

# HERALD

The Catholic Weekly

## Mission Statement

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

TERHAD

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Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

1 Cor. 12:3-4



Christian Meditation the John Main way

■ P4



Long house villagers attend Laudato Si' workshop

■ P5



Be the salt of the earth and light of the world

■ P16

# HOLY SPIRIT

## corrects and defends us

**V**ATICAN: The Holy Spirit consoles, defends and tenderly corrects those who turn to and listen to Him, Pope Francis said.

The Holy Spirit "is not a passing guest who comes to pay us a courtesy visit. He is a companion for life, a stable presence" who "desires to dwell in our spirits."

"He is patient and stays with us even when we fall," the Pope said. "He does not pretend to love us and then leave us alone when things get difficult. No. He is faithful, He is transparent, He is authentic."

Before reciting the midday *Regina Coeli* prayer with about 25,000 people gathered in St Peter's Square, May 14, Pope Francis spoke about the day's Gospel reading, John 14:15-21, in which Jesus speaks about the Holy Spirit as an advocate and consoler.

"The Holy Spirit never leaves us alone, He is near to us, like an advocate who assists the accused person, standing by his or her side," the Pope said. "And He suggests to us how to defend ourselves from those who accuse us."

"Let us recall that the great accuser is always the devil, who puts sin inside of you, the desire to sin, wickedness," he added.

During times of trouble, he said, "the Holy Spirit consoles us, bringing us God's pardon and strength. And when He places our errors before us and corrects us, He does so gently" with the warmth of love that speaks to the heart.

Like a true friend, the Spirit does not hide the truth and He "suggests what needs to change and where growth needs to take place," the Pope said. "But when He corrects us, He never humiliates us and never instills distrust. Rather, He conveys the certainty that with God, we can always make it."

The Holy Spirit "defends us from those who accuse us: from ourselves when we do not appreciate and forgive ourselves" and from the devil who accuses, divides and "does everything to make us feel incapable and unhappy," Pope Francis said.

"If we call on the Spirit, we will learn to embrace and recall the most important truth of life that protects us from the accusations of the evil one," he said. "What is the most important truth in life? That we are beloved children of God," and "the Spirit reminds us of this."

The Holy Father concluded by encouraging the faithful



(CNS photo/Crossers)

to consider our relationship with the Holy Spirit. "Do we call on the Holy Spirit? Do we pray to Him often? Let us not forget about the One who is close to us, or rather, is within us! Then: Do we listen to His voice, both when He encourages us and when He corrects us? Do we respond with Jesus's words to the accusations from the evil one, to the "tribunals" of life? Do we remember that we are beloved children of God?"

The Pope then invoked the intercession of Our Lady saying, "May Mary make us docile to the voice of the Holy Spirit and sensitive to His presence." —Agencies

## Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful and enkindle in them the fire of Your love.

Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created.

And You shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful. Grant that in the same Spirit they may be truly wise and ever rejoice in His consolation.

Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.



# HERALD

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Over the past 60 years, temperatures in the Asia-Pacific region have increased faster than the global mean. According to scientists, the past eight years have been the warmest on record globally, with 2016 being the hottest.

A UN report in March warned that “every increment” of global warming, due to greenhouse gases from human activities, will escalate multiple and concurrent hazards.

Climate scientists have cautioned that, as the world continues to warm, heatwaves are expected to become more frequent, longer lasting, and more intense, just like what we’re experiencing at the moment.

The Solemnity of Pentecost reminds us that everything which exists, every person and the whole of creation, is a gift of “God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.” God our loving Father creates and continues to give life to the world through His Word, Jesus Christ, in the power of His Holy Spirit. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Church, which we celebrate at Pentecost, is not something separate from Creation. God’s revelation of Himself in Creation is inseparable from the revelation of His love for us in Christ and in His desire to live in us through His Holy Spirit.

God’s Spirit is always and everywhere “the Lord, the Giver of Life”, and the voice of Pentecost is echoed in the voice of creation being transformed into the glorious liberty of God’s children. In this liberty, as God’s children, we call on the Spirit to ‘renew the face of the Earth’, and as His children, we are called, in turn, to use this liberty for the good of creation and for the good of all that brings life. Our world, God’s creation, is a precious gift to us. It is our common home, entrusted to each generation. But how have we used that glorious liberty? How do we honour this precious gift? Are we really demonstrating love, care and respect for our common home?

As we celebrate Pentecost this year, we are acutely aware of the damage that continues to be inflicted on the Earth, and the repercussions for the well-being of our brothers and sisters, both here in our own countries and, more especially, in the poorest countries of our world. Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have both taught us that everything is interconnected and interdependent. The way we live our everyday lives has an impact on everyone and on the earth.

For all too long we have either been ignorant of, or ignored, the systematic exploitation of our planet and the unsustainable consumption of its resources. While accepting the crucial need and demand for energy for the benefit of the poorest of our brothers and sisters, the provision of our energy must, nonetheless, be by

means which radically reduce the use of carbon-based fuels.

In our political thinking, there must be a new global understanding of our world, where nations recognise our common responsibility for the dignity of all people and their rights to sustainable livelihoods, in authentic freedom. Pope Francis speaks of a global politics that looks beyond our own needs to the needs of all, most especially the poor and the marginalised.

But we cannot leave the healing of our common home and the wellbeing and care of our brothers and sisters merely to a response from industry and governments. Our own local concern and action is necessary and has far-reaching consequences. We all have a part to play, each and every one of us, in the routines, choices and decisions of our everyday lives and our aspirations for the future. The actions of parishes, families, schools, and individuals will have a significant impact on our efforts to restore our common home. There are now many resources, freely available, to advise us on our choice of food, saving of water and electricity, suggestions about travel, waste, and re-use. These are measures that everyone can employ, in some degree, with minimal inconvenience and change. There are effective ways in which we can each reaffirm our personal vocation to be stewards of creation.

This Pentecost comes at a time of remarkable challenge and opportunity. We are gradually and progressively emerging from the tragedies and restrictions of the pandemic. We have the ability to make changes. In all our human endeavours, we need the presence of the Holy Spirit, “the Lord, the Giver of Life”, whose gift to the Church and the world we celebrate again at Pentecost.

Let us celebrate this Feast with that enduring hope that we can begin to repair the damage we have done and provide a healthy home for future generations. Our hope will be strengthened by our prayer. May our constant request be that the Holy Spirit guide us, strengthen our resolve and ‘renew the face of the earth’.

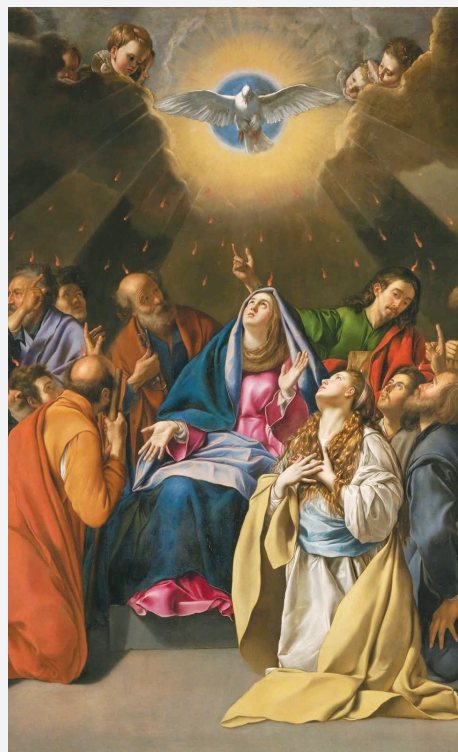
Patricia Pereira



## Let us be guided by the Holy Spirit

One of the enduring images associated with Pentecost is that of Mary and the disciples of Jesus, gathered in the upper room, with tongues of flames lingering above their heads, while the Holy Spirit descends upon them like a dove. This image illustrates what we find in the 1st Reading of the Mass of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:1-11). The descent of the Holy Spirit effects a transformation upon the disciples, as they are able to speak in languages previously unknown to them: “Parthians, Medes, and Elamites...Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, visitors from Rome...Cretans and Arabs; we hear them preaching in our own language about the marvels of God” (Acts 2:11).

This miracle of Pentecost is meant to be read together with another biblical episode: the building of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9). It begins by explaining that humankind spoke one tongue. They were of one people, of one culture. It was easy to communicate with one another, and to work together. Indeed, what humankind at that time experienced was wonderful! However, what should have been a blessing became a curse, when humankind, out of pride, decided to make use of their unity for their own selfish purposes. Being of one mind and heart, they decided to build for themselves a tower that would reach up to the heavens. Such a tower would, they imagined, enable them to make a name for themselves. Seeing the selfishness of mankind, God then intervened by confus-



ing the people and their language, making it impossible for them to understand one another. Losing their unity, they were unable to complete the tower, and humankind was scattered throughout the earth.

Why did this come to pass? Doesn’t God desire all to be united and to live in harmony? The answer to that question is: Yes! Of course, God desires unity, for everyone to be of one mind and one heart. However, in the story of the Tower of Babel, there

was a distortion of harmony and unity. Unity was used in the service of human pride, and for a selfish purpose. They believed that by building the tower, humanity would be able to reach the heavens and touch the divine. In essence, the building of the tower was a reflection of that very sin of our first parents – the desire to be like God and to be independent of Him.

Therefore, pride and hubris led to tragic consequences for the human family. However, with Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit reverses the curse of the Tower of Babel. No longer will differences of language be an obstacle to unity and the worship of God. With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Good News proclaimed by Jesus is now open to all peoples, regardless of origin, language or culture.

There’s another nuance of the story of Babel and Pentecost. If in the story of Babel, humanity thought that they could reach God and the heavens by means of a tall tower, it is in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that humanity is given the means by which we can be sanctified and made holy. It is by this sanctification that we are made one with the Lord. God is reached not via a building, but by His grace and power. It is by God’s merciful love that our sins are washed away, and it is through our communion with the Lord that we are led to heaven. At the 5th week of Easter, the liturgy emphasises the desire of the Lord that we, His children, should be where He is: “I am going now to prepare a place for you, and after I have gone

## Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Fr Nicholas Hoh, OCD

**Pentecost Sunday (A)****Readings: Acts of the Apostle 2:1-11;****1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13;****Gospel: John 20:19-23**

and prepared you a place, I shall return to take you with me; so that where I am you may be too.” (John 14:3)

Christ, our Good Shepherd, is the way that leads us to all fulfilment and blessings. It is by following Him that we are shown the way to our salvation. Yet, it is Christ Himself who sends the Holy Spirit upon us so that we may always know the right path that leads us to Him: “the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.” (John 14:26).

As we come together to celebrate Pentecost, let us ask for docility of heart, that we may always allow ourselves to be guided by the Holy Spirit. Let us make room for Him, so that the Spirit may teach us the ways of the Lord. May we constantly ask the Spirit to strengthen us, enlighten us, and enhance His sevenfold gifts within us, so that we may experience fully the joy of being disciples of Jesus Christ. And, being made one of mind and heart by the Holy Spirit, may we all, as one Church, journey together, helping one another, to follow and hear the voice of our Good Shepherd.





**ARCHDIOCESE OF  
KUALA LUMPUR**

CHAN/CD/05/2023

### Chancery Notice

## Status of “chapels”

After having received several inquiries, the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur would like to reiterate and confirm the following:

- The “Chapel of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (SSPX)”, listed as located at 1-3A Jalan PJU 5/3, Dataran Sunway, 47810 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia ; and
- The “Chapel of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Est. Yr 2000)”, listed as located at the First Floor, 1 Jalan SS23/11, Taman Sea, 47400 Petaling Jaya

are neither “chapels/oratories” nor part of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

*Clarence Devadass*

**Fr Dr Clarence Devadass**  
Chancellor  
Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur

May 18, 2023

# Good Shepherd Convent blessed and opened

LIKAS, Sabah: *Walai* (Kadazandusun word for house) Good Shepherd was blessed on the 83rd canonisation anniversary of Sr Mary Euphrasia, the Foundress of the Religious of the Good Shepherd (RGS).

After the blessing, the Blessed Sacrament was reinstalled in the prayer room.

Archbishop John Wong was the main celebrant at the Mass, with Fr Rhobby Mojolou, Fr Gerald Terence, Fr Cosmas Lee and Fr Arul Mariadass OFM concelebrating.

Also present were the Montfort Brothers, Franciscan Friars, Franciscan Sisters, Daughters of St Paul, Good Shepherd Lay Associates and members of the Global Good Shepherd Services Board of Directors, as well as the RGS Provincial Leader for Singapore-Malaysia, Sr Salomi Cruz, and her councillors.

The visitors were then given a tour inside and around the building. Of note was the bell



transported from the RGS former convent at Madonna Heights, Ampang, Kuala Lumpur that was closed in 2022. The bell is now located outside the convent near the main entrance.

The construction of the new convent be-

gan at the end of 2018. However, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the construction work from 2020 to 2021.

For the duration of the construction, the Sisters stayed in one of the houses at Taman Kinanty Luyang. — **KK Diocese**



## Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #132

**F12**  
NEWS  
MJD  
UPDATES

### Greetings again dear people of God.

The heat wave is here. The water rationing days are near. The state elections are next. The Unity Government Convention just ended, with a call for “the rakyat and the economy to be put first” and to end all old animosities. Is it a unity founded on justice and reconciliation? The DPAs, the parish and vicariate level preparations are underway. Listening, discerning and walking together builds communities.

**Listening Times:** Listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches, the *Book of Revelation* reminded the seven Churches. The same reminder is sweeping through the world today. The early Church listened. Many churches today have failed to listen to the Holy Spirit in the baptised, the *sensus fidei* — the spirit that moves in the faith community, and the cries of the poor and the earth. As observed by Msgr James Shea, we are preserving monuments, institutions and centres but forgetting to be the Body of Christ and build the Kingdom of God.

**In From Christendom to Apostolic Mission: Pastoral Strategies for an Apostolic Age,** Msgr Shea writes: “In a Christendom culture the Church as a whole is tempted to lose its spiritual and otherworldly character and to become merely a this-worldly body, a department of state or a promising career path, a centre of civilised activities rather than the mystical body of Christ...Attending to the moral and ritual life of the Church can become perfunctory, valued only for immediately tangible effects.”

As we celebrate Pentecost Sunday, let us listen, learn (in docility) and be led by the Spirit. Change or be changed.

### A THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: How Fortunate!

Have you ever felt dejected and discouraged about life and the things that

are going on in the world around us? Then, please read the following words slowly, ponder on them, and consider how fortunate your life really is!

