



2025 OUR WORLD, FAMILY OF FAMILIES –

MARFAM THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY

SEPTEMBER - OUR WORLD OF FAMILIES.



PEACE WITH CREATION

SEASON OF CREATION 2025

SEASON OF CREATION -

1 SEPTEMBER TO 4 OCTOBER 2025.

DAILY THOUGHTS are available on www.marfam.org.za, facebook and X. Send request for email to info@marfam.org.za.
Abbreviations: Pope Francis: LS = Laudato Si. AL = Amoris Laetitia FT = Fratelli Tutti.

THE ECUMENICAL SEASON OF CREATION 1 SEPTEMBER - 4 OCTOBER 2024

The season was initiated in the Eastern Orthodox church in 1989 and has been supported by many churches over the years, from 2019 including the Catholic Church. It offers a range of suggestions, resources, liturgical celebrations, and an possible blessing of animals, pets, domestic and wild, around feast of St Francis. Visit www.seasonofcreation.org
The season begins on 1 September with the Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation proposed by Pope Francis. Our common prayer and action can support us as we lament the individuals, communities, species, and ecosystems that are lost, and those whose livelihoods are threatened by habitat loss, climate change and conflicts. Our overall action is a response to the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor.

“SEEDS OF PEACE AND HOPE.” Theme and Message of Pope Leo XIV for the 10th World Day of Prayer for Creation 1 September 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters! The theme chosen by Pope Francis is most timely while celebrating the 2025 Jubilee as Pilgrims of Hope. Jesus often used the image of the seed, comparing himself to the grain of wheat that must die so as to bear fruit (Jn 12:24). Seeds are buried in the earth, life springs up, even in unexpected places, pointing to the promise of new beginnings. In Christ, we too are “seeds of peace and hope.” The prophet Isaiah tells that “the Spirit of God, poured out on us, can make an arid and parched desert into a garden, a place of rest and serenity. The wilderness will become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field a forest. Justice and righteousness will abide and the work of righteousness will be peace, quietness and trust forever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places” (Is 32:15-18). Passage taken from the Season of Creation guide.

These words remind us that with prayer, determination and concrete actions are necessary if this “caress of God” is to become visible to our world (LS 84). The prophet contrasts justice and law with the desolation of the desert. In parts of the world our earth is being ravaged. Injustice, violations of international law and the rights of peoples, grave inequalities and greed that fuels them are spawning deforestation, pollution and loss of biodiversity. Extreme natural phenomena caused by climate changes provoked by human activity are growing in intensity and frequency, together with the effects of the human and ecological devastation wrought by armed conflicts.

When justice and peace are trampled underfoot, those most hurt are the poor, the marginalized and the excluded, such as indigenous communities. Nature is reduced to a bargaining chip, God’s creation turns into a battleground for the control of vital resources. The wounds are the effect of sin and surely not what God had in mind when he entrusted the earth to men and women whom he created in his image (cf. Gen 1:24-29). The Bible provides no justification for us to exercise “tyranny over creation,” (LS200) Texts are to be read in their context. overseeing and preserving, implying mutual responsibility between human beings and nature” LS67.

Environmental justice can no longer be regarded as an abstract or distant goal, but an urgent need that involves more than protecting the environment. It is a matter of justice – social, economic and human. For believers it is also a duty born of faith, since the universe reflects the face of Jesus Christ, in whom all things were created and redeemed. I pray that Almighty God will send us in abundance his “Spirit from on high” so that these seeds, and others like them, may bring forth an abundant harvest of peace and hope.

INTRODUCTION SEPTEMBER. Our World of Families and Season of Creation. A fairly recent insight in Church thinking is integral ecology and the need for Care of creation. We, the various forms of the human family, with different religions, political ideologies and experiences of wealth and poverty are the greatest threat to our world's security and stability today. Every other family in creation will suffer because of our actions. Is this the heritage we want to leave to our children? How can the harmful attitude be redeemed during this Season of Creation from 1 September to 4 October in harmony with other Christian churches and the various resources including Jubilee 2025.

Pope Francis: Human beings too are creatures of this world, enjoying a right to life and happiness, and endowed with unique dignity. We cannot fail to consider the effects on people's lives of environmental deterioration, current models of development and a throwaway culture. LS 43. Culture is more than what we have inherited from the past; it is also, a living dynamic and participatory present reality, which cannot be excluded as we rethink the relationship between human beings and the environment. LS143. **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. SNC17.

INTRODUCTION OCTOBER. Family on Mission. Every family of any kind, human, plant or animal has a role to play to sustain our world, as a family of families. As the human family, we have the power to deliberately choose our mission. During 2025 our mission is to journey as Pilgrims of Hope. We cannot afford selfish greed, or hurtful violence, but are called to adopt God's mission of love, love of creation, all its creatures and the poor. St Francis, the patron saint of ecology is our inspiration on our mission. **Pope Francis:** The family is an agent of pastoral activity through the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, their witness, solidarity with the poor, openness to diversity of people, protection of creation, moral and material solidarity with other families and commitment to the common good. AL 290. Jubilee. 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. SNC 24.

Setting the scene for the MARFAM DAILY THOUGHTS Parishes were encouraged to promote the concept of BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES as all parishioners are connected with a family in some way, married couples, parents, children, grandparents, aunts and uncles and other relatives. Some articles from the MARFAM booklet BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES are used as a resource. The See-Judge-Act approach is used. 1. A look at life. 2. Scripture 3. Pope Francis writings, 4. Daily Eco-tip and prayer. Suggested daily family prayer for the season: *Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be. Amen.*

DOWNLOADABLE RESOURCES:

- **The Season of Creation Celebration Guide** is a comprehensive overview with references and can be downloaded. "Remember that rather than events we are building encounters, to cultivate listening in the spirit of ecumenism, engaging in prophetic action for our common home and strengthened by eco-spirituality to commit and follow-up on our responsibilities as stewards of creation."
- Google SEASON OF CREATION 2025 for many materials from different sources including the SACBC.
- Check out www.seasonofcreation.org, and resources, social media posts from www.laudatosimovement.org and www.laudatosiactionplatform.org on facebook, X, Instagram and register for regular emails.
- Check out the MARFAM resource booklets **FAMILIES CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION** and **BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES**. Available as print or e books. Go to www.marfam.org.za/shop/
- As this is an ecumenical project approach other Christian churches to share resources and activities.

2025 PRAYER FOR SEASON OF CREATION. PEACE WITH CREATION

Creator of all, we praise you for the gift of life
and for the faith that unites us in care for our common home.
We confess how estranged we have become—
from one another, from your Creation, and from our truest selves.
We acknowledge that our greed and destructive impulses
have fractured our relationships with you, with others, and with the Earth.
Fertile fields have become barren, forests lie desolate, oceans and rivers are polluted.
Thriving communities have become places of suffering, and the earth cries out.
Beloved Christ,
who spoke "Shalom" to frightened hearts, stir us to compassionate action.
Inspire us to work for the end of conflict, and for the full restoration of broken relationships—
with you, with the ecumenical community, with the human family, and with all Creation.
Prince of Peace, through your wounds,
teach us to stand in solidarity with the woundedness of others, of creation, and of the world.
Through your resurrection, make us people of hope—
with a vision of swords turned into ploughshares and tears transformed into joy.
May we come together as one family, to labor for your peace—
a shalom where all your people may dwell in safety, and rest in quiet places. Amen.

DAILY PRAYER. God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

PRAYERS FOR THE SEASON OF CREATION

St Francis Canticle of the Creatures

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord, Yours are the praises, the glory, and the honor, and all blessing,
To You alone, Most High, do they belong, and no human is worthy to mention Your name.
Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun, who is the day and through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor; and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
in heaven You formed them clear and precious and beautiful.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind, and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather,
through whom You give sustenance to Your creatures.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water, who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night, and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.
Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth,
who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs.
Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for Your love, and bear infirmity and tribulation.
Blessed are those who endure in peace, for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned.
Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death, from whom no one living can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will, for the second death shall do them no harm.
Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks and serve Him with great humility.

Peace Prayer of St Francis

Lord make me an instrument of Your peace
Where there is hatred let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness joy.

O Divine master grant that I may
Not so much seek to be consoled as to console
To be understood, as to understand.
To be loved. as to love
For it's in giving that we receive
And it's in pardoning that we are pardoned
And it's in dying that we are born...
To eternal life. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR OUR EARTH from Laudato Si '246

All powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with 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.
Help us to rescue and 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 upon it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognise 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 in our struggle for justice, love and peace. 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.

THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY SEPTEMBER

Pope Francis. *Human beings too are creatures of this world, enjoying a right to life and happiness, and endowed with unique dignity. So we cannot fail to consider the effects on people's lives of environmental deterioration, current models of development and the throwaway culture. LS 43. Eco-tip and prayer:* Do some study and plan what special prayers and actions will be taken up, ideally together as a family, during these 5 weeks. *Pray: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning and now and ever shall be world without end. Amen.*

September 1. Day of Prayer for Care of Creation. See above Extracts from Pope Leo Message for September 1 the Day of Prayer for Creation .

September 1. LISTEN TO THE CRY OF THE POOR. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*)

Families are asked to reflect and share together. Who are the poor? Jesus, in his Beatitudes – his blueprint for life - said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Is poverty an attitude, a spiritual vision of life, or is it material, as in having little or nothing by way of resources? Are these different aspects of poverty? The disadvantaged, disenfranchised and homeless people are often hopeless and even helpless. They may have little except their own selves and yet have the same dignity of the children of God as those more endowed with material possessions.

Saint Mother Teresa, the most recognised champion of the poor, worked tirelessly with her sisters caring for the destitute in the city of Calcutta, providing food and care for the sick and dying. She also often said that the greatest poverty in the world is to feel unloved. St Francis himself chose and embraced poverty as a treasure, like Mother Teresa showing how a passionate love of God is one antidote against poverty. But what is the child crying for, who is forced to go to bed hungry, as there is absolutely no food in her shack for her or her brothers and sisters? Is it love, or is it a simple piece of bread, maybe with jam or peanut butter? Are the poor the mothers or fathers with no work or shelter desperate to care for their children? Are the poor crying out of resentment, out of pain or misery?

