

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.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

Rom 8:26



Regional catechists meet physically after three years

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Networking with those passionate about humanitarian work

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It is good to be here
CHARIS Youth Conference 2023

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402 million Asians suffer from hunger

NEW YORK: The year 2022 witnessed a staggering number of people suffering from hunger worldwide, ranging between 690 and 783 million individuals.

This alarming figure reflects an increase of 122 million compared to pre-pandemic levels but does show a slight decline of 3.8 million from the previous year, according to *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023* report, published by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

While some regions experienced notable progress in combating hunger, Asia, especially the southern sub-region, struggled to significantly reduce moderate and severe food insecurity between 2021 and 2022.

Although the overall global hunger levels remained relatively stable during the period between 2021 and 2022, the report highlighted a persistently high undernourishment rate of around 9.2 per cent. This figure surpasses the pre-COVID-19 level of 7.9 per cent recorded in 2019, signaling the urgent need for concerted efforts to address the issue.

Amidst these circumstances, there were positive developments in Asia as undernutrition declined from 8.8 per cent in 2021 to 8.5 per cent in 2022. This improvement equates to a reduction of over 12 million people affected,

primarily in Southern Asia.

However, it is crucial to note that the current undernourishment levels remain 58 million higher than in the pre-pandemic period.

Southern Asia displayed the most significant strides in combatting hunger, although the region still grapples with an undernourishment rate of 15.6 per cent. Eastern Asia witnessed a disturbing reversal, with an additional two million people falling victim to food shortages in the past year.

Asia, despite boasting a lower undernourishment rate compared to Africa, bears the burden of being home to the largest absolute number of people suffering from hunger in 2022.

Approximately 402 million individuals, accounting for 55 per cent of the global total, struggled to obtain sufficient food.

Projections indicate that by 2030, an estimated 600 million people will continue to face chronic undernourishment.

Malaysia is no exception to the growing threat of rising food insecurity. In the 2022 Global Hunger Index, Malaysia ranked 58th out of 121 countries surveyed, earning a score of 12.5. This places Malaysia in a moderate position regarding hunger levels. However, there has been a small increase in the hunger index from 10.9 in 2014 to 12.5 in 2022, likely corresponding to a rise in food insecurity because of the pandemic. It is important to note that hunger does not necessarily imply a com-

plete lack of food but can also involve inadequate or improper eating habits.

Earlier this month, Pope Francis had appealed for "joint, multilateral action" on the part of all nations and organisations "to eradicate the scourge of hunger" starving millions worldwide. The Pope said this in his message addressed to the UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO)'s 43rd Session held July 1-7 in Rome.

The Pope encouraged the FAO's Director-General to continue his commitment "at a time when decisive and competent action to eradicate the scourge of hunger in the world is inescapable."

"The challenge we face," the Pope observed, "is joint and collaborative action by the entire family of nations. There can be no room for conflict or opposition, when the enormous challenges at hand require a holistic and multi-lateral approach."

Only if FAO and the other international organisations adopt and implement "a synergy of consensual and far-sighted thinking on the part of all the actors concerned," the Pope said, will they be effective in fulfilling their mandate.

This requires, he said, governments, businesses, academia, international institutions, civil society and individuals making "a joint effort" and "leaving aside petty logic and biased visions, so that everyone benefits, and no one is left behind."

The Pope decried that millions of people worldwide continue to suffer from malnutrition, citing armed conflict and climate change, with its resulting natural disasters, as key culprits.

"Mass displacement, along with other effects of global political, economic and military tensions," he said, "undermine efforts to ensure that people's living conditions are improved on the basis of their inherent dignity."

"It bears repeating time and again: poverty, inequalities, lack of access to basic resources such as food, drinking water, health, education, housing, are a serious offence to human dignity!"

The Pope acknowledged that experts say that the goal of 'Zero Hunger' will not be achieved within the timeframe set by the international community, and warned against letting this inability to meet common responsibilities lead to revisions of programmes which "do not take into account the real needs of the people."

Appealing for all to do their part, the Holy Father reassured that the Holy See "will continue to offer its contribution to the common good," through the work and experience of the Catholic Church's institutions, "so that no one in our world lacks daily bread and our planet is given the protection it requires." —
Agencies

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OPINION

Synodality and silos

Silos in the Catholic Church are one of the major bumps in the road we must overcome as we embark seriously on the synodal journey. We may be resistant to admitting the existence of silos, protesting we are good collaborators in our team or even that silos are necessary because of our own unique work. But Church synodality goes way beyond the team, beyond the local organisation. This journey has many tracks and we will have to listen to more of them. We are not building the doomed Tower of Babel but a whole city of the People of God to reach out to God the Father.

In civilian life we have ample experience of silos in our local communities, political parties, employment groups, regional areas, national entities and so on. Silos are an inevitable feature of most organisations. But the Church is not an ordinary organisation. It is comprised of stakeholders of a Trinitarian God, called to be missionary disciples.

The Catholic Church is indisputably the largest religious organisation in the world, with a long history, global reach, amazing missionary zeal, sanctity and sainthood. It has a proud history of missionaries carrying the message of the Lord Jesus across the world, providing education, health care and food for the poor and the hungry.

Silos for the Catholic Church are really no different from what exists in any large organisation. Our hierarchical — even monarchical — character compounds this structural feature but does not excuse it in any way.

Almost two and a half billion Catholics are part of the communion of the faithful, worshipping as the People of God, with multiple cultures and languages; delivering services of all manner and kind through thousands of ecclesial organisations. The charism of founders, the history of organisational formation, elaborate structural organisation and the dedication of adherents all contribute to the silo culture. The role of fortress silos has even featured in the sinful tragedy of

sexual abuse.

Emergent from the tomb in Jerusalem, the disciples of the early Church grappled with their own silo issues. In its earliest days, it decided whether the first silo could admit gentiles to membership. Quickly resolved, despite much anguish, the teams then followed the Master's teaching to embrace their mission and fanned out across the known world. Silo communities formed as the Word of God was spread by the Apostles and loyal followers.

We are now faced with how we will operate as Church in the 21st Century. "There is no need to create another Church, but to create a different Church," Pope Francis tells us. However big or small, international or local, ancient or modern in origin, senior or junior, lay consecrated or clerical, we are invited to join the journey, listening and discerning where the Spirit is leading us. Size and international diversity has little to do with our personal challenge to act synodally. Synodal behaviour must start with each of us and be practised at the parish level and in all our connections with and within Church.

Approaching the challenge at the local level, we know there are many separate and distinct organisations. Some may have little connection with each other on a regular basis but most will, especially at parish level. Is it sufficient to meet the requirements of synodality, to confine our horizon to our own organisation or team — whether its school, a charitable or welfare group, an educational programme, our parish? Is it any longer acceptable to think we are being collaborative because we listen to immediate parties and not actively consider the connections we have or should have with other parts, both inside and outside the organisation?

If silo blindness is to be replaced, active listening and discernment will need a much broader journey process but more importantly, a disposition to encounter and be open to others. Neither of the two disciples making the journey to

Emmaus after the death of Jesus were concerned beyond their own despondent selves, for reasons we well understand. But what guidance and elevation they experienced, how everything changed, when the "Stranger" shared with them.

If we Catholics are to act as part of the one, holy, apostolic Church, a much more open approach is called for. If we are genuinely acting on the mission of Christ, we must pause and listen to the Spirit and to all others in our context. We are all operating in a different world, a secular and more complex world that is unfolding in a way that is, by definition, not the old way. Those of us in ministry and service are severely challenged by what is expected by our "client community", how to relate to the apparent competition for parishioner time and engage in the competition for selection.

Across the western world, weekly Mass attendance is declining. The way parishioners see the Church meeting their needs and conforming to other competing interests and obligations is changing. In a synodal Church we are called to listen and consider their views. We are not permitted to come from fixed personal positions. We are obliged to be open to listen actively and be prepared to be surprised. We all have regular experience of resistance to change. Critically, if synodality has any meaning it is that we must be open to change. No glass houses in our mansions, nor chains around our silos!

The good news is that — as we actively listen and pray, personally and as parish — we may encounter good ideas and new ways of how to better meet current needs, see outside the confines of our personal or corporate silo and have our own repeated Emmaus experience. May our hearts burn with zeal as the Spirit enlightens us! We are participants in a community on mission; not our own way — but as missionary disciples, on a mission for the Kingdom of God. — **By Deacon Justin Stanwix, LCI** (<https://international-la-croix.com/>)

Adversity begets growth

Ever since humanity learned the art of speech, storytelling has been one of the most effective ways of passing down teachings, traditions and lessons from the past to the future generations. Since not many people were able to learn the art of written communication, oral transmission became almost the norm.

When we look at Sacred Scripture, many of the teachings were handed down orally rather than in written form. Literature such as Psalms and Proverbs were also likely to have been handed down orally by memorisation. Stories are usually able to bring to life certain teachings which are more complex or even not clearly understood by its intended audience. This is why Jesus used a lot of parables in the transmission of His teachings.

The people during the time of Jesus were largely uneducated. It was not because they were incapable of learning but because education was not as readily available as it is today. Those working as farmers, shepherds and fishermen did not need much education. This is why the use of parables and stories became a more effective means of teaching. This would also explain why some of the people who heard the teachings of Jesus did not understand what He was trying to tell them. Some concepts, even on the level of spoken words, were beyond their comprehension. We find this happening even today.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the dandel and the wheat. We, as modern audiences, can understand it better because, generally, our education and life experience



help us to grasp more complex concepts. However, someone who was a fisherman may not have understood this parable because they were not in the agricultural field. Given that some of Jesus' disciples were fishermen, it was not surprising to see them asking Jesus to explain to them the meaning of the parable.

Jesus makes the distinction between the dandel and the wheat. The dandel is sown by the evil one and we know that this represents those who have rejected God while the wheat is sown by Jesus and this represents those who have chosen to follow Christ. Both dandel and wheat co-exist in the same field, which is represented by our world. This is still happening today. We know that we live among people who reject God and even make life difficult for those who follow God.

Wouldn't it be easier if the dandel of this

world were uprooted and the wheat allowed to grow without hindrance? It is easier said than done. What Jesus explained still holds true today. If one pulls out the dandel, if it were intertwined with the wheat, then the wheat comes along with it. If we apply this to humanity, some who follow God may have been affected or influenced by the words and actions of those who follow the opposite path. If a reaping were to take place, these "wheat" may be swept along together with the dandel. In other words, people who are disciples of God, tainted by the evil one, will be lumped together with the evil ones. This is not a good strategy.

A better strategy would be to allow both the dandel and the wheat to grow together and separate them at harvest time. Imagine if there were only good people on earth, what would that be like? Would there be a

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Fr Philip Tay, OCD

16th Sunday of Ordinary Time (A)

Readings: **Wisdom 12:13, 16-19****Romans 8:26-27;****Gospel: Matthew 13:24-43**

need to struggle and grow? Would there be a need to improve oneself? To a certain degree, perhaps. But it is only when humanity faces some kind of challenge or adversity that they learn to grow and mature. This is the same for faith. If we live in an ideal situation with no problems and no evil, our faith will likely stagnate and we will remain in a state of complacency. But if we live in an environment where our faith is constantly challenged, then it is likely that we will find ways to strengthen our faith and grow in maturity.

Therefore, the presence of dandel in our lives will help us in the purification of our souls and help us to grow and develop virtues that are worthy of the disciples of Christ. Those who stand tall at the time of harvest, those who have stood the test of time, resisting the works of the dandel, they will be the ones who will be gathered into the kingdom of God. That is our goal in life, that is what we need to focus on, to grow amidst the dandel of our life and to be counted worthy to be gathered into the kingdom of God.

Bishops attend training for effective media communication

By Christopher Kushi & Hemaarvini Balan

PLENTONG, Johor: The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei (CBCMSB) held a one-day intensive media training workshop entitled, *Communications & Presentation Skills (Spokesperson Training Basic Level)* at MAJODI Centre on July 10. Participants included bishops, clergy, lawyers, and diocese social media lay personnel. The course was aimed at training participants on how to present the Church to the wider world with emphasis on media skills, strategies, and techniques that will enable one to be at ease and effective in a variety of presentation settings.

The CBCMSB deemed that in the world of broadcast media, social media Internet sites, and various online mass communications platforms, accurate and credible messaging is a very important tool to understand and master.

The workshop was conducted by Augustine Anthuvan, media consultant, communications advisor and trainer from Singapore.

Augustine, a freelance tv & radio reporter/executive producer, and media relations/crisis communications consultant, brought his 30 years' wealth of 'real life' experiences to the workshop.

The workshop began with *Storytelling — saying it in 60 seconds* where participants introduced key messages and introduced themselves and their organisation in a minute. This is necessary to communicate effectively and meet the expectations of the public. Building on the first exercise, the second module was about *Speaking and Connecting* with the audience by fine tuning the message with proper soundbites and quotable quotes. This was followed by lessons on media appearances and minimising distractions so viewers can focus their attention on the message.

The bishops took part in 'live' one-on-one interviews with a series of scenarios from the crisis communication playbook. Augustine played the role of a journalist asking difficult questions. This was an eye-opener whereby the spokespersons had to present their message in a clear and credible



Augustine Anthuvan conducting the media training workshop in MAJODI Centre.

way, learning how to think fast and improvise on the spot when faced with unexpected questions.

In the craft of speechwriting, participants were told to take note that 'it's not what you say, but what they hear' which will resonate with the public. Augustine explained the power of the Latin maxim *omne trium perfectum* which means "everything that comes in threes is perfect". Therefore, a speech should have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.

The final module was a *Media conference — Crisis Communi-*

cations where participants learnt to prepare for a media conference, anticipate questions from 'journalists', building on existing material and knowing that during an unexpected crisis or event, the media can be strong allies in getting your messages out quickly and accurately. The participants played the role of journalists asking difficult questions which were answered well. The spokesperson of the diocese, in whatever capacity, must always be prepared for the 'What is the position of the Church' question?

Participants also had very good sessions during lunch and tea breaks where the conversation involved events and stories that they had experienced in their interaction with the media, providing further input for participants to relate to.

As a media practitioner, Augustine was able to share how the media acts, what the media wants and when the media is satisfied. Participants all agreed that going forward, they feel better prepared, empowered and more confident to face any media related events.

KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

July

- 23 Confirmation – Church of St Joseph, Sentul
- 23 Confirmation – Church of the Holy Rosary, KL
- 25 Meeting – Sri Seronok Board

PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Sebastian Francis

July

- 24-30 Novena & Feast – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam

MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

July

- 31 Memorial Mass for Bishop Emeritus James Chan – MAJODI Centre at 6.00pm



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #139

F12
NEWS
MJD
UPDATES

Greetings again dear people of God.

A new cardinal for Malaysia. State elections have been planned for August. Boycotts or make-way claims circulating. Scammers are on the rise. Malaysia's invisible people, the registered stateless, number 16,000 or more.

