

# Overcome the dark clouds



## Embrace the future with hope

By Patricia Pereira

**P**LENTONG, Johor: The religious are an important part of the Church and have a role to play in the mission of Christ.

This was affirmed by the Malaysian bishops at the first Malaysia Religious Assembly (MRA) 2023 at MAJODI Centre, June 8-11. One hundred and eighty-four delegates representing 28 congregations were present at this historic gathering.

Bishop Bernard Paul in his keynote address painted a scenario of current situations and urged the religious to embrace the future with hope.

Hope is a virtue, an inner strength that consecrated men and women bring to desperate situations because their eyes are fixed on Christ, even as they look lovingly upon this world. In spite of dwindling numbers, ageing congregations and a lack of vocations, consecrated persons are still relevant and continue to play an important role in the life of the Church and society at large.

The prelate, giving his speech on behalf of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei spoke about 'dark clouds' that had engulfed the world during the pandemic and the subsequent dark clouds that had descended through selfish political reasons and bad governance, which have negatively impacted the lives of many.

Bishop Bernard also touched on the dark clouds in our church communities that have

forgotten their true mission and have instead become preoccupied with their smallness, weakness, powerlessness and fruitlessness.

"But the dark clouds do not have the last say. The dark clouds will give way when we see that consecrated life is not about survival, but a call to living encounter, a call to obedience to the God of surprises, and a call to prophetic vision that reveals what matters most," said the bishop.

Bishop Bernard reiterated that the dark clouds will give way when we rise to counter and overcome concerns such as mediocrity, a devaluation of our spiritual life, the temptation to reduce God's importance, an accommodation to a comfortable and worldly life, complaints and a mentality of resignation.

He urged the religious to open their eyes to the many realities surrounding them. In reference to the parable of the Good Samaritan, the bishop said we bring hope to the vulnerable, the neighbour and the victim when we stop, respond and accompany them with living affective love (social love), and we do this because we are made for love.

Speaking along the lines of synodality, the prelate said that when we see the vision of an open world, we are called to 'extend the tent', i.e. to go outside ourselves, to safeguard and respect solidarity and fraternity in the family and affirm the right to live with dignity.

"The dark clouds give way when we have a heart for the world. When we welcome, protect, support and integrate the migrants." The bishop further added that when we have

charity at heart and not political inclinations, we will recognise common good and the importance of people. Our discussion and dialogue will be centred on protecting work, promoting solidarity, subsidiarity, human dignity and the eradication of poverty. "The dark clouds give way when we have an attitude of kindness – of having dialogue, friendship and encounters with all, free from the modern day cruelty, anxiety and flurry," said the bishop.

Making reference to *Fratelli Tutti*, Bishop Bernard said that the dark clouds are overcome with renewed encounter and he proceeded to touch on three key points. The first is a 're-look at Communion', i.e. the image of 'One Body, with Christ the Head and we, the many parts'. This transcends narrowness, bigotedness, selfishness, exclusiveness and a call to reach out, to go beyond congregations and to be Church.

The second point, highlighted by Bishop Bernard is a call to 're-embrace participation' which is realising that we are an indispensable piece of a jigsaw puzzle, i.e. the picture is never complete without 'me' and 'you'. "True participation," said the bishop, "takes place where there is inclusivity, encouraging one another's gifts and giftedness, listening to the *sensus fidei*, the spirit in the community. We must be driven by a life-changing sense of community, ecclesia, creation, common good and common home."

Speaking on the final key point 're-new mission' Bishop Bernard explained that it is about undertaking to go forth, to go beyond

ourselves, our church compounds, rituals and rites, our divisiveness and discriminatory attitudes, our arrogance and aggressiveness, our hate and violence.

"It is about building bridges rather than walls, healing not wounding, loving not hating. Mission is about journeying together for a common home in which justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, love, joy and peace are the rights of all. It is a 'walking together' with no exclusive rights of ownership or territory, recognising that the Holy Spirit is the only manager and we are His servants," said the bishop.

Bishop Bernard ended his speech by reminding the religious that the only force that can keep the dark clouds and closed world at bay is discerned, united, love initiatives. "You sisters and brothers must see yourselves as the Body of Christ, not mere congregations and religious orders. The people have something to teach us, they do not see congregations and ministries, clergy and religious, they only see Church. That's who we are – members of the One Body, the Body of Christ. The greatest challenge will always be 'Being Brothers and Sisters to one another'."

● *The Malaysia Religious Assembly (MRA) 2023 is the journey of the consecrated community towards the Malaysia Pastoral Convention scheduled to take place in 2026. We will feature a comprehensive coverage of the MRA 2023 in an upcoming supplement.*

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person — though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die.

Rom. 5:6-7



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Johore  
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A synodal  
Church  
journeying  
together

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Bridging  
the hunger  
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## OPINION

## Don't stop at synod, says Catholic women's leader

The Catholic Church's synodal process is an invitation to invest in the pastoral and professional formation of women in the Church, said the newly elected president of a global network of Catholic women's associations.

In a weeklong general assembly that she called an "exercise in synodality," Mónica Santamarina (pic), was elected president general of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations, WUCWO, by 832 representatives of Catholic women's organisations from 38 countries.



"When you have different nationalities and cultures come together there are difficult moments, but you see how dialogue moves forward with understanding and coexistence. It all contributes to an environment of synodality, of prayer and openness."

As a network of organisations that represents some eight million members worldwide, WUCWO has a bird's eye view on the state of Catholic women around the world. In its general assembly, participants set priorities for the organisation's next four years, one of which is particularly pertinent in the Church today: increasing women's formation and participation in the Church through a spirit of synodality.

In Africa, Latin America and Asia, she said, "women don't feel capable of participating" in the Church; "They are insecure." That phenomenon is linked to gaps in education, salary, work formation and study opportunities, only worsened by the pandemic, which prevent women from fully developing themselves, Santamarina told *CNS*.

"One way to close those gaps is through greater formation of women in all ways — theological, pastoral, professional, so that they have a larger and better presence in the different spheres of the Church," Santamarina said. "We have to work so that each woman recognises all the dignity she has, all of her potential, since the first person to recognise it has to be the woman herself. She needs to be aware of her worth."

Already, she said, the Church's synodal process has been an important step in making women feel that they have a significant role to play in the life of the Church.

In March, the World Women's Observatory, a WUCWO project that seeks to gather data on the state of Catholic women worldwide, published a survey of 459 women who played a leadership role in the synodal process at the diocesan, national or continental levels.

The results of the synod survey, Santamarina said, show that the majority of women involved in the synod felt they had been listened to — 55 per cent of women said they were "always" or "usually" listened to — but also that an important percentage felt their opinions had not been taken into consideration. Of those surveyed, 19 per cent said they were rarely listened to and two per cent said they were never listened to, while 20 per cent said they were not effectively involved in decision-making during the synodal process.

Among the biggest obstacles to women's participation in the Church that arose in the survey, Santamarina said, is clericalism — a sense of ecclesial superiority on the part of the clergy, often condemned by Pope Francis — coupled with a fear of men by some women in the Church. One way to combat that, she proposed, is through a greater presence of women in seminaries and throughout priestly formation, to allow women and men, and clergy and laity, to "walk together as Church."

"It's not about substitution or 'taking something away,' it's about working together with women to bring their gifts to the table and

giving them a greater voice in decision-making," she said, "otherwise, the Church is losing a real richness, the Church needs to rely on the experience of women."

While Santamarina welcomed changes in structures of the Church that give women increased responsibility in the Church — she called the Pope's decision to make some three dozen women voting members in October's Synod of Bishops "very important" — she stressed the need for Catholic women to remain united in Church teaching throughout the synodal process.

"When you begin to open a door, all of a sudden you want to push it wide open. But you need to find a balance which is important," she said. "For us, it is the magisterium of the Pope that guides us. We are always under the light of the Pope's magisterium, and that is what helps us not become polarised, to not go to the extremes."

Santamarina noted that a recurrent and "natural" fear is that once the synod ends in October 2024, "the Church will again close its doors," which is why, she said, the push for women to become more active participants in the Church should not be limited to the synod. While women need to be encouraged to advocate for themselves, "they also need the ongoing opportunity to do so," she said.

"Women today are overworked, they have long workdays and demanding family responsibilities, so the options for their participation in the Church need to be adjusted to these realities," she said.

Although she recognised that the slow pace of change in the Church can be frustrating for many, especially the young people, "the best changes happen from within, even if it moves slowly and requires some patience," Santamarina said.

"This synodal process is showing us what synodality is. There are still many challenges, but the process is progress." — **By Justin McLellan, CNS**

## We have a God with a Heart for us. Do we have a heart for others?

This Sunday's reading assures us that God always has a heart for us, and we who live in the kindness of God's love and mercy are called to do the same for others.

The first reading marks a special moment where the Israelites receive the revelation of the Law and entered into a covenant relationship with God. Israel is to be God's own possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. From here, we can see that God did not only bring them out of slavery but gradually enlightened and formed them.

The image given of God in the first reading is that of an eagle. The eagle is wild and fierce, swooping down swiftly on its prey. Now the speed of the eagle and the strength of its wings are metaphors for swift rescue. The initiative is totally on the side of God, who saves us so that a covenantal relationship is possible. It will be much later before the idea of service to other nations as God's holy people and priests appear in the Old Testament.

In the *Letter to the Romans*, the theme of God's initiative and love continues. Paul tells us that while we were helpless and sinners, God reached out to us with everything, including giving His own Son. It is the image of God holding nothing back.

Paul artfully tells us that the human condi-



tion was in a state of enmity with God due to sin. However, God's love has reconciled us. Now we are in a state of right relationship and a condition of peace. The enmity was solely on the side of sinful humans, and the wronged party was God. Nevertheless, God, the wronged party, was the one who took the initiative and acted to reconcile us through the death of his Son. We can then be assured of God's magnanimity and joyfully trust in God. Jesus is indeed the face of God's divine mercy.

If the first two readings already highlighted for us the love of God, the gospel drives the final point. The gospels give us a deep and profound insight into how God relates to us through Jesus. What we have in the gos-

pel today is a God with a heart for us. We see this in how Jesus reacted to the crowds. We are told that Jesus is filled with compassion because He saw that the crowds were "harassed and dejected," like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus described this situation as a rich harvest waiting for labourers and told His disciple to pray for the Lord to send more labourers into the harvest. Note that Jesus did not end with just a prayer request for more labourers but appointed twelve and instructed them for mission. Jesus created a body of helpers so that there would always be labourers in His harvest.

We must acknowledge that we benefited and inherited the work of the labourers initiated by Jesus about 2,000 years ago. Now

### Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Fr Dr Lawrence Ng

#### 11th Sunday of Ordinary Time (A)

**Readings: Exodus 19:2-6;**

**Romans 5:6-11;**

**Gospel: Matthew 9:36 - 10:8**

we must take up the task in our own way and continue the work of the shepherd with a heart for His sheep.

Our life as Christians is different because we believe in God who is with us always. Believing activates and opens a life of grace and the experience of God's loving-kindness for us. It helps to remember that even as Christians, we are always a work in progress. That means we are always growing and learning. On the surface, everything may appear unchanged about us, but deep within, there can be a dynamic relationship with God that is always new and ever-growing.

It does not seem fitting that this dynamic relationship with God ends with us. We are called to share this confidence we have in the loving-kindness of our God, who is always with a heart for us. In this way, we too may do our part and there would always be labourers and faces of God's loving kindness in the vineyard.





## KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

### Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

#### June

- 20- **Monthly Clergy**
- 21 **Recollection**
- 22 **Archdiocesan Finance Meeting**
- 24 **RCIA Study Day**
- 24 **Confirmation – Church of Assumption, PJ**
- 24 **Confirmation – Church of Our Lady of Fatima, KL**
- 25 **Feast – Church of St Aloysius, Mantin**
- 25 **Blessing & Mass – Chapel of St Anthony, Serdang**
- 29 **CHARIS Youth Conference**



## PENANG DIOCESE

### Diary of Bishop Sebastian Francis

#### June

- 18 **Confirmation – Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Silibin, Ipoh at 9.00am**
- 18 **Diocesan Celebration of Kaamatan - Gawai Festival – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam (Live-streamed) at 3.00pm**
- 19 **Feast – College General Major Seminary, Penang & 25th Sacerdotal Anniversary of Fr Simon Labrooy at 6.00pm**
- 20- **Parish and National Shrine of Saint Padre Pio, Lipa, Philippines**
- 30
- 29- **Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference – Radio Veritas Asia (RVA), Manila, Philippines**
- 30



## MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

### Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

#### June

- 19- **Meeting – 16th Episcopal Commission for Migrants and Itinerants, Serian, Sarawak**
- 22
- 24 **Confirmation Mass – Church of St Louis, Kluang**
- 27 **Mass of St Josemaria – Church of the Holy Family, Ulu Tiram.**
- 29 **KATOLIKOS 2023 – Church of St Louis, Kluang**

# New transitional deacon for KL Archdiocese

By Julie Lim

KUALA LUMPUR: Seminarian Gnana Selvam Berentis, from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, was ordained a transitional deacon on June 5.

Deacon Selva has been serving at the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist (CSJE) since June 2022, after completing his studies at St Peter's College Major Seminary in Kuching. The theme he selected for his diaconate ordination was *Here I am* (Isaiah 6:8).



The Mass was held at Convent Bukit Nanas 2 chapel, as CSJE is temporarily closed for repairs.

Archbishop Julian Leow presided over the Mass with Vicars General, Msgr Stanislaus Soosaimariam and Msgr Patrick Boudville, Fr Edwin Peter, Fr James Gabriel and CSJE parish priest, Fr Gerard Theraviam, concelebrating.

In attendance were 400 guests comprising clergy, representatives from religious orders, seminarians, friends, parishioners, and family members. The Mass was also live streamed on YouTube.

