



MARFAM 2026 YEAR OF ST FRANCIS.

“OUR WORLD, A FAMILY OF FAMILIES”

THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY MAY THEME: PARENTS FORM FAMILIES



Including Laudato si' Week and Christian Unity Week 17-24 May

DAILY THOUGHTS on www.marfam.org.za, facebook and whatsapp. Request email to info@marfam.org.za. Abbreviations: Pope Francis: LS = *Laudato Si*. AL = *Amoris Laetitia* FT = *Fratelli Tutti*. Pope Leo DT = *Dilexi Te* and quotations from his visit to African countries April 2026

Overview. Parents form Families. Whether it is a study of biology, human physiology or spirituality, the gift of co-creation with God, in nature, should be recognized as one of God's greatest gifts. It is the male and female in nature, in human families a man and woman, ideally through a loving committed relationship, who continue God's creation as well as its sustenance and nurturance. Parents, human and animal, have the task of forming and educating their offspring and preparing them for adulthood. The ideal of the love of their father and mother for each other too is an important gift to children. Effective human parenting is amongst the most complex relationships today, with an awareness of the good and harmful seen so clearly in family relationships. Laudato Si week and Christian Unity week (from Ascension Thursday to Pentecost) commemorated this month can incorporate the theme too. The Year of St Francis can be brought into during the month and particularly during Laudato Si week in different ways.

Pope Francis: *The gift of a new child entrusted by the Lord to a father and a mother, begins with acceptance, continues with lifelong protection and has as its final goal the joy of eternal life. God allows parents to choose the name by which he himself will call their child for all eternity. AL166. Only if we devote time to our children, speaking of important things with simplicity and concern and finding healthy ways for them to spend their time will we be able to shield them from harm. Parents have to help prepare their children and adolescents to confront the risks of aggression, abuse or drug addiction. AL 260. In assessing the environmental impact of any project few careful studies are made of its impact on biodiversity. Little attention is paid to studying the reproductive patterns of species to prevent their depletion and imbalance of the ecosystem. LS 35.*

Setting the scene. As usual, the reflections are set in the format of family groups. During Mary's month of May all families are encouraged to include a special devotion to Our Lady. Some families, individually or as a family, pray the Rosary, or a decade each day or even a Hail Mary or a simple prayer to Our Lady can be prayed daily.

HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF GOD , BE OUR MOTHER TOO.

PRAY WITH US AND FOR US IN ALL THAT WE DO.

May 1. Workers Day. The Joseph the Worker. SEE. Workers' Day has for the last century been a struggle for the rights of workers, a battle between employers and employees mainly about wages. Deacon Masibi had been a shop steward in his day and with other union members was pleased that the Church also made its contribution to workers' rights. He told the members of the parenting group that 1st May was adopted by the communists as May Day - Workers' Day, to commemorate the struggle for worker's rights. In 1955 by making it a commemoration of St Joseph the Worker, Pope Pius XII added the Catholic Christian dimension as well. Catholic Social Teaching includes the topic of work, as the situation has changed over time. "But this is not just for us adults as workers alone, but also for us as parents to share with our children as they recognise the value of work and learn from doing their chores. Another thing to consider in this Year of St Francis is that "becoming eco-friendly families" can include the home and the work environment."

JUDGE. Reflect, share, Scripture. "Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward as you are serving the Lord Christ. Col 3:24. **Pope Francis:** *Labour makes possible the development of society and provides for the sustenance, stability and fruitfulness of one's family. We can appreciate the suffering created by unemployment. AL 24-25. We were created with a vocation to work. Work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development and personal fulfilment. LS128. **Pope Leo:** The Church's social doctrine analysis of Christian revelation in the context of modern social, labor, economic and cultural issues would not have been possible without the contribution of the laity, men and women alike, who grappled with the great issues of their time. DT*

ACT AND PRAY. Read up some of the Church's teaching on work. Mary, loving wife of Joseph, together you worked to build your family, pray for us.

May 2. Conscience. SEE. The parenting groups had shared on some very sensitive issues around sexuality and family planning. Prisca had been a good facilitator and most of the time she had managed to avoid any arguments or judgements, stressing that people had a right to share their views but it did sometimes reach volatile levels and once Beauty had walked out. "The Church teaches" Mrs Bonanza would say. "Yes but, the Church is out of date. We can't afford to have half a dozen kids these days," came a reply. Prisca pulled it together. "Yes, the Church does present us with a beautiful ideal but difficult teaching. We may not all agree and accept this, but we as a couple together in conscience before God have made our decision. I know that requires faith, love and commitment." And she squeezed her husband's hand while he smiled at her.

JUDGE. Reflect, share, Scripture. *The Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city and stirred up persecutions against Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of their district. But they shook the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium. Acts 13:50. Pope Francis: We find it hard to make room for the consciences of the faithful who very often respond as best they can to the Gospel amid their limitations and are capable of carrying out their own discernment in complex situations. We have been called to form consciences not to replace them. AL 37. Pope Leo: Christians have at times succumbed to attitudes shaped by secular ideologies and political or economic approaches that lead to gross generalisations and mistaken conclusions. Some dismiss charitable works as if they are an obsession of a few rather than the burning heart of the Church's mission. DT 15*

ACT AND PRAY. Mary, Mother and of Seat of Wisdom, pray for us.

May 3. 5th Sunday of Easter A. SEE. Fr Sylvester invited all the men in church to stand up and then repeated the words of the 2nd reading from Peter, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people." Then he added, "but these words are not for men, or priests, but for everyone, and in a unique way for mothers who play such an important role in families. So let the mothers stand up so we can acknowledge them too. 'You are a holy nation, God's own people.' We, every member of every family here present together through our baptism make up the holy nation, the royal priesthood in our homes, offering the sacrifices we make in our daily lives. We offer them together with Jesus in the Eucharist, making it a living sacrifice. Do you really understand this," he asked them and left them to think. Let us prepare for Mother's Day next week by keeping this in mind.

JUDGE. Reflect, share, Scripture. *You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. 1 Peter 2:9. Pope Francis: Each of us has his or her own personal identity and is capable of entering into dialogue with others and with God himself. Yet it would be mistaken to view other living beings as mere objects subject to arbitrary human domination. When nature is viewed solely as a source of profit and gain this has serious consequences for society. LS 81-82. Pope Leo: Any Church community if it thinks it can comfortably go its own way without creative concern and effective cooperation in helping the poor to live with dignity and reaching out to everyone will risk breaking down. DT 112*

ACT AND PRAY. Mary, Mother of all God's children, pray for us.

