

The HERALD is a Catholic Weekly of the Malaysian Church. It endeavours to communicate up-to-date news and Christian values and strives to dialogue with all sectors of society in order to build a harmonious community of believers in God. We support the formation of a participatory Church and encourage the laity and religious to make moral decisions in the marketplace.

Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.
1 Cor. 2:6-7



MJD clergy focusing on families

■ P4



Priestly ordinations

■ P5



Meet Asia's oldest cardinal – Cardinal Michael Michai Kitbunchu

■ P12

Papal trip reminds Catholics of responsibilities to Africa



Democratic Republic of Congo

31 January - 5 February

NEW YORK: Pope Francis' recent trip to the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan should remind Catholics of their responsibility to stand beside the millions struggling with poverty in African nations, according to the leader of the US Church's overseas development arm.

"The Holy Father's visit calls us to stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in these countries, and work tirelessly for a world where all can thrive," said Sean Callahan, president and CEO of Catholic Relief

Services recently, adding that the organisation is inspired by the "Pope's message of compassion, reconciliation, and harmony."

Pope Francis' trip to the African nations took place January 31 – February 5. Catholic Relief Services has a presence in both countries, each of which faces its own set of immense challenges that include violent conflicts, poverty and enduring humanitarian crises.

Exploitation of natural resources, particularly mineral resources in the Congo, have led to corruption and conflict opposed to economic growth. That reality is evident in the Congo's ranking of 153 out of 191 countries and territories in the 2021/2022 United Nations Human Development Index.

Armed conflict has left over 5.5 million people displaced in the Congo. There are also a number of infrastructure needs – including improvements to roads, energy sources, water and sanitation networks – and the government is rife with corruption. All of these factors combined have resulted in a situation where Congolese communities face numer-

ous health, economic and security challenges.

According to the Catholic Relief Services Congo page, the organisation's presence there works with Church partners, government agencies and other humanitarian actors to address both short term emergency and long term development challenges. These programming areas include transformative health, nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene and agriculture.

Like the Congo, people in South Sudan have suffered from decades of armed conflict that have left millions of people displaced, and/or living in underdeveloped and impoverished situations. A drought in Eastern Africa has also had an outsized impact on the wellbeing of people in the country. There are more than 5.5 million people in South Sudan facing a severe hunger crisis.

"Hundreds of thousands of children are acutely malnourished and need urgent nutritional support," the Catholic Relief Services South Sudan page highlights.

The organisation's work in South Sudan also attempts to provide short term emer-

gency relief and promote long term development. One focus is feeding hungry people impacted by the drought and the ongoing conflict, and working with community members to improve water and hygiene systems. It also collaborates with local partners to support peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts.

"Both countries have felt the impacts of protracted conflict and climate change, resulting in some of the biggest humanitarian crises in the world," Callahan said. "Massive displacement and skyrocketing hunger have caused tremendous suffering."

Callahan continued that he hopes Pope Francis' visit to the two nations is a reminder to Catholics worldwide of this struggle, and their duty to help.

"We can only hope his visit reminds the rest of the world of the plight of the millions of people struggling with poverty and of our responsibility, as Catholics, to stand beside them," he said. — **By John Lavenburg, Crux**

(Source photo/Vatican Media)
● See more on page 10 & back page



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COMMENTARY

Not of the world, but the world matters

Most of us Catholics are too worldly, as we know from every examination of conscience — and yet, in another sense, we're not worldly enough. We live in the world but, as Jesus says, we're not of it (Jn 17:16). What does that mean in real life?

It can mean "worldly" as in "a man of the world." It can mean someone who lives entirely by the world's standards, or someone who knows how the world works and how to make his way safely through it.

Judging from the way people speak, from many articles in the Catholic press, and from a lot of homilies, Catholics as a whole aren't so worldly in that second sense.

The general Catholic assumption is that we're in the world the way a nuclear submarine is in the ocean. The Church lives a self-sufficient life, adapted to the world's conditions, but not much affected by them and doing basically what she wants. (I'm speaking of how we mostly see the Church, not about what she is.)

And that's a mistake. God gave us the Church as a supernatural institution, but one made up of fallen human beings. People in groups act in certain ways. That's why your parents told you to avoid bad companions.

We live dependent on the Church being supernatural. But we don't understand that the Church is also formed by history and society, an institution of humans, and so we can't see how to help the Church better resist the world. We let down our guard because we don't know what to watch for.

Look at the typical response to the Church's sex abuse scandals. Almost everyone — bishops and priests, Catholic writers, secular critics, your friends at church — explains the horror in moral or intellectual terms. They blame bad people (the abusers and the bishops who hid the abuse) and bad ideas (dissent, their idea of Vatican II, "rigid conservatism," etc.).

In the same way, Catholics almost always offer moral and intellectual solutions to the problem. They call for more personal holiness, prayer and adoration, better catechetics, liturgical change, better community, more social action. And yes, we need these things.



But we also need to understand the world in which we living. The closest many got to a "worldly" explanation was blaming the bishops' "boys' club" (and their institutional self-interest) for hiding as much as possible "for the good of the Church."

That's not an excuse, but a basic reality of human life we must think about carefully.

It's a personal matter for me. A few months after I entered the Church in 2001, *The Boston Globe* exposed the horrors of the archdiocese's hiding of abusive priests. Evangelical friends popped up to say, "Bet you're sorry now!"

I said no. It seemed obvious to me that an institution so big and venerable, which had grown across the world for 2,000 years, and (unfortunately) frequently gained worldly power, would today be the way it is: unable, as a whole, as a visible institution, to live up to its own preaching, though preserving many signs of its true nature. I might not have entered the Church if I hadn't seen that.

The Church isn't a nuclear submarine, unaffected by the water around it. It's a sailboat moving across the ocean. The sailors sail to a destination they know, using the map they've been given and the skills they've been taught.

They're not of the ocean, but they're in the ocean. Very much in the ocean. The tides, the winds, the currents, the storms, everything affects them, and some of it could sink them.

The sailors must know how to read the signs, how to use the winds and currents, and how to stay afloat through the storms. The better they know the ocean, the more likely they are to get where they're going.

The alternative is for the Church to be only a lifeboat, floating about at the mercy of the elements. We want to be sailors so at home in the ocean that we can get where we want to go because we understand the ocean, and what it does to us. This requires remembering that the Church is human as well as divine. — **By David Mills, OSV**

● *David Mills is a columnist for OSV, the National Catholic Register, and other Catholic publications.*

Jesus — Choice for life and happiness

Today, the Church invites us to reflect on the law of Christ and to pay attention to what the Church is teaching us. The law of Christ is a divine law and it gives life to those who are faithful to it. Hence, to obey it is an essential choice for life and happiness. He expected us to understand and apply the moral principles already revealed in Scripture.

Danish philosopher and Christian thinker Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) said every choice we make is important to our characters because even if choices are trivial, many meaningless choices will add up and give meaning. Therefore, it is important to choose properly. We should not worry about the bad decisions we make now because those decisions can help us make better ones in the future.

Jesus is challenging us to choose freely either to observe the laws He gave to us or not. Yes... it does involve sacrifice and consistency, they are heavy, but His salvation awaits those who choose them with courage and confidence.

In today's Gospel, *Matthew* presents Jesus as a perfection of the law and Jesus instructs His disciples what not to do: "I have come not to abolish the law but to fulfil it." The righteousness of Jesus' followers must go beyond the thinking of mere "religiosity". Jesus assured His listeners that he was not anti-law at all. On the contrary, He fulfilled it; that is, both to keep and explain fully its original intention, which they had managed to miss over the centuries.

Jesus' teaching here awakened His people

to what the law meant from the beginning. He clarified God's long standing desire that His creation be characterised by both internal (attitudes) and external (actions) obedience and holiness. Fulfilled law is written on the heart. Jesus Himself fulfilled the law in several ways: (1) by keeping it perfectly; (2) by fulfilling the Old Testament messianic types and prophecies; and (3) by providing the way of salvation that meets all the righteous requirements of the law.

Once again, Jesus affirmed the law as it was but He began to shift His focus toward those who had changed its original meaning, while claiming to uphold it unchanged. Not only did He identify the Pharisees and other religious leaders by their tampering with the law, but He also focused on their responsibility to teach others.

We notice in the Gospel that some of Jesus' statements would have shocked His listeners especially the scribes and Pharisees. They considered themselves the ultimate example of righteousness. To the Jewish listener, Jesus' statement meant that no one could enter heaven. To the average person, the Pharisees were the truly holy people. Jesus claimed that even they were not good enough!

Jesus' response to the religious authorities is enlightening for us. Jesus went on to illustrate how bad their understanding of the law was by making comparison after comparison (*you have heard that it was said ... but I tell you; 5:21-22*). Yes... sometimes we too fall in the category of the scribes and Pharisees — we are good at judging others quickly rather

than examining our own selves.

As I reflect on this Scripture reading, I am reminded of my pastoral experience which transformed my heart to be more compassionate and merciful to others. One of the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion told me "Brother, you please don't give Holy Communion to that woman because she is a divorcee and she is not obedient to the Church." The question I asked myself was, "Who are we to judge others?" The leaders were making judgements without clarifying matters thoroughly, without exploring the real situation. If we judge others, we are the ones who will be liable for judgment, not them.

Jesus warns His disciples about the danger of thoughts and impurity, language, adultery, divorce or making false allegations, false oaths or pledges. The underlying principle is: Seek and apply the intention of God's instruction, not merely the letter of it. However, this is difficult to do on a human level but as we seek Him sincerely with all our hearts, He will reveal it to us (*Prov. 2:1 — Moral benefits of wisdom*). We have to obey God wholeheartedly and let our hearts be transformed by His grace to move forward in our lives.

That's why, in today's first reading, God presents us with two options, *life and death*. He gives us the freedom to make our choice. In order to make decisions and choices in life, He also gave us reasons to guide us. Consequently, if we choose to obey His laws, we shall be happy but if we make the wrong

Reflecting on our
Sunday Readings

with Bro Selva Francis

6th Sunday of Ordinary Time (A)

Readings: *Sirach 15:15-20;**1 Corinthians 2:6-10;**Gospel: Matthew 5:17-37*

choice, we shall face the consequences. For this reason, the psalmist reminds us that: "They are happy who follow God's Law" — meaning to say we are free beings, God never forces anybody.

In the second reading, St Paul refers to the law of Christ as wisdom. Therefore, to obey the law of Christ is the wisest thing to do. We have to understand that God's salvation cannot be understood through human reasoning. He said, the wisdom that comes from the Laws of God is divinely inspired, whereas, the wisdom of men has its own limitations.

Many Christians today similarly profess to agree with Jesus' doctrine but do not obey it. Jesus is very clear about what we are not to do in our daily lives. Let us ask ourselves: Do we take Jesus' words seriously? Do we strive for change as He calls us to live? Yes... Lent is nearing and we have a choice now — what will we choose today?

Bro Selva Francis has completed his seminary studies and is currently doing his pastoral attachment at the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, Kuala Lumpur.

IMPORTANT DATES

February 22: Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday is a day of penance for the whole Church of the Roman Rite. This day is to be marked by fasting and also by abstaining from meat.

February 25 & 26: Rite of Election

Lenten Campaign

In our next issue, we will be featuring the Lenten Campaigns of the various Arch/Dioceses.



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

February

- 18 *Mass – REIGNITE for ASAYO at the Church of Jesus Caritas, Kepong*
- 26 *Rite of Election – Church of the Holy Family, Kajang*



PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Sebastian Francis

February

- 19 *Mass & Meeting with Auxiliary of the Apostolate – Bishop's Residence*
- 21 *47th Anniversary Mass – Mt Miriam Cancer Hospital (MMCH) at 3.00pm*
- 25 *Rite of Election – Penang Island and Northern Deanery at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang at 3.00pm*
- 26 *Rite of Election – Perak Deanery at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Silibin, Ipoh, Perak at 5.00pm*
- 28 *Meeting with Menteri Besar of Perlis – Pejabat Menteri Besar, Kangar, Perlis at 3.00pm*



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

February

- 18 *DEO sharing and Study Day with Charismatic Group – Kluang*
- 19 *Parish Pastoral Assembly – St Joseph Church, Plentong*
- 23-27 *Asian Continental Assembly for the Synod – Bangkok*



DIOCESE OF PENANG

PKK/BDN/2023/02/153

Notifications and Updates

Penang Diocesan Lenten Campaign

Caritas Penang presented cheques for the Lenten *Kempen Kasih* to all 29 parishes in the diocese. The campaign was launched and the cheques presented by Bishop Sebastian Francis on Saturday, February 11 at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Ipoh during the feast day Mass. The RM5,000 *Kempen Kasih* fund presented to each parish in the diocese was to promote and support the Lenten Campaign initiatives and Social Mission work in the area of welfare and integral human development.

Community of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (FSIC)

Sr Rusiah Garuk, FSIC has been transferred to Penang Diocese to be part of the FSIC community here, together with Sr M. Florence Nemesius, FSIC and Sr Marysia Malating, FSIC. As a team, they

will participate in the mission of the local church in the Diocese of Penang and assist in pastoral work, mainly among the Bahasa Malaysia speaking people of Sabah and Sarawak presently working and residing in the five states of the Diocese of Penang.

Head of Penang Diocesan Bahasa Apostolate

Sr Marysia Malating, FSIC has been appointed as Head of the Bahasa Apostolate, replacing Sr Florence Nemesius, FSIC with effect from February 2023. We thank Sr Marysia for graciously accepting to head this apostolate for the Diocese of Penang.

As a team, Sr Marysia, Sr Florence and Sr Rusiah will continue their mission in this apostolate. We thank them for their dedication and commitment to this apostolate.

Nominee for Board of Governors of Stonyhurst International School Penang

Fr Francis Lim Chin Choy SJ, the Regional Superior of the Malaysia-Singapore Region of the Society of Jesus, has been nominated by me to be on the Board of Governors of Stonyhurst International School, Penang. He was a former principal of St Joseph's Private Secondary School (SJPS), a diocesan-owned school in Kuching, Malaysia from 2012 to 2021.

Board of management for St Joseph's Home

With grateful hearts, we thank Puan Tan Lean Kee and Madam Frances Chan for their valuable contribution and years of dedicated service and commitment to St Joseph's Home as they move on and embark on new missions entrusted to them.



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #119

F12
MJD NEWS
UPDATES

The rain is here again. Floods in many places. Johore has been hit: 2757 victims from 774 families temporarily placed at 31 flood relief centres.

Caritas MJDOHD has been collaborating with the State Disaster Management Committee and the many NGOs. The appeals are out. Pray for the weather to be kinder to us.

Disquieting Times. The big celebrations are over. No more long breaks. The SPM exams have begun. Another round of sackings, suspensions and resignations. What is unnerving is that inappropriate policies and actions which are unconstitutional/ not according to SOPs/ against the rule of law, are condoned or brushed aside. A political party is going through that phase. An elite school appears to have been racially biased. Claims of nepotism have appeared. Sometimes the religious institutions forget the meaning of "serving without fear or favour". The poor, the weak, the differently abled or the minorities are written off or ignored or ridiculed. So, where do our children learn racism, intolerance, bullying and discrimination from? Our homes and schools are breeding grounds for prejudice, anger and discontent. Sin that is not addressed festers.

A Thought for the Week: 30 cents Tip

A 10-year-old boy went to an ice-cream shop and asked how much a cone cost? The waiter said "RM1.80". The boy then started counting how much he had. And he asked how much a small cone cost? The irritated waiter said "RM1.50". Then the boy ordered the small cone. He ate, paid the bill and left. When the waiter came to clear the table, he was surprised to find that the boy had left 30 cents as a tip for him.

