



JUBILEE 2025 : OUR WORLD, A FAMILY OF FAMILIES" MARFAM THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY -

AUGUST – SEXUALITY A FAMILY GIFT



Abbreviations Pope Francis: LS = Laudato Si. AL = Amoris Laetitia. FT = Fratelli Tutti. DN =

Dilexit Nos. SNC = Jubilee 2025 Spes non confundit

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OVERVIEW. AUGUST. Sexuality, a Family Gift. Scripture starts with the statements that God looked on his creation and found it to be good. Ongoing creation continues through the sexual reproductive capability in almost every life form. Because of the special attributes of humans, including free will, human sexuality is a special gift and blessing, in its most profound expression in marriage. This ideal may still be poorly presented and misunderstood as sex and sexuality are unfortunately too often taboo subjects or seen as problems e.g. teenage sexual activity and pregnancy. In addition, sin and its consequences have resulted in gender-based violence, pornography and abuse. Gender-related changes and the presence of LGBTIQ+ persons is a social reality today with different degrees of acceptance. The complementary and equality of men and women is of growing importance in every society today.

Pope Francis: According to the order of creation conjugal love between a man and a women and the transmission of life are ordered to each other. Thus the creator made man and woman share in the work of his creation and made them instruments of his love, entrusting to them the responsibility for the future of mankind, through the transmission of human life. AL 81. Each person, regardless of sexual orientation ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration. AL 250. In assessing the environmental impact of any project, little attention is paid to studying reproductive patterns and some species face extinction. LS35. JUBILEE. "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". [4] 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

Setting the scene. Although in South Africa in August there is a strong focus on women and Women's month it is important to have a holistic family focus on the issue of sex and sexuality and the relationships of men and women. Different activities and opportunities for reflection and sharing can be brought in by various parish groups to assist with this focus while specialist help in reflecting on related or complex topics may well be necessary.

August 1. Gender balance in the work place is a perennial issue. Rayhab, a social worker, was invited to facilitate some discussions on the topic. She began by asking, "How open as individuals, but particularly as men and women, are we to change? Is there a need for change?" She looked around the room. Some people looked sceptical, some were frowning, others looked interested. She explained that with a focus on strengthening families and taking into consideration that changes had come about in society adjustment had to be made. People sometimes resist change and are only able to change when they are forced to do so by circumstances.

Scripture: "Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honour except in his own country and in his own house." And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief. Matt 13:57-58. **Pope Francis.** We need to acknowledge the great variety of family situations that can offer a certain stability but de facto or same-sex unions for example may not simply be equated with marriage. No union that is temporary or closed to the transmission of life can ensure the future of society. But nowadays who is making an effort to strengthen marriages. AL 52. **JUBILEE:** "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. SNC7. **Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 2. In one study group they considered the question, “How do you all here, men and women feel about women using their feminine wiles to manipulate men and get their own way, and even colluding and using other women for this? Talk to one another, as men and women about this for a moment.” Someone very quickly brought up the case of the judge and the secretary who had taken him to court and accused him of harassment. Feedback was almost unanimous from men and women that manipulation is not the way to achieve any kind of balance. It is not fair. Rayhab concluded. “Thank you, we are definitely going to have to unpack this much more.”

Scripture: *When Herod's birthday came the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and pleased Herod, so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. Prompted by her mother she said, “give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter.” Matthew 14: 1-12. Pope Francis.* *The equal dignity of men and women makes us rejoice to see old forms of discrimination disappear, and within families there is a growing reciprocity. From AL 54.*

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. SNC 13. Act and pray.* For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 3. Sunday 18C. Fr Joseph said, “Just last week we were reflecting on grandparents and the elderly. Now this month we take a different look at families. Who is most covetous, most consumerist, or money-minded? Men or women, older or younger? This week we look ahead as well as looking back. You have toiled away and what do you have to show for it? Maybe become wealthy or maybe not. You can't take material wealth with you any way when you die. What can you take is the knowledge that you have tried. Think about how hard and how successful you have been in bringing up your children and grandchildren. Many of us are disappointed that our young people do not go to church. Did we work in that? Only you can answer that. If you have tried your best, God knows and can give you peace of mind. Remember that the special gift the elderly have to share is prayer. Until your last day your prayer can sustain you and support you and bring you peace.”

Scripture: *Jesus said to them;” take heed, and beware of all covetousness, for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.” And he told a parable, “the land of a rich man brought forth plentifully. .” Luke 12:13-23*

Pope Francis: *The current global situation engenders a feeling of instability and uncertainty, which in turn becomes a seedbed for collective selfishness and their greed increases. The emptier a person's heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume. LS 204. 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. SNC 16. Act and pray.* For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 4. Johnson, from Justice and Peace one day asked who in their families were the main breadwinners. They were not surprised to find that almost all the men did have that responsibility and many but not all of the women, although many shared the responsibility. Irrespective of the issue of gender balance as they listened to one another it was enlightening to share on how heavy a burden they each felt this to be. “Do you ever pray in your families about this?” he asked.

