

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

Rom 8:18-19



Calling ministry heads to make headway

■ P5



Spreading kindness at the grassroots

■ P6



Milestone celebration for Canossians

■ P7

Vatican offers plenary indulgence for Grandparents' Day

ROME: The Vatican will again offer a plenary indulgence to mark the third World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly on July 23.

The indulgence can be received by grandparents, the elderly, and all Catholics who, "motivated by the true spirit of penance and charity," participate in Pope Francis' July 23 Mass in St Peter's Basilica or another Grandparents' Day celebration, or who visit the elderly, the Vatican said.

Chosen by Pope Francis, the theme of Grandparents' Day 2023 comes from a verse in the Gospel of Luke: "His mercy is from age to age."

It will be marked this year on July 23, the Sunday before the Feast of Saints Anne and Joachim, the grandparents of Jesus.

The concession of the plenary indulgence for Grandparents' Day 2023 was granted by a July 5 decree from Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, the head of the Vatican's Apostolic Penitentiary, a tribunal of the Apostolic See with jurisdiction over indulgences and the absolution of the gravest sins.

An indulgence is defined by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as "a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven."

The usual conditions for a plenary indulgence require the individual to be in a state of grace, have complete detachment from sin, and pray for the Pope's intentions.

The person must also sacramentally confess their sins and receive Communion, up to about 20 days before or after the prayers for the indulgence.

In his decree, Cardinal Piacenza asked priests to be more available to hear confessions in light of the possible indulgence.

"So that, therefore, this opportunity to attain divine grace through the power of the Keys of the Church may more easily be implemented through pastoral charity, this Penitentiary firmly requests priests equipped with the appropriate faculties to hear confessions, to make



(Vatican Media)

themselves available, with a ready and generous spirit, for the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance," he said.

The July 5 decree stipulated that one way to receive the plenary indulgence for Grandparents' Day is by dedicating time on July 23 to visiting the elderly, particularly those who are sick, disabled, or abandoned. A phone or video call can also count, the Vatican said.

Another way is to attend Pope Francis' Grandparents' Day Mass at the Vatican or another Grandparents' Day Mass.

Those who would like to participate in the indulgence but are unable to leave their homes due to sickness, age, or another serious reason, the decree said, can unite themselves spiritually to the celebrations of the day through "offering to the Merciful God their prayers, pain, and the suffering of their lives" while watching the Pope's Mass or another celebration on TV or online.

Pope Francis, who often speaks about the dignity of the elderly and the importance of grandparents in passing on the faith, established the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly in 2021. — **By Hannah Brockhaus, CNA**

Importance of dialogue between generations

VATICAN: The theme for this year's World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly is "His mercy is from age to age" (Lk 1:50). The theme was chosen to be in tune with that of World Youth Day in Lisbon: *Mary arose and went with haste*, taken from Luke's Gospel. Even the short passage "His mercy from age to age" is taken from Luke's Gospel and is the end of the first part of the Magnificat, when Mary immediately goes to meet her elderly cousin Elizabeth after the Angel's annunciation. Thus, it is a theme that highlights the importance of dialogue between generations, which is fundamental for perceiving and contemplating God's merciful action on behalf of human beings.

In his message for the third World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, Pope Francis writes:

"The Lord trusts that young people, through

their relationships with the elderly, will realise that they are called to cultivate memory and recognise the beauty of being part of a much larger history. Friendship with an older person can help the young to see life not only in terms of the present and realise that not everything depends on them and their abilities. For the elderly, the presence of a young person in their lives can give them hope that their experience will not be lost and that their dreams can find fulfilment. Mary's visit to Elizabeth and their shared awareness that the Lord's mercy is from generation to generation reminds us that, alone, we cannot move forward, much less save ourselves, and that God's presence and activity are always part of something greater, the history of a people."

● To read the message in full, go to: bit.ly/3D9eDKd

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OPINION

We remain hopeful about the synod process

When the Vatican released the working document for the synod on synodality on June 20, many Catholics, including those calling for church reform, expressed hope that the next steps toward the October 2023 and 2024 gatherings will continue a process of dialogue, openness and potential for change.

We agree: The 60-page document, called the *Instrumentum Laboris*, includes several positive signs that the three-year synodal process may be the beginning of a significant shift in the Church. At the very least, it looks like it will not be a “done deal,” as were gatherings of bishops under previous popes.

Instead, most — though not all — issues raised during synodal listening sessions around the world made it into the document that is a blueprint for the conversations in Rome in the fall. The ordination of women to the priesthood is the glaring exception, though there is mention of possible “new ministries” for women to effectively participate in “discernment and decision-making bodies.”

The document does raise the possibility of women’s ordination as deacons, as well as issues of access to the priesthood for married men, reparations for sexual abuse and abuse of power, and the integration of LGBTQ+ Catholics (and it uses the term “LGBTQ+” — previously stripped from post-synodal documents).

Some of these topics have been part of previous synods (particularly the Amazon synod and the synod on youth and young people), so we can’t claim this is a first for them to be on a synod agenda. But neither have they disappeared from the documents and discussion as this synodal process has progressed, as some progressive Catholics feared.

Instead, it’s clear these are issues that are, as one activist put it, no longer “on the margins.” And they are issues that sadly prompted much of the exodus of US Catholics from regular Mass attendance



and affiliation with the Church.

The working document also focuses on how the Church can better address the challenges of the modern world, including serving the poor, migrants, the disabled and victims of sexual abuse, violence and other injustices. Such an outward-facing perspective is urgent and needed.

In addition, the format of this *Instrumentum Laboris* itself is unique. In the past, working documents served as initial drafts of the final report, but this one is structured with an introductory section followed by a series of questions meant to guide synod discussions. As *NCR* columnist Michael Sean Winters

put it: “Whoever came up with the idea of framing the document in terms of questions, rather than a draft text, deserves a bonus.” (see *HERALD*, July 9, pg 10). The lack of predetermined answers to the questions is encouraging.

To be sure, the process has not been seamless. Some bishops and pastors in the United States did the bare minimum — or less — in the first phase of the consultative conversations. During the continental phase, the bishops’ handpicked delegates for the North American grouping reportedly veered in different directions than the diocesan phase conversations. During recent synodal listening sessions with US theologians, concerns surfaced about issues missing from the continental document — especially racism. And the US bishops’ insistence that the theologians keep the conversations confidential seemed antithetical to the openness of the synodal process.

Yet, we can’t help but remain encouraged, especially given the historic addition of lay men and women who will, for the first time, be full voting members, when 370 participants meet for the first session Oct 4-29. The selection and announcement of those lay members will be the next big signal about what to expect as the synod process moves forward. — *NCR Editorial staff*

Why is the Word not accepted into our hearts?

This Sunday we have the special privilege of hearing Jesus Himself interpreting one of His parables. He gives three basic reasons why the Word is not accepted into our hearts: lack of understanding, lack of discipline, lack of prioritisation.

Our passage for today opens in this way: “Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea and begins to preach.”

Jesus leaves a confined space, goes out into the open air and enters an open space and began to preach to the people. This is the Word of God being preached to the world. We are all meant to listen to His parable. It is meant for the whole world.

Jesus speaks of the parable of the sower. We know that the sower sows far and wide, some of the seeds landing on the path where the birds eat them; some of the seed fall on rocky ground and are choked off; some fall on thorns, some on rich soil where they bear 30, 60, and 100-fold.

Before we get into the details, we must keep in mind that Jesus Himself in Person is the seed. Jesus is the *Logos*, a Greek word that means Word. The Word must take root in us! Jesus sows far and wide through various means, because He is destined for the whole world.

Think of the image of a sower sowing the seed far and wide to those who are receptive, and also the unresponsive, to those who are likely to get it, and also those unlikely to get it.

Jesus says the seed sowed on the path stands for those who hear the Word of the Kingdom without understanding it and the evil one comes and steals what is sown. I would venture to guess many Christians and churchgoers know the basics of this Gospel story; they know something of the story of Jesus but the Word takes no root.

Why? Because they don’t understand, they don’t get it. We will not understand God’s Word until we are prepared to understand it. Israel had the extensive and complex preparation for the reception of the Word.

Why did the Word come to Israel? Because the Jews were the first to hear the Word of God. Israel was the means by which the Word could be understood and received.

Next the Lord says the seed sown on the rocky ground are the ones who hear the Word but it cannot take root in them. This is because of difficulties and persecution felt by those who hear the Word but lose confidence because of worries and persecution, and their faith withers away. This happens all the time.

A lot of people get turned on by the Word. That is good, the way that God chooses to plant the seed. But because the listener lacks discipline, lacks a sense of the religious tradition, the person lacks receptivity and perseverance. The initial glow of the Word dims in time and fades.

Nothing we take seriously which is not accompanied by discipline will last. What is the sign that we don’t take things seriously? The sign is when we do not receive what is sown in us with discipline. Yes, it’s a nice thing but I am not going to fuss about it or I am not disciplining myself to practise it.

But when you take something seriously, you surround it with some kind of rigour. Is it not true that for many a sense of rigour, discipline, are lacking and with the passage of time, the practise of the faith fades?

Are we surprised that people’s convictions do not last? Are we surprised that religion is fading or is ephemeral and is regarded as a superficial reality?

Attendance at Mass has dropped tremendously throughout the world, the recent pan-

demic making things even worse! “Yes, I go to Mass when I feel like it,” say some believers. Some weary churchgoers shrug their shoulders and say, “Oh yeah, I watch it online,” as if that were enough to count as attendance at Mass.

The third problem. The seed sown around thorns, hears but is beset by worldly anxieties and hence bears no fruit. Some people hear the Word; they listen to it, but then are unable to maintain their focus and prioritisation.

The Word of God must be the central and defining dynamic of one’s life. To know the will of God, the mind of God, one has to understand His purpose and path. Without it you lose your way amidst all the conflicting voices and inclinations of the world. It does not mean that you should not be interested in a lot of other things. It is the Word of God that orders and organises all the other interests in our lives.

The Lord tells us that worldly anxieties and the lure of riches are lesser concerns. They obscure and compromise what ought to be the primary concern in our lives. How much time you spend worrying about particular concerns — home, family, reputation, work, money-making and saving — will determine how much quality time you spend pondering and praying over the Word of God.

Obviously, we have to think about daily concerns, but should they be allowed the dominant role in our lives? Do these worldly concerns, and the lure of riches choke off your interest in the Word of God? How much time in the course of the week do you even think about the Word of God? If the answer is maybe a few minutes on Sunday; then, it is not good enough. The Word of God ought to be the central organising principle of your life, otherwise it will bear no fruit.

So, what’s the nature of the good soil, in

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr William Pillai

15th Sunday of Ordinary Time (A)

Readings: Isaiah 55:10-11

Romans 8:18-23;

Gospel: Matthew 13:1-23

which the Word will grow? It is the soil that characterises our understanding of the faith. Therefore, take time to read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, study the Scriptures, and how to feel with the Church. Good soil is marked by perseverance, discipline and practice. You must surround the Word by those things or it won’t grow!

Finally, it’s good soil that is marked by a keen sense of prioritisation. When the Word of God comes first, the other concerns of your life will revolve around it, not in a way that causes burdens and anxieties. As Scripture says, “My yoke is light and my burden is easy.”

When that soil is in place then the Word will bear 30, 60, or even 100-fold. Some bear more fruit than others. St Thomas Aquinas succinctly described this distinction in his commentary as: “Thirtyfold — ‘ordinary’ Christians who observe the law; Sixtyfold — those who seek to do more than their bare duty; Hundredfold — those who take a delight in doing their very best.”

Our Lord clearly points out that birth alone does not entitle us to become members of His Kingdom. Membership in the body of the Church is no guarantee of membership in the soul of the Church. Faith comes by hearing, but salvation comes by keeping the Word and living up to it.



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

July

- 18-19 Clergy Monthly Recollection
- 20 Archdiocesan Finance Meeting
- 22 Confirmation Mass – Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras
- 23 Confirmation Mass – Church of St Joseph, Sentul
- 23 Confirmation Mass – Church of the Holy Rosary, KL



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

July

- 17 3rd Caritas Malaysia - Diocesan Directors & EA Meeting
- 22 Catholic Teachers – Johor AGM at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, JB
- 31 Memorial Mass for Bishop Emeritus James Chan – MAJODI Centre at 6pm



PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Sebastian Francis

July

- 17 Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC) - Radio Veritas Asia (RVA) via Zoom
- 18 Council of Priests' Meeting at 10.00am – Stella Maris, Penang
- 18-19 Clergy Monthly Recollection – Stella Maris, Penang
- 19-20 Candidates & Permanent Deacons' Formation – Stella Maris, Penang
- 20 Flag Raising, Blessing & Mass for St. Anne's Feast Volunteers at 7.00pm – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam
- 22 Commissioning Mass for World Youth Day 2023 Pilgrims at 7.00pm – Chapel of St Peter, Malim Nawar
- 24-30 Novena & Feast of St. Anne – Minor Basilica of St. Anne, Bukit Mertajam

Notifications and Updates

PKK/BDN/2023/07/164

1. Caritas Diocese of Penang – Launching of New Online Education Grant Application

I thank Caritas Penang on the initiatives taken to digitalise the application, approval and disbursement of education grants for the Diocese of Penang. This effort was implemented from July 1, 2023 upon completion of the training for each deanery.

2. Charis Prophetic Intercession Training for Asia Region in Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia on 14-19 August 2023

CHARIS Intercession Commission will be organising a training programme for all Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) groups, prayer groups, ministries and all who are interested. For more details, here is the link bit.ly/3JFSpmM.

3. Appointment as Assistant Head of Penang Diocesan Vocation Team (PDVT)

Fr Desmond Jansen has been appointed as Assistant Head for Penang Diocesan Vocation Team (PDVT) with effect from June 16, Feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, under the leadership of Fr Louis Loi, the Head of PDVT. We thank and pray for Fr Desmond Jansen as he takes on this new role and responsibility in assisting this team to promote and nurture vocations in the Diocese of Penang.

Bishops commend abolition of death penalty

KUALA LUMPUR: Church leaders have expressed gratitude that the long awaited abolishment of the mandatory death penalty finally came into force July 4.

Archbishop Simon Poh of Kuching said, "I am proud that Malaysia has taken the step towards this abolition. It is important that the Church, together with all faiths continue to form the conscience and safeguard the moral values in our society. The moral and spiritual education of our children are our investment in the future generations of responsible citizens."

The prelate recalled the involvement of the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) in a focussed group discussion on the mandatory death sentence and alternative sentencing organised by the Bahagian Hal Ehwal Undang-Undang of the Prime Minister's department on Dec 12, 2019.

Views of the three component bodies of CFM were shared during the discussion. Archbishop Simon who was then one of the vice-chairman of CFM and Archbishop Julian Leow (then CFM chairman) had given the views of the Catholic Church

on the death penalty, which was then presented at the dialogue session by CFM Executive Secretary, Tan Kong Beng.

The Catholic Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person", and she works with the determination for its abolition worldwide. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #2267)

In sharing his elation, Bishop of Penang Diocese, Rt Rev Sebastian Francis, said, "As Church, we have advocated with the Universal Church and Pope Francis for the abolition of the death penalty in all countries. Blessings to our legislators in Malaysia, the prayers of the Universal Church are answered in Malaysia. We continue to be in solidarity and pray for countries yet to abolish the death penalty."

Bernama reported that the Attorney-General's Chambers published a Federal Government gazette on June 30, indicating that the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform), Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said, determined the effective

date of the law.

"In exercise of the powers conferred by subsection 1(2) of the Abolition of the Mandatory Death Penalty Act 2023 (Act 846), the minister appoints July 4, 2023, as the date on which the Act comes into operation," the gazette stated.

The Act, which seeks to eliminate the mandatory death penalty, modify sentences related to life imprisonment and whipping, and address related matters, was passed by the Dewan Rakyat in April.

As per the provisions of the Act, the court is granted the discretion to impose either the death penalty or imprisonment for a duration ranging from 30 to 40 years. Additionally, if the death penalty is not imposed, the offender is liable to receive a minimum of 12 strokes of whipping as punishment.

Amendments were made to multiple laws, namely the Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, the Firearms (Increased Penalties) Act, the Arms Act, the Kidnapping Act, the Dangerous Drugs Act, and the Strategic Trade Act, in order to eliminate the mandatory death penalty.



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #138



Greetings again dear People of God.

It has been hot, and it is going to get hotter. The weather, the political scene, the upcoming state elections, TikTok and social media are heating up. The MACC checks airports and entry points to the country. Sabahans take the Federal Government to court. The passing mark in public exams here is 20 per cent.

Hot! Hot! Times: Remember the reality show, *Survivor*? The participants worked hard to outplay, outsmart, outwit and outdo. This is the game the corporate world, businessmen and politicians play today. It is to win at all cost. We will see more strife, more lies, more promises, more marriages of convenience and more betrayals. Is there an alternative way of doing things? The following ideals cannot be compromised: unity in diversity, the common good, the people first, the cry of the poor and the earth, and upholding of the constitution. The sins of the past are catching up.

A THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: Going On 80

A 70 plus year old was asked what changes he had made that made him feel good? Below is a list of some of his wise thoughts:

- After loving my parents, my siblings, my spouse, and my friends, I have started to love myself.
- I have realised that I am not "Atlas" and the world does not rest on my shoulders.
- I have stopped bargaining with vegetable and fruit vendors. A few pennies more is not going to break me, but it might help the poor fellow save for his daughter's school fees.

- I stopped telling the elderly that they've already narrated that story many times. The story makes them walk down memory lane and relive their past.
- I give compliments freely and generously. Compliments are a mood enhancer not only for the recipient but also for me. And a small tip to the recipient of a compliment...never, NEVER turn it down...just say, "Thank You."
- I walk away from people who do not value me. They may not know my worth... but I do.

A Lesson from the Senior: Learn from the experienced. There is wisdom at work. Wisdom leads one to live happy and fulfilling lives. Why wait till you are 60, 70 or 80. Listen. Learn. Live.

Announcements for this Week

1. Katolikos 2023 ended on June 29. They came from the 3 Vicariates of Malacca, North Johor and South Johor. Eighty-seven leaders, advisors and collaborators attended. Receptive young people but comfortable in their own language groups. A reminder to us to be very aware of this need.

2. Calling all Catholic Teachers in schools, the CTAJ is organising a study day and Mass, on the theme "Called to Teach, Teach from the Heart" on July 22 at CIC, JB from 9.00am-12.45pm. Invited Speaker: Ms Elizebeth Chong

3. A Zoom Training Session on Safeguarding of Minors for Clergy, Religious, Catechists, Ministry/Committee Members & Church Personnel, volunteers and staff, will be conducted by the PSO of MJD on July 22. We have been reminded by the Pope to be

PSO Compliant.

4. The Church honours Grandparents Day on July 23. A zoom programme with Dr Peter Selestine and Regina William is organised by the Diocesan Commission for Family Life & Laity of MJD, on July 23 July from 8.00pm-10.00pm.

This Week's Question and Query

The Question asks: Why are some so creative, while others remain so inexpressive?

1. Something to think about: "Before children speak, they sing. Before they write, they paint. As soon as they stand, they dance. Art is the basis of human expression".

2. Many of us have grown up too fast. Others were made to grow up. A few never had a childhood. There was no time to be just children, doing children's things. The world of adults is overpowering. The victim is the inner child, unable to express.

3. **Connect with your inner child.** Sense its presence, its playfulness and its innocence. The inner child is an essential part of you. The inner child seeks to express through the arts: sing, paint and dance. It knows no shame, no inhibitions nor embarrassment. They are spontaneous like the children who climbed all over Jesus.

Before signing off, just know: "You have two choices - to control your mind or to let your mind control you. If you conquer yourself, then you conquer the world." God bless you all. Have a great weekend. Take care.

Bishop Bernard Paul

An Act to safeguard the vulnerable

KLANG: The Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur's Professional Standards Office (PSO) hosted a talk on *The Sexual Offences Against Children Act, 2017*, hereinafter referred to as the Act, at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes (OLL) on July 1.

Despite its formal-sounding name, the presentation drew a substantial and diverse audience from various segments of the community, including both older individuals and youth members. The Ecclesiastical Assistant of the PSO, Fr Gregory Chan, was on hand to introduce the Act as a much-needed piece of legislation to combat paedophilia and child predators. He peppered his talk with facts and figures and spoke about the alarming rise in statistics of sexual offences against boys, stressing the need to safeguard both girls and boys.

Beginning with S. 2 of the Act, which defined children as under 18 years of age, Fr Greg looked at the kinds of offences the Act punishes, like child grooming and sexual as-

sault, which consists of physical and non-physical sexual assault. In layman's terms, grooming refers to behaviour that manipulates and prepares a child to agree to engage in sexual activities. The Act also provides for enhanced sentencing for categories of persons who are in a special relationship with a child, like parents, teachers, lecturers or wardens, coaches, etc. They are called "Persons in a relationship of trust" (S. 16).

In addition, the Act penalises any person who fails to give information of any offence under the Act (S. 19). The Act also removes any requirement for the child witness to be corroborated under the Act.

Fr Greg added that before implementation of the Act, the rate of unsuccessful prosecutions for any form of sexual offence against a child was as high as 90 per cent. This highlights the significance of the Act as a means to level the playing field in prosecuting child offenders.



Archbishop Julian Leow, Fr Gregory Chan, and participants after engaging in a thought-provoking discussion on the Sexual Offences Against Children Act, 2017, on July 1, 2023.

The OLL parish priest also fielded questions, and allowed parties to open up on condition of anonymity. Several guests shared the atrocities they encountered. Many expressed the urgency to have talks like this to raise awareness among the people.

The attendees were pleasantly surprised when Archbishop Julian Leow graced the event. The prelate closed the forum by empha-

sizing the importance of being vigilant for all and sundry.

Recently, Pope Francis reaffirmed that the sexual abuse crisis is "particularly serious for the Church", because "it undermines her ability to fully embrace and bear witness to God's liberating presence. The failure to act properly to halt this evil and to assist its victims has sullied our witness to God's love."

Prison ministry, a demanding and arduous field of service

PENANG: The Penang Diocesan Prison Ministry (PDPM) retreat themed *Walking Together as a Synodal Church Listening to the Holy Spirit, Living the Word* was held at Stella Maris on June 24 and 25.

Fr Simon Labrooy led 47 PDPM and Freedom House (outreach arm of PDPM) members to recollect, reflect and share how they can be more community centred as faith sharers in their walk with God, listening to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and going beyond prison walls to be active evangelists.

The retreat commenced with a session of Praise and Worship, followed by a video message from Bishop Sebastian Francis and an opening speech by PDPM Chairman, Steeven Philips. In the video message, Bishop Sebastian blessed the PDPM members and ac-



Fr Simon Labrooy and participants of the Penang Diocesan Prison Ministry gather for a rejuvenating retreat at Stella Maris, Penang.

knowledgeed that the Prison Ministry is a *turun padang* ministry and a demanding and arduous field of service. The day ended with Holy Hour, bringing together participants from different parishes in Perlis, Kedah, Penang, and Perak. They had a profound and enlightening experience as they gathered and shared as one

united ministry.

The second day of the retreat commenced with Sunday Mass held at the chapel, accompanied by the Rite of Commissioning for PDPM members. The retreat ended on a joyous note, marked by the cutting of a celebratory cake and a closing speech by Anthony

Andrews, the founding member and former chairman of PDPM. This special occasion was dedicated to honouring PDPM's ninth anniversary, Fr Simon Labrooy's 25th sacerdotal anniversary, as well as the individuals commemorating their birthdays in June. — **Penang Diocesan Prison Ministry**

Exodus: From darkness to light

CHERAS: The Biblical Ministry of the Church of St Francis of Assisi (SFA) embarked on an enlightening journey through the Book of Exodus. This immersive six-week series, conducted every Friday from May 26 to June 30 at the John Paul II Hall, brought together about 100 participants weekly, from various parishes within the archdiocese, thus fostering a vibrant sense of community.



Fr David Reegon, OFM Cap.

Each session explored a specific theme, beginning with *The Hardening of the Heart* and culminating in *The Ten Commandments – The Spiritual Truth*. Under the skilful guidance of Fr David Reegon, OFM Cap., participants deepened their understanding of Exodus, engaging with the text in a profound and meaningful way.

The series started with a comprehensive overview of Exodus's overarching themes and messages. The initial focus was on the meaning and essence of Exodus, understanding redemption, recognising miracles in hopeless situations, and the practice of prayer. This context setting was crucial in creating a firm foundation for the journey ahead.

As the weeks progressed, participants dived into various themes such as the spiritual battle, the wilderness, and the 10 plagues. These themes weren't just theoretical; they were experientially engaged, with participants reflecting on the significance of unleavened bread, roasted lamb, and bitter herbs during a Sedar meal, sym-

bolising their journey with the Israelites.

The series was also enriched by Praise and Worship from diverse contributors. These included Fr Valentine Gompok, OFM Cap., and team, the Alpha International team from Bangalore, India, and the Charismatic Renewal team, amongst others. Their contributions added a deeper spiritual resonance to the sessions.

The final session was a culmination of the past weeks' shared insights, with a comprehensive summary of the journey through Exodus. The latter part of the session saw an engaging discussion, addressing questions compiled from the start of the series. The session concluded with a song, a fitting close to a memorable journey.

The atmosphere of fellowship after the event was palpable, charged with shared learning, insights, and camaraderie. This series was more than just a Bible study — it was a shared journey of faith in a community.

This initiative aligns perfectly with the SFA Biblical Ministry's vision of the SFA community being rooted in and nourished by the daily bread of the Word of God and being effective witnesses to Jesus amid their daily living. It also served the Ministry's mission, which is to help the faithful develop an appetite for the Word of God and make daily Bible reading an essential practice for their spiritual nourishment and formation. — **SFA Biblical Ministry**

Tampin parishioners go on a cleaning mission

TAMPIN: The parishioners of the Church of St John Marie Vianney marked World Environment Day recently with a cleaning exercise around the Tampin area.

Themed *Beat Plastic Pollution*, the event was aimed at enhancing consciousness and providing education on various aspects of environmental concerns, including threats and preservation.

The cleaning exercise, held at three locations, Taman Tasik Tampin, Stadium Mini Tampin and the area around Econsave, Tampin was supported by the Tampin District Council. About 70 participants of all ages took part in the programme.

The day began with Mass celebrated at 7.00am, followed by the flag-off. As a symbol to honour the 50th World Environment Day, parish priest, Fr Albet Arockiasamy, planted a tree in the church compound.

The session kicked off at 8.30am with a brief overview of the vision and mission of the programme. The participants were then split into three groups to clean their designated locations. The organising committee provided tools and resources such as garbage bags, gloves,

face masks and rubbish pickers.

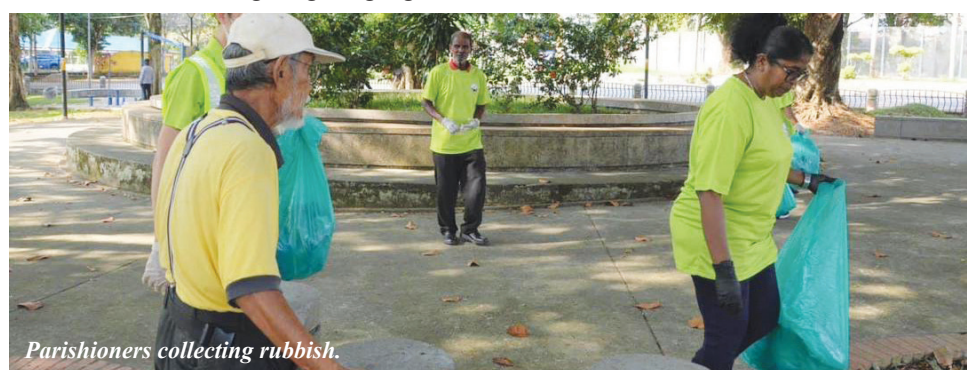
Besides that, registered participants received free t-shirts specially designed for the event. Group leaders guided their members to the locations and the rubbish collected was segregated according to categories — glass, plastic, paper, metal, and organic.

The Catechetical Ministry organised colouring sessions for the primary school children to implant the idea of keeping the environment green and clean.

Throughout the cleaning exercise, people of different faiths and ethnicity appreciated the effort taken by the parishioners. The public also brought complimentary breakfast and drinks for the participants.

The event concluded with closing remarks by Fr Albet and the programme chairman, Dr Goh Ah Fatt, who thanked the participants for their support in ensuring a successful event.

The 2023 World Environment Day project was a success. This event also ignited a great fraternity among community members as a build-up to the upcoming parish feast of St John Marie Vianney from August 3 to 6. — **By Priscilla Wilson**



Parishioners collecting rubbish.

Calling ministry heads to make headway

By Lucille Dass

PENANG: Eighty-two Diocesan Heads of Ministries and Teams from Penang Island and the northern deaneries crossed over to the Church of Immaculate Conception (CIC) on July 1, for a 9am-5pm day of recollection themed "Walking with the Risen Lord."

Theologian Fr Dr Clarence Devadass from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, in steering all on board, ventured to show how the Boat of Christ (Church) even when rocked by rough and raging seas, can sail smooth in her missionary journey.

Fr Jude Miranda, parish priest of CIC, led the opening prayer followed by Adoration and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and a decade of the Rosary. He welcomed all on behalf of Bishop Sebastian Francis. The refrain *Bless our God who walks with us*, (from FABC 2022 The Song of Asia) echoed the theme for the day. In his preamble, Fr Jude noted, "We meet to encounter and discern what God has in store for us; the synodal journey never

ends. It is a blessing that the Spirit of the Lord is at work subtly yet significantly" to help us relate to God and His people "in a personal way and not merely in a functional way," thereby referencing a concern in the synodal findings.

A vocabulary list: encounter, accompany, experience, empathise, relate, engage, listen...were among some focal imperatives of Fr Jude. Fr Clarence in turn, expounded on these requirements using Scriptures, quotes from Pope Francis and the Church Fathers, self and group reflection exercises.

Fr Clarence premised the session on some major concerns and themes that arose from the synodal findings, many of which could be addressed by ministry heads at the micro level to fulfil the common benefit doctrine.

The day-long segmented session was rendered engaging through the use of a multimodal approach: think-pair-share; pause-self-reflect-write; image-forming-sharing; active listening; think-feel-repair(vision/image)-share; etc. He began by clearing the cob-

webs re what the synodal journey was all about, using Luke's Road to Emmaus story as a mission model backdrop.

In short, we explored the **5Ws 1H** access route to synodality as wayfarers making wayside rest-stops to reflect-refuel-resume the route ahead when our 'driver' Fr Clarence saw fit. How about chewing on the following as you embark on your ministry's ongoing synodal journey?

- **What** is synodality all about? What are the characteristics of a synodal Church? What challenges does the Church (we) face at the micro level? What are the opportunities available to beat these challenges and move forward together at all levels?
- **Who** does it involve/concern? Who should we listen to?
- **Where** are the challenges/tensions present? Where are we headed towards? Wherein lies our hope and guidance to move together in relationality and solidarity?
- **When** is the right time to initiate changes for the better?



Fr Dr Clarence Devadass conducting the session for the ministry heads of the Penang diocese.

● **Why** is being synodal/consultative important in our spiritual and secular life?

● **How** do you discern-understand-practise being synodal in leading your ministries? How, as leaders, do you help members rise above petty parochial issues? How can you become God's instrument to share your understanding of the above 5Ws for effective spiritual engagement with others? ... and more!

Bishop Sebastian graced the evening to celebrate Mass with all present. He nourished everyone with his scripturally authoritative firebrand homily, "Enough of debates and discussions! Engage

and share in Spiritual conversation inspired by the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit; effective communication is half the battle won!" He cited the Pentecost experience (Acts 2:1-11) in context, "speaking in one language to be understood by everyone." He reiterated his (by now well-known) "Reality check" Q & A (refer to *HERALD* June 11) for spiritual growth. He stressed the need for a paradigm shift in the roles of both clergy and laity; "The vision of the Church synod is focussed on moving forward and beyond together. The Spirit is leading us to our roots." Our need? Docility to the Spirit.

Study Day for RCIA facilitators

KUALA LUMPUR: The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) Study Day, an initiative of the KL Archdiocesan Catechetical Ministry, is an annual formation open to coordinators, facilitators, and anyone helping or serving in the RCIA.

This year, the session was held at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on June 24. Approximately 180 participants from the four major language groups in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur attended the Study Day.

The theme of the Study Day was 'Conversion and the RCIA'. Many of us in the RCIA ministry have been questioning ourselves on how we can help our candidates experience conversion. Sometimes, we feel frustrated or doubtful about the effectiveness of how we carry out this ministry God entrusted to us. The Study Day was meant to shed light on these questions and guide

the participants so we may better support the RCIA candidates and catechumens in their process of conversion.

The day began with the participants praying the Rosary. The opening address by Msgr. Stanislaus Soosaimariam set the tone and expectations before the participants went to their respective lecture halls. The sessions were presented by Fr Alvin Ho, SJ (English), Fr Simon Lau (Mandarin), Msgr Stanislaus and Sr Retta Savariannan (Tamil) while the Bahasa Malaysia session was presented by Dr Steven Selvaraju and Stephanie Chia.

The topics addressed at the Study Day touched on the following questions: What is Christian conversion? What is the link between conversion and RCIA? What is the role of the Christian community in the process of conversion?

Archbishop Julian Leow,

dropped by to greet the participants. He thanked them for attending the Study Day and for their dedication to the ministry.

The combined effort of the organising team and the Archdiocesan Catechetical Centre is truly praiseworthy. The Study Day was a huge success and participants of the four language groups left with great enthusiasm to implement what they learnt in their respective parishes, so they could better help the RCIA candidates and catechumens experience conversion in their faith journey.