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Jesus said, “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. From Luke 4:16-30. “The Church’s love for the poor is a part of her constant tradition.” Catechism of the Catholic Church (2444, 2448) Pope Francis: The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together. The gravest effects of all attacks on the environment (by humanity) are suffered by the poorest. Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity. LS 30. Approximately a third of all food produced is discarded and whenever food is thrown out it is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor. LS 50 “We are called to form consciences not to replace them. AL 37. Ecological education can take place in a variety of settings: at school, in families, in the media, in catechesis and elsewhere. Good education plants seeds when we are young, and these continue to bear fruit throughout life. LS213. Eco-tip and prayer:* Prayerfully consider: The poor should be directly involved and take responsibility in addressing the issue of poverty, which should not only be a case of handouts and decisions by those in power and church leadership. How can each family take responsible action? **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 2. ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*)

What is this strange ideal? Terms such as environment, ecology, climate change or biodiversity, are all terms that address the same urgent need not only to understand the impact of climate change, but also to respond to it in our daily lives. Its effects such as extreme weather conditions are being experienced throughout the world, where more rain or less rain, hurricanes, typhoons, floods and landslides affecting everyone and everything causing deaths and much destruction and losses, also of livelihoods. These points were noted by the 2024 UN International Year of the Family 30th anniversary theme of “Families and Climate Change.”

Family is a reality and a form of family living is the most common way of life. Becoming an eco-friendly family is an ideal to work towards, a vision and also a journey in faith, accepting the reality and dealing with issues as they arise. It has many facets and differences. What are some of the key points in being and becoming eco-friendly families – a vision and a goal :

- Our approach is as families, as units, ideally choosing common causes e.g. save the rhino, protect unborn life.
- We recognize individuals; gender, age, relationships within a family.
- We recognize differences and needs: abilities and interests – from sport to technology, science or nature in men, women, children, young to old

- We aim to motivate for an environmental awareness – often in competition with other interests e.g. sport.
- We aim to share eco-friendly values, “refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle, repair.”
- We promote saving water, energy – electricity, electronics, travel.
- We aim for healthy eating – diet with less meat and more plant-based.
- We encourage joint activities and causes – “save the rhino, protect unborn life, clean-up campaign.
- We aim at areas of shared faith and spirituality, recognizing God as creator as the basis of all life. Reflect, share, pray to develop this spirituality.
- We put our money where our mouth is. Ecological awareness and action can require money and investment but its ultimate outcomes make any expense worthwhile.
- What starts at home is taken out into the world, school, work, sport etc.

All family members can engage with the environment in different ways, from feeding tiny infants in the most healthy ways, ideally through breast-feeding, to toddlers not being fed on junk food and sweet drinks. Learners at school are especially encouraged to be health conscious, when it comes to smoking, drinking, food and sexual behaviour. It is not for themselves alone but for the world around them, i.e. the school, sportsfield and shopping mall.

An ecological sensitivity started in homes can be put into practice in creative and innovative ways by young people’s technological ability for design and inventions when it comes to architecture, building, scientific research into energy and water management, nature conservation etc. The elderly are often still active in their families in water and energy saving and clean-ups, while as they become weak and feeble they may need special care and healthy diet. Appreciating beauty in nature and architecture is for everyone.

Pope Francis often writes, “Everything is connected.” An ecological sensitivity needs to be borne in mind across the board and by everyone, by town planners, economists and politicians, in planning and decision-making and should not be restricted to those directly involved. The concept of a Circular Economy should be strengthened, based on recycling, reuse and reduction of waste as is done by nature.

The World Economic Forum reported on the millions of disposable nappies dumped or incinerated every day, which is very unhealthy for the earth. Disposable nappies are used for infants but also by elderly and in hospitals. An innovative response was making reusable nappies using pineapple, instead of plastic. Other natural and biodegradable plant products such as wood, bark and banana leaves are all good alternatives to plastic in various products, even fashion fabrics. They do not emit carbon and in some cases even reduce carbon in the atmosphere. It’s all a question of mindset.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Encourage one another and build one another up just as you are doing. 1 Thess 5:9-11*

Pope Francis: *Authentic development includes efforts to bring about improvements in the quality of human life which involves settings in which people live. These influence the way we think, feel and act in our rooms, homes, workplaces and neighbourhoods, as we use the environment as a way to express our identity. If it is chaotic, filled with noise and ugliness it makes it more difficult to keep calm, relaxed and happy. LS147. Many problems are closely linked to a throwaway culture which affects the excluded just as it quickly reduces things to rubbish. Most of the paper we produce is thrown away. It is hard for us to accept that the way natural ecosystems work is exemplary: plants synthesize nutrients which feed herbivores, those in turn become food for carnivores, which produce significant quantities of organic waste which give rise to new generations of plants. Our industrial system at the end of its cycle of production and consumption has not developed the capacity to absorb and reuse waste and by products. We have not yet managed to adopt a circular model of production. LS 22. **Eco-tip and Prayer.** Loving God, make us more and more conscious that our homes are good places to start to become eco- and family- friendly. Show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.*

September 3. FEED THE WORLD, DON’T KILL THE WORLD. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*)

The Boney-M song “Don’t kill the world” goes back some 40 years. Environmental awareness was just starting to take off. It made a strong impact then. but hasn’t stopped us killing the world, which seems to just carry on. In those early days activists were often ridiculed, seen as tree huggers or bunny huggers but they were already aware of the hunger caused by droughts, famine and the extreme weather patterns which are now almost accepted as normal. The average world temperature is rising almost every year, heating the oceans, melting icecaps, affecting marine life, causing hurricanes and floods as well as drought in other places.

Killing the world is killing opportunities to grow and produce food to feed the world, resulting in hunger. This affects especially the poorest people living in villages and small towns, who often grow some of their own food. Feeding the world and the hungry is also providing aid to those affected by no, or low, rainfall and crop failures or floods and

destroyed farmlands. Those displaced due to the wars and internal conflicts in parts of the world are among the hungry. Such conflicts kill the world through the massive damage to infrastructure that we see daily on our TV news programmes. War cuts food production, as in Ukraine where reduced wheat and sunflower exports are affecting staple foods of other countries. In addition wild fires brought on by temperature rises destroy many of God's creatures and their habitats.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever and they asked him about her. He stood over her and rebuked the fever and it left her and immediately she rose and served them. Luke 4:38-44.*

Pope Francis. *A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness. Love is more than just a series of benevolent actions. Our love for others for who they are moves us to seek the best for their lives. FT 94. With the money spent on weapons and other military expenditures let us establish a global fund that can finally put an end to hunger and provide development in the most impoverished countries so that their citizens will not resort to violent or illusory solutions or have to leave their countries to seek a more dignified life. FT 262. Eco-tip. Offer help to someone who is sick, mentally or physically challenged or works with sick animals. As families revive the song, listen and meditate on the words, share and sing along. **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.*

DON'T KILL THE WORLD.

Don't kill the world, don't let her down
Do not destroy basic ground
Don't kill the world, our means of life
Lend ear to nature's cry

Don't kill the world, the only one we have
And surely she is worth to save
Don't let her die, fight for the trees
Pollution robs her breath

Don't kill the world, help her survive
And she will be gone, you will d

And don't just talk, go on and do
The one who wins is you

Cherish the world, a present from God
On behalf of all creatures made by the Lord
Care for the Earth, foundation of life
Slow progress down, help her survive

Don't kill the world, don't let her down
Do not destroy basic ground
Don't kill the world our means of life
Don't kill the world, our world.



September 4. WATER WARRIORS ARE WATER WISE. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*)

Cecilia is involved with a water provision project in a poor rural area. She arranged for tanks for harvesting rain water to be donated. Georgina laughed when she heard about it, "O mom, it hasn't rained there in 4 months so how can one harvest rain water." "Well there are times of the year when this is possible as you well know. But talking of harvesting water, what about putting a basin in the shower and taking shorter showers. That water can be used in the garden, or the toilet – if you have such luxuries which not every family has." "You're right, those of us who have ready access to water can use the "grey water" from washing dishes too and think twice when we brush our teeth or wash hands not to let the tap run. Saving water is a mindset that we all need to develop.

Water is one of the most essential elements of creation and its presence makes our earth habitable, although water is too often contaminated from mining and industrial use and dumping all kinds of items which interfere with water distribution, making it unsafe to drink. Space scientists are always on the look out for water out in space. But here, although the earth is made up of 70% water, much of it is sea water and not directly useable for us. But again scientists are improving desalination and some of the UAE countries have shown us how well an economy can run in that way. How we use the water in our homes should be noted to see how much we waste and how much we can save for the benefit of others. In our gardens we could choose indigenous plants that are drought-resistant and need less water. Watering should be done carefully rather than indiscriminately.

Water shortages are definitely being felt today, in rural areas far from rivers or where water has been dammed up elsewhere, or a much larger problem is poor water infrastructure management and service delivery in general. Pollution of surface and underground water can and should be issues for families, as water warriors, to address personally or through public channels with local councils or join a ocean or river cleanup project. Like everything in life water and its management is very costly and with our attitude of working for the common good there is much we can do.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: Jesus said, "Put our into the deep and let down your nets for a catch. Henceforth you will be catching men." From Luke 5:1-11. **Pope Francis:** Access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and as such is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. Water continues to be wasted not only in the developed world, but also in developing countries which possess it in abundance. Clearly the problem of water is partly an educational and cultural issue, since there is little awareness of the seriousness of such behaviour within a context of great inequality. LS 30. **ACTION AND PRAYER.** Read the Cantic of Creation of St Francis. With him "praise God for Sister Water who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste." **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 5. St Mother Teresa of Calcutta. PEACE ON EARTH BEGINS IN THE HOME. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*) The world of today is experiencing wars and conflicts on very serious levels and in many places. The news we see and hear in our homes is constantly filled with reports of war and violence of all kinds. How can this not influence our attitude towards life, peace and harmony? Peace is not only an absence of war but also the harmony of right relationships and living happily, practicing the life skills that build and strengthen family relationships especially gender relations. Peace is not something passive but needs to be built.

