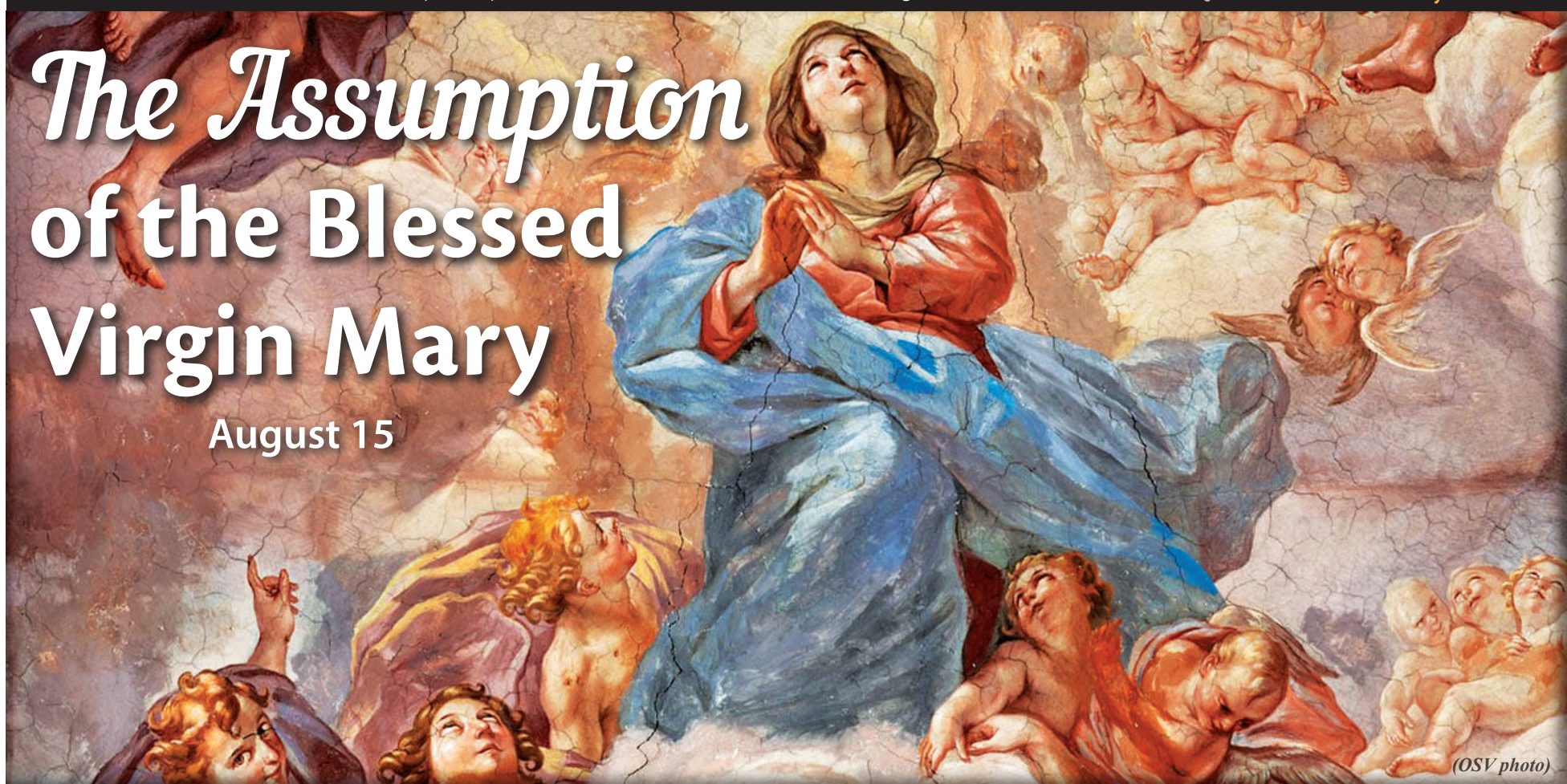


The HERALD is a Catholic Weekly of the Malaysian Church. It endeavours to communicate up-to-date news and Christian values and strives to dialogue with all sectors of society in order to build a harmonious community of believers in God. We support the formation of a participatory Church and encourage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



The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

August 15

Guided by faith through oppression

VATICAN: Pope Francis will be the second pontiff to visit Timor-Leste, after St John Paul II, who made a brief stop in the capital Dili on 12 October 1989 during his Apostolic Journey to the Far East that year, drawing international attention to the plight of the East Timorese people under the repressive Indonesian rule.

