

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

TERHAD

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Forgive and unite to serve in love

ROME: Cardinal Michael Czerny, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development has urged members of the Church's international confederation of charities — Caritas Internationalis — to work together in service to people in need.

The cardinal celebrated the opening Mass on May 11 for the General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis, which took place in Rome, May 11-16.

In his homily, Cardinal Czerny urged Caritas members and volunteers to put love at the forefront of their lives, encouraging them to “remove vanity” and the “desire to put ourselves above others.”

The Cardinal delivered his homily in St. Peter's Basilica almost six months after Pope Francis issued a decree removing the top leaders of the Church's humanitarian outfit in a move to “improve its management rules and procedures.”

“Listen to the gentle invitation – to encounter, to gather, to forgive, to unite, as you have been struggling to do these last five-and-a-half months. All this rooted and grounded in love, in the caritas which is your name and mission and mystery,” said the Cardinal.

He explained that every organisation, even ecclesial federations, goes through times of conflict and struggle when it is “not hard to keep track of wrongdoings.”

“Love forgives and excuses every offence, to that we let the Father's love embrace us. Love ‘keeps no records of wrongdoings,’ Paul criticises the wrong kind of bookkeeping,” he added, citing St Paul's *Hymn to Love*.

Cardinal Czerny also told Caritas Internationalis members to remind themselves of the mission that they have received from the Church, saying that charity and love go hand in hand.

“As Caritas, in making that loving and generous gift, you must remind yourself, as the Holy Father says, of the mission that you have received from the Church itself,” he said.

“It is a difficult path, to be sure, but surely worth taking — with one another, in love for the poor, and in union with the Church,” the Cardinal added.

Cardinal Czerny explained that charity is the most “sublime” way to know God and understand the Christian faith and that even the most generous service means nothing without the virtue of love.

“Love is what makes us ‘to be’. When we embrace God's love and love as God loves and remain in God's love, we understand the meaning of our own lives,” the Cardinal said.

“Love is forever, here and hereafter, and so

Jesus tells us this is where we must ‘remain’,” he added.

Cardinal Czerny closed his homily with a reminder of the Caritas Internationalis' three-fold task — to proclaim the Gospel with good works, to exercise the commitment to charity of their local Church, and to seek unity.

“Help the lay people carry the Church's message of love into the political, social, and cultural realms,” he urged.

“Love, love, love. Continue to be that Society of Love for all our siblings, everywhere, always,” the Cardinal said.

Caritas Internationalis is the umbrella organisation for 162 official Catholic charities operating in 200 countries and territories around the world. Its general assembly, attended by some 400 delegates representing national and local Caritas organisations, was to elect a new president, secretary-general, executive board and fill other leadership positions.

In November 2022, Pope Francis issued a decree suspending the secretary-general and other top officers of Carita, citing “deficiencies” in management and procedures “seriously prejudicing team spirit and staff morale.” Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle was also removed as Caritas president but remained in

the organisation to assist the temporary administrator appointed to oversee the transition.

In his address to Caritas delegates May 11, Pope Francis explained that what distinguishes Caritas from other aid organisations is its “ecclesial vocation,” which offers charity in communion with the Holy See and in line with the Catholic Church teaching.

From its conception, he said, Caritas was meant to mediate “between the universal and particular churches” and support “the involvement of the entire people of God in the work of charity.”

“Take care to train competent lay persons capable of bringing the Church's message to political and social life,” he told the delegates.

“The challenge of a mature and conscious laity is as timely as ever, since their presence reaches all those spheres that directly touch the lives of the poor,” the Pope said. “They can express with creative freedom the Church's maternal heart and concern for social justice thanks to their involvement in the challenging work of unjust social structures and promoting the happiness of the human person.”

Pope Francis also encouraged the delegates to remain united and learn to value their differences.

“Your confederation embraces many different identities. Experience your diversity as a treasure, pluralism as a resource,” he said. “Compete in showing esteem for one another, and allow conflicts to lead, not to division, but to encounter and growth.” — *Vatican News/NCR*

“What distinguishes Caritas from other aid organisations is its ‘ecclesial vocation,’ which offers charity in communion with the Holy See and in line with the Catholic Church teaching.”

— Pope Francis

(Caritas Penang photo)

But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

1 Pet 4:13-16



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Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre

5, Jalan Robertson, 50150, KL

Tel / Whatsapp: 03-20268291

Website : www.heraldmalaysia.com

Facebook : www.facebook.com/

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Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur,
Diocese of Malacca Johore, Diocese of
Penang and Diocese of Keningau**EDITOR**Patricia Pereira
editor1@herald.com.my**ASSISTANT EDITOR****Social Media Coordinator**Sandra Ann Inbaraj
sandra@herald.com.my**WRITER****Children's Section**Gwen Manickam
gwen@herald.com.my**GRAPHIC DESIGNER****Youth Section**Amanda Mah
amanda@herald.com.my**BAHASA MALAYSIA**Melania Liza Magnus
liza@herald.com.my**MANDARIN**Adelina Wong
yin4482@gmail.com**TAMIL**RK Samy
rksamy3@hotmail.com**ADMINISTRATOR****Advertisements/Memoriam**
advertisement@herald.com.my**LETTERS**

letterseditor@herald.com.my

Pope encourages friendly conversations that can open hardened hearts

In his message for the 57th World Day of Social Communications on May 21, the Holy Father has called upon Catholic Communicators to develop a cordial way of communication which can influence hardened hearts to open.

He empathises in the message that “friendly conversations can open a breach even in the most hardened of hearts,” and, at the same time, those who read or listen to communicators who disseminate information through cordial communication, are led to participate in the “joys, fears, hopes and suffering of the women and men of our time.”

According to the Pontiff, contemporary society is marked by “polarisations and contrasts,” a situation which he laments “not even the ecclesial community is immune.”

Expounding on the theme of the 57th World Social Communication Day: *Speak with the heart: Veritatem facientes in caritate (Doing the Truth in Charity)*, the Pope said, “We should not be afraid of proclaiming the truth, even if it is at times uncomfortable, but of doing so without charity, without heart,” since “we are all called to seek and to speak the truth and to do so with charity.”

The theme created after the past two years’ reflections: “to go and see” and “listening with the ear of the heart” as conditions for good communication, the message stressed that “it is the heart that spurred us to go, to see and to listen, and it is the heart that moves us towards an open and welcoming way of communicating.”

Once we have practised listening, which demands waiting and patience, as well as foregoing the assertion of our point of view in a prejudicial way, the Pontiff underscored in his message, “We can enter into the dynamic of dialogue and sharing, which is precisely that of communicating in a cordial way. After listening to the other with a pure heart, we will also be able to speak following the truth in love.”

Giving reference to the late Pope Benedict XVI’s message that “the Christian’s programme is a heart which sees,” Pope Francis narrated that “a heart that reveals the truth of our being with its beat and that, for this reason, should be listened to.”

This he says, “leads those who listen to attune themselves to the same wave length, to the point of being able to hear within their heart also the heartbeat of the other. Then the miracle of encounter can take place, which makes us look at one another with compassion, welcoming our mutual frailties with respect rather than judging by

57th World Day of Social Communication 2023



Theme: *Speak with the heart*
“The truth in Love” (Eph 4:15)

hearsay and sowing discord and division.”

Even though the message for the 57th World Social Communication Day is addressed to media practitioners, the Pope clarifies that the commitment to communicating with open heart and arms does not pertain exclusively to those in the field of communications. It is everyone’s responsibility.

As St Luke the Evangelist explains in his writings about Christ’s warning that every tree is known by its fruit, the message reads in part, “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure produces evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”

Pope Francis therefore notes that to communicate truth with charity, it is necessary to purify one’s heart and “only by listening and speaking with a pure heart can we see beyond appearances and overcome the vague din which, also in the field of information, does not help us discern in the complicated world in which we live.”

In conclusion, the Pope prayed that “the pure Word poured out from the heart of the Father may help us to make our communication clear, open and heartfelt, the Word made flesh may help us listen to the beating of hearts, to rediscover ourselves as brothers and sisters, and to disarm the hostility that divides and that the Word of truth and love may help us speak the truth in charity, so that we may feel like protectors of one another.” — **Agencies**

We are called to work together as one

In our Gospel reading, time seems to have stood still. The first 12 chapters of the Gospel cover the first 33 years of Jesus’ life. Then, from the beginning of Chapter 13 right through to the end of Chapter 17, we are in the Upper Room at a Passover Meal with Jesus and His disciples, His friends. This is the last evening of Jesus’ time with His disciples before the Crucifixion.

Jesus knows He is going to die. He knows He is spending His last few hours before His death with disciples who do not understand what He is about to do and why He is about to do it.

We have watched Jesus washing His disciples’ feet. We have heard Him talking of the Holy Spirit who will walk alongside them, live within them, help them to be witnesses to the love of God as they live their lives. We know that these actions and these words were spoken as much for us as for the disciples’ benefit.

In what Jesus says and does, He is encouraging us to share in His priorities for our lives: serving others; receiving their service to us with grace and love; witnessing to the love of God; listening to the inner voice of the Holy Spirit; and later in Chapter 17, placing a priority on working together as one, respecting each other, knowing that without our shared fellowship and witness, we are so much poorer.

Jesus has two key goals in mind as He prepares Himself, and His disciples, for their life ahead without Him. He wants



them to be one so they can remain strong and influence the world for God. He wants what He does to bring glory to the Father. While He faces humiliation and abandonment, His desire is to bless others.

And in the middle of all this, come those words of Jesus: “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you.”

There are two ways that we can think about those words.

First, there is the wider context of all that Jesus has been saying and doing in the Upper Room and the wider context of the whole prayer in John 17. He could be praying that God will be glorified through the lives of His friends. Jesus has commissioned them to serve Him and they will, from now on, be the ones through whom God is glorified. This means that we are the ones to be God’s visible presence in

the world. Our actions, good or bad speak about the Lord that we claim to follow and serve. Our choices and actions speak loudly about the God we say we serve. We are the ones who will glorify God. Or our behaviour and actions could bring shame on the God we say we serve. So, Jesus prays that God will be glorified by the choices we make and by our actions.

Secondly, and in line with the immediate context of John 17: 1-6, Jesus could be talking about something very different.

When Jesus talks about Himself being glorified and so bringing glory to God, it seems that He has in mind the days which immediately follow this prayer. He sees the events of the Crucifixion and Resurrection as being about glory! And particularly, the events of Good Friday. For Jesus, the glory of God will be revealed in Him at the cross and in His resurrection. As Jesus

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

7th Sunday of Easter (A)

Readings: **Acts of the Apostle 1:12-14**

1 Peter 4:13-16;

Gospel: John 17:1-11

is lifted-up in the eyes of everyone, so He gives glory to God.

Glory is to be found, not in power and influence, but in obedient submission to God’s will.

Jesus’ throne is the Cross. God’s glory is revealed in suffering. God is revealed most clearly at the place of suffering. Jesus’ prayer in John 17, “Father, use these next hours to glorify me and to glorify you.” And Jesus re-emphasises this as He says to God the Father, in John 17:4: “I glorified You on earth by finishing the work that You gave Me to do.”

Jesus’ example to us is one which centres on the Cross. It is at the Cross, the place of suffering, that God’s redeeming work is done. The place of weakness is the place of glory! This is the place where we discover who God really is, and God’s glory is revealed.

We are safe in the love of God, in some mysterious way, because of the Cross.

And because of the Cross, we too can serve others without counting the cost. And if we suffer, we can be sure that, in Christ, God has walked the same journey that we walk and is alongside us each step of the way.



Fr Fabian Dicom appointed National Director for Caritas Malaysia

JOHOR BAHRU: Fr Fabian Dicom has been appointed the National Office Director to spearhead Caritas Malaysia (CM) and the social mission agenda as envisaged by the nine Malaysian archbishops and bishops effective May 15.

Bishop Bernard Paul, the President of CM said this in a statement released May 10.

Fr Fabian will be accountable to the Bishop

President and is a member of the CM Board. He will serve CM full-time, for a five-year term as the Bishop President's delegate.

He takes over from Eta Ting, who managed the CM in a part-time capacity as Executive Secretary, filling the gap left by Charles Bertille.

CM records its thanks and appreciation to Eta.

CM also thanks Bishop Sebastian Francis for making Fr Fabian available to the Malaysian Church, and for a greater good.

In ending his letter, Bishop Bernard appeals to the Catholics of Malaysia to "be the 'Good Samaritan' wherever you are, and wherever you are planted. Work with Caritas Malaysia to 'hear the cry of the poor and the earth'".



Fr Fabian Dicom

Learning about the auxiliary of the apostolate

JOHOR BAHRU: An Auxiliary of the Apostolate awareness weekend was held at Majodi Centre, April 29 and 30. Organised by the Malacca Johore Vocation Promotion Team, the weekend was facilitated by four auxiliaries from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. There were eight women participants.

The weekend began with an introductory session — discovering God's dream and purpose for each person. Participants were guided with Scripture verses, leading to personal reflection and prayer time. They were given quiet time for journaling and writing exercises.

After Sunday Mass the following day, the participants met Bishop Bernard Paul, who was present for most of the sessions. More focused and intense sessions followed. The facilitators' sharing gave participants a better understanding of the vocation. The engagement and exchanges of questions during the Q&A session helped clear some doubts and queries on how to remain single and give up all to God for His Kingdom.

As Bishop Bernard concluded the weekend, he encouraged the women to be the "armour bearers", and to have great faith in serving and

supporting the King with dedication and loyalty, and most importantly, with the heart of a servant. "By studying the Word of God, one can build up strength and be armed with the truth of the Gospel to stand firm against enemy attack", he said. He cited Mary as an example of the perfect amour bearer we should follow.

Through citing Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Joy of the Gospel*, the bishop inspired the women to be joy-filled evangelisers, have a keen sense of mission, hearing the cries of the poor and the earth; being mindful

that we are all brothers and sisters in faith and keeping the importance of working together in our families, workplaces, ministries, and society.

He reminded the attendees that the Holy Spirit works in each one of us. "We are more than who we are, we can go beyond and walk the extra mile in our discipleship. We need to pause and listen to what the Spirit is saying and be open to the bigness of God, live life to the fullest, and desire to be more by doing more. It is by giving that we experience the fullness and joy of living", he exhorted.



