



2025 MARFAM JUBILEE YEAR FAMILY YEAR PLANNER

Theme: OUR WORLD, A FAMILY OF FAMILIES -

APRIL THEME: GOD AND FAMILY.

THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY: LENT and APRIL.

FAMILIES - PILGRIMS OF HOPE, SIGNS OF HOPE

Family, Lent and Jubilee of Hope 2025



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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. These Thoughts for the Day included the two months, March and April as well as a section for LENT 5 MARCH – 20 APRIL. March Thoughts for the Day were loosely connected with the Family Year Planner themes of family rights and the April ones with God and Family. The Lenten focus is on Families as Pilgrims of Hope and Signs of Hope. 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 <https://marfam.org.za/2025-lent-jubilee-and-families/>

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.

April overview. God and Family. Lent, Holy Week, Easter and Eastertime. God, as Trinity is family, the perfect community of love and as such is present in the whole Lenten and Easter Season of sacrifice and also with the Jubilee focus of hope and the particular emphasis on Jesus, the Son, crucified and risen. Every human family, as individuals and a unit, is an image of God, called to mirror the relationship of the Trinity. St Francis, recognizing the family of creation, in his Canticle of the Creatures praises God: "We praise you Lord for all your creatures, brother sun, sister moon, brother fire, sister water, mother earth and all creation. To you O Lord do they belong, you created them and they bear your likeness." How has that image of the Trinity been disfigured, as fire, water and wind are today such destructive forces? Humankind too disfigures God's image while we are gifted with power of understanding, to love to hurt and to forgive, because of love. Hope of salvation underlies the whole Lenten journey with the virtue of patience closely linked with hope.

Pope Francis: *The ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fulness of God already attained by the risen Christ. All creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival which is God. LS83. In the family, called a domestic church individuals enter upon an ecclesial experience of communion among persons which reflects, through grace, the mystery of the Holy Trinity. AL86. 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. SNC 3*

Setting the scene. As in the days of Lent during March. Eastertime is for many also holiday time, but as families let this season of autumn be a special blessing on our relationship with God through the moments of togetherness and sharing.

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.

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 for families.

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

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.

2025 LENT and JUBILEE OF HOPE

FAMILIES - PILGRIMS OF HOPE AND SIGNS OF HOPE.

2025 MARFAM THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY for

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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, April theme “God and Family,” 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 from website.

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

- The **desire for peace** in the world. Peacemakers are called “children of God.” Mt 5:9.
- **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.”
- **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.
- Tangible signs of hope are needed for **prisoners**, deprived of their freedom and feeling the harshness of detention, restrictions, lack of affection and respect.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Migrants, exiles, refugees and displaced persons.** A spirit of welcome and respect for their dignity by everyone and practical needs addressed by authorities.
- **The elderly, lonely and grandparents** deserve the esteem and gratitude shown for their contributions, wisdom and the treasure they are for families and society.
- **The poor** who are often forgotten need recognition and awareness from everyone all as signs of hope in their daily needs.
- May the Christian community always be prepared to defend the rights of **those who are most vulnerable**, opening wide its doors to welcome them.

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-swap 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

APRIL THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY.

April 1. *"Sir I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is troubled."* Outside the church on Sunday morning there was a whole row of beggars. "Me, me, please help me, give me, just R5 madam!" Suzie said to herself, "I never know what to do and always feel bad, like I don't trust them." Maysie thought, "What would Jesus do?" "You know full well," the little voice of conscience said. "Jesus mission was healing, making people whole again."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: At the pool of Bethzatha among the multitude of invalids there was a man who had been ill for 38 years. Jesus saw him and knew that he had been lying there a long time. He asked the man, "do you want to be healed?". The sick man said to Jesus, "Sir I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is troubled." From John 5:1-16. **Pope Francis: JUBILEE.** Signs of hope should also be shown to the sick, at home or in hospital. Their sufferings can be allayed by the closeness and affection of those who visit them. Works of mercy are also works of hope that give rise to immense gratitude. This should likewise be shown to all those healthcare workers who, often in precarious conditions, carry out their mission with constant care and concern for the sick and for the most vulnerable. Attention should also be given to 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. SNC 11. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

April 2. *The Father judges no one, but has given all judgement to the Son,* "I hate him. Whenever I read about Jesus and his Father I feel so angry." Jason yelled at his mom. "Why doesn't my father look after us as he should? Where is he, anyway? Do you know who my father is, so I can go and find him and tell him what I think?" Moyra cringed when her son carried on like that. She knew the situation wasn't right, that boys really do need a father's love for their own good and also to get to understand what kind of person God is.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *My Father is working still and I am working. The Father judges no one, but has given all judgement to the Son, that all may honour the Son as they honour the Father.* From John 5:17-30. **Pope Francis:** Jesus wants to bring us to the Father. That is why, from the very beginning, the Church's preaching does not end with Jesus, but with the Father. The Aramaic word Jesus used to address the Father was "Abba", an intimate and familiar term that some found disconcerting. He addressed the Father in expressing his anguish at his impending death: "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want" (Mk 14:36). Jesus knew well that he had always been loved by the Father: "You loved me before the foundation of the world" (Jn 17:24). In his human heart, he had rejoiced at hearing the Father say to him: "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased". DN37, 72 **JUBILEE.** This Jubilee 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**

April 3. *"O Lord, why does your anger burn hot against your people."* "There are a few things that puzzle me about God and his justice," Nathan said to Phyllis. "I believe God was quite justified in being fed up with the Israelites when they started grumbling against him. When these teenagers of yours are so stubborn I can't handle it. I know I'm their stepdad and that makes it hard for both of us, but when you ask me nicely I really do try harder to control my frustration."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture *The Lord said to Moses, I have seen this stiff-necked people. Let me alone that my anger may burn hot against them. Moses begged of the Lord and said, 'O Lord, why does your anger burn hot against your people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt?' 'The Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people. From Exodus 32:7-14* **Pope Francis: JUBILEE.** For the last Extraordinary Jubilee, I commissioned Missionaries of Mercy, and these continue to carry out an important mission. During this Jubilee, may they exercise their ministry by reviving hope and offering forgiveness whenever a sinner comes to them with an open heart and a penitent spirit. May they remain a source of reconciliation and an encouragement to look to the future with heartfelt hope inspired by the Father's mercy. I encourage bishops to take advantage of their precious ministry, especially by sending them wherever hope is sorely tested: to prisons, hospitals, and places where people's dignity is violated, poverty abounds and social decay is prevalent. In this Jubilee Year, may no one be deprived of the opportunity to receive God's forgiveness and consolation. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