The lesson from the boy: Always Try to Make Everyone Happy with Whatever You Have.

Announcements for this Week

1. The ACD2022 or Annual Clergy Discernment took place January 17-19, 2023. The Synodal Reports remind the MJD clergy, Catholics, parishes and ministries to practise the six-Ws in their daily living and serving:

a) Welcoming: open, listening, helpful.

b) Warm: smile, reach out, walk with, friends.

c) Wide: extend the tent, inclusive, bridge-building, communion-participation-mission, include more youth, women, the elderly, the indigenous, other faiths, those outside-the church.

d) Word-based: well-prepared homilies and formations that inspire and convert, invite personal, communitarian, ecclesial, ecological and synodal conversions.

e) Worshipping: lively, relevant liturgy which are Scriptural, live the Eucharistic spirituality; Masses that include children, and the youth

f) Witnessing: re-ignite the baptismal fire, reawaken the "called and sent" commission, incorporate the 4-E (encountered, enlightened, empowered, evangelising) focus.

2. Calling all single women, aged 18-50 to explore a special lay vocation committed to the Bishop of the Diocese. The Auxiliary of the Apostolate: A Vocation To Discover is facilitated by the Auxiliaries from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

Join us on:

Feb 18 - 19 (from Saturday, 3.00pm to Sun, 4.00pm) at Good Shepherd Seminary, Melaka

Apr 29 - 30 (from Saturday, 3.00pm to Sun, 4.00pm) at MAJODI Centre

Call or WhatsApp: Ms Clara Paul +6012-250 9527

3. Caritas Malaysia NATIONAL RELIEF FUND is on again. A ready pool of funds for speedy response for emergency and natural disasters anywhere. Relief Aid delayed is help denied. This special collection will close on February 22, 2023 (Ash Wednesday). Just do your part.

This week's Question and Query.

The Q asks: Why is it then we think we know and then realise we don't?

Belief holds on, faith lets go.

Belief excludes, faith includes.

Belief believes it knows, faith knows it does not know.

Belief leads to religion, faith moves beyond religion.

Belief tries to control, faith sets free.

Belief seeks confirmation, faith seeks truth.

In the bold act of faith: The Bible is best viewed as an evolving myth; with some of the stories loosely based on historical events.

A wise student is like a house owner who brings from his storehouse treasures both old and new. –Jesus–

Let us remember the young ones sitting for their public exams. May they be granted good health, peace of mind, fair and just assessment and untampered results. May all have a chance to compete on level ground, where the goalpost does not shift.

Bishop Bernard Paul

MJD clergy focused on building the communion of families



By Fr Dr Lawrence Ng

The clergy from the Diocese of Malacca Johore.

JOHOR BAHRU: The Malacca Johore Diocese clergy gathered for their Annual Clergy Discernment (ACD) at MAJODI Centre in Plentong from January 17 to 19.

The ACD was initially planned for December 2022 but was pushed to January due to the diocese's golden jubilee celebration on Dec 3, 2022.

The diocesan theme, *A Light of Hope*, focusing on *Building the Communion of Families*, guided the discussions of the clergy. The objective was to bring to the forefront the realities of family life in this period of post-pandemic recovery, hoping it would assist the clergy ministering to families within the context of their parish.

The focus on families was proposed at an earlier meeting with the Council of Priests in October 2022. There, many members of the clergy felt that in this time of recovery, there was a need to minister to families. All agreed that families are at the heart of every parish community and should always be a primary concern of clergy serving in the diocese.

The clergy was divided into seven groups. Each group was tasked with looking at a spe-

cific area throughout the ACD. The areas of focus were:

1. The Family Itself as a Unit
2. Issues Facing Parents
3. Issues Facing Single Parents and Divorcees
4. Issues of Marriage
5. Effects of the Pandemic
6. Issues on Economic Realities Today Facing Families
7. Issues of Political Realities Affecting Families

The discussions and reflections of the ACD were based on the "See, Judge, Act" model, except that it was adapted pastorally as Discover, Discern, Design, and Deliver.

The first day's task was to *Discover the Realities of Family Today*. The second day's discussion was on *Discerning the Clergy as a Builder for the Communion of Families*. The last day was themed *Design and Deliver: Hope Begetting Hope*.

Many were appreciative of the process of discernment. Capuchin Friar Joe Matthews said he appreciated that many of the clergy acknowledge that the pandemic had created a culture of fear. He "proposed that one of the

ways to address the culture of fear was to build communities centred on the Word of God."

Bishop Bernard Paul shared his family's experiences and proposed that the clergy be a light of hope for families by listening, dialoguing, welcoming, accompanying, and strengthening the bond of families. Bishop Bernard said that the focus on families is important to our ministry within the larger framework of the vision and mission of the diocese.

The clergy drafted a statement that expressed how they could be a light of hope as a builder of the communion of families. The statement could also serve as part of their pastoral vision in their parishes.

Commenting on the statement, Fr Joseph Heng said it could give guidelines and directions to the pastoral ministries while instilling hope in our families. He said this would be helpful as he takes up his new appointment as parish priest of the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Melaka from Feb 1. He added, "serving as head of the counselling ministry, building and strengthening the bond of families is an essential part of our ministry as priests."

The statement is as follows (see right).

Annual Clergy Discernment (ACD) Statement

A Light of Hope: Building the Communion of Families

We, the clergy of Malacca Johore Diocese, are committed to being a light of hope to everyone we serve. We focus on building the communion of families in our parishes.

We acknowledge the reality of brokenness and imperfections in the family unit and marriages in our parishes. We take note of these as we continue to minister to families with the heart of a shepherd, listening, dialoguing, welcoming, accompanying, and strengthening.

We strive to build a communion of families that is inclusive and accepting of all. We seek the path of understanding that leads to healing and growth.

We seek to uphold the values of marriage and married life holistically through our ministry of accompaniment while offering continual formation.

We seek to counter the culture of fear by facilitating a communion of Christ-centred families through pastoral activities based on the Word of God.

We will not lose sight of the Church's preferential option for the poor.

We, as citizens of Malaysia, affirm our duty as Catholics to participate in the political processes of transforming the country by building bridges of trust and respect amongst fellow Malaysians.

Clergy feel renewed for mission



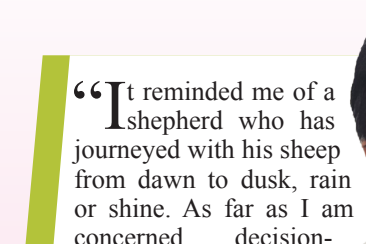
"I felt the ACD was a good start to the year for the MJD clergy. It focused on the family, and the role of the clergy as a light of hope in building the communion of families, as its overarching theme. We shared in small groups and individually for our own awareness and healing. It was a time of grace, touching us, guiding us, breaking us, and building us back anew in Christ. We prayed, celebrated, and were in communion as brothers moved to the mission once again this year." — **Fr Alexuchelvam Mariasosai**



"I gained most from the sharings by different priests about their respective ministries and their encounters with people. These enriched my experience, especially as we enter into the post-pandemic period. They also helped me see that there is a bigger picture out there. Sometimes when we encounter difficulties in our ministries, we tend to see them as our problems and that we are not adequate to deal with the issues at hand. Their sharing on a particular topic gave me more confidence in the ministries I serve." — **Fr Sebastian Koh SJ**



"Actively discerning Church! The whole process of the Annual Clergy Discernment could be summed up in these words. The Church needs to be grounded in tangible realities that aid or resist the message of Christ in the world today. Without this awareness, we risk ending up as a pulpit church that is only functional, lacking zeal for servanthood, and atomised. The Synodal journey that is emphasised now is a call to awareness. Awareness of our true selves flows from the mission and the person of Christ. If the goal of the Church is not to build the kingdom of God then we do not have a goal." — **Fr Moses Rayappan**



"It reminded me of a shepherd who has journeyed with his sheep from dawn to dusk, rain or shine. As far as I am concerned, decision-making should benefit all language groups. "As written in the Gospel of St John, Jesus says "I am the Good Shepherd: The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep." (Jn 10:11)

"A Good Shepherd will seek what is lost and bring back what has been driven away, mend the broken and strengthen the sick. These can be very challenging and so Lord, please strengthen me, Your unworthy co-worker in the vineyard." — **Fr Matthew Bun**



"As a pastor, it is very encouraging for me to sense our brother-priests' commitment to serving our brothers and sisters with a renewed sense of direction and focus." — **Fr Moses Yap**

First ordination for Sibu Diocese in 2023

By Jane Moh

SIBU: The Diocese of Sibu welcomed a new priest, Fr Johanaz Ling, 34, to the Presbyterate on January 25 at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart.

The ordination ceremony was presided over by the Bishop of Sibu, Rt Rev Joseph Hii, with thousands of Catholics participating at the Mass which started at 3.00pm.

In his homily, Bishop Joseph said that Johanaz entered into the priesthood of his own free will and a clear conscience.

"He was sent to his mission to continue God's ministry and serve the people of God," he said. He also hoped that the Word of God would regenerate all Catholics.

Fr Johanaz, from Sarikei, said that the calling to the priesthood started when he was nine years old. However, as a young boy, he did not know what it was, so life

continued as usual.

"I was inspired by Fr Thomas Connor, the way he served the Mass and his kindness. I told myself that I wanted to be like him. But I did not realise it was a calling."

"Growing up, my father was very strict, making sure we prayed the Rosary and participated at Masses," he said.

He said he seriously started to contemplate his vocation in 2011, after his Sixth Form.

He decided to meet Bishop Joseph Hii. The prelate asked him to stay at Christ the King Church in Bintangor for a year to experience priesthood. He stayed with Fr Philip Hu and Fr Simon Lau.

From 2012 – 2013, Johanaz studied at College General Penang, which was a pre-initiation. In 2014, he was sent to St Peter's College in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, and then to St Peter's College in Kuching for six years.

"I graduated in 2020 and was assigned to pastoral work at the cathedral. I spent one year there."

"On May 26, 2022, I was posted to Mary Immaculate Conception Church, Kapit. I was ordained as a deacon on June 3, 2022," he said.

He recalled that when he broke the news of his desire to enter the priesthood to his parents, they were very supportive.

"My father said that if God had called me to the priesthood, I should go try it. They encouraged and supported me all the way," he said.

Now as a priest, he said he could continue his mission to evangelise.

"It is a journey and along the way, I hope to become a better person. I am just continuing God's mission," he said, adding that it is a journey he knew he would enjoy despite the challenges and difficulties.



Bishop Joseph Hii praying over Deacon Johanaz Ling.

A priest needs to be united in Christ to emulate His ministry

KAINGARAN, Tambunan: Another priest from the Carmelite Sancti Eliae Congregation (CSE) was ordained on the feast of St Paul's Conversion, January 25 at the Carmel Hermitage. Domi Bin Duuk @ Lasius, 35, or Dominico Evan, was ordained by Bishop Cornelius Piong.

Hailing from Tambunan, Fr Dominico is the fourth priest from CSE, after Fr Giovanni C. Sugau (2012), Fr Sharbel Francisco De Karem'Ei (2021) and Fr Rudolf De Acquaviva last year.

Among the concelebrants was Msgr Gilbert Lasius, the Vicar General of Diocese Keningau, who is also Fr Dominico's brother.

"Following and serving God requires an unwavering commitment. Therefore, a priest needs to live united with Jesus (John 15:4-5) and be obedient to Jesus (Mat 18:20) so that his ministry emulates Jesus' way (John 13:34). "Our mission in priestly ministry should be to do God's will, not our own," said Bishop Cornelius.

He also thanked the parents and family who guided and supported Fr Dominico. CSE Superior General, Fr Sergius Paul, congratulated him on his ordination. "As a priest, it is necessary to sanctify himself by praying without ceasing, celebrating the Eucharist and Liturgy of the Hours so that he is able to sanctify the faithful he serves. A priest is also entrusted with the task of preaching the Good News of God's love to their flock."

Fr Sergius, one of the formators at Seminary Catholic High School



Newly ordained Fr Dominico Evan CSE (right) with his brother, Msgr Gilbert Lasius and their parents.

(STIKAS), announced that Fr Dominico will be sent to serve at STIKAS St John of the Cross, Bandol, West Kalimantan, Indonesia to guide seminarians from Sabah and Sarawak.

Fr Dominico's ordination theme is *And He that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him (John 8:29)*. In his speech, he thanked all who had come to this special occasion and those who had prayed and supported him during his formation and pastoral year. He also thanked his parents, whose dedication in serving the church served as a good example that inspired him to become a priest.

Fr Dominico realised his calling at an early age. Attending Mass and being involved in many par-

ish ministries had been his routine. As he grew, the calling got stronger and finally, he said "Yes" to God as he joined the CSE Congregation as a Postulant at the Pertapaan Karmel, Kaingaran, Tambunan in July, 2011.

After he received his religious habit and entered Novitiate for two years, he professed his first religious vow on July 16, 2014. He then pursued his study in Theology and Philosophy at STIKAS for three years. He professed his Final Vow at Kapela Maria Bonda Karmel (MBK), Carmel Spiritual Centre, Bandol, West Kalimantan on July 20, 2020 and was ordained as Deacon on January 25, 2022.

He ended his speech by calling the young people to be courageous in accepting God's call to work in His vast vineyard.

A celebration of life and vocation at NBVM

BUTTERWORTH, Penang: The Feast of the Conversion of St Paul this year marked the 17th sacerdotal anniversary of the parish priest of the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (NBVM), Fr Dominic Santhiyagu. The special occasion, commemorated with Mass and fellowship dinner coincided with Fr Dominic's 50th birthday a few days earlier.

Present to share in the festivity were Msgr Henry Rajoo, priests who had previously served the parish: Frs Francis Andrew, Louis Loi, and Konstend Gnanapragasam, sons of the parish, Frs Mark Michael and Martin Arlando, and parishioners.

As he began the Eucharistic Celebration, Fr Dominic prayed the same prayer he offered to God on his ordination day in 2006. "Dear Lord, I thank You for the wonder of my being. I thank You for the gift of the priesthood. Help me to be humble in being and doing whatever You tell me. Amen."

The homily, preached by Fr Francis, touched on the calling and mission of St Paul. What changed Paul was his encounter with the risen Lord on the road to Damascus. The

brightness of Jesus' glory temporarily blinded Paul, but Jesus Christ could not have been any clearer.

Following his encounter with Jesus, Saul was told by the Lord what to do. Likewise, each day when we wake up, we need to ask the Lord what to do. Some of us may already know what our mission is; to raise a family, to evangelise, to care for the poor, and so on. Others may not be sure or feel the nudge that God is calling them to something new. This is a time to encounter Jesus once again. "Keep asking Him, pursue Him in prayer, in the sacraments, and in the Scriptures. Make Jesus your best friend. May our prayer be, 'Lord Jesus, I want to build your body. Show me what you want me to do,'" said Fr Francis.

During the prayer of the faithful, the congregation prayed a special blessing over Fr Dominic by singing *The Blessing*, which has lyrics from the Aaronic Blessing, or the Priestly Blessing taken from Num 6:22-27. After Mass, everyone adjourned to the parish hall for dinner and a fun night of singing, dancing, and heartfelt speeches from priests and parishioners. — nbvmcsc.org



Fr Dominic Santhiyagu with priests who have served in the parish and the two sons of the parish, Frs Mark Michael and Martin Arlando.

Kuantan parish to address Mass attendance, BECs, youth

By Francis Leong

KUANTAN: The Church of St Thomas held its Pastoral Assembly at the Parish Community Centre on January 29, after a multi-lingual Mass celebrated by Archbishop Julian Leow.

It began with a brief Praise and Worship session before the Pastoral Council chairman, Henry Alberto, together with parish priest Fr George Packiasamy, presented the Study Day findings.