Scripture: *Moses said to the Lord, “I am not able to carry all this people alone, the burden is too heavy for me.” Read Numbers 11:4b-15. Pope Francis.* *“Man” is presented as a labourer who works the earth, harnesses the forces of nature and produces the bread of anxious toil in addition to cultivating his own gifts and talents. AL 23. We can appreciate the suffering created by unemployment and the lack of steady work as reflected in the Book of Ruth. AL 25. 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. SNC 10 Act and pray.* For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 5. Introducing the topic for group discussion Rayhab said, “In a talk I went to recently it was stressed that good leadership is not based on positional power or status. Just because you are the CEO or a manager you might be given some deference but are you really a leader? In politics and business men are still mostly in leadership. In churchy

matters women might be in the majority in caring for the parish needs, visiting the sick and belonging to sodalities, but when it comes to leadership e.g. on the PPC it is changing but we do still find a higher proportion of men. But remember the issue of leadership has cultural aspects and perceptions too that we need to take into consideration.

Scripture: *The man Moses was very meek, more than any men that were on the face of the earth. The Lord spoke to Aaron and Miriam. "My servant Moses is entrusted with all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth clearly and not in dark speech." Mirriam and Aaron spoke against Moses and said, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses?" The Lord's anger was kindled against them and Mirriam became leprous. From Numbers 12:1-13* **Pope Francis.** Even though significant advances have been made in the recognition of women's rights and their participation in public life, in some countries much remains to be done to promote these rights. AL 54. **JUBILEE.** Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. Even so, uncertainty about the future may at times give rise to conflicting feelings, ranging from confident trust to apprehensiveness, from serenity to anxiety, from firm conviction to hesitation and doubt. **SNC11 Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 6. Transfiguration. Rayhab liked to approach the subject in a positive way. "Some gender topics are challenging from a negative point of view; we are well aware of oppression, exploitation and abuse and violence, but there is also a positive challenge, for good gender relationships. These don't happen naturally and need a lot of hard work." Tracy, one member of the family team shared, "today's feastday, the Transfiguration, has been one of my favourites for a long time. The three apostles chosen by Jesus to witness his transfigured self were overcome with wonder and exclaimed. 'Lord it is good for us to be here.' That is my hope and dream for all our gender relationships."

Scripture: *Jesus was transfigured before them and his face shone like the sun and his garments became white as light. And behold there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord it is well that we are here."* Read Matt 17:1b-9. **Pope Francis.** The joy of Love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church. For all the signs of crisis in the institution of marriage, the desire to marry and form a family remains vibrant, especially among young people and this is an inspiration to the Church. AL1. **JUBILEE.** 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 Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 7. "Who do you say I am?" Together Fr Joseph and Rayhab led a reflection on religion and human relationships. "Our world is now so secular one wonders what role religion plays in the events and actions of our daily lives. It's not just about remote spiritual things. How does God or religion come into our personal growth particularly as a sexual being? Does God come into your issues around sexual behaviour and orientation, as youth or adults? Does God's Spirit of love help us discern who and how we are meant to be?"

Scripture: *Jesus asked "Who do you say I am." "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Read Matthew 16:13-23.* **Pope Francis.** Unity of teaching and practice is certainly necessary in the Church but this does not preclude various ways of interpreting some aspects of that teaching drawing certain consequences from it. This will always be the case as the Spirit guides us towards the entire truth. AL 3. Families with persons who experience same-sex attraction should be given respectful pastoral guidance so that those who manifest a homosexual orientation can receive the assistance they need to understand and fully carry out God's will in their lives. AL 250 **JUBILEE..** Hope, together with faith and charity, makes up the triptych of the "theological virtues" that express the heart of the Christian life (cf. 1 Cor 13:13; 1 Thess 1:3). In their inseparable unity, hope is the virtue that, so to speak, gives inward direction and purpose to the life of believers. **SNC 18 Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 8. Rayhab, the facilitator picked up the threads, "Yesterday we considered the value of religion in human development and forming relationships too. Today we look at the fact that all religions from the most primitive until today have certain laws, rules, norms and standards, in other words a moral code. To live a good life as an individual man or woman or also as a couple demands sacrifices. The group members were given time to think and share. "I think I have

carried my cross with dignity." "My cross is still very hard." "My cross was taken away from me after we joined AA and Alanon to deal with the alcohol abuse in our home." "I thank God, but pray to him to give me strength."