April 4. *'Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us* After Mass a few men stayed chatting. "Politicians aren't the only people it is hard to trust. In every situation there are greedy, self-centred people just out to feather their own nest and eager to trap and exploit you. Even friends betray friends. What kind of Christians are they really, or is their religion just skindeep?" "Or maybe ours too? Is this not a time for conversion or metanoia, to consider if you have

harmed someone, planned to fire or get rid of him or even just destroyed their good name? That kind of sin doesn't just need confession only, but also asking them forgiveness."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture Ungodly men said to themselves, 'Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions. He accuses us of sins against our training. Let us condemn him to a shameful death. Wisdom 2:12-22. **Pope Francis: JUBILEE.** Judgement, then, 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 definitive encounter with God's love. As we know from personal experience, every sin "leaves its mark". Sin has consequences, not only outwardly in the effects of the wrong we do, but also inwardly, inasmuch 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". In our humanity, weak and attracted by evil, certain residual effects of sin remain. These are removed by the indulgence. The Apostolic Penitentiary will issue norms for obtaining and rendering spiritually fruitful the practice of the Jubilee indulgence. SNC 23, **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

April 5. Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does? "You see, I'm right. I know I'm right and expect the judge to uphold my point of view." Labour disputes and even family disputes are reasoned out like that. "That may be so, but compromises may be necessary and circumstances can also have an influence. A poor child stealing to buy food, or a teenager stealing to buy drugs isn't quite the same, is it?" "You're right too but on top of that there is a growing awareness of the question of mercy. Pope Francis really challenges me when he even calls for a merciful judgement for everyone."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: Nicodemus said to the Pharisees, Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does? From John 7:40-53. **Pope Francis:** Mercy is not opposed to justice but rather expresses God's way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert and believe. FM21. **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. We should prepare ourselves consciously 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 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, in whose midst Christ, the Judge himself, is present. Clearly, then, 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. Sacred Scripture states: "You have taught your people that the righteous must be kind, and you have filled your children with good hope, because you give repentance for sins, so that... when we are judged, we may expect mercy" (Wis 12:19.22). SNC 22

April 6. Sunday Lent 5. Adultery. "Let him who is without sin among you, be the first to throw a stone." Fr Michael decided to tell the congregation a story linked with the gospel of the day. John 8:1-11. He called it, "A Mother's prayer. "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon this little child... Yes Jesus, look upon him with mercy and love and especially with gentleness and compassion, but may be not with meekness and mildness. We have to be strong, so very strong. It's not his fault that he was born HIV positive. Is it mine, or his father's? Should we not have allowed him to be born? We should not have contracted the disease in the first place. I find the anger in me sometimes wants to boil over, to burn and destroy and then fall back exhausted. Slowly acceptance is growing. Mike was such a good husband at first and then seemed to get bored and started going with those women. When I found out I was shattered at first but then just wanted to retaliate and do the same. Then it all went horribly wrong and maybe we both got what we deserved. In those days there was no anti-retroviral treatment and Mike became very ill and succumbed to the disease. I and the boy are fortunate to be on treatment, but Lord, the guilt for me is so overpowering and yet I find it hard to understand that a God who is so good and merciful can allow the innocent to suffer too? One day I believe I will explain the situation to him. When he asks, 'What is adultery' maybe I will tell him, 'It is what adults do to children without thinking.'"

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: "Let him who is without sin among you, be the first to throw a stone at her" "Has no one condemned you?" "Neither will I." John 8:1-11. **Pope Francis: JUBILEE.** A reality having to do with eternal life is God's judgement, both at the end of our individual lives and at the end of history. Sin has consequences, not only outwardly in the effects of the wrong we do, but also inwardly, inasmuch 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". In our humanity, weak and attracted by evil, certain residual effects of sin remain. These are removed by the indulgence, always by the grace of Christ, who, as Saint Paul VI wrote, "is himself our 'indulgence'". SNC 23. The pain of love becomes our salvation and our joy". **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

April 7. "Have you condemned a daughter of Israel without an examination?" Ernestina shared with her friends, "I got quite a shock when I read the story of Susanna in the book of Daniel the other day. Two elders of the people desired Susanna a beautiful woman, the wife of their host, threatened her and falsely accused her, when she refused them. The prophet Daniel was inspired to speak out for her as she was due to be executed unjustly, but justice prevailed and the two elders were punished for their evil intentions and lies. Was abuse of women and lying officials already common in those Biblical times?" "For sure, society hasn't really changed has it, but isn't that why Jesus came in his own time to call people to repent and to practise justice?" "We sure need that today too with the high incidence of gbv." "I'm not too sure how I feel about mercy for the offenders though. Susanna did receive it but what about them?"

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: Read the Susanna story from Daniel 13:1-62. **Pope Francis:** Jesus' words show that his holiness did not exclude deep emotions. On various occasions, he demonstrated a love that was both passionate and compassionate. He could be deeply moved and grieved, even to the point of shedding tears. It is clear that Jesus was not indifferent to the daily cares and concerns of people, such as their weariness or hunger: "I have compassion for this crowd... they have nothing to eat... they will faint on the way, and some of them have come from a great distance" (Mk 8:2-3). DN 44. **JUBILEE.** The judgement of God, who is love 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, in whose midst Christ, the Judge himself, is present. SNC 23. Mercy is not opposed to justice but rather expresses God's way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert and believe. FM 21. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

April 8. The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people and many died. Jacob belonged to his parish Justice and Peace group and worked in the prison too. "That is for my sins" he used to say. "But that is where I am able to put a different dimension on Justice and Peace. Yes people are guilty, some, not all, admit their guilt and I feel called to accompany them as they experience punishment on their journey towards repentance. I often see God's mercy at work there. I'm also excited to have heard about a programme that exists of Victim-Offender dialogues. And by the way why do snakes have such a bad image, not only in Biblical cultures but also pagan and some traditional religions have an unholy fear of snakes?"