Before the Assembly, the online Study Day was conducted over two sessions, on November 9 and 23, 2022, by Archdiocesan PPA coordinator, Rita Krishnan, and attended by the PPC, PCC, BECs, and leaders from various other ministries.

The areas identified were Mass attendance, youth involvement, and BEC attendance. Among the items highlighted were the noticeable decline in weekend Mass attendance, the lack of youth involvement due to an absence of youth advisors, proper guidance, and youth-oriented activities, and also poor participation at BEC gatherings.

Archdiocesan Pastoral Institute Director, Fr Eugene Benedict, presented the Synodal Spiritual Conversation based on the conversation



The participants at the Parish Pastoral Assembly of the Church of St Thomas, Kuantan.

of the two disciples with Jesus on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). Participants then formed into small groups of five, and each group chose and discussed one of the three areas of concern from the Study Day findings. Representatives of the various groups presented their discussion reports to the Assembly.

In his address to the Assembly, Archbishop Julian Leow complimented the participants for their presence as it shows their care for the Catholic Church and their sense of belonging. He encouraged the Assembly to continue developing their relationship with God and the Church.

He said each of us has a role to play in the parish, but there should be a balance between family life and parish involvement. He also stressed the need to pay attention to family relationships and to be credible witnesses of our faith. We realise our challenges and the issues that arise, hence the need to work together to find solutions.

On the issue of poor attendance at weekend Masses, probably due to live-streaming Masses still being carried out in the Archdiocese, the prelate said it was for the homebound and those unable to go to church for health or other valid reasons. His Grace strongly encouraged

those who are healthy and fit to be physically present to receive the Eucharist rather than having a "virtual meeting" with Our Lord.

Fr George, in his closing address, affirmed that unlike past Pastoral Assemblies, this year's Assembly is also known as "A Synodal Pastoral Assembly". It paves the way for the deepening of our faith communities by keeping certain core needs (areas of concern) of the parish upfront to achieve the Vision and Mission of the parish. He then presented it to the Assembly. The Closing Prayer was led by Fr. Eugene, followed by a blessing from the archbishop.

SFA to focus on leadership, formation and community

CHERAS: An estimated 180 parishioners from the Church of St Francis of Assisi (SFA) attended the Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA) on January 14.

Also in attendance were Archbishop Julian Leow, Director of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Institute, Fr Eugene Benedict, and Archdiocesan PPA Coordinator, Rita Krishnan.

Three key areas of concern were raised from the synodal questionnaire in 2021 and consolidated from the first synodal meeting held in mid-2022. They are: leadership, community, and formation.

Parish Pastoral chairman, William Cheong, reported on the synod findings and proposed plans for 2023.

To facilitate a smooth PPA and guide parishioners to contribute effectively, they assigned smaller groups, and each group focused on one of the three areas of concern highlighted. During the spiritual conversation, everyone had sufficient time to share their thoughts on the three questions.

Among the concerns raised were:

Leadership — too much bureaucracy and rules, one-man show leadership, long-serving parishioners continue to hold the reins.

Formation — although various formations are organised, the same members are seen attending.

Community — BECs are lacking in community and fellowship. We must ensure all members participate as the seniors feel left behind while the youth are not involved.

Archbishop Julian commended the team for a well-planned PPA. However, he cautioned that this is just the first step. "How do we translate all of these plans into concrete action?"

He reminded those present that everyone is important. "We are all part of the community. The suggestion of a mentor-mentee programme is vital, especially in planning for succession."

In his closing remarks, parish priest Fr Paul Cheong OFM Cap, said that the PPC and Synod team will work on addressing all concerns.

He also urged parishioners to call upon the Holy Spirit every day to guide and inspire them and to practise the *Eight Habits of Effective Christian Living*, so that SFA can be a model parish for others. — **By Jaclyn Sharmelee**

BECs are vital in forging relationships



The parishioners sharing their thoughts based on the questions provided.

BRICKFIELDS: About 100 parishioners attended the Church of Our Lady of Fatima's Parish Pastoral Assembly at Dewan Fatima on January 28.

Parish priest Fr William Michael thanked the parishioners from the English and Tamil-speaking apostolates for participating.

Parish Pastoral Council chairperson Susai Anthony, emphasised and explained the meaning of the four topics to be discussed.

- a) Youth: Work-life balance influences participation
- b) Formation: To fine-tune personal development skills
- c) Parish Community: BECs play a vital role in community building
- d) Leadership: To enhance skills to lead the community

The mixed BEC teams with five members each, analysed one topic and they were allocated sufficient time to discuss and summarise their findings.

After analysing the four topics, the BECs presented their deliberations to the Assembly. Fr William thanked everyone for their contributions, fruitful participation, and presentation of reports on their findings.

Concluding the BEC teams sessions, Fr William called on Archbishop Julian Leow to close the Assembly.

Archbishop Julian asked all present to reflect on how many Catholics attend weekend Saturday Mass or Sunday Mass as the numbers seem to be declining.

He suggested that if non-attending Catholics are our neighbours, we should meet them, get to understand them and pray for them. Make friends and eventually invite them to join us in attending Masses. Because of our friendship and understanding, they may agree to come to church again. Doing so makes us disciples of Christ and our lives become enriched because of our faithful contribution. — **By Francis Magimay**



Participants in groups during the Spiritual Conversation.

Red Mass at the Church of the Holy Family



The lawyers with the clergy.

By Christina Param

KAJANG: The Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit, commonly referred as the Red Mass, was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Family January 28.

Themed *A heart to seek you*, the Mass was presided over by Most Rev John Wong Soo Kau, Archbishop of Kota Kinabalu, and concelebrated by Most Rev Julian Leow, Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur.

Archbishop John touched the hearts of the congregation and Catholic lawyers with three main points to be pondered on.

His Grace exhorted the congre-

gation to focus on the person of Jesus, and keep the strong Faith demonstrated by the Lord in the Gospel, while carrying out the mission of upholding and dispensing justice in their daily lives, especially in the area of creating awareness in protecting children's rights and interest.

Still on the subject of Faith, His Grace touched on our Lord's Word, proclaiming that even if we have faith as small as a mustard seed, we say to a mountain, "move from here to there" and it would move, as nothing is impossible, but we might be asking the question,

'Why then are we not able

to move Mount Kinabalu?' His Grace then answered the question with yet another thought-provoking, soul-searching question, i.e. we could start by asking ourselves first whether we are able to move a candle with the faith we have, whether all of us have that faith to move a candle to light up the life of another person. His Grace believed the answer is in the affirmative.

Everyone left the Red Mass feeling assured that we possess that kind of faith.

The Mass concluded with a photo session at the main entrance, followed by a fellowship at the Church Hall.

Double Celebration at St Peter's College, Kuching

KUCHING: St Peter's College community celebrated the joint occasion of the inauguration of a new academic year and the installation of Fr Patrick Heng as the new rector for the seminary with Mass presided over by Archbishop Simon Poh. Also present were the other formators of the seminary.

In his homily, the prelate touched on the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives and how, as Christians, we are always called to listen to the voice of the Spirit. This, he added, is to ensure the continuation of the mission entrusted to the Church, which must be carried out until the Second Coming of Our Lord. Archbishop Simon also gave a fatherly

reminder to the seminarians to be aware of this call in their priestly formation.

After the homily, Fr Patrick took his oath and officially signed in as the new rector. Towards the end of the Mass, Fr Patrick shared some words of wisdom relating to his 28 years of priestly ministry, which he said is all about finding joy in one's calling and ultimately discovering Jesus, our one and only saviour, in that joy.

The evening ended with a simple and meaningful community fellowship with the introduction of the first-year theology students and a final blessing by the archbishop.

— By Gabriel Puvan



The seminarians with Archbishop Simon Poh and seminary formators.

Learning the art of destressing

RAWANG: The Church of St Jude played host to some 34 participants of *The Art of Destressing And Letting Go* on January 28 and 29. The two-day session on destressing was conducted by Fr Charles Chin.

The session began on Saturday morning with a brief introduction on the various techniques used by people to de-stress. Fr Chin emphasised that the techniques he would be teaching were methods which were logical, understandable and verifiable once there was evidence of success. In order for these methods to work, he said "one would need to practise it daily".

His first session was on *Observing Our Breath*. He said "once you learn to focus on your breathing with no craving nor aversion, the sensation of stress and inner trauma will emerge to pass away and eventually you will be stress free".

The second day began with a quick recap of what was learnt the previous day. Fr Charles introduced another technique called



The organisers and some participants with Fr Charles Chin.

Body Scanning 1. He asked the participants to scan their own bodies with the ray of mindfulness, moving systematically from top to bottom and vice versa. They were told not to jump from one sensation to another. After being aware of a sensation, they had to stay with it a little longer and then move on. If a certain part of the body was hurting, then look at it in your mind with tender loving care. Healing will be the final by-product.

In *Body Scanning 2*, the participants were asked to be mindful of their breathing. When they breathe in, they recognise their bodies, and when they breathe out, they smile at the body, looking at it with tender loving care and reassuring the body that it will be taken care of.

The next technique taught was *The Power of Look*. Masaru Emoto, author and pseudoscientist, studied the crystalline form of water and photographed the changes

brought to it from various human influences.

Water with positive message made beautiful crystals while the water with negative message made deformed crystals. Masaru concluded that people's thoughts, feelings and words directly affected the crystal structure of water, which seems to react like a living entity. Using this theory, Fr Charles said that since the body was made up of 60-70 per cent of water, we

must look at our body with love, thus healing it from within.

Finally, we learned about *The Power of the Present Moment*. We are to look at our breath from moment to moment with awareness. Breathing anchors us to the present moment because each breath takes place only in the present moment, thus gradually the sensation of stress and inner trauma will emerge to go away.

"I have heard about meditation and inner healing, but the technique I learned today is easily understood and practised," said participant Chetna Jeyakant.

The only youth representative, Jeshua Raphael, added that it was his very first experience. To him, the methods taught were easy to comprehend and follow.

Angel Innasi, one of the organisers of the event, said she was looking forward to the next session with Fr Charles. The organising team then presented Fr Charles with a small token of appreciation.

— By Mercy Almeida

KK religious attend talk on 'New wine in new wineskins'

TANJUNG ARU, Sabah: Around 100 religious men and women attended a half-day talk on "new wine in new wineskins" at the Galilee Hall, Stella Maris Convent on January 28.

The talk, given by Franciscan Friar Derrick Yap of Singapore, was in preparation for World Day of Consecrated Life (WDCL), organised by the Council of Religious in lieu of the usual preparatory triduum of prayer. The talk, based on the Vatican document *New Wine in New Wineskins*, focused on the

ongoing challenges in consecrated life since Vatican Council II. Time was given for small group sharing.

The attendees included the Marist Brothers (FMS), Gabrielite Brothers (SG), Good Shepherd Sisters (RGS), Daughters of St Paul (FSP), Franciscan Friars (OFM), and the host, Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (FSIC).

The WDCL was celebrated at St Michael Penampang on Feb 2, Feast of the Presentation of Jesus, at 10.00am.



Religious men and women attended a half-day talk on "New Wine in New Wineskins" January 28 at the Galilee Hall, Stella Maris Convent.

Sri Lankan cardinal warns against 'sacristy Catholics'

COLOMBO: Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith of Colombo (*pic*) urged Catholics in Sri Lanka to "fight for justice" and not become "sacristy Catholics."



"We need a laity who are ready to get down to the streets and fight for justice and do what is right for society," the cardinal said at the 40th Anniversary of the Deva Dharma Nikethana in Colombo earlier this month.

The prelate, who has been vocal in his criticism of government policies, said the Catholic Church needs mature Christians who are fit for leadership.

"We have to change the outlook of the Church. Today, we no longer need such sacristy Catholics," said Cardinal Ranjith, adding that the Church should not be "bishop-priest centred."

"The Church needs Christians who will commit themselves for Christ and follow His example. We do not need spoon-fed babies," he said.



A file photo of the aftermath of the suicide bombing at St Sebastian's Church. (UCA News photo)

The cardinal also urged bishops and priests not to be afraid to hand over responsibilities to the laity.

"We should share our responsibilities with joy. The Church cannot continue otherwise,"

he said.

The cardinal had recently welcomed the ruling of Sri Lanka's Supreme Court that found former Sri Lankan president Maithripala Sirisena and four other top officials re-

sponsible for failing to prevent the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings that killed 279 people.

The court ruling was issued on January 12, following a lawsuit filed by 13 families and local Church leaders. The seven-judge bench ruled that Sirisena had been negligent in not taking measures to thwart the attack, despite solid intelligence warnings two weeks earlier.

They ordered Sirisena, 71, to pay 100 million rupees (RM5,189,657.10) to family members of victims who brought the civil case before the court. Sri Lanka's former police, intelligence and defence chiefs were also held responsible and instructed to compensate victims' relatives.

It is the first time that a head of state in Sri Lanka has been held responsible for failing to prevent a terror attack.

"This is a beginning, and it is a very happy beginning, and we are very happy that the learned judges gave us such hope for a future for this country, which is a much-needed hope for the developing of our nation," said Cardinal Ranjith. — *LiCAS.news*

Japan probes 'forced sterilisation' of disabled people

TOKYO: Authorities in Japan have ordered local officials to investigate the alleged forced sterilisation of people with disabilities, following reports of malpractice by disability care service providers.

Katsunobu Kato, Health, Labour, and Welfare minister, told reporters during a recent press conference that local governments have been directed to provide better support to individuals with disabilities.

"We have issued an administrative notice to secure and enhance a collaborative system among welfare for persons with disabilities, maternal and child health, and child welfare," Kato said.

In a notice dated January 20, the ministry ordered local authorities to immediately notify any organisations mandating sterilisation or contraception as a condition to avail its services.

Last December, local media reported that the Asunaro Social Welfare Service Corporation in Hokkaido, which caters to people with intellectual disabilities, mandated sterilisation or other birth control measures for couples who intended to start a family or live together.

Reportedly, eight men among the couples have undergone a vasectomy at the recommen-

dation of the care home authorities.

Kato said no one should interfere with the free will and decision-making powers of individuals with disabilities.

"It is extremely important to implement appropriate support based on the wishes of persons with disabilities, including marriage, childbirth, and child-rearing," he said.

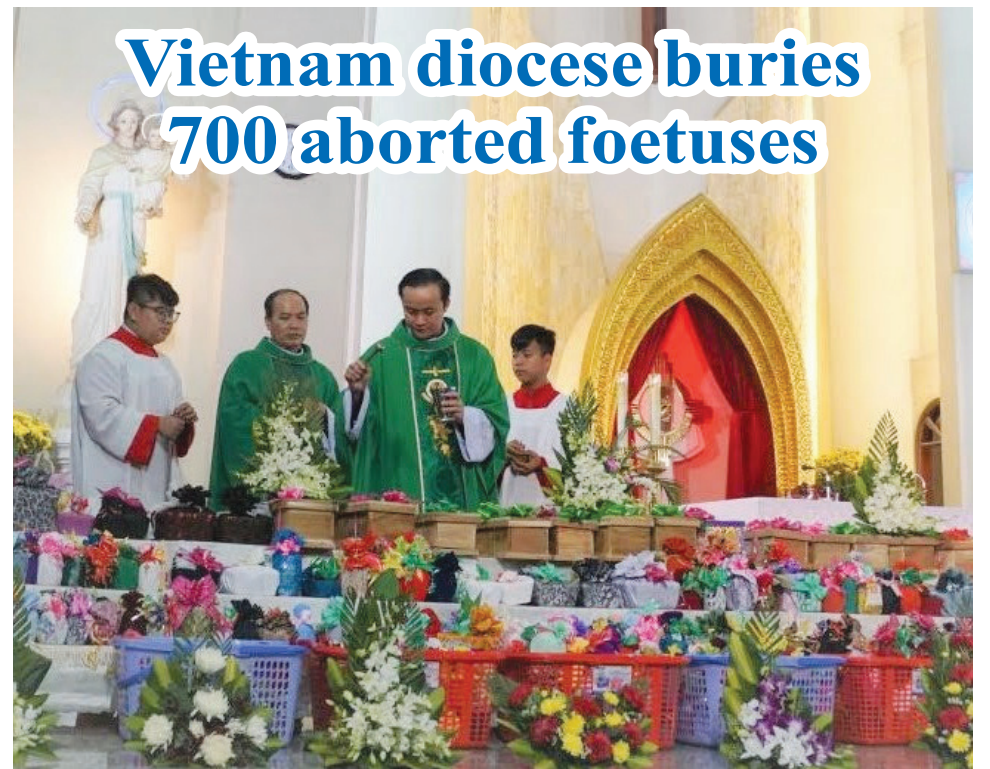
Kato also announced that the ministry is planning to research marriages, pregnancies, childbirths, and child rearing of people with disabilities to better understand their situation and provide appropriate support.

