



2025 MARFAM JUBILEE YEAR FAMILY YEAR PLANNER

Theme: OUR WORLD, A FAMILY OF FAMILIES -

THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY: MAY - PARENTS FORM FAMILIES

FAMILIES - PILGRIMS OF HOPE & SIGNS OF HOPE

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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.



GENERAL NOTES. May is traditionally Mary's month and a short daily prayer to Our Lady is added, but praying with the Magnificat would be highly recommended especially for Laudato Si week. The Church commemorates the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis encyclical LAUDATO SI during **LAUDATO SI WEEK** from 24-31 May. Events can be organized for parishes and families to raise awareness with the theme "Raising Hope."

The official **Jubilee of Families, Children, Grandparents and the elderly** will be held in Rome from 30 May – 1 June and can also be commemorated at local level.

MAY OVERVIEW. Parents form Families. Whether from the perspective of biology, human physiology or spirituality, the gift of co-creation in nature everywhere should be recognized as one of God's greatest gifts. Male and female in nature, man and woman, ideally in a loving committed relationship, continue God's creation and its sustenance and nurturance. **Laudato Si week** celebrating the 10th anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical and the **Jubilee of Families** from 30 May – 1 June can incorporate the theme of hope through co-creation and responsible parenthood as one of the Signs of Hope. Parents have the task of forming and educating their offspring to prepare them for adulthood. The ideal of the love of their father and mother for each other is important for children. Effective parenting in any family structure is amongst the most complex relationships today, aware as we are of the good and the dysfunctionalities of family relationships that play out in family violence. *Pope Francis: The gift of a new child entrusted by God to a father and a mother, begins with acceptance, continues with lifelong protection and has as its final goal the joy of eternal life. God allows parents to choose the name by which he himself will call their child for all eternity. AL166. Only if we devote time to our children, speaking of important things with simplicity and concern and finding healthy ways for them to spend their time will we be able to shield them from harm, prepare them to confront the risks of aggression, abuse and drug addiction. AL 260.*

Setting the Scene for the reflections: As parenting is such an important aspect of parish life on the whole, it is suggested that all parish groups can promote the idea of Parenting in families, in its different context and across the generations too. The usual See-Judge-Act approach is used with life situations and daily scripture and many references are made to the Jubilee document *Spes Non Confundit* (Hope does not disappoint) and some to *Dilexit Nos*, on the love of Jesus.

POPE FRANCIS RIP: As these THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY are being completed we are in mourning after the death of this great leader on Easter Monday. He will remain present to us and to families through his writings and quotations. It should be remembered that one of his first acts in 2013 was to initiate a discernment process into family life and its needs.

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.*

PRAYERS FOR THIS TIME.

LAUDATO SI' 2015 – 2025. PRAYER FOR OUR EARTH. Pope Francis,

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. Amen.

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

MAGNIFICAT

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,

my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:

the Almighty has done great things for me,

and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him

in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,

he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,

and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,

and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel

for he has remembered his promise of mercy,

the promise he made to our fathers,

to Abraham and his children forever.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever.

Amen.

May 1. Workers' Day SA. St Joseph the Worker. Workers Day has for more than a century been a battle for the rights of workers, a battle involving employers, employees and trade unions. The Church has been involved on issues of workers' rights too during this time. Rights of women workers has only come to the fore years later. Maternity leave had been an issue and more recently paternity leave has been included in some places. A fatherhood group had spearheaded this campaign to allow mothers and fathers to be able to bond with a new baby. When it was raised in some parish groups some of the dads had welcomed it while others had said, "I don't want to be with my wife when she gives birth. It's against our culture." One man said, "I was with my partner when she gave birth and it was a very special experience." St Joseph was a worker, a tradesman, and a simple country man who was given a tremendous task to support his young wife, Mary, and her child. In one family group when the question of childbirth came up, a dad said, "These days we don't work on farms much and don't live close to nature, but I think it is still good for children to witness nature and birth. When our dog gave birth to her puppies my little daughter was amazed and we talked about the wonder of it together."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward, you are serving the Lord Christ. Col 3:23-24. Pope Francis:* *We were created with a vocation to work. Work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development and personal fulfillment. LS128.*

JUBILEE. *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* **Pray.** *Mary, loving wife of Joseph, together you worked to build your family. Pray for us.*

May 2. MOTHER OF PEACE is just one of thousands of small projects where generous and committed people care for abandoned, homeless or disabled children and adults. Providing food can be a great challenge and for some it feels like the well-known miracle of the feeding of the 5000 with just a few loaves and fish. Miracles of multiplication of food have been recorded too in various parts of the world. But was Jesus also testing the generosity of the people and the inventiveness of the apostles as well as providing the gathered crowds with food?

Reflect, share, act. Scripture. *There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they among so many. Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks he distributed to those who were seated. From John 6:1-15* **Pope Francis:** *Feeding the hungry is one of the Corporal Works of Mercy. 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, not only in certain parts of the world. 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 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. The poor are almost always the victims, not the ones to blame. SNC 15. Pray: Mary, mother of the poor and forgotten, pray for us.*

May 3. When Moses and James met at the soccer they sometimes complained that their wives were always busy with sodality matters. "I want her home on Sunday morning to cook for me," Moses said and James nodded his agreement. But Daniel overhearing their conversation chipped in, "I'm sorry that my wife has died because now what am I supposed to do. My children have their own families or sodalities to be worried about but one day I asked them all to come together so we could talk things through. I asked them, "How can we look after all our different interests so that no one feels left out. They really listened and things are much better now."

Reflect, share, act., Scripture. *When the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. And the Twelve said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore pick out from among you seven men of good repute whom we may appoint to this duty." Acts 6:1-7. Pope Francis.* *In family life we need to cultivate that strength of love which can help us fight every evil threatening it. Love does not yield to resentment, scorn for others, or the desire to hurt or to gain some advantage. The Christian ideal, especially in families, is a love that never gives up. AL 118 JUBILEE. One of the signs of hope to be explored is grandparents. May they find support in the gratitude of their children and the love of their grandchildren, who discover in them their roots and a source of understanding and encouragement. Pray: Mary, mother and protector of the elderly, pray for us.*

May 4. Sunday Easter 3C. Fr Peter told the congregation, “Like in all the stories in the gospels there are so many messages, but let’s pick up just two from today’s gospel that paint a wonderful picture for our imagination. After the resurrection the apostles were still lost and confused, so what they did was go back to their work, fishing for some, but that day they had little success. Jesus arrived and, understanding them, encouraged them to cast their net out again, and this time they caught a large number, 153, big fish. When they got back to the shore they found Jesus cooking breakfast for them, but still they felt unsure about him. Do we ever feel like that? How real is Jesus for us, real enough to cook breakfast?