In this context, and the 2025 Jubilee Year theme of Hope, Pope Francis' message for World Day of Peace 1 January 2025 is "Forgive us our trespasses: grant us your peace." "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." The Jubilee tradition in Old Testament Judaism included forgiveness of sins and debt cancellation. This requires genuine conversion on all levels, personal, local and international. Surely at the family level the matter of forgiveness and even debt cancellation has relevance. If we say Peace must Begin in the Home, let's ask how much domestic violence and femicide are perpetrated there? How many wars are and have been fought historically over maintenance, inheritances, land and property?

The topic of peace also brings to mind important world figures, religious, political and social such as Mahatma Ghandi, Archbishops Oscar Romero and Desmond Tutu. St Mother St Teresa of Kolkata has written: "Let us not use bombs and guns to overcome the world. Let us use love and compassion. Peace begins with a smile. Smile five times a day at someone you don't really want to smile at; do it for peace. Let us radiate the peace of God and so light His light and extinguish hatred and love of power in the world and in the hearts of all people. . Today, if we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other-that man, that woman, that child is my brother or my sister. If everyone could see the image of God in his neighbor, do you think we would still need tanks and generals? Peace and war begin at home. If we truly want peace in the world, let us begin by loving one another in our own families.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Matthew 25. **Pope Francis.** Some parts of our human family can, it appears, be readily sacrificed for the sake of others considered worthy of a carefree existence. Ultimately persons are no longer seen as a paramount value to be cared for and respected, especially when they are poor and disabled, not yet useful – like the unborn, or no longer needed, like the elderly. We have grown indifferent to all kinds of wastefulness, starting with the waste of food. FT 18. **Eco-tip and prayer:** Make a study of the life of St Mother Teresa and show support for her Missionaries of Charity. Pray the Peace Prayer of St Francis and the **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 6. RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN AND SIN.

A Look at life. One Saturday a family who were out on an eco-safari decided to camp out as they did from time to time, to experience nature more intimately. They had put up their tent and as everyone was hungry they all helped

to put together their simple meal. As they ate and shared they considered how the natural environment had changed over the years. Mom commented, "In creation and in daily life there must be a right order of doing things. God created everything and, from the beginning, gave to mankind the task of caring for creation. This does allow people the freedom to use but not exploit and abuse nature and the environment."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *The disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. Jesus said, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry he and those who were with him, how he entered the house of God and took and ate the showbread, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat. The Son of man is lord of the sabbath. From Luke 6:1-5.* **Pope Francis:** *Human life is grounded in three fundamental relationships, with God, with our neighbour and with the earth. According to the Bible these vital relationships have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin. Today sin is manifest in all its destructive power in wars, the various forms of violence and abuse and abandonment of the most vulnerable, and attacks on nature. LS66. For human beings to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation and to degrade the integrity of the earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the earth of its natural forests or destroying its wetlands, contaminate and pollute these, are sins against the natural world, against ourselves and against God. LS8.*

Eco-tip. Do an examination of conscience and ask "How have I degraded my own immediate environment? What can I do to fix it?" Pray for forgiveness and make a promise to correct what is needed. **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 7. 23rd Sunday C. AN ECO-FRIENDLY CARBON FOOTPRINT. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*) Climate change is caused mostly by temperature rise in the atmosphere, due to an increase in greenhouse gases like CO₂ i.e. carbon dioxide emitted through all our activities. It can be helpful to measure how and how much is produced, even, by each person and each family. The less we produce, the better it is in the long run for our climate and our world.

Every single thing we do, from breathing to kicking a soccer ball around needs energy which is produced, stored and used by the body. The energy we use through electricity is generated from burning fossil fuel, like coal, diesel and gas. CO₂ is a byproduct of this. The greatest amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere in South Africa is from burning fossil fuel. Renewable energy like solar or wind energy produces less harmful greenhouse gas. People and animals emit CO₂, but plants absorb it or extract it from the air. That is why planting trees is especially good and cutting down and clearing trees is harmful. For the good of the planet we all have to do what we can to reduce the amount of CO₂. A carbon footprint is an image of the amount we each produce. Measuring this can help us to decide where and how we can reduce it in small and larger ways.

MEASURING OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT. Google has different measuring tools that can be downloaded, for a family, school, individual or business. Tools use questions to explore how much CO₂ has been produced through our energy use and activities directly or also indirectly through transporting goods to us. Suggestions are made to reduce our carbon footprint.

- How do you travel, or go to school? Private car – public transport.
- How often does your family eat out or order takeouts? Seldom – often
- How often do you do laundry in a washing machine? Once a week - daily
- How many soft drinks do you drink? 1 each per day or more?
- Do you switch lights and plugs off when not in use?
- How much air-conditioning or heating do you use?
- Walk or cycle rather than drive a petrol or even an electric car.
- Cook and eat at home using local and home-grown items.
- Hand wash or don't use a washing machine with small loads.
- Open windows, use extra blankets and jerseys for heating or cooling rather than air-conditioning.
- Restrict time on electronic devices and switch off when not in use.
- Develop the attitude to "Reduce, Recycle, Reuse or Repair,"
- Plant trees, especially indigenous water wise ones.



Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Which of you desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it. Whoever does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:25-33.* **Pope Francis:** *Such actions bring out the best in people and can be acts of love. LS 211. When our hearts are authentically open to universal communion the sense of fraternity excludes nothing and no one. LS 92.* **Eco-tip and prayer.** Set yourself a reminder to assess your commitment, take action and pray for the earth. **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 8. PEACE WITH CREATION IN THE SEASON OF CREATION. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*) This is an interdenominational event celebrated annually worldwide with Christians from many countries and many organisations including those linked to *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis' encyclical on "Caring for our Common Home." The theme chosen by the Season of Creation team for 2025 is **PEACE WITH CREATION** inspired by the prophet Isaiah 32: 14-18. *"For the palace is forsaken, the city deserted, the hill and the watchtower will become dens, the joy of wild asses and flocks. Until a spirit from on high is poured out on us and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field. Justice will dwell in the wilderness and righteousness in the fruitful field. The effect will be peace, quietness and trust."*

The prophet describes the **War on Creation** and portrays creation, desolate, devoid of peace due to injustice and the broken relationship between God and humankind which is responsible for destruction through sin. He depicts animals moving in and claiming back the earth.

Peace is more than the absence of war. *Shalom* indicates a move from the absence of conflict to full relationship restoration with God, ourselves, the human family and all Creation.

Our hope is Peace in creation with Justice restored. Hope is active, with prayer, action, reconciling with God and creation through repentance and solidarity. Righteousness leads to peace and restores the land's fertility.

A Kairos Moment: 1700 years of the Nicene Creed. 2025 marks this Christian anniversary to confess their faith and witness in the context of a trouble, unequal and divided world with the Creed as a bond of peace and communion to strengthen faith.

A Call to Action. "The Effect of Justice is Peace. As co-workers with the Creator, we must embody peace with all of Creation. It cannot only be for only a few.

Pray and respond to the cries of communities losing land and livelihoods due to war, climate change, unsustainable practices and debt. The Spirit guides us to understanding, ecological conversion and a transformative outcome, – not mere restoration of previous conditions.

Proactive steps should respond to Jesus' teaching of repentance and restorative justice. Hope fuels action. **Through prayer, discernment and commitment** we create a foundation for change. Peace emerges from **work** as transformation takes patience, understanding and trust. **Action** includes advocacy on local issues, sustainability projects, cleaning campaigns. Education shows how care for Creation is central to faith. Collaborate as interreligious communities for peace in diversity and unity, through reforestation, river cleaning, water and food security projects. (TR) Get full SOC guide at <https://seasonofcreation.org>

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *It happened that on a Sabbath, when Jesus entered the synagogue and taught, a man was there whose right hand was withered Jesus said, "I ask you is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?" Luke 6:6-11.* **Pope Francis:** *The majority of people living on our planet profess to be believers. This should spur religions to dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor and building networks of respect and fraternity. LS 201.* **Eco-tip and prayer:** As an ecumenical initiative check out how different believers practise listening to the voice of creation, to the "cry of the poor and the cry of the earth." Hold a combined prayer service. **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 9. Effective Leadership. A Look at Life. The Covid pandemic which is still ongoing although at a low level has led the whole world to a deeper reflection on matters of health and wellbeing. The most effective approaches towards these new health risks, the safety and efficacy of vaccines include the importance of effective leadership with its many medical and psychological concerns. Effective leadership issues continue to surface as in elections and establishment of new government structures. "How are leaders chosen these days?" This was a serious question for all communities, parish groups and families to discuss. Who chooses, how and why? If one looks around the world and the different countries and even organisations, do people lobby for support, bribe or give out food parcels to buy votes? Do we vote as a reaction against something or for someone who we believe will serve the common good? We can describe such people as "servant leaders."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *All night long Jesus continued in prayer to God. And when it was day he called his disciples and chose from them twelve whom he named apostles. He came down and stood with them and with a great crowd of his disciples. Luke 6:12-19.* **Pope Francis:** *We lack leadership capable of striking out on new paths and meeting the needs of the present with concern for all and without prejudice towards coming generations. LS53. There are too many special interests that easily end up trumping the common good and manipulating information so that the person's own plans will not be affected. LS 54*

Eco-tip and prayer: Get involved in a "leadership debate" on social media. Discuss servant leadership and pray for leaders with integrity in all spheres of life. **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of

Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 10. SAVE. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*) This one word, “save” is interpreted nowadays in lots of different ways, sometimes useful but sometimes not. Common of course is my computer which constantly asks me to “save” or “don’t save.” Much of what I have saved over time is clogging up the works but then extra space is constantly being created to store all that saved stuff. Is it in the cloud or under the sea? Are you a hoarder, and should you be getting rid of, or giving away all the knick-knacks and dozens of useless items you have saved?

A better use of the word is in saving money. It can and should be for a rainy day, for one’s old age, or for a special item one wishes to buy. This does happen but maybe less than before and how many parents encourage children from a young age to save a little? We buy on credit rather than save, even kids do. But credit is not unlimited and a day of reckoning is coming.