**KUALA LUMPUR
ARCHDIOCESE**

**Diary of Archbishop
Julian Leow**

May

29/5 - 3/6 *Clergy Retreat – Cambodia*



PENANG DIOCESE


**Diary of Bishop
Sebastian Francis**

May

22-25 *Meeting — Episcopal Regional Liturgy Commission (ERLC), Kuching, Sarawak*

28 *Mass — Solemnity of Pentecost – Feast Day, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang at 10.00am*

31 *Mass — Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Church of the Nativity of the Blessed, Virgin Mary, Butterworth at 8.00pm*



**MALACCA JOHORE
DIOCESE**

**Diary of Bishop
Bernard Paul**

May

23-24 *Clergy Monthly Recollection – MAJODI Centre*

24 *Meeting – Diocesan Finance Council, MAJODI Centre*

27 *Confirmation – Sacred Heart Cathedral, JB*



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #131

F12
MJD NEWS
UPDATES

Greetings again dear people of God. The voices are back. Divisive voices. Uniting voices. Assuring voices. The voice of politicians. But where are the voices of the *rakyat*? As if the heat wave is not enough, there are the disgruntled voices, adding fuel to the fire. The voices of self-interest have possessed many. More important is to hear the voice or voices that unite, that hear the cry of the poor and the earth, and that discriminate against no one.

Discerning Times: "Test everything", the Scriptures say. Common sense, sense of objectivity and common good are getting rare these days. Social media, propaganda, adverts, preachings and speeches are today's influencers. We buy, act or react without thinking. What makes us do what we do? Do we stop-look-go? What tools do we resort to when making decisions or changes? We feast on what's online and TikTok. We consume what we are fed by the government and the Multi National Companies and their propaganda machines, we are enslaved by what the spirit of the world sells as the normal, the acceptable and the approved. The call is to discern. The See-Judge-Act or the Awareness Examen or Spiritual Conversations are some of the tools for discernment. Check every news for teaching, preaching and statement against the Word of God and the Church's stand. Listen to what the Spirit is saying to you.

A THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:
The Eagle & The Raven
The only bird that dares to peck and ir-

ritate an eagle is the raven. It will sit on the eagle's back and start to continually bite its neck. However, the eagle does not respond, nor does it fight with the raven. It does not spend its time and energy on the raven...it just opens its wings and begins to fly, and rise higher and higher into the heavens. The higher the eagle flies, the harder it is for the raven to breathe and soon, the raven falls off due to the lack of oxygen.

Lesson from the eagle: Stop wasting your time with the "ravens." Just take them to your heights and they will fade away. Do not let the "little things" in your life get you down, make you mad, or take the joy out of your life.

The enemy will sit behind your back and bite your neck, but those who wait upon the Lord will have new strength; they will lift their wings like eagles. (Isaiah 40:31)

Announcements for this Week

1. **Seminarian Aaron Alammalay** will be ordained a transitional deacon on May 23 at the Church of St Joseph, Plentong at 8.00pm. He is now based at the Church of St Andrew, Muar.

2. The **upcoming Clergy Monthly Recollection** will be held on May 23-24 at MAJODI Centre.

3. The **100th Day 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 Google Form link provided. <https://forms.gle/zUNzcXhUfTgHStdn9>

This Week's Question and Query.

The Q asks: People collect and collect. Do they need all that?

+ The TRUTH is that all of the 'STUFF' here on earth we work so hard to buy and accumulate ... does not mean a thing.

+ At the end of the day ... people will be cleaning out our 'STUFF', going through our 'STUFF', figuring out what to do with all of our 'STUFF'...

This 'STUFF' we've accumulated in our life.

+ The only thing of VALUE that remains are the MEMORIES and what we deposit into others. May we all learn to spend less time accumulating 'STUFF' and spend way more time making MEMORIES. (ECSaayli © Saayli8)

On May 5, the World Health Organisation Director General Tedros announced: "It's with great hope that I declare COVID-19 over as a global health emergency. The emergency phase is over, but the pandemic declared in March 2020 has not come to an end, noting recent spikes in cases in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and thousands still dying from the coronavirus every week."

Stay Safe. May the Lord watch over you and keep you safe. God Bless.

Bishop Bernard Paul

Msgr William Sabang celebrates Sacerdotal Ruby Jubilee

KUCHING: The Archdiocese of Kuching celebrated the 40th year of priesthood for her Vicar General, Msgr William Sabang, on May 4. The mid-afternoon Eucharistic celebration took place at the Chapel of Mother Mary, with several dignitaries and members of the clergy in attendance.

The celebration included his seminary mate, Fr Joseph Chai, Archbishop Simon Poh and Archbishops Emeriti Peter Chung and John Ha and a number of brother priests from the Kuching Archdiocese.

His family members, relatives, and friends from Serian were also present.

During the Eucharistic celebration, Archbishop Simon delivered a homily congratulating Msgr William and Fr Joseph on their sacerdotal Ruby Jubilees. He likened the deep red colour of the precious stone to the Passion and Love of Christ, as red represents the “blood of Christ” that priests offer at every Mass, as a sacrifice for us.

The prelate thanked Msgr William for saying “Yes” to God and for his “sacrifice

and obedience” while serving under all the three archbishops. A priest’s anniversary celebration is a “celebration of the community”, not only for the priest, he said.

Archbishop Simon also thanked the Sabang family for the gift of Msgr William. To both priests, he said: “May your joy be full as you give your life totally to serve the people of God.”

The anniversary celebration concluded with a dinner at the Christian Ecumenical Worship Centre (CEWC) that evening.

Msgr William’s vocation journey began in 1975 at age 18, when he left his village in Serian to pursue his studies for the priesthood. He attended St Francis Xavier Minor Seminary in Singapore before continuing his education at the College General Penang Major Seminary from 1977 to 1982. Later, he pursued further studies at the University of Urbania in Rome, earning a Licentiate in Canon Law in 1990.

Msgr William was ordained as a deacon on Feb 20, 1983 in Kuching, and his priestly ordination took place on May 4 at St Theresa’s Church in Serian. Fr Joseph was ordained a priest a day earlier, on May 3, 1983, in Kuching.

Msgr William recalled how 40 years ago, as a “timid young priest just out of the ‘oven,’” he celebrated his first Mass with two Mill Hill priests beside him. “Today I am flanked by three archbishops



Msgr William Sabang

and a classmate.”

As Msgr William is the first Iban priest and the first priest from the Serian parish, he is popularly known as “Apai Will” meaning “Fr Will”.

Throughout his priesthood, Msgr William has served in various rural parishes as an assistant priest and rector. He held positions such as rector of St Joseph’s Cathedral and St Peter’s College in Kuching. Additionally, he served as secretary and chancellor, judicial vicar, and worked on the Ecclesiastical Tribunal in the archbishop’s office. Since 2008, he has been the rector and priest-in-charge of the Chapel of Mother Mary/Priests Retirement Home in Stutong.

Before his current appointment as Vicar General in April 2017, Msgr William served as Vicar General (Protem) in September 1996 and became Vicar General in June 2003. — *Today’s Catholic*



Msgr William Sabang (front-second left) sharing his sacerdotal Ruby Jubilee joy with Archbishops and brother priests, 4 May 2023, CMM. (Today’s Catholic Photo/CMM)

Ordinations to transitional diaconate

KUALA LUMPUR: Seminarian Gnana Selvam Berentis will be called to the Order of Deacon by the Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, Most Reverend Julian Leow D.D on Monday, June 5, at 10.00am, in the chapel of the Convent of the Infant Jesus, Bukit Nanas, Kuala Lumpur. This was announced in a Chancery Notice dated May 5 (go to bit.ly/3Bkli3y for full notice)

Bro Gnana hails from the Church of St Paul the Hermit, Bestari Jaya, Selangor. He completed his ecclesiastical studies in Philosophy at the College General Major Seminary, Penang (2016-2017) and then in Theology at St Peter’s College, Kuching (2018-2022).

Bro Gnana currently resides at the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, Kuala Lumpur.



JOHOR BAHRU: Seminarian Aaron Alammalay will be ordained to the Sacred Order of Deacon on Tuesday, May 23 at 8.00pm at the Church of St Joseph, Plentong.

Bro Aaron, 39, is from the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Puchong.

He began his vocation journey with the Carmelite Order before discerning his calling to become a diocesan priest.

He pursued his ecclesiastical studies in Philosophy and Theology in Singapore before joining the San Jose Major Seminary for his Theology formation.

He is now assigned to the Churches of St Andrew in Muar and St Matthew in Tangkak. Additionally, he serves as an assistant in the Diocesan Ministry of Migrants and Refugees.



First Family Day with the four language groups

PERMATANG TINGGI, Penang: On the Feast of St Joseph, May 1, the Church of the Holy Name of Mary held its Parish Family Day themed *How good, how delightful it is to live as brothers all together!* (Psalm 133:1)

The festivities kicked off with morning Mass, followed by breakfast. There were various activities for the 300 parishioners from the four language groups.

There were outdoor and indoor activities like Tank Race, Brick Walking, Gunny Sack Race, Passing Rubber Bands and Newspaper Dance, specially planned for the different age groups. They also organised a Treasure Hunt throughout the village.

For the less adventurous, the Rosary-making workshop was a tremendous hit.

Attendees enjoyed a day of harmonious interaction between the different cultures and language groups. An observer said, there



Parishioners having a joyful time during their Family Day.

was so much fraternity among the various language groups that it was a witness to a church in unity as envisioned by Christ when He said: “May they all be one”.

A parishioner suggested a family day event like this should be held once every three months. This is testimony that parishioners are eagerly waiting for such events

at the parish level that will bring all the language groups together, giving them a chance to interact, get to know one another better, build fraternal brotherhood, and give glory to Almighty God.

Parish priest, Fr Louis Loi, participated in most of the activities and was thrilled with the positive outcome of the day.

“I’m very happy. This is the first-time our family day saw the different language groups participate together. Previously, each apostolate held their own events. Seeing them slowly accepting each other as brothers and sisters in Christ was heart-warming,” said Fr Louis.

“We must emulate the Holy Family, not just individual families but the parish family too.”

Big applause to all and kudos to the organisers for a job well done!

Making all things new

By Adel Jayasuria

KAJANG: The Church of the Holy Family recently organised an Easter recollection programme titled *Road to Emmaus - HFK Parish Recollection* on May 4. This event was part of the parish's five-year plan to strengthen spiritual life and community spirit, aligning with its mission to *Make All Things New*.

The Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) took charge of organising the programme, which saw more than 150 parishioners participating. Attendees included members from various language groups, ministry leaders, Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) coordinators, and representatives from different language apostolates.

The recollection sessions were led by the parish priest, Fr Michael Chua (English), and assistant priests Fr Philip Chua (Mandarin), Fr Bonaventure Rayappan (Tamil), and guest priest Fr Valentine Gompok OFM Cap (BM). These sessions were structured around the Scripture passage of the road to Emmaus, emphasising personal reflection and group sharing.

During his sharing, Fr Michael reassured the parishioners that Je-



Group sharing session.

sus is always with them, and the choice lies with the community to either walk towards Jesus (Jerusalem) or away from Him (Emmaus), each following their own path.

To encourage deeper introspection and communal evaluation, attendees were presented with reflection questions such as:

- whether there was something they were running away from or
- something they wished to forget.

Similar to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, they were asked if they were on the way or in the way.

Fr Michael also emphasised the significance of the Holy Eucharist

as spiritual sustenance and essential nourishment for the journey. The community of faith was invited to remember, celebrate, and believe through the Holy Eucharist.

The half-day recollection concluded with a para liturgy and a pledge from attendees to commit to the mission of the parish renewal plan. The themes for renewal were categorised into four main areas: *Renewing Spirit, Renewing Faith, Renewing Community, and Renewing the Ardour for Mission*.

The programme began with registration, followed by Adoration and Benediction at the church. Attendees then moved to their re-



Parishioners write their commitments, either personal or to the parish on post-it notes and place it on the cross.

spective language groups for the recollection sessions. This provided a wonderful opportunity for fellowship, sharing of ideas, and thoughts. The programme ended with everyone regrouping in the main church for the closing session and final blessing.

The PPC expressed gratitude to

the priests and attendees for their presence and contributions. The desired outcome of the recollection was for attendees to be inspired and committed to the Lord's mission. The programme aimed to enhance their spiritual life, foster community spirit, and align with the parish's mission.

Soft launch of St Philip's centennial celebrations

SEGAMAT, Johor: The Church of St. Philip turns 100 next year. The soft launch of the parish's approaching centenary celebration was celebrated on the Patron Saint's feast day, May 3.

The Mass began with parish priest and main celebrant, Fr James Rajendran, assistant priest Fr Paul Wong and Fr Andrew Arokiasamy from India, processing into the church that was decked with flowers.

Fr Andrew, who read the Gospel and delivered the homily, included a brief history of the parish.

The dedication and passion of the custodians of the parish over the years have played a significant role in shaping the church into what it is today. The seed of faith that was planted by the MEP Fathers has borne fruit, and the church has become a spiritual home to many.

Segamat was the first town to receive a visit by a foreign missionary, Fr Jules Francois, MEP.

His visit to the quaint town proved fruitful as he found the people receptive to the Gospel, and with the first 300 converts, he bought a house and set up the Church of St Philip in 1924. The choice of name for the church, that of one of the 12 Apostles, is significant as St Philip was known for his closeness to Jesus and his ability to bring others to Him.

The French parish priest from the Church of St Francis Xavier, Malacca's visit marked the beginning of a new chapter in the spiritual life of the town, and the establishment of the Church of St Philip has since become an integral part of the community's religious and cultural identity. The church's history is a testament to the dedication and hard work of the early missionaries and the people who have continued to uphold and nurture the faith for almost a century.

Fr Andrew's homily highlighted the importance of nurturing an

intimate relationship with Jesus, just as St Philip did. St Philip's example of bonding well with Jesus and pointing Him out to others, as well as his empathy towards the community, serves as an inspiration to all Christians.

The slide show and lighting of the 'Centennial Candle' by members from the four main language groups provided an excellent opportunity for the congregation to reflect on the church's progress over the years and anticipate the upcoming centenary celebration. The countdown to the centenary celebration, officially opened by Fr James, and the centennial gong sounded by Fr Paul, added to the excitement of the event.

The fireworks display and fellowship of finger food and drinks were a fitting end to the day's programme, providing an opportunity for the community to come together and celebrate the church's rich history. — *By Philip Packium*

Every drop counts

RAWANG: Donating blood is a selfless act that can have a significant impact on the lives of others. It helps support the community and allows us to contribute to the welfare of others, making a direct and positive impact on the lives of people in need.

In support, the Church of St

Jude's Parish Integral Human Development Ministry (PIHDM) organised a blood donation campaign on May 7, 2023.

Youth leader, Emmanuel In-nasi, was one of the first to donate blood at the annual event.

He said, "I am always happy to do this act of sacrifice. Christ did this for us first and if my blood can help save someone's life, it's worth the while."

These campaigns not only benefit patients who require blood transfusions but also create a sense of unity and solidarity among parishioners.

Emmanuel wished more youths would come forward to volunteer. Several youths who came to donate but were rejected, expressed their disappointment. The doctor on duty said the few rejected were due to health reasons. She said from the 79 people who came to donate, only 58 bags were collected.

Parish priest, Fr. Vincent Thomas, and the PIHDM members thanked the blood donors for their life-saving gift. — *By Mercy Almeida Stellus*



Fr Vincent Thomas congratulating seminarian Bro Philip Asirvalam for his donation.