Reflect, share and act. Scripture The people spoke against God and Moses. "Why have you brought us here? Then the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people and many died. Then the people came to Moses and said "we have sinned." So the Lord said to Moses, "make a fiery serpent and set it up as a sign and every one who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." Numbers 21:4-9 **Pope Francis:** **JUBILEE.** During the Holy Year I think of prisoners who, deprived of their freedom, daily feel the harshness of detention and its restrictions, lack of affection and, in more than a few cases, lack of respect for their persons. I propose that in this Jubilee Year governments undertake initiatives aimed at restoring hope; forms of amnesty or pardon meant to help individuals regain confidence in themselves and in society; and programmes of reintegration in the community, including a concrete commitment to respect for law. SNC 9. "The Lord has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Is 61:1-2). Jesus made those words his own at the beginning of his ministry, presenting himself as the fulfilment of the "year of the Lord's favour" (cf. Lk 4:18-19). In every part of the world, believers, and their Pastors in particular, should be one in demanding dignified conditions for those in prison, respect for their human rights and above all the abolition of the death penalty, a provision at odds with Christian faith and one that eliminates all hope of forgiveness and rehabilitation. SNC10. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

April 9. "Our God, whom we serve is able to deliver us." "Are there really still people who are so committed to their faith that they really think God will save them from harm?" Priscilla asked. "Well isn't that what martyrdom is?" "Not really, because martyrs even risk their lives." "Of course we only hear about them because they die, like Daswa. What about other martyrs these days who are killed for their beliefs but don't have a choice about that?" "Talking about faith miracles do happen too, people get healed or disasters are avoided after prayer. I heard that a massive hurricane was going to hit Mexico and when the people prayed it just petered out into an ordinary storm."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego said, "Our God, whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace. If not, we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up. Read Daniel 3: 14-28. **Pope Francis.** The preaching of Jesus is made visible once more in the response of faith Christian are called to offer by their witness. FM16 **JUBILEE.** The most convincing testimony to this 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. The martyrs, coming as they do from different Christian traditions, are also seeds of unity, expressions of the ecumenism of blood. I greatly hope that the Jubilee will also include ecumenical celebrations as a way of highlighting the richness of the testimony of these martyrs. SNC 20. **Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

April 10. “from now on you will be catching people.” In her confirmation group Abigail said, “When we celebrate days like St Patrick's and of St Daniel Comboni and the many other missionaries to foreign countries I wonder whether we stop to think of the hardships, penance and austerity they practised to bring the Christian faith to these countries over the centuries to millions all over the world. Maybe we don't still have an image of a missionary being fed to wild animals or boiled in a pot to be eaten by cannibals, but certainly torture and killing is still happening. “

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: After doubting Jesus before the miracle of the great catch of fish when Jesus resent them to go and fish a second time Simon Peter said, “Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man.” Jesus replied, “from now on you will be catching people.” From Luke 5:1-11. **Pope Francis:** “We become good confessors when above all we allow ourselves to be penitents in search of his mercy. **FM17. JUBILEE.** During this Jubilee, may Missionaries of Mercy exercise their ministry by reviving hope and offering forgiveness whenever a sinner comes to them with an open heart and a penitent spirit. May they remain a source of reconciliation and an encouragement to look to the future with heartfelt hope inspired by the Father's mercy. I encourage bishops to take advantage of their precious ministry, especially by sending them wherever hope is sorely tested: to prisons, hospitals, and places where people's dignity is violated, poverty abounds and social decay is prevalent. In this Jubilee Year, may no one be deprived of the opportunity to receive God's forgiveness and consolation. **SNC 23. Choose an act of love and sacrifice from the list, also published at www.marfam.org.za/lent**

April 11. The ecumenical group discussed, “Why do Muslims have a big issue with blasphemy and we Christians don't? You dare not take the name of the prophet Mohammed in vain and yet people use the name of God and of Jesus in disrespectful ways all the time.” “When Jesus was accused of blasphemy his Jewish listeners saw him as taking God's power on himself by saying, 'your sins are forgiven.' For us this is one of the proofs of his divinity.” “Whatever our background is respect for God and religious matters should still be accepted and even promoted as important.”

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: The Jews answered, “We stone you for no good work but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God.” From John 10:31-42. **Pope Francis:** **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, that of Nicaea. From apostolic times, bishops have gathered on various occasions in order 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 ensuring the 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**

April 12. As world citizens everyone is involved in this debate. “Is a national interest necessarily in accordance with God's plan, or can it be against Jesus and his vision for God's kingdom?” “I believe in the prior value of the common good applied more widely than just in one country. President Trump's “Make America Great Again” is really very selfish.” “But does he have the right to do that?” “We in SA can be criticised for a policy like BEE if we really consider the common good.” “Is stopping another country's wars expected of us, as that involves migrants?” “And what about a call to debt cancellation?” And so the debate has to continue.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: Caiaphas said, “If we let him go on like this everyone will believe in him and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation. You do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation should not perish. John 11:45-57. **Pope Francis:** **JUBILEE.** Another heartfelt appeal that I make in 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 a question of generosity, this is a matter of justice. It is made all the more serious today by a new form of injustice which we increasingly recognize, namely, that “a true ‘ecological debt’ 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**

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER. Family Reflections on the Love of Jesus

“LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU.” John 15:12.

Holy Week reflections take up the focus on the love of Jesus from *Dilexist Nos*. This encyclical from Pope Francis issued in October 2024 is also relevant in the context of the Jubilee Year of Hope. Central to these reflections is the statement ‘LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU’ and the love of Jesus, human and divine, his person, his vision and his qualities which are expressed in a variety of ways included the Sacred Heart. The format used is a description of an imaginary activity of groups of families participating in a mini-retreat. Scripture references, Church teaching and quotations from Pope Francis are added.

Introduction. The words, “love one another as I have loved you” are part of Jesus’ discourse at the last supper, a very significant moment in his life and a very important statement containing three elements. We can see it as an invitation to love others, but also to reflect on Jesus and his way of loving, as well as his love for each of us individually. So we can ask what are some of the qualities of the love of Jesus, what can we learn from him for our relationships and how can we come closer to understanding, appreciating and loving him in return? The document *Dilexist Nos* issued shortly before the start of the Jubilee year is one of the valuable resource documents for living as Pilgrims of Hope and creating Signs of Hope, which are purposes of the year.