The other reflection sees Jesus speaking to Peter. “Do you love me?” he asked, three times. Peter gets annoyed, but Jesus may have been driving home the point of Peter’s triple denial and now he is called to confirm his love three times. Then Jesus says, “feed my lambs,” and “feed my sheep.” For us, is it love of Jesus and for Jesus, that empowers us, as families, to care for our little lambs and our older sheep?”

Reflect, share, act., Scripture. Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. Truly I say to you, when you were young you fastened your own belt and walked where you would, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and another will fasten your belt and bring you where you do not wish to go.” John 21: 1-19. **Pope Francis:** In a family, parents, grandparents and children all feel at home, no one is excluded. If someone has a problem even a serious one, even if he brought it upon himself the rest of the family comes to his assistance. FT 230. “The experience of love in families is a perennial source of strength for the life of the Church”. (AL 88) We were conceived in the heart of God and for this reason each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each is loved, each is necessary. LS 65. **JUBILEE.** The Fathers of the Church, opposing those who denied or downplayed the true humanity of Christ, insisted on the concrete and tangible reality of the Lord’s human affections. Saint Basil emphasized that the Lord’s incarnation was not something fanciful, and that “the Lord possessed our natural affections”. DN 62 **Pray.** Mary, mother most caring, concerned for all in need, pray for us

May 5. “Why are we in our day not like those early Christians, so full of fire?” Brent had often thought about this. “I see other churches talking about miracles and wonders but we’re so sceptical about that. Do miracles really happen or can they really happen?” They decided to consult with the prayer group in their parish and were told, “Yes, miracles are still supposed to be a sign of God’s care and presence, but our faith and understanding may not be strong enough. Instead of arguing and disputing should we not be praying for an increase in faith, love and commitment to God’s way and how we live our relationships?” That really made them think.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture In those days, Stephen full of grace and power did great wonders and signs among the people. Then some arose and disputed with Stephen. But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. From Acts 6:8-15. **Pope Francis.** Keeping our missionary fervour alive calls for firm trust in the Holy Spirit. There is no greater freedom than that of allowing oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit, renouncing the attempt to plan and control everything and instead letting him enlighten, guide and direct us, leading us wherever he wills EG 280 **JUBILEE** By his perennial presence in the life of the pilgrim Church, the Holy Spirit illuminates all believers with the light of hope. He keeps that light burning, like an ever-burning lamp, to sustain and invigorate our lives. 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. SNC **Pray:** Mary, Mother of Hope, pray for us to be Signs of Hope.

May 6. The post-confirmation group were studying history of religion. The catechist led the discussion. “St Stephen is the first Christian martyr, stoned to death for his bravery and conviction about his beliefs. In today’s world there has been an increase in violence. Many people are killed because of their religious beliefs, in other parts of the world because of politics that also causes wars, or people are killed over race or ethnicity. A serious problem is family violence, femicide and the number of women killed, often by a partner or a husband. Shockingly in the war in Ukraine there were hundreds of thousands of deaths, civilians, women, children, men as well as soldiers on the Ukrainian and Russian sides. Were they killed defending a country or over an ideology, or just obeying orders? What are the reasons for the wars in Gaza, Myanmar and elsewhere? What is a true martyr? Would you really be prepared to die for your beliefs or your country?

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. Stephen said to the people and the elders and scribes, ‘You stiff-necked people, you always resist the Holy Spirit.’ They were enraged and cast him out of the city and stoned him. Acts 7:51-8:1. **Pope Francis:** Faith means believing in God, believing that he truly loves us, that he is alive and that he is mysteriously capable of intervening, does not abandon us and brings good out of evil by his power and his infinite creativity. EG278. **JUBILEE:** The most convincing testimony to hope is provided by the martyrs. Steadfast in their faith in the risen Christ, they renounced life itself here below, rather than betray their Lord. Martyrs, as confessors of the life that knows no end, are present and numerous in every age, and perhaps even more so in our own day. We need to treasure their testimony, in order to confirm

our hope and allow it to bear good fruit. Coming as they do from different Christian traditions, they 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. Pray. Holy Mary, Queen of martyrs, pray for us

May 7. Parents in the groups expressed concerns that so many of the youth were making friends with other youth and attending services in Pentecostal churches, because they seemed more lively. One mom said, “In a way I think it is OK if they go there to pray and worship and for fellowship but what worries me is that there is no true communion. Jesus did say, ‘I am the bread of life’ and I believe we need to be fed with his body and blood.” “Not having been able to go to Mass and receive communion during the time of Covid was sad and hasn’t helped.” “But for our family, prayer and faith sharing at home has helped us, especially these days a focus on nature and climate change has been good.”

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *Jesus said to the crowds, “I am the bread of life. I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but to do the will of him of who sent me. This is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. John: 6:35-40.* **Pope Francis:** *One Person of the Trinity entered into the created cosmos, throwing in his lot with it, even to the cross. From the beginning of the world, and throughout the incarnation the mystery of Christ is at work in a hidden manner in the natural world as a whole.* **LS 99. JUBILEE.** *Signs of hope are needed by the young. 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 and people are in need. 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 even self-destructive actions. The Church must make greater efforts to reach out to them. SNC12. Pray. Mary, Mother of the Holy Family and model for all families, pray for us.*

May 8. The parents continued their discussion. “That story of Philip and him sharing the story of Jesus in such a way that the Ethiopian was convinced enough to ask for baptism is really powerful. In the Catholic church do we have such preachers that can hold our and the kids’ attention?” “Since lockdown and church-hopping we did find preachers and liturgies we found more enjoyable than our own old parish back home.” “It is a problem that the style in other denominations’ churches can be more dynamic.” “We need to explore more as there are programmes, some for youth, like Theology of the Body or for adults too like Charismatic or marriage and family Encounter movements that do grab people with new insights into spirituality or have missions to inspire people”

