

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

Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

2 Cor. 13:11-13



Becoming servant leaders

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Speaking with the heart

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A ministry of human fragility

■ P10-11



"The Trinity teaches us that one can never be without the other. We are not islands, we are in the world to live in God's image: open, in need of others, and in need of helping others." – Pope Francis (Wikimedia Commons/The Trinity by Taddeo Crivelli/J. Paul Getty Museum)

The great enemy of synodal process IS FEAR

VATICAN: "Evangelisation is at stake. A Church weighed down by structures, bureaucracy and formalism will struggle to walk in history at the pace of the Spirit, meeting the men and women of our time. The great enemy of this process is fear," said Pope Francis.

"We need Christian communities in which space is enlarged, where everyone can feel at home, where pastoral structures and means foster not the creation of small groups, but the joy of being and feeling co-responsible."

The Pope was addressing the bishops and diocesan representatives of the synodal path in Italy in the Paul VI Audience Hall, as the Italian Bishops' Conference (CEI) concluded its 77th General Assembly focused on the synodal process.

The Pontiff said that as he entered the Vatican audience hall for the meeting, some-

one not so politely told him that the whole synod process is creating a mess.

"Think about the Apostles on the morning of Pentecost," the Pope said. If the synod is "a blank, Pentecost morning was even worse. It was worse. Total disorder. And who provoked that mess? The Holy Spirit. He's good at creating disorder to move people. But the same Spirit also provoked harmony."

"Don't be afraid when there is disorder provoked by the Spirit," said the Pope. One need fear "only when it is provoked by our selfishness or the spirit of evil."

The Pope urged everyone, especially the fearful, to pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who opens people to listen to others, who makes dialogue fruitful, enlightens discernment and guides choices and decisions.

Pope Francis told the bishops and representatives that he would try to respond to their questions about "the priorities for the Church in relation to society, about how to overcome resistance and concerns, on the involvement of priests and lay people, and

on the experiences of marginalisation."

Church unity and shared responsibility are essential, he said. An "always lurking" temptation is to rely on "a few 'qualified actors' who carry out pastoral activity" while the rest of the faithful stand by and watch. Sometimes one gets the impression that religious communities, chanceries and parishes are still too self-referential," said the Holy Father.

Promoting co-responsibility in the Church, he said, is not simply a matter of finding a new way to "distribute power." Rather, he said, it means learning how to recognise the gifts of each person, particularly those "who still struggle to see their presence recognised in the Church, those who do not have a voice, those whose voices are drowned out or even silenced or ignored, those who feel inadequate perhaps because they have difficult or complex life paths (and) are sometimes almost 'excommunicated' a priori."

The Pope said those already active in the Church need to remember the parable of the wedding feast from Matthew 22.

"When none of the invited guests show up, what does that gentleman say? 'Go to the crossroads and call everyone.' Everyone: sick, healthy, righteous, sinners, everyone, everyone."

"We should ask ourselves how much space we make and how much we really listen in our communities to the voices of young people, women, the poor, those who are disappointed, those who have been hurt in life and are angry with the Church," the Pope said. "As long as their presence remains sporadic in ecclesial life overall, the Church will not be synodal, it will be a Church of the few."

Bringing his address to a close, Pope Francis again encouraged the Italian Church to continue this journey together, trusting in the Holy Spirit, "the protagonist of the synodal process". "Let's entrust ourselves to the Holy Spirit. He is harmony. He causes all this disorder, but He is capable of creating harmony which is something totally different from the order that we could create by ourselves." — *Agencies*

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OPINION

More than ever, we need diocesan news media

When my wife bought a Subaru a few years ago, we not only got a car. We also received a company magazine called *Drive*. Subaru was trying to use a “membership magazine” to build a relationship with us as well as sell us more stuff. We usually tossed the magazine in our recycling bin.

I thought of this recently when I saw a diocesan ad recruiting a newspaper editor. The job was clearly meant to be part of the public relations office, and the job description was to “highlight the good works of the diocese and its partners and to obtain positive coverage of diocesan programmes, services and events.”

Now dioceses, like corporations, do want and need public relations efforts, especially after the past two decades of allegations and controversies. And diocesan officials can be forgiven for wanting “good news” and positive stories after the hammering they’ve gotten.

I would argue that developing “membership magazines” is an incomplete assessment of what the People of God need — indeed, of what the Church needs.

There are many threats facing the Church, from ersatz diocesan news efforts that are really fronts for partisan political agendas, to a stressed secular media that has a shrinking number of journalists, especially religion journalists. Their reports are often sloppy, shallow or incomplete. And the polarisation that infects both Church and state also infects the third estate, making it harder for a Catholic voice to be heard unless it is found to be ideologically agreeable.

But the greatest threat may be a lack of institutional faith in the value of Catholic news

media and the courage to support it at the local level.

Secular and Catholic local newspapers are both closing at a breath-taking pace. What’s left are “news deserts” where those seeking information are driven to national news organisations or whatever they find on the Internet — sources with agendas often quite different from those of the diocese.

Whether it’s “culture wars” or just “culture confusion,” Catholics often find themselves on the front lines but disarmed, lacking both information and formation.

What they need is solid, trustworthy, courageous journalism that gets the story right, be the news good or bad. Catholic journalism that does its job well will develop a relationship of trust between the diocese and its people, between the Church and its people, providing the information necessary to withstand the bad and celebrate the good. Propaganda only suffices in a bubble, its recipients unwilling or unable to engage the world.

One advocate for such journalism is Pope Francis. Earlier this year, he told Catholic journalists that theirs “is a noble profession: to convey the truth.”

The Pope told his own Vatican journalists in 2021 that for a news organisation to be effective, “it is necessary to make sure everyone has enough freedom to work, that they have the ability to take risks and not go and ask permission, always permission ... this is paralysing.”

To make Church communications effective, the people responsible for that communication must have the trust of, and access to, Church leaders. If every story needs to be vetted at the top, if only good news is allowed

to be told, readers will get the message quickly enough. These are strategies for breaking the back of local Catholic media.

Diocesan newspapers, once the pride of the US Catholic Church, are struggling. When they disappear, all that is left are the press releases most Catholics never read. On issues like gender debates, immigration, guns, or the entire panoply of right-to-life issues, the Catholic voice is increasingly muted, exactly when it should not be. And positive efforts at engagement, from synods to Eucharist revivals, need a healthy media to inform and mobilise as well.

Catholic journalism is in crisis, but crisis always signifies opportunities. Some dioceses are closing their news media, but others are investing more in their multimedia efforts.

Independent but Church-affiliated organisations are also investing more in news-gathering. *Our Sunday Visitor*, for example, stepped in to fill a vacuum left by the bishops’ closure of the domestic offices of *Catholic News Service*.

It is worth saluting those diocesan news efforts that continue to do their job despite shrinking staff and shrinking resources. They strive to be both the voice and the ears of the local Church, helping to make all of us more informed and better formed. — **By Greg Erlandson, OSV**



Greg Erlandson is an award-winning Catholic publisher, editor and journalist whose column appears monthly at OSV News.

Understanding God as Trinity

Today the Church commemorates Trinity Sunday. We might have heard that sermons and lectures about the Trinity usually conclude with the caution that it is beyond comprehension and that we may never be able to fully understand it. That would be right, as the Trinity is one of the sacred mysteries of faith.

While the Trinity has to be accepted in faith, it is important that we at least try to appreciate what the *doctrine* of the Trinity teaches. This is all the more crucial for us Malaysians, as our Muslim neighbours are not only confused by the assertion that there are three Persons in One God, but insist that it goes against the Islamic belief in the Absolute Oneness of God (*Tawhid*). The Holy Qur’an teaches: *And do not say, ‘Three’; desist — it is better for you. Indeed, Allah is but one God. Exalted is He above having a son (Surat An-Nisa 4:171).*

As a response, Christians should affirm unequivocally that we too believe in only One God, as evidenced by the Nicene Creed which is professed every Sunday. This is, in fact, the thrust of today’s first reading. Moses brings to the Lord two tablets to replace the ones he had earlier smashed onto the Golden Calf as the Israelites had sinned against the first of the Ten Commandments “I am the LORD your God, . . . you shall not have strange Gods before Me” (Ex 20:2-3). Thus, believing in only One God is as central to the Christian

faith as it is to Islam.

While adhering faithfully to the doctrine of the Oneness of God, Christians also believe that this One and Only God relates to the world as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Sometimes referred to as the *economic Trinity*, this teaching underscores God’s coming into the world, as today’s Gospel reminds us: “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son” (John 3:16). The doctrine of the Trinity, therefore, is about God’s Self-communication with the world and how human beings encounter the Triune God. A Trinitarian faith is premised on the belief that God entered into a relationship with humanity and is continuously and actively involved in the world as creator (Father), redeemer (Son), and sanctifier (Holy Spirit).

Numerous analogies have been used to explain what three Persons in One God means (the Greek word *Hypothesis* and Latin *Persona* signify subsistence more than our modern understanding of personhood). The more common ones compare the Trinity to H₂O (which can take the form of ice, water or steam) or to the Irish shamrock (with its three-leaf clover representing faith, hope and love) or to a tree (with Jesus as the trunk connecting the roots with the branches) or to a woman (who can be daughter, wife and mother at the same time). These analogies are good in so far as they maintain that the

different forms are constituted of the same *substance*, just as Jesus is *consubstantial* with the Father, as with the Holy Spirit. But they mislead if Father, Son and Holy Spirit are presented as three different modes of God’s existence or that all Three do not exist at the same time or that they are not distinct from one another.

In any case, appreciating the economic Trinity paves the way for understanding the *immanent Trinity*, i.e., the interior life of God. Just as God is in constant relationship with the world outside of God’s-Self (*ad extra*), the same is also true of God within God’s-Self (*ad intra*). Thus, the *immanent Trinity* teaches that within the Godhead, there are Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That there are three Persons in One God is not an empirical or mathematical abstraction and cannot be understood from a carnal or rational perspective. Instead, like everything else about God, it has to be perceived through the eyes of wisdom and faith and certainly not through the eyes of the flesh or of the mind.

What the doctrine teaches is that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are constantly relating with one another in a *common-union*, where there is mutual indwelling, the same way God is dynamically engaged with the world and all its creatures. In other words, there is an enduring and loving relationship within the Godhead, as well as between God and the created world, summed up

Reflecting on our
Sunday Readings
with Edmund Chia, PhD

Trinity Sunday (A)

Readings: Exodus 34:4-6, 8-9;

2 Corinthians 13:11-13;

Gospel: John 3:16-18

in the teaching that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). A Trinitarian faith does not allow for God to be conceived as a stern, detached judging monarch who is uninvolved with the lives of the people.

Because human beings are made in the image of God, understanding God as Trinity, therefore, invites us to a threefold pattern of communion, with God, with one another, as well as with the cosmos. That is what today’s second reading suggests, with St Paul exhorting us to “encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace,” before offering the Trinitarian blessing of “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit” (2 Cor. 13:11-13).

Originally from Kuala Lumpur, Edmund Chia has been teaching theology at Catholic Theological Union (Chicago) and Australian Catholic University (Melbourne).



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

June

- 5 *Diaconate Ordination – Gnana Selvam Berentis*
- 8-11 *Malaysian Religious Assembly in Majodi*



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

June

- 5 *Diocesan Pastoral Assembly – Vicariate level*
- 10 *Keamatan – Church of Divine Mercy, Skudai*
- 13-14 *Clergy Monthly Recollection – MAJODI Centre*
- 15 *MJD Young Peoples Network*
- 17 *MJ Mission School Committee Gathering – Good Shepherd Seminary, Melaka*
- 19-22 *Meeting – 16th Episcopal Commission for Migrants and Itinerants, Serian, Sarawak*
- 24 *Confirmation Mass – Church of St Louis, Kluang*
- 29-30 *Deliverance & Healing Programme (Modules 3 - 6) – MAJODI Centre*



ARCHDIOCESE OF KUALA LUMPUR

CHAN/CD/05/2023

Chancery Notice

Clergy appointment and reassignment

In consultation with the College of Consultors, Archbishop Julian Leow is appointing/reassigning some members of the clergy to the following portfolios:

1. **Rev Fr Alberto Irenus David SJ**, is appointed Assistant Parish Priest to the Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, effective June 15, 2023;
2. **Rev Fr Alvin Ng Sze Syn SJ**, is appointed Assistant Parish Priest to the Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, effective July 15, 2023;
3. **Rev Fr Eugene Benedict** is reassigned to serve full-time at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Institute, Kuala Lumpur, effective June 1, 2023.

Clarence Devadass

Rev Fr Dr Clarence Devadass
Chancellor
Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur
May 22, 2023



ARCHDIOCESE OF KOTA KINABALU

CHYKK/WA/05/2023

Chancery Notice

Appointment of new spiritual advisors in the archdiocesan commission

His Grace Archbishop John Wong, in consultation with the Bishop's College of Consultors, has recently implemented a minor reshuffle within the Archdiocesan Commissions by appointing new Spiritual Advisors:

1. **Msgr Nicholas Stephen** has been appointed as the new *Spiritual Advisor for the Social Communication Commission (SOCCOM)*.
2. **Rev Fr Erik Patrick Jerome** has been appointed as the new *Spiritual Advisor for the Catechetical Commission*.

All newly appointed individuals will assume their roles with immediate effect, serving as Spiritual Advisors within the Archdiocesan Commissions until December 2025.

With regard to this, His Grace the Archbishop wishes to extend his thanks and appreciation to the outgoing Spiritual Advisor for the Social Communication Commission (SOCCOM), Rev Fr Thomas Madanan for his dedicated service over the last seven years (2016-2023).

Yours Sincerely,

Rev Fr Dr Wilfred Atin

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



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #133



Greetings again dear people of God.

The rains are here. Reservoirs are getting filled. Parties unite? Allah divides? Politicians trying to interpret law. Ordinations in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur and the Diocese of Malacca Johore. Vicariate level facilitators' training and pastoral assemblies are gearing up. Coming soon is the Malaysian Religious Assembly 2023 or MRA2023.

Upsetting Times Again: As if veiled threats to the unity government are not enough, now the "Allah" issue storms into the recovering nation. Politicians have usurped the role of religious heads, theologians and scholars. They seek to divide and rule, and maintain a stranglehold on power wielding. But the people on the street are undisturbed. They go on with their daily routine, with their daily living and their interactions and intermingling. The drama is the same. The *wayang* never changes. The same script again and again. Uncertainties, meaninglessness and helplessness are upsetting. But do these upsets make us stronger? These words are from the overcomers: "I believe in the Sun even when it isn't shining; I believe in love even when there's no one there; I believe in God even when HE is silent."

A Thought for the Week: Five Legs

Lincoln was trying to make a point. His hearer was unconvinced and stubborn. So, Lincoln tried another tack. He said to the disputer, "Well, let's see now. How many legs does a cow have?" The disgusted reply came back "Four, of course." Lincoln agreed, "That's right. Now, suppose you call the cow's tail a leg; how many legs would the cow have?" The opponent replied confidently, "Why, five,

of course." Lincoln came back, "Now that's where you're wrong. Calling a cow's tail a leg doesn't make it a leg!" *A Lesson from Lincoln:* Truth does not change shape. It does not compromise. We can overlook it when we have made up our minds about what it is. What is required is courage: courage to search and courage to teach.

Announcements for this Week

1. A seminar on *Building Resilient, Low-Carbon Communities* by Creation Justice Commission of MJD will be held on June 10 at Sacred Heart Cathedral. To register, scan the QR code or click on the link: <http://bitly.ws/FzL3>.
2. The *Memorial Mass for the late Bishop James Chan* is planned for Monday, July 31 at 6.00pm in MAJODI Centre, with dinner and exhibition to journey down memory lane. Please register for both Mass and dinner using the link provided.
3. *Coming from August 7- 11*, Fr Augustine Tsang SJ, from Fu Jen University Taiwan, will be introducing the Spirituality of St Theresa of Lisieux at St Theresa Melaka, St Mary Air Salak, St Joseph Plentong, Sacred Heart Cathedral, JB & Church of Divine Mercy, Skudai.

This Week's Question and Query.

The Q asks: Again the "Allah" issue? What is this about?

