

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



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The Publisher, Editor and Staff of *HERALD* wish all our readers a Blessed Lunar New Year.

There will be no issue on January 29, 2023. We will return on February 5, 2023.

We don't have to be perfect to evangelise

VATICAN: We do not have to be already perfect to live in a way that gives witness to Christ and attracts others to Him, said Pope Francis.

At his weekly public audience recently, the Holy Father reflected on Jesus' calling of St Matthew, then a tax collector, to follow Him as one of His 12 Apostles.

"Here is the message for us: we do not have to wait until we are perfect and have come a long way following Jesus to witness to Him; no, our proclamation begins today, there where we live," he said.

Speaking in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall, Pope Francis emphasised that evangelisation and proselytism are not the same.

"And it does not begin by trying to convince others, but by witnessing every day to the beauty of the Love that has looked upon us and lifted us up," he said.

Francis recalled a line from a homily given by Pope Benedict XVI at a meeting of Latin American and Caribbean bishops in Aparecida, Brazil, in 2007: "The Church does not engage in proselytism. Instead, she grows by 'attraction.'"

"Do not forget this," Pope Francis added, calling Christians who proselytise "pagans dressed as Christians."

The Pope's general audience message was the first in a new series of catechesis, or teachings, on apostolic zeal.

"It is a vital dimension for the Church," he explained. "It can happen, however, that the apostolic ardour, the desire to reach others with the Good News of the Gospel, diminishes."

"When Christian life loses sight of the horizon of proclamation, it grows sick," he



continued, "it closes in on itself, becomes self-referential, it becomes atrophied. Without apostolic zeal, faith withers. Mission, on the other hand, is the oxygen of Christian life: it invigorates and purifies it."

The Pope said the way in which Jesus called St Matthew to leave his former life behind is an example for Christians today.

He recalled that Matthew, as a tax collector for the Roman empire, would have been viewed by others as a "publican" and a traitor to the people.

Evangelisation and proselytism are not the same. The Church does not engage in proselytism. Instead, she grows by 'attraction.' (The Catholic Weekly Photo/Alphonsus Fok)

"But in the eyes of Jesus, Matthew is a man, with both his miseries and his greatness," he said.

Jesus, Francis emphasised, does not see someone as the "adjectives" which are used to describe him or her, but as a person.

"We can ask ourselves: how do we look upon others? How often do we see their faults and not their needs; how often do we label people by what they do or think," he said. "Even as Christians we say to our-

selves: is he one of us or not? This is not the gaze of Jesus: He always looks at each person with mercy, actually, with predilection."

"And Christians," Pope Francis said, "are called to do as Christ did, looking like Him, especially at the so-called 'distant ones.' Indeed, Matthew's account of the call ends with Jesus saying, 'I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'"

Hannah Brockhaus, CNA

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COMMENTARY

Who will step up to replace Cardinal Pell in defending the truth of the Catholic faith?

In his last years of life, the Australian prelate became one of the universal Church's most prominent champions for doctrinal orthodoxy, a mantle others will need to carry forward following his departure.

Immediate reflections following the shocking death of Cardinal George Pell have focused on the Australian prelate's heroic endurance of false accusations of sexual abuse. And rightfully so.

Cardinal Pell's fortitude in the face of such ideologically motivated injustices, which included 404 days of solitary confinement in a Melbourne prison cell before the charges were quashed by the Australian High Court in April 2020, were an inspiration to Catholics across the world, a compelling example of faithfully enduring the kind of persecution that Christ foretold those who follow Him would face.

But far less attention has been given to the significant role Cardinal Pell took up after his post-exoneration return to Rome in 2020 — a role that makes his passing at this moment in the life of the Church all the more significant.

An outspoken and public advocate for doctrinal orthodoxy going back to his days as a bishop in Australia, Cardinal Pell's profile took on new stature following his exoneration. The trials he endured, recounted in his published *Prison Journal*, raised his status beyond defender of the faith to a witness to it, communicating the truth of the Gospel not only through what he was willing to say, but what he was willing to suffer. It has even been reported that the late Benedict XVI enjoyed having passages of Cardinal Pell's *Journal* read to him in his final years.

Furthermore, although officially retired, the Australian cardinal's activity didn't cease upon his return to Rome. Freed from official ecclesial responsibilities as the prefect for the Secretariat of the Economy and as one of Pope Francis' hand-picked "council of cardinals" advisers, Cardinal Pell showed a willingness to speak out about threats to orthodoxy within the Church with more vigour and universality than ever before.

He was one of the first cardinals to sign onto a fraternal letter of correction from the world's bishops to the German episcopacy over the potentially schismatic Synodal Way, describing the bishops' push there for women's ordination and the blessing of same-sex sexual relations as "an explicit disavowal and rejection of Christian teaching." Cardinal Pell publicly called upon the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith to intervene in the matter, a theme he reiterated after two prominent European clerics, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg and the German bishops' conference president, Bishop Georg Bätzing, made public comments amounting to a "wholesale and explicit rejection" of the Church's teaching on sexual ethics.

"As successors of the Apostles, we've got something of a duty to bear witness to the truth," Cardinal Pell told the *Register* at the time regarding his intervention.

Cardinal Pell also didn't hesitate to take to the printed pages to provide his own assessment of the doctrinal crises plaguing the Church.

In the final chapter of his life, Cardinal Pell was not only a voice for these kinds of doctrinal commitments, but was seen by many as a kind of rallying point or even a "party whip" for other Church leaders who shared them.

For this reason, it's worth considering what kind of role Cardinal Pell would have continued to play at this moment in the life of the Church — and the vacuum that will need to be filled in his absence.

Despite the fact that he had already passed the age limit for voting in a papal conclave, some believed that Cardinal Pell was poised to play an influential role in the selection of Pope Francis' successor if the current pope were to resign or die. His endorsement would certainly have carried weight and could have played the role of indicating a "consensus candidate" for cardinals who shared his doctrinal commitments and concerns. His involvement as a widely recognised figurehead for a certain ecclesial and theological vision may have been especially valuable at a time when opportunities for members of the College of Cardinals, which has been significantly remade under Pope Francis to meet, have been few and far between.

With Cardinal Pell's passing, it's not clear who, if anyone, can play a similar role of rallying cardinals who hew to the "hermeneutic of continuity" understanding of doctrine and development around a consensus candidate in the event of a conclave. Cardinal Pell's post-2020 standing as a widely known and respected champion of doctrinal orthodoxy may simply not be replaceable.

Nonetheless, the Australian prelate will continue to inspire the Church and those who shared his vision through, God-willing, heavenly intercession, but also through the compelling witness he leaves behind; during his maltreatment at the hands of the Australian legal system, yes, but also in his last years of life, as an increasingly prophetic voice for those committed to safeguarding the apostolic faith and handing it on in continuity to future generations.

In what was possibly his last public interview before his death, Cardinal Pell told the hosts of EWTN's onsite coverage of Pope Benedict XVI's funeral Mass, "What is really important, of course, is that the legacy of John Paul the Great and Benedict survives and thrives."

As one of those hosts, *Register* contributor Fr Roger Landry put it on Twitter last night, "We also pray that others will continue the hard work of Cardinal Pell to make sure [John Paul II's] and [Benedict XVI's] legacy in service to Christ and His Church does survive."

Cardinal Pell has carried the mantle this far. Time will tell who steps up to carry it forward. — **By Jonathan Liedl, Register**

● See also page 8

What is our response to God's call?

Today we celebrate the "Sunday of the Word of God."

The Word of God is His communication in love with His children aimed to establish a relationship of love with them. By creating all human beings in His own image God desired to strike this love relationship with them. God has been faithful to this relationship of love down through the ages of human history.

Today's Liturgy of the Word bears witness to God's unfailing fidelity to His relationship with humankind. The first reading from Isaiah talked about the people of Israel living under Assyrian domination about 700 years before Christ. They felt they were living in darkness. But there was a greater darkness enveloping them: it was the darkness of their sin, their rebellion against God. In fact, this darkness of sin brought about their oppression by a foreign power. Left with no apparent hope of liberation, they felt they were living in the shadow of death. God came in to promise them a great light to come and fill them with joy.

Today's Gospel presents Jesus as that light. In narrating the appearing of Jesus, it quotes Isaiah's prophecy in the first reading. It also times Christ's coming with the arrest of John the Baptist, the last prophet to prepare the people's hearts for Christ's coming. Thus, Jesus started His public ministry after



John and all the Old Testament prophets had prepared the hearts of people for Him.

All these years of preparation were necessary because people were hard-hearted, they preferred to live in darkness, the darkness of sin. They must now decide to turn away from their sinfulness to be ready for the coming of the Messiah and be bathed in His light.

What was this light brought by Jesus? It was the kingdom of heaven. Jesus proclaimed it in His call to the people: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand." The kingdom of heaven amounts to a life of love relationship with God. God first took the initiative to desire this relationship and offered it through Jesus. God's offer called for acceptance — a response from people and indeed from us. The response takes the form of repentance, a turning away from the darkness of sin to a life of love with God.

It amounts to God walking in the light of Christ.

After proclaiming the kingdom, Jesus proceeded to call His first four apostles from two sets of brothers, Peter and Andrew, James and John. They responded. Their response was first of all to Jesus' call of repentance and acceptance of life in the kingdom. While all this was personal to the first four apostles, their call and response also reflected God's deeper and far-reaching Will, the Will to extend the call to all humankind in every corner of the earth and of every generation.

These Apostles were fishermen. Jesus called them to drop this occupation of theirs to become "fishers of men". Jesus called them to "fish" people for Him and to draw them to the kingdom of heaven. In the kingdom all will enjoy God's love and live in the light of Christ. With this call of the Apostles and their positive response, the Word of God

Reflecting on our
Sunday Readings
with Archbishop Emeritus
John Ha

3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time (A)

Readings: Isaiah 8:23 – 9:3;

1 Corinthians 1:10–13, 17;

Gospel: Matthew 4:12–23

started to transcend the boundaries of space and time.

Today, we are so privileged to have received and responded to the Word of God proclaimed by the prophets of old, fulfilled by Jesus and entrusted to the apostles to extend to all nations of all time. With this great privilege there comes a responsibility. We have been given the responsibility to proclaim the Word of God to others.

As we celebrate the Word of God Sunday, we are reminded of this call Christ has given us: "Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to all nations." In His fidelity to His love relationship with all His human creatures, God wants to involve us. What is our response?

Archbishop Emeritus John Ha is from the Archdiocese of Kuching



Sunday of the Word of God, January 22, 2023

Synodality and the Word of God

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Regional Biblical Commission, would like to greet and address you on this Sunday of the Word of God which the Holy Father inaugurated three years ago with the sole purpose of setting aside “a Sunday given over entirely to the Word of God, so as to appreciate the inexhaustible riches contained in that constant dialogue between the Lord and His people”.

In the meantime, the Pope, aware of the problems that beset the Church today, has launched a two-year process of returning to the Church’s early, habitual way of proceeding called ‘Synodality’ which means ‘walking together’. While problems of abuse, discontent, dissent and non-involvement of many of the faithful prevail in the Church, this process of ‘journeying together’ is meant to awaken the whole Church as the People of God to a brighter future of hope and joy.

The Bible recounts continuously this journey of the people of God: from the wandering Aramean who migrated to Egypt (Dt 26:5-10), to the Exodus, to the disciples at Emmaus (Lk 24:13f), until the missionary outreach in the Mediterranean world and Asia Minor. The nascent Church, whose adherents were even called “followers of the Way” (Acts 9:2), was

conscious of these communal experiences especially in arriving at crucial decisions for the converted non-Jews at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15). This journeying together, in listening to the lived-experiences of the disciples, especially of Peter and Paul, helped in arriving at a solution for the whole Church.

Synodality, therefore, calls for a culture of listening and dialogue. It is this listening to one another and to the Word of God that helped the People of God to discern what the Spirit was saying to the Churches. “The Spirit, according to the Lord’s promise, does not limit Himself to confirming the continuity of the Gospel of Jesus, but will illuminate the ever-new depths of His Revelation and inspire the decisions necessary to sustain the Church’s journey” (Synod Preparatory Document 16). This process will eventually draw us towards a conversion in communion, participation and mission.

Hence, as a first step, I encourage each and every one of you to prepare the readings before Mass for a worthy and a fruitful participation in the Eucharist wherein the Word of God is read and shared in the homily during a community celebration. Try to join and participate in Bible-sharing groups which help to see the Word of God as the sword of the Spirit piercing through

This year’s Sunday of the Word of God falls on the first day of the Lunar New Year.

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Malaysia-Singapore and Brunei have confirmed that Masses for that day should be devoted to the celebration, study and dissemination of the Word of God. In line with this, the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan Biblical Apostolate has prepared some activities to celebrate this day.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Together with Mandarin oranges, slip a Bible verse into the cookies (WORD cookie replaces the fortune cookie).
2. Each family to own a Bible to be read and prayed together.
3. Youth activity using YOUCAT, DOCAT or youth Bible.
4. Children to draw images based on the Gospel text (heaven, boat, lake, light, persons).



thoughts and emotions and bringing about a communal conversion of heart and mind. Let this Word of God Sunday move the Church forward in a synodal way “to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds and weave together relationships, and awaken a dawn of hope...” (PD 32).

+ Richard Ng

Rt Rev Bishop Richard Ng
President, Regional Biblical Commission
Catholic Bishops Conference of Malaysia,
Singapore and Brunei.



**KUALA LUMPUR
ARCHDIOCESE**

**Diary of Archbishop
Julian Leow**

January

- 28 Red Mass – Church of Holy Family, Kajang**
- 28 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of Our Lady of Fatima**
- 29 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of St Thomas, Kuantan**



PENANG DIOCESE

**Diary of Bishop
Sebastian Francis**

February

- 11/2 Feast day — Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Silibin**



**MALACCA JOHORE
DIOCESE**

**Diary of Bishop
Bernard Paul**

January & February

- 30/1 Caritas Malaysia Diocesan Heads & Ecclesiastical Assistants Meet**
- 31/1 Caritas MJDOHD Exco Meet**
- 2/2 Mass — Consecrated Life in Melaka**
- 3/2 Visit of Rt Rev Simon Kim Ju-Young, Bishop of Diocese of Chuncheon, Korea**
- 4-5/2 Caritas MJDOHD Assembly — Kluang**

IJ sister celebrates platinum jubilee

IPOH: Sr Mary Joseph Francis, from the Infant Jesus Order, celebrated 70 years of service as a nun on December 27, 2022.

The platinum jubilarian renewed her vows at the Church of St Michael, during the weekday Mass celebrated by Fr Anthony Liew.

Hailing from Ipoh, Sr Mary, aged 94, comes from a family of five, with two siblings. She started her early education in 1938 at St Philomena’s School as one of its pioneer students. When she completed her sixth standard, the war broke out. Subsequently, she joined the Holy Infant Jesus Main Convent where she studied until Form Three.

At the tender age of 13, Sr Mary heard the calling to submit to our Lord via a religious vocation. At 21, she joined the Infant Jesus Order as an aspirant at the Main Convent School, Ipoh, Perak. She became a novitiate in the Main Convent, Penang, and took



Jubilarian Sr Mary Joseph Francis with Bro Peter Foo, FSC (left) and Fr Anthony Liew.

her first profession. Eventually, she started teaching the Tamil language at the same place.