Reckoning applies to ecology and creation too, which is certainly in need of saving from destruction. Biodiversity loss of plants and animals should be addressed through saving. Human population is a very complex issue as growth is unbalanced in our day affecting the peace and harmony of established cultures. Some important old and well-functioning cultures are in need of saving from being overwhelmed by outsiders or newcomers. While migrants should have rights as they often leave their home country due to conflict and poor governance, but also for more selfish economic reasons, what is their impact on their new host countries which should also have rights. Conflict can come about in the host countries when they feel threatened by this influx and want to save what they have developed in time. Where are the rights and where are the wrongs? The Beatitudes of Jesus are as countercultural now on issues of justice as they were in his day.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Woe to you that are rich for you have received your consolation. Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger. From Luke 6:20-26. Pope Francis:* *We have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. LS 49. A constant flood of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment. To be serenely present to each reality, however small it may be, opens us to much greater horizons of understanding and personal fulfilment. Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little. LS 222. Eco-tip and prayer:* . Reflect on and share on your understanding of the deeper meaning of saving and salvation. Pray the eucharistic acclamation *Save us, saviour of the world, for by your cross and resurrection you have set us free.*

September 11 FAMILIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*)

The United Nations International Year of the Family 30th anniversary in 2024 chose *Families and Climate* as its focus theme with 2 main areas: 1. The impact on families. 2. The response of families.

IMPACT. The direct and indirect impact on families is largely negative. Extreme weather ranging from floods to drought can result in loss of life, damage and destruction of homes and livelihoods, displacement and the break-up of family units. Consideration should be given to the fact that impact is not only on human but on all ecosystems and all families of creation.

THE ROLE OF FAMILIES IN CLIMATE CHANGE AND ACTION.

Humans’ lifestyle has a profound and mostly negative impact on the planet’s health. Use of power for lighting, cooking, heating, cooling, modes and frequency of travel, what we eat, what we use from clothing to plastics and electronics all contribute to greenhouse gas emission i.e. higher CO₂ levels in the atmosphere which then leads to changes in the climate. Materialist attitudes fed by advertising contribute to consumerist behaviour, encouraging people to buy more than they need, making wastage a major problem. Every family member in every way contributes in greater or lesser degrees. Our diets and eating habits, sports and entertainment industries also play a role. A carbon footprint measure demonstrates how the more wealthy, who use more power, contribute many times more to this harmful situation.

THE NEED FOR RESPONSIBLE ACTION BY EVERYONE.

Drastic action needs to be taken. Responsible role players are government, civil society organisations, including churches, the private and business sectors on a large scale. Power and food producers, and even our leisure activities can act to limit harmful effects of our lifestyle. Improving productivity, limiting use of water and power, reducing wastage and plastic not replacing what still works are mindsets.

An important point to note is that all the role player groups are made up of family people, but a special role can be played in families at home, in practical, material and financial ways. for example, by using renewable energy, changing to plant-based diets, cutting car use or unnecessary travel. Once again it is a matter of mindset. Think before you dump. Or jump! In order to achieve a near zero CO2 impact.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Love your enemies, and do good and lend expecting nothing in return., and your reward will be great and you will be sons of the Most High. For he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. "Be merciful even as your Father is merciful. Luke 6: 27-38. **Pope Francis:** If we can overcome individualism we can truly bring about change. LS208 Many problems are closely linked to a throwaway culture which affects the excluded just as it quickly reduces things to rubbish. Most of the paper we produce is thrown away. The way natural ecosystems work is exemplary: plants synthesize nutrients which feed herbivores, those in turn become food for carnivores, which produce significant quantities of organic waste which give rise to new generations of plants. Our industrial system at the end of its cycle of production and consumption has not developed the capacity to absorb and reuse waste and by products. We have not yet managed to adopt a circular model of production. LS 22. **Eco-tip and prayer.** Act and pray for the motivation to provide the family with tools to develop family spirituality and form strong positive foundations and habits, civic awareness and activism can increase. **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.*

September 12. EACH ONE TEACH ONE. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*)

Dominic was a science teacher, Phumzile a learner with a great interest in animal trafficking, particularly of rhinos and pangolins. Her uncle Boris was a big game hunter. Imagine the debates and the arguments that raged about the merits of trophy hunting or any type of hunting. Who knows all the facts, the truth and the financial implications of game farming?

Because environmental awareness is still a relatively new science or a still growing field of knowledge it is often children from nursery school up who can teach their parents, who may have had little exposure to this. Young children learn even just through growing a bean plant. They can be helped to share their observation and knowledge. We, as parents, of course can tell traditional stories of Jack and the Beanstalk but also retrieve our traditional folk tales and fairy tales of talking and humanized animals. TV has so much educational material but in our families do the young and older adults, from their particular work or study perspective, share with one another. There are important issues, also ethical matters around the growing body of debate on climate justice, research into renewable energy or recycling, etc. Together families can even devise their own circular economy projects, reusing items, practicing recycling, making compost, – on the way to become eco-friendly families!

Adult education, self-empowerment for eco-friendly decision-making, supporting community initiatives and integrating family-centred intergenerational approaches into policies can ensure meaningful climate action. Advocacy, by all for all, is a necessary attitude towards a co-responsible way of life with the ideal of "Each one, teach one" being adopted from young, but very much so by those in the workplace and areas of control and power.

Biomimicry is a fascinating discipline. What can nature teach us from observing and learning from special effects in nature. An example is the whale wind turbine. These massive creatures weighing many tons are amazingly agile swimmers and we go whale watching to see them jump right out of the water. It is the design and tubercles on their fins that provide that ability. Aircraft design has learned from that. Velcro was developed from studying how burrs stick to dog's fur. The hooks and the loops do the trick. High-speed bullet trains, with their sharp pointy nose, imitate the kingfisher bird's ability to navigate between air and water at amazing speed. And much more.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Jesus said, "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully taught will be like his teacher. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" Luke 6: 39-42. **Pope Francis:** the contemplation of creation allows us to discover in each thing a teaching which God wishes to hand on to us. LS 85. Authentic development includes efforts to bring about improvements in the quality of human life which involves settings in which people live. These influence the way we think, feel and act in our rooms, homes, workplaces and neighbourhoods, as we use the environment as a way to express our identity. If it is chaotic, filled with noise and ugliness it makes it more difficult to keep calm, relaxed and happy. LS147. **Eco-tip and prayer.** Spirit of God, teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and recognize that we are united with every creature in creation. God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.*

September 13, GO GREEN, GROW GREEN. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*)

If a teacher at school asks, “Who here considers themselves green, or a greenie? Who is going green and growing green?” What answers would she get? Do young people understand what going green is, or do the adults in families? “Green” or a “greenie” is being environmentally friendly, making efforts to protect and build rather than destroy the earth. This concept was adopted about 50 years ago and is commonly seen in documents such as the Earth Charter of 2000. Programmes like the Anglican church’s Green Alliance, or Green Salesians and many different organisations use the term. “Greening the parish” is using plants and trees to beautify the setting around our churches, keeping the area clean and also using solar heating and water harvesting. So are you a greenie? Do you ever think of the Tree of Life and the Cross?

Going green is a positive attitude towards saving and giving life. It is overcoming a negative attitude of death and destruction. Here is a list of 10 points for you to check your attitudes.

- Be conscious of plastic in all forms, avoid single use plastic and recycle.
- Think reduce waste – make compost from food waste, reduce paper
- Eat healthy, reduce meat and move to a plant-based diet.
- Conserve energy in your home – don’t leave unused lights and plugs on
- Conserve water – cut shower time and reuse water in toilet and garden.
- Check your carbon footprint, make changes to reduce carbon emission.
- Save money – buy fewer unnecessary or new items, repair what you can.
- Use biodegradable and sustainable cleaning and beauty products
- Practice sustainability out- and indoors. Don’t litter, pick up others’ rubbish.
- Support environmental causes, sustainable businesses, vote with your mark and your feet.

Growing green is also an activity.

- Plant trees, especially indigenous or fruit trees or those needing little water.
- Grow your own vegetables and herbs, quick growing and water-wise
- Grow highly nutritious micro-greens in a pot
- Make compost, feed and care for the soil.
- Where possible use renewable energy, even simple solar lights.
- Take frequent walks in nature, appreciating that green means beautiful.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Jesus said, “no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good and the evil man of his evil treasure produces evil. Luke 6:43-49. Pope Francis: St Francis, faithful to scripture invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks, granting us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. Francis asked that part of the friary garden always be left untouched so that wild flowers and herbs could grow there and those who saw them could raise their minds to God the Creator of such beauty. LS 12. Eco-tip and prayer.* Research “greening” projects in Africa like the “Great Green Wall” across the Sahel in North Africa. Pray for greater greening awareness for all, e.g. tree planting projects but aware of the value of indigenous and edible plants and shrubs. **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 14. 24th Sunday Year C. Also feast of the Triumph of the Cross.

The Phantana family had spent a few weeks already taking an eco-safari around parts of the country. Every day they did make time for some reflection and faith sharing on the scripture readings of the day. Particularly on a Sunday they took it easy, shared chores and did some housekeeping. George shared, “it’s interesting that when we are more relaxed we tend to have less arguments, as if there isn’t anything to fight about.” When they were sharing after Sunday Mass Pauline wondered, ““Let’s think about the gospel today and the young son who was anxious to leave home and maybe look for some excitement in his life What was behind his wish to take his inheritance and go? His brother, his father? Didn’t he have enough freedom, or was he like one of the young people Pope Francis talks about who are dissatisfied with life and the things they have. Maybe social media has tempted him to want to do his own thing. Not having a job yet does make many young guys restless.”

Reflect, share, act. Scripture. . “Father, give my share of property that falls to me.” He took a journey into a far country and there he squandered his property in loose living. Luke 15:1-32. **Pope Francis:** *We should glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom is our salvation, life and resurrection, through whom we are saved and delivered. Entrance antiphon feast of the Triumph of the Cross. Today’s media do enable us to communicate and to share our knowledge and affections. Yet at times they also shield us from direct contact with the pain, the fears and*

the joys of others and the complexity of their personal experiences. For this reason, we should be concerned that, alongside the exciting possibilities offered by these media, a deep and melancholic dissatisfaction with interpersonal relations, or a harmful sense of isolation, can also arise. LS 47. **ECO-TIP.** Consider the reality of young people struggling with depression, a sense of dissatisfaction with their lives and even contemplating suicide. Can you reach out to anyone in need? **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 15. ALL CREATURES MATTER. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*) **Our Lady of Sorrows.** Sitting and musing makes you think. When you think “matter” you’re either thinking something is important or that it is made of something material. In both senses everything that God created matters, from every part of the nearly unlimited universe, to the tadpole that has not yet grown into a frog. All creatures have a physical nature, as well as a value and a role to play whether we like it or not. We may be disgusted by a cockroach or “parktown prawn” (which is actually a type of king cricket) but they are part of the cycle of life, as they feed on something and are food for something else.