1. The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (*MC-CBCHST*) in its statement on May 19, 2023 outlines these facts:

a) that most of the states have passed enactments which prohibit the use of 20-40 words by non-Muslims. The Selangor State Government had passed Enactment 1, on June 28, 1988, banning non-Muslims from using 25 words (*Allah, Firman Allah, Ulama, Hadith, Ibadah, Kaabah, Kadi, Illahi, Wali, Mubaligh, Syariah, Qiblat, Haj, Mufti, Rasul, Iman, Dakwah, Wahyu, In-jil, Salat, Khalifah, Fatwa, Imam, Nani and Sheikh*) in our everyday use.

b) that the move is to control or restrict the propagation of any religious doctrine or belief among persons professing the religion of Islam.

2. *The MCCBCHST argues* that there must be propagation of any religious doctrine to Muslims to warrant a prohibition. But there is no propagation, as these words are for one's own learning. Hence Section 9 of the State Enactment is unconstitutional.

3. *The MCCBCHST, an inter-faith council, has urged* the PM and the cabinet to protect the rights of all Malaysians in line with the Federal Constitution; and declare as unconstitutional existing state laws that impose a blanket ban on the use of words such as "Allah" by non-Muslims.

Continue to pray for common sense, a sense of constitutionality and a sense of a Malaysian Malaysia.

The obstacle is the way. The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way becomes the way. (Marcus Aurelius). In all situations, keep your eyes on Jesus, He will keep us afloat. Take care. God always makes a way. Till the next F12, God bless.

Bishop Bernard Paul

Bishop Bernard Paul

Becoming servant leaders

By Maria Yeap

PENANG: Bishop Bernard Paul conducted a formation session for over 200 ministry members from the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit on May 22.

Drawing from John 20:19-31, Bishop Bernard emphasised that resurrected individuals give rise to resurrected ministries. He reminded the participants that before encountering the Risen Lord, the early Christian community lived in fear and doubt. However, after encountering Jesus, they experienced joy, peace, and belief. They received forgiveness and were taught to forgive. Jesus always stood in their midst. The bishop urged everyone to be like the resurrected Thomas, resurrected disciples and to raise up resurrected communities.

The prelate highlighted the importance of each ministry having its own image. Referring to Ephesians 2:13-22, he explained that the disciples used images to convey their teachings to the people. Although images are not perfect or complete, they hold great significance as they can speak a thousand words. Images communicate the vision and mission of the ministry. The ministry's image should be accompanied by appropriate words of God that drive and motivate its members, keeping them focused.

Bishop Bernard outlined the following mission for ministries:

- To respond to emerging needs
- To evangelise
- To build the body of Christ
- To listen, discern, walk, and work together.

The bishop compared ministries to tributaries, emphasising that if a tributary were to flow by itself, it would eventually dry up



The ministry members washing each other's feet as a sign of accepting servant leadership.

without a main source of water. However, when tributaries come together with the parish as the main river, the community becomes richer with the many gifts and charisms that each member possesses.

In the context of a synodal Church, Bishop Bernard explained that faith without action is meaningless. The Caritas Movement is where faith and action come together. It is not solely liturgical or biblical but a social response to the signs of the times. A church must be warm and welcoming.

During the final session, Bishop Bernard referred to Acts 2:42-47 to discuss the building blocks for ministries. These building blocks include the Apostles' teachings, which require faithful catechists.

Additionally, the building blocks entail:

- Listening to the Spirit
- The six Ws of synodality (Welcome, Warm, Wide, Word, Worship, Witness)
- Identifying gifts and giftedness

The bishop emphasised that evangelisation involves reaching out not only to those who do not know Christ but also renewing the faith of lapsed Catholics. Furthermore, efforts should be made to nurture and strengthen the faith of a small percentage of regular churchgoers.

Regarding becoming a witnessing community, Bishop Bernard explained that the Malaysian Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) is currently at level one, where members gather for regular prayer activities such as the Rosary. However, the BEC needs to progress to level two, where people are motivated to make changes, involve individuals from different races in getting things done, and inspire everyone to improve the environment for the benefit of all. BECs in places like the Philippines and South America are currently at level three, where they engage in political activism and demand government action against corruption. By doing things differently and better, the community becomes a witnessing one.

As leaders in various ministries, it is important to recognise the gifts present in the people within those ministries. Some individuals may need encouragement to volunteer, and leaders must select the right person for the right position. Bishop Bernard explained that grace builds upon nature, and when the Holy Spirit touches individuals, their gifts become even greater.

To conclude the session, Bishop Bernard commissioned and sent forth the 200 ministry members through a simple ceremony where each group of nine persons washed each other's feet as a sign of accepting Servant Leadership.

Malacca Johore Diocese has a new deacon

PLENTONG, Johor: Seminararian Aaron Alammalay, *pic*, was ordained a transitional deacon on May 23 at the Church of St Joseph.

Bishop Bernard Paul presided over the Mass with Msgr Michcel Mannayagam, Fr Jason Wong, Fr Sixtus Pitah OFM concelebrating and Deacon Leslie Petrus assisting.

Bro Aaron chose *Rejoice O hearts that seek the Lord* (Psalm 105:3) as the theme



for his ordination.

In his homily, Bishop Bernard emphasised the importance of preparation and discernment in responding to God's call. He highlighted that Jesus Himself spent 30 years preparing before starting His ministry, and there was a period of 50 days of preparation before Pentecost. The bishop encouraged Aaron to recognise his years in the seminary, pastoral exposure, and diaconate-in-action as essential preparation for his future role as a priest.

Bishop Bernard discussed the significance of building a strong foundation, using the metaphor of rocks. He mentioned fidelity, trust, gentleness, acceptance, respectfulness, and faith as the necessary "rocks" for a strong foundation in the priesthood and marriage. He also referred to the six Ws from the Synodal church, which are: to be welcoming, warm, wide, Word-based, worshipful, and witnessing.

Addressing Aaron directly, Bishop Bernard urged him to let love flow through his life and to serve both at the altar and the poor, as the role of a deacon entails.

After the ordination, Aaron was vested with a stole and dalmatic and received the book of the Gospel. He then assisted the bishop in the Eucharistic celebration.

In his expression of gratitude, Deacon Aaron emphasised the joy and privilege of serving the people. He acknowledged the support and guidance of Bishop Emeritus Paul Tan and Bishop Bernard throughout his formation. He thanked his family, including his late mother and grandmother, his brother, and other relatives. Aaron concluded by requesting everyone's blessings and prayers, emphasising the importance of prayer in his journey. "I also thank my family: *bapak*, my late *Mak*, my late grandma, my brother Adam, Uncle Charlie, and Uncle Richard."

In closing, Bishop Bernard thanked the God of vocations, the God who still believes in calling men and women to share in the mission and the call of Jesus Christ. He thanked Fr Moses Yap and Fr Sixtus from the host parish. He also thanked all present, including parishioners from the Muar church where Deacon Aaron will continue to serve until his priestly ordination. — *By Gwen Manickam*



ABECAT introduces TEAMS — on being a good neighbour

KUALA LUMPUR: Forty BEC Co-ordinating Team (BECCOT) and BEC Animating Team (BECAT) coordinators representing various parishes gathered for the fourth BECCOT-BECAT Assembly with the theme *Rebuilding BECS* on May 20.

The assembly began with Praise and Worship followed by an interactive "card game". Archbishop Julian Leow actively participated and assisted the teams in finding solutions. The archbishop then addressed key issues and concerns faced by BECs, particularly in their interactions with people and the community.

Fr Mitchel Joseph, the Ecclesiastical Assistant for ABECAT, gave the history of BECs which was popularised by the Latin America Church. It operated based on community, worship, and Bible study models which was later introduced to Asian countries by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference.

The importance of leadership development and spiritual growth formations for BEC leaders was also highlighted.

Rita Krishnan, the ABECAT chairperson,

delivered the keynote address. She highlighted the significance of the case study, which emphasised prejudices and influences that disrupt relationships, break trust, and create disharmony within the community.

The acronym TEAMS was introduced, representing Trust, Empowerment, Assimilation, Management, and Service, which were connected to the concept of being a good neighbour or "jiran". This acronym was reiterated during the subsequent brainstorming and discussion session.

The coordinators then engaged on reflecting Henri Nouwen's *Solitude and Community* and *Community and Quality Heart*. The focus was on developing and nurturing giving hearts within the community, rather than solely on creating community.

Rita further emphasised that tensions and difficulties can be a signal of new grace from God and a call to renewed fidelity and a return to the essential and initial vision. Community life is seen as an obedient response to being called together by God.

The monthly BEC reflection paper was

discussed using a sample from the June BEC Reflection Paper. The theme of *Loving Neighbour and Self* was linked with the concept of "quality hearts," which represents the highest human expression of divine love, and the Sacred Heart as a symbol of God's mercy.

The assembly concluded with a discussion on the second draft of the BEC Handbook. It will be further improved based on the input from the assembly and then given to the clergy for comments and recommendations.

Fr Mitchel expressed his heartfelt appreciation for their commitment and love for God. They were urged to exemplify and share the presence of Jesus in their activities, rather than simply promoting parish events without a focus on Jesus.

Over the past seven years, ABECAT has been dedicated to developing people and leaders and building Christ-centred communities through formations and assemblies. The commitment to showing Jesus in the lives of others was emphasised, and blessings were extended to all.



Archbishop Julian Leow with the BECCOT and BECAT leaders at the assembly.

Speaking with the heart

By Sheila Rose Darmaraj

BUKIT MERTAJAM: The Penang Diocesan Social Communications Ministry (DSCM) organised a one-day formation on May 20, in conjunction with the 57th World Day of Social Communications 2023. The event aimed to bring together the media and communications teams from all parishes in the diocese.

Themed *Speaking with the Heart*, the formation was held at the Minor Basilica of St Anne.

There were interactive sessions led by guest speaker Michael Xavier. In the first session, *Communicating Cordially*, Michael emphasised the importance of Christian communication, which recognises that every person we communicate with is made in the image and likeness of God. He stressed the need for healing, uplifting, building, and nurturing relationships through our communication. Michael highlighted that communication involves thinking, conveying and receiving messages, and ultimately, it should align with the Holy Spirit's guidance and God's will.

The second session, *Communicating Heart to Heart*, focused on four key actions related to speaking with the heart: dialogue, charity, authenticity, and attention. Michael explained that engaging in dialogue, rather than debate, promotes a deeper understanding, speaking with love and kindness fosters relationships, authenticity allows for



genuineness and humility, and attentive listening without judgment or advice enhances communication. Speaking from the heart creates long-lasting experiences.

In the third session, *Disarming Souls through the Language of Peace*, Michael discussed promoting a language of peace to avoid conflicts. He emphasised the importance of open and respectful dialogue, overcoming the tendency to discredit or insult opponents, and perceiving situations objectively and with discernment rather than aggression. He used the analogy of Judo, which means "gentle way," to illustrate the neutralisation or disarming of opponents through peaceful means. He explained that it is necessary to overcome the tendency to 'discredit and insult opponents' from the outset and be open to respectful dialogue. The gentle way involves seeing and perceiving with objectivity and discernment instead of aggression.

Following Michael's sessions,



During one of the sessions.

evangelist Paul Julianose, who works with *The Seeds*, a young adult ministry, shared his evangelising experiences through platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and websites. He emphasised the need to use tools that young people are comfortable with and highlighted the significance of online evangelisation in reaching the youth. Paul drew attention to the importance of creativity in capturing the interest of young minds.

The Church of the Nativity of the

Blessed Virgin Mary's media team delivered the final session, sharing their experiences connecting with parishioners through social media, websites, and photography. They discussed managing the church's social media accounts, creating web content, and promoting the church's mission activities. Social media allowed them to keep parishioners updated with announcements, reminders, and Scripture, fostering a sense of connection and engagement. The team expressed

gratitude for the support they received from their parish priest, Fr Dominic Santhiyagu, and team members.

Throughout the formation event, teams from various parishes shared their struggles and experiences, creating a valuable learning experience for all participants as they exchanged different perspectives and addressed the needs of their respective parishes.

The event concluded with a Mass celebrated by Bishop Sebastian Francis, with Fr Patrick Massang CSsR concelebrating and Deacon Lazarus Anthony assisting. In his homily, Bishop Sebastian highlighted the role of those involved in social communications as evangelists. He expressed his gratitude to Daniel Roy and his team for organising the event and thanked all the participants.

The prelate emphasised that "Speaking with the heart" is both a gift of the Holy Spirit and a skill that requires development. He quoted Pope Francis, stressing the importance of personal engagement in sharing the Gospel, rather than relying solely on online platforms. Bishop Sebastian encouraged all attendees to be open to the Holy Spirit's guidance and to allow the Spirit to lead them forward in communication and evangelisation, drawing inspiration from the disciples who gathered in the upper room to pray and wait for the Holy Spirit before embarking on their mission.

Communicate the Good News to everyone



SOCOM members in the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu.

KOTA KINABALU: "It is important that Church Social Communications (SOCOM) members use their tools to convey the Good News of God to everyone."

Archbishop John Wong of Kota Kinabalu said this during the 57th World Communications Day (WCD) celebration, May 21.

"The task of SOCOM members is not only to prepare and make good use of the communication tools available, but each one is a 'communicator of the Good News'," he said.

To be a good communicator, he said, one has to start with "listening and speaking with the heart."

"When we speak with the heart, we are not only expressing our honesty about the truth, but we are also opening up an opportunity for dialogue with others," said the Archbishop.

He said he hoped that both archdiocesan and parish SOCOM members "will learn to speak with the heart in whatever programmes and

projects you carry out. Not simply to speak, but to speak the truth in charity."

The prelate said he noted that all SOCOM members have read, reflected and shared the content of Pope Francis' message for this year's World Communications Day *Speaking with the heart: Doing the truth in charity* during their reflection session at the Archdiocesan Centre on May 1.

A total of 72 members of Social Communication (SOCOM) committees from various parishes and from Archdiocesan Commission, gathered at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart (SHC).

Archbishop John presided over the Mass in Bahasa Malaysia. Concelebrating with him were Msgr Nicholas Stephen, the new Spiritual Advisor (SA) of the SOCOM Commission, Fr Thomas Madanan, the outgoing Spiritual Advisor and Fr Paul Lo, parish priest of SHC.

Each attending parish had also brought their SOCOM logo and WCD poster. Archbishop John thanked them for their effort and said, "Thank you for your effort to create your SOCOM logo, I hope the meaning is not only on paper and for exhibition but will be practised and not abandoned."

Before the Mass ended, the prelate blessed all communicators of the Good News in the archdiocese.

He also announced that the Church of St Joseph, Papar, will host WCD 2024.

He also welcomed all parishioners to view the exhibition prepared at the parish complex, depicting SOCOM activities throughout several parishes and the Commission, as well as the evolution of *Catholic Sabah*, since its first issue in 1959 until today's digital era.

The celebration continued with lunch and entertainment. — By Linda Edward

Being merciful social communicators

CHERAS: The Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur celebrated World Day of Social Communications at the Church of St Francis of Assisi with the theme, *Speaking from the heart, according to the truth and with charity*.

The May 20 event began with a session by Dr Melissa Shamini Perry, focusing on *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman. It revolved around words of affirmation (compliments), quality time, gifts, acts of service, and physical touch as thematic approaches that can facilitate effective social communication among Catholics, with love serving as its foundation. At the end of the session, attendees participated in a quiz to identify their preferred love languages. The results revealed that a significant number of participants favoured quality time, acts of service, and words of affirmation.

At Mass, Social Communications Ecclesiastical Assistant, Fr Richard Anthonysamy, SJ reiterated the Pope's message of *Speaking with the Heart — The truth in love* from

Ephesians 4:15. He highlighted the importance of linking this year's theme with that of 2022, *Listen with the ear of the heart*, which is intended to be part of the path leading to the Synod celebration in October 2023. Fr Richard emphasised that communication should foster dialogue, understanding, and unity in an increasingly interconnected world.

Fr Richard also encouraged media professionals to be merciful communicators, upholding the teachings of the Church and utilising media responsibly, ethically, and in service of truth, justice, and solidarity. He referred to relevant papal works such as the encyclical *Pacem In Terris* by St John XXIII and the Vatican II decree *Inter Mirifica* by St Paul VI.

The session concluded with lunch. Many participants took the opportunity to exchange ideas, resources, and knowledge, with some expressing their commitment to speaking from the heart by listening with the ear of the heart. — By Bernadette Anne Fernandez



Social Communication representatives from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

Reignite the Fire: Journeying through the Sacraments

By Adele Gwyneth Yeoh

PENANG: The Renewal Weekend at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit was a spirit-filled phenomenon that took place on May 20 and 21. Over 300 people attended the event, themed *Reignite the Fire: Journeying through the Sacraments*. The main objective of the weekend was to rediscover and renew one's faith.