On June 4, 1958, Sr Mary took her final vows. Upon becoming a full-fledged nun, she continued her journey in education serving several schools in Penang, Klang, Grik,

Taiping, Puchong, Kuala Lumpur, Melaka, Bukit Mertajam and Teluk Intan. She is currently retired and based in Sitiawan, Perak.

We wish Sr Mary Joseph Francis good health and much love as she continues to serve our Lord in her ministry. — **Dr Jude Selvaraj Joseph CMILT**

Visitation parish to look into formations and deeper faith knowledge

SEREMBAN: The Church of the Visitation held its Pastoral Assembly on January 8. The three-and-a-half-hour assembly saw 176 parishioners from different language groups in attendance.

Archbishop Julian Leow, parish priest Fr Xavier Andrew, and assistant priests Fr Kenneth Gopal, OCD, and Fr Philip Tay, OCD, were also present.

The PPC chairperson, Stephen Francis, gave a welcome speech before Fr Xavier Andrew addressed the congregation.

Based on feedback from the Synodal Survey in 2021, the four areas of concern identified were youth, family, Church, and community.

Participants were broken into groups of five for three rounds of sharing, and each group tackled one area of concern.

Feedback included the need for formation, and organising study sessions on

Scripture and Spirituality, to help married couples and families deepen their faith knowledge and spiritual life. Broken families and mixed marriages were also highlighted.

In his closing address, the prelate stressed the need to have events that bring the community together like Family Day and mul-

ti-lingual celebrations. Archdiocese PPA Coordinator, Rita Krishnan, presented the closing summary before Fr Xavier said a few words and the closing prayer.

Son of the soil, Archbishop Julian who recently celebrated his birthday, was presented with a surprise cake to commemorate the occasion. — **By Sabrina Smith**



Parishioners of Visitation Church with Archbishop Julian Leow.

SOLEMN DECLARATION OF THE MINOR BASILICA OF ST ANNE, Shrine of Harmony

By Carmel Dominic

BUKIT MERTAJAM: The Church of St Anne, also known as the Shrine of Harmony, was officially declared a Minor Basilica in a grand Eucharistic celebration on January 9. The Diocese of Penang received the decree from the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments in Rome on Sept 5, 2019 which granted the title of Minor Basilica to the parish. The delayed celebration was due to the pandemic.

The celebration saw the attendance of about 2,000 people, including clergy, religious and lay faithful from Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Thailand, Pakistan, Australia and New Zealand participating in the historic event, which marked the first of its kind in Malaysia. Also present at the Mass were Chief Minister of Penang, Chow Kon Yeow, Deputy Minister of Finance II and Member of Parliament for Bukit Mertajam, Steven Sim Chee Keong, Member of Parliament of Bagan, Lim Guan Eng and other state leaders.

The celebration began with a Praise and Worship session led by the church choir. There were also two cultural dances to signify the diversity in the Catholic community. The *shofars* were blown, true to Catholic tradition and Cardinal William Goh, the Archbishop of Singapore, then presided over the multi-lingual Mass with the Bishop of Penang, Rt Rev Sebastian Francis concelebrating. In his first order of business, Bishop Sebastian introduced the invited guests, by name and designation, to the congregation. Later, the Rite of the Solemn Declaration took place. Fr Michael Cheah was given the honour of reading the Decree, which he did in Latin, and then in English. Fr Michael played a monumental role in ensuring the construction of the church to what it is today.

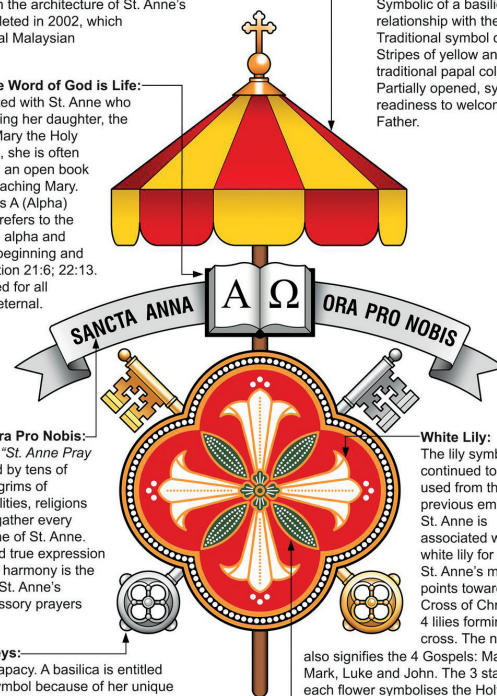
A Minor Basilica is named as such for its historical value, antiquity, dignity, architectural and artistic work and of course, being a significant centre of worship. Among the physical signs that indicate that a church is a Minor Basilica is the *ombrellino* (little canopy) — a silk canopy with yellow and red stripes which are the traditional papal colours and

THE MINOR BASILICA OF ST. ANNE

Inculturation: Engaging with Local Culture.
To add a Malaysian flavour to the coat of Arms, the design was influenced by traditional Batik. This is inline with the architecture of St. Anne's Sanctuary completed in 2002, which incorporated local Malaysian architecture.

Open book/ The Word of God is Life:
Symbol associated with St. Anne who is steep in teaching her daughter, the Blessed Virgin Mary the Holy Scriptures. Thus, she is often depicted holding an open book (or scroll) and teaching Mary. The Greek letters A (Alpha) and Ω (Omega) refers to the phrase "I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end" Revelation 21:6; 22:13. Christ has existed for all eternity; God is eternal.

Papal Ombrellino:
Distinctive symbol used in basilicas throughout the world. Symbolic of a basilica's unique relationship with the Pope. Traditional symbol of the Papacy. Stripes of yellow and red are traditional papal colours. Partially opened, symbolic of readiness to welcome the Holy Father.



Sancta Anna Ora Pro Nobis:
(Latin) meaning "St. Anne Pray for Us" is uttered by tens of thousands of pilgrims of different nationalities, religions and races who gather every year at the Shrine of St. Anne. This tangible and true expression of inter-religious harmony is the result of faith in St. Anne's powerful intercessory prayers over the years.

Papal Cross Keys:
Symbol of the Papacy. A basilica is entitled to display this symbol because of her unique relationship with the Pope. Representing the "keys to the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt 16:19), Christ's promise to Peter, "I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven."

White Lily:
The lily symbol continued to be used from the previous emblem. St. Anne is associated with white lily for purity. St. Anne's mission points towards the Cross of Christ; thus 4 lilies forming a cross. The number 4 also signifies the 4 Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The 3 stars at each flower symbolises the Holy Trinity.

Colours Red and Green:
St. Anne is associated with Red for Love and Green for Rebirth (and life), as she bore the New Eve.

Green leaf (of the Lily):
Represents Life and the Basilica's ongoing green initiatives in keeping with Pope Francis encyclical "Laudato Si': On care for our common home".

SYMBOLS OF A BASILICA: Coat of Arms

the *tintinnabulum* (or bells) mounted on a pole that symbolises its link to the Pope.

The logo of the crossed keys of St Peter was also displayed on the church's banners, furnishings and on the Seal of the minor basilica. The keys refer to the promise of Christ to Peter and symbolise the continuous relations between the Basilica and the Pope.

In his sermon, Cardinal William said that St Anne, the grandmother of Christ, is a powerful intercessor. Women in particular, both married and unmarried, come to her in their time of greatest need. Even non-Catholics seek her help and intercession in their desperation. Over the years, there have been great many testimonies of her intercession by people of all walks of life. Therefore, the church, which has become a sanctuary of peace, solace and healing for many, is truly a Shrine of Harmony.

The cardinal added that this goes to show that God has no favourites and is all inclusive, as stated in the *Acts of the Apostles*. So long as we fear Him and do what is right in His eyes, His favour and peace will follow us, because He loves us all and sees us all as His children. The Basilica is, and has always been, a symbol of unity that has drawn the multitudes to seek God through the intercession of St Anne. Now, we as believers, must reach out to others and promote a personal and intimate relationship with Jesus. We must give Jesus to others in a way that makes them want to know Him more and more.

The blowing of the 'shofars' to mark beginning of the celebration.

Cultural performances to showcase the diverse community.



The 'tintinnabulum' (or bells) mounted on a pole that symbolises the Minor Basilica's link to the Pope.



The 'ombrellino' (little canopy) — a silk canopy with yellow and red stripes which are the traditional papal colours.

Fr Michael Cheah with the Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

Some of the political leaders.

E., BUKIT MERTAJAM, JANUARY 9, 2023

is now a Minor Basilica

Cardinal William went on to say that when Jesus was baptised, which was also the Gospel reading for the day, He knew His identity as the Son of God, and that enabled Him to embark on His earthly mission. Since we are also baptised with the same Spirit, we are also sons and daughters of the same God and we too, have our earthly missions. This means we are the face of God on earth and we should conduct our lives accordingly.

His eminence also said that the world is in its present state because many do not know who they are and that causes them to fall into the trap of the enemy very easily. Hence, those of us who have encountered the love and forgiveness of Jesus must go out and help those who are still struggling in the trap of the enemy. We should do so with great humility, hospitality and respect, just like Jesus did. Jesus also understands our human struggles because He walked on earth and had earthly experiences, the only difference is that He is sinless. Therefore, if we have, at any point, received God's favour through the intercession of St Anne, we must strive to speak of Jesus to anyone who needs Him.

After the sermon, the Litany of Saints was sung and the Intonation of the *Te Deum* followed after Communion. After the final blessing, the New Youth Testament Bible, called *Identity Identified*, by the Bible Society of Malaysia, was launched by Bishop Sebastian.

The Bible caters to youth and has specially highlighted pas-

sages that speak directly towards dealing with challenges like suicide and addiction, issues that are constantly plaguing youths now. It is a new and trendy way to get youths to know their identity in God so they will be able to find their purpose in life.

His Excellency Archbishop Wojciech Zaluski, the Apostolic Nuncio to Malaysia, gave a brief address. He first extended the Pope's greetings and blessings to all present. He then proceeded to give a brief history of the Major and Minor Basilicas and said that the title of minor basilica unites churches from around the world with the Vatican. His last point was about the importance of St Anne, who passed on her knowledge of motherhood to her daughter, Mary, who later became the mother of Jesus. And now, she is a mother to us all.

Bishop Sebastian spoke next. He said that the primary motive of requesting the title of Minor Basilica is to honour the pilgrims, regardless of race, religion or nationality that flock to the church because of their love and respect for St Anne and the God she worships. The church has served as a refuge and a sign of hope for all and it's also an inclusive, creative and bridge building House of God.

He thanked the Penang State Government for conferring the Penang Centennial Heritage Excellence Award 2022 to three churches – Church of the Holy Name of Jesus (Balik Pulau), Church of the Assumption (Georgetown) and the Minor Basilica of St Anne (BM).

He also thanked all those who were involved in the organising of the historic event and blessed them.



Fr Michael Cheah reading the Decree in Latin and English while Fr Martin Arlando holds the Decree.



Archbishop Wojciech Zaluski



The Arch/Bishops of the region and from Pakistan, Indonesia and Thailand.



Bishop Sebastian Francis



The multi-lingual choir

AOHD serving the poor for 30 years

By Cheryl Kristine

PORT DICKSON: Incorporated on October 1, 1992, the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD) marks 30 years of service to the poor. With great support from the Parish Integral Human Development (PIHD) ministry, AOHD has grown in strength and commitment towards the mission to carry the Light of Christ to everyone.

As part of its pearl anniversary celebration, AOHD organised an annual formation for PIHDM leaders from Jan 6 to 8. Sixty participants from 23 parishes were at the much-needed retreat to recharge, reaffirm, and update incoming leaders on methodologies and empowerment.

The formation started with Mass celebrated by the ministry's ecclesiastical assistant, Fr Albet Arockiasamy. In his homily, Fr Albet listed the ministries under AOHD and advised those present to collaborate with other parishes and ministries.

Over the next two days, participants had briefings on the inauguration of AOHD/



AOHD members with the PIHDM leaders during their annual formation.

PIHDM, and how PIHDM has been a bridge for AOHD to the parish ministries.

Guest speaker, Fr Jestus Pereira, shared on empowerment. He took us through the story of the Wise Men and King Herod and how we need to have the right intention when serving the poor, as opposed to personal intentions. He rounded up his session by encouraging us to go out and act upon what God wants us to do and wants us to be.

The next session by Fr Xavier Andrew was on *Mission with Passion*. Romans

12:11 "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord", was one of the Bible verses given to reiterate the retreat's message.

All sessions were interspersed with guided questions by Stephen John. He drew us to think about how we connect with the poor — with empathy or with sympathy.

Archbishop Julian Leow graced the formation for a brief session. He thanked everyone present and called the PIHDM a special group of people giving their time

for the mission. He also reminded us about self-care, that we must take care of ourselves before we serve others.

Our long-term collaborator, Malaysian Care director Leong Hap Choy, shared on voluntarism and how to grow it. He also spoke about his partnership with other NGOs to support the poor.

Many participants said they were happy and felt encouraged after the sessions. Some went a step further and connected with others to work towards future collaborations.

Three parishes in Penang declared centennial heritage

PENANG: The State Government awarded the Penang Centennial Heritage Excellence Award 2022 to three parishes in the diocese — the Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam, Church of the Holy Name of Jesus, Balik Pulau, and the Church of the

Assumption, Penang.

The Chief Minister of Penang presented the awards to members of the Penang Diocesan Catholic Heritage Committee on January 5, 2023, at the Eastern and Oriental Hotel, Penang.



Penang Diocese Heritage Committee members receive the award on behalf of the churches.

Ozanam Retirement Home to be ready in December 2023

TAIPING, Perak: The National Society of St Vincent de Paul Malaysia (SSVP) embarked on the development and management of a purpose-built retirement village for senior citizens on the grounds of the Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Klian Pauh.

This project, called the Ozanam Retirement Village (ORV), signifies SSVP's continuous effort to care for the elderly. The proposed development, targeted for completion in December 2023, consists of 168 units priced at RM98,000 per unit. A 30 per cent allocation is made for the poor.

Construction is currently underway. The retirement home is expected to house up to 200 persons, catering for non-disabled persons aged 55 and above.

Residents keen to live in ORV will sign a Residents Agreement, giving them a right to occupy the unit up to 28 years.

This village aims to provide its residents with a community living concept, in either a single or double occupancy room, five meals per day, laundry services, recreational activities and more, all in a guarded and gated

environment at RM1,500.00 per month as service fee.

ORV will also provide the residents with a great sense of community — staying with friends who are at the same stage in life. A chance to get involved in social activities and always someone to pass the time of day with.

Since there is a 30 per cent allocation of the units for the poor, there is a need to raise funds to help pay for these units.

Hence, this project organising committee humbly asks for cash contributions to help ease our burden in providing for the poor and needy. Those interested to contribute, please contact Sharon (011-3106 2806) or email svpmsia@gmail.com for further details. Your kind contributions towards this project will help elevate it to greater heights.

We at the SSVP are forever grateful for your kindness. Thank you for helping us help others. *Service in Spe* (Serving in Hope). — **The Organising Committee – Fund Raising Projects, Ozanam Retirement Village, SSVP, Malaysia**



Artist's impression of the Ozanam Retirement Home.