In his homily, Archbishop Julian said that

everyone is in need of God's mercy and forgiveness. "What is important is that we recognise our weaknesses, we turn to the Lord for strength, and we depend on Jesus Christ completely for inspiration."

The prelate reminded that every baptised person has been chosen to be a disciple of Christ. "Each one of us must listen and respond accordingly to the state of life we have been called to," he said.

After the final blessing, Deacon Selva took the opportunity to share his vocation story. He did not grow up in a staunch Catholic family, and was away from God for 15 years where he focused on his studies, career, fame, fortune and worldly relationships. Even though he accomplished all he set out to do, there was still a longing within for something more.

The turning point came when Deacon Selva lost his savings in an online investment scam. That incident was a wake-up call that the endless quest for worldly pursuits will never be quenched. He needed to find the key to everlasting peace and joy. An encounter with a corporate figure who spent hours focusing on driving new business streams but yet was passionate about spreading the Word of God was another eye opener. Deacon Selva started attending Mass again, and pursuing God through prayer. It was during that time that he felt a desire to think about the priesthood.



Archbishop Julian Leow lays his hands on Deacon Gnana Selvam.

In his thanksgiving note, Deacon Selva expressed gratitude to Archbishop Julian, the clergy of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur and Fr Gerard.

He acknowledged his retreat master, Fr Christopher Soosaipillai, as well as the former and present vocation directors, Fr Augustine Lee and Fr Vincent Thomas.

A special mention was given to the seminary formators, fellow seminarians, religious brothers and sisters, the community of CSJE, the social communications team of the Archdiocese, his family members and the community from Bestari Jaya who were participating from the parish community hall.

Deacon Selva will continue to serve at CSJE until his priestly ordination.



## Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #135

**F12**  
MJD NEWS  
UPDATES

### Greetings again dear people of God.

The badminton doubles pair, men and women, did well. State elections' preparations are gearing up. The King has called for resolving the "Allah" issue for national unity. A 'Tan Sri' title for Lim Kit Siang. The Malacca Johore Vicariate Pastoral Assemblies (VPAs) open the way for the October 14 DPA 2023. The synodal processes have created a path for communion, participation and mission.

**Listening Times:** Silence and listening leads to bonding. For the unity government, the law makers and religious leaders, all designs, decisions and directions must emerge from the respect of the other. Respect the fear: the apprehension, the inner struggle, the timidity, the inability to express in words or in languages other than the mother tongue and the culture of silence that conditions many. The recent VPAs were planned well, respected the processes, included the many faces of the diocese, yet the leaders sought input and clarification in their own language. Inclusivity and bridge-building tears down walls, silences the fear-mongering voices, and calms the troubled mind and heart. Listening heals.

*Thich Nhat Hanh said: Deep listening, compassionate listening is not listening with the purpose of analysing or even uncovering what has happened in the past. You listen first of all in order to give the other person relief, a chance to speak out, to feel that someone finally understands him or her.*

### A Thought for the Week:

A blind boy sat on the steps of a building with a hat by his feet. He held up a sign which said: "I am blind, please help." There were only a few coins in the hat.

A man came by, dropped a few coins into the hat, and wrote a few words on the sign. The hat began to fill up. Many stopped to give. That afternoon, the man who had changed

the sign came to see how things were. The boy recognised his footsteps and asked, "Were you the one who changed my sign this morning? What did you write?"

The man said, "I only wrote the truth. I said what you said but in a different way." I wrote: "Today is a beautiful day but I cannot see it." *Lessons from the Creative:* Both signs told people that the boy was blind. But the first sign simply said the boy was blind. The second sign told people that they were so lucky that they were not blind. Our handicaps may not change, but be creative and innovative. Smile at them and make others smile.

### Announcements for this Week

1. The *Vicariate Pastoral Assemblies* ended on June 5. A total of 300 parish and ministries' leaders, pastoral workers and clergy met at the Church of Our Lady of Good Health, Krubong, Church of St Louis Kluang and the Church of the Immaculate Conception, JB. The biggest shift is in listening to the Holy Spirit, there was no brainstorming, no SWOT nor SOAR. The *Spiritual Conversations*, a communitarian discernment tool, respects the *sensus fidei*, the Holy Spirit working in the baptised faithful.
2. The *MJ Mission Schools Gathering* took place at the Good Shepherd Seminary on June 17 from 10.30am to 12.30pm. It was the meeting of all Mission Authorities, BOGs and Head Teachers.
3. The youth of MJD will gather on June 29 and 30 at Bakhita Hall, Kluang for the *Katolikos 2023*.
4. The Deliverance and Exorcism Office of Malacca Johore Diocese is conducting *Deliverance & Healing 3 & 4*, a follow-up programme in Chinese and English for clergy, case officers, charismatics and parish-sent candidates, on June 29 and 30 at MAJODI Centre.

### This Week's Question and Query.

**The Q asks: Why do people react or become judgmental?**

Carl Jung says that for many "thinking is difficult".

**But be open to the ways of life!**

1. "The world will ask you who you are, and if you don't know, the world will tell you."
2. "If a man knows more than others, he becomes lonely."
3. "Everything that irritates us about others can lead to an understanding of ourselves."
4. "Life really does begin at 40. Up until then, you are just doing research."
5. "You are what you do, not what you say you'll do."
6. "Knowing your own darkness is the best method for dealing with the darkness of other people."
7. "Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate."
8. "Be grateful for your difficulties and challenges, for they hold blessings. In fact... Man needs difficulties; they are necessary for healthy personal growth, individuation, and self-actualisation."
9. "Everyone you meet knows something you don't know but need to know. Learn from them."
10. "I am not what happened to me, I am what I choose to become."

**To walk, work and witness TOGETHER-NESS is going to be tough for many who have yet to encounter the Spirit of Communion.**

The Holy Spirit works powerfully where there is unity. Unity is the fruit of loving tenderly, acting justly and walking humbly!

Take care. The Kingdom is in our midst. He walks with us.

*Bernard Paul*  
Bishop Bernard Paul



# Malacca Johore Diocese

The Malaysian Church is entering a new phase with the Malaysia Pastoral Convention (MPC) in 2026. This convention will be the first that sees participation from all the dioceses in Malaysia.

Each diocese begins her preparation with her own Diocesan Pastoral Assembly that focuses on *Family, Church, Ecology, and Society*. The preparation as a diocese is an integral part of the journey towards MPC 2026.

The Diocese of Malacca Johore has planned a two-stage assembly. The first was held at vicariate level and took place on June 5 as follows:

- Malacca: Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Krubong
- North and Central Johore: Church of St Louis, Kluang
- South Johore: Church of the Immaculate Conception, Johor Bahru

The second stage will be held at diocesan level on Saturday, October 14, at MAJODI Centre in Johor Bahru.

We feature some highlights on the framework and proceedings of the assembly on pages 4 and 5.

## The delegates

The delegates are either bilingual or trilingual, and the language should include English or, at the very least, Bahasa Malaysia.

They must participate in both the vicariate (June 5) and diocesan (October 14) levels.

A total number of about 300 delegates were invited. They comprise of:

- Twelve representatives per parish
- Three representatives per diocesan ministry
- All the active clergy and religious working in parishes and ministries
- Retired clergy (encouraged to attend)

## Orientation

The assembly will be conducted within the framework of "Synodality" — walking together while listening to each other and, at the same time, discerning together what the Holy Spirit is saying to us.

We celebrate our sense of togetherness as each of us exercises our priesthood (common or ministerial) that we all share in the one baptism of Christ. This is so that the fruits of our Assembly, that focuses on *Family, Church, Ecology, and Society*, can be something that can help build our communion of communities.

Delegates are reminded to prepare themselves through prayer and works of mercy.

## Bishop Bernard Paul explains the rationale for MPC

"We are moving into a new chapter in the history of the Malaysian Church from the 1976 *Aggiornamento*." Bishop Bernard Paul said in his opening address at the vicariate pastoral assemblies, June 5. His message was played simultaneously in the three vicariates.

He explained that the 2024 Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Convention will be the last to be held. This is a 10-year convention comprising, clergy, religious and lay leaders coming together to discern the pastoral direction of the Peninsular Church.

"The Church will move towards a truly Malaysian Pastoral Convention or MPC in 2026. From now on, Sabah and Sarawak will also participate in the discussions and discernment," he added.

"In preparation for this, all dioceses will be holding their diocesan assemblies focusing on four areas: *Family, Church, Ecology and Society*."

"For the Malacca Johore Diocese, the process begins with the



Vicariate Assemblies held simultaneously in the three vicariates — (South Johore, North Johore and Malacca), this assembly is a precursor to the diocesan assembly on October 14.

"An important pastoral thrust in our mission as Church in this diocese is to seek the Communion of Families. The goal is so that we, as Church, build on the Communion of Families while seeking to be Creative, Inclusive, Bridge Building, Visionary and Missionary, and most importantly, to go forth as 'disciples of Hope.' Let us take our mission as disciples of hope, participate and contribute to caring for the earth and building our society," said Bishop Bernard.

Explaining the process, Bishop Bernard said, "In part one of this pastoral assembly, we begin by asking HOW? We will ask you to discern with us."

Bishop Bernard stressed on the importance of the delegates' role. They would be assisting in offering a tangible pastoral response for the diocese in these four areas.

"Our pastoral response will be based on our communal discernment together. What you offer will be discerned further by our discernment team. This team will analyse and propose this pastoral response at the Malacca Johore Diocesan Pastoral Assembly on Oct 14 this year.

"This gathering expresses our 'walking together' as we 'celebrate our sense of togetherness.'"

"Let us all be reminded that we are all united by our one baptism in Christ.

"By our baptism, we all share in the mission of Christ. Our mission can be expressed within our roles as Priests, Prophets,

and Kings.

"We have our own special role within the Church for the building up of God's kingdom.

"As priests, we participate in this process today from within a life of prayer and a holy witness.

"As prophets, we stand here as one who lives and witnesses to God's Word as disciples and people of God, safeguarding our faith always.

"As Kings, we build God's kingdom and the Church of Christ through our service to each other, marked by love.

"Let us participate in our discernment process with openness and sincerity. We will conduct our discussions through the "spiritual conversation" when silence and listening are an important part of the process. This is so that we can sense the general movement of the Spirit.

"In this way, what we do here can be something new that is relevant to the Church of the Diocese of Malacca Johore, and is led by the Holy Spirit."



The delegates at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Johor Bahru.



## Understanding the process of synodality

Before the assembly began the group dynamics, the delegates were briefed on what the synodal process was and the method of spiritual conversation.

In 2021, Pope Francis called us to be a Synodal Church. Synodality is not a philosophy or new theology but a way of being Church.

"Synodality" means journeying or walking together as Church while listening to what the Holy Spirit is saying.

The goal of the assembly is to offer a tangible pastoral response for our diocese in the areas of *Family, Church, Ecology and Society*.



The clergy praying over the religious and laity at the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Krubong.

The spiritual conversation process focuses on the quality of one's

capacity to listen as well as the quality of the words spoken. In this process, we pay attention to ourselves and to the spiritual movements within us, and to the other person during the conversation.

While listening, we ask: "What is happening in the other person and in me, and how is the Lord working here?"

When Pope Francis introduces the path of synodality, he always says, "Let us listen to the Holy Spirit". To be a synodal Church is to be a Church that walks together while listening and being sensitive to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

When we give our full attention to the person speaking or sharing, we also respect the other person.

The purpose of this assembly is not to produce more documents but to pray, be silent, discern, and discuss together with the goal of doing God's will or what is pleasing to God. We sincerely desire that what we discuss here is in harmony with what God wants of us.

Therefore, may our work today inspire the Church of the Diocese of Malacca Johore to dream about the Church we are called to be and contribute to the building of God's kingdom.



The spiritual conversations at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, South Johor.



# prepares for MPC 2026



RESPONDING TO THE HOLY SPIRIT: TOWARDS PMPC2026 IN THE SPIRIT OF COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION & MISSION

## Communion, Participation and Mission

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference's 50th anniversary document, *Journeying Together as Peoples of Asia*, tells us that "Communion is the opposite of wanting to be exclusive. We are all united by our baptism; therefore, we are all 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, God's own people' (1 Pt 2:9). There are no first and second-class members in the Church. The Spirit further empowers us to enter into communion not only with our fellow Catholics but also with every Christian, every human being and every created being."

Only in communion with the Spirit can we grow into communities of disciples. Let us contribute to the building of God's Kingdom by first building our

own communities.

**Participation** means that we are alive as a body of Christ, and the same Spirit animates and empowers us. However, power, or the desire for power, can block and disrupt participation in our communities.

All of us are leaders, so let us exercise our leadership in a spirit of servanthood, participating in the leadership of Jesus, who came "not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for the many." (Mk 10:45)

It is with the Spirit of communion and participation by servant leadership that we proceed with **Mission**. We must not live life only for ourselves but rather for the world. We always go forth as part of the servant Church.



## Reflecting on Family, Church, Ecology and Society

### Family



The Asian Church including the Malaysian Church, recognises the central place and importance of family, citing the family as the bedrock of society. Some challenges discerned by the Malacca Johore clergy are:

- many families affected by the recent pandemic.
- children leave home to work in another state.
- many parents especially in Johor, work in Singapore.
- there are situations where the elderly are neglected.
- the young in our communities are ignored or left out.
- the impact of digital technology, especially through social media.

### Church



Church does not mean a building but the people of God. We are all Church. When we speak of the Malaysian Church, we speak of Malaysian Catholics living and expressing our faith within the context of our lives, lived experiences

and cultures.

We are called to be a synodal Church, which is a Church that journeys together.

During the MJD Synod last year, issues of clericalism and politics came up as part of our realities. The report also noted that commitment and participation in BEC gatherings are declining. Some reports expressed concerns about egoistic self-glorification by members of the Church. This reality is slowly creeping into the urban parishes where social media is used as a tool for self-exaltation. The Church in Malacca Johore also faces an ageing population and smaller families.