These reflections for Holy Week linked with the events as described mainly in Luke’s gospel can be used in many different ways, as an individual, a group or a family with or without children in appropriate ways. It can be seen as a Holy Week pilgrimage, a way to deepen our love for and understanding of Jesus, the God-man who loved us. He showed his love till the end of his human life, but still continues to love us each in a special way. To put it simply, “Getting to know him is to love him, and getting to love him is to desire to know him better.”

Pope Francis: *For everyone, may the Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the “door” (cf. Jn 10:7-9) of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as “our hope” (1 Tim 1:1). SNC 1 “HE LOVED US”, Saint Paul says of Christ with certainty because Jesus himself had told his disciples, “I have loved you” (Jn 15:9, 12), “I have called you friends” (Jn 15:15). His open heart has gone before us and waits for us, unconditionally, asking only to offer us his love and friendship. For “he loved us first” (Because of Jesus, “we have come to know and believe in the love that God has for us” (1 Jn 4:16). DN1*

April 13. PALM SUNDAY. A story. Instead of just gathering to make palm crosses the group of families in preparation for Holy Week had chosen the day before Palm Sunday to start a mini-retreat that would continue briefly each day. There was time alone, time together as couples, for various family groups to share and a programme for younger children too. They had spent time in the morning meditating on the statement of Jesus, “Love one another as I have loved you” and when they met the director asked them to list some qualities of love that they had experienced and discovered. What was the message for themselves? It wasn’t really unexpected that the list looked rather like the message Paul gave to the Corinthians. “Love is patient, kind, never jealous, boastful or conceited, never rude or selfish; it does not take offence, is not resentful, takes no pleasure in other people’s sins, is truthful, always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes. Love lasts forever. “ True love is unconditional.” “I need to work on my jealousy,” “trust,” “pride,” were some comments. Even some young ones realised that showing off to their friends, and being impatient with younger siblings were not being loving. The director then told them “our task for this week will be to take time to think about Jesus and how you can identify these qualities in his personality and his life.”

Scripture: Read Luke 19: 28-40, Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. Reflection, discussion and sharing. The families’ retreat director posed some questions to be considered by families. “Did Jesus take charge of the situation and does he come across as someone with authority? How does he show his love in this situation?” He also gave them some thoughts for reflection about their own lives. “At baptism we are baptised into the kingly mission of Jesus. Discuss what a loving king would do for his people; would he protect, defend, rule with fairness and justice? The 4th commandment “Honour your father and your mother” speaks of respect for parents and by extension also for all those in authority. What should be done if these people abuse their authority? How should we love those in authority over us?

CHURCH TEACHING. *By reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will, so that these may grow according to Christ and be to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer. LG31. VATICAN II.*

April 14. MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK. Jesus and friendship. Scripture: Read John 12:1-11 that describes Jesus’ meal at the house of Lazarus, his sisters Martha and Mary and the apostles.

Reflection, discussion and sharing. The director introduced the reflection. There is a modern day rock opera called Jesus Christ Superstar that focuses on Judas and Magdalene and their relationship as friends of Jesus. It is criticised by some people because Judas is almost excused for betraying Jesus because he felt let down when Jesus does not turn out to be the kind of Messiah he was hoping for. In this show and some popular books nowadays the nature of the friendship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene is discussed. This gospel account of Mary pouring ointment over Jesus' feet and wiping them with her hair and the words of the very meaningful song she sings in the musical "I don't know how to love him" do speak to us too about our relationship with Jesus. Is he a remote spiritualised figure, a friend, a brother, a beloved, comforter and guide in times of need? That is from our human side. What do we know of Jesus as a friend from the scriptures? What did he mean when he said, "I do not call you servants any more, I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learned from my Father?" Exploring qualities of friendship, e.g. loyalty, acceptance, intimacy, forgiveness, faithfulness, honesty, joy and more illustrate the unconditional love he showed even to Peter who denied him.

Discussion, sharing, action. Focusing then on friendship is Jesus a true friend to each of us? Are our family members also our friends or are our friends closer or more important than our family? What qualities do we show in our friendships? Are we open to being more than colleagues or just providing a service to others? If possible as a family share some qualities of friendship you have noticed. Thank Jesus for his loving friendship and for his invitation to love as deeply as he loves. If possible check out the musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* and Mary Magdalene's song "I don't know how to love him."

Pope Francis: *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! SNC 23*

April 15. TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK. Scripture: *The director read the short story and then the passage from Luke 19: 41-44 and asked his listeners again to consider what loving qualities of Jesus are displayed there?*

Jesus made his way up Northcliff hill. He loved hills where he so often prayed to his Father at any time but now he was coming to take a look around. He could see all around him for miles and miles. To the north there were parts of Johannesburg, Randburg, Midrand and almost as far as Pretoria. To the east was the skyline of central Johannesburg and still some mine dumps. To the south, towards Soweto, through the smog he could see houses, thousands of them, some quite modern, others poor shacks. To the west there were hills that reminded him how this city had sprung up in the wake of a gold rush chasing after money. Jesus sighed. Each year for nearly 2000 years he had sighed and wept over great cities of the world. Would they never learn? Would they never come to realise that the way of the kingdom is to be one of ongoing reconciliation. There had been greater hope here some 30 years ago. It had faded but he wasn't going to give up. "Love one another, as I have loved you," he kept on saying to anyone who would listen.

Discussion, sharing, action. The director then said, "Do we as families take stock from time to time and consider our own future and that of our city, country and world in this time of human, political and environmental turmoil? What is the loving thing to do as Jesus did? Is it still a good time through our own love to bring children into the world, children to whom we can pass on our hopes and dreams for God's kingdom? "

Pope Francis: *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 first effect of this is the loss of the desire to transmit life. 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, and social models whose agenda is dictated by the quest for profit rather than concern for relationships.*

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. It is urgent that responsible legislation on the part of states be accompanied by the firm support of communities of believers and the entire civil community. For 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 born of hope and it generates hope. SNC 9

April 16. WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK. Scripture: *Read Luke 19:45-48* When the director read the account of the traders being expelled from the temple he opened up the subject of anger. This resulted in a huge debate in all the families and is of course very relevant to family life. Opinions ranged from "I don't think anger is ever OK" to "Anger is natural, you just have to learn to manage it." The director said, "Googling "Anger in the Bible" also shows that people have different opinions. Some questions raised are, "Is all anger sin and if so why are there references to God's anger? Is there such a thing as righteous or unrighteous anger or is it only to do with how we respond to the angry feelings that arise in us? Can anger be loving or what is the loving thing to do when one is angry? Could Jesus have been unloving in his act of chasing the traders out of the

temple and also in the way he constantly criticized the scribes and Pharisees? From another extreme in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus told his disciples to “turn the other cheek.”

