



MARFAM 2025 OUR WORLD, A FAMILY OF FAMILIES

DAILY THOUGHTS NOVEMBER "FAMILY LOSSES AND ENDINGS"

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Abbreviations: Pope Francis: LS = *Laudato Si*. AL = *Amoris Laetitia* FT = *Fratelli Tutti*. FM = *The Face of Mercy*
EG = *Evangelii Gaudium*

NOVEMBER. Family Losses and Endings. Losses big and small are inevitable in daily life. Birth, growth, decline and death are the natural cycle of every element of creation, inanimate and those with greater consciousness. It may be a painless letting go, or a cataclysmic event or a source of renewal of the land. Extinction is a serious concern for the animal and plant kingdoms where in general numbers are decreasing while human numbers increase. For us created with special capabilities and gifts to love and hurt and forgive, this time of the year is a special gift to remember life and death and their Creator as well as ultimate resurrection and reunion with our loved ones. **Pope Francis:** *If we accept death we can prepare ourselves for it. The better we live on this earth, the greater the happiness we will be able to share with our loved ones in heaven.* AL 258. *For human beings to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation, these are sins against the natural world, ourselves and against God.* LS8 *Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is first and foremost our concern. The issue is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn.* LS 160. **JUBILEE.** As the Second Vatican Council observed: *"In every age, the Church has the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. In this way, in language adapted to every generation, she can respond to people's persistent questions about the meaning of this present life and of the life to come, and how one is related to the other"* SNC1

Setting the scene. Bryan and Joan had been active members of a parish family group for a long time. Some time after losing his wife, Joan, after a long battle with cancer Bryan decided to explore a healing ministry. He himself felt the need and he realised there were many others also experiencing all kinds of losses. Losses include death of a spouse, parent or other loved one. Divorce, job losses, loss of a special loved item, a pet, a house, a car, a friend, family leaving the country, can also be painful. Climate change is on the international agenda, with COP30 happening in Brazil in November. Bryan studied different books and programmes on loss and healing and planned to participate in healing services, visiting groups as well as individuals and families to listen to their stories. In that way his own journey to healing would progress.

COMMUNAL PRAYER FOR THE DEAD.

God, Our Father, we remember in prayer those who have had a special place in our hearts and in our lives and are now no longer here with us. We thank you Lord, for the gift of life we have shared together. We ask forgiveness for the hurts we caused and forgive our loved ones too. Comfort us through the memories they leave us. May those memories give us courage for our journey into the future. Grant them a place of peace and joy in your kingdom where there is no more suffering and grief. And when each of us is called to depart from this life May we be reunited with them in eternal happiness. Amen

PERSONAL PRAYER FOR THE DEAD.

God, Our Father, I remember in prayer those who have had a special place in my heart and in my life and are now no longer here with me. I thank you Lord, for the gift of life we have shared together. I ask forgiveness for the hurts I have caused and forgive my loved ones too. Comfort me through the memories they leave me. May those memories give me courage for my journey into the future. Grant them a place of peace and joy in your kingdom where there is no more suffering and grief. And when I am called to depart from this life May we be reunited in eternal happiness. Amen

A PRAYER FOR OUR EARTH from Laudato Si'

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

November 1. There are 2 things in life that are certain: death and change. Bryan in his research had noted how strong the fear of death is for many people. If he invited a discussion on the topic people sometimes refused to come or often shied away from the subject. It intrigued him that when he promoted a workshop by saying there would free funeral cover for the first 10 attendees suddenly there was greater interest. "What is the greatest driving force in life he wondered, is it status, wealth or humble and genuine concern for others?

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Jesus told a parable to those who were invited when he marked how they chose the places of honour, saying to them. "when you are invited by any one to a marriage feast, do not sit down in a place of honour lest a more eminent man than you be invited. Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted."* Luke 14: 1-11 **Pope Francis:** *If we accept death, we can prepare ourselves for it. The way is to grow in our love for those who walk at our side, until that day when "death will be no more, mourning and crying and pain will be no more. Rev 21:4. AL 258. We direct our gaze to the end of time when the Son will deliver all things to the Father so that God may be everything to everyone. LS 100. Jubilee. what is the basis of our hope? To understand this, let us stop and reflect on "the reasons for our hope" (cf. 1 Pet 3:15). "I believe in life everlasting. So our faith professes. Christian hope finds in these words an essential foundation. For hope is "that theological virtue by which we desire... eternal life as our happiness". SNC19. Act and Pray for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.*

November 2. All Saints Sunday. Fr Pius began, "We may say so in the Creed but who really, honestly, believes in the communion of saints, or understands what it really means? Who believes that with Christ at our head it refers to all of creation, us, humans here on earth, those who are still being purified from their sins in purgatory and also those already with God in eternal happiness? Isn't that kind of special? But, to be a saint one has to do certain things, 'continue to love one another and join in praising the Most Holy Trinity.' Those who died in the love of God, or for God as martyrs are especially honoured. Martyrdom is happening in many parts of the world today. I invite you to discuss together at home who you know, or have heard of, who are martyrs of our time?