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *An Ethiopian, a eunuch, a minister to the queen had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning in his chariot while reading from the prophet Isaiah, “Like a sheep, led to the slaughter, or a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opened not his mouth.” The Spirit told Philip to join him, so he did, explained the passage and told him the good news of Jesus. The eunuch asked to be baptized. Acts 8:26-40.* **Pope Francis:** *The Gospel of the Family responds to the deepest expectations of the human person: a response to each one’s dignity and fulfilment in reciprocity, communion and fruitfulness. This consists not merely in presenting a set of rules but in proposing values that are clearly needed today.* **AL201. JUBILEE.** *in order to fill the empty cradles in so many parts of our world all of us 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. Pray. Mary, full of grace, always filled with God’s presence. Pray for us in our need.*

May 9. Conversion experiences was one of Marie’s favourite topics and she had written a whole booklet on it. She shared, “I have discovered much about my own faith through these conversion stories of people throughout the centuries. Some were life-changing events, like Saul’s, others were more like a process of change. Some men and women felt called to start or join a religious congregation. Turning away from an addiction to drugs, alcohol or gambling can be a conversion too. Most of us, young and old, have small conversion experiences, possibly during a time of fasting or moment in one’s life. Childbirth can also be such a moment. A conversion towards interreligious dialogue or an ecological conversion are strong features of our time.” Antony added, “it’s funny, conversion is an individual reality, but it can also be a turning away from an individualist view, towards seeing the family as the way to be church. For me that has been an ongoing process. What about others?”

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. Saul still breathing threats and murder against the disciples went to Damascus to look for and arrest disciples. As he journeyed suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul why do you persecute me?" and he said, "Who are you?" **Pope Francis:** St Francis did not wage a war of words aimed at imposing doctrines; he simply spread the love of God. He understood that God is love and those who abide in love abide in God. He became the father to all and inspired the vision of a fraternal society. FT4. The Second Vatican Council renewed the image of the family as a "domestic Church" present in the first centuries of Christianity. **JUBILEE.** Saint Paul often 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. **Pray.** Mary, Mother most hopeful, trusting in the goodness of the Father, pray for us.

May 10. Jocelyn quoted a favourite nursery rhyme. "Mary, Mary quite contrary, how does your garden grow?" "It is not just because I am a teacher, but as a thinking human being I know that we have to reflect on what makes things happen, what makes a garden grow? Right physical conditions for sure, but also a caring attitude and the right actions. Pope Francis, speaking about peace and social friendship as a basis for communion and good relationships within a group or between groups, calls it a *culture of encounter* and proposes dialogue. Approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understand one another and to find common ground is dialogue as Pope Francis brought it to the Synodality Synod. It also leads to another important concept, the common good." Macy added, "And of course, all this applies to all families, human, plant and animal and as intergenerational communities in a particular way too."

Scripture. *In those days the Church had peace and was built up, and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it was multiplied. Peter found a man, Aeneas, who had been bedridden and was paralysed. Peter said to him. "Jesus Christ heals you. Rise and take your bed."* And immediately he rose. In Joppa there was a woman disciple named Tabitha, full of good works who fell sick and died. Peter came, put all the widows who stood there outside, and knelt down and prayed. Turning to the body he said, "Tabitha arise". Acts 9:31-42. **Pope Francis:** Life for all its confrontations is the art of encounter. I have often called for the growth of a culture of encounter capable of transcending our differences and division. Each of us can learn something from others. No one is useless and no one is expendable. FT215. **JUBILEE.** It could be said, that I am my heart, for my heart is what sets me apart, shapes my spiritual identity and puts me in communion with other people. The digital world shows that our thoughts and will are much more "uniform" than we had previously thought. They are easily predictable and so capable of being manipulated. That is not the case with the heart. DN14 **Pray.** Mary, Blessed are you among women, the greatest who ever lived, pray for us to help us grow.

May 11. Sunday Easter 4C. Good Shepherd Sunday. Mothers Day. Fr Jeff decided to link all the themes for the day in his homily. He asked, "how many of you have ever met a shepherd? How many of you have been one? In an urban setting it isn't likely that many have, but in a rural setting many men will have been herdboys and many young boys are still caring for sheep and cattle. In some countries women and girls have that task too. Sheep stealing is still a problem and who would be willing to die for their sheep? But many of us would be more devoted to a cat or a dog. Devotion is the kind of love Jesus expressed and showed for those he loved. More than anyone else in a family, caring for another person to such an extent is truly a mother's natural maternal vocation. How many mothers wouldn't die for their children? But mothers need protection too. Are they being cared for and protected by others in their families? I offer a special blessing to all of you as birth mothers, grandmothers, mothers-in-law, mothers-in-waiting, adoptive mothers and all those who mother other people's children too.

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me, and I give them eternal life and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand, John 10: 27-30. **Pope Francis:** Mothers are the strongest antidote to the spread of self-centred individualism. It is they who testify to the beauty of life. A society without mothers would be dehumanised for even in the worst of times they are witness to tenderness, dedication and moral strength. AL 174. **JUBILEE.** In exploring the signs of hope one notes 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 their love. SNC9. **Pray:** Mary, model of commitment and love for mothers and children, pray for us.

May 12. Even before they got married Paolo and Teresa had decided they wanted a large family. They each had four siblings and there were always plenty of pets in the house and an openness to the community, a general love of nature and environmental awareness. Although there certainly had been all kinds of problems, financial, medical and at times relationship problems, they had enjoyed the richness and fun as well as the security of family togetherness. "You can't be selfish when there are so many of you." Teresa shared. Paolo added, "Our favourite Bible verse will still be the same one, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

Reflect, share. . Scripture. Jesus said, "I am the door of the sheep. If anyone enters by me he will find pasture. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." **John 10:10. Pope Francis:** The family is thus an agent of pastoral activity through its explicit proclamation of the Gospel and its legacy of varied forms of witness, namely solidarity with the poor, openness to a diversity of people, the protection of creation, moral and material solidarity with other families, including those most in need, commitment to the promotion of the common good and the transformation of unjust social structures, beginning in the territory in which the family lives. **AL 290. JUBILEE.** In a world where everything is bought and sold, people's sense of their worth appears increasingly to depend on what they can accumulate with the power of money. We are constantly being pushed to keep buying, consuming and distracting ourselves, held captive to a demeaning system that prevents us from looking beyond our immediate and petty needs. The love of Christ has no place in this perverse mechanism, yet only that love can set us free from a mad pursuit that no longer has room for a gratuitous love. Christ's love can give a heart to our world and revive love wherever we think that the ability to love has been definitively lost. **DN216. Act.** How do parents, children, siblings and relatives try to love each other with their frailties, vulnerabilities, conflicts and different points of view? **Pray.** Mary, mother of the domestic church of the home, pray for us.

