defend and promote the common good. LS 157.

A JUBILEE PRAYER FOR FAMILIES.

May the FAITH you have given us in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,
and the flame of LOVE enkindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
awaken in us the HOPE for the coming of your KINGDOM of love, peace and beauty.
As PILGRIMS OF HOPE and SIGNS OF HOPE in our families
help us to plant the seeds of the gospel, to care for and nurture them
and so transform the Church, the world and all of creation. Amen

A PRAYER FOR OUR EARTH.

God of Love, creator of all, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
You are a family, a community of love, our model and inspiration.
To us you have given the task of caring for our common home
And all the families of creation, human, animal and plant.
We praise and thank you and pledge our care. Amen

March 1. “Let the children come to me for to such belongs the kingdom of God.” After a discussion on divorce members of a parish family sharing group went home feeling quite challenged. Quite a few had experience of divorce in their families. Jack asked himself, “could we have done more to work on our marriage for the sake of our children? We both knew that the bitterness and fighting didn’t do them any good before we separated.. Little Andrew used to hide away, but now that we are divorced is it really better for them? I think there should be more programmes to help families like us dealing with the effects of divorce, mediation about mutual acceptance arrangements and the rights of the children.” Moyra’s response was different. “I’m thinking about being more eco-friendly, so I’m going to look after any young creatures abandoned by their families. Lots of them are just left to die.”

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them for to such belongs the kingdom of God." MK 10:13-16. **Pope Francis:** Do we feel the immense psychological burden borne by children in families where the members mistreat and hurt one another, to the point of breaking the bonds of marital fidelity? AL246. Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us living creatures are dependent on one another. LS42. **JUBILEE.** "God has in 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". This can allow the power and the love of God to expand in our lives and in the world, whereas our refusal or indifference can prevent it. The Lord cries out, "If only you would return to me, O Israel!" (cf. Jer 4:1). DN 190. **Prayer and action.** Pray for children that suffer violence or abandonment. Choose appropriate action for children and young.

March 2. Sunday 8C. *In the Lord your labour is not in vain.* Some Justice and Peace groups had begun to focus on environmental issues and some to combine that with a family focus. "It makes sense to ask ourselves, 'How clean is our backyard?' As a family we have a right to services like water, electricity and shelter, but also have to take responsibility to care for our own immediate environment. Brian may be involved in the bigger municipal issues beyond our own walls but we can't neglect our own yard." Fr Oliver was pleased that his J&P and Family teams were working together. He suggested, "Apart from keeping your yards tidy you families could start a little vegetable patch and encourage the children to take responsibility for that. That is how all our work can bear fruit.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *My beloved brethren be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.* 1 Cor 15:54-58. **Pope Francis:** Some committed and prayerful Christians ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive. What they all need is an ecological conversion. LS 217. **JUBILEE.** We should indeed prepare ourselves consciously and soberly for the moment when our lives will be judged from the standpoint of hope. The judgement of God, who is love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8.16), will surely be based on love, and on all that we have done or failed to do with regard to those in need, in whose midst Christ, the Judge himself, is present (cf. Mt 25:31-46). SNC 22. **Prayer and action.** Pray that your labour will be eco-friendly and fruitful. Choose appropriate action

March 3. "Go sell what you have and give to the poor." Patrick and Patience were a wealthy couple. They blessed God for their successful business plans, achieved through their hard work and some wise investments. As committed Catholics at the same time they felt sad that Jesus always seemed to condemn "the rich." Together they addressed a Justice and Peace meeting saying, "Let us acknowledge that things are much more complicated in our day and we, as the Church in the home, need good economists, honest politicians with a well-formed spirituality. We should all focus on the common good to chart the path forward towards greater economic wellbeing for all the families in our country as well as the environment." As a result of this presentation a Catholic business forum study group was initiated.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *Go sell what you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and come follow me. His countenance fell and he went away sorrowful for he had great possessions. Jesus said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!"* MK 10:17-27. **Pope Francis:** Recognising that all people are our brothers and sisters and seeking forms of social friendship that include everyone demands a commitment to devise effective means to this end. Individuals can help others in need. When they join together in initiating social processes of fraternity and justice for all they enter the field of charity, at its most vast, working for a social and political order whose soul is social charity. FT 180. **JUBILEE.** Whenever a person thinks, questions and reflects on his or her true identity, strives to understand the deeper questions of life and to seek God, or experiences the thrill of catching a glimpse of truth, it leads to the realization that our fulfilment as human beings is found in love. In loving, we sense that we come to know the purpose and goal of our existence in this world. In contemplating the meaning of our lives, perhaps the most decisive question we can ask is, "Do I have a heart?" DN 22. **Prayer and action.** Explore the importance of ecological economics and social charity.

March 4. Shrove Tuesday. *No one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father, or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel who will not receive a hundredfold.* The new bishop in his Lenten pastoral letter wrote, "This month in SA is Human Rights month, but we, in our Church, can make it FAMILY RIGHTS FOR PILGRIMS OF HOPE AND SIGNS OF HOPE. I recommend that parishes and their PPCs and different desks combine for Lenten reflections on this. That is one way to promote the Jubilee of Hope too with the topic of rights and justice, day by day."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: No one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father, or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, house and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. Mark 10:28-31: **Charter of Family Rights Article 4e:** The rights of the person, even though they are expressed as rights of the individual have a fundamental social dimension which finds an innate and vital expression in the family. **Pope Francis: JUBILEE.** As the Second Vatican Council observed: "In every age, the Church has the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. In this way, in language adapted to every generation, she can respond to people's persistent questions about the meaning of this present life and of the life to come, and how one is related to the other". SNC 7. **Prayer and action.** Pray for a right and just balance in life. Choose appropriate action. As this is Shrove Tuesday commemorate as Pancake Tuesday in the family.

LENT 2025: THEME: FAMILY RIGHTS FOR PILGRIMS OF HOPE AND SIGNS OF HOPE.

LENTEN THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY. Part 1. MARCH

Introduction. Pope Francis established 2025 as a Holy Jubilee Year of Hope with the theme "Hope does not disappoint." Its aims are renewal, experiencing God's mercy, rebuilding of our relationship with God with others, and all of creation. Jubilee is a special biblical concept with a number of special beliefs, activities relating to repentance, forgiveness and hope for eternal life, which are highlighted during the Lenten season in the parish and also in our own homes and families.