A big "Thank You!" to the KL Archdiocesan Catechetical Ministry who made the participants of the Study Day realise that conversion is ultimately the work of God; nevertheless, it is our duty as an RCIA Team to be the instruments that facilitate this conversion for the candidates and catechumens. — **By Angelica Bateman**



Archbishop Julian Leow with some of the participants during the RCIA Study Day on June 24.

Parishes encouraged to celebrate World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly



JOHOR: The Diocesan Commission for Family, Life and Laity of the Malacca-Johore diocese is encouraging parishes to celebrate the elderly during Mass on Sunday, July 23 by making efforts to bring the homebound elderly to church.

The commission has prepared prayers and blessings to be incorporated in the Mass. Other suggested activities include having a fellowship after Mass, talks on elderly care and visits to elderly care homes.

A Zoom conversation and forum will be held on July 23, 8.00pm - 10.00pm. Speakers for this session are physician and geriatrician Dr Peter Selestine and Regina William, experienced journalist, communications professional and grandmother.

To join, scan the following QR code:



A similar call to celebrate the Day was made by the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur's Family Life Commission via its new ministry – the Grandparents and the Elderly Ministry (GEM), which caters to the needs of the

aged.

GEM welcomes and encourages all parishes to celebrate the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly this year with a special Mass honouring grandparents and the elderly on July 23. Information brochures and souvenir bookmarks will be given out to the elderly on that day.

Set up in July last year, this ministry is not here to change anything but will work hand-in-hand with existing parish-based elderly ministries, who are already doing wonderful work in their respective parishes. Instead, GEM will gather them under one umbrella so the elderly community can journey and "walk together," moving in tandem with the Holy Father's objective by helping, sharing, encouraging and encountering each other to bring joy and dignity back to the elderly in the archdiocese.

For parishes that have yet to form a ministry for the aged, GEM encourages them to do so. A half-day formation is being planned for the elderly of the archdiocese sometime in August. (more details to follow).

Spreading kindness at the grassroots

JOHOR: Caritas Malacca Johore Diocese of Human Development (Caritas MJDOHD) held a three-hour Kindness Bazaar or *Bazar Sumbangan Kasih* on June 17.

Racks, tables, and banners were set up at the void deck of Block C, Flat Hijau in Taman Plentong Utama, Masai, providing its residents with an opportunity to “buy” and also contribute new and pre-loved goods. Although at first glance it may have appeared to be a simple thrift shop, the bazaar was more than just a sale of pre-loved goods.

The organising team put much thought and effort into ensuring that all who came to the bazaar felt the friendly and festive atmosphere while keeping to the slogan *Take What You Need. Spare Some for Others. Give What You Can* and promoting ecological consciousness.

The bazaar featured a children’s games area to keep the young ones occupied, allowing mums and dads to go bargain hunting amidst the colourful array of clothes, jewellery, gadgets and household items. Fostering their artistic creativity, several children created Father’s Day cards using recycled



Fr Martinian Lee and the Caritas team at the Kindness Bazaar, June 17.

materials. Additionally, a section of donated toys allowed the young ones to select items they liked to take home. Environmental consciousness was not forgotten, as a table was set up to demonstrate the process of making eco-enzyme using jaggery, fruit peel and water, along with its various uses.

Take What You Need

The Malacca Johore Creation Justice Commission (CJC) Diocesan Team Lead, Dr Ma-

ria Lee, explained why it was necessary to incorporate environmental awareness at the bazaar. “Earth is our common home, as highlighted by the Pope in his encyclical letter — *Laudato Si’ Mi Signore*. We must reassess our lifestyles which are fast depleting our natural resources. Our throwaway culture continues to add to the already fast-increasing mountains of waste. Pope Francis calls upon the Church to respond.”

“The task of the CJC is to encourage everyone to live in a more sustainable way to slow down the current state of environmental degradation and depletion of natural resources. The bulk of the goods at the bazaar came from the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Johor Bharu through the monthly Resource Recovery Activity programme. This programme allows pre-loved goods to find new homes. Many of the items donated were new or unused.”

Spare Some for Others

On how the idea of a Kindness Bazaar came about, Caritas MJDOHD Executive Director Andrew Leo said, “We have seen many thrift shops set up in a church or in places where people have to travel to get there. So we thought, why not go to the people instead? We collaborated with our partners — those serving the needy, POHDs of Plentong and

Masai, and Creation Justice Ministries of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Cathedral of the Sacred Heart and Church of St. Theresa, Masai, which rallied 25 volunteers to help in this bazaar which aims to serve the community through the sharing of pre-loved goods, bringing about a greater awareness of the benefits of up-cycling, waste reduction and promoting the use of eco-enzymes.

“We added the word ‘kindness’ to emphasise the importance of this value following the example of Caritas Philippines’ Kindness Stations, introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic, where people could donate food-stuff which was picked up by those in need from various stations or points.”

Give What You Can

Following the success of the event, Caritas MJDOHD plans to extend its outreach to other communities in need, including migrants and Orang Asli villages, as well as other locations. “We would like volunteers from our apostolates, BECs, and youth to step up and serve the community through such projects. This is a good way to demonstrate our faith in action and play our part in environmental sustainability. Hopefully, more will want to give their time,” said Andrew.

Dr Maria added, “People who learnt about the bazaar donated what they no longer needed. Such a bazaar allows those living here to acquire necessary items. This unique mobile event helps prevent resources that are still in good condition from ending up in landfills. Proceeds from this bazaar go back to the needy through future Caritas programmes and projects.”

This bazaar also celebrated our *Muhibbah* spirit by fostering teamwork and collaboration among diverse communities, including our brothers and sisters from East Malaysia and our Filipino friends. If you would like to find out more about how you can spread kindness through such events, please contact Andrew at 019-7298574. — *By Karen-Ann Theseira*



The children enjoying a playful time at the games area while parents explore shopping options.

Parents’ Day at Church of St Michael, Ipoh

IPOH: The congregation of the Church of St. Michael joyfully commemorated Parents’ Day 2023 on June 29. The event was filled with delightful and unforgettable moments, featuring a wide array of engaging and entertaining activities meticulously planned over four months.

Parents’ Day began with a special bi-lingual (English and Mandarin) Thanksgiving Mass at 9am. More than 60 parishioners, over the age of 80, were present. Many of them had not been attending services in church due to age constraints or poor health but made it a point to attend Parents’

Day. During Mass, they received a special blessing and a token from the parish.

In the lead-up to the event, parishioners devoted two months to crafting small origami hearts as a heartfelt tribute to their cherished parents and grandparents. This symbolic gesture was a testament to the profound influence these loved ones had on shaping their lives, particularly in matters of faith. During the Mass, the origami hearts were presented as offerings.

After Mass, there were activities for every age group to spend time together. Many were involved in indoor childhood

games and the outdoor tele match. Others entertained the crowd with their singing, dancing and instrumental renditions. The entertainers were as young as five years and as old as 85 years. They came as soloists, pairs and even as families and groups. There was even a *roti canai*-eating competition.

As a nostalgic stroll through time, a captivating photo exhibit showcased cherished moments of parishioners bonding with their loved ones. The collection included both current and past snapshots, capturing special memories. Additionally,

during the month of June, numerous parishioners left their painted handprints on a 15-metre-long banner, adding a personal touch to the celebratory ambiance.

The banner worked as a foreground behind which parish priest Fr Anthony Liew stood with the parishioners for a group photo. The congregation of about 800 people then adjourned for a catered buffet luncheon.

Everyone had a good time, mixing around in a friendly atmosphere, and enjoying all the activities of Parents’ Day! — *By Jennifer Duarte*



Parishioners offering the small origami hearts they crafted as a heartfelt tribute to their loved ones.



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Please send in your applications by 31st July 2023.

Milestone celebration for Canossians

By Moses Sinnappan

KUALA LUMPUR: The Canossian Daughters of Charity, celebrated the 250th anniversary of their foundress, St Magdalene of Canossa at the Chapel of Christ the Light (CCL), Desa Jaya on July 1.

The theme chosen for the celebration *Set Life On Fire, A gift of Love and Freedom* coincides with the call of a synodal Church to be true disciples of Jesus. Serving God is a demonstration of your love for Him through loving service to others.

The celebration commenced with Mass during which the chapel administrator, Fr Peter Anthony, reminded the congregation that each and every one of us have to take responsibility for the mission in the Church. He



The nuns displaying their talents during the celebration.

called on everyone to pray for vocations and work hard to instill a desire for the mission. Fr Peter urged the congregation not to be selfish and self-centred but to be Christ-centred.

A pictorial exhibition on the life of the saint, history of the Canossians and activities of the sisters was displayed at the foyer of the chapel. Close to 300 faithful including friends and relatives

from the North District churches of Kuala Lumpur came to witness the milestone celebration.

Sr Shanti Louis, shared the charism and life of being a Canossian Sister. She added that despite giving up her career, the calling offered her much joy and peace. The Canossian Sisters live by their motto 'To make Jesus known and loved' by reaching out to the poor, especially in educating under privileged children.

The day was even more joyous with Sr Theresa Yong celebrating her diamond jubilee of religious profession. Fr Peter thanked the diamond jubilarian, a motherly figure for her 60 years of services. A specially-made cake was presented to Sr Theresa in gratitude for her service.

It was a lively evening with fellowship, food and performances

by the nuns, youths of the chapels of Christ the Light and Christ the King and Standard One children.

Sr Theresa Chew gave a speech thanking Fr Peter for organising the grand celebration for the Sisters.

Archbishop Julian Leow, at the celebration said that there is hope for the religious community as he saw some young faces in the Sisters which brought laughter from the floor.

The prelate then urged the Sisters to relook at what God is asking of us. "The numbers of clergy and religious is getting smaller. Besides praying, there is a need for collaboration with the laity as the laity also need to share the mission, vision and charism of the Canossians. Let the spirit of St Magdalene of Canossa lead us," said the archbishop.

Feast of Sts Peter and Paul, Banting draws pilgrims

BANTING, Klang: The Church of Sts Peter and Paul commemorated its parish feast day with a Triduum starting June 27. The event was a joyous occasion that united the entire community, providing a welcome reprieve from the limitations imposed by COVID-19 restrictions.

The overall theme of the feast was *Salt of the Earth, Light of the World*. On the first day, Fr Michel Dass from the Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam, as the main celebrant. The sub-theme for the first day of the Triduum was *You have the words of eternal life* (John 6:68), the focus of the homily being the life of St Peter. Fr Michel's vibrancy, together with the parish administrator Fr Richard's steadfast love for the Church, truly resonated during the Mass and beyond.

The following day's sub-theme was *For we live by faith, not by sight* (2nd Corinthians 5:7). Presider for the day, Fr Gregory Chan from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang, focused on the life of St Paul and the relationship between these two great saints during his homily.

The culmination of the feast took place on a beautiful Thursday morning, June 29.

More than 100 pilgrims from the Church of the Assumption, Petaling Jaya, made the hour-long journey to join in the festivities and support their previous assistant priest, Fr Richard Anthonysamy, SJ.

Pilgrims and parishioners were triply blessed with the presence of Archbishop Julian Leow, Fr Lawrence Andrew SJ and Fr Bernard Hyacinth SJ, together with Fr Rich-

ard. At the close of a slide presentation on the post-COVID activities of the parish, the prelate reminded parishioners of Sts Peter and Paul to "Continue to build the community".

Celebrations for each day of the Triduum commenced with the Rosary and novena to Sts. Peter and Paul, followed by Mass. There was fellowship after each Eucharistic celebration which was particularly delightful and appreciated after the long break.

The Church by the Langat River with (according to its PPC Chairperson Ruben Susai) its monkeys, snakes and not to mention crocodiles (as Archbishop Julian rightly pointed out), refreshed the souls of the parishioners and pilgrims of the feast day celebrations. —**By Tamara Joan Duraisingam**

Collaborative community effort at KKB parish



Fr VA Michael getting ready to hoist the flag bearing the image of St Paul, to mark the beginning of the celebrations on June 29.

KUALA KUBU BAHRU: The Church of St. Paul the Apostle honoured its parish's feast day with a four-day celebration from June 29 - July 2. The festivities drew a multitude of parishioners, including Catholics from different places who joined in the merriment.

The celebrations consisted of religious activities such as Latin prayers dedicated to St. Paul, the recitation of the Rosary, and Mass. A healing session also took place on July 1 after Mass.

The feast began with the hoisting of St Paul's flag on June 29. Fr Michael commended the parishioners for their enthusiastic preparation and collaboration, including painting the church building and decorating the parish. Their collaborative efforts reflected the spirit of a synodal Church.

During the homily, Fr Michael, highlighted the growth and activity

of the small but thriving community of Kuala Kubu Bharu.

Touching on the roles of Sts Peter and Paul as builders of the Church and the sacrifices they made in spreading Jesus' teachings, he encouraged the congregation to deepen their faith and respond to Jesus' call with conviction, just like the saints.

On June 29, which coincided with Fr Michael's 66th birthday, the children from the parish presented him with a cake which shared during the dinner fellowship.

The celebrations on July 1 and 2 included pilgrims from far away-joining the parishioners for Mass, cultural performances, and a variety of food prepared by the locals. Fr Michael mentioned that it was the first time in the parish's history that surrounding communities actively participated in the four-day feast celebrations, fostering unity and collaboration. —**By Bernard Anthony**



The pilgrims from the Church of the Assumption, PJ with Archbishop Julian Leow.

St Thomas the Apostle — A saint for our times

KUANTAN: The parish community of St Thomas the Apostle joyously observed the feast of their beloved patron saint with a reverent nine-day novena, from June 24 to July 3.

The theme for this year was *A Saint for Our Times*, with daily sub-themes that corresponded with each intention from the Litany of St. Thomas the Apostle. The Mass on the morning of July 1, Day Eight was held specifically for the anointing of the sick and the elderly.

The parish composed a special

litany to honour St. Thomas, the Apostle and proudly use it in both their personal and community prayers. Parishioners were encouraged to recite it daily to strengthen their relationship with our patron — our friend and companion who brings us closer to Jesus and proclaims Him as Our Lord and Savior.

Throughout the novena, daily Masses were held and guest priests, both local and foreign, delivered homilies on the chosen theme. Over the last two days, our parish

was honoured to have our former parish priest Fr Eugene Benedict, as a concelebrant. The community celebrated his 34th sacerdotal anniversary on July 3 with a small cake-cutting ceremony.

The overall attendance at daily Masses was commendable, with migrant workers, students from higher learning institutions, and outstation visitors participating.

Parish priest Fr George Packiasamy expressed his gratitude to the feast day committee and the Liturgical Committee for their dili-

gent efforts in planning and coordinating the celebrations.

A special thanks to the BEC members and parishioners who had actively participated in leading the Rosary, novenas, and animating the Masses. In addition, their efforts in providing refreshments after each Eucharistic celebration was truly appreciated.

Lastly, we express gratitude to God for blessing us with great weather that allowed us to have a joyful and fulfilling celebration. —**By Dr Francis Leong**



Children honouring their parish patron, St Thomas the Apostle.

First Indian elected to lead Maria Bambina

NEW DELHI: Sister Venita Fernandes has become the first Indian to head the Sisters of Charity of the Saints Bartolomea Capitanio and Vincenza Gerosa, an international Catholic religious congregation based in Italy.

Sr Fernandes, a native of Balli-Fatorpa in the western Indian state of Goa, was elected at the congregation's 28th general chapter that was held May 8 to June 24 in Rome.

She succeeded Sr Annamaria Viganò, an Italian who led for six years the 191-year-old congregation, known also as the Sisters of Maria Bambina (Holy Child Mary).

Pope Francis surprised the apex body of the congregation when he unexpectedly visited the chapter hall on June 19 as soon as he left the Polyclinic in Rome where he had undergone a surgery.

"His ability to get close to us, even in a moment of such great physical fragility, moved us and made us feel the living presence of Jesus in our midst and the love of his Church," says the congregation's website.

The Pope invited the nuns to become mothers and sisters, by living in their spousal bond with Jesus. He also wants them to become courageous to live their calling, not waiting to have everything planned out on paper. He also reminded them that the Lord wants them close to the people, because it is the people who live



Sister Venita Fernandes

and testify to them the faith.

The election process began May 29 with the outgoing superior general Sr Annamaria explaining to the participants the congregation's Rule of Life and some criteria for discernment and Sr Fernandes was elected on the third day.

On June 3, the four general assistants were elected: Srs Maria Monica Moschen, Luisa Bonforte, Saly Painadath, and Maria

Goretti Wichianiranat.

Sr Fernandes was born the eldest of five daughters of Minguel Fernandes and Ilda Borges.

She completed her education at St. Xavier's High School in Velim and Maria Bambina Convent High School in Cuncolim. After her higher secondary education at Damodar College in Margao, she entered religious life with the Sisters of Charity.

