

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

1 Cor. 3:16-17



27th World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life

■ P4



Lenten Campaigns

■ P5



Called to be Salt of the earth and light of the world

■ P16

Preparing for the season of Lent

As with every Lenten Season, the Church provides us with the powerful first reading from the Book of Joel 2:12-18. In the early verses of the Word of God it says: "Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord, your God." We are strongly reminded here that we belong to no other than to the Lord God who is the author of life; He, for whom all things are possible.

Lent reminds us that in every heart, there is a lot of room for improvement. We will continue to live a life for the world when we choose to rend our garments in order to upgrade our wardrobes. But the call is to rend our hearts and return to the Lord our God. It is inside our hearts that, the Word of God says, can be found all sorts of negativity. From within our hearts come all those sins we confess at the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

May our return to Him during the holy season be peaceful, blessed and safe. AMEN!



(Photo/CIC Facebook)

The synod is not here to destroy Catholic identity

PRAGUE, Czech Republic: The chief organiser of the Catholic Church's Synod on Synodality said that the global synod process is meant to uphold what makes the Catholic Church distinctive, not "to destroy Catholic identity."

In a homily in Prague's St Vitus Cathedral recently, Cardinal Mario Grech noted that some have wrongly understood the synod as "a battle of the conservatives against the liberals."

The secretary general for the Synod of Bishops added that others have misunderstood the synod as a process to change the Church and to "blur the distinction between

what is within the Catholic tradition and what is outside."

Addressing these two "equally problematic" ways of understanding the Synod on Synodality, Grech said that the synod is not a process to "raze distinctions."

"The synod is not here to destroy distinctions. The synod is not here to destroy Catholic identity," he said.

"Rather, it is here to uphold distinctions, to understand the Gospel and what makes the Catholic Church truly one, holy, catholic, and apostolic."

Grech offered these reflections midway through the European Continental Assembly meeting in Prague February 5-12, where some European delegations have asked for a clearer definition of "synodality."

"We need to try and define our vision

of the Church which, during this process means, perhaps, a clearer definition of 'synodality' in the broader ecclesiological and theological sphere," a representative of one of the English-speaking discussion groups told the assembly on Feb. 7.

The European assembly is split into two parts. In the first part, Feb 5-9, laypeople and clerics — including 65 women and 46 bishops — together represented their countries in livestreamed discussions of what priorities and themes should be taken up in the Synod of Bishops meeting at the Vatican this fall.

In his homily, Grech used the word "prepositions" 30 times to explain that "what is internal cannot be understood if not in relation to the external, and the external cannot be understood if not in relation to the internal."

"I believe that our synod is, and should be, a synod of prepositions. A prepositional synod — not necessarily a propositional synod — but definitely a prepositional synod," Grech said.

The cardinal underlined that "every day we have to ask what makes us distinct as a Catholic Church."

"It is in this way that I understand and look, with hope, at the Synod on Synodality. May our endeavour not become an exercise in exclusive distinction between those who are in and those who are out. In other words, a distinction without relation, which ultimately results in no distinction," he said.

"May our God, who is totally different yet totally in communion, guide His Church to become distinct, yet in relation." — **By Courtney Mares, CNA**

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COMMENTARY

Faced with evil, from one excess to another



Women react in the aftermath of a major earthquake in the Elbistan district of Kahramanmaraş, Turkey, February 8, 2023. (LCI Photo/SEDAT SUNA/ EPA/ MaxPPP)

The recent deadly earthquake in Turkey and Syria has cruelly raised the question of evil: how can a benevolent God allow such things?

The massive earthquake that rattled Turkey and Syria left a toll that is very high. More than 21,000 dead as I write these lines. That is just a provisional figure, to which we must also add thousands of injured and homeless people who must face the harshness of the climate.

As always in the face of such tragedies, the question of evil, or the excess of evil, is raised. The experience of evil and the goodness of an “all-powerful” God seem to be mutually exclusive, even to the point of questioning divine existence itself.

If creation is truly good, why does it cause desolation and death? If God exists, why does He not prevent evil from entering creation? Whatever answers we might give to these questions, evil, whether suffered or committed, will always remain an enigma.

Evil is always already there. Its origin is elusive. It has an unfathomable anteriority. It is therefore useless to look for an explanation for its origin. On the other hand, what we have to do is engage our freedom to face this evil, as best we can. Evil then becomes what we fight against, and we turn to the future for our hopes.

In the words of Paul Beauchamp, a Jesuit biblical scholar: “It is excess that is at the origin; it is the excess of good that alone can overcome the excess of evil”. An excess of good to which everyone can contribute, in his or her own way, by showing solidarity with the victims. — **Dominique Greiner, LCI** (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

Dominique Greiner, a moral theologian and Assumptionist priest, is a senior editor at La Croix.

● See also back page

Difficult demands, but not impossible to meet

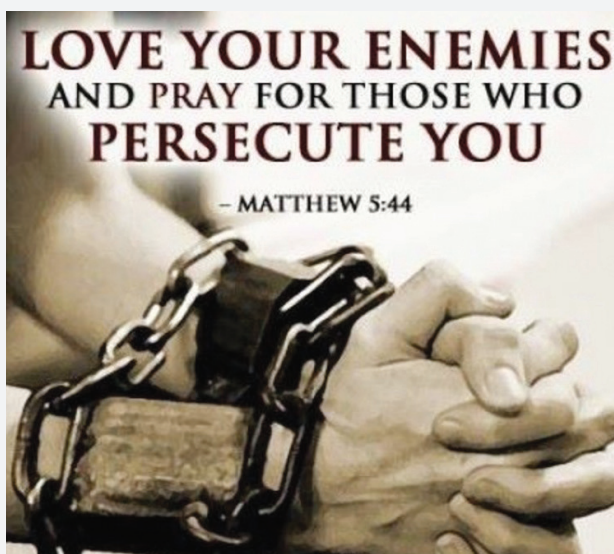
“Be holy, for I, the Lord your God am holy.” This is God’s call to His people in the first reading. “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” This is Christ’s call to His disciples in the Gospel. How do you feel about each of these calls?

Understandably, our responses are generally negative: “No; that’s not possible.” “How could God or Christ be so unreasonable? How can we, imperfect and sinful human beings, ever reach the standards of the all-holy and perfect God?” “If that is God’s demand of me, I am doomed and damned.” We can add on to the list of these negative responses.

Are God’s and Christ’s expectations of us really unreasonable? Do They make demands beyond our ability to meet them? Will They leave us to perish in hopeless and helpless situations because we cannot meet Their demands? A closer look at the readings will help us understand the calls God made to His people and Christ made to His disciples.

In the first reading, “be holy” is concretely spelt out in terms of relationship with neighbour: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” Love vanquishes hatred and vengeance. Love seeks the good of neighbour as much as one’s own. On this score, it embraces fraternal correction for betterment, not just of one’s neighbour, but of oneself as well. Love relationship with neighbour flows from an experience of God’s love and constitutes a response to it.

Relationship lies at the core of the Old Testament concept of holiness. To be holy in the Old Testament is to be separated from, in order to be separated for. With reference to relationship, the first reading sees the separation as from hatred for those who hurt and offend and a desire to take revenge on them. This separation results in forgiveness of offenders and even restoration of relationship with them. Separation is thus from hostility for relationship with neighbour.



In today’s Gospel, Jesus takes up God’s call to be holy but rephrases it thus: “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” He also articulates it in terms of relationship with neighbour. He thus instructs His disciples not to follow the “eye for eye and tooth for tooth” demand, but to “turn the other cheek” when the right cheek is hit and to give more than what is asked for. Taking this point further, Jesus calls for forgiveness of enemy, which goes beyond love of neighbour. Loving friend and foe alike is modelled on God’s goodness and generosity towards bad and good men, dishonest and honest men alike. It reflects God’s perfection and makes one “perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect.”

To sum up, God’s call for holiness and Jesus’ call for perfection amount to demands for radical efforts to live in good relationship with people. These demands may, at times, be very difficult to meet, but they are not impos-

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Archbishop Emeritus John Ha

7th Sunday of Ordinary Time (A)

Readings: **Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18;**

1 Corinthians 3:16-23;

Gospel: Matthew 5:38-48

sible, especially with help from the Holy Spirit. Clearly, one very difficult area is forgiveness, especially when the hurt caused is very deep. Forgiveness calls for extreme generosity. But once offered, forgiveness destroys hatred and turns foe into friend. Many people have transcended their hurts to forgive those who caused these hurts. This is evidence that forgiveness is possible. Forgiveness yields good relationship and is an unmistakable expression of love.

Good relationship with neighbour and forgiveness of an enemy make one “holy as God is holy” and “perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect.” When in the wilderness His people radically rejected Him in favour of a golden calf, God forgave them and continued to accompany them in their journey towards the Promised Land. When Jesus was hanging on the cross, He prayed to His Father to forgive His enemies on the grounds that they did not know what they were doing.

As disciples of Jesus Christ and as children of the one Father in heaven, it is our mission to love friend and foe and, in this way, to draw all into a life of love with one another. In this lie our holiness and our perfection, modelled after the holiness and perfection of God our Heavenly Father.

Archbishop Emeritus John Ha is from the Archdiocese of Kuching.

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

The Rite traditionally takes place on the first Sunday of Lent. This is where Catechumens affirm their desire to join the Catholic Church and are then called the Elect.



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

February

- 19 **Catholic Business Fraternity Graduation**
- 26 **Rite of Election – Church of the Holy Family, Kajang**



PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Sebastian Francis

February

- 19 **Mass and Meeting with Auxiliary of the Apostolate – Bishop's Residence**
- 21 **Mass – 47th Anniversary 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 – Menteri Besar of Perlis at 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 – Klang**
- 19 **Parish Pastoral Assembly – St Joseph Church, Plentong**
- 23-27 **Asian Continental Assembly for the Synod – Bangkok**

Catechists and Lectors commissioned



By Gregory Matanjun

KARAMUNSING, Sabah: A total of 57 lectors and 172 catechists of Sacred Heart Cathedral were commissioned on Catechetical Sunday January 29.

The theme for this year's Catechetical Sunday is *Renewing the Church with Families of Faith*. With this as the focus, Fr Paul Lo invited members of the Cathedral's lectors and the various catechetical

ministries to reflect more deeply on their calling during the recollection session on Jan 10, which was attended by 57 catechists and 20 lectors for the English-speaking.

The same session also held for the Bahasa group, comprised 84 participants, conducted by Fr Terans in a separate room at the Parish Centre on the same night.

Meanwhile, 68 participants of the Chinese group had turned up on the recollec-

Catechists of the English speaking group.

tion session with Fr Paul Lo a day earlier.

All 20 lectors and 57 catechists of the English language groups were commissioned during the Sunset Mass Jan 28, while 20 lectors and 48 catechists of the Chinese language group were commissioned during the Mass in Chinese Jan 29. The BM group has 17 lectors and 67 catechists who were commissioned during the Mass in BM on Jan 29. — *Catholic Sabah*



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #120

F12
MJD NEWS
UPDATES

Devastating earthquakes hit Turkey and Syria. It is feared that more than 21,000 (at press time) have perished. Pray for the victims. The state elections are next. The race to win votes is here again. So far, the unity government has been working to clear the mess, and expose the hidden abuses. Trust among the leaders, the parties and the people is in want. Trust is earned not given.

Wait and See Times. After so many years of propaganda, politicised civil service, religion, education and nation building, the *rakyat* remains suspicious and critical. Social commentators call this the trust deficiency. When Civics in schools returns, the *Rukun Negara* becomes the basis for national unity, when corruption and the corrupted are condemned as sin and sinners, and when education produces poets, artists, writers, philosophers and social prophets with hearts, then we will see a *nation with a conscience*. When conscience is dead, expect no trust.

A Thought for the Week: Inside or Outside Tree

An eight-year-old boy went to his grandfather and proudly announced, "I am going to be very successful when I grow up. Can you give me any tips on how to get there?"

The grandfather nodded, and without saying a word, took the boy by the hand and walked him to a nearby plant nursery, purchased two small saplings; planted one of them in the back yard and the other in a pot and kept indoors.

Which one do you think will grow better and be more healthy?" asked the grandfather. The boy thought for a moment and said, "The indoor tree. The grandfather shrugged his shoulders and said, "We'll see."

A few years later, the boy, now a teenager, came to visit, and wanted to know the answer to his old question.

The old man showed the teenager the indoor tree and then took him to see the outside tree. It was towering. But the teenager wondered: it doesn't make sense; the outside one had to cope with more challenges!

The lesson from the grandfather: The outside tree had the freedom to spread its roots and its branches towards the heavens. The challenges toughened the tree. You can always choose the safe option and never grow like the inside tree.

Amazing paths reveal themselves out of great adversity. (*dailytenminutes.com*)

Announcements for this Week

1. A Call to the Auxiliary of the Apostolate: Calling all single women, aged 18-50 to explore a special lay vocation committed to the Bishop of the Diocese. "Discover Your Vocation", a programme facilitated by the Auxiliaries from Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

Call or WhatsApp: Clara Paul, 012-2509527.

Join us on:

- Feb 18 - 19 (from Saturday, 3.00pm to Sunday, 4.00pm) at the Good Shepherd Seminary, Melaka.
- Apr 29 - 30 (from Saturday, 3.00pm to Sunday 4.00pm) at MA-JODI Centre JB

2. 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, Ash Wednesday. Just do your part.

This week's Question and Query. Q asks: What do we teach children?

1. In today's world, there is an incredible amount of stress and pressure put on children in a variety of ways. Some parents have an unhealthy and obsessive desire to see their son or daughter be the top player on a sports team or athletic activity, be the smartest kid in their class, or be the most handsome or beautiful individual in all the land. There are parents who put an unbelievable burden on their children to achieve high levels of excellence...sometimes unattainable.

2. There is nothing wrong for parents to want the best for their kids but perhaps we should all teach our children things that will allow them to be successful and contribute their talents and gifts in other ways.

3. Don't become preoccupied with your child's academic ability only but instead...

#Teach them to sit with those sitting alone
#Teach them to be kind
#Teach them to offer their help
#Teach them to be a friend to the lonely
#Teach them to encourage others
#Teach them to share
#Teach them to look for the good in people
This is how they will change the world

The Kingdom of God belongs to the little ones, Jesus said.

Always ask the Lord: What His design is for your children. Let us build with the Lord or you build in vain. God bless. Have a great week.