May 13. When Mavis first recognized, after they had moved to the city where she had access to a pediatrician, that her little baby was blind she worried terribly how badly this would affect her life. She soon realised that other senses of hearing and touch would have to take over in how she would be able to communicate and understand her world. "It has been a most unusual experience in many ways," she explained. "I have learned to talk to her all the time, about everything I see or do. As she too was learning to talk she would ask lots of questions. 'What do you and daddy look like, or what does this fluffy kitty look like? What does "fluffy" mean?'"

Reflect, share, act. Scripture. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. **John 10:22-30. Pope Francis:** If the family, in the light of faith, accepts the presence of persons with special needs, they will be able to recognize and ensure the quality and value of every human life with its proper needs, rights and opportunities. They render the Church and society a gift and an invaluable witness. **AL 47. 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. **SNC10. Pray.** Mary, Mother of the afflicted, pray for us.

May 14. FAMILY VIOLENCE. For years Granny Gloria had been an activist about any current issue that concerned her. Politics, race, religion all had to do with justice and rights. Her message, "People should have the right to be free in their choices, but they have to consider the common good and treat everyone and everything with respect. Each year's International Day of Families theme uses a current issue that families around the world face, e.g. urbanization, migration or aspects of family violence. These may create situations that lead to femicide, and trafficking of persons, particularly women and children. In and outside their homes we need to protect all women and safeguard our children from physical, psychological and sexual abuse and also deal with bullying and child pornography which have become all too common in our schools and homes."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. Jesus said, "the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and I know that his commandment is eternal life. **John 12: 44-50. Pope Francis:** Violence can happen with families where communication is lacking, defensive attitudes predominate, the members are not supportive of one another, activities that encourage participation are absent, the parental relationship is conflictual and violent and relationships between parents and children are marked by hostility. Violence in a family is a breeding ground of resentment and hatred. **AL 51. FT 283.**

JUBILEE. When we witness the outbreak of new wars, with the complicity, tolerance or indifference of other countries, or petty power struggles over partisan interests, we may be tempted to conclude that our world is losing its heart. We need only to see and listen to the elderly women – from both sides – who are at the mercy of these devastating conflicts. It is heart-breaking to see them mourning for their murdered grandchildren, or longing to die themselves after losing the homes where they spent their entire lives. Those women, who were often pillars of strength and resilience amid life's

difficulties and hardships, now, at the end of their days, are experiencing, in place of a well-earned rest, only anguish, fear and outrage. DN22. Pray. Mary, Mother of families who suffer violence, pray for us.

May 15. International Day of Families. Joan said, “Why are there so many floods all over the world these days? Hurricanes, cyclones, monsoons have got stronger, bigger and more destructive. Our human destructive actions towards the environment are the cause of climate change. It makes me think of Noah’s ark times, when innocent animals also had to suffer, because of the wickedness of the people. There are actually many stories like The Flood in other cultures too. But history also repeats itself, and we know that it has been necessary for God to intervene again and again, until God sent the Messiah. Jesus preached a new message and made a new covenant with humanity which is being broadened to include all of creation. Isn’t history repeating itself again today, with the most powerful creatures being responsible for most of the harm and the most vulnerable members of creation suffering the most from the harmful effects. The UN International Day of Families is mainly concerned with the needs of human families but we can expand it to include all families of creation. That is our focus in MARFAM and its campaign to become eco-friendly families.”

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *Paul stood up and said, “Men of Israel, and you that fear God, listen. God chose our father and made the people great. He led them out of Egypt. He bore with them in the wilderness, gave them their land, kings and prophets. Of this posterity God has brought to Israel a Saviour Jesus. Acts 13:13-25. Pope Francis: The lack of historical memory is a serious shortcoming in our society. A mentality that says, “then was then and now is now” is ultimately immature. Knowing and judging past events is the only way to build a meaningful future. AL193. JUBILEE. The Jubilee will 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. Pray. Mary, Mother of all of creation suffering due to climate change, pray for us.*

May 16. Peace. Moyra wondered, “Our Lady of Fatima appeared to three little children with her message, a call to pray for peace. How many parents really talk with their children about social reality and the problem issues of today. Or maybe the kids should inform their parents, or their carers, as they learn far more about these matters at school than we ever knew. In many ways kids, the young, are better informed, more capable technologically and make us older people feel quite inadequate at times. However we must not forget how vulnerable young people also are to abuse, e.g. pornography, through their cellphones. Those are important family issues. But have we lost our “advantage” over the youth? Does the 4th commandment to honour your parents still apply? Are we still to be respected or do we parents and children each have to reconsider our place in the scheme of things?”

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me. John 14:1-6 Pope Francis: Nowadays authority is often considered suspect and adults are treated with impertinence. They themselves become uncertain and so fail to offer sure and solid guidance to their children. AL176. From FAMILIES AND THE SYNOD. What role can the family play in the process of building a more synodal Church? How can this synodal process help us to better understand, promote and empower the mission of the family within the Church and in the world? (AL 290) JUBILEE. The first sign of hope should be the desire for peace in our world. 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. Pray. O God, who chose the Mother of your Son to be our Mother also, grant us that persevering in penance and prayer for peace and the salvation of the world, we may bring about the reign of Christ. Mary, Mother of peace, pray for us*

May 17. Joan was shattered when she discovered that her husband, after 15 years of a difficult and sometimes abusive marriage had also been unfaithful since they moved into town from their rural family homestead. She was bitter and angry and at first refused to talk to him. She just wanted him out of the house and out of her life. She was fortunate that she had a good friend who listened and counselled her. “What about the children?” she asked. “At least for their sake can you try to see if the relationship can be mended.” Her friend encouraged Joan and her husband to participate in the hurting marriage programme she knew about. It wasn’t an easy journey to recovery. They had talked and listened and come to realise how they had both contributed to the breakdown, in part when adjusting to the new environment. “It’s strange”

Joan shared with her friend later, “your advice to pray together and the words of Jesus about a new commandment to love one another as he loved us were a real wake-up call for us. That also brought us back to practicing our faith.”

