



MARFAM 2026 YEAR OF ST FRANCIS.

“OUR WORLD, A FAMILY OF FAMILIES”



THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY AUGUST. THEME: SEXUALITY A FAMILY GIFT.

Using a SEE-JUDGE-ACT format, a focus on grandparents and elderly and quotations from Popes Francis and Leo. Family-focused Thoughts of the Day are published on www.marfam.org.za, facebook and whatsapp. Email request to info@marfam.org.za.

Abbreviations: Pope Francis: EG = *Evangelii Gaudium*, LS = *Laudato Si*. AL = *Amoris Laetitia* FT = *Fratelli Tutti*. Pope Leo DT = *Dilexi Te* and *Magnifica Humanitas* MH

Magnifica Humanitas and the **CIVILISATION OF LOVE**. This recent encyclical from Pope Leo is extensively used here. It can be downloaded in full from www.vatican.va for study and used for faith sharing, ideally in families, call it synodal dialogue. The objective and task chosen by Pope Leo of **building a civilization of love** can be related back to the 1994 World Meeting of Families theme **FAMILIES – HEART OF THE CIVILISATION OF LOVE**.

AUGUST OVERVIEW. Sexuality, a Family Gift. God looked on his creation and was pleased. Particularly good was the ability for creation to continue and evolve through its sexual reproductive capability in almost every life form. Because of the special attributes of humans, including free will, human sexuality is a special gift and blessing, in its most profound expression in marriage. As an ideal it is often poorly presented and understood, and is still often a taboo subject or seen negatively. The consequences of sin have resulted in situations such as gender-based violence and abuse. Women's empowerment, complementarity of men and women and positive education for youth are important. Gender-related changes, infertility treatment, the existence of LGBTIQ+ persons are family matters and a reality today. Sexuality and procreation are core aspects of all of creation, human, animal and plant. Other than manipulating this in nature, for our human benefit, we no doubt know too little of the psycho-social aspects of sexual behaviour in animals that also acts for the common good of all of creation.

Pope Francis: *In assessing the environmental impact of any project, little attention is paid to studying reproductive patterns and some species face extinction. LS35. Each person, regardless of sexual orientation ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration, while every sign of unjust discrimination is to be avoided, particularly any form of aggression and violence. AL 250. Sexuality can only be seen within the broader framework of an education for love and for mutual self-giving.” AL 280.*

Pope Leo: *The civilization of love will not arise from a single or spectacular gesture, but from the sum total of small and steadfast acts of fidelity that serve as a bulwark against dehumanization. For this reason, it is worthwhile pausing to reflect on some aspects of how we, each in our own way, can cooperate in building the civilization of love. Without presuming to exhaust this theme, I would like to propose five paths toward daily and public responsibility: 1. the need to disarm words, 2. building peace through justice, 3 adopting the perspective of victims, 4. cultivating a healthy realism and 5. reviving dialogue and multilateralism. From MAGNIFICA HUMANITAS - ON SAFEGUARDING THE HUMAN PERSON IN THE TIME OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)*

SETTING THE SCENE. Sexuality a Family Gift. As ongoing adult formation in the area of sexuality and gender issues is so important it was considered helpful to address it from diocesan level with different departments discerning and working together, picking up on aspects relevant for them and taking these back to the parishes and families. Most basic is the understanding of sexuality which begins and is lived within any and every family. The family life department requested, Rayhab, a social worker to be an advisor to the overall project.

Each of the reflections with the SEE – JUDGE- ACT approach includes a Look at Life, an extract from a scripture passage of the day and quotations from Pope Francis and Pope Leo concluding with action and prayer . They can be used by individuals and groups but also valuably for faith sharing in families. Special days during the month are SA Women's Day and the Assumption of Our Lady as the patronal feast for South Africa.

Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us. Us.

August 1. SEE. Womanly wiles. One parish study group considered the question, “How do you all here, men and women feel about women using their feminine wiles to manipulate men and get their own way, and even colluding and using other women for this? Talk to one another, as men and women about this for a moment.” Feedback was almost unanimous from men and women that manipulation is not the way to achieve any kind of balance. It is not fair. “Thanks for that,” Rayhab concluded. “We are definitely going to unpack this much more.”

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: When Herod's birthday came the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and pleased Herod, so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. Prompted by her mother she said, "give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter." Matthew 14: 1-12. **Pope Francis:** The equal dignity of men and women makes us rejoice to see old forms of discrimination disappear, and within families there is a growing reciprocity. From AL 54 **Pope Leo:** The value of persons, however, does not depend on what they achieve or produce. There are rights that apply to everyone simply by virtue of being human, and no human power can legitimately deny or arbitrarily limit them. MH 51. It is, therefore, not enough to state simply that men and women have equal dignity and rights; it is necessary that this be reflected in concrete decisions, such as in laws, access to employment, education, social and political responsibilities, and the way society listens to and values women's contributions. As long as this gap persists, we cannot say that society truly and fully recognizes that women have the same dignity as men. MH 57.

ACT AND PRAY. As appropriate for the needs of your family. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 2. SEE. SUNDAY 18A. Inclusive language. Martin opened up the topic of exclusive and inclusive language. "Let's take a look at the rally in the gospel and these 5000 men, besides women and children that were fed. Would they really have gone without taking any provisions with them? That does sound like an unwomanly thing to do. Could it have been just one woman, or maybe a man who had brought some loaves and fish? The story does illustrate God's concern for us, for our human and spiritual needs because they were not expecting to be fed. The fact that the gospel notes 5000 men first and then adds on some women and children shows the world-view of the time. Women were not on an equal plane with men. But in other instances Jesus does challenge gender stereotypical thinking, a good topic to explore.