Confusing Times: Troubling times. Troubled people. Troubling trends. The Ministry of Education has initiated the ABC aspirations to inculcate good manners, morals and integrity to build character. ABC stands for "Anak yang Baik lagi Cerdik". Gandhi once said: "Education without character is one of the social sins."

The PM has said that *Malaysia cannot be a totally secular state. Secular elements must merge with religious elements. We must not imitate the European concept of complete separation of state and religion.* Troubled, confused and inauthentic lives reflect decadence on the way. To remedy the situation, we do not need moral police nor more laws nor more externalism, we need to inculcate respect which is common in all religions, and bring back the simple and practical civics that made us better Malaysians. There was more sense of Malaysia-ness when there was respect.

Albert Einstein said: *Everyone should be respected, but no one idolised.*

A THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: Thrown to the Dogs

There was once a king who reared 10 wild dogs and, unfortunately, used them to devour any of his unfaithful and slackening servants. One of his vocal servants was ordered by the king to be thrown to the dogs. The servant begged for his life, saying: "Why are you do-

ing this to me? I served you for 10 years and was loyal and faithful to you. Please give me 10 days before you throw me to the dogs." The king pondered the servant's pleas then decided to grant them.

During the next ten days, the servant dedicated himself to feeding the dogs, cleaning, washing, and caring for them lovingly.

When the 10 days were up, the servant was thrown to the dogs. The voracious dogs began licking the servant's feet!

The king and the watchers were bewildered by what they were seeing, asked, "What is this? What has happened to my dogs?"

The servant replied, "I took care of the dogs for only 10 short days and they did not forget my services. However, I served you for 10 long years, my king, and you forgot my dedication and devotion after one misspoken word."

The king realised his mistake and humbly ordered the servant to be released."

The lesson from the dogs: We tend to forget the good things people do for us as soon as the person has said or done something wrong. We should remember not to get angry, give up and forget all the nice, caring and thoughtful actions of a friend...sometimes established over a long period of time... just because of one misstep that may have hurt us. Mahatma Gandhi once said, "The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is an attribute of the strong."

Announcement for this Week:

1. The Bible Apostolate of the diocese is organising *Discipleship in the Gospel of St Matthew* with Fr Ryan Innas Muthu, August 7-9 at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, JB, nightly from 8.00pm -10.00pm.

This Week's Question and Query.

The Q asks: **Is there an attitude for working with disadvantages?**

1. 'Advantage' and 'Easy', are two words that describe conditions and circumstances that are desired by anyone. Who would not want to have an easy life; one where success, wealth and advantage comes easily?

2. In many circumstances in life, one has to work with disadvantages, weaknesses, flaws, defects, shortcomings, uphill challenges, deficiencies, lack, burdens, difficulties and drawbacks. But it is never an excuse for not trying, persisting, persevering and overcoming them.

3. In fact, the Vikings had the "so what" attitude — the calling to never give up, regardless of the disadvantage or difficulty; the mental tenacity to persistently persevere; and to remain patiently resolute in their effort without becoming fatalistic or ineffective.

4. From Helen Keller, Nick Vujicic, Michael J Fox, Andrea Bocelli, Thomas Edison and Stephen Hawkins to the ordinary immigrant who had no education and worked three jobs to successfully bring up and educate their children, they had the "so what" attitude of the Vikings.

5. This principle embodies the truth that **nobody succeeds effortlessly.**

Nobody has the advantage all the time, every time. Nobody gets its easy all the time, every time.

Another week, another opportunity. Let us learn to count our blessings. God bless you all.

Bishop Bernard Paul

Strengthening BEC coordinators for community growth

KUALA LUMPUR: BEC coordinators and their core team members from Chapel of Kristus Aman attended a Revival Workshop 2023 on July 1.

The workshop provided an opportunity for them to interact and get to know one another as there have been changes in leadership since the resumption of physical church activities. The participants also shared some of the challenges they encountered in leading their BECs.

Rita Krishnan, the chairperson of ABE-CAT (Archdiocesan Basic Ecclesial Communities Animating Team) shared the importance of emotions, maturity and spirituality in the revival of BECs. Emotional health and spiritual maturity are inseparable as it is not possible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature. She advised that BECs are about building



Chapel of Kristus Aman BEC coordinators and core teams members at the Revival Workshop 2023.

communities and in doing so, we need to understand the needs of the members, provide mentorship to support new leaders and groom successors. We should also use different approaches for different age groups, have a core team to share the responsibili-

ties, heal relationships if they impede the cohesiveness of the group, communicate well and most importantly, pray for one another.

Participants gained practical skills, spiritual guidance, and invaluable knowledge through Rita's guidance. The workshop em-

powered BEC coordinators and core teams to serve their communities more effectively, foster faith, promote community building, and encourage collaboration among the leaders.

The participants also witnessed the passing of responsibilities of the BECCOT (Basic Ecclesial Communities Coordination Team) chairperson from Adrian Ho to Christine Ong and the appointment of Sunny Lee as the BECAT (BEC Animating Team) chairperson.

The KA BECCOT core team will now comprise Christine Ong, Sunny Lee, Adrian Ho and Geoffrey Chee.

With help from the archdiocese, the KA BECCOT core team and the BEC coordinators will strengthen and grow the communities in the Lord's vineyard with love, led by the Holy Spirit.

CSJE parish leaders recharged after weekend getaway

PORT DICKSON: More than 90 parishioners from the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist (CSJE) came away recharged after attending a weekend getaway for leaders.

The participants comprised core team members from various Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) and ministries in the parish. Leaders from the African, Filipino and Myanmar communities also participated.

The getaway was held July 8 and 9 at Port Dickson Methodist Centre.

The main speaker was Elizabeth Lopez, the Regional Development Director (Catholic Context), Alpha Asia Pacific. Assisting her was Amanda Fernandez, the Regional Development Manager (Catholic Context), Alpha Asia Pacific. Amanda is also a lay leader and parishioner of the Church of St Thomas More in Subang Jaya.

The getaway began with a recap of CSJE's synod findings, where areas of improvement for the parish were highlighted. CSJE's achievements were also mentioned, such as its ability to remain functional despite not having a physical building to worship in as the cathedral has been closed for repairs since February 2023. This was evident during the Family Day in June which brought parish communities together and, at the same time, raised funds to build its

community centre.

Next, participants were given an insight into the state of the Church. They were reminded that as leaders in building the Body of Christ, their vision must always be on Jesus Christ, who set an example of servant leadership when He washed the feet of His disciples. In remembering Christ's example, participants washed each other's feet too, leaving some deeply touched during that profound act of servant leadership that was done in a contemplative atmosphere.

During the session on what it means to be a leader, participants watched a clip about leadership by inspirational speaker Simon Sinek, after which they shared about leadership traits that they are currently practising in ministry and areas they wish to focus on.

Another engaging activity was discovering one's gifts and role in building the Body of Christ. Here, participants completed a test where they discovered whether their strength is in being an Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor or Teacher. The concept is taken from Ephesians 4:11, where St Paul laid a framework to equip saints for service and building up of the Body of Christ.

With the input received and new friendships built over the weekend, CSJE hopes to continue building a united parish that is one in the Body of Christ. — *By Julie Lim*



Group sharing

Embracing success and collaboration through Parents-Catechist open day session

SENTUL: Parents-Catechist Open Day is a significant event in the Catechetical calendar that bridges the gap between educators and parents. It serves as an invaluable opportunity for parents to engage with catechists, gain insights into their child's progress, and foster a collaborative environment for their faith education journey.

With parish priest, Fr Frederick Joseph's consent, the Open Day was held at the Church of St Joseph on July 9, catering for the Tamil and English language classes. Parents were able to meet their children's catechist face-to-face, establishing a connection that lays the foundation for effective communication throughout the year. Such relationships foster trust, making it easier for parents to collaborate with educators in addressing their child's strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.

The primary purpose of the day was to provide parents with a comprehensive overview of their children's progress in class. This knowledge enables parents to support their child's faith learning journey more effectively by reinforcing positive aspects and addressing any challenges.



The catechists, parents and learners during the open day.

By working together, educators and parents can create a tailored approach that nurtures the child's unique abilities.

Fr Frederick reminded and encouraged parents to be engaged and invested in their children's learning process, thus providing opportunities for them to contribute positively towards the growth of the Church and community — *By Nelson Dass*

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Regional catechists meet physically after three years



Malaysian Catechetical Commission members and observers.

By Stephanie Chia

“Those who have welcomed Christ’s call and freely responded to it are urged on by love of Christ to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world. This treasure, received from the Apostles, has been faithfully guarded by their successors. All Christ’s faithful are called to hand it on from generation to generation, by professing the faith, by living it in fraternal sharing, and by celebrating it in liturgy and prayer” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 3)

MIRI, Sarawak: The Malaysian Catechetical Commission (MCC) held its annual meeting from July 3 to 7.

Archbishop Julian Leow of Kuala Lumpur, the President of the Commission, presided over the meeting. Present were priests, religious and lay representatives from the Archdioceses of Kuala Lumpur, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching, as well as from the dioceses of Keningau, Malacca Johore, Miri, Penang, Sandakan and Sibul with observers from the National Catechetical Office, the Archdiocese of Singapore and the Apostolic Vicariate of Brunei. This annual meeting of minds from all across Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei fosters a sense of solidarity and friendship among the catechetical ministries of each diocese.

Established as a consultative body to the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Malaysia, the MCC is a pastoral assembly consisting of one clerical and one lay representative from each of the nine dioceses across Malaysia, meeting to promote cooperation and common action in the Church at a national level. The MCC discusses various matters pertaining to catechesis in the local Church: the Malaysian Catechetical Series (MCS), formation of catechists, catechetical focus for the coming year, as well as the sharing of ideas and challenges in each diocese.



Archbishop Julian Leow trying out the gamelan.

Opening Address — the relevance of catechesis to young people today

The meeting began with an opening address by Archbishop Julian, who posed several key questions regarding the relevance of catechesis to the young people of today, the role catechists are now called to play and whether they are equipped to be role models and to journey with the young. After the opening address, Dr Steven Selvaraju, the current chairperson of the MCC, invited participants to ponder the questions and share their thoughts and responses with the gathering.

The general response from the participants of the meeting reflected their varied experiences of catechesis in the context of different dioceses — from the questions posed by young people in Kuala Lumpur to the challenges faced by children and adults in rural Sabah and Sarawak. Though the situation for each diocese is so different, most participants of the meeting gave a positive response: that young people still ask the same questions about the meaning of life and relationship with God, but the impact of catechesis centred more and more on the approach and the person of the catechist, rather than the imposing of doctrines or rules without meaning.

The sharing of Wendy Loe, from the Archdiocese of Singapore, was particularly poignant: in a world where everyone, from media influencers to peers, says that they have to have certain standards, attitudes, behaviour, and knowledge to be admired, to be rewarded, to succeed, it is so important for young people to feel that they are loved and accepted just as they are, even if they do not conform to expected standards, before they are expected to learn the doctrines and practices of the faith.

Fr David Arulanatham, from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, added that as witnesses for the faith, catechists don’t just teach a class like a subject in school, but proclaim the love of Christ, introducing Him to young people and encouraging them to become more and more like Him.

Inspired by this sharing on the keynote address, the meeting continued full force for the next few days, with discussions on the catechetical focus for the coming year, preparations for Catechetical Sunday, the MCS books, formation and training of catechists as well as the sharing of experiences from each diocese.

Theme for 2024

One of the key outcomes of the discussion was the catechetical focus for 2024, which is aligned with the four strategic focus areas leading up to the Malaysia Pastoral Convention (MPC) 2026. The phrase: “We are stewards of God’s Creation” together with the Bible verse: “Like good stewards of the varied graces of God, use whatever gift each one of you has received to serve one another.” (1 Peter 4:10) was chosen as the theme for Catechetical Sunday 2024 and is a reminder to all Catholics of their call to proclaim Christ with whatever they have and wherever they are, particularly in the area of Church and ecology.

Updating of the MCS

Another subject discussed deeply was the content of the Malaysian Catechetical Series (MCS). For those who are unaware, the MCS books were published between 2004 to 2010 as textbooks for catechism from Primary One to Secondary Four. In response to a survey conducted by Deacon Sherman Kuek, representative of the Diocese of Malacca Johore, catechists in his diocese highlighted a need for updated content. Archbishop Julian, representing the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Malaysia, reiterated that the content of catechesis does not change, but the approach, methods and activities used can be adapted to suit the context of each catechetical session. In relation to this, it was the general consensus among participants of the meeting that the need for formation of catechists was more compelling than ever.

Visiting a parish and longhouse

The MCC annual meeting is also a platform for participants to encounter, share and experience the diversity of cultures in Malaysia. The meeting this year allowed all delegates and observers present to experience first-hand the life of the people of Miri. This began with a dinner and fellowship at St Dominic and the Rosary Church, where we were invited to experience the local food and warm hospitality of the parishioners. The hospitality continued with a visit and house blessing at “Rumah Wilson”, a longhouse in Sungai Nakat 45 minutes outside Miri and concluded with dinner and fellowship at the Holy Rosary Chapel in Piasau Utar.

Archbishop Julian, who joined in with the fellowship and activities, expressed his gratitude and admiration for their hospitality, unity and openness to invite us into their communities and activities. It was truly a wonderful experience for those present to be so welcomed and to sense the willingness to journey together as a Malaysian Church.

Our heartfelt appreciation to our first-time host, the Diocese of Miri, especially to the Miri Catechetical Commission who organised the fellowship programmes, Bishop Richard Ng for his encouragement and support, and to all the people who extended their hand to us in welcome.

Sharings from the arch/dioceses

The arch/diocesan representatives shared their highlights, challenges and efforts in promoting catechesis and faith formation in their respective dioceses. Many dioceses are focused on reconnecting with catechists after three years of lockdown.

Diocese of Malacca Johore conducted parish surveys;

Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu set up roadshows, listening to catechists at the grassroots and will be organising a catechetical convention for catechists in the Sabah region;

Diocese of Sibul recently organised a catechist formation in three languages;

Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur is also developing new formation programmes for catechists in addition to existing programmes;

Diocese of Penang is currently reconnecting with their catechists with an online formation on the Directory for Catechesis while also emphasising the role of the Bible in catechesis;

Vicariate of Brunei is focusing on using the Bible as a source for their catechesis;

Archdiocese of Singapore shared their comprehensive efforts in reaching out to both catechists and youth who fall through the gaps.

The idea of sharing these highlights from each diocese was not for comparison but as a way to celebrate successes, stimulate new ideas and learn from each other’s experiences.

Catechesis is a life-long process

The meeting drew to a close with the concluding remarks given by Archbishop Julian, who echoed the general view of participants that catechesis is more than just the teaching of the faith; it is a life-long process, not just an event or programme to be carried out and finished with. Instead, it is an introduction to the person of Jesus, through the cultivating of personal relationships — the best syllabus or the best books in the world cannot replace the value of a good catechist.

He expressed his hope for more of the faithful to be attracted to the special ministry of catechesis and his whole-hearted support for their formation. He called for more collaboration among the dioceses and also within the dioceses, with the various other ministries of the Church, to enrich the catechetical experience, to deepen relationships, most importantly because catechesis is the work of the whole Christian community, not just its catechists.

The Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu will host the next MCC meeting in June 2024.

Networking with those passionate about humanitarian work

SINGAPORE: The Humanitarian Forum and Fair (HFF), a biennial event organised by CHARIS (Caritas Humanitarian Aid & Relief Initiatives Singapore), was held at the Catholic Junior College recently.

Representing the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD) were director Dr Gary Liew, coordinator for the Ministry of the Poor (MOP) Aaron Koh, coordinator for the Ministry for Migrants & Itinerants under AOHD Josephine Tey and administrator Cheryl Danasamy. The full-day programme began with Mass, presided over by Fr Colin Tan SJ.

Former United Nations Special Envoy, Dr Noeleen Heyzer (pic) was the keynote speaker.



The 75-year-old was the first woman to serve as Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and continues to play an active role in the UN, despite her advanced age. From her presentation, the attendees witnessed her genuine care and affection toward the less fortunate in the world. Aaron said, "From her, I learnt age didn't matter, but attitude does."

The Plenary speakers were the Regional Superior for Order of Friars Minor (OFM) in Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei, Friar Derrick Yap and the co-director for the Focolare Movement in the Indian Subcontinent and Philippines, Fr Andrew Camilleri. Friar Derrick spoke about the spiritual focus on *Laudato Si'*, a contemplative eye on creation and the change of heart/change of mind.

We connected with individuals and witnessed the accomplishments of CHARIS' diverse partners through their exhibition booths located outside the main hall.

The setup provided a great platform to engage potential volunteers for their numerous projects and initiatives.

The welcome goodie bag contained a book



Breakout session. (photo/Caritas Singapore)

on a group study guide tailored for Catholics going on overseas mission trips. That book encompassed the Catholic Social Teachings (CST) which are relevant to the work done in the archdiocese or parish.

At lunchtime, the volunteers diligently collected and recycled the empty food packages. Not only did they preach the principles outlined in *Laudato Si'*, they actively put them into practice.

Break-Out Sessions

Three break-out tracks ran simultaneously. The members split up to gain the best out of all the sessions. Josephine, who attended the break-out group titled: *Responding in the Moment of Crisis*, was touched by how different countries play their part in times of crisis, reaching out to the vulnerable. She was struck by how the Philippines remains strong and resilient despite enduring natural disasters often. She believed there was a wealth of knowledge we could gain from them. Josephine also learnt that we could mobilise churches and network with the local communities to assist in reaching out to affected areas. She also understood the significance of connecting with supply chains in advance to be better prepared in the wake of a crisis.

From the perspective of supply chains, a speaker said, during a crisis, it is important not to ignore local businesses. Donors engaging local businesses during a crisis will help them too. The speaker felt everyone has a role to play

regardless if they are from the church, local partners, supply chain or government agency. It is important to engage the local communities as we should not take over what they can do for themselves. This is what the Principle of Solidarity in the Catholic Social Teaching is all about.

Cheryl attended the session on sustaining people titled *Building up Livelihoods; Starting Afresh*. She learnt that when there was a crisis in Sri Lanka, the founder of the Dimuthu Foundation in Sri Lanka, Fr Jude Nicolas Fernando, and the team could not afford to wait for funds. Instead, they started a self-sustaining farm where they grew vegetables and gave it to the needy. The balance was sold to purchase more seeds to help more people. This self-sustaining project helped many who were struggling to put food on their table.



Praise and Worship. (photo/CHARIS Singapore)

Working together for the good of mission schools

MELAKA: Bishop Bernard Paul hosted the annual gathering of mission authorities at the Good Shepherd Catholic Seminary recently. Sixty participants, including priests, Canossian and Infant Jesus sisters, members of the Board of Governors, principals, and teachers, attended the meeting. Fr William Pillai, pic, the recently appointed delegate to the Malaysian Catholic Education Council (MCEC), the Federation of Christian Mission Schools Malaysia (FCMSM), and the Diocesan Mission Schools, warmly greeted the participants and provided an overview of his new responsibilities.



Fr William encouraged the members to foster open communication and collaboration among themselves. He hoped the meeting would facilitate a fruitful exchange of ideas, where participants could listen to one another and gain valuable insights. Moreover, he stressed the significance of holistic

education in unlocking the full potential of individuals.

The workshop featured three sessions, namely:

1. Serving in a mission school by Shanti Louis
Shanti shared her insights on serving in a mission school. She discussed the unique challenges and rewards of working within the mission's framework.

2. Financial matters pertaining to mission school by Vivien Cheong

Vivien, an experienced educator, provided valuable guidance on managing financial resources within mission schools. She addressed the financial challenges commonly faced by such institutions, and shared effective strate-

gies for budgeting, fundraising, and optimising resources. Attendees gained a deeper understanding of financial management practices tailored to mission schools.

3. What makes a mission school different by Elizabeth Chong

Elizabeth delivered an enlightening session on the unique characteristics that set mission schools apart from other educational institutions. She explored the core values and ethos that define the identity of mission schools. Attendees gained a renewed appreciation for the distinctiveness and significance of mission schools in shaping students' lives.

The workshop concluded with an interactive group activity that fostered collaboration and

encouraged participants to share examples of activities in their respective schools that exemplify the ethos of mission schools. Attendees were divided into groups, creating an environment conducive to the exchange of ideas. This engaging session allowed participants to learn from each other's experiences and identify innovative practices to enhance the mission-driven education provided by their schools.

The workshop was an invaluable platform for educators and administrators from various mission schools to gather, learn, and collaborate. The knowledge shared and the connections established during the event will contribute to the continuous growth and development of mission schools, ensuring they remain beacons of academic excellence and moral values.



Indian prelate calls for consensus building to promote synodality



Archbishop George Antonysamy

MADRAS: Archbishop George Antonysamy of Madras-Mylapore has called on Church and ecclesial leaders to “foster consensus” and ensure “a synodal way of decision-making”.

“Consensus is, by far, the most effective method for mutually acceptable decision-making, as the involvement of all in arriving at one, will allay the apprehensions that a majority decision thrust on a minority who disagrees will,” said the prelate.

Archbishop Antonysamy, who is the vice president of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI), made the state-

ment during the launching of the Indian edition of the *Instrumentum Laboris* on July 11.

The *Instrumentum Laboris* is the fruit of a vast synodal journey. It is a document by the entire Church. All who took part in the synodal process at the diocesan, regional, national, and continental levels are co-authors of this document, according to the CCBI.

In India, the Synod for the Synodal Church was conducted in all dioceses, and the national Synod consultation was held from July 26 to 28 last year in Bangalore.

In February 2023, the Asian Continental Synod took place in Bangkok. The suggestions and proposals from these were incorporated into the document.

Archbishop Antonysamy said the synodal way of making decisions is “balancing the voices of the majority and minority and ensuring an equitable outcome”.

The first session of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops is scheduled to be held from October 4 to 29, 2023, at the Vatican. A 12-member team from India will take part in the Synod. — **By Rita Joseph, LiCAS**

Voice of universal and African Church shines at SIGNIS conference



Helen Osman, SIGNIS president, moderating a panel discussing the role of the Church in providing holistic support to the 1.5M refugees in Uganda. (photo/Signis Facebook)

KAMPALA: The SIGNIS Africa Conference for Catholic Media, which took place in Kampala, Uganda, has heard from the voice of the Church, Ugandan government officials and Ugandan civil society working with migrants and refugees.

From a universal point of view, Cardinal Michael Czerny's keynote address entitled *Pope Francis' vision of migration and refugees: Lessons for media workers* was read by an official of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Dr Mercedes De La Torre.

According to Cardinal Czerny's message, Catholic media can play an important part in contributing to a form of communication that is not hostile but, rather, one that favours a respectful dialogue.

Speaking on behalf of SECAM, the Association of African Catholic Bishops, Bishop Emmanuel Badejo of Nigeria called on African Catholic media to consider developing new media strategies for speaking and writing about migrants and

refugees, including coming up with an African lexicon that differs from the usual stereotypes of the Western media.

Representatives of the Ugandan Government shared how the country's policies on refugees are informed by what is known as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.

Representing Uganda's civil society, the Refugee Law project of the School of Law at Makerere University made a passionate appeal to the Catholic Church in Africa to create more partnerships by signing Memoranda of Understanding with civil society to benefit migrants and refugees.

They said that their research revealed that more could also be done by the Church in the area of counselling and trauma for migrants and refugees.

Apart from discussions, African Catholic media practitioners visited and prayed for migrants and refugees at the Ugandan Martyrs Shrine. — **By Fr Paul Samasumo, Vatican News**



Participants attend the training organised by the African region of the World Catholic Association for Communication, SIGNIS Africa, in Kampala, Uganda. (CNA photo/Adelaide Felicitas Ndilu)

Pope Francis names Dominican priest as Alaska's next bishop

VATICAN: Pope Francis has named Dominican Fr Steven Maekawa, a former active duty military chaplain, as the next Bishop of Fairbanks, Alaska.

The Vatican announced the appointment on July 11. Maekawa will take on the role of leading a diocese that spans more than 400,000 square miles, the largest diocese in the United States geographically.

The 55-year-old Dominican friar has been based in Alaska since 2016, serving as the pastor of Holy Family Old Cathedral in Anchorage.

Maekawa was awarded a special medal in active duty for his work as a military chaplain in the US Navy Reserve, serving a tour of duty with ground troops in Afghanistan in 2004.

Born in Seattle on Nov 22, 1967, Maekawa earned a bachelor's degree in architecture at the University of Washington, before entering religious life in the Dominicans' Western US province.

He studied at the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology in Berkeley, California, where he earned a master of divinity degree in 1998, the same year he was ordained to the priesthood.

Maekawa has served as the chaplain of the Newman Centre at the University of Washington (1998–2002) and as the vocations director of the Western Dominican Province (2007–2015). He ministered in San Francisco and Seattle before moving to Anchorage seven years ago.

In Fairbanks, Maekawa will succeed Bishop Chad Zielinski, whom Pope Francis appointed as the bishop of New Ulm, Min-



Dominican Fr Steven Maekawa

nesota, last year.

The Diocese of Fairbanks has 46 Catholic parishes, only nine of which can be reached by car. The new bishop will need to use a bush plane to reach some remote Catholic parishes, including in native Yup'ik, Cup'ik, and Inupiat communities.

The northernmost diocese in the US has a total population of 166,800 people, roughly 11,500 of whom are Catholics. It is also a poor diocese, with only eight parishes that are self-supporting. In some remote churches, parishioners are only able to receive sacraments from a priest every two or three months, with priests travelling long distances over difficult terrain and harsh weather conditions. — **By Courtney Mares, CNA**



The Society of St. Vincent De Paul, State Council of Selangor, is a Catholic Lay charity organization. We operate 8 homes, 2 service centres and 1 kindergarten.

One of our children's homes located in the Petaling Jaya region has a vacancy for the following position:

Home Administrator - 1 position

Responsibilities

- Day-to-day operations and management of the Home.
- Providing adequate facilities for the children.
- Ensuring well-being and safety of the children.
- Developing plans and encouraging the children to reach their full potential.
- Liaising with local authorities.
- Organizing staff duties and training.

Criteria for the position:

Seeking candidates with pleasant mature personality, innovative, resourceful, computer literate, have management and admin skills. Prepared to work beyond regular office hours. Experience in handling children and NGO work is an asset.

Submit your resume to the provided email address :

Home Committee Chairperson

State Council of Selangor, Society of St Vincent De Paul,
Unit 3-10, Level 3, Times 89 Business Plaza Jalan Sri Sentosa 8A, Taman Sri Sentosa 58000 KL.
Tel: 03-77839946 | WhatsApp: 019-352 1776 | Email: rkki09@gmail.com

Please send in your applications by 31st July 2023.

Priest in DR-Congo evangelises through rap music



Fr Jean-Pierre Mongambi, the “rapper priest” of the Archdiocese of Kinshasa. (Photo by Rappeur/ Father Mongambi)

KINSHASA: “I was inspired by secular rap to make Christian rap,” explains Jean Pierre Mongambi, a 44-year-old Catholic priest in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), who is also a rapper.

“This music, which influenced my adolescence, enables me to catechise and evangelise the faithful,” says Mongambi, who serves as youth chaplain and associate pastor in the Archdiocese of Kinshasa.

He was born into a Catholic family and grew up in St Joseph’s Parish located in a central neighbourhood of the DRC capital. Like his mother, Mongambi joined the parish choir. He was also an altar server.

“In 1992, before I became a priest, I was already rapping secular music,” he says.

Like most young people of his generation, this “rapper priest” was also a breakdancer.

“In our day, we were called janspiler,” he explains, citing a term used to describe Michael Jackson fans. “I hung around several rap groups in the capital, mostly *Black Dangerous*, *Méthode Suprême*, and *The*

Guys Blessing.”

Mongambi and his brothers formed a Christian music group in 1998 called, *Famille Mongambi F.M.N.B.* After entering the seminary, a vocation born of his service as an altar server, the group eventually disbanded.

After his ordination to the priesthood, Fr Mongambi devoted himself to musical composition.

“My first composition was a song for the 50th anniversary of priesthood for His Eminence the late Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo,” he says. “The cardinal appreciated the song, and even supported me in the making of the video clip for his song entitled *Bon Anniversaire Tata cardinal*,” he recalls.

He says his music “is one of the most effective ways of getting the Gospel message across to young people, and of reaching out to them.”

The rapper priest has also set up an orchestra with 10 lay people called *La main de Dieu* (Hand of God). They rehearse once

a week.

“I’m a priest first and a rapper second. It’s my apostolate as a priest that comes first,” he explains.

Mongambi has already released two albums: *Je crois* and *Nzambe Bundelanga*.

“The albums have sold well,” he asserts.

After several concerts in the Congolese capital and in the interior of the country, he has made religious rap music accepted within the DRC Church.

“I brought rap music into the Catholic Church. I think this is the first time in Africa that a priest has rapped,” Mongambi says.

Now preparing his third album, titled *Confirmation*, he says the local bishops have offered him lots of encouragement.

“Recently, I was received by Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo,” he reveals. “He encouraged me, and I officially presented him with the trophies I’d won at various festivals within and outside of the country.” —

By Prisca Materanya, LCI (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

“WYD is not about conversion”: Controversy over cardinal-designate’s comments

Cardinal-designate Américo Aguiar, the Auxiliary Bishop of Lisbon and chief organiser of next month’s World Youth Day (WYD) in the Portuguese capital, has sparked controversy by saying the large Catholic youth festival with the Pope is not about converting people to Christ.

The 49-year-old bishop said the comment, which he made during a July 6 interview with Portuguese television station RTP, was in response to a question about Pope Francis’ encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*. He told the network that World Youth Day — which will next be held August 1-6 in Lisbon — is not intended to “convert young people at all costs to Christ, to the Catholic Church or to anything else”. Taken on its own, the remark provoked incomprehension among many WYD participants.