Coffee morning in aid of ACS

KUALA LUMPUR: The Assunta Children's Society (ACS) a day-care service for underprivileged Malaysian children ages seven to 15, held a coffee morning at the Church of the Holy Rosary on May 7.

The coffee morning saw a spread of Malaysian breakfast delights, muffins, and Korean noodle packets for sale among others. Parishioners and volunteers supported the fete, and most

items sold out before the second morning Mass.

On hand to help at the coffee morning were the FMM sisters, the ACS Management Committee, FMM Lay Associates, and members of the Assunta Alumni, who sold copies of Sr Enda Ryan's memoirs and donated the proceeds to ACS.

ACS falls under the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM) and is currently run by lay volunteers.

The centre in Petaling Jaya has 11 volunteer teachers caring for 17 students who come on week-day afternoons, after school.

If you would like to volunteer your time or make a donation, please email assuntacs94@gmail.com for details. It's an excellent opportunity to contribute to a noble cause and make a difference in the lives of underprivileged children. — *By Gwen Manickam*



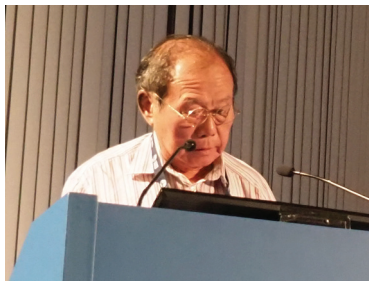
Parishioners lining up to buy food at the coffee morning.

WOOMB International meets in Rome

KUCHING: In celebration of the 70th anniversary of the discovery, the 2023 WOOMB International (Billings Ovulation Method®) Conference was held at the Sacred Heart University, Gemelli, Rome, April 28 and 29. The conference theme was *The "BILLINGS Revolution" 70 years later – from fertility knowledge to personalised medicine*.

In a message to the participants, Pope Francis highlighted the Billings Ovulation Method®'s ongoing contribution to the understanding of human sexuality and a fuller appreciation of the relational and procreative dimensions of the couple, saying that the use of methods based on the natural rhythms of fertility should be encouraged.

"We need to discover the beauty of human sexuality by once again turning to the great book



Dr Chan Lek Lim delivering the Malaysia Report

of nature, learning to respect the value of the body and the generation of life, with a view to authentic experiences of conjugal love".

Several interesting papers were presented by researchers from around the world.

The conference attracted over 200 delegates from many countries in Europe, Asia, Australasia, and the Americas. The Vice-President of the Billings Ovulation



The Extension Training Programme delegates.

Method® Service of Malaysia and the Associate Director of WOOMB International, Dr Lek-Lim Chan represented Malaysia.

Conference papers were classified into four sessions:

A. Revolution for Science: History and Development of Research

B. Revolution for Reproductive Health: Diagnosis and Prevention

C. Revolution for Culture: Anthropology, Education, Politics

D. The 'Billings Revolution' around the world

After the two-day conference, many delegates including

Dr Lek-Lim, stayed behind for the Basic or Extension Training Programme. Dr Lek-Lim always learns something new during the training programme to upskill himself in helping others.

On May 3, the group was at St Peter's Square for the Papal Audience.

Run4Unity participants get active for ecological conversion

By Julie Lim

KUALA LUMPUR: The *Laudato Si'* Action Platform of Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development recently co-sponsored a global sports and tree-planting activity called Run4Unity.

The theme for this year's edition was *People, Planet and Our Ecological Conversion*. Participants of the activity were called to promote ecological conversion by exchanging the kilometres they run or walk, or the minutes of physical exercise they do with the planting of trees.

In support for the cause, the Cre-



Archbishop Julian Leow (in white t-shirt) leading participants in prayer at KLCC Park before they began jogging or walking. The distance accumulated will be translated into the planting of trees.

ation Justice Commission (CJC) of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur organised a Run4Unity activ-

ity held at two separate locations. In total, 50 participants from different parishes in the Archdiocese

collectively completed 240.12km which translates into the planting a minimum of 200 mangrove

trees.

The first activity was held on May 6 at the Perdana Botanical Gardens (Lake Gardens). Ecclesiastical Assistant of CJC, Fr Andrew Manickam led a group of 28 participants to complete 114.32km cumulatively.

On May 7, the second group comprising 22 participants led by Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, Most Rev Julian Leow completed 125.80km at the KLCC Park.

The tree planting is scheduled to be held in June 2023 at two possible locations of Kuala Selangor and Port Dickson. More information will be provided soon for those who wish to participate.

Silver Liners Easter gathering

CHERAS: The Church of St Francis of Assisi (SFA)'s Silver Liners Ministry (SLM) hosted an Easter gathering and dinner for 175 members and guests May 7.



Archbishop Julian Leow with Lucy Tong, the oldest member of SLM.

Many were pleasantly surprised to see Archbishop Julian Leow at the function. In trying to forge greater relationships with senior groups from other parishes, lead-

ers from the Cathedral of St John and the two other parishes from the South District were also invited.

In the opening address, the SLM chair couple, Santiago and Maria, shared a visual presentation of the various activities the seniors' group engaged in last year. Santiago said, "We move on in life, and with our wealth of knowledge, we can still be useful mentors to the present and future leaders in parish ministries." It was noteworthy that many seniors are still actively involved in various ministries in the church.

Echoing parish priest Fr Paul Cheong OFM, Cap's vision statement for the parish of SFA, "To build together a vibrant community of effective missionary disciples who are holistically healthy in body, mind, and spirit," Santiago urged all to respond to the call of the Church for effective discipleship.

Fr Paul, in his address, praised the SLM for the many activities and mini pilgrimages organised

for its members. SLM, formed last April has close to 200 members. He reminded the seniors to live a productive life of fellowship. He also thanked those still active in various ministries in the parish.

He also extended his appreciation to the prelate for gracing the occasion despite his tight schedule.

Archbishop Julia said, "As you age gracefully, be connected, reach out to others, care for the elderly and those less fortunate. Seniors, with their good knowledge in various ministries, must guide the young and upcoming leaders and allow them to lead."

As God may call us home anytime, he urged everyone to be more prayerful. He closed his address by saying that the quality of one's relationship is determined by how happy one is at this stage.

One highlight of the function was honouring the most senior member of the SLM community. Despite her age, Madam Lucy Tong, 92, who often attends Sunday Mass in

a wheelchair, slowly walked into the banquet hall. When called up, she unhurriedly made her way to the front to receive a fruit basket and blessings from the archbishop. Madam Lucy, a long-standing SFA parishioner, used to stitch beautiful sashes for the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

The invitees spent the rest of the evening relishing a sumptuous dinner of Chinese and Indian cuisine while listening to retro songs by the band and music machine. Later, the floor opened for dancing. Much to the delight of the crowd, Fr Valentine Gompok OFM, Cap sang a few numbers.

At 10.30pm, the party wound down. Many were seen smiling as they carried their door gifts, lucky draw items, and good memories from the event. All attendees appreciated the well-organised party. Kudos to Prances Soosa and his team for making this event another successful one for the Silver Liners of SFA.

Religious vocations on the decline in Vietnam

HUE, Vietnam: Taxi driver Bartholomew Hoang Thanh Tung was deeply disappointed when his 15-year-old son gave up his studies at a pre-seminary last year.

But Tung admits that equal blame rests on him and his wife, as domestic discord was the order of the day. Due to their meagre income, Tung said his wife often picked quarrels with him about almost everything.

Tung said his son Hoang Le Thanh Huy could not stand “the nonsense of his mother, who shouted loudly at family members on a regular basis.”

Huy was one of three students who lost their priestly vocations in the Tay Loc parish in the last two years because of domestic discords and economic woes, officials said.

Fr Philip Hoang Linh, vocation promoter in Hue archdiocese, which covers Huy's parish, said there were 250 vocations two years ago, but it has come now down to 130, aged 10-18.

Students such as Huy, who show an aptitude to join the seminary, are admitted to the archdiocesan pre-seminary after they finish high

school. The local church no longer runs any minor seminary after the country was reunified under communist control.

Huy “used to be an altar boy and eagerly wanted to be a priest, but was disappointed with the family and gave it up,” his 52-year-old father of three said.

“I have no choice but to accept his decision,” said the parishioner in the south-central province of Thua Thien Hue which borders Laos to the west.

Huy dropped out of school and took up a job at his sister's goldsmith's shop in the neighbouring Da Nang city because of the family's financial woes, his father said.

Hue Archdiocese sends at least six candidates to the major seminary each year. Currently, it has 63 major seminarians and 17 candidates in the pre-seminary.

Fr Linh said economic distress, domestic disharmony, migration, and disregard for faith are reasons for dwindling priestly vocations in the archdiocese.

Huy's Tay Loc parish, which comprises two provinces of Quang

Tri and Thua Thien Hue, lost three priestly vocations after their families moved to other places for their livelihood.

In another case, Mary Nguyen Thi Dieu Anh said her 16-year-old son Simon Dang Huu Da left a Redemptorist vocation last year after she lost her job at a factory over deteriorating health.

The single mother and her son now live with her parents in Phuong Duc parish in Hue, the capital of Thua Thien Hue province.

Da said after his mother's business collapsed, she and the family left for another place to avoid repaying debts.

“My mother's financial woes came as a great shock to me and it shamed my family. So, I am not worthy of a priestly vocation,” Da, who has three siblings, said. He now works in a vehicle repair garage.

Fr Linh, the pastor of Tay Loc parish, said the archdiocese now offers scholarships to 100 candidates to sustain vocations. Local Catholics are also encouraged to sponsor candidates, the priest added.



Young candidates assemble to mark the 60th World Day of Prayer for Vocations at Tay Loc parish in Hue archdiocese on April 30. (UCA News photo)

Sr Ephrem Mai Thi Loan from St Paul de Chartres Convent said fewer women are now qualified to join convents because of a drop in the number of girl students attending universities and colleges due to financial problems.

To generate interest in consecrated life, “we offer scholarships, arrange weekly meetings, and encourage them to take an active part in charity activities and visit our homes for orphans, elderly people, people with physical disabilities, lepers, and HIV/AIDS patients.”

Fr Dominic Phan Hung, the pastor of Phu Cam Cathedral parish in the archdiocese, said that the num-

ber of vocations in the parish has fallen from 50 to 36 in recent years.

The 341-year-old parish, which has produced two archbishops, 79 priests, and 96 religious, has the largest number of vocations in the archdiocese.

The 68-year-old priest said the parish tried to groom young vocations by inviting them to pray, study Church subjects, do outdoor recreational activities, and visit religious sites.

The priest also meets their parents regularly to encourage them to set good examples. “Families play a decisive role,” he said. — ucanews.com

Marian library seeks to show Mary through new perspectives

OHIO: A research library at an Ohio university houses what it calls “the largest dedicated collection of materials on Mary in the world” — and its doors are as open as the Blessed Mother's arms.

“We are here for everyone, including people with a personal devotion, artists looking for inspiration, academics and theologians,” Sarah Cahalan, executive director of the Marian Library at the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio, told OSV News.

Founded in 1943, the Marian Library lives up to its motto of *De Maria numquam satis* (Never enough about Mary). Its books, periodicals, articles, prints and religious artefacts — combined with resources in an array of disciplines, including patristics, biblical studies, church history,

spirituality, hymnography and iconography — represent 100 languages and form an impressive repository that only one institution can match, said Cahalan.

“It's not a competition, but obviously the Vatican had a significant head start,” she admitted.

The library, which supports a number of Marian studies programmes offered by the school, led to the creation of the International Marian Research Institute, which hosts the online Marian Forum to promote academic research on Mary. Institute graduate and former faculty member Archbishop Frank Leo now heads the Archdiocese of Toronto, which he entrusted to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Seeing Mary through fresh eyes is a goal of the Marian Library,



Visitors at the Marian Library in the University of Dayton, Ohio take a look at the exhibits kept on display. (UCA News Photo/Marian Library)

one that informs its acquisitions policy, said Cahalan. She and her colleagues seek to incorporate “more geographic diversity” in

the library's materials by adding pieces from African, Indigenous and other cultures.

“We are actively working to ac-

quire materials that demonstrate the global reach of devotion to Mary, and give a more comprehensive overview of what that devotion looks like today,” she said, pointing to Our Lady of Kibeho, Rwanda — the only Vatican-approved Marian apparition in Africa — as one example.

With “a majority of its material Catholic” in nature, the library is also making “a concerted effort in recent years to show how Mary is presented in other traditions, such as Islam, which is important for ecumenism and interfaith dialogue,” said Cahalan.

Even a few works by Marian detractors, such as “17th-century Protestant authors writing against Catholicism,” can be found on the library's shelves, she said. — ucanews.com

Catholic shrine in Tamil Nadu opens breastfeeding room



The newly opened breastfeeding room at Our Lady of Periyannayagi Shrine in Konankuppam, Tamil Nadu, India. (GSR photo/Donald Reegan)

KONANKUPPAM: Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child in her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands (Isaiah 49:15-16).

These are the words written in a new breastfeeding room, which was opened recently at Our Lady of Periyannayagi Shrine. The shrine is in Konankuppam, Kallakurichi district of the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, and was constructed by Italian Jesuit missionary Fr Constantine Joseph Beschi (1680-1747).

The special room for feeding babies was inaugurated by Elizabeth, mother of nine, and by

Chinnamma, mother of eight children, both from the Konankuppam parish. They were assisted by Fr Jayaseelan, a Jesuit who does pastoral ministry at the shrine.

It is indeed a turning point to see the needs of these women met.

“When I was a young boy, I used to notice that my mother and other women used to go to the toilet at night or at dawn, when there were no toilet rooms either in the village or at home,” said Fr Devasagayaraj M. Zackarias, the rector and parish priest of the Our Lady of Periyannayagi Shrine.

Breastfeeding babies in the one-room houses of people living in poverty is an equally difficult situation for mothers. When there is

only one room in the house and neighbours are visiting the house, it is an embarrassing situation for the breastfeeding mother, commented Fr Zackarias.

Inclusion is important in churches in India. “We thought they needed privacy to breastfeed the babies. We are sure that this will be useful for breastfeeding mothers,” said the rector.

The 303-years-old church draws a million pilgrims every year. It has 200 rooms for the pilgrims to stay in, a canteen, drinking water, a conference room, and a higher secondary school for hearing-impaired children. A soup kitchen was started during COVID-19. — **By Robancy A Helen, Matters India**

Asian theology should consider local realities, heritage

SEOUL: Catholics in Asia need to renew their commitment to evangelisation by focusing on emerging regional realities such as migration and environment, while protecting Asian heritage and values, speakers told a gathering of Asian theologians.

"We [must] reflect very seriously on how to theologise the Asian heritage and values by illuminating them in the light of Christian faith while preserving them, and how to dynamically testify to the Gospel in an Asian context," Archbishop Peter Chung Soon-taek of Seoul Archdiocese said on May 5.