MAY 4. Older persons. SEE. Parenting one's own older parents is a reality that many families experience and it is not the easiest thing on earth. Older people still want to be independent and can be very set in their ways and quite stubborn and mean too, even if they are not suffering from some form of dementia, which is fairly common in that age group. George and Paula shared a thought, "Maybe it is anxiety that they won't have enough money to last them, and I accept that their values are different to ours but they're really hung up about their money and their possessions. They'd be much happier if they would loosen up a bit. I wonder if they would maybe even feel fulfilled if they gave us a hand with varsity fees for our kids."

JUDGE. Reflect, share. Scripture. *We bring you good news that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. Acts 14:5-18, Pope Francis: Support of the elderly is a challenge to families. The church cannot and does not want to conform to a mentality of impatience, and much less indifference and contempt towards old age. AL191. From FAMILIES AND THE SYNOD: How are families a key point of communion in the Church - on the one hand, within themselves and, on the other, beyond themselves in the larger community. Pope Leo: The gospel message has to do not only with an individual's personal relationship with the Lord, but also with something greater, "the kingdom of God." DT 96*

ACT AND PRAY. Mary, mother and carer of all, old and young. pray for us.

May 5. Same-sex relationships SEE. James and George had been in a relationship for three years when they came accepted that they wanted to make their relationship permanent and maybe even parent a child. They shared with an understanding priest friend who explained that a marriage of gay men was not possible in the Catholic Church. So they settled for a pastor to witness their commitment in a same- sex union. A while later they began to explore the ways that they could have a child. They considered in vitro fertilisation with a surrogate mother or adoption. With the help of a counsellor they finally settled for adoption. A year later they were proud parents showing off their daughter to delighted grandparents, who were nevertheless still somewhat bemused by the situation. James and George smiled as they considered, “this whole business could have been much easier in animal families don’t you agree?”

JUDGE. Reflect, share. Scripture. *Paul and Barnabas continued, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. Acts 14:19-28. Pope Francis: Every person regardless of sexual orientation ought to be respected in their dignity. Those who manifest a homosexual orientation should be given respectful pastoral guidance so that they can receive the assistance they need to understand and fully carry out God’s will in their lives. AL 251. From FAMILIES AND THE SYNOD: Are families listened to within the Church? How can they be heard in this synodal process? Pope Leo: There are many forms of poverty: the poverty of those who are socially marginalised and lack the means to give voice to their dignity. DT 9.*

ACT AND PRAY. Mary, mother most caring of those who are marginalised pray for us.

May 6. Bearing fruit. SEE. Lots of comments came from the group on the day’s reading about bearing fruit. “Every parent must feel honoured but also challenged by this reading, I’m sure. Do we as parents bear good fruit, or is the focus on quantity rather than quality of children?” “But we also feel honoured that our bearing fruit in whatever way gives glory to the Father.” “I particularly like an image we heard of, that our children are the fruit of our love, we being attached to Jesus the vine.” “Much as I like it there is still a challenge and I pray every day for my husband to begin to understand its deeper meaning and that we can share this with one another. That would make our family planning decisions easier too. I was shocked when I was pregnant a fourth time and he suggested an abortion.”

JUDGE. Reflect, share, Scripture. *Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, and you are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. By this my Father is glorified. John 15:1-8. Pope Francis: A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings. It is clearly inconsistent to combat trafficking in endangered species while remaining completely indifferent to human trafficking, unconcerned about the poor, or undertaking to destroy another human being deemed unwanted. LS 91. Pope Leo in Equatorial Guinea. Welcoming life requires love, commitment and care. These words should lead us to reflect seriously on the importance of protecting and safeguarding the family and the values learned within it. Let us cultivate, live and bear witness to these values, even when it requires sacrifice, or when judgments, prejudices and stereotypes seem to diminish their worth,*

ACT AND PRAY. Mary, as a mother, pray that parents will accept their children as a fruit of their love.

May 7. Moral issues. SEE. The debate about whether Gentiles should be circumcised like the Jews became a very interesting cultural but also a practical debate. Of particular interest was the comment that Jason picked up about God putting a yoke upon the neck which none was able to bear. Does that speak to us about the teachings on contraception, condoms and abortion or where do we draw the line? Those are some of the issues that were discussed at the Synods on the Family in Rome and by Pope Francis in his letter, *Amoris Laetitia*. His message is to study the teaching and develop and use our conscience on that question of carrying that yoke.

JUDGE. Reflect, share, Scripture. *Peter said, “God made no distinction between us and the Gentiles but cleansed their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear. But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.” Acts 15:7-21. Pope Francis: On discernment: Conscience can do more than recognise that a given (irregular) situation does not correspond objectively to the overall demands of the Gospel. It can also recognise with sincerity and honesty what for now is the most generous response which can be given to God and come to see with a certain moral security that it is what God himself is asking while yet not fully the objective ideal. AL 303. Pope Leo: As we contemplate Christ’s love we are inspired to be more attentive to the sufferings and needs of others. DT 2*

ACT AND PRAY. Mary, mother most sensitive, pray for us.

May 8. Friends. SEE. Mrs Paulsen asked, “Does Jesus put friends above family. I sometimes wonder about that? In our little village there are some elderly people that have been friends for many years, almost their whole lives. I think they are closer to each other than they are to their own children or siblings. But you can't deny that family is still family, a blood relationship matters even if friendships are so important. I believe that my friend Josephine would die for me. What do others think? “

JUDGE. Reflect, share. Scripture. *Love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. John 15:12. Pope Francis: I know that you are capable of great acts of friendship and goodness. With these you are called to build the future, together with others and for others, but never against others. Jubilee for Youth. Pope Leo in Equatorial Guinea: Dear friends, you have come to this gathering with your families. They are the fertile soil in which your human and Christian growth, like a young and delicate tree, sinks its roots. For this reason, I want to invite everyone to thank the Lord together for the gift of your loved ones.*

ACT AND PRAY. Consider the blessing of friends and family as people to love. Mary, mother most loving, pray for us.

May 9. Ecumenism. SEE. George and Fatima could share well on another sensitive subject. “In our parish we have some Hindu and some Muslim converts but sadly for us, some of our girls having married into Muslim families have become Muslims too. Others are in “mixed marriage” families, practising two forms of religion. Prayers and practices about how and what to cook for food, how to pray and fast are things people do at home and if we really think of our families as little churches we should sort those things out so that they don't cause conflict. Conforming to some religious practices in the home as a compromise for the sake of peace and harmony can be an *ubuntu* thing.”