The Lenten theme built into MARFAM's THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY is adapted from the March theme Human Rights are Family Rights, Pope Francis' Jubilee document *Spes non Confundit*, and his encyclical on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, *Dilexit Nos*. They are aimed at deepening family spirituality and an eco-spirituality. These can be done through performing acts of Love and Sacrifice around the three Catholic practices of Lent prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Prayer, personal or communal, makes room for God in our lives. Fasting is denying ourselves, possibly something we like, give to others in need, or just as self-denial. Almsgiving is sharing with others some of our gifts, time, talents, money or other possessions.

MARFAM LENTEN FAMILY "ACTS OF LOVE AND SACRIFICE." 40 suggestions to choose from daily or as appropriate to do individually or together. Relevant in many different contexts of families. Download and print

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

Suggested LENTEN PRACTICES FOR THE HOME for Becoming an Eco-Friendly Family as Pilgrims of Hope.

Study and Read:

Study and use Laudato si Action Platform goals.

Subscribe to eco-friendly newsletters on-line. Select topics of interest to study further on climate, biodiversity and living a simpler lifestyle. Read up on biomimicry, water saving, electricity saving, carbon footprints, healthy diets. Watch TV series and programmes on climate action and protection of creation around the world. Read up St Francis life and way of life and study Pope Francis writings especially *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*.

Do: Do a family project on becoming eco-friendly: pray privately and together, do faith sharing ideally together. Hold a Family Reconciliation service and if possible Confession. Have a Family Prayer Meal. Pray STATIONS OF THE CROSS for Families from MARFAM in various languages. Check your family carbon footprint and make adjustments to reduce it. Save energy and water, grow herbs, vegetables, trees, eat more healthily – less meat, more vegetables. Support conservation projects for wild life, birds, bees, insects. Lobby about chosen issues – plastic pollution, environmental clean-up. Donate unused items to charity. Knit, sew, make items to donate to charity. Family fast days (Friday fast) to save money and donate to feeding projects. Exercise to keep fit.

Save money: Cut down on alcohol, smoking, fizzy drinks, junk food, bottled water, car use. Think twice before you spend, do clothes-swop rather than buy, buy in bulk and share. Have a meatless day. Donate money to Bishops' Lenten Appeal. ,

Waste reduction: Recycle. Avoid single use plastics, styrofoam, avoid wasting food, compost food wastage.

Energy Saving: Do energy use check, switch off unnecessary and unused lights, TV and plugs. Use solar power, solar lights and rechargeable batteries. Cut time on TV, computer and cellphone to save energy and data.

Water saving: Use "grey" water from bath, shower and washing for toilets and garden. Don't run taps when not needed. Collect rain water, use drip irrigation in garden or veggie patch.

Recycle: Join in recycling projects, plastic, paper, glass, make ecobricks out of plastic 2l bottles stuffed with plastic.

General: clean up environment, plant trees, support ecological campaigns in church, school and society. Make time for relationships and relaxation by cutting time on-line or cellphone.

Care for others: Befriend, share, give to poor and beggars, give away unused items, show care for sick and lonely

PEACE PRAYER OF ST FRANCIS.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith,
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.

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

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

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

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

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

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

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation,

to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

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

March 5. Ash Wednesday. *Even now return to me with all your heart,* All the learners from St Pius XII school, whether they were Catholic or not went to get their ashes on their foreheads. “Why do you do this?” the RE teacher asked the class. “Dunno.” “We just do it every year.” “It's tradition and then we all give up something during Lent. But we're not really supposed to tell what,” one Grade 6 girl said. Josh called out the three tasks of Lent: prayer, fasting, almsgiving. “There is the penance part, but we can also take up some extra sacrifice to challenge one's willpower.” “In our family at home we often do things together during Lent. Ashes remind us it is time to pull up our socks as we're all just made of the dust of the earth.”

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *Even now return to me with all your heart, with fasting with weeping and mourning and tear your hearts and not your garments” says the Lord. Joel 2:12 .* **Pope Francis:** *The life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities but lived in and with them in communion with all that surrounds us.* LS 216. **JUBILEE.** *Hope is born of love and based on the love springing from the pierced heart of Jesus upon the cross.* SNC.2-3
Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent

March 6. “I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil.” Melanie said, “Road rage is a horrible thing and must be a sin, but surely it is so often brought on by someone breaking the law, or being selfish in the traffic,” Gordon added, “Like some oldies who have forgotten how to drive! Or are taxis the worst.” Mohale said, “Load shedding and robots out of order have messed up the traffic flow, multiplied our anger and frustration and the accident rate on the roads no end. Where exactly is the evil in all that? I ask myself how can I deal with this situation in the most “life-giving” way?”

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *Moses said, “see I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and keeping his commandments then you shall live. Deut 30:15-20* **Pope Francis:** *Let us say to the Lord, “I am angry with this person. I pray for him. To pray for a person with whom I am irritated is a beautiful step forward in love. EG 101. JUBILEE. Uncertainty about the future may give rise to conflicting feelings, 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. May the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope. God's word helps us find reasons for that hope. SNC1. 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* **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 7. “Is it not to share your bread with the hungry?” The Nkosis sat together at the beginning of Lent to discuss how they could fast and choose their acts of love and sacrifice. “Let us have a family fast day once a week, just have one full meal, ideally together, and no snacks and cold drinks in between,” Amy suggested. “But we should really also give the food we would have eaten, or the money saved to a poor or homeless family, together with some clothes.” “And on other days?” Busi asked. Mom said, “For suggestions check the list on the fridge door.”