During his three-day stay the Pope is scheduled to meet with local clergy and religious, young people and to preside over Mass at the Tasi Tolu complex, in Dili, the same site where St John Paul celebrated Mass 35 years ago. More than 700,000 faithful from across Timor-Leste and also neighbouring Indonesia and other countries are expected to attend.

In the youngest nation in Asia (which at-

tained independence in 2002 after over two decades of struggle and strife, and a UN-backed referendum in 1999), with an overwhelming Catholic majority of 96 per cent, preparations for the visit are in full swing.

According to Fr Bento Pereira, national head of communications and media of the Episcopal Conference of Timor-Leste, the preparation is not only material, but also spiritual, with a special prayer to be recited in churches, and a cycle of catechesis on Pope Francis' teachings and on the central theme of the visit, 'May your faith become your culture'.

Fr Graciano Santos Barros, who serves as Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Dili, said that the motto is an invitation to Timorese Catholics to live their faith in harmony with their cultural heritage. The priest noted that it is also a reminder of the close link between their Catholic faith and the troubled decades of the Indonesian occupation.

"Faith has accompanied each of our steps,

in suffering and in hope," he said. "Today, 25 years after the referendum for independence, we can look at our history with a reconciled heart, recognising the work of God who has illuminated the minds and hearts of men in many crucial moments".

The history of this former Portuguese colony evangelised in the XVI century is intimately intertwined with the Church that played a major role during the 25 years of struggle for self-determination, by being close to the suffering East Timorese people and denouncing the atrocities committed by the Indonesian occupying army, while working for peace and reconciliation.

The names of the former Apostolic Administrators of Dili, Bishops Martino Da Costa Lopes, Alberto Ricardo da Silva, and Carlos Ximenes Belo, SDB, are still impressed in the memory of the Timorese people. This commitment to supporting non-violent struggle earned the Salesian Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo the 1996 Nobel Peace

Prize which he shared with the independence leader and future President José Ramos Horta. Also at that time nuns, priests, catechists and religious also played a crucial role by showing their closeness to the people suffering: "They were always close, they shared our destiny," said Fr Barros.

This closeness and support has translated into a significant increase of the number of Catholics in Timor-Leste, who today make up some 95 per cent of its population of 1,400 million.

This shows how, "in times of oppression, faith was a fundamental pillar for the people," said Fr. Barros. "With an open heart the people of East Timor, understood and perceived within themselves that the Gospel was the only way, the only salvation: they cried out to the Lord, they trusted in Him and the Lord heard their prayers" He "did not abandon them and guided them towards their promised land." — **By Lisa Zengarini, Vatican News**

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Eph. 4:30-31



Alor Gajah chapel celebrates feast of St Anne

■ P5



Caritas MJD leads mangrove restoration project

■ P6



Seoul holds launch event for World Youth Day 2027

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Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre
5, Jalan Robertson, 50150, KL
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Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur,
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editor1@herald.com.my**ASSISTANT EDITOR**Sandra Ann Inbaraj
sandra@herald.com.my**GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Youth Section**Amanda Mah
amanda@herald.com.my**SOCIAL MEDIA**Kevin Francis
kevin@herald.com.my**BAHASA MALAYSIA**Melania Liza Magnus
liza@herald.com.my**MANDARIN**Adelina Wong
yin4482@gmail.com**TAMIL**RK Samy
rksamy3@hotmail.com**ADVERTISEMENTS /SUBSCRIPTION**

advertisement@herald.com.my

MEMORIAM

memoriam@herald.com.my

LETTERS

letterseditor@herald.com.my

OPINION

Church has no room for lobby groups

In recent discussions about the role of women in the Church, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg has sparked a significant conversation by emphasising the need for sincere dialogue over lobbying. As a central figure in organising Pope Francis' Synod of Bishops on Synodality, Hollerich's remarks offer a thought-provoking perspective on how the Church should approach the complex and often contentious issue of women's involvement in leadership and governance.

Cardinal Hollerich's stance is clear — the Church should not be a place for lobbying groups pushing for specific agendas. Instead, he advocates for an approach rooted in prayer, open discussion, and genuine listening. "Lobbying is not part of church culture; it should not be," he asserts. His call for dialogue underscores a deeper understanding that the issues surrounding women's roles in the Church are multifaceted and require a nuanced approach.