JUDGE. Reflect, share. Scripture *Timothy's father was a Greek. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him and he took and circumcised him because of the Jews that were in those places for they all knew that his father was a Greek. From Acts 16:1-10. Pope Francis: Marriages involving disparity of cult represent a privileged place for interreligious dialogue in everyday life. They involve special difficulties regarding both the Christian identity of the family and the religious upbringing of children. Bearing witness to the ability of the Gospel to immerse itself in these situations will make possible the upbringing of children in the Christian faith AL 248. Pope Leo in Algeria on St Augustine: “He is still a very important figure today, as his writings, his teaching, his spirituality, his invitation to search for God and to search for truth is something that is very much needed today, a message that is very real for all of us today, as believers in Jesus Christ, but also for all people*

ACT AND PRAY. Ask how open am I to people of other religions? Mary, mother most accepting, pray for us.

May 10. MOTHERS DAY. 6th Sunday of Easter A. SEE. Fr Fidelis started by saying, “I almost don't need to preach a sermon about mothers and motherhood. Just using the words of Jesus today is an examination of conscience and a test to see how deep our faith is. ‘If you love me you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father and he will give you another counsellor, to be with you for ever.’ But I would like you all, mothers included, to do an exercise. What commandment do you find most difficult to keep but still do so, out of love for Jesus? Please feel free to share, especially with one another at home.” Mercy thought, “Remember too St Francis, who said, ‘Be praised my Lord for those who forgive others out of love for you.’ I have always valued that statement.”

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture. *If you love me you will keep my commandments. She who loves me will be loved by my Father and I will love her and manifest myself to her. John 14:15-20. Pope Francis: With great affection I urge all mothers: keep happy and let nothing rob you of the interior joy of motherhood. Your child deserves your happiness. AL 171. Social love is the key to authentic development. In order to make society more human, more worthy of the human person, love in social life- political, economic and cultural – must be given renewed value, becoming the constant and highest norm for all activity. LS231 Pope Leo: in situations of exclusion we constantly witness impressive examples of daily heroism of mothers defending and protecting their vulnerable families. DT 12*

A MOTHER'S DAY REFLECTION AND BLESSING:

If I live in a house of spotless beauty with everything in its place
But have not love, I am a housekeeper - not a homemaker.
If I have time for waxing, polishing and decorative achievements,
But have not love, my children learn cleanliness – not godliness.
Love leaves the dust in search of a child's laugh
Love smiles at the tiny fingerprints on a newly-cleaned window
Love wipes away the tears before it wipes up the spilled milk
Love picks up the child before it picks up the toys.

Love is present through the trials,
Love reprimands, reproves and is responsive
Love crawls with the baby, walks with the toddler, runs with the child,
Then stands aside to let the youth walk into adulthood.
Love is the key that opens salvation's message to a child's heart.
Before I became a mother I took glory in my house of perfection.
Now I glory in God's perfection of my child.
As a mother, there is much I must teach my child
But the greatest of all is love.

PRAYER AND BLESSING

Lord God, thank you for the gift of motherhood and especially for our own mothers, present or deceased. Bless all mothers on their special day in their families with all good things, especially health, joy, love and laughter. Keep them in your care and protect them from all that is harmful. We invite Mary, the mother of Jesus and our mother to care for our families as she cared for the Holy Family and so we say her special prayer: Hail Mary..... .

May 11. SEE. Pauline commented "You know, I never realised it but St Paul had a pretty bad time on those missionary journeys of his. Sometimes they loved him and wanted to make him king. Next thing they hate him and want to stone him or beat him. I think that being a parent over the years can also be rather like that. Don't we all agree? But the special moments right from babyhood into adulthood make it all worthwhile. Who would like to share on that?"

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture. *We sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia who was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to listen and she was baptised, with her household. Acts 16:13-15. Pope Francis: "Allow me to share a family memory. My mother said, "I have five children, like five fingers. Should they strike this one it hurts me, should they strike that one it hurts me. All five hurt me. All are my children and different like the fingers of a hand." General audience February 2015. Pope Leo: A collective approach grounded in the Gospel can transform local institutions and structures into "instruments for the common good," rather than "places of conflict, self-interest, or sterile struggles."*

ACT AND PRAY. Mary, patient mother of the family, pray for us.

May 12. Household conversion. SEE. "How powerful was the preaching of Paul to make people believe, or was it because of miracles and signs, like the gates of their prison opening miraculously?" The group discussed the question amongst themselves. Maysie was intrigued how a brilliant preacher could convert a whole household. "Who are the most sceptical amongst us, or the easiest to be influenced? Old, young, women?" Some older women didn't quite dare to voice their opinions but knew that a powerful preacher could make a great impression especially on the youth. Mr Anderson referred them to the message of Pope Francis to the youth and to preachers.

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture. *After their preaching Paul and Silas were attacked by the crowds and magistrates and put in prison. At night an earthquake shook the building and the prison gates opened but they did not escape. When the jailer found them praying and singing hymns he was overwhelmed by their faith. Paul told him, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household. The jailer washed their wounds and took them to his house and they were baptised. Read Acts 16:22-34. Pope Francis "Dear young people, Put on Christ in your lives. Christ awaits you in his word, listen to him. Christ awaits you in the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. You can be joyful witnesses of his love, courageous witnesses of his gospel carrying to this world a ray of his light. Let yourself be loved by Christ, he is a friend who will not disappoint." Christus Vivit. Pope Leo: As we contemplate Christ's love we are inspired to be more attentive to the sufferings and needs of others and confirmed in our efforts to share in his work. DT2*

ACT AND PRAY. Mary, mother open our ears and hearts to the love of your Son.

May 13. Our lady of Fatima. SEE. Moyra wondered, "Our Lady of Fatima appeared to three little children with her message, about their current social reality and a call to pray for peace. How many parents really talk with their children about social realities and the problem issues of today. Or maybe the kids should inform their parents, or whoever their carers are, as they learn far more about these matters at school than we ever knew. In many ways the young are better informed, more capable technologically and make us older people feel quite inadequate at times.

However we must not forget how vulnerable young people also are to abuse, e.g. pornography and misuse of their cellphones. Those are really important issues for family consideration and devotion to Our Lady of Fatima can be a great support and a source of happiness for families.