Scripture: *If any man or woman would come after me, let them deny themselves and take up his cross and follow me.* Matt 16:24. **Pope Francis.** Families often experience problems when one of their members is emotionally immature because he or she still bears the scars of earlier experiences. An unhappy childhood or adolescence can breed personal crises that affect one's marriage. AL 239. Drug use, is one of the scourges of our time, causing immense suffering and even breakup for many families. The same is true of alcoholism, gambling and other addictions. The family could be the place where these are prevented and overcome but society and politics fail to see that families at risk love the ability to act to help their members. AL 51. **JUBILEE.** 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 **Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 9. WOMEN'S DAY SA. The parish had been looking for a suitable activity to commemorate Women's Day as the "big thing" in the country these days. Some suggested a pamper or make-up session, some a high tea. At the other extreme some wanted a healing service well aware of the high rate of abuse of women. After some prayerful reflection they eventually decided that the secular thing was also a celebration of the contribution women make but that a more genuinely appreciative event could be a thank you or gratitude tea, provided by their families, thanking God and thanking them for the enormous contribution they make and the many blessings their women are to all their members, old, young, sick, healthy using the Beijing letter for Pope John Paul II :

Thank you, women who are mothers! You have sheltered human beings within yourselves in a unique experience of joy and travail. This experience makes you become God's own smile upon the newborn child, the one who guides your child's first steps, who helps it to grow, and who is the anchor as the child makes its way along the journey of life.

Thank you, women who are wives! You irrevocably join your future to that of your husbands, in a relationship of mutual giving, at the service of love and life.

Thank you, women who are daughters and women who are sisters! Into the heart of the family, and then of all society, you bring the richness of your sensitivity, your intuitiveness, your generosity and fidelity.

Thank you, women who work! You are present and active in every area of life-social, economic, cultural, artistic and political. In this way you make an indispensable contribution to the growth of a culture which unites reason and feeling, to a model of life ever open to the sense of "mystery", to the establishment of economic and political structures ever more worthy of humanity.

Thank you, consecrated women! Following the example of the greatest of women, the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, you open yourselves with obedience and fidelity to the gift of God's love. You help the Church and all mankind to experience a "spousal" relationship to God, one which magnificently expresses the fellowship which God wishes to establish with his creatures.

Thank you, every woman, for the simple fact of being a woman! Through the insight which is so much a part of your womanhood you enrich the world's understanding and help to make human relations more honest and authentic.

Scripture: Jesus said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." The Canaanite woman replied, "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered her, "O woman great is your faith! Let it be done as you desire." Read Matt 15:21-28. **Pope Francis.** The equal dignity of men and women makes us rejoice to see old forms of discrimination disappear and within families there is growing reciprocity. AL 54 **Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

The groups had also decided to hold an interfaith church service to commemorate Women's Day. "We don't want to forget the importance of God in our lives. We thank God for his role in all our liberation, as women and men but right now in our country we pray for an end to violence in particular against women and children. We pray for victims but also for perpetrators that they may recognise the evil they have committed and experience a conversion of heart. We pray for healing for every family that has been effected."

PRAYER FOR THE WOMEN OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Almighty God,

You are father and mother to us, your children.

We thank you for the particular and special gifts you have given to women, the gift of nurturing life, of sustaining and supporting life, the qualities of compassion, commitment, generosity and a willingness to share.

As they progress towards their rightful place in society we request your blessing on all women
that they may continue also to hold their rightful place in the family.

that women and men together may build a society

which will bring about the Kingdom You have promised us.

We call on Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who nurtured and cared for her son and now reigns with Him in heaven
to inspire the women of South Africa,
to pray with them in their joys and in their struggles,
and to intercede for them with her Son.

Mary, Queen assumed into heaven, patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 10. Sunday 19C. Infertility. Fr Thabo had been asked to include the topic of infertility in his homily as the occasion appeared appropriate and had been addressed during the 2014-5 Synods on the Family. “The topic of infertility can be easier for some than for others to discuss. While the Church still teaches that sex in marriage should be natural and open to life, there are an increasing number of couples who have difficulty conceiving. Prayer and faith may suggest different options to them. They should discern well into different approaches and make the most life-giving decisions in conscience.