Bishop Bernard Paul

BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN MISSION — 27TH WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR CONSECRATED LIFE FEBRUARY 2, 2023

Honouring the consecrated

By Bernadette Anne Fernandez

KLANG: About 40 religious were present at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, February 4.

Archbishop Julian Leow, the president, emphasised how the celebration was a way to honour the women and men who had chosen the consecrated life. He stated the importance of being like salt and light, which was based on the Gospel of the day. Salt is needed to flavour the lives of those encountered and being light to illuminate the other upon being sought out for guidance.

He highlighted how through the years, the Church has often evolved to meet the prevailing needs of the people, be it through education, caregiving to the aged and the sick, or more importantly, being communal pilgrims journeying together as a synodal Church that dialogues continuously to understand the people of God and their needs better.

Drawing on the importance of relevance in an ever-changing world, Archbishop Julian called



Celebration of consecrated life at Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang.

on laypeople to remain steadfast in their faith and to continue striving for practicality, especially towards the young, who may seek to reinforce their faith by exemplifying those who have dedicated their lives to the service of others, particularly the religious.

The event ended with a sit-down dinner for the religious and the parishioners.

Among the religious present were the Capuchins (OFMCap),

Good Shepherd Sisters (RGS), Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM), Daughters of St Paul (FSP), Infant Jesus Sisters (IJS), Discalced Carmelite Friars (OCD), Marist Brothers (FMS), Canossian Sisters (FDCC), Congregation of the Disciples of the Lord (CDD), Society of Jesus (SJ), Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (FSIC), De La Salle Brothers (FSC), and the Franciscan Sisters of Sarawak (SSF).

Helping each other preserve the vocation

PENAMPANG: Over 250 religious men and women from eight congregations converged at the Church of St Michael.

Fr Andrew Kim, Head of the Council of Religious Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu, said, "Today especially, let us help each other so we can live by keeping our respective religious vocations. Our consecrated life is not for our own glory, but for the glory of God, not only for our salvation, but for the salvation of the world."

"A religious life is a consecrated life not compelled and commanded by someone, but by one's own free choice. By choosing a consecrated life, religious men and women have committed themselves to God, promising to preserve chastity, poverty, and obedience."

Fr Andrew also asked for prayers for the religious as they are human beings, lack many things, and very much in need of believers' prayers.

The Korean priest emphasised that parents' support is essential in letting children choose their vocations. He hoped many young people in the community choose to join a religious or clergy vocation. He said God wants many religious and priests in the community as His workers.

In conclusion, Fr Andrew asked the congregation, made up



Fr Andrew Kim giving his speech during Mass.

of religious, associates and lay parishioners, "What do you ask of God and of his Holy Church?"

He said, "I ask for perseverance in following Christ our Bridegroom in this religious community all the days of my life. I ask for lifelong perseverance in the Lord's service and the proclamation of his Gospel in this religious family."

He invited all to always work together to realise God's love and mercy in our lives and to consecrate ourselves to God with a pure heart as mature believers.

Archbishop John Wong presided over the Eucharistic Celebration with Msgr Nicholas Stephen, and Chancellor Fr Wilfred Atin and a few other priests concelebrating. — **By Linda Edward, Catholic Sabah**

Thank God for the Religious

SIBU: Bishop Joseph Hii Teck Kwong exhorted everyone to thank God for our consecrated Sisters and Brothers, for their selfless lives to serve all in their midst.

The lay faithful came to the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart to pray for the Marist Brothers, Franciscan Sisters of Sarawak, and Putri Karmel Sisters.

As the celebration is also known as Candlemas (Jesus as the Light of the World), Bishop Joseph blessed candles at the entrance before Mass, with concelebrants, Sacred Heart Cathedral's assistant priest Fr Raphael Samosir, OFM Cap, Fr Ravi Alexander, OFM Cap, and the newly ordained Fr Johanaz Ling.

In his homily, Bishop Joseph mentioned the significance of the 40 days of prayers in our faith and how it's linked, for example, to the Old Testament, where the Israelites travelled 40 years before reaching the Promised Land. There are also 40 days from Christmas to The Presentation of the Lord which marks the end of the Christmas season.

The prelate shared about Simeon and Anna who met Mary and Joseph, obediently following the tradition of presenting and consecrating their son at the Temple.

With the lay faithful, Bishop Joseph urged everyone to join the soil, air, ocean, and world to shine like Jesus. — **By Eta Ting**



Bishop Joseph Hii with the religious at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart.

Religious enrich the local Church

KUCHING: The Archdiocese of Kuching celebrated at the Carmelite Chapel, for some 50 persons living the consecrated life.

It included religious men and women from the Order of Discalced Carmelites (OCD), Sisters of St Francis of Sarawak (SSFS), Claretian Missionaries (CMF), Disciples of the Lord (CDD), Marist Brothers (FMS), Order of Friars Minor (OFM), Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB), and the Society of Jesus (SJ). Also present were members of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites (OCDS).

The evening began with a sharing by the Marist brothers, Bro Robert Teoh, FMS, and Bro John Emil Alada, FMS, on the order's history and their experience of coming to start a community in Kuching in 2015. They have since been running St Joseph's International School, under the umbrella

of the Catholic St Joseph's Family of Schools.

The sharing was followed by the blessing of candles, by Archbishop Simon Poh, at the main door of the Carmelite Monastery. Thereafter, all proceeded into the chapel to begin the Eucharistic feast.

In his homily, the prelate reminded the religious of Pope St John Paul II's apostolic exhortation, *Vita Consecrata (On the Consecrated Life)* wherein the late Holy Father stressed the importance of Community, Communion, and Mission: the three pillars that define the role of religious persons in the Church.

Wherever they find themselves, these men and women of consecrated life enrich the local Church with their respective charisms. In this regard, Archbishop Simon noted that the Archdiocese of

Kuching is blessed with the presence and contributions of each of the nine religious bodies who support the diocesan priesthood in making the Church a truly synodal one.

The final hymn at Mass was a piece dedicated to the occasion. Entitled *By His Wounds*, it was a composition by Fr Alvin Ng, SJ. Sung for the first time by all present, with Florida Law accompanying on the keyboard, the lyrics of the hymn exhorted the call to follow Christ by whose wounds all are healed.

A simple fellowship followed the Mass with packed meals provided for all present. Some had not met physically for the past two years and a visit to the monastery parlour to meet and chat with the OCD nuns added to the merriment and was a pleasant closure to the celebration. — **Today's Catholic**



The congregation listening attentively to the sharing by the Marist Brothers.

Lenten Campaigns in the Arch/Dioceses

Penang Diocese: Renew our hearts to care

Lent is the time when we remember the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness, facing challenges and temptation. It is a time when we reflect on God's purpose for our lives.

This year, we invite you to reflect on real human stories, understand their sufferings and judge the reality based on Gospel's reflection and finally discern how the Holy Spirit wants you to take action to change.

How to observe Lent?

Penang Diocesan Lenten Campaign is aimed at encouraging the faithful to be meaningfully and fruitfully engaged in the three key Christian practices of **prayer, fasting, and almsgiving**.

The desired outcome of these triple Lenten practices is **conversion, renewal, and transformation** of our hearts to become a community of care.

As we journey through Lent together, you are encouraged to use the devotions as part of a daily spiritual journey: read the Scriptures, watch the videos and do reflections. You can

write in a journal, share on social media, or reflect in silent prayer. Whatever you choose, let this be your prayer:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me." – Psalm 51:10

Almsgiving

Start a *Kempen Kasih* in your community.

After reflecting on the stories found in the kit/website, now it's time for us to put our faith into action.

We invite you to take the first step on your journey by simply stopping for a moment and prayerfully and humbly seeing and hearing the people around you.

The next step is to start a *Kempen Kasih* in your family, school, office, ministry, or church, to offer food to the hungry, a caring hand to the sick and dying, listen to the voice of the voiceless and echo their cries, and give alms to those who are in need.

Finally, you are welcome to inspire us with your Lent experiences.

Go to: <https://caritaspenang.com/lenten-2023/>

KEMPEN KASIH
Renew our hearts to care

May our care for creation and the poor move us to action.

Feed the hungry.
Give drink to the thirsty.
Shelter the homeless.
Visit the sick.
Visit the prisoners.
Bury the dead.
Give alms to the poor.
Care for our common home.

FAST | PRAY | ALMSGIVING

Be inspired at caritaspenang.com/lenten-2023

Together WE ESTABLISH A NEW BUILD

Caritas MALAYSIA | DIOCESE OF PENANG

LENTEN PRAYER

Renew Our Hearts To Care

God Our Father, you created heaven and earth and all that is in them.

All that you created was good.

You made us in Your image and called us to be co-responsible of Your creation.

Have mercy on us Lord for we have sinned against You by failing to abide by Your will.

Give a new heart and put a new spirit in us that sees the damage we have caused to our common home.

We ask You to guide us to change our attitudes to a culture of care.

Your Son became poor so that we, through His poverty, might become rich.

Like Him, help us to be more self-giving in the way we live so that we are able to share the gifts of Creation, which You have freely given to us all. Strengthen our efforts to love and care so that we overcome the boundaries in our hearts and see all humanity as one human family.

Do not let us be indifferent to what is happening around us but send Your Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with hope and enkindle in us the flame of mercy and compassion.

Dear God, take our hands to daily set the world on fire with acts of care and compassion of those who suffer the most this Lenten Season.

Re-enkindle in us the fire of your Love so that we hear the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth, longing for restoration, protection and renewal. Heavenly Father, Grant us hearts wide open to the sacredness of life that can help us discern paths of peace from those of oppression, for us and for future generations.

Lead us in Your path of love and kindness so that today we care for our common home and for the poor together, for a better tomorrow.

Amen

Malacca Johore Diocese: A Light of Hope

This year, the focus of the Diocese of Malacca Johore Lenten guide is based on Pope Francis' *Fratelli Tutti* ("Brothers and Sisters All"), an encyclical on dialogue and social friendship.

As Christians, we are called to live a life that is marked by love in our relationships with one another and by our care for creation. *Fratelli Tutti* (FT) can guide us in our Lenten reflections and lead us to repentance. First, when we fail to recognise our neighbours as "brothers and sisters". Second, for not doing our part but instead contributing to the social and ecological crises facing our world today.

We invite you to enter into the journey of Lent and dive deeper into the reflections of Pope Francis

with the goal of transforming our Christian lives as "A Light of Hope".

How to use:

1. Take time to use these reflections during each week of Lent.
2. You can also read *Fratelli Tutti* at www.tinyurl.com/ftlent
3. Accompany your reading with your reflections. What is your own experience telling you? Pray by conversing with God from the insights you gained from your reflections.
4. Formulate a resolution for a Lenten action from your reflections and prayer.

To download the weekly reflections, go to: <https://mjdio-cese.my/>

Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese: Light of Life

This year's Lenten Campaign is to invite the people to be the "Salt of the Earth and Light of the World" while focusing on the three Lenten pillars of Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving.

Prayer

To many, prayer is secondary. They pray when they need something. When things are good they forget to pray.

Lent is about praying for others rather than for yourself. It is also a time to spend a little more time on prayer than the usual.

Anyone can pray wherever they are and praying as a family or a community is a good virtue.

Let's encourage our community to pray for someone in need.

Fasting

The core reason for fasting is so that whatever you save on that meal can be given to help those in need. Why fast? The core reason for fasting is so that whatever you save on that meal can be given to help those in need.

Let's remember the struggles of others through the act of abstinence.

Almsgiving

People are willing to support a cause if they see or hear and believe it.

During the pandemic, there were many movements of people sup-

porting one another — white flag, #kitajagakita, etc.

Let's come together to donate for a good cause.

The target to raise is RM2million.

Below are ways to be the Salt of the Earth and Light of the World.

a) Pocket Prayers

Catholics are encouraged to sign up for a "subscription service" via a microsite.

Starting from the first day of Lent, all subscribers will be emailed or Whatsapp on the Lenten Journey (Light of Life).

The Light of Life is a 40-day movement. Every day, you will receive a two-minute video of Church leaders sharing on one of the Lenten pillars (prayer, fasting and almsgiving). You are encour-

aged to share this video with your family, friends and community.

At this microsite, there will also be candles which will glow when donations are made. The more donations, the more candles will be lit.

b) Light of Life @ Home

Families can purchase and decorate candles together.

Then create a prayer jar. Family members can write a prayer request (for someone else) and place it in the jar. You can decorate the prayer jar as a family Lenten art project. Each night, remove one slip and the family joins together in prayer. The prayers should not be self-serving.

Families can also collect for the poor with their own giving jar.

Go to: <https://www.lightoflife.my/>



Sam Tet principal honoured with bronze statue

By Evelyn Lim

IPOH: Chinese Catholic mission school SMJK Sam Tet held a ceremony to unveil the statue of Marist Brother John Moh, FMS, who served as its fourth principal from 1959 to 1992, on February 4.

The bronze statue was erected to honour Bro John's legacy and immense contribution to the school.

Born in Beijing, China on Dec 25, 1927, Bro John came to Malaya when he was 28 years old to teach in missionary schools. Before joining SMJK Sam Tet, he taught at SJK(C) Kim Sen, Penang, and Singapore Catholic High School. Although scheduled to retire in 1982 at the age of 55, he stayed on to oversee the completion of the school's ongoing development projects.

He applied annually to the Education Ministry for an extension of his service until he reached the age limit of 65.

He is fondly remembered as a warm, kind-hearted and approachable person, who cared deeply for his students' welfare. Ever the hard worker, Bro John barely took any sick leave in his 33 years of service. In 1985, he was awarded Model Teacher of Perak. He passed away on April 16, 2000, at the age of 73.

The unveiling ceremony was held in conjunction with the school's annual Chinese New Year celebration. It was graced by the Local Govern-



Msgr Stephen Liew and the guests of honour unveiling the bronze statue of Bro John Moh, FMS. Inset: The late Bro John Moh, FMS.

ment Development Minister, YB Nga Kor Ming, Member of Parliament for Ipoh Timur, Howard Lee, Member of Parliament for Taiping, Wong Kah Woh, and several other Perak ADUN members. Also in attendance, representing the Diocese of Penang, was the Chairman of the Board of Governors, Msgr Stephen Liew, and Marist Brothers, Bro Joachim Heng, FMS, and Bro Robert Teoh, FMS.

Before the unveiling ceremony, guests were treated to various cultural performances, including a lion dance, dragon dance, 24 Festive Drums, and a Wushu performance.