The question of women's participation in Church leadership — particularly the possibility of women serving as deacons or priests — has been one of the most heated topics within the Synod on Synodality. This multi-year process, which began in 2021, has seen extensive debate and consultation at various levels. During the initial Rome-based meetings, discussions on women and LGBTQ+ inclusion were among the most emotionally charged.

As the Synod prepares for its second Rome-based session from October 2-27, the preparatory working document has notably excluded these contentious issues, entrusting them to specialised working

groups for further exploration. This decision reflects the difficulty in achieving consensus on such divisive topics. One of these working groups, comprising members from the Vatican Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and the General Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops, will examine theological and canonical questions related to women's ministries. However, details about their findings remain undisclosed.

Cardinal Hollerich, while acknowledging the significance of these discussions, emphasises that changes in Church practice regarding women's roles cannot be implemented in isolation. He notes the disparity in how these issues are perceived across different continents. In Western Europe, there is strong advocacy for women's access to ordained ministries, while other regions may not share this urgency. Hollerich warns that implementing changes solely based on one region's perspective could lead to division within the global Church. "This is not a change the Church can do easily, and it's not a change that can be done just in one part of the world; it would tear the Church apart," he cautions.

Rather than pushing for predetermined outcomes, Hollerich suggests that the Church's path forward must involve an "open dialogue" that seeks the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He envisions a process where different viewpoints are heard and considered, leading to a deeper understanding of how women can fully participate in Church life and decision-making without necessarily seeking ordination. "Perhaps in that dialogue women will say, 'oh but, yes, I understand, I want to fully participate,

and also participate in decision-making, but perhaps I do not need to be a priest for that,'" he proposes.

Despite the polarised nature of current ecclesial debates, Hollerich remains optimistic about the potential for constructive dialogue. He observes that the Synod has been characterised by a commitment to real conversation, even amidst differing viewpoints. "In the Synod, of course you have people at the right, people at the left, and so on, but people committed to real dialogue also through the methodology of conversation in the spirit," he explains.

Hollerich's reflections come against the backdrop of an annual pilgrimage for altar servers in Rome, which he recently attended. During this event, the issue of women's roles did not specifically arise, but he acknowledged its importance for many young people. Hollerich emphasises the necessity of listening to these voices, stating, "For me, it's important to listen to them." He underscores that the Church must remain open to evolving perspectives, particularly in response to the younger generation's insights.

Cardinal Hollerich's call for dialogue over lobbying presents a valuable approach to addressing the issue of women in the Church. His perspective encourages a thoughtful and inclusive process that respects the diverse views within the global Church. As the Synod continues, Hollerich's emphasis on prayer, discussion, and mutual listening offers a pathway for navigating complex issues while striving to maintain the unity and integrity of the Church. — **Cruz**

The power of the Living Bread

Have we ever felt tired in life? I'm not talking about physical or emotional tiredness but the kind of tiredness that makes us feel like just giving up. For those who serve in ministry, whether priests, religious or lay persons, there will come a point in time where we will just give up because we become fed up with everything that we are doing and we just say, "Forget it...I'm not doing this anymore." This happens even to the best of us. Maybe not everyone will go through this experience but this is quite a common experience for many in the Church.

This is a normal human condition. If

machines can break down, so can the human body. But sometimes, it's not about the body breaking down but rather, the spirit starts to break down. We are made up of body, mind and soul. What happens to one affects the other. Very often, we take care of our body and mind but rarely think of our soul. It is easier to take care of our body and mind. When we are tired, we rest and take a holiday. But how do we take care of our souls?

The first reading and the Gospel give us a clue on how to do this. In the first reading, the prophet Elijah tells God that he has had enough, asking God to take his life, after which he goes to sleep. He is woken up twice by the angel of the Lord, asking him to eat. All that is provided by the angel are scones and water. This is no ordinary food because, after two meals, Elijah can make the journey to Horeb, the mountain of God. No mortal food can sustain someone for forty days and forty nights. This food brought by the angel gave his spirit a new burst of energy, helping the body and mind to put aside the thought of giving up.

In the Gospel, Jesus

proclaims Himself to be the living bread which has come down from heaven. The people were not able to comprehend this proclamation because they were not able to think beyond what is physical. They failed to realise that, even with just manna and meat raining down once a day, they were able to sustain themselves throughout their journey until they reached the Promised Land. This itself should have told them that the food that they were given was more than mortal food.