Scripture: *By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive even when she was past the age. Hebrews 11:1-2,8-12.*

Pope Francis. *The technological revolution in the field of human procreation has introduced the ability to manipulate the reproductive act, make it independent of the sexual relationship between a man and a woman. Let us not fall into the sin of trying to replace the Creator.* AL 56. **JUBILEE:** *Openness to life and responsible parenthood is the design that the Creator has implanted in the hearts and bodies of men and women, a mission that the Lord has entrusted to spouses and to their love. 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 **Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 11. Taxes. On a very practical level the groups were discussing taxes. There is income tax, sales tax, e-tolls as road tax but there are also the different grants. “We give, but it is mostly others who get. Is that fair?” “I think the principle of the common good is a “good” one. For me it does put a positive spin on the fact that life isn’t fair.” “Don’t women on the whole carry heavier financial burdens as so many of our families are headed by single mothers?” “But what about young girls who they say get pregnant just so that they can get a child grant, which they don’t always even use for the baby?” “Shouldn’t all that be balanced out for the common good?” “I think we need to look more holistically at family units rather than at men’s or women’s perspectives. What about family income tax and family grants?”

Scripture: *“The collectors of the half-shekel tax went up to Peter and said, “Does not your teacher pay the tax?”*

Matthew 17:22-27. Pope Francis. *Families have the right to be able to count on an adequate family policy on the part of public authorities in the juridical, economic, social and fiscal domains. Families and homes go together. This makes us see how important it is to insist on the rights of the family and not only those of individuals.* AL 44. **JUBILEE:** *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.* SNC9 **Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 12. Child rape. A serious topic needing an urgent response from everyone is the question of abuse and rape of children. “Are our children precious to us, are they a fruit of our love to be guarded and protected?” “Should we not consider all children in the same light?” “How?” “Child rape can of course never ever be justified but how can it be explained? What could be going through a child rapist’s mind? Surely that is an unnatural act? Is there some substance-

induced behaviour underlying this?" Rayhab agreed to organise some professional input on this subject and a possible response.

Scripture: *Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of My Father who is in heaven.* Matthew 18: 1-5. **Pope Francis.** *The sexual exploitation of children is a scandalous and perverse reality in present-day society. Societies experiencing violence due to war, terrorism, organised crime are witnessing the deterioration of the family, above all in large cities where the phenomenon of street children is on the rise. Sexual abuse of children is scandalous when it occurs where they ought to be most safe, e.g. in families, schools, communities and Christian institutions.* AL 45. **JUBILEE:** *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.* SNC 9. **Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 13. The family and youth groups presented insights into sibling relationships too. Thandi said, "Think of your own families. Is there rivalry between brothers or sisters and brothers, or jealousy, or resentment or possibly even sexual abuse or serious conflict for one or other reason? The intimacy in family units is unique among all other human relationships and should be cherished rather than abused." Claire said "I personally admire the young people who manage their own child-headed homes but I also know that they do need more help than they get. It is not fair on teenage boys and girls to be responsible for younger siblings when they themselves have hardly developed their own personal identity. Sometimes they are just left behind in a different town, alone or with a carer or relative. These little units are very vulnerable on many fronts. Do we know of any?"

Scripture: *If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his faults between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen take one or two others along with you that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses.* Matthew 18: 15-20. **Pope Francis** *Growing up with brothers and sisters makes for a beautiful experience of caring for and helping one another. We see the care and love that surround a little brother or sister who is frail or disabled. Children do need to be patiently taught to treat one another as brothers and sisters. This can be quite demanding and is a true school of socialisation.* AL 195. **JUBILEE:** *12. Signs of hope are also needed by those who are the very embodiment of hope, namely, the young. Sadly, they often see their dreams and aspirations frustrated. We must not disappoint them.* SNC 12 **Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 14. Sexuality and Money. Everyone discussed the issue of money and its many implications for causing or dealing with conflict and distress in the area of sexuality. Giving money instead of love is only too common in families where parents cannot find time. In cases of abuse money may be paid to ensure silence. Sugar-daddies or "blessers" give money for luxuries to teenage girls in exchange for sex. "I find that term really offensive" Jane said " It is really a form of prostitution." In cases of extreme poverty women and girls may resort to selling their bodies. Even parents sometimes sell their own children and women become surrogate mothers for financial reward. Trafficking of girls is an increasing problem, Girls may be abducted or unwittingly lured into the situation.

Scripture: *The Kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts. One was brought to him who could not pay. The servant fell on his knees imploring him, "Lord have patience with me."* Matt 18:21 - **Pope Francis.** *Migration, extreme poverty and other situation of family breakdown sometimes lead families to sell their children for prostitution or organ trafficking.* AL 46. **JUBILEE:** *Still, 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".* SNC23 **Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 15. Marriage and Divorce. Paula shared, "Sexual issues can and do have an impact on couple relationships in various ways but we as individuals and couples seldom bring them to the Church. Are we embarrassed or think we won't be listened to or accepted?" "There are competent experts who are able to speak to life from a "God-perspective," Joan

replied, "but it is also good to consult secular professionals in this area to help us explore our concerns and experiences, e.g. childhood abuse in the past and its present effects."