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. Whatever you ask in my name I will do it that the Father may be glorified in the Son. John 14:7-14. **Pope Francis:** Some families break up when spouses engage in mutual recrimination but experience shows that with proper assistance and acts of reconciliation through grace, a great percentage of troubled marriages find a solution. The arduous art of reconciliation which requires the support of grace needs the generous cooperation of others even outside help and professional assistance. AL236. **JUBILEE.** The 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. **Pray.** Mary, forgiving mother, pray for us.

MAY 18. 5th Sunday of Easter. Fr Abel told the congregation, “We have used today’s gospel passage for many of our reflections during Lent and Easter already. “Love one another as I have loved you.” Today I want to share a special story. I want to tell you about a family in our community. The Mambus are a three generation migrant family. Mr and Mrs Mambu were fortunate that during a very troubled time they were able to leave the DRC with their younger daughter Lily, taking her with them especially for her safety and protection from any harm. However, their older boys were left with their maternal grandparents who had decided to remain in their village. It was difficult for them being separated like that and safety was still everyone’s concern. They had all hoped that the conflict would end soon, so that they could be reunited. Imagine everyone’s delight when through the intervention of our parish Justice and Peace group the whole family has finally been able to be safe and happy together in their new home. Let us welcome them warmly to our community on this special day for them too.”

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. John 13:33-35. **Pope Francis:** Forced migration of families resulting from situations of war, persecution, poverty and injustice and marked by the difficulties of a journey that puts lives at risk traumatises people and destabilizes families. In accompanying migrants the Church needs a pastoral programme addressed to families that migrate but also to those members who remain behind. Respect for their cultures, for the human and religious formation from which they come and the spiritual richness of their rites and traditions require special pastoral care. AL 46. **JUBILEE.** Signs of hope should also 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. 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. **Pray.** Mary, caring mother of all families, especially those displaced, pray for us.

May 19. Parenting one’s own older parents is a reality that many families experience and it is not easy. Older people still want to be independent and can be very set in their ways and quite stubborn and mean too, even if they are not suffering from some form of dementia so common in older people. George and Paula thought, “Maybe it is anxiety that they won’t have enough money to last them. They’re really hung up about their money and their possessions. I do accept their values are different to ours, but I think they’d be much happier if they would loosen up a bit. They might even feel fulfilled if they gave us a hand with varsity fees for our kids.”

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. We bring you good news that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. Acts 14:5-18, **Pope Francis:** Support of the elderly is a challenge to families. The church cannot and does not want to conform to a mentality of impatience, and much less indifference and contempt towards old age. AL191. **JUBILEE.** The elderly also deserve signs of hope. I would mention grandparents, who represent the passing on of faith and wisdom to the younger generation. May they find support in the gratitude of their children and the love of their grandchildren, who discover in them their roots and a source of understanding and encouragement. **Pray.** Mary, mother and ancestor, pray for us.

May 20. James and George had been in a relationship for three years when they came to the realisation that they wanted to make their relationship permanent and even have a child. They shared with an understanding priest friend who explained that a marriage of gay men was not possible in the Catholic Church. So after further prayer they settled for a pastor to witness their commitment in a same- sex union. A while later they began to explore the ways that they could

have a child. They considered in vitro fertilisation with a surrogate mother or adoption. With the help of a counsellor they finally settled for adoption. A year later they were proud parents showing off their daughter to delighted grandparents, who were nevertheless still bemused about the situation. James and George smiled as they considered, "would this whole business have been easier in animal families or not? We don't really know or as Pope Francis might have said, "Who are we to judge?"

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *Paul and Barnabas continued, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. Acts 14:19-28. Pope Francis:* Every person regardless of sexual orientation ought to be respected in their dignity. Those who manifest a homosexual orientation should be given respectful pastoral guidance so that they can receive the assistance they need to understand and fully carry out God's will in their lives. AL 251. From FAMILIES AND THE SYNOD: Are families listened to within the Church? How can they be heard in this synodal process? **Pray.** Mary, mother most wise pray for us.

May 21. It seemed to the parish family team that almost everywhere there were differences in religious traditions and practice in families. Most couples marry a partner belonging to another church, either a mainline church or a Pentecostal or African independent church. Christians marry Hindu, Jewish, or Muslim partners. Within one religion and one family there are also differences in practice and beliefs. Devotion to Mary and the rosary, different types of worship or music, acceptance of teaching on contraception and Mass attendance are some differences that the team realized couples should be encouraged to discuss from the start and over time with their children. Jason asked, "Was it always like this amongst us human families or is this non-conformist attitude more recent? There is surely more conformity in nature, where attitudes do not seem to matter."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *. Some men came down from Judea and were teaching, "unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Paul and Barnabas were appointed to go up to Jerusalem about this question. Acts 15:1-6. Pope Francis:* Marriages involving spouses of different religions present special difficulties regarding both the Christian identity of the family and the religious upbringing of children. We reiterate the necessity that the religious freedom of all must be respected. AL 248. Human beings cannot be expected to feel responsibility for the world unless at the same time their unique capacities of knowledge, will, freedom and responsibility are recognized and valued. LS 118. **JUBILEE** We are called to discover hope in the signs of the times that the Lord gives us. "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". VII. We need to recognize the immense goodness present in our world, lest we be tempted to think ourselves overwhelmed by evil and violence. The signs of the times, which include the yearning of human hearts in need of God's saving presence, ought to become signs of hope. **Pray.** Mary, mother of peace, calling us to overcome difficulties, pray for us.

May 22. When his daughter started bringing black friends home from school Manuel realised he had to examine his own views and values quite seriously. "It's Ok for little kids to play together" he thought but when our white teenagers start mixing with black guys and girls it is more serious. He decided to share with some of his friends. Gideon agreed, but shared that as a black Zimbabwean living in South Africa there were other black-on-black issues too. "Xenophobia can flare up at any time, and that issue of social relations is one of my great concerns. Our kids do also still experience that."

Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *Why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus just as they will. Acts 15:7-2. 1. Pope Francis* Benedict XVI observed that the world cannot be analysed by isolating only one of its aspects since the book of nature is one and indivisible and includes the environment, life, sexuality, the family, social relations and so forth. The natural environment has been gravely damaged by our irresponsible behaviour. The social environment has also suffered damage. These are due to the same evil, the notion that there are no indisputable truths to guide our lives and human freedom is limitless. LS 6. **JUBILEE**. The 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. SNC 25. **Pray.** Holy Mary, pray for us to follow God's ways. .