Who has discovered biomimicry as a facet of creation that looks for lessons that can be learned from nature? Those big anthills one finds in parts of the country go deep under the ground too and can teach us about air-conditioning in a natural way. Modern-day science is studying and discovering many invisible as well as visible things, large and microscopic. The very air we breathe matters, it is alive with gases, particles and carries all types of messages across the world.

But are creatures only important for their usefulness? What were we, oldies, taught in our long ago catechism days? “Why did God make me?” the response was, “to know God, to love him and serve him in this world and to be happy with him in the next.” Does that still apply or not quite in the same way? My own understanding, which is becoming more eco-friendly over time, comes from experience and, I believe, also follows the thinking of Pope Francis. “Everything is connected. Every creature has value and is to be loved and served. This world is not only for serving God, but for service to God’s creation and also for achieving a taste of the happiness to come. Isn’t that what marriage as imitating the love relationship of the Trinity is all about?” On this day the Church commemorates Mary, as the Mother of Sorrows, who shares in the sufferings of her son and our world.

Reflect, share, act. Collect 15 September. *O God, who willed that when your Son was lifted high on the cross, his mother should stand close by and share his suffering, grant that your Church, participating with the Virgin Mary in the Passion of Christ, may merit a share in his Resurrection. Scripture: “Lord, do not trouble yourself for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Luke 7:1-10. Pope Francis: The earth’s resources are being plundered because of short-sighted approaches to the economy, commerce and production. The loss of forests and woodlands entails the loss of species which constitute extremely important resources in the future, not only for food, but also curing disease and other uses. Because of us, thousands of species will no longer give glory to God by their very existence, or convey their message to us. LS6. 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. LS 241*

Eco-tip and prayer: Reflect and share together on worth and what really matters to each one? Is “to die for” concerned with chocolate goodies, or for the values that control our lives. Discuss your attitudes towards the worth of every creature, human and animal, the unborn, abandoned and disabled. Pray to share the compassion of Mary in her suffering on our behalf. **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 16. PRESERVE WILD LIFE. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*)

I remember being amused by a car bumper sticker I saw ages ago that read, “preserve wild life, pickle a squirrel.” Today, with a much more finely honed environmental conscience I don’t find that funny. We have done too much harm to wild life, destroying their habitats and migration routes, poaching and trafficking in rhino horns and pangolins. However, while that is going on nature conservation is a growing industry, enjoyed widely by tourists – families of course too. It is very much also to study and be able to protect species that are at partial or total risk of extinction. Thousands of plant and animal species do become extinct each year.

Few things can beat a couple of days in a game park where many of us chase around looking for the big five – lion, leopard, elephant, rhino, buffalo. There are other, more educated and sophisticated visitors, who study birds, trees

and all types of vegetation, insects and the myriad other elements that are needed to make up a successful ecosystem.

And then there are the vast majority of people who haven't experienced those luxuries, but still have a vast knowledge and love of wild life. Then don't forget those who know little and care less. Who really cares that many species e.g. springbok whose vast herds of thousands of animals have been hunted almost to extinction in the last few hundred or so years in parts of South Africa? Encouraging is that writers and interest groups who are newly conscientized to this evil, through rewilding programmes are beginning to re-introduce game and endangered species back into their natural surroundings. Modern medicine as a product of modern technological development has made tremendous progress in saving lives and promoting wellbeing for all areas of creation, human and other. These can also be described as miraculous in a sense. They are the more positive aspects of science that nevertheless need to be monitored and evaluated in terms of the common good.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *A man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother and she was a widow. When the Lord saw her he had compassion on her and said to her. "do not weep." Jesus came to the bier and said, "Young man arise." And the dead man sat up and began to speak. Luke 7:11-17.* **Pope Francis:** *It may well disturb us to learn of the extinction of mammals or birds as they are more visible. But the good healthy functioning of ecosystems also requires fungi, algae, worms, insects, reptiles and an innumerable variety of microorganisms to maintain the equilibrium of a particular place. Many birds and insects which disappear due to synthetic agrotoxins are helpful for agriculture: their disappearance will have to be compensated for by other techniques. A sober look at our world shows that the degree of human intervention often in the service of business interests and consumerism is making our earth less rich and beautiful. We seem to think that we can substitute an irreplaceable and irretrievably beauty with something which we have created ourselves. LS 34. The family protects life in all its stages, including the last. The Church not only feels the urgency to assert the right to natural death without aggressive treatment and euthanasia, but likewise firmly rejects the death penalty. AL 83.* **Eco-tip and prayer:** Reflect on and discuss scientific developments in medicine that support or manipulate life and if possible advocate for justice and the right to life. Pray this short *Laudato Si* prayer. *"Father, we praise you with all your creatures. They came forth from your powerful hand, they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love. DAILY PRAYER.* God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 17. LOVE GIVES LIFE - LOVE KEEPS US TOGETHER. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*)

Ask yourselves or one another, "What do I really love?" It is said, "No person is an island." Human beings have been created by God with inherent needs to love and to belong, to be in relationship. God, as the Trinity, is the first and most perfect love relationship and our model for the way of love. Family relationships, marriage and parenting in particular, are ideally prime examples of unconditional love and acceptance, because they naturally last across the years, even if members don't see each other all the time. Other relationships between people of all ages, friendships, interest groups and physical attraction are aspects of love and deep commitment too but may change over time.

God's love is the life force present in all of creation. Lifegiving is a very special attribute and gift from God. Sexuality as a gift from God, is a family gift. The ideal experience of a loving marriage relationship gives life to the spouses as well as to children. Sex is one expression of the physical aspect of life-giving and is the reality in almost every form of created life. Love is also present in different degrees in all of creation, human, animal and even plant life, as is now being studied. For example trees communicate and have the ability to protect themselves and warn other nearby trees when a hungry giraffe passes by. A visit to a National Park and observing the behaviour of a family of elephants or warthogs or a wounded cheetah, still striving to protect her cubs are heart-warming and teaches about life and love in nature. However humanity has been blessed with greater potential for psychological and spiritual love.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Love is patient, love is kind..... Faith, hope and love, these three remain and the greatest of these is love. 1 Cor 13* **Pope Francis:** *Love always gives life. Conjugal love does not end with the couple. They, in giving themselves to one another, give not just themselves but also the reality of children, who are a living reflection of their love, a permanent sign of their unity and a living synthesis of their being a father and a mother. AL 165. For Christians, believing in one God who is trinitarian communion suggests that the Trinity has left its mark on all creation. Creatures tend towards God, and in turn it is proper to every living being to tend towards other things, so that throughout the universe there are any number of constant and secretly interwoven relationships. LS 239-240.* **Eco-tip and prayer:** Carefully read and share on the famous passage on love. 1 Cor 13. Explore how animals and plants are also able to relate and communicate. Thank God for this ability.

ACTION AND PRAYER. A FAMILY PRAYER.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Blessed Trinity.
You have shown us how to love, to be God's family.
We're sorry for the things we've done to cause another pain,
make us willing to forgive and so be whole again.
Bless our family today, keep us in your care,
old and young, or sick and healthy, those no longer there.
Help us care for others too, Jesus showed the way.
May every home be home for God, now and every day. Amen

September 18. Culture, truth and peace. A look at life. Mr Moshoeshoe told his children, "Heritage Day is just around the corner. I wonder who of you really understands our South Africa, Basotho, Christian heritage. So a family project was started to try to trace their own family background in Lesotho. "Do we go back to those bushmen whose paintings you showed us in the caves?" Phumi asked. "Not really as I think that is part of the bigger South African heritage and cultures. Every culture has traditions and rituals as part of its heritage. Performing these correctly shows respect. We often do not understand one another's culture well and may be offended by certain actions that are foreign to our own background. In a rainbow nation such as ours, we constantly have to be aware and respectful." "I think there is too much negative talk of racism in particular these days which too often is hurtful. Couldn't we be learning more about one another's cultures? Would that be healing the hurts, forgiving and reconciling? How about some activities to do that?"

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Simon, do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. Her sins, which are many are forgiven for she loved much.* Luke 7:36-50 **Pope Francis.** *In many parts of the world there is a need for paths of peace to heal open wounds. There is a need for peacemakers, men and women prepared to work boldly and creatively to initiate processes of healing and renewed encounter. Truth is an inseparable companion of justice and mercy, all together are essential to building peace.* FT 225, 227. **Eco-tip and prayer:** Reflect on and discuss what collaborative activities can help us understand one another in our various parish, school and work communities. **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 19. HEALTHY FAMILIES ARE HAPPY FAMILIES. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*)

"A healthy mind in a healthy body" This ancient Greek philosophy of Hippocrates still applies in our day, as well as his comments on the connection of mood to health and happiness, which after all involves a degree of decision-making. Health and happiness do not just appear on their own. Food, habits and behaviour can and do influence them. Wellness has become almost a religion in our day. Whether considering that health makes us happy, or the opposite, that happiness brings health – mental, physical and spiritual too, both can be vehicles to reach beyond oneself and take care of the health of other families of creation and becoming more eco-friendly.

Money plays a role in providing food security as a minimum, but what and how it is spent will influence the level of enjoyment as well as our health. Can one afford bottled water, which should be safer to drink, but how necessary is that taking into account the environmental cost of plastic bottles? It is true that for both rich and poor, how and what we eat and what our lifestyles are will make a big difference. Taking care of our bodies by how we treat them, what we put into them and through optimum, not excessive, exercise we can develop a personal sense of wellbeing. Even beauty and appreciating a sunrise can set the tone for the day, produce a sense of inner joy and peace and relieve stress from the start of the day.