Bishop Bernard Paul of the Diocese of Malacca Johore, the presenter, took the participants on a journey of reminiscing and reviving their stagnant spirits. The event began by focusing on the wonders of the sacraments, starting with the sacrament of Baptism. Baptism, as the sacrament of initiation, has the power to cleanse individuals of original sin and refresh them, restoring them to a new life as children of God. The attendees were invited to renew their baptismal vows, reminding them of their commitment to the Lord, the church community, and their mission. They were also reminded of their responsibility to protect, nurture, and care for their faith as it grows and bears fruit.

The sacrament of Confirmation, which is closely tied to Baptism, was also explored. The sacrament of Reconciliation, which em-



A weekend of rediscovery and renewal by Bishop Bernard Paul at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang.

bodies God's overflowing love and mercy, was another focal point. The participants rediscovered and remembered their vocations and callings as children of God, as well as

their duty to share their gifts and talents as they journeyed through the sacrament of Vocation. They were reminded that their first vocation and calling is to live the covenant

and to realise that what they have is God's gift to them, while what they become is their gift to God.

The second day centred on renewing the understanding of God's love and restoring the relationship with Him. The attendees embarked on an inner journey and underwent inner healing by rediscovering and renewing their well-being. They allowed the spirit of love to fill them and break down walls of doubt, fear, and past pain. They were reminded that God's love is evident through His continuous forgiveness, especially demonstrated on the cross.

The climax of the journey was the rediscovery and renewal with the Lord of the Eucharist. The participants felt the closeness and love of the Spirit as they communed with the Lord. The entire journey culminated in a Healing Mass, where they celebrated the sacrament of the Eucharist with a renewed spirit of hope, love, joy, power, and peace.

The success of such an event cannot be measured by attendance numbers or expenses incurred. Instead, it is measured by how many hearts were touched and transformed. Although lives may not change overnight, a conviction in the heart and an open mind are the starting points for a miraculous journey of transformation.

Teachers are God's disciples

PETALING JAYA: The Catholic Teachers' Association of Malaysia (CTAM) organised a Mass for Teachers' Day at the Church of St Francis Xavier on May 20. The event brought together more than 120 teachers, both active and retired, from various educational levels.

Before Mass, the teachers walked in procession, carrying multicoloured candles with the CTAM logo, while a recording of the song *We'll Be A Light* composed by Helena Fernandez, a music teacher from Stella Maris International School, was played. The Mass was celebrated by Archbishop Julian Leow, with Fr Alvin Ho SJ, the Ecclesiastical Assistant for Catholic Education, concelebrating.

In his homily, Archbishop Julian highlighted the importance of humility and the role of teachers as God's disciples. He emphasised the need for teachers to nurture their students and choose a compassionate approach rather than being distant or author-

itarian. The archbishop also quoted the Holy Father, emphasising the power of words could give life and hope or cause harm.

The Mass included a PowerPoint presentation showcasing teachers from different parts of Malaysia and the challenges they face in their profession. The parish choir dedicated the song *How Could You Love Us* to the educators present, which was composed by Eugene Morais of CTAM.

Fr Alvin expressed gratitude to Archbishop Julian for celebrating the Thanksgiving Mass and thanked the CTAM Executive Committee and all those involved in organising the event.

In addition to the Thanksgiving Mass, there was also a separate Christian Teachers' Day Celebration held at St Paul's Church in Petaling Jaya, jointly organised by the Teachers' Christian Fellowship Malaysia (TCF), Malayan Christian Schools' Council (MCSC), and Catholic Teachers' Association Malaysia (CTAM). Approxi-



Archbishop Julian Leow giving the final blessing to the educators as the congregation prays over them.

mately 150 Christian teachers, including the CTAM Executive Committee members, attended this event.

CTAM extended an invitation to all educators, from kindergarten to tertiary level, to join their association. Interested individuals were encouraged to scan a provided QR

code and fill out the required details.

Overall, these events aimed to honour and appreciate teachers and educators for their important role in shaping the younger generation and imparting knowledge in formal educational settings. — **CTAM Executive Committee**

Children portray the different images of Mary



The children dressed in costumes depicting the various images from Mary. (From left) Mary Untier of Knots, The Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Good Health, Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Lourdes and Our Lady of Sorrows.

TAMPIN, Negeri Sembilan: May is often referred to as the Month of Mary, a month when Catholics across the world pay special devotions to our Blessed Mother as 'Queen of the May'.

At the Church of St John Marie Vianney, during Mass on the seventh Sunday of Easter, the catechetical ministry prepared seven children to portray various images of Mary, such as Mary Untier of Knots, The Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Good Health, Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Lourdes, and Our Lady of Sorrows.

The catechetical ministry also engaged the children in making parts of their outfits, fostering their participation and creativity while keeping costs down. Jennifer Michal Fernandez's daughter being chosen to dress up as Our Lady of Good Health, was a special

blessing for their family. The preparation for the event seems to have deepened their understanding and appreciation of the different images of Mary, as they took the time to learn more about Mary and pray together at home.

For longtime parishioners like Pakiam Thomas, it was a unique experience to witness the children dressed up as different manifestations of Mary. Their graceful portrayal of the images left a lasting impression. The intention behind having the children carry the images of Mary was to showcase the stories of the Marian apparitions from various countries, inspiring and reminding everyone of the eternal compassion and guidance that Mary offers.

Overall, the celebration was a beautiful tribute to Mary, encouraging devotion and a deeper understanding of her role in the continuous salvation plan. — **By Priscilla Wilson**

The evolving leadership styles in the secular world and within the Church

By Jennifer Duarte

IPOH: Church leaders gathered at the Church of St Michael's Parish Activities Centre for a three-hour formation session on *Embracing Servant Leadership* by Vernon Fernandez, May 21.

Vernon began the session by defining the concept of a servant leader. He emphasised that being a servant leader doesn't mean simply doing everything that is asked of us. Instead, it involves prioritising the needs of others, empowering and supporting them to reach their full potential. Servant leaders are encouraged to listen to others actively and empathetically and foster a culture of collaboration and teamwork.

The session highlighted the positive impact of servant leadership in various contexts. In the workplace, adopting servant leadership behaviours and values can lead to higher job satisfaction, increased produc-

tivity, and improved employee retention. Implementing servant leadership principles within families can contribute to a more harmonious and fulfilling dynamic. Within the church, servant leadership can foster a sense of community and belonging, inspiring individuals to serve and contribute to their community.

Vernon encouraged the participants to reflect on their motivations for serving in the church. He urged them to go a step further and consider how far their service could take them in their journey of serving the Lord. He emphasised that over the years, leadership styles have evolved, both in the secular world and within the church. Authoritative leadership has given way to a more collaborative approach that values trust, motivation, and teamwork, resulting in better performance and job satisfaction.

The speaker used animated examples to illustrate how parental and elder figures,



Vernon Fernandez giving a session on servant leadership at the Church of St Michael, Ipoh.

including teachers, have transitioned from being more critical in the past to adopting nurturing attitudes that allow individuals more freedom in their choices today. He encouraged the participants to develop their personal value systems and strive to embody certain values, such as bringing hope,

peace, and joy to those they encounter.

The participants found Vernon's presentation enjoyable and felt that their Sunday afternoon was well spent. Now, they are inspired to put into practice the principles of servant leadership in their workplaces, homes, and church communities.

KANGAR: The Church of Our Lady of Fatima recently observed her 64th annual parish feast. Established in 1959, it is the only Catholic church in Kangar.

The theme chosen for the celebration was *Our Lady of Fatima, Help Us to Arise and Move Forward*. The Thanksgiving Mass was presided over by newly ordained Fr Desmond Jansen, with the parish priest, Fr Francis Xavier Selvarajoo concelebrating.

During his homily, Fr Desmond reflected on the Gospel text of love, selflessness, and the divine purity of Mary. He emphasised how Mary, upon hearing the news from the Archangel Gabriel, immediately went to the aid of her cousin Elizabeth, who was experiencing difficulties due to her pregnancy at an advanced age and her husband's muteness. The encounter between Mary and Elizabeth was characterised by joy, as the unborn child in Elizabeth's womb rejoiced.

Fr Desmond urged the congregation to follow Mary's example not out of obliga-



Fr Desmond Jansen with some parishioners of the Church of Our Lady of Fatima in Kangar after Mass.

tion but because of genuine care and concern. He encouraged them to open their hearts, minds, and souls to prayer and faith

during times of trials, in the face of enemies, evil, and stubbornness. Fr Desmond emphasised the importance of cleansing

one's conscience from temptation and guilt, allowing one's heart to remain open to goodness and peace. He also highlighted the significance of welcoming neighbours, drawing inspiration from Elizabeth's warm reception of Mary into her home. By doing so, one can find comfort, security, and the opportunity to offer comfort to others.

Fr Desmond further stated that God shapes our life paths, leading us to encounter various individuals with different stories and intentions. Regardless of these differences, Mary's visitation teaches us to be welcoming and accepting, demonstrating hospitality in various ways.

After Mass, Fr Francis expressed his gratitude to the parishioners for their presence and participation in the modest celebration of the parish feast day. He also extended his appreciation to Fr Desmond for joining them in Kangar to celebrate his first Mass in Perlis.

Fr Francis Xavier concluded by wishing the small yet vibrant Catholic community a blessed feast day. — **By Bernard Anthony**

Understanding St Teresa of Avila's Nine Grades of Prayer

PENANG: The three-day session on the *Nine Grades of Prayer*, based on St Teresa of Avila's classification, was held in Penang. St Pius X described the prayers as a representation of the many grades of elevation and ascent toward Christian perfection.

The sessions were led by Matthew Leonard, an American evangelist and founder of the Science of Sainthood. He delved into and dissected the various grades of prayer outlined in St Teresa's work, *The Interior Castle*, through a series of video

presentations on *The Nine Grades of Prayer*.

Matthew classified the grades of prayer into two categories: ascetical and mystical. The ascetical grades included vocal prayer, meditation, affective prayer, and the prayer of simplicity. The mystical grades comprised infused contemplation, the prayer of quiet, the prayer of union, the prayer of conforming union, and the prayer of transforming union. These grades were further divided into three categories: Purgative, Illuminative, and Unitive.

After each video session, there were discussions where participants shared their insights and interpretations of the grades of prayer. The participants had the opportunity to learn from Fr John Anandan, OFM Cap, who provided deep insights and helped enhance their understanding throughout the sessions.

The participants included individuals ranging from those who had been part of the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit's first batch of RCIA candidates in 1993, to the most recent-

ly baptised individuals.

The programme was made possible through collaboration with the Penang Diocesan New Evangelisation Commission (PDNEC) and the Holy Spirit Prayer Group (HSPG) from the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. The participants felt enriched and enlightened by the teachings on the *Nine Grades of Prayer* as they realised all souls on earth are invited, in varying degrees, to Grade Nine in prayer, which serves as a prelude to Heaven.

To quote St Teresa "You must not build upon foundations of prayer and contemplation alone, for, unless you strive after the virtues and practise them, you will never grow to be more than dwarfs."

To surmise, the *Nine Grades of Prayer* could not be more aptly described than the following:

A Christian more perfect in loving God and others is one who prays more perfectly or powerfully. Living and praying in a higher grade of prayer is living and praying in a greater intensity of love, grace or Divine Energy. All are called to be filled with God's grace, resembling Holy Mary who was "full of grace" in the ninth grade while living on earth. — **By Marion Beatrice Pereira**



Participants of the Nine Grades of Prayer with Fr John Anandan OFM Cap.

Record number of participants at Media Ethics conference

KRAKOW, Poland: For 17 years, the media ethics conference at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow has gathered media researchers from all over the country. This year, it attracted a record number of academics. The reason? The main topic was the ethics of using AI in the media space.

"The theme is gaining momentum," said Fr Michal Drozd, dean of the university's social sciences department, at the opening of the conference, which took place in Krakow May 17-18.

"So far, we're in the stage of having fun with ChatGPT, we're treating it as an adventure. But we see more and more that this is an issue of human ethical security, and we start our reflections from this point at the conference," he said.

What is at stake, Fr Drozd said, is a threat of the objectification of man and empowerment of machines. "Man is at the centre of everything that surrounds us, that should be the starting point of any discussion, and all machines, all applications, algorithms, should serve mankind, and already serve us to a large extent."

"Technical progress is most praiseworthy, in line with the teaching of the Church," Fr Drozd said, "but man should not lose control so that at some point, he does not feel threatened by the machine."



With AI flooding the media space, what is at stake, organizers said, is a threat of the objectification of man and empowerment of machines. (OSV News photo/courtesy Jagiellonian University)

Security means that we will feel safer as recipients of media content, but also as creators of it."

Many researchers gathered at the conference proved AI-generated content is already flooding the media space — whether in journalism, public relations or marketing.

AI-generated anchors host shows on entertainment and technology innovation on Chinese TV; Sophia, a humanoid robot was granted citizenship in Saudi Arabia in 2017; and ads at bus stops are being generated entirely by AI that is reading human needs.

"More and more often we see we're not in charge of the situation any more, and often, not only in media but in life, when we feel

the situation is getting out of control, we turn to ethics, we look for firm foundations and we find them in values so often despised in the past," said Katarzyna Drag, professor of communications at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow and organiser of the conference.

Since the university's biggest institute is communications and media, many students asked whether their profession will become extinct due to AI-generated content.

"So far, I stick to the conviction that a human being is, after all, irreplaceable. Because technology will never have the feelings, sensitivity and emotional intelligence of a human. And I can only hope the

future proves this," Drag said.

Drag said Catholic journalism has a role to play in AI-revolution "by showing that values matter, that we can't only follow persuasive communications, achieving the goal of clickbait at any cost. The dignity of a human being has the biggest value and by communicating it; we lay the fundamentals of good communications based on respect and truth."

Fr Drozd added that the responsibility lies on the shoulders of journalists themselves, as they are the ones who should fact check what the computer data is suggesting, but they also should not be afraid to use technology to make their work more efficient.

"We can use the help of the machines, which I believe is most reasonable and appropriate," the priest said. "Why should we take everything on ourselves when some things can be helped by a machine, applications and algorithms, something we generally call artificial intelligence?"

But, Fr Drozd stressed, "Reliability, honesty and truthfulness of the message will always be on the side of man."

Marcin Makowski of iTechArt Group said that AI "will always be faster because it is trained to look for correlations, patterns and to average the sets of information

it has been given." But it's only a human being who can "anticipate and get facts right. If you feed AI with 'facts' that the Earth is flat and a man never landed on the Moon, it is going to 'believe it'."

More and more often however, tech giants' executives call for regulation of AI. On May 16, the chief executive of the California start-up OpenAI, Sam Altman, urged government to regulate the increasingly powerful technology in testimony before members of a Senate subcommittee.

"Heads of technology giants see the danger that the tool they created may, at some point get out of people's control," Fr Drozd said.

Many participants of the Krakow conference agreed that regulation is one challenge. The other is the education of society.

"We can't stop technology, but we have to educate," Natalia Hatalaska — author of *The Age of Paradoxes. Is Technology Going to Save Us?* — said at the panel closing the conference. "When we build a hotel, it's clear and regulated where the plugs are going to be located."

But all the regulations are useless, she argued, if "I don't teach my child that putting his fingers inside a plug or using a hair dryer in the bathtub is dangerous." — **By Paulina Guzik, OSV**

Pope adds Fátima visit to World Youth Day trip

VATICAN: Pope Francis will visit the Shrine of Our Lady of Fátima during his trip to Portugal for World Youth Day 2023, the Vatican said.

In a statement on May 22, Matteo Bruni, director of the Holy See Press Office, confirmed that the Pope will travel to Lisbon Aug 2-6 and will visit the Shrine of Our Lady of Fátima Aug 5.

The Lisbon trip will mark the 86-year-old pope's fourth World Youth Day after taking part in the international Catholic gatherings in Panama, Poland, and Brazil.

Pope Francis, who has repeatedly said he intended to be in Lisbon for World Youth Day, had not spoken publicly about also going to Fátima in August. In October 2022, he publicly registered to at-

tend World Youth Day as a pilgrim with the help of two Portuguese university students after praying the Angelus from the window of the papal apartments overlooking St Peter's Square.

The theme of Lisbon's World Youth Day, which will take place Aug. 1-6, is *Mary arose and went with haste*.

Pope Francis sent a video message to the teens and young adults preparing to attend this year's World Youth Day earlier this month.