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house, when you see the naked to cover him and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Isaiah 58:1-9. Pope Francis:* *I ask with all my heart that hope be granted to the billions of the poor, who often lack the essentials of life. Before the constant tide of new forms of impoverishment, we can easily grow insensitive even resigned. We must not close our eyes to the dramatic situations all around us. Each day we meet people who are poor or impoverished; maybe even our next-door neighbours. The poor may be homeless or lack sufficient food for the day and suffer from exclusion and indifference on the part of many. It is scandalous that in a world possessed of immense resources, destined largely to producing weapons, the poor continue to be the majority of the planet's population, billions of people who frequently remain at the bottom of the pile”. SNC JUB 15. .*
Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent

March 8. “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” Bongi, as usual, was argumentative. “I don't see why tax collectors should be sinners. Don't they have a right to work for SARS or whatever form it took in those days. Surely that doesn't make them sinners.” Refilwe explained, “in those days tax collectors worked for the oppressors, and were often dishonest and cheated people. But it wasn't just them. There were inspectors checking up on people's documentation. It was like that here in the apartheid days, before we thought of human rights and family rights like being able to live together as a family in one place.”

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus answered, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick do; I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Luke 5:32 **Pope Francis:** *Free and heartfelt forgiveness is something noble, a reflection of God's own infinite ability to forgive. It can be shown even to someone who resists repentance and is unable to beg pardon. Those who truly forgive do not forget. FT250-1. Prayer: “Lord, grant us your peace! This is my prayer to God as I now offer my good wishes to the Heads of State and Government, to the leaders of International Organizations, to the leaders of the various religions and*

to every person of good will. "Forgive us our trespasses, Lord, as we forgive those who trespass against us. In this cycle of forgiveness, grant us the peace that you alone can give to those who let themselves be disarmed in heart, to those who choose in hope to forgive the debts of their brothers and sisters, to those who are unafraid to confess their debt to you, and to those who do not close their ears to the cry of the poor. Prayer from Message for World Day of Peace January 1. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 9. Sunday Lent 1C. Temptation. *The devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world.* Fr Oliver asked the altar servers, "I know you have been studying about temptation. What was Jesus being tempted to do? Mpumi knew the three temptations, "turn stones into bread, worship the devil and test God to see if God would protect him." "Yes, but what is behind those and how do they apply to us?" Fr continued. "Could there be temptations to choose power, material, political or religious power, even making them into idols? That is worshipping the devil too? I think you need to go and discuss this more at home and think about our own reality with all the bribery and corruption we keep hearing about."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *The devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and said, I will give you all this authority and glory to you if you will worship me."* Luke 4:1-13. **Pope Francis:** *The worship of the ancient golden calf has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money. Man is reduced to one of his needs alone, consumption.* EG 56. **Jubilee** will thus be a Holy Year marked by the hope that does not fade, our hope in God. May it help us to recover the confident 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. May the witness of believers be for our world a leaven of authentic hope, a harbinger of new heavens and a new earth (cf. 2 Pet 3:13), where men and women will dwell in justice and harmony, in joyful expectation of the fulfilment of the Lord's promises. SNC25. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 10. *You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people.* Therese was thinking, "There is a lot about laws and rules in the Old Testament isn't there, especially the book of Leviticus? But maybe that is suitable for Lent to get us to do some looking into our own sins. How many grudges do I bear and how many grudges are against those close to me? Sometimes recognising their rights when I don't agree is the hardest thing of all. I wonder why? Sometimes it seems easier to go and love your neighbour than to make peace with your own family. Most of us wouldn't treat other people the way we treat our own family. Why is there more domestic violence, abuse and incest within a family? Why can't we be responsible where it matters most?"

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people but you shall love your neighbour as yourself.* Lev 19:11-18. **Pope Francis:** *We cannot forget that mercy is not only the working of the Father, it becomes a criterion for knowing who his true children are. We are called to show mercy because mercy was first shown to us.* AL 310. *Pastoral care for families needs to make it clear that the Gospel of the family responds to the deepest expectations of the human person, a response to each one's dignity, fulfilment in reciprocity, communion and fruitfulness.* AL200-1. **JUBILEE.** *Looking to the future with hope entails having enthusiasm for life and a readiness to share it. Sadly, in many situations this is lacking. A number of countries are experiencing an alarming decline in the birthrate as a result of today's frenetic pace* fears about the future, the lack of job security and adequate social policies, rather than concern for relationships. The tendency "to blame population growth, instead of extreme and selective consumerism on the part of some, is one way of refusing to face the [real] issues". SNC 9. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 11. *My word shall not return to me empty but accomplish that which I intend.* "Graham had made a serious commitment to read the daily scripture passages during Lent. He noted that often in these Old Testament readings it was God speaking, "The Lord says..." and he realized that God speaks through people, like the prophet Isaiah and others. "I think God is speaking to me too to encourage others around me to listen to His word and follow what it is telling us. Now I must pray that they will listen to me." **Reflect, share and act. Scripture:** *Thus says the Lord, "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word not return to me empty but accomplish that which I intend."* Isa 55:10-11. **Pope Francis:** *The family is called to join in daily prayer, to read the word of God and to share in Eucharistic communion and so to grow in love and become ever more fully a temple in which the Spirit dwells.* AL29. **JUBILEE.** *The Jubilee Year will also coincide with a significant date for all Christians, namely, the 1700th anniversary of the celebration of the first great Ecumenical Council of Nicaea. From apostolic times, bishops have gathered on various occasions to discuss doctrinal questions and disciplinary matters. In the first centuries of Christianity, synods frequently took place in both East and West, showing the importance of unity of God's People and the faithful proclamation of the Gospel. The Jubilee can serve as an important occasion for giving concrete expression to this form of synodality, which the Christian community today considers increasingly necessary for responding to the urgent need for evangelization. All the baptized, with their*