If you have FOOD in your fridge, CLOTHES on your back, a ROOF over your head, a place to sleep, you are richer than 75 per cent of the ENTIRE WORLD.

If you have MONEY in your wallet, and can go ANYWHERE you want, you are among the 18 per cent WEALTHIEST people in the ENTIRE WORLD.

If you are ALIVE today and HEALTHY, you are more blessed than the MILLIONS of people who will not survive this week and DIE.


If you can actually READ and UNDERSTAND this message, you are more fortunate than the 3 BILLION people in the world who are blind, deaf, or illiterate.

LIFE is not about complaining. LIFE is about thousands of other reasons to be happy and grateful!

Today’s post is a great reminder of how truly blessed you might be.

### Announcements for this week

1. Talks on *Deliverance (E)* on May 27, 28 at Church of St Andrew, Muar from 10.00am-4.15pm, with Fr Benedict Yee and the DEO Team.

2. The *Memorial Mass for the late Bishop James Chan* is planned for Monday, July 31 at 6.00pm in Majodi, with dinner and exhibition to journey down memory lane. Please register for both Mass and dinner using the  Google Form [bit.ly/3obLlqD](https://bit.ly/3obLlqD)

### This Week’s Question and Query. The Q asks: Why is it that church attendance has not spiked?

*Yes, church attendance is down.* The good many ask: Do we even need to go to church?

63 per cent of respondents to the most recent American Beliefs Study say no; astonishingly 69 per cent of Catholics

say believing in Jesus does not require participating in a church!

### 1. Reasons they are not attending church

Despite agreement with beliefs and having faith, many have left the Church. Among the many reasons:

- # The Church is not inspiring them or helping them in their belief.
- # Religious people are too judgmental.
- # They don’t trust organised religion.
- # Religion is too focused on money
- # The churches and parish communities have become a programme of programmes, losing the messiness of caring for people as individuals who are all in different states of belief and participation.
- # The young feel left out, completely alone, with no one to talk to, with no sense of belonging.

### 2. Things Catholics want in a church. The top four responses were:

- # Warm and friendly encounters: a welcoming parish
- # Celebration of the sacraments: a beautiful, awe-inspiring, reverential liturgy and music.
- # Quality sermons: compelling ones that teach, guide, challenge, inspire and sustain belief, participation and experience of community.
- # Activities outside Mass: Opportunities to connect, interact and build trust.

As Fr Mallon says in “Divine Renovation: Beyond the Parish” “... in the twenty-first century, it is difficult for people to come to belief in Jesus without first experiencing the sense of acceptance and love that comes with belonging to a community rooted in Jesus.”

*God bless you all. Have a great weekend. Be safe. Keep well!*

*Bernard Paul*

**Bishop Bernard Paul**



## KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

### Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

#### May/June

- 29/5 - 3/6 **Clergy Retreat – Cambodia**  
5/6 **Diaconate Ordination**  
**Deacon Gnana Selvam Berentis**  
8-11/6 **Malaysian Religious Assembly in Majodi**



## PENANG DIOCESE

### Diary of Bishop Sebastian Francis

#### May

- 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

#### June

- 1 **Meeting — MJ Diocesan Animating Team via Zoom**  
5 **Diocesan Pastoral Assembly — Vicariate level**



# Christian Meditation the John Main way

By Basil Surin

PENANG: On May 4, a gathering of 85 participants from parishes in Penang and Sungai Petani came to the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit to experience the profound practice of the John Main tradition of meditation. This ancient Christian form of meditation delves beyond words, thoughts, and images, employing mantras to deepen one's spiritual journey.

The Cathedral of the Holy Spirit Meditation Group organised the one-day introductory workshop in collaboration with the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM) (Malaysia). It aimed to introduce and share the Christian tradition of meditation while encouraging participants to embrace a deeper spiritual life through the discipline of silent meditation, stillness, and simplicity.

The workshop was facilitated by Fr Eugene Fernandez CSsR, Roland Victor, Jessie Chin, and Victoria Labrooy, who provided insightful guidance on John Main's meditation practice.

In the morning session, Fr Eugene and Roland shed light on the value of meditation, emphasising the cultivation of interior silence, the practice of physical stillness, and the art of being present to God



The participants from the parishes in Penang and Sg Petani at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit (photo/Sam Gopal).

in a state of simplicity. Fr Eugene expounded on the obstructive nature of the ego in one's relationship with God and stressed the importance of transcending self. He also introduced the concept of the wheel of prayer, symbolising the perpetual motion of the prayer life that moves us closer to God. The spokes of the wheel represent the different forms of prayer that ultimately converge at the hub, which signifies the prayer of Christ, the mind of Christ.

During the afternoon session, Jessie discussed the pivotal role played by the Benedictine monk John Main (1926-1982) in rediscovering the ancient prayer practice of the Desert Fathers and its relevance to modern Christians. This practice involved the loving

repetition of a single sacred word, now referred to as a mantra. Jessie eloquently highlighted the roots of meditation in the Christian tradition and John Main's contributions.

Victoria succinctly presented the fruits of embracing the daily discipline of meditation. Throughout the sessions, participants actively engaged in lively question and answer exchanges.

Roland guided the participants through two 20-minute periods of meditation, emphasising the importance of complete silence and the slow, loving repetition of the chosen mantra in the mind. Participants were led to meditate in silence, repeating the four syllables of the Aramaic word *Ma-Ra-Na-Tha* (Come, Lord) to experi-

ence the divine presence of God. Roland reiterated the significance of maintaining a good sitting posture, focusing on the mantra, gently and continuously repeating it, returning to it during moments of distraction, and persevering by dedicating 20 to 30 minutes to meditation each morning and evening.

In the final session, a video presentation showcased the international activities of the WCCM, focusing on the role of Lawrence Freeman, the current director of the community. Roland also shared the initiatives of WCCM in Malaysia, expressing hope that the gift of meditation is shared with others nationwide.

The participants found the workshop to be uplifting and en-

lightening, even within the short span of a single day. Participant Chris Chin reflected, "I learned that meditation complements prayers, providing an opportunity to empty myself so God can work within me. It showed me it is possible to transcend everything and connect directly with the Spirit of God."

Attendee Christine Ho shared her transformative experience stating, "It was an eye-opener and gave me a glimpse of how to surrender myself like a child to my Creator, my Father, my God!"

The workshop provided an opportunity for the participants to experience the healing and transforming power of divine love and the presence of God within their hearts through silent meditation. By letting go of distracting thoughts and mental images, and embracing the meditative act of repeating the soul-touching mantra *MA-RA-NA-THA* syllable by syllable, participants were able to immerse themselves in the profound practice of the John Main Tradition. The workshop catalysed personal growth and spiritual enrichment, leaving participants with a deeper understanding of the Christian tradition of meditation and a renewed connection with their faith.



Fr David Reegon OFM Cap giving a preview on the Book of Exodus.

## Exploring the Exodus

CHERAS: Fr David Reegon, OFM Cap, gave a preview on the *Book of Exodus* at the Church of St Francis of Assisi on May 12.

There were 148 participants from different parishes who came for the introduction before the programme begins at the end of May.

The session commenced at 8.00pm with Praise and Adoration led by Fr Valentine Gompok OFM, Cap. Parish priest Fr Paul Cheong OFM Cap then gave an exaltation on the Word of God.

The participants were captivated by two engaging sessions that explored the Exodus story through video clips and group reflections. The journey began with a glimpse into the past, starting from Genesis.

Using the 10 keys, Fr David unlocked the Israelites' bondage and oppression under the Egyptians.

The focus then shifted to the present, exploring the seven keys to redemption. Through this session, the participants witnessed the undeniable hand of God in the deliverance of His people, emphasising the power and presence of God in their liberation. Looking toward the future, the session explored the call of Moses by God to lead the Exodus of His people. Despite Moses initially resisting God's call, giving excuse after excuse, it became evident that no one can escape God's purpose and call.

The participants were left with a deeper appreciation of the Exo-

dus story and its relevance in their lives, recognising God's unfailing love, power, and faithfulness throughout the past, present, and future.

Fr David provided a glimpse into the *Book of Exodus* during the talk. However, those eager to delve deeper into the subject were invited to attend the upcoming Five Exodus Studies at the SFA parish.

These in-depth sessions will be held from May 26 to June 23, from 8.00pm to 10.00pm. Fr David promises to unveil more profound insights and teachings from the *Book of Exodus* during these extended study sessions, offering a richer understanding of its significance. — By Vincent Liew

## Building ecumenical bridges

PETALING JAYA: The Archdiocese Ministry of Ecumenism and Interreligious Affairs (AMEIA) hosted an ecumenical event at the Church of St Francis Xavier on May 6.

The gathering comprised Christian Church leaders and the Parish Ministry of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (PMEIA) core group members from various Catholic churches in the KL Archdiocese. The worldwide Christian Unity theme, *Do Good; Seek Justice* (Micah 6:8) was adopted for

the event.

The morning was divided into two parts, an ecumenical Liturgy and a Forum based on the theme. The speakers at the forum, moderated by Pastor Sean Prasad, were Archbishop Julian Leow (Catholic Church), Rev Bishop Steven Lawrence (Zion Cathedral), Rev Dr Vijendran Daniel (St Paul's Anglican Church), and Rev K.S. Mathew (Mar Thoma Syrian Church).

Each speaker spoke on different aspects of the theme like Econ-

omy, Social, Environment and Governance. An active discussion followed between participants and speakers on the topics presented.

The clergy jointly blessed the participants before breaking up for group photographs and lunch.

"Every year AMEIA hosts an Ecumenical and Inter-Faith event in its commitment to build bridges and fraternity among Malaysians of all religions," remarked Fr Xavier Andrew, Ecclesiastical Advisor of AMEIA. — By Angeline Lesslar



The ecumenical participants at the forum.



# Long house villagers attend *Laudato Si'* workshop

MIRI: The Miri Diocese Creation Justice Commission (CJC) team, headed by Fr Joseph Ding, conducted a *Laudato Si'* Creation Justice Workshop at the longhouse village of Long Jegan at the Lapok Parish from April 21 to 23. The villagers warmly welcomed and generously accommodated Fr Joseph and his team during their stay.

Long Jegan village is located around a three-hour drive from Miri, and reaching it requires navigating through an unpaved timber track road that is accessible only by four-wheel drive vehicles. The village doesn't have access to electricity or water supply from the grid. Instead, the villagers rely on their own resources and ingenuity to

provide power through diesel-fueled generators and solar panels, while rainwater from the nearby mountains serves as their water supply.

The workshop received a positive response from the village community, with over 80 participants, ranging from school students to *warga emas* (senior citizens), registering for the weekend event. Conducted in Bahasa Malaysia, the workshop effectively conveyed Pope Francis' message in *Laudato Si'* to the attendees. Notable figures such as Penghulu Patrick, who heads the local area encompassing various villages, and Ketua Kampong Dennis, who leads the Long Jegan village, also attended the work-



The villagers learning about compost.



One of the activities during the workshop.

shop with their respective communities.

In his closing speech, Penghulu Patrick expressed gratitude to Fr Joseph and the Miri CJC team for bringing the workshop to Long Jegan village and spreading Pope Francis' message of caring for our common home. He emphasised his joy in discovering that the Catholic faith aligns with the village's longstanding traditions of respecting and protecting nature for the benefit of future generations.

It wrapped up after Sunday lunch with a demonstration and lesson on Home Composting by the CJC team. In closing, a team of volunteers signed up to form a Creation Justice Ministry in their village to implement the Framework for Action Plan decided at the workshop.

*Laudato Si' mi Signore!* – Praise Be to You, My Lord! — *By the Episcopal Commission for Creation Justice, Diocese of Miri*

## Celebrating the gift of mothers

PARIT BUNTAR: A mother's love is unconditional, unbreakable, and forever. A mother's arms are more comforting than anyone else's. A mother's influence on her children's lives is beyond calculation. And Mother is the most beautiful word on the lips of mankind.

In commemoration and appreciation of the sacrifices mothers make, the Church of Our Lady of Good Health (OLOGH) celebrated mothers the world over on May 14. Holy Mass was presided over by parish priest, Fr. Martin Arlando, and assisted by Fr. Raymond Raj Jeremiah from the Minor Basilica of St. Anne, Bukit Mertajam.

During his homily, Fr Martin spoke on the

love mankind should possess and show towards each other for the growth of Christian life.

Like Mother Mary, a mother is one of God's greatest gifts to us. In conjunction with the day, the parishioners carried out several activities including playing games, singing songs, and fellowship at the BEC level. This was so people could experience the church and the world around them by showing Christ's love through actions and not words alone.

Fr Martin took time out to join and participate with the different BECs. — *By S.N. Sebastian*



Mothers feted at the Church of Our Lady of Good Health, Parit Buntar.

## Free medical screening for mums



The mothers at the various booths for the health screening.

KUALA LUMPUR: The Women's Ministry of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in collaboration with the National Cancer Society of Malaysia, organised a free medical screening especially for mothers.

This was in conjunction with Mother's Day celebrations on May 14.

The free screening included general

health screening, cancer markers, female health screening, self-cancer detection and mammogram.

The medical screening session which was held at the church hall from 8.00am till 12 noon benefitted 103 participants.

Participants were given free rock melon sponsored by the Parish Integral Human Development Ministry. — *SHC*

## Gathering for Visitation seniors

SEREMBAN: The Visitation Senior Parishioners Fellowship (VSPF) organised a Mother's Day gathering on May 14.

It began with a Marian hymn, followed by a decade of the Rosary. This was followed by the VSPF Rally Song and line dance.

Each mother also received a bookmark for Mother's Day.

Parish priest, Fr Xavier Andrew, was present to make it a special day for all. Members took turns to chat with Fr Xavier and snap a photo or two with him. It was a relaxed and happy afternoon.

Some members settled down to board games. Others just chitchatted with each



other. Some joined the musicians in singing their favourite songs.

Fr Xavier then presented the lucky draw winner.

At 6.00pm, the *Angelus* was prayed with Fr Xavier.

The fellowship came to a close at 6.30pm. The VSPF exco and members thank Fr

Xavier for spending time with the senior parishioners of Visitation Church on this beautiful Mother's Day! — *Visitation Church Media Team*



# Media practitioners reflect on Pope's message

By Linda Edward

KOTA KINABALU: Eighty-two media practitioners from Parish Social Communication Committees (SOCCOM) of the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu gathered for a half-day reflection session recently.

This was in preparation to celebrate the 57th World Communications Day (WCD), May 21, in Sacred Heart Cathedral.