“The World Youth Days in Lisbon are also a cry for this universal fraternity,” he said, referencing the key concept in *Fratelli Tutti*.

Not just for Catholic young people

“Not so long ago, world leaders were saying that what’s different drives people apart and divides them, and that the solution to what’s

different is to build walls, to put distance between people. WYD must be a school, it must transmit the taste and joy of knowing what is different. Difference must be understood as richness,” said Bishop Aguiar, who is one of the 21 men the Pope will make cardinals on Sept 30.

In this spirit of openness to diversity, the journalist then asked the bishop if young people from other religions were invited. Aguiar confirmed that World Youth Day is not exclusively for Catholics.

“Popes have never invited only young Catholics; they have always invited youth from all over the world,” he said.

“It’s very important that the youth who come to Lisbon meet other young people from Africa, Asia, America, rich, poor, Western, Catholic, non-Catholic, with or without religion, with or without faith, and who understand, first of all, that this diversity, whatever it may be, is a richness,” he continued.

“Then, get to know yourself and make yourself known. From there, take care of each other, love each other, enjoy being with each other,” continued the Portuguese cardinal-elect.

He ended the interview by expressing the hope that the pilgrims would be aware of the mutual contribution of differences.

“I think differently, I feel differently, I organise my life differently, but we are brothers and sisters and we will build the future together. This is the main message of this encounter with the living Christ that the Pope wants to give to young people,” he said.

Why did his comments upset some Catholics?

Fragments of Bishop Aguiar’s interview were shared on news sites and social media. Sometimes taken out of context, they have provoked reactions of incomprehension and disapproval from Catholics who say they feel abandoned by their leader in their mission of evangelisation.

Priests and chaplains of youth groups preparing to make the long pilgrimage to Lisbon took offence at the fact that the missionary dimension of WYD had been sidelined.

“WYD is an invitation to all the young people of the world to experience God,” Cardinal-elect Aguiar later explained to *ACI Prensa*, a Spanish language service of *EWTN News Inc.* He said he wanted to retract what he had said in his lengthy interview with RTP, which he felt had been misinterpreted.

The controversy over the bishop’s comments was actually sparked by the title of the article published by *Catholic News Agency (CNA)*, which is also a service of *EWTN*. The news agency then changed the headline to defuse the criticism.

There is no doubt that “WYD is a source of conversions”, said a chaplain in charge of World Youth Day in a diocese in France.

“We’ve got plenty of testimonials from young people who’ve returned from WYD having met Christ, and who have learned to love the Church,” he said.

“The invitation is sent to all young people, it’s not WCYD (World Catholic Youth Day),” the priest continued. “Depending on the group, some young people come by chance, brought along by friends or out of



Cardinal-designate Américo Aguiar

curiosity. Most pilgrims go to strengthen their faith, but for others, it’s an opportunity to discover something completely new,” he said.

Are the cardinal-designate’s words in line with what the Pope preaches?

Cardinal-designate Aguiar has met Francis several times in the run-up to World Youth Day and quotes extensively from the Pope’s work.

“The world will be objectively a better place if we are able to put the certainty of *Fratelli Tutti* in the hearts of all young people,” Aguiar told RTP during the July 6 interview. The encyclical, which was published in 2020, is dedicated to fraternity and social friendship.

In terms of substance, the cardinal-designate’s comments are not at odds with the Jesuit Pope’s teachings. During his visit to small Christian communities in Morocco in March 2019, Francis warned against any temptation to “proselytise” to swell the ranks.

“The paths of mission are not those of proselytism, which leads always to a dead end,” the Pope said. “The Church grows not through proselytism, but through attraction, and through witness.”

For Christians, this means bearing witness to their faith by the example of their lives, and in meeting and serving others. — By Cécile Mérieux, LCI (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)



As Twitter devolves, how should Christians proceed on social media?

With the arrival of the new social media app Threads by Meta (the parent company of Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp), a lot of Twitter users are actively discerning the future of their engagement with the platform that tech mogul Elon Musk purchased for \$44 billion (RM199 billion) last fall.

As recently as a year ago, it would have been unthinkable that another tech company, even one as large and wealthy as Meta or Google, could pose a legitimate challenge to Twitter, although some small companies have tried. But with Musk's seemingly impulsive purchase of Twitter and what has been described as a series of terrible decisions and actions by its new owner, the once-important and relevant platform has devolved into a glitchy, unfriendly and increasingly unappealing digital space.

I am among the millions of Twitter users



(Dreamstime/Peter Kováč)

who have basically had enough. And I'm not sure whether I want to stay, go somewhere else, or leave social media altogether.

My experience over the last few months

on Twitter echoes the experiences of the *New York Times* journalists Natalie Kitroeff and Mike Isaac who, in a recent episode of *The Daily*, discuss how disappointing

and negative the context on Twitter has become: Trolls and bad-faith voices proliferate, policies pressuring users to monetise the platform have soured the organic spirit of dialogue, and personnel cuts and poor administrative decisions have affected the fundamental quality of the service.

Last year, months ahead of Musk's purchase of Twitter, I gave up all my social media accounts for Lent. And as I shared in these pages, it was a generally good experience and one that continues to have an impact on my relationship to Twitter and other platforms. I am still reflecting on how engaged I want to be and whether it is even worth it to stay on such platforms.

With Threads seeking to supplant Twitter, I find myself at another crossroads, wondering whether it is worth it to jump ship from one to the other, or just walk away from it all.

A pastoral reflection on engagement with social media

For this reason, I returned to a document issued in May by the Vatican Dicastery for Communication titled *Towards Full Presence: A Pastoral Reflection on Engagement with Social Media*. It is, in my opinion, one of the better and more useful documents published by a Vatican dicastery in some time.

From the outset, the document makes clear that we are living in an age when most people will not be able to completely avoid the "digitisation" of our societies.

The opening paragraph notes: "Advancements in technology have made new kinds of human interactions possible. In fact, the question is no longer whether to engage with the digital world, but how."

This question of "how" to engage in what Pope Benedict XVI called the "digital continent", or what this document calls the "digital highways", goes right to the heart of what many people are struggling with at this moment. This document is a helpful examination of conscience, a handy tool that many people of faith might draw from to assist them in their own reflection on how to proceed with engaging social media at this moment in our shared history.

Organised into four parts, the document provides poignant observations and questions for reflecting on what it means to be a Christian in a digital world and on social media today. Clearly taking its guiding inspiration from Pope Francis' 2020 encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti*, the Dicastery for Communication draws on the parable of the Good Samaritan to frame the text.



(Freepik)

I. Watching out for pitfalls on the digital highways



The first part focuses on some of the pitfalls and challenges that confront us in this digital age, including future threats that are only beginning to be spotted on the horizon, such as artificial intelligence.

Rather than offering pedantic lectures that oversimplify the complex realities we all live and move in today, the document acknowledges the intricate and complicated landscape in a realistic manner. Among the pitfalls highlighted are the increasing division and polarisation that arise on social media because of echo chambers of our choosing, algorithms designed to keep us on the platforms, and triggers intended to amplify

anger and resentment among groups.

The conclusion of this section includes three excellent questions for consideration:

- How can we co-create healthier online experiences where people can engage in conversations and overcome disagreements with a spirit of mutual listening?
- How can we empower communities to find ways to overcome divisions and promote dialogue and respect in social media platforms?
- How can we restore the online environment to the place that it can and should be: a place of sharing, collaborating, and belonging, based on mutual trust?



raised by the simple question posed to Jesus in the Gospel: "Who is my neighbour?" In the digital age, those we encounter online are included as much as the wounded man on the side of the road in the parable is in Jesus' time.

II. From Awareness to True Encounter

The second section invites us to move beyond merely recognising the challenges before us and the capitalistically driven algorithms and other technologies that increase the dangers we experience today, toward becoming people of authentic encounter.

Alluding to the parable of the Good Samaritan, the document explains: "The parable can inspire social media relationships because it illustrates the possibility of a profoundly meaningful encounter between two complete strangers."

Encountering strangers, whether in per-

son or online, is not a bad thing, nor is it something we should avoid. But how we encounter them is the key, as the parable of the Good Samaritan famously explores.

The document challenges us to engage on social media in ways that are deeper, more reflective, more attentive and kinder than we are often inclined to be. Instead of dismissing, ignoring or even attacking the unknown "other" or stranger online, do we try to recognise them as our siblings in the world?

The aim of this section can be summa-

III. From Encounter to Community

The third section focuses on the next step in this process of Christian engagement online, which moves from authentic encounter with the stranger and seeks to build a genuine community of beloved individuals. This begins with connections forged on digital platforms, but must move back into the embodied, physical world. We might ask ourselves how what we do and say online connects with, or relates to, the way we are in the so-called "real world."

There is also a deeply Eucharistic dimension to this section, as the authors of the document remind us that, as Christians, we are called to fellowship at the table with one another, just as Jesus did in His own earthly ministry. You cannot simply "live online" but must also live with one another in community in the flesh.



As the document states, "Embodiment is important for Christians. The Word of God became incarnate in a body, He suffered and died with His body, and He rose again in the Resurrection in His body."

IV. A Distinctive Style

Finally, the document suggests some ways we might cultivate a particular style of community that we are called to build. Precisely as Christians, we are called to be a community of love, a community of narrative, a community that heals, and a community that bears witness to the God of Jesus Christ we profess to believe in and follow.

While simply stated, this is particularly challenging in an age marked by such polarisation and by means of media that often foster individualism, selfishness, greed, animosity and bad faith.

As for me, I'm still not sure what my long-term relationship to social media is. But for as long as I continue to travel along those "digital highways," I will find this document a useful source of reflection and discernment. — **By Daniel P. Horan, NCR**

New cardinals — Francis

Pope Francis has once again caught everyone off guard by announcing his decision to hold a consistory on September 30 during which he will create 21 new cardinals. Eighteen of those who will get the red hat are under the age of 80 and will be eligible to participate in a conclave to elect his successor. This includes Rt Rev Sebastian Francis, the Bishop of Penang.

The Pope's list of new cardinals, which he announced on July 9 at the end of his noontime *Angelus* address and blessing, includes a few obvious choices but also a number of surprises.

Three new heads of Vatican offices top the list, which is customary. But there are also two papal ambassadors, representing the Holy See in the United States and Italy, who will become cardinals, something not so common.

The names read out also include Catholic leaders present on the world's fault lines or difficult terrain, such as the bishop of Hong Kong, the archbishop of Juba (South Sudan) and the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. The three future cardinals over 80 — and therefore not eligible to participate in a conclave —

all share the Pope's vision of the Church: Archbishop Agostino Marchetto, who is particularly concerned about the issue of migrants, the Venezuelan Diego Rafael Padron Sanchez and Fr Luis Pascal Dri, the Pope's former confessor in Argentina.

After the Sept 30, ceremony there will be 137 cardinal electors, including 53 Europeans, 24 Asians, 19 Africans, 17 North Americans, 16 South Americans, five Central Americans and three Oceanians. A total of 97 will have been created by Francis, i.e. over 70 per cent of cardinals under the age of 80.

The creation of the 18 new cardinal electors by the 86-year-old Francis will put the total number of cardinal electors well above the limit of 120 set by Pope Paul VI in 1975. Both Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI also exceeded that number at various points during their papacies.

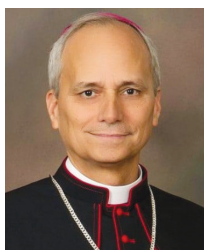
The September ceremony to create new cardinals, being held on the eve of the Pope's highly anticipated Synod of Bishops in October, will be Francis' ninth consistory for the creation of new cardinals since his election as pontiff in March 2013. He last created new cardinals in August 2022.



(Vatican Media)

Archbishop Robert Francis Prevost OSA, prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops

Archbishop Prevost, who will be 68 in mid-September, was born in Chicago (USA) of a French-Italian father and a mother with Spanish origins. He joined the Augustinians in 1978 and did missionary work in Latin America before being elected the Chicago province's superior. Elected prior general of the worldwide Order of St Augustine in 2001, he was appointed Bishop of Peru in 2014 to help pacify the country's episcopate at a time of intense tensions. Pope Francis named him prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops last April and, since taking up his duties, He has quickly earned the reputation of being a hard worker who has a perfect command of the bishops' office.



Archbishop Christophe Pierre, papal nuncio to the United States

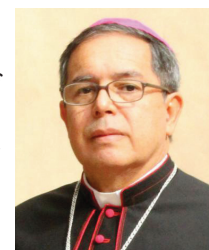
The 77-year-old Frenchman and Holy See diplomat has been the apostolic nuncio in Washington since 2016. He was ordained for the Archdiocese of Rennes before studying at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, the Holy See's diplomatic school. After graduating, he went abroad in 1977, first to New Zealand to serve in the arcana of Vatican diplomacy. A succession of missions followed: Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Cuba, Brazil, then the Holy See's permanent mission to international institutions and the United Nations office in Geneva.

Pope John Paul II conferred on him the title of archbishop in 1995 when he appointed Pierre apostolic nuncio to Haiti. Appointed to Mexico in March 2007, just a few months before the opening of the Aparecida conference, the French papal diplomat saw in the easing of relations and the opening of a new pastoral approach in Latin America "a desire to continue to evangelise people who are changing in a world that is changing".



Archbishop Luis José Rueda Aparicio of Bogota (Colombia)

Archbishop Rueda, 61, is president of the Colombian Bishops' Conference and primate of Colombia. He was a parish priest for 22 years in his native diocese of Socorro and San Gil, before Benedict XVI appointed him bishop of Montelíbano in 2012. Francis made him archbishop of Popayan in 2018 and then transferred him to Bogotá two years later.



Archbishop Claudio Gugerotti, prefect of the Dicastery for Eastern Churches

Archbishop Gugerotti, 67, has been prefect of the Dicastery for Eastern Churches only since January. An Italian who only gradually emerged as a high-ranking Vatican diplomat. He is one of the Roman Curia's greatest experts on the Slavic world. He is one of the Pope's most trusted advisors, whom he consults regularly on the war between Ukraine and Russia.



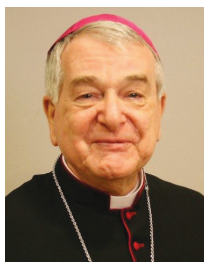
Archbishop Víctor Manuel Fernández, newly named prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF)

The Argentine theologian and current Archbishop of La Plata, who turns 61, has been one of the ghostwriters or contributors for all of Pope Francis' major texts since the start of his pontificate. Some have criticised the recently named prefect of the Vatican's doctrinal office (appointed on July 1) for his theological liberalism. Becoming a cardinal — which is normal for DDF prefects — will only further strengthen his position.