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' Rev 7:14 "My dear people, we are already the children of God but what we are to be in the future has not yet been revealed; all we know is that when it is revealed we shall be like him because we shall see him as he really is. 1 John 3:2. Pope Francis:* *Our prayer also extends to the saints and blessed ones who made divine their mission in life. The better we live on this earth, the greater the happiness we will be able to share with our loved ones in heaven. AL 258. We direct our gaze to the end of time, when the Son will deliver all things to the Father so that God may be everything to everyone. The creatures of this world no longer appear to us under merely natural guise because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself. The very flowers of the field and the birds are imbued with his radiant presence. LS 100. Jubilee. The most convincing testimony to this hope is provided by the martyrs. Steadfast in their faith in the risen Christ, they renounced life itself here below, rather than betray their Lord. Martyrs, as confessors of the life that knows no end, are present and numerous in every age, and perhaps even more so in our own day. We need to treasure their testimony, in order to confirm our hope and allow it to bear good fruit. SNC 20. Act and Pray for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.*

November 3. All Souls. They had gathered at the parish early on Sunday morning to start their pilgrimage to the cemetery. Men, women and children, all who had lost a dearly beloved family member or close friend made the short journey, and it was the company of the others that comforted them. Bryan was mourning the loss of his wife. John had recently lost a son in an accident, Paul's son had been killed during an armed robbery while Mavis's daughter had succumbed to AIDS. Jos in his old age, mourned the loss of his son to Covid. "Why him and not me," he kept asking himself. As parents they came to share their grief and offer one another support. Fr George prayed a special prayer for grieving parents and reminded them of the support offered by The Compassionate Friends.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful ones. Psalm 116:15. "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."* **Revelations 21:4 Pope Francis:** *We cannot fail to offer the light of faith as a support to families going through the experience of a death of a loved one. To turn our backs on a grieving family would show a lack of mercy, and mean the loss of a pastoral opportunity and close the door to other efforts at evangelisation. AL 253 Jubilee.*
What, then, will become of us after death? With Jesus, beyond this threshold we will find eternal life, consisting in full communion with God as we forever contemplate and share in his infinite love. All that we now experience in hope, we shall then see in reality. We are reminded of the words of Saint Augustine: "When I am one with you in all my being, there will be no more pain and toil; my life shall be true life, a life wholly filled by you" SNC21. Act and Pray for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.

November 4. Bryan met with Mrs Page, the parish's volunteer psychologist when they shared with Fr Michael, "Isn't it strange how often people avoid what needs to be addressed, whether it is a terminal illness and approaching death, a marriage running into difficulties and fears about divorce or issues with children, other family members or work related matters. Is there a great fear of loss, so much so that we manage to hide it and pretend it doesn't exist?" "Or even refuse any help that is offered," he responded. "That always saddens me. "

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *A man gave a great banquet and invited many. When the time came he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited. "Come for all is now ready." But they all began to make excuses. From Luke: 14: 5-24 Pope Francis: the life of every family is marked by all kinds of crises, yet these are also part of its dramatic beauty. Couples should be helped to realise that surmounting a crisis need not weaken their relationship, instead it can improve, settle and mature the wine of their union. AL 232. Jubilee What will characterize this fullness of communion? Being happy. Happiness is our human vocation, a goal to which all aspire. But what is happiness? What is the happiness that we await and desire? Not some fleeting pleasure, a momentary satisfaction that, once experienced, keeps us longing for more, in a desperate quest that leaves our hearts unsated and increasingly empty. We aspire to a happiness that is definitively found in the one thing that can bring us fulfilment, which is love. SNC 21. Act and Pray for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.*

November 5. "What on earth could Jesus mean by saying we have to hate everything and everyone and take up one's own cross to follow him?" Jasmine had often pondered over this statement. "Can he really mean hate, or is he using exaggerated language to make his point?" When her husband left her for another woman she was devastated. There were times when she felt as if she hated him and even the whole world. Gradually as she came to see Jesus' statement differently she realised that for her not having that earthly attachment could even open up other doors for her spiritually and be a way forward.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and children and brothers and sisters, yes and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.* Luke 14:25-33. **Pope Francis.** *The joy of the gospel is such that it cannot be taken away from us by anyone or anything. The evils of our world, and those of the church must not be excuses for diminishing our commitment and our fervour.* EG 84. **Jubilee.** *For everyone, may the Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the "door" (cf. Jn 10:7.9) of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as "our hope" (1 Tim 1:1). Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. SNC1. Act and Pray for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.*

November 6. All SAINTS OF AFRICA. Bryan had invited the Missionaries of Africa to address a deanery gathering. He introduced them saying, "You can in a way represent all the saints of Africa, St Augustine, the missionaries, martyrs like the Uganda martyrs, slaves like St Josephine Bakhita and very many catechists who spread the gospel throughout the centuries. Please share their story with us. Many men and women have died for their faith and sadly many are still being killed in parts of the continent, but the Christian faith is strong and growing in parishes, small Christian communities and families. Let us thank God for that special gift."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Let us praise famous men and parents in their generations. These were men of mercy, whose righteous deeds have not been forgotten. Peoples will declare their wisdom and the congregation proclaims their praise.* Sirach 44: 1,15. **Pope John Paul II.** The African Synod 1994 in Ecclesia in Africa presented the image of the Church for Africa will be a family. Families are to evangelise and be evangelised. "The Church is the Family of God. Let us bring Christ to Africa and Africa to Christ." **Jubilee.** *We know that the Letter to the Romans marked a decisive turning point in his work of evangelization. Until then, he had carried out his activity in the eastern part of the Empire, but now he turns to Rome and all that Rome meant in the eyes of the world. Before him lay a great challenge, which he took up for the sake of preaching the Gospel, which knows no barriers or confines. The Church of Rome was not founded by Paul, yet he felt impelled to hasten there in order to bring to everyone the Gospel of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen from the dead, a message of hope that fulfils the ancient promises, leads to glory and, grounded in love, does not disappoint. SNC2 Act and Pray for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.*