Discussion, sharing, action. Mrs Peters, a psychologist, contributed to the discussion saying that anger is a natural physical reaction to an adverse situation that is not in itself wrong but needs to be managed properly and there are programmes that would be of enormous help in families where angry outbursts and abuse are only too common. Maurice suggested that their family could make a poster and put up the passage from Ps 103:8, “The Lord is compassion and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy.” But, he said, “Let’s make little post-its to change the words “The Lord” to “my dad,” or “my mom” or whoever. Everyone agreed that was a great idea.

Church teaching. *Scripture reveals anger and envy in man as consequences of original sin. Catechism of the Catholic Church 2259. Anger is a desire for revenge. To desire vengeance in order to do evil to someone who should be punished is illicit, but it is praiseworthy to impose restitution “to correct vices and maintain justice.” CCC 2302.*

April 17. HOLY THURSDAY. The director presented a short story for them to reflect on before reading the gospel.

They sat in a group around the scrubbed table, their Bibles open, eyes closed to the sight of peeling paint, ears closed to the sound of crying babies and nagging children, their hands dry and wrinkled from washing and cleaning and Jesus was there among them. “How have you practised your ministry of foot-washing?” he asked.

One woman spoke up, “I visit the sick every Thursday, bring clean clothes and food hampers.” Jesus said, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Another spoke up. “I go to the squatter camps once a month and bring blankets.” Jesus said, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Proudly each one listed their good works.

One woman sat quietly in a corner. Jesus asked her, “And You Ellen?” She burst into tears. “My Lord and Master, I feel so embarrassed. I used to do such a lot but then when my marriage was in trouble Peter accused me of never being home. We talked it through and prayed and decided I would concentrate on our 5 children for now. We are poor but I do not go to work. I make their clothes, teach them to sew and cook and Peter helps with their school work and plays soccer with the boys. I do feel guilty but” Jesus smiled, “Well done, friend. You have learned a hard lesson.

And all of you too, your hands are dry and wrinkled not from the weekly or monthly visits but from the daily ministry in your homes, wiping noses, eyes and bottoms, washing clothes, serving meals and mending broken hearts. Thank you for following my example. Much as I value your kindness greatly it is not mainly through the visits to the squatter camps but through the daily loving you give to your and my children that you wash my feet too.”

Scripture. discussion, sharing, action. The director then read the account of Jesus washing the feet of the apostles from John 13:1-15 beginning with “He had always loved those who were his in the world, but now he showed how perfect his love was.” What loving qualities does Jesus display and how can these be imitated best in your own life?

Church teaching. *In our own time, in a world often alien and even hostile to faith, believing families are of primary importance as centres of living, radiant faith. It is in the bosom of the family that parents are by word and example the first heralds of the faith. They should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each child. LG 11*

Pope Francis: *Consequently, the Christian community should be at the forefront in pointing out the need for a social covenant to support and foster hope, one that is inclusive and not ideological, working for a future filled with the laughter of babies and children, in order to fill the empty cradles in so many parts of our world. All of us, however, need to recover the joy of living, since men and women, created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26), cannot rest content with getting along one day at a time, settling for the here and now and seeking fulfilment in material realities alone. This leads to a narrow individualism and the loss of hope; it gives rise to a sadness that lodges in the heart and brings forth fruits of discontent and intolerance.*

April 18. GOOD FRIDAY. The director handed out a newssheet that read:

NEWS OF THE WORLD, Friday 18 April 2025.
JESUS CHRIST CRUCIFIED AGAIN.

Our roving reporter interviewed Christ in his cell at St Francis' Care Centre. Showing her the wounds in his hands and feet, the gaping oozing wound in his side and with his face still bloodied he listed for her the crimes against God and humanity.

RAPE, ABUSE, INFIDELITY, SEXUAL PROMISCUITY, VIOLENCE, MUTI-MURDERS, HIJACKING, FRAUD, CORRUPTION, ARMED ROBBERIES, BETRAYAL, BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS, ABORTION, ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION, HIV/AIDS INFECTION, LACK OF COMPASSION, SELFISHNESS, GREED, LACK OF RESPECT FOR THE AGED, SICK AND DISABLED.

With tears in his eyes he quoted, “What they do to the least of these they do to me.”

Deeply moved she sat quietly for a while. On an impulse she took off her scarf and gently wiped his face. At last she spoke. "Why?"

As she waited for his response a voice resounded from the yard outside where the youth choir was practising for their traditional Good Friday dramatisation.

"Repent and believe the Good News. I have come that they many have life and have it to the full." And many voices rose in harmony.

"The spirit lives to set us free. Walk, walk in the light.

Jesus promised life to all. Walk, walk in the light.

He died in pain on Calvary, to save the lost like you and me.

We know his death was not the end, he gave his spirit to be our friend.

By Jesus' love our wounds are healed, the Father's kindness is revealed."

Jesus and Joanna looked at each other then quietly joined in.

"The Spirit lives in you and me. Walk, walk in the light.

His light will shine for all to see. Walk, walk in the light."

She got up, and leaving him in the darkened room walked out into the bright sunlight.

Discussion, sharing, action. The director posed the question, "Redemptive love: was there and is there, a human and a divine dimension to Jesus love? "Does Jesus' total gift of self ever come to an end? Does love ever end?" When reading the passion accounts in any of the gospels do so with a particular awareness of the ways that Jesus showed his love in spite of his pain and suffering.