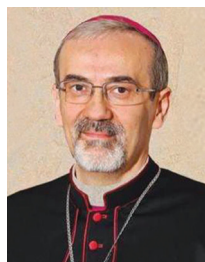
Archbishop Emil Paul Tscherig, apostolic nuncio to Italy

The 76-year-old native of Switzerland is a lifelong Holy See diplomat who has been the papal nuncio to Italy since 2017. Before this key assignment, he was nuncio in Argentina from 2012-2017 and, during that period, he got to know Pope Francis when the latter was Archbishop of Buenos Aires. Tscherrig's diplomatic career in the service of the Holy See has taken him to many countries, including Mongolia and South Korea, Scandinavia, the Caribbean, Bangladesh, Uganda and Burundi. In the late 1980s and early 90s, he also served as one of the major organisers of John Paul II's many foreign journeys.



Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa OFM, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem

The 58-year-old Italian Franciscan will be the first Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem to be created a cardinal since the patriarchate was re-established in the 19th century. Pope Francis named Pizzaballa apostolic administrator of the patriarchate in 2016 and then made him Patriarch four years later. Fluent in Hebrew, Pizzaballa has also been adroit at dealing with the patriarchate's complicated financial situation.



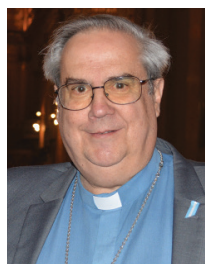
Archbishop Stephen Brislin of Cape Town (South Africa)

Archbishop Brislin, who will be 67 when he is created a cardinal, has led the Archdiocese of Cape Town since 2009. He was a member of the Synod of Bishops' 2014 assembly on the family in his capacity as president of the South African Bishops' Conference (SABC).



Archbishop Ángel Sixto Rossi SJ of Córdoba (Argentina)

An Argentine and a Jesuit like the Pope, Archbishop Rossi turns 65 next month. He's headed the Archdiocese of Córdoba in north-central Argentina since 2021. Ordained in 1986, he took his final vows to the Society of Jesus in 1994. He holds a doctorate from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, and later became provincial of the Jesuit province of Argentina and Uruguay, before his appointment as archbishop.



Archbishop Grzegorz Rys of Lodz (Poland)

Rys, 59, has been Archbishop of Lodz since 2017. He will be only the second Pole that Pope Francis has made a cardinal. A historian specialising in the Church of the Middle Ages, Archbishop Rys was involved in the canonisation process of Pope John Paul II, whose pilgrimages he commented on for Polish radio and television. A former auxiliary Bishop of Krakow, he is committed to ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.



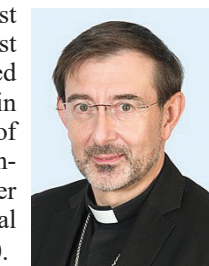
Archbishop Stephen Ameyu Martin Mulla of Juba (South Sudan)

Archbishop Ameyu, 59, welcomed Pope Francis to South Sudan this past February. He was one of the main organisers of the papal visit to Juba, where he has been archbishop since 2019. He has been an outspoken advocate for peace in a very troubled context. At the end of June, he invited the dioceses of South Sudan to set up reception centres for refugees from Sudan, which is in the midst of armed conflict.



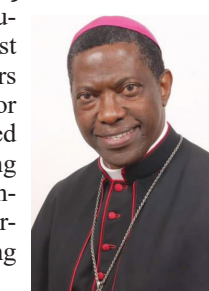
Archbishop José Cobo Cano of Madrid (Spain)

Appointed Archbishop of Madrid just last month, Cobo Cano will be 58 just days before getting his red hat. Trained as a lawyer, he was ordained a priest in 1994 and became an auxiliary Bishop of Madrid in 2017. Within the Spanish Bishops' Conference, he has been a member of the Commission for Social Pastoral Care and Human Promotion since 2020.



Archbishop Protase Rugambwa, Coadjutor Archbishop of Tabora (Tanzania)

Rugambwa, 63, was appointed Coadjutor Archbishop in his native Tanzania last April after serving more than 11 years as the secretary at the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples. Ordained to the priesthood by John Paul II during the papal visit to Tanzania in 1990, Archbishop Rugambwa is known to be particularly attentive to the plight of young people in Central Africa.



has chosen men he trusts

● Continued from Page 10

Bishop Sebastian Francis of Penang (Malaysia)

Bishop Francis, 71, has led the Diocese of Penang since 2012. He has been president of the Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei since 2017. He will be only the second cardinal in Malaysia.

He held the post of vice president of the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) and the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) from 2015 to 2017.

Bishop Sebastian is also a member of the Central Committee for the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC) and was appointed as the chairman of the Federation of the Asian Bishops' Conference – Office of Social Communication on January 1, 2023.



Bishop Stephen Chow Sau-yan SJ of Hong Kong (China)

Bishop Chow, who turns 64 next month, will be China's eighth cardinal. The former superior of the Jesuit province of Taiwan, Hong Kong and mainland China, he was appointed Bishop of Hong Kong in 2021. He is the first bishop of the diocese since 1985 to visit Beijing. His episcopal ordination, following two years of strong protests against China's interference in Hong Kong affairs, was seen as an attempt to ease relations between the Vatican and the Chinese regime.



Bishop Américo Manuel Alves Aguiar, auxiliary bishop of Lisbon (Portugal)

At 49, Bishop Alves will become one of the Catholic Church's youngest cardinals, after already being Por-



tugal's youngest bishop. Ordained to the priesthood in 2001 for the diocese of Porto, he is the current auxiliary bishop of Lisbon, who is particularly involved in communications. He has had five private meetings with Pope Francis in the last two years.

Bishop François-Xavier Bustillo OFM Conv. of Ajaccio (Corsica)

The 54-year-old Conventual Franciscan has been Bishop of Ajaccio (Corsica) since 2021. He is no stranger to Rome, since his books — one devoted to religious life in a secularised world, the other to the vocations crisis — have been read and appreciated by Pope Francis.

The Pope recently distributed one of them to all the world's apostolic nuncios. Bishop Bustillo was in Rome at the beginning of July, along with 30 other bishops, to take part in a training course organised by the French Bishops' Conference on the management of sexual abuse in the Church.

A native of Pamplona in the Spanish

Basque country, he was superior of the convent of St Maximilien-Kolbe in Lourdes before moving to Ajaccio. Since his arrival in Corsica, he has begun a cycle of visits to all the island's parishes. This tour, during which this calm, outspoken man meets not only Catholic leaders from the region he visits, but also political and social leaders, is expected to last "another six or seven years".

Rev Ángel Fernández Artime SDB, rector general of the Salesians

Fr Fernández Artime, who turns 63 next month, has been rector general of the Salesians of Don Bosco since 2014. A native of Asturias, Spain, with a degree in philosophy and pedagogy, he is the tenth successor of Don Bosco and worked with Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, then Archbishop of Buenos Aires (Argentina), when he was inspector of South Argentina in 2009. — **By Loup Besmond de Senneville, LCI** ([https:// international.la-croix.com/](https://international.la-croix.com/))



Cardinals not eligible to vote

In addition to the new cardinal electors, Pope Francis will also give the red hat to two archbishops and one priest over the age of 80, who would be ineligible to participate in a papal conclave. The Pope said that "they have distinguished themselves in their service to the Church."

Archbishop Agostino Marchetto, Apostolic Nuncio

For Pope Francis, he is the greatest hermeneutic of the Second Vatican Council. Born in Vicenza on August 28, 1940, he attended schools at the Patronage Leone XIII in Vicenza, then entered the seminary and was ordained a priest at Vicenza Cathedral on June 28, 1964. On Aug 31, 1985, he was appointed Titular Archbishop of Astigi with the office of Apostolic Nuncio to Madagascar and Mauritius. On Dec 7, 1990, he was transferred as Apostolic Nuncio to Tanzania, and on May 18, 1994, as Apostolic Nuncio to Belarus. On Nov 6, 2001, Pope John Paul II appointed him secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. On Aug 25, 2010, upon reaching the age of 70, he retired from his post to devote himself to studying, in particular the hermeneutics of the Second Vatican Council. In addition to Italian, he speaks French, English and Spanish.



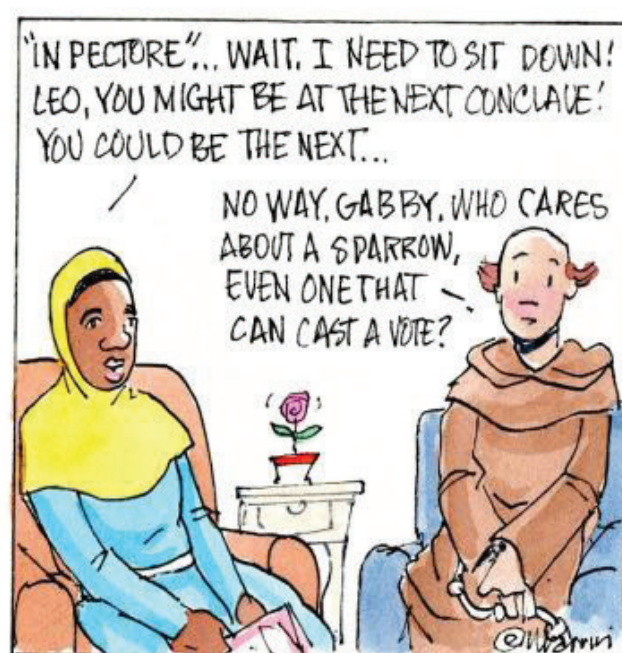
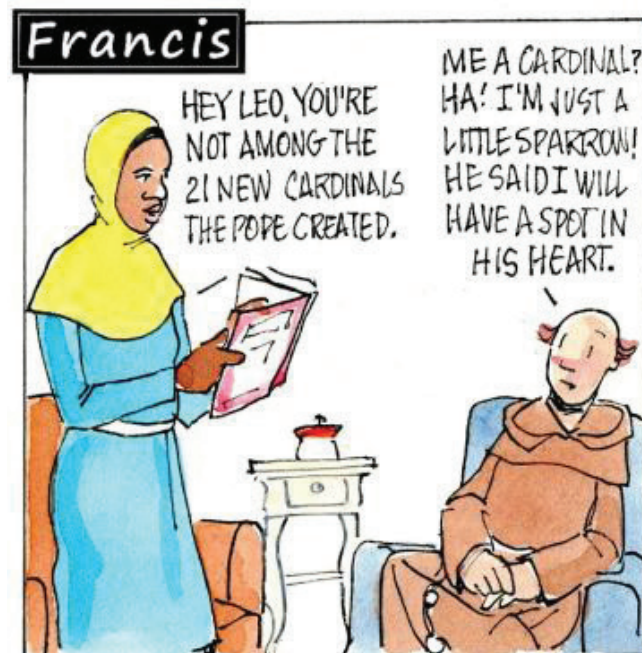
Archbishop Diego Rafael Padrón Sánchez

He is currently parish priest of La Inmaculada de Camoruco, in the Archdiocese of Valencia in Venezuela. Born in Montalbán, on May 17, 1939, he holds a degree in Biblical Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and a diploma in Oriental Biblical Sciences from the Franciscanum Institute in Jerusalem-Israel. He is a professor of Spanish, literature and Latin, a graduate of the Professional Institute of Teaching at the Pedagogical Institute in Caracas. Ordained a priest on Aug 4, 1963, he was parish priest in several parishes in Valencia. In 1990, Pope John Paul II appointed him Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Caracas and Titular Bishop of Gisipa, in 1994 he was Bishop of the Diocese of Maturín and in 2002 Metropolitan Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Cumaná. He was President of the Venezuelan Episcopal Conference for two consecutive periods.



Fr Luis Pascual Dri

Fr Luis is 96 years old and continues to serve the Lord every day by administering the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He was born in Federación, Entre Ríos Province, Argentina, on April 17, 1927, into a family where all but one of the children consecrated themselves to God in the religious life. From a very young age he worked in the fields, tending animals and also planting corn and alfalfa. He entered the Capuchin seminary in January 1938 at the age of 11, and took the Capuchin habit on Feb 21, 1945. On March 29, 1952, he was ordained a priest in the Cathedral of Montevideo. Director of the San Francisco de Carrasco Minor Seminary in 1953, in 1961, he specialised in Europe as formator of novices. In 1962 he began his mission as educator at the Colegio y Liceo Secco Illa de Uruguay, until 1974. A parish priest in several churches, at the beginning of 2000, he was transferred to the Shrine Ntra. Sra. De Pompeya, Buenos Aires, where he spent three years, then was appointed parish priest in Mar del Plata. In 2007, he returned again to the Shrine of Nuestra Señora de Pompeya.



NCRonline.org/cartoons

From prison to World Youth Day

Man builds 50 confessionals to be used for pilgrims

Some things take time. Pedro Silva (pic) needed to reach the age of 50, celebrated in a high-security prison cell, to look back and understand the “signs” he received along the way.

“I realised that God was always with me. He doesn’t give up on us, so we can’t lose hope,” he said, with the smile of someone who believes he is about to start a new life.

A few days before being released, after six years in jail for drug trafficking, Silva put the finishing touches on the 50 confessionals that, together with four other prisoners, he built for World Youth Day (WYD) 2023, which will take place in Lisbon, Portugal, August 1-6, and will be attended by Pope Francis.

While still in prison, Silva told *CNA* about one of the first missions he will undertake post-incarceration — participating in WYD as a volunteer and helping to set up the confessionals in “Reconciliation Park,” which is being prepared in a Lisbon district called Belém (in English, “Bethlehem”), located alongside the Tagus River.

In all, 150 confessionals were built in three Portuguese prisons (Coimbra, Paços de Ferreira, and Oporto), following an agreement between the WYD Lisbon 2023 Foundation and the Directorate-General for Reinsertion and Prison Services, with the aim of valuing the professional skills of prisoners and contributing to their reintegration into society.

Upon learning of Silva’s intention, the WYD Local Organising Committee was overjoyed.



“We are very interested in complying with his wishes and we will do all the necessary steps so that he can participate in the setting up of the confessionals,” assured the spokeswoman for the WYD Lisbon 2023 Foundation, Rosa Pedroso Lima.

The different pieces that make up the structure of each confessional, together with the benches that will be placed inside, are already packed and stacked, ready to go directly to Belém, where Reconciliation Park will be open from Aug 1-4, between 10.00am and 6.00pm.

During this time, distributed among the confessionals will be priests of different nationalities (and, on the morning of Aug 4, the Pope himself), available to listen to pilgrims from all over the world who wish to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Coincidence or not, it was precisely in Belém, in the church of the Jerónimos Monastery, that Silva received baptism at the age of 12. Neither he nor his 12 siblings were baptised as babies and never attended catechesis.

In the midst of a complicated childhood, with his parents absent and in the care of a grandmother, Silva remembers the day his religion teacher asked the classroom: “Who is still not baptised?” Silva was the only one to put his hand in the air and that day he came home asking for the sacrament.

Silva’s grandmother had no idea who to invite to be his godparents. “I was a problematic child and she thought nobody would want it, but I suggested it could be my primary teacher and off we went to talk to her, who gladly accepted... I ended up keeping in touch with her throughout my life, until I came to prison,” he recalled.

Despite having been baptised, Silva did not remain connected to the Church. As an adult, he lived in Argentina for a few years and experienced another moment he will never forget.