November 7. The deanery J&P groups discussed the situation. "Too many people nowadays lose their jobs, some even more than once, and often through no fault of their own. This can be a terrible tragedy and cause of great stress on families. Not all of them have made provision for this and many do feel too old to dig and too ashamed to beg. Debt counsellors and financial advisors have their hands full. Is their advice always honest and for the benefit of their client or for themselves? That situation is really as old as the hills. In the gospel Jesus noted that even bad managers can make good decisions; decisions that will not only help themselves. What is money for except to assist people? But we cannot give away

what doesn't belong to us in order to buy favour as in Jesus' parable of the dishonest steward. As children of the light we have much to learn about the proper use of goods – for the benefit everyone."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: Jesus said, "The sons of this world are wiser in their own generation than the sons of light." From Luke 16:1-8. **Pope Francis:** We have created new idols. The worship of the ancient golden calf (cf. Ex 32:1-35) has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose. The thirst for power and possessions knows no limits. EG 55- 56 Work should be the setting for rich personal growth , where many aspects of life enter into play ; creativity, planning for the future, developing our talents, living out our values, relating to others, giving glory to God. Work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth. Helping the poor, financially must always be a provisional solution. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work. LS 127-8. **Jubilee.** Looking to the future with hope also entails having enthusiasm for life and a readiness to share it. Sadly, in many situations this is lacking. A first effect of this is the loss of the desire to transmit life. A number of countries are experiencing an alarming decline in the birthrate as a result of today's frenetic pace, fears about the future, the lack of job security and adequate social policies, and social models whose agenda is dictated by the quest for profit rather than concern for relationships. SNC9. **Act and Pray** for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.

November 8. Bryan had discovered that it too easily happened that people who had been poor became quite obsessive about acquiring wealth. Maurice shared, "Greed too easily leads to corruption and a loss of integrity. I realised the truth of the saying, 'the love of money is the root of evil,' not 'money is the root of evil' as is sometimes said. While I was growing richer I very nearly lost my self-respect and compassion. I'm pleased I was helped to discover that in time. BEEE in our country clearly has merits but how much corruption has grown out of that too."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Scripture: You cannot serve God and mammon. No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.* Luke 16:9-15. **Pope Francis:** Do not fall into the terrible trap of thinking that life depends on money and that in comparison with money anything else is devoid of value or dignity. We cannot take money with us into the life beyond. FM19. Human beings are not completely autonomous. Our freedom fades when it is handed over to the blind forces of the unconscious, of immediate needs, self-interest and of voices. We stand naked and exposed in the face of our ever-increasing power, lacking the wherewithal to control it. LS 105. **Jubilee.** All of us, however, need to recover the joy of living, since men and women, created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26), cannot rest content with getting along one day at a time, settling for the here and now and seeking fulfilment in material realities alone. This leads to a narrow individualism and the loss of hope; it gives rise to a sadness that lodges in the heart and brings forth fruits of discontent and intolerance. SNC 9. **Act and Pray** for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.

November 9. Sunday 32C. After some time Bryan was coming to realise that widowhood can be seen as the last stage of marriage but it is also not a static condition. "Becoming widowed," like "Becoming Married" are ongoing journeys in life. While it is almost impossible to accept at the time the overwhelming sense of loss at the death of a spouse does change gradually. Very sad moments do happen even after some years, but there is a definite spirituality of widowhood, of aloneness, remembering and forgiving and forgetting. "I do still long to be reunited with Joan" he shared and other men and women agreed.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: Jesus said, "the sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are accounted worthy to attain to the age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die any more, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God and the resurrection. But that the dead are raised even Moses showed. Luke 20:27-38 **Pope Francis:** If we accept death we can prepare ourselves for it. The better we live on this earth, the greater the happiness we will be able to share with our loved ones in heaven. AL 258. **Jubilee.** 14. The elderly, who frequently feel lonely and abandoned, also deserve signs of hope. Esteem for the treasure that they are, their life experiences, their accumulated wisdom and the contribution that they can still make, is incumbent on the Christian community and civil society, which are called to cooperate in strengthening the covenant between generations. Snc14. **Act and Pray** for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.

November 10. Bryan knew that it is hard even within families to criticise or rebuke a family member for some wrong-doing. It may well end up in a complete breakdown or a loss of trust. On the other hand, there are also cases where a brother can be a brother's keeper and warn him and protect him from a bad habit, like gambling or excessive drinking. "What is the risk that this will be for the good or will it harm a sibling relationship?" Bryan asked himself. "It certainly can be difficult to just accept what others choose to do and be willing to forgive."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Scripture: Jesus said, "take heed. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents forgive him. And if he sins seven times in the day and turns to you seven times in a day and says, 'I repent' you must forgive him."*

Luke 17:1-6. Pope Francis: *In families everyone contributes to the common purpose; everyone works for the common good, not denying each person's individuality but encourage and supporting. They may quarrel but there is something that does not change, the family bond.* FT 230. *We cannot forget that mercy is not only the working of the Father; it becomes a criterion for knowing who his true children are. We are called to show mercy because mercy was first shown to us.* AL 310 **Jubilee.** *The judgement of God, who is love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8.16), will surely be based on love, and in particular on all that we have done or failed to do with regard to those in need, in whose midst Christ, the Judge himself, is present (cf. Mt 25:31-46). Clearly, then, we are speaking of a judgement unlike any handed down by human, earthly tribunals; it should be understood as a rapport of truth with the God who is love and with oneself, within the unfathomable mystery of divine mercy.* SNC 10. **Act and Pray** for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.

November 11. Anthony shared, "At the West Park cemetery, whenever I visit my parent's grave, I pass a tombstone of a young air force pilot presumably killed in action. On the stone is written. 'He did his duty.' In the great wars of the 20th century millions of young men died "doing their duty," as did others in the liberation wars of the time. What was their own view about this? Their country and their families did take pride in their sacrifice. One can only hope that they themselves too would have felt that pride as they lay wounded and dying. I wonder if all soldiers still have that sense of "duty" in our day?" "Or commitment to a cause of their own choosing?"