"To participate in WYD is something beautiful," the Pope said. "Prepare yourselves with that enthusiasm. Put hope in that. Have hope... because one grows a lot at an event like WYD." — **CNA/ucanews.com**



Pope Francis in Fátima, Portugal in 2017. (Vatican Media)

Fighting clericalism means empowering laity, cardinal says

VATICAN: The Catholic Church must combat clericalism among its ranks by giving authority to a "responsible and reliable" laity, the head of the Vatican's development dicastery said.

In an article co-written by theology professor Fr Christian Barone, Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, wrote that the current Synod of Bishops offers a challenge to "incorporate the witness and action of laypeople in the life and mission of the church at all levels."

The article, published May 18 in the Jesuit publication *La Civiltà Cattolica*, takes up the central ideas of a speech he delivered April 21 to the Third Latin American and Caribbean Congress on Catholic Social Teaching held in Bogotá, Colombia. In it, he reflected on the effects of synodality on the development and implementation of Catholic social teaching today.

To develop a more circular model of the Church's hierarchy, the article said, it is "urgent" the Church "overcome the hurdle of clericalism," which in some cases leads to abuse of power and sexual abuse.

The cardinal recognised that many members of the clergy are reluctant to embrace the spirit of



People pray during a Mass at St John-Visitation Church in the Bronx, N.Y. (CNS file photo/Gregory A. Shemitz)

synodality out of fear that giving more responsibility to the laity could weaken the Church's structures.

"Even if that were true," wrote Czerny and Barone, "the solution would not be to perpetrate a top-down, authoritarian model of government, but to promote and form the laity to a genuine and authentic spirit of belonging and ecclesial participation."

Addressed to lay and religious researchers, professors and leaders of social movements, the cardinal's message in Bogotá called for bishops' conferences to apply synodal principles within their territories to

develop social teaching tailored to the needs of their communities.

"Teaching and diffusing social doctrine is essential to the Christian message," he said, not just a practical application of dogmatic teachings.

Particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean, which is plagued by socioeconomic inequality and the devastating effects of climate change, Catholics are called to draw upon the "wise tradition of the Church's social teaching" to bring about change in social, political, environmental and cultural subjects, said Czerny. — **By Justin McLellan, NCR**

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY, JUNE 5, 2023

Caring for the environment is a moral issue

The basis of Catholic concern over climate change is exemplified in psalm 24:1: “The earth is the Lord’s and all that it holds.” In response to the wonderful gift that God has given us, clean air, life-sustaining water, fruits from the land’s harvests and even nourishment from the sea, we are called to not only honour God for these many blessings but to also do so by honouring His creation.

It is because we value our relationship with God and God’s creation that climate change is for us Catholics a profoundly spiritual, ethical, and moral issue. Climate change is not about economic theory or a political platform; it is most certainly not about partisan politics or concessions to special interest groups on either side of the argument.

Climate change is about our responsibility as God’s children and people of faith to care for each other and future generations by caring for all of God’s wondrous creation.

The human contribution to climate change represents one of the clearest examples of how human activity can be damaging to God’s wondrous creation. We need to recover the spiritual values that respect God’s creation. For those of us in economically developed countries, we have a duty to examine the ethics of responsible usage of God’s resources.

These resources do not belong exclusively to us, they belong to God, and therefore, are to be treated with reverence and used prudently. As children of God and brother and sister to each other, we need to be more prudent in the use of God’s resources so that we can share the gifts of God’s creation more fully with the poor and the marginalised.

In the Bible, we are called to love God and care for each other and all of God’s creation. If we improperly or disproportionately use the fruit of God’s earth, we not only dishonour Him but we also ultimately endanger the livelihood of our poor and marginalised siblings who most depend on God’s creation.

As a result, what was once an individual decision now becomes a moral issue since it is the poor and the marginalised who will tragically suffer the worst of the consequences, though not having contributed to climate change. Catholic Social Teaching calls on us to first consider how our actions and

policies affect the poor, the marginalised, and the most vulnerable people. As God’s children, we must never forget our moral obligation to our brothers and sisters in need.

In looking at the workings of nature, it is hard to miss how interconnected all of creation is. And if we desire to love and care for all of humanity, we must love and care for all of creation as well. That is a concept that St John Paul II talked about in his statement for the World Day of Peace in 1990.

St John Paul II said, “I should like to address directly my brothers and sisters in the Catholic Church, in order to remind them of their serious obligation to care for all of creation. The commitment of believers to a healthy environment for everyone stems directly from their belief in God the Creator, from their recognition of the effects of original and personal sin, and from the certainty of having been redeemed by Christ. Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation, which is called to join man in praising God.

“There is a growing awareness that world peace is threatened not only by the arms race, regional conflicts, and injustices among people and nations, but also by a lack of due respect for nature, by the plundering of natural resources which leads to a progressive decline in the quality of life. The sense of precariousness and insecurity that such a situation engenders is a seedbed for collective selfishness, disregard for others and dishonesty.”

And St John Paul II was not the only person to consider respect for the environment to be a part of our commitment as a pro-life Church. In his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI wrote:

“Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other. Herein lies a grave contradiction in our mentality and practice today: one which demeans the person, disrupts the environment, and damages society.”

In the secular world and in politics, pro-life viewpoints and pro-environment viewpoints are often pitted against each other. But Catholics don’t need to accept this false dichotomy. Catho-



File photo of the children of Fatima Home planting seeds.

lic teaching tells us that caring for and protecting all human life and caring for and protecting the environment are both important parts of living a Christian life.

We’re not pantheist. We don’t worship creation. But we recognise creation as the art of God. And we respect the Artist behind it. We know that it has its own intrinsic value and worth. And we’re for protecting that because, as St Paul teaches in Romans chapter 8, “All creation groans and is in agony awaiting the revelation of the children of God.” The more we live a full Christian life, the more we also serve and protect the environment.” — *Agencies*

Holy Land starts promoting eco-friendly pilgrimages

The village of Taybeh, which lies 15 km northeast of Jerusalem and 12 km northeast of Ramallah, is the last entirely Palestinian Christian town in the West Bank. And the Muaddi family have erected ten tents in the middle of their farmland here.

They will be ready to welcome tourists and pilgrims who are looking for an alternative and ecologically-friendly experience in the Holy Land, one that is far from the crowds that flock to the holy places and is closer to the people who live here.

“The idea is to offer accommodation with all the comforts, but entirely ecological and energy self-sufficient,” says Fouad Muaddi, who heads the family project that he has named Bariy (“wild” in English). The word is used in the Arabic New Testament to designate the places far from the cities where Jesus liked to withdraw.

Mass tourism

In 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, the country welcomed 4.5 million tourists – a record – including 630,000 Christian pilgrims.

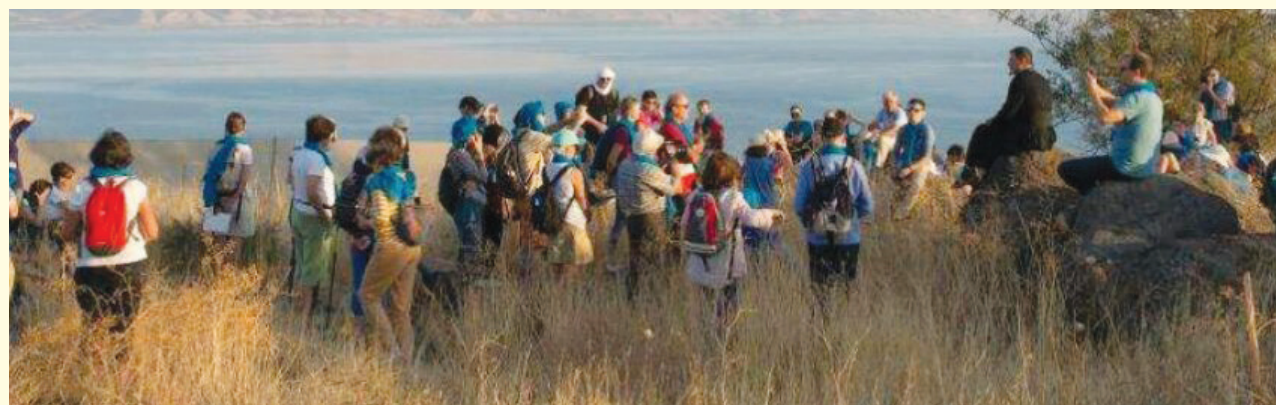
“Pilgrimages have become mass tourism. The groups only go to the major holy places, without taking time to meet the living stones – the local Christians,” regrets Muaddi, who wants to complete the experience of the tents with proposals for hikes, introductions to agriculture and local heritage.

This young Palestinian Christian emphasises the relevance of this “step aside” in a pilgrimage. “Christianity was born here, in a Palestinian countryside that is still steeped in the traditions of the first Christians,” he says.

The concept has caught on. Reservations have already begun for the 2024 season, including a group of thirty pilgrims.

Quality rather than quantity

Slowing down the pace, focusing on quality rather than quantity and offering benefits for local communities... That’s at the heart of the concept for an alternative pilgrimage. But it



A group of pilgrims on an excursion to the Mount of the Beatitudes near Lake Tiberias, where Jesus is said to have delivered the Sermon on the Mount. (LCI Photo/TERRALTO.COM)

is not new.

Jerusalem, the city that is called “holy” by the three monotheistic religions, already tried to become the standard bearer for an ethical pilgrimage back in 2013. A conference called “Green Pilgrimage Jerusalem” was organised that year. It was driven by the conviction that religions have a responsibility in educating people to live more simply and soberly. And that decisions motivated by faith are the most sustainable.

It brought together representatives of different religions, including the current Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa OFM.

“It is part of the identity of pilgrimages to be simple, sober, and connected with the region,” says the 57-year-old Italian Franciscan. “But this requires setting priorities: it is impossible to want to visit everything, and it is necessary to think of places of accommodation simpler than hotels,” he says.

The archbishop points to Pope Francis’ encyclical from 2015, *Laudato Si’*.

In a world where “green” and “sustainable” are often more about marketing, it is an entire model that remains to be thought of in the Holy Land, while the 2013 conference

did not create the expected emulation. Initiatives remain confined to the individual level. But some agencies are trying to take up the theme.

Respecting the environment and people

For the past year and a half, Laurent Guillon-Verne, head of the French agency “Terralto”, has been trying to offer trips that are more respectful of the environment and the people. The agency works in particular on reducing the amount of plastic waste produced during trips (offering water bottles, limiting disposable dishes...), and alternative tours with different places and experiences – as in Hippos-Sussita in Galilee, near Lake Tiberias.

“In order for the changes to take place on a deeper level, the hotels and all the local actors must take up the issue. But ecology is far from being a priority,” Guillon-Verne points out.

“There is also work to be done among group leaders. If they have not seen the benefits of a different kind of pilgrimage, they will not pass the course,” she says. — *By Clémence Levant, LCI* (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

A ministry of human fragility

Why I established a mental health office in the Diocese of Phoenix

By Most Rev John P. Dolan

I am a bishop, but before anything else, I am a human being who understands the severe toll of mental illness, especially when it is left untreated. As a survivor of suicide loss, I have experienced firsthand the pains of mental illness in my own family. Having lost my brother, Tom, my sisters, Mary and Therese, and my brother-in-law, Joe, all through suicide, I understand the importance of finding some comfort in our Church and the gift it brings to so many people within our parishes and families.

The truth is, when I had to survive some of these losses early in my life, the Church was the only place of comfort for me. I relied heavily on the prayers and spiritual outreach of priests, women religious and deacons. I was blessed by their pastoral care. But there was a gap between the help they could provide as spiritual leaders and the deeper accompaniment I needed. This personal experience led me to establish the Office of Mental Health Ministry in the Diocese of Phoenix in 2022. With a focus on education, accompaniment and advocacy, the ministry aims to fill the gaps in our pastoral care and address in an intentional way mental health challenges in the modern world.

Through our programme, volunteer facilitators, many of whom are deacons, are trained in the Church's understanding of mental health and are educated on basic mental health first aid and literacy through a state-run programme. They are supported by the director of the mental health ministry as they tend to the parishes in their designated areas. Our goal is to have at least one facilitator in each deanery. As facilitators of accompaniment in parishes, these trainees lead gatherings for those struggling with mental illness, survivors of suicide loss and those grieving the death of a loved one. Facilitators lead group discussions on growing through grief, help people find benchmarks of hope along the journey and ultimately help those suffering see



that they are welcome within the family of the church.

The diocesan Office of Mental Health Ministry, which does not diagnose, prescribe or treat mental illness, ensures counselors and psychologists are state-licensed in order to refer people in need to professional treatment and guidance. The office also provides training for our clergy members, religious, deacons, parish ministers, school leaders and laypeople on the most current understanding of mental illness, preparing us as Church to accompany those suffering from mental illness with confidence, understanding and pastoral care.

Our diocese's mental health ministry is based in individual or clustered parishes to help make sure the weight of this responsibility does not rest solely on the shoulders of the pastor. The ministry is motivated by the Gospel mandate to love through accompaniment. Certainly, those who struggle with depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, scrupulosity and obsessive-compulsive disorder (just to name a few challenges) need continu-

ous love and care from not only the priests, women religious and deacons but also from the wider parish community.

In his general audience on Jan. 4 2023, Pope Francis addressed one of his favourite themes: spiritual accompaniment. Preferring the term "spiritual accompanier" to "spiritual director," Francis encouraged those who seek to accompany others to embrace their own human fragility. "Woe to those people who do not feel fragile. They are harsh, dictatorial," he said.

God chose to become one with us in our fragility. And through his own human fragility as Jesus Christ, he accompanies us. Sharing in Jesus' divine mission, we accompany others with the knowledge that we are set apart but never above, because we are all fragile.

As a survivor of suicide loss, I have come face to face with this reality. As a bishop, I am not above anyone. Before anything else, I am a fragile accompanier; and by God's grace, I am ministering to those who, like me, suffer.

Mental illness in the modern world

Imagine a mother of three struggling with depression and feeling guilty that she cannot do more for her children. Our mental health ministry's method of accompaniment would involve inviting this mother to a parish gathering facilitated by a trained volunteer. Not only would the mother have a place to express her struggles and receive a referral to a professional, but, depending on the parish, she could also find accompaniment in the form of wraparound services: parish members bringing her meals, homework help for her children and additional community support to help lighten her burden in practical ways. This ministry is about the body of Christ coming together to support each of its beloved members.

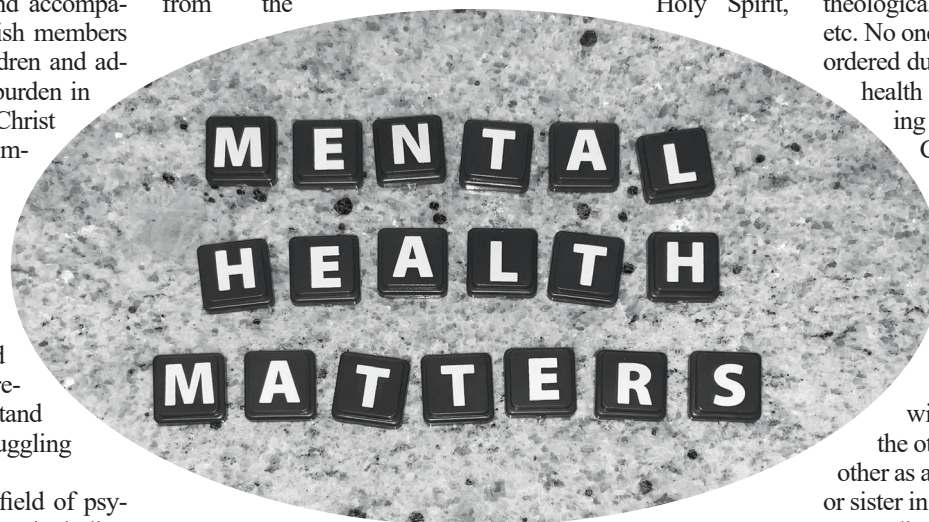
When we ourselves have not personally suffered from mental illness, it can be difficult to understand how someone could struggle so significantly or even consider taking their life, let alone go through with this act. Thus, our natural reaction is often one of misunderstanding and judgment. But I would like to propose another response, one that seeks to accompany, to understand and to uphold our brothers and sisters who are struggling with mental illness.

This proposal relies on current studies in the field of psychiatry. Thanks to advances in medical technology, including functional magnetic resonance imaging and other imaging techniques, we have been able to gain a greater understanding of the role the brain plays in mental illness. In many cases, the brain scans of those experiencing mental illness show frontal lobes that are not fully developed, holes in the brain that impede blood and oxygen flow to the organ, or some other physical impairment that directly or indirectly results in a mental disorder.

