

HERALD

The Catholic Weekly

Mission Statement

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

TERHAD

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Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. *Rom 6:3-4*



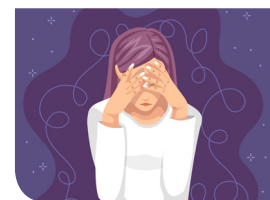
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I'm ready I can't wait to go!



(photo/JMJ Lisbon 2023 flickr)

VATICAN: Forty days before the upcoming World Youth Day (WYD) in Portugal, Pope Francis sent a video message to young people who will participate or follow the WYD in Lisbon, saying: "The doctor told me I can go, I can't wait."

"Some think that because of illness, I cannot go, but the doctor told me I can, so I will be with you," he said in the June 22 video message.

Showing the grey backpack with the kit that will be distributed to the pilgrims, he said: "There are 40 days left, like Lent, to the meeting in Lisbon. I am ready! I already have everything. I can't wait to go!"

The 86-year-old Pope Francis will visit Portugal from Aug 2-6. Several World Youth Day events are on his agenda, including hearing confessions, praying the Stations of the Cross, attending a prayer vigil, and celebrating Mass on Sunday, Aug 6, the final day of the weeklong gathering. In between, a stop at the Marian Shrine of Fa-

tima is planned for Aug 5 – the pontiff's return, after the 2017 trip on the occasion of the centenary of the Marian apparitions to the three shepherd children.

The World Youth Day organisation released two videos: one addressed to the participants, the other to those who have been working for months to set up the organisation, welcome and accommodation for pilgrims.

"The Day is a point of attraction for everyone. Right now it is the point we must look toward, toward which you, young people must look," the Pope said. "Come on, young people!" he encouraged, adding, "Don't listen to those who reduce life to ideas. Those poor people who have lost the joy of life and the joy of encounter. Pray for them".

The Pope also told young people they have "three languages of life" on their side: the language of the head to think clearly, the language of the heart to feel deeply, and the language of the hands to put what they think and feel into action.

"Come on, be cheerful. See you in Lisbon!" were his parting words.

The Pope also recorded a video thanking organisers and those involved in creating the infrastructure for World Youth Day.

"I know you are spending hours and hours of work to make all of this possible," he said. "You do not look like the protagonists of WYD, but it is you who make it possible. WYD cannot be realised without your work. For this I say thank you, thank you for being seeds. You are like seeds; you will germinate from below. You cannot see it, but the fruit will be born."

"Thank you for helping this organisation. Thank you for your generosity," said the Holy Father.

The theme of WYD 2023, which will take place Aug 1-6, is "Mary arose and went with haste."

Lisbon will mark Pope Francis' fourth time attending the international youth gathering, which was established by Pope John Paul II in 1985.

The event usually attracts hundreds of thousands of youth and is expected to double the Portugal capital's population of 505,000 people during the first week of August. — *Vatican News/CNA*

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OPINION

Synod on Synodality to open debate on wide range of hot topics

Decision-making methods, the place of women, migrants, homosexuals, cultural traditions, climate change, priestly formation. Rarely has a document from Rome covered so many themes in such an open manner.

But they are all there in the new *Instrumentum laboris* (Latin for “working document”) for the first of two assemblies of the Synod on Synodality, which will take place October 4-29 and bring together bishops and lay people to reflect on the future of the Roman Catholic Church.

Officials at the Synod’s secretariat released the new 60-page text on June 20 at a press conference in Rome.

Through a series of questions addressed to the participants of the Synod on Synodality, which Pope Francis launched in October 2021 and which has already led to consultation with Catholics worldwide, the authors of the new document outline the future of what they call a “synodal Church”, one that is more attuned to its grassroots. In fact, the word appears 71 times in the text, which the Synod secretariat issued in Italian, English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.

The *Instrumentum laboris* is intended to organise the work of October, but “is not to be a first draft of the Final Document of the Synodal Assembly”, warned the authors. Nevertheless, the series of questions that it presents over 33 of its pages still offers a fairly clear vision of the Church.

Recognising “what is good” in the world

Beyond the first part, which is a spiritual presentation on the concept of synodality, the Synod secretariat outlines, through the themes chosen

or the way of asking its questions, the vision of a Church more attentive to the grassroots, where the question of margins is omnipresent. It is an institution of believers who are called upon to play a more active role, and which must rethink its way of announcing its message to the contemporary world. This is a far cry from a fortress Church, under siege, which should be defending what it has achieved.

“What is the attitude with which we approach the world? Do we know to recognise what is good and, at the same time, commit ourselves to prophetically denounce all that violates the dignity of persons, human communities and creation?” asks the working document. It explains that such a question is necessary in view of the “abuse crisis” that has shaken the Church.

“To the penitence it owes to victims and survivors for the suffering it has caused, the Church must add a growing and intensified commitment to conversion and reform in order to prevent similar situations from happening again in the future,” it states.

Integrating “LGBTQ+ people” in the Church

The text raises the question of integrating “those who do not feel accepted in the Church, such as the divorced and remarried, people in polygamous marriages, or LGBTQ+ Catholics”.

It is notable that this is the first time that such a Church document from Rome uses the acronym, rather than homosexuals or people with same-sex attraction. Additionally, the document expresses concern about “racial, tribal, ethnic, class or caste-based discrimination, also present in the People of God”. On the other hand, certain themes are omitted,

such as bioethics and the pre-conciliar liturgy.

Moreover, the place of women, which was one of the major themes that came up in consultations with Catholics around the world, is also a central issue of the working document. The text goes so far as to raise the question of women deacons, without explicitly mentioning the ordination of women priests, to which Pope Francis has repeatedly stated his opposition.

“What new ministries could be created to provide the means and opportunities for women’s effective participation in discernment and decision-making bodies?” question the document’s authors.

Another highly sensitive topic the Synod secretariat does not side-step is the ordination of married men.

“As some continents propose, could a reflection be opened concerning the discipline on access to the priesthood for married men, at least in some areas?” the document proposes.

This issue was already addressed without being resolved at the last Synod assembly held in Rome, which was devoted to the Amazon.

Addressing the issue of the authority of Catholic leaders, clerics and laity alike, and the need to adapt their formation, the Synod secretariat goes so far as to question the role of priests, bishops ... and even the Pope.

“How should the role of the Bishop of Rome and the exercise of his primacy evolve in a synodal Church?” it asks.

It’s a question previously unimaginable in a document published by the Vatican. — **By Loup Besmond de Senneville, LCI**

● See also Page 10

Choose God above all else

Today’s Gospel passage is one that causes some of us to lose sleep. Ok, maybe not lose sleep perhaps but causes us to worry a little. Jesus told His disciples that if anyone prefers father or mother or son or daughter is not worthy of Him. If we take this instruction literally, then two scenarios can occur. One, we choose family and forsake Christ or, two, we choose Christ and forsake our families. But is that what Jesus really meant?

Allow me to present a series of reasons. We know from Scriptures that Jesus is the Word of God and He is Truth. Jesus Himself proclaimed that He is the Truth. It follows then that whatever He teaches is also truth. Jesus also said that whatever He teaches comes from His Father, who is God. So, whatever He teaches is truth that comes from God.

Now, if we look at the Ten Commandments, which was given to Moses by God, we find the commandment about honouring father and mother.” Honouring means we have a special place for them in our hearts and in our lives. This means that, on some level, we have some kind of preference for our parents. If we compare what the Ten Commandments tells us and what Jesus said in today’s Gospel, isn’t there some kind of contradiction? If we follow this line of reasoning, who is right and who is wrong? Are we saying that either Jesus or God is lying? Yet, we know that Jesus or God do not contradict one another since they are One and everything that Jesus



teaches comes from God.

We need to look at things from a different perspective. Take the scenario of a husband and wife. If a husband or wife prefers the company of their friends rather than that of their partner, then we know that something is not right because husbands and wives should prefer each other rather than their friends because of the love that they have for one another. However, this does not mean that they should completely forget about their friends. Friendship is maintained but should not and must not take precedence over one’s spouse.

This same line of reasoning applies to Jesus as well. When we choose to love Christ and follow Him, it does not mean that we have to reject everything and everyone else. We should not be too attached that it becomes an obstacle for us to take up our cross and follow Christ.

In *Star Wars Episode 3: The Revenge of*

the Sith, Anakin Skywalker (the future Darth Vader) kept having recurring premonitions about the death of his secret wife (he was not supposed to have one). He was deeply troubled and sought the advice of Jedi Master Yoda. Two things that Yoda advised him applies to us in today’s Gospel passage. The first concerns attachment. Attachment is a shadow of greed and causes us to be possessive over someone or something. When we are too attached to our loved ones, we not only impede their growth but also hinder our own as well. This attachment hinders us from growing closer to God.

The second advice was for Anakin to learn to let go of the things he fears to lose the most. It is only if we are able to let go of something or someone that we will be able to gain more. A closed hand cannot receive anything. The thing is sometimes we do not want to open our hands because we do not want to lose the things that are precious to

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Fr Philip Tay, OCD

13th Sunday of Ordinary Time (A)

Readings: 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16

Romans 6:3-4, 8-11;

Gospel: Matthew 10:37-42

us. But in doing so, we deny ourselves of even more wonderful things.

When we choose Christ, it does not mean we forsake our families and friends. We are still called to love and care for them. This love however, should flow from our relationship with Christ. When we choose Christ first, He will fill us with His love and this is the love we give our loved ones. In loving our families and friends, we fulfill the greatest commandment of loving God and neighbour. From this commandment, we can see the order of loving – love of God comes before love of neighbour.

After all, St John, in his *Letters*, tells us that we love because God first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. If we are not able to love our brother and sister, whom we can see, then how can we claim to love God, whom we cannot see. Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister. The order of preference, then, should be choosing to love God first before all else.



**ARCHDIOCESE OF
KOTA KINABALU**
CHYKK/WA/06/2023

Chancery Notice

Banns of Sacerdotal Ordination

Having consulted the College of Consultors by the request of the superiors of the Mill Hill Missionaries, His Grace Most Reverend Archbishop John Wong Soo Kau, DD has agreed to ordain the following deacon to the Sacred Order of Presbyter:

Deacon Elvost Lunchi MHM
Venue: Holy Rosary Church, Limbahau
Date: 22 July 2023
Time: 9.00 am

Deacon Elvost hails from Kg Sabandil, Papar. He completed his ecclesiastical studies in Philosophy (2016-2017) and Theology (August 2017-May 2019, August 2021-May 2023) at Mill Hill Missionaries Formation House in Nairobi, Kenya. He went through the Pastoral Immersions in the following places: St John the Baptist, Tando Allahyar, Pakistan (Sept 2019-May 2021) and parish of Mary Mother of God, Embulbul, Kenya (Sept 2022-April 2023).

Catholics are obliged to reveal any impediments or circumstances that would prevent Deacon Elvost from receiving the Sacred Orders and should contact the archbishop or the parish priest with such information (Canon Law No. 1043).

The publication of these banns fulfill the canonical requirement of Canon Law 1051 2°.

Yours Sincerely,

Rev Fr Dr Wilfred Atin
Chancellor
Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu
June 20, 2023



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

July

- 3-7** Malaysian Catechetical Commission Meeting in Miri
- 8** Confirmation Mass – Chapel of Christ the Light & Church of Christ the King
- 8** Confirmation Mass – Church of Jesus Caritas & Chapel of Kristus Aman
- 9** Confirmation Mass – Church of St Thomas, Kuantan
- 9-14** Catholic Bishops' Conference Malaysia-Singapore- Brunei Plenary Meeting



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

July

- 2-9** Retreat for Singapore Seminarians – MAJODI Centre
- 10-14** Catholic Bishops' Conference Malaysia-Singapore- Brunei Plenary Meeting
- 17** 3rd Caritas Malaysia - Diocesan Directors & EA Meeting
- 22** Catholic Teachers – Johor AGM at the Church of the Immaculate of Conception, JB
- 31** Memorial Mass for Bishop Emeritus James Chan – MAJODI Centre at 6pm

Church communicators told to remain vigilant

PENANG: "Let us be vigilant about the pitfalls of digital communication, but not be deterred by them," said Bishop Sebastian Francis to participants of a webinar on June 17.

The chairman of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences-Office of Social Communication (FABC-OSC) spoke at the two-hour event titled *The Church's Call for Communication Formation*.

The bishop underscored the centrality of communication to the Church's mission, stating that it is the way forward in the media age.

He urged pastoral leaders to prioritise communication formation, recognising that effective leadership necessitates a deep understanding of this crucial aspect.

"Communication is at the heart of the Church's mission, and it is the way forward in the so-called media age. We have to take communication formation seriously," the prelate said.

The bishop highlighted how the Gospel of Jesus Christ provides invaluable insights into the significance of communication formation.



Bishop Sebastian Francis

Quoting a document released by the Vatican Dicastery for Communication on May 29, the prelate stressed the need to establish a digital ecosystem founded on sharing, collaboration, and belonging based on mutual trust.

The document titled *Towards Full Presence: A Pastoral Reflection on Engagement with Social Media*, described a creative process that progresses from awareness to encounter, community, sharing, and witnessing.

Bishop Sebastian emphasised that Christians' engagement in media should reflect their unity with Christ and each other.

Drawing inspiration from the Parable of the Good Samaritan, he encouraged individuals to shift their focus from "Who is my neighbour?" to "Who proves to be in solidarity with humankind?"

"In today's digital milieu, we need to support one another, especially in the ministry of social communication," he said.

The webinar was sponsored by FABC-OSC and its training arm, the Veritas Asia Institute of Social Communication. — *LiCAS/ RVA*

Rapid action needed against climate change

KUCHING: As climate change worsens, Catholics are called to act rapidly against its negative effects.

"We need to be responsible for Mother Earth, be mindful of our actions that include sustainable production and consumption, ethical investments, divestment from fossil fuels and any activity harmful to the planet and the people, supporting circular economies, and prioritising labour and protecting the dignity of workers," said Archbishop Simon Poh in a message to the Archdiocese of Kuching.

"In the face of climate change, governments, Christians, and all peoples are asked to act NOW!" he said.

Sarawak plays a central role in Malaysia's agricultural sector as a whole, producing both foodstuff for local consumption and cash crops for export.

"While we progress in food production with modern

farming methods, we are all reminded of Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* responsibility," said the archbishop.

The prelate invites every Catholic to overcome the 'use and throw' mentality, reduce waste, and live a sustainable lifestyle by closely practising the 7Rs every single day - Rethink your choices; Refuse single-use; Reduce consumption; Reuse everything; Repair before you replace; Refurbish / Re-purpose old stuff, and Recycle only as the last option. — *RVA*



Archbishop Simon Poh

World Day of Prayer for Sanctification of Priests



Archbishop Julian Leow with the clergy.

KUALA LUMPUR: The World Day of Prayer for Sanctification of Priests takes place every year on the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

In the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, the celebration was held on June 16 at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Mass was presided over by Archbishop Julian Leow. Concelebrating with the archbishop was Archbishop Emeritus Murphy Pakiam, ten members of the clergy and assisted by Deacon Gnana Selvam Berentis.

Archbishop Julian, in his homily, spoke about God's love. He explained that God's love is unlike the conditional secular love we are familiar with, it is unconditional. Every pain of rejection and betrayal is magnified because of true love. The prelate concluded that God's model of steadfast and unconditional love is our perfect model of true love.