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REST IN PEACE

Korean Church aims revival of faith, ecological conversion

SEOUL: Catholic leaders in South Korea called on the faithful to make strong efforts for a revival of the faith that was battered by the COVID-19 pandemic and work towards ecological conversion based on Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

In his New Year message, Archbishop Peter Chung Soon-taek of Seoul urged Catholics in the archdiocese to re-equip themselves "with a missionary spirit and start anew" as they emerge from the pandemic and return to normalcy.

"In 2023, to live as a 'newly starting church' is to cultivate spiritual strength in the Holy Mass, the source of religious life, and to rekindle the life of faith that has shrunk through various devotional activities," Archbishop Chung said.

The prelate urged the faithful to engage in activities such as adoration of the Eucharist, Holy Hour, participation in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the exaltation of martyrs, and pilgrimage to holy places.

The other dioceses in South Korea also dedicated the year 2023 towards 'ecological conversion' by taking cues from Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'* which urges everyone to "repent and modify [their] lifestyles and destructive systems".

Bishop Simon Kim Ju-young of Chuncheon in his pastoral letter "Living the Word and the seven-year journey of *Laudato Si'*", emphasised the need to harmoniously merge the objectives of the encyclical and living the Christian life.

"Living *Laudato Si'* and living the Word of God must go hand in hand and ultimately... it should be in a single direction," the letter read.

The prelate stated that the diocese would start operating a "*Laud-*



File photo of South Korean participants at the WYD in 2019. The archbishop of Seoul has urged the faithful to engage in activities such as adoration of the Eucharist, Holy Hour, participating in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the exaltation of martyrs and pilgrimage to holy places. (Archdiocese of Seoul photo)

ato Si' school" this year "to create an environment where parishioners can more actively participate in living the Word and *Laudato Si'*."

He also pointed out that the recently launched 'Online Youth Ecological Apostolic Meeting' will be expanded to face-to-face meeting events.

The Archdiocese of Daegu which is due to celebrate its 120th founding anniversary in 2031 has set the year 2023-2024 as the "Year of Communion."

The diocese aims to create harmony "with God, with neighbours, and with creation" during this period.

The Diocese of Andong labelled its pastoral plan for 2023 as *Treasuring life — Towards an integrated ecological Church that values life* which is to fulfil its responsibility

to return livable earth to future generations.

The Daejeon diocese however has decided to keep pursuing the goals set forth during the "2040 Carbon Neutral Declaration Mass" on Sept 26, 2022.

The declaration aims to implement 'energy diagnosis' in all of Daejeon diocese's parishes and institutions by the end of 2040. The diocese will also seek to install renewable energy sources across its territory to achieve carbon neutrality.

Considering the ongoing Synod on Synodality, the Daejeon diocese has formulated a plan to harmonise the various charisms of the parishioners in pastoral councils so that various members can participate in achieving the evangelisation of the Church.

The Archdiocese of Gwangju and the Diocese of Jeonju have also released their plans to work towards ecological conversion and care for the environment around them.

Apart from the pastoral plans laid out for the year, 2023 also brings across jubilees that have historical relevance for the nation.

2023 marks the 100th anniversary of the Maryknoll Foreign Missions Society's entry into Korea, the 70th anniversary of the Korean War Armistice, and the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Korea and the Vatican.

Reportedly, plans are underway to organise various events to commemorate these jubilees that hold historical importance for the Church in South Korea. — [ucanews.com](#)

South Korea appoints first woman envoy to the Vatican

SEOUL: South Korea has, for the first time appointed a Catholic woman as its ambassador to the Holy See.

Oh Hyun-Joo, who was deputy ambassador to the United Nations, has been appointed the ambassador to the Holy See, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced on January 4, reported *Catholic Peace Broadcasting Corporation* (CPBC).



Oh Hyun-Joo, the new South Korean ambassador to the Vatican.

The ministry said that Oh's expertise in areas of multilateral diplomacy and international development cooperation as a member of South Korea's permanent mission to the UN would be an asset in her new role.

"Ambassador Oh is a Catholic and a female diplomat who can manage bilateral issues in celebration of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties with the Vatican this year," a ministry official said, according to a report by Yonhap news agency.

Oh is the 17th South Korean ambassador to the Holy See. She was born in 1969 and joined the Korean foreign services in 1994.

She was baptised a Catholic in 2003 at St Joseph Korean Parish, Archdiocese of Newark, in the US while serving as the second secretary to the United Nations.

Oh has served as consul to Chengdu, counsellor to Geneva, special assistant to the President of the United Nations Human Rights Council, and director of development cooperation.

The Vatican has to its credit around 20 female diplomats from all over the world.

However, Africa was the first continent to send a female ambassador to the Vatican. The Vatican accredited Bernadette Olowo from Uganda on Jan. 23, 1975, thus making her the first-ever female ambassador to the Vatican. — [ucanews.com](#)

Tea Garden parish marks 100 years of Catholic mission

NAGRAKATA: A tea garden parish in the Dooars area of Jalpaiguri district of North Bengal inaugurated the 100 years' celebration of the founding of the Catholic community at Champaguri, near Naya Sylee Tea Garden near Nagrakata on January 8.

Bishop Clement Tirkey of Jalpaiguri presided over the solemn centenary inaugural Eucharistic Celebration with 20 priests, 40 religious; and some 1,000 faithful.

The parish has some 1,020 families with about 4,000 Catho-

lics spread out in 17 sub stations.

As the old parish church was in a dilapidated condition and the new church construction incomplete, the celebrations were held in the open.

While congratulating the faith of the Christians of the parish, the bishop lamented the fact that "in 100 years, the parish could offer only two priests, one for the diocese and another for the Jesuit society."

Parish priest Fr Samir Tirkey says, "Spiritual preparation for all age groups, catechism classes at grass roots level, training for catechists, and ongoing faith formation through Small Christian Community programmes at different tea gardens to be held regularly are being planned."

Centenary celebrations will conclude in October 2023.

The Pontifical Milan Fathers

(PIME) started the mission at Nya Sylee Tea Garden around 1911 and moved to Champaguri in 1923, to the same bungalow offered by the then Tea Garden Manager.

The mission began with PIME Fr Joseph Antony Lazzaroni from present Krishnagar diocese in Nadia contacting a group of 20 Catholics from Chottanagpur in present Jharkhand state and working in the tea garden.

The Naya Sylee Tea Garden village in Jalpaiguri district is situated in North Bengal, with a population 6,034 (Census 2011) in an area covering about 11 square kilometres.

Till the partition of Bengal at India's independence in 1947, Naya Sylee mission was under the Diocese of Dinajpur in East Bengal, now Bangladesh. — [Matters India](#)



Bishop Clement Tirkey of Jalpaiguri releases the dove. (Matters India photo)

Late Cardinal Pell praised for his witness despite controversies

SYDNEY: Cardinal George Pell, Catholic Australia's senior prelate, former adviser to Pope Francis, former head of the Vatican's economy department and the most senior Church figure ever jailed for historical sex offenses, charges which were subsequently overturned, has been praised for his leadership qualities.

George Pell born on June 8, 1941, in the Australian town of Ballarat to an English-born Anglican father and Catholic mother of Irish descent died Jan 10 in Rome of cardiac arrest following a hip replacement surgery.

"Cardinal Pell provided strong and clear leadership within the Catholic Church in Australia, as Archbishop of Melbourne and Archbishop of Sydney and as a member of the Bishops Conference for more than 25 years," said Archbishop Timothy Costelloe of Perth, president of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

"Cardinal Pell's impact on the life of the Church in Australia and around the world will continue to be felt for many years. As we remember him and reflect on his legacy, I invite all Catholics and other people of goodwill to join in praying for Cardinal Pell, a man of deep and abiding faith, and for the repose of his soul,"

he added.

Archbishop Anthony Fisher of Sydney, where the late cardinal was once head of the archdiocese, said on Facebook: "This news comes as a great shock to all of us. Please pray for the repose of the soul of Cardinal Pell, for comfort and consolation for his family and for all of those who loved him and are grieving him at this time."

Auxiliary Bishop Richard Umbers of Sydney also tweeted: "Larger than life, Cardinal Pell was a highly intelligent and well-read man who took a genuine interest in everyone around him. A pioneer for much good in Sydney, Australia, and the entire church. Please join me in praying for the repose of his soul. *Requiescat in pace.*"

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said, "For many people, particularly of the Catholic faith, this will be a difficult day and I express my condolences to all those who are mourning today."

Tony Abbott, former Australian prime minister and a Catholic, praised the cardinal. "Australia has lost a great son and the Church has lost a great leader with the passing of George Pell. His incarceration on charges that the High Court ulti-



mately scathingly dismissed was a modern form of crucifixion; reputationally at least a kind of living death. His prison journals should become a classic: a fine man wrestling with a cruel fate and trying to make sense of the unfairness of suffering," he said.

"In Australia, he [Cardinal Pell] is a well-known and controversial figure and his conservative views have been used as ammunition in the political culture wars there. His detractors tend to be of the left; his defenders of the right," David Armstrong, Australian journalist and former editor in chief of *The Australian*, *The South China Morning Post* and managing director of *Post Publishing*, had earlier said.

A well-known and influential figure, Pell was ordained a priest in 1966, made an auxiliary bishop of Melbourne in 1987, heading the archdiocese nine years later. He was transferred to become archbishop of Sydney in 2001 and made a cardinal by John Paul II in 2003. In 2013 Pope Francis appointed him as a member of his Council of Cardinals and a year later to take charge of the newly created Vatican-based Secretariat for the Economy and tasked to reform the Vatican's financial systems. During the previous two pontificates, Pell was a well-known and influential figure in Rome, being a member of two of the most significant "congregations" in the Vatican bureaucracy — Bishops and Doctrine of the Faith.

Cardinal Pell was on leave of absence from his post as prefect of the Vatican Secretariat for the Economy to return to Australia to face charges that he had abused two boys while Archbishop of Melbourne in the 1990s. His five-year term as prefect of that secretariat came to an end on February 24, 2019, the last day of the three-day summit on abuse of minors that Pope Francis held at the Vatican with presidents of the world's national episcopal conferences.

The cardinal spent 13 months in prison after Victoria's County Court in central Melbourne, the city where Pell formerly served as archbishop, found him guilty in December 2018. Pell maintained he was innocent and lodged an appeal and was freed from Melbourne's Barwon Prison after the country's top court unanimously agreed to overturn his conviction in 2020.

Pell returned to Rome following his trial and imprisonment and was received by Pope Francis at the Apostolic Palace in the Vatican in October 2021. A video of the meeting showed Pope Francis shaking the cardinal's hand, while saying, "It is a pleasure to meet you again" and "Thank you for your witness," while they were seated.

Vatican News reported how Pope Francis in a pre-Christmas interview with *Mediaset* that year recalled the "prescient work" done by the cardinal in the economic sphere and how due to a "calumny" Pell had had to "distance himself from this administration. It was Pell who drew up the outline of how we could move forward," the Pope said. "He is a great man and we owe him so much." — **By Ivan Fernandes, LCI** (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

Bishop of Matagalpa ordered to stand trial

NICARAGUA: Bishop Rolando José Álvarez Lagos of Matagalpa (*pic*) was indicted on charges of conspiracy during a pre-trial hearing on January 10 in which he was ordered to remain under house arrest.

The Nicaraguan bishop, who doubles as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Estelí, is accused of "crimes of conspiracy to undermine national integrity and propagation of false news through information and communication technologies to the detriment of the Nicaraguan state and society".

The judge has also confirmed the arrest warrant against Fr. Uriel Antonio Vallejos, pastor of the Jesús de la Divina Misericordia parish in the city of Sébaco, who is currently in exile, on the same charges.

Álvarez is the first bishop to be arrested and indicted since President Daniel Ortega returned to power in Nicaragua in 2007.

He was taken into custody by police officers on Aug 19 last year, along with priests, seminarians and lay people, after being forcibly imprisoned for two weeks in the Curia for allegedly having attempted to "organise violent groups" with "the aim of destabilising the Nicaraguan State and attacking the constitutional authorities".

The Bishop was subsequently

transferred to his private residence in Managua under house arrest, while the other people arrested were taken to a police station in the capital.

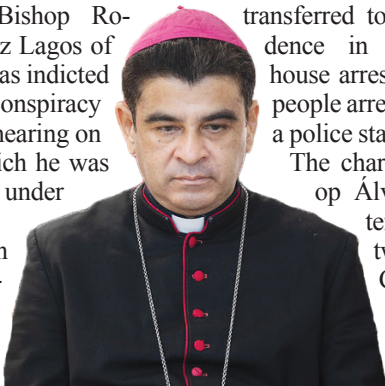
The charges against Bishop Álvarez come amid tense relations between the Catholic Church and Ortega's Sandinista government, that began in April 2018, when the

Central American country was rocked by huge protests against controversial government reforms. Ortega accused the bishops of being complicit in an alleged coup.

Following the events, several Bishops' Conferences and organisations across the world, have expressed their solidarity with the Nicaraguan Church.

Pope Francis referred to the situation in Nicaragua during the *Angelus* prayer on August 21, 2022, saying he was closely following developments "with concern and sorrow", and expressing his hope that, "through an open and sincere dialogue, the basis for a respectful and peaceful coexistence might still be found".

Even UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, has expressed dismay at the crackdown of the Nicaraguan government on civil society organisations, including those of the Catholic Church. — **Vatican News**



Pope's visit will bring a new breath of air to the Congolese people

VATICAN: The visit of Pope Francis to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which will take place at the end of January, will revive peace efforts for those who seek peace for the Congolese people, says the ambassador of the DRC to the Holy See, His Excellency Deogratias Ndagano Mangokube.

Speaking after Pope Francis' address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, Ambassador Ndagano told *Vatican News* that Pope Francis' visit to the DRC from January 31 will be "a revival and a new breath of air in the life of the Congolese," he said.

The Congolese diplomat first expressed his appreciation to Pope Francis for his constant closeness to the suffering Congolese people

who have endured years of armed conflict perpetuated by armed gangs, especially in the eastern region of the country.

The Pope, in his annual keynote discourse to the diplomats, "addressed some of the ills that plague the world while wishing that this new year would be a year of innovation for peace in this world where division and wars seem to multiply," said the ambassador.

The words that touched the Congolese ambassador the most in the Pope's address were: "I will, at last, be able to go to the DRC ..." When the Pope said those words, Ambassador Ndagano felt particularly moved.

"The expectations of the Congolese people are enormous. Their joy is immense. Pope Francis' ar-

rival in Congo is being prepared for in every locality of the country, not only at the level of the Church or in the capital city, but literally, everyone in the country is preparing for this visit," said the Congolese envoy.

The DRC yearns for peace and he hopes that this Apostolic visit will encourage all those who work with energy for peace in the country to do even more, said the Congolese ambassador. He reassured that the meeting of the Pope with victims of the armed conflicts in the eastern region of the country has been taken care of and would constitute one of the highlights of the Pope's visit to the DRC. The Pope will meet the victims in Kinshasa. — **By Stanislas Kambashi, SJ, Vatican Media**



DRC Ambassador Deogratias Ndagano Mangokube flanked by wife and daughter with Congolese officials. (Vatican Media)

Swiss bishops warn Catholics that only priests can preside over the Mass

SWITZERLAND: The Catholic bishops of the three German-speaking dioceses in Switzerland — Basel, Chur and Sankt Gallen — have published a letter calling for compliance with liturgical rules regarding the sacramental authority that is attributed solely to the Church's ordained presbyters (priests).