In their speeches, the Vice Chairman of Sam Tet Board of Gover-

nors, Dato' Lim Kok Cheong, and YB Nga Kor Ming, acknowledged that helming the school for 33 years, as Bro John did, was not an easy feat, as it had its fair share of challenges. To date, no other principal in Malaysia can boast of such a track record.

YB Nga said in his speech, "There are people who, even though they have passed on, continue to live in people's hearts and minds, because of the lives they touched. Bro John was one such person. Since its founding in 1934, Sam Tet has produced countless professionals who have contributed to society in various capacities. All of them are standing on the shoulders of this



Statue of Bro John Moh

"giant" who was Bro John. Without his dedicated leadership, this success would not have been possible. May SMJK Sam Tet continue to uphold its motto *Faith, Hope and Charity* and nurture generations of students who not only excel in studies but are also exemplary people who go on to become God's faithful stewards in the world."

During Bro John's tenure, Sam Tet underwent 10 rounds of beautification, upgrading works, and expansion. He transformed the school from its original wooden structure to the present four-storey school block, which includes a spacious hall, complete with badminton courts. In his honour, it was later

named Bro John Moh Hall.

This was done to provide a conducive learning environment for the expanding student population, which grew from approximately 300 students when he first became principal to more than 2500 students upon his retirement.

Bro John later donated his life savings and EPF contribution towards the Bro John Moh Tet Old Boys' Association (STOBA) to assist needy students. In honour of the late principal, YB Nga also pledged RM20,000 to this foundation.

After the VIP speeches, Msgr Stephen and Bro Robert officiated the unveiling ceremony. This followed the solemn singing of the 'Hail Mary' prayer in Mandarin, accompanied by the school's brass band. The vicar general then blessed the statue and prayed to invoke God's blessings on the school and its students. Finally, the guests of honour stood in silent contemplation before the statue as a mark of respect.

The VIPs and guests adjourned to the school hall for refreshments while entertained by the school's brass band, symphony, and Chinese Orchestra. The school choir sang their rendition of Bro John's favourite Chinese song, *Cao Yuan Zhi Ye* (*Night in the Meadows*). Students, teachers, parents, former students, and guests were happy to mingle and revel in the celebrative mood.

Double joy in the highlands

CAMERON HIGHLANDS: The Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel celebrated the 10th sacerdotal anniversary of parish priest Fr Augustine Lee, and visiting priest Fr Chin Sin Wee, OCD with a Mass and fellowship, January 30.

A decade ago, on Jan 24, 2013, Fr Augustine and Fr Chin professed their vows with Fr Peter Anthony and Fr Gregory Chan at the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist. Their ordination theme was *All Things to All Men* (1 Cor 9:22).

Fr Chin said, "We both remember our promises, aware that the day we said 'Yes' to You, we are to live three



From left: Fr Chin Sin Wee, OCD and Fr Augustine Lee.

virtues daily till the end of our lives. St Teresa of Avila, in her book *The Way of Perfection*, taught the following virtues to attain spiritual perfection:

- Detachment from created

things if we are to keep holiness;

- Humility makes us be simple and become little ones again;
- Love of neighbour.

"Do not forget we are all called to be holy. My fellow brother in Christ, Fr Augustine, let us, on this journey of the priesthood, always pray for the grace of holiness.

"Brothers and sisters, we need your prayers too. Pray for your parish priest and all priests, for the grace of holiness," summed up Fr Chin in his homily, delivered in English and Mandarin.

Later, an anniversary cake and a floral bouquet were presented to them. As it was also Fr Augustine's birthday, an additional cake was cut.

Fr Augustine spoke of God's goodness towards him and how He always surprised him. He'd learnt to always rely on God. The parish priest gave thanks and praise to the Lord for His blessings and guidance throughout the past 10 years. — *By Cynthia Baring-Gould*

Games and choir lessons to integrate multi-lingual learners

SITIAWAN, Perak: The Church of St Francis De Sales parish priest, Fr Francis Andrew, and the Catechetical team conducted a formation session themed *Renewing the Church with Families of Faith* for the Catechetical students and their parents, on February 5.

There were two 45-minute sessions, one for the Tamil and English-speaking groups and another for the Bahasa Malaysia and Mandarin-speaking groups.

Fr Francis touched on the roles and responsibilities of parents and catechists in ensuring and

safeguarding the young ones faith growth.

"If we don't take care of the faith of our young ones or of their faith education, one day we will lose our young ones. Let's work hand in hand with the faith formators."

The parish will also introduce a new concept dubbed CC (Catechism Classes) G (Games) and C (Choir classes) to learn liturgical hymns to help integrate children from different language groups. The games and choir class will be held once a month. — *By Christi Nathan*



Fr Francis Andrew addressing the catechetical students and parents during the formation.



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Holiness in leadership programme

By Jonathan Lesslar

BUKIT MERTAJAM: CHARIS Penang organised a programme for leaders of the different ministries under its purview, February 4-5 at Domus St Anne. The ministries included the Parish Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) Groups, Covenant Communities, Shekinah Glory Renewal Group, Seeds Ministry, and the Prophetic Intercessory Group.

The programme, themed *Holiness in Leadership* was to rediscover the need for personal holiness and living it out daily, especially in effectively leading others.

The two-day programme comprised eight recorded talks by Archbishop Francis Kalist (CHARIS India), Dr Ralph Martin (Renewal Ministries USA), Chevalier Cyril John (CHARIS International), Felix Ali Chandra (CHARIS Indonesia), Paul Julianose and Catherine Lee (CHARIS Malaysia).

To begin the programme, participants were briefed on the history of CHARIS, founded by Pope Francis, followed by the CHARIS Penang Organisation Chart, and all the groups that now fall in its scope.

The series of talks began with *Repentance*. Archbishop Francis expanded the elements of leadership such as Servant, Shepherd, and Steward, and Service to God's Word. Leaders need to be in union with God through holiness. In a state of sin, holiness is impossible and he exposed the seven cardinal sins of pride, greed, anger, jealousy, laziness or sloth, gluttony, and lust, and how they shift us away from holiness and God.

Dr Ralph's talk focused on the importance of *prayer and encountering Jesus*. Seek first the Kingdom of God and have faith in God's promise to provide all we need. The key takeaway was that even when we think we do not feel God's love or see His gifts in our lives, we must continue to believe and be faithful in daily prayer to sustain the relationship with him.

Next, Chevalier Cyril gave insights on *transformation and growth*. He said that



Ministry leaders under CHARIS Penang participate in a two-day leadership programme.

transformation is not a singular event and emphasised the need for continuous discernment of the Will of God. The key is a life of prayer and growing in spiritual maturity.

Bishop Sebastian Francis celebrated Mass with the Gospel themed, *Salt of the Earth and Light of the World*. In his sermon, he asked, 'Why is God Holy?' He went on to explain that God the Father is focused on Jesus and Jesus is focused on the Father. Jesus then invites us to live in Him as He lives in us. Hence, holiness is the gift to focus totally and singularly on Jesus.

To conclude Day One, Felix spoke on a *Call to Servanthood*. He focused on the call to serve the people, not ideologies, and not just financial or physical service but spiritually as well. He then spoke on our stewardship over God's creation which He entrusted to us to work for the betterment of His creation. In summary, faith and discernment are the foundation of servanthood.

On the second day, Dr Ralph reminded attendees about *Rekindling the Baptism of the Holy Spirit*. With the formative foundation Jesus gave the Apostles, He told them to wait till He sent them power from on High before going out on mission. This power is the Holy Spirit and without it, we cannot do God's will.

He called for obedience and faithfulness in waiting on God and understanding His will for us.

During the next session, Paul and Catherine dove into *Pastoral Care* and gave a blueprint on how to invest the right amount of focus on the different levels under their pastoral care. They also spoke about the importance of learning to follow Jesus, allowing Him to lead us to rest and rejuvenate beside still waters. Only when leaders allow themselves to be spiritually nourished by Jesus, can they share that same spiritual nourishment and growth with others under their care.

Chevalier Cyril spoke about the *Call to Mission*. He explained that the purpose of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is to be sent out on mission, to make disciples of the nations. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is for the whole church and Charismatic Renewal is a Pentecostal Grace that we are called to share with all.

Ending the talks, Archbishop Francis explained the need for an ongoing *Process of Conversion for Leaders*. He explained how conversion and sanctification of life are necessary as we constantly fall into sin and are tempted daily. Only through continuous conversion and faith growth can we be fruitful in

our mission and identity as Christians through the signs of Love and Holiness that we perpetuate. We need the World to live in but if we allow the World to get into us, we will fall away from God.

The series of talks had the central theme of *Holiness in Leadership*. The key elements emphasised, such as daily prayer life, repentance, and reconciliation, a call to faith, discernment, spiritual growth and maturity, living in communion with Jesus, servant leadership and the responsibility of stewardship over the people of God, obedience, pastoral care and management, the power of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit especially in the call to mission and the on-going conversion and sanctification, are all vital for ministry leaders.

The talks were complemented by Praise and Worship sessions and group discussions. Throughout the programme, all present witnessed the manifestations of the amazing power of the Holy Spirit as many were healed physically, and spiritually, and were blessed with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and made new. The programme culminated with a Jericho March around the Minor Basilica of St Anne and a blessing by Bishop Sebastian, sending the leaders forth for a mission at the end of the programme.

Planting mangroves – baby steps towards decarbonisation

KUALA SELANGOR: The Creation Justice Commission (CJC) of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur organised a Mangrove Plantation activity at the Kuala Selangor Nature Park on February 4, as part of its initiative to promote decarbonisation.

From zero waste to beach cleaning, and now moving towards the planting of mangroves, the archdiocese is heeding the voice of creation, is concerned, and is taking action.

The activity was a collaboration with the Kuala Selangor Nature Park and the Malaysian Nature Society. It brought together 117 enthusiastic environmentalists from different faiths, communities, and age groups. Archbishop Julian Leow, Fr Andrew Manickam OFM Cap, Fr Edwin Peter, and Fr Bernard Hyacinth, SJ, were among the participants.

On arriving at the Kuala Selangor Nature Park, everyone was greeted by volunteer staff and invited for breakfast. CJC head, Fr Andrew, welcomed and thanked everyone for their participation. The aim was to plant 150 trees and 200 seedlings.

Dato Dr Dionysus (Dino) Sharma, from the Church of Divine Mercy, introduced the staff and shared how the park collaborates with the Malaysian Nature Society to engage people to become responsible for their choices, to share resources and to promote reusability along with conservation.

Archbishop Julian then reminded everyone that two festivals – Thaipusam and Chap Goh Mei, were celebrated over the weekend



Environmentalists from various groups planting mangrove trees.

and that our fellow brothers and sisters were remembered. The archbishop incorporated the examples of the coconut and the orange and invited those present to reflect on how we could break the hardness of our hearts and build the pure holiness of the coconut fruit. And just like an orange that is orange in colour on the outside and inside, we could be true to ourselves and pure on the outside and the inside, thus beginning a journey of being aware.

Shan, the park manager, said the park was

managed by an NGO and funds were collected to protect the mangrove area. He mentioned that the amphitheatre where everyone was seated, was earlier covered by sea and there were salt pans around. Mangroves act as a natural filter to block out pollution by trapping plastic, garbage, etc. washed in from the sea, and the huge mud flats which become home for the migratory birds that visit each year.

Shan added that as some of the mangrove trees had been uprooted and destroyed by

wind and lightning strikes, new trees were planted. He appreciated everyone that supported ecology-based activities. Mangroves play an important role in decarbonisation and improving the quality of water. The group was then briefed on rules to observe during the activity.

The participants were divided into two groups – those helping to prepare seedlings and those who would plant the trees. The volunteers put on Wellington boots and started their walk toward the plantation area. They used the time to connect with nature and each other as they waited for the entire group to finish their tasks.

The second group that prepared the mangrove seedlings consisted mainly of children between the ages of four and 14. When nine-year-old Mia was asked about her experience, she said, "It was amazing and fun! I think we had more fun than the adults and learnt a lot. We held tiny crabs, spotted a monitor lizard, saw birds, and mud skippers, and learnt survival skills if we are lost in a mangrove area, names of plants, etc."

Once both activities were completed, participants freshened up and gathered for lunch. It was truly a time to ponder on our call to be the Salt of the Earth and Light of the World as we reflected on the love of our Creator God.

The CJC and the Archdiocesan Prayer Ministry will hold "An Outdoor Lenten Reflection" on March 4, at Lake Gardens. — *By Marilyn Menezes Simon*

150,000 people trafficked every year in South Asia

MILAN: Pope Francis released a video message for the Ninth World Day of Prayer and Reflection against Human Trafficking. In it, the pontiff says that, 'Human trafficking disfigures dignity. Exploitation and subjugation limit freedom and turn people into objects to use and discard.'

In South Asia alone, the United Nations estimates that 150,000 people are trafficked each year, most of them women (44 per cent) and girls (21 per cent); forced labour, sexual exploitation, and early marriage are the main reasons for this crime.

"The system of trafficking profits from the injustice and wickedness that oblige millions of people to live in conditions of vulnerability. Indeed, people impoverished by economic crisis, wars, climate change and many forms of instability are easily recruited," said Pope Francis in the video released on February 8.

This year's theme, *Journeying in dignity*, remembers St Josephine Bakhita, a Sudanese woman who was sold into slavery, abused, and finally freed, and is now the patron saint of survivors of human trafficking.



Myanmar migrants apprehended by Thai military personnel in Kanchanaburi province bordering Myanmar. (UCA News photo)

The Pope's words reflect the experience of many Church entities in Asia that fight prostitution and human trafficking, like the Trust of Nano Nagle School (TNS) in Goa (India). Run by the Redemptorist Fathers, it is open to children who live in

slums or from migrant families.

"The school's vision is to provide free English medium education to migrant street children, slum children and drop-outs in Goa and prevent child labour, child abuse, and to uphold the rights of

children," said TNS director Fr Ritesh Rosario.

The school, which is located in the Redemptorist Vice Province of Majella, welcomes children, especially girls, from the slums in Margaon and Navelim, south of Goa.

In line with the statutes of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, the TNS offers schooling from kindergarten to high school; in addition to an all-round education, it provides breakfast and lunch.

Its courses cover a panoply of subject matters, from home skills, personality development and moral values to technical training and computer literacy.

For Fr Rosario, the overall aim of the school's programme is to help girls to break free from the dangers that lack of education favour.