Many faithful came to honour and pray for the priests who dedicated their lives to Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church through the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The Church is invoked to pray for all priests to stay faithful to their vocation.

During Mass, the elderly and infirm were brought forward for anointing.

As we continue to pray for vocations and religious life, we also thank the priests who have walked with us on this journey to those who have prayed with us, celebrated and wept with us, forgiven us, uplifted us, hoped with us and those who have told us again and again, "God loves you".

May the love of the Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of Mary be our models of love as we carry our wounds and heartaches to continue our pilgrimage life to heal our brokenness. — *By Cecilia Grace*

Episcopal Regional Commission for Family, Laity and Life meet in Sibü

SIBU: The Episcopal Regional Commission for Family, Laity and Life (ERCFL) for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore & Brunei held its annual meeting at the Sibü Diocesan Pastoral Centre June 11-13.

This ninth edition of the annual meeting was attended by 35 delegates from diocesan Family Life Commissions from the region covering Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei.

In his homily at the opening Eucharistic celebration, Archbishop John Wong Soo Kau, President of ERCFL, made a special mention of this spirit of joy and unity



Archbishop John Wong and the delegates from the region of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei.

visibly present among the delegates and exhorted them to share this joy with the families in their respective dioceses.

In his opening address, the prelate welcomed all delegates to this meeting, especially those who were new, and thanked them

for their faithful service and commitment in serving and ministering to build strong Christian families.

The prelate further shared the coming together to listen to one another; to share concerns and propose recommendations annually is a very important aspect and reflected the objective of the Synodal Journey started by Pope Francis. The prelate continued, "The Synodal process is a pilgrimage of the whole People of God coming together to discern the way the Church needs to be in its localities and worldwide, and in this context for us to search for the will of God at this moment and season of time, and also for the well-being of Christian families in our region."

Reports on Programmes and Initiatives

Delegates from the respective dioceses then took turns to share family life programmes and initiatives in the period between August 2022 to May 2023.

All dioceses have resumed in-person programmes which include marriage preparation and enrichment courses, programmes for pre-school, primary and secondary students, young people, parenting, Catholic Nurses Guild, Rachel's Vineyard, Retrouvaille, Children with special needs, Natu-

ral Fertility Awareness, and Counselling.

Notable in a few dioceses were programmes and initiatives for grandparents and the elderly, seen as fruits after two years of celebrating World Day of Prayer for Grandparents and the Elderly.

The reports also highlighted the significant outcome of collaboration with other church ministries, non-government and government institutions and agencies e.g. KL Archdiocesan Mental Health Ministry, Couples for Christ, Marriage

Encounter, Couple Empowerment Programme, Office for Human Development, Ministry of Health, and Befrienders, just to name a few, to address issues and concerns affecting families.

Most dioceses have also held follow-up programmes from the 10th World Meeting of Families held in Rome in 2022 which included formation talks for families covering a wide range of topics and deepening sessions on the document *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love).

Structures suited to pastoral situations

Delegates expressed their gratitude that this ERCFL annual meeting has provided good opportunity to share and network with each other on useful family life programmes being conducted in the region and to share resources with one another.

While acknowledging that each diocese is different and utilise structures and approaches best suited to its pastoral situation and needs, the sharing and reports revealed many new ways and approaches to Family

Life Ministry, and these have indeed enlightened, inspired and enriched the delegates.

One particular issue highlighted was on Same Sex Attraction (SSA) and LGBTQ+. Though the Church is clear on its stand on this issue, there are concerns that more families are affected by it and there is no clear pastoral strategy how to deal with it to help families faced with this situation. The delegates agreed to look into this further at its future meetings.

Journeying together to build up Christian families

In his concluding address, the President once again thanked all the delegates for their passion and commitment to the church, in particular in the area of Family Life. The archbishop expressed joy in seeing the enthusiasm and passion of the different dioceses and how they are journeying together in helping to build up the Christian family in this region.

The President also urged the Commissions to contact each other and to share resources with one another. His concluded by urging them to keep each other in prayer and to encourage one another.

The next ERCFL annual meeting is scheduled to be held June 9-12, 2024, to be hosted by the Archdiocese of Singapore. — *By Neil Mah, Secretary ERCFL*



Igniting the flame of leadership

CHERAS: Seventy current and aspiring ministry leaders of the Church of St Francis of Assisi (SFA) were buzzing with anticipation as they gathered for a day-long formation entitled *Igniting the Flame of Leadership* at the John Paul II Hall on June 17. The event, organised by the SFA Formation Ministry, was in line with the church's vision to "build together a vibrant community of effective missionary disciples who are holistically healthy in body, mind, and spirit."

Fr Mitchel Joseph and Ms Rita Krishnan, the speakers for the leadership formation, demonstrated a remarkable connection on the topic of leadership in a church setting. Fr Mitchel skillfully intertwined Scripture with practical applications for leaders in their service. He provided valuable insights on various aspects, including the paradigm shift and changes in the Church before and after Vatican II, the concept of transformative leadership, and the challenges of

Catholic culture and faith, and he encouraged us to open our senses to truly understand the pain and realities within the Church in today's world.

Rita, a trainer by profession, organised a range of leadership and teamwork activities during the formation. These activities were designed to help us gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and others. Additionally, she introduced a personality test that allowed us to explore our traits and characteristics further. Rita emphasised the significance of "Christian Leadership" and highlighted the importance of self-awareness, awareness of others, and the ability to maintain relationships. Her insights shed light on the qualities and attributes that contribute to effective leadership within a Christian context. Through these activities and discussions, we were encouraged to reflect on our leadership styles and grow in our understanding of how to lead with integrity and compassion.

Their combined knowledge and passionate delivery made the session both enlightening and thought-provoking.

This session was a practical application of the church's "Eight Habits of Effective Christian Living," helping participants to better understand and live out these habits in their daily lives and their roles as leaders.

In his closing remarks, parish priest Fr Paul Cheong, OFM Cap, reminded the participants on the importance of igniting the flame of leadership and keeping the flame burning within oneself and spreading the fire to the community. He also stressed the necessity for such formation programmes in nurturing and developing better leaders within the community.

The cleric's thoughts were echoed by participant Christina Ng who said, "We must first nurture the fire within us, allowing it to burn brightly and guide our actions. By being Christ-centred and adopting the mindset of a humble



The participants engaging in teamwork activities to gain a deeper understanding of self and others.

servant, we can effectively lead and serve our community. Embracing the qualities of a servant leader means, prioritising the needs of others, practising humility, and demonstrating selflessness in our

actions. By embodying these principles, we can inspire and ignite the flame of leadership in others, fostering a culture of service and growth within our community." — *By SFA Formation Ministry*

Celebration and thanksgiving at College General

By Alvin Lucas Devasahayam

PENANG: College General seminary was blessed to have a triple celebration on June 19. Firstly, it was the Feast of Sts Philip Minh and Companions, the Vietnamese martyrs who were alumni of College General. They received their priestly formation in the early 19th century and were canonised by St John Paul II in 1988. The following celebration was two-fold, celebrating the birthday and 25th sacerdotal anniversary of Fr Simon Labrooy, rector of College General.

These triple celebrations began with an outdoor Mass at the Shrine of Sts Philip Minh and Companions. Fr Simon was the main celebrant. Archbishop Julian Leow, Bishop Sebastian Francis, Bishop Emeritus Anthony Selva, a deacon and 50 priests were present.

The Mass was animated by the seminarians of College General and attended by invited guests. In his homily based on the Gospel

text of John 12:24-26 – *unless a grain of seed falls on the ground and dies it will not yield a fruitful harvest*, Fr Simon mentioned that this text contains a principle of life where whatever is not shared will disintegrate and lose its value.

He recalled the wise words of the late Fr Phillips Muthu, a dear friend of his who once said “If you want to live more than one life, you must die more than once”. In any relationship one enters, one must sacrifice and die to a certain aspect of life to sustain and grow in that relationship.

Fr Simon referred to the saints who were great examples of having a close relationship with Jesus Christ to the point of martyrdom. He summarised this Gospel text as a lesson for us to realise our fears and what we are clinging onto that inhibit our growth in our relationship with Christ.

He ended his homily by asking the congregation to pray with him as a tribute to the people who journeyed, influenced, and inspired

him throughout his life.

After Mass, the celebration continued with dinner in the hall. Various performances from several groups made the dinner livelier. The seminarians sang multilingual songs and performed an East Malaysian dance which brought the guests to their feet. The dinner also included a cake cutting by Fr Simon.

Archbishop Julian in his speech said that Fr Simon is a man who shares his love and generosity with everyone without limitation. Bishop Sebastian, who is the President of College General thanked Fr Simon for his contribution to the seminary and his willingness to accept the responsibility as rector of the seminary when offered, and his contribution to the Diocese of Penang thus far.

Msgr James Gnanapiragasam who was Fr. Simon's rector when he was in the seminary, described him as a man who makes people feel comfortable and warm at any given time, and a lovable person.



Fr Simon Labrooy giving his homily.

In short, Msgr James said he is a “People’s Priest”.

Msgr Jude Miranda, recalled his seminary days with Fr Simon where he taught him to ride a motorcycle. He thanked Fr Simon for assisting him at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Pulau Tikus.

Fr Ryan, the Procurator of the seminary and the man responsible for the wonderful celebration mentioned in his speech that he

sees Fr Simon as his mentor and thanked him for his guidance and companionship over the last few years in the seminary.

All who attended the triple celebration went home praising God for the gift of life of the Vietnamese martyrs who died for the love of Christ and for the gift of life and priesthood of Fr Simon.

Fr Simon thanked the organising team especially Fr Ryan and the seminarians for their hard

Kampar parishioners deepen devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

KAMPAR: The Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, celebrated its feast day on June 16, with the festivities spanning three days. The theme for the feast day was ‘Covenant and Mission’. Archbishop Emeritus John Ha from Kuching, Sarawak was the main celebrant with parish priest Fr. Simon Anand concelebrating. Also present was seminarian Leon Gautier.

The Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus commenced with a multilingual Mass. After Mass, the faithful kept vigil during a 12-hour Adoration marathon, which started at 9pm and concluded with Benediction the following morning. The adoration was an opportunity for continuous prayer and reflection to help deepen the congregation’s devotion and connection to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

During his sermon, the archbishop emeritus highlighted the significance of God’s commandments, emphasising their presence throughout the Old Testament, from the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He highlighted that God bestowed His Commandments as a means to establish His identity as true God for the people.

On the final day of the triduum, the church celebrated the feast of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Fr Simon extended a special invitation to couples to renew their marriage vows. This invitation was in line with Jesus’ desire that every couple be considered a nucleus Christian family and participate in the act of consecration of families.

Fr Simon explained the signifi-



The couples getting ready to enter the church and renew their marital vows.

cance of this act by referring to Pope Pius X’s approval of an official Act of Consecration of Family to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This approval was based on Jesus’s revelation to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, wherein He expressed His ardent desire to reign over every Christian family. It is noteworthy that this act of consecration took place on May 19, 1908, the same year the parish was established, deepening the connection between the parish and the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Forty nine couples were ushered into the church by flower girls, page boys, bridesmaids and best men as the *Bridal March* played.

In his homily, the prelate said that the Father sent Jesus to the world to fulfill His promises through His covenant in the New Testament. Jesus came into the world to bring a new covenant, a new law that is given in the hearts of the people. The sacrifice of Jesus is a sign of love and forgiveness as Jesus made us His Father’s children through His sacrifice on the cross. Arch-

bishop John highlighted that every Christian family is consecrated in the covenant through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and her unique love for her Son and the Father.

After Mass, the Blessed Sacrament was carried on a vehicle and exposed for all to see and venerate during a procession around Kampar town.

The Bahasa Malaysia Mass on Sunday began with the *Tarian Sumazau*, a traditional dance by the Kadazan Dusun parishioners. The choir was conducted by a group of Indonesians, mainly from Timor Leste and Belu. The archbishop stressed the importance of respecting and appreciating migrants, as they too are proclaiming the love of God. He encouraged the promotion of mutual respect, acceptance, and tolerance among the community. Additionally, he expressed his hope that the parish, through its mission, fosters a harmonious community and serves as a beacon of light in our multireligious and multicultural country, Malaysia.

— By Jaya Mary Asirvatham

Parish community focuses on praying for vocations

KUALA LUMPUR: In honour of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, to whom this church is dedicated, a nine-day novena followed by Mass was held at the parish in Peel Road from June 16 onwards.

This year’s theme, ‘Feed my Lambs’ (John 21:15) invited the faithful to reflect and pray, especially for vocations.

In May this year, the parish vocation team set up the “Clergy Rosary Bouquet” to pray for the priests’ intentions. Each family/BEC/parishioner was invited to take one sealed “Clergy Rosary Bouquet” card and pray the Rosary throughout the month.

This year’s theme relates to Jesus calling young people to feed His sheep, which is to care for His followers and to teach them when He’s no longer with them. Jesus asked His disciples to ensure that each of His sheep or followers was loved and cared for.

During the nine-day celebration, the vocation team collaborated with the parish Youth and Media Ministry to put up an exhibition to promote vocations to the priesthood and religious life. The exhibition was to enable parishioners and visitors witness the history behind the calling for vocation. It also emphasised that the faithful should reflect and pray for vocations and that the Holy Spirit would stir the hearts of the young people to adhere to God’s calling.

On the final day, there was a candlelight procession after Mass. Archbishop Julian Leow, parish priest Msgr Stanislaus Soosaimariam, Fr Philip Chua and Fr Robert Kham took turns carrying the monstrance around the surrounding neighbourhood. Everyone returned to church for the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament before adjourning for a dinner fellowship to close the festivities. — By Cecilia Grace



Fr Robert Kham leading the procession.

Re-discovering the power of evangelisation

KUALA LUMPUR: The Alpha Asia Pacific (Catholic Context)'s annual *Transforming Parishes 23* brought together 140 delegates from 10 nations on June 12. The event was part of the broader Alpha Regional Gathering which took place from June 12 to June 14 at The Alpha Hub.

Delegates comprised priests and lay leaders together with the staff of the different National Alpha Offices across the region. The evening started with dinner and fellowship as delegates embraced the opportunity to mingle and get to know others from the different nations represented at the event.

Speakers included Archdiocese of Sydney's Director for the Sydney Centre of Evangelisation Daniel Ang, Global Catholic Alpha Youth Director Huw Warmenhoven and a panel that comprised Archbishop Julian Leow, Archdiocese of Hong Kong's Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Ha and Alpha Asia Pacific Regional Development Director Elizabeth Lopez.

Daniel started off by reminding all present

that the question that presses upon us is our willingness to not merely believe in Jesus from the comfort of our pews but to also follow Him into such a missionary impulse, this missionary vocation and dialogue with cultures, traditions and the poor which He sets before us and upon, which future generations depend (John 14:12). He spoke about the need to re-discover the power of evangelisation so that we could renew our Church and world.

Clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit, it was people such as those gathered in the hall that evening, at the frontline of our Church, that shaped the future through their leadership and witness under the good graces of God.

Following Daniel's call to embrace missionary discipleship, Huw took us on a journey to better understand Gen Z. He helped us gain clarity about this very important generation by looking into the insights of a study done in collaboration with Barna, on teens' perception of and engagement with three crucial elements of the Christian faith: Jesus,



The panel of speakers.

the Bible and justice. A total of 24,870 young people between the ages of 13 to 18 were interviewed, representing 26 countries (including Malaysia). They answered 71 questions in 16 languages, enabling 297 unique data points per respondent. The study was commissioned to help Church leaders better understand teenagers around the world and to seek ways to engage with them in spaces that

were non-judgemental and safe. These young people wanted healthy conflict, mutual understanding and authenticity, not perfection.