### Ecology



With insights from science and over the year, we realise that all of nature is God's creation and is deeply and profoundly interconnected. The human person is but a part of the structures and processes of nature.

Our actions drastically impact the environment and the lives of all God's creatures that share this home we call Earth.

It has come to a point where human persons, as God's creation, have been reckless and irresponsible with Mother Earth, our common home. Over the years, we have

heard of this situation reported by the scientific community and the media.

This prompted the response of the Catholic Church that urges us to listen to the cry of the Earth through the Pope's encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

### Society



The Catholic Church has always recognised that the Church is not isolated from the world.

The Vatican II document *Church in the modern world* speaks of shared lives or deep solidarity between the Church as a people of God and the whole human family. Pope Francis' encyclical on *Fraternity and Social Friendship* asks us to consider building a better, just, and peaceful world.

It points out many problems in our society. First, we are increasingly becoming a society with a throwaway culture. There is a kind of wastefulness.

Despite the advancement of technology to communicate, such as our mobile devices, we are becoming isolated. Nowadays, we have a flood of information, but they do not make us wiser.

The issue of economic imbalance, where corporations ravage the world's resources for their gain, and people are also considered resources of the world, and something to be exploited.

## Spiritual Conversations on Family, Church, Ecology and Society

Two hours were allocated for the different groups to reflect on one of the questions below.



### On Family

How can we build on our efforts to deepen communion in our families?



### On Church

How can we build on our efforts to become a more listening, inclusive and evangelising Church?



### On Ecology

How can we build on our efforts to appreciate and protect our ecology?



### On Society

How can we build on our efforts to being better witnesses of love, justice and truth in society?

## The process

### Preparation – Prayer – Silence for FIRST ROUND: Taking the Floor

Participants were given about two minutes to share their experiences, feelings, or what happened at prayer based on the questions given. After one has shared, the group may take a brief pause to absorb what was said.

### Preparation – Prayer – Silence for SECOND ROUND: Making Room for the Other

In two minutes, participants shared from what resonated most in them of what others said. (No discussion)

It is here that signs of the action of the Holy Spirit in the group begins to manifest, and the conversation becomes an experience of shared discernment.



Participants share their experiences and feelings during the spiritual conversations at the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Melaka.

### Preparation – Prayer – Silence for THIRD ROUND: Building Together

This is a time of "WE" and coming to a consensus.

They ask themselves, "What do WE feel is important to say to ourselves and the whole Church as a 'contribution' with respect to the topic?"

The facilitator will help the par-

ticipants to come to three key points of "HOW CAN WE BUILD..." and the note taker writes them down.

*This is a process, and participants are here not to solve problems. There will always be unresolved issues. The point is not to produce more documents and data but to offer a response based on how the Holy Spirit is leading us.*

## What happens next?

The discerning team headed by Fr Dr Lawrence Ng comprises of Mgrs Peter Ng, Fr Paul Sia, Sr Shanti Mariadass, Sr Magdalene Kepong, Albert Tan and Vivianna.

The discerning team will offer a short analysis and propose key points for a response that the diocese can undertake.

This analysis and proposed key points will be presented on October 14 at the Diocesan Pastoral Assembly.

Delegates will be given 10 minutes to note down their responses followed by an open forum and discussion. They are given two minutes each for input, proposals, and statements.

Having listened to everyone, the discerning team will meet once again and consider the draft presented.

The team will also listen to the bishop's feedback, reflections, and directives on how to proceed and apply this at the parish level.

The outcome will be emailed to all the parishes.



# A synodal church journeying together

SEREMBAN: The Church of the Visitation celebrated her feast with a week-long preparation from May 24 to 31. Every evening, Rosary devotions and Masses were held in the four major languages, with different themes each day focusing on family, the elderly, youth, children, the poor, Basic Ecclesiastical Communities (BECs), and a synodal church.

On the first day, the president, Fr Dr Clarence Dass highlighted the importance of family and nurturing relationships, pointing out unity and prayer within the family. On the second day, he spoke on the elderly and the importance of caring for them, accentuating respect, purposeful living, social relationships, care, and prayer.

The third day focused on the youth and their vibrant role in the church. Celebrant of the day, Fr Moses Rayappan, highlighted the love of God, the care of Jesus Christ, and the importance of embracing God's love and staying rooted in Christ.

The following day, Fr Moses highlighted the significance of children in bringing happiness to the family. Whenever we talk about children, it is a joy — when a child is born or, it's a child's birthday.

When a child is born, we want to make the child laugh all the time. As the child grows,



The congregation during the feast day celebration at the Church of the Visitation, Seremban.

this tends to stop. It could be the reason many of us forget our childhood. Fr Moses emphasised the importance of spending time with children, providing love and emotional support, and promoting unity in the family.

Fr Robert Daniel presided over days five and six where he first shared on the role of the poor in enriching the Church. He said poverty was seen as a sign of God's blessing and a challenge to societal values. Serving and caring for the poor are acts of spiritual enrichment.

The next day, he highlighted the BECs as the pulse of the parish, reflecting God's presence. Quoting the late Fr Clement Pereira who said, 'the progress of a parish is the measure

set at the pace of the slowest in the community, not those who are fast and active in the parish.'

The progress and health of the parish is the obligation of the strong towards the weakest in the parish. They are found in the BECs. They are people struggling spiritually, economically, physically, emotionally. We should go there, the pulse of the parish, the health check of the parish. That is the mark of progress of the parish. Fr Robert also accented the importance of community and solidarity, especially during the pandemic.

On the feast day, the Eucharist was presided

over by Msgr Henry Rajoo, with eight priests concelebrating, including parish priest Fr Xavier Andrew. The theme centred around a synodal church journeying together. It emphasised communion, participation, and mission within the Church. The faithful were encouraged to feel for others, listen with their hearts, and take action.

Throughout the celebrations, the youth of the parish organised a picture exhibition showcasing the various events and activities held by the ministries and congregation. Parishioners were encouraged to visit the exhibition. — *Visitation Media Team*

## Outreach to Hanukkah's Children Centre

MELAKA: Five members of BEC Klebang and Theesha, a student from SMK Klebang Besar, visited a children's home, May 31.

Hanukkah's Centre is a home dedicated to providing care and support for children of single parents. With 20 children between the ages of four to 17 years, the centre offers assistance in their upbringing.

Filled with excitement and armed with four large pizzas, sweets, and yogurt, our goal was to spend quality time with the children, spreading joy and creating lasting memories.

The visit commenced with an uplifting session of singing songs of praise. As the atmosphere filled with laughter and joy, we moved on to activities that captured the children's enthusiasm. During the "musical chairs" activity, one of the BEC members held the hands of the younger children, ensuring their full participation and enjoyment. The next activity, "filling the cups to the brim," showcased the children's pouring skills. Their ability to pour water from jugs into cups without spilling amazed those present.

Theesha led the third activity. The children standing with their backs to the objects, had to answer "Yes" or "No." A wrong answer resulted in a sprinkle of flour on their faces, leading to hilarious and contagious laughter. Even the caretaker joined in the fun, further strengthening the bond between the children and the visitors.

Following the activities, we treated the children to a scrumptious meal of pizzas and refreshing drinks. The shared enjoyment of food brought us all closer together. Witnessing the smiles on each child's face served as a testament to the success of our visit. — *By Anna Tan*



The BEC members with the children.



Pizza treat for the children.

## Celebrating mothers

SEREMBAN: The Women's Ministry of the Church of the Visitation held a post-Mother's Day event for 80 mothers, from the various language groups, at the church hall on June 3.

The ministry's chairperson, Vinarasi, and parish priest Fr Xavier Andrew, kicked off the event with their respective speeches before the 30-minute Zumba session. Although the mothers were tired, they felt hyped-up and energised to volunteer for the next item on the agenda, the popular singing and dancing slot. The overwhelming response indicated that many mothers were eager for time off from their daily routines and were excited to express themselves through music and dance.

The games slot organised by the youth of the parish brought an element of fun and camaraderie to the event. The "Poison Box" game, where participants had to pick random papers and perform the tasks written on them, followed by the "Whisper Challenge," involving teamwork and memory skills, was engaging and brought smiles to the mothers' faces.

The interactive games created the opportunity for laughter, bonding, and friendly competition.

The Women's Ministry video presentation, showcasing their achievements throughout the year, was a great way to recognise and appreciate their efforts. It allowed those present to understand the impact of the ministry's work and served as an inspiration for others.

The unique and creative lucky draw session, where participants were called on their mobile phones instead of their names, added an element of excitement and encouraged everyone to keep their phones at hand. It was a clever way to keep everyone engaged and ensure the smooth flow of the event. The prize presentation for the games winners added to the excitement.

Finally, the fellowship was an opportunity for the mothers to come together and share their lives. Such moments of connection and support are valuable and help strengthen the bonds within the community. — *By Sabrina Smith*



The mothers being feted by the Women's Ministry.

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REST IN PEACE



# We are a universal Church interceding with Mary

By Sheila Rose Darmaraj

PENANG: This year, the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary was a time of Marian Prayer in preparation for the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

Bishop Sebastian Francis was the main celebrant at the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with parish priest, Fr Dominic Santhiyagu, concelebrating. The Mass was dedicated to the Synodal Process, Synodal Journey to our Mother Mary.

In his homily, the bishop explained that the four Gospels tell us very little of Mary, but enough. On this feast day, the focus is on these two women – one is Elizabeth, about 60+ and Mary, a very young teenager. In the incident of the Annunciation in Luke – the first person to utter the words of the Rosary was the Archangel Gabriel – “Hail Mary Full of Grace”; and the second person was Elizabeth – “Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.”

Although the story of the Annunciation is brief, we can understand from the greeting that Mary was highly favoured and a special person in God’s plan. She was troubled and struggled with the message – just as people struggle with divine messages. She may

have had sleepless nights but her fiat was ‘yes’ to her destiny and the miracle took place. Miracles are not something that happen by chance but are, rather, part of God’s plan. A miracle is a statement about life and miracles govern every part of life.

The prelate quoted Karl Rahner, the theologian who, when he was asked if he believed in miracles, replied “I don’t believe in them. I rely on them to get through each day!”

Bishop Sebastian added that we want to pray for a miracle to happen in the coming Synod – for the universal Church. He said we may think we are in control of our lives but some crisis happens and we realise we are not in control. For some of us, the Synod is a crisis for the Church and we need to surrender, as Mary did, to God. She did not know what was going to happen but completely surrendered her destiny. He said Pope Francis also has similar sentiments and has surrendered the outcome of the Synod to the Holy Spirit.

He said, we have come to a point where we need to question and reflect if we are where God wants us to be. We need to listen to the Holy Spirit so we too can respond with haste, as Mary did. Mary’s response was sincere and a selfless act – to go and visit her cousin when she heard of Eliza-

beth’s pregnancy.

As baptised Christians, we too are sent on our mission. St Paul reminds us it is a curse if we do not preach the Gospel. Jesus gave us a mission to make disciples of others. How do we make disciples? He explained that “We are sent to be witnesses that encounter the world with hope, love, mercy and joy. We are to replace worldly values with values of the Gospel – growing together in humility, service and love”. “We are to be missionary disciples – the world needs the joy of the Gospel, the mercy of the Father and hope generated by the Holy Spirit, and Mary is the embodiment of all this”.

The prelate said, “tonight the Church prays as one, together with Pope Francis, to surrender the synodal process and journey to the maternal care of Mary.” He quoted Pope Francis that Mission is passion for Jesus and also for God’s people. “Love is the root of the mission – always intending the good of the other and thus sacrifice becomes the fruit of mission”. In this mission, Mary is leading the way.

Bishop Sebastian explained that the Synod has two moments – Oct 2023 and Oct 2024. Pope Francis’ intention is to make the Synodal way – the way of the Church and way of life – until the coming of



Bishop Sebastian Francis blesses Mother Mary's statue.

Christ. He has also declared 2025 as the Jubilee Year of Hope. In 2026, the First Malaysian Pastoral Convention will be held, uniting all the churches in Malaysia including Semenanjung Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. There is a plan to introduce a step-by-step journey as a Synodal Church par-

ticipating in communion and in mission. The bishop stressed that we are a Church and the nature of the Church is missionary.

At the end of the homily, the prayer of consecration of the Synodal Journey was recited. He said we are all here as a universal Church interceding with Mary.

## Where are you called to serve?

Continuing from our last issue, we feature sessions three and four of the Five Loaves and Two Fish programme organised by the Penang Diocesan New Evangelisation Commission recently.

Fr Simon Anand, parish priest of the Church of the Sacred Heart, Kampar (CSH) and head of Penang Diocesan Youth Network, spoke on *migrant ministry*, an outreach programme that has become synonymous with CSH because of the sizeable population of migrant workers in Kampar, mainly Indonesian, many of whom are Catholics. Other migrants include Bangladeshis and Nepalese.

The young priest gave an insightful and comprehensive coverage of the ministry in areas most wanting: sacramental, physiological, medical, and educational needs. Other church communities – especially the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit (CHS), the 11 ‘kelompok’ (group) leaders and their members, together with bodies in public office and institutions – all rallied to undertake the massive and manifold tasks for the positive well-being of migrants in Kampar.

He reiterated that the “key problem” was the urgent need for personal ID documentation of many Indonesian migrants. This

### FIVE LOAVES AND TWO FISH

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your gifts/skills/talents etc. in the  
Lord's vineyard to expand God's Kingdom?



Fr Simon Anand

Indonesian diaspora were from among the far and widely scattered 17,000 islands, that make up Indonesia. In many of these far-flung islands there is no registration office/department. “Personal documentation is closely tied up with the schooling system,” Fr Simon disclosed. Without any school records, one is tantamount to “being stateless,” disenfranchised, and deprived even of sacramental documentation!