All this applies to individuals but in a particular way to families. Good and open communication is an important key to happiness and to health as well. However, at any stage of life, and no matter how hard we work to avoid it, sickness and debilitating chronic disease can upset a family equilibrium. Patience, tolerance and love are likely to be tested to the limit and so support on many levels is necessary for a patient and those providing care. Happiness should not make families inward looking but be an invitation to look further, at the health of the greater family of creation, the needs of others and the joys that can be shared.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture; *Jesus went out through cities and villages, preaching, and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And with him were the Twelve and some women who had been healed by him and provided for them out of their means.* Luke 8:1-3. **Pope Francis:** *A healthy relationship with creation is one dimension of overall personal conversion which entails the recognition of our errors, sins, faults and failures and leads to heartfelt repentance and desire to change.* LS 218. *Human ecology involves the relationship between human life and the moral law inscribed in our nature and which is necessary for the creation of a more dignified environment. Our body itself 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. Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning in its femininity and masculinity is important in an encounter with someone who is different. *LS 155.* **Eco-tip and prayer** I was recently told that tinned fish and chicken liver are good for anyone's health, rich or poor. How can these contribute to our happiness? Pray around the K I S S principle. (Keep it simple stupid!) **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 20. LOCAL IS LEKKER. "MAKE MOTHER NATURE YOUR FOOD GARDEN" TONI'S CAMPAIGN WITH EDIBLE INDIGENOUS PLANTS. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*)

Indigenous trees and shrubs, suited to the particular environment can save a lot of water, fight pollution and be sources of nutrients and medicinal help. Promoting their commercial cultivation can be beneficial to food security.

My food security campaign began when I was introduced to the spekboom by our Cape Town Laudato Si' community and adopted it myself. September 2 2023, Day 2 of the SEASON OF CREATION was the occasion of the Spring Breakfast at our retirement village. In 2022 I had promoted the health and environmental benefits of the edible spekboom and in 2023 I had gone further. Having researched and using recipes, which we gave out at the breakfast, we made spekboom jam and a breakfast smoothy, with the spekboom leaves, blueberry fruit and yoghurt. Leaves can also be added to salads and cooked in chutneys and pickles and jams. These are some of its benefits .

Spekboom plants grow everywhere but extensively in the dry Eastern Cape in South Africa. They are popular with animals because of their water content. The plant is evergreen, easy to grow and is water-wise and drought resistant. It has medical uses for skin ailments, stings, bites and sore throats. It is one of more than 2000 edible indigenous plants growing wild that was known to local people, but sadly appears to be forgotten. A special blessing for the environment is its ability to absorb larger quantities of carbon dioxide than usual, e.g. 100 times more than e.g. a fir tree of the same size.

But there are many more known and used edible indigenous plants, while some spurned, described as weeds. *Morogo*, a wild spinach, has different versions and is one of the number that are common and traditionally cooked and eaten. One version, amaranth, also grows almost everywhere and its leaves and seeds are very good sources of nutrients. It is recognised that younger people tend to look down on such traditional foods, having been trained to prefer western type vegetables. Using the slogan "Make Mother Nature your Food garden" invites us to promote the indigenous freely available plants, especially in school food gardens and also around homesteads as they can be of great help in fighting poverty and increasing food security, especially if leaves are dried or frozen and seeds used and kept for future use. .

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: "A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trodden under foot and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock, some among thorns, some on good soil. Luke 8:4-15. **Pope Francis:** It is important that people experience the gospel of the family as a joy that fills hearts and lives because in Christ we have been set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. As in the parable of the sower we are called to help sow seeds, the rest is God's work. it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners in projects affecting their land. Land is not a commodity for them but a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space which maintains their identity and values. When they remain there their care is best. *LS The Church wishes with humility and compassion to reach out to families and to help each family to discover the best way to overcome any obstacles it encounters. AL 200.* **Eco-tip and prayer:** Learn more about edible plants e.g. the spekboom, amaranth/marog and join a food gardening programme, grow your own vegetables and compost food waste. Take action to build healthy soil. **Pray.** Thank you God for the food we can grow and the food we can share. **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 21. 25th Sunday C. As they continued their eco-safari the Phantana family found they weren't able to go to Mass every Sunday in some of the tiny places where there was no resident priest. However they did read and reflect on the scripture and practised their faith sharing. Pauline asked. "I think that the story of the dishonest steward changing the invoices of the money owed to their master is very real and a serious case of corruption like we hear about all the time. Were people like that already in those days?" Michael responded, "Well wickedness has been around since the time of Adam, don't you know! In the Bible stories God also punished people through nature, e.g. the Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah. Whether those are literally true accounts is another matter but the point is that such stories illustrate how God's justice overcomes evil. You can't continue to get away with corruption. We hope

that the government will eventually catch up with you.” “Unless your family and friends protect you. Isn’t that what happens?”

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *No servant can serve two masters. You cannot serve God and mammon. Read Luke 16:1-13. Pope Francis:* *We lack the culture needed to confront the crisis of global warming, water scarcity and more. We lack leadership capable of striking out on new paths and meeting the needs of the present with concern for all and without prejudice towards coming generations. LS53. We should not think that political efforts or the force of law will be sufficient to prevent actions which affect the environment because when the culture itself is corrupt and objective truth and universally valid principles are no longer upheld the laws can only be seen as arbitrary impositions or obstacles to be avoided. LS123. ECO-TIP AND PRAYER:* Witness to and lobby for Christian eco-values and social justice in the workplace or wherever one’s environment allows. Pray for honesty and integrity in political leaders as they decide on the necessary action to combat climate change effects. **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 22. **BECOMING** (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*)

MARFAM’s history of over 30 years is a journey in faith, a journey of *becoming* more and more family-centred. Originally in 1979, we, Chris and Toni Rowland had experienced a life-changing conversion through Marriage Encounter, gaining new insights into the value of marriage for couples and the Catholic Church. This led to our work in marriage preparation and gradually, also as our family grew, into family ministry. We came to appreciate the importance of family life as a network of relationships and the ideal place to begin to learn the many life skills required to *become* mature and well-functioning persons in a social setting.

Growing and *becoming* are life tasks at every stage of life from infancy to old age, through marriage, widowhood, divorce, parenting and grandparenting. After Chris’ untimely death in 2000 the journey of *becoming* continued for me, Toni, into widowhood. My spirituality in time has become more ecological, understanding too more fully, God as Trinity, God as creator and our human role as co-creators with God through lifegiving sexuality which is God’s gift and is intrinsic in all of creation.

Becoming Fully Human and Fully Alive is a psycho-spiritual view of growth and development that everyone undergoes in their own way as an individual and also in the context of their relationships. I am a woman, not in isolation but in the context of my family relationships first of all. After that my friends and colleagues, in school, work and other activities, help me on my way to *becoming* the person I am destined to be according to God’s plan.

At the same time there is also a need for privacy. “Why do people keep some of their traditions and cultures a secret? People may be welcoming but seldom really get to share or know other people’s personal traditions. Is it privacy, fear, embarrassment, not wanting to be challenged, or superstition?” But through social media everyone can get to know everything about everybody. “I also believe that we often keep things that worry us to ourselves.” “Maybe we ought to be more open about teaching important values e.g. about loss of biodiversity or how properly to Care for our Common Home.” “Communication in a family is important to help persons grow and *become* but can be really tricky too, to keep a proper balance.”

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Jesus said “no one after lighting a lamp covers it with a vessel or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand that those who enter may see the light. For nothing is hidden that shall not be made manifest, nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light. Luke 8:16-17. Pope Francis.* *Ecology involves protecting the cultural treasures of humanity in the broadest sense. It is more than what we have inherited from the past; it is also and above all a living, dynamic and participatory present reality which cannot be excluded as we rethink the relationship between human beings and the environment. LS 132. Pope Francis:* *In the family we receive an integral education which enables us to grow harmoniously in personal maturity. The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures as everything is interconnected. LS 240.*

Eco-tip and prayer: Reflect on and discuss the value of privacy or openness in communication for our common good. **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 23. **WE ARE CO-CREATORS WITH GOD.** (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*)

This statement highlights how important we are, particularly as human beings, in God’s plan of creation. Although Genesis may tell us that God created busily for 6 days and then rested, this myth only tells part of the story. Creation was and still is an ongoing process. Every living thing has the potential to reproduce, alongside God who still holds the key to life. Sexual reproduction is the key to almost every species where male and female parts combine and their

reproductive acts produce one or more new creatures that continue the dynasty. This ability is God-given, an aspect of ongoing creation. We could say that God does continue to create all the time, or do we say he set the process in motion and lets us get on with it, evolving or developing new formats. If God creates and recreates constantly is that our task too? The wonder of co-creation with God in conception and child-birth are extra special, in the realm of the sacred, experienced with wonder and awe, as parents well know, and may even have experienced it on a number of occasions. It is one of the great joys of family life.

There is another side to co-creation, an extreme and at times negative side. Understood and studied widely, science today has and continues to manipulate the elements of life. Although this has been happening for many centuries in agriculture, present-day genetic modifications in all areas of creation place a great responsibility on us as humankind. Do we fully recognize this responsibility and can we predict the ultimate consequences whether they are positive or negative?

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Jesus was told, your mother and your brethren are standing outside, desiring to see you. But he said to them, my mother and my brethren are those who hear the word of God and do it. Luke 8:19-21. Pope Francis:* *Everything is interconnected. Just as the different aspects of the planet -physical, chemical and biological are interrelated so too living species are part of a network which we will never fully explore and understand. LS 138. God himself created sexuality which is a marvellous gift to his creatures. If this gift needs to be cultivated and directed it is to prevent the impoverishment of an authentic value. AL 150. The couple that loves and begets life is a true, living icon capable of revealing God the Creator and Saviour. Eco-tip and prayer:* Decide and discuss integral ecology and the family and how to become more and more an eco-friendly and family-friendly society. Pray the Glory Be for a lasting eco-friendly focus in all families, i.e. our World, a Family of Families.

September 24. Heritage Day. THERE IS HELP, THERE IS HOPE. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*).

For us believers, Christians, or members of other religious faiths, even if our life and our particular situation seems hopeless and we are helpless, or feel helpless, our trust in God can sustain us. Practical help comes from somewhere, from God, our sense of community, and most often our family members are the first recourse. How can the effects of climate change be so devastating for us and our family? Have we given up hope? Weather related conditions can be slow torture or quick devastation. Drought and heat are a slow creeping disaster, with the constant hope for rain to bring relief. Hurricanes, typhoons and tornadoes can bring wind, excessive rain and floods bringing sudden, even unexpected destruction. Hope for things to change and for relief remains, and help is provided by private, community or government resources.