respective charisms and ministries, are co-responsible for ensuring that manifold signs of hope bear witness to God's presence in the world. SNC 17. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 12. *Let them be covered with sackcloth and let them cry mightily to God.* Paula remarked "I've never seen anyone putting on sackcloth. It must feel horrible. But that is not the point is it? It is about repentance. I like the word metanoia. It is turning back from times when we have abused our own rights and ignored rights of others, person and all of creation too. I think it is also about responsibility, the opposite of rights. Our family did an exercise on family rights; the right to life, to a house, and lots of stuff that doesn't all apply to me yet now, but I do have to be responsible for how to use my time and my money."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *The king made a proclamation: "let neither man nor beast taste anything, let them not feed or drink but let them be covered with sackcloth and let them cry mightily to God: let him turn from his evil way and from the violence which is in his hands. Who knows God may yet repent and turn from his fierce anger." God saw what they did and did not do what he said he would do to them. Jonah 3:1-10* **Pope Francis:** *Together with our obligation to use the earth's goods responsibly we are called to recognize that other living beings have a value of their own in God's eyes as they bless him and give him glory.' By virtue of our unique dignity and our gift of intelligence, we are called to respect creation and its inherent laws, for the Lord by wisdom founded the earth. LS 69.* **JUBILEE.** *In our Journey as Pilgrims of Hope let us return to Scripture that speaks to us in these words: "May we who have taken refuge in him be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered" (Heb 6:18- 20). The image of the anchor is eloquent; it helps us to recognize the stability and security that is ours amid the troubled waters of this life, provided we entrust ourselves to the Lord Jesus. SNC 25.* **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 13. *Queen Esther seized with deathly anxiety fled to the Lord.* Lucie was the one who opened the sharing. "The ways of society globally right now are frightening. Leaders and rulers have rights as well as their responsibilities to act in the best interests of their people not just for their own interests. There is always jealousy, scheming and plotting against the good, honest leaders, while others are willing to cosy up to the bad leaders. For us too, in a small way we are all like the leaders, having responsibilities and rights, but do we always do what is just and fair?"

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *Queen Esther seized with deathly anxiety fled to the Lord. Save us from the hand of our enemies. Esther 14. Jesus said, "Ask and you will receive." Mat 7:7.* **Pope Francis.** *Ethics has come to be viewed with a certain scornful derision. It is seen as counterproductive, too human. It is felt to be a threat since it condemns the manipulation and debasement of the person. EG 56.* **JUBILEE.** *A reality to do with eternal life is God's judgement, both at the end of our individual lives and at the end of history. Artists have often attempted to portray it in accordance with the theological vision of their times and with the aim of inspiring a sense of awe in the viewer. We should 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. we are speaking of a judgement unlike any handed down by human, earthly tribunals; it should be understood as a rapport of truth with the God who is love and with oneself, within the unfathomable mystery of divine mercy. SNC 22.* **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 14. *"Go first to be reconciled to your brother."* Martha was careful about the point she wanted to make. "Conflict in extended families is not uncommon. They may all have grown up together but one sibling may be more or less successful than another, cleverer, have more children or, in some cultures, more wives, all of which may lead to jealousy and resentment. Expectations about rights and duties in traditional families are quite complex as there is also an expectation of helping other family members financially or materially. Modern day young adults sometimes challenge traditions of patriarchy or the rights of a mother-in-law and may want to do away with them. What are their reasons for wanting this?"

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *"Everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgement. If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there and go first to be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift. 5:20-26* **Pope Francis:** **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.* **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 15. “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Nicholas came up with some awkward questions. “Should prisoners have rights, or soldiers on each side in a war? Do rights only apply to good people, or also to those who have done something wrong, or if we disagree with someone? I think that can be difficult in a family too. After all rights come from being created in the image of God, which we all are.” Mrs Meyer thought to herself of her son and others, even priests, in prison for sexually abusing a child. She found it hard to forgive her son for the abuse and thinking about the family of the child made her wonder even more how they could be forgiving.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Matthew 5:43-48. **Catholic Charter of Family Rights 9d.** *The rights and necessities of the family, and especially the value of family unity, must be taken into consideration in penal legislation and policy, in such a way that a detainee remains in contact with his or her family and that the family is adequately sustained during the period of detention.* **Pope Francis: JUBILEE.** *The first sign of hope should be the desire for peace in our world, which once more finds itself immersed in the tragedy of war. Heedless of the horrors of the past, humanity is confronting yet another ordeal, as many peoples are prey to brutality and violence. What does the future hold for those who have already endured so much? How is it possible that their desperate plea for help is not motivating world leaders to resolve the numerous regional conflicts in view of their possible consequences at the global level? Is it too much to dream that arms can fall silent and cease to rain down destruction and death? May the Jubilee remind us that those who are peacemakers will be called “children of God” (Mt 5:9). The need for peace challenges us all, and demands that concrete steps be taken. May diplomacy be tireless in its commitment to seek, with courage and creativity, every opportunity to undertake negotiations aimed at a lasting peace. SNC 8. I propose that in this Jubilee Year governments undertake initiatives aimed at restoring hope; forms of amnesty or pardon meant to help individual (offenders) regain confidence in themselves and in society; and programmes of reintegration in the community, including a concrete commitment to respect for law.* **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 16. Sunday Lent 2C. Transfiguration. *As he was praying the appearance of his countenance was altered.* Fr Sylvester wondered if South Africans live with fear more than other peoples. “Security is one of the biggest industries in the country. He explained to the congregation that the Transfiguration story of Jesus being seen in a new glorious way was giving courage to the disciples. It is always read during Lent because Jesus wanted to prepare his apostles for the time when he would be handed over to his enemies, suffer and be put to death. We all have fears and anxieties that we can bring and share with Jesus knowing that we can put our trust in him. I invite you to reflect on this issue of fear and courage and share with one another in your families.”

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *Jesus took Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. As he was praying the appearance of his countenance was altered and his clothing became dazzling white. Moses and Elijah, talked with him about his exodus. Peter said to Jesus, “Master it is well that we are here.” A cloud came and overshadowed them and they were afraid. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, my Chosen, listen to him!” Luke 9:28-36.* **Pope Francis:** *Our contemplations of the fulfilment yet to come allows us to put the historical journey we make as families in perspective. In this way we stop demanding of our interpersonal relationships a perfection which we will only encounter in the Kingdom to come. AL 325. Vatican News 17 February. In an interview with Italian newspaper the Vatican Secretary of State reiterates the urgent need for a multilateral ‘diplomacy of hope’. ‘Echoing Pope Francis’ and Pope St. John Paul II words Cardinal Parolin emphasized that peace requires courage, justice, and forgiveness, three values that seem increasingly absent in modern society. “Today the courage to negotiate is often mistaken for weakness, while military power and demonstrations of force continue to be privileged as conflict resolution tools. “Only when courage, justice, and forgiveness are once again lived as fundamental values, will it be possible to embark on a genuine path to peace.”* **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 17. *To us Oh Lord, belongs confusion of face because we have sinned against you.* Moses spoke as a parent. “Is living with justice and mercy a right, a responsibility, or even a duty born of love, something we learn from the example of God? We parents struggle with discipline and finding suitable punishments these days for kids of all ages. Self-discipline is important and enforcing discipline, teaching moral values and right behaviour is both a right and a responsibility that I don't think we parents are well enough equipped for. Maybe we should run that parenting course after Easter.”