Pope Francis: *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). In this sense, he could say to his disciples, "Abide in me" (Jn 15:4). Jesus' words show that his holiness did not exclude deep emotions. On various occasions, he demonstrated a love that was both passionate and compassionate. He could be deeply moved and grieved, even to the point of shedding tears. DN 43-44 Devotion to the heart of Christ is not the veneration of a single organ apart from the Person of Jesus. What we contemplate and adore is the whole Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, represented by an image that accentuates his heart. That heart of flesh is seen as the privileged sign of the inmost being of the incarnate Son and his love, both divine and human. More than any other part of his body, the heart of Jesus is "the natural sign and symbol of his boundless love". DN 48*

April 19. HOLY SATURDAY. Scripture. Reflection. Read John 11:1-43 and try to discover more about the loving Jesus and those who experience human love as his love. The director focused more directly on the married couples but suggested that everyone could relate to the sense of desolation and loss that the apostles must have felt on this day after Jesus' death and that we know that Jesus felt too at the death of his friend Lazarus.

Discussion, sharing, action. Cyril and Prudence shared. Cyril began, "Love one another as I have loved you" is the slogan chosen by Marriage Encounter which was for us a deeply moving experience. Our marriage had not been in a good place for some time and because I was hurting and feeling very lonely and abandoned I reluctantly agreed to participate in the programme. I can't even say exactly what it was that changed things so radically for us but listening to the stories of some couples and particularly through listening to each other as we were able to pour out our own feelings of desolation and through experiencing God's plan for our marriage to be a truly life-giving one with Jesus, as they said, as the 3rd partner became a real Resurrection moment for us."

Prudence added, "I truly believe that after that time of desolation we experienced Jesus' love in the deepest possible way and I must say that we are still challenged by those words to love one another, as he has loved and still loves us."

CHURCH TEACHING. *Christ did not live his life for himself but for us, from his Incarnation to his death and Resurrection. He is still "our advocate with the Father and remains ever in the presence of God on our behalf. CCC 519. In all of his life Jesus presents himself as our model. He is the "perfect man" who invites us to become his disciples and follow him. In humbling himself, he has given us an example to imitate, through his prayer he draws us to pray and by his poverty he calls us to accept freely the privation and persecutions that may come our way. CCC 520*

April 20. EASTER SUNDAY. Scripture, Reflection. Sharing, Discussion. Read the Resurrection account in John 20: 1-9 or any of the gospels. The director asked the families to consider how his disciples, still traumatized from experiencing his death had to learn to relate to the risen Jesus.

The youth from the different families had become quite close and shared quite deeply. "I prefer to relate to the flesh and blood Jesus" Josh said, "he is so much more human." They had to laugh at that. "Isn't that exactly why he did come to earth as a human being, from being a helpless squawking infant, no doubt, to a little bit of a rebellious teenager, if you will excuse me for saying so, to a man who could speak with authority, inspired tremendous love and devotion, but also hatred from those who were not willing to follow his way and love as he loved. We do believe what we are taught that he was truly God, but he was also truly man."

The director summed up their thoughts. "While we meditate and try to relate to Jesus as a man, to discover the personal qualities and learn how to love as he loved, at the Resurrection he moved into a different domain. As Risen Lord he returned and appeared at different times to different people. He remains with us too while at the same time being with the Father. His Post-resurrection appearances continued his teaching and prepared his followers for continuing the task of building the Kingdom, for which he promised to send a Helper. That is the task we still have today. You can call it Evangelisation, and maybe for some of us this week's experience could even be called a New Evangelisation, deeper love and greater knowledge and greater confidence in hope."

"Amen," they agreed. "That statement, "love one another as I have loved you" certainly has made me think." "And me."

Pope Francis: *Whether the image of the Sacred Heart or whatever the image employed, it is clear that the living heart of Christ – not its representation is the object of our worship, for it is part of his holy risen body, which is inseparable from the Son of God who assumed that body forever. We worship it because it is "the heart of the Person of the Word, to whom it is inseparably united. Nor do we worship it for its own sake, but because with this heart the incarnate Son is alive, loves us and receives our love in return. Any act of love or worship of his heart is thus "really and truly given to Christ himself", since it spontaneously refers back to him and is "a symbol and a tender image of the infinite love of Jesus Christ". DN 50 Surely 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. SNC18*

April 21. EASTER MONDAY. In South Africa this is celebrated as Family Day, a day for moms and dads and grandparents and children and siblings and aunts and uncles and any members of the extended family, and beyond them the Family of God to remember to celebrate and proclaim: "The Lord is risen, Alleluia."

EASTER 2025, a story

The Greek owner at the Spar greeted all the customers who came in to buy Easter eggs by saying, "The Lord is risen, Alleluia." Instead of saying, "Thanks be to God, Alleluia," which is the right reply, most of them looked at him funnily and went on to get their eggs.

That is what worried Jesus in heaven with the Father and the Holy Spirit and many, many, many people who had died and come to heaven.

"What can you see happening over there," he asked. An old man spirit said, "Same as always, same as yesterday, today and tomorrow, wars here and there, floods, people going shopping, going on holiday, lots of accidents, tut-tut, and the floods and snow last winter were devastating. Climate change is with us, I say!"

Jesus answered, "You're right, but in some way people can also learn from their experiences. Didn't some of those awful things bring any of those people closer to God?" But he still looked sad.

A little girl spirit said, "but look over there, aren't there lots and lots of children running around their gardens, looking under bushes and even climbing trees. I remember we used to do that before I got sick. We were looking for Easter eggs and it was so exciting."

Jesus smiled, but still in a kind of a sad way. "I wonder whether they're thinking of me, of us, my Father and I, how we planned this whole business to help them. They were sinners and did so many bad things. Even children fought with each other, stole things and bullied each other and lots of other stuff. So we decided that they needed a new kind of life. I went to them, came as a baby, grew up and started teaching them and eventually their leaders didn't like what I was saying, so they took me and killed me. OK, that was part of the plan, but it was very painful. But the best part was that the Father raised me up again, brought me back to life and that is where the new life came in. All those Easter eggs, and bunnies and chickens are about new life, sure, but it is my kind of new life, a life of greater kindness, more love, less fighting and wars is what we were planning for. Do those chocolate goodies really help to remind people of that? And when they've eaten so much chocolate that they're feeling sick have they thought about other children who don't even get to eat a piece of bread? I think we have a long way to go to get people to hear the real message. It's also not so much about the things they give each other but the gift that I gave them. You see it is all about love and joy.

I think I'll have to get the Spirit to go over there and remind them and give a special blessing to that Greek man at the Spar for doing his bit. That's what everyone should be doing. Tell the people, "The Lord is risen, Alleluia. Be filled with joy and happiness and share it with everyone around you."