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: Jesus said, "they need not go away, you give them something to eat." Those who ate were about 5000 men, besides women and children. Matt 13: 13-21. **Pope Francis:** Certain forms of feminism have arisen which we must consider inadequate, we must nonetheless see in the women's movement of our time the working of the Spirit for a clearer recognition of the dignity and rights of women. AL 54. **Pope Leo:** Recognizing that every man and woman possesses an inalienable dignity, together with rights that no human power can betray or nullify, requires us to shape the way we live together, including our economic and political choices, and the makeup of our cities. From this arises the first major principle of Social Doctrine: the common good. MH 59

ACT AND PRAY. Pray as appropriate for the needs of your family. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 3. SEE. Migration. The boat people, young men, women and children crammed together in the boat sat quietly at times, slept, children cried and sometimes Jeremiah prayed that their journey would be worthwhile, that their future life would be better for them and their families. He hoped and believed that this journey must be good for them all. As he looked out over the ocean, sometimes calm and sometime stormy he thought how Jesus came to his disciples walking over the water of the sea of Galilee and how Peter's faith failed him. He prayed silently, "Jesus, be with us and bless us on this difficult journey. May our faith in our future be justified." How many times has this scenario been repeated in the last 10 years. It is reported that 35000 people have been lost at sea including a least 3500 children.

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: After Jesus had come to them walking on the water and Peter had been afraid and begun to sink, Jesus said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?". Matt 14:22-36. **Pope Francis.** Forced migration of families, resulting from situations of war, persecution, poverty and injustice and marked by the vicissitudes of a journey that often put lives at risk, traumatizes people and destabilises families. AL 46. **Pope Leo:** 62. It is the pursuit of the common good that gives life to a people, understood not as a mere collection of individuals, but as a living reality in which people learn to recognize that they themselves are interconnected and jointly responsible for the res publica. In this sense, every person contributes to the building up of one's people through "a slow and arduous effort calling for a desire for integration and a willingness to achieve this through the growth of a peaceful and multifaceted culture of encounter.

ACT AND PRAY. Act and pray for a just and compassionate resolution to the migration problem worldwide Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 4. SEE. Unfaithfulness. The group quickly started picking up issues themselves that sometimes needed to be teased out. "The front page article in *THE CITIZEN* newspaper reports on a disgraced politician, charges of corruption as well as various love relationships. Was the disgrace because of the love relationship or the corruption?" "In our day the different commissions of enquiry are often coming up with a combination, corruption and relationships, including unfaithfulness to their marriage partner." "How destructive for themselves and their families are these kinds of

relationships that are far too common. Is breakdown in family life punishment enough for the guilty parties, as adultery is no longer a legal matter?"

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *There is no medicine for your wound, no healing, all your lovers have forgotten you. For I have dealt you the blow of an enemy, the punishment of a merciless foe, because your guilt is great, because your sins are flagrant."* Jer 30: 12-15. **Pope Francis:** *We treat affective relationships the way we treat material objects and the environment: everything is disposable. It is easy to confuse genuine freedom with the idea that each individual can act arbitrarily, as if there were no truths, values and principles to provide guidance, and everything were possible and permissible. The ideal of marriage marked by a commitment to exclusivity and stability is swept aside whenever it proves inconvenient or tiresome.* AL39. **Pope Leo:** *As the first natural society, endowed with foundational rights, the family is the fundamental and irreplaceable cell of every community organization. Consequently, when political projects and major economic decisions relegate the family to a marginal or secondary role, the authentic growth of the entire social body is compromised.* MH 165.

ACT AND PRAY. For integrity in public life. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 5. SEE. Racism and sexism. Angela referred her group to a discussion Fr Thabo had held on discrimination with some of the catechists at one of their formation sessions. As they were quite a mixed cultural parish it was interesting to hear their opinions and he had also shared some of those in his Sunday homily. "Deep down inside ourselves how do we look at men and women of different races and cultures? Do we respect a German woman differently from a Nigerian woman? Do we take a Chinese man or a Zulu more seriously? What is our attitude towards people but also towards them as "gendered" people? I think that in the last twenty years or so we have become more accepting and tolerant of one another but I don't know whether that applies to the sexes too. Jesus lived in a racist society, where Canaanites were not acceptable to the Jews and for a Canaanite woman to approach him for her sick daughter might even have been a shock

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Jesus said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It is not fair to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."* The Canaanite woman replied, "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Then Jesus answered her, "O woman great is your faith! Let it be done as you desire." Read Matt 15:21-28. **Pope Francis:** *The equal dignity of men and women makes us rejoice to see old forms of discrimination disappear and within families there is a growing reciprocity.* AL: 54 **Pope Leo:** *It is the State's responsibility to ensure cohesion, unity and the proper organization of civil society, so that the common good can be pursued with everyone's contribution. In practical terms, this means that public authorities have the delicate duty to "harmonize the different sectoral interests with the requirements of justice," seeking a balance between individual interests and the common good, without leaving behind the most vulnerable.* MH 63.

ACT AND PRAY. Examine our own attitudes on the subjects of racism and sexism. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 6. SEE. Transfiguration. Fr Joseph, the parish priest had prepared his Sunday homily with the topic for the month, of Sexuality as a Family Gift and with the upcoming Women's Day in mind. "Some gender topics are challenging from a negative point of view; we should be well aware of oppression, exploitation and abuse and violence, but there is also a positive challenge, for good gender relationships. These don't happen naturally and need a lot of hard work." Tracy, one member of the family team added, "today's feastday for us, Catholics has been one of my favourites for a long time. On this feast of the Transfiguration the three apostles chosen by Jesus to witness his transfigured self were overcome with wonder and exclaimed. 'Lord it is good for us to be here.' That is my hope and dream for all our gender relationships."

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Jesus was transfigured before them and his face shone like the sun and his garments became white as light. And behold there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord it is well that we are here."* Matt 17:1b-9. **Pope Francis:** *The joy of Love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church. For all the signs of crisis in the institution of marriage, the desire to marry and form a family remains vibrant, especially among young people and this is an inspiration to the Church.* AL1. **Pope Leo:** *The dignity inscribed in each of us by the Holy Spirit can also be seen in our capacity to reflect critically, choose and love freely, and form authentic relationships. No computational system, however sophisticated, can create a heart that gives itself, or a conscience that discerns good from evil. Even when machines excel in efficiency, a human face that asks to be gazed upon remains the center of our history. This human face is the fullness toward which history is moving.. the certainty that the Father has decreed to bring all things, those in heaven and those on earth, back to Christ, the one Head.* MH 233.