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *To us Oh Lord, belongs confusion of face because we have sinned against you. To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, because we have rebelled against him. Dan 9:4-10.* **Pope Francis:** *It is essential to help children realise misbehaviour has consequences. It is important that discipline not lead to discouragement but to be instead a stimulus to further progress. AL 268-270* **Pope Francis: 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. 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”m SNC 22. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 18. *Practise and observe whatever they tell you, but not do what they do, for they preach but do not practice.* Mike was the parish Justice and Peace contact and spoke to the confirmation class too. “As you begin to move to adulthood understand that we all have a right and a responsibility to judge for ourselves who and what is right and wrong. Who to vote for, whether to take drugs or what action to take with regard to climate change and economic justice. Then we also have to stand up for what we believe. It's no good complaining about the school, and the government and then still take no action against injustice or even give them our vote.”

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so practise and observe whatever they tell you, but not do what they do, for they preach but do not practise. Matt 23:1-2. Pope Francis:* *Freedom is something magnificent, yet it can also be dissipated and lost. Moral education has to do with cultivating freedom through ideas, incentives, practical applications, rewards, examples and more. AL 267. JUBILEE Signs of hope are also needed by 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 when disasters strike. Yet it is sad to see young people who are 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 self-destructive actions. For this reason, the Jubilee should inspire them for they are the joy and hope of the Church and the world. SNC 12. Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent*

March 19. St Joseph. *Mary's husband being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame resolved to send her away quietly.* Fr Brian explained, “Pope Francis gave us a Year for St Joseph in 2021 with his letter *Patris Corde*, i.e. “A father's heart.” He continues to reflect on Joseph, describing him from the perspective of fatherhood in various beautiful ways; a beloved father, tender and loving father, obedient, accepting, creatively courageous, working, but finally he refers to “a father in the shadows.” 2021, the time of Covid-19 helped us see more clearly the importance of “ordinary” people who, far from the limelight, exercise patience and offer hope every day. “Joseph set aside his own ideas so as to accept the course of events God had in mind for him, to embrace them, and make them part of his own history. Unless we are reconciled with our own history, we will be unable to move forward for we will remain hostage to our expectations and the disappointments that follow. The spiritual path that Joseph shows us does not *explain*, but *accepts*. Only then can we begin to glimpse the broader history and deeper meaning.” How committed and responsible are most men as fathers, and also foster- or stepfathers in caring for those in their homes? Are they offered help in managing this task?

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *Her husband being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to send her away quietly. But as he considered this an angel of the LORD appeared to him in a dream. Matt 1:16-24. Pope Francis: Prayer to St Joseph from Patris Corde.* *Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to you God entrusted his only Son; in you Mary placed her trust; with you Christ became man. Blessed Joseph, to us too, show yourself a father and guide us in the path of life. Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage, and defend us from every evil. Amen. JUBILEE. God has in 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. This cooperation can allow the power and the love of God to expand in our lives and in the world, whereas our refusal or indifference can prevent it. DN190. Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list published at www.marfam.org.za/lent.*

March 20. *Cursed is the man who trusts in people. Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord.* Mike and his son Jerry discussed the prophet Jeremiah, after whom Jerry was named. He had started his ministry as a young man but as he had grown old and tired he became disillusioned as it seemed people weren't listening to his preaching. His ministry was speaking out on behalf of God, judging right from wrong and recognizing human weakness. At times in his dialogue with God Jeremiah even said he just wanted to sit down and die. “So, my son, be warned, it's not easy in life to keep on standing up for what you believe.”

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *Cursed is the man who trusts in people. Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt. I, the Lord search the mind and try the heart, to give to every man according to his ways, according to the fruits of his doings. Jer 17:5-10. Pope Francis:* *Doing what is right means more than judging what seems best or knowing clearly what needs to be done. We have to arrive at the point where the good that the intellect grasps can take root in us as a thirst for the good that outweighs other attractions. AL 265. JUBILEE In addition to*

finding hope in God's grace, we discover hope in the signs of the times that the Lord gives us. The Second Vatican Council observed: "In every age, the Church has the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. In this way, in language adapted to every generation, she can respond to people's persistent questions about the meaning of this present life and of the life to come, and how one is related to the other". 1. We need to recognize the immense goodness present in our world, lest we be tempted to think ourselves overwhelmed by evil and violence. 2. 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. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 21. Human Rights Day. Favouritism, discrimination and envy. Human Rights Month and Day in South Africa commemorate the Sharpeville killings by police of innocent people protesting over serious social justice issues. In today's bible account Joseph, the favourite son of his father, Jacob, was also an innocent victim. He was abused by his brothers as they were jealous when his father gave Joseph a multi-coloured coat. His brothers tried to get rid of him by throwing him in a pit but fortunately he was rescued. He was taken to Egypt, a foreign country, where he had to fend for himself and eventually became successful as Pharaoh's right hand man. How do we treat the foreigners amongst us. do we respect their dignity and rights?