Sr Fernandes completed her novitiate at Dharwar, pronounced her First Profession, and served at the congregation's convent in Secunderabad.

She has served the congregation as the novice director, provincial councillor, and assistant superior general.

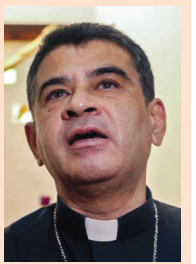
The congregation was founded in 1832 by Bartolomea Capitanio, a 26-year-old woman, who was involved in the struggles of the people of Lovere, her native town.

Bartolomea was helped in her project by Catherine Gerosa, a rich pious woman of Lovere. They were consecrated to God in a simple ceremony on November 21, 1832, at Casa Gaia. Bartolomea died July 26, 1833, eight months after founding the congregation. Catherine Gerosa led the congregation guided by Don Angelo Bosio.

They opened many provinces of Italy. They came to India in 1860, when Mother Theresa Bosio, the first superior general, sent four sisters to work in Bengal. — By **Jose Kavi, Matters India**

Bishop Alvarez sent back to prison

NICARAGUA: Nicaraguan Bishop Rolando José Álvarez Lagos (pic) has been sent back to prison after negotiations between the Nicaraguan bishops and the government of dictator Daniel Ortega broke down, Nicaraguan news sources reported.



According to *ACI Prensa*, CNA's Spanish language news partner, Álvarez, bishop of the Diocese of Matagalpa, in Managua, was released on July 3 but returned to custody, July 5 after he refused to comply with the Ortega regime's demand that he go into exile.

Since his release Álvarez has been sheltered at the headquarters of the Nicaraguan Bishops' Conference in the nation's capital city Managua, according to *Reuters*.

On July 5, the Nicaraguan news agency *Divergentes* reported that CEN and the Vatican were negotiating with the Ortega government on Álvarez's behalf.

Nicaraguan human rights activist Bianca Jagger said in a July 4 tweet that she was informed the regime intended to exile Álvarez to Rome.

Álvarez refused to be exiled unless ordered to do so by the Pope, according to exiled Auxiliary Bishop Silvio José Báez of the Archdiocese of Managua.

In a July 5 statement, Báez said that Álvarez told him "he would not leave Nicaragua for any reason unless the Pope ordered him to do so." — By **Peter Pinedo, CNA**

Three brothers share the same ordination day



Frs Renato and Marko with their brother Deacon Robert.

CROATIA: As parents we hope our children will grow up to be close to each other. However, three brothers from Croatia — Renato, Marko, and Robert Pudar — share not only a sibling bond, but one that ties them to their faith and their Heavenly Father.

In a very rare occurrence, the three men were all ordained on June 24 at the Holy Family Church in Solin. Robert was ordained to the diaconate, while Renato and Marko were ordained to the priesthood for the archdiocese of Split-Makarska and the Franciscan Province of the Holy Redeemer, respectively.

Msgr Želimir Puljić, the Apostolic Administrator of the archdiocese, presided over the ordination that saw a further four other men join the priesthood.

The church was filled with family members, relatives, and friends of the ordinands.

"Do not be afraid of your weakness when God calls. Surrender to God's Providence completely and without reservations, and He will strengthen and encourage you. You will be able to do everything in the one who strengthens you. He is counting on you and wants to realise great plans in this world through you," Msgr. Puljić said in his homily. The prelate also asked the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary for the ordinands.

He asked the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary for the ordinands.

The diocese which was established in the third century has a Catholic population of more than 440,000. Around 78 per cent of the Croatian population identifies as Catholic. — *Aleteia/Shalom World*



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Without the people, the priest has no job!

NAIROBI: The role of a Catholic priest as a prophet, a pastor, and a king defines his priestly ministry among the People of God.

This was the message preached by Bishop Rodrigo Mejía Saldarriaga, who was presiding over the priestly ordination of eight deacons, July 2.

"The job description of the priest is to be a prophet, pastor, and king in the image of Jesus Himself who came to teach us, who came to sanctify us, who came to be our leader, to lead us to the Father," said the prelate.

A Catholic priest is a prophet, "not because he predicts the future, but because he gives meaning to the present life of the people," the Vicar Apostolic emeritus of Soddo in Ethiopia clarified during the priestly ordination of seven members of

the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and one member of the Society of Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers/MAfr.).

On the role of Catholic priests as pastors, the Jesuit bishop emphasised the need for Catholic priests to prioritise the spiritual needs of the People of God under their pastoral care.

"Without the people, the priest has no job, has no meaning and his mission becomes impossible," Bishop Mejía said during the ordination at St Joseph the Worker Kangemi parish of Kenya's Nairobi Archdiocese.

Making reference to the *Letter to the Hebrews*, the 84-year-old native of Colombia added, "A priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer

gifts and sacrifices for sins."

As pastor, a Catholic priest has also the role of teaching and announcing the Good News of Jesus Christ, offering guidance to members of the community, and building up the communion of the Church.

"The grace of God makes him (priest) an instrument of the Spirit for others through the sacraments and Jesus' amplifier of the community," Bishop Mejía said, adding, "His mission in this respect is to make the community the one and only image of God in union with the will of the Father."

He reiterated, "As teacher and master, the priest has to evangelise the community."

Highlighting the role of a Catholic priest as king, Bishop Mejía cautioned against falling into the temptation to portray "an authori-



Seven Jesuit deacons and a deacon for the Missionaries of Africa were ordained priests on July 2, 2023. (CNA photo/ACI Africa)

tarian attitude of power".

The Nairobi-based Catholic bishop, who retired from the pastoral care of Soddo Apostolic Vicariate in January 2014 aged 75, expressed his awareness of the "many challenges" priests have to address in their line of duty today.

"It is not easy to be a teacher, a guide, and a leader of a community today. Priests have many challenges and must be ready to face them, trusting in our support and the grace of God," Bishop Mejía said.

He went on to call upon the laity to support members of the clergy, saying, "Priests are like any other human beings; they are fragile; they are weak; they have limitations; they need the support of the people."

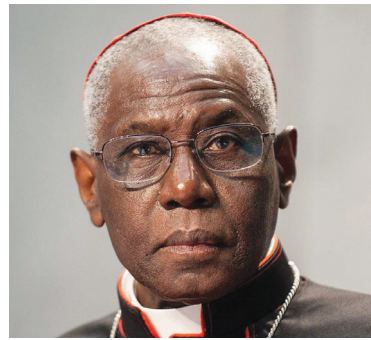
"The priests are not asking for material salary to enrich themselves, but they have the right to expect the support of the people through prayers of the Church," he added. — **By Silas Mwale Isenjia, ACI Africa**

No synod can invent a 'female priesthood'

MEXICO: Cardinal Robert Sarah, prefect emeritus of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, stressed that "the priesthood is unique" and warned that "no council, no synod" can "invent a female priesthood."

In his conference on the priesthood, entitled *Joyful Servants of the Gospel* given July 3 at the Conciliar Seminary in Mexico City, the cardinal assured that no one "has the power to transform this divine gift to adapt it and reduce its transcendent value to the cultural and environmental field."

"No council, no synod, no ecclesiastical authority has the power to invent a female priesthood ... without seriously damaging the perennial physiognomy of the priest, his sacramental identity, within the



Cardinal Robert Sarah

renewed ecclesiological vision of the Church, mystery, communion, and mission," he emphasised.

Sarah stressed that "the Catholic faith professes that the sacrament of Holy Orders, instituted by Christ the Lord, is one; it is identical for the universal Church. For Jesus, there is no African, German,

Amazonia, or European priesthood. The priesthood is unique, it is identical for the universal Church."

In his conference, the prefect emeritus also reflected on "being a priest" and stressed that "the priesthood is a great, great mystery, so great a gift that it would be a sin to waste it."

"It's a divine gift that must be received, understood, and lived, and the Church has always sought to understand and enter deeper into the real and proper being of the priest, as a baptised man, called to be an *alter Christus*, another Christ, even more so an *ipse Christus*, Christ Himself, to represent Him, to conform to Him, to be configured and mediated in Christ with priestly ordination,"

he explained.

For the Guinean prelate, "the priest is a man of God who is day and night in the presence of God to glorify Him, to adore Him. The priest is a man immolated in sacrifice to prolong the sacrifice of Christ for the salvation of the world."

The cardinal said that the "first task" of priests "is to pray, because the priest is a man of prayer: He begins his day with the Office of Readings and ends his day with the Office."

"A priest who does not pray is about to die. A Church that does not pray is a dead Church," he warned.

Regarding the lack of priestly vocations, he encouraged the faithful to pray because "it's not

that we are few."

"Christ ordained 12 for the whole world. How many of us are priests today? There are close to 400,000 of us priests in the world. There are too many of us," he said, citing the same observation made by Pope Gregory the Great in the seventh century.

"Many have accepted the priesthood, but they're not doing the work of the priest," Sarah explained.

"So in response, we must pray. Ask Him to send workers to His harvest, pray. And show that we priests are happy, because when young men see that we are sad, we won't attract anyone," he urged. "We have to be happy, even if we're suffering." — **By Ana Paula Morales, CNA**

Pope creates commission to identify modern-day martyrs

VATICAN: A quarter of a century after John Paul II held an ecumenical celebration during the Great Jubilee of 2000 to honour Christian martyrs, Pope Francis has decided to update the work of his Polish predecessor by compiling a new martyrology of Christians of all denominations.

The Vatican announced on July 5 that the 86-year-old Pope has formed a commission of experts whose task is to identify the Christian martyrs of the last 25 years. It will be a part of his intention to create a new martyrology of those more recently killed for the faith in preparation for the Church's upcoming Jubilee in 2025.

"The research will concern not only the Catholic Church, but will extend to all Christian denominations," the Pope states in his letter constituting the *Commission of New Martyrs-Witness of the Faith*.

He is asking the commission "to gather the testimonies of life, up to the shedding of blood, of these sisters and brothers of ours, so



A file photo of Mass for the canonisation of two new saints, October 2022. (Vatican News photo)

that their memory can stand as a treasure cherished by the Christian community."

Francis, who has regularly referred to "ecumenism of the blood" since the beginning of his pontificate, also clarifies that "this initiative is not intended to establish new criteria for the canonical recognition of martyrdom, but to con-

tinue the investigation begun on those who, to this day, continue to be killed simply because they are Christians."

"As I have said many times, martyrs 'are more numerous in our time than in the first centuries': they are bishops, priests, consecrated men and women, lay people and families," he says in the letter.

The Pope has entrusted this work, which was first envisaged over a year ago, to a commission of experts that will be under the direction of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints. The dicastery's head, Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, has been named the commission's "prefect", while the dicastery's secretary, Archbishop Fabio Fabene, has been named the "president" and director of the new commission.

There are 14 members in all, nine of whom are Italians. Four of the experts belong to the Rome-based Sant'Egidio Community, whose founder — Andrea Riccardi — has been named as the commission's vice-president. The 73-year-old historian was also part of the group on modern-day martyrs that John Paul II set up for the Great Jubilee of 2000.

During that Holy Year, the Roman Basilica of San Bartolomeo all'Isola Tiberina — which Sant'Egidio oversees — was dedicated to the memory of the 20th

Century Martyrs. The breviary of Jacques Hamel, the elderly French priest who was slain in 2016 while celebrating Mass in a parish church in Normandy, is among the relics that can be found there.

It is extremely rare for the Vatican to officially recognise non-Catholic martyrs. But Pope Francis did so last May when he decreed that 21 martyrs who were killed by ISIS terrorists in 2015 — 20 of whom were Coptic Orthodox — be added to the Roman Martyrology.

ISIS released a video in February 2015 showing its militants beheading 21 men dressed in orange jumpsuits. The last man in the footage is usually presented as a Catholic from Ghana. The remains of these martyrs were found in a mass grave three years later, their heads separated from their bodies. Francis, for his part, offered the leader of the Coptic Orthodox Church a relic of St. Catherine of Alexandria, a martyr from the early fourth century. — **By Loup Besmond de Senneville, LCI**



The Synod as a spiritual response to the fantasies

What critics of Pope Francis and his synodal project fail to understand

By Massimo Faggioli

It's always 1968 in the minds of those who think change in the Church has gone too far. Every time there are serious discussions about changing the Church's stance on modern social issues or ecclesiastical discipline, the ghosts of the 1960s seem to reappear, first of all in the minds of those who read all things Catholic through the lens of American politics.

Now it's time to accuse the Synod — once again — of bringing about a liberal revolution in the Church. This is a rerun of the visceral reactions against the Synod assemblies on the family and marriage (2014-15) and the assembly for the Amazon region (2019).

New York Times columnist Ross Douthat, often has interesting thoughts on Catholicism, and in his latest online article, he comments on the recently released working document (*Instrumentum Laboris*) for the Synod assembly this October, suggesting it is an effort to “de-emphasise” the Church’s “unfashionable ideas about sexuality” in order to reconcile them with “our decadent culture”.

“Maybe it was easy to believe in such a reconciliation in the 1960s, in the flower of boomer youthfulness and energy. But that was long ago and far away, and now the world that too much of liberal Catholicism wants to marry, suffers from a sickness unto death,” he opines.

Turning away from a monarchical, imperial Church

Douthat, who was received into the Church as a teenager during the pontificate of John Paul II, is an example of a certain Anglo-American Catholic phenomenon that is really a sign of our times. It is made up of prominent critics of Pope Francis and the “synodal process”, who seem to share the idea that



the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) produced a dystopian Church and world. They evidently believe Francis and the synodal movement are undoing efforts by John Paul II and Benedict XVI to pull the Church back from that brink. This reveals a profoundly naïve and mistaken reading of the “synodal process” and especially of the way and the intention in which Francis announced it and has let it unfold so far.

On the one side, there is a question of historical vision: The Synod is not Vatican III or “Vatican 2.1”. But it's the *aggiornamento* of the *aggiornamento* of the last council. That council was shaped by what preceded and led to Vatican II, the previous 150 years, or “the long 19th century”, as Jesuit historian John O'Malley called it. The “synodal process” is developing the turn that was announced, but not implemented by Vatican II. It is the turn away from a monarchical, imperial Church structure and ethos.

The moment in which we find ourselves reminds us more of the 19th century than the 1960s in terms of the challenges we face. In his book *Catholicism: A Global History from the French Revolution to Pope Francis*, Notre

Dame historian and provost John McGreevy captures this well. He identifies the Second Vatican Council as the arch and hinge point between the “long sweep of the 19th century Catholic revival” and where we are now — a Catholicism faltering in the Global North but burgeoning in the Global South. “Catholicism in the 21st century will be reinvented, as it was in the 19th. We just don't know how,” he says.

Synthesis and rebalancing

There is a second reason why it is highly unlikely that the Synod assemblies of 2023-2024 and synodality as it develops afterwards will be a repeat of the 60s and 70s. It is true that the Synod decided to let the synodal participants, and the *Instrumentum Laboris*, openly speak about issues that were considered taboo until not long ago, especially on the role of women in the Church (including women deacons). But what the catastrophists of the Synod really cannot see is that Pope Francis is not a progressive. Their visceral rejection of this pontificate reveals that they do not understand progressive Catholicism, or the papacy — or both.

What this pontificate, and its cautious way of proceeding with the synodal process reveals is that Francis sees this moment as the possibility of a synthesis and rebalancing of the de-constructionist project on one side, and the doctrinal disciplining of John Paul II — Benedict XVI on the other side. The synodal process is an integral part of the Jesuit Pope's pontificate, which is not a capitulation to the spirit of the age. It also stands apart from the dominant deconstructionist approach currently present in the humanities, including theology. The current crisis of academic Catholic theology in the United States, which has “largely been a white, bourgeois enterprise”, gives even more space to this kind of myopia by political commentators.

But commentators that read everything Francis says or does through a political and culture-war lens cannot grasp what is really going on in theological and spiritual cords of global Catholicism today. One of the differences between Douthat (and similar voices) and Francis is that the Pope might consider some issues that came up during the listening session as transitional, but he does not see them as accidental. There is something essential in the way Catholics wrestle, for instance, with the issue of equality, and this is key to understanding the Church of today. It must be listened to.

As Rowan Williams wrote in his book *The Wounds of Knowledge*, “Whatever the social order, the Church is still on pilgrimage; and the ‘Christian Empire’ is a transitory and ambiguous a phenomenon as any other social form”. The Synod is helping the Church in the already ongoing transition out of a certain ecclesiastical form of “Christian empire”. And there is no way that those who hold a vision of Christianity imprisoned in fantasies will be happy about that. — LCI

The synod has taught me Catholics are not as divided as the sceptics thought

It has been a little more than a year since I started brushing up on my Italian. An unlikely invitation landed in my WhatsApp messages, and yet again, my plans to spend a few months writing a new book were interrupted. This time, the invitation was to help with the work toward the Synod on Synodality. It is difficult to think of an ecclesial process more important to me, so I gladly set aside the pile of books.