Scripture: *The Pharisees tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" Jesus said, "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one."?* Matthew 19:3-12. **Pope Francis.** *Situations will arise involving human weakness and these can prove emotionally overwhelming. One spouse may not feel fully appreciated, or may be attracted to another person. Jealousy and tensions may emerge or new interests that consume the other's time and attention. Physical changes naturally occur in everyone. These and so many other things rather than threatening love are so many occasions for reviving and renewing it.* AL 237. **JUBILEE.** *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.* SNC23. **Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 16. Children and divorce. Another serious topic needing a response from the group was the question of children, family violence and divorce. Rayhab shared her experience as a social worker. "Divorce almost invariably has a negative impact on children in a whole variety of ways but so does the experience of ongoing violence. Divorce is very common today but we do need to ask if it is chosen too quickly. Careful discernment with qualified and competent counsellors and possibly even mediation can be very helpful in deciding on the best course of action." Everyone agreed in principle but they knew that it is a difficult situation to deal with, especially when one is alone and desperate. That is why seeking trained help is very important.

Scripture: *"Let the children come to me and do not hinder them for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."* And he laid his hands on them and went away. Matt 19:14-15. **Pope Francis.** *At times separation becomes morally necessary as a last resort, when it is a matter of removing the more vulnerable spouse or young children from serious injury due to abuse and violence, from humiliation and exploitation, and from disregard and indifference.* AL241. **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.* SNC 13. **Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 17. Sunday 20 C Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven. Patron Feast of SA. The Catholic family members were given a chance to explain their devotion to Mary to others from other churches. Some shared how they saw her as a powerful queen, some a mother, a sorrowing mother, at times possibly angry at events in her life and that of her son. She had experienced exile, and losing a child is very painful as some families had also experienced. Some people liked the "gentle woman" that we see on Christmas cards. All agreed with the words she herself used, "The Lord has done great things for me." The sharing was enlightening for all and they agreed a patroness can be all those things. After they considered their particular local reality they prayed together, "Mary, Queen assumed into heaven, patroness of South Africa, pray for us."

Scripture: *Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden. For behold henceforth all generations will call me blessed: for he who is mighty has done great things for me and holy is his name.* Luke 1:46-49. **Pope Francis.** *Mary, the mother who cared for Jesus now cares with maternal affection and pain for this wounded world. Carried up into heaven, she is the Mother and Queen of all creation. In her glorified body, together with the Risen Christ part of creation has reached the fullness of its beauty.* LS 241. **JUBILEE:** 24. *Hope finds its supreme witness in the Mother of God as we see that hope is not naive optimism but a gift of grace amid the realities of life. Like every mother, whenever Mary looked at her Son, she thought of his future. Mary cooperated for our sake in the fulfilment of all that her Son had foretold in announcing that he would have to "undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again" (Mk 8:31). In the travail of that sorrow, offered in love, Mary became our Mother, the Mother of Hope.* SNC 24. **Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 18. Harassment. There was quite some discussion around the subject of sexual harassment especially in the workplace. Both the men and women needed to have their say. "You men....." and "You women....." went on for a bit. "It's the way you dress." "But why can't we?" "You know what," Joan said, "I wonder if we are conscious of our commitment to our husbands, partners, children etc. when we are at work. Do we separate our private and work lives?" "I have found it quite a challenge when the women at work look so sexy and my wife at home may not be looking her best," Martin admitted.

Scripture: *In those days the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals and forsook the Lord. So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel and he gave them over to plunderers. Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them. And yet they did not listen to their judges for they played the harlot after other gods. From Judges 2:11-19.* **Pope Francis.** We treat loving relationships the way we treat material objects and the environment: everything is disposable: everyone uses and throws away, takes and breaks, exploits and squeezes the last drop.

Narcissism makes people incapable of looking beyond themselves, beyond their own desires and needs. AL 39. **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).

SNC 4 Act and pray. For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 19. Money management. The conversation in the group came back to possessions and money management again. This is a sore point in many places. Men complain that women are spenders, women complain that men are mean and irresponsible, drink or gamble. "My husband refuses to tell me what he earns." "I need to ration the money I give to my wife because she just spends it all." So comments came from all around the groups. Are there gender traits when it comes to managing finances or is it to do with one's ideology, be it socialist or capitalist? They also came to recognise that not everyone is called to give up all worldly possessions. That is a special calling. Everyone is called however to have a proper balance even recognising that wealth and greed and corruption can be problems at any level.