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: Jesus said, "when you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'we are unworthy servants, we have only done what was our duty.'" Luke 17:7-10. **Pope Francis:** *In the name of God, who has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and who has called them to live together as brothers and sisters, to fill the earth and make known the values of goodness, love and peace we declare the adoption of a culture of dialogue as the path, mutual cooperation as the code of conduct, reciprocal understanding as the method and standard. From the Document on Human Fraternity for world Peace and Living Together. Abu Dhabi. 2019.* FT 285 **Jubilee.** *We should indeed prepare ourselves consciously and soberly for the moment when our lives will be judged, but we must always do this from the standpoint of hope, the theological virtue that sustains our lives and shields them from groundless fear. The judgement of God, who is love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8.16), will surely be based on love.* SNC 11. **Act and Pray** for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.

November 12. Bryan wished to highlight the loss of quality of life and dignity caused by certain illnesses. "All Illnesses, physical and mental, result in a loss in the quality of life. Some are fatal. Some diseases cause a loss in dignity too as sufferers are discriminated against and stigmatised. Many of those infected with HIV and those who have died from Aids related diseases have suffered serious psychological and emotional pain too. Leprosy was a terminal disease until recent times and in Jesus' day sufferers lived as outcasts from the community. Jesus' gift of his healing ministry extended to anyone, outcasts and foreigners but he still, and rightfully, expected some recognition and thanks."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *One of the lepers when he saw he was healed turned back praising God. Jesus asked "Were not ten lepers cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except his foreigner?" Luke 17:11-19.* **Pope Francis:** *The family can discover together with the Christian community new approaches, a different way of understanding and identifying with others by welcoming and caring for the mystery of the frailty of human life.* AL 47 **Jubilee.** *Signs of hope should also be shown to the sick, at home or in hospital. Their sufferings can be allayed by the closeness and affection of those who visit them. Works of mercy are also works of hope that give rise to immense gratitude. Gratitude should likewise be shown to all those healthcare workers who, often in precarious conditions, carry out their mission with constant care and concern for the sick and for those who are most vulnerable. Inclusive attention should also be given to all those in particularly difficult situations, who experience their own weaknesses and limitations, especially those affected by illnesses or disabilities that severely restrict their personal independence and freedom. Care given to them is a hymn to human dignity, a song of hope that calls for the choral participation of society as a whole.* SNC11. **Act and Pray** As a family activity why not consider the stories of all ten of the lepers, the one who did give thanks and those who maybe took this for granted. Give them names. Use your own imagination: How would you react if suddenly you were restored to life and community: What did you miss while you were excluded? Pray for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.

November 13. Bryan knew that their own young adult children like so many teenagers had drifted away from the Church after their confirmation. For many of them it is like a church-leaving certificate. They may go back from time to time but often they have not yet found a deep spiritual meaning for themselves. In a way they've lost the plot or even lost their faith, maybe the little immature faith they had. At a dark moment in his young adult life, after one of his close friends committed suicide, Jock was invited to participate in a youth camp. He decided to go for the jol but during the course of the camp, speaking to one of the spiritual counsellors it struck him, that God wasn't just out there somewhere, but right here in this group. That was a rediscovery for him and the start of a new journey.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Scripture: The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, "Behold here it is here! For behold the kingdom of God is in your midst. Luke 17:20-25. Pope Francis: Hope speaks to us of something deeply rooted in every human heart, independently of our circumstances. Hope speaks of a thirst, an aspiration, a longing for a life of fulfilment, a desire to achieve and great things, that fill our heart, lift our spirit to lofty realities like truth, goodness, beauty, justice and love. FT55. Jubilee. It is gratifying to see the energy they demonstrate, for example, by rolling up their sleeves and volunteering to help when disasters strike and people are in need. Yet it is sad to see young people who are without hope, who face an uncertain and unpromising future, who lack employment or job security, or realistic prospects after finishing school. Without the hope that their dreams can come true, they will inevitably grow discouraged and listless. SNC10. Act and Pray for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.*

November 14. "Should mistakes, sin and evil be punished? Should there be a warning first?" These were questions Bryan posed for debate. "Often punishment does come about naturally and a warning can be a preventative step. 'HIV/AIDS is a disease not a sin,' was a slogan used in the early days of HIV/AIDS. At first its cause was not immediately clear. Soon it was discovered that sex was the primary form of transmission. Can the fact be taken as a punishment that after 20 years of providing information and anti-retroviral drugs the infection rate continues, and in some groups even rises? Would repentance from immoral behaviour not be the best solution?

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Scripture: In the days of Lot, they ate, they drank they bought, they sold, they planted, they built but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and brimstone rained from heaven and destroyed them all. Luke 17:26-37. Pope Francis: If everything is connected it is hard to image that the global disasters are unrelated to our way of approaching reality, our claim to be absolute masters of our own lives and all that exists. I do not want to speak of divine retribution, nor would it be sufficient to say that the harm we do to nature is itself the punishment for our offences. The world is itself crying out in rebellion. FT 34. Jubilee. The evil we have done cannot remain hidden; it needs to be purified in order to enable this definitive encounter with God's love. Here we begin to see the need of our prayers for all those who have ended their earthly pilgrimage, our solidarity in an intercession that is effective by virtue of the communion of the saints, and the shared bond that makes us one in Christ, the firstborn of all creation. The Jubilee indulgence, thanks to the power of prayer, is intended in a particular way for those who have gone before us, so that they may obtain full mercy. SNC22. Act and Pray for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.*

November 15. On his travels Bryan had come across a good number of programmes that cared for families experiencing loss. There was Grief Share, Divorce Care, Compassionate Friends and a number of other support groups and counsellors. Sometimes there were social workers but quite often the people involved had experienced the situation of loss themselves. He kept asking himself, "Does helping someone in need necessarily make one feel good or do we do good because we feel guilty or out of a sense of obligation or a calling from our religious background? Does an attitude of care and of the common good – lead to the joy of helping?" He still concluded that peer counselling is a wonderful gift that could be promoted far more widely.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Scripture: There was a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man. And there was a widow who kept coming to him saying, "vindicate me against my adversary". Luke 18:1-8. Pope Francis: To turn our backs on a grieving family would show a lack of mercy, a loss of a pastoral opportunity and close the door to other efforts at evangelisation. AL 253. Jubilee. For our sake, Jesus experienced the drama of death. The Father's love raised him in the power of the Spirit, and made of his humanity the first fruits of our eternal salvation. Christian hope consists precisely in this: that in facing death, which appears to be the end of everything, we have the certainty that, thanks to the grace of Christ imparted to us in Baptism, "life is changed, not ended", [15] forever. SNC14 Act and Pray for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.*

November 16. 33rd Sunday of the Year C. 6th World Day of the Poor. In his homily Fr Pius highlighted the theme of the day and referred also to the challenges of daily family life and the COP 30 climate conference being held this month. He began by saying, "Pope Francis so often chooses wisely in commemorating these special days and I am very pleased that Pope Leo is following in his footsteps."