The research is expected to begin in the 2023 fiscal year.

The Hokkaido incident underlines the grim reality of the problems that persons with disabilities must endure to start a family and have children in Japan. The care homes for disabled people do not have provisions for child care and are designed for couples only. Moreover, they do not address the needs of people under 18 years old.

Even though the government has provided a service that undertakes household chores, the coverage is deemed insufficient, local media reported. — *ucanews.com*

Vietnam diocese buries 700 aborted fetuses



Frs Joseph Nguyen Van Tich (left) and Vincent Nguyen Minh Tien bless dead fetuses at Bac Hai Church before burying them on January 29, 2023. (UCA News Photo/giaophanxuanloc.net)

VIETNAM: A diocesan pro-life panel in southern Vietnam celebrated a special Requiem Mass and burial for 700 aborted fetuses recently where participants dedicated themselves to raising awareness of human dignity in the communist nation where students lead the pack in seeking abortions.

Led by Xuan Loc diocese's pro-life committee, the special Mass at Bac Hai Church in Bien Hoa City, in the southeast region of Vietnam, was attended by hundreds of pro-life volunteers from different faiths. The cemetery is home to over 62,000 unborn babies.

Before the burial, the dead fetuses were cleaned with alcohol, wrapped in white cloth, given names, decorated with flowers, and placed in the church for people to pray for.

"Burying dead fetuses is to apologise to unborn babies for the pain and suffering we make them endure ... and to pray for other babies to be safe," Fr Joseph Nguyen Van Tich, one of two priests who concelebrated the Mass said.

Although people took ten days off to cel-

brate the Tet (Lunar New Year) festival in January, early terminations did not subside and volunteers still collected 700 dead fetuses from local clinics and hospitals, Fr Tich said.

The southeast Asian nation, with a population of 99.4 million records 300,000 terminations per year, mainly among girls aged 15-19. Of them, 60-70 per cent are students, according to studies.

Fr Tich, who started pro-life activities in Vietnam in 2011, said the diocesan panel has rescued hundreds of babies from abortion and provided safe accommodation for 2,000 single mothers abandoned by their boyfriends and relatives for refusing to terminate their pregnancies.

In Vietnam, abortion in the early period of pregnancy has been recognised as a women's right under a 1989 law on people's health.

A study done for the UN Sustainable Development Goals found that there was one abortion for every 1,000 women among 15-19 years old in Vietnam in 2021. — *ucanews.com*

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Pope Francis on World Day for Consecrated Life

Religious have 'special role' in the Church

ROME: On the 27th World Day for Consecrated Life, Pope Francis recalled the special role religious brothers and sisters have in the Catholic Church.

"In the People of God, sent to bring the Gospel to all people, you consecrated men and women have a special role," the Pope said in a written message.

This special role, he continued, stems "from the special gift you have received: a gift that gives your witness a special character and value, by the very fact that you are wholly dedicated to God and His kingdom, in poverty, virginity, and obedience."

Pope Francis' message was read at the beginning of a Mass for consecrated men and women in Rome's St Mary Major Basilica on February 2.

Pope Francis usually celebrates

a special Mass in St Peter's Basilica to mark the World Day for Consecrated Life but was unable to do so this year because the day fell in the middle of his Jan 31-Feb 5 trip to the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan.

The Mass in St Mary Major was celebrated by the prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for Consecrated Life, Cardinal João Braz de Aviz, who read the Pope's message to those present.

"When you hear this message from me, I will be on mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and I know that I will be accompanied by your prayers," the Pope said. "In turn, I want to assure you of mine for the mission of each of you and your communities."

"All of us together are members of the Church," he continued, "and

the Church is in mission from the first day, sent by the Risen Lord, and will be so until the last, by the power of his Spirit."

The theme of the 2023 World Day for Consecrated Life is *Brothers and Sisters in Mission*.

In his message, Pope Francis said the mission of consecrated men and women is enriched by the unique charisms of their communities, in addition to the fundamental gift they have each received.

"In their stupendous variety, [charisms] are all given for the edification of the Church and for its mission," he said. "All charisms are for mission, and they are precisely so with the incalculable richness of their variety; so that the Church can witness and proclaim the Gospel to all and in every situation."

He prayed that the Virgin Mary



A file photo of Pope Francis presiding over the Vigil Mass for World Day for Consecrated life. (CNA photo/Vatican Media)

would obtain for consecrated men and women the grace to bring the light of Christ's love to all people. He also entrusted them to Mary "Salus Populi Romani," the title of a Byzantine Marian icon housed in the Basilica of St Mary Major.

In his homily at the Mass, Archbishop Carballo, who is a religious in the Franciscan Order of Friars Minor, said "we want, especially on this day, to say our thanks to the Lord and, using the words of Mary, the consecrated woman par excellence, sing our Magnificat to him who is the Good, the All

Good, the Supreme Good."

God, he said, "has made us sharers in a beautiful inheritance and a mission no less beautiful: that of representing in us the historical form of the obedient, poor, and chaste Jesus."

"Let a song of thanksgiving rise from our lips and from our hearts, today and always, because Jesus has bent over our littleness and has given us the grace to follow him in the various forms of consecrated life, despite our littleness," he said. — **By Hannah Brockhaus, CNA**

Costa Rican priest shares his journey from intelligence agent to the Catholic priesthood

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica: Fr Luis Enrique Guillén left a police career in the National Intelligence and Security Directorate of Costa Rica to give his life to the Lord in the Catholic priesthood.

"The experience of the priesthood is very beautiful. It has been a bit of everything, but I can openly say that nothing I gained before compares to what God has given me in this ministry," Guillén, a priest now for more than 20 years, said in a recent interview with the Costa Rican channel *Teletica*.

The priest recounted that, before becoming a priest, he had several jobs and even had a girlfriend.

"After leaving school, my first job was as a school teacher. Later, I took a position at the Juan Santamaría Airport in flight operations, and then I spent seven years



Fr Luis Enrique Guillén. (CNA photo/Archdiocese of San José)

working in the Intelligence and Security Directorate (DIS)," he commented.

The DIS is a police agency under the Ministry of the Presidency of

Costa Rica. According to its regulations, its functions include "intelligence and investigations" to "ensure the security of the State."

Guillén said that "in the DIS I

worked for seven years and so I still maintain a connection, but [now] as a chaplain. After working for that time, [I] began the whole vocational discernment process."

Guillén, 52, said that he responded to God's call when he was 24.

"At 24 years of age, I think that maturity and the passing of the years made me question what I wanted, where to go. That made me wonder: 'And why not what I had once thought about?'" he recalled.

"Back then I even had a girlfriend, I talked to my parents and told them that I wanted to give myself a chance at the seminary, whether it was three weeks, three months, or three years. And here I am, I am already on my way to 21 years of priesthood and 10 years

of being a chaplain for the Costa Rican Public (police) Force," he added.

Guillén also noted that the priesthood means learning to renounce material goods and trusting fully in God's providence.

"It's giving up credit cards, a monthly salary, and starting to depend a lot on divine providence, which is manifested through the charitable action of people or depending again, a little, on the family," he said.

Finally, he stressed that "God never fails, he is always faithful," because he "always gives us what we need."

Guillén was recently installed as pastor of St Anthony of Padua Parish in the city of Curridabat in San José province. He was ordained on March 19, 2002. — **CNA**

Religious freedom 'under assault' across the world, leaders testify at summit

WASHINGTON: "Tragically, religious freedom for many is increasingly under assault around the world," Congressman Michael McCaul said to kick off the International Religious Freedom (IRF) Summit, which took place in Washington, early February.

Faith leaders from across the world — including Catholics, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, and others — gathered at the summit to address the ongoing persecution against people of faith, which has been increasing in many nations and has resulted in the deaths of millions.

McCaul, a Republican congressman from Texas and a Catholic, invoked the teachings of both Pope Francis and St John Paul II in upholding religious freedom as the

"cornerstone" of human rights.

Some leaders at the summit, including Naomi Kikoler of the Holocaust Memorial Museum, cautioned that the persecution of people of faith in some countries already amounts to genocide and could lead to genocide in others if immediate action is not taken.

"We know from studying the Holocaust that genocide and related crimes against humanity, persecution, is never spontaneous," Kikoler said. "There's a wide range of early warning signs, and if detected and their causes are addressed, it could be possible to prevent catastrophic loss of life."

"The right to practice one's religion of choice is so frequently violated by governments all over

the world," said Congressman Jim McGovern, a Catholic Democrat from Massachusetts, while speaking at the summit. "The Uyghurs and Tibetans by China, Muslims and Sikhs in India, Coptic Christians in Egypt ... Shia Muslims in Sunni-governed countries, Catholics in Nicaragua, Jews in France, I could go on and on and on, the list is way too long."

"As a practicing Catholic myself I know how important and personal the right to freedom of religion is," McGovern added.

Though Catholics in America don't face widespread violent persecution, Catholics are being killed, persecuted, and arrested by the thousands in other countries such as Nicaragua, China, and Nigeria.

According to religious freedom



From left: Imam Talib Shareef of the Nation's Mosque; Robert Destro; and Cole Durham of the International Centre for Law and Religion Studies at Brigham Young University Law School. (CNA photo/Peter Pinedo)

watchdog Open Doors International, 5,014 Christians were killed in 2022 in Nigeria alone.

"Ours is a huge task, freedom for the soul and respect for each other," said Ambassador Sam Brownback at the summit. "We are gathered and

fighting here for the abused and beaten, even killed religious minorities that even now are huddled in secret places yearning with all their heart to worship God as they believe they should. And is that too much to ask? It is not." — **By Peter Pinedo, CNA**



POPE'S VISIT TO DRC & SOUTH SUDAN, JANUARY 31 - FEB 5, 2023

Stop choking Africa

It is not a mine to be stripped or a terrain to be plundered

KINSHASA: The people of Congo are more precious than any of the gems or minerals found in the earth beneath their feet, yet they have been slaughtered by warmongers and exploited by prospectors, Pope Francis said.

"This country, so immense and full of life, this diaphragm of Africa, struck by violence like a blow to the stomach, has seemed for some time to be gasping for breath," the Pope said January 31 at a meeting with Congo's President Felix Tshisekedi, other government and political leaders, diplomats and representatives of civil society.

Poverty, internal displacement, crime and violence plague the Congolese people. The United Nations and human rights organisations say more than 100 armed groups are operating in the country, sowing terror particularly in the east.

Yet, according to the US State Department country report, for Africa "regional stability and security is dependent on durable peace" in Congo, "the largest country in sub-Saharan Africa," one bordering nine other nations and home to diamonds and vast mineral reserves. It also has the largest Catholic population in Africa and has the sixth most Catholics of any nation after Brazil, Mexico, the Philippines, the United States and Italy.

Tens of thousands of people lined the streets from the airport to the city centre, cheering as the Pope passed by in the popemobile. Many children and teens were dressed in their school uniforms, parishioners proudly held banners welcoming the Pope in the name of their communities and many of the women wore brightly coloured cotton dresses with images of the Pope.

Speaking to several hundred leaders in the garden of the Palais de la Nation, his official residence, President Tshisekedi told the Pope that the welcome and harmony that had characterised Congo for centuries has, in the past 30 years, "been undermined by the enemies of peace as well as terrorist groups, mainly from



"I am with you; I want to bring you God's caress. He gazes upon you with tenderness and compassion."

Pope Francis meets with survivors of violence from the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. (Vatican Media)

neighbouring countries."

"Indeed," he told the Pope, with "the inaction and silence of the international community, more than 10 million people have had their lives taken from them atrociously. Innocent women, even pregnant ones, are raped and disembowelled, young people and children have their throats slit, families, the elderly and children are condemned to brave fatigue and exhaustion, wandering far from their homes in search of peace because of the atrocities committed by these terrorists in the service of foreign interests," who want to exploit the country's natural resources.

Pope Francis, responding to the president, added that Congo is suffering from a "forgotten genocide," one the world must recognise.

Returning to his prepared text, the Pope chose diamonds as the key image in his first speech in Congo, insisting that "you, all of you, are infinitely more precious than any treasure found in this fruitful soil!"

In a speech frequently interrupted by applause

and shouts of "Amen," the Pope urged the Congolese people to demand the respect they deserve; he pleaded with the country's political leaders to put the common good ahead of greed and a lust for power; and he begged the international community to help Congo, not plunder it.

"Diamonds are usually rare," he said, "yet here they are abundant."

"If that is true of the material wealth hidden in the soil, it is even more true of the spiritual wealth present within your hearts," he said. "For it is from hearts that peace and development are born, because, with God's help, men and women are capable of justice and of forgiveness, of concord and reconciliation, of commitment and perseverance in putting to good use the many talents they have received."

Every person in Congo has a part to play, Pope Francis insisted.

"May violence and hatred no longer find room in the heart or on the lips of anyone, since these are inhuman and un-Christian sentiments that arrest development and bring us back to a

gloomy past," he said.

Referencing both the loss of life and the term for diamonds mined to finance conflict, the Pope said that "the poison of greed has smeared (Congo's) diamonds with blood."

The developed world, he said, "often closes its eyes, ears and mouth" to the tragedy occurring in Congo while greedily buying up coltan, a mineral used in mobile phones, and other natural resources from the country.

"Hands off the Democratic Republic of the Congo! Hands off Africa," Pope Francis insisted to applause and the stomping of feet. "Stop choking Africa: it is not a mine to be stripped or a terrain to be plundered."

At the same, the Pope did not let the Congolese off the hook, especially those who promote members of their own ethnic group or political party to the detriment of their neighbours, "thus nurturing spirals of hatred and violence."

"From a chemical standpoint, it is interesting that diamonds are made up of simple atoms of carbon which, if differently bonded, form graphite: in effect, the difference between the brilliance of the diamond and the darkness of graphite comes from the way the individual atoms are arranged," he said.

Different ethnic groups or cultural traditions do not create tension automatically, but it depends on people and the way they choose to live together, the Pope said. "Their willingness or not to encounter one another, to be reconciled and to start anew makes the difference between the grimness of conflict and a radiant future of peace and prosperity."

Pope Francis also called for greater respect for the environment, including the Congo rainforest, second in size only to the Amazon. The Pope called it "one of the great green lungs of the world."

But, he said, efforts to protect it must be carried out in cooperation with the people who live there and rely on it for their livelihoods. —By Cindy Wooden, CNS



Pope Francis listened to the stories of victims of violence. (Vatican Media)



People at Mass in Kinshasa, DRC. (CNA photo/Elias Turk)



Meeting with the Bishops at the CENCO headquarters, Kinshasa.