Scripture: Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." From Matt 19:23-30. **Pope Francis.** 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 a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. LS 202. **JUBILEE:** Patience, one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, sustains our hope and strengthens it as a virtue and a way of life. May we learn to pray frequently for the grace of patience, which is both the daughter of hope and at the same time its firm foundation. **SNC 4 Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 20. Work. The speaker kicked off with, "Equal work for equal pay," is a popular slogan and goes to the heart of much of the gender question today in almost every sphere. "But should there be discrimination about the type of work men and women can do?" "Women cannot or would not necessarily want to do hard physical labour. Are we built differently physically and mentally to work differently too?" Many other important and relevant points were raised but once again the conclusion was that it had to do with balance and attitudes. "It even starts at home with the way we teach our kids, boys and girls, about money and give them pocket money or expect them to contribute their time to making things work in the family." "And not necessarily in stereotypical ways" Robert added. Everyone was encouraged to go and discuss the issue further with their children at home.

Scripture: *The kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. Matt 20:1-16.* **Pope Francis.** Masculinity and femininity are not rigid categories A rigid approach turns into an over accentuation of the masculine and feminine and does not help children to appreciate genuine reciprocity. Taking on domestic chores or some aspects of raising children does not make a man any less masculine or imply failure, irresponsibility or shame. AL 286. **JUBILEE:** 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).**SNC 10. Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 21. Wedding feasts. “Why would someone not want to go to a wedding especially a traditional one that goes on for a day or two with lots of family, friends, food and drink, I wonder.” “Maybe too busy.” “Can’t afford to dress up.” “Not really interested, or in the people involved.” Reasons came from men and women. “I think it’s mostly men, who don’t see such religious or cultural things as relevant. Ask yourself too why there are so few men in church these days?” **Scripture:** *The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son and sent his servants to call those invited but they would not come.* Matt 22:1-14. **Pope Francis.** *Catechesis is a proclamation of the word and is always centred on that word, yet it also demands a suitable environment, an attractive presentation and the use of eloquent symbols. Every dimension of the person should be inserted in a communal journey of hearing and response.* EG 166. **JUBILEE.** 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. SNC 18 **Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 22. Extended family. The issue of extended families came up for discussion too. One married woman shared her frustration that she found her husband more concerned about his parents and siblings than about her. “Maybe that is why I don’t get on well with my mother-in-law,” she said. Another woman shared, “My mom-in-law is a treasure, I love her to bits,” The men listened with interest, for most of them this issue of mother- and daughter-in-law was somewhat of a mystery.

Scripture: Ruth said to her mother-in-law, “Wherever you go I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge, your people shall be my people and your God my God.” Ruth 1:1-22. **Pope Francis.** *The larger family includes in-laws and all the relatives of the couple. One particularly delicate aspect of love is learning not to view relatives as competitors, threats or intruders. Marriage demands respect for their tradition and customs, an effort to understand their language and to refrain from criticism, caring for them and cherishing them while maintaining the legitimate privacy and independence of the couple.* AL 198. **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.* SNC10. **Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 23. Evaluation. As the month was beginning to come to an end the teams started some evaluation. “How much have you learned from our discussions, sharing and listening to each other?” “With women’s lib and the striving for gender equality clearly there needs to be ongoing discussion but then is sexual harassment often addressed. Is it still as serious in the workplace? And what about in families and homes?” “Should we continue with further sessions or discussions on Families and Sexuality?”

Scripture: Boaz said to Ruth, “Have I not charged the young men not to molest you? All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me. So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife.” Ruth 2:1-17. **Pope Francis.** *There is a need for training lay leaders who can assist in the pastoral care of families, with teachers, counsellors, physicians, social workers and specialists in psychology, sociology, marital and family therapy. Professionals can help keep pastoral initiatives grounded in the real situations and concrete concerns of families.* AL 204. **JUBILEE:** “*il believe in life everlasting*”. [12] *So our faith professes. Christian hope finds in these words an essential foundation. For hope is “that theological virtue by which we desire... eternal life as our happiness”.* [13] *The Second Vatican Council says of hope that, “when people are deprived of this divine support, and lack hope in eternal life, their dignity is deeply impaired, as may so often be seen today.* SNC 19. **Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 24. Sunday 21C. Fr Thabo asked the congregation, “who is the disciplinarian in the family? Man or woman, father or mother or some other person? I can remember when I was a child my mother used to threaten us by saying, ‘Wait until your father comes home!’ I think those days are long past. Partly because there are too many absent fathers. They may be alive and around, but not within the family or in another family. I can also ask, ‘do they exclude themselves or are they excluded for various reasons. Let us do our best to bring fathers back, to share in disciplining their children.’”