Thanks to the guidance of the



Theresa Wan

Holy Spirit, through the collaboration and goodwill of the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, this major problem was resolved by the CSH ministry. This important settlement not only safeguards the migrants in all security related matters while in Malaysia, it also guarantees their citizenry upon returning to their home country.

He also elaborated on various health measures undertaken, in particular, the prevention of maternal and infant mortality. Doctors,

nurses, and public health officers helped raise good hygiene and health awareness among the migrants. After their monthly Masses, medical/health check-ups are made available within the church premises, especially for all pregnant women.

It was heartening to learn about the enthusiasm and zeal with which these migrants involved themselves in all church related events, especially in animating the monthly Masses. Another happy outcome the priest related was that they were well accepted by the local parishioners. Fr Simon ended his enlightening delivery with a call for “helping hands” for there still remains much to be done.

The next session was on *Family Life Ministry* which was presented by Theresa Wan, secretary of Penang Diocesan Family Life Commission. She began with a quote from Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* 53, “The strength of the family lies in its capacity to love and to teach how to love. For all a family’s problems, it can always grow, beginning with love.” And as we might know, this document opens with its eponymous exhortation, “The Joy of Love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church.”

Theresa documented the brief history of the Family Commission in Penang, initiated by Fr Edmund Woon in November 2011. The current spiritual director is Deacon Lazarus Jonathan. She harked back to the setting up of World Wide Marriage Encounter (WWME) programme by Fr Gabriel Calvo of Spain in 1952. ME Malaysia began in the early 1980s with a stress on marriage as a “domestic church” (*Lumen Gentium* #11) and its mission to extend this Catholic faith-based experience of couplehood to all dioceses in Penang. She also spoke about the ME weekend stay-in experience designated to help deepen and enrich spousal relationship and to help priests and the religious to strengthen their communication skills with their ‘spouse’ i.e., the people of God.

The goals of ME are: to strengthen communication skills between spouses and to nurture a deeper appreciation of “couple sacraments of holy matrimony.” She emphasised that the ME weekend experience was to “help improve intimacy between husband and wife.” It was not for troubled marriages nor was it a therapy/counselling session. — **By Lucille Dass**

More in our following issues.



# French diocese paralysed as it awaits the fate of its bishop

TOULON, France: It appears that no major decisions will be made in the southern French Diocese of Fréjus-Toulon until the Vatican finally decides the fate of Bishop Dominique Rey, its controversial leader.

The 70-year-old bishop, who has headed the diocese since 2000, was recently forced by the Vatican to suspend priestly ordinations for the second year in a row. Now he has indefinitely postponed a final vows ceremony for two sisters and a brother of the Fraternité Eucharistein (Eucharistic Fraternity), one of the new ecclesial communities he welcomed into the diocese. The community was informed of the postponement on June 1, just 10 days before the three members were due to take their vows.

"Bishop Rey explained to me that the ecclesial context is tense with regard to new communities. He preferred to postpone the Mass," the Eucharistein moderator told the



Bishop Dominique Rey

cath.ch news website. "This is not a censure or a sanction" against the three future religious, he added, referring to a postponement of several months, without

providing further details.

According to a diocesan source contacted by *La Croix*, the character of the members is not in question.

"Bishop Rey's decision is logical and common sense," said the source. "As his discernment is being questioned by Rome, he is showing that he has understood the situation and is giving proof of common sense."

The community, set up in Switzerland in 1996, and its founder, Fr Nicolas Buttet, had been implicated in 2021 when a Vatican investigation concluded that there were "instances of control and manipulation in the organisation of people's time, down to the smallest detail of their activity and life".

In particular, the investigators noted a lack of supervision on the part of Bishop Rey. Following the submission of the report to Rome, the fraternity reformed its

governance and hoped to welcome new members this year.

Bishop Rey himself has been in the sights of the Vatican authorities for several months. In particular, he has been accused of ordaining priests without ensuring that they had received sufficiently solid training. Some seminarians previously rejected in other dioceses were then integrated into his diocesan seminary.

A canonical visitation took place in March 2023 to shed light on Bishop Rey's governance. The results have not yet been made public. The Vatican took the rare disciplinary measure to suspend priestly ordinations in the diocese last year, a ban that was continued this year as well.

"This sanction will be applied until Bishop Rey's future is sealed," said a source close to the matter. — **By Matthieu Lasserre, LCI** ([https:// international.la-croix.com/](https://international.la-croix.com/))

## Pope-Imam document inspires formation of human fraternity forums

OOTY, India: A document coauthored by Pope Francis and Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Sheikh Ahmed El Tayeb has inspired the participants of two seminars to launch human fraternity forums to promote peace and the art of living together.

People from various walks of life, including children and transgenders, attended the seminars on *Human Fraternity*

for *World Peace and Living Together* at Ooty and Coimbatore towns in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

The Coimbatore-based Franciscan Missionaries of Mary and Delhi's Islamic Studies Association jointly organised the seminar – first at Ooty and then at Coimbatore the following day.

The participants discussed the salient

features of the declaration *Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* – written by the Pope and the grand imam.

The participants found the document inviting "all persons who have faith in God and faith in human fraternity to unite and work together so that it may serve as a guide for future generations to advance a culture of mutual respect in the awareness of the great divine grace that makes all human beings brothers and sisters."

Adopting a participatory methodology,

the participants discussed social interventions for a social order worthy of humanity (*Gaudium et Spes* 24). They felt that the document is truly a model for inter-faith harmony and human solidarity.

They resolved to take inspiration and renew their commitment to stand together as one human family. They established the Human Fraternity Forum to put into action the key teachings of the document. — **By Joseph Victor Edwin, Matters India**



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# Planting a tree is an act of faith, hope and charity

BENIN, West Africa: Despite the early morning rain, the inhabitants of Djègbadji – a district of the city of Ouidah, located in southern Benin along the Atlantic Ocean – welcomed some special visitors in the early hours of June 1.

Archbishop Roger Houngbédji of Cotonou and his two vicars' general set off in a cheerful procession. The 60-year-old archbishop, a Dominican friar who was recently elected president of the Episcopal Conference of Benin (CEB), chose "the beautiful beach of Ouidah, whose landscape inspires admiration and praise for God the Creator" to commemorate the West African nation's 39th National Tree Day.

"This day is a public appeal to every citizen to contribute to the fight against desertification by planting a tree, in accordance with current standards, for the good of all," said the archbishop, who just last March launched a "Green Church" programme on behalf of the Archdiocese of Cotonou.

"Planting a tree is an act of faith, hope and charity: faith in God's providence who will give the rain needed for the seedling to grow, hope that one day the little seedling will become big, and charity towards the multitude of strangers who will enjoy its benefits," he said while inaugurating the day at the diocesan level, the first of its kind in Cotonou.

On June 1 the Catholics of Cotonou planted 500 seedlings that were acquired as part of the archdiocese's partnership with Benin's Ministry for the Living Environment and Sustainable Development.

"120 coconut seedlings were planted in Ouidah, 200 teak seedlings in Allada and 170 eucalyptus and Blighia Sapida seedlings in Glo-Djigbé," said Fr Georges Adéyè, coordinator of the "Green Church" programme.

Killing two birds with one stone, by addressing the media associated with the event, Archbishop Houngbédji invited the priests and admin-

istrators of the 114 parishes in the archdiocese to "raise awareness among the faithful at all Masses on June 4, in the run-up to World Environment Day, about the urgent need to abandon non-biodegradable plastic bags and adopt environmentally-friendly alternatives to safeguard our common home, the earth".

But the archbishop, who has led the Church in Cotonou since 2016, wanted to involve more than just Catholics in the project. "I encourage all the people of Benin to devote themselves to alternative solutions, which will contribute to the protection of our common heritage: the environment," he said.

Thomas Bagan, an environmentalist who is a member of the "Green Church" programme's technical committee, said there are a number of alternative solutions. "Packaging can be made of cardboard or paper; everyone can have their own reusable water gourd instead of sachets of water; no more buying meals in non-biodegradable



Archbishop Roger Houngbédji of Cotonou plants a coconut tree on a diocesan estate in the city of Ouidah, some 50 kilometers from Cotonou (LCI Photo/Juste Hlannon/LCA)

sachets, etc." he said.

Catholics seemed to react enthusiastically to Archbishop Houngbédji's message, which was read out at Masses throughout the archdiocese on June 4.

"The fact that the archbishop himself has sent us this message, which was read out at Mass, can only comfort us," said Sophie Agbidi, who's St Anthony of Padua Parish has been running a "green parish project" since 2019 and is the pilot parish for the "Green Church" programme. "It reinforces the great awareness-raising drive already launched here to adopt attitudes that keep plastic bags away from our entire parish and our people," she told *La Croix Africa*.

"This message will certainly raise awareness and help improve not only the living conditions of the local Catholics, but also of Benin's population in general," said Ivan Koura, another St Anthony

parishioner who teaches at the National University of Agriculture. "Ecological transition implies the need to change habits and opt for healthier, more environmentally-friendly attitudes, including the abandonment of non-biodegradable plastic bags," he said.

"Despite the adoption of law 2017-39 of Dec 26, 2017, banning, among other things, the production, marketing, possession and use of non-biodegradable plastic bags in Benin, there is still no real awareness in the country," noted Samuel Tognizin, a young lawyer from St Thérèse de Godomey Parish.

"If the Church, which represents the majority of Benin's population, takes action alongside the State in this way, it will undoubtedly bear fruit," he said, pointing out that "whatever the Church asks of us, we cannot refuse". —

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



## Feast of St Thomas, the Apostle

### A Saint for our Time

Day 1	Saturday, 24 June 2023 5.30pm Novena * 6.00pm Mass St. Thomas, Apostle of Jesus Christ
Day 2	Sunday, 25 June 2023 8.00am Novena * 8.30am Mass St. Thomas, Devoted Apostle
Day 3	Monday, 26 June 2023 7.30pm Novena * 8.00pm Mass St. Thomas, the Missionary
Day 4	Tuesday, 27 June 2023 7.30pm Novena * 8.00pm Mass St. Thomas, Father of Our Faith
Day 5	Wednesday, 28 June 2023 7.30pm Novena * 8.00pm Mass St. Thomas, Proclaimer of the Faith to Unbelieving Nations
Day 6	Thursday, 29 June 2023 7.30pm Novena * 8.00pm Mass St. Thomas, Witness to the Reality of the Resurrection
Day 7	Friday, 30 June 2023 7.30pm Novena * 8.00pm Mass St. Thomas, Acknowledger of the Divinity of Jesus
Day 8	Saturday, 1 July 2023 9.30am Novena * 10.00am Mass - ANNOINTING OF THE SICK 5.30pm Novena * 6.00pm Mass St. Thomas, Martyr for the Love of the Risen Lord
Day 9	Sunday, 2 July 2023 8.30am Rosary * 9.00am Mass St. Thomas, Proclaimer of Jesus as "My Lord and My God"

Monday, 3rd July 2023  
Rosary@7.30pm  
**THANKSGIVING MASS**  
@8.00pm

- The Rosary and Novena to St. Thomas will be held 30 minutes before Mass
- Mass offerings & donations can made at the Parish Office or via email
- Cheque made payable to: Gereja Katolik St.Thomas

**CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS**  
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# Can Pope Francis bring peace to Ukraine?

Pope Francis has launched a peace mission aimed at finding a settlement of the Russia-Ukraine war, upsetting Ukraine's allies with his refusal to insist that Russia leave Ukraine as a starting point for negotiations. For their part, the Russians simply ignore the Pope.

Western supporters of Ukraine accuse the Pope of moral equivalency, treating both sides as equal. This is nonsense.

Just four weeks into the war, the Pope condemned "the violent aggression against Ukraine" and the "senseless massacre where every day there is a repetition of slaughter and atrocities," in his Sunday *Angelus* in March 2022. "There is no justification for this!"

The Vatican has always said that it wants a "just peace." When *America's* Gerard O'Connell asked Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Vatican's foreign minister, what a just peace meant for the Vatican, Gallagher said it meant a withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukrainian territory.

This is not to say the Pope holds the West blameless. In June of last year, Francis told *La Civiltà Cattolica*, a Jesuit publication, that a couple of months before the war, an unnamed "wise" diplomat had expressed concern to him about NATO. "They are barking at the gates of Russia," the diplomat said. "And they don't understand that the Russians are imperial, and they will not allow any foreign power to approach them. The situation could lead to war," concluded the diplomat.

While Francis made clear that this was the diplomat's opinion, it is hard not to conclude that Francis agreed with him. He seems to believe, as many in the Global South do, that NATO somehow either provoked, or failed to prevent, the war.



Cardinal Matteo Zuppi engages in high-level talks in Kyiv. (ANSA) Inset: Cardinal Zuppi

Francis has also noted "the interest in testing and selling weapons" to combatants in the war. There is no question that the American military-industrial complex is profiting in Ukraine, financially as well as strategically: The Russian war machine is being severely degraded without the loss of a single American life.

But responding to those who accuse him of being pro-Putin, Francis told *La Civiltà Cattolica*: "No, I am not. It would be simplistic and erroneous to say such a thing. I am simply against turning a complex situation into a distinction between good guys and bad guys, without considering the roots and self-interests, which are very complex."

The Pope acknowledged "the brutality and ferocity with which this war is being carried out" by the Russian side. "While we witness the ferocity and cruelty of Russian troops," he said in the *La Civiltà Cattolica* interview,

"we should not forget the problems, and seek to solve them."

The Pope is not cheering on either side in this war, which is an essential quality needed in a mediator. The Pope has appointed Cardinal Matteo Zuppi as a special envoy for peace in Ukraine. Both sides have used the Vatican for facilitating exchanges of prisoners, which is a good sign.