The reflection focused on the theme of Pope Francis' message for WCD 2023 *Speaking with the heart: The truth in love* (Eph 4:15).

The Archdiocesan SOCCOM Commission facilitated the session with 24 points of reflection summarised from the full message, in both English and Bahasa Malaysia.

This was the first gathering for the Soccom members. Rueben Sario, Head of the Commission said the programme was a wonderful opportunity for the members to get to know each other.

"This is a multi-purpose event, primarily an opportunity for us to discern and discuss the Pope's World Communications Day's message and share it at our respective parishes. In addition, it is an opportunity for us to share about the role and functions of Soccom."

"This is the first step in fostering a close



Media practitioners of the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu.

working relationship among ourselves and help each other in our mission of helping to communicate our Lord's Word and love, said Sario.

To deepen the reflection, members were assigned into small groups and each produced a short sketch and explanation on social communication topics. The assignments brought out fruits of reflection in creative ways among the members.

Fr Thomas Madanan, Spiritual Advisor of the Commission, in his short address, said Soccom exists to evangelise and it is a mandate given to the members by the Church. He also emphasised on the role of St Joseph, Patron Saint of the Universal Church and a role model of a leader to give guidance to members of the Archdiocesan Soccom family as they work out the evangelisation mission.

The Commission has produced a simple

booklet called 'Celebrating St Joseph'.

For the main WCD celebration May 21, each Parish Soccom was asked to produce their own Parish Soccom logo and a WCD poster based on the theme and message, to be presented during the offertory at Mass, and thereafter during the celebration in the Sacred Heart parish complex.

Archbishop John Wong presided over the Mass in Bahasa Malaysia at 11.00am.

## Communication is life

KUALA LUMPUR: The Media Ministry of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus recently organised a formation — *The Gift of Communication*.

Parish priest, Msgr Stanislaus Soosaimariam, gave the opening session on communication relating to God.

"The purpose of communication is to give life. Communication is life. The movie *ET* shows how humans and aliens communicate and build a relationship."

As in the beginning of creation, God reached out to touch Adam. Communication at the service of life.

Life comes from the family, begins from the family. The purpose of communications is to transform our earthly families into holy families.

What makes the holy family holy? It is living in communion. Communication is the means to help enhance this.

The family communion was disrupted by industrialisation.

Secularisation and materialism have become distractions and family life is neglected. Many now are more concerned with material things.

Industrialisation and modernisation have



created 'necessities' for the families who now spend less time together, becoming disunited in the need for higher incomes to afford these 'necessities'.

We live in a modern society. Technology and media can bring our families together, and can also disrupt and isolate them.

The main purpose of communication is to bring life. Now, it is also part of a culture of death.

We need to use all the means provided to be lifegiving and allow our families to be holy again.

This was followed by an interesting session led by Dr Melissa Shamini Perry who elaborated Gary Chapman's *Five Love Lan-*



Dr Melissa Shamini giving a session to the media ministry members.

guages.

She explained that people express and receive love in five different ways, called love languages. They are: quality time, words of affirmation, gifts, acts of service, and physical touch.

She then conducted a Q & A with the participants to discover their ways of expressing the love languages.

The main highlight of this session was to be aware of the need to discover and understand each other's expression of love and not to force our own understanding on them.

She also highlighted how Jesus expressed

all the five love languages in His life. Some examples were: the time spent with His disciples, Words of affirmation, courage given to the vulnerable, Gifts, the gift of Holy Communion, acts of service and physical touch, washing of the feet,

The formation ended with a sharing cum presentation by the Media ministry's leader on the ministry and the role of the ministry.

There was also a quiz to encourage the participants to get involved. The formation ended with a lunch fellowship.

This formation was initiated from the feedback received at the 2022 Parish Pastoral Assembly. — **SHC**

## OLF celebrates parish feast day

KUALA LUMPUR: The Church of Our Lady of Fatima (OLF) celebrated her feast day from May 5 to 13. Rosary, Novena and Mass were held daily throughout the nine-day period.

The Novena was well attended by the faithful from OLF and pilgrims from other parishes. The Masses were celebrated by visiting priests from the archdiocese, who all expounded on the message of Fatima and the importance of our Blessed Mother in the life of the church and the faithful.

The Novena concluded on the May 13 with a candle-light procession around the Brickfields area.

Archbishop Julian Leow presided over

the event while OLF parish priest, Fr William Michael, priest-in-residence, Fr Andrew Manickam OFM Cap and Fr Robert Francois-Xavier were the concelebrants. It is estimated that more than 1,000 faithful participated.

A special Fatima prayer room was set up for the faithful to spend quiet time in prayer throughout the period. The prayer room also housed a mini-exhibition that highlighted the events and message of Fatima, which although it happened 106 years ago, still holds relevance for us today. To further commemorate the event, a special Marian booklet was prepared to guide the faithful in their spiritual journey.

The feast day celebrations also marked the



From left: Fr Andrew Manickam OFM Cap, Archbishop Julian Leow, Fr William Michael and Fr Robert Francois-Xavier.

culmination of the OLF Diamond Jubilee celebrations (1963 – 2023). To celebrate 60 years of God's blessings, a bi-lingual community Mass was held on May 14. The event, attended by 700 faithful, concluded with lunch and fellowship.

The parish of OLF would like to thank the faithful for joining in the Novena; and wish, that we continue as a community of the faithful (as per the theme of the OLF Diamond Jubilee), to always 'Journey with Our Blessed Mother to Her Son.'



# Nuns to foster dialogue between Japan, S. Korea

SEOUL: Catholic nuns from South Korea and Japan joined a regional meeting in Seoul where they decided to promote and work towards a “culture of listening, dialogue, discernment, care, and peace” in both nations.

The nuns made the decision during the Korea-Japan General Assembly of the International Union of Superiors General held at the National Reconciliation Centre in Paju near Seoul from May 9 to 14.

The heads of 18 female religious orders in Korea and 10 religious orders in Japan attended the conference with the theme *Embracing Vulnerability on the Synodal Journey*.

During the concluding Mass, Bishop Peter Lee Ki-heon of Uijeongbu Diocese said that he believes the decision of the nuns can help resolve various regional issues between both nations.

“It is very meaningful for superiors from Korea and Japan

to meet and share roles at a time when security risks in Asia, including Northeast Asia, are escalating and environmental crises are accelerating,” Lee said.

He further added that “the longer we endure each other, the bigger the fruit will be, so I think the meeting of Korean and Japanese women religious superiors will also achieve great fruit in the future.”

The prelate was pointing out the motto of the union which has 1,903 Superiors General worldwide organised within 36 regional constellations. Asia has 184 member congregations.

The union aims to “create ways for women religious to be in dialogue with one another, with the Church authorities and with global organisations.”

The union traces its informal beginnings to an extraordinary meeting held under the patronage of Pope Pius XII in 1951. The

organisation that subsequently emerged was officially approved by the Vatican Council on its final day, Dec 8, 1965.

The recently concluded meeting was a continuation of discussions on the topics taken up in the 22nd General Assembly of the union held in Rome last May.

The nuns also discussed ways to embrace vulnerability in the world and within the congregation and passed a resolution “to embrace the vulnerability of the world.” The details of the resolution are unavailable.

One of the participants pointed out that the meetings helped the delegates understand each other better.

“Through this time, the positive minds of the Japanese confreres and the apology and reconciliation for historical events softened the hearts that were struggling with Korea-Japan relations,” she said.

The delegates also conducted an



Korean and Japanese nuns pray during their May 9-13 meeting in Seoul. (UCA News Photo/Catholic Times)

ecological pilgrimage to Odusan Observatory, Seosomun Shrine, Dora Observatory, Inter-Korean Immigration Office, and Dorasan Station as part of the meeting.

The meeting also decided to actively participate in the *Laudato*

*Si*’ seven-year journey and promised to actively participate in its implementation in their respective territories.

The nuns also decided to pray every day for peace in Korea and Japan. — [ucanews.com](http://ucanews.com)

## Church in strife-torn Indian state appeals for peace, help

NEW DELHI: The Catholic Church in the violence-hit Manipur state in northeastern India has appealed for help as more than 45,000 people continue to live in cramped relief camps.

Archbishop Dominic Lumpon of Imphal Archdiocese said those in camps are in need of food and clothing, among other basic things, and sought people’s support for them.

Lumpon’s May 14 message said he was “pained, saddened and most of all concerned” by the situation of the people’s suffering.

The ethnic violence that began on May 3 killed some 60 people amid looting and burning of houses and the destruction of places of worship that has left thousands of people displaced, languishing in military bar-

racks and relief camps.

“There is fear, uncertainty and a general sense of hopelessness and desperation,” Lumpon said.

He also stressed the need for helping the people who have lost their houses and income sources to rebuild their lives as “many have no place to go.”

The violence reportedly damaged 1,700 houses and some 120 churches and other institutions mostly run by Christians.

Fr Varghese Velikkam, vicar general of the archdiocese based in the state capital Imphal said tension continues in the area. “We do not know what is going to happen next,” he said.

The government said the state is limping back to normalcy with the

administration relaxing curfew and other restrictions.

“But nobody knows how much time it will take to heal the wounds,” Varghese said.

Fr Solomon Thezii, the archdiocesan chancellor, said some 45,000 people live in government shelter camps while villages in the hills also manage camps housing thousands.

“Many in the relief camps and those who fled to neighbouring states are clueless about their future as their houses are burnt down and sources of income destroyed,” said Thezii.

Church leaders said it is still not possible for their fellow priests and nuns from the indigenous Kuki community to venture out as they face threats from the Meiteis.

The ethnic violence was between

the state’s majority Meitei people and Kuki indigenous people. Most Kuki people are Christians, while most Meiteis are Hindus, though a few of them are Christians too.

Meiteis make up 53 per cent of Manipur’s 3.2 million people and 40 of the 60 legislators in the state assembly belong to the community. They are also better off socially and economically than the indigenous tribes.

The violence began when Kuki people opposed a proposal to list Meitei people as a Scheduled Tribe (ST). The listing will help Meitei people to get various government welfare benefits meant for uplifting the socially and economically poor and backward tribal people. — [ucanews.com](http://ucanews.com)

## Caritas Asia re-elects president for a second four-year term



Dr Benedict Alo D’Rozario

ROME: Caritas Asia, one of seven regional offices of the Catholic Church’s humanitarian agency Caritas Internationalis, reelected Bangladeshi Dr Benedict Alo D’Rozario as its president.

His reelection came May 10, during the Caritas Regional Assembly in Rome, a day before the 22nd General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis.

He will serve for a second, and last, term of another four years.

D’Rozario was first elected to the post in 2019, making him the first lay person to fill the role, succeeding Archbishop Tarcisio Isao Kikuchi of Tokyo.

Caritas Asia, composed of 24 regional offices, is part of Caritas Internationalis, which coordinates more than 160 Catholic charities in about 200 countries and territories.

D’Rozario, 66, served in Caritas Bangladesh for 29 years. He retired in 2016 after serving as the agency’s executive director for 11 years. — [LiCAS News](http://LiCAS News)

## Indonesian Catholic minister detained for graft

JAKARTA: Indonesian authorities have detained the only Catholic minister in the current cabinet after he was named a suspect in a multi-million-dollar corruption case involving the construction of communication infrastructure in remote areas, including in Christian-majority provinces.

Johnny Gerard Plate, the Minister of Communication and Informatics was detained by the Attorney General’s Office on May 17.

“There is sufficient evidence that he is suspected of being involved in the criminal act of corruption in the construction of the Base Transceiver Station [BTS] 4G project,” said Kuntadi, director of investigations at the Attorney General’s Office, who only goes by one name.

He said Plate became a suspect in relation to his position as minister and holder of power of attorney for utilising the budget provision for the



John Gerard Plate

project.

He is the fifth suspect in the case involving the project implemented under his ministry in the 2020-2022 fiscal year.

According to the state-run Development and Finance Supervisory Agency, the state lost more than eight trillion rupiah (RM2.4 trillion) for the activities of compiling studies supporting the project, price mark-ups for various equipment, and payments

for BTS towers that have not yet been built.

The project was supposed to target 7,904 blank points or areas not having an internet network, to achieve equal distribution of internet access, especially in disadvantaged areas, such as in Christian-majority provinces of East Nusa Tenggara and Papua.

However, the project was deemed redundant as many towers were not functioning.

Eky Adsen, a teacher at an elementary school in Deruk, East Manggarai Regency of East Nusa Tenggara province, said that the telephone and internet network has been “completely paralysed” since the new network was set up in the village.

“We can’t access the internet, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Youtube. We can’t even make regular telephone calls,” he said.

The network “only consumes the state budget [because] it cannot be utilised,” he added.

Plate, who is also secretary general of the Democratic National Party, had studied at the Ruteng Diocese-run Pius XII Minor Seminary in Catholic-majority Flores Island.

The businessman-turned-politician is known for making donations to the Church.

He was the chairman of the 2020 National Christmas Celebration Committee and is on the advisory board of the Vox Populi Institute, a Catholic lay organization.

In February 2022, during his visit to Kupang, the capital of East Nusa Tenggara Province, he personally donated 1.5 billion rupiah (RM458k) to the Kupang Archdiocese and Society of Divine Word-run Widya Mandira Catholic University. — [ucanews.com](http://ucanews.com)



# Priests in France to use upgraded clergy ID

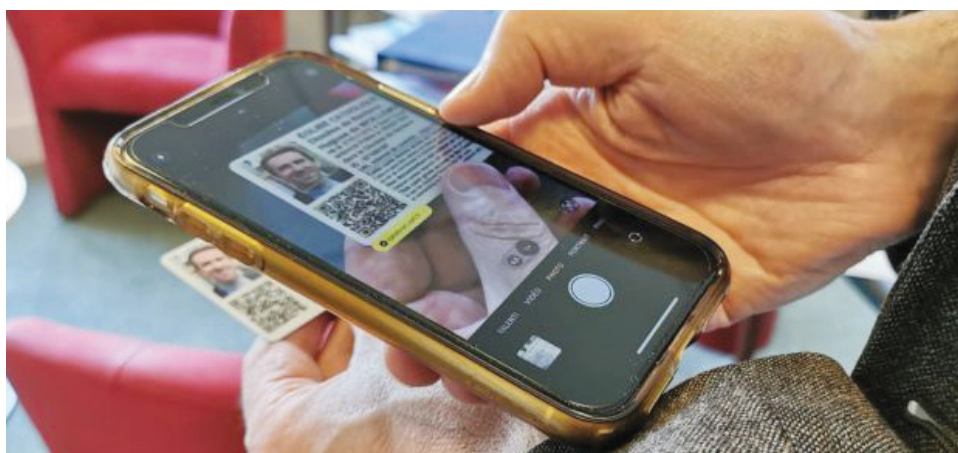
PARIS: Catholic clergy in France will soon carry a standardised identification card linked to a national database that shows whether they are currently in good standing and can celebrate Mass and hear confessions.