Scripture: *The Lord disciplines him whom he loves and chastises every son who he received. What son is there whom his father does not discipline?" Hebrews 12:5-7. Pope Francis.* "Manhood itself seems to be called into question. "At first this was perceived as a liberation from the father as master, as representative of a law imposed from without, an obstacle to their freedom. In our day the problem no longer seems to be the overbearing presence of the father so much as his absence. Fathers are often caught up in themselves, their work and their own self-fulfilment. Authority is often considered suspect. They become uncertain and fail to offer sure and solid guidance to their children. A reversal of the roles of parents and children is unhealthy. AL176-177 In the Christian vision of the Trinity, God is contemplated as Father, Son and Spirit of love. The triune God is a community of love and the family is its living reflection. AL 11. JUBILEE. "At the oment of judgement we experience and we absorb the overwhelming power of his love over all the evil in the world and in ourselves. The pain of love becomes our salvation and our joy". **Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 25. "There are too many hypocrites in our churches and communities," Joel stated before the group session got under way. "I know that in our church choir there are people who want to be seen as leaders but are abusing their wives or even having an affair with someone else. The frightening thing is that people know, but don't do anything about it. Of course no one really knows what goes on in the families. But I wish someone would write a "woe to you" letter to a guy I know. It might make him wake up." **Scripture:** Jesus said, "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites and blind guides." Matt 23:13. **Pope Francis:** Every form of sexual submission must be clearly rejected. This includes all improper interpretations of the passage in Ephesians where Paul tells women to be subject to your husbands. This passage mirrors the cultural categories of the time, but our concern is with the revealed message that it conveys. St John PAUL II wisely observed, "Love excludes every kind of subjection whereby the wife might become a servant or a slave of the husband. Paul goes on to say, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. Be mindful, "Be subject to one another." AL156. **JUBILEE.** 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" SNC 22. **Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 26. Law. Rayhab had invited a family lawyer to facilitate a session with the group. "I know that the law is important and we need to know the law for justice to happen, but how often is the law manipulated and true justice is not done. Many abuse cases and even rape cases never result in a conviction. Is that justice? It certainly cannot be mercy if an abuser is let off and the victim is left with no reparation or resolution. Should true justice not have to involve some punishment and reparation? What is true justice after all?

Scripture: *Woe to you. You tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith. Matt 23:23. Pope Francis.* It is not helpful simply to consider whether or not an individual's actions correspond to a general law or rule, because that is not enough to discern and ensure full fidelity to God in the concrete life a human being. General rules set forth a good which can never be disregarded or neglected, but in their formulation they cannot provide absolutely for all particular situations. AL 304. **JUBILEE.** The judgement of God, who is love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8.16), will surely be based on love, and in particular on all that we have done or failed to do with regard to those in need, in whose midst Christ, the Judge himself, is present, SNC 24. **Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 27. St Monica. Mrs Buthe shared her perceptions and experience of the last month. She added, "it is also quite interesting that this is the feastday of St Monica. She was a Christian, a wife and mother. Her pagan husband converted to Christianity and she and prayed constantly for her son Augustine. . After an early life of loose living he eventually converted, became a teacher, a bishop and is considered one of our greatest saints. I'm sure he did come to understand too that our sexuality and spirituality are gifts from God, beautiful and to be cherished. Too often this is spoilt and attacked by negative influences and images. I love art and for me the arts are meant to edify and raise our spirits to wonder at God's greatness. Pornography today is a perversion of art, sadly too accessible to anyone, also too early in life and too commonly used even as escapism from real relationships.

Scripture: *A good wife is a great blessing. She will be counted among the blessings of the man who fears the Lord. Sirach 26:1-4 O Lord you search me and know me. From Psalm139. Pope Francis:* The word patience refers to the quality of

one who does not act on impulse and avoids giving offense. In the Old Testament we read that God is slow to anger. The God of the Covenant calls us to imitate him also within the life of the family. AL 91 The Synod Fathers expressed concern about the current spread of pornography and the commercialisation of the body, fostered also by a misuse of the internet. AL 41. JUBILEE. In our fast-paced world, we are used to wanting everything now. We no longer have time simply to be with others; even families find it hard to get together and enjoy one another's company. Patience has been put to flight by frenetic haste, and this has proved detrimental, since it leads to impatience, anxiety and even gratuitous violence, resulting in more unhappiness and self-centredness. SNC 4. Act and pray. For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 28. St Augustine. The PPC chairman thanked all those who had participated in exploring the month's theme of sexuality as a family gift which we know also includes gender justice. We now have a new pope, after the death of Pope Francis in April. Pope Leo XIV chose his name, following the approach of Pope Leo XIII who was one of the early proponents of social justice. Harassment is one aspect of injustice that happens in the context of power. As an Augustinian, and a close follower of St Augustine, who lived in the 4th century in north Africa, Pope Leo will no doubt be teaching us much about him in the future. One of his most famous sayings is, "Our hearts are restless Lord, until they rest in you."