ACT AND PRAY. Reflect on the Joy of Love in your own life. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 7. SEE. Addictions. All religions, from the most primitive until today's sophisticated faith practices have certain laws, rules, norms and standards, in other words a moral code. To live a good life according to the prescribed norms as an individual man or woman and also as a couple demands sacrifices. Addictions to gambling, pornography and various substances can be crosses within families. The group members were given time to think. "I think I have carried my cross with dignity." "My cross is hard; an addiction to pornography is a cross." "My cross was taken away from me after we joined AA and Alanon to deal with the alcohol abuse in our home. I thank God but pray constantly for strength to carry on the journey."

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *If any man, or woman would come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. Matt 16:24 (using inclusive language)* **Pope Francis:** *Drug use was mentioned as one of the scourges of our time, causing immense suffering and even breakup for many families. The same is true of alcoholism, gambling and other addictions. Society and politics fail to see that families at risk "lose the ability to help their members."* AL51. **Pope Leo:** *According to the teaching of our faith, we have and adore in our mysteries, a God who is born in a manger, a God who lives and travels in Judea, a God who dies on the cross, a dead God who lies in the tomb." The future of humanity, therefore, finds its standard in the ability to welcome this divine way of drawing near, of sharing the burden of the world, of transforming relationships from within. MH232.*

ACT AND PRAY. What is my concern for the future of humanity as well as all of creation? Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 8. SEE. Limitations and service. Life was hard for Petru as a single Mom and she had never had a stable relationship since her teen years when she had become addicted to alcohol. Her daughter had been born with fetal alcohol syndrome. Rayhab, the appointed social worker, shared her concern about a number of such cases that she had to deal with because they were rejected by their families. "It is sad that families often don't understand that a problem for one is a problem for all, so families too need healing as a unit. "

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *The woman spoke to Jesus, "My son is an epileptic and suffers terribly. I brought him to your disciples but they could not heal him." Jesus rebuked the demon and the boy was cured instantly. Jesus said to his disciples. "O you of little faith." Matt 17:14-20.* **Pope Francis:** *Service in great part means caring for vulnerability, for the vulnerable members of our families, our society, our people. In offering their service individuals learn to set aside their own wishes and desires, their pursuit of power, before the concrete gaze of those who are most vulnerable* FT 115. **Pope Leo:** *The spirituality I wish to commend is that of the "wise architect" who, driven by hope for the Kingdom of God, is committed to building the world for the common good. The task of building in our time must place our relationship with God at its center. Our rule must be the acceptance of human limitations as a natural and positive reality, and should be characterized by shared responsibility and a language characterized by the Gospel. MH236.*

ACT AND PRAY. How accepting am I of limitations, in myself and others? Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 9. SEE. Sunday 19A. WOMEN'S DAY SOUTH AFRICA. Various groups had decided to hold a combined interfaith church service to commemorate Women's Day. "We don't want to forget the importance of God in our lives. We thank God for his role in all our liberation, as women and men, but right now in our country we pray for an end to violence in particular against women and children, which is even seen as a national disaster, as well as the xenophobia that has been plaguing us recently. Families have been torn apart and mothers with children suffer the most. We pray for peace and calm and for openness to listen to one another's voices. We pray for victims but also for perpetrators that they may recognise the evil they have committed and experience a conversion of heart. We pray for healing for every family that has suffered."

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Elijah stood upon the mount before the Lord. The Lord passed by and a great, strong wind tore the mountains, but the Lord was not in the wind, and after the wind an earthquake, and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire there was a still small voice. And when Elijah heard it he went out and stood at the entrance to the cave. 1 Kgs 19:9a, 11-13a.* **Pope Francis:** *Love impels us towards universal communion. No one can mature or find fulfilment by withdrawing from others. By its very nature love calls for growth in openness and the ability to accept others for a greater sense of mutual belonging. FT 95.* **Pope Leo:** *Let us cultivate relationships! In an era that favors speed and fragmentation, the human person still yearns to receive care and recognition from attentive minds, kind words and hands capable of tenderness. MH 239.* **ACT AND PRAY Women's Day. .**

PRAYER FOR THE WOMEN OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Almighty God,

You are father and mother to us, your children.

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

As they progress towards their rightful place in society we request your blessing on all women
that they may continue also to hold their rightful place in the family.
that women and men together may build a society
which will bring about the Kingdom You have promised us.

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

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

St Francis and St Clare, lovers of peace and support for those who are suffering, pray for us.

August 10. SEE. Taxes. On a very practical level the groups were discussing taxes. There is income tax, VAT, and property taxes but there are also the different grants. Comments came thick and fast. "We give, but it is mostly others who get. Is that fair?" "I think the principle of the common good is the right one. For me it puts a positive spin on the fact that life isn't fair." "Don't women often carry heavier financial burdens, as so many of our families are headed by single mothers?" "But what about young girls who they say get pregnant just so that they can get a child grant, which they don't always even use for the baby?" "I think we need to look more holistically at family units rather than at men's or women's perspectives. What about family income tax and family grants?" "Shouldn't all that be balanced out for the common good?"

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *"The collectors of the half-shekel tax went up to Peter and said, "Does not your teacher pay the tax?" Matthew 17:22-27. Pope Francis:* Families have the right to be able to count on an adequate family policy on the part of public authorities in the juridical, economic, social and fiscal domains. Families and homes go together. This makes us see how important it is to insist on the rights of the family and not only rights of individuals. AL 44. **Pope Leo:** Fidelity to the truth requires integrating the possibilities offered by technology within a framework marked by wisdom, which is capable of safeguarding both the dignity of each person and the future of our common home. MH 237. **ACT AND PRAY.** Reflect and share as appropriate. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 11. SEE. Child rape. A serious topic needing an urgent response from the groups was the question of abuse and rape of children. "Are our children precious to us, are they not a fruit of our love to be guarded and protected?" "Should we not consider all children everywhere in the same light?" "yes, but how?" "Child rape can of course never ever be justified but how can it be explained? What could be going through a rapist's mind? Surely that is an unnatural act? Is there some substance-induced behaviour underlying this, or a personality disorder?" Rayhab, the parish's social worker, agreed to organise some professional input on this subject and some possible responses to help them when necessary.