“I went to the cathedral with my sister, who lived in Buenos Aires, and with her husband’s family, and we attended Mass.” The celebrant was none other than the then-Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio. “In other words, I had the privilege of being with the Pope! And from then on, I really liked him,” he said.

Late catechesis and the right opportunity

Years later, living with another sister in Alicante, Spain, Silva was going through “a particularly difficult phase” and, desperate, he decided to pray.

“I was walking down the street and asked God to help me, to give me a sign. The next moment, I look down at the floor and see a folded magazine. I open it and it was an issue of *Awake!* by Jehovah’s Witnesses. So I looked up at the sky and said to God, ‘What? That fast?’”

Pedro laughed as he shared his story, fondly recalling how he went out to the street where some members of Jehovah’s Witnesses used to be and spoke to them. “From then on, every week they came to the house to teach me about the Bible. It was there



Pedro Silva puts the finishing touches on painting a confessional. (CNA photo/Clara Raimundo)

that I deepened my relationship with God.”

But when he moved to Vigo, another Spanish city, to work in a restaurant, he “didn’t have time for anything,” and his connection to religion was lost.

A new complicated phase in life, marked by some mistakes, eventually brought him back to Portugal, condemned to a six-year sentence at the Coimbra Prison. It was there that he learned that World Youth Day would take place in Lisbon, though he was still far from imagining he would ever see the Pope he loved again. But when the challenge of the confessionals came and he was one of the five chosen to join the team that would build them, Silva felt that it was another sign from God, and a new opportunity that appeared when he needed it most.

“I was very happy and grateful, and it makes me proud to know that in those confessionals there is a part of me and of my companions,” he said.

The fact that it was a better paid job than usual in prison was extra motivation.

“When I found out that we were going to receive 10 euros a day, I immediately thought that it would be a good help so that, when I was released, I wouldn’t be so dependent on my family,” he said.

Made from recycled wood supplied by the JMJ Lisboa 2023 Foundation, the confessionals have a simple structure, which Silva, already used to making more complex pieces in the prison’s carpentry shop, found easy to execute.

“And since we have a colleague on the team who is a real carpenter, we even improved what had been designed,” he points out with pride, while showing one of the confessionals already completed and assembled in the workshop, so that it can be photographed. — **By Clara Raimundo, CNA**



Made from recycled wood, the confessionals have a simple structure, which Pedro Silva, already used to making more complex pieces in the prison’s carpentry shop, found it easy to execute. (CNA photo/Clara Raimundo)

Emeritus Professor Dr Christopher Ng, a Malaysian icon

When we think of Malaysian icons, we usually think of our first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, professional squash player, Datuk Nicol David, and maybe even fashion designer Datuk Jimmy Choo. But did you know, nestled between these familiar faces on an installation known as the *Bird of Malaysia*, erected at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) celebrating our national heroes, is our Catholic brother in Christ – Emeritus Prof Dr Christopher Ng Kwan Hoong.

Attached to Universiti Malaya’s Department of Biomedical Imaging, Dr Ng is a pioneer in medical physics, and his work in the early diagnosis of breast cancer significantly aided the global struggle to combat the disease. In 2018, he was honoured as the first ever scientist from a developing country to receive the prestigious *Marie Skłodowska-Curie Award* – an honour from the International Organisation of Medical Physics, for his substantial contribution to research, education, and leadership. He is also the recipient of the *Merdeka Award* for outstanding scholastic achievement.

If that is not “wow” enough, Dr Ng is also certified by the American Board of Medical Physics, consults for the International Atomic

Energy Agency (IAEA) and is a member of its elite study team that works on the health consequences of the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant disaster.

With all these accreditations, awards and responsibilities under his belt, Dr Ng still makes it his priority to serve actively as a parishioner of the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist. Together with his wife, Leng Suan, they lead the Golden Eagles group at the cathedral and work closely with youth groups and various charities.

True to the definition of an unsung hero, Dr Ng has greatly impacted the progress of both our Catholic Church and the country – and for this very reason, we applaud and celebrate him!

The installation honours the remarkable accomplishments of Malaysians. To drop names, some of the icons you would recognise on this structure include the nation’s former Prime Ministers and current leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Tan Sri Robert Kuok, Tan Sri Michelle Yeoh, Datuk Mohd Nor Khalid (Lat), Tun V. T. Sambanthan, Prof Khoo Kay Kim, and Irene Fernandez, among others.

Bird of Malaysia started as a student project in 2021 and recently reached its culmination

with the physical installation at the airport. It is the collective achievement of a team of architecture and engineering students from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). The structure takes the form of a wing spread, mimicking the flight of a bird.

The Star reported that according to Assoc Prof Dr Mohamad Fakri Zaky Ja’afar, a lecturer from UPM’s Faculty of Design and Architecture, the centrepiece of the installation is “an egg that symbolises our roots, encapsulating the primary structural anchor. This signifies the significance of our origins in attaining greater heights”.

The project director, who also serves as the head of the Architecture Department, explained that the bird’s wing, encompassing the egg, serves as a representation of growth and advancement. The wings, adorned with portraits of national figures, pay homage to those who propelled the nation toward greater accomplishments.

“This is precisely why we named it the *Bird of Malaysia*. It symbolises our flourishing nation and celebrates the achievements of numerous Malaysians,” Dr Mohamad reportedly said.

“We aspire to inspire more Malaysians to



The ‘Bird of Malaysia’ installation at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) celebrates our national heroes, which includes Dr Ng.

reach new heights,” he added.

Let us learn from Dr Ng the invaluable lesson that honest work is a divine calling for every individual.

Through various means God tells us that engaging in honest labour while keeping faith in our hearts can lead to the great things he has planned. The installation will be displayed in the airport until Aug 31. — **By Tianne Ramona Pereira**

Did Jesus come to turn the world upside down?

Sometime around the year 200 AD, someone scratched out graffiti on plaster in the room of a house near the Palatine Hill in Rome.

The graffiti, discovered in 1857, appeared to mock a Christian worshipping a crucified figure with a donkey's head against the backdrop of a Y-shaped structure or cross.

Below the blasphemous image, the inscription in crude Greek read: "Alexamenos worships [his] God."

This was how some segments of Roman society back then insultingly depicted the religion of the people known as Christians. Many in contemporary Roman society simply could not understand why anyone would regard as God someone who was executed on a cross, when it was the Empire that ruled much of their known world.

For many, even today, it is difficult to understand why Jesus had to die on a cross.

Similarly, many have difficulty understanding His message about the kingdom of God.

What is this kingdom about? Was Jesus referring to the afterlife, the kingdom after the "end of the world"?

Or could He have meant that the kingdom was already with us? Or again, did He mean that the kingdom of God is within us, which is what some of us might think? Or something else?

But Luke 17 says:

20 Asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was to come, He gave them this answer, "The coming of the kingdom of God does not admit of observation

21 and there will be no one to say, 'Look, it is here! Look, it is there!' For look, the kingdom of God is among you."

The problem in interpretation lies in the original Greek word *entos*, which has sometimes been translated as "within" in this context, when it can also mean "in the midst of" or "among".



SUNDAY OBSERVER

Anil Netto

So, we are actually in the midst of the kingdom or the kingdom is among us rather than the kingdom being within or inside us.

This makes more sense, as the kingdom of God could hardly have been within the Pharisees who were out to fix Jesus up.

Jesus also told Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world."

This did not mean Jesus' kingdom was in another world — for then He would have used the word "in" rather than "of".

What Jesus meant was that His kingdom subscribes to a radically different set of values compared to the worldly values of the unjust leaders of His time, who were under the power of evil forces. Some would call these evil forces the kingdom of Satan.

In truth, many among the ruling class of Jesus' time worshipped power, wealth, prestige and position.

This quest for power and wealth — the overwhelming greed that concentrates wealth in the hands of a few — is responsible for much of the misery and suffering on the planet.

The rulers of the world in Jesus' time — and much of the patriarchal society — also regarded women and children, the lower classes, the sick and the poor as either of inferior status or "unclean". These marginalised groups simply did not matter in the domination system of the time.

But Jesus came to give the Good News to the poor, the marginalised and the oppressed: that God valued them as human beings and they had a place in the kingdom. He lifted up

women and children, giving them equal dignity as men. He healed the sick, who many had assumed were paying the price of their sins or those of their ancestors.

Later, this was extended to those who were "poor in spirit" — that is, those who, in spirit, are in solidarity with the poor and other oppressed groups in society.

Some would say, as I have in the past, that Jesus turned the values of this world upside-down.

So did the late South African theologian writer Albert Nolan OP. But then he added, perhaps a more accurate description would be the world's values were already upside down, and that was not how God meant the world to be. Jesus came to turn the world the right way up.

Nolan described the kingdom of God as a city or fortress set apart. This kingdom would be different from the kingdom of the world under the likes of Pilate, Herod and the chief priests.

It would be a world where people loved one another and shared their wealth so that nobody in the community would be in need.

This did not mean people were expected to sell their own homes or personal belongings. What it did mean was that whatever was in excess of what was needed for a life of dignity ought to be shared with the community, especially those who were in want. It would mean a detachment from wealth in favour of the interests of the community, as we also see in the *Acts of the Apostles*.

This was why when Zacchaeus, the tax collector, said he would give half his possessions to the poor and pay back to people four times what he had cheated them of, Jesus declared: "Today, salvation has come to this house...."

It was also why the young man walked away sadly when Jesus told him to sell all his possessions and give them to the poor so that he could enter the kingdom of heaven. But

he couldn't separate himself from his possessions and his great wealth.

The subtext behind Jesus' words seemed to be: young man, how can you claim you love your neighbour as yourself — one of the two greatest commandments — if you are not concerned about your neighbours' immense suffering and lack of food and other essentials? And by the way, how did you get so wealthy in the first place? Was it at the expense of your neighbour or the way you exploited your workers, or cheated your customers, or displaced them from their property?

Yes, the kingdom of God is already among us. People like Pilate and the chief priests — the forces of darkness — failed to grasp this, even though it was staring them in the face.

But because the values of the kingdom are markedly different from the values of the world — which worships power and wealth — those who subscribe to kingdom values sometimes have to pay a heavy price, as Jesus did on the cross. The Way is not an easy way. Jesus never said it would be.

Two thousand years on, and things are not that much different. The world is still ruled by forces that value the acquisition of immense wealth, along with the power and prestige that go with it.

The fallout is the tremendous suffering it causes to ordinary people and the degradation and destruction of the ecosystems — the cry of the poor, and the cry of the Earth.

But the kingdom is still among us in the community of those who value justice and love and compassion, growing quietly and unexpectedly turning into a tree where all who need shelter can gather below.

Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven.

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



WORD MADE FRESH

Nicholas Lye

Prayer through seeing

Do we often pray to God but struggle to hear Him speak? Is prayer only about speaking to God, or can we actually pray and hear God through our eyes?

In a recent session I conducted over Zoom for a group of 13-year old children, I was teaching them about prayer, and how we can find God in the things around us, and allow Him to speak to us through what we see or notice. This is based on the Ignatian spirituality and motto of finding God in all things.

After giving them some time to be still and look around their room or outside of their window, one of the boys shared how he found God in his octopus plushie. Placing the plushie over his head, he explained how, whenever he feels sad, God feels sad, and whenever he feels happy, God feels happy. It was such a simple but profound way of acknowledging how God is with him in every feeling or situation that he is going through, symbolised by the plushie that he finds comfort in whenever he places it over his head.

Another boy shared how he found God in a bird that was hopping about right outside

his house. As he looked out of his window and noticed the bird, the bird somehow also suddenly stopped in its tracks and seemed to look up at him. In that moment, he felt as if God was looking for him, and that really touched him.

So often we pray through our lips and our minds, or 'hear' Him through the words of Scripture. Yet Psalm 19:1-4 tells us that "The heavens are telling the glory of God; the firmament proclaims His handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."

In other words, apart from Scripture, God also speaks His truths to us through all of His creation; day and night, God is speaking to us through everything around us. In fact, God's first 'words' to us in the *Book of Genesis*, before the Word of God was written on tablets, was expressed through imagery, the visual creation of the world. Therefore, would we not want to learn how to pray and listen to God through what we see in the world around us?

There is actually a physiological reason why God speaks to us through images. Imagery is the language of the body-mind. Our body's senses first picks up our physical en-

vironment and daily experiences as images in the right brain, before it gets translated into words, thoughts and concepts in the left brain. This is why God appears in the Old Testament as a burning bush, a cloud, or a pillar of fire; and why He would eventually reveal Himself through the person of Jesus, who Himself also teaches and heals through imagery, such as the multiplication of loaves, the calming of the storm, or the mixing of sand and spittle. So much of such imagery, and our own daily experiences, contain much of God's word and truth, if only we take time to see and notice.

In the Greek language, there are different words to describe "seeing". *Blepo* refers to the physical sight of observation, and *theoreo* refers to the sight of understanding, which explains why we often say "I see" after understanding something. *Orao* refers to the sight of faith, which is what is needed when we pray through seeing. Even when we do not literally see (*blepo*) God in the things around us, we can still see (*ora*) God in the things around us through faith, and begin to see (*theoreo*) and understand His truths through what we see and notice. When we can indeed learn how to pray through our eyes, we shall eventually see and hear more from God, wherever we go, and at any time of the day.

From my younger days, whenever I saw

a leaf fall from a tree, I started associating it with God dropping a message and saying hello to me, which often reminds and assures me of His presence. There once was a time when I was going through a very difficult period, and was doubting if God was really there for me. When I decided to go out for a walk, and took a path that was surrounded by rows of trees, I exclaimed to God to prove to me if He was truly there. Suddenly, a strong gust of wind blew, and soon countless leaves started falling from the trees. Immediately I saw it as God's overwhelming assurance that He was indeed with me, and that helped me SEE the truth that I am not alone in my difficulty.

Fr Thomas Green defines prayer as "the opening of one's heart and mind to God." If we also learn to open our eyes and be open to how God might be speaking to us through the things around us, we can actually be praying for as long as our eyes, hearts and minds remain open to His presence and truth.

● **Nicholas Lye** is a lay missionary and creative evangelist who loves to help people encounter God and discover His truths through sights, sounds, taste and touch. Check out tinyurl.com/prayerthroughart for the various prayer workshops he offers both physically and through online platforms.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Relating to both Jesus and Christ

For too many years, for me, Christ was simply Jesus' last name: *Jack Smith, Susan Parker, Jesus Christ*. Intellectually, I knew better; but practically, both in my private faith and as a theologian, I functioned as if Christ were simply Jesus' surname. Whether in prayer, writing, or preaching, I almost always used the two names together, *Jesus Christ*, as if there were a perfect identity between the two.

There's not. Jesus is a divine person inside the Trinity, someone who once walked this earth as a flesh and blood individual and who now is with the Father as part of the Godhead. And although He is also the key component inside the reality of Christ, Christ is more than Jesus.