Pope Francis in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* gave the example of the Covid pandemic where in spite of their fear and anxiety, so many ordinary people came to the rescue and helped where they could: doctors, nurses, pharmacists, storekeepers, cleaners, transport and public safety workers and many volunteers.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Jesus gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases and he sent them out to preach the Kingdom and to heal. "Take nothing with you," he told them." Luke 9:1-6. Pope Francis* from message for Day of Prayer for Creation 2024. *The life of a Christian, is one of faith, active in charity and abounding in hope, as we await the Lord's return in glory. Christian salvation enters into the depths of the world's suffering, which embraces not only humanity but also the entire universe, nature itself, and the oikos, the home and living environment of humanity. Salvation embraces creation as an "earthly paradise," mother earth, which is meant to be a place of joy and a promise of happiness for all. Our Christian optimism is founded on a living hope: it realizes that everything is ordered to the glory of God, to final consummation in his peace and to bodily resurrection in righteousness, as we pass "from glory to glory."*

We are not exempt from pain and suffering: the whole creation groans (cf. Rom 8:19-22), we Christians groan (cf. vv. 23-25) and the Spirit himself groans (cf. vv. 26-27). This expresses apprehension and suffering, together with longing and desire. It speaks of our trust in God and our reliance on his loving yet demanding presence as we look forward to the fulfilment of his plan, which is joy, love and peace in the Holy Spirit. Eco-tip and prayer: Healing the damage to the world demands changes in behaviour. Discuss, adopt and promote Reuse-Reduce-Recycle not just as a practical campaign but as part of a prayer campaign for the care of creation in one's wider community. **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 25. CHILDREN DESERVE A FUTURE. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*)

The sodality leader stated, "The place of children – or let me say offspring – changes from time to time in our world of families. Who can remember the time, not too long ago, when "children should be seen and not heard" as they were considered as having little intrinsic value. They were offspring to secure the future of the family, dynasty or species.

Then, with greater awareness of their value, the attitude became, “children should be seen and not hurt.” Child abuse by adults, who are likely known to them, is a serious offence today although historically it has been common, possibly even in Jesus’ day. Nowadays there is almost a trend to put children first. The consumer market is certainly very child-conscious. The SA Children’s Act states that a child’s interest should always be paramount in the case of any legal or social dispute. How can family’s best serve these best interests?”

Our current worldview is that future generations of people and of every creature, animals and plants too, have to be assured of a future for the world to continue existing in its present form.

It is also important that children and the youth especially, like the poor and all disadvantaged people, should be involved in current processes to preserve the world for the future and make it a better place. If we ask the young what their thoughts and feelings are, some are likely to feel anxious, some depressed, some may be extremely interested in becoming active participants, while possibly the majority of our current generation of young people is fairly alienated from environmental matters, which may just be seen as another school subject to be forgotten in due course. Or a nuisance if they have to cut down on time and use of their digital devices. Is it up to us, families as a whole, to listen to where they are, to motivate and even agitate for the future of our children. Will AI be on our side?

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *The word of the Lord came to Hagai. “This people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord.” Thus says the Lord, “consider how you have fared? Go and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and may appear in my glory” Hagai 1:1-4. Pope Francis:* *The notion of the common good also extends to future generations. The global economic crises have made painfully obvious the detrimental effects of disregarding our common destiny, which cannot exclude those who come after us. We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity. Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others. LS 159.*

Eco-tip and prayer. Consider and share with youth the story of a young saint Carlo Acutis, a computer prodigy and a devout boy dedicated to the Eucharist, who was born in 1991, diagnosed with leukaemia and died aged 15 in 2006. As a talented web designer he created websites of Eucharistic miracles. He offered his illness and suffering to God, always remaining cheerful. His message to other youth, “everyone is born as an original but many people end up dying as a photocopy. You are called to be greater than that, so ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to never end up as a photocopy.”

September 26. DISCERNMENT. A Look at Life. The family had spent some weeks on an eco-safari, observing and absorbing the world around them. The relaxed atmosphere they had achieved had given them a different view of life. “Today people rush into everything, want the latest gadgets. You know it seems that people used to be much more patient than they are today.” “But still there are times when action is important, like when we challenge governments and big corporations about inequality, climate change and pollution they’re very slow to act. On Heritage Day the teenagers had suggested they really needed to celebrate National Braai Day. “Why?” “Because a braai is a good South African institution that we all enjoy.” So in a small town they visited they saw a big sport stadium and a soccer competition being advertised. Nearby was an outdoor eatery advertising “Buy and Braai” That idea was new to them, but they joined in and enjoyed themselves until Michael noticed that a lot of young kids hanging around the soccer field were clearly poor. Had they eaten? Was there genuine sharing here? They prayed for guidance as they discussed what they could do.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Jesus asked, “Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ of God.” Pope Francis:* *We should be particularly indignant at the enormous inequalities in our midst, whereby we continue to tolerate some considering themselves more worthy than others. We fail to see that some are mired in desperate and degrading poverty, with no way out, while others have not the faintest idea of what to do with their possessions, vainly showing off their supposed superiority and leaving behind them so much waste which, if it were the case everywhere, would destroy the planet. In practice, we continue to tolerate that some consider themselves more human than others, as if they had been born with greater rights. LS 90. Eco-tip and prayer.* Continue to value and make moments away from the rush of daily life and pray for wisdom in discerning the way forward in every action.

DAILY PRAYER. God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 27. ANIMAL FARMING. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*)

Norah came home from her confirmation class full of fire. She shared, “We had a sexy young speaker today, a climate activist and university student. He spoke on sustainable living and told us about climate change and the impact of animal agriculture, which of course is raising animals to provide food for humans and includes meat, fish, dairy and egg industries. Deforestation in the Amazon provides land for millions of cattle, the methane gas that they emit

increases CO2 contributing up to 18% of global warming. It also reduces the habitat for all the other natural creatures and plants that could decrease the CO2 instead.

But even more shocking for me was to hear how in every country, as human populations grow and every other creature decreases in numbers, the way animals are treated is cruel and heartless. Over 70 billion land animals are raised and killed every year for food in processes that also cause extensive environmental damage. We want to eat meat and have milk and cheese but chickens are force fed with growth hormones to make them grow unnaturally fast so that their legs can't even support their bodies. Cows too often live in very unnatural, even unhygienic settings where they can hardly even move. Remember recently there were some huge factory ships passing by the Cape transporting hundreds of these cattle all cooped up in cages halfway across the world.

Brendan had lots of stories but what really touched me was thinking what God would have to say about how badly and unfairly we treat these creatures for our own selfish wants. That isn't why God created them and they also have rights on this earth and feelings as we know. I think it is very important that we should be eating a plant-based diet, at least moving in that direction, because that can go a long way to cut down on the harm of animal agriculture to the environment. We should take note that the way we humans consume food is ultimate unsustainable. You don't have to be an animal activist to think like that, but I wonder why Pope Francis didn't have more to say about the meat thing in his writings. Maybe as an Argentinian he likes his steak too much!"

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *At that time while they were marvelling at everything Jesus did, he said to his disciples.*

"Let these words sink into your ears, for the Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men." But they did not understand. From Luke 9:43-45. Pope Francis: Respect for our dignity as human beings often jars with the chaotic realities that people have to endure in city life. LS154. The catechism (340) teaches "God wills the interdependence of creatures. The sun, the moon, the cedar, the little flower, the eagle and sparrow, the spectacle of all their diversities and inequalities tells us that no creature is self-sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on each other, to complete each other, in the service of each other." When we see God in everything, our hearts are moved to praise and worship God with St Francis. LS 86-7. Eco-tip and prayer. Continue to discern about the positive and negative aspects of human behaviour in creation and what action you are called on to take. DAILY PRAYER. God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 28. 26th Sunday C GOD SAID "LET THERE BE LIGHT." (From BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES)

God said, "Let there be light." Adam pushed the button on the wall of their cave. Nothing happened. "No light again" he complained to Eve. Is it load shedding, load reduction, power outage or what?" "Ha, ha, it is a matter of connection," Eve replied. "You know that one thing has to lead to another. This great big sun out there certainly produces plenty of light, but only during what we call day-light hours. So we have learned to capture it, harness it, store it to use later. But God also gave us interior light, intelligence, and we have managed to produce light and energy in a lot of different forms and ways, quite apart from the sun, but never out of nothing at all. Isn't God great that he created this potential energy source."

One of the first statements in Genesis is about the creation of light to dispel the darkness and chaos that reigned. It is true that daylight allows us to see forever, "on a clear day" as per an old popular song and if the air is not polluted by smog. But electricity as a source of light, warmth and more, was only discovered in the 18th century by a man called Benjamin Franklin, who attached a wire to a kite in a thunderstorm. It is now most often taken for granted, as if it always existed. You push a button & voila!

In the last 2 ½ centuries inventions in the field of science and technology have sky rocketed making this one of the most common work areas, often replacing older jobs. Latest inventions e.g. AI in particular, are a risk to our human capacity and need for creative work as a particularly human need and value. How far have we got from appreciating that light is a gift from God after all, a gift that is amazingly beautiful as well as powerful and without which life on earth would cease to exist? There is a saying, "If you don't know where you are going you will probably end up somewhere else." Who knows what the future holds for our earth or universe in the way we are "progressing." Where will Adam and Eve or Xuan and Bona be in the 22nd century?