Chung was a keynote speaker at the week-long meeting of Asian Catholic theologians that ended May 7 in the South Korean capital, reported *Catholic Peace Broadcasting Corporation*.

It was organised by the Office of Theological Concerns of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), the regional body

of national Catholic bishops' conferences. About 20 people attended the meeting, including Indonesian Bishop Adrianus Sunarko, the commission chairman.

The meeting was themed *The Future and Theological Prospect of the Church in Asia*.

Chung also pointed out the need to focus on pastoral care for migrants.

"The reality is that not only is the Church [demanding more] pastoral care for migrant workers and multicultural families, but more effort and consideration are being requested for the understanding and integration of all members of society," the prelate said.

He also voiced his concern about the plight of people displaced due to the climate crisis and urged the gathering to listen to them.

"Amid the ecological crisis, 'the cry of the poor' has become an important voice that the Asian Church needs to listen to," Chung added



Archbishop Peter Chung Soon-taek of Seoul delivers his keynote speech during the meeting of theologians held in the South Korean capital from April 29 to May 7. (Photo: Seoul Archdiocese)

that "it is regrettable that the poor are suffering more damage due to climate change in Asia."

Chung also pointed out the growing influence of universalism, secularism, and fetishism as the reason for losing the value of faith and turning away from the Church.

Bishop Adrianus Sunarko pre-

sented his critique of the German Synodal path and emphasised the role of Scripture, tradition, and the theological method according to FABC texts.

Sunarko spoke on his views on a Church's mission based on agape — unconditional love — and self-sacrificing love in the joy of the

Gospel.

The paradigm of agape based on *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation, should be at the very heart of the Gospel proclamation in Asia, he insisted.

The meeting also had a panel discussion in which the delegates gave their opinions on the role of the laity in the Korean Church and Christ-centred synodality.

Teresa Choi Hyun-soon, a professor at Jesuit-run Sogang University, pointed out the need to provide training to the laity to help them understand their role and importance in the Catholic Church.

"Sufficient education on the identity and mission of the laity is also necessary, and in particular, making them realise how dignified they are and how important they are in the Church, providing a venue for them to participate, and giving them some degree of initiative, if necessary," she said. — ucanews.com

Washington Marian pilgrimage gathers Asian communities

WASHINGTON: Some two dozen Asian Catholic communities came together for the Asian and Pacific Island Catholics' Marian Pilgrimage.

The 600 pilgrims who gathered at the basilica came from the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and North Carolina. In the procession, they carried banners and wore traditional dress as they carried statues and portraits of Mary as the patroness of countries, including the Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, China, Laos, Myanmar, India, Pakistan, Vietnam, Korea, Samoa and the US island territory of Guam.

As the pilgrims marched toward the altar, a choir sang a Marian hymn in Tagalog, the national language of the Philippines, and the participants reverently placed their statues and portraits of Mary in the sanctuary and lined up their banners in an area behind the altar.

Celebrating a Mass for the pilgrims that afternoon, Washington Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory said, "Your presence is a magnificent witness of how all-encompassing are the places and nations where God's Word has been planted and has flourished."

In his homily, the cardinal also noted, "As our neighbours from Asia and the Pacific Islands assemble here in Mary's Shrine, you continue to remind the entire Church that God's Spirit is present in every corner of our world. His divine glory is to be found in every part of our planet."

The pilgrimage was sponsored by the Asian and Pacific Catholic Network, in collaboration with the



Members of the youth group from Our Lady of Vietnam parish in Silver Spring, Maryland, play traditional drums to welcome pilgrims at the beginning of the 19th Asian and Pacific Island Catholics' Marian Pilgrimage to the Basilica of the National Shrine of Immaculate Conception on May 7, 2022. (UCA News Photo/Catholic Standard)

US Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church and related offices of the Archdiocese of Washington and the Diocese of Arlington, Virginia.

"The Blessed Mother brings all her children together to her Son," said Msgr Vito Buonanno, the basilica's associate rector and director of pilgrimages, as he welcomed the Asian and Pacific Island Catholics.

Before Mass, the joyful mysteries of the Rosary were recited in different languages and led by members of the Couples for Christ from northern Virginia, the Korean Catholic community from New Jersey, the Burmese Catholic community from Metro Washington, the Asian Catholic community of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and the Syro-Malankara Eastern Catholic Rite from the Archdiocese of Washington.

In his homily, Cardinal Gregory said Mary "has chosen to visit many

of the places in this part of God's world," showing her maternal love and closeness as she reveals herself in the garb and appearance of the people she visits.

Noting the diversity and unity of the Asian and Pacific Island Catholics, the cardinal said, "The Spirit of God receives the gifts that we bring ... (and) fashions those differences into an ever new and wonderful image of Christ fully alive and risen in the contemporary world."

He emphasised that "the aim of the Church of Christ cannot be achieved by a secular 'multiculturalism,' as noble and much needed as such an accomplishment may be, especially at this time in history."

Cardinal Gregory underscored how Catholics are a people who profess one faith, share one Eucharist and are sanctified by the sacraments. "Our unity is never simply tolerance, but oneness in faith and in grace," he said. — ucanews.com

Religious festivals turning into tourist attractions

MANILA: Many towns and villages in the Philippines are now in the thick of celebrating *Flores de Mayo* (Flowers of May), a centuries-old Catholic festival in honour of the Virgin Mary held during the month of May.

People from different parishes gather colourful flowers to decorate their churches. Streets are lined with buntings and community games and parades are held, complete with brass bands.

The *Flores de Mayo* is capped by the *Santacruz* (Festival of the Holy Cross), a religious festival commemorating the finding, according to legend, of the Holy Cross in Jesus Christ's Calvary by Saint Helena, mother of Constantine the Great.

Townfolk choose the prettiest ladies, dress them in gowns and hold a procession before a night Mass at the local church. The town mayor usually sponsors the event, sometimes hosting a dinner party.

While parish priests are involved in planning and preparation of the annual activities, the Church does not necessarily endorse loud and lavish activities.

Msgr Andy Valera of the Diocese of Malolos in the northern province of Bulacan, said there are two kinds of fiesta celebrations, the secular and the religious.

An example of secular fiesta in the province is the *Buntal Hat* in Baliuag town, celebrated every second week of May.

The festival is designed to promote the industry of hat making from buri palm leaves. It is usually highlighted by a showcase of a giant *buntal* hat measuring two metres in diameter, and more than

a metre in height.

For the second type, Msgr Valera cited the annual Fertility Dance festival in Obando town and the *Kneeling Carabao* (water buffalo) festival in Pulilan town.

The *Obando Fertility* Dance festival is famous for married women who want to have a child. It is held for three days from May 17 to 19.

"It is religious in the sense that fertility dance are done with prayers," Msgr Valera said.

He added that even movements of dancers and participants are similar to biblical dances recorded in the Old Testament, like the dance of King David.

"It has religious meanings like the dance of King David," Msgr Valera said, noting that if a woman wanted a child, her hand movements are toward her.

At least two priests have written separate theses on the religious side of *Obando Fertility* festival, he said.

The *Kneeling Carabao* festival, on the other hand, is held on May 14 in honour of St Isidore of Labrador, the patron saint of farmers.

Msgr Valera said training carabaos to kneel in front of the church is the farmers' way of expressing gratitude to God for a yearlong bountiful harvest.

While many of these festivals have religious beginnings they are now becoming secular. Most are being promoted as tourist attractions by local officials and the Department of Tourism.

That's why, Msgr Valera said, there is a need to continue to purify the festivals, noting that the Church is continuously monitoring them. — *LiCAS News*

The bishop is a pastor, not a manager

Q: What does it mean for you to go from being a missionary bishop in Latin America to leading the dicastery that helps the Pope choose bishops?

Archbishop Prevost: I still consider myself a missionary. My vocation, like that of every Christian, is to be a missionary, to proclaim the Gospel wherever one is.

Certainly, my life has changed a lot: I have the opportunity to serve the Holy Father, to serve the Church today, here, from the Roman Curia. [It is] a very different mission from before, but also a new opportunity to live a dimension of my life, which simply was always answering 'Yes' when asked to do a service. With this spirit, I ended my mission in Peru after eight and a half years as a bishop and almost 20 years as a missionary, to begin a new one in Rome.

Could you offer an "identikit" of a bishop for the Church of our time?

First and foremost, he must be 'Catholic': sometimes the bishop risks focusing only on the local dimension. But a bishop should have a much broader vision of the Church and reality, and experience the universality of the Church.

He also needs the ability to listen to his neighbour and seek advice, as well as psychological and spiritual maturity.

A fundamental element of the portrait of a bishop is being a pastor, capable of being close to the members of the community, starting with the priests for whom the bishop is father and brother. To live this closeness with all, without excluding anyone.

Pope Francis has spoken of four types of closeness: closeness to God, to brother bishops, to priests, and to all God's people. One must not give in to the temptation to live isolated, separated in a palace, satisfied with a certain social level or a certain level within the Church.

And we must not hide behind an idea of authority that no longer makes sense today. The authority we have is to serve, to accompany priests, to be pastors and teachers.

We are often preoccupied with teaching doctrine, the way of living our faith, but we risk forgetting that our first task is to teach what it means to know Jesus Christ and to bear witness to our closeness to the Lord. This comes first: to communicate the beauty of the faith, the beauty and joy of knowing Jesus. It means that we ourselves are living it and sharing this experience.

How important is the bishop's service of unity around the Successor of Peter in a time when polarisation is also growing in the ecclesial community?

The three words we are using in the work of the Synod — participation, communion, and mission — provide the answer.

In an interview with *Vatican Media*, the new prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, Archbishop Robert Prevost, says, "We are often worried about teaching doctrine, but we risk forgetting that our first duty is to communicate the beauty and joy of knowing Jesus."

At the age of 67, Archbishop Robert Prevost is beginning his "novitiate" as prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops.

An Augustinian friar, Robert Francis Prevost was born in the US city of Chicago, and served, first as a missionary, and later as bishop in Chiclayo, Peru, before being chosen by Pope Francis to succeed Cardinal Marc Ouellet.

In the following interview with *Vatican Media*, he sketches a portrait of the type of bishop needed today.



Archbishop Robert Francis Prevost with Pope Francis. (Vatican Media)

The bishop is called to this charism, to live the spirit of communion, to promote unity in the Church, unity with the Pope. This also means being Catholic, because without Peter, where is the Church? Jesus prayed for this at the Last Supper, 'That all may be one,' and it is this unity that we wish to see in the Church.

Today, society and culture take us away from that vision of Jesus, and this does so much harm. The lack of unity is a wound that the Church suffers, a very painful one.

Divisions and polemics in the Church do not help anything. We bishops, especially, must accelerate this movement towards unity, towards communion in the Church.

Can the process for the appointment of new bishops be improved? *Praedicate Evangelium* states that 'members of the people of God' must be involved. Is this happening?

We had an interesting reflection among the members of the Dicastery on this issue. For some time now, not only some bishops or some priests, but also other members of the people of God, are being heard. This is very important, because the bishop is called to serve a particular Church. Therefore, listening to the people of God is also important.

If a candidate is not known by anyone among his people, it is difficult — not impossible, but difficult — for him to truly become pastor of a community, of a local Church. So, it is important that the process is a little more open to listening to different members of the community.

This does not mean that it is the local Church that has to choose its pastor, as if being called to be a bishop was the result of a democratic vote, of an almost 'political' process. A much broader view is needed, and the apostolic nunciatures help a lot in this. I believe that, little by little, we need to open up more, to listen a little more to the religious, the laity.

The Church is engaged in the path that will lead to the Synod on Synodality. What is the role of the bishop?

There is a great opportunity in this continuous renewal of the Church that Pope Francis is inviting us to promote. On the one hand, there are bishops who openly express their fear because they do not understand where the Church is going. Perhaps they prefer the security of answers already experienced in the past.

I truly believe that the Holy Spirit is very present in the Church at this time and is pushing us towards a renewal and therefore we are called to the great responsibility of living what I call a new attitude. It is not just a process, it is not just changing some ways of doing things, maybe holding more meetings before making a decision. It is much more.

But it is also what perhaps causes certain difficulties, because, at the end of the day, we must be able to listen first of all to the Holy Spirit, to what He is asking of the Church.

How do we achieve this?

We must be able to listen to one another, to recognise that it is not a question of discussing a political agenda or simply trying to promote the issues that interest me or others.

Sometimes it seems that we want to reduce everything to wanting to vote and then doing what was voted for. Instead, it is something much deeper and very different: we need to learn to really listen to the Holy Spirit and the spirit of truth-seeking that lives in the Church. Move from an experience where authority speaks and it's all over, to a Church experience that values the charisms, gifts, and ministries that there are in the Church.

The episcopal ministry performs an important service, but then, we must put all

this at the service of the Church in this synodal spirit that simply means walking together, all of us, and seeking together what the Lord is asking of us, in this, our time.

How much do economic problems affect the lives of bishops?

The bishop is also asked to be a good administrator, or at least [to have] the ability to find a good administrator to help him.

The Pope has told us that he wants a Church that is poor and for the poor. There are cases where the structures and infrastructure of the past are no longer needed and it is difficult to maintain them. At the same time, even in the places where I have worked, the Church is responsible for educational and health institutions that provide basic services to the people because, many times, the State fails to provide them.

Personally, I am not of the opinion that the Church should sell everything and 'only' preach the Gospel in the streets. However, this is a very big responsibility, there are no one-size-fits-all answers. There is a need to promote more fraternal help between the local Churches.

Faced with the need to maintain service structures with incomes that are no longer what they used to be; the bishop must be very practical. Cloistered nuns always say: 'You have confidence and entrust everything to Divine Providence, because a way will be found to respond.' The important thing also is never to forget the spiritual dimension of our vocation. Otherwise, we run the risk of becoming managers and reasoning like managers. Sometimes this happens.

How do you see the relationship between the bishop and social media?

Social media can be an important tool to communicate the Gospel message, reaching millions of people. We must prepare ourselves to use social media well.

I am afraid, that sometimes, this preparation has been lacking.

At the same time, the world today, which is constantly changing, presents situations where we really have to think several times before speaking or before writing a message on Twitter, in order to answer or even just to ask questions in a public form, in full view of everyone. Sometimes there is a risk of fuelling divisions and controversy.

There is a great responsibility to use social networks, communication, correctly, because it is an opportunity, but it is also a risk. And it can do damage to the communion of the Church. That is why one must be very prudent in the use of these means. —

By Andrea Tornielli, *Vatican Media*



File photo of General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in the Vatican Synod Hall on Oct 3, 2018. (CNA photo/Daniel Ibáñez)



What convinced me that we need more women leading at the Vatican

Ask me about almost anything related to the Church or politics, and I will err on the side of traditionalism, conservatism...whatever you would like to call it. I have always been a rule follower: I liked wearing uniforms at my all-girls Catholic schools, and I get annoyed when the priest goes off-book saying some of the prayers during Mass. I even enjoy the Latin Mass, at least during the few times I have attended.

