

MARFAM - MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE RENEWAL MINISTRY -

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2019 FAMILY YEAR PLANNER CALENDAR.

Theme: EVERY FAMILY MATTERS!

This overview can be downloaded from the website. See 2019 Calendar. Also see daily reflections online or emailed direct. .

General overview:

It is universally recognised that “families matter.” Families are the basic building blocks of society and ideally intended for fulfillment, happiness and joy. *The Joy of Love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church.* So writes Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia*, his 2016 document on the Family. Economically they are effective and practical ways of living and sharing life tasks. Needs for housing, feeding, caring for and providing security for different age groups are best met. Permanence offers security, necessary for optimum development of the young. On a psycho-social and spiritual level tasks and life skills are practised and learned. *Ubuntu* is practised, values, morality, faith and traditions are shared and passed on. Managing relationships and conflict come with practice in communal living. God did not create human beings to live alone. God, as Trinity, is a community of three persons in relationship.

Marriage is still widely accepted as the ideal basis for family life, a relationship of intimacy and commitment contributing to personal growth and fulfillment. However, the reality is that not all families in our day are built on marriage. The father-mother-child form is one of a number of family types. The extended multi-generational family was and remains common. Today single parent families, mostly woman-headed, are one of the most common forms and childless families, child-headed and non-heterosexual families exist. Nevertheless commitment and intimacy need to be experienced as an essential quality that defines a family as not purely a group of people who happen to share a house for a time. *A family is an intimate community of life and love bonded together for life by blood, marriage or adoption.* This description from Pope St John Paul II in his 1981 document *Familiaris Consortio* remains a meaningful guide. The 2013 SA White Paper On Families contains a similar vision. Promoting the vision is MARFAM’s mission, a family focus that has the potential to address many social ills.

Monthly themes.

Different types of family and family relationships are the focus month by month. These may be linked with religious themes e.g. Easter in April or popular and national themes e.g. Women’s Day in August. Daily reflections are also provided by MARFAM, linked to scripture readings of the time and meaningful quotations. These can be used by individuals or shared and discussed in homes, communities and churches. See contact details to access these.

January: Good Beginnings matter.

We often begin the year with New Year resolutions, wanting to improve, do more or less of something - more time together, less cellphone time, or start over in the case of hurt or breakdown. Each year can be a new beginning, a gift for relationships, not purely for oneself. but also for a family as a unit, irrespective of shape, size or form. The Church has often said “the family that prays together stays together.” We can add “the family that prays and plays together stays together.” Beginning a habit of sharing thoughts and feelings, both good and negative, is a valuable relationship building tool. Mutual decision-making and adopting the changes that naturally happen in family life are necessary. Regular times to review and make a new start can strengthen families on their journey. New Year is a good time for such a new beginning.

Pope Francis acknowledges there is no stereotype of the ideal family, but a challenging mosaic of different realities AL57. He recommends a simple way to preserve and foster love by saying “Please, Can I? May I?”, “Thank you” and “I’m sorry” and never allowing the sun to set on a quarrel or misunderstanding.

February: Loving Families Matter .

A popular saying “Love wasn’t put in your heart to stay – love isn’t love till you give it away” gives us an important message. Love is a feeling but also much more than that, a decision to act. Love includes the Valentine romantic aspect but every kind deed and good word for another family member or an attempt to overcome a negative situation is an expression of love. The tenderness of intimate relationships is a special family quality. The intimacy of marriage in good times and in bad and the patient and enduring love in all families in times of difficulty all require decisions. Love in its different forms is the foundation for all relationships within families and beyond. *Love one another as I have loved you. John15:12. Against a backdrop of love so central to the Christian experience of marriage and the family another virtue is often overlooked in our world of frenetic and superficial relationships, it is tenderness. AL 28 “Marriage based on an exclusive and definitive love becomes the icon of the relationship between God and his people and vice versa.” Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. AL70*

March: Family Rights Matter.

When we think of rights we tend to think of individual human rights. But the Church has a Charter of Family Rights aimed at the wellbeing of family units. It promotes the right to life, to marry, have children, work, shelter and more. Respecting these rights and providing what is needed is the responsibility of governments. Yet it cannot be left only to them to pass laws and protect us. We are each expected to pursue our rights and live out our responsibilities too. Exploring this can be a good Lenten exercise, not a simple one but demanding commitment from everyone. *The family is much more than a mere legal, social and economic unit, but is a community of love and solidarity. It is uniquely suited to teach and transmit cultural, ethical, social, spiritual and religious values, essential for the development and well-being of its own members and of society. Charter of Family Rights. E.*

April: God Matters.

The joyful Easter season is a special celebration of faith and life with God, lived out in our human lives. After weeks of penitence and sacrifice the Easter season begins with a time of closer reflection on the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. A renewal of our baptismal promises calls us to make an act of faith. Each of the sacraments is a special moment in the life of faith. Baptism is the initiation and Confirmation invites us to a deeper commitment. Their marriage is for married people a fulfilment of their baptismal promises. The healing sacraments are important too in family life as each family is a growing and developing system, where sickness and hurt exist. as members grow from childhood to old age in relationship with one another and with God. *Encountering Christ, letting themselves be caught up in and guided by his love, enlarges the horizons of existence. Faith is no refuge for the fainthearted, but enhances our lives. It makes us aware of a magnificent calling, the vocation of love. Pope Francis, Lumen Fidei 53.*

May: Parents do Matter.