JUDGE. Reflect, share and act. Scripture. *The descendants of my people shall be known among the nations and their offspring in the midst of the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed. Is 61:9-11. Pope Francis: Only if we devote time to our children, speaking of important things with simplicity and concern and finding healthy ways for them to spend their time will we be able to shield them from harm. AL176. From FAMILIES AND THE SYNOD. What role can the family play in the process of building a more synodal Church? How can this synodal process help us to better understand, promote and empower the mission of the family within the Church and in the world, as "a leaven of evangelization in society?" (AL 290)*

Pope Leo at the shrine of Mama Muxima in Angola. *Dinis Mayomona, a seminarian described the shrine as a place of total surrender. "We surrender all our suffering, all our dreams ... because we have got many problems here," he said, "and once we surrender our suffering in the hands of Mama Muxima, we know perfectly that she will solve our problems because she is beside her Son." The shrine carries a complex and painful history. For nearly 300 years, the site along the Kwanza River served as a waypoint for enslaved Africans being marched to the Atlantic Coast for transport to the Americas.*

ACT AND PRAY. O God, who chose the Mother of your Son to be our Mother too, Grant us that persevering in penance and prayer for peace and the salvation of the world, we may further the reign of Christ. Mother of peace, pray for adolescent children

May 14. (Ascension Thursday is moved to Sunday in South Africa.) Jonathan shared what he had learned about the early Church. "Why do we hear mostly about men in the stories of the early Church? How did it really work and what about their families? We are used to worshipping in a parish church these days but in the very early church it was in homes where they would have the "breaking of bread" for all family members, children as well as servants and slaves."

JUDGE. Reflect, share and act. Scripture: *Paul found a Jew named Aquila lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius the emperor had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them and because they were of the same trade he stayed with them and they worked. Acts 18:1-8. Pope Francis: A married couple who experience the power of love know that this love is called to bind the wounds of the outcast, to foster a culture of encounter and to fight for justice. AL183. Pope Leo: God destined the earth and all it contains for all people and nations so that all created things would be shared fairly by all humankind under the guidance of justice tempered by charity. DT 65.*

ACT AND PRAY. What does the church mean in your life? Mary, mother of every living creature pray for us.

May 15. International Day for Families. Joy. SEE. When they came to read the gospel passage that mentions the woman in labour Mr Clarke said, "That is a true to life example all right. I was pleased to be able to be with my wife when our children were born. I saw how you were in great pain but we were both so filled with wonder and joy when the baby arrived safely. That is the kind of joy I don't mind sharing. I did, with the guys at work and they laughed at me but I didn't mind. I believe it is a sign of equality in our family and how we both care for our kids. The theme for IDF today is 'families, inequalities and child wellbeing.'"

Reflect, share, act. Scripture. *When a woman is in labour she has pain because her hour has come but when the child is delivered she no longer remembers the anguish for joy that a child is born into the world. John 16:20-22. Pope Francis. God sets the father in the family so that by the gifts of his masculinity he can be close to his wife and share everything. And to be close to his children as they grow – when then play and when they work, when they are carefree and when they are distressed, when they are talkative and when they are silent, when they are daring and when they are afraid, when they stray and when they get back on the right path. Children need a father. AL177. Pope Leo in Equatorial Guinea. Yours is a young country! I am certain that within the Church you will find help for the formation of free and responsible consciences, enabling you to advance together toward the future. In a world wounded by arrogance, people hunger and thirst for justice. It is necessary to encourage those who believe in peace. those who place the common good at their very center. What is urgently needed is the courage of new visions and an educational pact that gives young people space and trust.*

ACT AND PRAY. Mary, wife and mother pray for fathers that they will support their families with love and care.

May 16. Prayers of Petition. SEE. As encouraged by the parish family life team May was a true parenting month for parents and for their children. They had stressed that all parents including single mothers and fathers had obligations to provide the love and care the need. "You know," Joseph added, "even those carers or grandparents looking after children are acting as parents. They can all spend some time considering what would be the greatest gift they could ask for from God, individually and for their families. There are many things, spiritual and worldly but a real effort could be made to pray as a family, apart from individual devotions and prayers.

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture. *Truly, truly I say to you, "if you ask anything of the Father he will give it to you in my name. ask and receive that your joy may be full."* John 16:23-28. **Pope Francis:** "I would like to ask you, dear families, do you pray together from time to time as a family? Some of you do, but so many people say to me: But how?" As the tax collector does, it is clear: humbly before God. Each one with humility allowing themselves to be gazed upon by the Lord and imploring his goodness, that he may visit us. Homily for Family Day October 2013. **Pope Leo:** Prayer teaches us how to act. In prayer, our limited human possibilities are joined to the infinite possibilities of God. Thoughts, words and deeds then break the demonic cycle of evil and are placed at the service of the Kingdom of God. At vigil for peace 11 April 2026

ACT AND PRAY. Reflect on an appropriate action and invite Mary to pray with you for peace in the home.

LAUDATO SI WEEK AND WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY. 17-24 MAY

THEME: FROM HOPE TO ACTION;

"THERE IS ONE BODY AND ONE SPIRIT, JUST AS YOU WERE CALLED TO THE ONE HOPE OF YOUR CALLING"

(Ephesians 4:4)

Provided as a resource by the SACBC Departments for Christian Formation, Ecumenism, Inter-Faith & Religious Dialogue, Commission for Justice & Peace and MARFAM.

FOR UPDATES on these weeks and events for families, parishes and ecumenical gatherings visit www.marfam.org.za

Introduction

Laudato Si' Week www.laudatosiweek.org is an annual initiative of the Vatican Dicastery for Integral Human Development held around the date of the launch of the original document by Pope Francis in 2016. It is supported by many followers of *Laudato Si* but in particular by www.laudatosiplatform.org of the Dicastery and the international movement www.laudatosimovement.org. These are active in the SA region.

Laudato Si Week's theme "From Hope to Action" focuses on transforming ecological reflection into concrete action for our common home. It highlights ecological conversion through reflection, prayer, community initiatives, and practical steps against climate change, emphasizing daily choices, ecological conversion and protecting creation.

A CHRISTIAN PRAYER IN UNION WITH CREATION. From Laudato Si'

God of love, show us our place in the world as channels of your love
for all the creatures of this earth for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.
Enlighten those who possess power and money that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good, advance the weak and care for this world in which we live.
The poor and the earth are crying out.
Seize us with your power and light, help us to protect all life to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of you Kingdom, of just, peace, love and beauty.
Praise be to you. Amen.