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Whoever humbles himself like this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I tell you that in heaven their angels always behold the face of My Father who is in heaven. Matthew 18: 1-5. Pope Francis.* The sexual exploitation of children is a scandalous and perverse reality in present-day society. Societies experiencing violence due to war, terrorism and organised crime are witnessing the deterioration of the family, above all in large cities where the phenomenon of street children is on the rise. Sexual abuse of children occurs where they ought to be most safe, e.g. in families, schools, communities and Christian institutions. AL 45. **Pope Leo:** we cannot limit ourselves to the level of abstract analysis. Pope Francis encouraged us to "touch the wounded flesh" of those who suffer, look at their faces, listen to their stories and acknowledge their wounds. Painful events require both history and memory, the former to recount the facts, the latter to bear witness to lived experiences MH216.

ACT AND PRAY Reflect and share as appropriate, inviting St Clare on her feastday to pray for children who suffer. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 12. SEE. Sibling relationships. The family and the youth groups presented insights into sibling relationships too. Thandi said, "Think of your own families. Is there rivalry between brothers or sisters and brothers, or jealousy, or resentment or possibly even sexual abuse or serious conflict for one or other reason? The intimacy in family units is unique among all other human relationships and should be cherished rather than abused." Claire said "I personally admire the young people who manage their own child-headed homes but I also know that they do need more help than they get. It is not fair on teenage boys and girls to be responsible for younger siblings when they themselves have hardly developed their own personal identity. Sometimes they are just left behind in a different town, alone or with a carer or relative. These little units are very vulnerable on many fronts. Do we know of any?"

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his faults between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen take one or two others along with you that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. Matthew 18: 15-20. Pope Francis* Growing up with brothers and sisters makes for a beautiful experience of caring for and helping one another. We see the care and love that surround a little brother or sister who is frail or disabled. Children do need to be patiently taught to treat one another as brothers and sisters. This can be quite demanding and is a true school of socialisation. AL 195. **Pope Leo:** Authentic realism does not give up on changing the world; indeed, it starts by clearly identifying interests, fears, constraints and power dynamics, precisely in order to determine what can be achieved, and the measures needed to achieve it. MH 218.

ACT AND PRAY. Reflect and share as appropriate, remember the needs of child-headed families. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 13. SEE. Money. Everyone discussed the issue of money and its many implications for causing, or dealing with conflict and distress, in the area of sexuality among others. Giving money instead of love is only too common, in families where parents cannot find time for one another. . In cases of abuse money may be paid to ensure silence. Sugar-daddies, or "blessers" give money for luxuries to teenage girls in exchange for sexual favours. "I find that term really offensive" Jane said "This is really a form of prostitution." In cases of extreme poverty women and girls may resort to selling their bodies, while parents sometimes "sell" their own children. Women become surrogate mothers for financial reward. Trafficking of girls is an increasing problem as they may be abducted or unwittingly lured into the situation.

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *The Kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts. One was brought to him who could not pay. The servant fell on his knees imploring him, "Lord have patience with me." Matt 18:21 -19:1. Pope Francis.* Migration, extreme poverty and other situation of family breakdown sometimes lead families to sell their children for prostitution or organ trafficking. AL 46. **Pope Leo:** This insight proves even more fundamental in the current context of digital transformation. Digital networks, the globalized economy and the development of AI create increasingly tighter bonds, linking — in real time — decisions made in one place to the effects they produce elsewhere. In this sense, the words of the Second Vatican Council on the growing interdependence between peoples remain timely, for the common good is taking on an increasingly universal dimension, with rights and duties concerning the entire human family. MH 187.

ACT AND PRAY. Reflect and share as appropriate. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 14. SEE. Marriage crises. Paula shared, "Sexual issues can and do impact on couple relationships in various ways but we, as individuals and couples, seldom seem to bring these issues to the Church. Are we embarrassed or think we won't be listened to or accepted?" "There are competent experts who are able to speak to life from a "God-perspective," Joan replied, "but it is also good to consult professionals in this area to help us explore our concerns and experiences, e.g. childhood abuse in the past and the effects that still has in the present."

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *The Pharisees tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause"? Jesus said, "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one."? Matt 19:3-12 Pope Francis.* Situations will arise involving human weakness and these can prove emotionally overwhelming. One spouse may not feel fully appreciated, or may be attracted to another person. Jealousy and tensions may emerge or new interests that consume the other's time and attention. Physical changes naturally occur in everyone. These and so many other things rather than threatening love are so many occasions for reviving and renewing it. AL 237 "Be subject to one another.(Ephesians 5) " In marriage this reciprocal submission takes on a special meaning, and is seen as a freely chosen mutual belonging, marked by fidelity, respect and care. Sexuality is inseparably at the service of this conjugal friendship for it is meant to aid the fulfilment of the other. AL 136. **Pope Leo:** 165. The family is a primary social good. Founded on the enduring union between a man and a woman, it is the first environment in which all persons

develop their potential, become aware of their dignity and learn the earliest forms of truth and goodness, internalizing the habits that prepare them for life in society. MH 165.

ACT AND PRAY. Reflect and share as appropriate. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 15. SEE. (The feast of the Assumption is transferred to Sunday 16 August in South Africa) **Children and divorce.** Another serious topic needing a response from the group was the question of children and various forms of family violence. Rayhab shared her experience as a social worker. "Divorce almost invariably has a negative impact on children in a whole variety of ways but so does the experience of ongoing violence. Divorce is very common today and we do need to ask if it is chosen too quickly. Careful discernment with qualified and competent counsellors and possibly even mediation can be very helpful in deciding on the best course of action." Everyone agreed in principle but knew that it is a difficult situation to deal with, especially alone and when one is feeling really desperate.