After a coffee break with snacks to replenish energy and fuel conversations, the delegates gathered to listen to a panel that addressed the topic – *Understanding that Evangelisation is a key priority, what are we called to do as Church?* Questions sought the views of the panellists on what was urgently needed to enable evangelisation in our parishes and how this could be done collectively as a community.

The final talk was *Why we need the Holy Spirit* by Dr Mary Healy. This simple and profound talk helped us understand how critical it is for us to have a posture of prayer, so renewal could happen in our parishes.

The evening ended as it began with Praise and Worship, beautifully led by Cathy, John and Ignatius from Worship Culture, India, followed by a blessing by Archbishop Julian.



The speakers with the delegates.

CSJE organise fund raising family day fiesta

KUALA LUMPUR: The Cathedral of St John the Evangelist (CSJE) organised a family day fiesta to raise funds for its community centre. The event was held on June 18 at St John's Institution school field in Bukit Nanas.

The fiesta kicked off with an opening prayer and blessing by Archbishop Julian Leow.

Next, students of CAPE (Capability Enhancement Programme) got the crowd up and dancing with a Zumba performance to the tune of *Dreamers* from the FIFA World Cup 2023 soundtrack. The students also performed a cultural dance at the end of the event. CAPE is a programme run by the Tahanang community of CSJE.

Throughout the event, established solo performers and bands entertained the crowd with a rendition of evergreen songs and current hits. The performers were Balan, Ian & Alysa, Jeremy & Shila, the Jetliners, Marites Samonte, the Small Stones, and The Milky Way.

Families, children, groups, and individuals

took time to patronise the stalls which sold a variety of food and drinks, as well as items such as plants, fashion accessories, hand-painted bags, candles, and preloved clothing.

There were various activities such as carnival games, tele-match, tug-of-war, raffle draw, face painting, art workshop, and puppy adoption.

Stall operators comprised of BECs and ministries of CSJE, as well as external vendors. All sales were conducted through coupons.

CSJE parish priest, Fr Gerard Theraviam said the family day fiesta was a tremendous success as it brought together families and various parish communities to raise funds for its community centre.

The estimated cost to build the community centre called, 'Magnificat' is RM16.0 million. As of June 15, RM11,821,862 had been raised. The groundbreaking ceremony was held on May 2 and the project is expected to be completed in June 2024. — **By Julie Lim**

Triple celebration in Bentong



Fr Clement Lim joins the fathers and god-fathers as they gather for the cake cutting.

BENTONG: This once drabby looking little town church of the Sacred Heart is now transformed into its present unrecognisable beauty by none other than our present priest, Fr Clement Lim.

In his effort to improve the church, he roped in the cooperation of our East Malaysian brothers and sisters and locals to make the church what it is today - beautiful and inviting.

On June 17, the parish celebrated the feast of the Sacred Heart, Father's Day and Gawai/Keamatan.

Much festivities and joy was anticipated prior to the celebration. Those assigned to various duties were very busy for days getting things ready for the big day. The Fathers' Day cake was ordered and those contributing to the pot luck buffet displayed such an array of East and West Malaysian cuisine never seen before and enough to feed a battalion.

There were gifts in abundance for the fathers, lucky draws etc. This team spent

countless hours wrapping and doing up the gifts and hampers.

Mass started at 7 pm after the Sacred Heart of Jesus novena, followed by the blessing of fathers and god-fathers. All received special gifts after which was the cake cutting ceremony.

Fr Clement blessed the food and everybody proceeded to the canteen to indulge in God's great abundance.

The community enjoyed themselves and it was a great time of celebration achieved through the hard labour of the organisers and established camaraderie of the parishioners.

In conclusion we would like to particularly thank the organising committee, the donors of gifts and hampers, the sponsors for the spectacular pot luck buffet, all the helpers behind the scene, Fr Clement for his generous donation of gifts and guidance and most of all to God our heavenly Father, Christ our Lord and the Holy Spirit for rendering to us a fantastic night. — **By Jenny Cheah**



Children and adults dancing along to the Zumba performance.

Clergy rock band raises thousands for Caritas Ukraine

UNITED KINGDOM: Clergy rock band The Mercy Brothers is a group of priests from Salford and Shrewsbury dioceses who use their musical talents to share Gospel values and raise vital funds for charity.

Since its humble beginnings in the Year of Mercy (2015-2016), the band has raised a whopping £10,000 on average each year for various causes and this year, the boys were back in town to raise funds to buy electrical generators for schools and nurseries in Ukraine.

Taking to the stage at St John Fisher's in Denton recently were parish priest Fr Joe Gee on guitar, Fr Chris Gorton from St

Cuthbert's in Bolton on keys, and Fr Mark Harold, from St Mary's in Bamber Bridge, performing as the band's lead singer.

They were also delighted to welcome Fr Nick Kern from the Diocese of Shrewsbury and lay member, Tom, as the band's drummer.

Almost 200 people crowded into the parish hall to hear all their favourite classics, such as "I'm a Believer", "Knock, Knock, Knockin' on Heaven's Door", and Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah", whilst enjoying the opportunity to taste some delicious Ukrainian cuisine.

Fr Joe Gee was delighted to host the event following a request from

a parishioner.

He said: "I was approached by a member of the parish with links to the Manchester Ukrainian community about the possibility of a parish fund-raiser. I told him that I actually had the clergy band lined up for a parish event but we could put the two together."

"A member of the Ukrainian community then came and spoke at all the parish Masses one weekend, and as they had already raised money for electrical generators for schools and nurseries via Caritas Ukraine, we said we'd donate our funds to the cause."

Together with funds from the raffle, the evening raised a total of £2,200. — ICN



Clergy rock band The Mercy Brothers.

Pope appoints first Syro Malankara priest as Apostolic Nuncio

VATICAN: Pope Francis has appointed Monsignor George Panamthundil as the apostolic nuncio to Kazakhstan, making him the first priest from the oriental Syro Malankara rite to receive this honor.

The appointment of Monsignor Panamthundil as the archbishop of the titular see of Floriana was announced on June 16.

His episcopal ordination is scheduled to take place on September 9, 2023, as stated by Father Stephen Alathara, Deputy Secretary General of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India.

Currently serving as the Chargé d'affaires of the Nunciature in Cyprus, the 51-year-old priest hails from the Trivandrum Archdiocese

in southern Kerala.

Born on May 20, 1972, he belongs to the Saint Mary Queen of Peace Basilica in Palayam, the capital city of Thiruvananthapuram. He was ordained a priest on February 18, 1998.

Monsignor Panamthundil holds a degree in Eastern Canon Law from the Pontifical Oriental Institute in

Rome and has been serving in the Diplomatic Service of the Holy See since July 1, 2005.

He has held various positions at the Apostolic Nunciature in Costa Rica, Guinea, Iraq, Austria, and Israel, the Apostolic Delegation in Jerusalem and Palestine, and the Pontifical Representation in Cyprus.

— By Rita Joseph, LiCAS News

Invitation to reach out, be bearers of hope

FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISH Discover Your Calling into Lay Ministry

How can you offer or invest your gifts/skills/talents etc. in the Lord's vineyard to expand God's Kingdom?

The Five Loaves and Two Fish series concluded with topics on Ecumenism and Inter-religious Dialogue and Catechetics, Healing and Deliverance.

Arokiadass Anthonysamy highlighted the etymology of "Ecumenism" – from Greek oikumene, meaning the whole world that represents "the place of God's reconciling mission." While oikos means house, family, people, or nations, thereby stressing our important role in ecumenism.

The century-old word and concept of ecumenism is a movement hailed by Vatican II "through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit" for the unity of all Christians in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, i.e., all who believe in the Trinity. Quoting Pope Francis on the meaning of "Ecumenical Dialogue," and Jesus' High Priestly Prayer (John 17:21), he explained, "Its motive is not to convert our separated brethren into becoming Catholics, but to work together as one body to bring the message of salvation to the whole world ... to recover the apostolic sense of the Early Church for unity in diversity, confronting frustrations, difficulties and ironies of the modern

pluralistic world."

The worldwide Ecumenical Movement began in 1910 at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh. Locally, the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM), initiated by the Catholic Church, was formed on 6th Feb. 1985 as an official body comprising the Roman Catholic Church, Council of Churches Malaysia (CCM) and National Evangelical Christian Fellowship (NECF). This body negotiates with the government of the day with regards to all faith related issues.

Meanwhile, inter-religious dialogue is "Conversation between persons of different minds coming together to learn from one another; to witness as well as to bring Jesus into the lives of others." This happens through MCCBCHST – a non-profit inter-faith Malaysian organisation – whose aim is to fight for the rights of all other faiths (outside Islam). "The Church recognises the goodness in every religion; in every man and woman," while holding steadfast to the belief that Jesus is our Saviour who "reconciles the world to Himself" (2 Cor.5:18-19). Dutifully, we must reach out to others like Pope Francis, by building and spreading



Arokiadass Anthonysamy

kingdom values on earth.

Next, two deacons shared the zoom room for their delivery. As the recently appointed Head of the Healing and Deliverance ministry, Deacon Charles Lazaroo has consecrated the ministry to St Joseph, the "Terror of Demons" and to Mother Mary. "This ministry seeks to help all who are suffering" – physically (the ill) and spiritually. The latter "suffer from obsessions, oppressions, infestations and possessions" (in extreme cases). "The bishop as chief exorcist, appoints a priest to deal with possessed cases." From experience, the deacon related bizarre happenings, disturbances, and why – "The evil one wants attention, to show what he can do! He wants to intimidate all who come to pray for those affected and their families." He highlighted from the Book of Job on "losses and sufferings." Why does God allow this to happen? "For purification of all concerned; it



Deacon Charles Lazaroo

helps them move closer to God; to know that the all-powerful God is in charge; and this makes us humbler."

"Catechesis (proclamation of the Word of God), celebration of the sacraments, and worship of God always precede healing and deliverance." His team is documenting information of all prayer groups in the diocese for easy access in times of need. He closed with a call for all to think and pray about getting involved in the ministry with the noteworthy, "If not you, then who?"

Deacon Clement Samuel, who now heads the Penang Diocese Catechetical Commission (PDCC), said the word 'commission' differs from 'ministry.' "Commission gives greater authority to decide on all matters related to catechetics." He introduced the team's organisational structure and the new PDCC logo with its four elements of catechism: The Creed, Prayers, Sacraments, and Morality.



Deacon Clement Samuel

The ministry has a two-pronged focus: Adults (RCIA), Children and the youth – through catechism classes based on a common syllabus designed by the Malaysian Church. The primary catechetical focus is: Initiation, the starting point of a person's faith journey to receive the sacraments. "Catechesis" in Greek means "to echo the teaching. We are all called to echo God's Word." This explains the new title for all catechists – "Evangelising Catechist" – as the primary call contained in the latest Directory of Catechesis released by Pope Francis in 2020.

As "Bearers of Hope," catechists play an important role as sharers of a rich heritage/ God's history; providing meaning and answers (to life's questions); initiating (others) into New Life and preparing for eternity. In short, the ministry is a commitment to Jesus in introducing people to God. — By Lucille Dass

Pope offers blessing for US bishops' Eucharist initiative

VATICAN: A year ahead of the culmination of the US bishops' three-year eucharistic revival initiative, the efforts have received a blessing from Pope Francis.

In a private audience on June 19, the Holy Father extended his Apostolic Blessing on the 10th National Eucharistic Congress that will take place from July 17-21, 2024, and on the monstrance that about 50 pilgrims will carry into the event.

The US bishops launched the National Eucharistic Revival initiative in 2021. The first year was focused on the diocesan level. The second year, which launched earlier this month, is focused on the parish level. The final phase begins in May 2024, when 48 "perpetual pilgrims" spread out at four separate locations across the country will embark on a two-month pilgrimage to Indianapolis for the start of the National Eucharistic Congress.

The congress will be held at Lucas Oil Stadium. The pilgrims



Pope Francis blesses the monstrance that will carry Jesus in the Eucharist into Lucas Oil Stadium for the US bishops' National Eucharistic Congress in July, 2024. (Vatican Media.)

will converge outside of the stadium at the end of their journeys to carry the monstrance inside. The monstrance is Mexican-made and four-feet high, and pays homage to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Francis called the congress "a significant moment" in the life of the US church.

"The National Eucharistic Con-

gress marks a significant moment in the life of the Church in the United States," Francis told the congress' delegation.

"May all that you are doing be an occasion of grace for each of you and may it bear fruit in guiding men and women throughout your nation to the Lord who, by his presence among us, rekindles

hope and renews life."

Bishop Andrew Cozzens of Crookston, chair of the National Eucharistic Congress, said Francis blessing the congress and monstrance was "a wonderful gift."

"A wonderful gift to meet with Pope Francis and ask for his blessing, this was truly a unique spiritual opportunity as part of our country's preparation for such a historic moment in our Church's life," Cozzens said of the meeting.

Cozzens travelled to Rome to meet with Francis alongside Tim Glemkowski, the congress' executive director, Bishop Kevin Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, and other members of the congress' board of directors, organisers, and staff.

"It was so important to gather together as a team in the presence of Pope Francis and ask him to bless the event, the monstrance, and the work we are doing to prepare tens of thousands of people to encounter Jesus Christ, truly present in the Eucharist," Glem-

kowski said.

At the US Bishops' Conference spring general assembly last week, Cozzens said the bishops are about two-thirds of the way to their \$28 million (RM131 million) fundraising goal, and he "doesn't anticipate difficulty getting to the end."

Cozzens, chair of the USCCB Committee on Evangelisation and Catechesis, said there are about 25,000 people signed up for the congress so far, and he envisions reaching the 75,000, and potentially exceeding, the needed 75,000 to fill Lucas Oil stadium.

He said it's a "generational moment" for the US church that the bishops should embrace.

"I invite you to invite your people to come," Cozzens said. "I'm confident that if we bring our people here the Holy Spirit will affect them in profound ways and set them on fire for mission as they home helping us in the United States to make that missionary conversion as a US church." — **By John Lavenburg, *Crux***

Indonesian parish finally has a church after 33-year ordeal

JAKARTA: Although the constitution of Indonesia guarantees religious freedom and the country's guiding philosophy of *Pancasila* includes the idea of space for all faiths, St. Bernadette's Catholic Church in Pinang, which opened June 11 after 33 years of struggle, is a symbol of the frequent gap between theory and practice.

Fr Romo Lammarudut Sihombing, pastor of St Bernadette's, nevertheless sees spiritual significance in the long delay.

"It is truly a great moment to inaugurate the church on its 33rd anniversary," Sihombing said. "At the age of 33, Jesus had done His mission in the world. We as followers of Christ have a legacy to continue His mission to bring Good News to the world."

In 1990, St Bernadette's was officially announced as a parish by Jakarta's then-Archbishop Leo Sukoto, who died five years later.

Ever since, Mass was celebrated in the hall of a nearby Catholic school, because the parish was unable to put up a church building.

The inability to erect a place of worship, local observers say, was the product of all-too-familiar pattern in the world's largest Muslim nation: Opposition from Muslim radicals, combined with bureaucratic foot-dragging and delays.