"It aims to prevent impostors [false priests or deacons] from continuing to act to the detriment of the faithful and the sacraments," the Conference of French Bishops' website said May 5. It noted that current paper documents can be faked.

Clergy have always carried a document showing they are approved to celebrate Mass, called a *celebret*. The document, issued by a bishop or a religious superior, is valid for one year. It shows a priest is authorised to celebrate Mass and to hear confessions. The French Catholic Bishops' website compared the card to a press credential for journalists or an identity card for legal professionals.

France's Catholic bishops first approved the updated clergy identification card at their November 2021 plenary assembly. The bishops made the change to help standardise documents between dioceses and religious communities and to provide real-time updates on authorisations and restrictions.

The French Bishops' Conference, in a May 10 announcement, described the change as part of a large set of measures "intended to continue and intensify the fight against sexual violence within the Church" following the October 2021 report of the Independent



The "celebret" card of the French priests will now include a QR code. (Aleteia photo)

Commission on Sex Abuse in the Church.

That report, however, did not make recommendations regarding identity cards. The French bishops' press kit about the card also does not mention abuse prevention explicitly.

All bishops and priests are affected by the new ID cards, as are permanent deacons. Both French-based clergy and those who are living in France as part of their religious mission, must have an identification card.

Clergy credentials are to be verified by those who supervise a religious event or gathering, including pilgrimages or Masses.

"If the ordained minister refuses to present his card, he will not be able to celebrate," the French bishops' website said.

The system is operational for French bishops who received their cards at their March plenary assembly. Data collection is underway for 13,000 priests and 3,000 deacons. Identification cards will be issued when the process is complete.

The new *celebret* document includes a QR code linked to a secure national directory. The national database may be accessed by using a phone to scan the QR Code on the identification card or by entering the clergyman's name and personal ID number on the relevant website.

Bishop Alexandre Joly of Troyes, vice-president of the Bishops' Conference of France, explained at a May 10 press conference that

when the card's QR code is scanned, the app will show a green, yellow, or orange colour based on the priest's authorisations.

This is a nonspecific indication of whether or not the ordained minister has specific restrictions on his ministry. Out of concern for privacy, the user must enter the clergyman's four-digit confidentiality code to display the specific details.

Authorisations or restrictions can apply to public celebration of the Eucharist, preaching, baptisms, confessions, one-on-one pastoral counselling, wedding preparation and celebration, and ability to preside at a funeral.

A lack of authorisation is not necessarily due to a flaw on the clergyman's part. Newly ordained priests are not immediately approved to hear confessions pending further training, *France24 News* reported.

The superiors of clergy, can at times, bar them from making media appearances, so the identification card will show whether the clergyman is approved to participate in programmes broadcast by radio, television, or the internet.

Dioceses are responsible for updating the information for their priests, while religious superiors are responsible for updating the information for religious clergy. Information will be updated once a year, but immediately for cases of serious misconduct, Joly said. —

By Kevin J. Jones, CNA

## Monument to life installed at Catholic University



"Advent: The National Life Monument," a larger-than-life bronze statue by Canadian Catholic artist Timothy Paul Schmalz, depicts the Blessed Virgin Mary pregnant with an unborn baby Jesus. (CNA photo/Peter Pinedo)

WASHINGTON: The new "National Life Monument," a larger-than-life bronze sculpture depicting the Blessed Virgin Mary pregnant with the Christ Child, was unveiled and dedicated on the campus of The Catholic University of America's Theological College in Washington recently.

According to the Canadian artist Timothy Paul Schmalz, the statue, titled *Advent*, is meant to be a symbol of beauty, a celebration of new life, and a bold pro-life statement in the nation's capital.

Schmalz was present at the dedication ceremony along with the archbishop of Washington, Cardinal Wilton Gregory, and Canadian Cardinal Marc Ouellet. Gregory prayed over the monument, giving a special blessing to the statue and those present for the dedication.

Gregory praised the monument, saying, "Advent, as a pregnant Madonna, transcends bronze, revealing a deeper significance, deeper truths of God and of us, and His love for

each of us, graced as we are in His image and likeness."

The statue is entirely bronze except for the Blessed Virgin's womb, which is made of reflective stainless steel. The Virgin Mother lovingly cradles her womb in which Jesus is depicted as an unborn baby. Our Lady is portrayed with a serene and peaceful countenance as she holds the Christ Child in her womb. The steel, which Schmalz describes as a "mystical material," forms a type of halo around the unborn Christ Child.

"The hope with this sculpture is bringing a permanent, physical symbol that says 'yes' to life, that says life is great," said Schmalz. "To have it here in the nation's capital is making a powerful statement. It's saying that we have to celebrate all human life, and all human life is splendid and wonderful, and it's mystical."

Crafting a pro-life sculpture was something like solving a riddle, Schmalz said. For years he pondered how to create something

that would send a bold pro-life message that wasn't just "about the horror of abortion."

"The idea is very difficult within a culture we're in that, as Pope John Paul II said, is a culture of death," Schmalz said. "So, to put a sculpture called life in the centre of Washington, is in a sense a peaceful weapon to persuade."

By placing the monument in a high-traffic, public setting in Washington, Schmalz hopes his statue will not just "preach to the choir" but also touch the hearts of nonbelievers and even those who may be abortion supporters.

"Ideally, I'll have people coming across here that might be ambiguous about their ideas of abortion, but they will come take a look at this and they will say, 'You know, I have to say, that sculpture is beautiful,' and if they're saying the sculpture is beautiful, what it's expressing is also beautiful," Schmalz said. "If it touches one person, I think it's done its job."

— By Peter Pinedo, CNA

## Thousands participate in inter-diocesan youth day

GUINEA-BISSAU: The city of Bula, north of Guinea-Bissau, recently hosted young people from across the country's two dioceses for three day of youth activities.

Gathering under the World Youth Day theme, *Mary arose and went with haste*, the Inter-diocesan Catholic Youth Day initiative is always held in the year of the World Youth Day.

For three days, about 7 000 young people from the two dioceses of the country, Bissau and Bafatá, engaged in various activities ranging from Adoration, confessions, catechesis, peace march, concerts, and the celebration of the Eucharist.

The official closing Mass of the gathering was presided over by the Diocesan Admin-

istrator of the Diocese of Bafatá, Fr Lucio Brenegani, who, during his homily, insisted that young people should rise to the occasion and assume their various responsibilities, especially in fighting the evils that affect the Guinean society, specifically corruption.

Reflecting on the three days, Fr Lucio highlighted the importance of the three days in the lives of the young people of Guinea-Bissau.

"It was an exciting meeting for young people. The youth demonstrated once again that they are ready to be a living force within the Catholic Church," said the Diocesan Administrator. He added that the presence of so many priests and religious sisters was also an important testimony for the young people. —

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# ChatGPT is not 'artificial intelligence' — it's theft!

Over the last year, we have seen an explosion of so-called AI-produced material. First it was wild and incredible works of art, then text documents of every kind, from homilies to academic essays. One of the issues in the current Writers Guild strike is whether studios and networks should be allowed to use programmes like ChatGPT to create outlines or full-length scripts, which writers then would simply rewrite or polish.

We have labelled the programmes that do this work “artificial intelligence.” And on the surface, the reality of that concept has never seemed more persuasive. These programmes generate complete and seemingly original works in an instant. They can also communicate with a person in a way that resembles actual conversation.

But in fact, for the time being anyway, these programmes are not sentient but just a very complex form of the kind of predictive text bot you find using Gmail or Google docs. ChatGPT-3, for instance, was trained on, and is informed by, 500 billion “tokens” — words or phrases culled from books, articles and the internet through which it interprets and responds to the prompts given to it. (You’ll also hear this referred to as “large language model” machine learning.) Where Google docs might suggest the rest of a phrase when you start typing the first word, ChatGPT has so much data at its disposal it can suggest a whole paragraph or essay. And it continues to learn and develop from the data that we enter and the responses that they get.

Now, you might say, why make a big fuss about what we call this? No one is claiming that ChatGPT is C-3PO or that we are approaching the singularity. Chill



out.

But in calling these programmes “artificial intelligence”, we grant them a claim to authorship that is simply untrue. Each of those tokens used by programmes like ChatGPT — the “language” in their “large language model” — represents a tiny, tiny piece of material that someone else created. And those authors are not credited for it, paid for it or asked permission for its use. In a sense, these machine-learning bots are actually the most advanced form of a chop shop: They steal material from creators (that is, they use it without permission), cut that material into parts so small that no one can trace them and then repurpose them to form new products.

It is important to remember these pro-

gramme algorithms are predictive — that is, they’re meant to think about their tokens in relationship to each other. It makes sense that, having been given a thousand tokens from a great writer like Toni Morrison or Stephen King, bots like this would be able to either reproduce or repurpose those authors’ voices, ways of thinking and turns of phrase.

And once again, this has all been done without anyone ever having obtained those writers’ permission to allow their work to help inform the programme’s output. A number of such art-based programmes are currently facing lawsuits over claims that their databases of billions of copyrighted images, which are then “diffused” to create new images, constitute copyright infringement.

ment. (There’s also a case currently before the Supreme Court considering when the use of another artist’s material becomes transformative instead of theft.)

In a way, ChatGPT and its ilk are the highest form of separating labourers from the fruit of their labour. We get an answer or piece of art from a predictive text bot and the original articles and ideas from which they were generated are so far removed that even those creators themselves don’t realise they have been stolen. In fact, they themselves might join those who think that argument is absurd. Which is kind of like admiring somebody’s souped-up hot rod when a tiny part of its hood (or engine design) was stolen from your car.

Back in the day, programmes like Napster had everyone believing that we shouldn’t have to pay for music. If I own something, why shouldn’t I be able to share it with whoever I want? Even today, it remains hard to convince some that there’s anything wrong with illegally downloading the latest music from Lizzo or a bootleg of “Guardians of the Galaxy 3.” Those same people will insist without irony that they are those artists’ biggest fans.

The same is already true with these predictive algorithms. We are so enthralled by what they can do, or the social goods they seem poised to offer, we don’t want to examine where all of this material is actually coming from. Rather than pointing to some future utopia (or robots vs. human dystopia), what we face in dealing with programmes like ChatGPT is the further relentless corrosiveness of late-stage capitalism, in which authorship is of no value. All that matters is content. — **By Jim McDermott, SJ, America**

## The dangers of Artificial Intelligence

In the beginning of May 2023, Geoffrey Hinton, often portrayed as the godfather of artificial intelligence (AI), quit his job and warned about the growing development in that technology. His pioneering work and research on neural networks and deep learning paved the way for the current systems such as ChatGPT. In artificial intelligence, neural networks are systems that are like those found in the human brain, both in the way they learn and process information. This allows AI to learn from experience in the

same way as a human being would. This is called deep learning.

In 2021, I wrote a book, *Robots, Ethics, and the Future of Jobs*. And I pointed out how powerful AI was in 2017. It recognises patterns and finds relationships in data that are so complex that no individual human being or group of human beings would be able to see these connections. In January 2017, *Libratus*, an AI programme designed to play poker, was entered in a 20-day-long tournament against four of the best poker

players in the world. *Libratus* won. The algorithms that powered *Libratus* were designed to have applications beyond playing cards.

As I point out in the book, AI is being used in agriculture, finance, banking, insurance, healthcare, education, policing, retail, construction trade, military strategies and in the care of young people and the elderly. Many teachers are aware that some students are using AI to write their term papers and thesis.

In his book, *Why the Future is Workless*, Tim Dunlop predicts that these technologies will replace people in the workforce, and lead to significant levels of unemployment and impoverishment for many people. Geoffrey Hinton believes these technologies can do wonderful things, but he is also aware that there is need for regulation. According to him, it is essential that the world invests urgently in AI safety control. He is not the only one calling for regulations. In March 2023, an open letter co-signed by many people in the AI field — including the tech billionaire Elon Musk — called for a pause on all developments more advanced than the current version of the AI chatbot. In the current world this would not be an easy thing to achieve. Even if everybody in the United States stopped

working to improve AI, China and India could develop their tech industry during this time.

Many people believe that these new technologies will push many people back into the situation which prevailed during the early part of the 19th century when there were no jobs available for people. Those formulating regulations must include, not just people who understand AI technologies, but sociologists and philosophers.

The reason that there has been no regulations to date is that large tech corporations have huge influence on politicians in many countries across the globe. Politicians must challenge the giant companies on several issues, especially workers’ rights and users’ rights.

Many of these corporations are monopolies that should be broken up. Scientists for Global Responsibility, a campaigning group comprising of scientists and engineers, surveyed its 750 members about the effects that AI would have on their future. Almost all their members felt that AI would entrench and deepen inequality in society, as more and more power and benefits would flow to the large digital corporations rather than to the ordinary citizen.

The *Irish Times* journalist Karlin Lillington asks, “how much longer do we allow such monolithic speech orbiters — which they unquestionably are — to operate without limitation or responsibility?” — **By Fr Sean McDonagh, ICN**





# Is Cardinal Tagle's star waning?

On May 13, the Church's largest charitable entity, Caritas International, elected Japanese Archbishop Tarcisius Isao Kikuchi of Tokyo as its new president, a role held until now by Filipino Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, once widely seen as a top contender for the papacy.

The former archbishop of Manila, Tagle's star began to rise with Pope Francis' visit to Sri Lanka and the Philippines in 2015. He was seen as sharp, organised, highly popular and incredibly charismatic, with a knack for reaching the multitudes and drawing people in from the peripheries.

The Pope's closing Mass in Manila during that trip is still on record as among the best attended papal liturgies recorded, with an estimated 6-7 million people present.

Tagle also shares many of Pope Francis' pastoral priorities, from attention to the poor, his missionary drive, and his insistence on the need to be more welcoming of those who don't fit the Catholic ideal, especially LGBTQ individuals and those who are divorced and remarried.

In the wake of the 2015 papal trip, Tagle was dubbed "the Asian Pope Francis" and was seen as a frontrunner among the papabile, meaning those with the best odds of being elected pope.