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *"Let the children come to me and do not hinder them for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." And he laid his hands on them and went away. Matt 19:13-15. Pope Francis:* At times separation becomes morally necessary as a last resort, when it is a matter of removing the more vulnerable spouse or young children from serious injury due to abuse and violence, from humiliation and exploitation, and from disregard and indifference. AL241. *The good of children should be the primary concern, and not overshadowed by any ulterior interest or objective. Never ever take your child hostage! AL 245. Pope Leo:* The family, however, is a fragile social good immediately affected by the economic and technological transformations reshaping the nature of work. It thus requires cultural, juridical and economic support. MH 166.

ACT AND PRAY. Reflect and share as appropriate. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 16. SEE. Sunday 20A. Assumption of Our Lady into heaven. patron feast of South Africa. Fr Joseph spoke about the many different images we have of Mary. He asked, "Is she a patroness to you, and in what way? I am asking you when you get home to share your own devotion to Mary with your family. Different people see her as a powerful queen, a mother, a sorrowing mother, at times possibly angry at events in her life and that of her Son. She had experienced exile, and losing a child is very painful as some have also experienced. Some people like the "gentle woman" that we sing about or see on Christmas cards." The sharing at home later on was enlightening and all agreed with the words she herself used, "The Lord has done great things for me" and they agreed a patroness can be all those things. Every family could pray together regularly, "Mary, Queen assumed into heaven, patroness of South Africa, pray for us."

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has regarded the lowly estate of his handmaiden. For behold henceforth all generations will call me blessed: for he who is mighty has done great things for me and holy is his name. Luke 1:46-49. Pope Francis:* Mary, Virgin and Mother, you who moved by the Holy spirit welcome the word of life in the depths of your humble faith as you gave yourself completely to the eternal One, help us to say our own "yes" to the urgent call, as pressing as ever to proclaim the good news of Jesus. From EG 288. **Pope Leo:** 244. *The Blessed Virgin Mary not only teaches us to recognize God's invisible work, but also directs our gaze to "the points at which humanity is broken and the world becomes distorted: the contrast between the humble and the powerful, the poor and the rich, the satiated and the hungry," teaching us "to look at the world from a lower position: through the eyes of those who suffer rather than the mighty; to view history through the eyes of the little ones, rather than through the perspective of the powerful; to interpret the events of history from the viewpoint of the widow, the orphan, the stranger, the wounded child, the exile and the fugitive."* MH 244.

ACT AND PRAY, Reflect and share on your devotion to Our Lady as patroness for South Africa. Share with her your particular needs and Invite her to pray for your family.

August 17. SEE. The rich young man. One of the group raised the topic of materialism and even vanity. "I was thinking of the Scripture of the rich young man who was asked to sell all his possessions and follow Jesus." Joann said. "We always think of a young man but would it not apply equally to a woman? Are women more materialistic, more vain, more interested clothes and nice things than men, or are their desires just different? I think that this challenge that Jesus issues is probably one of the most difficult ones to respond to. Quite honestly I think most people I know would "go away sorrowful" whether they are rich or poor."

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *if you would be perfect go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me. The young man heard this and went away sorrowful. Matt 19: 20-22.*

Pope Francis: Many people know that our current progress and the mere amassing of things and pleasures are not

enough to give meaning and joy to the human hearts yet they feel unable to give up what the market sets before them. LS 209. **Pope Leo:** Jesus is an itinerant teacher, whose poverty and precariousness are signs of his oneness with the Father. They are also conditions for those who wish to follow him on the path of discipleship in this way. The renunciation of goods, riches and worldly securities becomes a visible sign of entrusting oneself to God and his providence. DT20. **ACT AND PRAY.** For an increasing openness to be willing to entrust oneself to God's providence.

August 18. SEE. Money management. The conversation in the group came back to possessions and money management again. This is a sore point in many relationships. Men complain that women are spenders, women complain that men are mean and irresponsible, drink or gamble. "My husband refuses to tell me what he earns." "I need to ration the money I give to my wife because she just spends it all." Such comments came from all around the groups. Are there gender traits when it comes to managing finances or is it to do with one's personal ideology, be it socialist or capitalist even? They also came to recognise that not everyone is called to give up all worldly possessions. That is a special calling. Everyone is called, however, to have a proper balance even recognising that wealth and greed and corruption can be problems at any level.

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." From Matt 19:23-30. **Pope Francis:** Many things have to change but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, our mutual belonging and a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. LS 202. **Pope Leo:** The Biblical story of building of the tower of Babel tells us that when a city is built on pride and the claim to self-sufficiency, communication breaks down, languages are confused and people no longer understand each other. The result is not unity, but dispersion. Babel thus reveals the limits of any effort that, however grandiose, arises from self-affirmation, sacrifices human dignity for efficiency and aspires to reach heaven without God's blessing. MH 7 **ACT AND PRAY.** Reflect on the gender aspect of money management and the need for communication and balance. Pray for guidance.

August 19. SEE. Work. The speaker kicked off with, "Equal work for equal pay," is a popular slogan and also goes to the heart of much of the gender question today in almost every sphere. But apart from pay should there be discrimination about the type of work men and women can do? "Women cannot or would not necessarily want to do hard physical labour, although that seems to be changing, In the area of sport both work equally hard but differences do remain, especially when it comes to payment. Are we built differently physically and mentally to work differently too?" Many relevant points were raised but once again the conclusion was that it had to do with balance and attitudes towards equality as well. "It already starts at home with the way we teach our kids, boys and girls, about money and give them pocket money or expect them to contribute their time to making things work smoothly in the family." "And not necessarily in stereotypical ways these days either," Robert added. Everyone was encouraged to go and discuss the issue further with their children at home.

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: The kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. Matt 20:1-16. **Pope Francis.** Masculinity and femininity are not rigid categories A rigid approach turns into an over accentuation of masculine and feminine and does not help children to appreciate genuine reciprocity. Taking on domestic chores or some aspects of raising children does not make a man any less masculine or imply failure, irresponsibility or shame. AL 286. **Pope Leo:** For young people, job insecurity is particularly devastating. As the Bishops of the United States of America have recalled, work is not merely a source of income but a crucial sphere in which identity is formed, friendships and relationships are forged, practical responsibilities are learned and one's vocation is discerned. When access to work is hindered by high levels of unemployment, inadequate systems of training or structural barriers, many young people find the path to their human and professional fulfilment blocked. MH 167

ACT AND PRAY. As families with youth consider responsible choices in planning for future work possibilities.