The successes of so many girls who attended the Redemptorist school show the importance of education to prevent young people from being abducted or lured into trafficking. — *AsiaNews*

Philippine Church leaders release *Litany of Gratitude* after the COVID-19 Pandemic



A churchgoer in the Philippine capital prays with her face mask and face shield on. (LiCas News photo/Mark Saludes)

MANILA: Catholic Church leaders in the Philippines released on February 2, a *Litany of Gratitude after the COVID-19 Pandemic*, a special prayer to replace the *Oratio Imperata* or obligatory prayer for protection against the diseases during the pandemic.

In a statement, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines said the "Litany" is to be prayed in all weekday and Sunday Masses from Feb 11 until Feb 22, Ash Wednesday.

Msgr Bernardo Pantin, CBCP secretary general, said the prayer was approved on January 30, during the Philippine bishops' plenary assembly.

In January 2020, the CBCP first issued the *Oratio Imperata* against the COVID-19 pandemic. In February 2021, the Church leaders revised the prayer to include a plea for the effectiveness of the vaccines to end the health crisis. — *LiCAS*

First Indigenous bishop in Indonesia's Papua ordained

JAYAPURA, Papua: The first Indigenous bishop of Indonesia's Papua province was ordained recently at the Christ the King Cathedral in the provincial capital Jayapura.

"I never dreamed of becoming a bishop, but the Holy See chose me, making my mother's dream come true," said Bishop Yanuarius Theofilus Matopai You (pic).

"I was in tears when the papal nuncio informed me of the choice of Pope Francis," recalled the new prelate, adding that he will continue the programmes started by his predecessor.

"My vision is to build a Church with a missionary identity," he was quoted as saying in a report on *AsiaNews*.

"I am a native Papuan but will serve all parts in Papua," said the new bishop. "The bishop is morally destined to become a figure of union who does not implement preferences," he said.

The Vatican announced the appointment of Bishop You as prelate of the Diocese of Jayapura on Oct 29, 2022.

A member of the indigenous Mee tribe in Papua, Bishop You, 61, succeeded retired Bishop Leo Laba Ladjar.

Born in 1961, Bishop You was ordained a priest in 1991. In 2002, he became the parish priest of the Cathedral Church in Jayapura and served as the vicar general of



the diocese until 2007.

He studied for a master's degree in psychology at state-university Gadjah Mada Yogyakarta from 2008-2010 and a doctorate in anthropology at Cenderawasih University Jayapura from 2015-2018.

Since September 2019, he has been the rector of the Fajar Timur Abepura School of Theological Philosophy. He is also a lecturer at the John the Apostle Catholic Pastoral High School, Waena.

The Diocese Jayapura has an area of 115,350 square kilometers and a population of 67,500 Catholics spread over 25 parishes. — *LiCAS*



Bishop Yanuarius Theofilus with Arch/bishops Bishops from Papua New Guinea and East Timor.

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Visiting DRC and South Sudan fulfilled dreams, says Pope

VATICAN: During his weekly General Audience, held in the Pope Paul VI Hall, Pope Francis reflected on his recent visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan. Thanking God for the long-awaited visit, he said it was the fulfilment of two dreams.

The Holy Father expressed joy to have visited the Congolese people, who, he said, are “guardians of an immense country... a land rich in resources and bloodied by a war,” he said, “that never ends because there are always those who feed the fire.”

The Pope expressed delight to visit the South Sudanese people, while undertaking “a pilgrimage of peace” together with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and the Moderator General of the Church of Scotland, Iain Greenshields.

“We went together to witness that it is possible and right to collaborate in diversity, especially if one shares faith in Christ,” he said.

The Holy Father reflected on his days in the Democratic Republic of Congo’s capital of Kinshasa, and the messages he made there to protect the precious nation from contention, violence, poverty and exploitation.

“In the face of all this I have said two words: the first is negative: ‘enough!’, stop exploiting Africa! The second is positive: ‘together,’ together with dignity and mutual respect, together in the name of Christ, our hope.”

The Pope recalled the Mass there which brought together some million people, where he brought a message of peace to the joyful crowds.

Recalling the encounter with the victims of violence in the east of the country, Pope Francis recalled the “region that for years has been torn apart by war between armed groups manoeuvred by economic and political interests” and where “people live in fear and insecurity, sacrificed on the altar of illicit deals”.

“With them I said ‘no’ to violence, ‘no’ to resignation, ‘yes’ to reconciliation and hope.”

He recalled fondly his time spent with the Congolese youth and catechists, and with priests, deacons, religious, consecrated men and women, and seminarians.

“I urged them to be servants of the people as witnesses of Christ’s love, overcoming three temptations: spiritual mediocrity, worldly comfort and superficiality.”

The Pope also remembered sharing the joy and fatigue of pastoral service with the Congolese bishops.

“I invited them to allow themselves to be consoled by God’s closeness and to be prophets for the people, with the power of the Word of God, to be signs like the Lord is, of the attitude the Lord has with us: compassion, closeness, tenderness!!”

The Pope then turned to the second part of the trip that took place in Juba, capital of South Sudan, a state born in 2011, not-



People attending the celebration of Holy Mass at the John Garang Mausoleum, Juba, South Sudan. February 5, 2023. (Vatican Media)

ing the visit had a very special character, expressed by the motto that echoed Jesus’ words: “I pray that they may all be one.”

Reaffirming this visit as an “ecumenical pilgrimage of peace,” the Pope called it “the culmination of a journey that began some years ago, which had seen us meet in Rome in 2019, with the South Sudanese authorities, to make a commitment to overcome the conflict and build peace.”

Unfortunately, he said, “the reconciliation process has not advanced” and “the newly born South Sudan is a victim of the old logic of power and rivalry, which produces war, violence, refugees and internally displaced persons... Only then can there be development, people can work in peace, the sick can be cured, children can go to school.”

The ecumenical character of the visit to South Sudan, the Holy Father underscored, was particularly evident in the moment of prayer celebrated together with the Anglican brothers and sisters and those of the Church of Scotland.

In a reality like South Sudan, this sign is fundamental, and not taken for granted, “because unfortunately there are those who abuse the name of God to justify violence and abuse.”

The Pope recalled that South Sudan is a country of about 11 million inhabitants, of whom, because of armed conflicts, two million are internally displaced, and as many,

have fled to neighbouring countries. For this reason, he said, he wished to meet a large group of IDPs, in order to listen to them and make them feel the Church’s closeness.

The Churches and Christian-inspired organisations are on the front line alongside these poor people, who have been living in IDP camps for years, the Pope said.

He also stressed the critical role of women. “I addressed women, who are the force that can transform the country; and I encouraged everyone to be seeds of a new South Sudan, without violence, reconciled and pacified.”

The Pope also recalled his advice to clergy to be docile to the Holy Spirit, allowing themselves to be molded by Him, and in particular, be compassionate and meek, “detached from our own interests and able to strive even with God, for the good of the people entrusted to us”.

The Holy Father remembered his homily in Juba, where he encouraged the nation’s Christians to be ‘salt and light’.

Pope Francis concluded by recalling that God places His hope not in the great and powerful, but in the small and humble, and that the Lord continues to say this today, to those who trust in Him.

“Let us pray that, in the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan, and throughout Africa, the seeds of his Kingdom of love, justice and peace may germinate.” — ICN



With the reassurance that Jesus knows and loves each of us personally, Pope Francis calls on the faithful of South Sudan to be “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world”

Persecution refines Christianity ‘like gold in a fire’

YAOUNDÉ, Cameroon: Surveying a rising tide of anti-Christian persecution across Africa, one expert says it’s an attempt to curb Christianity’s phenomenal growth on the continent — one doomed to fail, he said.

“It would be naïve to assume that the growth of Christianity in Africa has not led to an increased effort — by jihadist groups and authoritarian governments alike — to slow or halt this growth altogether,” said John Pontifex, Head of Press and Information at the papal charity Aid to the Church in Need.

Yet Pontifex is convinced those efforts will only strengthen Christian resolve.

“Persecution serves to increase the quality and quantity of Christians wherever they may be, much like gold is refined in a fire,” he said.

Pontifex underscored the connection between martyrdom and growth.

“Africa is the continent which has the largest number of martyrs, with four priests killed in Nigeria alone, two in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), as well as one nun,” ACN stated in a February 3 report.

Africa is also the continent projected to have the fastest growth in Christianity over the next couple of decades.

According to PEW Research, the world’s Christian population is expected to grow from 2.2 billion in 2010 to 2.9 billion in 2050. Sub-Saharan Africa’s Christian population will more than double, growing from about half a billion people in 2010 to more than a billion in 2050. — By Ngala Killian Chimtom, Crux



A police officer stands guard inside the St Francis Catholic Church, a day after an attack that targeted worshippers in Owo, Nigeria. (NCR photo)



Pilgrim people and a synodal Church

By Thomas O'Loughlin

The significance of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) – despite more than half a century – is still *terra incognita* (unexplored territory) to very many Catholics. More importantly, it has not been internalised by the majority of the clergy – the evidence being that they do not recognise what a definite break it marks with the very limited vision of the Church (the *oikoumene*) and of the Catholic Church that became dominant in the 19th century.

If further proof of this lack of appreciation and internalisation is needed, then the fact that so much of the talk surrounding synodality, such as that emerging in Germany, is frightening the horses and shows that those frightened had never really studied and made their own *Lumen Gentium*, the Council's dogmatic constitution on the Church. The outburst of fury attacking Pope Francis and synodality that appeared last year was typical of many which show scant understanding of the Council. That it has now emerged as coming from a cardinal is deeply disturbing as an indicator of how carelessly Vatican II is being studied, much less taken to heart.

The pilgrim People of God

The image of "the pilgrim People of God" was intended to be a biblically rich vision to replace the vision of the Church as an "unequal hierarchical society" (*societas inaequalis hierarchica*). Yet few organisations have such



Pope John XXIII addressing the assembled Fathers at the opening of the Second Vatican Council.

hierarchically clear levels. The clue is in the name: The Church claims to be hierarchical (in the original sense of its having a divinely-appointed government and in the popular sense of ranks in a pyramid); other power pyramids are only "hierarchical" by analogy. The Second Vatican Council used the image of the Church as the People of God to emphasise that it is all the baptised, as one community, that witnesses, preaches, works, suffers, and prays.

Put another way, the basis of the Church would be centred around baptism, not ordination. This basic insight of *Lumen Gentium* is only now becoming fully visible. The process of development does not simply explain how we got to where we are, it is ongoing in our life. Development is part of the life of the

pilgrim people. This means that as synodality develops, we have to experience the decay of hierarchy.

Being on "The Way"

It would also be a pilgrim Church. It has not yet reached its goal, so cannot think of itself as a *societas perfecta* (perfect community). In the older ecclesiology, the Church was the perfect beacon that not only other religious organisations, but all other societies, should imitate. Vatican II saw the community of the baptised as serving the larger human family, growing, and learning, humbly aware of its incompleteness.

After several centuries of triumphalism, taking the pilgrim image on board has been just

too much for many of us. Many of the divisions within contemporary Catholicism can be seen in terms of a willingness, on the one hand, and a reluctance, on the other, to take this image of the Church as a "pilgrim people" to heart. This is the conciliar background to Pope Francis' repeated calls for a "synodal Church". His hope is that synodality will give flesh to Vatican II's vision. When we are faced with new images of the Church, our instinct is to look backwards to "the early Church", to see if we can draw lessons or inspiration from there. This longing to recover some golden age of the first Christians is not new.

Already in the early second century, when writing the Acts of the Apostles, Luke presents us with a vision of unity, harmony, and dedication: All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2:42-7). Luke's statement raises some important questions:

- How accurate is his picture of the first Christian communities?
- Does looking backwards reflect a Christian vision?
- And while it is rhetorically powerful, is it pastorally effective?

Problems are part of pilgrimage

If it were not for the conflicts in the Aegean churches, we might never have had the letters of Paul. There were disputes over religious practices and an unwillingness to welcome one another as equals (1 Corinthians) and about what was to be believed and expected (1 Thessalonians). We know of arguments between Jewish followers and gentile followers of Jesus, about both circumcision and the sharing of resources.

Abuses over hospitality and support by "apostles and prophets" generated the first internal Church regulations, and it was not long before the term "christmonger" was coined for ministers greedy for money: there were "clergy on the make" within a few decades of the Crucifixion and several centuries before "clergy" emerged. And far from holding all in common, the wealthy kept their slaves, and most did not like practices that challenged the social status quo.

In other words, the first Christians were as challenged as we are by the vocation given us by the Christ. Far from being plaster-cast saints, it was their willingness to keep trying to live the Gospel in a culture that saw them as fools and odd-bods that was their claim to being "among the saints" (Ephesians 5:3). Greco-Roman civilisation looked back to "a golden age" since the time things started going downhill. But Christians were different. They looked to the future: to the coming of the Son of Man. At the heavenly banquet, people will be gathered from north, south, east and west. They are on a journey.

Synodality is focused on the future

This colours our thinking about the Church, and about synodality. We do not imagine

that there was a perfect time which we are seeking to re-create, but we, confident in God's help, ask what we should become.

We are not engaged in a restoration project. Luke's device of imagining a perfect past as a blueprint – a technique he borrowed from Greek history writing – engages the human propensity for nostalgia: "We shall not see their like!" But the sense that it was somehow easier for the first Christians – that they belonged to the "age of the saints", "the springtime" – disempowers us. Inherent in this is a lack of faith that our moment is as beloved of the Creator who holds it in being as that of those called to witness in the first days. The times have changed, but the call to follow and witness – amid the particular difficulties of our age – is always the same. Those early Aegean churches and our churches today are one in hearing: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe" (John 20:29).

Being disciples

Something else distinguishes the pilgrim people from the *societas perfecta*: discipleship. Until the 1930s, most mainstream Churches were united in thinking of belonging in terms of identification and the acceptance of specific beliefs. The matter of identification was seen in their desire to be recognised within legal frameworks: ideally, establishment, but at least giving their leaders a say in education or social policy. Likewise, individual belonging was presented as assent to certain propositions. Churches and denominations had their "truths to be accepted" (*credenda*). There was a list of boxes to be ticked.

Then came movements such as Fascism,



Minor Basilica of St Anne BM photo

Nazism and Communism. Identification and assent to propositions was no longer enough to "belong" – as was recognised by theologians like Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906 – April 9, 1945). One had to become a disciple.

The Disciple as "Apprentice"

The disciple – more an "apprentice" than a "student" – knows that one cannot just talk the talk, but must also walk the walk, as they say. And this is the walk of the pilgrim. Discipleship costs. Or as our formal memory (Mark 10:38) presents the desire of disciples looking towards their destination: "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be

baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?"