I have since learned more about the Church than I could ever have imagined, and the synod process has come to seem even more urgent and fruitful. Much of what I learnt has been surprising.

In the early months of my involvement, several journalists said the synod process would inevitably reveal a Church divided culturally between Europe and Africa, divided between clergy and laity, and at war with itself over moral issues. I was told that participation was so low as to make the process meaningless, that the reports had probably all been pre-written, and that the process would be either a sell-out or a stitch-up. These were fairly dispiriting statements to take into the

process I was preparing for: reading the episcopal conference reports as well as the reflections produced by religious congregations, lay movements and associations, plus the many individual submissions made to the synod.

If I were to talk to the same journalists now, I would tell them that their preconceptions were wrong. I came away from the process with a deeper sense of the profound and vulnerable questions raised by synod participants. For some people, this was the first time they had spoken publicly about their hopes and fears for the Church. They felt a profound sense of dignity in contributing but worried about whether they would really make any difference. In a culture that prizes certainty and opposition in political discourse, many people gave voice to their uncertainty and their desire for guidance and accompaniment, and for the communal spaces that would make reflecting together possible.

One bishop compared the synod's method of spiritual conversation to a disarmament process, and another told me his diocese would never be the same again (a good

thing!). Many who participated in the synod spoke honestly about the difficulty of genuinely listening to someone you disagree with, or with whom you feel you have little in common beyond a baptismal identity.

But it also became evident to me that the Church is not divided in a culture war between continents. Many of the most significant tensions and cleavages lie between neighbours, whose histories shape much of their ecclesial experience. The innovation of meeting at the level of the continent (something with which Latin America now has long experience) is one of the least mentioned but one of the most important aspects of the synod.

Another discovery: The questions of the status and participation of women, increased transparency in the Church, and how to hold together love, mercy and truth in extending a welcome were not solely the concerns of the global North. These echoed from every corner of the Catholic world.

It is true that some individuals and groups remain sceptical and even hostile toward the process; others now wish they had had more chances to become involved. It is also true, I

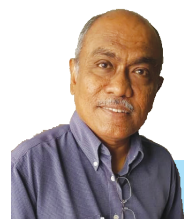
think, that the most silent group in the process so far is priests and bishops. This process will not be properly synodal unless they find a way to share their own experiences, with trust, with the wider People of God, and we need to understand more about why they have not done so already.

As we head into the next stage of this process, I remain hopeful and curious. The challenge of this next phase will be for those who participate in the assembly meeting of the Synod of Bishops in Rome this October to remain as closely connected as possible to those vital local expressions of love, uncertainty, hope and lament; to find ways to draw others into its dynamic pathway; and in doing both, to open new ways of walking together into the future. — By Anna Rowlands, *America*

● Anna Rowlands teaches Catholic social thought and practice at Durham University in Durham, England, and currently provides support to the Office of the Synod of Bishops and the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

The origin and development of the term 'catechesis'

On the invitation of the editor of the *HERALD*, I agreed to contribute a series of articles on the topic of catechesis. In my first article, I wish to explain the origin and development of the term 'catechesis' in the Church.



ECHOING THE FAITH

Dr Steven Selvaraju

Handing on the message of Jesus

The Acts of the Apostles states that after the ascension of Jesus Christ, the early believers "remained faithful to the teaching of the Apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers" (Acts 2: 42). Here, the "teaching of the Apostles" denotes a 'handing on' of the message of Jesus to the believers and new converts by the Apostles. The 'handing on' was done by word of mouth, that is, orally.

This was the earliest form of catechesis and was considered one of the key duties of the Apostles. It is based on the mandate of Jesus to them: "Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations, baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and *teach them to observe all the commands I gave you...*" (Mat. 28: 19).

Catechesis in the New Testament

The term 'catechesis' in itself has an ancient origin in the Church. The writings of Luke and Paul mention the term. For example, Luke addresses his Gospel to Theophilus so that he may "learn how well founded the teaching [*katechounti*] is that you have received (Lk. 1: 4). Paul writes that those "under instruction [*katechoumenos*] should always contribute something to the support of the man who is instructing them" [*katechethes*].

The Greek words used by Luke and Paul come from two other Greek words, namely *kata* meaning 'down', and *echein* mean-

ing 'to re-sound', 'to re-echo' or 'to sound forth'. Catechesis, therefore, implies oral instruction or verbal teaching. Basically, in the New Testament, catechesis meant either formation in the way of the Lord, oral instruction, and a handing on of all that has been received in and through Christ. The word was applied both to the message being taught (content) and the oral manner in which it was communicated (method). The message was to be taught and spoken accurately (Acts 18: 25).

The emergence of the catechumenate

The understanding of catechesis as an "oral re-echoing" of the message of Christ continued during the first four centuries of the Church. As more people entered the Church, the successors of the Apostles, the bishops, realised the need to establish a formal process of preparation before a person could be baptised. It was known as the 'catechumenate'. One of the main aspects of the catechumenate was catechesis, that is, the doctrinal and moral instruction given to the catechumens (persons receiving instruction) before their baptism.

From about the fifth century onwards, there was a gradual decline of the catechumenate. In many places, it was replaced by the practice of infant baptism. Over the course of the next few centuries, the whole process changed. The "handing on" of the Faith shifted from something pre-baptismal to being post-baptismal, and was given

largely to those already baptised. At this time, catechesis was largely in the form of preaching by the priest during the Mass. Parents were expected to "hear and re-tell the story" to the household later at home.

The emergence of catechisms

Regardless the manner in which catechesis was carried out, for more than 1,500 years, the main medium used was oral instruction or preaching (re-sound or re-echo). However, two events occurred in the 15th century that would shake the Church's dependence on oral communication of the Faith. The first was the discovery of moveable printing by Johannes Gutenberg, sometime between 1440 – 1456. It meant that the mass production of printed materials was now possible. The "written or printed word" began to replace the "spoken word".

The second was the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther and others began to write manual instructions to clearly spell out the Faith of the reformers. These manual instructions became known as the 'catechism'. The term 'catechism' was used to denote a summary or exposition of doctrine and morals used in the teaching of the Faith to children and adults. In response, Catholic theologians, such as, Peter Canisius and Robert Bellarmine and others wrote catechisms to explain the Catholic doctrine.

Over time, the bishops in Europe saw the urgent need to produce their national or regional catechisms to counter the ones by the reformers. To ensure that the content of the catechisms was taught correctly, the instructions were undertaken mainly by the clergy or religious. Catechisms were later introduced into schools as the medium of religious instruction to children who attended "catechism classes". As Catholic missionaries travelled to foreign lands

to spread the Faith, such as to Asia, Africa, Latin America and other parts of the world, they took along their catechisms. The method of catechesis used in Europe, namely indoctrination and memorisation, was introduced in the foreign missions.

Catechesis in modern times

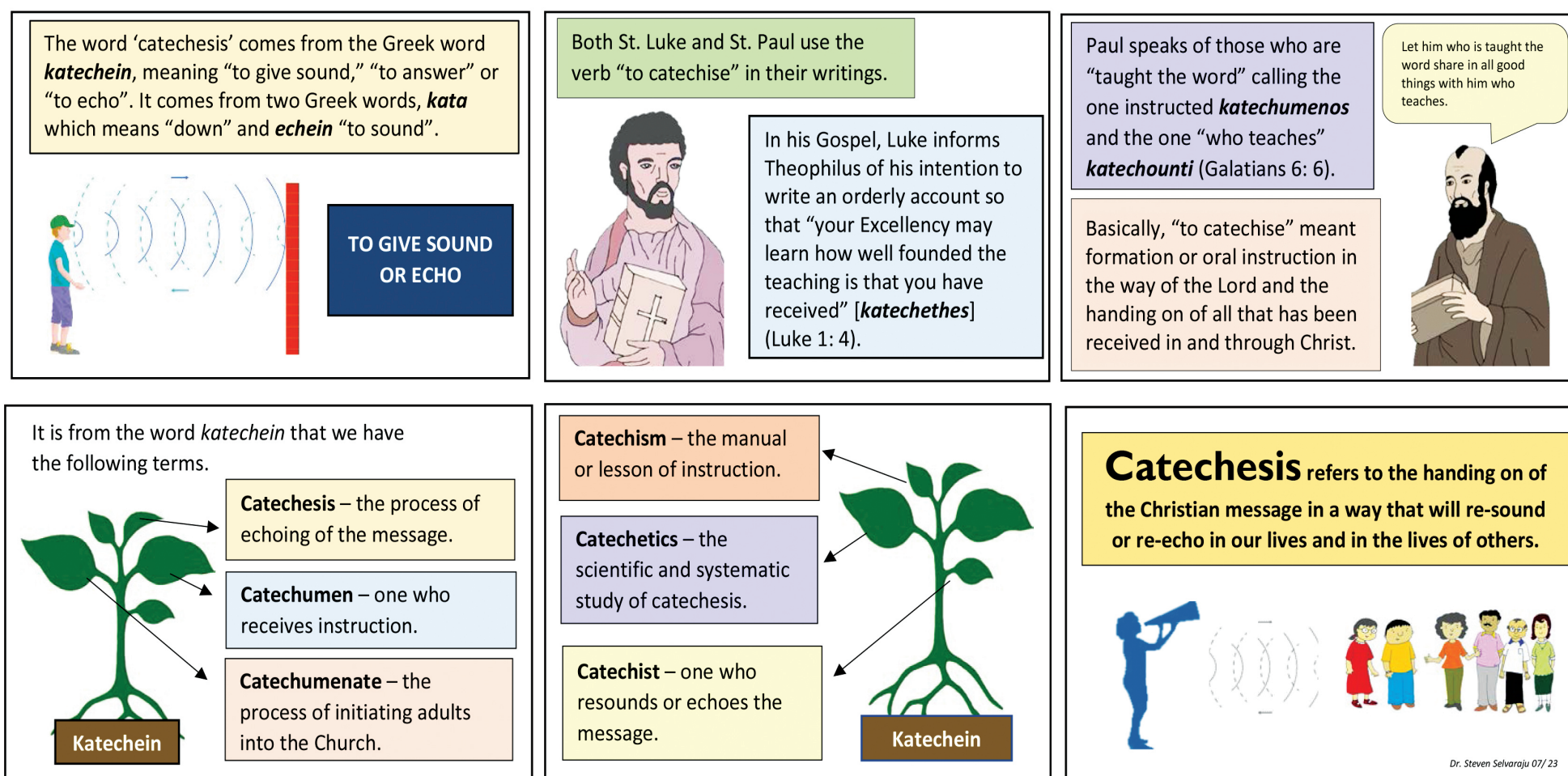
Around the mid-18th and 19th centuries, new approaches of transmitting the Faith to children began to develop in Europe. A return to the ancient sources of Christianity and studies on the catechumenate in the early Church led to the term 'catechesis' becoming popular again. After the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the pace of this development quickened. The bishops at the Council spoke of the importance of catechesis in the Church. Later, papal documents and directories on catechesis were published to explain the Church's renewed vision of catechesis. In time, 'catechetics' became a field of scientific and systematic study of catechesis in Catholic universities and institutions, and the person "handing on" the Faith became known as the 'catechist'.

Conclusion

We will examine further these developments in future articles. For now, it is enough to know how the term 'catechesis' emerged and developed in the Church. Below is a simple infographic that I prepared to help readers capture the essence of my article.

● Dr Steven Selvaraju holds a Licentiate and Doctorate in Theology with Specialisation in Catechetics from the Pontifical Salesian University in Rome, Italy. He serves as Director of the Archdiocesan Catechetical Centre, Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

The origin and development of the term 'catechesis' in the Church



Culinary wizard adds a dash of compassion

By Gwen Manickam

Serving hope, one plate at a time, Muar-born Jeffery Tan is a culinary wizard on a mission. With a dash of talent and a pinch of compassion, he ignites flavours that transcend taste buds. Each delicious creation from this self-taught chef serves a profound purpose, as it not only satisfies hunger but also nourishes the spirits of those in need.

The founder of the Australian-based Cooking for Charity initiative added another feather to his illustrious cap by earning a Certificate III in Commercial Cookery from the Boxhill Institute of TAFE, Victoria, last month. This qualification marked his first official recognition in the culinary field, showcasing his determination, perseverance, and lifelong learning mindset.

Graduating at age 73, the jovial grandfather of two's achievement is awe-inspiring and demonstrates that it's never too late to pursue one's dreams and acquire new skills.

An entrepreneur by day and philanthropist chef at heart, Melbourne-based Jeffrey is no stranger to a skillet and spatula.

"Although I have been cooking for people from all walks of life, including Malaysian royalty, it was my vision to get some paper qualification in this field. After taking this two-year course, I know more about hygiene, safety in the

kitchen, and bacteria, among other things."

However, he didn't start as a chef. Jeffrey dabbled a little as a student working part-time at a hotel in Marble Arch, London, but after earning his degree, the strapping young accountant followed his wife Jessie to Australia in 1981.

Eleven years and two children later, he founded IPF Culinary Consultancy, a distribution company specialising in supplying Australian-sourced fine wine and food, like wagyu beef and premium seafood, to the Asian Pacific and Middle East regions.

"When I started this business, I realised that unless I learnt to cook, I would not be accepted into the industry." And what better way to learn than at the stove of other chefs?

"Once a month, I used to wine and dine chefs, winemakers, and politicians at home. Remember, nothing in life is free; in return, I got myself invited to various chef's kitchens. I spent time with some of the top chefs in town, and I learnt how to cook."

Armed with an infectious smile, the fruits of his labour bore sweet rewards. He now stands as a celebrated chef, having achieved the pinnacle of culinary success. Jeffrey attained this distinction despite lacking formal professional training, making him among an esteemed few to earn a coveted spot as an Executive Chef member of the prestigious international culinary association Les Toques Blanches and the Australian Culinary Federation.

Dubbed the Humble Chef, Jeffrey began the Cooking for Charity initiative in 1996. At first, he cooked all the dishes, but as the project gained momentum and his relationship with the chefs around town deepened, Jeffrey would recruit different chefs to contribute their signature dishes for the functions.

"We don't entertain individual requests for private functions. It must be attached to an organisation, and they handle all money matters. I don't see a cent of the money raised. Sometimes we get sponsorships for the ingredients and wine, but often, we chefs donate the raw material. Our helpers are also volunteers and usually highly profiled people.

"I believe if you are good, you attract



good people. Of all the events organised, my most memorable was when we cooked for 10 carers of people with Alzheimer's disease. They had a great time and enjoyed a break from the strain of being a caregiver," said Jeffrey who previously catered for a gathering of 800 attendees at the prestigious Ritz-Carlton Hotel.

So far, Jeffrey has dedicated a substantial amount of his personal finances, along with his time and skills, towards the initiative.

Cooking for Charity helped raise over AUD5.6 million (RM17.4 million) for various charities, including the Australian Rotary Foundation Trust, Alzheimer Australia, Prostate Cancer of Victoria, Spastic Children Centre of Malaysia, Tibetan Disaster Relief Fund, and Melbourne Neighbourhood Foundation, to name a few.

Jeffrey's dedication to charitable projects through his culinary art has earned him numerous accolades. His notable achievements include the prestigious Order of Australia Medal (OAM) from Queen Elizabeth II in 2018, and the Australian Centenary Medal from the Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia, Chef De Honour World Gourmet Awards 2018 2019 2022, CHT International Outstanding Achievers Award, Great Chef 2019 list of William Angliss, and the Lifetime Achiever and Contributor of World Gourmet Awards 2023 among others.

Jeffrey's faith plays an important role in his life, and he believes in sharing his faith through exemplary actions. "I am a regular churchgoer and I attend Bible classes but I have my limitations. I am not a fundamentalist Christian. I believe the way to share our faith is by living a life exemplary of a good Christian, including doing charity work when and where we can."

In 2015, this writer was invited to Melbourne to help conduct interviews for a biography cum cookbook for Jeffrey. Aptly titled *Cooking for Charity with Jeffrey Tan*, the website describes the book as "a journey from Jeffrey's unconventional childhood in Malaysia to the most glamorous dining rooms in Australia, revealing how a celebrated chef translates the sounds, smells and tastes of the street hawkers of his youth." A total of 1,000 copies were printed, with the entire proceeds going towards charity.

In 2016, Jeffrey semi-retired by selling his distribution business to two shareholders. He has recently cut down on the number of Cooking for Charity initiatives he conducts but is inspiring other chefs to start their initiatives. Meanwhile, he continues to enjoy family, good food, great friends, and travelling to pass the time.

Jeffrey's accomplishment serves as an inspiration to others, proving that age should never be a barrier when it comes to pursuing one's passion.

Nun describes five-year jihadist captivity as "spiritually transformative"

NAIROBI: Sr Gloria Cecilia Narváez Argoti, a Catholic missionary abducted in the west African country of Mali, describes her five-year-captivity as "spiritually transformative" and a blessing in her life.

The Colombian nun was abducted in February 2017 in Southern Mali by what was later discovered to be a *jihadi* group.