August 20. SEE. Marriage feasts. Women and men discussed the topic of weddings and feasts. "Why would someone not want to go to a wedding especially a traditional one that goes on for a day or two with lots of food and drink, I wonder." "Maybe too busy." "Can't afford to dress up." "Not really interested, or in the people involved." Many reasons came from men and women. Portia concluded, "I think it's mostly men who don't see such religious or cultural things as relevant these days. Is that the same reason why there are fewer men in church? But of course we women are just far more sociable too,"

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son and sent his servants to call those invited but they would not come. Matt 22:1-14. Pope Francis.* Catechesis is a proclamation of the word and is always centred on that word, yet it also demands a suitable environment, an attractive presentation and the use of eloquent symbols. Every dimension of the person should be inserted in a communal journey of hearing and response. EG 166. **Pope Leo.** Let us cultivate relationships! In an era that favors speed and fragmentation, the human person still yearns to receive care and recognition from attentive minds, kind words and hands capable of tenderness. The digital culture multiplies connections and offers new opportunities for interaction; yet, the human heart retains an irrevocable need for genuine closeness. I invite everyone to cherish places and times where physical presence remains crucial, such as shared meals, Christian community gatherings, time spent with the lonely and serving the poor. These are signs of a humanity that continues to believe that every person's body is a dwelling place of God and a temple of the Holy Spirit. MH 239

ACT AND PRAY. Explore differences that can contribute to improved relationships. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 21. SEE. Other-centredness. Although the discussions in the groups were not intended to be only religious the topic of the great commandments and "Love your neighbor as you love yourself" with its two parts is taken very seriously today. There is a greater emphasis on self-esteem and one's own healthy self-image as opposed to focusing on a relationships with others. Maysie said she didn't want to be anyone's doormat as that has happened too frequently in the past, with women always being exploited. Joseph shared, "I think women are getting to be too independent and even overbearing nowadays. We men just can't handle that." Portia added, "It's not easy to keep a balance but we really need to teach our kids constantly to think of another person and not just oneself. Even with teens a lot of the time it's doing what I want or don't want.

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Matt 22:39. Pope Francis:* We treat loving relationships the way we treat material objects and the environment: everything is disposable: everyone uses and throws away, takes and breaks, exploits and squeezes the last drop. Narcissism makes people incapable of looking beyond themselves, beyond their own desires and needs. AL 39. **Pope Leo:** War is not only fought, but also culturally conditioned through simplistic narratives, a friend-or-foe mentality, disinformation and fear. When historical memory fades and the ethical principles that protect civilians and the most vulnerable are weakened, it becomes easier to justify violence as necessary, inevitable or even "sanitized." MH192.

ACT AND PRAY. Reflect and share as appropriate. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 22. SEE. Subsidiarity. It's not done in our culture for a man to sweep the house and serve his wife and family at table. I could never act like a servant," one man announced, "what will my friends think," he added. "Are our gender stereotypes determined by others or do we make our own decisions?" "They say peer pressure is great in young people, but I think it is just as hard for us men." Most of the men agreed and one added, "Also in polygamous families, how can a father be fully available to a larger number of wives and children to genuinely serve their best interests?" "Rayhab, the social worker, summed it all up. "Whatever the particular circumstances are, the principles of equality between men and women and of subsidiarity should be respected."

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *He who is greatest among you shall be your servant, whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Matt 23:12. Pope Francis:* Freedom of choice makes it possible for people to plan our lives and to make the most of ourselves. Yet if this freedom lacks noble goals or personal discipline it degenerates into an inability to give oneself generously to others. AL 33. **Pope Leo:** The Social Doctrine of the Church refers to subsidiarity as the principle according to which the role of individuals, families, local communities and intermediary organizations should not be supplanted by higher-level authorities. It is the responsibility of the political community to create the conditions that allow individuals, families, associations and intermediary organizations to fulfil their mission in society, without being replaced or reduced to mere facilitators. [94] 70. This principle encourages us to move beyond any form of paternalistic or welfare-based management of societal life, but instead to promote a culture of shared responsibility in a State that values citizens' initiative, and a civil society capable of forging bonds and mobilizing energies in the service of the common good. NH 68-70.

ACT AND PRAY. For freedom and generosity in families. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 23. SEE. Sunday 21A. Fr Joseph smiled to himself as he prepared his homily. "God really was amazing in creating men and women the way he did. Using the bible story of Adam having to look for a mate amongst the animals is nice but the real point is the reality of the differences between men and woman. At times this can be a source of awful conflict and yet also a source of endless delight. If only couples could be made to understand that. If only the Church could come to a deeper understanding too about those deeper aspects of sexuality and not get bogged down in narrower issues of fertile times and contraception. I think, sadly, that we often miss the point. But I must be careful how I put that to the people. I really want them to appreciate the wisdom of God in the gift of procreation, sexuality and reproduction as a gift to all of creation. How can that come across in a homily? It will need a whole retreat, or even a lifetime.

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counsellor?" Romans 11:33-36. **Pope Francis.** A couple's fruitful relationship becomes an image for understanding and describing the mystery of God himself, for in the Christian vision of the Trinity, God is contemplated as Father, Son and Spirit of love. The triune God is a community of love and the family is its living reflection. AL 11 **Pope Leo:** "Let us disarm words and we will help to disarm the world." We must all, therefore, examine our conscience regarding the words we use, the prejudices we have and the explicit or implicit aggression that lies within them. We have a real opportunity to contribute to the common good each time we speak the truth, offer wise advice, support those in need of comfort, denounce injustice and give a voice to the voiceless. The need to disarm words. MH214.

ACT AND PRAY. Let us carefully examine our use of words that can be upbuilding or destructive and pray for wisdom.