"The 'synodal Church' is not an exercise in nostalgia, an attempt to recreate an illusory early church without disagreement or dissent. Pope Francis' dream is that synodality will bring about Vatican II's vision of a pilgrim Church of disciples, "among the saints". Not because they are perfect but because they are disciples, humble witnesses to the Gospel of mercy. — LCI (<https://international.la-croix.com>)

• Thomas O'Loughlin is a presbyter of the Catholic Diocese of Arundel and Brighton and professor-emeritus of historical theology at the University of Nottingham (UK).

Closing the door to death penalty in Malaysia

By Carmel Dominic

On February 4, the *Catholics@Home* (CAH) podcast highlighted another interesting topic — the death penalty. The invited guest was former Member of Parliament Kasthuri Patto who joined in from France.

Kasthuri, a Catholic, is known for advocating for human rights, social justice and is very vocal about abolishing the death penalty altogether. In Malaysia, there are 33 offences that carry the death penalty, out of which 11 are mandatory. Mandatory means the judge presiding over the case has no other choice but to sentence the offender, if found guilty to death. According to Kasthuri, the number of people on death row in 2013 was about 900 and in 10 years, the number has increased by another 400 or so. Malaysia inherited the death penalty from the British. Though they have abolished it in their own country, Malaysia still holds on to it.

“This goes to show that the death penalty is not effective as a punishment because people are still committing the crimes with no fear of death. This in itself defeats the purpose of the death penalty,” she said.

She also mentioned that there were many underlying factors that could have contributed to the person committing the crime.

“The person could have been under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or may have been suffering from a mental health condition, mentally challenged or even been a victim of circumstance. But if all these arguments do not hold up in court and the person is found guilty, then its death,” Kasthuri added.

She also brought up the point that people in general are kind and considerate at heart. The desire to intentionally hurt someone is not something that we are born with; it's triggered by mental health issues, difficult circumstances and most often by



the abuse of some kind of substance.

She went on to say that no judicial system in the world is perfect. Therefore, issues like bias, racism and corruption that are present in every level of society can also affect a person's guilty verdict. She referred to a few cases of death row inmates in America who were exonerated after decades in prison simply because at the time of their trial, they were not tried justly due to human greed, selfishness or human error. The same could also be true for Malaysia. Hence, why she hopes to see the abolishment of the death penalty.

“Malaysians are usually up in arms for the death penalty if there is a heinous crime committed like murder or when a child is hurt. So, it's safe to say that people demand the death penalty as an emotional response to the situation. But it's really not that simple. We have to get to the crux of why the crime was committed. It is not a form of justice, its revenge.”

Issues like the lack of education and information, economic status and unequal opportunities are also strong contributors to a person committing a crime. Kasthuri is of the opinion that instead of sending offenders to the gallows, it may be more

beneficial for society at large if the government addresses socio-economic issues that plague the *rakyat*. This is a more proactive and progressive way to deal with the issue. The discussion around the death penalty should go a lot deeper than just asking if the offender deserves to die for the crime and Kasthuri feels that a lot more needs to be brought to the table about this issue.

“We can't just be asking if one supports or opposes the death penalty. We should be putting ourselves in the offender's situation and asking ourselves what we would have done if we were in that situation?”

Kasthuri also made it clear that while she advocates the abolishment of the death penalty, that does not mean she believes that the offenders should go free. Quite the contrary. If found guilty, the offender should be put away for life if necessary, for the safety of society and as punishment for the crime, but nothing justifies taking a life.

Malaysia has not executed anyone since 2017 and this is due to a moratorium against the death penalty. Malaysia is also a state party to a global moratorium against the death penalty that was signed at the United Nations General Assembly. A

moratorium is a document that temporarily prohibits an activity to be carried out.

Addressing the question on whether it would trivialise the pain and suffering of the victim's family by abolishing the death penalty, Kasthuri said that Malaysia has other forms of punishment that would ensure that the offender is punished for the crime and that life in prison isn't exactly a walk in the park. She also suggested that there should be more support given to families of both the victim and the offender, because at the end of the day, a loss is still a loss.

Fr Dr Clarence Devadass said that the Church strongly opposes the death penalty because we do not have the right to take a life. That right belongs solely to God.

“The book of *Genesis* says that we were made in the image and likeness of God and this is a special dignity that was given to us humans by the Creator Himself. No other created being was given this privilege. This dignity stays with the person throughout their life, regardless who the person becomes in life. Therefore, in God's eyes, a criminal still has worth and just like the parable of the Prodigal Son, God will forgive and welcome back those who repent of their sins.”

Furthermore, paragraph 2267 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that the death penalty is unacceptable and encourages its abolishment worldwide. Pope Francis, in his document *Fratelli Tutti*, also encouraged acceptance and inclusivity of one another. Then of course, there is mercy and forgiveness, which is the Church's primary view on matters like this. It is not easy, but just as God has forgiven us, we too should forgive one another. The concept of an eye for an eye that is somewhat prevalent in the Old Testament was broken and challenged by Jesus when He taught us to love our enemies and to turn the other cheek. That is just the way of the Kingdom.

Speaker moots special tribunal to decide fate of over 1,000 death row inmates

KUALA LUMPUR: As Malaysia moves to abolish the mandatory death penalty, Dewan Rakyat Speaker Datuk Johari Abdul has suggested the government set up a special tribunal to decide the fate of over 1,000 prisoners on death row.



The PKR politician who said he is against mandatory capital punishment, added that the tribunal could be set up similar to the existing Pardons Board, but with members comprising either sitting or former judges, January 12.

“Set up a special tribunal akin to the Pardons Board and it could be made up of prominent judges or former judges to look into these cases.

“Let them give their views and decide what to do,” he told the newspaper in an interview.

Johari, a former lawmaker, was asked to comment on fellow Pakatan Harapan colleague Ramkarpal Singh's announcement



FMT photo

that the government is looking into alternative punishments should the mandatory death penalty be abolished, as advised by a 2019 special committee led by Tun Richard Malanjum when the latter was chief justice.

But former de facto law minister Datuk Seri Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar told the newspaper that a special tribunal might not work as it could be seen as holding

higher authority than the Federal Court, which is accorded supreme judicial powers under the Federal Constitution.

“It would go against the Constitution if a tribunal is set up and has jurisdiction above the Federal Court,” Wan Junaidi was quoted as saying.

Instead, he suggested Parliament create a new law and amend the Constitution to allow the Yang di-Pertuan Agong the pow-

er to grant a general amnesty to prisoners on death row.

“The death sentences could be commuted to life imprisonment or otherwise, depending on the facts of each case,” he told the newspaper.

Citing Malaysian Bar president Karen Cheah, *The Star* reported there are currently 1,327 prisoners on death row. — By Rex Tan, *Malay Mail*

The miracle is Jesus

A conversation with Fr Michael Payyapilly, VC

By Carmel Dominic and Kathlin Kaminiy Ambrose

We were all spoilt for choice when it came to choosing where we 'attended' Mass during the worldwide lockdown. Thanks to the internet, we had the privilege to 'experience' Masses from different countries and with different priests. It was during this time that Fr Michael Payyapilly, VC became a household name in many of our homes. Although it was only through the screen, Fr Michael has made a lasting reputation as a charismatic and interactive priest, with his jovial nature and generosity of spirit in sharing personal stories during his sermons.

Back in 2020 and 2021, the Vincentian priest served as the parish priest of the Church of The Holy Family in Victoria, Australia. He currently serves at the Divine Retreat Centre in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The *HERALD* had the opportunity to have a quick chat with him recently. Despite a hectic schedule travelling across borders to share the love of Christ, he still had his signature smile throughout the conversation, and this writer is happy to report that Fr Michael is the same in person as he is on screen – gentle, calm and unshaken

in his love for Jesus.

Despite the reopening of churches, many of us have become complacent where our Sunday worship is concerned. We would rather wake up at a time that is reasonable to us and 'attend' Mass online as opposed to putting on our Sunday best and going for Mass in church. The temptation of enjoying the comforts of home while 'observing' Mass is a new challenge that we face post pandemic. Fr Michael had some sound advice that might help remind us why physical Mass is still relevant and very necessary.

"Firstly, we must be grateful that we had the platform that enabled us to move to online Masses at a time when we needed it. It was a blessing then and still is now, for example, for those who are home-bound and are unable to make it to church. However, we have to understand that online Mass was meant for that particular period of time. It is not something that the Church feels should be continued.

"As Catholics, it's most essential that we experience the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. While for a period of time we had to experience Jesus only through Spiritual Communion, now we are able to enter into and receive real Communion because we can gather for physical Mass. So, if we are truly



one with Jesus, we will not be able to stay away from the Eucharistic presence because it is essential nourishment for our journey.

"It is crucial that we realise who is important. It is Jesus who is important. Without Him, we do not have anything. It is also imperative that we remind ourselves that we are part of a community. The community di-

mension is very important. The Church is not individualist, we are a community. We share each other's faith and we help each other enter the Kingdom of God. If we remain at home, we are going to miss out on that community spirit which is an essential aspect of our faith journey, as Pope Francis has emphasised. We worship as a community."

Aware of the large following he has gained and having travelled far and wide over the years at requests to conduct retreats, Fr. Michael opined that people are inclined to attend retreats conducted by foreign/visiting priests simply because

People are thirsty for the Word of God

they are thirsty for more of God.

"Of course, it may be that the novelty of a foreign or visiting priest is exciting but, I think, one of the main reasons why people attend these retreats is because they are thirsty for God's Word and will go wherever they can to receive it. It is, therefore, essential that the Church is able to give them that."

In the same vein, the question that Fr Michael believes that all priests should ask themselves is, how much have I, as a priest, grown in the Word of God to be able to share it meaningfully with others?

"Priests are not 'sacramental machines' whose task is to merely dispense the sacraments.

We are also breaking God's Word through the sacraments and more importantly, through the proclamation of the Word. That proclamation is what people are thirsting for."

In his observation over the many years of conducting retreats, he has seen an exponential growth in people's interest in the Word of God. This has led the people to want more and more of it. Therefore, if priests do not supply this need, people are bound to go looking for it elsewhere.

"Then of course there is the fascination with miracles and healings, but, that is only the initial phase. As they progress in their faith journey, people want to know more about Jesus, the worker of the miracles. They thirst for Him. We have seen this happening over time. People are dealing with their daily issues not through lofty miracles but by being sustained by the power of God's Word. They are holding on to God's Word. I

think that is what is important. I think it is the proclamation, and knowing how they can live their faith in a way that is worthy of the Lord, one that is Biblically oriented, that is attractive to the people."

Fr Michael further added that from his observation, people are searching for ways to make the Bible applicable in dealing with their everyday issues.

"The reason I am emphasising on the Bible is that, sometimes, we fail to realise that the sacraments and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* are all Bible based. And so, we can use these gifts provided by the Church to make the Bible a reality in our life. That's the attraction I feel the people have, especially from the little ministry I have done. It has all been about their thirst for God's Word. At the crux of it all, what people are truly yearning for is a way to carry their daily crosses and live their everyday life in line with God's Word and this is what they receive when they attend these retreats."

Church benefits from different charisms and strengths of the clergy

The conversation then went on to the topic of the Holy Spirit and the importance that He plays in our daily lives. Fr Michael sheepishly admitted that perhaps there has been a slight oversight by some priests on the importance of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity. However, he also gently added that everyone, priests included, are not gifted in the same way but have different charisms and strengths to offer.

Speaking from his own experience, he related how the Catholic Church benefits from having priests and religious who have different ways in leading and serving a parish.

"I was serving as a parish priest, but I don't know if I was as pastoral as I have seen other parish priests be. I tried to love my parishioners but the other priests were a lot better in that area than I was. Pastoral means knowing and taking an interest in the parishioners and their lives, the nitty-gritty stuff, knowing all their names, for instance.

There are priests who are so involved in their parishioners' lives. They might not do so well at the pulpit but the community still loves and appreciates them. As for me, I might preach well, but I may not be able to even get two people's name correctly.

Nevertheless, despite the differences in our strengths and weaknesses, a parish would still benefit from whatever we have to offer."

He also pointed out the differences between the leadership of the late pope emeritus Benedict XVI who was more doctrinal in his approach and Pope Francis who is more pastoral. Different though they may be, the Catholic Church has grown under both their leaderships.

Fr Michael went on to say that likewise, different priests have different gifts to offer. The gifts may vary, nonetheless, they are all necessary for the growth of the parish and its

parishioners.

"The Church needs all these gifts. Everyone is not similarly gifted, and so it is with us priests. We see that the Jesuits might be good in education, the Salesians with the youth, and the Vincentians at preaching. The Church is rich with people gifted in all these different areas. The blessing is that we can spread God's Word by working together in using all of these gifts that complement each other."



Scan to read what Fr Michael



says about the Holy Spirit and the importance of personal time with the Lord.

<https://bit.ly/3YDpBAr>

A Church that celebrates culture

Last month, Malaysians may have been surprised to observe Catholic churches being decked in decorative lanterns, plastic 'firecrackers' and simple stapled *angpow* packets. Many parishioners, including non-Chinese, dressed in bright coloured *cheongsams* and red *samfus*.

Most churches also distributed blessed oranges, some along with red packets.

Some parishes with a larger Chinese crowd even had lion dance performances outside the compound!

Just a week before that, in many churches again, these same parishioners would have been outside the same compound, stirring bubbling pots of rice cooked with milk and jaggery, in elaborately decorated earthen pots, shouting *Ponggal O Ponggal!* as their ancestors in Tamil Nadu did for generations.

While many may find it a little odd, Catholics in this country have long observed these celebrations alongside *Gawai* and *Kaamatan*, the thanksgiving harvest festivals of our Sarawakian and Sabahan brethren, respectively.

In Melaka, the Eurasian Catholics observe *Intrudu*, a water festival just before Lent, which may be alien to others who are used to a quiet weekend before Ash Wednesday, or *Fiesta San Pedro*, which pays homage to the Portuguese heritage as fishermen, and to their patron saint.

So why do Malaysian Catholics find it normal to celebrate three harvest festivals, boat-blessing and a couple of new year Masses, despite it having not being particularly marked for any Biblical or liturgical significance?

A Malaysian Catholic identity

Being in a diverse country like ours, the



MAKING SENSE

Emmanuel Joseph

Church takes on the characteristics of its congregation — occupational, socio-economic and of course, cultural. Some of these, like *Ponggal*, have its roots in a worker's celebration of harvesting grain, when India was a more agrarian society, which eventually got absorbed and re-interpreted as a festival of thanksgiving. Similarly, Chinese New Year is also now observed as a form of thanksgiving and reunion of families, even as the Julian calendar replaced the lunar one.