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: Genesis 37 tells the long story of Joseph and his brothers. **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. Love inspires a sincere esteem for every human being and the recognition of his or her own right to happiness. AL95. **JUBILEE.** Signs of hope should be present for migrants who leave their homelands behind in search of a better life for themselves and for their families. Their expectations must not be frustrated by prejudice and rejection. A spirit of welcome, which embraces everyone with respect for his or her dignity, should be accompanied by a sense of responsibility, lest anyone be denied the right to a dignified existence. Exiles, displaced persons and refugees, whom international tensions force to emigrate in order to avoid war, violence and discrimination, ought to be guaranteed security and access to employment and education, the means they need to find their place in a new social context. SNC 13. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 22. World Water Day and Earth hour. The Peterson young people were excited to share about their plans for this day. "Funny that Earth Hour is about saving power by switching lights off for an hour in the evening and World Water Day is about saving water and creating awareness. Just the 2 elements that are causing such problems in our country nowadays. Whose problems are they, if not everyone's? Maybe if we all dealt with them responsibly some of the problems would be solved." "Maybe if beyond acting responsibly for a day we took responsibility and admitted our guilt about abusing the environment in so many ways. Not wasting resources or littering is Caring for God's creation and God will be pleased that some of us are making an effort to become an eco-friendly family and are encouraging others to do the same.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: Who is a God like you pardoning iniquity and passing over our transgressions for the remnant of his inheritance? You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. Mic 7:14-20 **Pope Francis. JUBILEE.** The Bible shows that the people that journeyed through the desert and yearned for freedom received the promise of an abundance of life-giving water: "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Is 12:3). The messianic prophecies gradually coalesced around the imagery of purifying water: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean... a new spirit I will put within you" (Ezek 36:25-26). This water would bestow on God's people the fullness of life, like a fountain flowing from the Temple and bringing a wealth of life and salvation in its wake. DN 92. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 23. Sunday Lent 3C. "If it bears fruit next year well and good, but if not, you can cut it down." Fr Oliver reminded the congregation, "We're nearing the end of summer and autumn and we have seen how parts of Africa have had major climatic disasters floods in parts and drought in others. People have been displaced and villages destroyed. In other parts drought still exists that will lead to famine in the months to come. Wars and conflicts contribute, and the natural disasters have highlighted too how nature has been harmed by our human activity. To what extent have we been responsible for the devastation in God's great garden. We are a continent of subsistence farmers and market gardeners and can reflect on God as a merciful gardener, caring for his fruit trees. But let us not test his patience.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: Let me dig about the fig tree and put on manure. If it bears fruit next year well and good, but if not, you can cut it down. Luke 13:1-9. **Pope Francis:** God's patience does not simply have to do with enduring all things. We encounter problems when we think that relationships or people ought to be perfect, or when we put ourselves at the centre and expect things to turn out our way. AL 91-92. **JUBILEE.** There is not much place for patience in this age of the Internet, as space and time yield to an ever-present "now". If we were still able to contemplate creation with a sense of awe, we might better understand the importance of patience. We could appreciate the changes of the seasons and their harvests, observe the life of animals and their cycles of growth, and enjoy the clarity of vision of Saint Francis. A renewed appreciation

of the value of patience could only prove beneficial for ourselves and for others. Saint Paul speaks of patience in the context of our need for perseverance and confident trust in God's promises. Yet, before all else, he testifies to God's own patience, as "the God of all patience and encouragement" (Rom 15:5). Patience, one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, sustains our hope and strengthens it as a virtue and a way of life. May we learn to pray frequently for the grace of patience, which is both the daughter of hope and at the same time its firm foundation. SNC 4. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 24. "My father, if the prophet had commanded you to do some great thing, would you not have done it?" Abel had done research into the history of Human Rights Day in South Africa, the tragic incident in our history way back in 1960 when many innocent marchers, during a peaceful protest, were killed and wounded by police. He asked, "How often since then have more innocent people been killed, families deprived of their loved ones and livelihoods destroyed. Have those who are guilty been held responsible? This year it is nearly 30 years since the adoption of the Constitution, which is meant to guarantee the rights and freedoms of all citizens, and the same question must be asked with urgency. Who is responsible for the wellbeing of another, if not each and every citizen together with our leaders? The late Anglican Archbishop Tutu said "Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: Elisha sent a messenger to Naaman, the leper, saying "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times." But Naaman was angry and said, "I thought he himself would come out to me." So he went away in a rage. But his servant said, "My father, if the prophet had commanded you to do some great thing, would you not have done it?" So Naaman went and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times and his flesh was restored like that of a little child and he was clean. 2 Kings 5:1-15. **Pope Francis:** The Covid-19 pandemic unexpectedly erupted, exposing our false securities. It is my desire that in this time, by acknowledging the dignity of each human person we can contribute to the rebirth of a universal sense of fraternity, brotherhood between all men and women. Let us dream as a single human family each with his or her own voice. FT8. **JUBILEE.** Inclusive attention should also be given to all those in particularly difficult situations, who experience their own weaknesses and limitations, especially those affected by illnesses or disabilities that severely restrict their personal independence and freedom. Care given to them is a hymn to human dignity, a song of hope that calls for the choral participation of society as a whole. SNC 11. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 25. The Annunciation. "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word." Pearl shared some of her insights with the others on the feast of the Annunciation. "Mary, a young girl, betrothed to be married, had her life completely turned upside down by the invitation she received through the angel Gabriel to be the mother of the Messiah. She rightly questioned the angel, asking how this could be possible, but her 'yes' to God was unconditional. From that moment on she devoted her life to her Son. This was nevertheless an unplanned pregnancy, and at that time it could have been as problematical as it has been for many other young women until our day. According to custom she could have been killed but Joseph had responded positively to God's message in a dream, and accepted and treasured Mary as his wife and Jesus as his son. Unwed mothers in different cultures have had very difficult experiences, as was reported in Ireland a while ago, where the moms and their babies were badly mistreated in institutions, because of the judgmental attitudes of the Church, the community and their own families too. Today, abortion is legal in South Africa and is far too commonly chosen as it remains seriously sinful. Social and family support for the right to life of unborn babies should always be available.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word." From Luke 1:26-38. **Pope Francis:** The Church has been present for centuries throughout the world and all things human are our concern. Wherever the councils of nations come together to establish the rights and duties of man, we are honoured to take our place among them. This journey of fraternity also has a Mother, whose name is Mary. Having received universal motherhood at the foot of the cross she cares not only for Jesus but also for the rest of her children. She wants to give birth to a new world, where all of us are brothers and sisters. FT 278. **JUBILEE.** Hope finds its supreme witness in the Mother of God. We see that hope is not naive optimism but a gift of grace amid the realities of life. Like every mother, whenever Mary looked at her Son, she thought of his future. Surely she kept pondering in her heart the words spoken to her in the Temple by the elderly Simeon: "This child is destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed, so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too" (Lk 2:34-35). At the foot of the cross, she witnessed the passion and death of Jesus, her innocent son. Overwhelmed with grief, she nonetheless renewed her "fiat", never abandoning her hope and trust in God. In this way, Mary cooperated for our sake in the fulfilment of all that her Son had foretold in announcing that he would have to "undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mk 8:31). In the travail of that sorrow, offered in love, Mary became our Mother, the Mother of Hope. It is not by chance that popular piety continues to invoke the Blessed Virgin as Stella Maris, a title that bespeaks the sure hope that, amid the tempests of this