Such impairments can sometimes result from traumatic life experiences, environmental and genetic factors, and long-term infections or other illnesses in the body. Science is showing that impairment to the brain can cause depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and personality changes, among other ailments. In other words, modern technology has helped us to understand that mental illness is truly that, an illness. Yet ac-

knowledging struggles and dealing with mental illness has long been taboo within religious groups, including our own.

Many in our Church have yet to embrace the immense benefits that medical and psychological treatments can bring in the lives of those who are suffering. Medication, therapy and other forms of treatment provided by trained professionals are gifts from the Holy Spirit,



who is continually guiding both faith and science to the same end — God Himself, who makes all things new. As Church, we need to embody *aggiornamento*, or "bringing up to date," when considering mental illness in the modern world. The Church has made efforts to deepen its understanding of mental illness. We saw this in 2018, when the California Catholic Conference of Bishops produced a document on caring for people with mental illness, called *Hope and Healing*. We see it in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, particularly Paragraphs 2282 and 2283, which remind us of three things: "grave psychological disturbances, anguish, or grave fear of hardship, suffering, or torture can diminish the responsibility of the one committing suicide"; "we should not despair of the eternal salvation of persons who have taken their own lives"; and "the

Church prays for persons who have taken their own lives." We also see this in the change of Church law, which now permits those who have died by suicide to have a Christian burial.

Relying on our theological and moral constructs of concupiscence and levels of culpability, accompaniment should begin with the premise that we are all disordered to some degree: theologically, psychologically, socially, physically, sexually, etc. No one is exempt from disorder. Each of us is morally disordered due to sin, but not everyone has a diagnosable mental health condition that requires medical treatment. And having such a disorder is not sinful. We all belong to the Church, healthy or not. And each must attend to our own mental health, too.

While we may be called to a certain ministry, we must remember that we undertake it from that place of shared fragility. Mental health ministry, for example, is not primarily about "helping" others. Most importantly, it is about loving others and ultimately abiding in love, as Christ commands. When we focus only on healing others who struggle with mental illness, there may be a tendency to treat the other as a patient. In doing so, we fail to recognise the other as a valued member of the body of Christ, a true brother or sister in Christ.

Our diocese's Catholic mental health ministry does not treat the person with a mental disorder with the same methods a psychiatrist or psychologist could or would use. As ministers, we neither make a diagnosis nor prescribe a treatment for our family members or parishioners. Nor, after discovering the diagnosis and treatment, do we provide therapy. These are often good and necessary interventions, and we encourage people to seek these treatments. However, for legal reasons, our ministry must leave those forms of intervention to the professionals. Our ministry is meant to complement that treatment. For spiritual reasons, we walk with and accompany our brothers and sisters in Christ and, as far as possible, celebrate in prayer certain benchmarks of hope and gladness that our brothers and sisters have found in the Church with our spirit of accompaniment.

• Continued on Page 11

Digital media is a gift from God

**Smartphones and social media are not the problem,
Unplugging and banning are not the solution**

With every major societal change and technological innovation comes growing pains, and something as paradigm-defining as the advent of social media is no exception.

Think about it — not only do you have the near entirety of human knowledge contained within a small rectangle that fits in your pocket — but now you can connect with the majority of every currently living human being in the world, at the tap of a screen. Of course, such a prospect is overwhelming.

In light of that, one could almost understand why some people, particularly a small but vocal minority of young adults who do not know a world without the Internet, might want to cut the cord and swear off social media.

However, I was deeply disturbed to read about a new scholarship at the conservative Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, that encourages the practice of unplugging, to the tune of \$5,000 (RM 23,055).

It's not that idea of unplugging that disturbs me, nor is it the notion of needing a break from the constant bombardment of advertisements, political hot takes and disingenuous influencers. Instead, I am dumbfounded that an institute for higher learning would actively encourage its students to accept fear over knowledge, to run away and hide from the world, and to cede social media to the problematic forces of greed and narcissism that currently inhabit it.

I do not doubt the problematic aspects of smartphones and social media brought up by the students: Constant notifications make it hard to focus on the present moment, algorithms force us into thought bubbles of confirmation bias, and social media anonymity can tempt even the best of us into saying unkind things online.

Shouldn't a college, particularly a Catholic school, prepare its students to use these tools sustainably and faithfully, rather than encourage them to retreat back into the metaphorical cave?

Taking a sabbatical from smartphones could be a helpful way for the students at Franciscan University to focus on their studies and be more present to the short, fleeting years of college. But it can also be a coping mechanism of avoidance, encouraging students to hide away from or, worse, demonise the realities of the digital world.

Unless every student in the programme is going into cloistered religious life, sooner or later, they will be confronted with the realities of digital media. When they do, they may find that they are unprepared for life in the modern age.

Instead of offering an "Unplugged Scholarship," wouldn't it be more effective to offer digital media classes, teaching students how these platforms work, what some of their more sinister or ulterior motives are and how to navigate them? What about a class on how these platforms are being used for good, for community, for inclusivity; and how Catholics can be the definitive models for that behaviour?

It seems trendy to blame social media for the major problems of society — the rising rate of mental illness in young people, the increase of violence and the proliferation of hate groups, to name a few. No doubt social media has contributed to shedding light on these real and pressing challenges.

Even the American government has selected social media to be the boogeyman *du jour*. Four senators introduced a bipartisan bill on April 26 that would, among other things, prohibit kids under 13 being on social media, require parental consent, and prohibit algo-

rithms for kids age 13-17.

This is not going to work — and not just because teenagers know their way around the internet better than you or I. This isn't going to work in the long term because it's an abrogation of personal responsibility on every level. An outright ban doesn't encourage parents to teach, model or practise sustainable social media use. A ban doesn't hold big tech accountable for their platforms and put the onus on multibillion dollar corporations to change. Banning children doesn't prevent the expansion of hate speech.

A ban doesn't solve the problems ailing social media, it exacerbates them and it sets our kids up for failure. If no meaningful change comes to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok or YouTube, kids will arrive on them at 17 unprepared, uneducated and vulnerable.

What's worse, the proposed law is effectively an acknowledgement that social media is an inherently bad thing, and it removes it as a tool to reach people, peacefully organise, form community and interact with the world.

Digital media is a gift from God. It offers opportunities for encounter, accompaniment and evangelisation. It allows us the opportunity to get outside of our comfort zone and confront the lived realities of others in different cultural or economic settings. It allows us to help someone experiencing tragedy, or celebrate another's triumph. It offers opportunities for connection and communion.

Blaming social media or smartphones for society's or the Church's problems is akin to blaming an MRI machine for a cancer diagnosis or a flashlight for shedding light on our challenges. It is an easy way to diffuse responsibility to a faceless entity, shift blame to the whistleblower and not look in the mirror and say, "I am part of the problem."



Social media is not responsible for the vitriol of Catholic Twitter — Catholic tweeters are. Streaming Mass on Facebook is not the reason people aren't going to Mass — uninspired liturgy, poor homilies and unwelcoming clergy are. Smartphones are not the only reason teenagers are experiencing an increase in anxiety — crippling societal angst about a half dozen issues like climate change, gun control and income inequality are responsible.

Social media and smartphones are not the problem — the way we behave on them is. It's time we took ownership of that, took a step back and learned how to use these tremendous gifts in service of our common mission as Catholics and fellow humans.

Social media is a vocation that not everyone is called to, but that conclusion can only be arrived after careful discernment. Instead of running away from social media, and unplugging from smartphones entirely, as the students are being encouraged to do at Franciscan University, we need to learn how to live with and effectively use these tools. —

By John Grosso, NCR

● John Grosso is NCR's digital editor

Who are we to judge?

● Continued from Page 10

Our mental health ministry does not judge. Mental disorders come in various forms. Those who accompany others through this ministry should not assume that people with disorders can simply take a "mind over matter" approach to dealing with daily routines or facing life's issues. Thinking, "If I can get this person to think rationally, willfully or even morally, then I will have done my job" is the wrong way to approach this important ministry. Judging a person based on one's own reasoning or moral behaviour puts the minister outside of the spirit of prayerful accompaniment.

For over 2,000 years, from Jesus to Pope Francis, the Gospel has called us to seek out the lost sheep and, as Pope Francis says, even acquire the smell of the sheep. We are all sheep. Reaching out to the peripheries and allowing those on the peripheries to touch us is the Gospel way, the communal way. It is a journey where those who abide in the heart, the bosom and the extremities walk together as one body of Christ. It is a journey of communion.

Made in God's image and likeness, we all have a certain unity and communion with God. Gabriel Marcel, a French Christian existentialist who passed away 50 years ago this October, often pointed to the Gospel of John, insisting that there is a

certain "withness" embedded in our human essence. If, in the beginning, there was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God, we must conclude that to be made in God's image means, as Marcel says, "To be is to be with." Anything less is a sin, which in Greek means "missing the mark."

From this perspective, we must insist that our Church, our parishes, our pastors and all who are one in Christ be inclusive. Still, our Church continues to miss the mark when it comes to including others. For example, our parish churches have made great strides in addressing the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. But beyond building ramps and retrofitting our restrooms, are we being proactive in using the gifts that people with physical restrictions and disabilities bring to our parishes? Are our holy water fonts and front pews accessible? Do we provide interpreters for those who are deaf and hard of hearing, allowing them to fully participate in the sacrifice of the Mass? Are lector, acolyte, and ministerial opportunities available for all? If "To be is to be with," are we not erring if we are concerned simply with compliance, attending only to the bare minimum?

In the realm of advocacy and politics, parishes are often charged up to vote no on abortion and physician-assisted suicide. But how effectively are parish communi-

ties accompanying those who are contemplating these hard decisions? State and national bishops' conferences have produced roadmaps toward such levels of accompaniment. While this is a step in the right direction, how many of our parishes are implementing these practices? If "To be is to be with," aren't we still missing the mark?

In the same way, when it comes to accompanying our brothers and sisters in Christ who suffer from mental illness, too often we embrace merely the aspects of their stories that we are comfortable with. We avoid the very real parts of their hearts that we do not understand.

We tend to psychoanalyse a person struggling with mental illness, rather than simply tending to their needs. How often are we tempted to look back at a person who has committed suicide and think they must have been "crazy"? Perhaps they were highly intelligent but very depressed. We tend to judge the soul of the one who has taken their life. We over-spiritualise and over-moralise. We assume that the suffering person simply did not pray enough or, again, could have taken a "mind over matter" approach, when in reality they struggled with a brain-related issue.

I personally witnessed a pastor chastise a family at the funeral Mass of their child who had died by suicide. He told them if they had been going to Mass as they should

have been, this never would have happened. This is missing the mark — egregiously so.

We often stand in judgment, falsely wondering why our brothers and sisters in Christ who struggle with mental illness are not trying harder to keep the course. But there are levels of culpability in our actions and decisions, and — we must recognise — those with severe mental health struggles have a different level of culpability than others. Mental illness is not a sin, and it does not disqualify them from our love, nor does it disqualify them from being held in high esteem by our perfect God.

As a priest, I have been touched and transformed by many people whom I first sought to comfort. This sense of Gospel journey is a two-way street. The more I give of my time to others in need, the more I am rewarded by love in return. As I am sent forth from the heart of Jesus once again to foster the mental health ministry of the Diocese of Phoenix, I know that in my own fragility and imperfections, I am called to accompany fragile and imperfect people in this imperfect world in an imperfect way. But I also know that as long as we abide in His love, our God who makes all things new will perfect our journey along the way. — *America*

● The Most Rev John P. Dolan is bishop of the Diocese of Phoenix.

Grandmother, grandchildren work to restore statue destroyed by vandal

FARGO, North Dakota: Marilyn Loegering is no stranger to difficult projects. Her artistic talents have been put to work for years at the Cathedral of St Mary in Fargo, North Dakota, keeping the statues and artwork in the sanctuary looking their best. But even she was shocked at what she saw in late January this year.

"I've repaired many of the statues at the cathedral, including the entire Nativity set," Loegering said. "I do it for the church, not for a living. The first time I saw the damage I thought, 'My gosh, do I have a big project this time.'"

That project was restoring the badly damaged Christ in Death statue that has been a fixture in the cathedral for nearly three decades. Brittany Marie Reynolds, 35, is accused of entering the cathedral on Jan 23 and pulling the statue from its display, sending it crashing to the floor below. She was arrested by Fargo police shortly afterward and has been charged with criminal mischief.

"I felt sadness," Loegering said. "Why would this ever happen? It was pretty much slammed to the floor so corners were damaged, the head was destroyed, the foot was destroyed, along with the canvas."

The good news is the statue was made of plaster, which is easier to work with than porcelain. And when Loegering was asked



The Christ in Death statue at the cathedral in Fargo, North Dakota, after it was damaged on Jan 23, 2023. (CNA photo/Paul Braun via New Earth)

once again by church staff to try to restore it, she knew it was the perfect opportunity to

bring in some help — her grandchildren, a niece, and a friend. Soon grandchildren Maria Loh; Hanna, David, Grace, and Emily Loegering; niece Jamie Keller; and family friend Isaac Olson were recruited to do the job.

"Getting to work with grandma was very special," Loh said. "I've worked with her on a few painting projects here and there, and she's taught me so much of what I know about art. I would not even know how to hold a paintbrush without her. Using the skills working with her that she taught me is really in a way like giving back."

While Loegering restored the foot of the statue, the others set to the task of repairing the rest. Loegering said each brought a unique set of skills to the project. For example, Hanna and David Loegering are very good at airbrushing, and Loh knew through her chalk drawings how to mix different colours. There were exchanges of ideas, critiques of each other's work, and skills learned from one another. In a sense, the project was a spiritual Lenten journey for the young artists.

"The statue was destroyed just before Ash Wednesday, so it kind of goes along with our liturgical cycle," Hanna Loegering said.

"We're supposed to die to ourselves and learn and grow spiritually, and being able to repair the statue before Holy Thursday so it could be back at the church for Good Friday was really great."

"Getting to work on the statue, especially the dead body of Christ, was really a special experience," Loh said. "It was almost a reflection of getting to minister to the body of Christ. Even though it was just with a paintbrush, it really brought insight into what it might have been like for the women who were mourning for Him, especially Veronica who wiped the face of Jesus. We were literally wiping the face of Christ to get the dust off, so it brought this whole new meaning to being able to be that close to Christ."

For Marilyn Loegering, the tragedy was an unexpected blessing — a chance for the next generation to carry on after she's gone.

"This project was perfect for training someone else to learn and to pass down the knowledge, because it's time someone else learns to do this," she said. "I've never experienced greater joy than to have worked with my grandchildren as they did the Lord's work. I think the statue looks better than ever!" — **By Paul Braun (New Earth), CNA**



Work progresses on the damaged Christ in Death statue. From left to right: Restoration artists David Loegering, Hanna Loegering, Emily Loegering, and Maria Loh put their newfound skills to work. (CNA photo/Paul Braun via New Earth)

World champion swimmer melts his gold medal for children with cancer

ROMANIA: If you've ever watched a sports awards ceremony, you'll notice the emotional response of those receiving their hard-earned medals. So, when an athlete decides to donate their medal for a worthy cause, it's not only inspiring, but it also shines a light on the cause the champion is in fact championing.

This was the case recently with the Romanian world champion swimmer, David Popovici. The 18-year-old, who specialises in freestyle, currently holds the world record for the long course 100-metre freestyle. And in 2022, he won two gold medals for the

men's 100- and 200-metre freestyle event.

But the swimmer decided this year to melt one of his precious medals to help children who've been battling cancer.

The gold from that one medal was used to make 100 small gold ribbons — the symbol that represents the battle of childhood cancer — and then they were handed out to children who've overcome their battle with cancer.

As Popovici shared in a post on Instagram: "Hope is immune to cancer." And when that hope is shared by a world champion, it seems even more powerful.

At such a young age, Popovici has already achieved an impressive number of records in world swimming championships. Last year he actually broke the world record 100-metre free for the first time in 13 years, which made him the youngest male swimmer to smash an individual world record since the well-known champion Michael Phelps, according to *NBC Sports*.

Hopefully Popovici, who is his country's youngest man to win a world title, will continue to break records while lending much-needed support to worthy causes. — **By Cerith Gardiner, Aleteia**



David Popovici is using the rewards of his talent to help children who've battled cancer.