With Ukraine unwilling to give up any of its territory — including Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014 — is there something else that would appease Russia and allow Putin to save face in defeat? I think there is: nuclear weapons.

The West has always feared the Red Army sweeping into Europe — indeed, it's the reason NATO exists. Because the US and Europe were unwilling to pay for enough conventional weapons to stop what they considered a formidable force, they relied on

tactical nuclear weapons as a deterrent to the Red Army's invasion.

We now see that the Russian army is a Potemkin army, more show than substance. If Ukraine, all by itself can hold off the Russians and score victories, NATO would wipe the floor with them without using tactical nuclear weapons.

This military reality calls for a rethinking of NATO's nuclear policy. As part of settling the Ukraine-Russia war, NATO and the US should do two things: First, swear off the first use of nuclear weapons in Europe. Second, negotiate the elimination, or at least reduction, of tactical nuclear weapons in Europe.

Ukraine will have to agree to not "officially" join NATO. The war has already made Ukraine part of NATO unofficially. Ukraine would continue to receive weapons, but no NATO troops can be deployed on Ukrainian soil.

Putin, as an authoritarian autocrat, can continue this war indefinitely. We must give him something to get him to stop. He could save face by telling his people that the war succeeded in forcing NATO into this deal.

There is a temptation to let the war go on as long as Russia is stymied and suffering huge military losses in the speculative hope that it will bring down Putin. But Ukraine is also suffering both military and civilian losses.

The Pope reminds us to look at "the human side of the war," the impact on people's lives, the deaths, the refugees, the widows and orphans. The war cannot be examined only in terms of "geopolitical calculations." Too many people are dying. The Pope is right in calling for peace. Unnecessary tactical nuclear weapons in Europe would be a cheap price to pay for it. — **By Thomas Reese, NCR**

## A decade of faith-led climate action under Pope Francis

The election of Pope Francis in 2013 promised a new era for the global Catholic community. Inspired by the patron saint of animals and the environment, the head of one of the biggest religious denominations in the world sought to change the role of faith in addressing the ecological crisis.

Ten years into his term, he has made an indelible mark on the Roman Catholic Church's perspective and approaches to tackling environmental issues.

By highlighting the ecological lens in his reflections and statements, he has not only made problems deemed as too technical or irrelevant more relatable, but also made the institution itself more approachable to billions worldwide.

While previous popes have issued statements and letters on environmental protection and social justice, Pope Francis is the first leader of the Catholic Church to strongly recognise the deteriorating state of the planet and call for transformative actions to address the ecological crisis.

Two years into his term, he issued the encyclical "*Laudato Si'*: On Care for Our Common Home", a reflection on the climate crisis, environmental degradation, consumeristic behaviours, and the resulting impact on different communities. It was a ground-breaking move that represented some deviations from traditional Catholic approaches to social issues.

By anchoring the letter on scientific findings regarding the climate crisis and emphasising the human aspect of said issue, *Laudato Si'* represented the complementarity between science and faith, two disciplines that have been at odds for centuries. Using this lens also made its messages more universal, allowing it to address people of different religions.

*Laudato Si'* also opened up new opportunities for dialogues between religious leaders, scientists, environmentalists, economists, policymakers, communities, and other stakeholders on protecting the planet. It also signified that the Holy See is willing to have a more vocal presence in climate-relevant decision-making processes, as seen by its entry as an active Party in the climate negotiations last year.

By placing itself behind the global climate and environmental movement, the Catholic community has been more influential in initiating sustainable actions worldwide. For example, Catholic institutions have played a pivotal role in the exponential growth of the global divestment movement. As of this year, over 250 Catholic groups joined the faith-based sector which makes up 35 per cent of all institutions that have divested from fossil fuels, more than any sector.

Since the release of *Laudato Si'*, the Vatican has published several more key documents that shape its official position on ecological issues and guide the actions of



A pilgrim presents Pope Francis with a shirt that is printed *Laudato Si'* on September 1, 2021, the start of the Church's observance of the Season of Creation. (Vatican Media)

its constituency. Among these are the *Mensuram Bonam*, which presents a set of principles and criteria for making sustainable, responsible, and faith-aligned investments, and the *Fratelli Tutti*, another encyclical on reestablishing and strengthening fraternity and social friendships as keys to building a better world.

The establishment of the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform has been instrumental in inspiring more dioceses, parishes, and communities to conduct ecologically-sus-

tainable activities. Such actions have been addressing numerous issues at the local levels, ranging from the adoption of sustainable lifestyles and ecological economics to taking care of ecosystems and communities alike.

Under Pope Francis' term and beyond, faith will play an important role in accelerating the growth and implementation of sustainable solutions worldwide for the decades still to come. — **By John Leo Algo, LiCAS News**



# ‘I fell in love with Christ’ to portray Padre Pio on screen

A film which made its US debut recently recounts the life of a beloved 20th-century saint — and the movie’s star told *OSV News* he “fell in love with Christ” to prepare for the part.

Actor Shia LaBeouf portrays St Pio of Pietrelcina in the new drama *Padre Pio*, which premiered at last year’s Venice Film Festival and was released in US theatres and on demand June 2.

Directed by Abel Ferrara, the movie traces a pivotal period in the life of St (Padre) Pio, when the 33-year-old Capuchin Franciscan priest — bearing the stigmata, the visible wounds of Christ — begins what would become his lifelong ministry in San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy, just after World War I. (The Capuchin himself had served as a private in the Italian army’s medical corps during the conflict.)

LaBeouf said he “wasn’t even trying to make movies” when Ferrara approached him about the role.

The acclaimed 36-year-old actor — whose Emmy-winning career as a kid on the Disney Channel blossomed into big-screen success — found himself “totally lost” after his inner demons led to partying, work conflicts and run-ins with the law.

“I was wandering around, living in my truck,” he said. “I wasn’t interested in acting anymore.”

As LaBeouf began confronting his personal issues, Ferrara tapped him for *Padre Pio*, a saint to whom the Bronx-born director — best known for his gritty cinematic takes on the underworld — felt himself “drawn.”

Based in Rome for the past two decades,

Ferrara had begun exploring the life of Padre Pio by first making a documentary, then crafting a feature film to depict a saint “struggling (as) an individual who, like all of us, is confronted with a lot of questions.”

“I wanted to make a film about a man,” Ferrara told *OSV News*. “I didn’t want to make a film about a saint.”

The project “seemed like a neon sign” beckoning LaBeouf, who said he “was looking for salvation (and) ... a relationship with God.”

While researching the film, LaBeouf met Bro Alexander Rodriguez, a Capuchin Franciscan who is assistant vocation director at the order’s Old Mission Santa Inés in Solvang, California.

Soon LaBeouf was asking about more than one of the congregation’s most beloved saints.

“Shia was looking to know about Padre Pio, and then delved into the faith,” Bro Rodriguez told *OSV News*. “He got into RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults). The friars and I were helping to catechise him.”

LaBeouf said “(learning) how to pray the Rosary” brought a “tangible relief” that he had previously sought through drugs, alcohol and life in the fast lane.

The lessons continued as Bro Rodriguez accompanied LaBeouf to Italy for filming, with the Capuchin providing technical assistance for the project while appearing in the movie as Padre Pio’s fellow Capuchin and spiritual adviser.

Drawing on the saint’s writings at the time, the movie presents a “pretty accurate” image of “a very human Padre Pio, one (who) did not become a saint in an easy way,” said Bro



Actor Shia LaBeouf, who portrays St Pio of Pietrelcina, and Brother Alexander Rodriguez, who is a Capuchin Franciscan, appear in the new drama “Padre Pio,” (*OSV News photo/Gravitas Ventures*) Rodriguez.

The film links the saint’s reception of the stigmata — and its attendant suffering — with post-war Italy’s tumultuous “two red years” (*biennio rosso*) of economic and social upheaval, which saw riots, strikes and peasant land seizures across the country. San Giovanni Rotondo itself was the scene of a little-known October 1920 massacre in which 14 peasants were killed by police after socialists attempted to install their mayor.

Ferrara said he sees the tragedy — which he called “the first battle of World War II” — as a window into “Padre Pio’s position of compassion and sacrifice beyond petty politics,” amid the reality of evil and human suffering.

Bro Rodriguez said Padre Pio’s stigmata, which over the years drew thousands of pilgrims to San Giovanni Rotondo, had been divinely given “as a ministry for the people who were suffering” in such troubled times — which continue today, said Ferrara, who

recently returned from Ukraine, where more than 88,000 Russian war crimes have so far been documented since the start of the Russian Federation’s full-scale invasion in February 2022.

“The fight has never stopped,” said Ferrara, adding, “what’s happening in Ukraine (and) what happened in World War I (both) show that evil is there, that it exists.”

“I have Polaroid pictures of evil in my life,” said LaBeouf, stressing that evil typically manifests itself in mundane forms such as “selfishness, self-centredness ... dishonesty (and) a complete lack of empathy for others.”

In the face of evil, LaBeouf said, he now draws on his faith for strength, wisdom and courage, with Padre Pio as a role model.

“He suffered in patience, silence and solitude. He didn’t complain about it,” said LaBeouf. “The deeper I got into Pio, the more I realised the right way to suffer. His life was instructive.” — **By Gina Christian, *OSV***

## Camillian Sister emphasises importance of healthcare

Sister Benilda Quimio, a Filipina vocation director of the Congregation of the Sister Ministers of the Infirm of St Camillus in the Philippines, highlights the vital role of healthcare in the lives of people and explains why nurturing life is important in the communities.

“Jesus Christ spent most of His time healing and attending to the sick, and Jesus cares for the well-being of every person,” she explained. “On January 23, 1829, our founder, Blessed Maria Domenica Brun Barbantini and our Patron Saint, St Camillus de Lellis, continued the mission of Jesus Christ in healing the people and I also follow the same path.”

The vocation directress told *Vatican News* that their charism in the congregation is “to witness the love of Jesus Christ for the sick, and to visit the sick and the elderly people in their own homes.”

### Caring for the sick and elders

Sr Quimio also noted that the Camillian sisters’ charism reflects the Filipino values in the Philippines.

“The Camillian sisters uphold the dignity and sacredness of the person by caring and helping the sick; giving preference to the abandoned and dying; living compassion towards all people who suffer; competence; responsibility; relationality; and communion, which are similar to the values of Filipinos,” she said.

She said their service to the sick and the elderly includes “assistance to those in the hospitals and those people in the homes for the elderly and other health facilities.” She added, “We provide loving care and attention



Sister Ministers of the Infirm of St. Camillus in the Philippines (courtesy of Sr. Benilda Quimio)

to the sick and all those who suffer, especially the dying, coupled with pastoral care of the family, and all forms of assistance to the poor and the marginalised.”

Aside from working for the sick and the elderly, Sr Quimio said the congregation of Camillian sisters also gives and organises health orientations and provides food for the poor in society. “Our congregation also engages in health education for the prevention of illness; we also respond to the needs of our poor brothers and sisters and we conduct feeding programmes in poor communities,” she said.

In addition to these initiatives, the Filipina Camillian sister adds that they facilitate formation activities for children with special needs in hopes of improving their role and participation in society. “We established a school with a special education programme to help the individuals with special educational needs in order to realise their full potential and to facilitate their integration in society,” she said.

### Protecting and nurturing the lives of people

Sr Quimio also spoke about the growing needs of helping the sick and the elderly in the communities.

“We speak here of the value of life; so it is important for everyone to take care of the sick and the elderly,” she said.

She also highlighted that it was through Jesus Christ that we have “all received the gift of life from God and we are on this earth because God loves us,” she said, adding, “God wants to share His life with us.”

Sr Quimio said that the Camillian charism of the sisters reflects the purpose of God in “sending Jesus to heal those who suffer in body and spirit and to grant us eternal life.”

In serving the mission of Christ, she said, they are able to be an example for young people to follow in taking care of the sick and the old in their communities. “The congregation cares for its sick members, for its old members, and by seeing and doing our activities, it teaches the young people to do the same. It

grows in love, compassion in service, respect, and unity,” she said.

She also explained that their mission in improving an individual’s health strengthens the faith and leads people closer to God.

“People with deep faith who contracted any serious illnesses and have recovered have stronger faith now,” Sr Quimio narrated. She believes that “people who have faith and got better had experienced the healing power of God, and nothing can dissuade them from their faith and trust in God’s healing and saving power.”

The nun also shared her perspective about the use of so-called “mercy” killing of the sick. “A society that does not care for the sick and the elderly does not care for life and cannot accept the reality of suffering,” she added. “Euthanasia is taking away others’ lives, it becomes an easy practice for others because some people are regarded only for what they can produce.”

Sr Quimio also said that an individual’s needs have many aspects that must be taken care of, and “the goal for improving one’s health is to have pleasure and satisfaction in all of life’s dimensions — physical, emotional, social, economic, spiritual, etc.”

She also pointed out that some people are forgetting the importance of God’s presence in our lives. “In a hedonistic and consumerist era, many things distract people’s lives so there is no available space for Him and God is being forgotten,” she emphasised.

In her 36 years of service as a Camillian sister in the Church, Sr Quimio said that she will faithfully continue to follow Christ in accordance with her faith because she is “called to be a witness of God’s presence and love to all people.” — **By Rechilda Estores, *Vatican News***





# Bridging the hunger gap

By Gwen Manickam

Seven years ago, a Kuala Lumpur-based non-profit organisation known as *The Lost Food Project* (TLFP), was founded to help reduce food waste, combat climate change, and fight hunger in the local community.

British-born Suzanne Mooney, a former broadcast journalist with the BBC, reporting for the Today Show, and a group of friends, initiated TLFP in April 2016, two years after Suzanne moved to Malaysia with her family.

According to TLFP's website, Suzanne found that no professional food banks were taking regular collections of surplus food from supermarkets or farmers in Malaysia. Many great charities were giving out food to people in need – but most of the food was either sponsored or sporadically donated by fast-food chains. Sustainability and environmental concerns were not a priority.