Scripture: "For your sakes Christ became poor (cf. 2 Cor 8:9)" **Pope Francis:** Jesus' words are clear: if we want life to triumph over death and dignity to be redeemed from injustice we need to follow Christ's path of poverty, sharing our lives out of love, breaking the bread of our daily existence with our brothers and sisters, beginning with the least of them, those who lack the very essentials of life. This is the way to create equality, to free the poor from their misery and the rich from their vanity and both from despair. From 6th World Day of the Poor. **Pope Leo. Message for World Day of the Poor 2025.** The poor are not a distraction for the Church, but our beloved brothers and sisters, for by their lives, their words and their wisdom, they put us in contact with the truth of the Gospel. The celebration of the World Day of the Poor is meant to remind our communities that

*the poor are at the heart of all our pastoral activity. This is true not only of the Church's charitable work, but also of the message that she celebrates and proclaims. God took on their poverty in order to enrich us through their voices, their stories and their faces. Every form of poverty, without exception, calls us to experience the Gospel concretely and to offer effective signs of hope. As Saint Augustine observed: "You give bread to a hungry person; but it would be better if none were hungry, so that you would have no need to give it away. You clothe the naked, but would that all were clothed and that there be no need for supply this lack" (In I Ioan., 8:5). **Jubilee.** I ask with all my heart that hope be granted to the billions of the poor, who often lack the essentials of life. We must not close our eyes to the dramatic situations that we now encounter all around us, not only in certain parts of the world. Each day we meet people who are poor or impoverished; they may even be our next-door neighbours. Often they are homeless or lack sufficient food for the day. They suffer from exclusion and indifference on the part of many. SNC15. Once the Holy Door is closed, we are to cherish and share with others the divine gifts granted us throughout this entire year of prayer, conversion and witness. **Act and Pray** for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.*

November 17. The diocese had organised a pilgrimage to Lourdes for a number of families who had members with disabilities. They had met beforehand to pray together, and while sharing their stories all became very excited. Would they or any of them be healed? The trip was quite arduous for them but it was a most spiritually uplifting experience. "Was anyone healed?" Bryan asked after they had come back. "In a way, I suppose I can say that not one of us was completely cured from their disability but almost every one of us was healed spiritually. I know that God touched me personally even though I am still blind." Jane said, adding. "I have kind of lost a sense of aloneness."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Scripture: "Son of David, have mercy on me." Jesus asked him, "What do you want?" "Lord let me receive my sight." Luke 18:35-41. Pope Francis:* *If the family, in the light of faith, accepts the presence of persons with special needs, they will be able to recognise and ensure the quality and value of every human life with its proper needs, rights and opportunities. AL 47. **Jubilee.** Inclusive attention should also be given to all those in particularly difficult situations, who experience their own weaknesses and limitations, especially those affected by illnesses or disabilities that severely restrict their personal independence and freedom. Care given to them is a hymn to human dignity, a song of hope that calls for the choral participation of society as a whole. SNC10. **Act and Pray** for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.*

November 18. Beliefs and Morality. Belief systems influence morality. Assisted suicide or euthanasia, rejecting treatment or blood transfusions, rejecting or accepting divorce and abortion are some moral issues that religious people agonise over. Within families, even when all are Christians, there are also different belief systems. Catholics uphold as best they can the teaching of the Church, with integrity and based on their own and – ideally - well-formed conscience. The story in the book of Maccabees about the sacrifice of the scribe Eleazar illustrates how this man of integrity not wishing to give scandal to his fellow believers chose death over the option of saving his life.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *"Such pretence is not worthy of our time of life" he said, "lest many of the young should suppose that (I), Eleazar in his ninetieth year has gone over to an alien religion and through my pretence for the sake of living a brief moment longer, they should be led astray. 2 Maccabees 6:18-31. Pope Francis* St John Paul II proposed the so-called "law of gradualness.' This is gradualness in the exercise of free acts on the part of subjects who are not in a position to understand, appreciate, or fully carry out the objective demands of the law as each advances gradually towards God's definite and absolute love. AL 295. **Jubilee.** In a particular way, I would like to invite the faithful of the Eastern Churches, particularly those already in full communion with the Successor of Peter, to take part in this pilgrimage. They have suffered greatly, often even unto death, for their fidelity to Christ and the Church, and so they should feel themselves especially welcome in this City of Rome that is also their Mother and cherishes so many memories of their presence. The Catholic Church, enriched by their ancient liturgies and the theology and spirituality of their Fathers, monks and theologians, wants to give symbolic expression to its embrace of them and their Orthodox brothers and sisters in these times when they endure their own Way of the Cross, often forced by violence and instability to leave their homelands, their holy lands, for safer places. For them, the hope born of the knowledge that they are loved by the Church, which does not abandon them but follows them wherever they go, will make the symbolism of the Jubilee all the more powerful. SNC5. **Act and Pray** for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.