Then they can all reply. "Thanks be to God, Alleluia. I will share your joy and your peace in my world."

And Jesus said to himself and to the Spirit, "So let them enjoy their Easter, enjoy their Easter eggs, but remind them not to eat too much chocolate. It's really not good for them and they might end up here in heaven sooner than they think." TR

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *This Jesus God raised up and of that we are all witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit he has poured out this which you see and hear. Acts 2:33. Pope Francis: If a family is centred on Christ he will unify and illumine its entire life. Moments of pain and difficulty will be experienced in union with the Lord's cross. Family prayer is a special way of expressing and strengthening this paschal faith. Moments of joy, relaxation, celebration and even sexuality can be experienced as a sharing in the full life of the resurrection. AL 317. JUBILEE.* All of us, however, need to recover the joy of living, since men and women, created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26), cannot rest content with getting along one day at a time, settling for the here and now and seeking fulfilment in material realities alone. This leads to a narrow individualism and the loss of hope; it gives rise to a sadness that lodges in the heart and brings forth fruits of discontent and intolerance. During the Holy Year, we are called to be tangible signs of hope for those of our brothers and sisters who experience hardships of any kind. **Choose an appropriate action to share your Easter joy.**

April 22. Tuesday of Easter week. Magdalene loved this story. She shared, "Once when I was quite little you told me that Jesus was everywhere and I must look around to see him. I didn't know what he looked like. It seems that Mary Magdalene also didn't recognise him. That made me wonder, how different does he look to different people at different times."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture *Supposing him to be the gardener Mary Magdalene said to him, "Sir if you have carried him away tell where you have laid him and I will take him away. " Jesus said to her, "Mary". She turned and said to him "Rabboni, Teacher." Read John 20:11-18 Pope Francis: The Lord's presence dwells in real and concrete families, with all their daily troubles and struggles, joys and hopes. Living in a family makes it hard for us to feign or lie; we cannot hide behind a mask. AL315. JUBILEE. The Gospel tells us that Jesus "came to his own" (cf. Jn 1:11). Those words refer to us, for the Lord does not treat us as strangers but as a possession that he watches over and cherishes. He treats us truly as "his own". This does not mean that we are his slaves, something he himself denies: "I do not call you servants" (Jn 15:15). Rather, it refers to the sense of mutual belonging typical of friends. Jesus came to meet us, bridging all distances; he became as close to us as the simplest, everyday realities of our lives DN 34. Choose an appropriate action.*

April 23. Wednesday of Easter week. Peter said, "Why did those two disciples that were walking to Emmaus not recognize him? Who were they, don't they have names? Were they not important? I like to think that Jesus is there for me, the same as for the pope or the bishop even if I am not important." Mercia added, "What I like is that there were a pair of them, together, maybe a husband and wife, maybe with their kids and that Jesus took his time to walk and talk with them. I think we should do that too, all together."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture *He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. He went in to stay with them and their eyes were opened and they recognized him. Luke 24:13-35. Pope Francis. In talking with his disciples Jesus would invite them to recognize the paternal relationship God has with all his creatures. With moving tenderness he would remind them that each one of them is important in God's eyes, "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God." LS 96. JUBILEE. The Sacred Heart is the unifying principle of all reality, since "Christ is the heart of the world, and the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection is the centre of history. All creatures "are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God where Christ embraces all things. In the presence of the heart of Christ, I once more ask the Lord to have mercy on this suffering world in which he chose to dwell as one of us. May he pour out the treasures of his light and love, so that our world, which presses forward despite wars, socio-economic disparities and uses of technology that threaten our humanity, may regain the most important and necessary thing of all: its heart. DN 31. Choose an appropriate action.*

April 24. Thursday of Easter week. Bryan seeing himself as a budding forensic pathologist said, "I am fascinated by Jesus and his resurrected body. How could he not just be a spirit but appear and disappear at will? It must really have been very hard for the disciples to understand and believe. Touching something does make it far more real and I suppose once you have crossed that barrier you can also take seriously what Jesus said.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *Jesus said to them, "Why are you troubled? See my hands and my feet that it is I myself. Touch me and see, for a spirit as no flesh and bones as I have. Luke 24:35-48 Pope Francis: . The New Testament does not*

only tell us of the earthly Jesus and his tangible and loving relationship with the world. It also shows him risen and glorious, present throughout creation by his universal Lordship. LS 100. **JUBILEE.** I once more ask the Lord to have mercy on this suffering world in which he chose to dwell as one of us. May he pour out the treasures of his light and love, so that our world, which presses forward despite wars, socio-economic disparities and uses of technology that threaten our humanity, may regain the most important and necessary thing of all: its heart. DN31. **Choose an appropriate action.**

April 25. Friday of Easter week. Mom who loved picnics shared her thoughts and smiled. "It must have been a very strange breakfast picnic there on the shore of the sea of Tiberias with the disciples first being skeptical about going out again in their boat after having caught nothing all night and even at the end when they came with their 153 fish and Jesus was cooking breakfast for them they seemed uncertain. I wonder who said what in the end. I also sometimes don't know what to say to Jesus. Does anyone else feel like that? There is a story about an old man who would come into church every day and sit down in the back row for a long time. One day an usher asked him what he was doing just sitting there. The old man replied, "I just look at Jesus, and he looks at me."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture: They went out in the boat but that night they caught nothing. As day was breaking Jesus stood on the beach yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. He said to them, cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some fish." So they cast it and now they were not able to haul it in. John 21:1-14 **Pope Francis:** We can be fully present to others only by giving fully of ourselves and forgetting all else. Jesus is our model in this. Our loved ones merit our complete attention since he or she possesses infinite dignity as an object of the Father's immense love. This gives rise to a tenderness which stirs in the other the joy of being loved. AL 323 **JUBILEE.** 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. DN 37. **Choose an appropriate action.**