His profile was further boosted when, in May 2015, just a few months after the Pope's trip to the Philippines, he was named president of Caritas International, the world's second-largest charitable organisation,

behind Red Cross International. Tagle was re-elected to the position in 2019.

He was given a red hat by Pope Francis in 2013 and was named as a delegate to the 2018 Synod of Bishops on Young People. Francis brought him to Rome in 2019 to lead the Vatican's Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples in the midst of his revamp of the Roman Curia.

Tagle has also enjoyed wildly successful TV and internet broadcasts, making him a Catholic rockstar throughout much of Asia during his time in Manila.

The broad consensus is that he is a kind man and pastor who is deeply committed to his people and to implementing the Francis agenda, although some of his fellow prelates have quietly raised questions over the years about his political and managerial effectiveness.

Last November, Pope Francis, in a surprising display of papal authority, fired Caritas International's entire leadership team, including Tagle; its secretary general, a Frenchman of Indian descent named Aloysius John; and the organisation's vice presidents, its treasurer and its ecclesiastical assistant.

The Nov 22 announcement was accompanied by a lengthy statement from the Vatican's Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development, which oversees the Caritas confederation, which said the decision had been made as the result of an external investigation.



Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle

While finding no evidence of sexual or financial impropriety, the dicastery's prefect, Canadian Jesuit Cardinal Michael Czerny, in the statement identified "real deficiencies" in management that had seriously affected "team spirit and staff morale."

Francis named an interim administrator to draft new statutes and to run Caritas until its spring general assembly, which is taking place this week in Rome, and during which new leadership was elected. Tagle was tasked with staying on as liaison with Caritas until the temporary administration was over.

Much of the blame for Caritas's internal woes fell on John, whose brief 2019-2022 tenure has been described as problematic, with staff complaining they had been routinely harassed and bullied.

An internal investigation was carried out by the Caritas board after complaints began in 2021, however, no action was taken until Czerny's department stepped in last year to conduct their own external investigation, resulting in the firing of the leadership team.

In the wake of the decision, many were disappointed to hear that Tagle had been aware of John's mistreatment, but had failed to take appropriate action, leading to questions about his administrative abilities.

He also fell under scrutiny in the wake of a 2019 CNN report on the case of Belgian Salesian priest Fr Luk Delft, who once served as director of the Caritas office in Central African Republic but who, in 2012, was charged with child sexual abuse and the possession of child pornography.

At the time, an internal Caritas investigation was conducted which found that Tagle and other leaders had been made aware of Delft's criminal conviction in 2017, a full year before Delft was tapped as director of Caritas Central African Republic, raising further questions about Tagle's oversight.

Some observers lay at least partial blame for the internal difficulties with Tagle, suggesting he took a largely hands-off role during his second term as president.

## New Caritas president has tall order to fill

Caritas's new president, Archbishop Tarcisius Isao Kikuchi of Tokyo, has a tall order to fill, as he is taking over for someone still seen as deeply popular, but whose internal mess he will have to clean up.



Archbishop Tarcisius Isao Kikuchi of Tokyo

### Building New Paths of Fraternity



Kikuchi was elected on May 13 during Caritas's general assembly, May 11-16 in Rome, and has extensive experience within the Caritas organisation and with missionary work. He will serve as president of Caritas for the next four years.

He began working with Caritas in 1995 as a volunteer at a refugee camp in Bukavu, Zaire, now Democratic Republic of Congo. He served as executive director of Caritas Japan from 1994-2004, and as president of Caritas Japan from 2007-2022.

Kikuchi was also president of Caritas Asia from 2011-2019 and was a member of the

Caritas International Executive Committee from 1999-2004, and a member of the Representative Council from 2011-2019, meaning he brings a wealth of experience with him to his new role.

Archbishop of Tokyo since 2017, Kikuchi was sent as a missionary to Ghana immediately after his priestly ordination, where he served in a rural parish for eight years, meaning he also has vast experience with the remote communities Caritas often serves.

In an interview with *Vatican News*, the Vatican's state-run information platform, af-

ter his election, Kikuchi noted that Caritas is one of the world's largest NGOs but insisted that "we are much more than that."

"We are a Catholic Church organisation, and the institute of the service of the Church. So, that means that Caritas is supposed to be a witness of the love of God. What we do is not only provide food or materials or any kind of assistance but rather, we want to be witnesses of the love of God, to show people that this is how God loves all people," he said.

Kikuchi offered a message to Caritas staff and volunteers, saying their primary task is to be "a witness of the love of God" to everyone they meet, whether they are working in administration, or in the field.

Volunteers at the local level represent Caritas in a special way, he said, saying "it is very important for each one of these volunteers to bear the characteristics of Caritas. They are Caritas. Those of us who are in administration, we are not Caritas alone. We, together with all these volunteers, we create Caritas." — **By Elise Ann Allen, *Crux***



Caritas organisations worldwide attended the 22nd General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis in Rome May 11 – 16, 2023. (Fr Dom says facebook)



# Pentecost and the newly initiated neophytes



## REMINISCING CHURCH

Richard Chia

This year it was reported (*HERALD*, April 9, 2023) that 852 Elect were baptised during the Easter Vigil in the three arch/dioceses in Peninsular Malaysia. This is quite a significant drop from the total numbers the Church in Peninsular Malaysia experienced pre-COVID 19 pandemic years, where the total numbers receiving the Sacraments of Initiation (Baptism, Holy Communion and Confirmation) were mostly 1,000 or more.

As these neophytes (as they are called when they are newly baptised) journey in their last leg of their Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), they are now introduced to their new life in the Church. The Period of Instructions which lasted until the First Sunday in Lent, was the period where they were catechised on the teachings of the Church, Bible, sacramental and prayer life of the Church.

Between the Rite of Election on the First Sunday of Lent, where the catechumens were presented to the bishop, until the night of Easter Vigil, the Elect undergo an intensive Period of Enlightenment and Purification. This is the period where the prayer of exorcism is prayed upon the Elect by the priest celebrant in the three Rites of Scrutiny and the church community are urged to pray for them every week. Spiritually, the five weeks of Lent is the time when the evil one will be at its peak do-

ing its best to stop the Elect from making their commitment to God and Jesus Christ. It cannot afford to lose 852 souls and their families to God.

In my 30 years of involvement in RCIA, during the Period of Enlightenment and Purification, strange things suddenly occur among the people involved in RCIA – the Elect, their family members, sponsors, godparents and their families, facilitators, presenters and their families. Elect may suddenly lose their jobs or suffer severe illness. Family members or even the Elect may experience an accident or death may occur. Depression, family arguments, or spouse conflicts may occur. Freak accidents, calamities or disasters may occur. All these I have learned to discern, is certainly the work of the evil one, attempting to prevent the Elect from making a lifelong commitment to accept God and Jesus into their life.

It is absolutely important for all RCIA coordinators, facilitators and helpers to truly understand these spiritual processes at work. That is why spiritual formations, retreats and weekends away are encouraged for all those involved in RCIA, to strengthen their own spirituality and faith, as they lead and guide the Elect through these periods of trials and temptations. The evil one will not only attempt to prevent or stop the Elect from taking their next step, but he may also pull away anyone connected to any of these Elect, if their faith or spirituality is weak. This is one reason why many parishes require the sponsors and godparents for these adult catechumens, or Elect, to also journey together in the RCIA process.

Unlike university or any tertiary education,

the RCIA process does not end on Easter Vigil, after the Elect receive their Sacraments of Initiation. As the name implies, it is INITIATION, not graduation. Meaning, after the joyous night when the Elect receive their three sacraments, after all the congratulations, hand-shaking and celebrations end, the neophytes (as they are rightly called then), BEGIN their new life as Christians living their Catholic faith.

The Period of *Mystagogy* (in Greek, meaning “to lead through the mysteries”). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes *mystagogy* as a “liturgical catechesis that aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ” [CCC 1075], where the neophytes are now introduced to the living faith and practices of the local Church. This period will begin from Easter Sunday and continue throughout the Eastertide season until Pentecost Sunday. Sadly, this is also the period when many parishes report a significant decline in attendance for those adults newly baptised, as they think they have now graduated and need not learn any more.

During this Period of *Mystagogy*, the neophytes are introduced to the practices, services and life of the Church. To KNOW, to LOVE and to SERVE GOD, where the initial process of the RCIA is to know (Period of Instruction), and then to love (Period of Enlightenment and Purification), and now to serve Him (Period of *Mystagogy*).

During the seven weeks of Easter season, the neophytes are introduced to the other members of the Church; namely, the various parish ministries, the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs), taught how to make their first

Confession, and given an overview of the local Church, its history, vision and mission, structure and how the local parish community is integrated with the larger Church hierarchy. In short, this period is like a job orientation period before the neophytes begin their new job. A new “job” it is, as that is what the neophytes or new Catholics are called to be. Their job specification: To know, to love and to serve God.

For some arch/dioceses or parishes in Malaysia, a ceremony called the Rite of Commissioning, held on the Sunday of Pentecost, marks the end of the one-year RCIA process and journey. This “end of journey” is by no means the end, but merely the end of a guided tour into the life of a Christian Catholic. Like most tours, the first tour is too brief and too rushed. We need time to absorb, to understand and to appreciate the various “parts of the itinerary visited”. We may need subsequent tours, but at a more leisurely pace and customised to our individual needs. Likewise, in the RCIA process, a newly baptised neophyte may require follow-up programmes, other faith deepening sessions (e.g. Bible study courses, formation programmes) or participation in Church activities, ministries and groups, to truly absorb and appreciate their learning. To know, to love and to serve God is not a one-off process, but a lifelong journey, until we meet Him face-to-face.

*Richard Chia has been actively involved in Church since young. He held full-time corporate jobs while serving in ministries and groups at various church levels for the past four decades.*

## Persecution not a deterrent to Catholicism in Vietnam

On November 24 each year, the Church in Vietnam celebrates the Feast of the Vietnamese Martyrs to honour those who died for their faith. It is estimated that between 1630 to 1886, some 130,000 to 300,000 Christians were forced to flee to the mountains to escape being killed and tortured for their beliefs. In 1785, a group of persecuted Catholics sought refuge in the rainforest of La Vang and would gather every evening under a large tree to recite the Rosary. Many were malnourished and suffering from various ailments and lived in fear for their safety. In 1798, Our Lady, dressed in traditional *ao dai* with the child Jesus in her arms and flanked by two angels appeared to them and instructed them to brew tea from bushes that grew nearby to treat their ailments. Word of her apparition and the miracle healing tea spread and the apparition also brought about many conversions to Catholicism. Since the late 17th Century, French missionaries of the Foreign Missions Society (MEP) and Spanish missionaries have evangelised in Vietnam. Today, they have approximately 7 million Catholics, representing seven per cent of the total population.

On May 4, Fr George Packiasamy from the Church of St Thomas, Kuantan led 24 pilgrims from his church and other parishes in the Klang Valley to pay homage to Our Lady of La Vang. Many of us felt blessed to be able to pay homage to our Blessed Mother, who had healed and protected so many during the time of Christian persecution. Like many who have made this pilgrimage to our Lady of La Vang, we came to honour her and seek her intercession for our various intentions at her shrine. A chapel was built in 1820 but was destroyed during another wave of persecutions that almost decimated the Catholic population. A new chapel was constructed in 1886, which was later elevated to a minor basilica in 1961, only to be destroyed during the Vietnam war. What remains of the original minor basilica today is only a partially bombed bell tower — a stark reminder of the Vietnam war and the immense suffering and hardship endured by the Vietnamese people.

As we prayed and celebrated Mass at the shrine accompanied by the sound of leaves rustling in the wind, one could not help but remember those who had sought refuge in the forest during the period of persecutions against Christians. A mural at the site depicting 117 known martyrs who died for their Catholic faith during the 18th and 19th centuries was a further reminder to us of how these brave men and women had stood firm in their faith right to the end. The martyrs in the mural included 96 Vietnamese, 11 Spanish and 10 French nationals. Eight were bishops, 50 were priests and 59 lay Catholics among whom was



The churches and shrine in Vietnam visited by the pilgrims during their May 1 to May 6 trip.

a nine-year-old child and Agnese Le Thi Thanh, a mother of six. Saints Jacques Honore Chastain, MEP, Laurent Marie Joseph Imbert, MEP, and St Philip Minh and companions (Vietnamese Martyrs) who at one time were studying and lecturing at College General, Penang, were also depicted in the mural. Every year, College General celebrates their feast day on June 19.

We had begun our pilgrimage from KLIA on May 1 and landed in Hanoi in the evening, which also happened to be the Feast of St Joseph, the Worker. We were truly blessed not only to begin our pilgrimage with a visit to St Joseph's Cathedral but also to attend a grand celebration befitting the feast of St Joseph. Built in 1884, the cathedral, which is the oldest church in Hanoi, was constructed by French missionaries, and its stained-glass windows and interior reflected many of the gothic features of churches in Europe. It was an experience for us to celebrate Mass in Vietnamese and to listen to the hymns accompanied by music played on the grand pipe organ, the sounds of which reverberated through the cathedral, adding a touch of grandeur to the celebrations.

During our pilgrimage, we had the privilege of celebrating Mass at different venues including lesser-known churches. The Trap Khe parish church was one such place. Tucked away in

a housing area, it was built in 1884 but was destroyed during the war and only restored in 2011. Worshipping at this small hidden church was a humbling experience as it reminded us of how the Catholic Church and her faithful people had survived persecutions at various times and later suffered much during the Vietnam war which lasted from 1954-1975. Another beautiful Mass was celebrated at Our Lady of Tra Kieu Church located right on top of a hill. The site was a challenge for some as it meant climbing more than a hundred steps up to the shrine. However, with faith, all of us made it up to the shrine where Fr George celebrated Mass and anointed all the pilgrims at the shrine which has a sweeping vista of the beautiful countryside. Perhaps one of our most unforgettable venues for Mass was on the top deck of our cruise boat on Halong Bay on the third day of our arrival. As the sun rose over the unique limestone formations in Halong Bay, our hearts were filled with gratitude as we received the Eucharist and rejoiced at the beautiful day that the Lord had made.