Raising grandchildren: A grandmother's perspective

Grandchildren are the crown of the elderly, parents are the pride of their children – Proverbs 17:6

They say it takes a village to raise a child and if you had asked me a decade ago, if I would consider giving up my career to become a fulltime grandmother halfway across the world, I would have said no.

My grandson was born in 2019 and my trips to the US became frequent to visit him, though I was still working. My daughter had asked me then, if I would consider coming over to help with William and I told her I would, if she had a second child.

COVID-19 hit right after his first birthday in February 2020. My daughter and William managed to come back for Christmas that year to visit my mother who was ill and attend my youngest daughter Karmen's wedding, though they had to spend two weeks in quarantine.

With no end in sight to the COVID predicament, it hit me that I might not be able to see my grandson in the near future. The thought was truly depressing even though I spoke to him on *facetime* daily.

It certainly put things into perspective and when my daughter became pregnant in 2021 with her second child, I didn't need much convincing to make that bold move to retire.

Many asked me if I was sure of my decision. "It's not your responsibility to look after your grandchildren. You have spent all your life raising your children so you need to look out for yourself. You need to enjoy your retirement", were some the comments I received.

It was not an easy decision to make as I have two daughters, and now a grandson back in Malaysia. Do I have any regrets playing full time *Amachi* over the past one and a half



FROM THE OTHER SIDE

Regina William

years?

I miss home of course, my mom and my siblings, family and friends but I wouldn't trade my present "vocation" for anything.

There are numerous benefits when grandparents look after their grandchildren, notably having a bonding and emotional connection with the little ones. Watching them grow, teaching them, passing down family values and traditions are the little things that give me great pleasure in imparting to William and Feia.

I remember my children relating to me personal stories my Mom had shared with them, but never with her own children. It is a wealth of wisdom, knowledge, and life experiences which my children remember until today. I'm grateful I had Mom with me during my most difficult years to help me raise my children after their dad passed away.

I'm hoping and praying I can do the same for William, Feia and my youngest grandson Elijah in Malaysia.

Research has suggested that grandparents who actively engage with their grandchildren experience numerous health benefits.

I can attest to that, as my health improved significantly over the past one and a half years. My last medical checkup even surprised my doctors, who were initially worried that I had lost significant weight, but ultrasounds and scans showed I was in the pink of health, bet-

ter than I have ever been in the past five years.

Waking up early, cooking their favourite meals and sending my grandson to pre-school and back has kept me on my toes, literally. Plus, I get to do stuff with them that I never had the time to do with their mother and her sisters as I was working full time then.

I'm now the go to person for my grandson whenever he fancies a chocolate chip cookie or a warm bowl noodles, and his favourite *bak kut teh*.

Catholicism does not have specific teachings or doctrines regarding grandparents looking after their grandchildren but emphasises the importance of family, the value of inter-generational relationships, and the responsibilities of parents and grandparents in raising and nurturing children. The Church promotes the concept of the domestic church, which recognises the home as a place where faith is lived and passed on to future generations.

It's not uncommon for grandparents to be less strict with their grandchildren compared to when they were raising their own children and this is so true. My daughter often laments about how relaxed I am with raising William and Feia, compared to when I was raising my three girls.

Having gained valuable experience from raising my own children, my priorities and perspectives have changed on what is truly important.

My priority now is to foster a strong bond, create happy memories, and nurturing rather than focusing solely on discipline and rules. Also, I truly relish the opportunity to spoil my grandchildren and indulge them in ways I didn't for my children when I was a single mother.

As their *Amachi*, I want to create a positive

and enjoyable experience and also hopefully be seen as a source of fun, comfort, and support while at the same time playing a vital role in teaching values, providing guidance, and instilling important life lessons.

While my involvement in raising my grandchildren is helping my daughter's family in many ways, often I have to take a step back and try not to overstep the boundaries as a grandmother.

I am thankful for my son-in-law Sidney, who has been extremely patient with me whenever we disagreed on certain matters related to the children.

I would be the first to agree that there are significant differences in beliefs, cultural values, and parenting styles due to the generational gap which sometimes doesn't align with their parents.

I have to remind myself not to interfere with the parents' authority and decision-making and stop trying to impose my parenting techniques. The last thing I would want is for my grandchildren to be confused with the different rules. Consistency in discipline and routines is more important.

I'm proud that my daughters are instilling in their children the values that they themselves grew up with and it makes it easier for me to take a step back and not interfere too much.

For now, I'm enjoying playing *Amachi* and though it is exhausting at times, I would never trade this for anything else in the world. It's one of the best decisions I have ever made in my life.

● **Regina William** is an ex-journalist turned head of communications, now full-time grandmother to three, crisscrossing the globe to play the role.



THE MUSTARD SEED JOURNEYS

Joanne Wong

I recently attended a five-and-a-half-day formation for the *Catechesis of the Good Shepherd* (CGS) and though I was hesitant to attend at first, I am glad that I did.

Now before I share more about my experience at the CGS formation, for those of you who are unfamiliar, CGS is a Montessori approach to faith formation that is profoundly biblical, sacramental and prayerful.

CGS takes place in the Atrium, a spiritual space for children to discover, listen and enter into a relationship with God. The purpose of the catechesis is to introduce the child to God through the Scriptures, the prayers of the Liturgy, and the Sacraments.

The catechists present works to the child ranging from practical life works to works around the Mass and selected Scripture readings. The catechists observe how they can serve the child because, in the Atrium, God and the Holy Spirit are the teachers and they are led by the child. The children do not play in the Atrium but instead, they work on the materials presented by the catechists in a meditative and thoughtful manner allowing them the opportunity to wonder and be open to experience a sense of awe around the greatness and mystery of God.

My youngest daughter Eleanor Hope is part

of the first batch of children in the Chapel of Kristus Aman to attend CGS. It's been less than a year since CGS started and I have noticed her paying attention to what the priest does during the Eucharist, I hear her speak more about Jesus and, at times, she randomly shares the things she has been introduced to in the Atrium. At three and a half years old, I think it's a wonderful way for her to start building her relationship with Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

Now at the formation, the catechists introduced us to the different presentations for the Level 1, Part 1 children (children aged three to six). We got to spend time in the Atrium doing the work just like the children would. Imagine grown men and women on child sized wooden Ikea tables and chairs or on mats hunkered down working on folding, painting, making prayer cards, working on the good shepherd materials, learning about the different coloured vestments, setting up a mini altar table and more.

The catechists also presented the work to us as if we were children, speaking to us in very soft voices and in a very slow, unhurried pace. We were not used to this slow pace. Most of us were used to doing everything fast, our lives were filled with distractions and many a to-do list, with words like "Quick. Hurry up. Don't walk like a snail. Faster-ah. Aiyoh, so slow I do for you", a part of our everyday vocabulary. So, it was rather unnatural for us to experience what it felt like to be a child in the Atrium.

However, when the fourth day rolled around, a large majority of us had slowed down. We

had gotten used to the "Atrium voice", we did things slower, more carefully. We were less harassed and hurried.

In the Atrium, I sat crouched down scooping beans one at a time, from one ceramic bowl to another using a ceramic soup spoon. I had the luxury of time to just focus on the motion of scooping the beans, just being present in the moment. I wiped leaves, set up the altar table, re-enacted the Last Supper, learnt about the different coloured vestments used by the priests, painted a mustard tree, prayed, sang and more – all done unhurriedly in a mindful state.

Needless to say, a lot of us were moved by CGS and the amazing potential it held for children. For cradle Catholics like me, it was, in a way, to relearn parts of our faith, a chance to reencounter God and enjoy His presence. And really, if we were feeling this, what about the child we asked? What an awesome, firm foundation it would be for them. What fertile soil would these little seeds of CGS be planted in. How we wished that all children had the opportunity to experience CGS. What a difference it would make for all them.

Indeed, the Good Shepherd calls us all by name and invites us to draw closer to Him. In the quiet moments of contemplation and stillness, He will reveal Himself and provide peace and respite as if we were lying down in green pastures besides quiet refreshing waters. And it is at the Atrium that I found this peace in my heart. My mind, which on normal days would fret and flit to many different things was still and focused. I felt an acceptance and a feeling of knowing that this was where I belonged and

what I am called to do in this season.

Here are the top five things I learnt at the formation:

- 1) My faith journey is never ending and that I am never too old to learn more about God and ponder over His mysteries.
- 2) We are all entrusted to care for God's children, it is our role to plant little mustard seeds in each of them so that their foundations may be strong.
- 3) We need to speak to children about God, to make the announcement and the proclamation of who He is and to help them fall in love with God.
- 4) The wonder of God and His teachings can only be revealed when we pause, when are unhurried and when we set aside time to ponder and listen.
- 5) CGS is a blessing for the Catholic Church – not only for the children, but for the parents and catechists that are a part of it.

So dear readers, after encountering this peace which only God can provide, I have taken the first step to offer up my time and gifts while continuing to build my faith, by saying "yes" to becoming a CGS catechist. I pray that the Holy Spirit will use my heart and hands to serve each child I meet.

● "Just a closer walk with Thee, Grant it, Jesus, is my plea". **Joanne Wong** is on a journey towards having faith the size of a mustard seed. She is happy to connect and share favourite worship songs or app recommendations. Do email her at joanne.wpm@gmail.com

Experiencing the Good Shepherd



Praying as a Christian

Fr Ron Rolheiser

There are four distinct kinds of Christian prayer: There is Incarnational prayer, Mystical prayer, Affective prayer, and Priestly prayer. What are these? How are they different from each other?

Incarnational Prayer. St Paul invites us to “pray always”. How is this possible? We can’t always be praying – or can we? What Paul is inviting us to do is what Jesus asks of us when He tells us to “read the signs of the times”. In asking this, Jesus is not suggesting we read every political, social, or economic analysis we can find. Rather, He is inviting us to look for the finger of God in every event in our lives. My parents’ generation called this being attuned to “divine providence”, that is, looking at every event in our lives and the major events of our world, and asking ourselves: “What is God saying in this event?”

One must be careful in doing this. God doesn’t cause accidents, sickness, heart-break, wars, famine, earthquakes, global warming, or pandemics; neither does God cause lottery wins or our favourite sports team to win a championship, but God speaks through them. We pray incarnationally when we pick up that voice.

Mystical Prayer. Praying mystically is not a question of having extraordinary spiritual experiences — visions, raptures,

ecstasies. Mysticism is not about these things. Mystical experience is simply being touched by God in a way that is deeper than what we can grasp and understand in our intellect and imagination, a knowing beyond head and heart. Mystical knowing works this way: Your head tells you what you think is wise to do; your heart tells you what you want to do; and your mystical centre tells you what you have to do. For example, C.S. Lewis, in describing his conversion experience, tells us that the first time he knelt down and acknowledged Christ, he didn’t do it with enthusiasm. Rather, in his famous words, he knelt down “as the most reluctant convert in the history of Christendom.” What compelled him to do that? His words: “God’s harshness is kinder than human gentleness, and God’s compulsion is our liberation.” We pray mystically whenever we hear and listen to the most compelling voice of all inside us, the one that tells us where God and duty call us.

Affective Prayer. All devotional prayers (adoration of Christ, litanies, rosaries, prayers asking for the intercession of Mary or a saint, and the like) are ultimately affective prayer, as are all forms of meditation and contemplation. They all have the same intentionality. What is that? In the Gospel of John, the first words out of Jesus’ mouth are a question. People are

looking at Him in curiosity, and He asks them, “What are you looking for?” That question remains throughout the rest of the Gospel as an undergirding. A lot of things are happening on the surface, but underneath, there remains always the one nagging, restless question: “What are you looking for?”

Jesus answers that question explicitly at the end of the Gospel, on the morning of the resurrection. Mary of Magdala comes looking for Him, carrying spices with which to embalm His dead body. Jesus meets her, but she does not recognise Him. He then repeats the question with which he had opened the Gospel: “What are you looking for?” and gives us its real answer. He pronounces her name in love: “Mary”. In doing this, He reveals what she and every one of us are forever looking for, namely, God’s voice, one-to-one, speaking unconditional love, lovingly saying our name. At the end of the day, that’s what we all are looking for, to hear God pronounce our name in love. All devotional prayer, whether it be for ourselves, for others, or for the world, has this as its ultimate aim.

Priestly Prayer. Priestly prayer is the prayer of Christ through the Church for the world. The Christian belief is that Christ is still gathering us together around His word and the Eucharist. And we be-

lieve that whenever we come together, in a church or elsewhere, to gather around the Scriptures or to celebrate the Eucharist, we are entering into that prayer. This is generally called liturgical prayer; this kind of prayer is Christ’s prayer, not our own. Moreover, it’s not a prayer first of all for ourselves or even for the Church, but one for the world – “My flesh is food for the life of the world”.

We pray liturgically, priestly prayer, whenever we gather to celebrate the Scriptures, the Eucharist, or any sacrament. As well we pray in this way when, in community or privately, we pray what is called the Liturgy of the Hours or the Divine Office (*Lauds and Vespers*). We are asked to pray regularly for the world in this way by virtue of the priesthood conferred on us in our baptism.

A mature, spiritually healthy Christian prays in these four ways, and it can be helpful to distinguish clearly among these kinds of prayers so as to be praying always and praying with Christ..

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

The struggle to pray is the struggle to believe in love

We are the children of God. We are not orphans.

Many times in life, the fallenness of our hearts wish to lead us into thinking we’re abandoned, or that we must be the sole self-creators of our lives and livelihood. And yet, in the midst of such struggles, there is another truth yearning to be heard and pining to be accepted, namely, the radical truth of the one true God’s immense love for each of us. It is a love so profound that we were created through it and are called to share in it throughout our lives and even into eternity.

As Pope Benedict XVI taught us: “We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary.”

Whenever we pray, we make an act of faith in God’s love for us. We show our desire, however faint or strong, to make a connection with God and to accept and live in the covenant He has made with us.

For this reason, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* emphasises that prayer is a covenant and communion with God. The *Catechism* explains: “In the New Covenant, prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father who is good beyond measure, with His Son Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit.”

The struggle to pray is the struggle to believe in love.

The *Catechism* emphasises this point: “God calls man first. Man may forget His Creator or hide far from His face; he may run after idols or accuse the deity of having abandoned Him; yet the living and true God tirelessly calls each person to that mysterious encounter known as prayer.”

Such a realisation about prayer can turn



**The *Catechism* explains:
“In the New Covenant,
prayer is the living
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of God with their Father who
is good beyond measure,
with his Son Jesus Christ and
with the Holy Spirit.”**

things upside down for many believers. In a world that is obsessed with money, a business attitude, a mercantile spirit, and relationships defined by a cold and harsh quid-pro-quo, the awareness that prayer isn’t about getting something, or demanding something, catches people off guard.

In our contemporary Western world, we might wonder what’s the point of prayer if we aren’t going to get something out of it. Such thoughts only reveal the anorexic understanding we have come to

accept about love and relationships.

If we concede and speak in terms of benefits, one of the first benefits of prayer is a relearning of love and a deeper dive into the value and meaning of true relationships.

The *Catechism* continues its teachings and makes the clear

and abrupt statement that the dimensions of prayer are the “dimensions of Christ’s love.”

Prayer, therefore, cannot be reduced or minimalised to just getting what we want, or issuing a wish list to God, or asserting

ultimatums to Him. Prayer is an invitation to put our guards down, to suspend the expectations and demands of this world, to slow our pace, pause the stress and anxieties of life, rest, be at peace, and to be rejuvenated in the presence of the God who loves us.

The reality of prayer is so authentically human, and such a source of spiritual freshness and newness, that many are perhaps tempted to dismiss it as too good to be true. They falsely assume that there must be a catch, a twist, or some ulterior motive or deception.

Prayer, however, is all that it claims. There is no hidden agenda by God. There is no fraud or deceit. Prayer is truly the invitation of God to be in a living and vital relationship with Him.