"You all know that only the priest validly presides at the Eucharist, grants sacramental reconciliation and administers the anointing of the sick," the three bishops state in the letter, which was issued on January 5.

It is a clear response to what's come to be known in Switzerland as the "Monika Schmid affair". Schmid, who served many years as the de facto administrator of a parish in the Chur diocese, "concelebrated" at a Eucharistic celebration last August to mark her retirement. In the days immediately following, Chur's Bishop Joseph Bonnemain ordered a preliminary canonical investigation "liturgical abuses".

Now the new letter — signed by Bonnemain and Bishops Felix Gmür (Basel) and Markus Büchel (Sankt Gallen) — has been seen as a warning to Catholics who may be tempted to introduce unlawful liturgical initiatives.

The letter is addressed to pastoral workers in particular. "We know very well that your work often requires a balance. There is a great gap between what you are burning for, your personal faith, and confronting everything that makes the Church so painfully behind the Gospel," the three German-



The bishops' call for adherence to Catholic "rules" follows an Internet controversy over a August 2022 video of a laywoman who seemed to concelebrate Mass with priests. (CNA photo/Katholisches Medienzentrum YouTube screenshot)

speaking bishops say.

Aware of the tensions concerning the place of laity in the Church, they remind the Catholics of their dioceses to rely on the synodal process as the place to discuss ecclesial developments. "We are very grateful for the synodal process, which shows us once again that we are on a journey together and that only together can we be credible witnesses of Jesus Christ," they write.

They also remind their people of the conditions that are required for valid celebrations of the Eucharist and other sacraments. "Common witness requires common forms and rules. We bishops regularly receive re-

quests and worried reactions: The faithful have a right to religious services that respect the rules and forms of the Church," they point out.

After underlining the universal character of the liturgy, the bishops insist that these rules "concern in particular those who preside at celebrations. You all know that only the priest validly presides at the Eucharist, grants sacramental reconciliation and anoints the sick. This is precisely why he is ordained. This rule of Roman Catholic faith must be respected without restriction in our dioceses," they continue.

The bishops insist that they are not trying

to defend any sort of "patriarchal clericalism", arguing that "priests, in the service and execution of the sacraments, make visible that Jesus Christ Himself acts in and through the sacraments. They keep open, as it were, space for God's action in the liturgy". The discipline of the Catholic Church, the three prelates say, requires "a sacramental designation, that is, ordination, to preside at the celebration of the Eucharist and to say the Eucharistic prayer as a concelebrating priest".

Building on the work of pastoral leaders, the bishops nevertheless recognise some of the demands that lay Catholics are making for a more open distribution of roles.

"We hear the requests of many people to be able to participate in the liturgy in other ways, for example as women. However, we urge you to not make the sign of unity that is the liturgy into a testing ground for personal projects. It is precisely in the worldwide celebration of the same liturgy that we are Catholic and in solidarity with one another," the three bishops plead.

They point specifically to Pope Francis' apostolic letter *Desiderio Desideravi* that insists on the quality of liturgies, inviting Catholics to use "the diversity of forms for liturgical celebrations that the Church offers. And to use places in the liturgy, such as reflection, preaching, meditation, intercessions, songs, music and silence, so that you can be part of it personally". — **By Christophe Henning, LCI** (<https://international.la-croix.com>)

Cardinal Zen gets private audience with the Pope

VATICAN: Pope Francis received Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-Kiun of Hong Kong in a private audience on January 6, at Santa Marta, the Pope's residence in the Vatican.

"It was wonderful. He was so very warm!" the overjoyed 90-year-old cardinal told *America* soon after the audience.

The Chinese-born cardinal had obtained special permission from a Hong Kong court only a few days earlier, on Jan 3, to attend Benedict's funeral on Jan 5. The court ordered that he be given back his passport for five days only, just for this purpose. Last May, the police had confiscated the passport when they arrested the cardinal, along with five others, over a fund on which they had served as trustees. The fund had provided legal and medical care to pro-democracy protestors who were arrested following the 2019 protests in Hong Kong. The cardinal and the others were convicted last November for failing to register the fund, but they have since appealed the conviction.

Once he had regained his passport, Cardinal Zen took the plane to Rome the very next day, accompanied by a young Salesian confrere, the Rev Carlos Cheung. They travelled via Doha and arrived at Rome airport at 6.00am on Jan 5, the day of the funeral, and made it to the Vatican just in time to take part in the requiem Mass in St Peter's Square. The cardinal briefly greeted the Pope in the sacristy as he and the other cardinals vested before the Mass.

The Jan 6 audience, however, was something special: a personal, private audience granted by the Pope to him at short notice because the cardinal had to take the plane back to Hong Kong the next morning to respect the court order.

The last time Cardinal Zen was in Rome, in 2020, he had not been able to meet the Pope in private, and many observers have since listed him among the adversaries of Francis because of Cardinal Zen's strong criticism of the provisional agreement on the nomination of bishops that the Holy See signed with China in September 2018 and renewed again last October.

The audience revealed that there is a deeper bond of faith and friendliness between the Hong Kong cardinal and the Argentine Pope than many realise, even if they are not on the same page over the provisional agreement and some other issues. The two Church leaders first got to know each other on a post-synodal council, where the Chinese cardinal concluded that his Argentine colleague in the College of Cardinals was "very pastoral."

Cardinal Zen told *America* that Francis first warmly welcomed him in a parlour on the ground floor of Santa Marta. They sat there for some time and conversed together in a friendly way. While respecting confidential aspects of their conversation, the cardinal said he felt free to reveal two things he told the Pope. First, he thanked Francis for giving Hong Kong "a good bishop," Stephen Chow, SJ, who was appointed in 2021. He recalled that Francis smiled at hearing this and quipped, "He's a Jesuit!"

Second, he told the Pope about his pastoral ministry visiting prisoners in Hong Kong's jails, a work he has been doing for over 10 years. He also told him that he had baptised a number of prisoners in these years, when they requested the sacrament. He said Francis was "very happy" to hear of this pastoral ministry that the elderly car-



Pope Francis with Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun (VaticanMedia)

dinal — who has to walk with the aid of a cane — continues to do even to this day.

After conversing for some time in the parlour, the cardinal said Pope Francis invited him and Fr Carlos to come upstairs to his private apartment, and there he gave them gifts of books and rosary beads.

The cardinal revealed that while they were in the Pope's apartment, Francis showed him the copy of the statue of Our Lady of Sheshan that he was given on his election, which he had placed in his room. The original stands atop the church at the famous Marian shrine of Sheshan, which is a pilgrimage site for many Chinese Catholics and stands on the outskirts of Shanghai, the city where the cardinal was born.

On seeing the statue, the cardinal told Francis, "I hope you can one day visit the shrine of Sheshan!"

The cardinal said the Pope was in great

form throughout the audience and full of good humour and even insisted on accompanying him and his companion to the door as they departed. Francis joked and laughingly explained this, saying, "I accompany you for two reasons: I want to make sure you go; and secondly, I want to make sure that you do not take anything with you!" They all laughed, and Francis waved goodbye.

Before the audience, the cardinal said he was allowed to visit and pray at the tomb of Benedict XVI in the crypt of St Peter's Basilica.

On Jan 7, Cardinal Zen made the long flight back to Hong Kong with happiness in his heart because he was able to attend the funeral of Benedict, pray at his tomb and have a warm private audience with Pope Francis. — **By Gerard O'Connell, America**

Pope Francis strengthens his grip on the Diocese of Rome

Rarely has a pope so directly exercised the diocesan ministry attached to being the Bishop of Rome.

Now Pope Francis has issued a new apostolic constitution entitled *In Ecclesiarum Communionem*, which does just that. The text, which was issued on January 6 and goes into force at the end of the month, abrogates and replaces previous rules John Paul II decreed in 1988 to regulate the governance of what is called the Vicariate of Rome.

With the new document, Francis places the management of the vicariate more squarely under his own authority and endows it with new entities.

What are the changes in diocesan governance?

It is clear that, by issuing the new apostolic constitution, the Pope wants to regain control of the day-to-day business of the Roman see. The authority of the episcopal council is strengthened, making it the vicariate's "principal organ of synodality". Up until now, it has been presided over by the Pope's cardinal vicar (currently Cardinal Angelo de Donatis). But with the new changes, the council will now meet at least three times a month under the presidency of the Roman pontiff. "The agenda for each meeting must be sent to me as soon as possible," Francis insists in the apostolic constitution.

The cardinal vicar, who since 1988 has exercised "the high and effective direction of the vicariate", is now designated as the Pope's "auxiliary". "In particular, he will not undertake any initiative of importance or beyond the scope of ordinary administration without first reporting to me," Francis continues.



Pope Francis addresses priests of the Diocese of Rome during a meeting at the Basilica of St John Lateran in Rome in this file photo. (CNS file photo/L'Osservatore Romano, handout)

The post of prelate general secretary of the vicariate, in charge of the moderation of the offices of the Diocese of Rome, has been eliminated. His responsibilities have now been given to the vicegerent, Bishop Baldassare Reina, whose appointment was announced the same day *In Ecclesiarum Communionem* was issued.

Which bodies have changed?

The diocesan council for economic affairs, which assists the Pope in managing the finances and patrimony of the diocese, also has new criteria defining its mission. New statutes will need to be approved by the Pope, introducing "criteria of transparency in the management of funds".

"Each year it prepares the budget for the economic management of the Diocese of Rome and approves the final statement of income and expenses to be submitted for

my final approval," writes Francis, who calls for economic management that is "prudent and responsible...conducted in accordance with the purpose that justifies the Church's possession of goods".

An independent oversight commission is also being established within the vicariate. This new internal control body is composed of six members "of certified juridical, civil and canonical, financial and administrative competence, free from possible conflicts of interest" who will be appointed by the Pope. The commission will issue an annual report to the Bishop of Rome.

Also noteworthy is the creation of new offices (e.g. for prison ministry and a service for the protection of minors and vulnerable persons), as well as the abolition of other bodies such as the vicariate's court of appeal, whose cases will now be handled by the tribunal of the Roman Rota.

In addition, the term of office of the management staff is limited to five years, renewable only once. Finally, new criteria have been established for the selection of future priests, whose "spiritual, psychological, intellectual and pastoral characteristics and experience in previous service, if any, must also be evaluated" before being submitted to the Pope.

Why is Pope Francis making these changes?

An audit of the diocese, which the Pope entrusted last year to a former member of the international professional services firm Deloitte, convinced Francis to make profound organisational changes. This is similar to moves the 86-year-old Pope has made concerning Opus Dei, Caritas Internationalis, the Order of Malta and Communion and Liberation.

He says his objective is to give "an evangelising and synodal impetus" to the Vicariate of Rome, so that it becomes "an exemplary place of communion, dialogue and closeness, welcoming and transparent, at the service of the renewal and pastoral growth for the diocese of Rome".

In the preamble to *In Ecclesiarum Communionem*, the Pope also asks Catholics living in the Eternal City to pay special attention to those burdened by "serious economic, social, psychological and health problems", while making "a special effort (for) the many refugees and migrants so that the Church of Rome may be a witness to all other Churches that no one should be excluded". — **By Matthieu Lasserre, LCI** (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

Benedict XVI's greatest work may not be what you think

History will remember Pope Benedict XVI as one of the most brilliant teachers ever to sit on the Chair of Peter. As Archbishop Georg Gänswein recently remarked, Benedict's greatest tool was the word, both spoken and written. Which raises the question: What was his greatest work?

It depends on the criterion. To make things easier, let's limit ourselves to his works as Pope Benedict XVI. That not only excludes magnificent articles and books written by Joseph Ratzinger the professor, archbishop and cardinal, but also the "Jesus Trilogy," a Christological *tour de force* published while he was Pope, but too dense for the average reader and published under the name "Joseph Ratzinger" rather than "Benedict XVI," at the his own discretion.

If we were to judge by sensationalism, the "Regensburg Address" would stand out due to its controversial, albeit historically sound, claims about Christianity, Islam and the relation between faith and reason. But once again, it takes a patient, discerning mind to understand the arguments, and they continue to escape many well-meaning Catholics.

Similarly, *Light of the World* fuelled convoluted debates about the use of condoms to prevent the spread of AIDS, and, quite honestly, interviews were not the optimal format for revealing Benedict's genius (nor anyone else's, for that matter). If we opt for an encyclical, *Spe Salvi* emerges as the most profound, but it would take another article to explain why.

What if the criteria are simply clarity,

The corpus of Benedict's general audiences stand as a witness to his catechetical mastery.



comprehensiveness and catholicity? What if we are looking for something accessible to average Catholics? What if we desire something that touches the heart as well as the head? What if it is something with the power to transform the Church?

Look no further than Pope Benedict's general audiences.

The corpus of Benedict XVI's general audiences stand as a witness to his catechetical mastery. But within this corpus is an extraordinary section that deserves special attention. From March 15, 2006, to April 6, 2011, His Holiness expounded the multi-variegated richness of the history of the Church, but this "history" was anything but a list of facts, names and dates. It was, rather, an introduction to the lives of saintly men and women who themselves had encountered the living Christ, so that we might discover how and from whom we ourselves have received the gift of faith.

The first instalments of Benedict's catechesis were concerned with the "origins of the Church so as to understand Jesus' original plan and thereby grasp the essential of the Church that lives on through the changing times." By reflecting on the Church's

history, "we also understand the reason for our being in the Church and how we must strive to live it at the dawn of a new Christian millennium"; understanding who we are today by rediscovering who we were then. That, indeed, is the essence of Ratzinger's focus on anamnesis (the memorial aspect) as the key to grasping our Christian identity.

Suffice it to say that Pope Benedict was convinced that, by examining the initial experience of Jesus' Resurrection, His appearances to the Apostles, their earliest proclamation of the Lordship of Christ (*kerygma*), and a careful consideration of how the gift of faith was transmitted and lived out continuously through different periods of history, we rediscover how to live fully as disciples today.

The main point of these catecheses on the Church's history, from its origins to the 20th century, is that we cannot live authentically as Christians individualistically.

"Even if [Jesus'] preaching is always an appeal for personal conversion, in reality He continually aims to build the People of God whom He came to bring together, purify and save. As a result, therefore, an individualistic interpretation of Christ's proclamation of the Kingdom, specific to liberal theology, is unilateral and without foundation," Benedict told pilgrims March 15, 2006. He was so compelled to rebut this individualism that, at the same general audience, he offered a concrete example of one of its most recognised proponents: the "liberal theologian Adolf von Harnack," who wrote, "The

Kingdom of God, insofar as it comes in single individuals, is able to enter their soul and is welcomed by them. The Kingdom of God is the dominion of God, certainly, but it is the dominion of the holy God in individual hearts."

Hence, Benedict's five-year project of cementing us to men and women across the centuries who continue to support us in building up the People of God precisely as a communion. Figures such as Sts Basil, Jerome, Augustine, Gertrude the Great, Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Bologna and many others. His Holiness concluded these catecheses April 6, 2011, appropriately with the "Little Flower," St Thérèse of Lisieux, who "points out to us all that Christian life consists in living to the full the grace of Baptism in the total gift of self to the Love of the Father, in order to live like Christ, in the fire of the Holy Spirit, His same love for all the others."