So, this realisation, which I had soon after I started working at *America*, came as a surprise to me: The Church needs (more) women in the hierarchy of the Vatican and its decision-making processes.

Again, I am usually not one to call for big changes or support radical ideas. If the Church has worked this way for 2,000 years, I used to think, who are we to change it now?

But then I ended up working in an organisation that is mostly male, and I realised that for the first time, I was a minority. (*America Media* has more women and lay staff than it did a decade ago. But there are still more men than women.) Up until a few months ago, every religious space I had ever been in was mostly, or all, female. The religious authorities I knew (outside of my parish priest) were all women, and from what I saw, they never felt the need to have their decisions validated by men.

I went to a small all-girls Catholic school from fourth to eighth grade, then I attended a slightly larger all-girls Catholic high school. My university's student body skewed towards mostly female (nearly 60 per cent), and the Catholic studies programme I was in had an even more pronounced majority of women. Thus, almost every religious conversation I



Women leaders from Catholic Extension. (Aleteia/Isabella H. de Carvalho)

had, with leaders or peers or family, was initiated by women who were not afraid to speak their minds on Church teaching or anything else.

I never really considered the role of women at the Vatican. In my mind, the authority that Sr Mary Thomas, or my lay teachers, had behind school gates extended to the wider Church. Who would dare to tell Sr Mary Thomas that her opinion is not welcome on any matter of Church governance?

Now, as a woman, I am part of a minority at *America*, and yet I am working in a religious space that is otherwise familiar to me. I find it strange, though it is probably normal for working women in the rest of the world, to have life experiences that are different than, and perhaps not fully understood by, my male colleagues.

Some examples: I would avoid going to the *halal* cart outside my apartment alone after about 9.00pm (the man who works there is a little too friendly with the women in my building). I would not think to go on a walk when

it's dark out, nor would I be comfortable sending a friend home late at night by herself. Some of these could be attributed to my self-ascribed status as "mom friend": the person who acts in a quintessential "mom" way, slightly overprotective and responsible for others. But the fact is that as a woman, I react to personal safety issues in a different way than men do.

What does this have to do with running the Church? Although anyone should be able to take care of vulnerable people, women are simply more sensitive to safety issues. With the sexual abuse crisis ever-present in the minds of the faithful, women, who are often more cognisant of and fight for and alongside those who need protection, can question the status quo and provide input from an outsider's perspective.

Women like Nathalie Becquart, XMCI, the first female undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops, have the depth and experience to perform their jobs without being ordained. They are not just a diversity check: Women should be there because of their skills and knowledge.

And now that women are allowed to vote in the synod, I have hope that their life experiences will affect the outcomes and documents of the synod.

My experiences with so many women leaders in religious spaces should have made me supportive all along of elevating women in the Vatican. I knew first hand of the strengths that women bring to the table. From leading schools, to being religious education directors and parish managers at so many churches, they have more than enough experience. Women are academic and business leaders, presidents of Catholic universities and many Catholic non-profits. Frankly, they should be in Church leadership already.

The Synod on Synodality has shown that the Church's future does not depend solely on priests or bishops but instead, will involve more laypeople — and specifically women — than ever before. And that starts with a new attitude, especially from those of us, myself very much included, who sometimes stubbornly resist change. — **By Jill Rice, *America***

Synodality: is it for them or for us?

"Synodality" is not a word that makes the heart leap with anticipation! It has something in common with those advertisements which pop up on Facebook: with this exercise routine, you could lose all those ungainly bumps in just thirty days! While the transformation is desirable, in all honesty, are you likely to persevere in the necessary demands?

We would all love our Church to look a lot more like the face of Christ: to actually be a sign of God's love in our world. We would like them to change. But this is asking us to change — to listen to those who think differently — to try to understand where they are coming from, with them to seek the best way forward. It is asking that we speak honestly about the build-up of barnacles on the Barque of Peter, that we take a hand in scrubbing off the mess. But even deeper than that, it is asking us to risk coming closer to the One we are called to model our life on.

For 1500 years at least, an attitude has been fostered in our Church which limited the power and responsibility that flows from baptism to a few, to the ones who had "a vocation". They were not all sleek and well-toned like the stars of the exercise routine, but they were the ones who were committed to really following Christ. In vaunting this more "heroic" following, a shadow message was clearly broadcast: those who chose to marry and have families and/or a profession or trade were the "also-rans".

Contemplating the failure of one model of Church

There were two clear defining differences:

the chosen few gave up the joys and struggles of a relationship supported by sexual intimacy, and they committed to giving time and effort to prayer and action for others. Looking down any list of saints, those who have taken this step outnumber married people about 100 (if not 1000) to 1! The message was clear: if you are serious about following Jesus, priesthood or religious life is the best direction to take.

Expecting a minuscule percentage of the total Catholic population to carry the mission of the whole is a recipe for disaster. Our Church is contemplating the failure of this model: we are seen as irrelevant, disgraced, divided. While the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) noted the split between faith and life (*Gaudium et spes*, 43), for many younger people, the message of Jesus has been negated by the actions of the Christian community.

Our Christian faith is based on an extraordinary claim. The divine

Other, the One who set in motion our universe, cared enough to actually become one with us, to be enfleshed, to live — and die — among us to show us that we are loved in all our physical and moral frailty. One might well ask how we made sense of lopping off the central yearning for, and expression of, love in sexual intimacy, and then making its absence the distinguishing mark of the real disciple! Celibate love can indeed lead to greater union with God, but it is not an either/or pathway.

Not just the pope and the bishops

Vatican II reshaped the message. All are called by baptism to step up and live out "being Christ" in our world, the life of Jesus as a fully grounded human being — His prayer, His action for justice, and His shaping a community (as priest, prophet and king) is a call to every one of us. Pedestals need

to be removed and all must contribute if our vision of a world where reconciliation, care for

planet, and peace, is to gain a foothold.

Synodality — this listening to others, respecting them, speaking our truth, listening to the Spirit, and seeking together a way to move forward — is not just for the pope and bishops, but is calling every one of us to transformation. As with the exercise routine, there are no short cuts. Attitudes have been embedded over generations. We need a long-term commitment to change mindsets.

The way can only be made by walking. As pilgrims we will stumble, we will get caught in false trails, but we have been promised the Spirit to keep reorienting us. We cannot give up because there is no overnight transformation. We have a message of love and reconciliation which the world sorely needs. With each person called to communion, participation and mission in family life, in work and in civil society, we can offer something different.

Each continent may have different priorities, but if we hold to the core message of Jesus, our faith can handle differences: our Christian understanding of a Trinitarian God reveals a relationship of Love, holding together difference, equality, and mission. Jesus' message can gain relevance if we can listen to the insights of those have been relegated to the fringes. Responding to them will help close the gap between faith and life. — **By Christine E. Burke, LCI** (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

Christine E. Burke IBVM is a Loreto Sister from Australia who has been living and working in the Philippines the past ten years.



Franciscan Professor helping students 'transform themselves and the world'

Brother Gregory Cellini, OSF, is the Director of the Office of Mission, Ministry and Interfaith Dialogue and an Adjunct Professor at St Francis College, Brooklyn, New York.

For years he has been proudly (even if, according to him, proud "may not be the right word") offering the "Franciscan Career Transformation" course, a unique approach for students whose goal is to look at their career path "in a Franciscan way."

His one-of-a-kind approach received so much positive feedback that it evolved into the book, *Transform Yourself – Transform the World: A Franciscan View of Career*, published by Tau Publishing.

Brother Greg's story

The course has much to do with Bro Greg's (as everyone calls him across the school corridors) peculiar life trajectory, first working for almost 30 years in the pharmaceutical sector and then, radically changing direction by joining the Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn congregation.

"My story goes way back to senior year in high school," he recounted. "I was part of a programme where you went to school in the morning and worked in the afternoon."

It was his introduction to the big pharmaceutical industry where he worked, with various responsibilities, for 29 years, until May 5, 2006. "That day, I received the news I was downsized. The good news was I had a sense it was going to happen."

Reflection and vocation

For the prior year, as Bro Gregory was exploring potential internal opportunities, the company kindly provided coaching from Gallup. "I took Gallup's *StrengthsFinder* assessment and my coach said to me, 'Greg, your profile, your strengths, are much more geared towards religious life than the corporate world. Might you think you have a vocation?' This question initiated deep interior reflection."

The downsizing turned out to be "critical in giving me that final push God was trying to give me." He started his formation as a Franciscan Brother in September 2006 and professed Vows in August 2009. In February 2010, he joined St Francis College in the Department of Student Affairs.

To many, career aspirations and Franciscan values are two contrasting concepts, impossible to be condensed into one specific area of study. However, probably due to his



Brother Gregory Cellini, OSF, with his book 'Transform Yourself – Transform the World: A Franciscan View of Career'. (Source/Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn Facebook.)

unique standpoint and life path, these suppositions have resonated in Bro Gregory's mind and dreams since becoming a Brother.

The journey to Assisi

"The key event took place in October 2013. The College had sent me on a pilgrimage to Assisi and Rome. In St Francis' hometown, Mary Beth Wisniewski of Cardinal Stritch University and I were supposed to visit Santo Stefano church for an hour and then tour the rest of Assisi. However, a terrible rainstorm forced us to remain in the church for a couple of hours."

While rain was pouring outside, Bro Gregory realised he had to make that vision of a class regarding Franciscan transformation come true. "I have no doubt God wanted me to walk down this path," he affirmed, "but I was lacking certain knowledge and skill to proceed."

When the weather calmed down and they could finally move to Piazza del Comune, he shared his idea with Mary Beth, whose "background was in counselling and career coaching. At that moment, I realised Mary Beth had the

knowledge and skill I was lacking. When I asked her to collaborate on the class, she immediately agreed."

It took a couple of years to put it all together and get the course approved. But, once we did, it was well-received by the students. I could readily see transformation occurring during each semester.

Franciscan career transformation

The course follows St Francis' footsteps, focusing on the Saint's personal conversion during which he increasingly discovered who God intended him to be. "I chose not to use the word conversion only because today, many people associate conversion with shifting from one religion to another," Bro Gregory reflected. "The word 'transformation' is much more familiar."

Parallel to his activities at St Francis College, Bro Gregory hosts *Thank God for Monday*, a weekly radio talk show about the workplace. "I have had many guests say to me, 'College students are not aware. They have lots of knowledge, but they don't really know who they are.'"

Career is all about finding and sharing the good inside of us to maximise our contribution to a world desperately in need of our good.

"A combination of beauty and brokenness"

A world that seems more and more inclined to emphasise negativity, especially among young generations. "They have difficulties seeing their good," Bro Gregory observed. "We look at someone's Instagram and think how perfect their lives are... and I am a mess. While, in reality, all of our lives are a bit messy. I like to tell students we are all a combination of beauty and brokenness."

Coming back to St Francis, Bro Gregory recalled the famous episode where the Saint, prostrated in front of the San Damiano Cross, heard God's voice saying:

"Francis, rebuild my Church which you see is in need of repair." Today young people are being challenged to "Transform the world, which you see is in need of repair."

The course, practically speaking, is divided into three parts. "The first is dedicated to discovering who you are. Then we get into some career ownership aspects, such as resume building, networking, and interviewing. We complete the learning by reviewing Franciscan values."

"Fraternal feedback, inclusiveness, gratitude, courage, right relationship. These Franciscan values are so critical in today's 21st-century workplace."

The students' response

Students leave Franciscan Career Transformation much freer than when they enter. A subtle but very effective technique used by Bro Gregory is to – at the beginning of each class – have the students place all of their electronic gadgets into what is called "the basket of freedom." "At first, students are a bit reticent to let go of their phones; however, by the third week of class, they cannot wait to do so. They look forward to the detachment!"

The book features many highlights from students who took the course and saw their lives turned upside down, not only from a career perspective but, also, from a day-to-day one. Specifically, Bro Gregory fondly recounted the story of a student who, at the end of the course, came to appreciate much more of herself and, consequently, her brother, with whom she previously hadn't had a healthy relationship.

"Franciscan love transformed their relationship and the impetus was her taking the class."

Share your own good

The foreword of the book, penned by Bro Richard Contino, OSF, reiterates that same concept of freedom related to St Francis who, on his deathbed, "freed" his brothers, saying: "I've done what was mine to do, may Christ now teach you what you are to do."

"Francis didn't want his brothers to try to imitate him. They had their own journeys, their own good that they needed to share in the way God intended each of them to be."

Bro Gregory's ultimate hope for the course is to see it adopted by universities worldwide. "Who we can't teach



Brother Gregory and some of his students. (Vatican Media)

in person, we can reach remotely — just as we did at St Francis College during the pandemic. I am convinced that — regardless of whether in-person or remote — the nuggets

introduced in the course can really help people at a much earlier age get on the path God desires for them." — **By Edoardo Giribaldi, Vatican News**

Offering hope to youth offenders

John (not his real name), 17, from India's eastern state of Assam, worked at a hotel in southern Bengaluru. One day, in a fit of rage, he fatally stabbed a fellow worker.

John was sent to an observation home and was tasked to serve inmates at a rehabilitation centre for people living with HIV. After serving the sentence, he was released and was re-employed by the hotel as chief cook.

Muhammad (name changed), a native of Karnataka's Mandya district, got into bad company and ended up at a special home. He underwent counselling and vocational education. Today, he owns a restaurant that employs eight people and earns up to Rs40,000 RMa month.

There are many success stories of reformed juvenile offenders who were able to go back to mainstream society through the help of ECHO, a Catholic charitable organisation in Bengaluru in Karnataka state.

To date, 13,000 children have been rehabilitated by ECHO, according to its founder and executive director, Fr Antony Sebastian O. Praem.

ECHO, short for Empowerment of Children and Human Rights Organisation, is the only NGO designated to manage a prison for juveniles.

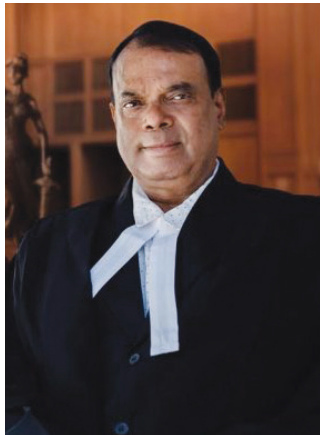
Set up under the Indian Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000, ECHO is a "transitional home" that enables children in conflict with law to shun crime and provides them shelter, food, education, and counselling.

ECHO aims to ensure the protection of the rights of juvenile delinquents, street and working children.

Fr Praem said the idea to start the NGO came about while he was doing his law studies in Pune, a city in western Maharashtra.

"I had to cross railway platforms to get to a bus stand to go to college. At the railway platform I often observed destitute children being harassed by the police," recalled the priest.