May 23. "Is there anything a parent will not do for his kids?" Jabu didn't hesitate at all when it was discovered that their daughter was in need of a kidney transplant. "Of course, I'm open to donating mine. And while I'm about it I want to make

a pledge that any body parts of mine can be donated should that be possible at any stage, before or after my death. I wish I could help someone in that way even before I die." "I'm intrigued what some pet-lovers are prepared to do for an old or sick pet? There certainly is great love there too."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture. *Greater love has no one than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. John 15:12-17.* **Pope Francis:** Our body establishes us in a direct relationship with the environment and with other living beings. The acceptance of our bodies as God's gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home. LS 155. In families everyone contributes to the common purpose: everyone works for the common good, not denying each person's individuality but encouraging and supporting it. The joys and sorrows of each member are felt by all. FT230. **JUBILEE.** Before the heart of Jesus, living and present, our mind, enlightened by the Spirit, grows in the understanding of his words and our will is moved to put them into practice. This could easily remain on the level of a kind of self-reliant moralism. Hearing and tasting the Lord, and paying him due honour, however, is a matter of the heart. Only the heart is capable of setting our other powers and passions, and our entire person, in a stance of reverence and loving obedience before the Lord. DN27. **Pray.** Mary, mother of the sick pray for us.

LAUDATO SI WEEK 2025. Theme "Raising Hope."

Introduction. THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY for this week are adapted from the SACBC series and used with permission In remembrance of 10 yrs since the Holy Father issued the encyclical on Creation: *Laudato Si* (24 May 2015) we recognize that we have a long way to heed the call to care for the earth; our common home. Pope Francis recalls the words of St Francis of Assisi's; "Praise God and all his creatures" (LD #1) as an urgent invitation to consider advocating for and embracing attitudes that can heal the world.

In the spirit of the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope, we are called to continue our pilgrimage as brothers and sisters towards unity, beauty and hope for creation. Amidst the decaying values in marriage and family life, socio-political and economic spheres in every society, the Jubilee calls for hope-filled actions.

In the spirit of the Jubilee and during this Easter Season of new life, Laudato Si week calls us to open our eyes and ears and to raise hope, truly be seeds of hope and signs of hope as pilgrim people, encountering brothers and sisters and promoting the values of the family. Through the Laudato Si Movement and concrete action platforms e.g. the Laudato Si Action Platform our action should be responding to the "cry of the poor" and "the cry of the earth".

MARFAM provides suggestions, resources and a focus for families and parishes on *Becoming Eco-Friendly Families*. Parishes can promote and organise family-centred Laudato Si week activities, by the Family Life or Justice and Peace office.

Booklets for discussion, sharing and action. www.marfam.org.za info@marfam.org.za and Toni Rowland 0825521275.

FAMILIES CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION. R25

BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES R25.

ACTION SUGGESTIONS FOR LAUDATO SI WEEK.

- *Use Laudato Si document for study and reflection, (freely downloadable)
- *Set up family discussion, sharing and prayer moments, to "raise hope" theme for the week.
- *Parish homily and talk about saving and avoiding waste – money, food, water, power, recycling. Choose action.
- *Family fast or meatless day, provide a meal to poor, beggar or homeless family.
- *Go green – grow green. Start vegetable garden, plant indigenous tree. Discover edible plants
- *Family talk walk or hike – listen to the cry of the earth.
- *Clean up activity, home, neighbourhood, river.
- *Become civic-minded, advocate, promote, act, support community projects.
- *Discuss current, relevant issues around poverty and consider possible action of each family member.
- *Be creative, enjoy beauty – knit, sew, cook, bake, view art and beauty in nature.

Saturday 24th May 2025; Acts 16:1-10, Jn 15:18-21. Our Lady, Help of Christians

Laudato Si' 213. "Ecological education can take place in a variety of settings: at school, in families, in the media, catechesis and elsewhere. I would stress the great importance of the family which is the place in which life - the gift of God - can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth. In the family we first learn how to show love and respect for life, respect for the local ecosystem and care for all creatures. Integral education enables us to grow harmoniously in personal maturity."

Scripture. "if the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own, but you are not of the world, because I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

JUBILEE. We need to recognize the immense goodness present in our world, lest we be tempted to think ourselves overwhelmed by evil and violence. The signs of the times, which include the yearning of human hearts in need of God's saving presence, ought to become signs of hope. SNC7

Action: Gather as a family to discuss, plan for action and pray for care of God's creation.

Reflection. The Easter season proclaims the joy of new life and the desire to become better through the resurrection of Christ. Today, in the Acts of the Apostles we learn of the Good News delivered to the Gentiles, after the first Council in Jerusalem. It is setting them free from unnecessary customs yet encouraging them to remain steadfast in faith and bold in Christian witness. Our society and families, especially the poor and the environment are suffering from the burden of pollution. In the Gospel, referring to his passion, Jesus invites his disciples to accept the hatred of the world, by doing what is right, practicing justice and truthful actions aligned to Gospel values.

Have we lost touch with the gift of life? Is there no one to remind us of our mutual responsibility to preserve family values, integrity of life and the dignity of the environment? Our world is besieged by war, hate and hurt. Thus, conversion of the heart is key to a better life for marriage and families, rich and poor alike and for a healthy environment. Pray and ask Our Lady, help of Christians to intercede for the conversion of hearts and just action.

Prayer for Families and Ecological Life

God our Father, give us the grace to know you more deeply, in order to love with all of our being.

Grant us a pure heart, to love our neighbor as Mary loves all her children. May the gift of your Holy Spirit enable us to see you present in our sisters and brothers. Let us, as families, be seeds and signs of hope in the world. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, 25th May 2025. 6th Sunday of Easter C. Acts 15: 1-2, 22-29; Rev 21:10-1, 22-23; Jn 14:23-29 "The promise of the Holy Spirit."

Laudato Si' 231. "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. Love for society and commitment to the common good are outstanding expressions of a charity which affects not only relationships between individuals but also macro-relationships, social, economic and political ones. Social love is the key to authentic development and is part of our spirituality."

Scripture: It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, from blood and what is strangled and from unchastity. Acts 15:29

JUBILEE. Saint Paul is a realist. He knows that life has its joys and sorrows, that love is tested amid trials, and that hope can falter in the face of suffering. Even so, he can write: "We boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope" (Rom 5:3-4). For the Apostle, trials and tribulations mark the lives of those who preach the Gospel amid incomprehension and persecution (cf. 2 Cor 6:3-10). Yet in those very contexts, beyond the darkness we glimpse a light: we come to realize that evangelization is sustained by the power flowing from Christ's cross and resurrection

Action: Use parish focus on saving and waste and choose action.