Malaysians are blessed to have cultural experiences all year round, owing to the many cultures that exist and thrive here.

Likewise, we have adapted a uniquely Malaysian experience of being the Catholic Church, blending local cultural experience seamlessly into our shared faith experience — thanksgiving, fellowship, mutual respect and tolerance.

Joyous affairs like weddings too, include these cultural practices. An Indian Catholic wedding could include a *thali* or *mangalsutra* alongside the traditional wedding rings.

Similarly, when mourning, some Indian Catholics observe a cultural vegetarian fast for between a week and a month, usually breaking it coinciding with the novena prayers after the death of a loved one.

This ostensibly extends to communities we play host to, as well.

Churches like the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist in Kuala Lumpur (and several

other parishes) hosts migrant communities, particularly from the Filipino and Myanmar community, adding their own flavour to celebrations like Christmas and Easter.

This collective experience produces a uniquely Malaysian Catholic experience and identity.

Catholicism's cultural influence on Malaysia

We too, have left an indelible mark on Malaysia. As we celebrate our Malaysian identity, so are Christians embraced as part of the community, perhaps a bit more so in the Catholic church.

One example are parish feast days. If Spain has Our Lady of the Candle, and Ireland has St Patrick's, feast days like that of St Anne's in Bukit Mertajam or St Jude's in Rawang have become community affairs, with road closures and people of various faiths and other denominations taking part in the procession and prayers. These symbolically animated acts of veneration, peculiar to our faith, allow people to draw close to it, share in a part of it, and draw some comfort or blessing from it, without being tied down with the study of catechism or a more serious profession of faith.

Though simple, it serves as an active bridge into ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and/or even an evangelical tool.

Because of early Christian charity work, mission schools tend to observe holidays such as Holy Week. The same missions provide visibility to Catholic orders and charisms. For instance, though not really venerated popularly within the Church, many Malaysians who went to mission schools would know St Jean-Baptiste De La Salle.

Though a minority within a minority here,

our impact belies our community size, as we should be known by our fruit (Lk 6:43).

Syncretism vs Adoption

There is a rather clear line between adopting certain cultural practices, and practising syncretic belief, like animistic worship or other Gods or spirits. One is encouraged and the other, prohibited. Divination and shamanism are other examples of things to avoid.

Some, perhaps, require a more open mind, like the accepted practice of ancestral veneration, which is still frowned upon by some Catholics as overtly Taoist or Buddhist in nature, some five hundred years after the debate started when the Jesuits in China introduced the idea as being compatible with Catholicism.

What many may not realise, is that these practices are not outright acceptance of another religion, in full or part, but rather, the recognition of the wisdom found in other faiths, compatible with our own, and planted by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

In fact, ancestral veneration in other cultures, such as in the Catholic Church in Zaire, is accepted as part and parcel of the liturgy there, one developed specifically for that country.

Goodness and truth in all faiths can be seen as a means of preparation for us to accept the Gospel (*Lumen Gentium* 16)

As much as our Church is a part of Malaysia, Malaysia is part of our Church.

● Emmanuel Joseph oversees IT as his 9-5 job and from 5-9, he serves a few NGOs, think tanks and volunteer groups. He serves as an advisor for *Projek Dialog* and is a Fellow with the *Institute of Research and Development of Policy*.



FAITHFULLY SPEAKING

Julie Lim Seet Yin

Effective leadership has a shelf life

and a corporate leader who decided to bow out because they knew that the time was right.

Resigning when the time is right

Last month, Jacinta Adern decided to quit as Prime Minister of New Zealand after just five years in the role. She said, "I am not leaving because it was hard. Had that been the case, I probably would have departed two months into the job! I am leaving because with such a privileged role, comes responsibility. The responsibility to know when you are the right person to lead, and also when you are not. I know what this job takes, and I know that I no longer have enough in the tank to do it justice."

In the corporate world, Abdul Farid Alias decided not to renew his contract as Group President and Chief Executive Officer of Maybank after holding the post for a period of eight years from August 2013 till April 2022. The Maybank Group is Malaysia's largest financial services group and the leading banking group in South East Asia. When Farid was asked the reason for his leaving, he said, "It's going to be nine years, and I don't think a CEO should overstay."

Political and corporate leaders are not the only ones who have resigned graciously. The Church too has had her fair share of resignations, some of whom have taught us a lesson or two in humility. Here are examples of three resignations in recent years.

Bowing out in humility

Towards the end of last year, two bishops in Europe announced their resignation before the mandatory retirement age of 75 for priests and bishops stipulated in Canon

Law. In December, 66-year-old Bishop Robert Byrne of the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle in the United Kingdom said that the office is "too great a burden." And in October, 59-year-old Bishop Valerio Lazzeri of the Diocese of Lugano in Switzerland said that "inner fatigue" had made his office "unbearable" to him.

Pope Benedict XVI, who passed away in December, gave the world a lesson in humility when he announced his resignation in February 2013 — merely into the eighth year of his papacy, citing a "lack of strength of mind and body". He was 86. Unlike priests and bishops who must retire at 75, a pope usually continues in his papacy until death. However, Pope Benedict XVI created history when he chose to resign.

No shame in resigning

Some of us may perceive that a leader who resigns is not an effective leader. However, we all need to understand that there is no shame in resigning. In fact, we have to applaud the leader for doing so because it means that he has a sense of self-awareness and humility. He is aware that an ineffective leader would be doing a great disservice to the organisation if he continues in his role.

The situation becomes worse when such an individual stays on for too long just because he can. In spite of his ineffectiveness, he refuses to step down because it would be a blow to his reputation and to his ego. Or perhaps he thinks that by relinquishing his post, he would be unfaithful to the responsibility that has been entrusted to him. Whatever the reason may be, an ineffective leader who clings on to power does not have the interest of the organisation at heart. They are detrimental to the growth of

any organisation.

Certain leaders who stay on for too long are soon accused of showing favouritism, as well as practising nepotism and cronyism. In extreme cases, the leader is accused of embezzlement of funds, sexual harassment, intimidation, etc. Acknowledging that these are the risks of having long-serving leaders in office, laws and rules to limit the tenure of leadership have been put in place by various parties.

Limiting leadership tenures for good governance

Countries like the United States of America and France limit its presidents to two terms, which is approximately 10 years. In most grassroots leadership in parishes, the maximum tenure for leaders serving in ministries is two terms, which is equivalent to four years. Even parish priests are reassigned to different parishes every five to six years, depending on the bishop of the diocese. Almost every government, organisation, and ministry acknowledges that effective leadership must have a shelf life.

Great leadership is having self-awareness and the humility to admit when the time is right to bow out. There is no shame in doing so. In fact, it could be a profound lesson for other leaders to emulate.

● Julie Lim Seet Yin believes that a satisfied life measured by one's heart, mind and soul is better than a successful life measured by worldly yardsticks. She works for a Japanese bank and is responsible for its Public Relations and Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives. She serves in various church ministries and charities and can be reached at: limseetyin@gmail.com

A general definition of a leader is someone who leads a group of people. We are all called to be leaders at some point in our lives. And we all want to become great leaders. So, what are the hallmarks of a great leader? According to American psychologist, Daniel Goleman, what distinguishes great leaders from good ones is emotional intelligence (EI). There are five skills in EI that enables the best leaders to maximise their own and their followers' performance. The five skills are self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

A leader with self-awareness knows his emotions, strengths, weaknesses, drives, values, and goals. Along with having self-awareness, a great leader would also know that effective leadership has a shelf life.

Effective leadership

Generally, most newly appointed leaders will begin their leadership brimming with ideas, raring to make impactful changes, and sometimes having to 'clean up' messy situations created by their predecessors. However, after a couple of years into the role, and faced with numerous challenges and the stress that comes along with it, the spark of leadership begins to dim. The leader soon begins to lose focus and becomes demotivated. He becomes ineffective.

With the challenges that leadership brings, it is not a wonder that many leaders throw in the towel after serving for between five to ten years. Let us look at a political



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Our overburdened planet

Creating the human race may be the single biggest mistake that evolution made. Douglas Abrams writes this in *The Book of Hope*, a book he co-authored with Jane Goodall. While that is a rather despairing view, in the end, this book is a book of hope, though not without it issuing a dire warning: There are now over eight billion people on this planet and already we are using up nature's limited resources faster than nature can replace them. In less than thirty years from now, there will probably be ten billion of us and if we carry on with business as usual, that could spell the end of the earth as we know it.

What do we need to do to turn this around? Goodall and Abrams suggest four things:

First, we must alleviate poverty. When people are hungry and desperate, their thoughts are not on the big picture, namely, the long-range future and the overall good of all humans and the planet. Understandably, their thoughts will be focused on survival and there will be no hesitation in cutting down the last tree to grow food or catching that last fish still alive. Desperation and concern for the big picture generally don't go together.

Second, we must reduce the unsustainable lifestyles of the affluent. Mother Earth is not a limitless resource and cannot continue indefinitely to sustain our present lifestyles. Moreo-

ver, this is true not just for the lavish lifestyles of the rich, but for all of us in most countries. We haven't faced the fact that everything is limited and hence, we continue to buy in excess, consume in excess, use electrical energy in excess, waste food in excess, use gasoline in excess, and create garbage in excess. This cannot continue much longer. Already millions of desperate refugees on borders everywhere, and dramatic shifts in climate most everywhere, are telling us that we must make changes, and soon. Our planet is big, but it is finite, and it cannot sustain the limitless demands of unexamined consumption.

Third, we must eliminate corruption and economic self-interest. Without good government and honest leadership that focuses on the big picture rather than on its own self-interests, it is impossible to solve our enormous social, economic, and environmental problems. As a Barbara Kingsolver character quips in her recent novel, *Unsheltered*, the free-market has the same morality as a cancer cell. The entrepreneurial spirit that drives our economies serves us well in many ways and affords us comforts, freedoms, and opportunities that few in history have ever had. However, generally, it is to the big picture what a cancer cell is to the body, a single cell growing on its own without connection to the overall health of the

body. Like a cancer cell, the free-market (with some exceptions) does not take the big picture and the long-range health of the whole body into account.

Fourth, we must face up to the problems caused by an ever-growing population. For most of history, religious and moral voices have literally commanded people to have children. Increase and multiply. This was a sacred duty, owed to God and the human race. However, for a large part, this was predicated on fears that the human race, like any species, was perennially in danger of becoming extinct. Indeed, there was the constant threat that this might happen. Diseases, famines, war, high infant mortality, a short life span, and disasters of all kinds constantly threatened the human species. Humans, like every species, needed to ensure that the species went on. That made sense, in every way, until this present century. Now, with the looming prospect of ten billion people on this planet, the threat of extinction arises more from our sheer number than from some external threat. The planet can only accommodate a given number of us at one time. Granted there are soul issues, moral issues, and religious issues involved with any talk of limiting human growth. Nonetheless, however complex these issues, unexamined growth must now be examined.

Abrams is wrong. *Creating the human race was not a tragic mistake that evolution made!* Creating the human person was not an accidental and undesired product of blind evolution. God is the author of the process of evolution and God doesn't make mistakes. God intended from the very beginning for us, human persons, to emerge from the process. Even more, God intended us to have a very special role in the process, namely, to be that place in the process where nature finally becomes conscious of itself and can then proactively help God shape the process towards a final peace and unity (*the Kingdom of God*) that will include all of us and the planet itself.

Humans weren't a mistake, though admittedly much of our stewarding has been because we tend to think of the world as something we can strip mine in any way that benefits us rather than as a garden, with limited resources, which we have been asked to care for with love.

● **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.**

'Professor of Spacewalking' lives her dream

Allissa Battocletti Noffke has one of the coolest nicknames on the face of the Earth. She is known as the "Professor of Spacewalking," reflecting her teaching and training of American astronauts in this rare skill at the NASA Johnson Space Centre in Houston.

Beyond the cool nickname, the 35-year-old Indianapolis native also has a view of the universe — thanks to her involvement in the International Space Station — that directly connects to the Catholic faith she first embraced as a student at St. Lawrence School and Bishop Chatard High School, both in Indianapolis.

"I just marvel at God's creation, creating this whole universe," she says. "I get to see it through our country's space programme. It leaves me in awe of all the beauty He has given us."

Battocletti Noffke is also in awe of the incredible journey she has taken that has led her to work at NASA for the past 15 years. It's a journey that began with a dream she envisioned for herself after a talk with her dad when she was a little girl.

Before she was in the second grade at St. Lawrence, her dad, Tom Battocletti, regaled his daughter with stories of the Apollo space programme of the 1960s and how American astronauts landed on the moon during his childhood.

"I thought that was so cool," she says. So, when her second-grade teacher asked her and her classmates what they wanted to be when they grew up, she told her teacher she wanted to work for NASA and be an aerospace engineer.

While her dad fuelled her dream, her mother Chris — a longtime technology teacher at St. Lawrence — helped contribute to Battocletti Noffke's ability in the classes she needed to pursue her dream.

"I was fortunate as I was growing up in grade school and high school that I really liked all the science and math classes. Science and math were my natural strengths, but I will also say that my college degree at Purdue was rigorous and a lot of hard work. I was academically prepared for that, coming out of Chatard — maybe even more so than a lot of my fellow

and makes a special space for Christ in her life



Known as the "Professor of Spacewalking," Allissa Battocletti Noffke helps train an astronaut in using the tools that are needed during a space mission.

students who didn't have that strong academic background."

Yet even that confidence was challenged when, in her first year at Purdue, she interviewed for a five-year programme that let students intern at NASA for half of the academic year and study at the university for the other half.

"I knew if you weren't accepted, you got a rejection letter. And if you were accepted, you got a phone call. Every day I checked my mailbox, crossing my fingers. Then one day, I was sitting in my dorm room, and I got the phone call.

"I just had a feeling of joy — and a lot of gratitude and satisfaction that something I had been working for my whole academic career proved fruitful. It was surreal to only be one year out of Chatard and working my dream job."

Even after working 15 years at NASA, Battocletti Noffke still talks about her work in the space programme with enthusiasm and joy —

the mark of a job that is still a dream.

As part of the Human Spaceflight Operations team at NASA, she is officially an astronaut instructor and flight controller who leads on-orbit operations for the United States' extravehicular activities on the International Space Station. She also works with Mission Control when American astronauts are in space.