Years later, when he got an opportunity to do his post-graduate studies in social development at The Hague, Netherlands, he conducted a study on street children titled *An Echo of the Cry from the Streets of Bangalore: A Study of the Problems of Street Children – A Legal Perspective*.



Fr Antony Sebastian O. Praem, founder and executive director of ECHO.



The study noted the legal inadequacies concerning juveniles, including the non-implementation of legal instruments and the possible interventions required by voluntary agencies.

After the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, many countries have tailored their juvenile justice laws to promote children's rights under the Convention.

The Convention states that every child, even those in conflict with the law, has "the right to treatment that promotes his/her dignity and worth... and reintegration into society."

Fr Praem said he started ECHO in 2000 with the objective to reform crime-prone children through behaviour modification, education, and skills training.

The priest worked with the special juvenile police unit, was a magistrate for eight years in the juvenile justice board, advisor to federal government boards on women and child development, and chairperson of the Karnataka State Commission for Child Rights.

"We started working with observation homes in courts, with the police, and we bailed children out and reformed them at ECHO," he said.

"Slowly the government took notice and we were entrusted with the task of running the jail or special home for juveniles," he said.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), there were 31,170 cases against juveniles in 2021, a 4.7 per cent increase over 2020, when the number of cases was pegged at 29,768.

A majority of those accused — 76.2 per cent or 28,539 —

Children in conflict with the law learn how to use computers at the ECHO centre at Sumanahalli, Bangalore, in Southern Karnataka. (LiCas News Photo)

were between 16 to 18 years of age.

Fr Praem said children in conflict with the law are held under three categories — petty, serious, and heinous crimes.

Petty and serious crime perpetrators are let off with fines or short penal terms, while those committing heinous crimes, such as murder, rape, and repeated theft have to undergo jail term of up to three years.

The priest said juveniles can be reformed with effective counselling and proper rehabilitation.

Through education, counselling, reformatory strategies, such as music and dance therapy, games and skills training for holistic development, ECHO was able to pull out children from the crime net.

Those who were not able to attend school are encouraged to get involved in farming, selling vegetables and dairy products aside from being employed in supermarkets or as traffic police assistants.

After rehabilitation, juvenile delinquents are monitored until they reach the age of 23.

Another study done by Fr Praem titled *Juvenile Crimes: A Peep into Reality* shows that lack of parental care (94 per cent) and poor education are among the reasons why young people become vulnerable to crimes.

"Our endeavour at ECHO is to ensure that no child falls out of the social security and safety net, and those who do, receive necessary care and protection," said the priest. — **By Rita Joseph, LiCAS News**

Grandmother to cycle 1,000 miles to help grieve the loss of her children

Mavis Paterson from Galloway in Scotland will celebrate her upcoming 85th birthday on her bike, in honour of her three deceased children, according to the BBC.

The grandmother lost her three children in the space of just four years: Sandy died of a heart attack in 2012, her daughter Katie succumbed to a viral pneumonia in 2013, and son Bob died in an accident in 2016. They were all in their 40s at their time of death.

While Paterson has already made impressive journeys on her trusty bike — she became the oldest woman to cycle the 960 miles from Land's End at the base of England to John O'Groats at the tip of Scotland in 2019 — she is now older, and is hoping that this particular challenge will help with the "unbearable grief" of losing her children.

"When I am cycling, I don't think about them so much, which is a big help to me because the grief is

unbearable. When my children died I just didn't know what to do. But the cycling has helped me a lot," she shared with the BBC.

The grandmother of three also explained how cycling is like therapy, and she realises that she can't spend the rest of her life thinking about her heartbreaking losses:

"I do think about them a lot but I've got to face life, so I take on the challenges, which are a huge help to me. The last one I did was wonderful because it took my mind off of the children," adding to BBC Scotland's *Mornings* programme that, "when I am cycling, I am really happy on my bike and I can even sing and enjoy myself."

Although Paterson is about to turn 85, over the last two decades she has undertaken some very impressive challenges. She's not only cycled across the United States and Canada, she's also climbed Kilimanjaro.

But the active granny is also cycling for a cause that is close to her heart. Her mom Cathy and sister Sandra both died from cancer, so the



Zuma Press photo



octogenarian will be on her wheels raising much-needed funds for Macmillan Cancer Support.

"I think about Macmillan because they have lost millions due to COVID so they need the money and I am going to work hard on that bike and hopefully raise lots and lots of money."

While not every grieving parent would be able to emulate Paterson's grief therapy, her desire to help others while finding her own inner-peace is truly inspirational. — **By Cerith Gardiner, Aleteia**

Preserving history as a new vocation?

The Royal Malaysian Police recently organised a prayer session for Christian officers at the Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras. The relatively well-attended service, graced by Archbishop Julian Leow, and Minister of Youth and Sports, YB Hannah Yeoh, not only served to strengthen the bond between Christian police officers, but highlight the relatively smaller, yet significant role they play in the Royal Malaysian Police.

Perhaps more significant, or even surprising, were the responses on social media and outlets where the event was shared — generally positive, with members of the public not aware that there were that many Christians in blue.

Although most of our current servicemen and women are Muslims, and therefore, religious associations and events in both the police and army tend to be Muslim in nature, both branches of our security services still do, from time to time, organise and participate in observations of other faiths, to their credit.

Catholic contribution to the nation's security forces is a long and historic one. As many of the commanding officers belonged to the British government service, English was generally used then. As a result, the middle-ranked officers tended to be those well versed in both the British system and the language — giving rise to the many Straits-born Chinese and Eurasians within the ranks. Non-Muslim officers of other faiths, for example, Sikh officers, too, formed a large bulk of officers — police gurdwaras are often built alongside police camps.

Some military camps in Semenanjung, like Terendak Camp, Melaka, have chapels on the base camps itself. This is more prevalent in Sabah and Sarawak, which has larger Christian



MAKING SENSE

Emmanuel Joseph

and Catholic communities there.

Apart from the security forces, Catholic involvement in our schools, hospitals, facilities for the aged, special needs homes, and hospice care, many of which were pioneering initiatives, pepper our national history. Many continue to fill still unpluggable gaps in the basic infrastructure our beloved nation was built on.

Yet, it is a struggle to maintain the Catholic identities of these institutions, unless something is done to arrest the decline.

For example, our schools.

Catholic mission schools produced, over the years, hundreds of thousands of graduates, including many leading Malaysians in business, politics, administration, and specialists in various fields.

Till this day, most of these schools are still operational through the undying, concerted efforts of the remaining students, parent teacher associations (PTAs), religious, alumni, dioceses, parishes.

It is a daunting initiative as many present trends work against the preservation of these schools.

First, the steep decline in the number of religious orders previously manning the schools. With so few religious left, the task of preserving the heritage is largely entrusted on secular alumni and PTAs.

Second, the low enrolment rates. Many factors contribute to this — some mitigatable, others less so.

Areas where schools built in the 60s and 70s are now experiencing rapid development, rising property prices and the conversion of housing areas into commercial ones, push residents out of these areas into other areas.

Another leading reason is the trend for parents to send their children to private or vernacular schools instead of national schools, which most Catholic schools operate as.

Some of these schools are then sold to private developers or converted into private schools.

In the case of the prior, often, great care is taken to preserve the historical aspect of our buildings, for example, St Jo's @Gurney, formerly St Joseph's Novitiate. In the case of the latter, the schools tend to strive to maintain its founding ethos in providing scholarships for those in need.

Both are great ways to preserve a small but sufficiently significant part of the rich history of these institutions, and to honour the sacrifices of those who built it.

Other Catholic institutions too, suffer similar problems of funding and staffing, forcing them to source for private contributions or surrender parts and portions of their organisations. To deal with rising costs, many of our hospitals are now serving as semi or fully private hospitals albeit with stronger charitable elements compared to for-profit ones.

Another related issue is the reducing number of Catholics in public institutions, who indirectly serve as ambassadors of sorts for our Church, sharing this with staff members who

may not see the relevance, significance, or value in preserving any religious identity in now mostly secular buildings.

For example, teachers and servicemen.

As salaries remain stagnant in these professions and the private sector becomes more appealing, perhaps encouraging our young to include these as vocation considerations, or even providing some financial encouragement in the form of scholarships or stipends would help reignite interest in these fields.

Educating our young on the history of Catholic involvement in nation building, along with the rich history of the Church in Malaysia, could serve to inspire future generations of Catholics who may not be aware of how widespread the contributions of Catholics were before, during and in the years after Merdeka.

This could be a new programme, or even as part of present church groups, catechism activity, or ministries, or even as a special interest group across parishes — like the Parish Integral Human Development Ministry or the Prison Ministry.

The historical value of Catholic contribution to our country, along with its institutions, but perhaps more importantly, those who gave life to those institutions, should not be allowed to disappear. By understanding it more, we could even create a new generation of flag bearers for our Church and nation.

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



... meanwhile

Joanne Lim

Joshua — my 15-year-old son, emerges from his room one day clutching a Bible in his hands (much to my amazement and delight) and excitedly starts quoting from sacred Scripture — “Ma, woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet. Women mustn't speak!”

And as I was still trying to grasp what he had just uttered, he continued: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner; it's there in 1 Timothy 2: 9-15. Ma, it's repeated in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35... Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.”

Just as soon as he blurted that out, he turned to his sister and read out another verse as if it was written just for her: “I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes!”

Thinking that was the end of it and trying to find my retort, he flipped the pages to Ephesians 5:22, exclaiming: “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord”, and then to 1 Corinthians 11:2-6 ... “For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.”

At this point, I was anxious for my dear mother, who was also seated at the table with us, though she seemed to have found all this quite amusing and entertaining...and sure enough Joshua blurted out “Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but

to teach what is good...” (Titus 2:3-5). Both our gazes fell on the little wine rack we have at home, with whiskey on toe.

At one point, even Joshua seemed fascinated at himself for such amazing discoveries. Suddenly he found a purpose in reading the Bible, and he finally ended with a quirky smile and a clear disclaimer: “I didn't say any of this. The Bible is the Word of God, so you can't but agree and just obey!” It was as if he had won a 10-billion-ringgit law suit against women.

I started to realise that this is what domestic inquisition was about — he wanted to stamp the position and status of women in the eyes of the Church...and all I could say was “...but Josh, we are all equal in the eyes of God!” I said, “remember Jesus appeared first to a woman after the Resurrection”. At that point, he was already moseying out of the dining room gleefully.

For centuries, women have struggled through the waves of feminism, discarding gender equality and the role of women in society, fighting patriarchy with irony, inverting sexist symbols, and combating exclusion with activism. The women in society fought hard for empowerment and respect. The Third Wave of feminism sought to question, reclaim and redefine how women were portrayed in the media — as Disney heroines and *Guerrilla Girls*; leading to the Fourth Wave, which focused on sexual harassment (#metoo), body shaming, and rape culture, among other issues.

Today, the Catholic Church still grapples with how it addresses women — in some churches, young girls are recruited as altar servers, others vehemently insist on the altar being only for the more “premier” gender — men/boys. However, young girls and women are increasingly self-aware, empowered, and raised to be articulate, high-achieving people in society who contribute much, even more than men, arguably. In many churches today, women have taken the position of authority, leading and participating in numerous ministries — undoubtedly, their voices are seen and heard at PPC meetings, Catechism, Music Ministry, as Altar Ladies and of course at BECs. But is this all women are good for?

She is worth more than rubies...

It is pertinent to reflect on how the Bible portrays women — from our dearest Mother Mary — the only human being born spotless without sin, who in complete trust surrendered all to the Lord; ...to Deborah the compassionate leader; Esther who used the power of prayer and bravery to save her people; Priscilla who through her marriage to Aquila became a couple that was known for their powerful ministry and generosity to those in need, and the many women of Jerusalem, including Joanna and Susanna, the two lesser-known women who followed Jesus and played a pivotal role in the early faith.

Evenings for the Engaged and Marriage Encounter seminars aside (which seems at times rather obligatory or regarded as a formality and often happens too late in any relationship), the Church needs to confront topics that are seemingly taboo in society — issues such as divorce and remarriage, adoption, family planning, sexuality, abuse, vasectomies, and the importance of chastity as single and married women, all beg to be discussed. Maybe Catechism might be an early forum to advance the Church's view on the young. Why wait till two months before marriage?

Many women are conflicted and they struggle with the Catholic Church, yet practise their faith despite the ongoing difficulties. These women prioritise their Catholic identity yet feel terribly frustrated, hurt, even angry with their relationship with the Church. We have yet to even consider the unique struggles of Catholic women who come from different backgrounds, cradle Catholics, converts, old and young, single and married...these topics are hardly old fashioned, yet even in the age of social media, there is a lack of ‘safe spaces’ for women to support each other through this journey to Christ.

Men too should be enlightened about how to uphold the role of women in the Church, and at home. For as the Bible says: *She is worth far more than rubies... She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands. She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar. She gets up while it is still night; she provides food for her family... She considers a field and*

buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard. She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks. She sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night. In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers. She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy. — Proverbs 31:10-31. This passage alone speaks of women as leaders, decision-makers — resourceful, wise, resilient and immensely strong...and in all of this, she has a special nature of selflessness, for her gaze is fixed only on pleasing the Lord, and serving others in Him alone.

This month of May, may we seek the intercession of Our Divine Lady, who is our model in holiness and faithfulness and focus not on our imperfections as women but on building an intimate communion in holiness, in closeness with the Risen Lord. Like the women in the Bible, we are called to inspire, encourage, and uphold one another, with our gifts and virtues, to lead mankind to God — one day and one prayer at a time.

...meanwhile, Joshua who had returned to the dining room after having found a way to deal with his Catholic guilt from laughing at us, turns to *Proverbs 31:31* and coyly reads: “Honour her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.” He asks what's for dinner and I grudgingly say, ‘cutlets’ to which he cheekily replies, “the woman who invented cutlets must have had a son!”

To share a meme I came across online recently (and to commemorate Mother's Day celebrated this month):

Son: Dad who is a man?

Dad: A man takes care of his family.

Son: One day I'm gonna be a man, like my mom.

Happy (belated) Mother's Day wishes!

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



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Quiet prophesy

Christian discipleship calls all of us to be prophetic, to be advocates for justice, to help give voice to the poor, and to defend truth. But not all of us, by temperament or by particular vocation, are called to civil disobedience, public demonstrations, and the picket lines, as were Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, Daniel Berrigan, and other such prophetic figures. All are asked to be prophetic, but for some, this means more wielding a basin and towel than wielding a placard.

There is a powerful way of being prophetic that, while seemingly quiet and personal, is never private. And its rules are the same as the rules for those who, in the name of Jesus, are wielding placards and risking civil disobedience. What are those rules, rules for a Christian prophesy?

First, a prophet makes a vow of love, not of alienation. There is a critical distinction between stirring up trouble and offering prophecy out of love, a distinction between operating out of egoism and operating out of faith and hope. A prophet risks misunderstanding, but never seeks it, and a prophet seeks always to have a mellow rather than an angry heart.