Serving the poor 'not philanthropy but faith' says Pope

KINSHASA: In a meeting with Catholic Congolese charities on February 1, Pope Francis praised the work being done to assist those in poverty and emphasised the importance of Christian charity as an integral part of the faith.

"What causes poverty is not so much the absence of goods and opportunities but their unequal distribution," the pontiff said at the apostolic nunciature in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He gave his speech after hearing testimony from representatives from various charities and meeting with some of the workers and people who receive care from them.

"Those who are prosperous, especially if they are Christians, are challenged to share what they have with those who lack the bare necessities, and all the more so if they are members of the same people," the Pope continued. "This is not a matter of benevolence, but of justice. It is not philanthropy, but faith.

For, as Scripture says, 'Faith without works is dead.'"

The Pope emphasised that charity, in the Christian sense, is about raising people "back up to their dignity" rather than treating those in need like statistics. He expressed gratitude that the people who do this work "are able to see Jesus in the least of his brothers and sisters."

"You did not simply list social problems or provide me with statistics on poverty, but more importantly you spoke with affection about the poor," the pontiff continued. "You spoke about yourselves and about people you did not know before, but who have now become familiar to you; people with names and faces."

"I am grateful that you are able to see Jesus in the least of His brothers and sisters. The Lord is to be sought and loved in the poor and we, as Christians, must take care not to turn our backs on them," he said, adding: "There is something wrong when a believer keeps Christ's loved

ones at a distance."

In his speech, Pope Francis said the work done by these charitable organisations is "wonderful but by no means easy." After referencing testimonies that he said were full of "stupendous happenings" that are "impossible to attribute merely to human strength," he said it is certainly worth it.

"Goodness is like that, it spreads; it is not paralysed by resignation or statistics but impels us to give others what we ourselves freely received," the Pope said. "Young people in particular need to see this: They need to see faces that overcome indifference by looking people in the eye, and hands that do not wield weapons or misuse money but reach out to those

who are down on the ground and raise them back up to their dignity, the dignity of a daughter and son of God."

"In this country, where the sound of violence is heard like the loud crash of a felled tree, you are the forest that quietly grows each day and makes the air clean and breathable," Pope Francis said. "Naturally, a falling tree makes more noise, but God loves and blesses the generosity that silently sprouts and bears fruit, and he looks with joy upon all those who serve the needy. That is how goodness grows: in the simplicity of hands and hearts stretched out to others and in the courage of small steps that approach the poor and vulnerable in the name of Jesus." — By Tyler Arnold, CNA

For comprehensive reports on the Pope's visit to DRC and South Sudan, visit our website: <https://www.heraldmalaysia.com/tag/Papal-DRC-and-South-Sudan-Visit>



GO Church or BE Church

As Catholics, we are constantly reminded to always go to church at least once a week to attend Mass. For most people, this will usually be sunset Mass on Saturday or Sunday Mass. Our Catechism teaches us that the Holy Eucharist is a sacrament, and that, as Catholics, we are obliged to attend and celebrate Mass every week, as a minimum. Perhaps many among you attend daily Masses too. This is what being a Catholic means to me — Mass attendance, going to church, receiving the Holy Eucharist, going to Confession, etc. This is what I was taught from young, and continue to teach others today.

Today, when we pick up any bulletins or materials about Church, we read about the “new way of being Church”. Emphasis is on “*BEING Church*”, not going to church. What does this mean? Isn’t church where we go to worship every week? Isn’t church the community we belong to where we attend Mass, send our children for Sunday catechism and fulfil our Sunday obligations?

The phrase *A New Way of Being Church* was first announced at the Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Convention (PMPC) II in 1996. This was a follow through from the Fifth Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) held in Bandung, Indonesia in 1990, where the phrase was first suggested and subsequently adopted by the Churches in Asia. Several years later, the phrase *A New Way of Being Church* appeared at formation sessions for Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs), parish formation and in church bulletins.

You may ask: “what exactly does *new way of being church*” mean? What’s wrong with the old way? Why do we need a new way? Why being church?

This was the challenge posed to the 390



REMINISCING CHURCH

Richard Chia

participants who attended the PMPC II gathering at Plentong, Johor in 1986. Having to disseminate and communicate this new abstract thinking to the larger community, a red booklet entitled *Towards a New Way of Being Church in Malaysia* was published. The booklet attempted to summarise the findings of the PMPC II, including the vision and mission statement of the Church in Peninsular Malaysia, and detailed the various pastoral priorities of the Church in Peninsular Malaysia. As with most Church documents, the laity, if they chanced on the document, found it extremely heavy, sounding theological and difficult to grasp. Not to say it was incomprehensible and not directly implementable.

In 1997, realising the need for the Church to disseminate this new “concept” to the larger community, a peninsular-wide event was organised. It was commonly dubbed as “the Bishops Roadshow” where a total of 20 resource persons, led by then Auxiliary Bishop Rt Rev Murphy Pakiam (now Archbishop Emeritus) and comprising other bishops, priests and laity, journeyed to 18 districts in the one archdiocese and two dioceses in Peninsular Malaysia, to communicate and engage with the grassroots leaders in the Church. This roadshow was conducted in four languages and involved many thousands of participants. As expected, lots of questions, concerns, issues and deliberations resulted.

In response, in 1998, the Church pub-

lished *Guidelines for BEC* and *Guidelines for parish structure* in an A4-sized book. Limited copies of these books were circulated among the Church leaders and many attempted to implement these guidelines in their respective churches. In 2001, the first revision of the book was made, where the book was shrunk to half an A4 size, commercially printed, mass produced and sold at an affordable price. This was generally dubbed “the pink book”. Two more revisions were made in 2002 and 2004, with inclusions of more appendices and examples. Many of the newly formed BECs then were encouraged to use this book, as it contained the WHAT, HOW, WHY, WHEN, WHERE answers to many of the questions commonly asked. E.g. — What is a BEC? What do we do at BEC gatherings? How do we conduct BEC gatherings? When should BEC gatherings be held? Who should lead? Why do we need BECs?

To support the implementation of this *New Way of Being Church* (NEWBEC), several support structures and roles were proposed. BEC Coordinating Team (BECCOT), BEC Animating Team (BECAT), Zone Coordinators, Messengers, etc. Parish structures were also changed. Before, the governing body for any parish church was the parish council, comprising representatives from all church ministries and church groups. A parish council typically comprised 20-30 people, and they met once a month, headed by the parish priest. As you can imagine, a typical parish council meeting could last many hours, especially when each parish representative brought forth issues and deliberations could last forever. Most times, parish council meetings were loud, focused on administrative, operational and sometimes technical matters of the church.

With the *New Way of Being Church*

guidelines, parishes began to slowly reorganise themselves into three structures: Parish Pastoral Council (PPC), Parish Coordinating Council (PCC) and Parish Finance Committee (PFC). The many functions of the previous parish council are now separated into three bodies, each focusing on their respective areas — pastoral planning, pastoral implementation and coordination, and managing parish financial resources. The number of members in each council are reduced and the frequency of meetings per year are also limited.

“Being Church” means the emphasis is now on the people of God, the parish community as well as the community at large. Church here is premised on the teaching of Jesus where He said “For where two or three gather together in My name, there am I with them”. (Matt 18:20). Even though the institutional church remains, the people of God *becomes the church* priority for pastoral and spiritual advancement.

As such, the *New Way of Being Church* is not merely about being a dutiful church-going Catholic once a week but rather, living Christ-centred lives daily, rooted in the Bible, 24/7 wherever we are — at work, at home, at play, while shopping, or anywhere else. The *New Way of Being Church* is not just about being active by joining a church ministry, a church group or attending seminars, retreats, prayer sessions and Mass, but all of the above plus living our Christian life rooted in communion with the Holy Trinity and in solidarity with the whole human family and creation. Tall order, yes? Certainly.

Richard Chia has been actively involved in Church since young. He held full-time corporate jobs while serving in ministries and groups at various church levels for the past four decades.

Where is Mass attendance highest?

One country is the clear leader

A compilation of new data by the Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University sheds light on the countries around the world that have the highest Mass attendance numbers.

CARA researchers used data from the World Values Survey (WVS), a major international study of religious belief that has been conducted for decades, to examine 36 countries with large Catholic populations. Of those countries, the researchers ranked them by the percentage of self-identified Catholics who say they attend Mass weekly or more, excluding weddings, funerals, and baptisms.

According to the data, Nigeria and Kenya have the highest proportion of Catholics who attend Mass weekly or more, with Nigeria as the clear leader. Ninety-four per cent of Catholics in Nigeria say they attend Mass at least weekly. In Kenya, the figure was 73 per cent, and in Lebanon it was 69 per cent.

The level of attendance in Nigeria is notably high given the high number of violent attacks against Christians across the country in recent years. Terrorist incidents inside Catholic churches are not infrequent; notably, in June of last year, when gunmen believed to be Islamic extremists opened fire on Catho-

lic worshippers attending Pentecost Mass at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in southwestern Nigeria, killing at least 50.

More than half of all Catholics attend weekly or more in the Philippines (56 per cent), Colombia (54 per cent), Poland (52 per cent), and Ecuador (50 per cent). But in 29 of the 36 countries examined, fewer than half of self-identified Catholics attend Sunday Mass. The researchers acknowledged that the use of self-reported Mass attendance numbers could inflate the figures slightly, meaning actual attendance numbers could be, in reality, slightly lower across the board.

The WVS data did not include the US, but CARA’s polling data indicated that the percentage of Catholics in the United States who attend Mass weekly or more is 17 per cent, even though more than three-quarters of US Catholics consider themselves to be a “religious person.”

Continuing down from there, the lowest levels of weekly attendance were observed in Lithuania (16 per cent), Germany (14 per cent), Canada (14 per cent), Latvia (11 per cent), Switzerland (11 per cent), Brazil (8 per cent), France (8 per cent), and the Netherlands (7 per cent).

“One might assume that the more religious Catholics are in a country,

the more likely they are to be frequent Mass attenders,” the CARA researchers wrote.

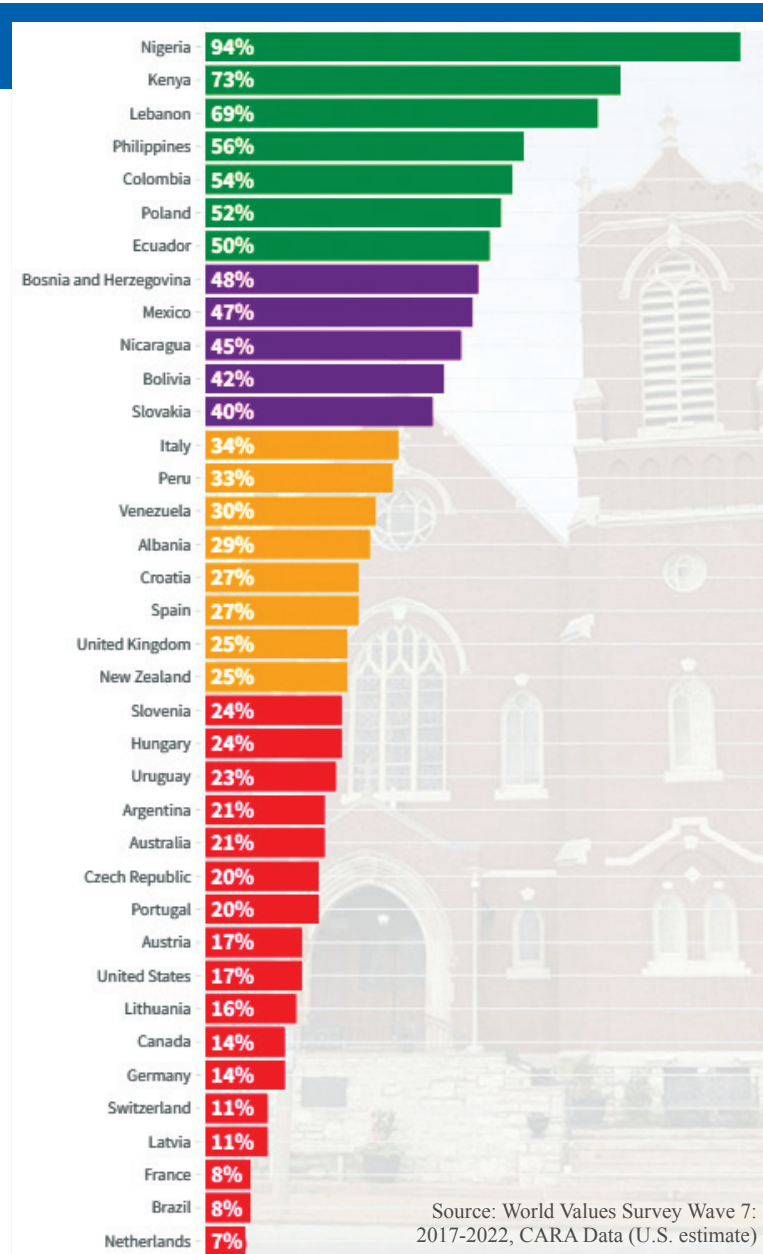
“Yet, there is not a strong correlation between the numbers identifying as a ‘religious’ Catholic and frequent Mass attendance.”

Countries with a higher Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita had lower levels of Mass attendance and vice versa, they noted.

“While there seems to be a disconnect between identifying as a religious person and attending Mass weekly, there is a third factor that may explain the comparative distribution of both of these attributes. If you’ve looked closely at the countries, you might have noticed some economic clustering,” the CARA researchers wrote.

“In this small sample of countries, we can surmise that Catholicism is strongest in what is often called the developing world where GDP per capita are lower, while it appears to be contracting in wealthier ‘developed’ countries,” the researchers concluded.

“The precise mechanisms associated with economic development and wealth that are impacting Catholics’ participation in the faith and identification as religious are unclear. Whatever they are, they matter significantly.” — **By Jonah McKeown, CNA**



Meet Asia's oldest cardinal

Cardinal Michael Michai Kitbunchu

He turned 94 on January 25. He is dubbed a "legend" among Catholic Church leaders, but he does not want to broadcast the things he did.

He watches television, "a lot," but he does not use a computer or a mobile phone.

Early every morning, he wakes up and walks around the property he built to serve the needs of the Catholic faithful, not only the clergy, of Thailand and Asia.

He speaks to the flowers, the trees, most of which he planted himself, and the fish in the man-made lake in the middle of the property which he developed since the mid-1990s in a province outside Thailand's capital.

He enjoys the morning sun, and his early morning walk. And he talks of planting, of farming, of the soil, of life, like an expert.

"Now we have the lemon, we have banana, we have coconut," he says, pointing at the trees surrounding his small residence across a sprawling cemetery that has become one of his most recent "projects."

Multiplying into ten

A few years back, he studied how to grow a good variety of rice to help poor farmers in the neighbouring areas produce a better yield.

"Farmers are poor because the price of rice is low, very low. We have to teach them to cultivate the good quality. Now, I have some experience to produce a good quality rice," he says.

He talks of how three years ago — when he was already 90 years old — he cultivated "some big quantity of rice."

"First of all, I studied how to prepare the land ... how deep to plot the soil," he says.

"You can't just dig, because, you see, the seed, when you put in the soil deep enough, the root can go deep down and grow tall ... and one seed can multiply into ten," he says.

"Second, because rice is one grass that want much water ... you give the rice the right amount of water, and you should know when to provide water," he adds.

He says a farmer must control even the rain through small canals to ensure that the plants will get the right water supply.

"If you have less water, it is not enough, if you have more, it is not good," says the cardinal.

Growing up Catholic

Cardinal Michael Michai Kitbunchu or Cardinal Michai as he is popularly known, was born in Sam Phran, a district of Thailand's Nakhon Pathom province, to a family of Chinese de-

scent on Jan. 25, 1929.