August 24. SEE. Hypocrisy. "There are too many hypocrites in our churches and communities." Joel stated before the group session got under way. "I know that in some of our parish groups there are people who want to be seen as leaders but are dishonest in their business dealings, abuse their wives or even have an affair with someone else. The frightening thing is that people see this but don't do anything about it. Of course no one really knows what goes on inside families, but I wish someone would write a "woe to you" letter to a guy I know. It might make him wake up."

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Matt 23:13. **Pope Francis:** Every form of sexual submission must be clearly rejected. This includes all improper interpretations of the passage in Ephesians where Paul tells women to be subject to your husbands. This passage mirrors the cultural categories of the time, but our concern is with the revealed message that it conveys. Be mindful, 'be subject to one another.' AL156 **Pope Leo:** Saint Augustine wrote: "There is no one who shuns the desire for peace, yet not everyone is willing to practice justice. But perform the works of justice, keeping in mind that justice and peace have embraced; they are not at odds with one another. Why do you set yourself against justice? Here, for example, is justice telling you not to steal, but you pay no heed; not to commit adultery, and you turn a deaf ear; not to do to others what you would not want done to yourself; not to say about your neighbor the things you would not want said about yourself... Do you therefore wish to attain peace? Then practice justice!" Let us never grow weary of seeking justice! MH215.

ACT AND PRAY. Examine your conscience on the issue of hypocrisy. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 25. SEE. Law. Rayhab had invited a family lawyer to facilitate a session with the group. "I know that the law is important and we need to know the law for justice to happen, but how often is the law manipulated and true justice is not done. Many abuse cases and even rape cases never result in a conviction. Is that justice? It certainly cannot be mercy if an abuser is let off and the victim is left with no reparation or resolution. However when will we acknowledge the "weightier matters " and examine the conflict situation more holistically? It is simply a case of victim and abuser, or is the relationship management aspect at the heart of the matter? And should true justice not have to involve some punishment and reparation? What is true justice after all?

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: "Woe to you. You tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith." Matt 23:23. **Pope Francis.** It is not helpful simply to consider whether or not an individual's actions correspond to a general law or rule, because that is not enough to discern and ensure full fidelity to God in the concrete life of a human being. General rules set forth a good which can never be disregarded or neglected, but in their formulation they cannot provide absolutely for all particular situations. AL 304 **Pope Leo:** The civilization of love will not arise from a single or spectacular gesture, but from the sum total of small and steadfast acts of fidelity that serve as a bulwark against dehumanization. For this reason, it is worthwhile pausing to reflect on some aspects of how we, each in our own way, can cooperate in building the civilization of love. I would like to propose five paths toward daily and public responsibility: the need to disarm words, building peace through justice, adopting the perspective of victims, cultivating a healthy realism and reviving dialogue and multilateralism. MH 213.

ACT AND PRAY, Learn and practice the technique of dialogue within family and other relationships. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 26. SEE. Work matters. Some of the successful career women were inclined to boast about how many family members they supported. Their generosity was commended, sure, but Portia also made a strong point about other men and women who sit back and just accept help and don't even try to get a job. She shared, "It is shocking that there are people who not worked for years. Joseph got an AIDS disability grant, and doesn't comply with his ARV treatment because if he gets better he might lose his grant. What does that do to his dignity as a breadwinner?" "Maybe that is being judgmental and oversimplifying things. There is so much more to HIV/AIDS and its impact on families. Some can no longer work, for some the stigma is still an issue, but nowadays with ARVs available the stigma is often even forgotten." "I've always thought that in some strange way ARVs are a cop out. The real answer to HIV/AIDS sure is behavior change."

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: "If anyone will not work, let him not eat. 2 Thess 3: 6-10 **Pope Francis:** Labour makes possible the development of society and provides for the sustenance, stability and fruitfulness of one's family. We appreciate the suffering created by unemployment on the lack of steady work which takes its toll on the serenity of family life. AL 23. **Pope Leo:** We can understand the great intuition of Saint Benedict of Nursia, who united prayer and work, showing daily activity to be a part of the human response to God's call. Created in the image of the Creator, our own work in some way continues his, for thereby we contribute to the progress of society and the common good, put to good use the capabilities we have received, improve and beautify the world, support our families, engage in cooperative relationships and, through listening and dialogue, learn to build together something that no one could achieve alone.

ACT AND PRAY. Act and pray for appropriate ways to address the issues in your own family. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 27. SEE. Be Prepared. The PPC chairman thanked all those who had participated in exploring the month's theme of the family's gift of sexuality in so many ways. It had been dealt with in the wider context of marriage, of family life and of creation too. He noted that the first place to situate sexuality as gender justice is within marriage and within intimate interpersonal relationships, heterosexual and homosexual too. As we are all sexual beings in all our dealings all our other social interactions demand respect and justice too. Young and old deal with friends, school mates, work colleagues and also people in authority where sexual harassment happens too easily because one has more power than the other. "A final word of warning is probably appropriate," he concluded. "put yourself and your own context into the situation in applying the words of Jesus to watch out, be prepared and, recognizing your own fragility, do not open yourself to opportunities and occasions for abuse and for sin."

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: Jesus said, "Watch for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this that if the householder had known in what part of the night the thief was coming he would have watched and not have let his house be broken into. Matt 24: 42-50. **Pope Francis.** The Church wishes with humility and compassion to reach out to families and to help each family to discover the best way to overcome any obstacles it encounters. Enabling families to take up their role as active agents of the family apostolate calls for an effort at evangelisation and catechesis inside the family. AL 200 **Pope Leo:** Authentic realism does not give up on changing the world; indeed, it starts by clearly identifying interests, fears, constraints and power dynamics, precisely in order to determine what can be achieved, and the measures needed to achieve it. It does not reduce politics to morality; neither does it surrender to violence. Instead, it seeks viable paths for making peace more than a mere word, through credible institutions, verifiable guarantees, patient negotiations, conflict prevention and the protection of civilians. **ACT AND PRAY.** Having reflected on the many aspects of sexuality relevant for family life, pray for a healthy attitude. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 28. SEE. Fr Thabo said, "seeing that we now have an Augustinian Pope, who loves to quote from St Augustine we better learn more about this early African saint. He was a brilliant worldly young man who, like St Paul, also received a call to conversion and became one of the greatest saints in his time and one of the greatest theologians of all time. We also remember his mother on 27 August and thank God for all mothers who pray constantly for the good of their children, especially for the blessing of their relationship with God. Our parish RCIA team will be asked to share with me in leading some discussion on St Augustine's life and work."