When Jesus said that only those who eat the living bread will never hunger or thirst, the crowd could only think of eating and drinking physical food. What Jesus meant was for them to eat His words and His teachings. This is the source of eternal life. Jesus was trying to tell them that this life on earth is only temporary. The people need to concentrate on what is eternal and only those who believe in Him will have that life.

For us today, whether or not we are serving in ministry, we need to realise the importance of the living bread that comes down from heaven. How many of us really hunger for the Eucharist? How many of us come to Mass eagerly wanting to receive both the Word and the Body of Christ? The challenge is this — when we have attended Mass for the span of life that each of us have lived, some have grown apathetic towards the Sacraments. Receiving the Sacraments has become mechanical and routine.

Reflecting on our
Sunday Readings


with Fr Philip Tay, OCD

**19th Sunday in
Ordinary Time (B)****Readings: 1 Kings 19:4-8;****Ephesians 4:30 — 5:2;****Gospel: John 6:41-51**

Until and unless we realise the importance of the Word of God and the Body of Christ in our lives, we will slowly descend along this apathetic path and one day become numb to its effects. It is these two elements that will sustain us in our journey - we need to rekindle our love for the Word and Body of Christ. When this love is rekindled, our hearts and our souls will be receptive to the spirit of God and this will help us to refresh our body and mind.

When we have the spirit of God in us, then we can transform ourselves to what St Paul tells us in the second reading — to imitate God and to follow Christ, to love as Christ loved us and to offer ourselves as a fragrant offering and to live as God wants us to live. We are called to be friends to one another, to be kind and to readily forgive as God readily forgives us. This can only be possible if we continue to consume the Word and Body of Christ because, on our own, we will not be able to sustain this call to love. God's grace is sufficient for us and that is all we need.






**KUALA LUMPUR
ARCHDIOCESE**

**Diary of Archbishop
Julian Leow**

August

- 17 Confirmation – Church of St Ignatius, PJ
- 18 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam
- 20-21 Monthly Clergy Recollection
- 22 Archdiocesan Finance Meeting




PENANG DIOCESE

**Diary of Cardinal
Sebastian Francis**

August

- 12 Meeting — Maintenance Team of St George's Premise, Balik Pulau at 11.00am — Bishop's Office
- 13 Curia Meeting at 10.00am — Minor Basilica of St Anne, BM
- 13 Closing Address - The Prophets: Messengers of God's Mercy, organised by Penang Diocesan New Evangelisation Commission (PDNEC) at 8.00pm via ZOOM
- 16 Thanksgiving Mass for Feast of St Anne with Service Team and Helpers at 7.00pm — Minor Basilica of St Anne, BM
- 17 Opening Address - Diocesan Tamil Apostolate at 4.00pm — Minor Basilica of St Anne, BM
- 18 Confirmation – Church of Divine Mercy, Sg Ara at 9.00am
- 22 Mass – Mt Miriam Feast and Blessing of the Renovated Body Holding Room at 1.00pm



**MALACCA JOHORE
DIOCESE**

**Diary of Bishop
Bernard Paul**

August

- 12 Meeting – South Johor Vicariate Cemetery Committee, MAJODI Centre
- 13 Meeting – 3rd Caritas Malaysia, online
- 14 Meeting – South Johor Vicariate Clergy, Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, JB
- 17 Launch & Appreciation Lunch – Caritas MJD, Caritas MJD Centre
- 20 Meeting – Diocesan Finance Council, MAJODI Centre.



DIOCESE OF PENANG
PKK/BDN/2024/08/189

Notifications and Updates

1. Heartfelt Gratitude to all during the Feast of St Anne and St Joachim, Bukit Mertajam

My heartfelt thanks to all the pilgrims, volunteers, donors, celebrants and concelebrants and every single person who had contributed in making the Feast of St Anne this year an enriching, grace-filled and memorable celebration for all. May you experience the power of prayer and intercession in your lives as your faith continues to be strengthened. St Anne and St Joachim, pray for us.

2. Visitation of Relic of Padre Pio from the National Shrine of St Padre Pio, Philippines

We thank the team of pilgrims from the National Shrine of St Padre Pio in Batangas, Philippines, who were with us in the various parishes of the Diocese of Penang from July 11 – 17, along with the parish priest and rector, Fr Oscar L. Andal.