"I was born Catholic. My grandfather came from China and married a local. My mother became Catholic because of the marriage," he says.

He was brought up a Catholic in the middle of farmlands "but near a big church."

"There was nothing here when we were young, only farms ... but I also travelled to see people," he says, adding that "even until now, I travel and am invited by the people" to visit their homes.

He realised that he wanted to become a priest from an "uncle" who is a priest.

"My friend's father had three boys. One of them became a priest," he recalls. "Once a year we met when he came home for a visit."

He admits, however, that when he was in school, he did not know what a seminarian or a seminary was. "I didn't know nothing," he says, adding that he was just an "ordinary student."

One day, a catechist in his school explained that, to be a priest, one must go to a seminary to study.

"I have to thank my teacher. He did not convince me to be a priest, but he told me to study well," he says.

Speaking about his education, the cardinal said, "We had to go to primary school and then, after we finished primary school, we had secondary school. I started from secondary school. It was during the Second World War," he says. "It was very difficult."

The future cardinal had to stop his studies for about a year. "The seminary in Pattaya was closed," he says. But he recalls learning Latin there although his English was "very bad."

He later went to Rome in 1953 to continue his studies and after seven years, he was ordained priest. "Then another six months in Rome to finish Theology," recalls the cardinal.

Long way to Rome

It took me from Bangkok to Rome, in Ciampino at the time, three days. First stop was in Calcutta. And then from Calcutta to Karachi, Pakistan, and I spent overnight there. And from Karachi we went to Iran. And then I had to spend another night there, and from there to Rome.

After spending his early seminary formation in the minor seminary of Siracha, in Thailand, he went to Rome and studied at the Pontifical Urban College of "Propaganda Fide," earning a licentiate in philosophy and sacred theology.

He was ordained a priest on Dec 20, 1959, by Cardinal Grégoire-Pierre Agagianian, then prefect of the dicastery Propaganda Fide.

He later returned to Thailand and served as assistant pastor and then pastor in Bang Kham. He later became pastor of Calvary Parish in Bangkok.

He served as archdiocesan consultant and as rector of the metropolitan seminary of Bangkok from 1965 to 1972.

On Dec 18, 1972, Pope Paul VI appointed him the second archbishop of Bangkok. He received his episcopal consecration on June 3, 1973, from Archbishop Joseph Khamsun Nittayo, with Bishops Lawrence Thienchai Samanchit and Michel-Auguste-Marie Langer, MEP, serving as co-consecrators.

Pope John Paul II created him cardinal-priest of San Lorenzo, in the consistory of Panisperna, on Feb 2, 1983. He was one of the cardinal electors who participated in the 2005 papal conclave that elected Pope Benedict XVI.

He became the first cardinal from Thailand and was president of the Thai Episcopal Conference from 1979 to 1982 and from 2000 to 2006.

He has been the "protopriest" of the College of Cardinals since Dec. 14, 2016.

A "protopriest" is the first cardinal-priest in the order of precedence, hence directly after the cardinal-bishops. This title is always attached to the most senior cardinal priest according to date of his creation.

While in Rome

In Rome, the future cardinal tried to adapt to a new environment, a new culture, a new world that had just survived a war.

"It was interesting because after the war, Europe was different," he recalls.

It was a time for rebuilding for everyone, including the Church.

"I tried my best to learn about the Church, about education, about religious congregations," Cardinal Michai recalls.

He says that in Thailand during that time, "we didn't have any religious congregation" except for the Paris Foreign Missions Society, the Montfort Brothers of St Gabriel and the Ursuline Sisters, also known as the Order of St Ursula.

"I invited all of them to come to Thailand," he says.

Among those who later came were the Mis-



sionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Italian Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions, the Camillians or Clerics Regular, Ministers to the Sick, among others.

The cardinal recalls that he tried to know more about the Church while studying in Rome and "I created an opportunity for me, for my life." He was only 23 years old when he arrived in the Vatican and was ordained priest when he was 30.

"When I became a priest, I thought, what work will I do in Thailand? So, I had to learn many things from Rome," he says.

He describes the Church then as "different" because "it was conservative" and the faithful were taught to be "responsible for themselves, not the other."

When he came back to Thailand, he wanted to change everything. "I tried to change the way in my diocese," he says.

And when he became archbishop of Bangkok and later president of the bishops' conference, "I tried to convince all the other bishops" to adapt to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council.

He says it was "not much of a problem for me to adapt myself," but the other priests found it "very, very difficult."

"When I became a bishop, I tried, step by step, slowly," he recalls.

To ensure the formation of new members of the clergy, Cardinal Michai built a seminary, and invited Pope St John Paul II, who supported the project, to come for a visit

Church in Thailand

Cardinal Michai says the Church in Thailand learned a lot from the Second Vatican Council.

"We were able to build many churches ... but to do pastoral work, we had the need for more personnel, lay people working together for the Church in different aspects of life."

He says that the Second Vatican Council taught them "to work together" and to work together, "we needed collaboration, needed a place where we could meet each other."

"So, we built some places for this purpose. For pastoral purposes, we needed to build a church ... for the children, we needed to build schools ... not only for Catholics, but for everyone."

To realise all the projects, Cardinal Michai came up with a "strategy." He asked friends for help and convinced supporters to come up with funds.

Most of all, however, he involved the faithful and helped them realise that they are the Church.

"The parish church was old and made of wood. The people wanted to have a new one, a stronger one. I accepted the proposal, but I told them that the church does not belong to me, it belongs to everyone," he says.

The people, however, said they were poor. "No, you are not poor, you can contribute according to your capacity," the cardinal recalls telling his parishioners. "You can pay one baht, you can pay two baht, you can pay ten baht," I said. They agreed."

He says that one bowl of Chinese noodles cost about 10 baht during that time. "I asked the noodles vendors how many bowls they could sell in one day. Fifty bowls?"

The cardinal says he was able to convince them to share one bowl for the construction of the church. "Everybody said it was very easy for them," he says.

"I told them if all of them promised to give just one bowl of noodles, their church would be finished in two years," he says. "So, they had a lot of churches after," he adds with a smile

Learning from the people

The cardinal says he started as a priest in a very poor village.

"I was sent to a very poor village, very poor church," he says. There was no subsidy because everyone was also in need.

So, when he became bishop, "I tried to convince my priests and the lay people about what had to be done." He asked everyone for their proposals.

"I went to visit them many times and talked with them. 'Every Sunday, I went for an outing with the people ... and witnessed the history of Thailand, the development, the growth.'"

The number of Catholics in Thailand grew very slowly from small stations in villages, says the cardinal.

A station sometimes would only consist of one or two Catholic families in a village.

When he was a young priest, he took care of 20 small stations where he taught Catechism, celebrated baptisms, heard confessions, and led Eucharistic celebrations.

"I stay with them for one day, two nights, three nights, and then I move to another, one

village after another, for 14 years," he says.

He would also visit the families of other religions "so that they knew me, I knew them, and we had a friendly conversation."

"I listened to them, and they listened to me, and we worked together, helped each other for the good of the community."

"The Church should be like that," says Cardinal Michai, adding that it was what the early Christians did. "You have to have a dialogue," he says.

Secret of long life

I try to be happy. The Lord said you should.

Yes, it is important so that we will not be afraid. It's a fact, a reality that a human person has to face some difficulties, some options in life, in our life. It's not a big surprise. So, if we can admit them, accept them, and then try to understand them, and try to correct our mistakes, we can be happy.

You work with intellect. You work with your mind. But you render service to the people with your heart, not with your position. — *By Jose Torres Jr, LiCAS.news*

Created by love, for love

I had pulled into a just-vacated parking lot near my favourite mixed rice shop, when I noticed a movement in the road just by the rear wheel of the car in front of me. It was a little cat, barely out of kittenhood, its fur a soft, pretty grey. Its blue eyes were made wider by the agony it had just experienced. The recently exiting car had inadvertently rolled over its back, and the pitiful mite was spasming in pain. Horrified, I sat down in the shop, tears hot in my eyes.

When I had gathered myself, I went back out, intending to at least remove the little creature from the path of further vehicles. I found the little body at the side of the drain, unresponsive. Part of me was relieved that it had died swiftly, without further suffering inflicted by way of ant bites, exposure, or dehydration. Another part of me mourned the loss of life, and how insignificant this death was. This stray had no family to mourn it, no loved one to wash and bury its body, no friends to drop flowers onto its burial place. Indeed, in death, the corpse would be subject to the indignity of either sanitation disposal, with the rest of the street rubbish, or decomposition under the scorching sun.

As I ruminated on the fleetingness of life, Psalm 8:4 struck me. “What is man that you are mindful of him, and a son of man that you care for him?” Having overcome the urge to end my life at two different times in the past year, I found my safety net to be the care and comfort of my friends.

Man(kind) is an apex predator. Despite our physical weakness in comparison to other predator species, mankind has evolved to this position because of our ability to fashion and use tools. The creation of nuclear warheads,



WORD IN PROGRESS

Karen Michaela Tan

chemical killing gases, and weapons of mass destruction has made man the most dangerous species on earth. Yet, as numerous media reports remind us almost daily, we perish or are killed every day, sometimes en masse, other times by almost laughable causes like drowning in two feet of water, or choking on a piece of gristle. Yet we still remain the most populous species on the planet.

There is an old French saying dating back to 1708, which goes, “God always helps fools, lovers and drunkards.” All evidence certainly points to the truth of this adage. The question I pondered as I wept over the lifeless little scrap of fur, was why and how God sees fit to help and protect us when we are not even as ‘awww’-inducing as kittens, and certainly more devious and sinful?

God did not create human beings because He needed them. Our omnipotent God is content in and of Himself. He is without need for companionship, as He exists in the eternal communion of the Trinity. God did not create mankind as a diversion, as Zeus was said to have manufactured the first Greeks. The Catholic Church notes that Scripture and Tradition never cease to teach and celebrate this fundamental truth: The world was made for the glory of God (CCC, 293).

Creation testifies to that glory, and mankind is the pinnacle of God’s creation. In coming to

know Him through His creation and through Revelation, we can better testify to His glory.

God created every single person who was, is, and is to be, out of love. And being created out of love, we are mandated to love Him, serve Him, and be with Him forever (remember how we had to parrot this line in the old catechism classes?). The one thing we often fail, as Catholics, to delve into, is that our creation out of love, is also *sustained* by His ever-faithful, unchanging love. He did not make us out of a whim, and then tire of us, leaving us to our own aimless devices.

God’s plan for us, the pinnacle of creation, is for us to come to love as perfectly as He does, and reflect that love to others. That is why, for all our obsessions with our mobile devices, we still remain pack animals. We thrive in company; we must exist in community. A person without family, friendship or even work ties, is a lone wolf, a renegade. They have no recourse to the comfort of fellowship, the balm of human sympathy, and love that can save.

As much as I mourned the fleeting existence of that little cat, I was reminded of how much value God has placed on mankind. We are valued enough for God made man to come to us, live amidst our messiness, pettiness and acrimony, and finally, willingly die for us. God did not do this for any of His other creations, no matter how precious and comforting a warm, purring bundle of fur can be.

God chose us — wayward, rebellious, contrarian, willful, fractious as we may be — to be the one thing in creation that He loves the most. While He pours out His love on His people every moment, God is also all-

conscious of humankind’s need for tangible expressions of love. That is why He made us pack animals who do best in communities and societies.

It is in these communities that we find our helpmates, partners, and sometimes, as in my case, lifelines.

God made us, unlike cats, to need each other. Need alone, however, can be parasitic. That is why we are reminded to “love one another as I have loved you.” John 13:34. Real love is reciprocal, it accepts the charge of one, as much as it places one’s heart, emotions, and in my case, life, in the charge of others.

My community, my inner circle, because of the honesty of the love shared and reciprocated, sensed something was amiss with me. Friends banded together to form a watch, giving me access to a listening ear at any time of the day or night, should I have wished it. It is testimony to their watch of love that the contemplation of suicide did not manifest into reality.

The love of community, the support of friends, and the availability of a listening ear, are things that God meant to be fruits of the hearts He created to love Him. That is why we were made just a little lower than the heavenly beings (Psalm 8:5). As we are “crowned with glory and honour” (Psalm 8:6), we are meant to remind others of their glory and purpose, especially when despair encompasses lives and darkness clouds the way.

● **Karen-Michaela Tan** is a poet, writer and editor who seeks out God’s presence in the human condition and looks for ways to put the Word of God into real action.



...meanwhile

Joanne Lim

The aroma and festivities of the recent Chinese New Year still linger in the air. ‘*Reunion*’ is key to much of this revelry — ‘*coming home*’ is for most, a warm feeling, there is always someplace or someone to go home to — ‘home’, as they say, is “*where the heart is*”. Home for us is also in Church, where God is. ‘God’s own home’...and I don’t mean Kerala! Whether we feel welcome or not is another matter, and the reality is that it isn’t always where we feel the happiest. However we define it, home is where we can also be vulnerable, and where we have the courage to often times be completely ourselves. Yet, are we? Are we completely ourselves with God or in Church?

Are we comfortable in the Lord’s house on earth? I remind myself that the Lord is also King of our hearts and His Spirit resides in us. This is home too! Yet, we are sometimes far from being comfortable in the Lord’s house, only because we are responding, consciously or unconsciously, to our vulnerabilities.

Maybe it stems mainly from concerns about externalities — “Do I have to go for confession this week? Can I sit next to this person? Do they think well of me? Does the person in my BEC sitting next to me, keep track of all my wrong doings and failures?” — alas, the Catholic guilt-trip feeds into my vulnerabilities.

Does this ring a bell? It belies the stress and strain of putting on a mask, because unlike the façade we are more familiar with wearing at work or school, this is somewhat different, illusive, ambiguous...and the unknown is always the hardest to deal with. For some of us, the pressure to come home is overbearing,

Come home...

and until we ‘find ourselves’ or ‘find God’, we stay away. We fear being judged, even when it’s *not* by God!

So begs the question of *how do we get people back to church?* Post pandemic, many can be armchair Catholics sipping coffee and attending Mass online. Others may have been sucked-in with the world around them because of the common thinking that life is fleeting, and time is the most expensive commodity. Meanwhile, in church, the priest is desperately trying to shepherd his dwindling flock to ensure that he doesn’t lose another parishioner to another denomination or another faith(!); the music ministry is in a conundrum to balance reverence with a contemporary edge — people need encouragement and inspiration as they enter and as they leave.

Hospitality ministers wear a bigger smile on their faces in hopes that people feel welcome and will return the following week... and beyond the Mass, formation teams and catechists are committed to ensuring that there are constant programmes to bring people back or closer to the Lord — from Alpha to *Metanoia*, 33 Days to Morning Glory, *Forgiven*, Advent Retreats, Landings, Marriage Encounter Weekends and so on. We communicate Jesus both online and offline, storm social media with Instagram and Facebook posts, Catholic podcasts, and organise visits to orphanages and old folks’ homes whenever possible. Around all our vulnerabilities, everyone is trying, so isn’t it time we tried harder too? Do you know someone you can bring back home? That’s perhaps evangelisation in its simplest form.

No need for the *Happiness Index* to determine if we want to return to church. Let’s not wonder if we belong to this wounded, broken home (because *YES We Do*, thanks to our baptismal vows). Let’s not only think about re-



turning home in our last days, or worse, when *THAT* Day comes. *Let’s accept that home doesn’t come with the promise of a feel-good, exhilarating one-hour experience but, rather, it is a priceless encounter with the Lord.*

Are we willing to embrace this vulnerability? The understanding that vulnerability is a weakness is in fact a myth; on the contrary it is the most accurate measure of courage and helps us foster better connections and relationships with others. We need to claim our right to come home, and to (re)build one another... We need to protect everyone’s right to a place to rest, to ownership and to safety for “Everyone will sit under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one will make them afraid” (Micah 4:4).