April 26. Saturday of Easter Week. "How often have I told you, shown you, nagged you and how often are you so thick you just don't understand or choose not to understand." They hadn't really started their family faith sharing yet and of course Percy would not have talked to his younger brother like that if they had. Aunt Norah was clever to use the opportunity to say that Jesus must also have felt frustrated and irritated at times with the "thickness" of the disciples. "Do we really always try hard enough to understand what we need to know," she added.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture Afterwards he appeared to the Eleven themselves as they sat at table and he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. And he said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. Mark 16:9-15. **Pope Francis:** When a family is welcoming and reaches out to others, especially the poor and the neglected, it is a symbol, a witness and participant in the Church's motherhood. Social love is a reflection of the Trinity. The family lives its spirituality precisely by being at one and the same time a domestic church and a vital cell for transforming the world. AL 324. **JUBILEE:** May the Christian community always be prepared to defend the rights of those who are most vulnerable, opening wide its doors to welcome them, lest anyone ever be robbed of the hope of a better future. May the Lord's words in the great parable of the Last Judgement always find an echo in our hearts: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" for "just as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it to me" (Mt 25:35-40). SNC 13. **Choose an appropriate action.**

APRIL 27. Divine Mercy Sunday. Easter 2C. "Do not be faithless but believe. Fr Sylvester had a few thoughts to share with the people on this Sunday. "How did the early church grow?" he asked. "Were the disciples all fired up immediately? No. They needed extra help, right, like we all do, all the time." You could say that Divine Mercy Sunday is celebrating God's mercy as that extra something, but something that is always available to us. There is the special Divine Mercy devotion attached to this which is practiced in many countries. It focuses on God's mercy and our trust in God as we acknowledge our sinfulness and need of mercy and forgiveness. We priests have been given special sacramental powers to forgive sins in the name of God. In all humility I really wish more people would appreciate what that can mean for them. It can be a real way of 'touching' Jesus who heals and forgives."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. "Put your finger here and see my hands and put out your hand and place it in my side; do not be faithless but believe." Thomas answered, "My Lord and my God." Read John 20:19-31. **Pope Francis.** The Church is commissioned to proclaim the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the mind and heart of every person. It will become possible for the balm of mercy to reach everyone, believers and those far away, as a sign that the kingdom of God is already present in our midst. AL309. **JUBILEE.** 1 More recent saints, like, Saint Teresa of Calcutta and many others, have spoken with deep devotion of the heart of Christ. The experiences of Saint Faustina Kowalska, re-propose devotion to the heart of Christ by greatly emphasizing the glorious life of the risen Lord and his divine mercy. Inspired by her experiences and the spiritual legacy of Saint Józef Sebastian Pelczar (1842-1924), 151 Saint John Paul II intimately linked his reflections on divine mercy with devotion to the heart of Christ:. DN147 **Explore and practice the Divine Mercy or other devotions to the Sacred Heart.**

April 28. Freedom Day SA. *Liberty is directed above all to love and the common good.* The speaker began, "What does freedom mean to you as an individual and a member of a family and community? It can even mean different things at different times and in these different contexts. On this holiday celebrating and commemorating the day in 1994 when the first fully democratic election was held in South Africa we do celebrate freedom and commemorate the new Constitution. Freedom is precious. It was and always is hard-bought and should be greatly appreciated. But it is not for free. It was bought at a price and still costs for many people. We as families can consider the cost of freedom and let us discuss the history of the day with those too young to remember the past." The packed hall applauded his speech. Would they go and do more? **Reflect, share and act. Scripture** *It is truly right and just that we should give you thanks and praise O God, almighty Father for all you do in this world, through our Lord Jesus Christ. For though the human race is divided by dissension and discord, yet we know that by testing us you change our hearts to prepare them for reconciliation. Even more by your Spirit you move human hearts that enemies may speak to each other again, adversaries may join hands and peoples seek to meet together. By the working of your power it comes about, O Lord, that hatred is overcome by love, revenge gives way to forgiveness and discord is changed to mutual respect.* **Preface for Reconciliation. Pope Francis:** *Fraternity is born not only of a climate of respect for individual liberties or administrative equality. Fraternity calls for something greater. Liberty is directed above all to love and the common good.* FT103. **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.*

April 29. Jason had a turn to lead the sharing. "Be honest everyone, "he said "are you all prepared to not only share your things within our family but for us to sell what we have and be prepared to share with everyone in the whole world. Isn't that pretty excessive? I think it is." It was a very big challenge for all of them to consider. "I don't think that even Pope Francis expects us to go that far, but I know and believe that there are still people like the missionaries and other religious who have given up all their possessions." "But they don't have kids to send to school." So they threw the idea around. "It is being of one heart and soul that means feeling for one another that is important and not letting others go hungry." "That would be a start for us at least," was the conclusion.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture *The company of those who believed were of one heart and soul and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had every thing in common. There was not any one needy among them. Acts 4:32, 34* **Pope Francis:** *I invite everyone to renewed hope which speaks to us of something deeply rooted in every human heart, a thirst, a longing for fulfillment.* FT 55. **JUBILEE.** *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 inured and resigned. Yet we must not close our eyes to the dramatic situations that we now encounter all around us. Each day we meet people who are poor or impoverished; they may even be our next-door neighbours. Often they are homeless or lack sufficient food for the day. They suffer from a largely to producing weapons, the poor continue to be "the majority of the planet's population, billions of people. Let us not forget: the poor are almost always the victims, not the ones to blame.* SNC15. **Choose an appropriate action.**

April 30. Busi picked up the sharing from the day before. "Can you see that not everyone thought like those followers did who were willing to give up everything. What intrigues me as that the Jewish leaders were jealous that there were people so committed to their beliefs and to each other that they were prepared to give up what they owned. I wonder if the Jews had a guilty conscience because they were not living the way they should." "In a peculiar way I can learn something from that too. I do feel jealous or rather resentful sometimes when I see really good committed people and wish I had that same will to do good."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture *Filled with jealousy they arrested the apostles and put them in prison. At night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out and said, 'Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life.'* Acts 5:17-19 **Pope Francis: JUBILEE.** *Echoing the age-old message of the prophets, the Jubilee reminds us that the goods of the earth are not destined for a privileged few, but for everyone. The rich must be generous and not avert their eyes from the faces of their brothers and sisters in need. I think especially of those who lack water and food: hunger is a scandal, an open wound on the body of our humanity, and it summons all of us to a serious examination of conscience. I renew my appeal that "with the money spent on weapons and other military expenditures, let us establish a global fund that can finally put an end to hunger and favour development in the most impoverished countries, so that their citizens will not resort to violent or illusory situations, or have to leave their countries in order to seek a more dignified life".* SNC 16. **Choose an appropriate action.**