As impressive as these titles and duties are, they're not exactly as catchy and memorable as "Professor of Spacewalking."

"Whenever there are astronauts doing space walks, my group is the one that does all the planning and the training for them. I really like working to plan space walks in real time. I'm the operation lead for US space walks on the International Space Station. I'm very involved in putting a plan and a schedule together. It takes about a month to get ready for a space-walk."

For her, the work is also rewarding.

"I love working with the astronauts. It's very fulfilling to become friends with them and help

them. It's really cool to see someone going from their initial training and not knowing anything, to performing on spacewalks. I specifically teach them everything they know about spacewalking."

She had to make that journey herself, as she spent the first three years at NASA learning about all the details involved in spacewalking.

"I just really fell in love with spacewalking and all the crew on the ground involved in it — being part of the team that supports our astronauts in space."

Through it all, she's also relied on a different foundation of support — her faith and her relationship with God.

Creating space for Christ

"When I first moved to Houston and I didn't know anyone, one of the first things I did was find a parish to attend Mass. That was comforting in a lot of ways — to be away from home and to still have the same Mass that I could participate in. That was very important.

"One of the things I really appreciate about my Catholic education is how it put Christ at the forefront of our lives every day. I'm so thankful for that. We had Mass, we had religion classes and we started every class with prayer. And that emphasised to me that Christ is the most important part of life. I still live that very much today."

She continues to count on that relationship with Christ as her life leads her into the unknown in two ways, one professional and one personal.

The professional part includes the plan of NASA to return to a landing on the moon — the landing that first led Battocletti Noffke to dream of working for NASA.

The personal adventure that she and her husband Matthew are awaiting is that their first child is due to enter the world on July 1.

"It's really exciting to think about having a relationship with my own child and helping my child have a relationship with Christ — just as my parents did with me." — **By John Shaughnessy, *The Criterion Online Edition* (www.archindy.org/criterion)**

Little Catholics' Corner

Dear boys and girls,

This week, Lent begins with Ash Wednesday.

On Ash Wednesday, when you attend Mass, the priest sprinkles your head with blessed ashes. These ashes are made by burning palm leaves saved from last year's Palm Sunday.

Ash Wednesday is also when we begin to do penance for Lent. Penance is to show sorrow for having committed sins. We do this to improve our relationship with God and others.

The Church suggests three special practices of penance for Lent:

Praying — attending more Masses and saying extra prayers.

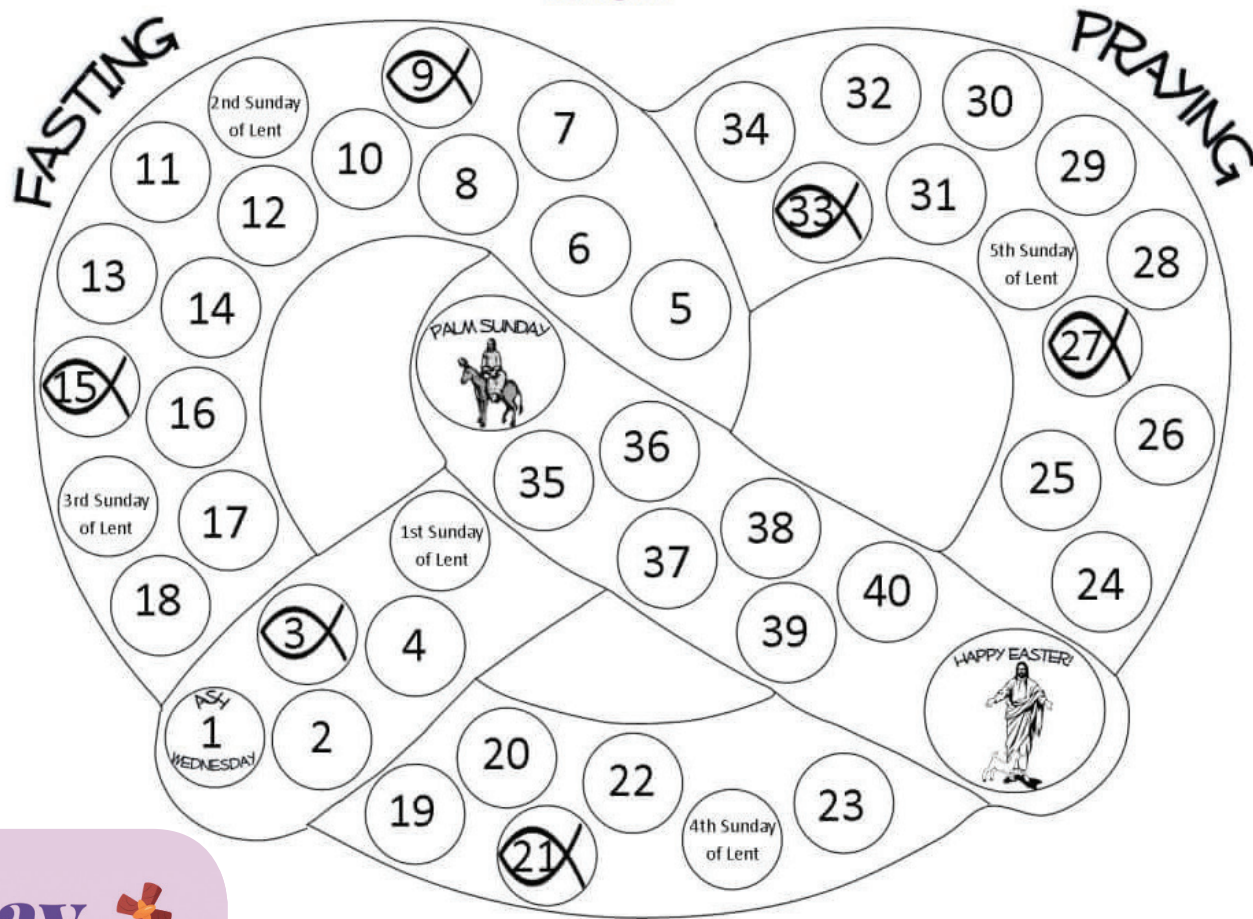
Fasting — eating less or giving up favourite food, treats or habits like watching television, playing video games or buying toys.

Almsgiving - means doing good to others or helping someone.

Make your Lent meaningful to show our Heavenly Father that you love Him and are trying your best to be good children.

Love,
Aunty Gwen

LENTEN CALENDAR: colour each day to help mark your lenten journey this year



Ash Wednesday

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

Name these Lenten symbols

Stations of the cross
Ashes
Preparation
Conversion

Palms
Sacrifice
Forty days
Fasting

Repentance
Prayer
Almsgiving
Confession



ABSTINENCE

SACRIFICE

CROSS

LENT

PALM SUNDAY

SIGN OF THE CROSS

MORTALITY

PENANCE

ASHES

FORTY

FASTING

DUST



YOUTH

FEBRUARY 19, 2023

Called to be salt of the earth and light of the world

By Bernadette Anne Fernandez

KLANG: Seven hours of rallying, interspersed with 90 minutes of total Praise & Worship sessions brought 259 youth together.

The youth from 12 different parishes comprising of the English-, Tamil-, and Bahasa Malaysia-speaking groups came together for a youth rally at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, February 5.

The rally which saw the return of one of the biggest parish youth-led events after a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic was roaring success as expressed by many youths who attended it.

With speakers hailing from the Church of St Thomas More, the brotherly duo of Christopher Luke

and John Paul Felix sparked both curiosity and interest amongst attendees on the parish feast day theme — *Salt of the Earth and Light of the World*. The theme focused on how faith, hope, and charity, the three theological virtues associated in Christian theology and philosophy, can both resume one's faith and be the driving forces for youths to continue practising their faith and be produc-

tive members of society.

The duo concentrated on how these three virtues are the antidotes in overcoming some of the problems faced by youth such as feelings of unworthiness, disconnectedness, and despair, reiterating how every person will find their desire for God written in their hearts, because humans are created by God for God; and God never ceases to draw hu-

mans to Himself, as only in God will humans find the truth and happiness they never stop searching for... *Catechism of the Catholic Church #27*

Apart from the captivating sessions from the speakers, the rally organisers had also organised some fun activities for the youth with some of them rediscovering their brand loyalties ranging from preferred smartphone operating systems, favourite childhood food-stuff and beverages, and approved social media platforms for digital socialising, including the almost ancient, Facebook.

Paying homage to the Lord in the best way possible, the highlight of the rally was Mass and the majority of the youth left with their faith rekindled, hopes renewed, and their feelings of charity reinforced to be the Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World.



Portugal will have a deaf choir performing at World Youth Day

A choir of deaf people will interpret the liturgical music at the central events of World Youth Day. The *Mãos que Cantam* project has joined the WYD Lisbon 2023 Choir, promoting the integration of both hearing and non-listening people in a choir.

Mãos que Cantam is composed of deaf people, and was born from the challenge of creating a choir with deaf students who could interpret the music not with their voices, but using Portuguese Sign Language. The *Mãos que Cantam* Choir is currently composed of 7 elements, including an interpreter, Sofia Figueiredo, and the conductor, Sérgio Peixoto, but during the week of WYD Lisbon 2023, the choir may grow to 15 elements.

António Cabral, one of the members of the *Mãos que Cantam* choir, feels "great satisfaction" with this challenge of being "in front of so many young people" so that "all the world know and see deaf people" as "models, of equality in communication, through sign languages, through writing, through reading, and we can all be in communion."

The project originated in 2010, by initiative of some students of the Degree and Master in Portuguese Sign Language of the Institute of Health Sciences of the Catholic University, which began by performing together with the Choir of this University.

For the conductor Sérgio Peixoto, artistic director of the Catholic University Choir, who immediately embraced this

idea, this project has shown that "there are no barriers" and they managed to "prove that deaf people can also make music". Sérgio Peixoto also refers that it is "a new way of communicating" and of "letting the emotions of gesture pass allied to music".

Questioned about what music means to a deaf person, Débora Carmo, member of the *Mãos que Cantam* Choir, highlights that "music is universal" and that "society needs to remove this label that deaf people cannot be in music."

Also Cláudia Dias highlights that "having the songs in Portuguese Sign Language is a way for people to realise that, in fact, music, and through music, one can be in interaction and we can be equal to others."

— lisboa2023.org



Forging Forward in Faith, Friendship, Freedom, and Fortitude

KUALA LUMPUR: For the 14 undergraduates of the Catholic Students' Society of the University of Nottingham Malaysia (CSS-UNM), who attended their annual camp recently in the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre, it was indeed an unforgettable experience of faith, fun and friendship.

The camp touched on ways the undergraduates could confidently forge ahead in a post-pandemic world, by centring on the renewing of one's relationship with self, God, family and others.

It was facilitated by Martin Jalleh, a speaker, motivator and spiritual guide for over 40 years, who, in the form of talks, personal reflections, group dynamics and prayer, made the sessions exciting, enlightening, empowering and even entertaining.

There was much laughter and learning when the participants were invited to be in touch with who they really were. Apart from self-knowledge and awareness, Martin Jalleh touched on topics such as self-esteem, positive attitudes and ways of communication.

In rediscovering God's love, the participants were amazed at the different under-

standing of God's love presented by Martin — of a God in search of us (instead of we searching for God; a God who is a giver and not a grabber and a God of humour and laughter)!

For many, the Inner Healing session was the climax of the camp, during which they experienced the healing love of the Lord. They felt especially blessed by the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and were thankful for the initiative of Fr Eugene Benedict

To "complete" their healing experience and personal encounter with the Divine Mercy, the Sacrament of Reconciliation was made available to the participants. It was administered by Fr Michael Chua and Fr Bonaventure Rayappan, whose presence were much appreciated.

Apart from the sessions, the participants had lots of fun and bonding through the ice-breakers and games organised by the Executive Committee (EXCO) of CSS-UNM. The camp was made memorable also by the sumptuous home-cooked food prepared by the parents of two sisters in the EXCO.



Martin Jalleh sharing his experience and knowledge.

On day two, the participants were excited to learn new ways of praying by using different body postures such as lifting up of their hands, kneeling, bowing, lying prostrate, and the use of their imagination. They were also taught how they could pray for each other.

The group was blessed by the presence of Fr Eugene Benedict who offered to celebrate the closing Mass. In his homily he shared that the Gospel reading wherein Jesus tells us to be the Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World was so very timely as a sending-forth message.

In the closing session Martin spoke about the call to maturity and the need to be formed, informed, reformed and transformed — or we would be deformed and begin to conform to the standards and values of the world. He also shared about CSS-UNM being a living testimony of unity.

Overall, the camp was successful in achieving its goal, especially in moving forward and in growing as a family far from home, developing as a person and as a community, and trusting God in the process. Such success is also made possible with the support of the Campus Ministry of the Holy Family Church

SOME TESTIMONIES SHARED BY CAMP PARTICIPANTS:

"The camp reaffirmed the love of Christ for me. It reminded me to let go and let God."

"I hope we will grow as a family and community moving forward. I will prioritise God and I know in His timing all will fall into place."

"The camp taught me many lessons such as 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.'"

"If God asks us to surrender something, it is because He has something better to offer us."

"If we know we have done wrong, we should not let guilt overcome us, instead we should surrender to the Lord and ask for forgiveness as the Lord loves us all."



The undergraduates with Fr Eugene Benedict and Martin Jalleh.

YOUTH CROSS THE ANDES IN A SHOW OF LOVE FOR THE VIRGIN MARY

CHILE: With the theme *Pilgrim of the Andes, lift up your gaze*, more than 110 youth began the trek known as the Crusade for Mary on January 16, starting out from Mendoza, Argentina, and hiking 415 kilometres (260 miles) over the Andes to arrive on Feb 2 at Bellavista Shrine on the other side of the mountains in metro Santiago, Chile.

The initiative was coordinated by the young men in the Schoenstatt Movement, including priests and seminarians. Youths from Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil, and Chile also participated, as well as a seminarian from Mexico and another from Switzerland.

Fr Emmanuel Tropini, vicar of the St Rose of Lima Parish in Villaguay, Argentina, joined the more than 100 youths in a great demonstration of love for the Virgin Mary, crossing on foot the Andes Mountains in a pilgrimage.

"There were 110 youth on the pilgrimage who made the journey strengthened by faith, prayers, and also the interchange that

this type of event brings about at the places where a break is taken to recharge and continue. It's a very enriching experience from the spiritual and human point of view," said Fr Tropini.