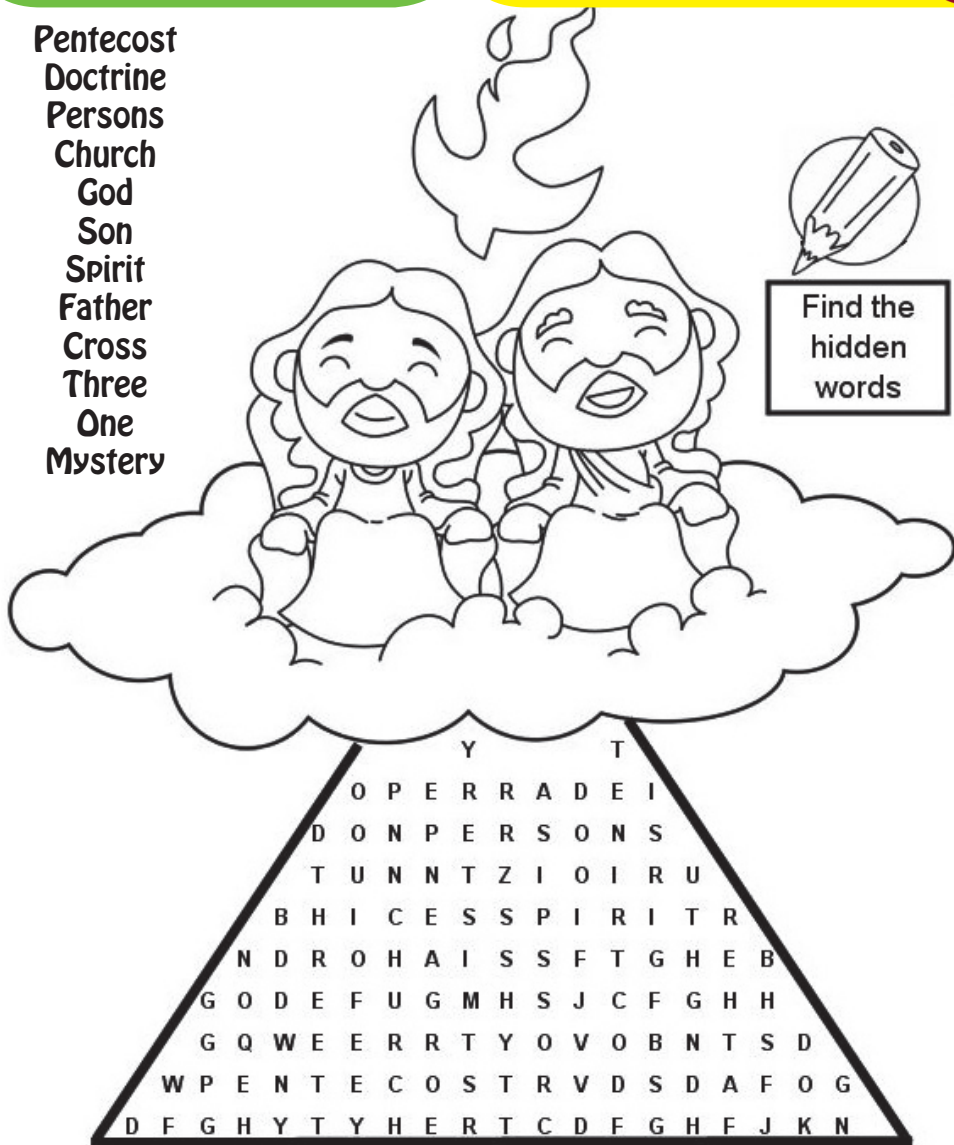
With that said, there will be moments of conversion in prayer. We will change our minds, see things from a different perspective, have our hearts transformed, and feel compelled to live our lives in a different way. Prayer will bring down idols. It will relativise things we thought divine. It will reorient our priorities and broaden our pluralities.

Prayer will lead us to encounter unconditional love and be converted by it. We will experience authentic love in all its depth and breadth. We will learn to love and feel compelled to share that love with others.

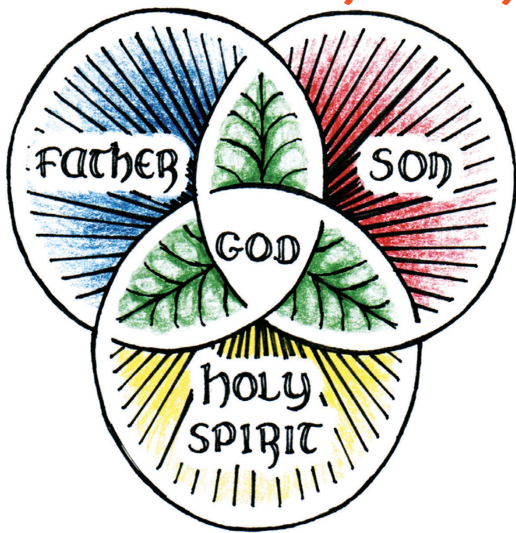
In these ways, we realise that we are the children of God. We are not orphans who are left to create our own worlds and meanings of life. We are the children of a loving Father, who wants to teach and guide us to understand the beauty of life, the meaning of goodness, and the power of love. — **By Fr Jeffrey F. Kirby, *Crux***

Little Catholics' Corner

Pentecost
Doctrine
Persons
Church
God
Son
Spirit
Father
Cross
Three
One
Mystery



Feast of the Holy Trinity



What does the word "Trinity" say about God?
Use the code to find out!

Y H F E E T E F J O A J

I A O A E U O X

D E G H I N O P R S T
X E U H L A O J F J Y

Hello children,

Today we are celebrating the feast of the Holy Trinity. "Trinity" means "three" and tells us that there are three Persons in God.

There is only one God, but God is a relationship of the Father and the Son, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

Each of the Persons in the Holy Trinity is really God, so the Father is really God, and Jesus is really God, and the Holy Spirit is really God. But they are not all the same Person.

Each of the Persons in the Holy Trinity is also equal to the others. The Father is not greater than the Son or the Holy Spirit; they are all equal.

Sometimes we can understand the Holy Trinity as if it were like a family.

Each of the persons is different, but the family wouldn't really exist if any one of them were missing.

The Holy Trinity is also a relationship of love. Because God is so full of love, He wanted to share it with others, so that is why He made us! When we live the way God wants us to, we are joining in the life of the Holy Trinity. Isn't that amazing?

Till we meet again. Be good, okay?

Aunty Eliz

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONE AND ONLY SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT PERISH BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. FOR GOD DID NOT SEND HIS SON INTO THE WORLD TO CONDEMN THE WORLD, BUT TO SAVE THE WORLD THROUGH HIM. (JOHN 3:16-18)

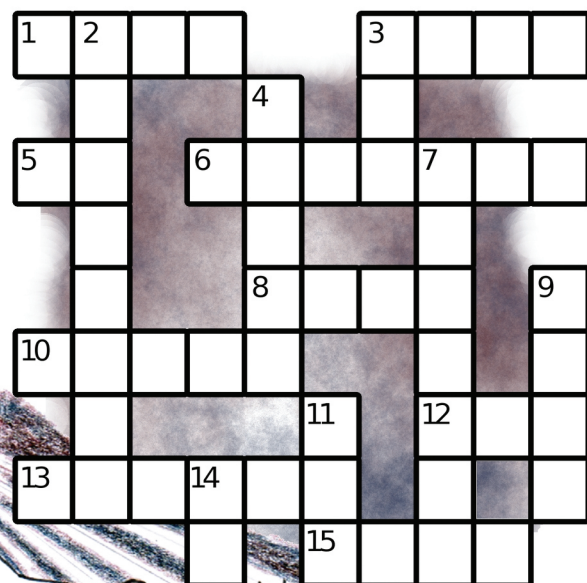
Let's Colour



God So Loved The World Cross-Word

_____(3d) so _____(10a) the world that he _____(3a) his _____(15a) Son, so that _____(2d) _____(11d) believes _____(14d) him might not _____(13a) but might have _____(7d) _____(8a) For God did _____(12a) _____(1a) his Son _____(9d) the _____(4d) to _____(6a) the world, but that the world might _____(5a) saved through him.

Use the words in the list to fill in the blanks in today's Gospel reading. Then fit them into the cross-word



BE
GAVE
GOD
IN
INTO
LIFE
LOVED
NOT
ONLY
PERISH
SEND
WHO
WORLD
CONDEMN
ETERNAL
EVERYONE



Before Jesus ascended into Heaven, He said something to prepare His disciples for His departure. What did Jesus say to them? Look at this page in the mirror to find out.

YOUTH

JUNE 4, 2023

Synodality leads Filipino youth to listen and engage with God

MANILA, Philippines: Fr Earl Valdez, a Filipino priest and director for youth, has expressed his dedication in educating and involving the youth with Christ in the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene at Quiapo.

He expressed that his task as a priest is to enlighten people about God.

"I see primarily the ministerial priesthood as a gift. Something that God gives and has a reason to exist," Fr Valdez said. "I believe the Lord trusts us with something that He can do, so He can transcend through us."

Fr Valdez said that the gift that he received and his perspective in Synodal Church moves him to include and educate the youth.

"My particular vocation is formation to our young people, not just the usual catechism and common worship and activities of Church but a holistic formation," he stated.



Synod youth participants at Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene. (Vatican News/PYM Quiapo)

The Filipino priest believes that Synodality reflects the essence of togetherness and the importance of youth participation in their journey with the Church.

"Synodality is actually walking together, and I think that kind of accompaniment is needed from the youth," he explained. "Synodality is not something we explicitly teach because it is very important for us that this

everyday living is being synodal in character; we directly teach it by practice and it comes with catechism, formation, and reminders."

He also shared that the parish seeks to strengthen the relationship of the young people with Christ by "meeting them regularly on Sunday to have a Bible sharing and training them to enhance their skills in singing and dancing for the ministry," he continued. "They are scholars of Quiapo church, so we give them formation and education."

Aside from inspiring young people to be with God, he also emphasised that they provide "more than just holistic formation. We also give them leadership duties, and leadership duties come with consultation, listening, and directing."

As a priest and youth coordinator, he revealed that the parish is putting more effort to contribute positively to the lives of young people.

"We do a lot of work because you need to talk to them, listen to them, understand where

they are coming from," he said.

Fr Valdez also conveyed the significance of helping young people listen to each other.

"In terms of Synodality, we have to be prepared to go through those rough edges of listening," he said. "Listening is not just passive; listening also entails having the obligation to prepare somebody to take right actions and to hear the right things that they need to hear."

He also added that "synodal is also part of my theological orientation that the Church is everybody."

Fr Valdez expressed the vital role of the Church by saying, "the Church is very Synodal, I think that is our lifeblood."

As a youth ministry coordinator, he hopes that the Church will continue to involve more young people and bring them closer to Christ.

"I hope that the Church can continue and accommodate greater interaction among young people," he said.

Fr Valdez said that young people in the Philippines recognize their belief with God.

"Filipino youth see the value of their faith," he added. "It is important to have discerning encounter with reality and Filipino youth can offer a faith that continuously discerns."

Fr Valdez hopes that those who joined and will join the Synodal activities will "not just be part of the Church but will remain."

He concluded the interview by encouraging everyone to contribute to the journey of the Synodal Church. "We can only work one step at a time to try and build a better future through our own efforts; synodality will bring better visions of who we are to our faith."

By Rechilda Estores, *Vatican News*



RAWANG: The Parish Integral Human Development Ministry (PIHDM) of the Church of St Jude, organised a talk on *Gangsterism and the Danger of Drug Abuse* in collaboration with the parish catechists. The talk was held on May 20 for Form Three to Form Five students.

The speaker, Tuan TTP Philip Pangkat, shared his extensive experience working in the field. He provided insights into the reality of life behind prison bars, drawing from his personal experiences. Tuan Philip supplemented his stories with pictures depicting life inside a prison.

He emphasised the perils of gangsterism and drug abuse, highlighting the severe punishments prisoners face, such as caning and being on death row.

He urged the students to steer clear of smoking or vaping, as these habits often serve as the gateway to drug abuse. Additionally, he reminded them that their bodies should remain free from evil contamination, as they are



The catechists and participants with Tuan TTP Philip Pangkat.

considered the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Charles Savary, the Parish Prison Ministry coordinator, expressed his gratitude to Fr Vincent Thomas for his assistance in organising the programme. He also extended his appreciation to the speaker, teachers, and students for attending the talk. When asked

about their takeaways from the event, one of the students mentioned their curiosity about prisoners' lives in Malaysia, including the significance of their different coloured uniforms.

The student stated that Tuan Philip's talk shed light on prison life, although it did not delve too deeply into the subject. Overall, the

students found the talk to be informative and it fulfilled the intended purpose.

PIHDM coordinator, Augustine Ratnasamy, presented a small token of appreciation to Tuan Philip for his valuable contribution as the speaker. — *By Mercy Almeida Stellus*

HIKE AND PRAISE BRINGS YOUTH, NATURE AND GOD TOGETHER

KUALA LUMPUR: The Youth Ministry of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (SHC) organised an outdoor activity called *Hike & Praise* on May 13. It was aimed at nurturing responsibility and love for Mother Nature among the parish youth. A total of 25 people aged 16 to 39 participated in climbing the hills of Taman Tugu.

The day commenced with an opening prayer by youth member Ben Choong before the members

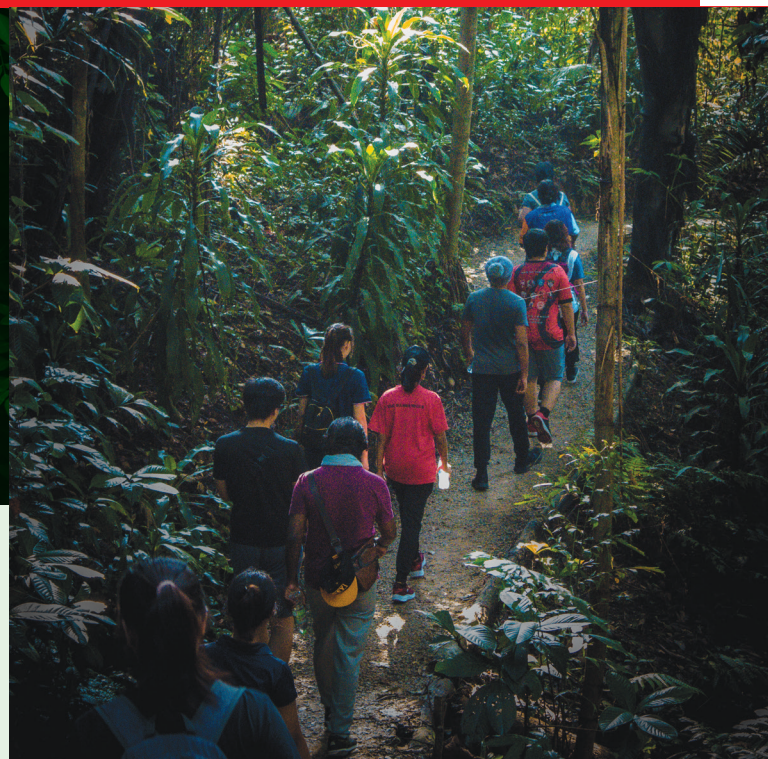
carpooled to Taman Tugu Hike Trails, located 15 minutes from SHC. There, they were grouped according to language.

All the teams navigated the serene trails of the hills while mingling with each other. The youth enjoyed a Saturday of healthy physical activities despite the strenuous one kilometre hike. Everyone learned each other's names and shared stories along the way. Seminarian Brother Gabriel Puvan, who tagged along,

praised the Lord while praying the Rosary with several youth.

Upon reaching the end of the trail, participants gathered for food and drinks prepared by the organising committee. The youth mingled with their new friends over snacks and light drinks.

The heat and pesky insect bites did not stop the troop from embarking on new unexplored trails in their groups. Some even embraced the challenge of lengthier treks. Accompanied by members



The youth hiking through the Taman Tugu trails.

of the organising committee, the participants returned to the rest area for more cool refreshments after traversing the 1.2 km and 1.5 km paths.

Back at the parish, the participant time to reflect on their outing. Chantelle, a participant, enjoyed the hike saying, "It was an amazing experience. I became closer with my Form Five Catechism students; we talked so much along the way. I also made lots of new church friends. Hopefully, we can have more fun-filled activities like bowling or badminton over the weekends".

This excitement was echoed by other participants who gave feedback in the form provided. Many found the *Hike & Praise*

fun and friendly.