Second, a prophet draws his or her cause from Jesus and not from an ideology. Ideologies can carry a lot of truth and be genuine advocates for justice. But, people can walk away from an ideology, seeing it precisely as an ideology, as political correctness, and thus justify their rejection of the truth it carries. Sincere people often walk away from Greenpeace, from Feminism, or Liberation Theology, from Critical Race Theory, and many other ideologies which, in fact, carry a lot of truth because those truths are wrapped inside an ideolo-

gy. Sincere people will not walk away from Jesus. In our struggle for justice and truth, we must be ever vigilant that we are drawing our truth from the Gospels and not from some ideology.

Third, a prophet is committed to non-violence. A prophet is always seeking to personally disarm rather than to arm, to be in the words of Daniel Berrigan, a *powerless criminal in a time of criminal power*. A prophet takes Jesus seriously when He asks us, in the face of violence, to turn the other cheek. A prophet incarnates in his or her way of living the eschatological truth that in heaven there will be no guns.

Fourth, a prophet articulates God's voice for the poor and for the earth. Any preaching, teaching, or political action that is not good news for the poor is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus came to bring good news to the poor, to "widows, orphans, and strangers" (biblical code for the most vulnerable groups in society). As Pastor Forbes once famously said: *Nobody goes to heaven without a letter of reference from the poor*. We are not meant to be the Church compatible.

Fifth, a prophet doesn't foretell the future but properly names the present in terms of God's vision of things. A prophet reads where the finger of God is within everyday life, in function of naming our fidelity or infidelity to God and in function of pointing to our future in terms of God's plan for us. This is Jesus' challenge to *read the signs of the times*.

Sixth, a prophet speaks out of a horizon of hope. A prophet draws his or her vision and energy not from wishful thinking nor from optimism, but from hope. And Chris-



tian hope is not based on whether the world situation is better or worse on a given day. Christian hope is based on God's promise, a promise that was fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus, which assures us that we can entrust ourselves to love, truth, and justice, even if the world kills us for it. The stone will always roll back from the tomb.

Seventh, a prophet's heart and cause are never a ghetto. Jesus assures us that in His Father's house, there are many rooms. Christian prophecy must ensure that no person or group can make God their own tribal or national deity. God is equally solicitous vis-à-vis all people and all nations.

Finally, a prophet doesn't just speak or write about injustice, a prophet also acts and acts with courage, even at the cost of death. A prophet is a wisdom figure, a Magus or a Sophia, who will act, no matter the cost in lost friends, lost prestige, lost

freedom, or danger to his or her own life. A prophet has enough altruistic love, hope, and courage to act, no matter the cost. A prophet never seeks martyrdom but accepts it if it finds him or her.

This last counsel is, I believe, the one most challenging for "quiet" prophets. Wisdom figures are not renowned for being on the picket lines, but in that lies the challenge. A prophet can discern at what time to park the placard and bring out the basin and towel – and at what time to lay aside the basin and towel and pick up the placard.

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

SOCIAL JUSTICE



Making a Difference
Tony Magliano

"Anyone who inflicts a permanent injury on his or her neighbour shall receive the same in return: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (Lev. 24:19-20). Thus, this Old Testament development in moral law insisted that one could inflict punishment on a person who injured him, but only to the same degree that he was hurt, no worse.

But when Jesus arrives, He develops this teaching to its highest moral level by declaring, "You have heard it said, 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil [read offer no violent resistance]. When someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other one to him as well. ... You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.'"

Here Jesus further develops the fifth commandment to its fullest meaning: an absolute ban on all killing, no exceptions!

The first generations of Christians – even during times of severe persecution – took most seriously Jesus' command not to kill.

Christian literature from the first three centuries consistently affirms that the earliest followers of Jesus Christ completely rejected all forms of violence and bloodshed – no abortion, no euthanasia, no war, no death penalty.

But from the fourth century – when Christianity became legal – much of Christianity lost sight of Jesus' absolute teaching against all killing – not even killing a murderer.

But in modern times the Catholic Church has come full circle on the death penalty. Pope St John Paul II taught that legitimate cases calling for capital punishment "are very rare, if practically non-existent."

And Pope Francis developed St John Paul's development to its full conclusion. Pope Francis has declared "the death penalty inadmissible."

This declaration by the Holy Father necessitated a change in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which now clearly teaches the Catholic Church's total rejection of the death penalty.

The new text in the *Catechism* says that "There is an increasing awareness that the dignity of the person is not lost even after the commission of very serious crimes.

... More effective systems of detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens but, at the same time, do not definitively deprive the guilty of the possibility of redemption.

"Consequently, the Church teaches, in light of the Gospel, that 'the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person, and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide' (see: <https://bit.ly/2KICIFi>).

According to Amnesty International, 55 countries still use the death penalty; including Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, China and 27 states in the US (see: <https://bit.ly/44sRBKV>).

After the total nonviolent teachings of Jesus, the strongest reason for banning the death penalty is the very real possibility of executing an innocent prisoner. Case in point: According to the Death Penalty Information Centre, "Since 1973, at least 190 people who had been wrongly convicted and sentenced to death in the U.S. have been exonerated" (see: <https://bit.ly/44sNRSP>).

In the state of Florida, where I live, 30 persons have been exonerated – that's

more than any other US state. Thank God these 30 fellow human beings were finally set free after being proven innocent – before they were murdered by the state.

As I write, I have just returned from a small gathering in front of the Key West, Florida courthouse. There, during the time that Darryl Barwick was being executed in Florida State Prison, four of us stood in vigil holding signs asking for an end to the death penalty.

During our vigil, I reflected on the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary, praying for the soul of Rebecca Wendt whom Barwick was convicted of murdering. I prayed for all those painfully affected by her murder. I prayed for mercy upon those who were participating in Barwick's state-sanctioned murder. And I prayed for God's mercy upon Darryl Barwick.

God of life and love, may we finally learn Your way that killing is never the answer.

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

'Thou shalt not kill' – not even a murderer

Little Catholics' Corner

Hello children of God

How will people know that we love Jesus? What should we do as Christians to make sure that we live in a way pleasing to God? Do you think it's better to try to stay away from those who do not follow Jesus and His teachings, or should we make sure that we are close to non-Christians so we can influence them?

The readings for the Seventh Sunday of Easter remind us that even though Jesus is not with us in His human body, we are still connected to Him and to each other in prayer.

On the Sunday after Ascension Thursday, the readings prepare us for the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The theme focuses on waiting and praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance and empowerment.

The first reading tells of how, after the Ascension of Jesus, His followers grow in community by praying together. The second reading reminds us to glorify God always, even when we are suffering. And in the Gospel, Jesus prays for His disciples and asks them to witness to the world about His mission and teachings.

Love, Auntie Gwen

Find the letters to fill in the blanks.
Write the letter that's missing from the second word of the pair

DESERT	-	TREES	—
FRUIT	-	TURF	—
SMILE	-	LIME	—
CAMEL	-	LAME	—
RADIO	-	ROAD	—
SPIDER	-	RIDES	—
LEARN	-	NEAR	—
ELBOW	-	BOWL	—
PEAS	-	APE	—



Jesus prayed for His



Dear God,
Thank you for Jesus
Thank You for all of His
work and His words
Thank You for His prayers
for us
Help us to demonstrate
that we are Your followers
Show us how to be in the
world, but not of the world
Remind us to always love
one another
Thank You for Your love
We love You, God!
In Jesus name, Amen!



Jesus prayed for His friends.

Jesus Prays

Jesus prayed to His Father in heaven.

Use the code to find some of His words.

○=A	◐=E	◑=I	◒=M	▢=Q	◻=U	⊠=Y
◐=B	◑=F	◒=J	▢=N	⊠=R	◻=V	◐=Z
◑=C	◒=G	◐=K	▢=O	⊠=S	◻=W	
◒=D	⊠=H	◑=L	▢=P	◻=T	◐=X	

He said, “

▢ ⊠ ▢ ◻ ◐ ◑ ◻
 ◻ ⊠ ◐ ◒ ◐ ⊠ ◻ ⊠ ◐
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Find 10 things that are different in the second picture.



YOUTH

MAY 21, 2023

KLANG DISTRICT YOUTH RALLY

A FIRST AFTER THE PANDEMIC



The Klang District Youth Council organised its first rally, mirroring the upcoming World Youth Day theme, *Mary arose and went with haste*, at the Church of the Holy Redeemer (HRC) on April 29.

About 110 youth from the four parishes in the district, the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, the Church of St Anne, the Church of the Holy Redeemer, and the Church of Sts Peter & Paul, attended the one-day rally.

HRC parish priest, Fr Andrew Kooi, gave the opening address before the ice-breaking activities. Then Fr Gregory Chan, parish priest Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, presented on the subtheme *Arising to serve with Mary*. His presentation was tied to a healing session and the washing of the feet by him and Fr David Arulanatham from the Church of St Anne.

The team spoke to a few youths at the rally, and here is what they had to say:

“I have always been described as ‘anti-social’. I never enjoyed talking, and neither did I enjoy crowds. So, naturally, I dreaded going. The only reason I went was because my sister, who was part of the committee, thought this would be a great chance for me to meet new friends through Jesus. I will forever be grateful to her for persuading me to join this youth rally. It now holds such a special place in my heart, as the memories are irreplaceable. I sang, danced, spoke, and prayed.”

“I experienced God’s presence in many new ways. I forced myself to get out of my comfort zone, and when I did, I truly enjoyed every

single second of it. Even my sister was shocked! If I were to choose a favourite moment from the whole rally, it would be the Sunset Mass. Never, in my 17 years of life, have I ever participated at a Mass this interesting before – Fr Gregory’s sermon, the choir, everything, was just amazing. All in all, the youth rally was remarkable. I never knew I could gain so much in just a day. Another good part was, the rally went smoothly! The committee resolved any hiccups quickly and quietly. I can’t wait for the next youth rally!” – **Raeshawna Ruben 17, Church of Sts Peter & Paul**

“I had so much fun that Saturday. I was happy to meet new people from different parishes. I’m glad everyone enjoyed every moment, even though we barely knew each other. The best part was the singing and dancing together, it felt so great. I hope we can get together again and make more memories.” – **Phoebe Alysa, 17, Church of the Holy Redeemer**

“Attending the Klang District Youth Rally 2023 was something out of my comfort zone. It was the first time I joined such a large youth event. I was afraid I would be lonely, as many of my friends weren’t able to make it. However, the committee members were friendly and welcoming, and I mingled with youth from other parishes. The rally was well organised with a good balance of games, sessions by Fr Gregory, and Praise and Worship. The best part of the rally for me was the Praise and Worship. We sang and danced to some beautiful songs chosen by the committee members. My favourite tunes were *Hari Ini*, *Ku Rasa Bahagia* and *Trading My Sorrows (Yes Lord)*. Although I was exhausted at the end of the day, I had lots of fun and enjoyed it. The rally was a great success and I am looking forward to the next event!” — **Natasha Ann, 19, Church of St Anne**

“As it was the first Youth Rally, I wasn’t expecting too much but I believe the mission in bringing the youths of the four churches together and making us realise we are part of a really big family under Christ was accomplished. Seeing and being in the spirit room with everyone, there was an energy like no other. The room was filled with ecstatic and lively energy that was felt throughout the day. Everyone had their own personalities and energy, which was so enjoyable to be around. Kudos to the committee. I hope everyone can relate to the sense of belonging and community we were part of. The most touching part of the rally was the hugging session, after washing of the feet.” — **Elijah Muralidharan, 21, Church of Our Lady of Lourdes**

All in all, it was a day filled with the Spirit, a fruitful session where some youths found their connection with God and some built new friendships. Plans are in play for next year’s District Youth Camp.



Leaders of the Klang District Youth Council.

GOING BACK TO WHERE IT ALL BEGAN... AT GALILEE

By Bro Aaron Alammalay

KLUANG: The Diocese of Malacca Johore (MJD) held a vocation promotion week April 29 to May 1. It aimed to promote the order and to help young men who are discerning and or desiring to journey towards a diocesan priesthood. Thirteen aspirants, aged 17 to their mid-forties, from the three peninsular dioceses, attended the discernment weekend.

It was organised by priests of the Church of St Louis, Msgr Peter Ng and his assistant, Fr Adrian Francis, with the help of their parishioners, who managed the food and logistics. Two seminarians and the permanent deacons from MJD also took time to be present and share input.

The session kicked off with an introduction to the programme and the seminarians sharing their vocation stories. The aspirants also talked about their reasons



The aspirants, seminarians with Msgr Peter Ng and Fr Adrian Francis.

for joining the programme.

The organisers were inspired to use the

Galilee scene as the theme. To creatively bring the theme to life, the aspirants were placed in camping tents inside the parish hall to reflect the living conditions of the fishermen surrounding the sea of Galilee.

There was also a series of talks via YouTube, on the life of a diocesan priest, their future formation and virtues and, most importantly, the life and spirituality of a diocesan priesthood and today's expectations from their flock, presented and facilitated by Msgr Peter and Fr Adrian. On this topic, the permanent deacons shared their expectations of a diocesan priest from their experiences.

Throughout the weekend, the pair of seminarians headed regular prayer sessions on how to use and pray the Liturgy

of the Hours. Apart from the spiritual activities of silence, community, and personal prayer, a physical spiritual walk was organised before Mass and breakfast on Sunday morning. Both priests, seminarians, and aspirants walked to the local recreational park which has a lake, reflecting the journey to Galilee.

On the last day of the programme, the aspirants were given the tools for vocation discernment and to pray for the seed planted in them to grow. They were encouraged to go back to where it all started, in the calling of the Apostles at the sea of Galilee, as it is a beautiful reminder that in times of doubt, we can always return to our first love, as Pope Francis once said



During the adoration

Theology of the Body

What is the mystery behind this theology?

KUALA LUMPUR: The KL Archdiocesan Catechetical Ministry organised a formation at the Church of the Good Shepherd on May 4-6. Forty participants, together with Fr Edwin Peter, attended this formation.

Andrew Kong spoke on *Discovering the true meaning of the Human Body* which gave a fundamental introduction to the Theology of the Body.

When Jesus died on the cross, it was an act of total giving of Himself in a redemp-

tive love to the will of God, thus uniting Man with God. Jesus became the Bridegroom and we, the Church, the Bride. God, in His divine wisdom, designed that man should have this fulfilment of love, be it spousal or celibate love. The Sacrament of Matrimony parallels this giving of love – a gift of oneself, where two become one.

Gabriel Ho then spoke on the way to attain this union with God. He took the participants through the Ascetical grades of



The participants listening to Andrew Kong.

prayer and the Mystical grades of prayer which culminates in a union of the entire

soul with God.

Many questions were raised regarding pornography, same sex attraction, chastity and self-control.