If you must choose to read just one thing of Benedict XVI, read these catecheses. Even if you've read everything else he wrote, you won't have a complete picture of what Benedict meant by the "new springtime of the faith" unless you read them.

Pope Benedict XVI will go down in history as one of the Church's greatest catechists. May he rest in peace. — **Daniel Gallagher, NCRegister**

● **Gallagher teaches Latin at Cornell University. He worked at the Vatican Secretariat of State from 2006 to 2016.**

Benedict XVI lived loving the Lord until the end

Thousands of faithful paid their respects to the mortal remains of the pope emeritus. You have spent a large part of your life with him. How do you live now?

Humanly, suffering very much. It hurts, I suffer... Spiritually, very well. I know Pope Benedict is now where he wanted to go.

Which words of his spiritual testament touched you the most?

The testament as such touched me deeply. Choosing a few words is difficult, I must say. But this testament had already been written on August 29, 2006: the liturgical feast of the martyrdom of St John the Baptist.

It was handwritten — very legible, very small but legible — in the second year of his pontificate. In German, you would say “O-Ton Benedikt”, that is “This is really Benedict.” If I had had the text, without knowing the author, I would have recognised it. It contains the spirit of Benedict. Reading it or meditating on it, one sees it is really his. All of him is in here, in two pages.

In short, it is a thank you to God and to his family ...

Yes. It is a thank you, but also an encouragement to the faithful, not to let themselves be led astray by any hypothesis, either in the theological or philosophical field or in any other field.

Ultimately, it is the Church that communicates, it is the Church, the living Body of Christ, that communicates the faith to all and for all. Sometimes even in theology, there are theories that are very enlightened, or seem so, but that after a year or two have already passed. It is the faith of the Catholic Church, this is what truly leads us to liberation and puts us in contact with the Lord.

What was the strongest message of his pontificate?

His strength lay in the motto he chose when he became Archbishop of Munich, quoting John's Third Letter: *Cooperatores Veritatis*, that is, “collaborators of the truth”, which means that truth is not something that has been thought, but is a Person: it is the Son of God.

God became incarnate in Jesus Christ, in

The private secretary of the late Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, Archbishop Georg Gänswein, speaks to Vatican News and offers a moving testimony of the many years he spent at his side.

Jesus of Nazareth, and this is his message: to follow not a theory of truth, but to follow the Lord. “I am the way, the truth and the life”. This is his message. A message that is not a burden; rather it is an aid to carry all the weight of each day, and this gives joy. There are problems, but faith is stronger; faith must have the last word.

The world will never forget that February 11, 2013, the announcement of the resignation. There are those who continue to say that it was not a free choice or even that he wanted to remain pope in some way. What do you think?

I myself asked him this same question on various occasions, saying to him: “Holy Father, they are looking for a conspiracy behind the announcement of February 11 after the Consistory. They search, they search, they search...”

Benedict replied: “Whoever does not believe that what I said is the real reason for giving up will not believe me even if I say now ‘Believe me, it is so!’ ‘This is and remains the only reason and we must not forget it. He had announced this decision to me: ‘I have to do it’. I was among the first who tried to dissuade him. And he answered me clearly: ‘Look, I’m not asking for your opinion, I’m communicating my decision. A prayed, suffered decision, taken *coram Deo*’.”

There are those who do not believe or make up theories, saying that they would have “left one part but kept another part”, etc.: all those who say this are only making up theories about one word or another and in the end they do not trust Benedict, what he said. This is just an affront to him. Of course, everyone is free to say sensible or less sensible things.

But the naked truth is this: he no longer had the strength to lead the Church, as he said in Latin that day. I asked: “Holy Father, why

as abortion and homosexuality.

Titled *Nothing But The Truth — My Life Beside Benedict XVI*, Gänswein's 330-page book was released in Italian on Jan 12. Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni has provided no comment on the book, which was written with Italian journalist Saverio Gaeta.

Another episode reportedly discussed in the book is Gänswein's effective dismissal from the role of prefect of the Papal Household, which occurred in 2020. Originally appointed to the position by Pope Benedict XVI in 2012, Gänswein continued to serve as prefect during Pope Francis' pontificate, a role that includes organising official audiences with the Holy Father.

However, Gänswein ceased performing the duties associated with the position following a controversy in January 2020



Archbishop Georg Gänswein in the studios of Vatican Radio. (Vatican News/FrancoPiroli)

in Latin?” He replied: “This is the language of the Church.” Anyone who thinks they can find or need to find some other reason is wrong. He communicated the real reason. Amen.

What aspect struck you the most when you were close to Benedict in the long period he spent as Emeritus?

It's been almost ten years. Benedict — already as a cardinal, already as a professor — had a very great [spiritual] dowry. Many say humility: yes, this is true, but also — perhaps this was not seen so well — an ability to accept when people did not agree with what he said.

As a professor it is normal: there is the comparison, the discussion, the “struggle” between the different arguments. Strong words are also used in this context, but without ever hurting and if possible, without causing controversy. It is another thing when one is a bishop and then Pope: he preaches and writes not as a private person, but as one who has received the mandate to preach and to be the shepherd of a flock.

The Pope is the first witness of the Gospel, indeed, of the Lord. And there we saw that his words, the words of the Successor of Peter, were not accepted. But this tells us that the leadership of the Church is not done only by commanding, deciding, but also by suffering, and the part of the suffering was no small one. When he became Emeritus, certainly all the responsibility and the whole Pontificate were over for him.

Did he think he would live this long after giving up?

About three months ago I told him: “Holy Father, we are approaching my tenth anniversary of episcopate: Epiphany 2013, Epiphany 2023. We must celebrate.” But it also means ten years from his resignation.

Some ask me: “But how is it possible he gave up saying he no longer had the strength and then he is still living after ten years?” And he replied: “I must say that I am the first one who is surprised that the Lord has given me more time. I thought a year at most, and

He gave me 10! And 95 is a good age, but years and old age also have their weight, even for a Pope Emeritus.”

He continued: “I accepted it and tried to do what I had promised: to pray, to be present and, above all, to accompany my successor with prayer.” And this is very beautiful. I also recommend to some who have problems with this to re-read what Benedict said, thanking Pope Francis in the Clementine Hall on the occasion of the 65th anniversary of his priestly ordination.

Finally, once, I jokingly said, in a not very elegant way: “Holy Father, you have reckoned without your host.” He replied:

“I didn't make any decision: I accepted what the Lord gave me. He gave me this; I have to thank Him. This is my belief. Others may have other ideas, theories or beliefs, but this is mine.”

What was the greatest teaching for your life, and what will you miss most about Joseph Ratzinger?

The greatest teaching is that written faith, pronounced and proclaimed faith, is not only something that he said and preached, but that he lived. That is, the example for me is that the faith he learnt, taught and proclaimed became a lived faith. And for me — even in this moment in which I suffer, not alone — this is a great spiritual relief.

In his testament Benedict writes: “If in this late hour of my life I look back on the decades I have covered, the first thing I see is how many reasons I have to be thankful.” Was he a happy, fulfilled man?

He was a man deeply convinced that in the love of the Lord one is never wrong, even if humanly one makes many mistakes. And this conviction gave him peace and — it can be said — this humility and also this clarity.

He always said: “Faith must be a simple faith, not simplistic, but simple. Because all great theories, all great theologies have their foundation in faith. And this is and remains the only nourishment for oneself and also for others.” — **By Silvia Kritzenberger, Vatican News**

Pope meets with Benedict's aide amid revelations in new book

VATICAN: Archbishop Georg Gänswein, the longtime personal secretary of the late Pope Benedict XVI, met with Pope Francis on January 9, according to the Vatican's daily press briefing.

The German prelate's meeting with the Holy Father comes only four days after Benedict XVI was laid to rest in the crypt of St Peter's Basilica on Jan 5.

It also took place shortly before the public release of Gänswein's forthcoming book detailing his nearly 20 years of service to Benedict XVI. According to a preview of the text published by *Reuters*, the book includes details about the German Pope's alleged disagreements with his Argentinian successor over matters such as Pope Francis' restriction of the traditional Latin Mass and his statements regarding moral matters such

surrounding a book on priestly celibacy originally published as co-authored by Pope Benedict XVI and Guinean Cardinal Robert Sarah. The book, *From the Depths of Our Heart*, was published amid the controversial pan-Amazonian synod and was seen by many as a critique from the former pontiff of Pope Francis' allowance for questions of married clergy to be discussed during the proceedings.

Gänswein asked Sarah to remove Pope Benedict's name as co-author of the text and said that a “misunderstanding” had led to the retired Pope's inclusion as an author.

Gänswein's role did not change following the incident, but his cessation of papal household prefect duties was explained by the Holy See Office as a reflection of the “redistribution of the various commitments and

duties” of papal household staff.

In his forthcoming book, Gänswein reportedly writes that, following the authorship incident, Pope Francis told him “not to come back to work tomorrow.” *Nothing But the Truth* reportedly claims that Pope Benedict wrote two letters to Pope Francis asking him to restore Gänswein to his duties because the German archbishop was “under attack from all sides,” but his reinstatement never took place.

With Pope Benedict no longer living, it is unclear what role Gänswein will have going forward in the Vatican, if any.

As is standard practice for private audiences, the details of the meeting were not shared by the Vatican press office. A request for comment from Gänswein was not immediately returned. — **By Jonathan Liedl, CNA**

A stroke of genius

By Gwen Manickam

Priest, medical doctor, scientist, a university professor in Bioethics, and artist are some of the roles attributed to Fr Joseph Tham LC.

Recently in town for his first local art exhibition, *Beauty of the Universe*, the Rome-based priest showcased 45 works of art at the Gallery, Sunway University, from January 9 to 14. Proceeds from the sale of the artworks will benefit the education-based charities of the Jeffrey Cheah Foundation in Malaysia and the Regina Apostolorum Foundation, a Hong Kong-registered charity, both of which worked with the university and lawyer cum philanthropist, Joan Foo Mahony, to curate the showing.

On hosting the exhibition, Sunway Education CEO, Professor Dato Dr Elizabeth Lee said, "Given that Chinese New Year celebrations are upon us, we believe the opportunity to host this remarkable *Beauty of*

the Universe exhibition would be most topical, enlightening, and interesting to many, especially in its uniquely inspired Chinese culture and art style."

Kicking off the inaugural event, Archbishop Julian Leow was given a sneak peek of Fr Joseph's Chinese brush paintings, calligraphy, and seal carvings.

A Hong Kong native and cradle Catholic, Fr Joseph said his love for art blossomed at a young age, and at 12, he started classes to hone his techniques and skills.

Three years later, his family moved to Toronto, Canada, where he continued his secondary education and fine-tuned his skills in Chinese painting. He later majored in Mathematics before becoming a medical doctor.

As a medical student, Fr Joseph went on missions to Kenya and Tanzania for two months each. He learnt more about the need out there and decided that after paying off his college debts, he'd become a missionary doctor.



"While practising in Canada, I looked around and saw many doctors and asked myself... 'do they need me?'"

"At the back of my mind, I wanted to

heal the body and person holistically. I felt a need to be authentic in living out my faith, meaning I wanted to help as many people as possible.

Priesthood

The calling to join the priesthood was also becoming stronger, but he resisted it.

"I still wanted to be a doctor. I wanted to help with what I was good at — being a doctor. But I realised God wanted me to give Him free rein. It was like God telling me, 'I want you, and I will tell you what you will be doing'."

"Previously, it was 'I want to do this, and I want God to bless me in what I want to do'. The other option was to surrender myself, trust in Him and be His instrument — be it as a medical doctor, missionary doctor, or priest."

Fr Joseph chose the latter, but it was a struggle to surrender completely to God.

He gave up an illustrious career as a medical doctor and joined the seminary for the Legionaries of Christ (LC) order in the United States at 29. A year before joining the seminary, he began classes on calligraphy and seal carving.

When asked how his Asian parents took the news, as he is the only son and second of five children, Fr Joseph was momentarily silent. It seemed like he was transported back to the raw pain of being shunned by his father, who opposed his decision to

join the priesthood. His father cast him out of the family and stopped going to church.

Fr Joseph's mother always prayed for a vocation in the family, but it was difficult when it was her only son who heard the calling. She struggled to deal with her husband too as Fr Joseph was suddenly *persona non grata* in the family.

"It was very tough on me. I talked to God asking, 'I am doing something so good, why is this happening?' It was also difficult for my spiritual director/superiors to understand what I was going through as it was very Chinese/oriental. They brushed it aside as something light, something every seminarian goes through. They didn't have insight into the ancient Confucian theory that one of the two crimes deserving capital punishment is when you go against your father."

"Not being understood by my biological family and my religious family, and being the only Chinese there, I felt very alone amidst the first few years of seminary life."

"During the first seven years in the seminary, I spent time meditating on the Fatherhood of God and what it meant. It was useful to understand that fatherhood on

earth is not a reflection of the Fatherhood of God. It's the other way around — God's Fatherhood is the perfect example of fatherhood, our earthly fatherhood is only a reflection."

After his novitiate, Fr Joseph moved to Italy to complete his pastoral studies.

"When I joined the seminary, I had to give up my biological family, any future family I might have, and my profession, but the hardest part for me was giving up my art." During the 10 years of his seminary formation, Fr Joseph didn't work on his art. He said the lack of time and the fact that the American and Italian formators did not understand Chinese art contributed.

Before his ordination, Fr Joseph's father was very ill, and the seminarian was allowed to visit him. They chatted and somewhat patched up before his passing.

Upon his ordination in Italy, Fr Joseph was made a professor and spent the last 18 years in Rome in academia. The former Dean of the School of Bioethics at the Regina Apostolorum Pontifical University in Rome said, although he could have taken up art again after his ordination, he didn't make the time for it except to dabble a little during summer breaks.

Art revisited

A decade ago, when Fr Joseph began visiting his homeland Hong Kong again, it re-ignited his artistic background but as a university professor, he still didn't have the time to indulge in his art.

It was only five years ago when his health was affected, that he made drastic changes to his lifestyle by keeping to strict working hours and having a better work-life balance.

"As priests and religious generally don't have a nine to five work schedule, they seldom have downtime, and it's not good. When I made time for myself, I became more productive," said the professor who speaks Cantonese, Italian, English, Spanish, and a little Mandarin.

On what inspires his art, he said after the long break and becoming a priest, he realised his vision of what was once considered beautiful changed.

"Now, I use my art to try and express my interiority. I use the artistic mediums I am good at to express my love for God, my inner state, and my spirituality. I started to create more on the Christian faith but in a Chinese way, and I feel that bridge is quite original." It was an opportunity for Fr Joseph to enculturate faith in the local culture.

Among the different styles, Fr Joseph is trained in one school of painting, where he only does landscapes, plants, and animals. "In Chinese art, along the way, you have to write/sign your name or a message on the painting, and I found my calligraphy was bad, so I began working on it to improve. Likewise, the seals."

"Now I find inspiration in calligraphy and carving seals. I find them more challenging. Although they are simpler, the simpler something is, the harder it is. When something is complicated, you can cover it up but, when it's simpler, it's technically harder."

"For the Chinese, including the Emperors, calligraphy has always been the highest and most precious form of art."