Although parish officials immediately sought permission to begin construction in 1990, an initial zoning permit wasn't issued until 2013. That decision, however, was challenged by Muslim activists, who succeeded in having it withdrawn.

Sihombing told *Crux* that setback triggered a long period of outreach by the parish's external relations committee, including "multiple dialogues and charity works, with the Muslim locals, religious leaders, and the government to create

an open communication."

The determination of local Catholics became well-known, with as many as 12,000 people showing up for Sunday Mass in the school and other makeshift locations, even though at times they were compelled to do so under police protection or private security because of threats from Muslim protestors.

The parish's efforts, Sihombing said, culminated in the issuance of a construction permit by the local mayor on July 14, 2021. In August 2021, the cornerstone for the new church building was formally dedicated by Cardinal Ignatius Suharyo, who in 2010 became the third Archbishop of Jakarta to take office before the parish found a home.

The parish's perseverance finally paid off on June 11 this year, when Suharyo travelled to Pinang to formally consecrate the new structure. On the occasion, Suharyo told *Crux* he didn't really need to say much.

"I felt there was no need of a sermon, because waiting in perseverance of faith for 33 years for the permission to build the church is more meaningful than any good sermon," he said.

"I said to the congregation that the building of the church has been accomplished. But the building of the community will never end," he said. "So let us walk together in line with the dynamics of the universal Church: To build a stronger communion [and] a more generous participation in the life of the Church, to work for a fruitful mission." — **By Nirmala Carvalho, *Crux***

400-year-old church emerges from the waters in Mexico



A church dedicated to the apostle James the Greater in the disappeared town of San Juan Quechula in Chiapas, Mexico, was visible due to heat and drought in June 2023. (CNA photo/Facebook of the City Council of Tecpatán)

CHIAPAS, Mexico: Due to an intense heat wave and drought that has spread in various parts of Mexico, a more than 400-year-old Catholic church has completely emerged from the waters in the state of Chiapas.

The church of the disappeared town of San Juan Quechula, dedicated to the apostle James the Greater and built by Dominican friars who evangelised the region headed by Friar Bartolomé de las Casas in the 16th century, was flooded in 1966 with the construction of the Nezahualcóyotl hydroelectric dam, also known as the Malpaso Dam.

In recent years, the upper part of the church remained visible and tourists could approach it using boats.

However, this year's drought has allowed the centuries-old Catholic church to be visible in its entirety.

According to the Tecpatán City Hall website, it is estimated that the church was built between 1564 and

1606, although "it was abandoned in 1776 due to a series of plagues that affected the surrounding communities."

Gilberto Hernandez, head of the diocesan communications commission for the Archdiocese of Tuxtla Gutierrez, acknowledged in a statement that the church can be seen at least partially every year.

"The lowering of the level allows one to contemplate the great structure of the church, which has resisted the passage of time and the onslaught of water," he said, emphasising that this year the entire building can be seen "due to the drought and the delay of the rainy season."

The current conditions, he pointed out, allow "that it is no longer necessary to reach the church by boat, but now access can even be by van or motorcycle, and therefore, the magnitude of the beautiful Dominican church can be better appreciated." — **By David Ramos, *CNA***



Cardinal Ignatius Suharyo consecrates the Church of St. Bernadette on June 11, 2023.

World Refugee Day and Gospel hospitality

Indeed, we face a situation where despite record numbers of refugees, many Christians would wonder if this had anything in particular to do with them. Even worse, right-wing governments in many developed countries see having a “harsh environment” towards refugees and asylum seekers as a popular vote winner. Worse still, these same governments sometimes boast of their defence of Christian faith and tradition – and few of the Christians in those countries see any problem.

The United Nations may hold this day to highlight the need for more human understanding of the problem; but the Church may need to highlight it because failure to sympathise with refugees may be a failing in discipleship.

The UN-sponsored World Refugee Day is marked each year on June 20, a commemoration that – sadly – most people probably don't even know exists. And it is not a date in the Christian calendar! But it is an important date, nonetheless and though the day may have passed unnoticed, it is never too late to be made aware of it and endeavour to do our part to assist refugees, especially here in our country, Malaysia.



Syrian refugees in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon.

Hospitality: a human value and a Christian virtue

Let's play a little game. Imagine yourself in the position of a guest arriving for a party. It is not a family party where everyone has known each other for years and can trace how each is related to the other, but a party of friends and acquaintances. You can sense from the moment the door opens whether the welcome you receive is really warm or just a formality. You cannot but notice if you are put at ease – and you know that is “how it should be”: your host is being hospitable.

Hospitality has been commented upon for as long as human beings have been keeping written records. This affirmation of the importance of hospitality can be found in some of the oldest strands of the Pentateuch (Lev 19:34): “The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and

you shall love him as yourself; for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

But back to our game: now imagine what it is like not to be welcomed with hospitality. Again you arrive at the door, but you are “processed” rather than welcomed and told you can “leave your coat over there”. You cannot help noticing that there's an “in” group – VIPs or people the host wants to impress – and there are the “also rans” who are there to swell the numbers. You cannot help feeling that some are more equal than others, or that there is a very defined limit on the food and drink, or that the atmosphere is very transactional. The whole event has a cold feel, but you might console yourself that you had to go anyway.



Hospitality is something we all know about

Inhospitality has also left a trail in our memories. In Mt 25, hospitality is offered as a key to discipleship, and inhospitality is presented as the key to the failure of following Jesus: “I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me” (Mt 25:43).

Now switch sides and play the game again, this time from the side of the host. Think of planning even a small gathering of a few friends and notice how offering

welcome and hospitality – just putting people at their ease – is a higher level concern than whether you are going to have this or that food. And yes, think of the darker side: those times when you hosted people but it was not hospitality that was uppermost, when “welcome” and a shared meal was used as an instrument to serve another purpose. We have all tried to offer real hospitality, and yes, as imperfect humans, we have all gone through the motions and put up a front of hospitality.

We all like to think of ourselves – and the groups we belong to – as hospitable. Looking at what we actually do, should make us more hesitant to declare that.

Where is the nearest hotel housing refugees? Do we have a sneaking like for populist drum-beaters of nationalism who claim migrants “are taking our jobs” or taxes or whatever?

Do we Christians even think it is important? Looking at many of our celebrations, it would be hard to imagine that hospitality

The challenge to the Church

is anything more than a formality. In our celebrations of the Eucharist do we actually experience hospitality and practise it? Many are simply “had to be there” events that feel very unlike a welcoming meal. Are we even offered the cup to drink – or is that just for the clergy?

Many celebrations are more marked by who cannot eat and drink than by the forgiving welcome of the Lord. The way we

behave officially in the liturgy often signals a type of inhospitality that we would never permit at home. Maybe it is because we have such an inhospitable liturgy that we do not link this charism with the Gospel.

1. The hospitality of love for the stranger

The most succinct expression – some would argue containing the core of the message of discipleship – is in Mt 25: 31-45: the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats.

When the Son of Man comes in His glory ... he will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you took me in, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you visited me ... Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these, my sisters and brothers, you did for me.”

2. The hospitality of reconciliation

In Luke 15 we have a sequence of three parables that highlight the hospitality Jesus showed to sinners – even when it scandalised those who took a firm line and would not “go soft on sin”. The chapter opens with

these words:

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were gathering around to listen to Jesus. So the Pharisees and scribes began to grumble: “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

Then we have the *Parable of the Prodigal Son* whose high-point is the wonderful hospitality of the father's meal welcoming back his lost son:

“Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let us feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again! He was lost and is found!” So they began to celebrate (Lk 15:23-4).

3. The hospitality of mercy

Faced with the question as to who is our neighbour (Lk 10:29), Jesus told the *Parable of the Good Samaritan* (Lk 10:30-37). The Samaritan is the one who showed mercy, cared for sick man and paid for his stay in the inn.

4. The hospitality of gratitude

We all recall that Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10), the crooked tax collector had his sins forgiven and promised to repay those he had defrauded, but we forget that the conversion comes when Jesus is staying in his house. Zacchaeus offers Jesus hospitality, and “salvation comes to his house”. In giving and receiving hospitality we can be transformed.



pitality as a basic mark of discipleship. Perhaps we should adopt this day as a day for Christian memorial as well? We all know what hospitality feels like. The real challenge is to practise it. — **By Thomas O'Loughlin, LCI**

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



Responding to the challenges in the modern world

When prelates and lay delegates gather in October for the Synod of Bishops, they will be asked to directly confront a number of pressing questions — including the possibility of women deacons, access to the priesthood for married men, the integration of LGBTQ+ Catholics, and penance for sexual abuse and the abuse of power, conscience and money — in consideration of how the Catholic Church might transform and expand its structures to become more welcoming to all its members.

In a much anticipated document released June 20, the Vatican's synod office set the stage for a wide-ranging discussion for the first session of a high-stakes meeting that is attempting to respond with "missionary urgency" to the challenges of church life in the modern world.

Known in Latin as an *Instrumentum Laboris*, the 60-page document will guide the month-long Vatican summit on a number of themes and concerns that have emerged during a three-year consultative process, which has focused on how the Church could become more focused on greater listening and participation of all of the baptised, not just the Catholic hierarchy.

Among the issues and considerations in the document are how a synodal Church recognises and values the central role of the poor; the experience of migrants; victims of sexual abuse, violence and other injustices; the disabled; divorced and remarried Catholics; the need for greater commitment to ecumenism and learning from other faith traditions; and the role of women in the Church today.

The newly released document is the culmination of worldwide listening sessions through local churches that took place 2021-



Women religious are seen at a session of the Synod of Bishops on young people, the faith and vocational discernment at the Vatican Oct 4, 2018. (CNS/Vatican Media)

2022 and seven continental gatherings held in early 2023.

Over the last decade, synodality has emerged as a key theme of Francis' pontificate and as a vehicle of implementing the reforms of the Second Vatican Council and instilling them into the practices and structures of the church today. Earlier this year, Francis dramatically expanded participation in the synod to include lay men and women, for the first time granting them a right to be appointed as full voting members of the Catholic Church's primary consultative body.

The new document — which is framed around three interwoven themes of **Communion, Mission and Participation** — aims to offer an honest account of the key ideas, difficulties, aspirations and fears of Catho-

lics from every corner of the globe. Those ideas will now be up for discernment and discussion by an estimated 370 synod participants in the synod's first session Oct. 4-29.

While past synod working documents have primarily been published to serve as an initial draft for a particular synod's eventual final report, the newly released document is structured in a novel format, with an introductory section that offers a vision for what it means to be a synodal church and a second section with three overarching questions meant to guide the synod discussions.

The text is accompanied by 15 worksheets — five for each of the three priority questions — that pose a series of open questions for synod participants to reflect upon individually and collectively.

Participation of all

The document is cautious to note that "a synodal assembly cannot be understood as representative and legislative, analogous to a parliamentary structure with its dynamics of majority building" and anchors the synod process in a spiritual foundation, saying it is best to be understood as a liturgical assembly.

"Ancient tradition tells us that when a synod is celebrated it begins with the invocation of the Holy Spirit, continues with the profession of faith, and arrives at shared determinations to ensure or re-establish ecclesial communion," the document states.

But while underscoring the spiritual dimension of the synodal process, the document does not shy away from demanding synod delegates consider concrete responses to a number of neuralgic topics in church life today. Becoming a synodal church, the document notes, requires the participation of all its members, including the pope, bishops, clergy, consecrated life and the laity alike.

A new methodology

While many topics enumerated in the synod's working document were once considered taboo in certain quarters of Catholicism, and indeed the Vatican itself, the document builds on many themes and concerns that were first published as part of the synod document that guided the continental synodal meetings.

That document, titled *Enlarge the space of your tent*, was published in October 2022,

and with the final reports of the continental assemblies are considered the foundation for the synod working document. Delegates are encouraged to utilise the entire body of documents in their preparation and participation in the October meeting.

During that meeting, working groups of approximately 12 members each will have discussions structured around four modules: what it means to be a Synodal Church, Communion, Mission and Participation.

While acknowledging the vast range of issues that synod delegates will have to confront, the working documents note that the primary goal of the first session will be to outline areas of in-depth study that will be carried out in a synodal style in the lead-up to the synod's second session in October 2024. Only then will the synod's final proposals be presented to the Pope for his consideration.

At a June 20 Vatican press conference following the document's release, Cardinal Mario Grech emphasised that the entire synod process is guided by the Holy Spirit and that none of its conclusions have been forewritten.

"To presume to write the conclusions first would be tantamount to blaspheming the Spirit," he added, noting that is a working document not of the Holy See but of the whole Church.

Grech, who is the head of the Vatican's synod office, told reporters that over the past two years, he has encountered many bishops sceptical of synodality, and who, once in-

involved in the process, found it to be a "priceless treasure."

One notable change in the upcoming synod, according to Jesuit Fr. Giacomo Costa, who serves as consultor to the General Secretariat of the Synod, is that unlike past synods, which have taken place in the Vatican's synod hall — an auditorium with stadium style seating — the October meeting will take place in the Vatican's Pope Paul VI audience hall to allow participants to sit at round tables, which he said will be more conducive for discussion.

"Conversation in the Spirit has made us experience the profound dignity of all the baptised by valuing each voice," Costa said.

"The radical nature of Christianity," the working document states, "is not the prerogative of a few specific vocations, but the call to build a community that lives and bears witness to a different way of understanding the relationship between the daughters and sons of God, one that embodies the truth of love, one that is based on gift and gratuitousness."

"The radical call is, therefore, to build together, synodally, an attractive and concrete church: an outgoing church, in which all feel welcome."

At the press conference, Grech said people should not view the document through a progressive or conservative lens.

"We can do without this distinction," he said. "We are the holy people of God." — *NCR/America*

Priority questions

The three questions that will serve as the framework for this synod are:

1. A communion that radiates: How can we be more fully a sign and instrument of union with God and of the unity of all humanity?
2. Co-responsibility in mission: How can we better share gifts and tasks in the service of the Gospel?
3. Participation, governance and authority: What are the processes, structures and institutions in a missionary synodal church?

The five main questions for discernment linked to each of the three priorities are as follows:

Communion

1. How does the service of charity and commitment to justice and care for our common home nourish communion in a synodal Church?
2. How can a synodal Church make credible the promise that "love and truth will meet" (Ps 85:11)?
3. How can a dynamic relationship of gift exchange between the Churches grow?
4. How can a synodal Church fulfill its mission through a renewed ecumenical commitment?
5. How can we recognise and gather the richness of cultures and develop dialogue amongst religions in the light of the Gospel?

Mission

1. How can we walk together towards a shared awareness of the meaning and content of mission?
2. What should be done so a synodal Church is also an 'all ministerial' missionary Church?
3. How can the Church of our time better fulfill its mission through greater recognition and promotion of the baptismal dignity of women?
4. How can we properly value ordained Ministry in its relationship with baptismal Ministries in a missionary perspective?
5. How can we renew and promote the Bishop's ministry from a missionary synodal perspective?

Participation

1. How can we renew the service of authority and the exercise of responsibility in a missionary synodal Church?
2. How can we develop discernment practices and decision-making processes in an authentically synodal manner that respects the protagonism of the Spirit?
3. What structures can be developed to strengthen a missionary synodal Church?
4. How can we give structure to instances of synodality and collegiality that involve groupings of local Churches?
5. How can the institution of the Synod be strengthened so that it is an expression of episcopal collegiality within an all-synodal Church?