life, the Mother of God comes to our aid, sustains us and encourages us to persevere in hope and trust. SNC 24. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 26. *I have taught you statutes and ordinances as the Lord my God commanded me.* Jonathan had done his homework and studied the Constitution. “The Constitution of a country (1996) does not belong to any political party but to every citizen. That might be forgotten in parliament or when elections come up and all political parties are lobbying for their own policies and interpretations of the law, but whatever the outcome of an election the Constitution is the arbiter of justice. Our bishops together with other religious groups also dialogue with the state to promote pro-family, pro-life policies for the good of all, while special interest groups lobby for environmental rights, justice and more.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *Moses said, “I have taught you statutes and ordinances as the Lord my God commanded me. Keep them and do them for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will say, “surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. Make them known to your children and your children’s children.” Deut 4:1-9. Pope Francis: Families have a right to be able to count on an adequate family policy on the part of public authorities. Love overflowing with small gestures of mutual care is also civic and political and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world. When we feel that God is calling us to intervene with others in social dynamics we should realise that this too is part of our spirituality. LS231. JUBILEE. Christian hope does not deceive or disappoint because it is grounded in the certainty that nothing and no one may ever separate us from God’s love: “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or the sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:35.37-39). This hope perseveres in the midst of trials: founded on faith and nurtured by charity, As Saint Augustine observes: “Whatever our state of life, we cannot live without these three dispositions of the soul, to believe, to hope and to love” SNC 3. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent***

March 27. *“This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the Lord, their God, and did not accept discipline, Stephen, a lawyer said, “It is difficult to legislate for the common good and for things like ecological conversion. It has been very interesting to see how much money and energy has gone into fighting events like the Covid-19 virus. Over time climate change has gone way down on the public agenda even though it is even more urgent and serious in the long term. It may be less clearly identifiable, but shouldn’t be. We have all seen recent climate catastrophes even closer to home.” Joyce added, “Activists and the popes too have spoken about it for many years as part of Catholic Social Teaching, it has not become a mainstream issue and with the US President taking a negative stance who knows what will happen. Who has studied *Laudato Si*? How many people have measured their carbon footprint? Humanitarian or human goods are hard to enforce but should be promoted. Pope Francis’s *Fratelli Tutti*, calls for social friendship beyond Catholic believers. We humans are the element of creation that can make decisions We cannot expect the animal kingdom or the plant kingdom to do that.*

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *You shall call to them but they will not answer you. And you shall say to them, “This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the Lord, their God, and did not accept discipline, truth has perished, it is cut off from their lips. Jer. 7:23-28. Pope Francis: A journey of peace is possible between religions. Its point of departure must be God’s way of seeing things. God’s love is the same for everyone, regardless of religion. It follows that we believers need to find occasions to speak with one another and to act together for the common good and the poor. This has nothing to do with watering down or concealing our deepest convictions. FT 281-2. JUBILEE. A heartfelt appeal I make in the light of the Jubilee is directed to the more affluent nations. I ask that they acknowledge the gravity of so many of their past decisions and determine to forgive the debts of countries that will never be able to repay them. More than generosity, this is a matter of justice. More serious today is the ‘ecological debt’ that exists, particularly between the global North and South, connected to commercial imbalances with effects on the environment and the disproportionate use of natural resources by certain countries over long periods of time”. As sacred Scripture teaches, the earth is the Lord’s and all of us dwell in it as “aliens and tenants” (Lev 25:23). If we really wish to prepare a path to peace in our world, let us commit ourselves to remedying the remote causes of injustice, settling unjust and unpayable debts, and feeding the hungry. SNC 16. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent***

March 28. Special Jubilee event: 24 hours with the lord. *Whoever is wise let him understand.* As the senior member of the family around the half-way mark through Lent Josh led the sharing. “I don’t know if we really value what God has to offer. He continues to beg us to come back to him, telling us he has more to offer than the idols we make for ourselves. Are glamour, money, rich friends, going to parties really what life is all about? The 24 Hours with the Lord is a great opportunity for us to reflect on where we stand with him and others. Everyone was given a chance to respond.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *O Ephraim what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. Whoever is*

wise let him understand, whoever is discerning let him know for the ways of the Lord are right and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them. Hosea 14: 9. **Pope Francis: JUBILEE.** The indulgence is a way of discovering the unlimited nature of God's mercy which knows no bounds. The sacrament of Reconciliation is not only a magnificent spiritual gift, but also a decisive, essential and fundamental step on our journey of faith. There, we allow the Lord to erase our sins, to heal our hearts, to raise us up, to embrace us and to reveal to us his tender and compassionate countenance. There is no better way to know God than to let him reconcile us to himself (cf. 2 Cor 5:20) and savour his forgiveness. Let us not neglect Confession, but rediscover the beauty of this sacrament of healing and joy, the beauty of God's forgiveness of our sins! SNC23. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 29. Missionaries of mercy. The Lord said, "I desire mercy not sacrifice. Fr Oliver was himself a foreigner and in some ways he could identify more with his compatriots than with the local people. The foreigners' faith experience, way of worshipping and family life was different but important to them. Some families had been split up with the generations of adults and children divided, but many were also trying to build a new life in a foreign country. They are not always well accepted and therefore their church community and liturgy is really important and they are naturally inclined to stick to their own people. In his ministry he realized that he had to find the way to balance welcoming, belonging and integration with their faith journey.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: The Lord said, "I desire mercy not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, rather than burnt offerings. Hosea 6:1-6. **Pope Francis:** Pastoral activity must be implemented with due respect for their cultures, for the human and religious formation from which they come and for the spiritual richness of their rites and traditions. AL 46. **JUBILEE.** Signs of hope should be present for migrants who leave their homelands behind in search of a better life for themselves and for their families. Their expectations must not be frustrated by prejudice and rejection. A spirit of welcome, which embraces everyone with respect for his or her dignity, should be accompanied by a sense of responsibility, lest anyone be denied the right to a dignified existence. Exiles, displaced persons and refugees, whom international tensions force to emigrate in order to avoid war, violence and discrimination, ought to be guaranteed security and access to employment and education, the means they need to find their place in a new social context. SNC 13. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 30. Sunday Lent 4C. The son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country and there he squandered his property in loose living. Deacon Paul told the congregation, "After you have read the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke's gospel let us adapt the story and put it into a modern day context and see what we can learn from that.