Christ is a mystery which also includes us, Jesus' followers on earth, the sacraments, the Word (Scripture), and the Church. Scripture is clear: *We are the Body of Christ on earth*. We don't represent Christ, replace Christ, or are some vague mystical presence of Christ. We *are* the Body of Christ, as too are the Eucharist and the Word (the Christian Scriptures).

That distinction has huge implications both for our private faith and for how we live out our faith in the Church. To simply identify Jesus and Christ impoverishes our discipleship, irrespective of which name (*Jesus or Christ*) we most relate to.

Let me begin with a *mea culpa*: In living out my faith, I more easily and existentially relate to Christ than to Jesus. What that means is that I have a belief in and a life-long commitment to, the reality of the resurrection, to Jesus' teaching, to the Church, to the sacraments, and to the Christian Scriptures. I believe that participation in the Eucharist is the single most important thing I do in life, that the Sermon on the Mount is the greatest moral code ever written, and that the Church, despite all its faults, is the Body of Christ on earth.

But, unlike many of the faith-filled mystics and saints that I read, and unlike many of my Evangelical friends and colleagues, I struggle to have a real sense that Jesus is an intimate friend and lover. I struggle to be the beloved disciple in John's Gospel who has his head reclining on the breast of Jesus and for whom one-to-one intimacy with Jesus relativises everything else.

I know that Jesus is real and wants a deep one-to-one intimacy with each of us; but truth be told, I struggle to actually feel that most days and to make it the central part of my discipleship. Commitment to the Eucharist, Jesus' teaching, and the Church are, save for graced affective moments in prayer, the heart of my faith and lived discipleship. Habitually, I relate more to Christ than to Jesus.

And, let me risk adding this: I believe that is also true for various Christian churches. We have churches that relate more to Christ and churches that relate more to Jesus (not that either excludes the other). For example, my own church, Roman Catholic, is a very Christ-centred Church. Ecclesial community, Eucharist, the sacraments, and Jesus' teachings are key. No true Roman Catholic can ever say that all I need is a private relationship to Jesus. That is also true of most Anglicans, Episcopalians, and mainline Protestants. It is less true for churches within the Evangelical family, where the salient mandate in the Gospel of John to have an intimate relationship to Jesus more easily becomes the central tenet within Christian discipleship.

It is not that the different churches exclude the other dimension. For example, Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, and mainline Protestantism emphasise private prayer as a means to relate to the person of Jesus as an intimate friend and lover. To this, Roman Catholicism brings its rich (sometimes over-rich) tradition of devotional prayer. Conversely, Evangelicals, with their strong focus on Jesus, use communal services of the Word and preaching as their major way to relate to the wider mystery of Christ.

We have something to learn from each other. Churches, just as individuals, must

be about both, *Jesus and Christ*, that is, focused on a personal relationship with Jesus and participation in the historical incarnational mystery of Christ, of which each of us is part. We must be focused on Jesus, but also on the Eucharist, the Word, and the community of believers — each of which is the Body of Christ. Our faith and discipleship must be both deeply private and visibly communal. No Christian can legitimately say, my discipleship consists wholly in a private relationship to Jesus, just as no Christian can legitimately say, I don't need Jesus, I only need the Church and the sacraments.

We are disciples of *Jesus Christ*, both the person and the mystery. We are committed to a set of teachings, a set of Scriptures, the Eucharist, and to a visible community we call the Church — as well as to a person named Jesus who is the heart of this great mystery and who wants to be our friend and lover.

● **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.

In 'Composition of Place,' we activate our senses in prayer

In the Christian tradition, prayer is about relationship. It is about an encounter with God. It is about speaking and listening to Him. We cannot allow the richness of prayer to be minimised and reduced to mere petitions. Prayer is far deeper and far more intimate than solely asking for things.

Prayer is about seeking to understand how much God loves us, and labouring to love Him back. The seedbed of prayer is love, therefore, and those who want to pray must be open to a vocation of love. Love is about being with someone. It is about hearts conversing and being united. Loving God contains a driving call to prayer and prayer calls us to love deeply.

The life of prayer was modelled by the Lord Jesus. As Jesus Christ sought loving union with the Father, he was a man of prayer. The way of the Lord, therefore, includes a way of prayer. As Christians, we seek to follow where the Lord has tread. He was a man of love and prayer. As such, as His disciples, we are called to be a people of love and prayer.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* clarifies the central tenets of prayer. It teaches us: "God calls man first. Man may forget his Creator or hide far from his face; he may run after idols or accuse the deity of having abandoned him; yet the living and true God tirelessly calls each person to that mysterious encounter known as prayer."

God loves us first. He begins speaking and listening to us first, and only then, after He has initiated this relationship with us, are we inspired and moved to love and speak and listen to Him. This is an elementary truth of the spiritual life. God is the one who initiates. He is the one who inaugurates



"Prayer is a conversation, a relationship, and accompaniment with the all-powerful and ever-living God, the Creator of all that is good, true, and beautiful."

a rapport with us.

The *Catechism* continues: "In prayer, the faithful God's initiative of love always comes first; our own first step is always a response. As God gradually reveals Himself and reveals man to Himself, prayer appears as a reciprocal call, a covenant drama. Through words and actions, this drama engages the heart. It unfolds throughout the whole history of salvation."

Such a description helps us to understand prayer as a momentum, an adventure, an odyssey, a task that is divinely begun and gently guided by a God who loves us. When fully understood, prayer is not a cold duty, a burdensome responsibility, or a lifeless and boring commitment. Prayer is dynamic, life-giving, energetic, and a

process that includes continual conversion, enlightenment, and rejuvenation. It is a call, an invitation, an opportunity for a mysterious encounter with God. Prayer is a conversation, a relationship, and accompaniment with the all-powerful and ever-living God, the Creator of all that is good, true, and beautiful.

As a help to us in accepting the summons to prayer, the Church has various prayer methods. Such methods are a resource and guide to us as we desire to speak and listen to God.

In addition to *lectio divina*, the prayer methods also include what is called *Composition of Place*. This prayer method is also sometimes called the Ignatian Method, since it was heavily practised and

promoted by Saint Ignatius of Loyola and the early Jesuits.

In order to understand this prayer method, we need to grasp some essential aspects of our human personhood. As human beings, we consist of a body and spiritual soul. Our spiritual soul consists of our intellect and will. Our intellect possesses our ability to reason, to process information, to do rational thought. It also includes our imagination and our memory.

When we speak of our spiritual imagination, therefore, we are speaking about a central component of our intellect. It is one of the many spiritual powers that distinguishes us from the animals (and the angels). The spiritual imagination can be elevated and used for prayer. It can engage the Holy Spirit and become a means by which we can encounter God, actively pray, and speak and listen to him in a creative and completely unique way.

In the *Composition of Place*, we use our spiritual imagination to compose a place from the Sacred Scriptures. We create an entire scene, we "compose a place." We activate our senses and ask ourselves what we see, hear, taste, touch, and smell. We allow for some poetic license in terms of the historical events and places. We seek to compose the place as we understand it. We imagine the wine at Cana, or the flowing water at the Jordan River, or the screams and shouts along the Way of the Cross.

There is more to be said about the composition of place, but the heart of this prayer method is an attempt to create a scene so that we can then approach and interact with the living God. — **By Fr Jeffrey F. Kirby, *Cruz***

Little Catholics' Corner

Which Parable is it?

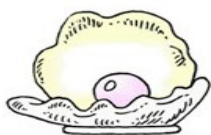
Write the letter of the parable next to the matching picture.



1. ____



2. ____



3. ____



4. ____



5. ____



6. ____



7. ____



8. ____



9. ____



10. ____

The Parables

- A The Kingdom of Heaven is like a hidden treasure. (Matthew 13:44)**
- B The House built on a Rock. (Luke 6:46-49)**
- C The Sower and the Seed. (Matthew 13:2-23)**
- D The Tares and Wheat (Matthew 13:24-30)**
- E The Leaven. (Matthew 13:33)**
- F The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37)**
- G The Mustard Seed. (Luke 13:18-19)**
- H The Pearl of Great Price. (Matthew 13:45, 46)**
- I The Lost Sheep. (Matthew 18:12-14)**
- J The Lost Coin. (Luke 15:8-10)**

Colour this picture of Jesus' grandparents St Anne, St Joachim and His mother, Mary.



Hello children of God,

This Sunday, we learn about the Kingdom of God. God wants us to be fair and kind to others. He also sends the Spirit to help us when we need it. We hear stories called parables that show how the Kingdom grows and makes a big difference. These stories teach us vital things about how God wants us to act and what is important to Him. Let's try to understand and follow these special rules of God's Kingdom.

On July 26, we celebrate the feast of Sts Anne and Joachim, who were honoured as the parents of Mary, Mother of God. When angels told them God would bless them with a child who would be known throughout the world, Anne and Joachim placed their trust and faith in God. As Jesus' grandparents, they are the patron saints of grandparents and today we also celebrate World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly.

Remember to wish and hug your grandparents!!

Love,
Aunty Gwen

Spot the Differences in The Story of the Lost Sheep

Compare the picture on the left with the picture on right. Circle the 13 things that are different.



YOUTH

JULY 23, 2023

IT IS GOOD TO BE HERE

CHARIS MALAYSIA YOUTH CONFERENCE 2023



(photo/Jonathan D'Oliveiro)

By John Luke Joeshua

PENANG: The inaugural CHARIS Malaysia Youth Conference 2023 left a profound impact on the hearts and minds of its young participants who aimed to establish a nationwide communion of Charis Youth Leaders, living life in the Spirit and training others to do the same.

With the theme *Personal Holiness*, this four-day event, held at the iconic Minor Basilica of St Anne from June 29 to July 2, brought together a diverse group of young people seeking spiritual growth and served as a transformative experience for all participants. This event was led by Paul Julianose and his CHARIS Youth organising team.

The conference commenced with a welcome Mass celebrated by Msgr Henry Rajoo. He emphasised the significance of coming together as a community of faithful believers. In his closing remarks, he highlighted

the phrase, "It is good to be here," which set the tone for the days to come, acknowledging the importance of being present and open to the transformative power of God's love.

Participants were then split into two main language groups, English and Mandarin, to facilitate deeper engagement. In the English segment, Charles Lim delivered a powerful keynote address, reminding the attendees that holiness is not solely an individual effort. Through his inspiring words, he emphasised the importance of unity and support in the journey toward personal holiness. Simultaneously, the Mandarin segment enjoyed a keynote address by Fr Simon Lau, who delivered a thought-provoking address, encouraging participants to understand their purpose and calling in life, offering unique insights into the pursuit of holiness.

The second day focused on the theme *Being set Apart*. Fr Simon celebrated Mass and shared an enlightening message on the transformative power of saying "yes" to God. He said, when we surrender ourselves to the divine will, our lives are turned 'downside-up', leading to a deep experience of God's grace.



(photo/Jonathan D'Oliveiro)

Throughout the day, participants engaged in four sessions that explored various aspects of personal holiness: *Identity, Called to Sainthood, Called to Repentance and Purity, and To Be Healed for More*. These sessions, led by Derek Chong and Anthony Lim in the English segment, provided practical insights on living out one's calling and allowing God to heal broken areas to fully experience the life of grace. Similarly, Mandarin speakers Mark Ng, Michael Yap, and Fr Simon emphasised the importance of embracing God's call and expounded on these essential aspects of personal holiness.

The third day centred on *Being on a Mission*. Fr Louis Loi presided over Mass, infusing the day with spiritual energy. Three impactful sessions, including *Road to Emmaus, Conversation in the Spirit, and Baptism of Fire*, were held to deepen the understanding of the participants' mission in the world. The highlight of the day was the Worship with Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the evening. It provided an opportunity for the attendees to enter into deep communion with God, reinforcing their commitment to live out their mission with passion and zeal.

The final day saw two sessions titled *Our Reality Now* and *Our Response Today*. These sessions invited participants to reflect on the challenges faced in today's world and explore practical ways to respond to these challenges through personal holiness and active engagement. As the conference drew to a close, participants shared their testimonies, revealing how the event impacted and transformed their lives. Eager to continue their spiritual journey beyond the conference, many were inspired to join various ministries in their respective parishes. The profound impact and transformative experiences shared by these young individuals served as a testament to the success of the conference.

The conference concluded with a Commissioning Mass celebrated by Bishop Sebastian Francis, who imparted a heartfelt blessing upon the youth, sending them forth to make a positive difference in their communities. This momentous occasion marked the beginning of a new chapter for the young participants as they were sent forth with renewed zeal, equipped to embrace personal holiness and lead others on the path of spiritual growth.

Pilgrims from Keningau

ready to rise and go to WYD Lisbon

KENINGAU: Seven young people from the Diocese of Keningau will be participating in the World Youth Day (WYD) in Lisbon, Portugal August 1-8.

Prior to that, they attended a spiritual and physical formation led by Roney Eming, Head of the Youth Commission. This will help them have a good experience, especially in evangelisation and mission during the "Days in the Diocese" July 24-31.

Bishop Cornelius Piong celebrated the Mission Mass at the Keningau Diocese Retreat House, Tatal, on July 17. Before leaving for Lisbon, they will have a nine-day Novena.

Some of the pilgrims shared their hopes:

Roney hopes that participating in WYD will give him new ideas that can be adapted in parish youth programmes as well as at the diocesan level.

Brenda Arambala, hopes that after returning from WYD, she will be more active in the youth ministry.

For Teresie Ketty, she has been longing to attend WYD and this year, she is very happy to be part of the Diocese of Keningau's contingent to WYD Lisbon. She hopes this will guide her to become a faithful, creative, brave and steadfast servant of God.



File photo of the youth from Keningau at World Youth Day, Krakow, Poland in 2016.

Fostering spiritual growth

KUANTAN: Twenty-six candidates received the Sacrament of Confirmation at the Church of St Thomas the Apostle on July 9. Archbishop Julian Leow presided over the multilingual celebration which was well-attended.

The candidates this year comprised 16 local students, seven Indonesian migrant workers, two Orang Asli, and one confirmand from Kemaman, Terengganu. Before Confirmation, the students attended a three-day stay-in camp from June 23 to June 25 at the Assunta Retreat Centre in Kuantan. The camp's theme was based on the quote *Holy Spirit Descend Plentifully into My Heart* by St. Augustine of Hippo. During the spiritual camp, the students contemplated the gifts of the Holy Spirit and how they could apply them to their faith journeys.

On July 8, a group of 30 Indonesian migrants, including the seven confirmation candidates, travelled from an oil palm plantation in Sri Jaya, some 90 kilometres



Confirmands with Archbishop Julian Leow, Fr George Packiasamy, religious sisters and catechists.

away, to Kuantan. They gathered for a two-hour session and engaged in scriptural reflections, Praise and Worship, recitation of the Rosary, adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, and Benediction. This was to prepare for their Sacrament of Confirma-

tion the next day and to foster their spiritual growth. Following the session, they spent the night at the priest's residence.

During his homily, Archbishop Julian reminded the confirmands that even though their lessons had ended, their catechesis

should be a lifelong pursuit.