She narrated her experience in the Foreword of the 2023 edition of the *Religious Freedom in the World Report*, which *Aid to the Church in Need (ACN)* published on June 22.

"Undoubtedly, it was one of the most spiritually transformative experiences of my life. Today, looking back, even though it sounds paradoxical, it was perhaps one of the greatest blessings God has given me," Sr Gloria said in the report on Christian persecution, which painted a grim picture of Africa.

She said that writing the Foreword of the report was an opportunity to speak out against religious intolerance and Christian persecution.

"I am aware of the importance of speaking about this fundamental right – religious liberty – to ensure it is protected, especially within a polarised society where attempts are made to sweep under the carpet the abuses committed against the freedom to profess religious beliefs," Sr Gloria said.

The member of the Congregation of the



Sister Gloria Cecilia Narváez

Franciscan Sisters of Mary Immaculate added that her mission in Mali and her experience with *jihadists* in the West African country taught her the importance of love and respect regardless of one's religious affiliation.

She narrated having shared her captivity with two women: a Muslim and a Protestant, and added, "I learned that if we love, accept and respect one another, we can live as brothers and sisters."

Accepting one another, she clarified, does not mean giving up one's beliefs, "for true respect, is about listening, welcoming, and acknowledging everyone for who they are."

Sr Gloria began working in Mali in 2010, reaching out mainly to women in the mostly

Muslim country.

In the Foreword, she shares that it was her Congregation's fraternal nature that made the people of Mali so fond of the missionaries.

"The Muslims of the community in which we served admired us for two things: constant prayers and open fraternity. They always saw us united and praying, working for others, with kindness, regardless of discomforts or precarious conditions, with a permanent smile and neighborliness. Differences in ethnicity, class, or religion made no difference to us; we treated everyone with love," the Colombian nun says.

She recounts experiencing the same love in Muslim families who invited the missionaries on important occasions such as the celebrations at the end of Ramadan.

"We were invited to celebrate in their (Muslim) homes, and we were always treated with great kindness," Sr Gloria recounts, and adds, "There were no closed doors or walls. At the same time, this provided an opportunity to evangelise in our way, for we told them that our work and fraternal relationship with different people was not the work of this or that sister, but that everything was done thanks to God, who is the giver of all blessings."

She says that at her kidnapping, the fraternity she had felt in her missionary

work vanished.

"Freedom, not only physical liberty, which allowed me to move without restrictions, became only a word, an immense longing. As time went by, and perhaps because of what I previously experienced in continuous, loving, respectful, and kind contact with people of every religious denomination and all conditions, I realised I had not only lost my freedom, but also my religious liberty," Sr Gloria narrates.

She adds that on numerous instances, she was singled out, beaten, and insulted for professing her Catholic faith.

The Catholic nun underwent adverse circumstances, including bad weather, the daily abuse, humiliations, and deprivation of food and water.

In all these circumstances, her faith remained unmoved, she testifies, and explains, "I never — not once — failed to thank God for allowing me to wake up and be alive amid all the difficulties and dangers: How could I not praise You, bless You and thank You, my God? For You have filled me with peace in the face of insults and mistreatment!"

Sr Gloria was released from her captivity on October 9, 2021. She still prays for the conversion of the souls of her captors. —

By Agnes Aineah, *ACI Africa*

Navigating the coming state elections

In a few weeks, six states will go to the polls to choose their state governments; three currently controlled by PH — Penang, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan, and three by PAS — Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu. The dynamics of the first and second set of states are similar, owing to the demographic, voting patterns and political norms of each other. While the first three are industrial economies with a more multiracial population, the latter are predominantly Muslim with an agricultural economic base.

Both Perpaduan and Perikatan desperately need this win. Perpaduan, to seal its legitimacy as a popular government, and Perikatan, to try and demonstrate that this government isn't endorsed by most of the electorate.

The reality is, however, that barring an overwhelming but unlikely win to either side, the status quo is likely to remain.

If the voting pattern of the last General Elections remain, Selangor and Penang would likely see reduced margins or seats for PH, especially the northern part of Selangor and mainland Penang. Their partnership with BN however, is likely to further secure the Perpaduan position in Negeri Sembilan, and in currently held strongholds, in central and south of Selangor, as well as Penang island.

For Perikatan, it is likely to solidify its positions in Kedah and Kelantan, with Kedah potentially being PAS' new fortress state, replacing Kelantan, which have traditionally relied on returning Kelantanese to maintain its grip on power.

It is also possible for PAS Kelantan to lose a few seats as anecdotal indications de-



MAKING SENSE

Emmanuel Joseph

note better reception to Anwar's leadership, combined with stronger brand recognition for Amanah, and Pakatan's partnership with BN, which through UMNO, has a narrower gap to fill — less than 10 per cent in a few seats, and in Gua Musang and Sungai Petani, the total votes exceeded that of PN, translating to seven DUN seats.

This could put a slight dent in a previously unassailable victory for PAS-PN.

Both sides will undoubtedly attempt to swing these results in their favour — both will interpret the results to prove their argument that they are the true voice of the electorate, when both will actually be maintaining their current base support while making some progress the other way.

In this sense, if pure political support is the only barometer, Perpaduan can be expected to lose a little ground to Perikatan, but perhaps more accurately read as a continuance of the last election's protest vote as opposed to permanently gained ground in Penang and Selangor.

Can Malaysia afford to play politics?

Whichever way the politics plays out, our lives will nonetheless be impacted. With a crushing 1.5 trillion-ringgit foreign debt, unstable and lowering Ringgit, we can no longer afford to dish out subsidies as we did in the yesteryears, as they now must con-

tend with other basic needs like infrastructure and civil service salaries. The politics of handouts and goodies is, however, likely to continue in some way or form, as the Perpaduan government will be pressured into doing so by their political opponents.

We will also likely not see the end of the politics of 3R (race, religion and royalty), as this is an emotive and therefore powerful method of soliciting support.

The real danger behind this is, as our economic problems aren't a sexy topic to discuss politically, it will not be brought to the forefront, where it ought to be, and instead of helping our rakyat understand that some fiscal austerities and sacrifices are required to set us back on the right track, we will continue to discuss otherwise frivolous matters as both sides attempt to assuage fears, even if they are with little basis in reality.

Long Term Effects

Malaysia has been able to progress much in the past several decades, in no small part because of our economic stability. We have been able to alternate peacefully between intense campaign periods and four-and-half years of relative political peace, apart from the occasional scandal. Since 2008, however, and amplified considerably after 2018, we have been in a state of political high alert, with parties and supporters alike being in high-strung mode, constantly arguing, and worse, attempting to topple each other through any means necessary.

While this has largely been contained now by new legislations, a noticeable trend is the increasing tendency by political parties to undermine the legitimacy of their opponents

who are in power, making it difficult to run the administration.

The constant politicking has also produced a jaded, disillusioned citizenry, and the social and economic destruction left in its wake, an impatient one.

It takes time and effort to turn policies around and make them work or devise new ones to circumnavigate old ones.

In response to this, political parties tend to devise too many "quick wins" to garner immediate support, mainly for its political survival.

This new need for immediacy, comes with two costs — thoroughness and opportunity — which come through three-to-ten-year plans that consider long-term studies and wider and more impactful, or even meaningful results.

Pandering to these stop-gap methods also creates the impression that this sort of sensitive political wagers pays off, leading to the continual use of extreme left or right type rhetoric, and the eventual abandonment of centrism, in favour of 'results', and a failure to deliver it, as certain political doom.

In the long run, this could mean abandoning the forest for the trees and the replacement of meaningful political debate, degenerating into jabs and narratives that do not serve the nation's best interest beyond a narrow and shrinking.

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



... meanwhile

Joanne Lim

I know the hesitancy; it isn't easy to walk into a confessional; my son badly wanted to go out with his friends last weekend and tried his usual high-level quotes, "Mum, you know it's easier to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission." After 10 minutes of earnest persuasion, the conversation ended with him obtaining an approval on condition that he goes for the Sacrament of Reconciliation that weekend, willingly. Many Catholic mothers will understand the difficulty in coaxing a teenage son to go for Confession.

Let's face it — the sweaty palms, pounding heart, and stomach churns are symptoms known to many believers, even adults (including me!!) just before entering the confessional. The Sacrament of Reconciliation, while being one of the most beautiful and unique aspects of Catholicism which showcases God's abundant love and mercy for us, isn't the easiest to embrace and undertake, until we understand its true meaning and experience the life-changing effects of **His Forgiveness**.

"But this priest knows me, grew up with me, knows all my friends and comes home for dinner sometimes! Won't he tell on me? Won't he judge me, or worse, laugh at me?"

Whether it is fear or embarrassment, one thing's for sure, it is temporary...because the moment we leave the confessional, the great battle is won — God triumphs over evil and our souls are cleansed again. A priest once shared with me that the confessionals are placed at the sides of the church as it serves

as 'lifeboats' to bring Catholics back to safety, back to our community, back to Jesus. Christians believe there is a quicker, perhaps less embarrassing way to do this — confess directly to God! After all, you can still feel remorseful and expect to be forgiven without the 'penance'. But what if by doing so, you're merely accumulating your penance for the afterlife? Why wait to seek His forgiveness when Jesus tells His disciples in John 20:23, *Whoever's sins you forgive, they are forgiven. Whoever's sins you retain, they have been retained*. Jesus spoke these words to show His Apostles that He wanted for them to be His representatives on Earth, **in persona Christi**, while the Holy Spirit would empower them to do so.

"Why would God forgive me of this mortal sin? Is the absolution for real if it comes from a human being?"

What's this arrangement that you can literally get away with murder? Or is that really the arrangement? *The mercy of God is infinitely greater than your malice*, Padre Pio would say, *Do not dwell on sins that have already been confessed. Jesus has forgiven them*. Indeed, as Jesus promises: *Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls* (Matthew 11:28-30).

It is the humiliation and remorse that we must subject ourselves to when confessing to a priest, in order to make a good confession. The old folly called **Pride** can sometimes stand in our way to reaching the kneeler at the confessional. We can't bring ourselves to stoop down to a **Man** who stooped even lower, washed our feet, and then died to free us from our sins. The sins we committed, not His sin, not our neighbour's sin, not the sins

"I have a confession to make..."

of strangers. Sins that we, knowingly, consciously, deliberately committed...and then there are venial sins and sins of omission, which no matter how we look at it, displeases God, detaches us, and causes hurt to others. **Jesus' death on the cross is the greatest love story ever told, and it gets retold every time we go for confession**. Yes, **confession** is linked to the **cross**. If you don't believe in the work of the salvation on the cross, you cannot believe in confession... that this One Man — took our sins and won our eternal life; that everyone will believe in Him and in the Father who sent Him, for you and for me.

Here's another sign of the times — **dis-trust**. We no longer trust one another, we find it incomprehensible to trust another man, including a priest, and yes, with the Age of Reason and now the Age of "Artificial Intelligence", we have found it even more difficult to trust God. Notwithstanding that people question the existence of God, a larger majority find it difficult to accept that He knows us by name and loves us enough to forgive us if we turn to Him. **We look for miracles everywhere, but the one miracle gifted to us is overlooked, underutilised, and ridiculed**.

What other evidence do we seek? Fr Thomas Byles remained onboard the Titanic, refused to board a lifeboat twice and instead stayed to hear confessions and gave absolution to over 100 passengers (including Protestants and Jews). Many wait till the end of their lives or when faced with a life-threatening surgery before seeking reconciliation, that is, if it wasn't a sudden death — in which case a soul may be unprepared for the afterlife. St Padre Pio spent most of his days hearing confessions totalling about five million confessions in his lifetime. He demanded that each confession be a true

conversion — no excuses, no insincerity but frankness, plain brutal honesty, and a firm resolution. St John Vianney shares even more hard-hitting truths: "When you confess your sins, you take the nails out of Jesus"; and "God is quicker to forgive than a mother to snatch her child from the fire." **Trust in the power of the priesthood** — Pope (Saint) John Paul II did so when he asked a priest who had left his priestly ministry to confess his sins to the late Pope, restored his priesthood and then the Pope knelt before the newly restored priest to offer his own confession! **Behold, the Power of Reconciliation!** Closer to home, I remember when I was a young teenager and being terrified to confess my sins, Fr Andrew Volle MEP, a humble priest a.k.a. God's gentle giant, laid his large comforting and anointed hands on mine at the confessional and everything came pouring out. It was as if God was listening and indeed He was, and forgave my sins through this blessed priest.

In this world filled with pent up emotions, guilt, and anger waiting to explode, we actually have an outlet, a real way out. Every Sacrament imparts its own particular grace. **The Sacrament of Reconciliation is akin to a soul's bath**. As Padre Pio said, *God runs after the most stubborn souls. They cost Him too much to abandon them*. The devil knows our sins and thrives on them...Jesus is well-aware of this and enlightened St Faustina who penned the Lord's words: *Let them not fear to approach Me; they are most in need of My mercy*. (Diary, 1275).

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



Fr Ron Rolheiser

No lasting city

Scripture tells us that in this life we have no lasting city. True enough. But, it seems, we also don't have a lasting house, school, neighbourhood, town, zip code address, or most anything else. Eventually nothing lasts.

Perhaps my case isn't typical, but a lot of things in my life haven't lasted. My grandparents were immigrants, Russian-Germans, moving to the Canadian prairies and being among the first farmers to break the soil there at the beginning of the 1900s. They were young, so too was life then on the prairies, and their generation planted new farms, schools, towns, and cities across the great plains of Canada and the USA. I was born into the second generation of all that – but just as urbanisation and other changes were already beginning to cause the disappearance of a lot of what they had built.

So, here's my story of having no lasting city: The elementary school I went to closed after I'd finished the sixth grade. We were bused to a bigger centralised school and our old school building was carted away. Nothing remains today to indicate there once was a school there. The new school I attended closed several years after I'd graduated. The building itself was razed and today the entire former campus is part of a farmer's field with only a small plaque to indicate there once was vibrant

life there, with hundreds of young voices filling the air with energy. That school was a couple of miles out of a small town and that town itself has now completely disappeared, without a single building left.

I went from high school to an Oblate novitiate house situated in the heart of the Qu'Appelle valley, a beautiful stately building on a lake. Several years after I'd graduated from there, the building was sold and soon afterwards was destroyed in a fire. Only an empty stretch of prairie sits there now. From there, I moved to another seminary, a magnificent old building (formerly the Government House for the Northwest Territories) and spent six wonderful years there. Again, several years after I'd graduated, the building was abandoned, and it too was eventually destroyed by a fire.

From there I moved to Newman Theological College in Edmonton where I spent the next 15 years. Newman College had a beautiful campus on the outskirts of the city, but several years after I'd left, the campus was expropriated by the city to build a ring road and all its buildings were razed. From there, I moved to a wonderfully homey building, the Oblate Provincial residence in Saskatoon. Several years later, after I'd moved out, that building too was razed and nothing remains where it once stood. And, while all this was hap-

pening, the little town to which our family was connected (for mail, for groceries, for services, for identity) became a ghost town with no inhabitants, all its buildings shuttered.

Eventually, I moved to the Oblate School of Theology in Texas to live in a welcoming little house designated for the president of the school. However, after a few years, the land it was on was needed for a new seminary and that house too was razed. Finally, most painful of all, two years ago, our family house, our home for more than 70 years, was sold and the new owners (sensitive enough to ask our family's permission to do so) burned the old house to the ground.

That's a lot of roots disappearing: my elementary school, my high school, the town our family was connected to, both seminaries from which I graduated, the college where I first taught, both Oblate houses I'd spent wonderful years within, and the family house — all gone, razed to the ground, nothing left to go back to.

What does that do to you? Well, there's nostalgia, yes. How I would again love to walk into any of those buildings, feel what they once meant to me, and bask in memories. None of that can happen. Each of these is a mini death, leaving a part of my soul rootless. On the other hand, more positively, all that unwanted letting go is

helping prepare me for an ultimate letting go, when I will be facing my own death, and not just some haunting nostalgia.

As well, this has taught me something else of substance. Buildings and houses may disappear, but home is not contingent on them. Rene Fumoleau, a poet among the Dene tribes, shares how he once visited a family the day after their house had been destroyed by fire and had this conversation with a young girl:

The next day I visited the burned out family.

What could I say after such a tragedy?

I tried with the ten-year old daughter:

'Joan, you must feel terrible without home.'

The young girl knew better:

'Oh, we still have our home,

But we have no house to put on it.'
(Home – Here I Sit)

Yes, we can still have a home even without our former house on it.

● **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.ron-rolheiser.com.

SOCIAL JUSTICE



Making a Difference

Tony Magliano

Our persecuted Christian brothers and sisters

For many of us who strive to seriously practise faith in Jesus Christ, and to extend that practise out into the marketplace, the political square and society at large, persecution rarely means more than being ridiculed, verbally harassed and, to a certain degree, socially and politically marginalised.