On our last day in Danang, Fr George shared a breakfast table with Dawn Chung — a young Vietnamese girl who had migrated to America and was now back on a visit. She told him that she was one of the boat people who had landed in Pulau Bidong as a child and later stayed at the Sungei Besi refugee camp while waiting to be resettled in America. As Fr George shared later after our morning prayers on the way to the airport, Dawn is a reminder to all of us not to forget the Vietnamese refugees, many of whom perished as they attempted to flee Vietnam and make the perilous journey by sea (South China Sea) to Malaysia. He told us about the graves — both marked and unmarked in Pulau Bidong, Dungun, Kuala Terengganu, Kuantan and various places along the east coast which stand as a reminder to us of those who had suffered much but did not make it in the end. Fr George also had a chance to share with Dawn about our Lady of La Vang and just as she had protected those who had sought refuge in the forests, she would have also watched over many who risked their lives to escape by sea and comforted those who had lost their loved ones. As the Patroness of Vietnamese Diaspora, our Lady of La Vang is as relevant today as when she first appeared in the forest in 1798.

In the face of a global refugee crisis and people being driven from their countries because of conflicts, let us continue to pray for those seeking refuge and let us pray that our Blessed Mother move the hearts of governments to open their country's borders and provide humanitarian aid for the many who have been displaced. — *By Evelyn Khor*



# Parish and community rally to save Baby Evelyn

By Gwen Manickam

**B**aby Evelyn Mary Alex Santhana who successfully underwent an ABO-Incompatible Liver Transplantation procedure in New Delhi, safely returned with her parents on May 12.

After spending several months at the Apollo Hospital, Baby Evelyn will continue her follow-up appointments at the University Malaya Medical Centre (PPUM) clinic as her white blood cells are not up to par.

## Background

In January this year, the local Catholic community and friends caught wind of the plight of 10-month-old baby girl, Evelyn Mary Alex Santhana, diagnosed with a rare disease called biliary atresia, through a social media appeal for funds by Fr Michael Chuah. Biliary atresia is a condition which blocks the tubes that carry bile from the liver to the gallbladder.

Baby Evelyn's young parents, Ilavarsee Muniandy and Alex Santhana were in turmoil as the Kasai procedure carried out in July 2022, when she was less than three months old, was not successful. The procedure, done at the Kuala Lumpur General Hospital (HKL), was to prevent the baby's liver from malfunctioning due to the disease. Its failure resulted in her needing a liver transplant.

The baby's parents were sadly deemed unsuitable donors, as Evelyn's blood type is O-positive while Alex's B-positive and Ilavarsee's A-positive. The underweight infant was put on a waiting list until a suitable donor was found.

After consulting doctors, the parents transferred Evelyn to PPUM, where she could be tube-fed with a special baby formula while waiting. Baby Evelyn's health was not improving, her tummy was swelling and she was constantly battling jaundice.

It was here that the parents learnt their baby could have a procedure called ABO-Incompatible Liver Transplantation. This procedure enables people of different blood type to be donors. HKL, the only hospital capable of doing the proce-

dure here, had a long waiting list and the light at the end of that tunnel was not visible.

Another option was to have the procedure done in a hospital in New Delhi, India at an estimated cost of RM300,000.

Ilavarsee was also told to get in touch with the Johor-based Mudzaffar Shah, founder of NGO Biliary Atresia Malaysia Association (Pertubuhan Biliary Atresia Semalaysia) for assistance.

The home maker and her husband Alex, who works as a lorry driver bringing home RM2,000 a month, needed funds to support their daughter's mounting medical bills.

## The Church steps in

The Catholic couple approached their close friend, Fr George Harrison, currently in Rome, and he directed them to the Parish Integral Human Development Ministry (PIHDM) coordinator at the Church of the Visitation, Seremban, as they were familiar with a similar situation. When the parish found that the family belonged to the Church of the Holy Family, Kajang (HFK), the parents were redirected to contact its PIHDM coordinator, Sarveswaran Subramaniam, in mid-October 2022.

Sarves said the parents only reached out to HFK in mid-December. "We quickly arranged a meeting with our parish priests," said Sarves.

Deeply moved by the family's quandary, assistant priest, Fr Bonaventure Rayappan, who baptised Baby Evelyn when she was two months old, was eager to find ways to help. Yet he had to move with caution.

After multiple discussions, Fr Michael proposed setting up a committee to manage this crowdfunding project. The priests also consulted Archbishop Julian Leow.

"Bishop said, raise what you can, if it's not enough, come back and see me. That built our confidence to start the project," said Fr Bona.

He knew it would be an uphill task to raise the full amount, but was eager to help in any way possible. They also set up a phone line managed by parishioner Chitra, so the public could call for enquires.

## Let's save Baby Evelyn

Upon ironing out the details, Fr Michael posted a brief message on his social media feed on Jan 21 evening about the baby's dire situation and parish PIHDM banking details with the tag "Let's Save Baby Evelyn". Within hours, the account received more than RM161,000. It wasn't sufficient, but the team was thrilled to see how quickly the amount was raised. The committee assumed the quick influx of funds would slow down, but low and behold, people's generosity exceeded the required amount within a few days. As of 9.00am on January 26, they collected RM315,997.58.

In another social media message, the parish said, "any surplus of funds after deducting both local and foreign medical expenses for Baby Evelyn's treatment, we will transfer the balance of funds to the next child suffering from Biliary Atresia requiring a similar procedure."

Several print media approached the parish wanting to highlight the cause, only to learn that the amount had been successfully raised.



Fr Bona said some parishes came forward and pledged up to RM10,000 from their PIHD funds. A few corporations also made sizeable contributions but almost 80 per cent were personal donations.

"Donations poured in from people of different races and religions. Some donated RM1 to RM2. Some gave RM1.15, assuming there might be processing fees. I see and cherish the heart of the people and the spirit of the community," said an elated Fr Bona.

Mudzaffar Shah was a huge help to the parish and the parents. He was responsible for coordinating the logistics in India and the parish's liaison with the medical team at the Apollo Hospital.

## Treatment in India

The family left for India Feb 21. After initial hiccups and smoothing out legal procedure through DNA testing to ensure the donor was related to the patient and no organ harvesting was involved, the transplant was done on March 14, three days after Baby Evelyn's first birthday. Although both parents were tested, Alex turned out to be the best donor option.

Two months later, Evelyn and her parents returned home. The baby is not out of the woods yet and will be monitored by a medical team at PPUM.

Fr Michael recently posted another message on social media to welcome the family back and share their appreciation to the rakyat.

"Once again, a big thank you from the parents of Baby Evelyn to all well-wishers, donors and the team members who had looked into fund raising and coordination of this whole project. A special word of thanks to En Mudzaffar Shah.

"I am both humbled and surprised by the outpouring of support for this cause. I must admit that I was initially sceptical as to whether we would be able to raise this large sum of money within a short period of time as we were racing against the clock to get Baby Evelyn to India to undergo this procedure while this was still viably possible. But thank God for the many individuals who stepped forward and stepped up, with many just donating RM10, which helped us reach our target within four days. To give you an indication of the volume of people who supported this cause, the team of volunteers who helped with issuing receipts expended over 30 books of receipts. What I saw was the face of humanity, which did not look at this cause from any specific racial or religious lens. They just saw a baby who was struggling to live and her desperate parents determined to give a fighting chance to their then less than a year old child," Fr Michael told *HERALD*.



Mudzaffar Shah at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport to receive Baby Evelyn, Ilavarsee and Alex from India, on May 12.

# Argentine diocese gets new priest after nine years

**BUENOS AIRES:** After nine years without priestly ordinations, the Diocese of Alto Valle de Río Negro in Argentina celebrated the ordination of Fr Alexis Oser (*pic*), May 1.

Bishop Alejandro Benna of Alto Valle presided over the ordination ceremony, which took place at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in General Roca, the city where the new priest will carry out his ministry.

The last ordination for the diocese was that of Fr Vicente Alberto Bó in 2014, who died in 2021 from COVID-19.

27-year-old Oser's mother works in a hospital as an orderly and his father is retired from the oil industry. He has two siblings, and although his background is Catholic, his



family was not practising the faith.

Speaking with the *Rio Negro* portal, the young priest acknowledged that his vocation "was born in the missions and among the sick" and that "it's a gift, a gift from God."

"One simply has to open up to that grace, to be available," he said.

Born in the city of Catriel, at age seven he began to attend Missionary Childhood (a worldwide organisation of Catholic youth) in a poor neighbourhood of his town.

That experience — as well as meeting a nun named Nieves — made an impact on his life. He was just a boy when he began to "know Jesus and call him a friend," Oser recounted.

The call to a vocation began to take shape when at age 15 he visited a terminally ill patient with leukaemia at a hospital in the city of Cinco Saltos along with a parish priest who, accompanied by a seminarian, was administering the sacrament of anointing of the sick to the patients.

At that time, Oser felt that science and medicine were not enough to end people's suffering.

A priest from where he grew up was the spiritual director who guided him until he was 18, when he decided to begin priestly formation.

He first served at the Jesus the Good Shepherd Seminary in Río Cuarto in Córdoba province, and then he transferred to Buenos Aires, where he continued his formation at the St. Peter and St. Paul Patagonian Seminary until 2021.

During those years, he worked in parishes in the Buenos Aires neighbourhoods of Mataderos, Saavedra, and Villa Crespo.

That same year, he returned to Río Negro where on May 25, 2022, he was ordained a deacon and was sent to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in General Roca.

"My destination so far, and as long as God says so, will be here in Roca," Oser said. — **By Julieta Villar, CNA**



# The two kingdoms: A battle over words

When Jesus set forth in His ministry, He proclaimed a new kingdom. But talk of this kingdom confused even some of His close followers.

In the lexicon of His time, a kingdom fell under the rule of a worldly emperor, like the emperor in Rome and the rulers in Judea and Galilee.

This kingdom held worldly power and demanded taxes and tributes. In return, it maintained the 'peace' of its subjects.

But this peace in the empire was secured through force, through military conquest and victory. This was the Pax Romana, the Roman idea of peace, which held the empire together.

Oh, there were the trappings of 'progress', the spectacle of the Empire — the gladiatorial shows that enthralled the crowds, the amphitheatres and aqueducts.

Some of Jesus' followers even marvelled at the enormous stones and the architectural wonder of the Temple in Jerusalem. Likewise, visitors to the Empire would have stood in awe at the imposing Roman structures and monuments.

But Jesus was not impressed. He knew that behind the veneer of 'peace' lay a hidden reality. He saw the violence of oppression, torture, crucifixions and how it hurt the farmers and peasants who groaned under the weight of taxes and tithes. He saw how the widows' belongings had been devoured by the greedy.

When Jesus spoke of His new kingdom, it put Him on a collision course with those who had a different idea of a kingdom.

No wonder when Jesus came face to face with the Roman prefect Pontius Pilate, the subject of 'kingdom' dominated their conversation.

Jesus took pains to distinguish His kingdom from Pilate's understanding of kingdom.

The former is from above, the latter has



## SUNDAY OBSERVER

Anil Netto

worldly origins. Jesus' kingdom is characterised by love, social justice, compassion. It has a place for the last, the least and the lost.

The worldly kingdom — to which Pilate was a loyal servant — valued power, material wealth and fame. Today, it even tramples on the ecosystem in the quest for even more wealth.

Even the term "Son of God" was contested. Like some emperors elsewhere, Roman emperors like Julius Caesar, Augustus and Tiberius considered themselves divine — or sons of the "divine one".

They exuded worldly power, wealth and ruthlessness while presiding over vast subjugated territories.

In contrast, Jesus, as Son of God, embodied divine love, compassion and justice in His person.

For the Roman rulers, power was used to serve the empire, to extract taxes and tributes from subjects, to acquire even more territory and wealth.

For Jesus, His power — servant leadership — was used to serve the people and empower them to live life to the full, as children of the one God.

Totally different meaning! That explains why some of His disciples were left confused. They thought of Jesus as a political liberator to free them from the yoke of Roman occupation.

But Jesus knew that attaining worldly power on its own could not change lives or the values that people subscribed to. The change, the kingdom had to blossom from

within, through the power of the Spirit flowing within them.

Jesus' conversation with Pilate also revolved around the meaning of truth. The truth according to Pilate was the Roman Empire's 'truth' — the reality of a domination system that put the interests of Empire first.

This was so different from Jesus' understanding of the Truth — which is that the Father has aching compassion for His people. This Truth reveals to us a God who is especially concerned about the poor, the lost, the captives, the persecuted.

As we can see, words matter — or what those words mean, matter.

Kingdom, truth, power — these words unleash a dynamic of their own that can influence large numbers of people.

So, it is crucial that, as the people of God, we distinguish clearly the worldly understanding of these words from how Jesus understood these words.

Even today, the forces of 'Empire' (the worldly powers) are constantly trying to mould, nay dictate, a certain narrative of power, wealth and domination in our world. These powers often twist the meaning of commonly used words to serve the interest of the powerful and the wealthy.

Take the word 'development', for instance. Does this refer to outward material development or holistic, human development?

Often, in the name of development, we have destroyed forests and degraded hills and rivers and even our water catchment areas. Even human wellbeing is measured in material terms, especially through the benchmark of "gross development product", ie GDP growth rates.

But this growth in GDP may include (and sugar-coat) some pretty destructive activities. Someone wrote in the media recently that certain construction projects

may be better described as destruction projects! Just look at how some projects destroy the environment, degrade lived habitats, displace local communities and reduce biodiversity. Unfortunately, those who point this out are often labelled as "anti-development".

Consider the word "land reclamation" — this is used to describe the grabbing of the sea from 'The Commons'. Wouldn't a more accurate term for reclamation be the "dumping of rocks and sand into the sea" mainly for private profit?

Or how about "collateral damage" in war? This should be more accurately described as the killing of innocent lives to further the interests of Empire.

Even in our conversations, when we say someone is "doing well" in life, what we usually mean is that that person is making a lot of money. But how is that money being made? Is the person in question serving society or profiting from the misery of some people?

Even the word healthcare — what we usually mean is 'curative treatment', usually with drugs. We often forget about preventive healthcare, with its emphasis on leading a healthy lifestyle, with adequate exercise and a nutritious diet. When Jesus treated the sick, He looked at not just the physical ailment but also the spiritual or inner healing that the person often needed to become whole again.

Words matter. So, let's examine certain common words we use in everyday life: are these words being used to shape the narrative of worldly forces? How can we reclaim these words to serve the kingdom of the Word made flesh?

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



## WORD MADE FRESH

Nicholas Lye

On the second last day of my personal retreat earlier this year, my retreat director suggested that I spend the whole of that day anticipating the gift and presence of the Holy Spirit, just as it happened on the day of Pentecost. This was meant to equip and empower me for the personal mission that God had placed in my heart.

After reflecting on some of the Scripture passages offered by my retreat director, I went about my day anticipating a significant Pentecost moment for myself. In the afternoon, I read three chapters of a book that inspired me greatly in the earlier days of my retreat. But for some disappointing reason, nothing stirred on that particular day.