November 19. Bryan shared, "You know, I always used to think of the parable of the talents in terms of admiring the men who doubled their money and kind of felt sorry for the other who just kept his money safe. But why should be punished? Did he really do something wrong, or did he just not do something right, like manage his master's goods for profit? Or how important is profit any way in the way we are now being asked to think? What would be our task concerning our own talents from God? It does need confidence to be an achiever and there are times, like when we are depressed over difficult situations, that we are hardly able to achieve anything at all. Would God still be a hard taskmaster or the merciful Father we believe in?

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Scripture: Lord, here is your pound, which I kept laid away in a napkin for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man.* Luke 19:11-28. **Pope Francis:** *The truly popular thing, since it promotes the good of the people, is to provide everyone with the opportunity to nurture the seeds that God has planted in each of us: our talents, our initiative and our innate resources.* LS 162 *When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself. Once the human being declares independence from reality and behaves with absolute dominion the foundations of our life begin to crumble.* LS117 **Jubilee.** *We need to recognize the immense goodness present in our world, lest we be tempted to think ourselves overwhelmed by evil and violence. The signs of the times, which include the yearning of human hearts in need of God's saving presence, ought to become signs of hope.* SNC10. **Act and Pray** for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.

November 20. Anne Marie used to sit by herself in her room with a little picture of Mary holding a tiny unborn baby in her hand. "I did this to my child," she would say to herself, over and over again and cry bitter tears. Her mom had tried to discourage her from having the abortion but she hadn't listened and now her mom was angry with her. A school counsellor who had heard the story came to visit and spoke to Anne Marie about her own experience. "I suffered for a long time too, but was able to go to speak to the priest, go to confession and receive absolution during a special programme of healing. Come let me take you. That is the only way I know of that can bring you back to life."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Scripture: At that time when Jesus drew near and saw the city he wept over it and said "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace."* Luke 19:41-44 **Pope Francis:** *From the first moments of their lives, many children are rejected, abandoned and robbed of their childhood and future. This is shameful!* AL166. In 2016, at the end of the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis signed a decree that allowed all priests the ability to absolve the sin of abortion. He stated, "*Given this need, lest any obstacle arise between the request for reconciliation and God's forgiveness, I henceforth grant to all priests, in virtue of their ministry, the faculty to absolve those who have committed the sin of procured abortion.*" **Jubilee.** *The sacrament of Penance assures us that God wipes away our sins. We experience those powerful and comforting words of the Psalm: "It is he who forgives all your guilt, who heals every one of your ills, who redeems your life from the grave, who crowns you with love and compassion... The Lord is compassion and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy... He does not treat us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our faults. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so strong is his love for those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our sins"* (Ps 103:3-4.8.10-12). **Act and Pray** for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.

November 21. A group of dissatisfied parishioners called a meeting to discuss their grievances. "Our church is mercenary." "All they're interested in is money and power." Each one seemed to have a story about the loss of integrity and ethical behaviour. They had seen examples and how some priests undermined the good that others were doing. "How can this be God's work," Charles asked. "It cannot be right. We need to take this up with the bishop, as it is a scandal." Joan stated, "It is enough to make you lose respect not just for them, but for the Church. Jesus surely would be condemning this here too."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Scripture: Jesus began to drive out those who bought and sold, saying to them "It is written, 'my house shall be a house of prayer but you have made it into a den of robbers.'*" Luke 19:45-48. **Pope Francis:** *In the parable of the Good Samaritan one detail about the passers-by stands out: they were religious, devoted to the worship of God: a priest and a Levite. This shows that belief in God and the worship of God are not enough to ensure that we are actually living in a way pleasing to God. St John Chrysostom wrote, "Do you wish to honour the body of the Saviour? Do not despise it when it is naked. Do not honour it in church with silk vestments while outside it is naked and numb with cold.* FT 74. **Jubilee.** *The image of the anchor is eloquent; it helps us to recognize the stability and security that is ours amid the troubled waters of this life, provided we entrust ourselves to the Lord Jesus. The storms that buffet us will never prevail, for we are firmly anchored in the hope born of grace, which enables us to live in Christ and to overcome sin, fear and death. This hope, which transcends life's fleeting pleasures and the achievement of our immediate goals, makes us rise above our trials and difficulties, and inspires us to keep pressing forward, never losing sight of the grandeur of the heavenly goal to which we have been called.* SNC25. **Act and Pray** for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.

November 22. At the widowed retreat the group prayed the Stations of the Cross for Widowed People. Each reflection dwelt on an event in the Passion of Jesus but also related it to the experiences of their own painful journey of "Becoming widowed." "You know why we have a 15th Station," Antonette asked. "The 15th Station is a reflection on hope. Because all of us, who miss our spouses so much, have a need to see them again, to know that death is not the end and that they are with God, waiting for us, to be reunited.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Those who are accounted worthy to attain to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage for they cannot die any more, being sons of the resurrection. Luke 20:27-40.* **Pope Francis:** *Indeed for your faithful people Lord, life is changed not ended, and when this earthly dwelling turns to dust an eternal dwelling is made ready for them in heaven. From Preface for the Dead. The better we live on this earth, the greater the happiness we will be able to share with our loved ones in heaven. AL 258.* **Jubilee.** *21. What, then, will become of us after death? With Jesus, beyond this threshold we will find eternal life, consisting in full communion with God as we forever contemplate and share in his infinite love. All that we now experience in hope, we shall then see in reality. We are reminded of the words of Saint Augustine: "When I am one with you in all my being, there will be no more pain and toil; my life shall be true life, a life wholly filled by you". What will characterize this fullness of communion? Being happy. Happiness is our human vocation, a goal to which all aspire. SNC21* **Act and Pray** for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.