It is completely acceptable (and perhaps even expected, given the spiritual and worldly forces that are hard at work to derail us) that we will be uprooted and displaced at one point or another. If God’s message leads us towards our Heavenly home with Him, how will we recognise this home if we are not dwellers of

the earthly home, that is the church? Come home! Let us, priest and people make this home a place to meet and worship, to pray and sing, and yes...to embrace every child of God. No one has a monopoly on God, no one knows Him all too well. Everyone matters, everybody counts. That’s what coming home means.

...meanwhile, take comfort and assurance in God’s words: “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). We are not meant to be homeless — it was never God’s plan when He invited us to be part of His family... there’s so much yearning for a place to rest, to be, and to belong — let’s feed that yearning. Come for supper, come taste and see, *Come Home*.

● **Professor Joanne Lim** shares the faith in Catechism and music in Church. She is Deputy Dean and lectures on media and society at the University of Nottingham Malaysia.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

To fall in love

To fall in love! We use the expression to cover many things. You can fall in love with a baby, a sports team, a city, a job, or another person. However, we reserve the prime analogue for this expression for one thing — emotional infatuation, that intoxicating feeling we first get when we meet someone who we sense as a soulmate.

Iris Murdoch once wrote that the world can change in fifteen seconds, because that's how quickly you can fall in love with someone. She's right, and falling in love emotionally can literally paralyse us with a grip so strong that even death seems preferable to losing the one with whom we have fallen in love. Countless heartaches, broken hearts, depressions, clinical breakdowns, suicides, murders, and murder-suicides testify to this. Emotional infatuation can be a deadly addiction, the most powerful cocaine on the planet. Where does it come from? Heaven or hell? And, what's its meaning?

Ultimately, God and nature are its author and that tells us that it is a good thing. We are built for this to happen to us. Moreover, it is a healthy thing, if properly understood, both in its intoxicating power and in its innate failure to be a sustaining power in love.

What happens when we fall in love so powerfully with someone? Are we really in love with that person or are we more in love with being in love and the feelings this brings us? As well, are we really in love with that person or are we in love with an image of him or her we have created for ourselves, one that projects a certain godliness on to that other?

Let me risk some answers. Imagine a man falling deeply in love with a woman. Initially, the feelings can be overpowering and literally paralyse him emotionally. However, inside of all this, a certain question begs to be asked: with whom or with what is he really in love? His feelings? The archetype of femininity the woman is carrying? His image of her? She herself?

In reality, he is in love with all of these: his feelings, his image of her, she herself, and the divine feminine she is carrying. All of that is of one piece inside of his experience. As well, all of this can be healthy at this stage of love.

God invented emotional infatuation, just as God invented honeymoons. We are not meant to be drawn to each other by cold analytics alone. But, this kind of falling in love is an initiatory stage in love (albeit a delightful one) that needs to be understood exactly for what it is, an initiatory stage,

nothing more, one that invites us into something deeper. Emotional infatuation is not yet a mature stage in love. Unless one dies in its grip, as did Romeo and Juliet, it will one day lose its hold on us and leave us disillusioned. When Iris Murdoch said that we can fall in love in fifteen seconds, she might also have added that, sadly, we can also fall out of love in fifteen seconds. Emotional infatuation can be that ephemeral, both in its birth and in its dying.

So, falling in love (in this emotional way) comes fraught with certain dangers. First, there is the adolescent proclivity to identify this with deep love itself. Consequently, when the powerful emotional and psychosexual feelings let go, the person easily concludes that he or she is no longer in love and moves on. Next, more subtly, there is this danger. When we are in this initial gripping stage of love, our image of the other carries with it a certain godliness. What's meant by that?

St Augustine coined this timeless dictum: *You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.* Hence, nothing in life can ever really be enough for us. We are always restless, always yearning for something more. However, in this initial phase of love, when we have fallen into the grip of emotional

infatuation, for a time the other is enough for us. That's why Romeo and Juliet could die happy. At this stage of love, they were enough for each other.

However, the hard truth is that infatuation does not last. The other person, no matter how wonderful he or she might actually be, is not God and can never be enough (and we are unfair to him or her when we unconsciously expect them to be enough). For a while, they are able to carry that godliness for us, but that illusion of godliness will eventually break and we will realise that this is just a person, one person, wonderful perhaps, but finite, limited, and not divine. That realisation (which is ultimately meant to be the ground for mature love) can, if not understood, jeopardise or sour a relationship. God invented falling in love! In it, we get a little foretaste of heaven, though, as experience tells us, that is not without its dangers.

● **Oblate Fr Ron Rolheiser**, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX. He writes a weekly column that is carried in over 90 newspapers around the world. He can be contacted through his website www.ronrolheiser.com.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Is technology discreetly, but thoroughly, rendering parents expendable?

About 10 years ago, my younger son stopped me in my tracks with a thoughtful observation.

I wasn't surprised that he could be thoughtful — he often is — but this time his thought seemed momentous to me: "Parents don't get to teach their children anymore. When I was little," he explained, "if I wanted to know almost anything, my first instinct was to go to you or Dad about it: 'What's a bowline knot? Why does everything get dusty? What is a shillelagh?' We would always talk it through. Now, if I'm curious about something I just go to Google. Younger kids don't even develop the habit of going to their parents for answers. They've been googling since they could reach a keyboard."

"Parents have become expendable," he concluded. "They aren't even in the equation."

He went about his business unbothered. I, on the other hand, spent the rest of the day in a horrified sort of daze. Pondering just how numerous and fruitful were the meandering conversations that fill our lives, I realised my son had identified a real threat to ordinary family dynamics. Our children's questions often became openings not just for discussion but for mutual learning and creative engagement. If my husband or I could not answer something off the top of our heads, we'd join in the research — searching a dictionary or an encyclopedia with them, or heading to the library if that's what was required. We learned together, and more than once, a child's question turned into a personal or family project.

Did you ever notice that in a jar of mixed



(iStock photo/Koh Sze Kiat)

nuts, the cashews and Brazil nuts are always on top while pistachios and broken pieces are on the bottom? One son noticed and asked about it. Soon we were putting rocks of varied sizes into a can and shaking it, finding that — what do you know — smaller things sink to the bottom as space availability relegates bigger stuff to the top. This wasn't an earth-shaking realisation (although one son eventually used it for a grade-school science project to good effect), but the question sparked discussion and then activity. In varying degrees, the whole family participated in the discovery and together we managed to be curious,

entertained, informed and — perhaps most important — impressed with each other.

It's a slight thing, yes, but — as our little experiment demonstrated — small things are what the big things ultimately rest upon. Family structure, sibling reliance, mutual respect, parental humanity and vulnerability — all of that big stuff rests upon the little questions and answers, the ever-widening discussions, the trivial but sweetly recalled moments of shared exploration and curiosities satisfied. Going to a search engine for an answer might be expedient but it delivers none of that vibrant interaction. A question quickly resolved brings no encouragement

to throw a curve into one's thinking, or to puzzle out new ideas while laughing or maybe even crying, if that's where the human part of it leads.

These memories came rushing back to me thanks to news stories about artificial intelligence and an AI tool called ChatGPT — GPT stands for "Generative Pre-trained Transformer" — which can write lively, human-sounding speeches, poems and school papers.

Recently, US Congressman Jake Auchincloss took to the House floor and delivered a 100-word speech written by ChatGPT; anyone listening would never have suspected it wasn't written by a human. In an "explainer" article, the *Associated Press* actually asked the tool how to discern its writing from human work and was given a perfectly reasonable response. The article then noted, "Open AI said in a human-written statement this week that it plans to work with educators as it learns from how people are (using) ChatGPT" Increasingly, we will see distinctions between human and machine-generated material become required, if we're to keep the world honest. For a while, anyway.

Our children learn from their parents and the world around them — how humans speak, act, explain, think, hold and uphold. Artificial intelligence learns, too, from what it is purposely or unwittingly fed by the human element. But it has no limits and no boundaries; it is an empty vastness, offering no human consolations, upholding nothing.

How terrifyingly bleak and unholy that sounds. — **By Elizabeth Scalia** (*OSV News*)/*TheCatholicSpirit.com*

Little Catholics' Corner

MATCH THE COMMANDMENT TO THE NUMBER

God's ^{top} 10

- #1 Go to Church on Sunday
- #2 Don't Cheat
- #3 If its Not Yours Don't Take it
- #4 Worship only Him
- #5 Respect and Obey Your Parents
- #6 Harm No One
- #7 Don't be Jealous of Other People's Stuff
- #8 Put God First
- #9 Tell the Truth
- #10 Use God's name with respect



Forgiving and Forgiven

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23-24)



R X M T R D A N G E R B R Y O
F V I E B C D A D K V R E J Y
P X S U X P R A X J Q O C D I
K A G W P N J E L A X T O P K
J P C I Z N R A M T X H N X Y
F C F V F I O H H E A E C I J
U A A P F T X Y C E M R I M U
O F F E R I N G R G L B L R D
O M C O K U V D E B L L E I G
X A F P C F H O Z W W I D R E
G N M L A I H M X U A I I S M
T G T E H R J O E X G W T U E
T R G K S S N K N W E O D D N
Y Y S R X T V Q H W F O O L T
X X B A A M U R D E R Y E J K

ALTAR
OFFERING
BROTHER
ANGRY
FIRST
HELL
PEOPLE
FOOL
DANGER
REMEMBER
JUDGEMENT
RECONCILED
MURDER
GIFT
FIRE

Hello children,

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus was talking about the laws of God. Some people thought He would take away the old law God gave the Jews. But Jesus said He didn't come to take away the law. He came to fulfill the law.

The old laws tell us the things we shouldn't do, like worship false gods or kill people or steal. Jesus is telling us that just obeying the commandments isn't enough. He wants us to do everything out of

love. If you really love a person then of course you won't kill them! But He says you shouldn't get angry at them either. You wouldn't steal from someone you love — but wouldn't you want to be generous to them too?

Jesus says the Ten Commandments are very important, but we have to do more than just obey them. We need to love!

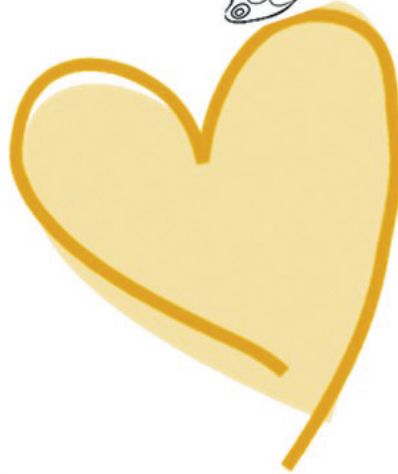
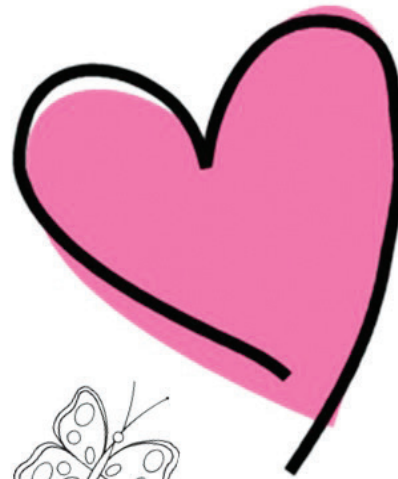
February 14 is Valentine's day ... remember to tell your family and friends that you love them.

Love Aunty Gwen



List what you love in the hearts and colour the pictures.

I LOVE



YOUTH

FEBRUARY 12, 2023

A DIFFERENT FUTURE IS IN YOUR HANDS

KINSHASA: On the third day of his Apostolic Journey to the DRC, Pope Francis held a lively encounter with young people and the local Church's catechists.

The meeting took place in the Martyr's Stadium in Kinshasa on February 2, and the Pope thanked the Congolese youth for their shows of affection and dancing.

In his address, the Holy Father invited the young people of the Democratic Republic of Congo to look at their hands and reflect on how each finger represents a different "ingredient for the future".

First of all, he noted, no one's hands are the same as anyone else's, just as each person is a unique and unrepeatable treasure. At the same time, each of us has to choose whether to clench our hand into a fist or to open it in an offering to God and others.

Our thumb, said Pope Francis, is closest to our heart and therefore symbolises prayer, which provides the driving force for our life.

Prayer, he added, is the basic ingredient for our future, and we need to listen to the word of God and cultivate a "living prayer" in order to grow inwardly.

"Jesus has triumphed over evil. He made of His cross the bridge to the resurrection. So, raise your hands to Him daily, praise Him and bless Him."

We should speak to Jesus as our best friend, entrust our fears to Him, and tell Him the "deepest secrets of your life," added the Pope.

"God loves this kind of living, concrete and heartfelt prayer," he said. "It allows Him to intervene, to enter into your daily



Pope Francis interacted with an energetic crowd of 65,000 young adults and catechists at Martyr's Stadium in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, on Feb 2, 2023. (CNA photo/Vatican Media)

life in a special way, to come with his 'power of peace', which is the Holy Spirit.

Pope Francis then turned to the index finger, which represents "the community".

He urged the young people of DR Congo not to isolate themselves from one another but to embrace those around them who seem lonely or are suffering.

The Pope offered the negative examples of drug-use or witchcraft, which makes the addict feel all-powerful but in reality ends up depriving the person of everything they hold dear.

Social media, he added, can also disorient those who spend excessive amounts of time scrolling or swiping. "Nothing can ever be a

replacement for the energy that we get from being together, the sparkle in our eyes, the joy of exchanging ideas!" he said.

Rather, young Congolese are called to build community, champion fraternity, and dream of a more united world.

"I know you have repeatedly shown that, even at great sacrifice, you are ready to stand up to defend human rights and the hope of a better future for everyone in the country."

Honesty, said the Pope, offers the third ingredient for a better future, and provides an antidote to the "cancer of corruption".

Speaking off-the-cuff, Pope Francis launched a heartfelt appeal for the people of

the Democratic Republic of Congo to refuse any form of corruption, urging, in French, "say no to corruption!"

"Do not be overcome by evil," he said. "Overcome evil with good," he said.

The Pope recalled a 26-year-old young man, Floribert Bwana Chui, who was killed 15 years ago in Goma for having blocked the passage of spoiled foodstuffs which would have harmed people's health. The young Christian man, said the Pope, prayed for guidance and said no to the "filth of corruption."

"If someone offers you a bribe, or promises you favours and lots of money, do not fall into the trap. Do not be deceived! Do not be sucked into the swamp of evil!"

The Pope turned to the ring finger, symbolising "forgiveness", and recalled that all the greatest goods in our life involve "weakness, weariness, and hardship."

"Forgiveness," he said, "means being able to start over. To forgive does not mean forgetting the past; it means refusing to repeat it."

Pope Francis noted that the pinky finger is our last and smallest finger, and represents our "service".

Our actions for others, he said, often seems like a drop in the ocean, but "it is precisely littleness, our decision to become little, that attracts God."

In conclusion, the Pope urged young Congolese Catholics to work for a better future in their nation by reflecting frequently on these five ingredients: prayer, community, honesty, forgiveness, and service. — **By Devin Watkins, Vatican News**

FROM PANAMA TO LISBON, FOUR YEARS AFTER THE ANNOUNCEMENT

LISBON: Four years ago, it was announced that Portugal would host the next World Youth Day (WYD). The announcement was made by Cardinal Kevin Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life, at the Concluding Mass of WYD Panama 2019.

Now that four years have passed, we are less than seven months away from the great meeting of young people from all over the world with the Pope, which will take place in Lisbon from August 1 to 6.