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *O people of God, aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith, take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 1 Tim 6:11-16. Pope Francis: Humanity has entered a new era. Our technical prowess has brought us to a crossroads. We are beneficiaries of 2 centuries of enormous waves of change, from steam engines, to modern medicine, the digital revolution and more. It is right to rejoice in these advances, products of a God-given human creativity. Yet it must be recognized that nuclear energy and all these technologies have given us tremendous power. There is a tendency to believe that every increase in power means an increase of*

progress, security, usefulness and welfare. The fact is that contemporary man has not been trained to use power well. It has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience. LS105. We have the freedom needed to limit and direct technology; we can put it at the service of another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, more integral. LS 112-3. **Eco-tip and prayer.** Let us reflect and pray for human enlightenment especially in the area of technology, AI and social media. **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

September 29. Feast of the Archangels, Michael, Gabriel, Raphael. There is a lot of interest in angels in popular culture nowadays. Fr James explained. "Angels and spirits are mentioned in various places in the Bible. Angels are creatures of God and they are given different tasks by God. They are also honoured in different cultures in different ways, while the whole spirit world is dealt with differently too. One popular Catholic devotion, from the book of Revelation, is the prayer to St Michael the archangel as defender against the devil and his lies and evil plans. Other archangels, mentioned by name are Gabriel, God's messenger bringing good news, and Raphael, the healer in the book of Tobit, which is found in Catholic bibles. "I have always been interested in angels and think that all the angels have something to contribute to our family life." Mom said, "We did pray to St Michael and St Raphael when we were having a difficult time. We prayed for deliverance from evil and for healing. And I do believe that they helped us." Judy came out with, "This horrible war in Gaza between Israel and Hamas seems to go on and on. I read that the Archbishop of Jerusalem actually said that he believes Satan is working his evil in exactly the same place where Israel was answerable to God. Is that still the case? Let us pray the prayer to St Michael."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: Jesus said, "Truly, truly I say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." John 1:51 **Prayer to St Michael.** "Saint Michael, the Archangel, defend us in the day of battle. Be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him we humbly pray. And do thou, prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God, thrust into hell satan and all evil spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of souls." **Pope Francis.** We are journeying towards the Sabbath of eternity, the new Jerusalem, towards our common home in heaven. LS 243. **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. SNC24. **Eco-tip and prayer.** God speaks to us through his messengers who take different forms. People but also the beauty of nature, animals, plants and flowers can speak of God. Pray the prayer of St Michael for peace and to defend God's people against evil.

September 30. CLEANUP-TIME 2025. . (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*) The website <https://www.worldcleanupday.org> reports that on September 20, 2024, World Cleanup Day, people in 211 countries, 10 000s of volunteers, stood up against the global trash problem and by raising awareness and cleaning up waste, making it the biggest positive civic action the world had seen. Over 114 million volunteers have registered since the inaugural event in 2018. WCD is a gateway for lasting societal change in attitudes towards waste in general. and raise awareness of the mismanaged waste crisis. Our global network sends a clear message of collective determination to create a waste-free world.

The massive problem of waste. Each year, humanity generates 2 billion tons of municipal solid waste. Without urgent action, global waste will increase by 70% at current levels by 2050^[1]. Additionally, over 3.5 billion people lack access to efficient waste management systems, with much of their waste being incinerated, or ending up in nature, the seas, and the oceans, mainly through river systems^[2]. Earth.org [reports](#) that 60% of an annual 300 million tons of plastic waste end up in landfill or nature, with at least 8 million tons per year entering the oceans. It is estimated that + 40% of the ocean's surfaces are covered in plastic debris.

Digital Cleanup Day and its needs. In the digital world there is also a huge amount of trash. Unnecessary emails, files, apps, duplicates of photos and videos, etc., are all digital waste. This digital trash creates digital pollution that continues to consume energy, even when we have forgotten it's there. Each year the internet (and its supporting systems) produces 900 million tons of CO₂, which is more than the annual output of the whole country of Germany! Digital Cleanup Day 2024's results are still being counted. The results for 2023's campaign saw over 380,000 participants, from 105 countries and territories, delete 12.7 million GB from their devices, thus preventing the annual production of at least 1,742 tons of CO₂.

A major concern with the growing use of AI is the enormous amount of energy consumed in creating and managing AI systems that abound almost everywhere now. Ongoing research and development and the massive servers required use large amounts of energy – often fossil fuel generated – and contribute to CO₂. Use of AI in many fields of activity, while it can improve efficiency, it has a cost in doing so. Hardware and data centres that produce AI also consume large amounts of energy and need water for cooling. Think driverless cars, search engines info production ++,

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *When the days drew near for Jesus to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him, but the people would not receive him. Luke 9:51-56. Pope Francis:* We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world and that doing good is worth it. LS 229 **Eco-tip.** **Clean-up Action:** 1. Become aware. 2. clean away waste. 3. Change behaviour, 4. Enjoy the cleaner, healthier environment. **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

<p>The SEASON OF CREATION continues until October 4.</p>

October 1. St Therese of Lisieux. Season of Creation. The families in the parish were invited to read her story. Therese grew up as a pampered girl and when she felt the calling to become a Carmelite her family didn't think she would be strong enough. She persisted and entered the convent at age 15. Ill-health did prevent her from going to a mission country which is what she wanted but she kept her love for the missions. She spent the last 9 years of her life aiming at perfection through what she called "the little way" and through prayer and meditation. Her little sacrifices of ordinary events in her daily life were seen as flowers and this simple spirituality earned her the title "the Little Flower." After hearing the story little Lizzy said, "I think I can be a missionary like St Therese too, doing all my chores as best I can." Pauline added, "Why don't we use the idea of a flower for each of the sacrifices we make too. Then we can take those flowers to someone who is sick, in the parish or community." Mom added, "her parents and all the family were really exceptional people. Her mom had 9 children, 4 died in infancy and the remaining 5 girls all joined Therese and became Carmelite nuns."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Jesus said, "unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me. Mat 18:1-5. Pope Francis:* St Therese invites us to practise the little way of love, not to miss out on a kind word, a smile or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship. Our prayers also extend to the saints and blessed ones who made divine mercy their mission in life. MV24. **Eco-tip and prayer:** Share how St Therese can be a model for each family member. **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

October 2. Guardian angels. There is a very long tradition in the church of devotion to our guardian angels. In recent years this seems to have faded with a greater interest in angels in general. We often see pictures of cute cuddly little creatures with wings and sometimes angels are portrayed as avengers at the gates of heaven or hell. All angels are messengers from God, but our guardian angels bring the message of God's care and love to a specific person. This can be a real source of comfort to children especially. Families can use the prayer with the young and you might find that as the kids grow up they may still use the prayers they learned as children. *Prayer: Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here, ever this day be at my side to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen.*

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Jesus said, "see that you do not despise these little ones; I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven. Matt 18:10. Pope Francis:* Each of us has a Guardian Angel, who acting on behalf of God, advises us and protects us from evil, if we only listen to him. 2015 message to families. Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others. LS 159

Eco-tip and prayer: Examine your prayer life as Eco-friendly families. How can it be enriched? Get MARFAM'S booklet *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES* to use for sharing and prayer.. **DAILY PRAYER.** God of love show us as families how to be channels of Your love for all Your creatures. Pour out Your Spirit upon us as we pray and work together to tend the garden and foster peace with creation.

October 3. FAMILIES WALK THE TALK. (From *BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES*) To "walk the talk" means to actively live out what we believe, to "put your money where your mouth is". If some of us are doing something we think is important, and also sitting together, sharing our thoughts and feelings, listening well and feeling understood we're, "walking the talk." That is the meaningful dialogue which is being promoted through the Church's Synod process. Too often our talking is hardly a conversation, as we shout, mumble, whatsapp or text one another, talk at or past each other and hardly listen with more than half an ear. Meaningful communication is essential in building good relationships but also fixing any issues that are causing family conflict. Too often we choose to be "too busy" for one another, even as we go out to do good and help others. Why not fix family first! Walking the talk is also going beyond just talk, but taking action and standing up for what we believe, even lobbying for a cause as simple as "don't drink and drive." It is good for a family to act together when it comes to saving water,

electricity and recycling at home, but adopting an external cause together can be particularly good. Example: Save the rhino, clean-up our town, protect unborn life.

A FAMILY TALK WALK is an activity for family members to take time together, ideally in nature or a pleasant setting, maybe with dog, pram or wheelchair for elderly, walking and talking as they go. No fixed distance, or time. Not a “Big Walk” fundraiser or exercise. A moment to bond that is good for family unity.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Righteousness belongs to the Lord our God, but confusion of face as at this day, to us, to the people of Judah and Jerusalem, and to our kings and our princes and our priests and prophets and our fathers because we have sinned before the Lord and have disobeyed him and have not heeded the voice of the Lord. Baruch 1:15-21.* **Pope Francis:** writing in preparation for the Synod on Synodality 2021-2024. *Co-responsibility for the common mission calls families to cooperate in building the fabric of the Church. Let us give them space and a listening ear so that they can participate in the synodal journey, showing the family face of the Church. The family is the way of the Church. The Church is in fact a family among families FT276 The family is an agent of pastoral activity through its explicit proclamation of the Gospel and its legacy of varied forms of witness, 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.* **Eco-tip.** Examine your prayer life as Eco-friendly families. Pray: Loving God, help us as families to grow in understanding of our responsibility for your creation, so that we may “walk the talk” more purposefully.

October 4. St Francis. End of Season of Creation. Michael shared with his fellow confirmation candidates. “Just like there are many Theresa’s there are also many Francis in parishes and families. Quite often children choose these as their confirmation patrons and to be their role models.” “How much do you know about St Francis, so that he can really be a model for you?” Tracy asked. Michael shared, “He lived 1000 years ago. He was a playboy, came from a wealthy family but in a conversion experience Jesus appeared to him and said, ‘Go and rebuild my church.’ At first he thought he had to go and rebuild a broken down old building but what Jesus meant was to go and build up the people, including himself, to love Jesus, the poor and all of creation, animals and plants too. Although his later life was not easy as he suffered much from nearly going blind and the pain of the stigmata – the five wounds of Jesus on his body – he was filled with the joy of love.” Michael then added, “We, in our family, have discovered St Francis and try to follow his example. Our parents really are witnesses to us and in the world, as we say, Our world is a Family of Families.”

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls Matt 11: 28-29.* **Pope Francis:** to Youth at World Youth Day 2023 and often repeated, *The youth and elderly need one another. The elderly are their roots and wisdom and the youth the source of joy and hope. In calling to mind the figure of St Francis of Assisi, we come to realise that a healthy relationship with creation is one dimension of overall personal conversion, which entails the recognition of our errors, sins, faults and failures and leads to heartfelt repentance and desire to change. LS 218. St Francis faithful to scripture invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness.* **Eco-tip and prayer:** Young people could do more to make St Francis a true model of an eco-family-friendly caring way of life. Begin together with a prayer and a special blessing of all animals, pets, domestic and wild? **Pray with St Francis Canticle of the Creatures or the Peace Prayer of St Francis.**