A turning point for Suzanne was a chance meeting with Robert Egger, who founded community kitchens in the United States. This encounter made her realise the impact individuals can have, leading her to establish TLFP.

Suzanne and her team formed a registered society in Malaysia with two charity projects, and *The Lost Food Project* was born. The organisation was established in response to the alarming amount of food waste in our society and the pressing issue of food insecurity many individuals and families face.

## The volunteers

Two weeks ago, I visited *The Lost Food Project*'s new, high-ceilinged, brightly-lit warehouse in Sungai Besi. The place was pristine, and crates of fresh produce were being processed for collection. The sight of dedicated individuals working diligently on a common goal inspired me.

The peaceful and joyful demeanour of corporate volunteers pruning, washing, and packing vegetables that arrived from Pasar Borong KL the night before was eye-catching. Intrigued by the positive atmosphere, I enquired about signing up as a volunteer.

Nnaemeka Chukwu from Enugu State, Nigeria, has been there almost every week for the last five and half years.

He came to Malaysia in 2010 to further his studies. An accountant by education and teacher by profession, he earned a second degree in business, a master's in Public Administration, and is now working on his doctorate in Education.

"I learned about TLFP looking for volunteers through a group chat of expatriates and Malaysians called *Internation*. At first, five of us came to help. The other four didn't return but I have not looked back."

The Jesus Caritas parishioner said he volunteers because "As a Christian, it is a way of evangelising. I bring smiles to people's faces. If you walk around Kota Raya, many people are looking very hungry and waiting for



Residents at a Projek Perumahan Rakyat (PPR) collecting vegetables delivered by *The Lost Food Project* from Pasar Borong KL.

### Food insecurity

TLFP's current chief executive officer, Ariffin Buranudeen said that he loosely classifies food insecurity as those who do not have three full meals a day and those who lack nutritious meals. According to 2019 statistics, 900,000 Malaysians, and more than 200,000 foreigners, face food insecurity. He added that 22 per cent of children under the age of five, living in Projek Perumahan Rakyat (PPRs) face stunted growth as their food is often starch and sugar based.

"We try to feed the hungry with nutritious food – both Malaysians and several refugee communities in the vicinity," said Ariffin,

who took on the role two months ago. He comes with 47 years of work experience, of which 31 years were with Nestle. Ariffin jests that he's the oldest freshe amidst the TLFP team of 10 permanent staff.

"Service to humanity. There is no greater service than to serve someone else," said the jovial philanthropist who is no stranger to dedicating time and funds to help the less fortunate.

Ariffin added that he reminds his team that they need to salute and thank the volunteers, without whom this mission would not be possible, as they help *feed the hungry not the landfill*, as the TLFP tagline goes.



Carmel Rozario is a volunteer at *The Lost Food Project* since its inception, seven years ago.

someone to give them food. If we didn't have TLFP, surely there will be even more hungry people out there.

"The more I do this, the more I assist some people to have food on their table."

Nnaemeka helps manage the volunteer groups. He preps them before they start their tasks and keeps the environment pumping by playing catchy tunes as they work.

Carmel Rozario from the Church of St Ignatius was recruited by the founder, Suzanne, as they live in the same condo complex in Bangsar, and she's been volunteering every Thursday for seven years.

"I saw a need and found Suzanne's intentions pure. Suzanne found there was so much food wastage and personally approached vendors at the wholesale market. I remember going to the grand opening ceremony at Pasar

Borong KL. Chef Wan and TV3 were there and that helped create momentum and found some volunteers for the project.

"I wish we could get more people from our churches involved, especially the youth. On days we have corporations sending their staff as a CSR project is great because we have extra hands. Some days we are very short-handed," said Carmel, whose father was a Society of St Vincent de Paul member.

Several years ago, while Carmel's husband worked in Nigeria, she helped an American couple raise funds and gather equipment to set up a medical laboratory in a remote village.

"God is so good. I have seen His hand work miracles. I approached a prayer group I belong to, and the expatriate community, and they all helped.

"At TLFP, if we don't volunteer, imagine the amount of food thrown out. I know we only give certain produce once a week, but surely every little bit helps.

Carmel said they make sure the food is presentable before it leaves the warehouse. "Just because they are poor doesn't mean they don't deserve nice things. It is worrying when we don't get enough vegetables to give for the week. Then we compensate with dry goods like rice, cereal, or milk."

Carmel comes with her friend Mary Daniel. "It's a fun and fulfilling activity we do together," said Mary, who has always played an active role in helping the less fortunate.

## The Lost Food Project (TLFP)

The first two years of the project felt like a roller-coaster. The volunteers started by distributing food from supermarkets to charities using their cars. But within three years, the project evolved into the leading food rescue organisation in the country, focusing on rescuing surplus food from various sources and redistributing it to those in need.

TLFP collaborates with food suppliers, farms, and other partners to rescue surplus food, which is then sorted, repackaged, and distributed to various charitable organisations and individuals in need.

Its collaborative partnerships with local farmers, including the wholesale market for fresh produce, *Pasar Borong* Kuala Lumpur, Selayang, results in them receiving 60 per cent of its fresh produce from the wholesale market, ensuring that surplus produce from both farms and the market is not wasted.

"We work closely with farmers to identify crops at risk of being discarded due to cosmetic imperfections, overstock, or market fluctuations. TLFP's dedicated team actively engages with farmers, providing them with a sustainable solution to minimise food waste and maximise the impact of their crops. By rescuing this surplus produce, we can effectively distribute it to charitable organisations and individuals in need, addressing both food waste and food insecurity in our community simultaneously," said Ariffin.

Since its establishment, TLFP has partnered with well-known organisations including Nestle, Procter & Gamble, DKSH Holding, Unilever, BIG Grocer, Euro Atlantic, Village Grocer, and *Pasar Borong* KL, among others.

The organisation takes pride in its diverse community of volunteers who support the cause. "Our organisation believes in fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment for people from all backgrounds, races, and religions. We actively encourage and embrace diversity, and it is heart-warming to see individuals with different perspectives and experiences collaborating side by side."

TLFP's volunteer opportunities are open to everyone. They actively promote and celebrate diversity through their recruitment efforts. Volunteers from various racial and religious backgrounds are united by a shared commitment to reducing food waste and fighting hunger. We believe that coming together with diverse perspectives and experiences strengthens our organisation and enables us to make a greater impact in the community."

Since its inception, TLFP has had the privilege of assisting a wide range of individuals and communities in need, including orphanages and children's homes where they provide nutritious meals and essential food supplies, ensuring vulnerable children have access to proper nutrition.

TLFP also supports homeless shelters by supplying fresh produce, packaged food, and other essentials, helping relieve hunger among the homeless.

They have reached out to low-income families, refugee and migrant communities facing food insecurity, offering food assistance and support to ensure access to nourishing meals.

TLFP collaborates with indigenous communities, addressing their specific food needs and cultural requirements to ensure their assistance is sensitive and inclusive.

The organisation's efforts resulted in rescuing a staggering 4,987,540kg of food, providing 15,435,721 meals to the needy, and preventing 12,468,851kg of greenhouse gas emissions from landfills in Malaysia. By diverting food waste, TLFP prevents a weekly average of 19 tons of greenhouse gases from entering the atmosphere.

Currently operating in Kuala Lumpur and certain parts of Petaling Jaya, TLFP serves communities in 15 PPRs and 80 welfare organisations.





# Less shared experiences, weaker bonds

The bonds of friendship between Malaysians who grew up in yesteryears are said to be stronger than today's generation, and the claim is repeated by those who endured the Emergency, all the way to my generation of the 80s. Reminiscing about the past always seems to be an idyllic, romantic idea.

If you trace back the common factor in these (often seemingly exaggerated) recollections, you often find a theme of hardship. My generation grew up with stories of how lucky we were to have three square meals, when all our parents had to eat was either tapioca or congee once a day. If the stories were to be put together, one would imagine the whole of Malaya to be a giant tapioca plantation where our grandparents huddled together, hiding from Japanese air raids in the morning and harvesting tapioca to share in the evenings, and running spider-fight rackets with banana leaf paper money in between.

On the topic of currency, the value of money is another favourite topic. Again, if the stories are collated, one would be inclined to believe that a single *roti canai* in the 60s could feed a family of four, but we digress.

My generation, too, growing up in the 90s, had many shared experiences, though perhaps less adversity than the one before. Almost everyone watched the same television programmes — *Airwolf*, *Knight Rider*, *Mr Bean*. Some transcended cultural barriers — *Baashha* would play on repeat every Deepavali and *God of Gamblers* every Chinese New Year.

Kids would by and large attend national schools — with pleasant memories of trucks dispensing ice-cold Milo, less pleasant mem-



## MAKING SENSE

Emmanuel Joseph

ories of lining up for BCG immunisations, strange ones of lining up by drains learning how to brush our teeth.

Saturday mornings were spent indulging in cartoons. Serial programmes meant coming back at regular intervals and tolerating long ads, especially during prime time.

Even in church, before the emphasis on teaching the meaning of Mass to children (or the existence of overhead projectors with translations of prayers), we would be left to fill these gaps ourselves, and that was part of the joy of learning about our faith, apart from sharing a hurried snack or drink before or after catechism.

Fast forward 20 years, and we are two generations away from millennials. Like tropical storms, we are reverting to Greek in naming future ones this way, and Beta is approaching us fast, as those who grew up in the 80s and 90s shift squarely into the middle of our seven living generations.\*

What shared memories will our kids have?

Just as we found it difficult to relate to sharing a television between neighbours, our children will find the idea of waiting for a 56k dialup modem unrelatable, even unbelievable.

Meanwhile, the current generation have developed an appetite for both quantity and quality of choice, with a demand for immediacy — they want it all, and they want it now.

Driven to power these, our own choices

have diminished somewhat. The value of our money has diminished, forcing us to expend more time in keeping up with developments the present has to offer, and anticipating the future.

Saturday morning cartoons we enjoyed at home, often together, as our parents gave up their large screens for us, are now replaced with multiple small screens over a table, usually outside home, as we satiate our coffee cravings to start the weekend.

Part of progress, perhaps, as we live our lives trying to tick our weekly boxes and rush through our now longer bucket lists. Holidays are cut short to accommodate more cities and documenting them becomes more important than experiencing them, adapting to today.

In adapting, we sometimes circumnavigate and tiptoe around problems.

National schools' quality not what it used to be? Send our kids to Chinese or Tamil or private schools. Higher crime? Gated and guarded communities. Not enough places in local universities? Go private. Government hospitals getting packed, get insurance for everyone.

A large part of the blame can be assigned to successive governments, but perhaps also us, the people, who accept things the way they are, and work around it.

This, sadly, just adds to the divide between our haves and have-nots, and with it the common bonds that bind us together as a Malaysian community. Together with these, values, identities, and relatability. As these now-bubbled communities drift apart, exacerbated by less need to be guarded or sensitive to each other's feelings, being stuck in new echo

chambers by people who think, speak and feel like us, reinforcing our beliefs, even if they may not be right.

It isn't like we don't have enough problems to tackle together, but the danger lies in the increasing propensity of seeing these problems from the lenses of only those who are 'like' us — replacing the quintessential Ali, Muthu and Ah Chong with more of the same race, or to including those with different pronouns or gender inclusion, or taking account of his/her education — depending now on which segmented bubble we belong to.

The results of these starting steps would reverberate in our children's adulthood-finding it harder to bond and relate to one another owing to having less in common.

Perhaps going back to basics once in a while would help remind us that we risk too much by simply rushing our families across the finish line, and it is worth spending some idle time with each other, by trucks dispensing ice-cold Milo.

\* The Seven Living Generation are:  
Greatest Generation — born 1901-1924  
Silent Generation — born 1925-1945  
Baby Boomer Generation — born 1946-1964  
Generation X — born 1965-1979  
Millennials or Gen Y — born 1980-1994  
Generation Z — born 1995-2012  
Generation Alpha — born 2013 — 2025.

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



## ... meanwhile

Joanne Lim

“Come sit with me a while”... *what if we tore down our fences and replaced them with benches instead*, I thought to myself as we sat by the grotto of the Church of The Sacred Heart at busy Tank Road, Singapore. There was not a single fence surrounding this beautiful church, so anyone could walk in to be greeted by warm welcoming smiles and lively, yet reverent, uplifting music. A fringe of carefully crafted and manicured shrubs gives the perimeter a breath of fresh air, literally. We sat and prayed in front of the grotto, a stone's throw from the bustling Orchard Rd, yet possessing its own aura of being 'quaint'. Do you remember the days when old fashioned people lived without fences separating them? Today, I hardly know anything much about my neighbour. **Who is my neighbour?** We shared compounds and reached across the aisle to speak like real people. Could we forget the era of a young Polish Pope (St) **John Paul 2** who stared at the stranglehold of Communism to ask that an important fence, the Berlin Wall, be torn down to free an imprisoned people? Still, no one in that era will ever forget the voice of **Ronald Reagan** at the famous speech in West Berlin to admonish the great Russian leader Gorbachav to 'tear down this wall!'

My thoughts returned to “family” back in Malaysia — and the community that grew up with me in another parish I used to attend...and the many friends whom I called “family” who had left due to a host of reasons — “oh I don't feel like I belong.” They say that people come and go, yes, so

## What if there are benches, not fences...

be it, but when people leave because they no longer feel accepted, ‘loved’...by God, by friends, by friends as close as family, by friends who become family, or by your own shepherd...the fences grow...and they grow tall. What was it that got Trump in trouble to his (MAGA) ‘*Make America Great Again*’ rant...he wanted a fence built at the Mexican border. **When once there was a bridge, suddenly there needs to be a fence.** We could get carried away with building fences around us, even as we contrastingly see the Lord Jesus as the only and ultimate bridge to Heaven.