But for so many other Christians throughout the world who courageously refuse to deny Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour – with all that that means – fierce persecution awaits them every day.

In their 2023 *World Watch List*, Open Doors, an international Christian organisation dedicated to shining light on the desperate plight of millions of Christians suffering tremendous hardships – often including torture and death – reported the shocking fact that more than 360 million Christians suffer high levels of persecution and discrimination because of their faithful commitment to follow Jesus. And it's getting worse.

According to Open Doors, "In the last 30 years, the number of countries where Christians suffer high and extreme levels of persecution has almost doubled to 76 countries."

Open Doors reports that last year the known number of Christians who were killed for their faith in Jesus totalled 5,621 – 90 per cent of those killed were in Nigeria alone. Also, 2,110 churches were attacked, and 4,542 Christians detained (see: [https://](https://www.opendoorsus.org/en-US/persecution/countries/)



A file photo of mourners at a funeral for Christians murdered by Islamic militants in Nigeria.

www.opendoorsus.org/en-US/persecution/countries/).

Christianity is clearly and overwhelmingly the world's most persecuted religion.

It is incumbent on those of us who are safe and sound to tirelessly pray, advocate for, and work on behalf of hurting and vulnerable Christians.

While followers of Jesus have a strict obligation to help all people in need to the best of our ability – regardless of their race, ethnicity, nationality, or religion – we have a unique responsibility to reach out to our suffering brothers and sisters

in Christ.

Open Doors staff members shared with me that the most important gift we can give to our suffering brothers and sisters in Christ is prayer! Not only because prayer is the most powerful force on earth, but also because persecuted believers find added strength and faithfulness in knowing that we are praying for them.

Open Doors has developed ways to communicate to the suffering that fellow Christians are praying for them.

Another essential gift we can give our brothers and sisters in Christ is financial

help. It was explained to me that when, for instance, a pastor is arrested his or her family usually has no sustainable way to support themselves.

The Catholic Church humanitarian organisation Aid to the Church in Need alarmingly states in its *Religious Freedom in the World Report 2023* that "In recent years, Christian persecution has been sharply on the rise, and its terrible impacts have only begun to be felt. In fact, according to Pope Francis, conditions for Christians are worse now than they were in the days of the early Church."

After her release from captivity in Mali where she was tortured by Islamic extremists for four years, Sr Gloria Cecilia Narvaez said, "It is difficult to be chained. It is difficult to be hit. But I lived in the moment as God presented it to me, and I wished no harm to my captors." One captor said to me, "Let's see if your God gets you out of here." She said that she couldn't fathom their hatred (see: <https://www.churchinneed.org/christian-persecution-religious-freedom/>). See also page 12.

Let us faithfully pray privately and liturgically, for example as an ongoing petition in the Prayer of the Faithful. Let us educate and advocate. And let us not forget!

● **Tony Magliano** is an internationally syndicated Catholic social justice and peace columnist. He can be reached at tmag6@comcast.net.

Little Catholics' Corner

Hello children of God,

Just like the seeds in today's Gospel on the Parable of the Sower, we can also receive God's Words in our hearts. Sometimes, we might ignore the Good News, like when we don't listen to our parents or teachers. Other times, we might get distracted by toys or games and forget to pay attention to what God is saying.

But what's important to remember is that God does the work in our hearts. We don't have to do anything special. Just like the soil doesn't have to work hard to produce plants, we don't have to do anything to let God's words influence us. We just need to open our hearts and let His words make a difference in our lives.

When we let the Bible bless our lives, it's not about us, but about allowing God's Word to shape who we are. We want our hearts to be like the "good soil," where God's love can grow and produce faith in us. And when our hearts are filled with faith, it can be like a beautiful crop that others can see and be inspired by.

So, let's remember the story of the Sower and think about how we can open our hearts to God's words. Let's be like the good soil, ready to receive His love and grow in faith.

Love, Aunty Gwen

COLOUR THIS BIBLE VERSE THEN CUT THE POSTER AND HANG IT IN YOUR ROOM, TO REMEMBER GOD'S PROMISE TO US.

"MY WORD
that goes out
from MY MOUTH
will NOT return
empty BUT will
accomplish
WHAT I DESIRE AND
achieve. THE
PURPOSE for
which I sent it"

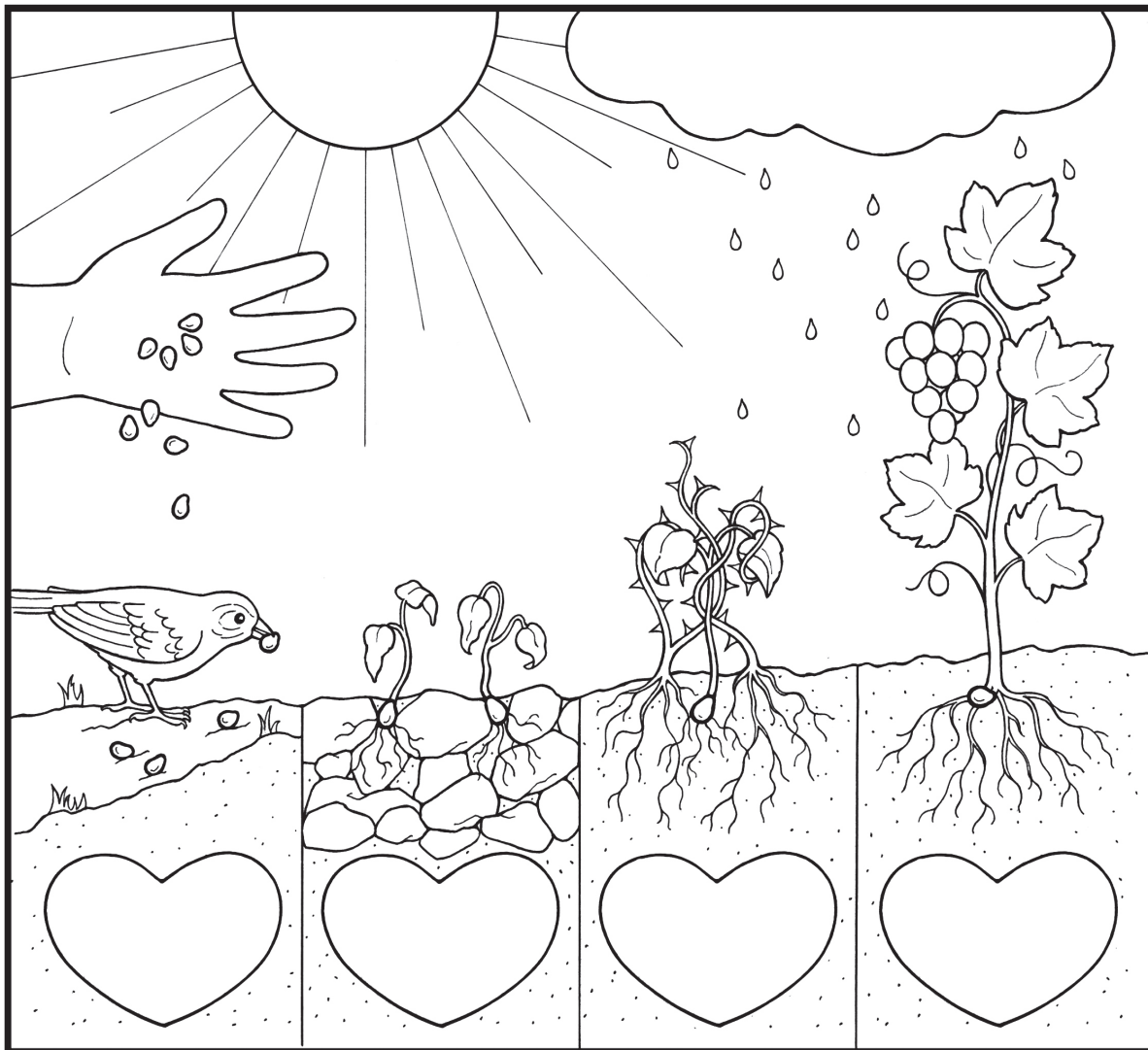
Isaiah 55:11

Mary Magdalene was one of the women who travelled with Jesus. She witnessed many of Jesus' miracles, stood at the foot of Jesus' cross, and was present as He died and was buried. She was also one of the first witnesses of Jesus' Resurrection.



I need to be ready to learn the teachings of Jesus (Matthew 13:1-23)

**Colour each part of the picture as you read the parable of the sower.
Match the hearts in the soil with the interpretations in the key.**



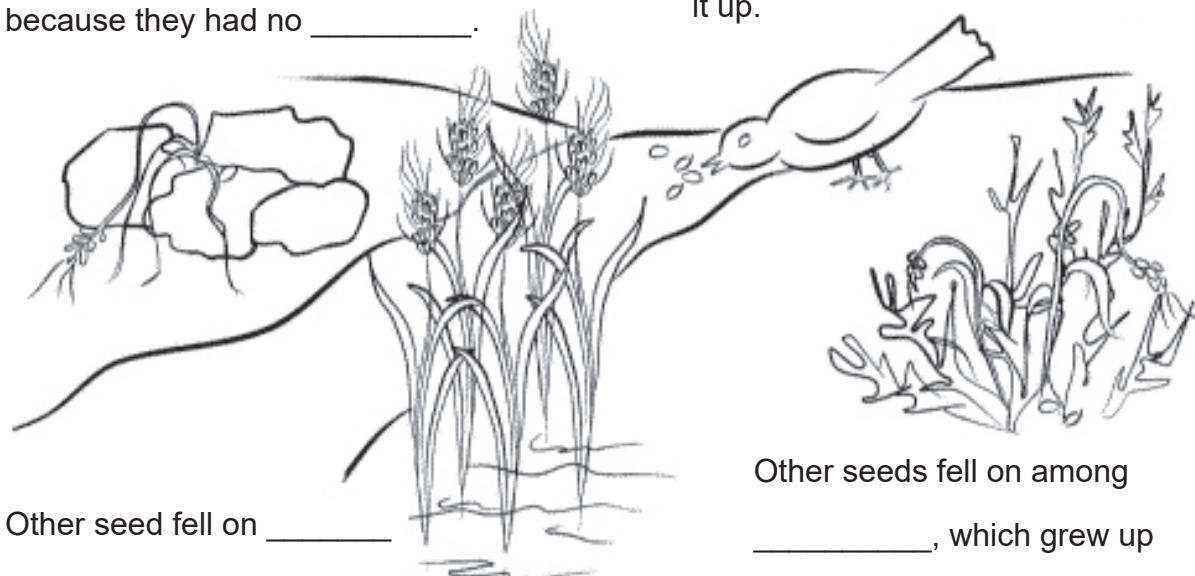
KEY

- Heard God's word but did not understand.
- Heard God's word but became worldly.
- Heard God's word but was offended.
- Heard God's word and understood it.

Jesus told a parable about a sower who sowed seeds that fell on four types of ground. What happened to each of them? Fill in the blanks with the words below.

Some fell on _____ ground. The plants _____ but dried up and died because they had no _____.

Some fell on the _____ of the path and the _____ came and _____ it up.



Other seed fell on _____ soil. It came up and yielded a _____ fold.

Other seeds fell on among _____, which grew up with it and _____ the plants.

thorns
rich

rocky
edge

hundred
birds

choked
ate

water
grew

YOUTH

JULY 16, 2023



WORLD YOUTH DAY PREPARATION

DIOCESE OF PENANG

The World Youth Day Organising Team of Penang Diocesan Network initiated a series of fundraising events to support young pilgrims participating in the upcoming World Youth Day in Lisbon.

There are 33 pilgrims from the three Deaneries: 12 from the Penang Deanery, 9 from the Northern Deanery and 12 from the Perak Deanery.

FUND-RAISING YOUTH BAZAAR

The first event was the Youth Bazaar, held on April 16, 2023, in collaboration with the Perak Deanery and hosted at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes (LOL) in Silibin, Perak. While the target audience was the young people from LOL, many parishioners and visitors from the Penang Deanery and Northern Deanery also attended. The bazaar offered a variety of food and drinks for sale, along with activities such as a coloring contest, temporary tattoo stickers, and fun games like Pong It!, Can Toss, and Dart Balloon. With the support of volunteers and the World Youth Day Organising Team, the Youth Bazaar Fundraising successfully raised over RM 16,000 for the event.

DEANERIES FUNDRAISING DINNER

Following the Youth Bazaar, three fundraising dinners were organised across the three Deaneries, combining the celebration of World Youth Day and Mother's Day. The first dinner took place on May 6, at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit on Penang Island, with over 400 attendees. The event offered various items for purchase, including button badges, World Youth Day Patron Saints stickers, flowers with Mother's Day cards, and Polaroid photos at the photo booth.

The second dinner was held on May 13 at



the Minor Basilica of St. Anne in Bukit Mertajam, attracting another 400 individuals. Handmade religious articles, special T-shirts, and performances by the busking team and local youths were featured during the dinner.

The third dinner, coordinated by the Perak Deanery pilgrims, took place on May 14 at Sun Lee How Fook restaurant, with over 400 attendees from the local community. Bingo games and a cake-cutting ceremony to honour mothers added to the festive atmosphere. The fundraising dinners were successful in terms of attendance and achieving their goals, fostering a sense of community and generosity among the diverse attendees.

• Continued on page 17



Youth Bazaar



Fundraising Dinner

A look at the numbers

LISBON, Portugal: The international celebration of the Catholic faith taking place Aug 1-6 brings together young people and others from around the world to meet and pray with Pope Francis.

- More than 600,000 people have started the registration process.
- Nearly three million lunches and dinners have been ordered.
- Ten thousand priestly vestments are being made. And at least 7,000 host families have volunteered to open their homes to pilgrims.

These are among the latest statistics released by organisers of World Youth Day, which will take place in less than three weeks.

An update on preparations of the event released June 30, included the following:

- 663,000 people have begun the registration process, and 313,000 from 151 countries have completed their registrations.
- The countries with the most completed registrations so far are Spain (58,531), Italy (53,803), France (41,055), and Portugal (32,771).
- 14,435 Americans are fully registered.



World Youth Day volunteers. (JMJ Lisboa 2023 flickr)

- 70 per cent of those fully registered (214,500) requested accommodations. So far, through the parishes in the host dioceses (which correspond to the capital region, Lisbon, and the neighboring regions of Santarém and Setúbal), 7,138 families have registered and are available to welcome young pilgrims in their homes, and more than 470,000 other places to stay overnight have been identified (namely in schools and sports clubs).
- 90 per cent of those fully registered

(289,000 pilgrims) have requested meals. The JMJ Lisboa 2023 Foundation has already contracted with thousands of participating restaurants and other establishments to provide almost 3 million lunches and dinners.

- 32,717 have started the process of registering as volunteers for the event, with 22,282 completing their registrations so far. Of these, 500 are doctors, nurses, or students completing their degree in the health field and will provide first aid to all

pilgrims throughout the week of the meeting.

- 698 bishops and 29 cardinals have registered to attend World Youth Day. The countries sending the most prelates are Italy (113), Spain (77), the United States (76), France (75), and Portugal (45).

- 10,000 vestments are being made for these cardinals and bishops and thousands of priests.

- 2,600 priests have already volunteered to be in "Reconciliation Park," a place where 150 confessionals will be set up between Aug 1-4. Confessions will be offered in the five official languages of this World Youth Day: Portuguese, English, French, Spanish, and Italian.

- Portugal's National Association of Protein Producers, Oilseeds and Cereals have donated two tons of Portuguese wheat for the manufacture of Communion hosts, which are being produced by the Clarisse Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Monastery in Lisbon.

To date, organisers have received 2,069 media requests to cover the event. — By Clara Raimundo, CNA

WORLD YOUTH DAY PREPARATION

DIOCESE OF PENANG

• Continued from page 16

MINI FUNDRAISING

A part from the major fundraising events, the World Youth Day Organising Team also arranged mini-fundraising initiatives like selling World Youth Day T-shirts throughout the Penang Diocese and other dioceses. Another initiative promoted fundraising merchandise, such as button badges, World Youth Day Patrons Saints stickers, T-shirts, and dinner tickets, at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. The Northern Deanery pilgrims conducted a roadshow in several churches within their deanery to promote the WYD T-shirts and dinner tickets. Additionally, coffee mornings were organised at various parishes as a lighter fundraising activity in June.



Mini Fundraising at the Church of the Holy Name of Mary, Permatang Tinggi.



Spiritual preparation – virtual FORMATIONS

To prepare the young pilgrims spiritually for WYD, online and in-person spiritual formations were conducted. Online formations involved sharing sessions where the pilgrims discussed their initial fears and joys upon being selected for WYD, their spiritual preparations, and their reflections on Mary's presence in their lives.

Jacintha and Josephine from ASAYO, who had attended previous WYD events shared their experiences, and provided travel tips. During their sharing, a few spiritual questions were raised such as "Am I aware that

the Holy Spirit dwells in me? Do I ask him to help me with the small and big issues of the day-to-day, "How am I letting God reach others through me?" Pilgrims shared their thoughts in small groups during the online formation.