Reflection. The apostolic letter from the Council of Jerusalem to the Gentiles, in content and personal witness bears testimony to life in the Holy Spirit. We can only imagine those words and actions which caused so much trouble from the Christian brethren relating to Jewish culture. We can only imagine the somber moment until the Gentile brethren received the comforting words from Barssabbas and Silas as they confirmed the content of the letter by actions, encouraging the congregation to live according to the dictates of the Holy Spirit.

In the Gospel, Jesus cautions his disciples to abide by his words, the commandment of love and the gift of the Holy Spirit which the Father will send in His name. "Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid".

The book of Revelation is the book of consolation, closely related to the gift of love and opens our hearts to the hope of heaven, "the new Jerusalem." This is a symbol of the new Israel where humanity will live in peace with all creation.

However, around the world, this vision of a new world is far from being realized, as power, greed, corruption, pollution and irresponsible attitudes and behaviors perpetuate the problems on earth.

Our Christian obligation compels us to resist the evil forces through love. Humanity and creation suffer; love and common good are too far out of reach. Yet, each individual person and family is responsible to transform communities and restore life, creating a better world through love. In that way faith, hope and love will abound in our land.

Prayer for Families and Ecological Life

God of love, who inspires sustainable livelihood, instill in us the courage to look beyond ourselves. Let us, as families, be seeds and signs of hope and first fruits in the world. Open our hearts and eyes to see the valuable existence of every living creature, redeemed by the blood of Christ, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

Monday, 26th May 2025. Acts 16: 11-15; Jn 15:26,27, "Together, Today and Tomorrow"

Laudato Si' 202. "Many things have to change, but it is we human beings, above all, who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, our mutual belonging and of a future to be shared with everyone. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal."

Scripture: "When the Counsellor comes, the Spirit of Truth, he will bear witness to me and you also are my witnesses."

JUBILEE. 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, not only in certain parts of the world. Each day we meet people who are poor or impoverished; they may even be our next-door neighbours. SNC15

Action: Choose an action that can bear witness to your commitment to care for creation..

Reflection. Philip Neri, the second apostle of Rome, whose feastday is commemorated today, had as his pastoral mission; "to fill the people of Rome with new ardor, to re-evangelize the city." He began his ministry on the street corners and in public squares where people were inclined to loiter and possibly to litter.

The two missionaries, Paul and Silas never rested but worked tirelessly to bring hearts to Jesus, opening up a whole new better world for the gentiles as they "sang a new song to the Lord," with the psalmist in today's responsorial psalm. In the Gospel, Jesus continues his farewell discourse and the promise of the Spirit of truth who will bring hearts "to remember" the beatific vision of God for creation. Human beings are responsible for destroying this vision for the yesterday, today and tomorrow of life. *Laudate Deum* calls human beings to take a stand against the destruction and towards rehabilitation from the global crisis. Our attitude will demonstrate the world we want. It is sad but true that human powers and greed have acted in ways that destroy, while the great majority of people stand back in silence.

We need to educate, advocate, campaign, be informed and reform our ways focusing on the urgent actions required for change. We need to understand and know that our present actions are against what we hope for, a better life for all.

Prayer for Families and Ecological Life

God our Father, as we long for a better life, let our eyes be wide open to the suffering in the world. Let us, as families, be seeds and signs of hope and first fruits in the world. As we travel through life, may we not engage in corrupt activities, but be just people who seek your will in everything. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Tuesday 27th May 2025, Acts 16:22-34; Jn 16:5-11. "The labours of salvation."

Laudato Si' 227. "One expression of the attitude of serene attentiveness to others and to everything is when we stop and give thanks to God before and after meals. I ask all believers to return to this beautiful and meaningful custom. That moment of blessing, however brief, reminds us of our dependence on God for life; it strengthens our feeling of gratitude for the gifts of creation; it acknowledges those who by their labours provide us with these goods and it affirms our solidarity with those in greatest need."

Scripture: Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

JUBILEE. Let us not forget that the poor are almost always the victims, not the ones to blame. SNC15

Action: Use meal time creatively, family fast, meatless, share a meal.

Reflection

The World Council of Churches encourages and invites us to reflect on the love of Christ towards one another. Wars, political intolerance, and violence through an 'eye for an eye' and 'cut it off' attitude or behavior have defamed and removed love completely from many hearts. Similarly, in Acts, the people are caught up in a frenzy of political pressures and unable to control themselves. Paul and Silas were attacked and jailed. Although an earthquake destroyed the jail they did not escape and the jailer when he recognized their faith was converted. Paul told him, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved,

you and your household." Political upheavals, and greed for power and wealth have harmed many lives and damaged the environment making everyone suffer.

In the gospel Jesus speaks of the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Counsellor, who will "*convince the world of sin, righteousness and judgement of sin.*" Christians are called to be different, have a conversion of heart, changing our action towards humanity and all creation. We must stop, think and pray for a new order where disunity is weakened, human values and the environment are restored to their original dignity.

Prayer for Families and Ecological Life

Gracious God, Spirit of Truth and Counsellor, you are the source of all love and goodness. Enable us to see the needs of others. Show us what we can do to bring about healing. Change us, so that we can love others as we love all of creation. Let us, as families, be seeds and signs of hope and first fruits in the world. Help us overcome the obstacles of division and injustice that we may build a just society, through Jesus who is Lord of all, yesterday, today and forever. Amen.

Wednesday, 28th May 2025. Acts 17:15, 22-18:1; Jn 16: 12-15

Laudato Si' 221. *God created the world, writing into it an order and dynamism that human beings have no right to ignore. We read in the Gospel that Jesus says of the birds of the air, that not one of them is forgotten before God. How can we possibly mistreat them or cause them harm? I ask all Christians to recognize and to live fully this dimension of their conversion. In this way we will help to nurture that sublime fraternity with all creation which Saint Francis of Assisi so radiantly embodied. The Spirit of God has filled the universe with possibilities and therefore from the very heart of things, something new can always emerge. Nature is nothing other than a certain kind of art, namely God's art (LS 80).*

Scripture: *The God who made the world and everything in it, does not live in shrines made by man, since he himself gives to all men life and breath and everything.* Acts.

JUBILEE. *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.* SNC16

Action: Discover St Francis of Assisi and his way of life.