Don't be held captive by toxic shame

By Carmel Dominic

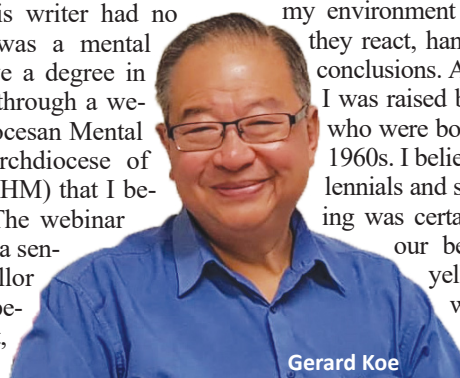
Do you suffer from shame? Or a constant sense of anxiety about how people perceive you? Or maybe a complete and utter sense of unworthiness no matter how well you do in life? And you wonder if something is wrong with you since you have been struggling with this feeling for as long as you can remember. You're never truly satisfied or happy and deep down, you wonder what it would be like to be contented with life. If I just described you, or someone you know or love, take courage. By the love and grace of God, this mental trap can be broken. Just keep reading.

The condition is called toxic shame. It is a little-known mental condition that affects everyone to varying degrees. Toxic shame is a deeply felt belief that there is something wrong with the person that originates from conception. Psychology has proven that a developing foetus can recognise sounds that they hear while still in the womb once they are born. The concept applies to the emotions of a foetus too.

A developing foetus can feel a mother's emotions and assume it's own. So, if the mother has feelings of unworthiness or insecurity, the foetus will feel it too. While the mother can understand why she feels the way she is, the foetus does not. Therefore, in its simple and primitive attempt to understand why it's feeling the way it is, it too will think of itself as unworthy and inherit the mother's insecurity. This is called introjection, as the baby is projecting its mother's feelings and not its own.

Furthermore, if at birth, the baby is surrounded and raised in constant negativity, like being subjected to corporal punishment with no explanation, the distinct lack of verbal and physical affection, being compared to peers, and the absence of debriefing (to ask what's bothering the child) will simply reinforce its initial primitive feeling of unworthiness.

Truth be told, this writer had no clue toxic shame was a mental condition and I have a degree in Psychology. It was through a webinar by the Archdiocesan Mental Health Ministry, Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur (AMHM) that I became aware of it. The webinar was by Gerard Koe, a senior family counsellor with 22 years of experience under his belt, specialised in coun-



Gerard Koe

selling on various addictions.

He is a Malaysian currently based in CatholicCare, Victoria, Australia. Gerard holds that, because we are not mindful of ourselves and are so preoccupied with satisfying our egos, we do not examine our hearts, mind, and behaviour as often as we should. This, in turn, creates mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual traps. Gerard also firmly believes that if one were to walk hand in hand with the Lord and do the work that is needed, healing and breakthrough is possible. According to Gerard, there are two kinds of shame - toxic and healthy. Healthy shame is good because we know we have done wrong and it provides us the motivation needed to change and make amends. Toxic shame, as explained above, can subtly or overtly affect our relationships throughout our lives. It is also directly related to addictive behaviour as addiction provides an avenue for one to escape all the negative feelings that one feels so strongly. Toxic shame can occur in any social stature and culture.

There were two webinar sessions on this topic and I realised that there were many phases in my life that I experienced or suffered from toxic shame. And the sad realisation is that some of my relationships with the people around me were affected.

There is still some degree of toxic shame in my life, but it is manageable. I didn't realise that it was due to toxic shame, I just acknowledged that the way I reacted and responded to certain situations in my life was due to my negative thoughts and emotions. I learned to look inwards (self-reflection) because I wanted to understand myself better and grow as a person. By doing this, I became aware of myself and learnt how to internalise and regulate my emotions before responding. This also taught me to check myself before checking others (Matt 7: 3-5) if found in a sticky situation.

Also, as I came of age, I began observing my environment and the people in it, how they react, handle situations, and come to conclusions. As a millennial (1982-1994), I was raised by parents and grandparents who were born between the 1920s to the 1960s. I believe I can speak for most millennials and safely say that gentle parenting was certainly not an option. We got our behinds whopped and were yelled at whenever our elders were upset with us. Our feelings were secondary. The only thing that mattered

to those who raised us was that we become valuable and useful members of society, come what may. This is because our elders were raised in that same manner and either didn't want to be the ones to break the cycle or saw nothing wrong in that manner of upbringing.

While their intentions and hearts were in the right place, more often than not, it resulted in us having some strong, negative feelings about ourselves, in addition

to the negative feelings we developed as the foetus. For example, as a child, I was always compared to my friends and my cousins. It just seemed that nothing I did or achieved was ever good enough to win my parent's approval. They were always more polite, more intelligent, more well-behaved than I was. I used to feel very inadequate. But in reality, I was just being me. I was able to hold conversations with people and have a hearty laugh. I didn't get straight A's like them and I was sociable. Later in life, I learnt that I am an extrovert, thus providing clarity on why I was the way I was. I had nothing to be ashamed about. I was, in fact, normal.

The only issue was that my parents lacked understanding that girls aren't always quiet and soft-spoken. I didn't fit into their template of what society dictated how a girl should be, so I was shamed, because they believed they were doing the right thing as parents. It took me a long time to understand my parent's point of view and love myself because I thought something was wrong with me. The day I did, I felt liberated.

According to Gerard, some other symptoms of toxic shame are anxiety about public speaking, anxiety about meeting people, particularly new people, looking people in the eye, aggression, and dominating behaviour and people-pleasing. Some are also always comparing their circumstances in a degrading manner, always competing, have a largely pessimistic outlook on life, constantly worrying/imagining worst-case scenarios, with a constant need for reassurance.

Then, some are constantly doubting peo-



Source: Freepik

ple, are oversensitive to people's remarks, are secretive, needy, have a high need to control people and situations, allow themselves to be dominated/exploited/taken advantage of, are excessively self-centred, have excessive emotional reactions, possess a distinct lack or overt sense of entitlement, and have the need to cover one's poor sense of worth with a cloak of extreme ideology in politics and/or religion, (false sense of self) and suffer from imposter syndrome. I can say for certain I have experienced at least three of the symptoms besides the one I already mentioned.

In the webinar, Gerard quoting Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist, who is known for his work in child development, said that children under 12 are not able to comprehend things as adults do. They are simplistic and literal. Children only develop sufficient neuron activity between the ages of 11 to 12. Before this, children will interject and incorporate primitive thoughts and beliefs into their developing sense of self. Due to this, they have simplistic conclusions - that they are the ones in the wrong and are unworthy and they are the reason bad things are happening in their lives. These negative thoughts get more and more concrete in their minds as they age because they are not told otherwise. This process is called the Myelin thought process.

Every negative thought forms a layer in their mind and as time passes, the layers grow, further grounding the belief that they are unworthy and useless. This consolidates toxic shame in a person. Gerard also said that unmanaged toxic shame could lead to chronic stress, contribute to declining physical health, and disturbs our sleep pattern.

Now not all is lost, dear readers. We worship a God that is Almighty, All-Knowing and All-Healing. He is good, loving and merciful. First, we must acknowledge that we have experienced toxic shame and must want to change and undo the emotional and mental damage and live the life Christ intended for us as stated in John 10:10 - *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.* But the work is hard and you need to enlist the help of a professional, like a therapist and maybe consider a spiritual director like a priest, to journey with you through this healing process. Gerard has some helpful suggestions on how to undo the damage based on his years of experience as a counsellor.

You can start by being mindful of your thoughts and behaviour, because when you're mindful, you can nip the thought in the bud. Understand that your thoughts fuel your emo-

Undoing the damage

tions. Secondly, train yourself to think and observe - the thinking self and the observing self. The thinking self-deals with the reality of life but if subjected to trauma, it can be obsessed with negative thoughts that could eventually lead to bad habits.

It will take time, but learn to manage your thinking mind. The observing self on the other hand, notices things as they happen. It seeks to know and understand and sees a bigger picture. When it dominates, good things happen because there is some sense of clarity.

Be aware of how you react and respond to situations. Fortify yourself with self-observation and its power because all negative thoughts and emotions can be arrested at this stage. Be honest with yourself. The healing process will not happen overnight, so be

patient with yourself and trust the process. Above all else, pray and ask for the Holy Spirit to help you with this process.

Thirdly, regulate your breathing. As you breathe, observe with all your five senses, but don't analyse anything, just observe without reacting. Don't judge and be compassionate with whatever you observe. This brings about calmness. Learning how to observe allows a person to discover in the deepest manner how the inner child was hurt and you will instinctively know how to comfort yourself. Acknowledge the pain you are feeling and comfort yourself in a healthy way, like eating an ice-cream. When there is no reaction and judgment, there will be less anxiety and insecurity. Self-love heals the wounds of the inner child.

Once you have started the healing process and you get triggered, you will have good control of yourself and be able to assess if it's a real danger or just trauma. Acknowledge that the feeling is real but that the threat is not. Consciously slow down your breathing and repeat the statement - the feeling is real but the threat is not. As you 'rewire' yourself, feed yourself with positive and self-affirming thoughts. Write them down and read and repeat them every day.

Toxic shame dies and true self love shines. Jesus loves us and desires to have a relationship with us, therefore you can be assured that if you seek Him, you will find Him. When we find/experience Jesus, then we have a shift in ourselves and see ourselves in a different light. (Matt 11:28-30) When Jesus touches the soul, the scales fall off and you see yourself as He sees you. And everything else that is not of Him dies and you will be made whole.

A brush with nature

By Gwen Manickam

Unleashing compassion through art, Christine Das paints a vibrant world where nature takes centre stage. With a palette of passion and strokes of activism, her brush dances across the canvas, creating a symphony of awareness and empathy.

As the first Malaysian artist to be accepted into the global collective of Artists for Conservation, Christine's journey as an artist has been one of self-discovery and transformation.

"My love for colour began when I first learnt to hold a pencil. Growing up, I had loads of colouring books and colour pencils. Although my mother was a teacher and my father wished I'd fulfil his botched dream of becoming a lawyer, I was lucky they supported my passion."

However, her love affair with paint and canvas only started 16 years ago, after some coaxing by her then-husband Adrian.

A journey of self-discovery

Back in the 80s, armed with a diploma in Graphic Designing, this Penangite worked as an illustrator in a publishing house before joining the Novotel Hotel as a resident artist for seven years.

"It was a good learning experience as I was exposed to various types of artistic work," said Christine.

As her career was taking shape, the young and vibrant child of the 60s immersed herself in entertainment activities and social vices to help mask her festering resentment towards her father.

"After my confirmation, I stopped going to church. The deep animosity I felt towards my now-late father, blinded my view of the Heavenly Father. My anger was so intense that I disassociated from all things religious."

Struggles

In the late 1990s, towards the end of the decade, the 33-year-old, was a social butterfly on the outside while broken and hurting on the inside. She was battling severe depression and one fateful evening, while sitting alone in her rented room, decided to end her life. Christine had her suicide letters laid beside her, on the bed, and she remembers whispering "Help me" before drawing the knife to her wrist.

Christine believes next, she either fell asleep or blacked out. During this time, she had a vivid dream in which she was a princess in a magnificent castle, and a towering figure, representing a fatherly king, was present. However, the restful atmosphere quickly turned hazardous as attackers approached. To her relief, a man dressed in white emerged and clasped her hand, guiding her to a safe house. Inside the safe house, Christine laid down to rest on a bed, with the man still holding her hand, lying on the floor beside her. Suddenly, the attackers appeared frighteningly at her window. Respond-



Christine Das painted this monochromatic mural on the level one exterior wall of her home.

ing swiftly, the man in white pulled Christine down onto the floor, and at that moment, Christine jolted awake.

From her turbulent state of mind, Christie unexpectedly lost the urge to end her life at that time. So, she put everything away for another day and went about her daily life.

Artistic growth

The following year, while waiting in line with friends to audition as extras on the movie set of *Anna and the King*, Christine's artistic eye caught sight of a poster seeking scenic painters.

Intrigued, Christine applied for the position and was fortunate enough to be hired. This marked her first experience using a paintbrush on canvas. Her role involved aging props and painting three-dimensional scenes, contributing to the vibrant portrayal of King Mongkut's palace. It was a remarkable opportunity for Christine, as she worked alongside talented art directors from Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom.

While working on set, this self-taught contemporary artist learnt the importance of having a keen eye for detail. She remembers being tasked with painting a carpet on canvas that would become a minuscule part of the set, yet the art director overseeing the project, Luciana Maria Arrighi, who had won Oscars for her work, scrutinised every stroke, dot, and design meticulously to achieve consistency and uniformity.

Over the next six months, witnessing the set come alive through her artistic contributions and the team's, left a lasting impression on Christine. She then went on to work with an edu-tainment multi-media organisation producing content for the Malaysian Smart School project.

Reconnecting

Christine's close friend Constance, who understood her 20-year struggle with religious matters, invited her to attend a women's retreat by the Servants of Yahweh in Genting Highlands. A tug-a-war between the two friends went on for a while and Christine finally gave in with several conditions, "You cover the cost and I will not talk to anyone or participate in anything."

The lanky artist stuck to her guns, but we all know God has his plans. Toward the end of the second day, the women made a prayer circle and Christine dutifully stayed in the outer circle and mumbled to herself, "If you are Jesus, you just wasted my weekend of parties." A lady bowed in prayer, a few metres away from Christine suddenly proclaimed, "Child, wasn't I the one who held your hand?"

Christine was almost knocked off her feet. She felt her whole life flash before her as she remembered 'that vivid dream'. She broke down and bawled her eyes out for a very long time.

"Nobody in that room, including Constance knew about that dream. Only then I realised its significance and God's role in giving me a second chance.

"I felt engulfed in God's love, and that wonderful feeling envelopes me till today. The next weekend, I called another friend and asked her to take me to church. We went to the Church of the Assumption, Petaling Jaya for the 11.30am Mass. The day's Gospel reading was about Jesus leaving 99 sheep to find the lost one. When Mass ended, I quickly went to the priest, Fr Simon Labrooy, and exuberantly shared that I was just like the lost sheep in the day's Gospel."

Christine joined the Servants of Yahweh and every time she shared her faith story during youth outreach programmes, at the end of the session, there was always a parent asking her,

"How come you were saved, and my child wasn't?"

"Why was I spared, what was my purpose? These thoughts troubled me for a long time.

"I felt I had a grasp on who Jesus and the Holy Spirit were, but I longed to know the God the Father Jesus always talks about. So, I approached Fr Simon again. He told me to go outside, touch a leaf, and I would have touched God."

None the wiser, Christine continued serving in the church choir and her art was evolving from pencil sketching to painting. She sustained her income by giving private art classes while painting images of Jesus and Mary for sale. Sales of those art pieces were few and far between, and deep down, Christine felt it wasn't her calling.

Finding her niche

"When you paint, you journey inwards. I told myself, you love nature, so why not be an eco-artist? With that, almost five years later, I made the connection with what Fr Simon had said – that the essence of God the Father is nature."

In 2011, the Ministry of Tourism gave her a platform and Christine had her first solo exhibition *Hot for Nature* at Matic. Since then, she has had three more solo exhibitions, showcasing her evolving style and commitment to capturing the beauty of nature.

Christine's dedication to wildlife conservation grew stronger when she learned about the tragic poisoning of 14 Borneo pygmy elephants in 2013, which deeply affected her. This event further solidified her belief in the interconnectedness between God, nature, and humanity. She realised that nature is her church, and through her art, she channels her deep love and respect for the natural world.