The **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity** is an annual ecumenical programme of the World Council of Churches, also supported by the Catholic church. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity theme is "*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling*" (Eph 4:4). In pursuit for Christian Unity it is celebrated in the week before Pentecost in the southern hemisphere. Coming together we pray that the Holy Spirit may help us realize the invisible unity of faith for which Jesus prayed.

In South Africa it is supported by the Church Unity Commission which has provided a leaflet, a daily prayer available in various local languages and that can be prayed for different Christian churches in our country. Visit sq@churchunitycommission.org, and www.churchunitycommission.org

CHRISTIAN UNITY PRAYER, SOUTH AFRICA.

Righteous and merciful God; we come to you in repentant hearts, teach us to do good, give us courage to seek justice for all and to seek a meaningful unity of the church so that: the oppressed may be liberated, the orphan and the widow may know justice so that: peace, justice and love may prevail; through the one who is love, Jesus our redeemer, and in the power of the one whose fruit is love, the enabling Holy Spirit. Amen.

In the spirit of the **Franciscan Jubilee**, we recognize that hope calls us, like St Francis, to recompose ourselves and march with joy. Through our combined spiritual exercise with others, religious and with all creation, in imitation of St Francis of Assisi, we stand together in hope and united in faith to address the impending crisis. Throughout the world, especially in the poor countries, we are witnessing serious decay, the demographic changes in the family, the impact on individuals and regional climate disasters.

The combined weeks of Laudato Si and Christian Unity call us to open ears and hearts, be seeds of hope and signs of life-giving action, encountering brothers and sisters in promoting the values of the family and care for the environment. Unity is a divine mandate at the core of our Christian identity, more than simply an ideal. It represents the essence of the Church's calling – a call to reflect the harmonious oneness of our life in Christ amidst our diversity. This divine unity is central to our mission and is sustained by the profound love of Jesus Christ, who has set before us a unified purpose.

Through our various platforms may our action be a meaningful response to the “cry of the poor” and “cry of the earth”.

The Church must always stand as a visible sign of unity and a beacon of hope in the world!

Day One. Laudato si' Week and Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Sunday, 17 May 2026

Acts 1:1-11, Mt 26:16-20. *Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord.* One Action. A Global Catholic Response

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



Reflection

The Ascension proclaims restoration of hope for all creation in Christ Jesus. Today, in the Acts of the Apostles we learn that the ‘time for fulfilment has come’ and the ‘restoration of the kingdom’ will not be like we expect, but in recognizing the hope-filled restoration of all created things groaning for redemption in Christ (cf Rom 8:22). The ‘good news’ is that once we receive the Holy Spirit, we turn to be witnesses of divine hope for the hopeless and a voice for the voiceless. Our action is to set the downtrodden free, set free the environment enslaved to pollution and save the earth’s resources. In this hope-filled action, we make all creation realize that “I am with you always; yes, to end of time.”

This divine calling invites us to embody God’s values within the fellowship of believers. By aligning our conduct with this calling, we not only reflect Christ’s teachings but also contribute to the unity and growth of the Body of Christ. Recognizing and embracing this calling is essential for living out the true essence of Christian community and nurturing a harmonious, supportive fellowship.

A question to consider

How does reflecting on the “calling to which you have been called” as described in Ephesians 4:4 inspire you to actively contribute to unity within your local and wider church communities?

The power is not in perfection. The power is in participation.

Prayer for Families and Ecological Life

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

Day Two. Laudato si' Week and Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Monday, 18 May
7th Week of Easter A. Acts 19:1-8; Jn 16:29-33. *Kingdoms of the earth, sing to God*



Laudato Si' 231. *“Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world. Love for society and commitment to the common good are outstanding expressions of a charity which affects not only relationships between individuals but also macro-relationships, social, economic and political ones. Social love is the key to authentic development and is part of our spirituality.”*

Reflection

In the Gospel passage there is the sudden realization, the disciples now believe that Jesus came from God. This is divine inspiration, calling us not merely to a personal journey but is vividly expressed in our interactions with others and the environment. This is a call to a new world where we see Jesus as the Messiah united to His Father and summoning all creation to redemption. It is this beatific vision that caused St Francis of Assisi to sing praises in the Canticle of Creation, in the realization that all this is made by God. Our Christian obligation compels us to resist the evil forces through love, promote peace over ego, mercy over judgment and simplicity over prestige. Each individual person and family is called to be responsible for transforming communities and restoring life, creating a better world through love, justice and truth. During this Franciscan Jubilee, let us do so with hope and ready for action.

A question to consider

How can the virtues of humility, gentleness, patience and tolerance, as mentioned in the letter to the Ephesians, help us as believers to navigate and overcome divisions within our local Christian communities?

The power is not in perfection. The power is in participation.

Prayer for Families and Ecological Life

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

Day Three. Laudato si' Week and Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Tuesday, 19 May

Acts 20:17-27; Jn 17:1-11. *Eternal life is this, to know you, the only true God and Jesus whom you sent.*



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

Reflection

Jesus's first section of priestly prayer is for all creation, especially humankind, that upon recognizing the Son they may have eternal life. He prays that through humankind the universe may be saved. David sings of God's goodness toward humankind, that when *'people were starved you gave them new life. it was there that you people found a home, prepared in your goodness, O God, for the poor.'* (Ps 68:10-11) Perhaps, like Paul, we have turned prisoners not in spirit, but in real acts of destruction and devastation.

Peace is a crucial factor in maintaining unity within the Church. In Ephesians 4:3, the “bond of peace” signifies a vital and active principle that not only connects but also sustains the unity of the Christian community. Christ, the Prince of Peace (cf. Isaiah 9:6), preached peace and reconciliation. Peace is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), both a gift and a result of the Spirit at work.

Peace fosters meaningful relationships, allowing believers to interact harmoniously and more readily forgive one another. Paul highlights the fact that true unity requires ongoing commitment to peace. It calls for active cultivation and promotion of peace among members.

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

A question to consider

How does St Paul's teaching that peace is a fruit of the Spirit impact our daily interactions and relationships within our communities, especially where there is need for reconciliation or forgiveness?

The power is not in perfection. The power is in participation.