In Fr Joseph's book *Art for God, Artworks and Spiritual Reflections*, he says while religious art is accepted, art as an expression of spirituality is still not fully integrated into the Church. Today his main line of work involves teaching, research, and writing in areas of Bioethics. He has also authored and edited numerous articles and books.



Fr Joseph Tham LC, takes Archbishop Julian Leow on a tour around his art exhibition at The Gallery, Sunway University on January 9, 2023. Looking on are Sunway University Provost Prof Dr Abhi Veerakumarasivam and Terry Mahoney.

A different kind of kingdom

With a new government in power in Malaysia, expectations are high that real change is possible this time.

However, we should temper our expectations, given the realities on the ground. It will take some time to change the divisiveness, the unequal wealth distribution and the neglect of marginalised groups.

My thoughts wander back to the 1995 general election, when the ruling parties under Dr Mahathir Mohamad swept to a landslide victory. The major opposition parties were almost wiped out.

I buried my face in my pillow as I lay in bed. Would we ever see change and reforms in Malaysia?

But then a friend asked me a searching question: “Even if the opposition parties had done well, would there really have been deep, long-lasting change in the country?”

That set me thinking. If society’s value system does not change, any change brought about by a switching of the political parties in power is likely to be limited.

Back in his time on earth, Jesus faced a dilemma.

He had proclaimed the kingdom of God and the people wanted to crown Him Messiah.

But Jesus did not want to be known as a messiah — at least not the kind of messiah the people had in mind.

Back in those days, messiahs were almost a dime a dozen, as many yearned for liberation for Israel from Roman military occupation.

Many ordinary people did not even understand the nature of the kingdom Jesus was proclaiming. Some of His own followers thought He would lead them to victory over their Roman overlords and then be crowned king. This was one of the temptations that even Jesus faced.

But the kingdom Jesus was proclaiming would be based on compassion and justice for all, especially the poor. He could see that the problem was larger than the Roman mili-



SUNDAY OBSERVER

Anil Netto

tary occupation.

Genuine change had to come from the bottom up for it to be lasting and meaningful. It had to be rooted in compassion for the marginalised and the oppressed which would then give real impetus to the quest for justice.

Otherwise, it would be difficult to dismantle an oppressive, exploitative system. Jesus could see that the local religious elite were manipulating religion for their own gain, making life miserable for the ordinary people. The Law, instead of upholding mercy and justice, was being exploited to enrich the elite and burden the peasants.

If the Jews succeeded in forcibly ousting the Roman occupiers from Israel/Palestine in battle — as the zealots hoped to do — would the new local rulers restore justice and lift the oppression of the long-suffering ordinary people?

Most likely, the end of Roman occupation would have resulted in neo-colonisation, this time by the local political and religious elite, still exploiting religion to the maximum, to secure even more profits, wealth and power.

So, a sense of urgency, of foreboding and doom, hung over the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus. They probably could sense that the seething resentment and bitterness beneath the surface towards Roman occupation would lead to a collision course between the little nation and the mighty Roman Empire — a catastrophe in the making.

That may explain why, as a matter of strategy, Jesus initially decided to urgently target His ministry at reforming the House of Israel, even though His kingdom project was relevant for all ages and places. He wanted to establish a new type of kingdom that involved



people loving their enemies, reaching out to those in need, and doing good to those who harmed them.

So, it was both a sense of impending catastrophe and the heralding of a radical new order that characterised Jesus’ ministry.

But John and Jesus’ brief ministries until around AD 30 could not stop the Jewish-Roman wars — large-scale revolts against Roman rule — from breaking out between AD 66 and 135, with horrendous casualties and devastation.

The *First Jewish-Roman War* (AD 66-73) resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and the fall of Galilee. Up to 1.4 million civilians and military personnel were killed.

In the *Bar Kokhba Revolt* in AD 132-136, the Romans devastated Judea’s countryside and ejected the people to suppress the revolt. The people, including many Christians, were scattered around the Middle East, and some even suffered persecution as minorities. “Fifty of their most important outposts and 985 of their most famous villages were razed to the ground. Some 580,000 men were slain in the various raids and battles, and the number of those that perished by famine, disease, and fire was past finding out. [...] nearly the whole of Judea was made desolate.” (Cassius Dio, 69:14.1-2)

Even though the catastrophes in Judea and Galilee could not be averted, the kingdom

that Jesus proclaimed lived on in the minds of the exiled followers of Jesus and would be relevant for other times and ages.

This kingdom involved radical change, an inversion of the old order. Those who were excluded and marginalised would find their way in, even ‘force’ their way in.

In contrast, those who put their faith in earthly power and wealth would find themselves excluded. Perhaps that is inaccurate: they would not find themselves excluded; rather, they would exclude themselves from this ‘alien’ kingdom of compassion and justice — just like the young man of great wealth who walked away sadly when Jesus told him to give up his wealth (which was perhaps accumulated from the suffering and exploitation of others).

May we continue to work for the kingdom of justice and compassion and inclusion, if we want to see long-lasting, genuine, change in the world.

Footnote: With thanks to the late Fr Albert Nolan, OP, a South African Dominican priest, theologian and writer, whose book “*Jesus Before Christianity*” inspired this article. Fr Nolan passed away on October 17, 2022.

● Anil Netto is a freelance writer and activist based in Penang. He believes we are all called to build the kingdom of God in this world.



... meanwhile”

Professor Joanne Lim

I’ve always admired Indian cooking for its aroma and how beautifully the spices mix and mingle to invoke our inner senses. The best *vindaloo*, fish curry and *thoran* require a sizeable portion of mustard seeds...tempered at just the right level of heat to enhance its flavour. A little under or a little over and you are almost assured of an unforgiving bitter dish. Little mustard seeds thrown in at the right time play such a pivotal role.

In Matthew 17:20, the parable of the mustard seed reminds us about the size of our faith and the power our faith holds... “if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘move from here to there’, and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you”. Yet, sometimes we lose sight of what our faith requires us to do. Is this faith meant to move mountains only for ourselves?

All around us we witness much bitterness and distrust. Close friends express their struggles at staying focused on the Lord: “I’ve lost sight of Him”, “He seems terribly far away”. A family member recently stopped attending Mass justifying that “going to church isn’t for me, it is too tiresome”. A single mother was cheated of 20 years of her life savings by a rich Datuk who promised her a home — he

saw an opportunity in her desperation. Two weeks ago, a student attempted to end her life because of a broken relationship followed by a tarnished reputation on social media — she became a victim of cancel culture and was ostracised by her friends. A 45-year-old entrepreneur with five children, the youngest suffering from leukaemia, received notice of termination from work five days before Christmas...his wife left home the next day. There is no denying that life is filled with unimaginable challenges — but with faith as small as a mustard seed, nothing is impossible. I ask myself, as Catholic and amidst my own struggles, do I have what it takes to respond?

Pope Francis says it best in his New Year message of Peace, “No one can be saved alone”. Even mustard seeds need each other to flavour a dish, they can’t do it alone! In that light, the biggest challenge in 2023 is perhaps not to focus on ourselves and our problems... but on others...our community, our family, friends, neighbours, even strangers. To do so, we need to honestly ask ourselves what we are doing amidst all the injustice, poverty, and discrimination we see around us? Are we mostly standing by, watching, doing nothing?

We need to appreciate that we are all called to make a difference — are we going to witness a fellow Catholic leave the faith, shrug and say “ah well, that’s his choice...he must have been misled”. Are we going to sit and watch as socially “powerful” people ruin

the lives of others who are weaker, torment, cheat and strip them of what’s left of their dignity and self-worth? How many more suicides must be witnessed to realise that there is a perpetuating psychological problem that plagues our society — perhaps due to an overly individualistic culture? Haven’t we had enough of talking about ourselves and parading our lives on social media so others can eat their heart out? Are we done with being pretentious and appearing to be “holier than thou”? I sometimes wonder, do I fall into this trap as well?

I visited Vietnam recently and realise their deep sense of accomplishment and togetherness in all they do. A country that was ruined to bits and pieces picked themselves up without show, pomp or false supremacy. Maybe we do have a lot to learn from communities like this. Catholic/Christian communities in places like Vietnam and nearby Singapore are growing in many tangible ways. I sometimes wonder as I enter a local church post pandemic, can we in Malaysia attest to a growing faith, or are we turning people away because of our petty indifferences on matters like prayer projection and song selections?

There’s so much more to do even here in Malaysia among ourselves and for others; I engage with young people daily and they need new inspiring ideas to keep their faith alive; the plight of people living on the margins, the migrant, and refugee; when was the last time we saw them beside us in church?

Do we all sometimes look good, hale and hearty? Who sits beside you week-in and week-out in church? Is it the sick, hungry or terminally ill...the widow, the single parent, our brother who is contemplating conversion to another faith. Do we pray enough for them at Mass? Are we equipped enough in our faith to lead people (back) to the Lord? They need us as much as we need them, we cannot get saved alone. God is “tempering” us (and our faith), so that at just the right time, we will be able to transform, to intervene, to be agents of change and unity. Do you hear that call? Did COVID-19 teach us anything at all? It certainly cannot be all about money or influence, popularity and fame.

...meanwhile, can I put aside my flaws and failures to be one with the last, the least, the lost, and the little? Will you help me as we journey through 2023 together? Like mustard seeds in this dish together, we need to look out for these (many) opportunities, to be present not only for ourselves, but more importantly, for *others*. Because a recipe never calls for a single mustard seed...it needs to be of adequate quantum to be seen, tasted, and heard crackling in the pan... likewise our faith must be shared in order to bring about God’s salvation.

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

As He tempers our faith



Fr Ron Rolheiser

The one and the many — ecumenical and interfaith relations

One of the most ancient problems in philosophy is the question of ‘the one and the many’, whether reality is ultimately a unity or a plurality and how these interrelate. We might ask the same question regarding the plurality of religious faiths, churches, and forms of worship in our world. Is there some inherent oneness there or is it all plurality without anything binding us together in some kind of community that transcends our differences?

At the risk of being misunderstood, here’s my perspective. All of us in the world who have a sincere belief share a common faith because, ultimately we share a common God. Moreover, since we share a common God, we also share a common problem; namely, we struggle equally in trying to conceptualise this non-conceptualisable God. The first dogma about God in all valid religions is that God is holy and ineffable, meaning that God cannot ever be circumscribed and grasped in a concept. By definition, it is impossible to capture infinity in a concept (like trying to have a concept of the highest number it is possible to count to.) Since God is infinite, all attempts to conceptualise God fall short.

All legitimate faiths have this problem in common, and this should keep us humble in our religious language. Further still, beyond our common struggle to have a concept of God, we also all struggle to understand God

as actually loving universally and unconditionally. All religions and all denominations struggle not to make God tribal, biased or lacking in full love and understanding. In Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, for example, where we all believe in the same God, we also all tend to conceptualise that God as male, celibate, and frowning most of the time. Not exactly the ineffable, unconditionally loving God of revelation.

So, what’s our task? Our task as believers is to move towards an ever-deepening empathy with each other, across all denominational and religious lines. That is the real route for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. At the risk of sounding heretical or disloyal to my own faith tradition, I say this. Our task is not to set out to make converts, to try to persuade others to join our own Church. Our task is to enter ever more deeply, faithfully, and lovingly into our own Church and denomination, even as we strive to be in deeper empathy with all others who worship God in ways different than we do.

The renowned ecclesialogist, Avery Dulles taught that the way forward for Christian ecumenism and interreligious dialogue is not the way of conversion, of trying to get others to convert to our particular Church. The way forward (in his words) is the way of “progressive gradualism”, namely, of each of us being ever more faithful to God within our tradition so that

as each of us grows closer to God (and, for Christians, to Christ) we will grow closer to each other and to all people of sincere faith. The unity we seek lies not in one Church or faith community eventually converting all others to join it, but in everyone of sincere faith becoming progressively more faithful to God so that the unity we desire can take place sometime in the future, contingent on our own deeper fidelity inside our own faith tradition.

Our task then is not that of trying to convert others to join our own Church, but of moving more deeply into our own Church, even as we strive to be in an ever-deeper empathy with other churches and other faiths. We need to be brothers and sisters to each other, recognising that we already have a shared God, a shared humanity, and shared heartaches.

I work in a doctoral programme in spirituality that draws students from many different Christian denominations. During the five years of their programme, these students study together, socialise together, commiserate together, and pray together (though only occasionally in a formal church service). Interestingly, during the 10 years, we have had the programme, we have not had a single conversion of one person to another denomination. Rather, every one of our graduates has left the program with a deeper love and understanding of his or

her own tradition — and a deeper love and understanding of other faith traditions.

This does not imply that all religions are equal, but rather that none of us is living out the full truth and that the path forward lies in a deeper personal conversion within our own faith and a more empathic relationship to other faiths.

I leave you with a poem, my own:

The One and the Many

*Different peoples, one earth
Different beliefs, one God
Different languages, one heart
Different ways of falling, one law of gravity
Different energies, one Spirit
Different scriptures, one Word
Different forms of worship, one desire
Different histories, one destiny
Different strengths, one fragility
Different disciplines, one aim
Different approaches, one road
Different faiths - one Father, one Mother,
one earth, one sky, one beginning, one end.*

● **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.

Priest with autism offers prayer resource for others

When one seeks guidance about how to improve in a particular sport, it is preferable to get it from someone who has played that sport. When one seeks guidance regarding an addiction, one who is well into recovering from it is an excellent resource.

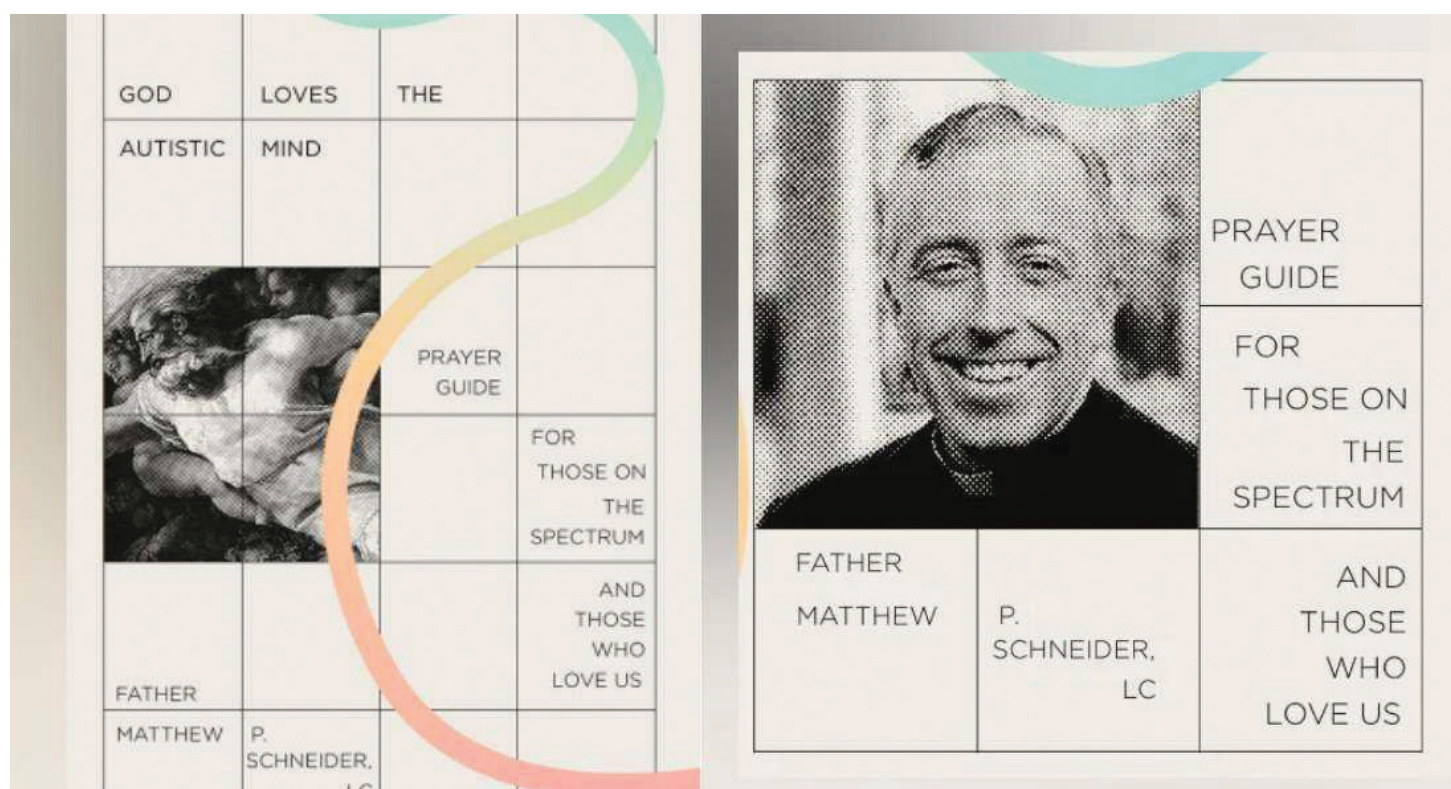
Thus, it makes sense for autistic people and their families seeking better ways to pray to get direction from an autistic person, especially when the person giving it is a Catholic priest. That is how Father Matthew P. Schneider, a member of the Legionaries of Christ, sees his goal in writing *God Loves the Autistic Mind*.