Scripture: *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. 1 John 4:7. Pope Leo in his first address after his election.* "I am a son of Saint Augustine, an Augustinian. He said, 'With you I am a Christian, for you a bishop.' So may we all walk together towards that homeland that God has prepared for us."

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. SNC 4. Act and pray.* For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 29. Martin and Angela shared, "We will soon come to the end of these sessions. I don't know whether you have learned a lot of information, gained knowledge or gained wisdom and insight which is something different. Relationships cannot be rationalised can they? I know many cases where people argue about that. But then we also cannot build a relationship purely on feelings. "Love is pretty irrational. I don't know why I love Beauty so much, I even like to think I worship the ground she walks on and that is irrational to say the least." "Ah, love is about feelings but much more than that as we have discussed this month." "It is about acceptance, even of things like homosexuality. Why did God make our son that way?"

Scripture: *The foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 1 Cor 1:25. Pope Francis.* We would like to reaffirm that every person, regardless of sexual orientation ought to be respected in his or her dignity, while every sign of unjust discrimination is to be carefully avoided. Families should be given respectful pastoral guidance so that those who manifest a homosexual orientation can receive the assistance they need to understand and fully carry out God's will. AL250. *The Synod Fathers observed that as for proposals to place unions between homosexual persons on the same level as marriage there are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogues to God's plan for marriage and family. AL251 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. Act and pray.* For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 30. "I'm sure everyone and every family will recognise this story: the story of the talents. Why is it that each human being is given different talents or attributes and some have more than others? Some men are handsome and clever, some only gorgeous but quite stupid. Girls may have beauty but poor health. One may have a business brain but poor relationship skills. What are the special gifts that attract James and Beauty to one another and not James and Antonette? Why is it that in spite of differences and conflict some couples can stick together for many, many years and their love can grow and remain fresh while others' love cannot last five minutes? There are good and bad decisions made and skills are acquired but nevertheless human relationships remain a mystery, almost as great a mystery as God.

Scripture: Jesus told his disciples, : it will be as when a man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted to them his property; to one he gave five talents, to another two and to another one, to each according to his ability. Matt 25:14. **Pope Francis.** Special discernment is indispensable for the pastoral care of those who are separated, divorced or abandoned. AL 242. Priests have the duty to accompany the divorced and remarried in helping them to understand their situation according to the teaching of the Church and the guidelines of the bishop. Useful in this process is an examination of conscience through moments of reflection and repentance. Conversation with the priest in the internal forum contribute to the formation of a correct judgement on what hinders the possibility of a fuller participation in the life of the Church and what steps can foster it and make it grow. AL 300. **JUBILEE:** The interplay of hope and patience makes us see clearly that the Christian life is a journey calling for moments of greater intensity to encourage and sustain hope as the constant companion that guides our steps towards the goal of our encounter with the Lord Jesus. SNC 5 **Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.

August 31. Sunday 22C Fr Thabo had thought a lot about his homily. "On this last Sunday of this month when we have used the daily readings to look at aspects of family life but particularly around sexuality I must say I have learned from hearing your stories. I have read, listened and shared and come to realise how many marginalised people there are among us. We could call them "irregular situations," but how do you, those who are not married, or have been married and are now widowed or divorced and not remarried feel about your sexuality? How do you young people feel? Are you stronger in the knowledge of who you are or in God's plan for you? There is a beautiful idea that Pope Francis writes about, the idea of gradualness. We're all on a journey, we're all growing, into who we are and who we believe God sees us becoming. Isn't that a beautiful thought for this Jubilee Year.

Pope Francis: This letter represents an invitation to Christian families to value the gifts of marriage and the family and to persevere in a love strengthened by the virtues of generosity, commitment, fidelity and patience. It seeks to encourage everyone to be a sign of mercy and closeness wherever family life remains imperfect or lacks peace and joy. AL5. So let's listen to the words of the gospel again. **Scripture:** "When you give a dinner or a banquet do not invite your friends or your brothers or neighbours lest they repay you and invite you in return. Invite the poor, the maimed, the lost, the blind, the marginalised, the different, homosexuals, those with HIV, prostitutes, and you will be blessed because they cannot repay you. Luke 14:7-14. **JUBILEE:** 5. This interplay of hope and patience makes us see clearly that the Christian life is a journey calling for moments of greater intensity to encourage and sustain hope as the constant companion that guides our steps towards the goal of our encounter with the Lord Jesus. SNC5. **Act and pray.** For the needs of families of all kinds to grow in love and acceptance.