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: Jesus said to his disciples, "you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher and are all brothers. Call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father who is in heaven. He who is

greatest among you shall be your servant. Mat 23:8-12. **Pope Francis:** I would like to express my particular gratitude to all those others who continue to pray, like Saint Monica, for their children who have strayed from Christ. AL 288. The word culture points to something deeply embedded within a people, its most cherished convictions. It has to do with their desires, interests and the way they live their lives. We should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges and planning a project that includes everyone. FT 216. **Pope Leo:** St Augustine, a vigilant pastor and theologian of rare insight realized that true ecclesial communion is expressed also in the communion of goods. Recognizing in the poor the face of Christ is an instrument of charity. Fidelity to his teaching requires not only the study of his works but also a readiness to live radically his call to conversion which necessarily includes the service of charity. DT 46. **ACT AND PRAY.** For openness to conversion. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 29. SEE. "I'm sure everyone and every family will recognize the story of the talents. Why is it that each human being is given different talents or attributes and some have more than others? Some men are handsome and clever, some only gorgeous, but quite stupid. Girls may have beauty but poor health. One may have a business brain but poor relationship skills. What are the special gifts that attract James and Beauty to one another and not James and Antonette? Some of us have talents for ecological sensitivity, maybe even one man for hunting and another for conservation. Then there are degrees or differences in the distribution of talents too. Consider any sport you care to name. That also highlights the fact that we are called to responsibility for our talent and to develop the talents that we have been given, without being jealous of others.

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: Jesus told his disciples, "it will be as when a man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted to them his property, to one he gave five talents, to another two and to another one, to each according to his ability. Matt 25:14. **Pope Francis:** Ecological education can take place in a variety of settings; at home, at school, in the media, in catechesis and elsewhere. Good education plants seeds when we are young and these can continue to bear fruit throughout life. LS 213. **Pope Leo:** 233. For this reason, as a believer among believers, I invite everyone to contemplate, in the face of the Son of God, the grandeur of humanity that shines a light also on the era of AI. In Christ, we are called to cooperate in the work of creation, rather than be disinterested observers of technological processes that limit our freedom and responsibility. The dignity inscribed in each of us by the Holy Spirit can also be seen in our capacity to reflect critically, choose and love freely, and form authentic relationships. No computational system, however sophisticated, can create a heart that gives itself, or a conscience that discerns good from evil. MH 233

ACT AND PRAY. For a growing and deepening understanding about responsibility for our abilities and talents. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 30. SEE. Sunday 22A. Fr Joseph in his homily at the end of this month was consciously speaking to the adults, those in committed marriage relationships, to invite them to continue to grow. At the same time he was speaking too to the younger people, those cohabiting, those not yet married, those teenagers idly playing with the gift of themselves. He didn't want to judge or condemn. He wanted to encourage and promote the beauty of human sexuality which he and other priests could recognize, but had to deal with in their own way. "You know couples who truly love and are living examples to me and to others. They are mirrors of God's love and encourage me in my vocation too. We too need to see and experience couple love as a sign of hope for all aspects of Our World as a Family of Families. Thank you and may God bless you all the days of your lives." He bowed his head and they all proclaimed in a loud voice. "Amen."

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Rom 12:1-2. **Pope Francis:** The majority of people living on our planet profess to be believers. This should spur religions to dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor and build networks of respect and fraternity. LS 201. **Pope Leo:** Saint Augustine explained to the new Christians of his local Church, the bread and wine on the altar are the sacrament of the unity of the faithful in Christ: "What is seen is a mere physical likeness; what is grasped bears spiritual fruit. So now, if you want to understand the body of Christ, listen to the Apostle Paul: together you are the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27). If you are the body and members of Christ, then it is your sacrament that is placed on the table of the Lord; it is your sacrament that you receive. You respond 'Amen,' and by responding in this way you assent to it. For you hear the words, 'the Body of Christ' and respond 'Amen.' Be then a member of the Body of Christ that your Amen may be true!"

ACT AND PRAY for an increase in faith and understanding for our lives. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.

August 31. SEE. Justice and Peace groups and family groups each had their own ideas to build on and share in the PPC at the end of this time. Jonas from Family Life was strong on the need to build resilient families but had been particularly touched by the overwhelming needs of the poor. His children sometimes complained that they thought he was stingy. He asked, "How many of you feel criticized by your own family when you come up with different ways of seeing things in your apostolate? Every group, big or small needs unity and a degree of conformity but we also need to recognize and value our right to be unique and different, and have autonomy." Martin added, "I can live with that, to a point, but interdependence is also a good concept for our different units, from family to parish, sodality and cultures in society. And isn't that really and truly based on dialogue!"

JUDGE. Reflect, share, act. Scripture: *Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. Luke 4:16-30. Pope Francis:* *Approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understand one another and to find common ground, all these things are summed up in the word "dialogue." Unlike disagreement and conflict persistent and courageous dialogue does not make headlines, but quietly helps the world to live much better than we imagine. FT 198. Pope Leo:* *The task of building in our time must place our relationship with God at its center. Our rule must be the acceptance of human limitations as a natural and positive reality, and should be characterized by shared responsibility and a language characterized by the Gospel. At the end of this reflection, the plan for **a civilization of love** can be seen more clearly, and the construction site appears to be already up and running, thanks especially to the many living stones solidly united to Christ the cornerstone (cf. 1 Pet 2:4-6). In this task, we are called to assume an active role, without taking refuge in spiritual sentimentality or retreating into our own little worlds. We must be faithful to the truth, invest in education, cultivate relationships and love justice and peace. MH 236.*

ACT AND PRAY, for the building of the civilization of love beginning in our own families. Pray St Francis Peace Prayer and pray: Mary, Queen Assumed into Heaven, Patroness of South Africa, pray for us.