I then decided to make another Labyrinth walk in the compounds of the retreat centre, which had previously offered me very deep insights about my life. Yet halfway through my prayer walk, when nothing seemed to inspire me, I felt the Lord hinting to me that I really did not require any 'special' method or place of prayer to encounter the Spirit in a deep and profound way. It was then that I realised how I might have been trying too

hard to orchestrate a dramatic Pentecost moment for myself.

What did eventually surprise me after dinner, after I gave up trying so hard and simply decided to go for a nice, casual walk around the retreat centre, was when I felt invited by God to talk about my thoughts and feelings towards a particular incident that happened last year. At first, it felt like a 'bad' time to be doing so, considering there were many unpleasant and frustrating emotions accompanying that incident, and I certainly did not want to end my retreat with a 'bad' aftertaste. Still, I trusted in the Lord and proceeded to rant and rave about how hurt and angry I felt during that incident, airing out all my pent-up feelings and thoughts that had been kept buried deep within me after all these months.

I soon found myself walking towards the adoration room in one of the retreat buildings, and eventually sat in front of the Blessed Sacrament, feeling so heard and held by the Lord after expressing all that I was feeling. It actually felt good to have been able to offload all my burdens to God, which at the same time, also gave me a better understanding of what was really upsetting me, and what was not giving me life during that incident. Through this, I was also able to realise and acknowledge for myself that

what is important for me is to be given sufficient autonomy and trust to do things in the unique way that I was created for, and that not every environment or type of work may allow me to do so. This realisation and acknowledgement suddenly gave me such a comforting sense of release, along with a greater freedom and joy to want to start choosing the kind of environment or work that best allows me to be my authentic self, without needing to please others or meeting the expectations of others.

Finally, God asked me, "What do you really want?" as if it were my birthday, coinciding with the birthday of the Church at Pentecost. I gave some thought to His question and finally answered: "I want to be free to be me, to find places and people with whom I can be free to be myself, and build God's kingdom in the unique way I was created to be. I also want to be able to help others to do the same."

As the above words left my heart and mouth, I not only felt this deep connection and joy of being able to articulate one of my deepest desires to God and myself, I was also so moved that God would even ask me what I wanted; that He loved and honoured me so much that He cared about my deepest desires (which on hindsight, were placed there by Him in the first place). This proved

to be such a Pentecostal moment for me, for it felt like God was speaking my language in such a way that truly connected to the depths of my heart. It gave me renewed inspiration and encouragement to live out the personal mission I was meant for, in the way that is most authentically me.

Through this, I now realise that a Pentecost moment can take place in the simplest of ways, when I get to be most honest with myself and God, and when it leads me to a better understanding of who I truly am. This allows me to become more fully alive as myself, and bring life to others in the unique way I was created to, and to speak the unique language that is meant for particular individuals who would be able to hear God speak through me. All the Spirit really desires to do in and for us, is to set us free to become the person God created us to be, and this, according to St Catherine of Sienna, is what allows us to set the world on fire.

● **Nicholas Lye** personal mission is to bring hope, healing and a taste of heaven on earth to others, particularly through the gift of creativity and authenticity. He also hopes to encourage, enable and empower others to become who they are uniquely created to be.

## My Pentecost moment





Fr Ron Rolheiser

# On not being defensive

In much of the secularised world, we live in a climate that is somewhat anti-ecclesial and anti-clerical. It's quite fashionable today to bash the churches, be they Roman Catholic, Protestant, or Evangelical. This is often done in the name of being open-minded and enlightened, and it's the one bias that's intellectually sanctioned. Say something derogatory about any other group in society, and you will be brought to account; say something disparaging about the Church and there are no such consequences.

What's the proper response? While it's easy to take offence at this, we must be careful not to overreact because, as a Church, we should not be fundamentally threatened by this. Why?

First, because a certain amount of this criticism is good and helpful. Truth be told, we have some very real faults. All atheism is a parasite feeding off bad religion. Our critics feed off our faults and we can be grateful that our faults are being pointed out to us — even if sometimes over-generously. Criticism of the Church is healthily humbling us and pushing us toward a more courageous internal purification. Besides, for too long we have enjoyed a situation of privilege, never a good thing for the Church. We generally live healthier as Christians in a time of dis-privilege than

in a time of privilege, even if it isn't as pleasant. Moreover, there are some important things at stake here.

We must be careful not to overreact to the present anti-ecclesial climate because this can lead to an over-defensiveness and put us in an unhealthy adversarial position vis-à-vis the culture, and that's not where the Gospel asks us to be. Rather, our task is to absorb this criticism, painful though it is, gently point to its unfairness, and resist the temptation to be defensive. Why? Why not aggressively defend ourselves?

Because we are strong enough not to, and that's reason enough. We can withstand this without having to become hard and defensive. Current criticism of the Church notwithstanding, the Church is not about to go under or away any time soon. We are two and a half billion Christians in the world, stand within a 2,000-year-old tradition, have among ourselves a universally accepted scripture, have two thousand years of doctrinal entrenchment and refinement, have massive centuries-old institutions, are embedded in the very roots of Western culture and technology, constitute perhaps the biggest multinational group in the world, and are growing in numbers worldwide. We are hardly a reed shaking in the wind, reeling vulnerably, a ship about to go under. We are strong, sta-

ble, blessed by God, an Elder in the culture, and because of this we owe it to the culture to model maturity and understanding.

Beyond that, even more important, is the fact that we have Christ's promise to be with us, and the reality of the Resurrection to sustain us. Given all this, I think it's fair to say that we can absorb a fair amount of criticism without fear of losing our identity. Moreover, we must not let this criticism make us lose sight of why we exist in the first place.

The Church exists, not for its own sake or to ensure its own survival, but for the sake of the world. We can easily forget this and lose sight of what the Gospel asks of us. For example, compare these two responses: At a press conference, Cardinal Basil Hume was once asked what he considered the foremost task facing the Church today. He replied simply: "To need to try to save this planet." Compare that response with that of another cardinal who, in a recent radio interview, was asked the same question (What is the foremost task facing the Church today?) and replied, "To defend the faith." Who's right?

Everything about Jesus suggests that Hume's view is closer to the Gospel than the other. When Jesus says, "My flesh is food for the life of the world", He is af-

firming clearly that the primary task of the Church is not to defend itself, or ensure its continuity, or protect itself from being crushed by the world. The Church exists for the sake of the world, not for its own sake. That's why there is such a rich symbolism in the fact that immediately after Jesus was born, He was laid in a trough in a stable, a place where animals come to eat; and it's why He gives Himself up on a table in the Eucharist, to be eaten. Being eaten up by the world is largely what Jesus is about, namely, risking vulnerability over safety and trust over defensiveness. At the very heart of the Gospel lies a call to risk beyond defensiveness and to absorb unjust criticism without fighting back: "Forgive them, they know not what they do!"

The Church is meant to give itself over as food for the world. Like all living bodies it needs sometimes to protect itself — but never at the cost of losing its very reason for being here.

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

## The value of quiet preparation before making big decisions

*The amount and endurance of our future work depends on the developed character and formation that we bring into the process.*

When St Dominic was born, his mother had a strange vision of her son as a dog holding a burning torch in his mouth. He broke away from her and set the world on fire. If her vision eventually came true — St Dominic did indeed change the world — throughout his youth and into early adulthood, there were absolutely no signs of it coming to fruition. As a boy, he was unremarkable and untroublesome. He enjoyed quietly reading, was neither popular nor unpopular with other boys, and showed a normal piety, devout but not excessive, when it came to church. Like other small children, he pretended to play Mass and, further, was much impressed with the idea of becoming a cloistered monk. He seemed destined for a quiet life.

When he went to the University of Palencia, he was known as an even-tempered, studious young man. Around the age of 25, he was ordained a priest. His assignment took him to the town of Osma where he lived in a semi-monastic group of priests attached to a parish. For nine years, Dominic lived with brother priests and serenely followed the rule of St Augustine. It was a peaceful and holy life. It was a rather unremarkable life.

In his biography of Dominic, Bede Jarrett remarks, "This seems, perhaps, a very gentle, even monotonous, beginning for a career..." If that was the way his life had continued to proceed, he probably would have died happy but completely unknown.

That's not what happened. Not at all. Today, St Dominic is one of the most famous saints of his era, often mentioned in the same breath as St Francis. The religious order he began has adherents worldwide who call themselves Dominicans in his honour.

### What happened?

Here's what happened. After his quiet years in Osma, Dominic became a travelling preacher. He did this for 13 years, going from town to town. During this time, his public profile was raised but he still hadn't formed a religious order. Again, if he had lived out his life as a circuit preacher, he probably would've died happy but his name would be unknown today.

He only began his religious order in the year 1216. He built it for five years — that was it. One massive, inspired burst of activity. Five short years and then he was called home to his Lord. His religious order outlived him and influenced the course of history.

What surprised me when I became acquainted with his story is that the vast majority of Dominic's life was spent in preparation. Then, in that one, decisive choice, that one pouring out of all his energy into one activity, he transformed his vocation. He was a late bloomer but left a lasting imprint.

### Quiet preparation

All my life, I've been impatient. I want to make decisions quickly and act on them right away. I don't like to be slowed down or feel like I'm wasting time. At work, I've always wanted to be the boss right away. I



(Wikimedia Commons)

wanted to race through my education and get out into the real world. I was always jumping out of my skin with the formation process in seminary because I was itching to get out into a parish and become involved. I wanted to skip ahead to what I considered the real work. To this day, I have almost zero attention span for meetings and long decision-making processes. For so long, I've considered decisiveness and promptness to be over-riding virtues that I've neglected the importance of patience and quiet preparation.

The life of St Dominic, though, reveals how important it is to lie fallow and properly prepare. Maybe he got started later than would be expected, maybe he was even frustrated and felt like life was passing him by, but once he got going, he travelled fast and far.

In his biography, Jarrett writes, "It was a crucial time for the saint in enabling him to gauge the depths of his own character

..." and that Dominic possessed, "a patient and hidden life before the public ministry began."

Looking back at all the preparatory moments in my own life — usually the times I was frustrated and impatient — they were all enormously helpful to my development. The bosses and formators I questioned always knew more than me, the people in the meetings who slow down the process with questions, the many people who have taught me to examine issues from multiple angles. Most of all, that time was never wasted because I was undergoing character development. As the life of Dominic shows, the amount and endurance of our future work depends on the developed character and formation that we bring into the process. Achievement is a matter of preparation.

As Jarrett concludes, "Only a man who has built carefully his character may hope one day to build the world." — **By Fr Michael Rennie, *Aleteia***



# Little Catholics' Corner

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY! Church



### Pentecost Word Search

R E W O P C S M P M T F E S S  
B V S E L P I C S I D I C E Y  
T O N G U E S I G N S F N G M  
D N I W Z F I L L E D T E A B  
P E N T E C O S T X B I S U O  
F I R S T F R U I T S E E G L  
G N I R E F F O B U S T R N I  
H C R U H C N E V A E H P A Z  
Y R A N I D R O A R T X E L E  
D N U O S P I R I T F I R E D

church  
disciples  
extraordinary  
fiftieth  
filled  
fire  
firstfruits  
heaven  
languages



offering  
Pentecost  
power  
presence  
signs  
sound  
Spirit  
symbolized  
tongues  
wind

Hello children of God,

Today is the second biggest feast in the Church year! Pentecost is celebrated on the Sunday that falls on the 50th day of Easter. It is also known as the birthday of the Church.

Pentecost is when the Holy Spirit came to the disciples and the Church was formed.

The Apostles went out and began to preach the Gospel and baptise thousands of people, receiving them into the new Church.

The Holy Spirit is God. He is the third person of the Holy Trinity, after the Father and the Son. Before Jesus came to earth, the Holy Spirit inspired the men who wrote the Old Testament part of the Bible. It was the Holy Spirit who brought baby Jesus to the world through Mary. Jesus told His followers that He would send the Holy Spirit to them after He went to Heaven.

### The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit



We all need the Holy Spirit. We can't do anything by ourselves. The Holy Spirit gives us the strength we need to do good. Did you know that we wouldn't even pray if the Holy Spirit didn't inspire us to?

Love Aunty Gwen



## FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



Good fruit



Bad fruit

CUT OUT THE WORDS BELOW AND GLUE THEM IN THE CORRECT COLUMN.

ANGER  
BEING GENTLE  
HATRED  
JOY  
LUST  
PEACE

BEING DRUNK  
FIGHTING  
IDOLATRY  
KINDNESS  
MURDERS  
SELF-CONTROL

BEING FAITHFUL  
GOODNESS  
JEALOUSY  
LOVE  
PATIENCE  
WITCHCRAFT



# YOUTH

MAY 28, 2023

## Church of St Joseph's Youth Rally

# BE THE SALT OF THE EARTH AND LIGHT OF THE WORLD

**S**ENTUL: The Youth Rally of the Church of St Joseph made a comeback during the recent parish feast day celebrations. It was aimed at bringing back the spirit of the parish youth and encouraging them to serve in the parish. Seventy-two participants, aged 14 to 32, attended the two-day event

Starting small last year, the youth ministry has grown tremendously.

Alvina and Azra were tasked to establish a working group for the success of the event. The 13-member team looked to our patron saint for inspiration and mirrored this year's Lenten campaign theme, *Salt of the Earth and Light of the World* for the rally.

Bro Philip Asirwalam (pic right), a seventh-year seminarian, spoke at two sessions. The first, *Called to be Salt of the Earth*, was an integration on what is Lay Vocation and next, *Living as the Light of the World*,

correlated to Religious Vocation. He later opened the floor for a Q&A session which the youth found informative and insightful.

Parishioner Benedict Savarimuthu conducted the final two sessions on day one. He spoke on *Leaven of God's Kingdom*, based on Matthew 13:33 in which Jesus shows that the kingdom will begin in the hearts of His followers and eventually grow to become the glorious kingdom the people were hoping for. Ben's second session, *Guided Adoration*, was to teach youth how to sit in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament and worship the Lord.

The turnout was outstanding and the organisers were in disbelief. We were blessed, and thankful to those who took part and took their time in spreading the word on this rally and joining us.

We are grateful to our parish priest, Fr Frederick Joseph, our resident priest, Msgr James Gnanapiragasam and Fr Anthony Madalaimuthu



for being our advisors, providing us the insights that were needed and fulfilling our needs to ensure that this event would bring change.