I take this opportunity to thank you, and all the hosting parishes and our parish priests, for your warm welcome and generosity during their visits. My heartfelt thanks to the Archbishop of Lipa,

His Grace, Archbishop Gilbert Armea Garcera, for his openness and support for this initiative.

3. Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, CSsR - First Religious Profession

Sharing with you two novices from the Redemptorist Community who recently made their first profession at the Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, Ipoh. Let us continue to pray for Bro Nicholas Narin Martin, from the parish of Our Lady of Fatima of the Holy Rosary, Kota Bahru, Kelantan and Bro Hilary Handrie Lim from the parish of St Bernard, Dalat, Sarawak. May our blessed Mother continue to intercede for them in their discernment and formation. Go to <https://rb.gv/5dwndo>

4. Peninsular Malaysia Regional Pastoral Assembly 2024

I request for your earnest prayers as we prepare to partake in the upcoming Peninsular Malaysia Regional Pastoral Assembly 2024 (RPA 2024) which will be held at the MAJODI Centre, Johor

from August 25 – 27. May this significant event draw us towards another milestone in the history of the Peninsular Malaysia Catholic Church.

5. Asst Priest, Church of St Joseph, Batu Gajah



Fr Konstend Gnanapragasam has been appointed as the assistant priest of the Church of St. Joseph, Batu Gajah with effect from July 11, 2024. We wish him the very best in this new parish.

6. ABLAZE 2.0, Tamil Youth Rally


The Islanders' Tamil Youth Network (ITYN), a youth ministry under the purview of Penang Diocesan Youth Network (PDYN), will be organising a Tamil Youth Rally on Saturday, September 14 at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang. I invite the young people to come and be enriched by the empowering of the Holy Spirit through this rally. For more information, register here: <https://bit.ly/4fIFPr8>

Sebastian Francis

Cardinal Sebastian Francis

Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #184



Greetings dear friends of MJD,

The Paris Olympics extravaganza is marred by one thoughtless event. Conflicts are brewing on the Lebanese border. Student unrest in Bangladesh has forced evacuations of Malaysians. Malaysia is trying to be the Asian Tiger again. She is vying to join the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates). New cyber laws to license social media is next. State funding or fund-raising sponsored by beer and tobacco companies for vernacular schools? There's always two sides to a story. Some see no harm. Some react. Some choose to be indifferent. Some forgive. Let us rise above our pettiness.

“Heart” Times: The weekend was a week of encounters. A man comes up to me at a parish feast and says: “Today is the saddest time of my life”. I did not understand. Later I discovered that his young, upcoming son-in-law, with a newborn child, was killed in an accident on Tuas Bridge on the way to work a few months back. Fifty-two volunteers and sponsors sank into the mud to plant 449 mangrove saplings at the Sg Pulai Forest Reserve, with the Forestry Department and Johor Nature Society. Then a cancer survivor relates her story, and the beginnings of the ICARE Cancer Support Association Johor Baru. Hard times became ‘heart times’. I saw a grieving father still serving. The afflicted reaching out to the afflicted. Communities, young and old, greening the earth. People with a little love can make a difference. **“At the heart of every other Christian virtue is love.”**

Generosity without love is extravagance; care without love is mere duty; fidelity without love is servitude. Vocation without love is job.

Never grow tired of loving. If love is the soul of Christian existence, it must

be at the heart of every other Christian virtue. Thus, for example, justice without love is legalism; faith without love is ideology; hope without love is self-centredness; forgiveness without love is self-abasement; fortitude without love is recklessness; Every virtue is an expression of love. No virtue is really a virtue unless it is permeated, or informed, by love.” — Richard Rohr

A Thought For The Week: The Prison

Hundreds of Turkish prisoners held a sit-in for more than six months. They abstained from food, and 12 of them died in defence of the honour of the cause. The hunger strike sparked off when Turkish authorities decided to build a smaller prison and transfer the prisoners there.

Their present prison was spacious, while the new one was narrow. For this reason some prisoners sacrificed their lives. It was for only a few extra metres of space.

Lesson from the prisoners: We do not feel freedom except when we are deprived of it. They may be prisoners, murderers and robbers, but they are ready to die for a sunbeam, some air or a wider space. It is said that the most famous sentence in history is “I am free”.

Announcements For The Week:

1. Fr Thomas Chong SJ, the parish priest of St Theresa, Gajah Berang celebrated his **25th Sacerdotal Anniversary** on July 31. May the Lord bless him with health and grace in his ministry.