During Greg from ASAYO's sharing, he came up with the "Inside Out" cartoon concept to describe emotions like - sad, happiness, disappointment, disgust, and excitement – that the pilgrims may feel during WYD. He asked them to reflect, ponder and pray on how they may handle the situations during WYD.

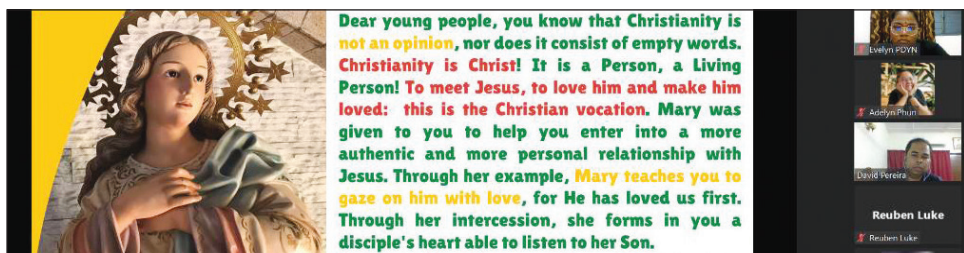


Spiritual preparation – FORMATIONS

The in-person formations were on June 24 and 25 in Penang, with 30 pilgrims in attendance. The sessions focused on Our Lady of Fatima, "SSD" (Spiritual, Seek, and Destination), rising up and living, and rising up and following. Between the sessions, Fr Desmond Jansen guided the young pilgrims to "Feel the power of prayers" during adoration. The adoration was a special moment for the pilgrims as

they were encouraged to write their problems on a piece of paper and burn it in front of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

In addition, the pilgrims participated in Mass, pilgrimage walks, Rosary prayers, Bible sharing, Praise and Worship, and reflections, strengthening their spiritual connection and readiness for WYD. This two-day formation ended with a thanksgiving prayer.



Surrendering to the Holy Spirit's Guidance

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you." Acts 1:8

KUALA LUMPUR: A total of 13 candidates comprising the English and Tamil speaking youths of the Church of Our Lady of Fatima, were sealed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit as they received the Sacrament of Confirmation during the Sunset bilingual Mass on June 24.

Archbishop Julian Leow presided over the Eucharistic celebration and administered the Sacrament of Confirmation. Concelebrating with the archbishop were parish priest Fr William Michael and resident priest Fr Andrew Manickam, OFM Cap.

In his homily, the prelate said that with Confirmation, the candidates had completed the Sacraments of Initiation ie. Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation and are now considered adult Catholics. This is the beginning of their faith journey and they are to go out and be witnesses for Christ in every situation of their lives. For a start, the archbishop encouraged them to serve in the various ministries in the parish.

The confirmands were both anxious and

exhilarated on completing the Sacraments of Initiation. The parents, too, shared that this has been a beautiful and emotional journey for them in witnessing their children bloom into full-fledged adult Catholics. The catechists for the class also expressed their joy in being able to share their faith in the lives of the confirmands.

Sharing by confirmand, Christian Shalom Felix

To me, Confirmation is the beginning of our lives as fully-fledged Catholics. I believe my classmates and I have been preparing for this moment for the past decade or so. I'm eternally grateful that we've chosen this path in life and I believe we will strive to be the best versions of ourselves to lead full, holy lives as Catholics.

By being confirmed, we have been called to witness the power of the Holy Spirit and spread the Good News to those around us through our actions and faith. As students and children of God, we have faced numerous challenges but I have learnt that by accepting guidance from the Holy Spirit and believing in the Lord, we will persevere.



The confirmands of the Church of Our Lady of Fatima, with Archbishop Julian Leow and Fr William Michael and Andrew Manickam, OFM, Cap.

I would like to thank my mother for sending me to Catechism almost every week and for stressing the importance of faith in my life. and I would also like to thank my sponsor, who was previously my catechist for a couple of years, for instilling a sense of curiosity in me to want to know and understand more about Jesus and the Church. I want to acknowledge my classmates' parents and sponsors who I'm sure

have always been there and will continue to support and guide them throughout their lives.

Through our faith journey, there will inevitably be ups and downs, but we must always remember to have faith and put our trust in the Lord in everything we do. I have learnt that trust is the key to happiness because when we believe God will take care of us, we will have nothing to worry about.

Ode to Ms Oh

PENANG: Ballet pioneer and respected teacher Oh Eng Sim who passed away on June 1, has left a legacy of generosity, discipline, kindness and community service.

Miss Oh as she was known among her ballet students at the Oh Eng Sim School of Dancing, had always cut a tall and elegant figure in cheongsams when she was not teaching, and instilled many good traits in her students who turned up to pay their last respects. Some of these students and friends were also a part of her life once she retired and went to a nursing home.

Dance teachers have always been known to give, give and give, by sharing their knowledge, passion and joy.

Apart from the gratitude felt by her former students whom Oh spent hours with at her school showing them steps, coaching them to be better and instilling valuable life lessons, a whole community is also mourning her passing.

The Church of the Immaculate Conception in Penang owes her a sea of appreciation for her generosity for one of its parish projects.

She was the most substantial donor of the church's



multi-million parish centre, whose hall is named after her.

"Because of her, we were able to kickstart the project and build the centre," former parish priest Fr Michael Cheah said when presiding over her funeral Mass on June 3.

"She lived her life well, by contributing to society as a good parishioner and daughter of God. "She deserves her reward in heaven and may very well open up a ballet school up there for the angels," he said during his homily.

Mindful of the fact that Oh spent over a decade of her life in a nursing home before her passing, Fr Michael added, "She has shown us how to leave this world happily and with a peaceful exit."

Which now begs the question of how the rest of us wish to be remembered when our time comes, and the kind of footprints we will leave behind.

In a Facebook post, Malaysian choreographer Joseph Victor Gonzales, who described Oh as a Malaysian pioneer and legendary ballet teacher and choreographer, said: "Thank you for everything and the generations you taught. Malaysia was blessed. Rest in peace Ms Oh." — *postcode-georgetown.com*

Missionary nun who innovated school education in India

NEW DELHI: An Irish Catholic nun, who revolutionised school education in India with her innovative methods, died June 24 in Kolkata.

Sr Cyril Mooney died at Loreto House in the eastern Indian city at the age of 86.

Sr Mooney came to India on Oct 10, 1956, a year after becoming a member of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary or the Loreto congregation.

Sr Mooney "was a great soul. She was a well-known educationalist all over the world and was closely associated with most of the priests and religious showing her care, concern, love, assuring them of her prayer," says a message from Fr Dominic Gomes, vicar general of the Archdiocese of Calcutta. "We shall miss her," he added.

Jesuit Father P J Joseph, who worked with Sr Mooney for a month 30 years ago, found her "truly amazing and inspiring." Writing on his Facebook page, the Jesuit said he heard for the first time, her message for the school and school children 'Each one teaches one'.

"There I witnessed the privileged children teaching the underprivileged. She told me many times that wasn't easy to begin with. But her vision and administrative acumen made it possible. My humble tribute to such a teacher par excellence. May God grant her eternal peace," he added.

Mini Joseph, a teacher who has worked with Sr Mooney, says the nun was an institution. "She was crystal clear in her approach towards holistic education of girls, to such an extent that she included a sense of community service among the girl students of Loreto Sealdah, where she was principal," Joseph told *Matters India*.

She recalled senior students travelling 20 km every fortnight to teach poor students subjects such as English, Bengali, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, and Value Education.

These "barefoot teachers" would prepare charts, activity cards and help educate "thousands of young minds who would otherwise have not had any education at all," Joseph said.

Sister worked more than 12 hours a day on her projects, even after age 60 and "touched hearts regardless of religion, caste, community, and gender. Through her work, she taught me what leadership



Sr Cyril Mooney receiving the Padma Shri award from then Indian President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. (Matters India photo)

truly is. She always led from the front and this is why, it was easy to follow her advice. She was, and will remain a model of grace, firmness, efficiency and inner power. A candle not to be blown off," she added.

Sr Mooney was the principal of Loreto Day School where she introduced a curriculum that included "work for justice" and was awarded the 1994 Noma Prize by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

The US\$15,000 (RM70,000) prize, established in 1980 with the help of the late Japanese publisher Shoichi Nom, recognises innovative programmes.

In 2007, she won the Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian award in India. Six years later, she was given the Irish Presidential Distinguished Service Award.

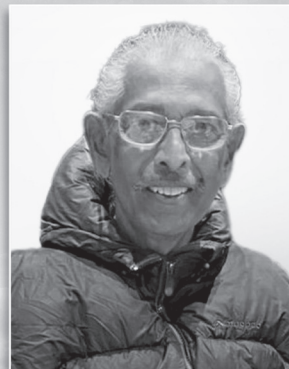
Sr Mooney was born July 21, 1936, in Ireland but she lived and worked in India for 67 years where she emerged as a nationwide leader in bringing quality education to urban and rural poor children.

— **By Jose Kavi, *Matters India***

MEMORIAM

For enquiries, please contact:
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Tel: 03-2026 8291

It is with deepest sorrow that we announce the demise of our beloved husband and father who passed away peacefully in Perth, Australia



In Loving Memory Christopher Denis

From God: 24 August 1953
To God: 25 June 2023

"Fill not your hearts with pain and sorrow, but remember me in every tomorrow. Remember the joy, the laughter, the smiles. I've only gone to rest a while. Although my leaving causes pain and grief, my going has eased my hurt and given me relief."

So, dry your eyes and remember me, not as I am, but as I used to be."

Rest in peace dearest Chris/Papa. Until we meet again.

Dearly missed and fondly remembered by
Wife: Gwendoline Rabel

Son: Sean Christopher Denis | Daughter-in-Law: Shamla V. Karumah
Daughter: Lisa Marie | Son-in-Law: Wilfred Victor | Grandchildren: Joshua Jacob & Laura Sabrina
Sister, nieces, nephews and a host of relatives and friends.

Funeral service will be held on the 5th of July 2023, in Perth, Australia, among close family and friends.

*Do not be
anxious about
anything, but in
everything by
prayer and
supplication
with
thanksgiving
let your
requests be
made known to
God. And the
peace of God,
which
surpasses all
understanding,
will guard your
hearts and your
minds in Christ
Jesus.*

Philippians 4:6-7

Patrick Michael
@ Bosco
31st Jan 1952 - 26th June 2010
(13th yr anniversary)

Madam Jayaganoo
@ Mrs S.A Michael
17th Sep 1923 - 18th July 2014
(9th yr anniversary)

*Silent tear,
Each night we shed a silent tear,
As we speak to you in prayer.
To let you know we love the both of you,
And just how much we care.
Take our million teardrops, wrap them up in love,
Then ask the wind to carry them,
To you in heaven above.*

Always loved and missed by Family

10th ANNIVERSARY



KOLANDASAMY GNANAMUTHU
Born: 26.12.1944 Departed: 16.07.2013

*Always in our Thoughts,
Forever in our Hearts...*

Always loved and remembered by beloved wife,
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grandchildren, relatives and friends.

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REST IN PEACE

Pope Francis condemns Quran burning in Sweden

VATICAN: Pope Francis has spoken to *Al-Ittihad* in his first interview granted to an Arabic news outlet, according to the United Arab Emirates newspaper.

In the July 3 interview, the Pope praised UAE authorities and spoke about interfaith cooperation, peacebuilding, and his 2019 *Document on Human Fraternity*.

Francis also commented on a protester's burning of a Quran in Sweden on June 28. The Muslim holy book was burned by an Iraqi-born refugee outside a mosque in Stockholm. The incident has sparked outrage among Muslims around the world and led to a raid on the Swedish embassy in Iraq by Shia Muslim protestors.

After other recent permit requests were denied due to plans to burn copies of the Quran, the Swedish courts ruled that the protests should be allowed on the basis of freedom of expression, the *BBC* reported.

"I have been outraged and disgusted at such deeds," Pope Francis said in response to a question about the incident. "Any book considered sacred by its people must be respected out of respect for those who believe in it. The freedom of expression should never be used as an excuse to offend others. Allowing that is [to be] rejected and condemned."

The papal interview was published in Arabic by *Al-Ittihad* with an English transcript

provided to journalists.

In the interview, Pope Francis said "the future of interfaith cooperation is based on the principle of reciprocity, respect for the other and the truth."

He said the message of every religion should be not only to call out evil but also to promote peace: "Our task, without giving in to conciliatory measures, is to pray for one another, asking God for the blessing of peace, and to meet, dialogue, and consolidate harmony in a spirit of cooperation and friendship."

"Our task is to transform the religious sense into cooperation, fraternity, tangible acts of good," he added.

The Pope said fraternity and caring for others "must be directed to everyone without distinction."

"If I only do good to those who think or believe like me, my benevolence is hypocrisy," he said, "because good knows no discrimination nor exclusion."

Referring to his *Document on Human Fraternity*, Pope Francis described it as an important text "for the peaceful coexistence of all human beings."

"I would like to say that the document is a light that guides all men and women of goodwill on the path of coexistence and encounter. It is a roadmap for anyone who courageously

chooses to be a peacemaker in our world torn apart by war, violence, hate, and terror," he said.

"Human fraternity," he continued, "is the antidote the world needs to heal itself from the poison of these wounds."

The Pope also addressed young people and the onslaught of negativity, prejudice, and fake news they are faced with today.

He said youth need to know how to use the tools of "freedom, discernment, and responsibility."

"Freedom is what distinguishes man," Francis said. "God created us free even to reject him. Today we can no longer force our youth not to think, to ask the question, to be sceptical, because the question is the way to the truth. And because freedom of conscience, freedom of belief, freedom of thought, and freedom of expression are essential to help them grow and learn."

"We can no longer force the youth of today, who hold in their hands cellphones that allow them to access any information, into darkness, ignorance, hatred, and isolation," he added.

Pope Francis also spoke about discernment, which he called a "gift from God" and "the ability to distinguish between the false and the true."

Pope Francis praised Abu Dhabi's Abra-



Protest in Pakistan against burning of Quran in Stockholm (ANSA)

hamic Family House, which provides a common place for the three Abrahamic religions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — to worship.

The complex, which has a church, a synagogue, and a mosque, opened earlier this year.

"The Abrahamic Family House is a place for respecting diversity, which God willed, and not turning difference into contempt or a cause for conflict," he said.

"It is a place of coexistence, tolerance, and faith. Each of us can live his faith with respect for the other's faith and human freedom," he added. "Only those who are not sure of their faith live in fear of meeting others and rush into confrontation. A true believer lives his faith without feeling threatened by others and without the need to threaten others." —

By Hannah Brockhaus, CNA

Unrest in France: Religious leaders call for dialogue and calm

PARIS: France's bishops joined other religious leaders in responding to the ongoing unrest in their country with a call for peace, dialogue, and a return to calm.

Catholic Church officials also issued a prayer for peace on July 1.

The riots, sparked by the fatal police shooting of a 17-year-old of North African origin named Nahel M. during a traffic stop in Nanterre, a suburb of Paris on June 27 have led to days of looting, attacks on public buildings, and destructive mob violence in several cities.

In a joint statement, religious leaders in France expressed their sorrow over the death and violence. At the same time, they called for a return to peace. "We affirm with one voice that violence is never the right way," the statement said, decrying attacks on schools, businesses, city halls, and transportation, noting that the residents, families, and children of these neighborhoods are the first to suffer.

The text was signed by Archbishop Éric de Moulins-Beaufort of Reims, president of the French Bishops' Conference.

Other signatories include leaders of the Conference of Religious Leaders of France: Chems-Eddine Hafiz, rector of the Grand Mosque of Paris; Grand Rabbi Haïm Korsia, chief rabbi of France; Mohammed Mousaoui, president of the French Islamic Council; Bishop Demetrios Ploumios, president of the Assembly of Orthodox Bishops of France; Pastor Christian Krieger, president of

the Protestant Federation of France; and Antony Boussemart, president of the Buddhist Union of France.

In the face of attacks on police and authorities, the signatories called for the strengthening of "necessary trust" between sectors of the population and law enforcement agencies. They encouraged politicians to work together responsibly to restore justice and peace.

"Today more than ever, may all believers be servants of peace and the common good. We are all available to contribute to this," the statement concluded.

The French bishops also published a prayer for the restoration of peace in the country, which was made available to parishes and Catholic communities in France.

The bishops also prayed for Nahel whose funeral ceremony took place July 1 in Nanterre. They prayed, "We entrust Nahel to you and pray for his loved ones. May the Spirit of light and peace sustain them."

"We entrust to you the wounded of these nights of violence, and those whose homes and workplaces have been destroyed or damaged," the French bishops' prayer continued.

The bishops also prayed for law enforcement and the government "under great pressure and sometimes under attack."

The prayer ended, "We beg you again: that even beyond the current explosions, our society will be able to identify the sources of violence with lucidity, and find the means to overcome them." — CNA/OSV

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