“Your children will always be your children” is an important saying and yet part of parenting is preparing children for independence. Becoming a parent involves co-creation with God of a new life that is eternal and can never be undone. It requires permanent commitment to the wellbeing of that child from conception. Commitment should ideally apply to mothers and to fathers although very many children live much of their lives without their fathers present. Many families also include stepchildren or foster children while daily parenting tasks are often performed by grandparents and other carers. *Choose life, so that you and your children may live, loving the Lord, obeying his voice and cleaving to him. Deut 30:19-20. I urge all future mothers: keep happy and let nothing rob you of the interior joy of motherhood. AL 171. A father helps the child to perceive the limits of life, to be open to the challenges of the wider world and to see the need for hard work. AL175*

June: Youth Matter.

The greatest sector of our population is young people, children and youth. Their wellbeing is a matter of great importance. Their needs for love, care, support, education and meaningful employment as they set out to form their own future families demand commitment and skill. Families and the young themselves must strive to overcome the stresses, conflict and lack of understanding and acceptance of one another. *Children obey your parents in everything for this pleases the Lord. Parents do not provoke your children lest they become discouraged. Col 3:20-21.4:5. What is most important is the ability lovingly to help the young people grow in freedom, maturity, overall discipline and real autonomy. They will come to possess what is needed to fend for themselves and to act prudently when they meet with difficulties. AL 261*

July: Grandparents do Matter.

There is a growing proportion of older persons in our society due to improved healthcare and nutrition. Some remain active in their own lives into old age. Others are involved with their children and caring for grandchildren. This relationship is important and many grandparents contribute in valuable ways to the wellbeing of their families, but eventually they are often the ones that need care and support. Neglect, exploitation and abuse of the elderly, even by their own grandchildren at times, shows they no longer seem to matter. *Our elderly are men and women, fathers and mothers, who came before us on our own road, in our own house, in our daily battle for a worthy life. How I would like a Church that challenges the throw-away culture by the overflowing joy of a new embrace between young and old. Pope Francis AL192.*

August. Women and Men Matter .

Everyone is a sexual being throughout their lives. Good relationships between women and men is essential to a well-functioning society. Parents should relate to and treat boys and girls equally and guide them with care in their developing identity as future adult members of society. Much work is needed for greater equality and tolerance between the sexes. Gender-based violence is a result of inability to relate well. Oppression and abuse is mostly experienced by women but men may be alienated and can be abused too. People with other sexual orientations, LGBTI, are particularly vulnerable. *Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Ephesians 5:21. God himself created sexuality which is a marvellous gift to his creatures. Sexuality is not a means of gratification or entertainment it is an interpersonal language wherein the other is taken seriously in his or her sacred and inviolable dignity. AL 151.*

September: Heritage Matters.

Our family and cultural background have a great influence in the new families we form. Ways of being and traditions, social and religious, from two families have to merge. At the same time the heritage of each is to be respected. Marriage and family life are very important parts of our cultural heritage with their practices and traditions. A spiritual heritage too is part of our overall life experience, ideally a shared one. *God who calls us to generous commitment and to give him our all, offers us the light and the strength needed to continue on our way. In the heart of this world the Lord of life, who loves us so much is always present. Laudato Si 245*

October: Family Mission Matters.

Although we are firstly responsible for ourselves and our own families our common mission as Christians is to care for our neighbor too. Our mission is to be disciples and spread the Good news of God's love to others. MARFAM's mission is to promote the wellbeing of every member and all families. Our mission is to promote the vision of the big church as a "family of families." *A bride and groom are consecrated and through this grace they build up the Body of Christ and are a domestic Church. The Church looks to the Christian family, which manifests her in a real way. God has given the family the job of domesticating the world and helping each person to see fellow human beings as brothers and sisters. AL 183*

November: Loss Matters

Loss is inevitable and comes in many different forms, death, divorce or in less traumatic ways. Dealing with serious losses such as a death of a spouse, parent, grandparent, child or other family member or close friend is a process that takes time. We may cope well or we may be overwhelmed by grief, sadness and at times guilt.. Families owe it to one another and beyond that to other families to offer care and support at times of loss. *“Although the certainty of death saddens us we are consoled by the promise of future immortality, for the life of those who believe in you Lord is not ended but changed. Our loved ones are not lost in the shades of nothingness; hope assures us that they are in the good strong hands of God.” AL 256*

December: Every Family matters. .

Every member of every type of family is precious, to one another and to God. Imagine how the Church and society would benefit if everyone understood this and was willing and able to live up to their commitments and take responsibility for what matters! Society and the Church do not take sufficient care of families as units. Far more energy is spent on separate and individual issues, e.g empowerment of women, jobs for youth, protection of children. These are family matters, whether in a dysfunctional single parent family, a granny-headed one or any family with teenage children on drugs. If spouses were faithful and parents concerned for children's welfare it would go a long way to building a healthy society. If all family members worked at their communication, kept their promises, looked after their health and made the decision to love even when they did not feel loving we would show that is what matters to us. Good fortune and misfortune can and do happen but at all times our faith in God's love and mercy calls us to an attitude of thankfulness. *Although you have no need of our praise, our thanksgiving is itself your gift, since our praises add nothing to your greatness, but profit us for salvation through Christ our Lord. From Common Preface of the Mass IV.*

What really matters is not what you can do for me or what I can do for you but who we are together and with God. TR