Reflection

All creation is invited to become increasingly aware of our orientation towards what is beyond ourselves. Our Christian tradition emphasizes prayer in every situation and for whatever we need. Paul, standing in the middle of the Aeropagus says; "*Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along, and observed the object of your worship, I found an inscription, 'To an unknown god.'*" In his preaching Paul used the basis of what is already there, and declared, in the Spirit of truth, the unknown to be now known in Jesus Christ. It is this God who "*made from one every nation of men to live on the all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, in hope that they might seek after him and find him.*" It is in the forgotten dignity of the human family that we need to re-inculcate the values of moral living and behavior. It is in the family that we can recognize and treat each member with respect and dignity. In the Spirit of St. Francis, let us return to humility and long to be the least of the brethren while acknowledging that all of nature is "God's works of art."

Prayer for Families and Ecological Life

Lord God, who searches every human heart, your will is that we should be a family in creation. Lead us with your Spirit to recognize and respect the dignity of each human child and all the young of creation begotten by your Word. May we learn to always embrace the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi and Mary, Mother of Jesus, and in humility surrender in all things to your will. Let us, as families, rooted in faith and love. be seeds of hope, and signs of hope and first fruits in the world, Amen.

Thursday, 29th May 2025. Acts 18:1-8; Jn 16:16-20, "*Let the Holy Spirit take hold of everything.*"

Laudato Si' 222. *"Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life and encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption. We need to take up an ancient lesson found in different religious traditions and also in the Bible. It is the conviction that less is more. A constant flood of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment. Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little."*

Scripture: *Paul found a Jew Aquila and his wife Priscilla and stayed with them and the worked for they were tentmakers.*

JUBILEE. *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

Action: Use opportunity to consider how to save – money, water, food, power, time etc.

Reflection.

The family constitutes the basic unit of society. Families need to revive active participation in all efforts of uniting people and rehabilitating the environment. It is in the family where first the 'seeds of hope' need to be sown through Christian spirituality, tradition and a contemplative and sustainable lifestyle away from the consumerist culture of today. The Jubilee invites us all to be both Pilgrims of Hope and Signs of Hope. Families rooted in the Scriptures are the hope of a society free of manipulation, suffering and consumerism and greed..

Paul is caught up in an argument, attempting to convince the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. Unfortunately, like society today, they were not willing to listen. Bad luck for the stubborn and hard of heart! Paul left and turned to the Gentiles, as a result "*Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue believed in the Lord, together with all his household; and many of Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.*"

The "little while" is central to today's Gospel, and it baffled the disciples. "What does it mean?" The family is present in the relationships of people with God, with one another and all of creation. How the family is formed by the message of the Gospel is the hope for better citizens and a better world. Laudato Si' encourages families to participate in "Care for our Common Home" as its title states.

Prayer for Families and Ecological Life

Blessed Trinity, Father and Spirit of love, in Jesus and Mary, you showed us the meaning of hospitality, recognizing the divine presence in all living creatures. Help us to become a family that welcomes those who feel abandoned and lost, building a home where all are welcome. Through Mary, may we come closer to one another and experience your unconditional love. This we ask through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Friday, 30th May 2025. Acts 18:9-18; Jn 16:20-23. "The Earth is God's city"

Laudato Si' 100 "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...This leads us to direct our gaze to the end of time, when the Son will deliver all things to the Father, so that "God may be everything to every one" (1 Cor 15:28). Thus, the creatures of this world no longer appear to us under merely natural guise because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them towards fullness as their end. The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence."

Scripture: You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. John 16

JUBILEE. The Jubilee of Families takes place in Rome from 30 May to 1 June. 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

Action: Use concept of "raising hope" and apply to your life.

Reflection

The wonder of creation bears the footprints of the God. This fills us with joy as Jesus says; "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy." When we finally recognize the connectedness, hope for life fills us with joy. St Francis, in the Canticle for Creation broke into song for this connection. Through faith, hope and love, we must resist allowing power, greed, pride, corruption and pollution to steal our joy, causing many to hunger and thirst even for a drop of fresh water and leading to permanent sorrow.

The Lord encouraged Paul in his mission to preach and teach in the city against injustice. We are heirs and coheirs with Christ in the responsibility over creation.

Prayer for Families and Ecological Life

God our father, who by sending into the world the Word of Truth and the Spirit of sanctification made known to the human race your wondrous mystery, grant us we pray that in professing the true faith, we may acknowledge the Trinity of the eternal glory and adore Your unity, power and majesty through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. May the wondrous mystery of creation inspire us as families on our journey to become seeds of hope and signs of hope in your world. Amen.

Saturday, 31st May 2025. Zeph 3: 14-18; Lk 1:39-56, Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Laudato Si' 241. "Mary, the Mother who cared for Jesus, now cares with maternal affection and pain for this wounded world. Just as her pierced heart mourned the death of Jesus, so now she grieves for the sufferings of the crucified poor and

for the creatures of this world laid waste by human power.... She treasures the entire life of Jesus in her heart (cf. Lk 2:19,51) and now understands the meaning of all things. Hence, we can ask her to enable us to look at this world with eyes of wisdom."

MAGNIFICAT.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation.
He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children forever.
Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

JUBILEE. *The Jubilee of Families is taking place in Rome from 30 May to 1 June. One of the topics will be the value of old age. 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

Action: Use Magnificat for sharing and discussion on way forward as an Eco-Friendly Family.

Reflection

The prophet Zephaniah echoes the message of consolation and encouragement for Israel who feels weak and fearful because of the oppression imposed upon Jerusalem. In the face of such fear the prophet says, "*Do not fear, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. The Lord your God is in your midst.... he will renew you in his love*". On the feast day of the Visitation let us acknowledge the role Mary played accepting the will of the Father to bear in her womb the Living Word of the Father, Jesus. Let her song of praise and confidence in the God of salvation for all who trust be our *Magnificat*, a hymn most appropriate for our vision of care for all of creation. While we strive to change our behaviors towards others and the environment, like St Francis we will sing our song with confidence for the grace of renewal which we hope to receive through the intercession of Mary, Queen of all Creation.

Prayer for Families and Ecological Life Pray the Magnificat.

God our father, who by sending into the world the Word of Truth and the Spirit of sanctification made known to the human race your wondrous mystery, grant us we pray that in professing the true faith, we may acknowledge the Trinity of the eternal glory and adore Your unity, power and majesty through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever amen.