It was emphasised that the dignity of the body should always be upheld and respected. It should never be compromised. We are all created in the image of God, an embodied spirit and therefore have the responsibility to enhance our lives by seeking this union with God.

It was concluded that the teaching of the Theology of the Body should be introduced in the form of Progressive Education in the Church.

At the close of the session, Archbishop Julian Leow visited the participants and gave his blessings. — **By Macline Fernandez**



The participants and presenters at the formation.

Priest buys, dedicates new cemetery plots for 'lost sheep'

Like most priests, Fr Douglas McKay has seen a number of people die over the years.

As the founder and chaplain of Our House Ministries in Philadelphia's Grays Ferry section, Fr McKay — who grew up in the neighbourhood he serves — has worked with addicted and impoverished people for more than 40 years.

His non-profit has provided recovery homes and faith-based sobriety programmes to hundreds since Our House Ministries was founded in 1997, just two years after his brother Anthony succumbed to an overdose.

Now, Fr McKay is making sure those he serves are assured of both a heavenly home and a final resting place for their remains.

On April 30, Fr McKay joined some three dozen ministry supporters to bless and dedicate the Good Shepherd cemetery section at SS. Peter and Paul Cemetery in Springfield, Pennsylvania.

The section, featuring a large statue of Christ as the Good Shepherd and accommodating 40 cremation urns, was personally purchased for approximately \$40,000 by Fr McKay, who plans to be buried in a casket there as well. Our House Ministries will review and decide requests for burial in the plot on a case-by-case basis.

Our House Ministries staffer Patrick Kennedy told *OSV News* his sister Kelly Ann, who recently died of cancer, was among the first buried in the Good Shepherd section, along with two individuals who succumbed to addiction and related illnesses.

"Father found that a lot of people were being cremated, and the ashes were winding up in basements and not in consecrated ground," said Kennedy. "These were people who had died of addiction (as well as) people who just didn't have the means to be buried. And he decided that he was going to buy a place to put them. He came up with the idea of the lost sheep, so he wanted to be the Good Shepherd."



Philadelphia priest Fr Douglas McKay blesses the Good Shepherd cemetery plot he purchased at SS. Peter and Paul Cemetery in Springfield, Pa. during an April 30 dedication ceremony. (*OSV News/Gina Christian*)

The Good Shepherd plot is meant to inspire all the faithful to look beyond death, said Fr McKay during the dedication service, which followed the Fourth Sunday of Easter (also known as Good Shepherd Sunday for its Gospel reading) liturgy he had celebrated, with the Archdiocese of Philadelphia's approval, at the cemetery's Our Lady of the Assumption Chapel.

"We should raise our hearts and look to the Good Shepherd, to Christ, who suffered and rose for our salvation," said Fr McKay. "He has commanded that we keep watch for His

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**4 Jan 1993
30th Anniversary**

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coming, and He has promised to meet us when we rise again."

Fr McKay provided attendees with copies of his newly revised book, *Heaven's Homecoming*, which recounts his experiences as a chaplain ministering to dying residents of the Holy Family Home, a senior residence operated by the Little Sisters of the Poor in Philadelphia.

Based on his chaplaincy and his current ministry, Fr McKay said his "theological hunch" is that "Christ takes the last breath if we believe in Him," as the Blessed Mother greets faithful souls entering eternity.

"You could be the greatest sinner in the world, but if you (accept Jesus Christ's salvation) in the end, you're going to heaven," said Fr McKay. "God loves us so much ... (and) He does everything He can to bring us home to restful pastures and still waters."

Like Christ, "our bodies will come out of our graves, and we will be glorified," Fr McKay said. "We will recognise one another in the kingdom of our heavenly homeland." — **By Gina Christian, OSV**

The singer and the nun

NEW YORK: Many are remembering how Harry Belafonte, who died April 25 in New York at age 96, was so inspired by the life ministry of Sr Thea Bowman that he had planned to make a film about her.

According to an April 25 posting on the website of The Catholic University of America in Washington, Belafonte first contacted Sr Bowman after he saw a profile of her on *60 Minutes* on CBS in 1987.

The religious sister, a noted educator and dynamic evangelist, had persuaded the TV news magazine's lead reporter, Mike Wallace, to say, "Black is beautiful" during the prime-time story on her ministry, said the university's posting.

"Belafonte watched the broadcast and knew he wanted to bring her witness to hope and healing to wider audiences," Catholic University said. "Belafonte contacted Sr Bowman to discuss his idea of a feature film about her life starring Whoopi Goldberg, both of whom she met during a visit to California."

They first met in 1988. At the time, Belafonte was "a Hollywood icon who was widely respected for his social justice activism, so Sr Bowman trusted that he would do her life's work justice," Catholic University said, adding that Belafonte

"went to great lengths to get personally involved in bringing her story to the big screen."

According to the university, the Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration, who was battling the cancer that would claim her life on March 30, 1990, invited Belafonte to her home in Canton, Mississippi, and to Xavier University of Louisiana's Institute for Black Catholic Studies, of which she was founding member, in New Orleans.

Belafonte visited both places "to speak with Sr Bowman's friends and students to learn about her impact on their lives," Catholic University said. "Even though she was using a wheelchair due to a battle with cancer that took her life less than two years later, he saw that nothing kept her down. They became practically inseparable, and Belafonte was seen pushing her along in her wheelchair."

When Sr Bowman's "condition worsened," Belafonte "travelled to visit her at her bedside," the university added. But the film was never made. The actor-activist's rights expired after the project was delayed because he and her Franciscan community had different opinions on who should "have final editorial control over her portrayal" — him or her community, the



Harry Belafonte and Servant of God Thea Bowman in an undated archival photo. Belafonte met Bowman at Xavier University in 1988. (*OSV News photo/courtesy Xavier University of Louisiana, Archives & Special Collections*)

university said.

Some years later, a documentary on her life and ministry was written and produced by Franciscan Sr Judith Ann Zielinski. The film was released in 2022. Sr Bowman today is a candidate for sainthood along with five other prominent Black Catholics in the US. — **Aleteia**

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REST IN PEACE

Vatican presents its Jubilee 2025 preparations

VATICAN: Preparations for the Jubilee of 2025 are in full swing, as an estimated 32 million pilgrims are expected to participate. A progress report on this large-scale event, organised by the Dicastery for Evangelisation, was presented on May 9, 2023, at the Vatican.

Speaking at the conference, Archbishop Rino Fisichella, the Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery's Section in charge of coordinating the Vatican's efforts for the event, said that preparations are proceeding at full speed and are progressing significantly.

For several months, four commissions – pastoral, cultural, communication, and ecumenical – and a technical committee, have been working on the organisation of the Jubilee. A coordination meeting is held every two weeks at Palazzo Chigi, seat of the Italian government, said Archbishop Fisichella.

The Jubilee itineraries

Registrations will open in September on the official website, which will be available in nine languages, announced Msgr Graham Bell, undersecretary of the Dicastery for Evangelisation.

The pilgrims will receive a digital map that will allow them to access Jubilee events and organise their pilgrimage to the Holy Door at St Peter's Basilica.

The "Pilgrim's Card," which can be purchased for "a few euros", will provide discounts for food and other necessities, explained Archbishop Fisichella.

Three pilgrimage itineraries are proposed for this Jubilee: the traditional 25 km (around 15.5 miles) pilgrimage of the seven churches of Rome; a pilgrimage dedicated to the women patrons and doctors of the Church; and a journey across the "European Union Churches" (*Iter Europaeum*).

The European itinerary will have an ecumenical aspect, as the Jubilee coincides with the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea (325), the first Christological council. Thus, the 28 stages of this itinerary include non-Catholic churches in Rome, such as the National Church of Greece, San Teodoro, given to the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchate, or the German Lutheran Church. Other churches included, such as San Silvestro, have an ecumenical dimension because they preserve a memory of the Council of Nicaea.

Rome under construction

The Faculty of Sociology of Roma Tre University estimates that around 32 million people will participate. However, these are only projections, which are subject to change. All the more so, as the city of Rome has faced a strong increase in tourists in recent months,

said Archbishop Fisichella

In this context, the Eternal City has undertaken big construction projects, which will begin in July 2023. In particular, an underpass is to be built between Piazza Pia and Via della Conciliazione leading to St. Peter's Square – an area that often represents a bottleneck for the influx of tourists from Castel Sant'Angelo. Other areas, such as St John Lateran, or Piazza del Risorgimento, should become pedestrianised. "We are confident that the major works will be finished by Dec 8, 2024," said Archbishop Fisichella.

The Jubilee calendar

The official dates of the opening and closing of the Jubilee will be given on May 9, 2024 – feast of the Ascension – by a Papal Bull of indiction. However, the main events are already known. Several thematic jubilees will take place over the months, including: law enforcement (January); people with disabilities (April); entrepreneurs/musicians (May); the world of sports/political leaders (June); prisoners (July); youth (August); and the world of education (October).

A "Pilgrims' Centre" will open on June

1 in Via della Conciliazione, where participants can get more information.

The Jubilee hymn

The Jubilee hymn was also unveiled. The text, written by theologian and musicologist Pierangelo Sequeri, is based on the official theme "Pilgrims of Hope." The music of the hymn was composed by Italian musician Francesco Meneghello. He was selected out of 270 composers from 38 countries, who all participated in the international competition, which ended on March 25.

As part of the preparations for the Jubilee, cultural events will be launched in September 2023, including an exhibition of works by Greek artist El Greco (1541-1614) in the church of Sant'Agnese in Agone, in Piazza Navona. The works featured have never left Spain before. The cultural committee also intends to organise initiatives in prisons and hospitals.

For the spiritual orientation of the preparations, Pope Francis has asked that the year 2023 be dedicated to the four constitutions of the Second Vatican Council – the texts of which were recently republished by *Shalom Editions* – and that 2024 be dedicated to prayer.

While Rome will be the epicentre, this Jubilee will also be spread throughout the dioceses of the world. Some 200 delegates from Italian dioceses and 90 delegates from episcopal conferences will work in conjunction with the organising Dicastery. — *Aleteia*



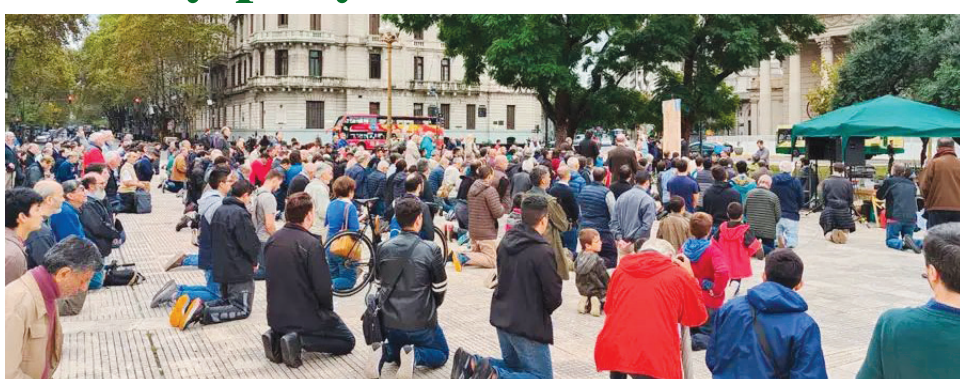
Men's worldwide Rosary prays for the conversion of the entire world

BUENOS AIRES: Men from more than 40 countries joined together May 6 for the worldwide Men's Rosary, praying on their knees before the Virgin Mary so that men would once again be valued in society and for the conversion of the entire world.

The general coordinator of the Knights of the Rosary apostolate in Mexico, Paco Páez, explained that by praying the Rosary, the participants "want to bear witness, not because of our virtues, but by getting on our knees asking for the intercession of our Most Holy Virgin Mary, so that she would grant us the conversion of sinners, our own conversion, that of our families, and that of the whole world."

Through this public Rosary, he added, they are praying for "the reign of Christ's peace in our hearts and in our homelands."

The Men's Rosary was also held in various cities in Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, Chile, Puerto Rico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Panama, Ecuador, and Paraguay.



The Men's Rosary in Buenos Aires on May 6, 2023. (CNA photo/Courtesy Segundo Carafi)

Other countries that also participated were Spain, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Brazil, Honduras, Ukraine, Italy, Croatia, Australia, Indonesia — a majority Muslim country — and the Philippines, the country with the most Catholics in Asia, as well as others.

Páez also noted that the prayer is held in the streets "in the Hispanic nations of the Ameri-

cas, which are culturally Christian, to reclaim the public square for Our Lord Jesus Christ, because a lamp is not lit to be put under the bushel basket, but is placed up high so that it shines throughout the house."

"We want to take up our call as men in the life of this Church, of this pilgrim Church that is also known as the Church militant,"

he continued.

One of the organisers of the Men's Rosary in Buenos Aires, Segundo Carafi, explained that "the importance of this Rosary lies in the fact that it is precisely men who want to bring back faith to public life, praying for the recovery of his own essence in a world that criticises and attacks him."

This demonstrates, he continued, that "faith is not only a woman's thing and that the man, as the man of the family, the priest as such, is ready to fight in defence of his most absolute essence as a man, that today is something that is up for debate."

"In a world where men are not only criticised from all sides, from the father of the family to the priest, but also where he is attacked in his maximum essence as a man, seeking the feminisation of men and the masculinisation of women, in the Men's Rosary we are praying once again for men to be valued in society," he concluded. — **By Walter Sanchez Silva, CNA**

Canada replaces crosses in new royal crown

OTTAWA: King Charles III has approved the Canadian government's new heraldic Royal Crown design that swaps out its crowning cross for a snowflake and replaces other crosses with maple leaves.

The Canadian Royal Crown redesign was recommended by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and is based on the bejeweled St Edward's Crown used at King Charles' coronation held on Saturday, May 6, as well



as the slightly different Tudor Crown symbol.

However, the stylised Canadian emblem drops the crosses and the *fleurs-de-lis* present on these crowns, instead incorporating "elements emphasising the Canadian identity of the monarchy," the governor general of Canada's website says in its heraldry section.

The Canadian Royal Crown emblem is "an important symbol of the sovereign's authority, the Canadian monarchy, and the power of

the state acting in the sovereign's name," according to the office of the governor general of Canada, who represents King Charles III in his role as king of Canada.

"In place of the orb and cross at the top of the crown is a stylised snowflake, a reference to Canada being a northern realm," the governor general's website says. The snowflake symbol is linked to the insignia of the Order of Canada, a top Canadian honour.

The combined orb and cross atop King Charles' crown have long been used by Christian royalty as a reminder that the world is

subject to the dominion of Jesus Christ. The symbol is part of the coronation regalia of the British monarchy. In the Church of England coronation liturgy, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, gave King Charles an ornate handheld orb and cross and told him, "Receive this orb, set under the cross, and remember always the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of Our Lord, and of his Christ."

Christian iconography sometimes shows Jesus Christ holding the orb and cross. — **By Kevin J. Jones, CNA**