Shouldn't our churches replicate a little of Heaven, whatever our vision or interpretation of Heaven is — a quick survey with the 10-year-olds in my catechism class gave me simple yet deeply thought-provoking and honest responses: “Jesus will be there to welcome us!” shouts Nate excitedly. “There will be angels singing...”, “and my favourite saint!” exclaims another learner. “Heaven is where love is, and joy, and peace...**unlike this earth.**” At this point, I knew we had a long way to go with this generation...they may no longer feel welcome, loved, warm and comforted... I thought they would at least relate Heaven to church... “don't you witness and experience Jesus and His immense love and graces and blessings when you go to church?”...they sensed my sudden desperation and replied, “Yes, yes, in the Eucharist!” I push it a little only to have regretted asking... “and the people?” **Utter silence.**

Look around, many of our churches are so afraid of being ‘robbed’ that we order our guards to shut the doors and lock the gates — if we are so guarded about our little haven, how are we going to get into heaven, I ask myself? When someone walks into

our haven, our space, we dictate to them about what they can do and can't do — “the gates are closed to you”, “you don't look the part, you may not fit into our mould, you don't have enough,” “you smoke too much, you talk funny, you came late, you got married in a temple”...we build barricades, fortresses — our churches can look so beautiful on the outside but our gates, maybe just like our hearts, are locked. **Outside our churches, beggars sleep at the bus stands**, but we don't invite them in, we don't make decent of their ‘indecent lives’. We oftentimes speak of outreach, when the treasures we seek lie in our own backyard. We travel to outpost areas, when the needy live right within us. We don't even know who to trust anymore...we don't even trust God to look after His own house, His own Church. **Are you still sitting with me at our bench or staring at a fence?**

Our teenagers feel more ostracised than accepted when they come to church — “what am I even doing here?” and they eventually build their own fences (and we know what happens to double fencing — it's pretty much permanent thereafter). After Mass, we talk to those who are popular, those who are influential — we build fences because the lesser, the little, the lost and the least are too far out of our reach and our radar. Why bother when we feel safe within our fences. Why tear down fences when they are built to seemingly “protect” us from being misguided, mislead? In 2 Corinthians 6:12 St Paul eloquently advises his people at Corinth **‘We didn't fence you in. The smallness you feel comes from within you. Your lives aren't small, but you're living them in a small way.’**

...meanwhile, at some corner in all our dioceses, someone is erecting a fence, the

new parish priest wants a beautiful barricade. Some may even be invited later to park their car inside, for a fee. Benches, like the ones built in Lourdes and Guadalupe, in the Vatican, Medjugorje and Fatima are nowhere to be seen. Benches that are inviting, welcoming... benches that invite people to take rest, to be calm, to breathe. Benches that can spark conversations, a place where you feel moved to revisit that difficult topic with your spouse; a sibling; your parent; a long-lost friend. Benches where children can lean on their parents and watch a fish pond or read the rich parish history, ...how many times have we heard our children plead: **“please sit with me...”**? We have mastered the skill of walking away, building a fence. Benches where the impaired can sit or the poor can sleep are slowly giving way to artistic, aesthetic fences.

When was the last time you sat on a bench and felt the peace of the Holy Spirit resting upon you? Or the hand of God saying, “come inside.” Be Still and Know... for you only find God in Silence...when was the last time we ran **to our place of refuge** in a church and sat on a bench inside and spoke silently to ourselves, yes, with the God that resides in the Tabernacle and in our hearts? Do we feel safe enough to tear down those walls within us so that someone can simply walk into our churches and be reunited with God without being pierced and crucified, like Jesus, by mere men?

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





Fr Ron Rolheiser

# Blessing others as the endgame of sexuality

Although not too many people might recognise this, the #MeToo movement is, in essence, a strong advocate for chastity. If chastity can be defined as standing before another with reverence, respect, and patience, then most everything about the #MeToo movement speaks explicitly of the non-negotiable importance of chastity, and implicitly for what our sexuality is ultimately meant to do, namely, to bless others rather than to exploit them.

What #MeToo has helped expose is how sex is often used as power, power to force sexual consent, power to either allow or block someone from advancement in her life and career, and power to make someone's workplace a place of comfort and safety or a place of discomfort and fear. This has been going on since the beginning of time and remains the sexual tool of many people in positions of power and prestige today: Hollywood directors, television personalities, university professors, famous athletes, employers, spiritual leaders, and persons of every kind who wield power and prestige. Too often, persons with power and prestige let themselves (however unconsciously) be taken over by the ancient archetype of the king, where the belief was that all the women in the land belonged to the king, and he had sexual privilege by divine right. The #MeToo movement is saying that this time in history is over and something else is being asked from persons in power, authority, and prestige. What's being asked?

In a word, *blessing*. What God and nature ask of power is that it bless rather than

exploit, use privilege to enhance rather than harass, and create a space of security rather than a place of fear. Imagine, for example, if in every one of those high profile instances where a Hollywood producer, a television personality, a star athlete, or a spiritual leader was indicted for harassing, exploiting, and assaulting women, those men, instead of wielding power and prestige, had used that power to help those women gain more access to security and success rather than (pardon the terminology) hitting on them. Imagine if they had used their power to bless those women, to simply admire their beauty and energy, make them feel safer, and help them in their careers. How different things would be today, both for those women and for those men. Both would be happier, healthier, and would have a deeper appreciation of sex. Why? What's the connection between blessing and sex?

To bless a person is to do two things: First, it is to give that person the gaze of non-exploitive admiration, to admire him or her without any angle of self-interest. Next, to bless someone is to use your own power and prestige to help make that other person's life safer and secure and help that person flourish in his or her dreams and endeavours. To bless another person is to say to him or her: *I delight in your beauty and energy. Now, what can I do for you that helps you (and isn't in my self-interest)?* To bless another in this way is the highest expression of sexuality and of chastity. How so?

Sexuality is more than having sex and

chastity is more than abstinence. Sexuality is the drive inside us for community, friendship, wholeness, family, creativity, play, transpersonal meaning, altruism, enjoyment, delight, sexual fulfilment, being immortal, and everything that takes us beyond our aloneness. But this has developmental stages. Its earlier stages focus on having sex, on emotional intimacy, and on generativity, on giving birth and nurturing. Its later stages focus on blessing, on admiration, and on giving away so that others might have more.

Dare I say this? The most mature expression of sexuality on this planet is not a couple making perfect love, wonderful and sacred though that is. Rather, it is a grandparent looking at a grandchild with a love that is purer and more selfless than any love he or she has ever experienced before, a love without any self-interest, which is only admiration, selflessness, and delight. In that moment, this person is mirroring God looking at the initial creation and exclaiming: *It is good; it is very good!* What follows then is that this person, like God, will try to open paths, even at the cost of death, so that another's life may flourish.

God and nature intended sex for many purposes – intimacy, delight, generativity, community, and pleasure – but this has many modalities. Perhaps its ultimate expression is that of admiration, of someone looking at another person or at the world with the sheer gaze of admiration, with everything inside of that person somehow saying: *Wow! I delight in you! Your energy enriches this world! How can I help you?*



(Freepik/syarifahbrit)

The higher integrates and cauterises the lower. There are no temptations to violate the beauty and dignity of the other when we can give her or him the sheer gaze of admiration.

Admiration and blessing are the endgame of sexuality. Would that those in power indicted by #MeToo had admired rather than exploited.

● **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](http://www.ronrolheiser.com).

## We're called to push beyond set prayers and

For the Christian believer, prayer is not an option. It's not something "extra" to the Christian way of life that we can do or not do. It is at the heart of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Our world is fallen and can sometimes look like a spiritual desert. In such a state-of-affairs, prayer is an oasis. It is a blessed encounter with God where He refreshes, restores, and rejuvenates us. Prayer is where the thirst of our souls is quenched. God gives us the water that gives us life again.

It is for this reason that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* calls prayer "a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God." Prayer is vital. It is life-giving.

While the set prayers of the Church are a necessary part of our tradition, our life of prayer cannot stop with them. If a Christian is asked, "Do you pray?" and they respond in the affirmative, but only list set prayers, then something is missing.

We are summoned to go beyond set prayers and to engage in a conversation with the living God. We are called to have mental prayer, which is an active speaking and listening to God. Our set prayers give us a foundation for this spontaneous prayer, which is a movement from our hearts to the heart of God.

In this context, we can again understand why the *Catechism* calls prayer both vital and personal.

If we only offer set prayers, then the personal aspect of prayer is lacking. We need to open our own hearts and speak to God from within our own relationship with



(photo/Sam Gopal)

Him, wherever that might be or not be. When we offer truly personal prayer, we lower our guard. We bring down our shield. We speak from our own concerns, fears, hopes, and joys. We speak to God and then we pause and listen as He speaks to us. It is a conversation between intimates. It is an exchange within a personal relationship.

There are times in which people will say that they cannot speak openly to God because they're angry with Him, with His perceived inaction, or His apparent negligence. Such people think that they're not allowed to tell

God that they're angry. But who told them such a thing?

Who tells us what we're allowed to say or not say in prayer? What would make us think that God doesn't want to hear what's really happening in our lives?

God does not limit what we can say in prayer. We do that to ourselves.

God is infinitely perfect and blessed in Himself. He can take whatever we need to say to Him. There is nothing that happens in our lives that is not willed or permitted by God's providence. There are no surprises

for Him. He knows where we are and what's happening in our lives, and He desires for us to speak openly and sincerely with Him.

God wants us to freely disclose what's in our hearts without fear or hesitation. However well-intentioned we might be, we cannot lie in prayer. We need to tell God exactly where we are and what we're thinking and feeling.

As an example, we can turn to Abraham in the Old Testament. After doing all that the Lord God had asked of him, the patriarch was frustrated and confused. Abraham left his home region, entered a place he did not know, left his wealth and prominence. He abandoned his comfortability in order to follow what God asked of him.

God promised Abraham a son. Abraham was an old man, and his wife was barren. After years of obedience, the son had not yet been given. God tells Abraham: "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." In response, Abraham pushed back and said to God: "O Lord God, what will You give me, for I continue childless."

Abraham continues and bemoans God's delay to God Himself. He asks God when He is going to fulfil His promise of a son. Such an exchange is an example of prayer. It is a model on how to approach prayer sincerely and as a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God. As with Abraham, so with us. We are called to speak transparently with God and to approach prayer as a truly vital and personal relationship with Him. —

By Fr Jeffrey F. Kirby, *Crux*



# Little Catholics' Corner

Dear boys and girls,

God loves us and wants us to be happy. He gave us rules to follow so we can be close to Him and receive His graces and blessings. In the first reading, God tells Moses to remind the Israelites to follow His rules and stay in His favour. The second reading tells us how Jesus died and came back to life so our sins will be forgiven and we

can be friends with God forever. We just need to believe in Jesus. In the Gospel, Jesus tells His friends to go and help others and tell them about God's love. They should be kind and share what they have with others, just like our parents teach us to be.

Don't forget to thank your father and grandfather for all they do for you and show how much you love them.

Love Aunty Gwen



Colour this picture of God speaking to Moses when he and the Israelites reached Mt Sinai.



## Missing Words

Jesus told his followers to tell the Good News. The sentences below are from today's Gospel story. Use the words from the word list to fill in the blanks.

POWER  
LOVE  
CAPERNAUM  
QUESTIONS

MATTHEW  
LEARN  
YOU  
NEAR

DISCIPLES  
TWELVE  
QUESTIONS

- Jesus had \_\_\_\_\_ disciples.
- Jesus sent his twelve \_\_\_\_\_ to preach the Good News.
- The disciples preached in the towns around \_\_\_\_\_.
- One of Jesus' disciples was named \_\_\_\_\_.
- Jesus gave his followers \_\_\_\_\_ to heal diseases.
- The disciples told people all about God's \_\_\_\_\_.
- Many people wanted to \_\_\_\_\_ everything they could about God.
- The people ask good \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ can tell the Good News also.
- The Good News is "God's Kingdom is \_\_\_\_\_."

My dad's name is

MY DAD

How old is my dad?

My dad's favourite thing to say is

His favourite food is

This is what my dad does best

My dad's job is

I love my dad because

My favourite thing to do with my dad is

This is what my dad looks like

Rearrange the letters to name the 12 apostles and colour them.





# YOUTH

JUNE 18, 2023

JOHOR BAHRU: The Young Adults of the Church of the Immaculate Conception (CICJB) kicked off their year with an engaging and thought-provoking session centred around the theme, *Am I happy where I am?*

The gathering, held on May 27, aimed to encourage introspection among the youth and foster a deeper understanding of their current state in life.

Excitement and joy were in the atmosphere as young adults reconnected with one another after a prolonged break since the previous session. The event commenced with a warm welcome from the emcee, which was met with enthusiasm from the crowd. The session opened with Praise and Worship before the attendees immersed themselves in a fun-filled, charade-like game to get to know each other. The young people used non-verbal means to convey a series of objects, while others attempted to guess what they were portraying.

Continuing with the programme, a skit titled *I'll be happy when I...* took centre stage. The skit narrated the story of a young boy who, as he navigated through



life, constantly set conditions for his happiness. He believed true happiness would only come when he obtained freedom, money, and unlimited free time to pursue his desires. Although the skit provided comedic moments, it carried a profound

message that resonated with the young audience. One participant shared, "The main character's portrayal was a great reminder that money cannot bring lasting happiness."

Next, a youth leader shared on the distinction between happiness and joy. Drawing from personal experiences, she shared her journey of searching for lasting happiness in worldly pursuits, only to discover it in the most unexpected place – through acts of sacrificial love for others. She explained that while happiness is an emotional state of contentment attainable on Earth, joy, though less common, is a stronger and more profound feeling that stems from one's spiritual connection with God.