From this rally, we have learned and understood the needs of our youth, we have received constructive criticism and feedback to improve upcoming events. With this spirit and foundation formed, we pledge to grow even bigger and join

the likes of the other churches with a strong foundation.

Their success stories have inspired us and one day we shall inspire others to be like us. The Youth Rally has ended, but our journey in faith has just begun — we start as small as a mustard seed, but will someday grow into a big tree — By Andronicus Valentino Gonsalverz and Teren Anthonysamy





# Young People, Fully Alive!

By Karlwin Kerol

KUALA LUMPUR: *Fully Alive!* — describes the experience of young people living in Christ.

The Shalom Catholic Community (SCC) and the Archdiocesan Single Adults and Youth Office Kuala Lumpur (ASAYO) organised a gathering of 34 young people at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre on April 22.

The event was an opportunity for the locals to meet two missionary representa-

tives from the SCC international office in Rome, Italy. Rainara Barbosa Dos Santos and Deacon Francisco Tiago Soares were in town to understand and learn the context of the youth here. They were invited by the SCC *Alive in Christ* virtual prayer group members Sham Lorenzo Ruiz and Kathysia Kerol.

After an introductory ice-breaking session, attendees were divided into several groups to get to know each other. The groups then spent time in prayer and sang SCC original praise songs. Later, Deacon Francisco shared his experience of answer-

ing God's call to become a missionary and join the SCC 13 years ago.

The local youths joyfully welcomed Rainara and Deacon Francisco and enjoyed listening to their experiences of encountering the Lord and what it means to be a young missionary.

*Fully Alive!* concluded with Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament led by Deacon Francisco. Most of them felt touched and strengthened in their faith to become young missionaries in their community. The event ended with fellowship.

During their visit, the international rep-

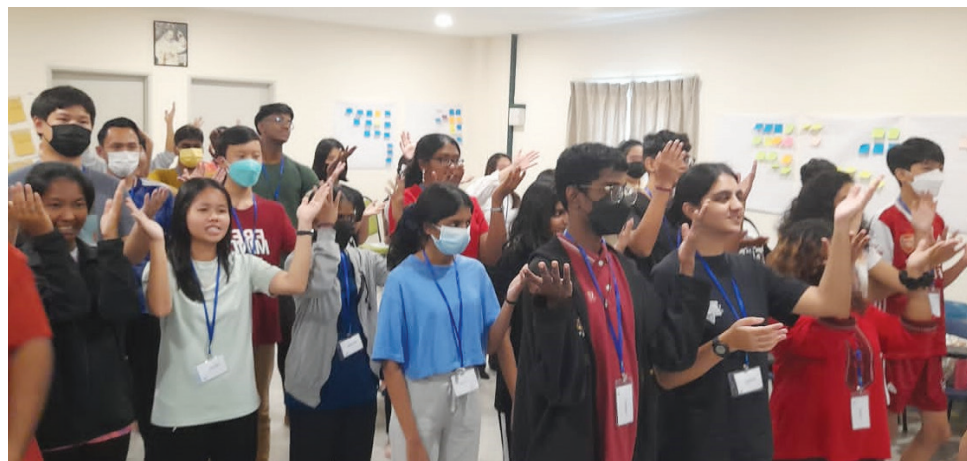
resentatives attended Mass in various languages, met youths from the community, and visited some local city sites. Before their departure, the pair were presented with Malaysian souvenirs to commemorate their visit.

Overall, this programme with the SCC aimed to inspire young people — the youth are the future of the Church, and they should be the living Gospel, bringing Christ to people.

Hopefully, this experience will fuel the spirit of the youth to continue forward as missionaries wherever they serve.



## Confirmation camp, a defining moment for many



Confirmation students at their camp.

CHERAS: The SFA Confirmation Camp 2023 was a defining moment in my faith journey and will stay with me for a lifetime. From the uplifting Praise and Worship sessions to the touching testimonies of our facilitators, this spiritual retreat brought me closer to God. It allowed me to reflect upon and strengthen my faith, imparting valuable lessons.

The teaching sessions were inspiring, thought-provoking, and incredibly impactful. It renewed my understanding of being Catholic and challenged me to think more deeply about my faith. As such, the facilitators' wisdom and insights were invaluable to me, and I appreciate their guidance.

One of the highlights at the camp was the

inner healing session when I experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as one of the facilitators prayed over me. Though I previously attended the Life in the Spirit Seminar (LSS), the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR), and the Healing Rally session in the past, I never encountered such a strong presence of the Holy Spirit. It filled me with a deep sense of peace, led me to shiver uncontrollably, and brought me to tears. These physical manifestations of the Holy Spirit's presence served as an unforgettable reminder of God's boundless glory, leaving me in awe.

All in all, this Confirmation camp was a transformative experience for me and I'm eternally grateful for this personal encounter with Christ. — By Caitlyn Lee

## St Joachim's Youth hold Easter Gathering

KOTA PADAWAN: Youth of St Joachim's 12th Mile hosted the annual Youth Easter Gathering (YEG), at Dynawood Beach Stay, Sematan.

As the first day of the camp was also Vocation Sunday, Fr Joseph Ng, SJ celebrated Mass outdoors for the 34 participants.

This year's theme from John 10:14, "I am the Good Shepherd, I know My own sheep and My sheep know Me," aimed to plant seeds of priestly and religious vocation in the youth's minds and hearts. It was also to respond to the call and mission that the Lord entrusts to us in this world, amid its afflictions, hopes, challenges, and successes.

In the evening, the youth engaged in fun activities on the beach. Later, Fr Joseph shared the experiences of his youth, before responding to his priestly calling. He also urged them to discern and answer their calling.

Listening to Fr Joseph's journey to follow God gave the attendees great insight. His humility and steadfastness to submit to the Holy Spirit's promptings for discernment demonstrated his fervent desire to lead a life dedicated to serving with love.

Participant Caitlin Lisa felt it was a great

experience for all, considering this is the first time YEG was held outside the 12th Mile chapel.

We hope through this camp, the prayer and activity initiatives related to this day will strengthen the awareness of vocations within families, parish communities, consecrated life communities, and our ecclesial associations and movements. Let's pray for the light of the Holy Spirit, so we can find our place and give the best of ourselves in His divine plan! — By Yvonne Isabelle Joshua, *Today's Catholic*



Fr Joseph Ng celebrating the Mass.





# Why priests really should be your go-to in times of despair

At the most distressing times in our lives, turning to your priest can offer some tranquillity.

One of the many joys of being a Catholic is how our faith can be of great solace in troubling times.

An easy example of this would be how our prayer life can have a calming and anchoring effect. If the day has been hard, or we have concerns of any sort, we know we can seek help. In fact, those bedtime prayers can almost feel like checking in with mom and dad before we nod off to sleep. It just feels like home.

Yet, other than our prayer life, there are also other elements of the Church that can provide great comfort, and often when you need it the most.

There have been two times over the last few years where I've felt such despair that I didn't want to get out of bed. It was the sort of emotional pain that I didn't think I'd have the wherewithal to cope with it. But as a mom to a number of kids, I couldn't allow myself to be submerged in the agony.

So, I took the advice of my mother — she's always right! I went to Mass. But for some reason I went to a church I didn't know — a chaplaincy with links to my father's hometown.

It was a beautiful little building and the familiar aroma of the polished pews hit me as soon as I walked in. It was the smell of my childhood. And then the priest arrived and he not only had my dad's accent, he also had the most kind and calming voice. I sat in the pews and cried, and cried.

After Mass I went to talk to him with red eyes. I didn't even care what he thought. I just needed to thank him for allowing me to feel such comfort amidst my personal, frightening anguish. Again, he was just full of compassion with a desire to ease my pain. He offered to say Mass for me to help with my particularly serious issue. I left the chaplaincy so much lighter.

A couple of years later I had a less serious issue, but nonetheless one that was causing me great pain. I'd spent the



*Aleteia photo*

weekend producing way too many tears and was in need of help. I prayed my usual prayers and sought out some help from some serious intercessors, but I felt emotionally drained.

Now as it happened, on the Monday morning I had an online meeting with a colleague who is a priest, and with my boss. Due to unforeseen circumstances my boss couldn't make it, so I was left chatting with Father.

Now, in his simple, sincere fashion he asked me how I was. Well that set me off ... again ... because when he asks that question you can see he really means it. It's not the throwaway question we so often ask others. And although I felt mortified with my highly unprofessional behaviour, I felt overwhelmed with relief.

I only gave Father the bare bones of my anguish but there he was lending a compassionate ear, and a feeling of reassurance that all will be okay in the end ... because it will be. Again, he offered to say Mass for me (which incidentally I'm sure worked wonders) and said he'd keep me in his prayers. It was as if someone had taken my burden on their shoulders.

Other than the fact that I felt there was a little heavenly intervention with my

boss not joining the meeting, it made me think what a beautiful gift the priesthood is for us all.

Our clergymen can share such compassion, kindness, and spiritual support. And not only can this make us feel like life is worth living, but it can also bring back the odd smile when we're in the throes of despair. — **By Josephine McCaul, Aleteia**

*Beloved, we are God's children now,  
and what we will be has not yet  
appeared; but we know that when he  
appears we shall be like him, because  
we shall see him as he is.*

1 John 3:2

## MEMORIAM

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### PRECIOUS MEMORIES



**GRACE MARIE BONNEY**  
NEE  
**HENDROFF**

Departed: 3rd June 1996

*O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good;  
His steadfast love endures forever!  
Psalm 118:1*

Affectionately remembered by loved ones.

### 2nd Anniversary In Loving Memory of



**Dr. Paul Sinnappan**  
April 24, 1950 -  
May 24, 2021

*"Empowering women  
and the maginalised  
is the way to a just  
and equitable society"*  
— Dr Paul Sinnappan

Beloved husband, father, grandfather,  
activist and credit unionist.  
Deeply missed and fondly remembered by  
his family, relatives, and friends.

### 5th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



**Benedict Liew**  
Departed: 26 May 2018  
*God has you in his keeping.  
We have you in our hearts.  
"For by grace You have been  
saved through faith."  
(Ephesian 2:8)*

Deeply missed and  
remembered by  
wife, children, siblings,  
sons & daughters-in-law,  
nieces & nephews,  
friends and relatives.

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## World's oldest near-complete Hebrew Bible sells for RM173 million

NEW YORK: A Hebrew Bible, more than 1,000 years old, sold for US\$38.1 million (RM173.16 million) in New York on May 17, setting a record for the most valuable manuscript ever sold at auction.

The *Codex Sassoon* — which dates to the late ninth to early 10th century — is the earliest near-complete Hebrew Bible known to still exist.

It was sold by Sotheby's following a four-minute bidding battle between two bidders, the auction house said in a statement.

The Bible was bought by former US diplomat Alfred Moses on behalf of an American nonprofit that will gift it to the ANU Museum of the Jewish People in Tel Aviv, Israel, Sotheby's said.

"The Hebrew Bible is the most influential book in history and constitutes the bedrock of Western civilisation. I rejoice in knowing that it belongs to the Jewish People," said Moses, an ambassador under president Bill Clinton.

The sale surpassed the US\$30.8 million (RM140 million) that Microsoft founder Bill Gates paid for Leonardo da Vinci's *Codex Leicester* manuscript in 1994 as the most expensive handwritten document ever sold at auction.



The 'Codex Sassoon' bible

The most expensive historical document remains one of the first prints of the US Constitution, which Sotheby's sold for US\$43 million (RM195 million) in November 2021.

The *Codex Sassoon* is one of only two codices, or manuscripts, containing all 24

books of the Hebrew Bible, to have survived into the modern era.

It is substantially more complete than the *Aleppo Codex* and older than the *Leningrad Codex*, two other famous early Hebrew Bibles, Sotheby's said.

The manuscript bridges the *Dead Sea*

*Scrolls* — which date back as early as the third century BC — and today's modernly accepted form of the Hebrew Bible.

It is named for previous owner David Solomon Sassoon (1880-1942) who assembled the most significant private collection of ancient Jewish texts in the world.

The manuscript was auctioned for the first time in more than 30 years and had a pre-sale estimate of between US\$30 million (RM136.3 million) and US\$50 million (RM227.2 million).

The *Codex Sassoon*, which has moved about throughout its history, has only been presented once in the past to the public, in 1982, at the British Library in London, said Orit Shaham-Gover, chief curator of the Museum of the Jewish People.

According to carbon-14 dating, the *Codex Sassoon* is older and more complete than the *Aleppo*, written in Galilee in the 10th century and brought to Israel in the 1950s after being found in that Syrian city.

The manuscript is also considered to predate the *Leningrad Codex*, the oldest surviving copy of the Hebrew Bible text in its entirety, and dated to the early eleventh century. — *LiCAS News*

## Statues of Venerable Ricci, Xu Guangqi unveiled in Italy

ROME: The statues of Jesuit missionary Venerable Matteo Ricci and his friend, Paul Xu Guangqi, were blessed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State, at the Collegiate Church of San Giovanni in Macerata, Italy recently.

The statues are gifts of the faithful from Beijing and Shanghai to the people of Fr Ricci's hometown. The words "A gift from Chinese Catholics, friends of Fr Matteo Ricci, 2022" are engraved on the bases of the statues.

Cardinal Parolin presided over the Mass and officiated the unveiling and blessing ceremony. The statues were installed in niches on the façade of the church on May 9.

Matteo Ricci and Paolo Xu Guanqi "belonged to distant and very different cultures," said Cardinal Parolin in his homily, noting that they met in friendship and generated social friendship, not pretending to be equals but drawing closer in mutual esteem, *AsiaNews* reported on May 11.

"Matteo Ricci was strong, humble, unarmed and courageous," he said.

"He was a great patriot, that is, he wanted the good of his people. At the same time, he was a convinced believer with an exemplary Christian life. Fr Matthew and Dr Paul, with their friendship, gave China the priceless gift of the Gospel," said Cardinal Parolin.

Professor Rachel Zhu Xiaohong from Shanghai, who worked hard to raise funds



The statues of Venerable Matteo Ricci left, and Paul Xu Guangqi, right, at the Collegiate Church of San Giovanni in Macerata, Italy. (AsiaNews photo)

for Xu Guangqi's statue and also actively cooperated with many scholars and Xu's descendants to conduct research on him in the Ming Dynasty, attended the event via video link.

Encouraged by Venerable Ricci, Xu was baptised in 1603. He was a Chinese agronomist, astronomer, mathematician and a devoted collaborator of Venerable Ricci who assisted in the translation of several classic Western texts into Chinese, including Euclid's *Elements*. — *LiCAS*

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