November 23. Christ the King. Year C. On this last Sunday of the year Fr Pius took some extra time to address everyone present. "I have been with you throughout this year and heard many of your confessions and stories. All of us have probably had suffering of some kind during the course of this year. Maybe some have lost a friend, a special possession, a pet, or more seriously a family member through sickness and death, cancer or suicide, others through an accident, or divorce. Some of us have lost jobs, friends, maybe a home. How did we deal with the loss? Did we grieve? Were we able to look at the suffering face of Jesus and take our pain to the Father in prayer, asking for his merciful love and healing? It may have happened or not. It may take more time. If there was guilt on our part we may have a need to ask for forgiveness from God or one another. Such is the experience and practice of mercy, which is so strongly related to faith, hope and love. It is my hope and prayer that our understanding of mercy as a special expression of God's love will grow stronger in the years ahead. May our sensitivity allow us to grow in awareness of the suffering of all of God's creation for which we humans are responsible.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Scripture: The rulers scoffed at Jesus, saying, "He saved others, let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God." Luke 23: 35-43* **Pope Francis:** *The New Testament does not only tell us of the earthly Jesus and his tangible and loving relationship with the world. It also shows him risen and glorious, present throughout creation by his universal lordship. We direct our gaze to the end of time when the Son will deliver all things to the Father and God may be everything to everyone. The very flowers of the field and birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence. LS 100.* **Jubilee.** *"I believe in life everlasting". [12] So our faith professes. Christian hope finds in these words an essential foundation. For hope is "that theological virtue by which we desire... eternal life as our happiness". [13] The Second Vatican Council says of hope that, "when people are deprived of this divine support, and lack hope in eternal life, their dignity is deeply impaired, as may so often be seen today. The problems of life and death, of guilt and suffering, remain unsolved, so that people are frequently thrown into despair". SNC19* **Act and Pray** for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.

November 24. Bryan raised a point that he had been considering for some time. "Why is it that we most often think of "poor widows?" Do we not make proper provision for the time when one of us is going to be left? I have tried to do my homework and make sure that while I am never going to be rich I will be able to look after myself in my old age." Others contributed. "My pension is always used up to look after the grandchildren and even the children borrow money from me." "Nowadays in most cases the time has gone when the family will look after their elders. Sometimes they're put into an old age home and just left there." "I am proud to say that although I have never been very well-off I am happy in my little cottage because the children visit regularly and I have many friends. If I can bring some sunshine into their lives I feel richly blessed."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *"This poor widow has put in more than all of them. They contribute out of their abundance but she out of her poverty put in all the living that she had. Luke 21:1-4* **Pope Francis:** *After the grieving process we have to help the person to realise that after the loss of a loved one, we still have a mission to carry out and that it does us no good to prolong the suffering. AL 255. The earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor. We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters. LS 2.* **Jubilee.** *We, however, by virtue of the hope in which we were saved, can view the passage of time with the certainty that the history of humanity and our own individual history are not doomed to a dead end or a dark abyss, but directed to an encounter with the Lord of glory. As a result, we live our lives in expectation of his return and in the hope of living forever in him. In this spirit, we make our own the heartfelt prayer of the first Christians with which sacred Scripture ends: "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev 22:20).* SNC19. **Act and Pray** for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.

November 25. 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE. Bryan was collaborating with the local J&P groups to highlight this important aspect of loss. The 25 day campaign every year from 25 November to 10th December is an opportunity to create awareness, dialogue and share, for many organisations but also for men and women, at home, school and work. The issue is not equality but a loss, the physical, emotional and psychological abuse experienced as loss of

personhood, of self-esteem. Treating women and children as objects, rather than human beings with value and dignity is a loss for a perpetrator and a victim. We are all created in the image of God but not all treated with the same respect. The right attitude should be taught and modelled at home. How are we doing?

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *When you hear of wars and tumults do not be terrified, for this must first take place, but the end will not be at once. From Luke 21:5-11. Pope Francis:* Extreme poverty and other situations of family breakdown sometimes even leads families to sell their children for prostitution or for organ trafficking. AL 46. The human person is the clearest reflection of God's presence in the world; all of the Church's work in pursuit of both justice and peace is designed to protect and promote the dignity of every person. For each person not only reflects God but is the expression of God's creative work and the meaning of Christ's redemptive ministry. The Challenge of Peace #15. **Jubilee.** 8. The first sign of hope should be the desire for peace in our world, which once more finds itself immersed in the tragedy of war. Heedless of the horrors of the past, humanity is confronting yet another ordeal, as many peoples are prey to brutality and violence. What does the future hold for those peoples, who have already endured so much? SNC10 **Act and Pray** for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.

November 26. Bryan was hosting a discussion evening, on the subject, "Loss and the need to remain faithful." "We live in very troubled times in different parts of the world. Thousands of people in war zones have lost everything. Most are killed indiscriminately and others are killed for their beliefs, especially where some are Muslims and some Christians. But the Israeli-Gaza war, while between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Muslims is not religious but political. Some nations fight within and amongst themselves. However, wars have been happening over and over for many centuries and we know there are millions of martyrs who did not or were not able to resist aggression. In spite of that we still have to persevere and believe in life after death for all our sakes."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Scripture: You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and kinsmen and friends and some of you they will put to death, for my name's sake, but not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives. Luke 21: 12-19. Pope Francis:* If there is no transcendent truth, in obedience to which man achieves his full identity, then there is no sure principle for guaranteeing just relationships between people. Their self-interest as a class, group or nation would inevitably set them in opposition to one another. If one does not acknowledge transcendent truth then the force of power takes over. FT 273. **Jubilee.** Saint Paul often speaks of patience in the context of our need for perseverance and confident trust in God's promises. Yet, before all else, he testifies to God's own patience, as "the God of all patience and encouragement" (Rom 15:5). Patience, one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, sustains our hope and strengthens it as a virtue and a way of life. May we learn to pray frequently for the grace of patience, which is both the daughter of hope and at the same time its firm foundation. SNC4 **Act and Pray** for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.