Prayer for Families and Ecological Life

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

Day Four. Laudato si' Week and Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Wednesday 20 May 2026

Acts 20: 28-38; Jn 17:11-19. *Father, keep them true to your name.*



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

Reflection

Wars, political intolerance, and violence through evil attitudes or behavior have defamed and removed God's blessing completely from many hearts. St Paul addresses the elders of the church in Ephesus; *'Be on your guard for yourselves... lest fierce wolves invade you and have no mercy on the flock'*. Political ego, conflicts, greed for power and wealth have harmed many lives, damaged the environment and caused everyone to suffer, especially the vulnerable. Jesus prays that we be protected from the evil one. Our shared hope in salvation through Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of this unity, drawing together diverse peoples into one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. As Christians, we are defined by this singular hope and the one Spirit through whom we are baptized and renewed. Our task is to ensure that this unity is not just a concept but a lived reality, reinforcing our shared mission and love for one another. May we not turn evil upon one another and the environment. After the example of St Francis of Assisi, we are called to be different, have a conversion of heart, change our actions toward humanity and all creation. We must stop, think, and pray for a new world order where disunity is weakened, human values and the environment restored to their original dignity.

A question to consider

In what ways can we, as a church or community, embrace the challenge of our one calling, while maintaining our unique identity and traditions? **The power is not in perfection. The power is in participation.**

Prayer for Families and Ecological Life

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

Day Five

Thursday, Laudato si' Week and Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 21 May 2026

Acts 22: 30; 23:6-11; Jn 17: 20-26. *One body and One in Spirit*



Laudato Si' 221. *God created the world, writing into it an order and dynamism that human beings have no right to ignore... How can we possibly mistreat them or cause them harm? I ask all Christians to recognize and to live fully this dimension of their conversion. In this way we will help to nurture that sublime fraternity with all creation which Saint Francis of Assisi so radiantly embodied. The Spirit of God has filled the universe with possibilities and therefore from the very heart of things, something new can always emerge. Nature is nothing other than a certain kind of art, namely God's art.*

Reflection

When Paul was brought before the council, he perceived that they were divided and stirred dissension among the Pharisees and Sadducees; *“Brethren, I am Pharisee, a son of a Pharisee; with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead...”* Jesus prays that all people of goodwill may become perfectly one, in him and with all creation. St Francis of Assisi recognize this and inspired action towards unity of creation in the Canticle of the Creatures. As we approach Pentecost, may we be *“multiplied and spread from one nation into every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, in hope that they might seek after him and find him”* Acts 17:26, Baptism creates the collective identity of the Church since we are one in the Body of the Lord. This sacrament serves as a powerful reminder that, while members may come from varied backgrounds, their unity in faith and baptism transcends all divisions. By focusing on these unifying elements, the Church can celebrate its diversity while remaining steadfastly united. This challenges us to prioritize our shared identity in Christ over our differences, reinforcing the bond that unites all Christians. It is this forgotten unity we must pray and seek, to re-inculcate the values of moral living and behavior. It is in the family that we can best recognize and treat each member with respect and dignity.

A question to consider

What collaborative initiatives can our various communities undertake to celebrate our shared faith in Jesus Christ and the unity established through baptism?

The power is not in perfection. The power is in participation.

Prayer for Families and Ecological Life

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

Day Six. Laudato si' Week and Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Friday, 22 May 2026

Acts 25:13b-21; Jn 21:15-19. *Let the Holy Spirit take hold of everything*

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



Reflection

The family constitutes the basic unit of every society. Families need to revive active participation in all efforts of uniting people and rehabilitating the environment. It is in the family where first the 'seeds of hope' need to be sown and from hope to action will begin. Families rooted in the Scriptures are the hope of a society free of manipulation, suffering, consumerism and greed.

This foundational truth calls the Church to embody and live out unity, rooted in the shared belief in one true God who is the Father of all believers. "All" signifies that every person created in God's image falls under God's authority. Worshiping one God creates a strong bond of unity among Christians. Just as family members find common ground through their love for a parent, Christians are called to be united in their devotion to the same Father.

St Francis of Assisi attested to a revolution against social ills, like Paul, who attests that Jesus who was dead and now is alive, what is cast down has been restored, the outcast brought in, strangers find welcome. Jesus commands Peter to "Feed my lambs, tend my sheep", an action of love in the Holy Spirit. The family of the Church is the all-embracing vision of a Mother who tends and feeds the flock of God's creation. Laudato Si' encourages unity of all families to participate in "Care for our Common Home" as its title states.

A question to consider

In what ways can the image of God as the loving and caring Father of all be integrated into the mission and ministry of our different church communities so as to promote a more unified Christian witness in the world?

The power is not in perfection. The power is in participation.

Prayer for Families and Ecological Life

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

Day Seven. Laudato si' Week and Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Saturday, 23 May 2026

Acts 28:16-20, 30-31 and John 21: 20- 25. *Earth is God's city*

Laudato Si' 100. *“The New Testament does not only tell us of the earthly Jesus and his tangible and loving relationship with the world. It also shows him risen and glorious, present throughout creation by his universal Lordship...This leads us to direct our gaze to the end of time, when the Son will deliver all things to the Father, so that “God may be everything to everyone” (1 Cor 15:28). Thus, the creatures of this world no longer appear to us under merely natural guise because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them towards fullness as their end. The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence.”*



Reflection

The wonder of creation bears the footprints of God. St Francis of Assisi recognized this fact. But we find ourselves like Peter, turning and looking at others with the question; What about this man or woman? Yet, our mission is to take

responsibility and make the world a better place for all. Like Paul, it involves setting free the captives of mind and stereotypes. St Francis, in the Canticle for Creation broke into song in recognition of the freedom of creation. Through faith, hope and love, we must resist allowing power, greed, pride, corruption and pollution to steal our joy of unity, causing many to suffer, knowing hunger and thirst even for a drop of fresh water, and leading to permanent sorrow. The churches and all local communities are diverse in their God-given unity, with grace given according to the gift of Christ for building up God's kingdom. These spiritual gifts are granted by one Lord, in one baptism, for one purpose. Diversity in unity: this is the unique Christ-centered richness and power of the Church in the movement of the Holy Spirit. *We are heirs and coheirs with Christ in the responsibility over creation.*

A question to consider

How will our relationships change if we accept that diversity of gifts is not a reason for opposition and competition but for mutual strengthening and sharing? **The power is not in perfection. The power is in participation.**

Prayer for Families and Ecological Life

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

Day Eight. Laudato si' Week and Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Sunday, 24 May 2026

Acts 2:1-11; Jn 20:19-23. **Solemnity of Pentecost.** *Lord, send forth your Spirit and you shall renew the earth.*