This monochromatic artist, currently does art pieces featuring her signature lines infused with mosaic designs.

She is commissioned to convert Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'* into a picture book. Christine said she experienced a lot of anger towards humanity while reading the encyclical, about what we are doing to the environment. So, it's taken a while to be at peace and work on the images, which are currently being reviewed before it is finalised.

Fuelling her passion for painting and artistic expression, Christine is also working on a series of paintings interpreting important Bible stories, with an ecological twist.

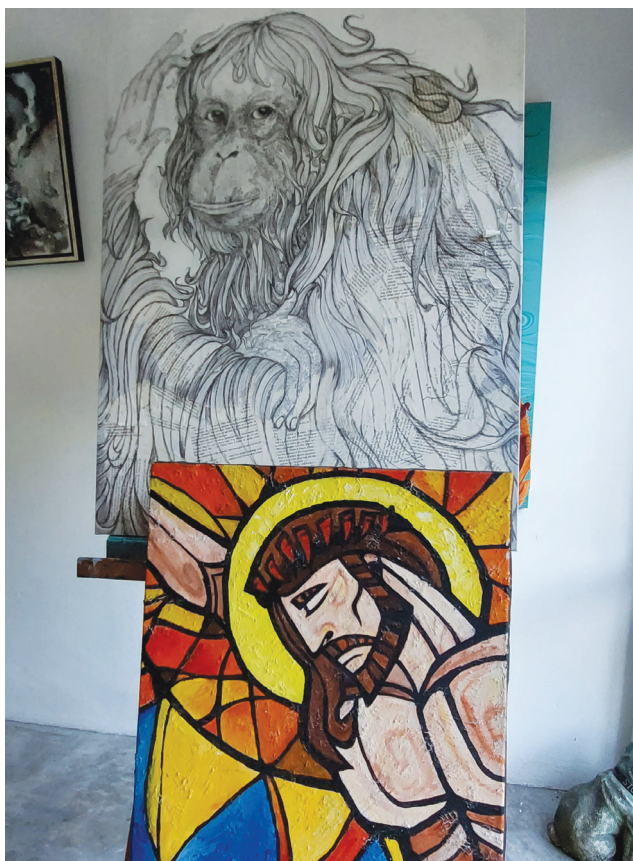
Recognition and healing

Her artistic journey has garnered recognition and accolades, including being named one of the Great Women of Our Time by *Malaysian Women's Weekly* and being featured on The POWER LIST of Extraordinary Women in Art by *Harper's Bazaar Art*. She is also a *Tedx* speaker and the founder of *SoWild: Art meets conservation workshop*.

Christine's art has also found its place within the walls of churches, with her hand-painted 14 Stations of the Cross adorning the Church of St Thomas More, Subang Jaya and the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang.

After a session on *Negative Childhood Trauma Reprogramming* sessions, Christine realised that all her anger towards her late father was just in her confused, teenager's mind and that her father was always there for her, trying to reach out. As it was too late to seek her father's forgiveness, it took Christine several more years to forgive that child in her.

Join her on a journey where art meets advocacy, and let the roar of change resound in every stroke. Follow Christine on www.instagram.com/christinedas and visit www.christinedas.com.



The untitled Jesus piece is Christine's first experimental acrylic on canvas back in September 2006. The yet-to-be-named orangutan mixed-media piece is the newborn in her studio, depicting the effects of deforestation on all our primates.



FROM THE OTHER SIDE

Regina William

Romans 12:18

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone

This verse encourages all of us to seek peace and live in harmony with others. While we can't control everything, we can control our own words, actions, and conduct to encourage peace. It is important to be at peace with everyone, even if it is difficult. True Christian love means blessing others always and not cursing them.

These days, it is so disturbing to see that all it takes is a tiny spark to create controversy especially in matters related to race, creed, political beliefs and religion.

Scrolling through postings on social media, it is scary to read some of the comments posted in response, always bordering along racial and religious lines, even if it is just a discussion on politics.

While we always blame politicians for playing the divide and rule game to suit their own ends, I can say that most of us are equally guilty of stereotyping people according to their ethnicity or religious beliefs.

We have seen many families breakup over political and religious differences.

When one of my siblings married a Muslim 30 years ago, I was surprised when it was my mom who first accepted my sister's choice to marry outside our ethnicity and religion. Coming from a very Catholic background, my mom's words still ring in my ears until today.

"How can I deny her choice of a life partner when I allowed all of you to choose your own? Whatever happens, it is her choice and not for

us to deny her that right," was my mom's response.

My mom's foresight has indeed been a blessing as today we are a truly multi-racial and multi-religious family. We have family members who celebrate Hari Raya, Chinese New Year, Deepavali and Christmas and it has been a learning curve for all of us, including our children and grandchildren to respect and learn more about each other's cultural, traditional and religious beliefs.

Hence, my topic for today "Live and let live", promoting tolerance, acceptance, and peaceful coexistence. It suggests that individuals should respect and allow others to live their lives according to their own choices and beliefs, as long as they are not harming or infringing upon the rights of others.

This phrase is often used to encourage people to adopt a non-judgmental and open-minded attitude towards others, recognising that diversity and individual differences are natural and should be embraced rather than criticised or suppressed. It implies that people should focus on their own lives and well-being rather than interfering with or trying to control the lives of others.

It is a call for tolerance, understanding, and the celebration of diversity in all its forms.

The Catholic Church, like many religious traditions, has its own teachings and principles regarding how individuals should live their lives. While the phrase "live and let live" is not explicitly used in Catholic doctrine, the Church promotes principles such as respect for human dignity, social justice, and the common good, which can be related to the idea of allowing others to live according to their own choices and beliefs.

Catholic social teaching emphasises the

importance of recognising and respecting the rights and freedoms of others, as well as promoting a just and harmonious society. It encourages individuals to live virtuous lives, guided by the principles of love, compassion, and charity towards others.

At the same time, the Catholic Church also upholds certain moral and ethical teachings based on its understanding of natural law and divine revelation. These teachings provide guidance on various aspects of life, including issues such as human sexuality, the sanctity of life, and social justice concerns.

While the Church may have specific moral teachings, it also recognises the freedom of individuals to make their own choices and decisions. The Catholic perspective emphasises the importance of dialogue, understanding, and respect for diverse viewpoints, even when there are differences of opinion or disagreement on certain moral issues.

Ultimately, the Catholic approach encourages individuals to live their own lives in accordance with their conscience while striving to promote the well-being of others and contribute to a just and loving society.

The Church also acknowledges and respects the existence of other religions and their followers. Over the years, the Church has developed its teachings on interreligious dialogue, understanding, and cooperation.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) brought significant changes to the Church's approach towards other religions. The document *Nostra Aetate* (In Our Time) specifically addresses the Church's relation to non-Christian religions. It promotes dialogue and mutual respect between Catholics and followers of other religious traditions.

According to *Nostra Aetate*, the Church

recognises the truth and goodness present in other religions. It acknowledges that different religious traditions often strive for a deeper understanding of life's meaning, the mystery of God, and the ethical values that guide human behaviour.

The Catholic Church encourages its members to engage in dialogue with followers of other religions, with the aim of promoting mutual understanding, peace, and cooperation for the common good. Interreligious dialogue is seen as an opportunity to learn from one another, build bridges, and work together to address shared challenges such as poverty, injustice, and environmental issues.

At the same time, the Catholic Church maintains its belief in the uniqueness and fullness of revelation in Jesus Christ. It teaches that Christ is the ultimate source of salvation and that the Church has a mission to proclaim the Gospel to all nations. However, this does not imply a rejection or disregard for the spiritual and ethical values found in other religious traditions.

In summary, the Catholic Church encourages respect for other religions, promotes interreligious dialogue, and recognises the importance of cooperation and understanding among different religious communities while upholding its own faith and teachings.

My fervent hope and prayer is that the politicians in Malaysia will wise up, and stop using religious and ethnic lines to score brownie points with voters.

● Regina William is an ex journalist turned head of communications, now full-time grandmother to three, criss crossing the globe to play the role. She can be reached at regina.william1223@gmail.com.

MINISTRY

Let us 'be bread for the world'

In March 2023, I participated in the zonal assembly of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the religious community to which I belong. The assembly was in Manila, Philippines. We were 20 delegates who came from India, Indonesia, the Philippines, the United States, and Rome.

What kept me deeply contemplating all through the assembly was the theme: *Together be bread for the world*. During the assembly, we reflected and discerned on being bread for others. We focused on forming ourselves as being closely connected to God, learning from Jesus; what He did, how He did it, and especially how He transformed Himself for the life of the world. It was undoubtedly a moving experience.

The assembly lasted from March 13-17. I returned to India on the 20th. On March 25, a new case of another death due to malnutrition was reported from Jajpur in the eastern Indian state of Odisha, where I am working presently. A starvation death now, in the land of surplus food grains? When there are government programmes for subsidised food for all? Questions such as these haunted me.

We have alarming numbers of deaths from starvation and malnourishment in our country. Shocking incidents of starvation deaths occur mostly in the Indian states of Odisha, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan.

A majority of the deaths are women and children. They are also mostly among the Dalit and Adivasi people (the lowest in the caste system are those who call themselves Dalit and the Indigenous people who call themselves Adivasis). Starvation deaths are a sad reality in India, though many cases are unreported. This depressed me. I have been seriously reflecting on this, as I have been

involving myself with the poor, hungry, and marginalised people. I started to ask myself: What am I expected to do?

According to a recent *Al Jazeera* news report, "As many as 828 million people – or 10 per cent of the world's population – go to bed hungry each night: 46 million more than the previous year, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)."

Millions of people live in hunger and die of starvation because the loss of life due to starvation is not taken seriously by any government. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 2 is about creating a world free of hunger by 2030. Unfortunately, the goals are not legally binding to any country. The top leaders of the world need to think about how to save the lives of the poorest who are on the periphery, and how to save these by providing nourishment and food. Regrettably, what we often witness is that they are concentrating on luxurious infrastructures, buildings, wars and weapons.

India has the largest food plan in the world in terms of the number of people covered. Officially, some 800 million people have been covered under the National Food Security Act for receiving highly subsidised food grains. Sadly, often the food doesn't reach the poorest of the poor. Food assistance is denied to the hungry because of want of an *Aadhaar* card, a 12-digit individual unique identification number that serves as proof of identity and address for Indian residents.

Many people living in poverty do not have an *Aadhaar* card as they do not have residences, and/or they move from place to place. Some other technical glitches also can prevent them from having one. If the food programmes don't reach the poorest of the poor, what are they for? Most of the time we talk

about the issue in percentages and statistics. Counting the people as numbers, not as human beings, does not disturb us.

It is the duty of the government to take appropriate measures to save the lives of the poor and hungry. It is our responsibility to ensure food security when we know someone is starving. As a woman and a religious, it is my responsibility to arrange food when someone is hungry and starving.

What did Jesus do in His life as a prophet and concerned human person?

For Jesus, feeding the hungry was an important act. He not only preached, but He performed miracles. And many of them are related to food:

- Jesus' first miracle was turning water into wine (*John 2*).

- Jesus feeds the 5,000 in the miracle of five loaves and two fish (*Matthew 14:13-21*) as seen in all four Gospels.

- Jesus feeds the 4,000 along the sea of Galilee (*Matthew 15:29-39*).

- Jesus and the miraculous catch of fish (*John 21*).

The Lord's Supper (*Luke 22:7-23*) is the last meal Jesus shared with His disciples before His passion and death. Through this He left us with a memorial of eating together in the Eucharist.

What do these Gospel passages tell us? Jesus cared for the poor and hungry. He not only cared for the spiritual needs of the people but also their physical needs. Jesus was the first food activist, who fed the people not just in words but in actions.

Food is an essential part of everyone's life. It nourishes our body, mind and spirit. Everyone who is hungry should be given food unconditionally and universally. It is the fundamental right of a person and the inherent

duty of every government to make sure that everyone in the land gets their basic needs of food, as is their due.

Jesuit Fr Irudaya Jothi, who is a food activist and the convener of the Right To Food movement in West Bengal state, preaches at *La Croix International* that "feeding the hungry is rediscovering the mystery of the Eucharist."

He challenges us often during the seminars and workshops he holds for religious, about the significance of our prayer to the Father, "Give us this day our daily bread." He encourages us to reach out to others with food and demand that the government, which has the responsibility, to distribute food to the hungry!

Hence, the theme "Together be bread for the world" makes a lot of sense to me as a Sister of the Sacred Hearts. On the solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I recommitted myself to being bread for others, by learning from Jesus Himself and by offering myself to nurture the lives of the poor and marginalised. I won't quit when faced with challenges, but untiringly I seek to fulfill the unique purpose God has in store for me/us — and do so in a way that communicates dignity, love, and respect to every individual whom I come across — and thereby continue to establish the kingdom of God. — By Sujata Jena, *Global Sisters Report* (NCR)

● Sujata Jena is a member of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. She is a human rights activist, and advocate with a special interest for the cause of the poor, Dalits, tribal women, children, minorities and migrants.





Fr Ron Rolheiser

Post-Sophistication

A generation ago, J.D. Salinger wrote a novel, *The Catcher in the Rye*, which became immensely popular, as well as becoming required reading in most undergraduate literature programmes. It deserved both. It's a great piece of literature.

Here's the image: A man is watching children playing in a rye field with an exuberance and delight that only innocent young children can have. He thinks ahead, picturing how each of them will eventually lose the joy of that innocence and will, like the rest of us adults, become jaded and unhappy. He imagines how wonderful it would be if he could protect these children from growing up and just keep them there forever, innocent, playing in a rye field, spared of all the mess, sin, compromise, and unhappiness of adults. A fantasy which touches the heart.

It also touches something at the heart of the tension between conservatives and liberals. Conservatives and liberals disagree on most everything, except one thing: both are unhappy with the direction in which things are going.

For conservatives, the present moment is seen as a falling away, from a faith, a stability, and a happiness that supposedly we once had. Their instinct is to return to what once was, to what once (in their view) held things together. What would fix things, they believe, is a certain retreat to a past in-

nocence. At the root of that lies that exact nostalgia inside the man watching those children playing in *The Catcher in the Rye*, namely, that leaving behind the innocence of childhood for the sophistication of an adult, brings with it instability, mess, and unhappiness. Sophistication comes at too high a price, and so we need to be protected from certain kinds of learning and experience.

Liberals tend to have the opposite instinct and proclivity. For them, we live in a social, religious, moral, and technological milieu that sets us above the past, irrespective of the mess this sometimes brings. We are simply advanced in ways that past generations, whatever their values and sincerity, were not. Any retreat would be a regression, an intellectual and moral loss. The path towards maturity is forward, and we must have the courage to travel that road, notwithstanding the upheavals that come with it (you can't make an omelette without scrambling an egg). The road forward leads through adult experience and learning, beyond the shelter of the rye field. That's the road that leads to maturity and gets us beyond the narrowness, bigotry, racism, sexism, and ignorance that undergird much false fear, rigidity, injustice, and violence in the world.

Who's right? In what direction should we be moving? What's the way forward?

My hunch is that we will get to where we should be going by following neither

the instinct of the liberal nor that of the conservative fully. While both emanate from a healthy intuition, both have shown themselves inadequate vis-a-vis the road to maturity, peace, and happiness. Liberals are right in intuiting that moving back to the past is not the answer, just as conservatives are right in believing that simply becoming ever more sophisticated is no answer either. Both are partially right and partially wrong. Where should we be going?