November 27. Groups discussed "the last things" which came up a lot in the readings of the time. "In almost every generation there are people who believe the end of the world is nigh. We call that millennialism. Some people interpret the book of Revelation and speak about The Rapture, when they believe that if they have lived righteous lives, they will get taken straight up into heaven. Some Old Testament books like Daniel and Ezekiel also wrote in that apocalyptic style. Even Paul wrote about the end times to the Thessalonians. In our time Pope Francis continuously drew attention to the abuse of the environment as a sign of our times. Will that contribute to the end of the world – as a Family of Families? Jesus told us that only the Father knows. How is that able to give you hope and comfort or not?"

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Scripture: And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity. Luke 21: 20-28. Pope Francis:* Patriarch Bartholomew has drawn attention to the ethical and spiritual roots of environmental problems which require that we look for solutions not only in technology but in a change of humanity; otherwise we would be dealing merely with symptoms. LS 9. **Jubilee.** Christian hope does not deceive or disappoint because it is grounded in the certainty that nothing and no one may ever separate us from God's love: "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or the sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:35.37-39). SNC3 **Act and Pray** for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.

November 28. Bryan continued to work with all kinds of groups. "Every time we say the Nicene Creed, especially in this Jubilee year, when we also commemorate the Council of Nicaea, I believe we should think more about the words we use. We talk about death and judgement but maybe we aren't really listening to ourselves. As we come to the end of another year do we have any energy left to reflect on the Church's year and also the work and school year? Can we think about the end of our own lifespan and what we will be judged for or are we already too deep into party mode? Did we lose hope or

faith or give up loving as much as we could? If we are able to take time for such reflection maybe we would change our ways and our attitudes for the year to come. I do believe that hope can come in cycles, let's say hope can be recycled."

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Scripture: Think of the fig tree and all the trees, as soon as they come out in leaf you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. So when you see these things you know that the kingdom of God is near. Luke 21: 29-33 Blessed are they who dwell in your house forever singing your praise. From Ps 84. Pope Francis: The Church has a public role over and above her charitable and educational activities. She works for the advancement of humanity and of universal fraternity. She does not claim to compete with earthly powers but to offer herself as a family among families, this is the Church open to bearing witness in today's work open to faith, hope and love for the Lord and for those who he loves with a preferential love. A home with open doors, because she is a mother, in imitation of Mary the Mother of Jesus. FT 276 Jubilee. The Council of Nicaea was a milestone in the Church's history. The celebration of its anniversary invites Christians to join in a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Blessed Trinity and in particular to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, "consubstantial with the Father", [11] who revealed to us that mystery of love. At the same time, Nicaea represents a summons to all Churches and Ecclesial Communities to persevere on the path to visible unity and in the quest of finding ways to respond fully to the prayer of Jesus "that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17:21). SNC 17. Act and Pray for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.*

29 November. Bryan, after concluding his tour of the healing groups he had visited said, "At a time of loss people are particularly vulnerable and without being given support, or using the support that is offered, they may give in to depression, addictions like alcohol or addictive medication. A vicious cycle could be set up that also leads to a personal sense of loss of dignity and self-esteem. How would you like to look, standing before God on your judgement day? Drunk and disorderly, beautifully dressed and made up or like your real, normal self, the way you lived? Jesus has a word of advice for us!"

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Scripture: "Take heed lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life and that day come upon you suddenly like a snare. Watch at all times praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that will take place and to stand before the Son of man." From Luke 21:34-36 Pope Francis: No family drops down from heaven perfectly formed, families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love. This is a never-ending vocation born of the full communion of the Trinity. Our contemplation of the fulfilment which we have yet to attain allows us to see in proper perspective the historical journey which we make as families and in this way to stop demanding of our interpersonal relationships a perfection, a purity of intentions and a consistency which we will only encounter in the Kingdom to come. This keeps us from judging harshly those who live in situations of frailty. All of us are called to keep striving towards something greater than ourselves and our families. Let us make this journey as families, let us keep walking together. AL 325. Jubilee. Surely we need to "abound in hope" (cf. Rom 15:13), so that we may bear credible and attractive witness to the faith and love that dwell in our hearts; that our faith may be joyful and our charity enthusiastic; and that each of us may be able to offer a smile, a small gesture of friendship, a kind look, a ready ear, a good deed, in the knowledge that, in the Spirit of Jesus, these can become, for those who receive them, rich seeds of hope. SNC18 Act and Pray for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.*

November 30. 1st SUNDAY OF ADVENT A. Bryan looked back on the last month and admitted to himself that in many ways it had been a very healing experience for him. "I know Christmas will still be difficult, but I have grown so much closer to Jesus and hope I will be able to share some of that with my children and grandchildren when we are together these holidays. I have much more to be grateful for than I had before, but I still have a very real sadness, that I will not be able to share it all with my beloved wife, Joan, in the flesh and only in spirit. But we have a month to prepare. What I can do over this next month is pray more earnestly for peace, in Jerusalem and every city and home in the world that awaits the coming of the Messiah, borne in such great love by Mary his Mother and cared for by Joseph, his patient and supportive father. J.

Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *For the peace of Jerusalem pray. "May they prosper, those who love you. May peace abide in your walls and security be in your towers. For the sake of my family and friends, let me say, Peace upon you. For the sake of the house of the Lord, our God, I will seek good things for you." Psalm 122. Pope Francis: The Church is a home with open doors, because she is a mother. And in imitation of Mary, the Mother of Jesus we want to be a Church that serves, that leaves home and goes forth from its place of worship. Goes forth from its sacristies, in order to accompany life, to sustain, to be the sign of unity ... to build bridges, to break down walls, to sow seeds of reconciliation. FT 276. Jubilee. I am confident that everyone, especially the suffering and those most in need, will come to know the closeness of Mary, the most affectionate of mothers, who never abandons her children and who, for the holy people of God, is "a sign of certain hope and comfort". SNC24 Act and Pray for compassionate concern for those suffering loss in their families.*