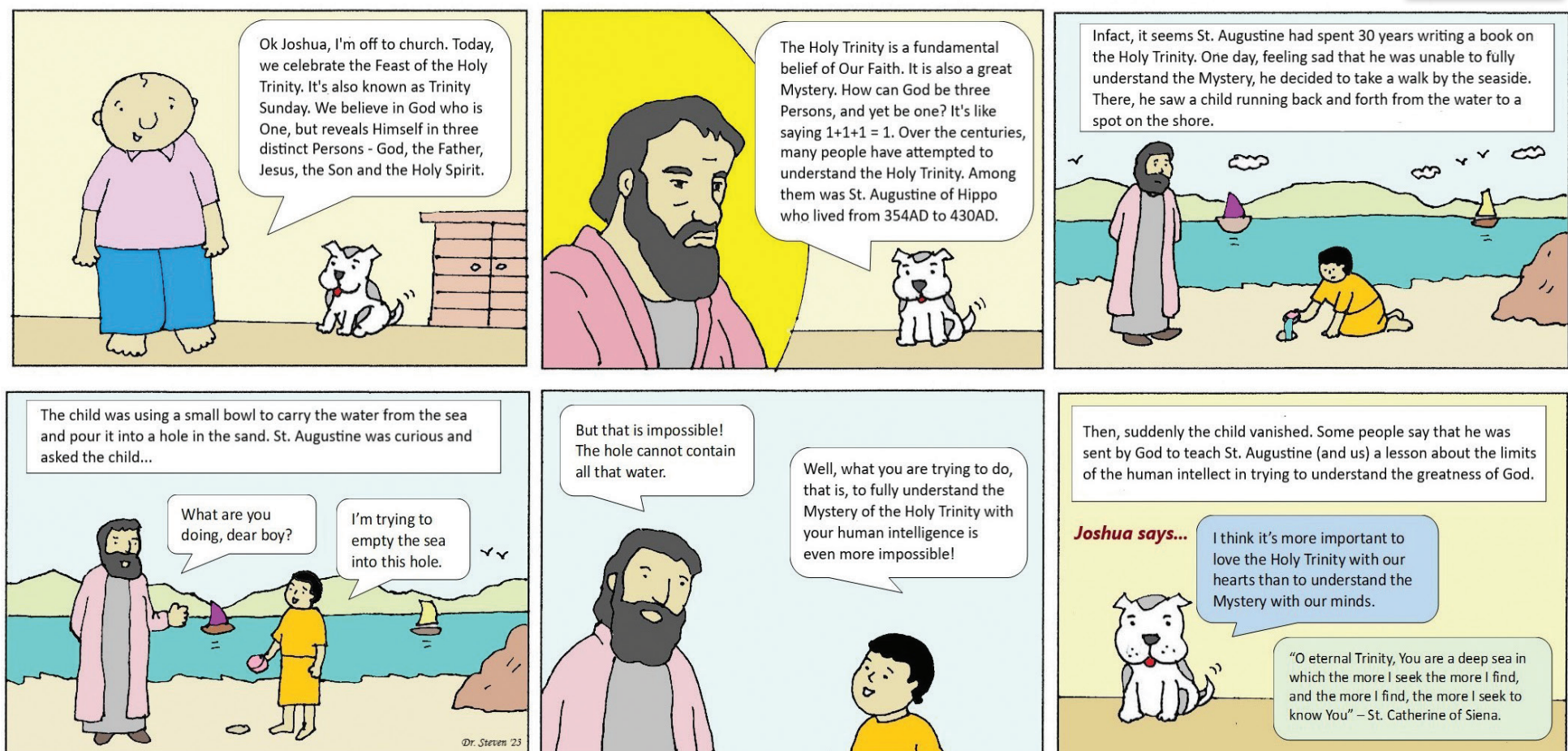
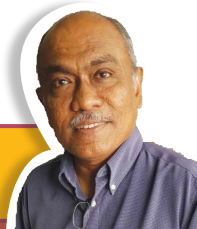
Benedict Charles, fondly known as 'Uncle Ben', wrapped up the day by pointing out that the 'Praise' part of the event was not just at the start or the end of the event. Instead, it could be felt all day long. He also said that Jesus is present at all times, especially when young people seek out opportunities to get to know Him better.

Overall, *Hike & Praise* was a successful endeavour as the Youth Ministry gained additional members and lifelong friends. The organisers would like to thank parish priest, Msgr Stanislaus Soosamariam, SHC parishioners, and everyone who helped make this event possible. — *By Isabel Andrew*



THE SIMPLE LIFE...

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



Faith comforts family of civilian killed by stray bullet in Sudan



Albert Augustine (right) was killed by a stray bullet on April 15, 2023, amid clashes between Sudanese armed forces and paramilitaries in Khartoum. (Pic source/Keralakaumudi.com)

MUMBAI: An Indian Catholic killed by a stray bullet in Sudan in front of his wife and daughter on April 15 is finally home, with his remains returned to the southern Indian state of Kerala May 19 and laid to rest the next day.

Albert Augustine, a former Indian soldier who had been working in private security for a Sudanese company, was killed when he opened a window in his Khartoum apartment to attempt to reach his son, who was in the UK at the time, on the phone.

Augustine thus became an early casualty of the fighting that's gripped Sudan since April 15 between forces loyal to the country's army chief and a leading rival, which has left hundreds of people dead and displacing more than a million.

Augustine had invited his wife and daughter to join him in Sudan for a couple of weeks during their summer vacation before the violence erupted, and they found themselves trapped in his apartment for days after his death awaiting evacuation. The family is deeply Catholic, with one of Augustine's sisters being a nun.

The wife, Saibella, and the daughter, Marieta, were eventually rescued and returned to India on April 27. Bureaucratic and security procedures delayed the return of Augustine's body by another two weeks.

His remains eventually were returned to India aboard a C-17 Airforce evacuation aircraft, according to the Indian embassy in Sudan. Estimates are that some 4,000 Indian nationals live and work in Sudan.

The body was transported from Port Sudan airport to a military airbase near New Delhi by an Indian Air Force flight. It arrived at the family home in Nellippara, Kerala, around 1.00am on Saturday, May 20.

The Catholic funeral was held at Holy Family Church, near his

house at Nellippara around 1.00pm the same day. Hundreds, including family, friends and colleagues, came to pay homage to Augustine.

Eight priests concelebrated the funeral Mass, and many clergy had visited and prayed beforehand, including retired Syro-Malabar Archbishop George Valiyamattam of Tellicherry.

Augustine's sister, a member of the Sisters of St Joseph of Annecy and director of St Joseph's Community College in Bhubaneswar in northeastern India, said the family's Catholic faith is a source of comfort.

"We are all grieving, the loss of my brother is very painful, but we're uniting our pain and sorrow to the Passion of Jesus Christ, praying for peace in Sudan," said Sr Remya Thomas.

"My mother's grief is unbearable, she has lost her only son ... she told me that in her bitter agony, she feels the support of the Grieving Mother of Jesus at the foot of the Cross, and my mummy is offering her pain for an end to the War in Sudan and Ukraine," Thomas said. "She was weeping when she asked Jesus, to help all the weeping mothers, who have lost their sons in Sudan and Ukraine and also mothers in Russia."

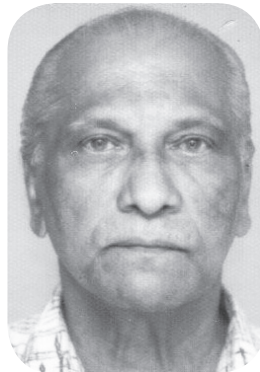
"The faith has been the source of the strength, they are weeping and in deep agony, but we all unite with Pope Francis in begging God for an end to war in Sudan and Ukraine," Thomas said. "Their strong faith has given them gratitude in these days of grief, they're grateful to God that my brother could be brought home and given a Christian funeral."

During the funeral Mass, the priest delivering the homily noted the irony that Augustine had served his nation for 19 years as a veteran army commander, only to be struck down by tragedy as a civilian when he went to Sudan to try to provide for his family. — By Nirmala Carvalho, *Crux*

MEMORIAM

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

20th Anniversary In Ever Loving Memory of



JEAN MARIE AIME
Born:
3 September 1934
Departed:
7 June 2003

"Goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever"
Psalm 23:6

The brightness of your smile, the gentleness of your soul and the kindness of your heart will be forever cherished.

Deeply missed by Brother, Sister-in-Law, Cousins, Nephews, Nieces, Grandnephews and Grandnieces.

8th Year Anniversary In Loving Memory of



**LUCAS LEE
PAK KEONG**

Departed:
10th June, 2015

Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
(Psalm 23:6)

Deeply missed and forever cherished by:
Wife: Mrs Lucas Lee (Marie)
Daughter: Lilian Lee Li Lian
Brothers & Sisters, In-laws, Nephews, Nieces, Grand Nephews and Grand Nieces, Godchildren, Relatives and Friends.

5th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



**Rosamma
Mathew**

Born:
2nd June 1938
Departed:
9th June 2018

In life we loved you dearly,
In death we love you still,
In our hearts we hold a place,
That only you can fill.

Always remembered by children, In-laws and loved ones.

12th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Simon Fernandez
From the Lord: 31.08.1929
To the Lord: 10.06.2011

Your very best you gave, Long years of humble service and quiet love, Through days of sun and darkness, Till the very end silent and brave. Please always know we love you, Though many years can come and go, No one can take your place.

Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own.
Ps 33:12

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine"
Isaiah 43:1-3

In Loving Memory of George S. Joseph 8th Anniversary



13 October 1925 - 3 June 2015

Beloved husband, father, father-in-law, grandfather, great-grandfather, uncle & friend.



40th Day Memorial Prayer

Mr Paul Thanaraju Devasahayan
(St Vincent de Paul member of St Andrew Church Muar, Johore)

Born: October 6, 1952
Reunited with the Lord: April 9, 2023

Life will never be the same without you with us.
We are missing you dearly and trying to learn to live without you here.
We hold you close within our hearts, and there you shall remain.
To walk with us throughout our lives until we meet again.
We love you, Appa!

He is fondly remembered and missed by wife, children, sons-in-law, daughter-in-law, and his lovely seven grandchildren.

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REST IN PEACE

Public display of faith through streets of Washington

WASHINGTON: A few hundred Catholics marched through the streets of Washington, DC, to publicly pray and adore the body of Christ during a Eucharistic procession on Saturday, May 20, two days after the solemnity of the Ascension.

The procession, led by Catholic Information Centre (CIC) director Fr Charles Trullols, began at the CIC building at 1501 K St., NW, and passed by Lafayette Square, which overlooks the White House, and by the Veterans Affairs Building. It ended with Benediction back at the CIC.

"This was the best event ever, because we honoured Jesus Christ in the holy Eucharist downtown, Washington," said Grace Sims, 66, Arlington resident, after the Benediction.

Procession participants knelt before the Eucharist displayed in a monstrance and sang St Thomas Aquinas' hymn *Salutaris Hostia* before beginning the procession through the city. Attendees stopped at three altar stations for silent prayer. At the first altar, Trullols read from the Gospel of John and at the second altar, he delivered a homily. At the third altar, he celebrated Benediction.

During the procession, attendees prayed the joyful mysteries of the Rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet. They also sang hymns, which included *Immaculate Mary*.

Edwin Salazar, a 27-year-old resident of Hyattsville, Maryland, said that it was amazing how many people showed up to



A few hundred Catholics march through the streets of Washington, to publicly pray and adore the body of Christ during a Eucharistic procession on May 20, 2023. (CNA photo/Joe Portolano)

give public witness to their faith.

"I think it was amazing; it was beautiful," Salazar said.

"It really helps people ground their faith when they have a community backing them up."

Another attendee, Sandy Cremers, said that she had been to a Eucharistic procession before, but this was her first time attending one in Washington.

"We should do one every day until the country converts ... and until our leaders convert," she said.

Trullols said that the procession helps Catholics see the "sense of the beauty that we all have to ... give to the Eucharist and the devotion and reverence." He added that

it also helps bear witness to the faith in front of people who otherwise would not encounter the Eucharist.

Some bystanders who were not part of the procession also showed interest. Several people stopped to watch the procession, some took pictures, and others asked a few of the attendees about the event.

"I saw so many bystanders stopping, taking pictures, wondering what it was," added Trullols.

Trullols said this was the first time CIC organised a procession and it "exceeded all of [our] expectations." He said he hopes to organise another procession next year "to make this an annual event." — **By Tyler Arnold, CNA**

6,500-mile pilgrimage to kick off bishops' 2024 National Eucharistic Congress

NEW YORK: A year from now, 48 Catholics spread out at four separate locations across the country, will embark on a two-month pilgrimage to Indianapolis for the start of the National Eucharistic Congress — and, if everything goes to plan, they'll encounter more than 100,000 fellow Catholics along the way.

The National Eucharistic Congress has announced the routes and plans for the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage that will begin next Pentecost Sunday, May 19, 2024, and conclude in Indianapolis on July 16, 2024, which is the site of the National Eucharistic Congress. Each taking off from a different region of the US, the four pilgrimage routes will cover approximately 6,500 miles, and run through 65 dioceses.

The pilgrimage is a next step in the US bishops' three-year Eucharistic revival initiative.

"It is a stirring vision — Christ truly present in the Eucharist, travelling across our nation inviting crowds of hungry souls to come and be fed," Will Peterson, president and founder of Modern Catholic Pilgrim, said in a statement.

"The pilgrimage is modelled after the road to Emmaus and is an invitation for pilgrims to encounter the risen Christ on the journey and in the breaking of the bread before being

missioned back into their local communities to spread the fire," Peterson said.

The four cities the pilgrimage will start from are: San Francisco, California; Bemidji, Minnesota; New Haven, Connecticut; and Brownsville, Texas.

Each route will have 12 "perpetual pilgrims" — young adult Catholics between the ages of 19-29 — who will lead the way, along with priest chaplains who will cycle through on a weekly schedule. However, the National Eucharistic Congress has made it clear that these pilgrims will not walk the entire journey. There will be a support vehicle "for legs of the journey in which safety, terrain, and/or climate may present obstacles," according to the National Eucharistic Congress.

Pilgrims will travel 10-15 miles a day, and be offered stay at parishioner homes and diocesan related centres.

An application process for those interested to be one of the 48 "perpetual pilgrims" will open this summer, followed by an interview process in the fall.

The priest chaplains will be charged with helping celebrate Mass, leading the Eucharistic procession, taking part in devotions, and hearing confessions. In general, there will be a consistent schedule for each pilgrimage route that includes Mass and major solemn

procession on Sundays, with Mass and smaller processions at parishes during the week.

There will also be day pilgrims who are the 100,000-plus Catholics expected to join the pilgrimage along the way on what will be designated official segments. Peterson said they will make sure to give all Catholics an opportunity to participate, even if not directly on the road.

Part of the impetus for the US bishops launching the Eucharistic Revival initiative in 2021 was a 2019 Pew study that showed just 30 per cent of Catholics understand the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The first year was focused on the diocesan level, with the second year focused on the parish level. The pilgrimage and subsequent National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis — with an expected attendance of 80,000 — are the culmination of the initiative.

Bishop Andrew Cozzens, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Evangelization and Catechesis Committee chair, who has spearheaded the National Eucharistic Revival initiative, has said the goal is to create a movement of Catholics across the United States, healed, converted, formed, and unified by an encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist — and sent out in mission "for the life of the world." — **By John Lavenburg, Crux**

Eucharistic Congress in Ecuador to offer sign of hope for nation



Logo of 53rd International Eucharistic Congress in Ecuador

QUITO: The 2024 International Eucharistic Congress in Ecuador, will aim to be an event of fraternity and hope, especially for host nation Ecuador where the people and the Church are facing multiple challenges.

The celebration will recall the importance of the mystery of the Eucharist, a sacrament that allows us to "see ourselves as children of the Father and therefore brothers and sisters among ourselves," said Fr Corrado Maggioni, president of the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses.

Fr Maggioni explained that following the previous international Eucharistic congress in Budapest in 2021, the reason for choosing Ecuador for the next gathering had to do with the 150th anniversary of Ecuador's consecration to the Heart of Jesus. The local Bishops' Conference saw this as a way to awaken spiritual energies and an opportunity for the Catholic Church to assess, give witness to, and strengthen evangelisation, both locally and beyond. Ecuador then submitted its candidacy to the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses, which, in turn, presented it to Pope Francis who approved it.

The theme of the Congress is *Fraternidad para sanar el mundo (Fraternity to heal the world)*, recalling Jesus' words "You are all brothers." Fr Maggioni explained that this is a very timely theme for Ecuador, but also for the Church, as the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* notes. And the emphasis on this theme in Ecuador aims to contribute to local efforts to overcome difficulties and strengthen positive relationships in social, political, and cultural spheres. He also notes that it is the Eucharistic theme par excellence, because the celebration of the Eucharist helps us to see ourselves as children of the Father and, therefore, as brothers and sisters.

Fr Maggioni recalled that the Eucharist is the guarantee of communion with Christ, and the Eucharistic mystery makes Christ present with us and us with Him. And as we are called to be the living body of Christ today, as leaven in the world, the Eucharist is the high road, a transmission of life from Christ. — **By Renato Martinez, Vatican News**