The priest begins by sharing his story and giving a summary of how autistic people pray differently than neurotypicals, i.e., those who have a “standard system of connectivity.” The former’s prayer, he notes, focuses on information, while the latter’s is emotional.

He writes, “The autistic logical foundation tends to be more solid than the more emotional foundation neurotypicals may have for their spiritual life. We autistics often need a reason: ... If you say I should do X because you say so, I will pretty much ignore you. If you give me a decent reason, I will generally follow through. We need a reason why, but once we have that reason, we remain steadfast in our resolve.”

In the first part of the book, Fr Schneider provides an overview — primarily by comparing and contrasting how autistic people and neurotypicals think and how knowing this is critical to their prayer lives. He familiarises readers with words, e.g., stimming, that are an integral part of the autistic mind.

He addresses myths about autism, including the idea held by some that it is some sort of demonic possession. He relates



Cover image of Fr Matthew P. Schneider's book 'God Loves the Autistic Mind: Prayer Guide for Those on the Spectrum and Those Who Love Us.' (UCA News Photo/Pauline Books and Media/frmatthewlc.com)

the story of a woman who was the subject of an attempted exorcism.

He also notes that autistic people, even in adulthood, are likely to pray in a “childlike” manner, which he writes “refers to someone who relates to God simply, a person for whom faith and the spiritual world seem ordinary in this life,” adding that “childlike” is different than the self-centredness and pettiness of one who is “childish.”

While the first part reads like a research paper, complete with footnotes, the second part of *God Loves the Autistic Mind* is

engaging, as it includes 52 meditations, several of which include the personal stories of autistic people, including the author's, a Scripture passage and a reflection. Topics include *Jesus Loves Me as an Autistic*, *From Loneliness to Being Alone with God* and *Remain Watchful in Our Own Lives*.

Fr Schneider considers *God Loves the Autistic Mind* a “first attempt at enculturating the faith to autistics. I don't expect it to be perfect, but I do intend to keep some important truths in mind: the orthodoxy of the Catholic faith and the

reality of being autistic.”

This first attempt is important because of the autistic faithful for whom it was written. However, tighter editing, e.g., elimination of the frequent and distracting use of “I think,” would have made it a better book. Nonetheless, it is eye-opening for neurotypicals and one that autistic people might find affirming in their prayer lives. As Fr Schneider writes: “We need to avoid stigmatising autism and recognise that autistics are called to be and can become saints.” — ucanews.com

Little Catholics' Corner

WHEN I READ THE BIBLE, I CAN...



DRAW IT

Draw a picture of what I read.

RESEARCH IT

Use the info in my Bible to find out:

- who wrote this part?
- who did they write it to?
- why was it important to write down?
- where is this in the timeline of the Bible?

IMAGINE IT

Imagine myself in the story

What does it feel/smell/taste/look like?



SING IT

Does this passage remind me of a song?

If not, I can make up my own song!

Does this passage remind of another Bible passage? What does this show me about God? Is God asking me to do something in response to this?

ASK IT

WRITE IT

Write a favourite verse or sentence. I can use in fancy lettering if I like!

PRAY IT

Change each sentence a bit to turn the words into a prayer.

PLAY IT

I can act it out or reenact it with stuffed animals, make up a dance, shape it out of play dough, or build it with blocks.

SPEAK IT

Read it out loud. I can use dramatic voices, weird accents, or read it to someone else.

Hello children,

The Third Sunday of Ordinary Time is the 'Sunday of the Word of God' — a day, instituted by Pope Francis on the Feast of St Jerome in 2019. It is devoted to the celebration and study of Sacred Scripture. Do you have a Bible that you read God's word from?

Today we also hear about Jesus beginning His mission of preaching and healing. First, He tells people they should repent of their sins.

Why do we need to repent of our sins? Why don't we just stop thinking about the bad things we did and start trying to be good?

Well, pretend your soul is like a garden. When you sin, it's like making a big hole in the ground. You can't grow flowers in a hole, and someone might trip on it and make the hole bigger. That's what can happen with sins too — little sins can cause bigger ones.

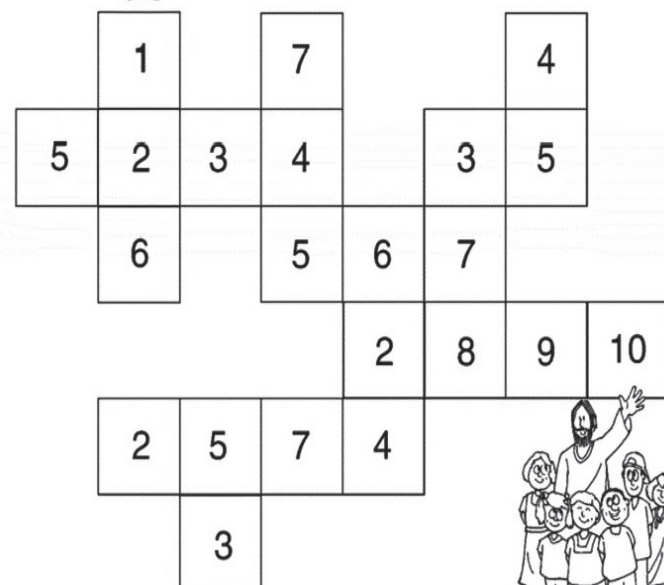
When you are sorry for your sins and go to Confession, it's like filling the holes and planting flowers there. Let us keep our souls like a smooth garden and the 'holes' regularly patched up by going for Confession and being sincerely sorry for our sins.

To everyone celebrating the Lunar New Year ... wishing you and your family love, peace, good health, and prosperity. Gong Xi Fa Cai.

Love Aunty Gwen



Help the child find her way to Jesus.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Create a paper mobile and fill in some of Jesus' promises to help us remember and share The Good News

Gives us life abundantly

Jesus heals the sick

Love us and sent His Son

Casts out demons

The Kingdom of heaven is near

Raises the dead

Cleanses the lepers

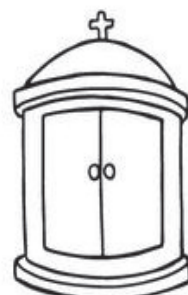


SCAVENGER HUNT

Look around your church for the items below. Colour or check the box next to each item you discover.



☐ Monstrance



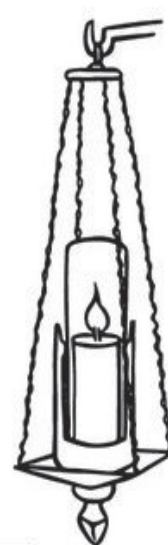
☐ Tabernacle



☐ Crucifix



☐ Stations of the Cross



☐ Sanctuary Lamp



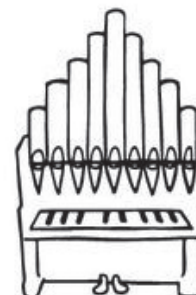
☐ Stained Glass Window



☐ Presider's Chair



☐ Baptismal Font



☐ Organ



☐ Hymnal



☐ Statue



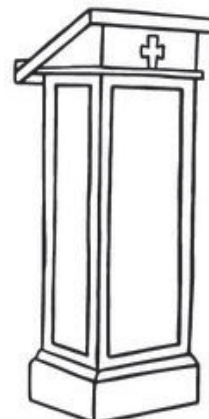
☐ Votive



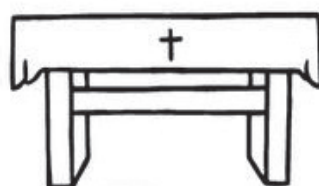
☐ Paschal Candle



☐ Cruets



☐ Ambo



☐ Alter

YOUTH

JANUARY 22, 2023

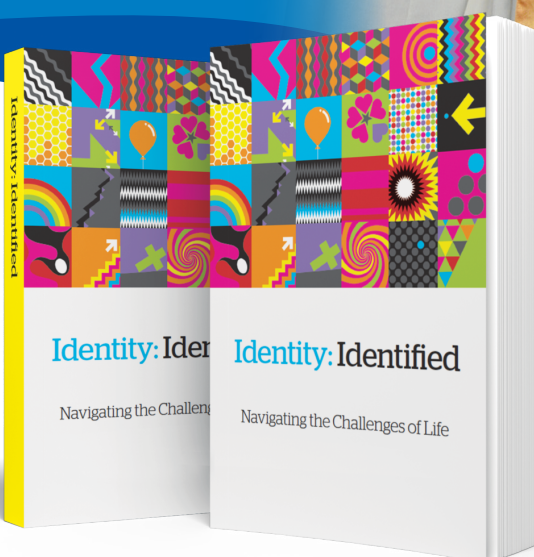
Know your identity in Jesus



It is very easy for bystanders to pass judgment on young people who make questionable life choices that eventually land them in some sticky situations. But the truth of the matter is, until and unless we know what is going on in their hearts and minds, their decisions will always baffle those around them.

Speaking from personal experience, it is very hard to know who to trust with our inner most struggles, lest we get a long and unnecessary lecture, or worse, be criticised and/or humiliated. Sharing our thoughts and struggles requires a lot of courage on the young adult's part. While I was blessed to have found adults who listened to me with an open mind and heart, this helped me navigate through my issues. Unfortunately, not everyone was as fortunate as I was. Many, way too many, youth fall through the cracks and the enemy simply swallows them up whole. The most talked about issue of late is gender and identity, which is the very essence of who we are as humans.

The Holy Father was so burdened by the issues that are ravaging the youth that he convened a special synod to address these



issues in 2018.

The main purpose of this synod was to identify the challenges that youths face and to offer practical advice and, of course, hope. Hence, the Bible Society responded to his call with the Youth New Testament Bible aptly named, *Identity Identified*. The Bible

was launched in Malaysia at the Eucharistic celebration during the Solemn Declaration of the Minor Basilica of St Anne by Rt Rev Bishop Sebastian Francis and the Bible Society of Malaysia, January 8, 2023.

Rev Matthew K. Punnoose, the General Secretary of the Bible Society of Malaysia, said that the interactive and trendy Bible has 24 inserts and highlighted key passages within the New Testament that are designed to help youths navigate life's challenges while understanding and securing their unique identity in Jesus.

The Bible also touches on some very hard to speak about topics like suicide, depression, sexuality, sexual orientation and social media, to name a few. Youth will be able to get spiritually guided answers to their complex questions. The most interesting part of this Bible is that there are QR codes in the Bible that youths can scan that will lead them to a series of videos made by others who have struggled with the similar issues and found ways to cope.

The Pope has given his blessing for this Bible and the hope is that the youth will make this Bible their constant companion and have a personal, intimate and real relationship with Jesus. Because, when you have Jesus, you have everything. — **By Carmel Dominic**

MORE THAN A THOUSAND VOLUNTEERS MEET IN PREPARATION FOR WYD LISBON 2023

LISBON: Volunteers, team leaders, and volunteer pivots gathered on January 8 at the Sacred Heart Church in Lisbon for the first meeting of 2023.

The meeting brought together volunteers who are already preparing for World Youth Day (WYD) Lisbon 2023, both at the central and parish level. The afternoon began with the celebration of the Eucharist, presided over by Bishop Joaquim Mendes, Auxiliary Bishop of Lisbon, and continued with a presentation about the path that the volunteers will take until WYD Lisbon 2023.

The Auxiliary Bishop of Lisbon, dur-

ing his homily, recalled the words of Pope Francis, where he mentioned that “to be a volunteer is to be a craftsman of mercy.” “I thank God for each of you, for your availability, for your generosity to serve this beautiful project of the mission of the Church, which is the World Youth Day”, he added.

On the Sunday that celebrated the Epiphany of the Lord, Bishop Joaquim Mendes invited the volunteers to try “to be the stars that guide, to the encounter with Him, the young people from all over the world that will come to the World Youth Day”.

During the first session of the afternoon,

Margarida Manaia, responsible for the Direction of Reception and Volunteering (DAV), stressed that “being a volunteer is the best thing about World Youth Day” and that “this service to others in WYD is to embody the theme of WYD Lisbon 2023”.

In addition, the director of the DAV stressed that “there is no WYD without volunteers”, asking everyone to “be enthusiastic about WYD”, because “only then can we infect others”.

Beatriz Ribeiro, head of the central team, emphasised the importance of this type of initiative and meeting since it allows us to “realise that WYD is really about getting

closer”, as well as “to understand what our role will be in this world meeting”.

This young woman from Coruche, who will coordinate the central volunteers who will collaborate in the tasks and activities related to the central events of WYD, believes that her role will allow, “above all, help people to meet Christ and have this spiritual experience, besides all the moments of joy and fun”.

The meeting also continued with a moment for team leaders and volunteer pivots, where useful information . — **Lisboa2023**



Bringing joy to the poor and needy



The children enjoying themselves.

KUALA LUMPUR: The Parish Integral Human Development, Youth and Altar Servers' Ministries of the Church of St John the Evangelist (CSJE) jointly organised a Christmas party for children from the Lai Catholic Migrant Community (LCC) and CSJE's adoptees on January 7. A total of 67 attended.

The morning kicked off with outdoor fun and games at the St John's Institution field. The group then visited the Nativity crib at Cardijn House, the residence of Archbishop Julian Leow. The LCC leader explained the significance of each figurine in the crib and also the meaning of Christmas to the children. They were honoured by Archbishop Julian's presence. The prelate welcomed them and gave the group a blessing before they made their way to

the grounds of CSJE, where they continued the day with lots of fun activities, including face painting.