We must move forward, though not in the way popular liberal ideology tends to conceive this, that is, as *salvation through sophistication alone*. We must move forward, but in a way that ultimately takes us beyond sophistication to a *second naivete*. What is meant by this?

This: If you ask a naive child: "Do you believe in Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny?", she answers: "Yes." If you ask a bright child the same question, she answers: "No." But if you ask an even a brighter child that question, she answers: "Yes". But for a different reason.

The task in life is to move from *naivete* through *sophistication* to *post-sophistication*. Both conservatives and liberals need to challenge themselves (and each other) in the light of this truth (which is found both in the Gospels and in the best insights in anthropology). God and nature do not intend for us to remain as children all our lives. We are meant to grow, to experience life, to

sort out the critical questions that are inside us, to become sophisticated. Admittedly, in that process we will lose much of our innocence. And, as Adam and Eve found out after they ate the fruit, when our eyes are opened, happiness does not exactly follow.

Where is happiness found? In that place where it is possible again to believe in Santa and the Easter Bunny, in a place of post-sophistication. There are various vocabularies within which to express this, but they all point to the same thing. They all have the same progression:

Naivete – Sophistication – Second naivete

First fervour – Disillusionment – Mature love

Pre-critical – Critical – Post-critical Innocence – Lost innocence – Revirginised

Childish – Grown Up – Childlike

Happy – Disenchanted – Peaceful

Naive fool – Sophisticated fool – Holy fool We once were naive fools. Then we became sophisticated fools. It's time to become post-sophisticated fools.

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

Who is Blaise Pascal and why does Pope Francis like him?

Blaise Pascal was born on June 19, 1623, in Clermont-Ferrand, a city in central France. From an early age he was considered a prodigy in several fields including physics, mathematics, and as an inventor. He invented, for example, the "Pascaline" an early mechanical calculator in the 1640s.

In his 20s he drew close to Jansenism, a heretical movement within the Catholic Church that wanted to reconcile divine grace with human freedom.

The movement was centred in the Abbey of Port-Royal in the southwest of Paris and was in conflict with many in the Catholic Church, especially the Society of Jesus. In Pascal's text *Lettres Provinciales* ("Provincial letters"), which is a series of 18 letters written in the 1650s, he even took a vigorous defence of Jansenism against the Jesuits. This text was condemned by Pope Alexander VII in 1657.

In 1654 Pascal had a strong conversion experience he would later call the "Night of Fire," which the Pope explains was when the philosopher lived an "experience of the love of God" in "Jesus Christ personally."

In fact, Pascal wrote shortly after a text called *Mémorial* ("Memorial"), a brief prayer that he then sewed into his coat for the last years of his life. At a general audience in 2020, Pope Francis quoted this prayer: "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of the philosophers and savants. Certitude, certitude; feeling, joy, peace. God of Jesus Christ." He mentions this again in the apostolic letter.

After this conversion experience, the Frenchman started writing a text titled *Apology for the Christian Religion*, but was unable to complete it before his death. The drafts of this project were included in *Pensées*,

a collection of his writings that was published posthumously in 1670. Pope Francis has said that this text is a "splendid and religiously interesting book."

The Pope thinks of Pascal as a model to follow for his pursuit of truth

In his apostolic letter, the Pontiff cites Pascal as a model for "everyone who wishes to persevere in seeking truth," hailing a "man of prodigious intelligence who insisted that apart from the aspiration to love, no truth is worthwhile."

He warns, however, against the temptation of reading the French philosopher as someone who wanted to impose his faith on others, for Pascal knew that "belief is possible only by the grace of God, embraced by a heart that is free."

The Pontiff finds that Pascal was quick to grasp the "tragedy of this life" — the inability to see and thus avoid evil — and understood that faith could not be excluded from our search for goodness and truth. Recalling the Frenchman's professional background, Francis believes that Pascal "speaks to our own times" as a rational mind — or "spirit of geometry," as the philosopher put it — because he "reminds us of the grandeur of human reason and encourages us to employ it in understanding the mysteries of the world around us."

Pascal evangelised using reason and patience

The Pope also explains that through philosophy, Pascal "sought as much as possible to engage in dialogue with those who did not share his faith," as he chose to continue to rely on rational discourse. "Here

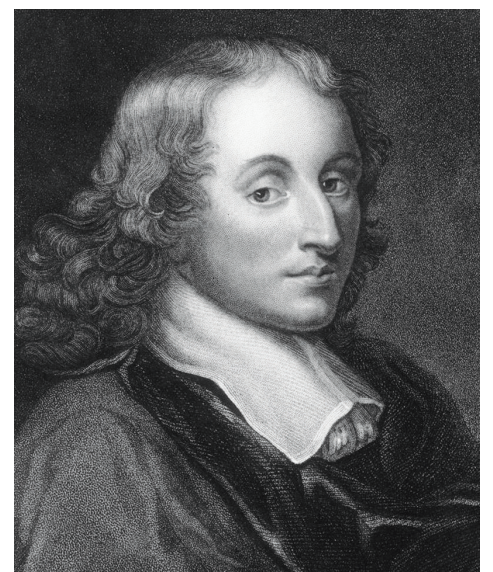
we see a completely respectful and patient form of evangelisation that our generation would do well to imitate," Francis says.

The Pontiff praises Pascal's care to avoid "disembodied reason," where ideas are superior to reality. "The baneful ideologies from which we continue to suffer in the areas of economics, social life, anthropology and morality, keep their followers imprisoned in a world of illusions, where ideas have replaced reality," the Pope explains.

"After applying his extraordinary intelligence to the study of the human condition, the sacred Scriptures and the Church's tradition, Pascal now presents himself with childlike simplicity as a humble witness of the Gospel," the Pope said. The Pope insists that the Frenchman knows that "divine revelation is not only not opposed to the demands of reason, but offers the amazing response that no philosophy could ever attain on its own."

Pascal: a part of Pope Francis' "spiritual constellation"

Blaise Pascal is one of the "great figures" who form part of Pope Francis' "spiritual constellation," suggested Cardinal José Tolentino de Mendonça, Prefect of the Dicastery for Culture and Education, at a press conference held at the Vatican to mark the publication of the apostolic letter. The Portuguese cardinal said the Pope is able to "quote from memory" many of the reflections contained in *Pensées*. The Pontiff particularly appreciates Pascal's "honesty" and is a "profound admirer" of the man and mystic, the Portuguese cardinal stressed, recalling the Frenchman's special concern for the poor and the sick at the end of his life.



On June 19, 2023, Pope Francis published an Apostolic Letter dedicated to the French philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) on the 400th anniversary of his birth. The 12-page letter, titled *Sublimitas et miseria hominis* – "The Grandeur and Misery of Man" in Latin – pays tribute to this Frenchman, which the Pope, a former literature teacher, has referenced multiple times in his texts.

Cardinal Mendonça added that Pascal is "a role model for dealing with the complexities of modern man." The philosopher "helps to find paths of hope in the heart of man," confronted with "the emptiness, the nothingness" of his time, the Cardinal highlighted. — **By Isabella H. de Carvalho, Aleteia**

Little Catholics' Corner

Hello children of God,

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells His friends that loving and following Him is very important. He says when we love Him, we also learn how to love others. Jesus explained that when people show love and kindness to His friends, it is the same as showing love

to Him and God. He wants us to be kind and caring to everyone we meet, just like He showed us. We should share our toys, snacks, and smiles with others to make them feel loved and happy.

Let's always remember to share and care!

Love, Aunty Gwen

Bible Quiz

1. How many commandments are there?

- a. 5 b. 10
c. 9 d. 3

2. Who built the ark?

- a. Abraham b. Moses
c. Adam d. Noah

3. What language was the Bible originally written in?

- a. Egyptian b. Greek
c. Hebrew d. Aramic

4. Who betrayed Jesus?

- a. Jack b. Judas
c. James d. Julian

5. Where was Jesus crucified?

- a. Galilee b. Nazareth
c. Jerusalem d. Bethlehem

6. Who was given the coat of many colors?

- a. Elijah b. Ruth
c. Sheba d. Joseph

7. According to the Bible, who was the first woman?

- a. Sarah b. Eve
c. Hannah d. Delilah

8. Who fought the giant, Goliath?

- a. David b. Solomon
c. Martha d. Peter

9. Who was the mother of John the Baptist?

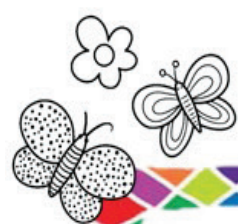
- a. Anne b. Elizabeth
c. Mary d. Jezebel

10. With what food did Jesus feed the 5,000

- a. burgers and fries
b. pizza
c. chicken rice
d. bread and fish



A family that prays together, stays together.
Colour this picture.



What does the Gospel teach us about love ?

Draw a picture in each square to describe how you understand the phrase.

GOD LOVES US WITH ALL HIS HEART

HE WANTS US TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL OUR HEARTS

HE HELPS US FIND WAYS TO BE KIND TO OTHERS

WE SHOW OUR LOVE FOR GOD BY FOLLOWING JESUS



YOUTH

JULY 2, 2023

SFX confirmands go beyond the classroom

PETALING JAYA: The Sacrament of Confirmation is a significant milestone in the spiritual journey of any Catholic.

On June 18, 34 students from the Church of St Francis Xavier (SFX) together with two young adults, one of whom is from the French community received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Most Rev Julian Leow, Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur. Concelebrating at the confirmation Mass were Fr François-Xavier Robert and SFX parish priest, Fr Norris

Seenivasan, SJ.

These students committed themselves to a period of intense preparation over 18 months, which included attending weekly classes as well as engaging in a three-days-two-nights camp led by Martin Jalleh. It also included an Exposure Immersion Programme (EIP), to provide an avenue for the students to live their faith through action and encounter. The confirmands also had an opportunity to join a six-month internship programme, to experience serving at various ministries in the parish.

This year, our first in-person EIP post-Covid, we collaborated

with SFX's Society of St Vincent De Paul (SSVP) and the Migrant Ministry, to allow the students to serve the underprivileged in the community. The students also organised a "Sports Day" for a group of 12 migrant children. Everyone enjoyed making new friends and celebrating their newfound friendship with a pizza party for lunch!

Through these EIP activities, the students developed a strong sense of responsibility and dedication toward their faith and the wider community. Some of the students, under the guidance of a catechist, who is in the digital marketing profession, also built a website for the SSVP PJ chapter.



Archbishop Julian Leow anoints a confirmand with Chrism oil.

The Confirmation Day was a momentous occasion, for the confirmands and the community. The sense of unity and joy felt was a testament to the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic" Church that we profess and belong to.

As the new confirmed candidates, like the apostles, receive the courage, faith and confi-

dence to go out into the world and proclaim the Good News through their words and their deeds, we pray they may be inspired to live out their faith with joy, courage and love and go forth to serve with humility, striving to be the hands and feet of Christ to those around them.

— *By Christine Chuah*



Confirmands with Archbishop Julian Leow, Fr François-Xavier Robert and Fr Norris Seenivasan, SJ.

STAY CLOSE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT'S FLAME

SUBANG JAYA: Amidst the solemnity, as parishioners in their Sunday best and hushed whispers, there was also a sense of anticipation and excitement as 56 student confirmands and 13 adult confirmands filed into the Church of St Thomas More in a single line, taking their respective seats with their sponsors.

The Confirmation Mass was celebrated on the Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, on June 17. Archbishop Julian Leow presided over the Mass together with the host church's parish priest Msgr Patrick Boudville, and the Church of Divine Mercy, Shah Alam's parish priest Fr Alan Pereira, as the concelebrants.

During his homily, Archbishop Julian emphasised the importance

of assisting one another in their faith journey as we all need a faith community. He said, "If we are alone, as in a fire, and you remove a piece of coal or a piece of wood from the heap of burning flame, that piece will die off eventually. But if it is together, in that community, it burns brightly."

He reminded the confirmands to stay close to the flame and let their hearts beat as one together with the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to give life and radiate goodness, gentleness, loving-kindness, fear of the Lord and all the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Congratulations to our 2023 batch of confirmands! Filled with the Holy Spirit, may you go forth in action and service for Christ. — *By Kathleen See*



Confirmands and catechists with Archbishop Julian Leow, Msgr Patrick Boudville and Fr Alan Pereira.



YOUNG PEOPLE IN KT ATTEND FAITH IN YOUTH CAMP

TERENGGANU: The Catholic Students' Society (CSS) recently organised a rejuvenating healing camp for its youth, focused on the theme "Faith in YOUth" based on John 14:1-12, "I Am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." The camp aimed to provide the students with a stress-free environment while strengthening their faith and spiritual connection.

The camp commenced with an opening prayer and a warm welcome from the students. Soon after, preparations began for animating Mass scheduled for the following day.

After Mass the students' had an insightful talk on the *Faith Journey* by Nurse Joan, at the convent. they also recited the Divine Mercy Chaplet and had Praise and Worship segments.

The young people also watched a movie "A Week Away" which depicted the life of Will Hawkins, a troubled orphaned teenage boy with a challenging spiritual background. His life took a turn when his adoptive parents sent



Nurse Joan sharing her faith journey.

him for a spiritual camp, and Will learnt to be more open to others and embraced a life centred around God.

Later, the group gathered for a meaningful meditation session, seeking inner healing through the recitation of prayers and worship hymns. This hour of devotion and self-reflection culminated in a powerful moment of reconciliation among the campers, promoting

unity and forgiveness.

On the final day, the campers embarked on an excursion to the picturesque Lata Kolam River. This outdoor activity aimed to foster an appreciation for the tranquil beauty of God's creation and encourage a deep connection with nature. The day concluded with a heartfelt closing prayer, as the participants bid farewell and returned to their respective homes.

MELAKA TEENS HAVE AN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE ON CHRISTIAN LIFE



MELAKA: The Youth Encounter (YE) Programme, organised by the youth group of the Church of St Theresa took place at Good Shepherd Seminary. The programme primarily targeted teenagers aged between 16 and 19 years old.