The coordinator of the confirmation class, Dorcas Lee, expressed her admiration for the students' unwavering commitment, remarkable effort, steadfast obedience, openness and willingness to grow, despite language barriers and other challenges. She also thanked the catechists for accompanying the confirmands on their journey.

As a representative of the catechists, she added that it is imperative that all confirmands actively engage in church activities and ministries. The Church should be an integral part of their lives, and we pray they will serve with joy and enthusiasm.

After taking their group photos, the confirmands gathered at the community centre for fellowship with Archbishop Julian, teachers, parents, godparents, sponsors, and families who had supported them in achieving this significant milestone. — **By Dr Francis Leong**

COME HOLY SPIRIT, LET YOUR FIRE FALL

RAWANG: Archbishop Julian Leow conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation on 20 candidates from the Church of St Jude on July 1.

Before this special day, the students embarked on a three-day, two-night camp themed *Journeying into a Synodal Church*. Accompanied by their parish priest, Fr Vincent Thomas, catechists, Josephine Bosco and Soosai Selvanathan, they gathered at the Golden Sands Resort in Port Dickson from June 16 to 18.

Catechists Dr Grace Gnana Piragasam and Dr Jennifer Joan Francis were touched by the children's enthusiasm to be infilled with the Holy Spirit. Dr Grace said it has been a phenomenal experience for the stu-

dents, from the camp to confirmation day. She added that it marked a significant milestone in their journey of discipleship. Confirmand, Bryan Teddeus Vincent said that confirmation day was the best day in his life. "My friends and I were extremely excited".

Crisalynn Sunetra Ryan, said, "After being confirmed, I felt a sense of clarity I've never felt before. I understand my purpose in this religion and I wish to improve my relationship with God. Getting confirmed makes me want to be a better Catholic". The celebration ended with a performance by the candidates, presentation of the certificates and a cake-cutting ceremony. — **By Mercy Almeida Stellus**



Confirmands with Archbishop Julian Leow, Fr Vincent Thomas, seminarians and catechists.

WALKING TOGETHER IN UNITY AND MISSION MCYMC IN SANDAKAN

TELUPID: With the theme *Walking Together in Unity And Mission*, a total of 33 youth participated in the MCYMC's initiative programme for the fourth time from June 28-July 2 at the Chapel of St Patrick, Kg Entilibon under the Parish of St Martin Telupid, Sandakan.

The Malaysian Catholic Youth Ministers' Committee (MCYMC) initiative programme was implemented at the arch/diocesan level throughout Malaysia in preparation for the Malaysian Catholic Youth Assembly (MCYPA) in 2025 and the Malaysian Pastoral Convention (MPC) 2026.

The objective was to reach out to the youth in the outskirts and to strengthen the relationship with them, to listen and to learn; to experience and to share God's love with others. This initiative programme was divided into two parts; outreach and post-evaluation.

Fr Dafrinn Diwol, Youth Spiritual Advisor of the Diocese of Sandakan celebrated the opening Mass at St Patrick's Chapel. The participants were sent out to selected



MCYMC members and friends helping to clean a village.

villages, namely St Patrick, Kg Entilibon, St Mary, Kg Sanan, St Petrus, Kg Kiringgu and St Bede, Kg Bobotong, to carry out *Charity and Faith* activities June 29-30.

In the village, they lived with foster families and got involved in activities such as mutual aid, visiting and praying for the sick and sharing their faith experiences with the

youth and the villagers.

Upon completing the outreach, MCYMC team members, Roney Alfred Eming and Josephine Tan conducted the post-evaluation session with them. They spent time reflecting, evaluating and sharing on what had touched them as they faced these challenges in three parts, namely; 'Joy moment', 'Junk

moment' and 'Jesus moment'.

In the second session, they were asked to artistically express the theme of *Walking together* in the form of acting, singing, painting and dancing.

Each group was assigned to compose a prayer based on the Word of God that touched them, and these prayers were recited during the liturgy led by Fr Dafrinn and Sr Noemi Mejia FSIC.

The closing Mass was held on July 1, celebrated by Fr Christopher Ireneus, parish priest of St Martin Telupid, with Fr Dafrinn concelebrating.

In his homily, Fr Christopher invited the MCYMC participants to reflect on their experiences and how they will bring changes to their respective diocese.

They were filled with happiness and blessed to have Fr Dafrinn's support and involvement throughout the programme. — **By Sr Noemi Mejia FSIC**



Remembering victims of Srebrenica massacre

SARAJEVO: On the 28th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, Archbishop Tomo Vukšić of Sarajevo expressed his closeness to the families of the victims of the mass killings, saying the graves of the victims "preach peace" in today's world.

Srebrenica became a global symbol of suffering and genocide as a result of the horrendous attack by Bosnian Serb forces in July 1995.

Ignoring a Security Council resolution that declared Srebrenica a safe, protected area, during the presidency of Radovan Karadžić, the Bosnian Serb army, under the command of General Ratko Mladic, attacked the city, and after placing the women, children, and elderly aboard buses directed to Bosniak-held territory, executed some 8,000 Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) boys and men.

Some killings occurred on the evening of July 12, but mass evacuations of mostly blindfolded Bosnian men to execution sites began in earnest on the evening of July 13. It was discovered later that many of the victims of the massacre had had their arms and feet bound. Many of the bodies also showed signs of mutilation.

In addition to the killings, more than 20,000 civilians were expelled from the area while over 6,000 homes, mosques, schools, factories and infrastructure were torched.

The massacre, which was the worst episode of mass murder within Europe since World War II, helped galvanise the West to press for a cease-fire which led the 1995 Dayton Accords ending three years of warfare in the former Yugoslavian republic.

However, the war has left deep emotional scars on survivors and enduring obstacles to political reconciliation among Bosnia's three main ethnic groups: Croatian, Serb and Bosnian.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, established before the massacre to scrutinize ongoing military conduct, concluded that the Srebrenica slayings, compounded by the mass expulsion of Bosnian civilians was genocide.

In a message issued on the eve of the 28th anniversary of the massacre commemorated annually on July 11, the Archbishop Tomo expressed his deep condolence to all those mourning their loved ones who perished in the killings, underlining how "each victim was a father or mother, brother or sister, son or daughter, wife or husband, boyfriend or girlfriend, someone's friend or acquaintance".

He concluded: "For the rest of us, they are our brothers and sisters whose life was taken away, so our fraternal compassion towards them is sincere".

The archbishop mentioned particularly the families of those whose remains will be buried only this year, after being exhumed from more mass graves and whose identification hadn't been completed until recently.

The prelate said the graves of the victims are "great messengers of peace" who "demand that every life be respected and preserved". This is "their greatest message and lesson for all".

The message concludes with a prayer to God, "our merciful creator and only Lord of life" so that "He may grant all the deceased eternal life" while "hope may be born of the sorrow of the living". — **By Lisa Zengarini, Vatican News**

MEMORIAM

*"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour." Luke 1:46-47*

In Ever Loving Memory Of



**Gertrude De Silva,
AMN**

27 August 1930 – 19 July 2013

**Louis Chivapathy,
AMN, PJK**

27 July 1930 – 3 June 2014

*Dearest Mum & Dad,
If ever love had an aura,
that aura emanated from you;
If selfless service of others had a face,
that face, shining brightly, was yours,
You were God's most precious gift to us,
we shall forever cherish you ...
So wait for us, beloved Mum and Dad,
there, where eternity transcends time
and the aura of love gains its permanence.*

Deeply missed by Angeline & Ruban, Barbara,
Adrian & Ita, Nimala & Kenny, Ash,
great-grandchildren, relatives, and friends.

45th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



**Sauriamah De Cruze
Departed: 24-07-1978**

*Though the years
have passed by, Mum,
you are always remembered
in our hearts and,
most of all, in our prayers.*

Always remembered
and missed by
your loved ones.

28th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



**Mejar (Rtd)
Christopher
Ratnasingam KAT, psc
Departed: 22-07-1995**

*In thoughts, dad,
you are always near,
still loved, still missed,
still very dear.
But happy memories
we keep forever
Of days when we
were all together.
In heaven you rest,
no worries, no pain
but in our hearts you will
always remain.*

Always loved
and missed by
Wife, children,
daughters-in-law,
son-in-law, grandchildren
and loved ones.

In Loving Memory of 29th Anniversary 19th Anniversary



**Philip Tung Kwan Kun
@ Tang Kwan Kun
Departed: 04-12-1994**



**Margaret Mary
Foo Pei Fong
Departed: 23-07-2004**

*"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes
in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever
lives and believes in Me shall never die."*

— Jn. 11:25-26

Fondly remembered by children and loved ones.

14th Anniversary

*"As it was by one man
that death came,
so through one man has
come the resurrection
of the dead.
Just as all die in Adam,
so in Christ all will be
brought to life."
1 Cor 15:21-22*

In Loving Memory of Gurunathan Selbadurai

7th March 1944 –
29th July 2009

Deeply missed by
wife, children,
grandchildren, all family
members and friends.



17th Anniversary In Loving Memory



**Philip Sinbad
Departed:
25-07-2006**

*Any, 17 years have passed
since you physically left us. Your
spirit lives on through the values
you instilled in us, reminding me
to embrace kindness, resilience,
and compassion in all that we do.*

*We honour your memory by
cherishing the moments we had
together and by striving to make
you proud. Your absence is
deeply felt, but your love
continues to guide us. We hold
tightly to the memories we
created, preserving them as
precious treasures. They serve
as a reminder of the bond we
shared, a bond that time and
distance cannot diminish.*

Forever in our prayers and heart,
your beloved wife, children,
siblings, relatives and friends.

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Mongolia's 'House of Mercy' awaits the Pope

ULAANBAATAR: The Catholic Church in Mongolia has built a "House of Mercy" — a charity centre for migrants and destitute in the national capital Ulaanbaatar that Pope Francis will inaugurate and bless during his first visit to the central Asian nation in September.

Francis will be in Mongolia from Sept 1-4 and attend a series of programs including meeting with local Catholic clergy, religious and laypeople as well as top government officials and leaders of various faith groups.

The theme of Francis' apostolic journey in Mongolia is *Hoping Together*.

The opening of the House of Mercy in Ulaanbaatar's Bayangol district will be the Pope's final public event before he heads back to Rome on Sept 4.

The centre is a symbol of love and compassion for the weaker sections of society from Mongolia's tiny Catholic Church with about 1,500 members and 77 missionaries, the report said.

The project started in 2019 thanks to efforts by Giorgio Marengo, an Italian missionary and apostolic prefect of Ulaanbaatar whom Pope Francis made a cardinal last year.

His idea was to open "a social centre that would take care of women and minors who are victims of domestic violence."

Domestic violence is prevalent in the country due to its male-dominant social system.

About 57.9 per cent of married women and 46.8 per cent of children faced some kind of domestic abuse in Mongolia in 2020, according to International Development Law Organisation.

The centre sees itself as "a place where people with problems ... can find comfort and peace," Fides reported.

The project received funding from Catholic charity Caritas and the papal charity, Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS), Australia.

A three-story building with a basement has been set up in an abandoned school complex formerly owned by the Sisters of St Paul de Chartres.

It will serve not only as a temporary shelter for women and minors who have had to flee their homes after suffering abuse, but also as a first-aid facility where the homeless will receive medical care.

Most homeless people are not registered with the national health system and therefore do not have access to treatment in public health facilities, Fides reported.

An important mission of the centre is to promote the re-establishment of contact between the homeless and their families in order to initiate "family reunification processes."

It also aims to become a temporary accommodation facility for migrants who arrive in the city and have no local relatives or friends who



Cardinal Giorgio Marengo, Apostolic Prefect of Mongolia celebrates Holy Mass (Vatican News photo/Archivio fotografico Missioni Consolata)

can provide them with initial support.

The centre is being established in Bayangol district, as per the PMS report, as it has a population of more than 150,000 with diverse social and economic backgrounds.

The district is also a popular destination for internal migrants who flock to the capital from rural areas. Its diverse communities represent the widening wealth gap between the rich and the poor in the country.

The government offers free healthcare services to all citizens, but the health system suffers from a shortage of healthcare professionals and limited resources in some areas.

Homelessness is a common and complex issue in urban areas such as Ulaanbaatar. Development groups estimate the city has at least 7,000 homeless people among an estimated

population of 1.4 million.

Poverty remains a major challenge too. The National Statistics Office of Mongolia reported in 2021 that about 27.4 per cent of the nation's estimated 3.3 million population was poor, and the unemployment rate was 9.6 per cent.

The papal visit to Mongolia will be closely watched by Russia and China, two nations sharing borders with the country, analysts say.

The Vatican has been toeing diplomatic lines with Russia and China in recent years. The Pope sent an envoy to Russia recently to broker peace talks to end the Ukraine war.

On the way to Mongolia, the Pope is expected to fly over China, rather than Russia. As per the papal custom, the pontiff is likely to send a brief telegram to Chinese authorities in recognition of this. — ucanews.com

Sport teaches sacrifice and teamwork

VATICAN: Pope Francis recently welcomed in the Vatican the players and managers of the Spanish Football Royal Club Celta de Vigo, celebrating its centenary. The club, also simply known as 'Real Celta', was founded in the Basque town of Vigo, in Galicia, in 1923.

In his address, Pope Francis again reflected on sport as a metaphor of life and on its true meaning as "an opportunity to rediscover and promote values", such as giving oneself generously, working as a team, but also welcoming the other as a friend, to promote a more united and fraternal world.

Noting that the team bears the same sky-blue colours of the Virgin Mary, and those of the national football club of his home country, Argentina, Pope Francis started his reflection by remarking that it is almost as if Mary "had wanted to put herself the two shores the Atlantic which has united us more than separating us, so that we never forget her".

Pope Francis reflected on another feature of the insignia of the team: The Cross of St James (a cross resembling a sword, with the hilt and the arm in the shape of a *fleur-de-lis*, ed.), rising like a banner of victory. "Even that cross recalling your Galician homeland," he noted, "unites it to Europe and, in it, to all of Christianity, which from time immemorial has wandered in the footsteps of the first Apostle who shed his blood for Christ."

Like the Cross of Saint James, the Pope remarked "both in the stadium and in life, your weapons are those small gestures to which we sometimes don't pay any attention: winning starting from humility, working as a team without relying only on one's own strength, understanding that victory belongs to everyone. It is



Pope Francis meeting members of the Real Club Celta de Vigo Spain (Vatican Media Divisione Foto)

also giving oneself generously, sparing no effort, knowing how to sacrifice oneself for the other".

"In the same way," the Holy Father continued, "it is accepting that comparing ourselves with other teams serves to improve, to learn, to test ourselves and evaluate our game."

In this sense, he stressed, "the other, more than an adversary worthy of respect, is always a welcome friend."

"If our game and our life are consistent with each other, we will set this example and be able to convey not the passion for the colours that exclude, but the love for what they represent," Pope Francis said.

Concluding, Pope Francis insisted, once again, on the importance of preserving the amateur dimension of sport.

"When sport loses this amateur dimension", he warned, it turns into an "aseptic business, devoid of passion." — **By Lisa Zengarini, Vatican News**

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