Quoting GK Chesterton, the youth leader stated, "Joy is the Gigantic Secret of Christianity." The talk highlighted the secret to experiencing joy in all circumstances, whether favourable or challenging. The answer, according to the speaker, lies in making Christ the centre of one's life, living with detachment from material things, and allowing nothing to affect them except their relationship with Him.

As the session drew to a close, the youth leader emphasised, "It may sound difficult, but it is possible. Seek Christ, and joy will follow." The gathering left the young adults with a renewed sense of purpose and a desire to pursue authentic joy rather than fleeting happiness.



## POPE FRANCIS' SCHEDULE FOR WORLD YOUTH DAY 2023

**R**OME: Pope Francis' schedule for his trip to Portugal for World Youth Day 2023 was published by the Vatican on June 7.

During his Aug 2–6 visit to the southern European country, the 86-year-old Pope will split his time between WYD events and meetings with local government and religious leaders and other organisations.

He will also spend the morning of Aug 5 at the Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, about 75 miles northeast of Lisbon, where he will pray the Rosary with sick young adults in the Marian shrine's Chapel of Apparitions.

On the evening of Aug 5, Pope Francis will participate in a vigil with World Youth Day participants at Tejo Park in Lisbon, a green space of more than 220 acres flanked by the Tagus River and with a view of Europe's second-longest bridge, Vasco da Gama.

The park will be the site for WYD 2023's main festivities, including Mass with Pope Francis on the final day.

Sunday Mass, followed by a meeting with World Youth Day volunteers will be the Pope's final encounters before returning to Rome on the evening of Aug 6.

The five-day trip will begin with a meeting with Portugal's Catholic President, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, followed by an address to

government authorities, civil society members, and the diplomatic corps.

He will later meet with the country's prime minister, António Costa, before praying vespers with local priests, bishops, seminarians, and consecrated men and women at the 16th-century Jerónimos Monastery, one of Lisbon's top-visited sites.

On Aug 3, Francis will meet students from the Portuguese Catholic University before travelling to the Cascais suburb west of Lisbon to spend time with young people from Scholas Occurrentes, an international group that promotes education in poor communities.

That afternoon, he will take part in his first World Youth Day event, a welcome ceremony



at Eduardo VII Park.

On Friday, Aug 4, Pope Francis will hear confessions, meet representatives of charity organisations, have lunch with young adults, and pray the Stations of the Cross.

The trip will mark Francis' fourth World Youth Day, after taking part in the international Catholic gatherings in Panama, Poland, and Brazil.

World Youth Day was established by Pope St John Paul II in 1985. The week-long celebration usually attracts hundreds of thousands of young people.

The theme of Lisbon's World Youth Day, which will take place Aug 1–6, is *Mary arose and went with haste*. — **By Hannah Brockhaus, CNA**



(photo/World Youth Day facebook)



# The Emmaus Experience

MELAKA: Thirty-five youth from the Church of St Theresa attended the Youth Encounter (YE) programme held at the Good Shepherd Seminary recently.

The YE was organised by the parish youth group, led by spiritual director, Fr Martinian Lee, together with a team of facilitators and outreach team.

The YE generally caters for teens between the ages of 16-19 years.

The Youth Encounter (YE) programme was first introduced in the diocese by the late Fr Ignatius Huan more than 30 years ago. The YE programme had been adapted by Fr Ignatius Huan to cater to the needs of teenagers.

The four-day-three-night live-in programme was to bring together a small group of youths to experience the Christian life,



complete with Scriptures, to share and learn about the meaning in life and to see the reality of the Christian vision as a community.

The whole YE Programme was packed with sessions of learning and small group sharing, Scripture reflections, activities that centred on community, fun games, music, prayer, and lots of affirmation and love. The teens

present learnt about God, themselves, the people around them, and their life situation.

The YE is a renewal and formation programme. It does not have any exclusive follow-up programmes, nor does it establish any structures after the weekend. Instead, participants are invited to return to their groups and parishes, where they can continue their growth.



"I learnt so much about myself and about my relationship with God. Besides that, I also learnt how to live my life as a good human being and a good Catholic. I am really glad to see my friends open their hearts to people and, especially, to God." — **Kean (17)**

"This camp really helped me in many ways to affirm my parents and people around me. I want to say thank you to the people who supported me throughout the camp." — **Leandra (16)**

"We learnt to interpret simple Bible passages in order to discover the true message that God is trying to convey to us." — **Jared (16)**

"I have met many great people there and I was able to open up to each of my teammates without being uncomfortable." — **Ashton (17)**

"I learnt about how Jesus celebrated the first Mass that happened more than 2000 years ago, and it brought me closer to Jesus." — **Beasley (16)**

"It helped me go beyond my comfort zone in life, and journey to seek God as a community." — **Martinus (17)**

"I was given the opportunity to know and spend time with many new people, I got to know what they're facing in life and what their biggest struggles are." — **Martin (17)**

"Insightful and deep yet fun and interactive. Unforgettable memories made, bonds built and strengthened, faith deepen." — **Keenan (17)**

"I've learned how to forgive people for the better and how to let go of my masks. Now I am free." — **Yuhanes (16)**

"Eye-opening experience which created a huge impact in my daily life. It was a wonderful journey in faith and I've met many lovely people." — **Eezanetiana (16)**



Youth of the Church of St Theresa

## Do not be afraid of sharing the Good News with others

MIRI: The third Malaysian Catholic Youth Ministers' Committee (MCYMC) Initiative took place in the Diocese of Miri as part of the journey towards the Malaysia Pastoral Convention (MPC2026). The initiative lasted from May 24 to 28 and involved 12 MCYMC members and 48 youths from each parish in the diocese.



Bishop Richard Ng addressing the youths.

The event started with a warm welcome from Bishop Richard Ng, who encouraged the participants not to be afraid of sharing the Good News with others. The first day began with an ice-breaking session, followed by a briefing from MiDYC Youth



MCYMC members with Miri youth.

Minister, Adrian. The day concluded with a Praise and Worship session led by Raphael Suyong.

The initial programme was conducted at two locations: Rh Paberi and Kg Logan Bunut, both under the Lapok parish. The 60 attendees were divided between these two villages. The activities in the villages included praying for the sick, participat-

ing in the villagers' daily activities such as picking ferns and tuber sprouts, bathing in the waterfall, and fishing in Logan Bunut National Park. In the evenings, the participants prayed the Rosary with the villagers to deepen their devotion to Mother Mary.

After spending two nights and three days in the villages, the youth returned to their respective parishes, while the MCYMC

members continued with their assessment for the last two days. The MCYMC and MiDYC members attended the Pentecost Mass celebrated by Bishop Richard at the Parish of St Anthony of Padua in Tudan. At the end of the Mass, the prelate blessed the MCYMC members and the MiDYC youth, and they adjourned for a fellowship

RAWANG: The Church of St Jude played host to 60 scouts from the French Boys and Girls Scouts of Kuala Lumpur on June 4. Parish priest, Fr Vincent Thomas, warmly welcomed the troupe in his opening note.

This annual event, which has been taking place since 2018 (excluding the pandemic years), involves the French Boys and Girls Scouts of Kuala Lumpur holding their camp in the jungles around the Klang Valley. This year, 45 children between the ages of 7 and 16, accompanied by 10 adults, chose Eko Rimba Komanwell in Rawang for their three-day camp in the wild.

Etienne and Marie Bonnancy, a couple in their early 40s, have been managing this scout group for a year. They arrived in Kuala Lumpur two years ago with



French scouts in Malaysia

their six children, five of whom are part of the scouts. After a year of supporting the

group, they were asked by the French Catholic community to take on leadership roles.

One of their sons, Stanislas Bonnancy, recited a decade of the Rosary and sang the final Hail Mary in French.

Additionally, one of the scouts participated in the first reading. Members of the troupe were also invited to carry the offertory. The parishioners were later mesmerised by a thanksgiving hymn to Our Lady, sung in French.

Marie shared her impression of the liturgy, highlighting the beauty of it as well as the warmth of the community and the priest. She said they experienced "in real life" the priest's words during his sermon — different cultures, different languages, different songs, but all united around one God in three persons, one Faith, and one Communion. — **By Mercy Almeida Stellus**



## MEMORIAM

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### 10th Anniversary In Loving Memory of Our Beloved Mother



#### MARY ANTOINETTE HENDRY Returned to the Lord on the 21st of June 2013

O God, Creator and Redeemer,  
Of all Your faithful people  
Grant to the souls of all our faithful departed  
Your mercy, light and peace  
Lord, we pray that those we love  
Who have gone before us in faith  
May know Your forgiveness for their sins  
And the blessings of everlasting life  
In the company with the Virgin Mary  
And all the angels and saints in Heaven.  
Amen

Deeply missed and always remembered by  
your daughters, sons-in-law, grandchildren,  
relatives and friends.

#### 5th Anniversary In Ever Loving Memory of



**Anthony Francis**  
From the Lord:  
23 December 1958  
To the Lord:  
21 June 2018

"Blessed are the pure in  
heart for they shall see  
God" Matthew 5:8

Dearly missed and  
forever remembered by  
Wife, Daughter, Son,  
Son-in-law and loved ones.

#### 8TH ANNIVERSARY



**GERARD VICTOR  
SANDANASAMY**  
(15.2.61 - 21.6.15)

Wonderful memories  
woven in gold  
These are the treasures  
we tenderly hold.  
Deep in our hearts  
you will always stay.  
Loved and remembered  
everyday.

## 6<sup>th</sup> Year Memorial

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (2 Timothy 4:7)*



### Augustine Peter

Was called home to be with the Lord  
on 19 June 2017

*We know you can hear us  
way up in heaven  
because we talk  
through our hearts.*

*Dear Papa in heaven  
we miss you everyday  
and we know you miss us too.*

*No matter how old we get  
or how long you're gone,  
We hear you, Papa,  
up in heaven  
through the love  
in our heart.*

*Absolve, we beseech thee O Lord, the soul of thy faithful servant,  
Augustine Peter, from every bond of sin that in the glory of thy resurrection, he may rise to a new and better  
life with thy Saints.  
Through Christ our Lord, Amen.*

*Dearly missed and fondly cherished by beloved*

Wife: Rosa Peter

Sons:

Dato' Frances Peter Jaditsin Peter  
William Peter

Daughters:

Matilda Peter Mary Rose Peter  
Thessa Peter Flori Peter

Sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, great grandchildren, relatives & friends.

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*So also you have  
sorrow now, but I  
will see you again,  
and your hearts  
will rejoice, and no  
one will take your  
joy from you.*

John 16:22

Happy  
Father's Day in Heaven



**Soosai Innasi @Vitor**

To my First Hero, my everything, my Appa,  
Rejoice with Amma in heaven as we are sending a prayer to both of you,  
I know that both of you are always watching over all of us.  
I love you forever and always in our hearts  
Happy Father's Day in heaven...  
always, your daughter, Adellina Anne



## Feast of St. Anne 2023

### THEME: SALT OF THE EARTH LIGHT OF THE WORLD NOVENA & MASSES SCHEDULE

E - English, BM - Bahasa Malaysia, M - Mandarin, T - Tamil, K - Kadazan



Date	Time			Sub-Theme
<b>DAY 1</b> 21 JULY 2023 FRIDAY	10.00am (E)*	3.00pm (BM) 5.00pm (T)	7.00pm (E) 9.00pm (M)	<b>UNITY</b>
<b>DAY 2</b> 22 JULY 2023 SATURDAY	10.00am (E)*	3.00pm (BM) 5.00pm (T)	7.00pm (E) 9.00pm (M)	<b>PRAYER</b> <i>Adoration and Healing at 12 noon</i>
<b>DAY 3</b> 23 JULY 2023 SUNDAY	10.00am (E)	3.00pm (BM) 5.00pm (T)	7.00pm (E) 9.00pm (M)	<b>GRANDPARENTS AND THE ELDERLY</b>
<b>DAY 4</b> 24 JULY 2023 MONDAY	10.00am (E)*	3.00pm (BM) 5.00pm (T)	7.00pm (E) 9.00pm (M)	<b>FAMILY LIFE</b>
<b>DAY 5</b> 25 JULY 2023 TUESDAY	10.00am (E)*	3.00pm (BM) 5.00pm (T)	7.00pm (E) 9.00pm (M)	<b>LOVING NEIGHBOUR AND SELF</b>
<b>DAY 6</b> 26 JULY 2023 WEDNESDAY	10.00am (E)* 12 noon (K)	3.00pm (BM) 5.00pm (T)	7.00pm (E) 9.00pm (M)	<b>NEWNESS OF LIFE</b>
<b>DAY 7</b> 27 JULY 2023 THURSDAY	10.00am (E)*	3.00pm (BM) 5.00pm (T)	7.00pm (E) 9.00pm (M)	<b>THE YOUNG PEOPLE</b>
<b>DAY 8</b> 28 JULY 2023 FRIDAY	10.00am (E)*	3.00pm (BM) 5.00pm (T)	7.00pm (E) 9.00pm (M)	<b>PEOPLE LIVING IN THE MARGIN</b>
<b>DAY 9</b> 29 JULY 2023 SATURDAY	7:00am (E)* 9:00am (M) 11:00am (T) 1:00pm (BM)	7.00pm MULTI-LINGUAL (OPEN AIR)	8.30pm PROCESSION	<b>SALT OF THE EARTH AND LIGHT OF THE WORLD</b> <i>Adoration and Healing at 3pm</i>
<b>DAY 10</b> 30 JULY 2023 SUNDAY	7:00am (T)* 9:00am (E) 11:00am (M)	1:00pm (BM) 3:00pm (T) 5:00pm (E)		<b>SENT ON MISSION</b>

\* This mass will not be live-streamed

- Personal Prayer request available outside shrine.
- Confessions will be available throughout all 10 days.
- No plastic bottles will be provided for St. Anne's Water. Please bring your own water containers.



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Minor Basilica of St. Anne,  
Bukit Mertajam