Laudato Si' 80. *God who wishes to work with us and who counts on our cooperation can bring good out of the evil we have done. The Holy Spirit can be said to possess an infinite creativity, proper to the divine mind, which knows how to loosen the knots of human affairs, including the most complex and inscrutable. The Spirit of God has filled the universe with possibilities and therefore from the very heart of things, something new can always emerge. LS 238. The Spirit infinite bond of love, is intimately present at the very heart of the universe, inspiring and bringing new pathways. The world was created by the Three Persons acting as a single divine principle, but each one of them performed this common work in accordance with his own personal property. LS 241. "Mary, the Mother who cared for Jesus, now cares with maternal affection and pain for this wounded world. She treasures the entire life of Jesus in her heart (cf. Lk 2:19,51) and now understands the meaning of all things. Hence, we can ask her to enable us to look at this world with eyes of wisdom*



Reflection

On this feast day, let us acknowledge the role of Holy Spirit who helps us accept the Will of the Father, Mary; the spouse of the Holy Spirit, and St Francis of Assisi who responded to the inspiration.

The "full stature of Christ" is the goal of Christian maturity. It means becoming more like Jesus in every way: loving as he loves, serving as he serves, and reflecting his character. We are called to evaluate our spiritual journey, seeking unity with each other, growing in our knowledge of the Son of God, and striving for his fullness in us.

Let the various inspired songs and choruses to the Holy Spirit ring in our hearts, transforming us to a new creation in Christ, inspiring us to renew our commitment to unity with all creation. While we strive to change our behaviors towards others and the environment. Like St Francis, with and for our families we pray the prayer for peace:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon;

where there is error, the truth; where there is doubt, the faith;

where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light;

and 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 is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

Pray: Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be.... (for the conversion of hearts to God the Creator).

May 25. Mary, Mother of the Church. SEE. There was a young teenage group of altar servers who used to meet on a Sunday evening with the parish deacon, Benedict. He told them, "The Church has traditionally dedicated this month of May to Mary, the mother of Jesus. That is why we have Mother's Day this month too. When I was growing up almost every family had a great devotion to Mary. Many would say the Rosary every night and I must admit that most of us kids didn't appreciate having to kneel next to our beds for that, although we did like to see her as our other mother who cares for us. Isn't that how much society has developed. We tend not to put our whole heart into things." And he sighed quietly. "Except for sport, old man!" a voice piped up. "Ja, I suppose you're right that sport has become the new religion. And while sport-madness is so often overdone, there are positives too." "I love it when my mom comes to watch my matches. And always makes sure that I have clean gear to wear." Abigail voiced her interest, while fingering her Immaculate heart of Mary medal. "My gran gave it to me and introduced me to the Rosary and to have a really special friendship with Mary. I know she has stood by many people over the years, and hope and pray that she will be my friend forever."

JUDGE. Reflect, share. Scripture. *The Lord said to the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel." The man called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all living. Genesis 3:9-15, 20. Jesus spoke from the cross, "Behold your Son. Behold your mother. John 19:25-34*

Pope Francis: *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. Pope Leo in Angola Muxima Mama shrine:* *Dear young people, and those devoted to Mamã Muxima, the Mother of the Heart, I am pleased to share this moment of Marian prayer with you. We are in a sanctuary where, for centuries, many men and women have prayed in times of joy and also in moments of sorrow and great suffering in the history of this country. For a long time now, Mamã Muxima has quietly worked to keep the heart of the Church alive and beating. Her heart contains a multitude of hearts: yours, and those of many people who love, pray, celebrate, weep, and sometimes — even when unable to come in person — entrust their requests and petitions to letters and postal messages. Mamã Muxima welcomes everyone, listens to everyone and prays for everyone.*

Act and Pray. Put up an image of Mary as a reminder to pray often: Mary, Mother of the Church, pray for us.

May 26. Vocations. SEE. When Sibusiso decided to study for the priesthood his parents felt very proud that there could be a priest in their family. However when it was explained to them that as a member of a religious congregation even though he was the oldest son he would not be able to give his family financial support, they were quite shocked and spoke to him about that. But they accepted when he shared how important it was for him to answer God's calling.

JUDGE. Reflect, share. Scripture. *I say to you there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time and in the age to come eternal life. Mark 10: 28-31. Pope Francis:* *Family bonds are essential for reinforcing healthy self-esteem. It is important for families to be part of the seminary process and priestly life, since they help to reaffirm these and keep them well grounded in reality. AL 203. Pope Leo in Equatorial Guinea 22 April 2026 Meeting with Youth and Families.* *"Francisco Martin spoke from the perspective of a vocation to the priesthood. He has given us a glimpse into the beautiful reality of so many young people who give themselves totally to God for the salvation of their brothers and sisters. He did not hide how difficult it was for him to find the courage to say "yes," his fiat, "yes Lord," yet through his words, we can all understand that entrusting oneself to God's will brings joy and profound serenity."*

Act and Pray. Discuss the special calling to the religious life and how parents can respond to that. Pray that parents will be open to whatever calling their children choose to follow. Mary, Mother of the church, pray for us.

May 27. Servant leadership. SEE. Karen and her neighbour Agatha were discussing the leaders in their different churches. "My priest keeps telling us about servant leadership, as he calls it, but he still expects us to do all the work around the church. Maybe he sees his service as celebrating Mass every Sunday. I think there should be more to it than that." Agatha listened and shared her experience. "My pastor is married and they have 4 children and I know that his wife has a job. It is quite funny to see a pastor doing housework and helping the kids with their homework. But I think it helps him to understand what all our lives are like every day."

JUDGE. Reflect, share. Scripture. *Those who rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. Whoever would be great among you must be your servant. The Son of man came not to be served but to serve. 1 Peter 1:18-25 Pope Francis:* *The commitment to Christian*

spirituality cannot be sustained by doctrine alone, without an interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity. LS 216. Pope Leo in Equatorial Guinea 22 April 2026. “Dear young people, parents and all who are present, let us be inspired by the beauty of love; let us become witnesses to the love that Jesus has left us and taught us! Let us show every day that it is beautiful to love — that the greatest joys, in every situation, come from knowing how to give and from giving of ourselves, especially when we reach out to those most in need. The light of charity, nurtured in our homes and lived out in faith, can truly transform the world.”

Act and Pray. Consider how servant leadership can be applied in your own setting. Pray that our spiritual leaders will be true to the calling of Jesus. Mary, Mother of the church, pray for us.