Kate, 27, and Patricia, 32, were two of the young women on the altar at the time of the announcement. "It was a very, very big feeling of joy," said Kate. According to her, this is an opportunity to "bring the encounter to young Portuguese people who, perhaps, have never experienced a WYD". Patricia highlighted the

"joy of welcoming everyone here at home".

Since its first edition in 1986, in Rome, WYD has been a time of encounter and sharing for millions of people around the world. Madalena, Esperanza and Fr Nuno Westwood are examples of this and shared their experiences of participating in previous WYDs.

Madalena Novais is 24 years old and participated in WYD Krakow 2016, revealing that "the best memory I have is that on Friday, after the Stations of the Cross, there was music and a group was dancing". "It was an inexplicable joy, where it seemed that everyone knew each other", she said. As for the participation in World Youth Day, Madalena stressed that this is a moment in which "we are all aligned".

For Madalena, "when you go to a World Youth Day you feel something that you have never felt anywhere else," and she sent out an invitation to WYD Lisbon 2023 for all youth: WYD "has already changed the lives of many people, young people and adults" and "now may be the opportunity for you to also feel this

change in your life".

Esperanza, 35, has already participated in several World Youth Days. "I have many good memories from all the WYDs I have attended. It is difficult to choose just one," she said. She attended WYD for the first time when she was 12 years old and, as she recalled, "I was deeply touched by St John Paul II's commitment in his physical weakness, showing great love for us." Besides, her expectations were always surpassed since "I always went with one type of perspective and God surprised me in all of them", she said.

Esperanza also left a note for all young people: "One thing is certain and true: a young person who participates in WYD gains a unique experience of encounter with Christ that will leave a mark on his or her life". The young woman from the Nova Oeiras Parish also stressed that taking part in WYD is a sign to the world that there is a young and living Church. So, if you are young and have doubts about your participation in WYD, go with

your doubts and let yourself be surprised.

Father Nuno Westwood, parish priest of Nova Oeiras and São Julião da Barra, has already participated in six editions of World Youth Day. He has been in Paris, Cologne, Madrid, Rio de Janeiro, Krakow and Panama. "In all of them, I was able to have the ecclesial experience of us being a Church in communion. We are of different nationalities, cultures, races, sensibilities and rhythms, but at WYD we become one in Jesus Christ, we form one Body, united to the Pope," he stressed.

Nuno Westwood highlighted the Vigil as an important moment of WYD. "It is impressive to see hundreds of thousands of young people, from the four corners of the world, on their knees, united in adoration of the same Jesus.

More than 400,000 pilgrims have already registered for WYD Lisbon 2023. Pope Francis appealed to the young people that in this WYD they should always learn to look to the horizon, to always look beyond. — **Lisboa2023**



The youth at the Sense of Belonging session.

SEREMBAN: The Church of the Visitation's youth ministry organised a session themed *Sense of Belonging* on January 29. The half-day event was held at the Chapel of the Sacred Heart, Marjorie Estate, Rantau.

The Archdiocesan Single Adult and Youth Office (ASAYO) was present to support and facilitate the session, attended by some 70 youths.

We started with a Praise and Worship session before moving to the Tamil and English sessions separately. Seminar-ians Bro Solomon John shared in Tamil while Bro Larry Misol shared in English, and a little activity was inculcated based on the theme.

Both seminar-ians shared how they responded to God's call through the sense of belonging

they had with their family, peers, and communities. It was then that the desire and love grew stronger, to say 'Yes' to God!

The language groups came together for the parish priest, Fr Xavier Andrew's session, before heading outdoors to play games for an hour. The spirit-filled sessions ended with a fellowship that everyone had been looking forward to. — *By Sabrina Smith*

Student honoured for Ukraine fundraiser

ARLINGTON, Texas: Sofia Parfomak, a senior at Bishop O'Connell High School in Arlington, was recognised by the National Catholic Education Association January 31 for organising a fundraising concert that benefitted the children of Ukraine last summer.

Parfomak was chosen from more than 1.6 million Catholic school students across the country for the Youth Virtues, Valor and Vision Award, recognising selfless service, determination, innovation and ideals that are changing the world. She received a prestigious NCEA crystal flame and a Chromebook supplied by Archangel Education + Technology.

"Sofia is one of the most versatile and accomplished student/citizen I've had the pleasure of knowing in my 38 years in education," said Head of School Bill Crittenger. "I am pleased that her joyful commitment to serving others and her infectious enthusiasm has been recognised in this way."

"It was fun and fulfilling to put on a concert with my friends for a worthy cause," said Parfomak, who was inspired by her own grandmother's experiences as a Ukrainian refugee forced to leave her home in World War II. "It was



Sofia Parfomak with Head of School Bill Crittenger.

really a surprise and an honour to receive recognition for it, but that's not why I organised the concert. The most important thing is to support the Ukrainian children, and if this award brings renewed attention to their plight, then it will have helped to accomplish my goal."

"The very title of the award, Youth Virtues, Valor and Vision, tells us a lot about these young people," said NCEA President/CEO Lincoln Snyder. "Each one is a witness to the risen Christ and the importance of Catholic schools. These students are the faces of our Catholic faith at work in their communities." — *The Arlington Catholic Herald*

THE SIMPLE LIFE by Dr. Steven Selvaraju



Created by Dr Steven Selvaraju, this is a comic strip that wishes to tell simple stories of life and faith.



Thousands mourn Cardinal Pell at Sydney funeral



Cardinal George Pell's funeral Mass drew thousands of mourners to Sydney's St Mary's Cathedral Feb 2, 2023. (CNA photo/Giovanni Portelli/The Catholic Weekly)

SYDNEY: The late Cardinal George Pell's funeral Mass on February 2 drew thousands of mourners, filling Sydney's St Mary's Cathedral to capacity.

Civic leaders, friends, and members of Pell's family remembered the Australian cardinal's dedication to the Church and the Gospel and his courage in the face of many obstacles, including more than a year in prison before his exoneration.

"George Pell was my brother. He was a prince of the Church. A good and holy man, and a proud Australian," David Pell said at the cardinal's funeral Mass, according to *The Catholic Weekly* newspaper.

"Be not afraid" was George's motto. These words are mentioned in the Bible 365 times," Pell's brother continued. "They are powerful words and need to be remembered by us as we continue the daily struggle."

Addressing the cardinal, he added: "You have fought the good fight. Help us to accept the battle. Rest in peace."

The cardinal died Jan 10 in Rome at the age of 81 from cardiac arrest following complications during hip surgery.

Archbishop Anthony Fisher of Sydney celebrated the Pontifical Mass of Christian Burial at Sydney's St. Mary's Cathedral. The four-hour liturgy included a specially composed offertory motet by Sir James MacMillan based on the cardinal's motto "Be Not Afraid" and the text of Wisdom 3:1-4.

Attending the funeral were 30 bishops, 220 priests, and dozens of seminarians. The congregation included women religious, theologians, Catholic school teachers, and families. Representatives of Catholic agencies and eth-

nic communities were at the Mass, as were the residents of David's Place, a community for the homeless and marginalised in Sydney.

Fisher in his homily described his predecessor Pell as a "lion of the Church" who proclaimed the Gospel "shamelessly, vehemently, courageously to the end."

"He had a big heart, too, strong enough to fight for the faith and endure persecution but soft enough to care for priests, youth, the homeless, prisoners, and imperfect Christians," the archbishop said.

David Pell described his brother as a "passionate" player of Australian Rules football.

"He believed in the rule of law, a fair go to all, and in Aussie Rules parlance, he 'played the ball, and not the man,'" he said. "He may have disagreed with your opinion, but he didn't disagree with you as a person."

He also recalled his brother's happiness to serve as archbishop of Sydney.

"He was at home here. He loved Sydney, and gauging by the outpouring of love as he laid in state and today, Sydney loved him."

About 2,000 people arrived at the cathedral's forecourt to secure a seat inside. Many stayed and took part in Mass even though they could not enter the cathedral.

Leading dignitaries in attendance included former Prime Ministers John Howard and Tony Abbot and Peter Dutton, leader of the opposition Liberal Party. Current Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and New South Wales Premier Dominic Perrottet both sent representatives. — **By Kevin J. Jones, CNA**

MEMORIAM

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2nd Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Arulnathan a/l Sebastian 3.3.1940 – 15.2.2021

2 years have passed so quickly and we miss you dearly.
You are forever in our hearts.
Psalm 73:26

My flesh and my heart may fail but
God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Forever loved and dearly missed by
Wife Madam Selvanayagam, Children, Grandchildren,
Daughters in Law, Relatives and Friends.

2nd Year Death Anniversary Joseph A. Gomes (JAG)

Birth: 6 Jan 1945, Died: 12 Feb 2021



We're assured of your love
Even though we're apart
Cause so much
we've shared
Is written in our hearts
In the emptiness and
silence of our mourning
Comes the comfort
from on high
With peace
in our hearts and the joy
That you are
always nearby.

Loving Tribute from
Wife, Children,
Grandchildren and
Family Members.

1st Anniversary In Ever Beloved Memory of

Maria Pushpam Eruthayasamy Pillai

Age: 79 years (2022)



I AM home in HEAVEN
Where I always wanted to be
All the grief, pain and
suffering is over
JESUS, Himself came to welcome me
Whilst the Angels and Saints
sang song of praise,
So, cease your mourning, dry your
tears for I live still in your hearts and
in the memories of our times together.
Cherish this and when it is God's will,
we will be together AGAIN.

From the Lord: 30 June 1942
To the Lord: 15 February 2022

Please join us in the Eucharistic celebration to commemorate MOM's return to the Lord
Saturday, 18 February 2023 at 6pm at the **Church of St Thomas More**,
No. 12, Jalan TP 5, Taman Perindustrian UEP 47600 Subang Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan.

Always remembered and dearly missed by family, relatives and friends.
We LOVE you and MISS YOU MA!!!

30th Day Mass In Loving Memory of MR. JOSEPH TM SAMY returned to the Lord on 17th January 2023



Sweet are the memories
that never fade
Of one we loved,
but could not save
Always so true,
faithful and kind
Few in this world
his equal we will find
A beautiful life that came
to a sudden tragic end.
He died as he lived as
everyone's friend.

Deeply missed and forever remembered by
his Sister (India), Daughters, Sons-in-law,
grandchildren and loved ones.
Memorial Mass will be celebrated at the Cathedral of
the Holy Spirit, Penang on 18th February 2023 at 6pm.

In our hearts forever 40 Days Memorial Prayer



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Jesus said to her,
"I am the
resurrection and
the life.
The one who
believes in me
will live, even
though they die."
John 11:25

9th Anniversary In Loving Memory of Hazel Renee



16.04.1958 – 14.02.2014

Softly within the shadows
God gave a gentle call
With farewells left unspoken
Mum, you silently left us all
Our hearts still ache with sadness and
Silent tears still flow
For what it means to love and miss you, Mum
No one will ever know.
Deeply missed and forever loved.

So also you
have sorrow now,
but I will see you
again, and your
hearts will rejoice,
and no one will
take your joy
from you.

John 16:22

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Biggest papal Masses ever

How does the recent Mass in the DRC compare?



Pope Francis celebrated Mass with around 1 million people in Kinshasa, DRC, on Feb 1, 2023. (CNA photo/Vatican Media)

ST LOUIS, Missouri: More than one million people attended Pope Francis' Mass celebrated on an airfield in the Democratic Republic of Congo on the morning of February 1, according to local authorities. The papal Mass, celebrated in French, was filled with joy and dancing.

Papal Masses, especially in the last 50 years or so, have attracted crowds of millions — many of them at World Youth Days, the massive gatherings of young people that began in 1987 and take place every few years.

Here's an inexhaustive ranking of some of the biggest papal Masses:

Pope Francis, Manila, 2015: 6-7 million
Residents of the historically Catholic Phil-

ippines made a tremendous showing at the final Mass of Pope Francis' 2015 trip to the Philippines. By official estimates, between six and seven million people packed into Rizal Park in Manila at the final public event during his Jan 15-19 trip to the country.

The Mass is thought to be the largest papal event in history.

Pope John Paul II, Manila, 1995: five million

An estimated five million people turned out for Mass celebrated by JP II, who was the most travelled pope ever and possibly the most-seen person in history. The attendance numbers set a record that would take years to be broken.

Pope Francis, Rio de Janeiro, 2013: three million

Pope Francis' celebration of the final Mass at World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro — his first World Youth Day — set a record as the largest papal event since Manila in 1995. The mayor's office of Rio de Janeiro estimated that 3.2 million people attended the liturgy at the famous Copacabana Beach.

Pope Francis, Krakow, 2013: 1.5-3 million

Original estimates were of "at least 1.5 million" attendees at the Mass, based on the number of people at the vigil the night before. Though Polish police did not give an estimate, World Youth Day spokesperson Anna Chmura later told *Agence France Presse* there were "between 2.5 and 3 million people."

Pope Francis, Kinshasa, 2023: one million

The Mass in Kinshasa, DRC's capital city, took place on the airfield of the N'Dolo Airport on the second day of the Pope's trip to two countries in central and east Africa.

Pope Francis celebrated Mass in French, the official language of DRC, and Lingala, the Bantu-based creole spoken in parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo and by millions of speakers across Central Africa. The Pope delivered his homily in Italian with French translations for the Mass, which was celebrated according to the Zaire Use of the Ordinary Form of the Roman Rite. — **By Jonah McKeown, CNA**

● See more on Page 10 and Front Page

The Church needs you!

KINSHASA: On the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, Pope Francis met with priests, deacons, consecrated persons, and seminarians in Kinshasa's Cathedral of Our Lady of the Congo.

Reflecting on the encounter between Simeon and the Christ Child, which is commemorated in the feast, the Holy Father drew out the lesson: "When we place Jesus at the centre of our lives, our outlook changes, and despite all our efforts and difficulties, we feel enveloped by His light, comforted by His Spirit, encouraged by His Word, and sustained by His love."

He reminded those with religious vocations that, despite "enormous challenges," there is nonetheless "great joy in the service of the Gospel." Clergy and religious, the Pope said, are called to be witnesses of God's love, by anointing His people today "with the balm of consolation and hope."

Pope Francis emphasised that priests, sisters, missionaries, and others called to religious service are called to be servants of the people, "to act as signs of Christ's presence, of His unconditional love, His reconciliation and forgiveness, and His compassionate concern for the needs of the poor."

But this service, he said, will always be lived in the face of challenges and difficulties, including spiritual mediocrity, worldly comfort, and superficiality.

These challenges can be overcome, he said, through prayer, both public and private; through forgetting oneself and devoting one's life to others; and by being "educated, well-trained, and passionate" witnesses of the Gospel.



Speaking in Our Lady of Congo Cathedral in Kinshasa on Feb 2. (CNA Photo/Elias Turk)

"These challenges have to be faced" he continued, "if we want to serve people as witnesses of God's love."

"To be good priests, deacons and consecrated persons, words and intentions are not enough: your lives must speak louder than your words."

Acknowledging the difficulties faced by the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Pope Francis reminded the clergy and religious of Jesus, the Good Samaritan, pausing to care for the wounds of the oppressed.

"Brothers and sisters, the ministry to which you are called is precisely this," he said: "To offer closeness and consolation, like a light that keeps shining amid the encircling gloom."

Offering his heartfelt thanks to priests, deacons, religious men and women, and seminarians, Pope Francis urged them not to be discouraged "because we need you!"

Speaking in the name of the whole Church, he insisted, "You are precious and important." And he invited them to "always be channels of the Lord's consoling presence, joyous witnesses of the Gospel, prophets of peace amid the storms of violence, disciples of love, ever ready to care for the wounds of the poor and suffering."

By Christopher Wells, *Vatican Media*

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