There were party packs for each child and a free flow of snacks and drinks. Non-stop Christmas music filled the air. A singing Santa brought much laughter, singing, chatter and fun. After a KFC lunch, the children gave a performance which culminated with *We Are the World* which was sung with gusto and joined by all present.

Santa and Santarina entertained the children and helped hand out Christmas gifts before the elated children lined up to board their bus home when the party ended. The organisers and volunteers also enjoyed an amazing day, bringing much Christmas cheer to the children!

Plastic bottle caps open up future for youth in South Sudan

SOUTH SUDAN: From Villaciambra, Italy, to Juba, South Sudan, a 5,000-kilometre-long journey tells the story of the "Open Caps" project. Tons of bottle caps were collected, sold, and recycled, providing a way to pay for scholarships for young people in South Sudan. The African nation still suffers from various crises, but people are finding hope and a chance in life through education.

It all began in a small village of just over a thousand people in the province of Palermo, a place called Villaciambra, at the Don Bruno di Bella Oratory of the parish of Maria Santissima del Rosario. During Sunday Mass, Marta and Antonino heard the parish priest speaking about the collection and sale of these plastic bottle caps with

a 'miraculous' consideration. They were used to finance charitable initiatives for poor people in difficult circumstances.

This time they have focused their solidarity and given hope to children in a village near the capital of South Sudan, offering them scholarships at the secondary school, "Bro Augusto Memorial College." The institution makes up part of a number of projects sponsored by the Italian Bishops' Conference (CEI) through its Committee and Service for Charitable Action in the Developing World. Projects also include the construction of the nearby Good Shepherd Peace Centre, where Marta and Antonino stayed during their trip, and the Catholic University of South Sudan.

"Today there is more need than ever to share good news stories, and this is one!" exclaims Marta, as she explains the whole process that turns bottle caps into money used to educate those where illiteracy is rampant, as it is here.



Some of the recipients of the scholarships funded by the sale of bottle caps

Sustainability offers a future

All the families in and around Villaciambra have become zealous 'hoarders' of bottle caps. They put them aside, involve their children, even the youngest, and once they have filled their bags, they take them to the oratory. The collection point for the bottle caps involving churches in the city of Palermo participating in the initiative, is the parish of Santa Lucia, thanks to the support of Claudio Parotti, a Comboni brother who lived in Colombia for many years.

The caps are taken to storage areas, in their own cars and vans, to a space made available, free of charge by a Villaciambra resident and then emptied into "Big Bags" weighing 160-170 kg each. These huge bags are then taken to an area company that recycles the bottle caps and resells the semi-finished product to other companies that use them to produce pipes, utensils, and household accessories. In previous years, the sale of bottle caps made it possible to raise fairly large sums of money, which have been allocated to promote charitable and solidarity-based activities. Now this solidarity has reached Juba, South Sudan.



The "Big Bags" of plastic caps weighing 160-170 tonnes each.



Students in class at the Bro Augusto Memorial College Secondary School in the village of Kit, Juba.

Education and moving forward

"Every time something happens in South Sudan, the first to lose out are young people," Marta Genova recounts. "The government, perpetually at war with the so-called rebels, suspends lessons at every hint of a crisis, blocking educational or training projects, even those set up by the local Church, thereby halting their only chance of moving forward. With Open Caps, a different way has opened up, allowing 15 boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 20 to study and obtain a diploma, a huge step forward, even if it seems like a drop in the ocean."

"We met all the students and especially those who had received scholarships. They knew nothing and while we explained what was happening to their lives (through the project), they looked moved and their eyes showed happiness, as they listened to us with amazement. All they knew was that one day, Fr Mario Pellegrino, a missionary for years in those lands, had taken them off the streets and from the poverty of the villages, but they did not expect

that they would be able to also study. They were taken aback and moved to discover that in a faraway city, there are people who think about them and want to try to help them. This opened up a broader reflection, also on what they themselves could do one day for their country. Everyone thanked us. One boy in particular had lost his parents, some of his siblings, and yet he was saying all the time how happy he was to be there at school.

"Letting them know how things are going and showing the result of their actions creates a powerful impression on them and leaves a lasting message that can only do good and motivate them to do more. If you know that those bottle caps will help people who have a name, a face, even if they live on another continent, you will set those bottle caps aside with care, you will take time to bring them to the collection centre, and you will become a key part of the project and do it with joy." — By Cecilia Seppia, *Vatican News*

For enquiries, please contact:
Email: advertisement@herald.com.my
Tel: 03-2026 8291

MEMORIAM



15 JUNE 1933 - 28 JAN 2015

8th ANNIVERSARY

In Loving Memory of
**THERESA
BALAKRISHNAN**

*Dearly missed and fondly
remembered by*
*Husband, Children,
Grandchildren, Relatives,
Friends & Students.*

**2nd Anniversary
In Ever Loving
Memory of my
beloved wife,
AMY PHILOMENA
ZUZARTEE**
15.04.1953 - 26.01.2021



Dearly missed by husband
Vincent Shanmugan
and loved ones.

Everyone who calls on the
name of the Lord will be
saved. – Romans 10:13

**22nd Anniversary
In Loving Memory of**



**Henry Pereira
Departed: 1-2-2001**

*May the road rise up
to meet you, may the wind
be always at your back,
may warm rains
fall softly upon your fields,
and until we meet again,
may God hold you
in the palm of His hand.*

Deeply loved and missed by
wife Lucy Pereira,
children and all loved ones.

**TENTH ANNIVERSARY
WITH FOND MEMORIES OF OUR
BELOVED BARBARA BONNEY aka "Acca"**



Called to The Lord on 26th January 2013

*The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.
To all who received Him He gave power to become
children of God.*

John 1:14.12

Affectionately remembered by loved ones.

**17th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of our Beloved Mama**



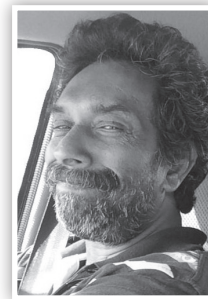
**Rosa Pereira (Dass)
Called to rest:
28-01-2006**

*Those we love
don't go away
They walk
beside us everyday
Unseen, unheard
but always near
Still loved, still missed,
and very dear.*

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

Always loved
and remembered by:
Children, sons-in-law,
daughters-in-law,
grandchildren,
great-grandchildren and
a host of relatives
and friends.

**4th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of
Joe De Cruz**



20/10/1960 – 26/01/2019

*Your life was a blessing,
your memory a treasure,
you are loved beyond
words and missed
beyond measure.*

Dearly missed by
all loved ones.

**20th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of**



**Alphonso Sta Maria
(Sunny)
Departed: 24-01-2003**

Deeply missed
and fondly remembered
by loving wife, children,
their spouses and
grandchildren.

In Loving Memory Of
SEBASTY EMMANUEL
15 May 1920 – 27 January 2011



To live in hearts
we leave behind
is not to die. –
Thomas
Campbell

*Remembering you is easy,
I do it every day.
Missing you is the heartache
That will never go away*

Well done, good and faithful servant.
You have been faithful over a little;
I will set you over much.
Enter into the joy of your master. – Matthew 25:21

*"I will not forget you! See, I
have engraved you on the palms
of my hands" - Isaiah 49:15-16*



**11th Anniversary
In Ever Loving Memory of
Weeratunga Paul Perera**
Returned to the Lord on
1st Feb 2012

Dearly missed by
Daughters: Pamela & Pauline
Sons-in-law: Christopher & Jerome
Grandchildren: Glenn, Ashley,
Sara Jane, Sherrellyn
and loved ones.

**6th Anniversary
In cherished memory of**



**Kandamkary
Mathai Cherian**
**12 October 1927 –
25 January 2017**

*Dearest dad
Our very grateful thanks
for the great blessings
we received from you.
Praise be to God!*
Your loving family



40TH DAY MEMORIAL PRAYERS

Rebecca @ Rebena C Lawrence
**Returned to the LORD on
19th December 2022**

The family of Rebecca Lawrence wishes to
express their heartfelt thanks and deepest
appreciation to all relatives and friends for
your kind attendance, support, and floral
tributes during this difficult time in our lives.

A MEMORIAL MASS WILL BE
CELEBRATED ON SATURDAY 28TH
JANUARY 2023 AT 6.00 PM AT RISEN
CHRIST CATHOLIC CHURCH AIR ITAM
PENANG AND 6.00 AM INDIA TIME AT
ST PETER'S CHURCH, KANNATHURA,
KERALA STATE, SOUTH INDIA.

*PLEASE TREAT THIS AS
A PERSONAL INVITATION*

**5th Year Death Anniversary
Rest In Heavenly Peace Dearest Papa
Vincent V. J. Fernz**
11 Jan 1949 – 15 Dec 2017

*"The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green
pastures. He leads me beside still waters
Even though I walk through the valley of
the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me"
(Psalm 23:1-4)*

Dearly missed by wife, Mdm. Lucy D'Cruz,
Children & Spouse, Grandchildren,
Family & Friends.

A Memorial Mass was held on 17 December 2022
at St Joseph's Church Plentong J.B. followed by
Dinner to celebrate his life at Wan Li Restaurant
Renaissance Hotel J.B.

We thank relatives and friends
from near and far who attended the same.



**10th Anniversary
of our Beloved
ANBU NATHAN
s/o SANTIAGO
AROKIASAMY**
**14.07.1936 –
01.02.2013**

Formerly of St. John's Institution, KL.
Ex-Headmaster of PJ Road 10 school;
SEA Park School; SRK Kelana Jaya and formerly
of MAZ International School, P.J. Ex-Sports
official in MSSS, MSSM, SAAA & MAAU. RIP.

Always remembered and loved by
sister, nieces & nephews & loved ones.

Queenie: 016-3625224

In Loving Memory of

6th Anniversary



**Catherine Ho
Lai Koon**

(19-3-1939 to 27-1-2017)

2nd Anniversary



**Joseph Fong
Meng Tao**

(16-6-1933 to 3-2-2021)

*You are missed but always loved,
You are gone but never forgotten,
We know your souls are at peace above,
In eternal joy in the Lord's kingdom in heaven.*
Deeply missed by your children, grandchildren,
siblings, relatives and friends.

Celebrating Catechetical Sunday, January 29, 2023

Renewing the Church with Families of Faith (1 Cor. 16:13-14)

St Paul's farewell message to the household of Stephanas, one of the first active families of the early Church, must be the foundational factors of renewal for modern families: "Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love." (1 Cor. 16:13-14). The household of Stephanas exemplified the principle of doing all things in love because they devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints (1 Cor. 16:15).

Perhaps it is through the principle of the "ministry of saints" that we can revive our families again. The "ministry of saints" exemplifies biblical love, where one seeks the best for the one being ministered to, that is, for the other. Just as the family of Stephanas did. Filled with the Spirit of God, they submitted to the leadership of the Church of Corinth (Eph. 5:18-21), worked together and took on difficult tasks in their ministry for the Lord. Besides pouring their lives into serving the Church, Stephanas and his family also prayed together – "The family that prays together – stays together".

Surely, there can be no better basic organism of a society than a family which



is founded on the belief in God. However, the pressures, challenges, and realities facing modern families today make it difficult for families to intentionally grow in faith together. Societal and cultural trends point toward individualism, atheism, pluralism, personal choice, and instant gratification, all of which challenge the Christian family these days.

Our religious education programmes are packed with youngsters preparing to receive

their First Holy Communion but then the enrolment often drops dramatically in the ensuing years. Why don't they come back? After preparing for and receiving Confirmation, many good-hearted young people move on to other things. Why do so few remain in the Church or involve themselves regularly in service projects or youth groups?

Perhaps with our catechism classes, faith formation programmes, youth programmes, Bible camps, retreats and rallies for youth and many other well-meaning programmes, we may have, unfortunately, communicated to families, and especially to parents, that the best thing they can do for their children and teenagers is to "drop them off" at church, and we will make disciples out of them.

But our disciple-making efforts seem to have yielded less positive results than we had hoped for, and so we conclude that families and parents are not doing their part. We remind them over and over again that they are the primary educators of their children's faith. Yet, why don't they behave as such? Have they got their priorities mixed-up? Or could it be that we have conditioned them to "behave" in this way?

It's long overdue. We must raise the bar in our commitment to challenge and support all families in their faith-building efforts. We must raise the bar in terms of our expectations for families and households to make a stronger commitment to explore faith at home. We need to shift the paradigm of household faith-growth from something viewed as optional and hoped-for to something that is expected; from extraordinary to ordinary.

Ultimately, renewal in the Church is the work of God. However, He works through us. The privilege and the challenge belong to us. We need to be watchful, to stand firm in faith, be courageous, be strong, (cf. 1 Cor 16:13-14) and uphold faith, hope and charity — the foundational rocks on which human love in families are built upon.

Finally, "Renewing the Church with Families of Faith" can only be realised if the definitive aim of catechesis is actualised by putting "people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Spirit" (*Catechesi Tradendae* 5).

Families are central in catechesis

Dear People of God,

In 2022, the Catechetical Sunday Message on the theme *Family: A Path to Holiness* touched on the important and irreplaceable role that parents and families play in the area of catechesis.

Parents take on the responsibility of educating their children in the faith by virtue of the Sacrament of Marriage. This is why the Church calls parents the primary catechists of their children. In fact, the Church has always regarded the family as integral to the ministry of catechesis.

In view of this, the Malaysian Catechetical Commission (MCC) has decided to continue placing emphasis on the role of the family in catechesis. For Catechetical Sunday 2023, the MCC has selected the theme: *Renewing the Church with Families of Faith*. In the Catechetical Sunday 2023 message, some key questions are put forward. For example: in spite of the efforts made in catechising our young people in the parish, why is it that a large number of them don't come back to Church? Why do so few remain in the Church or are not regularly involved in service projects or youth groups?

In addition, although we repeatedly remind parents of their responsibility as primary catechists, could we, by having catechism classes and regular faith formation events and activities in the parish for young people, be communicating to families (and especially to parents), that the best thing they can do for their children and teenagers is to 'drop them off' at church, and we will make disciples out of them? Could it be that we have conditioned them to think that catechesis is the responsibility of the par-

ish, and more specifically, of the catechists?

These are difficult questions that we have to ask, and finding the right answers is even more challenging. What is clear however, is that all of us need to work together to "raise the bar in our commitment to challenge and support all families in their faith-building efforts". As stated in the 2023 Message, we have "to shift the paradigm of household faith growth from something viewed as optional and hoped-for, to something that is expected; from extraordinary to ordinary".

On that note, I am happy to share that we will soon be releasing a parents' guide to catechesis, titled *As For Me & My House*. This publication, among other key matters pertaining to family catechesis, will explore the paradigm shift spoken about in the 2023 Message. This book aims to assist parents in the formation of their children's faith, and give form and substance to their family's unique spirituality. Let us reinforce our efforts to provide proper and effective catechesis to our children and young people in the home, and in the parish community as a whole.

Finally, on behalf of the Bishops of Malaysia, I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to parish priests, catechetical coordinators and catechists, parents and guardians and all who are involved in the ministry of catechesis: May Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd lead and guide us.

Yours in Christ,

Julian Leow Beng Kim

+Most Reverend Julian Leow Beng Kim, D.D.
Episcopal President,
Malaysian Catechetical Commission

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