May 28. Light of the world. SEE. The oldies gathered round the clubhouse table were discussing and sharing some memories from the past. Martha said, “In our day, here in Ireland, we used to consider Africa as the dark continent. I can’t really remember why. Was it because the people are black or were seen to be backward, as in un-enlightened? My son became a missionary and spent most of his life in Africa, teaching and preaching and as he said when he came home one year. “I keep telling my people that Jesus Christ, is the light of the world. We talk about it and sing about it, but I’m beginning to wonder what we really understand or what that means to us. I have come to realise that in a world where not everyone has electricity on tap, light is a very precious and valued commodity.” Dorothy added, “We here would appreciate seeing the sun more often I must say. I like what St Francis sang about, ‘Be praised O Lord for Brother Sun, for he is the day and through him you give light, and he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour and bears a likeness of you Most High.’ I do appreciate every bit of sun that we get.”

JUDGE. Reflect, share. Scripture. *You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. 1 Peter 2-12*
Pope Leo in Equatorial Guinea 22 April 2026 meeting of Youth and Families. “Your Bishop described Equatorial Guinea as a country that is ‘young, full of energy, questions and a thirst for life,’ and at the same time eager to make Christ its light. These words echo the motto of this journey: Christ, light of Equatorial Guinea, toward a future of hope. His words are confirmed by your very presence! The brightest light here is the one that shines in your eyes, on your faces, in your smiles and through your songs and dances. Everything bears witness that Christ is the joy, meaning, inspiration and beauty of our lives.”

Act and Pray. Consider how servant leadership can be applied in your own setting. Pray that our spiritual leaders will always remain true to the calling of Jesus. Mary, Mother of the church, pray for us.

May 29. Family love. SEE. Fr William reflected: When Pope Leo visited four different countries in Africa earlier in April he carried a number of messages with him. Peace, in the midst of the US-IRAN war was uppermost in everyone’s minds. He spoke about unity, diplomacy and dialogue, about the evils of war and the terrible injustices and the suffering of innocent civilians. But wars are being waged in many places and each of the countries he visited knows the experience of internal strife, on ethnic, political or even religious grounds. Both Pope Francis and Pope Leo have expressed the view that the world is experiencing World War III, being waged piecemeal. Both have spoken repeatedly of love, God’s love, lived as human love and love for all of creation and hope for peace in the world. Where and how can, should and does love begin, if not in families and the Church as the Family of God.

JUDGE. Reflect, share. Scripture. *Beloved, the end of all things is at hand; therefore keep sane and sober for your prayers. Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins. Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another. As each has received a gift employ it for one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace. 1 Peter 4:7-13. Pope Francis: Why are we here? What need does the earth have of us? We need to see that what is at stake is our own dignity. Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is first and foremost is up to us. It has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn. LS 160.*

Pope Leo in Equatorial Guinea 22 April 2026 heard the testimony of a couple. “Dear friends, you have come to this gathering with your families. They are the fertile soil in which your human and Christian growth, like a young and delicate tree, sinks its roots. For this reason, I want to invite everyone to thank the Lord together for the gift of your loved ones. As Purificación and Jaime Antonio have suggested, entrust yourselves to the Lord, so that your families may grow in unity and welcome life as a gift to be cherished and nurtured, as we journey toward the Lord, the Lord who is the way, and the truth and the life.”

Act and Pray. Thank God for the gift of parental love and pray for all parent-child relationships to be centres of love.

May 30. Authority. SEE. A parent-teacher meeting was called to discuss school rules and authority. Mr Jackson, the principal invited the parents to speak amongst themselves about the situation faced in schools and homes. Are parents strict enough or too strict? Do parents support the teachers in trying to enforce discipline in a classroom or playground made up of hundreds of children? After the parents' time to discuss and the feedback he received the principal asked an important question. Who is in charge here, really in charge? What authority do I have, granted by whom?"

JUDGE. Reflect, share. Scripture. *As Jesus and his disciples came to Jerusalem and were walking in the temple the chief priests, scribes and elders came to him and said, "by whose authority are you doing these things?" Jesus said, I will ask you a question. 'Was the baptism of John from heaven? They replied, "We do not know? Jesus said, "neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things." Mark 11: 27-33. Pope Francis: "The common good is the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment." Underlying the principle is respect for the human person endowed with basic and inalienable rights ordered to his or her integral development. It has also to do with overall welfare of society. LS 156. Pope Leo: Pope Leo in Equatorial Guinea 22 April 2026 meeting with authorities. Yours is a young country! I am certain, therefore, that within the Church you will find help for the formation of free and responsible consciences, enabling you to advance together toward the future. In a world wounded by arrogance, people hunger and thirst for justice. It is necessary to encourage those who believe in peace and to dare to engage in "countercurrent" politics — those which place the common good at their very center. The city of God — the city of peace — is indeed received as a gift from on high, the horizon toward which our every noble aspiration turns. It is both a promise and a task.*

Act and Pray. Consider how best to deal with the issue of authority. Pray for peace and harmony in homes , schools and society.

May 31. Trinity Sunday. SEE. Fr George looked around the church. In his parish the men sat on one side, women on another and children all together. He thought to himself, "How can I relate this situation to the Blessed Trinity. Maybe I should encourage them at least once a month to sit as family units as best they can, to be a noticeable symbol of a community of love." In his homily he brought out images of the Trinity, the perfect community of love and how loving married couples and loving families should try to imitate this.

JUDGE. Reflect, share. Scripture. *Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. to God who is, who was, and who is to come. Rev 1:8. Pope Francis: The couple's fruitful relationship becomes an image for understand and describing the mystery of God himself, for in the Christian vision of the Trinity God is contemplated as Father, son and Spirit. AL 11. Pope Leo in Equatorial Guinea 22 April 2026: "Many of you are preparing for the sacrament of Holy Matrimony. Being spouses and parents is an exciting mission — a covenant to be lived day by day. Within this covenant, you will continually rediscover one another as you cooperate with God in the miracle of life and in building happiness for yourselves and for your children. Be prepared to embrace this calling as a journey of true love that grows in freedom; as a journey of hope, born from the knowledge that God will never abandon you; and as journey of holiness, in which you always seek the good and happiness of others."*

Act and Pray. Give thanks to God for the gift of the Sacrament of Marriage and for the couples invited to live out this calling as a sign to us all. Pray that married couples especially as parents, may be strengthened in their relationships, through the intercession of Mary, who was a wife and mother.

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