Despite the difficulties of the journey — arduous trek, sun, blisters on the feet, pain, discomfort, cold — there was a climate "of contagious joy," due to the number of young people who "participated a lot in prayer, singing, and daily Mass," shared the priest.

"There was a spiritual atmosphere, but we also played the guitar, and since there were kids from other countries, they talked about soccer and they observed their local customs, some that we know and others that we're learning about in the daily interchange, in an atmosphere of wonderful communion," he recounted.

At the last stop before arriving at Bellavista, Argentine pilgrim Tomás Ugarte gave



More than 100 pilgrims arrived at the Bellavista Shrine in Santiago, Chile, Feb 2, 2023. (CNA photo/Instagram Cruzada de Maria)

his testimony on social media: "I am counting the kilometres to get there, my heart starts pounding, you can begin to sense the Bellavista Shrine is there; [I'm] very happy there's no more to go."

Vicente, a young Chilean, was thankful for the "very great" affection they experienced during this time together. "Thanking the Blessed Mother for what this crusade has been like and to meet Jesus, with this

tremendous energy and love for God that we have," he commented.

Matías Estigarribia from Paraguay shared: "Excited, happy to arrive after much suffering, wanting to arrive and give to the Blessed Mother all the sacrifice and dedication that we made during these days."

When they reached the doors of the shrine, the "crusaders" sang and waved the flags of their countries. — CNA

MEMORIAM

To Jesus, the Holy Spirit and Mother Mary. Thank you Jesus, for loving Patrick, 9-01-2007. Thank you, Jesus, for keeping him in your light. 18-02-2007. Thank you, Jesus, for sending your angel to take him home. 19-02-2007. Thank you, Lord, for keeping Patrick in heaven with you. 21-02-2007.

Thank you, Mother Mary for your intercessions and answering all our prayers and sending Patrick home in peace. 19-02-2007.

~ Wee-Lim family



Patrick Wee
Returned to the Lord
19-2-2007

16th Anniversary In Ever Loving Memory of

"May Patrick's soul
rest in peace.
May his body rest in peace.
May his spirit live for all
eternity in the Lord,
in the Holy Spirit,
in the company of Mother
Mary, all the Angels and
Saints, Amen."

Forever Deeply
Loved in our hearts,
Wife Bertha,
Son Edmund,
Daughter and Son-in-law
Angela & Jit Fu

The Lord is my inheritance

Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge.
I say to the Lord,

"You are my Lord, my only good."
The best part has been allotted to me.
Delightful indeed is my inheritance!
I keep the Lord always before me;
for with him at my right hand,
I will never be shaken.

My heart, therefore, exults, my soul rejoices;
my body too will rest assured.
For you will not abandon my soul to the grave,
nor will you suffer your holy one to see decay
in the land of the dead.

You will show me the path of life,
in your presence the fullness of joy,
at your right hand happiness forever.

Psalms 16:1,2,6,8,9-11

Pakistan Catholics pay tribute to General Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: Catholics in Pakistan paid tribute to the military ruler who headed the South Asian Islamic nation during the global war on terror, initiated by the United States in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

General Pervez Musharraf, former president of Pakistan, governed the strife-torn country for nearly a decade after seizing power in a bloodless coup in 1999. General Musharraf died in Dubai on February 5 at the age of 79.

Fr Inayat Barnard, the chaplain of Caritas Pakistan, remembered General Musharraf as a great statesman.

He showed the courage to make Pakistan terrorism-free. For him, the genuine slogan was "Pakistan First," Fr Barnard said.

"The corruption-free president will be remembered forever. May his soul rest in peace," the priest observed.

The newly installed Bishop Yousaf Sohan of Multan remembered the late president for supporting vulnerable religious minorities.

"It's a huge shock. We remember him for his services," he said.

General Musharraf was born in India's national capital, Delhi, on Aug 11, 1943.

At the age of four, he joined his family, and millions of other Muslims, to migrate to Pakistan, following the partition of India in 1947 after the British ended their rule in the subcontinent.

He attended the Catholic Church-run St Patrick's School in Karachi and Presbyterian-run Forman's Christian College (FCC) in Lahore before entering the Pakistan Military Academy in 1961.

The college was nationalised in 1972, along with a number of other Church-run schools and colleges, a move that weakened Church-run institutions and created fear among Christians.

In 2004, Musharraf ordered the conditional privatisation of minority educational institutions. As a result, 59 institutions, including more than 10 schools in the southern Karachi archdiocese, were returned to the Church.

He also granted university status



to FCC, which was established by the American Presbyterian Church as Mission College in 1894.

The new status allowed the college to confer its own master's degree certificates. FCC became the first Christian college to gain this status.

Musharraf faced fierce criticism from radical clerics for an attack on the controversial Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) that killed 103 people in 2007.

The *jihadi* outfit Taliban holds him responsible for the large-scale bloodshed that followed his decision to side with the US war on terror.

Musharraf, who survived numerous assassination attempts, angered Islamic militants by dropping support for Afghanistan's Taliban regime and for arresting hundreds of al Qaeda members in the country.

He also hit hard against domestic militant groups, while fostering ties with India, with which Pakistan has fought two full-fledged wars.

Though the democratic rule was suspended after the coup, he did restore the joint electorate system in 2002, enabling Muslims and religious minorities to run and vote for general seats.

Previously, minority communities could vote only for members of their own groups to fill the reserved seats. He also allowed private news channels to operate in the country for the first time. — **By Kamran Chaudhry, ucanews.com**

29th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Augustin Pathrose Lopez
Departed on
24th February 1994

*Eternal Rest
grant upon him, O Lord
And Let Perpetual
Light shine upon him.
May his soul Rest in
peace. AMEN.*

Dearly missed and
fondly remembered by

Wife: Eleyamma

Children: Judit, Jude,
Ida, Freeda, Linda, Justin

Son-in-law: Robert

Daughters-in-law:

Jasmine, Samantha

Grandchildren:

Raymond, Rhianna,

Joel, Julianne,

Juliette, John.

10th Anniversary In Ever Loving Memory of



RONNIE ANTHONY ROZARIO

From the Lord: 6th February 1933
With the Lord: 23rd February 2013

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Deeply loved
and forever cherished by
his beloved Wife, Lalitha
Rozario, children,
grandchildren
& loved ones.

22nd Anniversary In Loving Memory of our beloved Dad Michael Bong Su Hee

25-09-1943 ~ 25-02-2001



Deeply missed, always
remembered and cherished
by Loving wife, sons,
daughters and spouses,
grandchildren, relatives,
friends and all loved ones.

20th Anniversary In Loving Memory of ROSE

MATHALAMUTHU
20th September 1938 –
23rd February 2003



"I believe that I shall see
the good things of the Lord
in the land of the living" –
Psalm 26:13

Fondly remembered &
deeply missed by Brothers,
Sisters, Children and
Grandchildren.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Kathy Revi

10 June 1965 - 24 Feb 2012

*'Eternal rest grant unto her soul, O Lord,
and let Your perpetual light shine upon her:
May her soul rest in peace. Amen.'*

* * *

**But I have hope that those sleeping will rise.
The Bible says that God will open their eyes,
No suffering, sickness, yes, not even pain.
Those who did good, eternal life they'll gain.**

* * *

Missing you more than you'll ever know,
Mom, Leslie, Tabitha and loved ones.

*But, though
he cause
grief, he
will have
compassion
according
to the
abundance
of his
steadfast
love;
Lamentations
3:32*

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Pope Francis calls for solidarity with Turkey, Syria after earthquakes

VATICAN: Pope Francis urged all people to be in solidarity with the regions of Turkey and Syria struck by two powerful earthquakes early February 6 and that are “in part already martyred by a long war.”

The two earthquakes, which both measured above 7.0 magnitude according to the United States Geological Survey, struck southern Turkey and impacted large swaths of neighbouring Syria. As of midday Feb 9 local time, the death toll had climbed to over 21,000 and the number of dead was expected to climb further as rescue teams continued to search through the rubble of toppled buildings.

Pope Francis prayed for the thousands of dead and wounded at his general audience Feb. 8 and expressed his closeness to the victims, their families “and all who suffer from this devastating calamity.” The Pope also thanked aid workers responding to the crisis.

Hundreds of foreign engineers, medical personnel and rescue workers have been sent to Turkey and Syria to search for people trapped under wreckage and aid the thousands without shelter in freezing winter conditions.

“Let us pray together so that these our brothers and sisters can go forth in the face of this tragedy, and let us ask Our Lady to protect them,” Pope Francis said. He then led the recitation of the Hail Mary with the thousands of visitors and pilgrims gathered for his general audience.

Hours after the earthquake on Feb 6, Pope Francis sent two telegrams to Turkey and Syria to express his spiritual closeness to those affected.

A variety of Catholic charitable and aid organisations are part of the relief efforts. Caritas Internationalis, the umbrella organisation of national Catholic charities, immediately



A woman reacts as rescuers search for survivors through the rubble of collapsed buildings in Adana, Turkey, on Feb 6, 2023. (CNA photo/CAN EROK)

launched a fundraising campaign and a request for donations of winter clothing, especially for infants and young children. The charity has been active in Turkey since 1991 and in Syria since 2011, primarily providing aid to refugees.

Speaking to the *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper, Bishop Paolo Bizzeti, apostolic vicar of Anatolia, said that the earthquakes were “a tragedy within a tragedy,” since the region is already “full of refugees from various countries who have fled terrible situations.”

While aid is being sent through Caritas Turkey, he said, “it is difficult to receive the aid necessary, given the state of the roads.” Bishop Bizzeti added that the aid must be properly “spaced out” to ensure it lasts the duration of the relief efforts.

Aid to the Church in Need, a pontifical foundation that provides aid to Catholic communities worldwide, is supporting reparation projects in Aleppo, Syria, to allow people to return to their homes. The charity said an estimated 7,500 people slept in Aleppo’s churches,

convents and other locations the night of Feb 7. The Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States has also created a fund to support Catholic dioceses and partner organisations in Turkey and Syria.

Jesuit Fr Tony O’Riordan arrived in Aleppo, Syria, Feb 7 to lead Jesuit Refugee Service’s response to the crisis. In a statement, he said JRS’ priority is to reopen its health clinic in Aleppo and help protect people against the cold. The Jesuits have also opened their building in Aziziyé to host people without shelter.

The Middle East Council of Churches is calling for aid to be sent to the region, and for sanctions to be lifted on Syria to allow for access of relief materials.

The Catholic Near East Welfare Association launched an emergency campaign to shelter survivors and provide bedding, food, medicines, nursing formula, diapers and clothing to more than 2,000 families for three months in the Aleppo and Hama areas of northern Syria. — CNS

Should children share their parents’ faith?

WASHINGTON: A little more than a third of Catholic parents say it is extremely or very important for their children to grow up to have religious beliefs similar to their own, according to a recent Pew Research Centre report.

In the study released last month and expounded further in a February 6 article, 35 per cent of Catholic parents with children under 18 said it is extremely or very important for their children to grow up to share their religious beliefs.

In total, 65 per cent of Catholics said it was either extremely, very, or somewhat important for their children to hold their Catholic beliefs as adults. Thirty-four per cent of Catholics said it was not too important or not important at all.

Hispanic Catholics answered with slightly more enthusiasm with 39 per cent saying it was extremely or very important that their children grow up to share their religious beliefs, while white and non-Hispanic Catholics registered at 29 per cent.

Catholics recorded among the lowest enthusiasm for passing their religion to their children of any Christian denomination in the survey.

An even lower 29 per cent of white non-evangelical Protestants said it is extremely or very important for their children to share their religious beliefs.

White evangelicals were among the highest, with 70 per cent responding that it is extremely or very important for their adult children to share their religious beliefs. In other words, white evangelical parents are twice as likely as their Catholic counterparts to strongly believe their children should share their views on religion.

The only group that registered significantly lower enthusiasm overall was the religiously unaffiliated category, those self-identifying as atheist, agnostic, or nothing. Only eight per cent of this group said having their children share their beliefs was either extremely or very important.

A crucial note to the study is that parents who attend services weekly or more were more than three times as likely to say having their children share their beliefs is important, 76 per cent vs 21 per cent, Pew said.

Pew’s report follows a downward trend in Catholic Mass attendance in the United States. The Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate reported in January that just 17 per cent of American Catholics attend Mass weekly or more, down from 24 per cent in 2019.

Meanwhile, the Pew report found that 81 per cent of Catholic parents believe it is extremely or very important for their children to grow up to become people who help those in need.

Seventy-nine per cent said it was extremely or very important for their children to become adults who are accepting of those different from them.

The Pew report was based on a fall 2022 survey of 3,757 US parents with children under 18. — By Peter Pinedo, CNA

Miraculous Medal Shrine in Philadelphia elevated to basilica

WASHINGTON: The Vatican recognised the Miraculous Medal Shrine, located in the Germantown neighbourhood of Philadelphia, as the city’s second basilica, elevating its status to a minor basilica recently.

The shrine, created by the Vincentians in 1927 under the leadership of Fr Joseph Skelly, is now known as the Basilica Shrine of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. The Marian title is based on apparitions to St Catherine Labouré in Paris in 1830. The medal includes a depiction of Mary, the Mother of God, with the prayer “O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee” encircling her.

“It is an esteemed honour to be recognised by the Vatican as a Minor Basilica,” Fr Timothy Lyons, the shrine’s rector, said in a statement. “We are both overjoyed and humbled by this recognition. This historic proclamation

marks the next chapter in the shrine’s history and recognises the significant role it has played in the Catholic Church, the Philadelphia Archdiocese, and the Shrine community.”

According to a news release from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, the elevation to a basilica grants the shrine certain privileges and responsibilities, such as the celebration of the feast of the Chair of St Peter; the solemnity of the Holy Apostles, Peter and Paul; and the anniversary of the Pope’s election into pastoral ministry.

Basilicas also have the authority to grant plenary indulgences, which remove all temporal consequences of one’s sin. This is distinct from a partial indulgence, which only removes part of the temporal consequences. The designation also recognises the shrine as a historic landmark, according to the archdiocese.

“I am deeply grateful to the Holy Father for



The Miraculous Medal Shrine in Philadelphia

bestowing this tremendous honour on the Miraculous Medal Shrine,” Archbishop Nelson J. Pérez said in a statement. “This moment is one of great joy for the entire Church in Philadelphia. The Miraculous Medal Shrine is a great gift drawing souls closer to Christ through the intercession of the Blessed Mother. I congratulate the Vincentians and all those working to sustain the Shrine and its ministry. May their work continue to bear great fruit.” — By Tyler Arnold, CNA