"Jose Manuel had come from Madeira with practically nothing but some sound words of advice from his mother. "Find yourself a good girl who will be a good mother to your children and when you're in trouble pray to the Virgin." He had been lucky that an uncle was able to help him get a job and being hardworking he was soon earning good money and could impress the girls. He did marry a good girl who bore him three daughters and, after much prayer to the Virgin, finally a son. His bottle-store business was going well and he had become a rich and influential man in the community. He doted on the boy Paolo and gave him everything he wanted, but seldom took notice of his Maria and their daughters who came to resent their spoilt little brother. At high school Paolo started getting into trouble. There were plenty of friends to help him spend his money. They introduced him to alcohol and drugs and of course girls. At first his father refused to listen and would brush Maria aside when she and the girls tried to talk to him. After Paolo was arrested for drunken driving and Jose had to bail him out for the second time, he was very angry and gave the boy an ultimatum. "Get your life together or leave home," he shouted, never thinking that would happen, but it did. Arrogantly Paolo chose to leave home, demanded his inheritance and left town. Jose Manuel was shattered. At first he was angry and stormed around the store and house yelling at everyone. Then he became withdrawn and would sit by the window looking down the road. The daughters took over running the business. At times Jose ranted and raved, at times he even cried but always he blamed everyone else. Days, weeks and months passed. Paolo had secretly been in touch with his mother on whatsapp and even sometimes asked her for money. She tried to talk to his father but he refused to listen. She started a novena to the Virgin Mary and left pictures of Paolo around the house.

One night Jose had a dream, seeing young Paolo playing his first soccer match and scoring his first goal. When the team lost the match, the boy came running to his dad in tears. Jose hugged him saying, "Don't worry son I'll always be there for you." The next morning he asked Maria, "Do you know where Paolo is? Do you think he needs me?" "But of course, Papa" Paolo's mother said, "He and you have always needed each other but sometimes you are both too proud. Why don't you call him and ask him to come home for Easter." He picked up the phone. "Hi dad," came the reply, "I was just about to call you. I'm sorry to hear you haven't been too well. I really would like to come home for Easter. Is that OK with you?"

Deacon concluded the story, "Is it possible that behind every forgiving father is a manipulating, concerned, never-letting-go, determined-to-make-peace mother? Could we maybe even say that mercy is one of the feminine qualities of God? Where do you most experience mercy in your families?"

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: Read the parable in Luke 15:1-3,11-32. **Pope Francis.** The woman stands before the man as a mother, the subject of the new life that is conceived and develops in her and from her is born into the world. Every child has a right to receive love from a mother and a father, both are necessary for a child's integral and harmonious development. Respecting a child's dignity means affirming his or her need and natural right to have a mother and a father. AL172-3. **JUBILEE.** As we know from personal experience, every sin "leaves its mark," has consequences, not only outwardly in the effects of the wrong we do, but also inwardly, as "every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death, in the state called Purgatory". These are removed by the indulgence, always by the grace of Christ, who, as Saint Paul VI wrote, "is himself our 'indulgence'". This experience of full forgiveness cannot fail to open our hearts and minds to the need to forgive others in turn. Forgiveness does not change the past; it cannot change what happened in the past, yet it can allow us to change the future and to live different lives, free of anger, animosity and vindictiveness. Forgiveness makes possible a brighter future, which enables us to look at the past with different eyes, now more serene, albeit still bearing the trace of past tears. SNC 23. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

March 31. A new heaven and a new earth. Thus says the Lord. "Behold I create new heavens and a new earth. Mrs Beatus spoke to the group: The 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic is nearly 5 years behind us. It was a difficult time that still has after-effects today. It is not the only pandemic history has seen, but it was the most wide-spread, because of the nature of our global village. Economically the global village has suffered too, and creation in all its forms has suffered and survived many catastrophes. Human beings are responsible for causing many disasters such as conflicts and wars on every level. We are the only creatures with the capacity to be able to address many disasters, even if only after the event. Judgement and punishment for wrongdoing is necessary, but seemingly seldom happens as it should. In spite of all hope remains. God never abandons his people.

From *The Care of Creation – a Franciscan spirituality of the earth.* Ilija Delio et al. "God created, was present and continues to be present in his love, throughout the life of Jesus, his resurrection and the final transformation of all creation, as foretold in the gospels and the book of Revelation. Relationship is the key to the beauty of the universe. Since all reality is good, then my relationship with others, human and non-human ought to promote goodness."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: Thus says the Lord. "Behold I create new heavens and a new earth. Be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create, for behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy. No more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping or the cry of distress." Isaiah 65: 17-21. **Pope Francis:** If we accept the great principle that there are rights born of our inalienable human dignity, we can rise to the challenge of envisaging a new humanity. We can aspire to a world that provides land, house and work for all. This is the true path of peace which will only be possible in the event of solidarity as the whole human family. FT 127. **JUBILEE.** Hope is "that theological virtue by which we desire... eternal life as our happiness". The Second Vatican Council says that, "when people are deprived of this divine support, and lack hope in eternal life, their dignity is deeply impaired, as may so often be seen today. The problems of life and death, of guilt and suffering, remain unsolved, so that people are frequently thrown into despair". 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. As a result, we live our lives in expectation of his return and in the hope of living forever in him. In this spirit, we make our own the heartfelt prayer of the first Christians with which sacred Scripture ends: "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev 22:20). SNC 19. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

Part II of Lenten Reflections will be available in the form of APRIL THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY that include Holy Week.