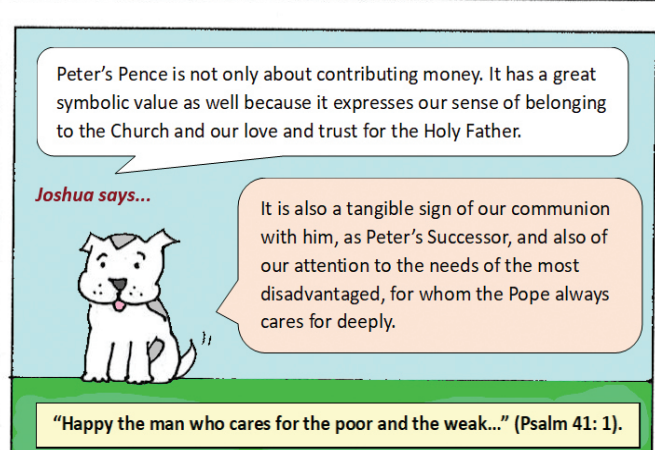
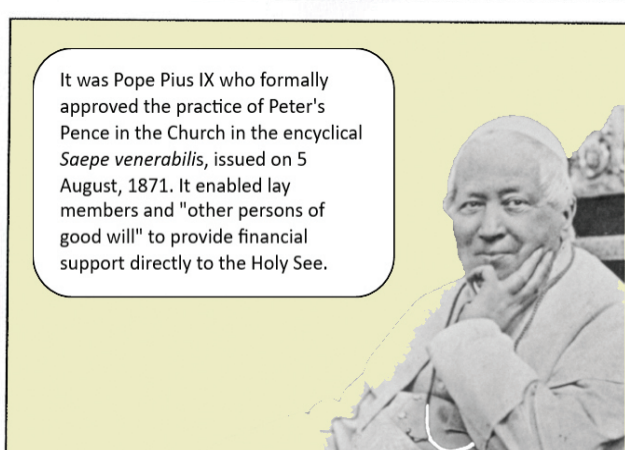
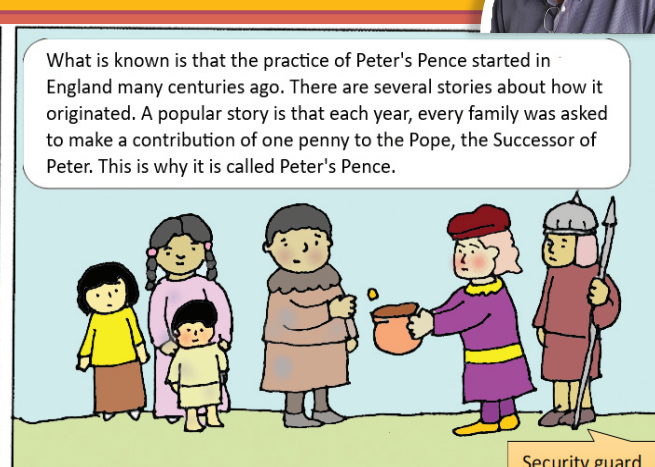
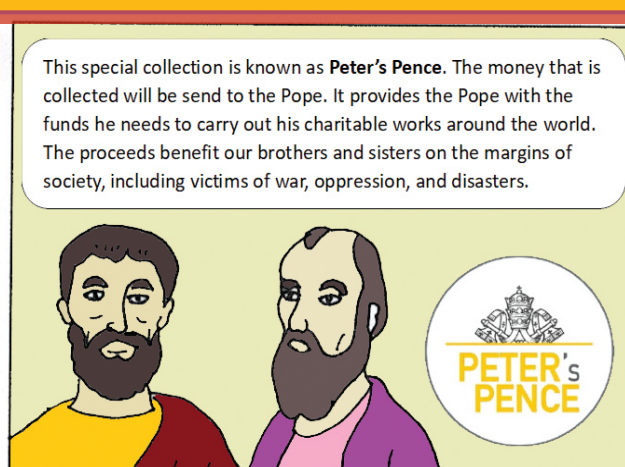
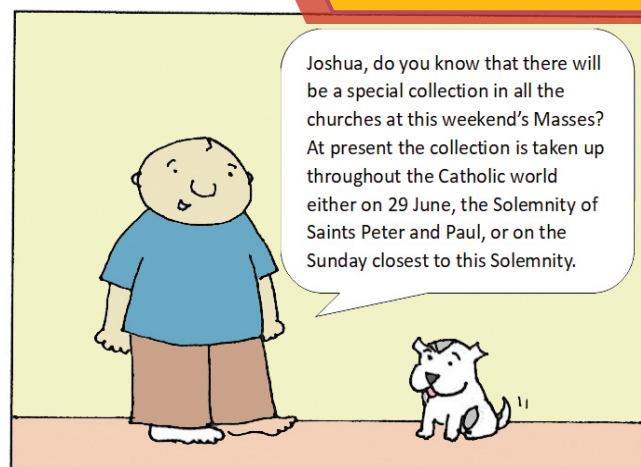
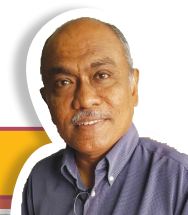
The YE was facilitated by Fr Martinian Lee and a team of coordinators and outreach members who were closely connected to the late Fr Ignatius Huan, who founded this programme in the diocese over 30 years ago. The programme saw the participation of 35 individuals. The four-day-three-night live-in programme aimed to gather a small group of

youth and provide them with an immersive experience on Christian life. The programme was packed with educational sessions and small group sharing, scripture reflections, activities that centred on community, fun games, music, prayer, and lots of affirmation and love. Besides teaching the attendees how to explore the deeper meaning of life, the sessions aimed to help them develop a Christian vision of reality and foster a sense of community among the youth.

The teenagers left the camp having learnt more about God, themselves, the people around them, and their life situation.

THE SIMPLE LIFE...

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



MEMORIAM

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Pakistani migrant's last call home foretold Greek tragedy

PAKISTAN: Before 21-year-old Pakistani Muhammad Akash boarded a rickety fishing trawler in Libya on a journey he hoped would take him to a brighter future in Europe, he contacted his family one last time.

"He made a heartfelt phone call to his brother, urging the family to pray for him as he embarked on what he acknowledged to be a perilous journey," his uncle Amanat Ali told *AFP* after learning Akash was one of the hundreds who drowned off the coast of Greece on June 14.

Authorities in Europe still have no clear idea how many people were aboard the boat when it sank – estimates range from 400 to over 700 – but likely hundreds came from Pakistan, and many from Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

Four of Akash's friends from the town of Khuiratta were also aboard, but only two survived. They had the grim task of breaking the news to his family.

The uncle told *AFP* that Akash started his journey three months ago.

He had been in regular contact with two other friends who had already made their way to Italy by similar means, and he wanted to follow them.

Akash's father passed away 12 years ago, leaving him to assist his older brother in managing the family-owned catering business in Khuiratta.

"He became fascinated by the enhanced living standards of the local residents whose families had established roots in Europe," said Ali.

"The family isn't impoverished, rather it is the lack of faith in the system among the youth in the area that is leading them to consider leaving the country."

Ali said the family clubbed together to pay an agent two million rupees (around RM32,700) to organize his journey, which started with a flight to Dubai, onwards to Egypt, and finally to Libya.

Then the call when he shared fears of the boat journey ahead.

"Despite our attempts to dissuade him, he remained adamant," Ali said.

On June 18 Prime Minister Sharif announced a national day of mourning for those who perished -- local media say as many as 300 Pakistanis could have been aboard.

"The devastating news has left us in deep sorrow," said Ali.

"He had a special place as the dearest among the siblings to his mother, so we made the difficult decision not to immediately inform her of his passing."

"Instead, we have conveyed to her that he has sustained injuries. We simply can't muster enough courage to speak the truth to her." — *ucanews.com*

Remembering Our Dearest Anya & Amma

37th Anniversary

24th Anniversary



Francis Arimadass Chettiar

2nd July 1986



Esther Arokiasamy

4th February 1999

"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die..." (John 11:25-26)

Dearest Anya & Amma,
Though both of you are away from us, guide us throughout our journey here on earth. You are always at our side and we will cherish our times together, forever praising God.

Deeply missed and forever cherished by sons, daughters, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, relatives, friends and loved ones.

Deep in our heart, a memory is kept.

In Loving Memory of

KENETH K. SIVAPRASAD

(26 November 1972 - 3 July 2012)



"We know that time heals all, yet the pain still lingers in our hearts. We begin to remember not just that you died, but that you lived. Your life gave us memories too beautiful to forget. And left a place no one can fill. We miss you dearly and forever will."

Deeply missed and fondly remembered by,
Loving Wife, Daughter, Parent,
Brother & Sister-in-law, Uncles, Aunties, Cousins,
Nephews, Nieces, and a host of relatives and friends.



1st Anniversary In Loving Memory of Isaac Santhana Das

16th Feb 1956 - 4th Jul 2022

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." John 11:25

Deeply missing you then you'll ever know and fondly remembered by

Wife : Cecilia Anboo
Son : Gavyn William
Daughter-in-law : Cynthia Gavyn
Daughter : Sharon Isaac
Brother : David Jockins

Host of loving families, relatives and friends.

Memorial Mass will be celebrated on 8th July 2023 at 5.00pm at the Sacred Heart Cathedral, Johor Bahru.

We miss you very much.

8th Year Anniversary In Ever Loving Memory of Our Beloved Mother



Mdm. JeyaMary Sebastian (J.Mary)

From the Lord: 25th June 1938
To the Lord: 4th July 2015

*Loving and kind in all her ways,
Upright and just to the end of her days,
Sincere and true, in her heart and mind,
Along with her Rosary everyday,
beautiful memories, she left behind.*

Deeply missed and always remembered by:
Children, Daughter-In-Law, Son-In-Law,
Grandchildren and Relatives

We would like to express our deep gratitude for all the fraternal support we received. May God Bless you.

In Loving Memory of Our Parents



Francis Fernandez
10th Anniversary

Departed: 08-07-2013



Gertrude Fernandez
3rd Anniversary

Departed: 08-06-2020

Deeply missed by children, their spouses and grandchildren.

21st Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Sally Koh Wai Lan
Departed: 04-07-2002

*Mum gone but not forgotten
And, as dawns another year,
In the lonely hours of thinking,
Thoughts of you are always near.*

Rest in peace, loving mother.

Always remembered and cherished by your Son, daughters, sons-in-law, daughter-in-law and all loved ones.

BE FORMED AND INFORMED

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REST IN PEACE

FEAST OF ST. ANNE

WEDNESDAY, 26 JULY, 2023

NOVENA MASS DATES:
FRIDAY, 22 JULY – SUNDAY, 31 JULY, 2023



RESTORE MY CHURCH
重建我的教会
என்னுடைய திருஅவையை மீட்டமை
PULIHKAN GEREJA SAYA



DATE / DAY	TIME	EVENT	THEME
The Father who calls us ... / 召叫我们的天父 / Bapa yang memanggil kita ... / நம்மை அழைக்கும் தந்தை			
21. 07. 2023 FRIDAY	6.30 PM 7.00 PM 7.30 PM	Rosary Adoration/Novena Mass (E/T/BM)	You shall be my people ... a united community / 你们必作我的子民 ... 一个合一的团体 / <i>Kamu akan menjadi umatku ... Satu umat yang bersatu / நீங்கள் என்னுடைய மக்களாய் இருப்பீர்கள் ... ஒன்றினைந்த சமூகம்</i>
22. 07. 2023 SATURDAY	6.30 PM 7.00 PM 7.30 PM	Rosary Adoration/Novena Mass (E/T/BM)	Be holy, for I am holy ... a listening community / 你们应是圣的, 因为我是圣的 ... 一个聆听的团体 / <i>Kuduslah, sebab Aku kudus ... Umat yang mendengar / நான் தூயவராய் இருப்பது போல நீங்களும் தூயவராய் இருங்கள் ... செவிகொடுக்கும் சமூகம்</i>
23. 07. 2023 SUNDAY	8.00 AM 8.30 AM 10.30 AM 11.00 AM 6.30 PM 7.00 PM 7.30 PM	Rosary & Novena Mass (Tamil) Rosary Mass (Children) Rosary Adoration/Novena Mass (E/T/BM)	Rich in mercy ... a healing community / 富于慈悲 ... 一个治愈的团体 / <i>Kaya dengan belas kasihan ... satu umat yang menyembuh / மிகுந்த இரக்கம் உடையவர் ... குணமளிக்கும் சமூகம்</i>
The Son we encounter / 与我们相遇的圣子 / Anak yang kita bertemu / நாம் எதிர்கொள்ளும் மகன்			
24. 07. 2023 MONDAY	6.30 PM 7.00 PM 7.30 PM	Rosary Adoration/Novena Mass (E/T/BM)	I have given you an example ... disciples learning saintly virtues / 我给你们立了榜样 ... 门徒们学习圣洁的美德 / <i>Saya sudah bagi contoh ... para murid belajar nilai-nilai para Santo / நான் உங்களுக்கு மாதிரி காட்டினேன் ... சீடர்கள் புனிதமிக்க நற்குணங்களைக் கற்றுக்கொள்கிறார்கள்</i>
25. 07. 2023 TUESDAY	6.30 PM 7.00 PM 7.30 PM	Rosary Adoration/Novena Mass (E/T/BM)	Do this in memory of me ... disciples nourished by the Eucharist ... disciples embraced by the Sacraments / 这样做来纪念我 ... 受圣体滋养的门徒 ... 受圣事拥抱的门徒 / <i>Lakukan ini sebagai kenangan akan daku ... murid-murid dipelihara oleh Ekaristi ... murid-murid dipeluk oleh Sakramen / இதை என் நினைவாகச் செய்யுங்கள் ... நற்கருணையால் ஊட்டம் பெற்ற சீடர்கள் ... அருட்சாதனங்களை ஏற்றுக்கொண்ட சீடர்கள்</i>
The Spirit who enables us / 使我们有力的圣神 / Roh yang membolehkan kita / நம்மை செயல்படுத்தும் தூயஆவியானவர்			
26. 07. 2023 WEDNESDAY	9.30 AM 10.00 AM 6.30 PM 7.00 PM 7.30 PM	Rosary & Novena Mass (English) Rosary Adoration/Novena Mass (E/T/BM)	Behold I make all things new ... Families as 'social' sacrament / 看, 我已更新了一切 ... 家庭为“社会”的圣事 / <i>Lihatlah, Aku membaharukan segala sesuatu ... Keluarga sebagai sakramen 'sosial' / இதோ!, நான் அனைத்தையும் புதியது ஆக்குகிறேன் ... குடும்பங்கள் “சமூகத்தின்” அருளடையாளங்கள்</i>
27. 07. 2023 THURSDAY	6.30 PM 7.00 PM 7.30 PM	Rosary Adoration/Novena Mass (E/T/BM)	One Spirit, variety of gifts ... BECs are lights for all to see / 一个圣神, 多样恩赐 ... 基信团是所有人得见的明灯 / <i>Satu Roh, pelbagai karunia ... KED adalah cahaya penglihatan bagi semua / கொடைகள் பல; ஆனால் தூய ஆவியார் ஒருவரே ... அதிசக்கள் பிறர் காணும் ஒளிவிளக்குகள்</i>
28. 07. 2023 FRIDAY	9.30 AM 10.00 AM 6.30 PM 7.00 PM 7.30 PM	Rosary & Novena Mass followed by Anointing of the Sick Rosary Adoration/Novena Mass (E/T/BM)	We and the Holy Spirit are witnesses ... The Church, a home for all / 我们与圣神同为见证人 ... 教会, 我们共同的家 / <i>Kami dan Roh Kudus adalah saksi ... Gereja, rumah untuk semua / நாமும் தூய ஆவியாரும் சாட்சிகள் ... திருஅவை அனைவருக்கும் இல்லம்</i>
29. 07. 2023 SATURDAY	9.30 AM 10.00 AM 5.30 PM 6.00 PM 6.30 PM	Rosary & Novena Mass (English) Rosary Adoration/Novena Mass (Multilingual) followed by Procession	RESTORE MY CHURCH / 重建我的教会 / PULIHKAN GEREJA SAYA / என்னுடைய திருஅவையை மீட்டமை
30. 07. 2023 SUNDAY	6.30 AM 7.00 AM 8.30 AM 9.00 AM 10.30 AM 11.00 AM 5.30 PM 6.00 PM	Rosary Mass (English) Rosary Mass (Tamil) Rosary Mass (Mandarin) Rosary Thanksgiving Mass (E/T/BM)	RESTORE MY CHURCH / 重建我的教会 / PULIHKAN GEREJA SAYA / என்னுடைய திருஅவையை மீட்டமை

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