2. The Malaysian Association of Social Workers and Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat are organising an **Introduction of Social Work Training** on August 10, 11, 17 and 18 from 8.30am to 6.00pm at Universiti Malaya. Registration fee is RM100.

they really seeking?

“The Bushmen in the Kalahari Desert talk about two ‘hungers’.

There is the Great Hunger and there is the Little Hunger.

The Little Hunger wants food for the belly; but the Great Hunger, the greatest hunger of all, is the hunger for meaning.

There is ultimately only one thing that makes human beings deeply and profoundly bitter, and that is to have thrust upon them a life without meaning.

There is nothing wrong in searching for happiness.

But far more comfort to the soul is something greater than happiness or unhappiness, and that is meaning.

Because meaning transfigures all. Once what you are doing has meaning for you, it is irrelevant whether you're happy or unhappy.

You are content - you are not alone in your Spirit - you belong.” — *Laurens van der Post*

See the Holy Spirit @ work: We're all assigned a piece of the garden, a corner of the universe that is ours to transform. Our corner of the universe is our own life — our relationships, our homes, our work, our current circumstances — exactly as they are. Every situation we find ourselves in is an opportunity, perfectly planned by the Holy Spirit, to teach love instead of fear.” — *Marianne Williamson*

Something to tickle you: From the world's perspective, there are many places you can go to find comfort. But there is only one place you will find a hand to catch your tears and a heart to listen to your every longing. True peace comes only from God.” — *Charles Stanley*

Bernard Paul

Bishop Bernard Paul

Ecumenical prayer service marks Sarawak Day celebration

By Ivy Chai

KUCHING: An Ecumenical Prayer Service held to celebrate the 61st Sarawak Day, July 18. Held at Christian Ecumenical Worship Centre, it was organised by the Association of Churches in Sarawak (ACS). This year's service, hosted by the Roman Catholic Church, was themed *May they all be one* (John 17:21).

The event began with the ACS combined choir leading the singing of the national and state anthems, accompanied by the hoisting of flags by the Boys and Girls brigades. Organising chairman, Fr Davie Entalai of the Catholic Church, welcomed heads of Churches, special guests, state dignitaries, priests, religious figures, and attendees of all faiths.

Fr Davie emphasised the significance of the theme, urging unity through love for one another and our homeland, bumi Kenyalang.

The opening prayer, delivered in English



Arrival of ACS chairman Anglican Bishop Datuk Danald Jute, Archbishop Simon Poh, state dignitaries and guests of honour.

by ACS chairman Datuk Danald Jute, Anglican Bishop of Sarawak and Brunei, was followed by Scripture readings in BM, Iban, Mandarin, and Bidayuh Jagoi, with the Gospel read in English.

Archbishop Simon Poh of Kuching Archdiocese reflected on the theme.

Speaking in English, with key explanations in BM and Mandarin, the archbishop talked about God's love and the sins of mankind, citing examples from Genesis of how pride, greed, and ecological destruction can fracture human relationships. He highlighted Jesus as a bridge between God and humanity

and urged the congregation to live by the Beatitudes, showing mercy and kindness.

Archbishop Simon quoted Pope Francis, stating, "The name of God is Mercy," and called for reconciliation and a commitment to building a nation of peace, respect, and unity. He encouraged prayers for Sarawak and its leaders.

The service included prayers in various languages by representatives of participating Churches, intercessory prayers for leaders and authorities, and appeals for global peace, justice, and righteousness.

The event concluded with a Benediction led by Datuk Danald Jute, followed by a final blessing from the heads of Churches. The ACS combined choir, consisting of members from various Christian parishes, performed a "Prayer for Peace" song, leaving the audience with the message to "Go light the World," a performance animated by the Catholic Church before the Benediction. Over 1,000 attendees were present at the service.

Local Jesuit priest ordained in Kota Kinabalu

KOTA KINABALU: Thirty-seven-year-old Deacon Nalerin Erone bin Nahfrin was ordained as a Jesuit priest on July 31 at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart by Archbishop John Wong. The ordination took place on the feast day of St Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits.

Concelebrating with Archbishop John were Fr Francis Lim SJ, the Regional Superior of the Malaysia-Singapore Society of Jesus, Jesuit priests from Malaysia and Singapore, and clergy from the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu.

In his homily, Archbishop John reminded the newly ordained priest of his duty to serve Christ as Teacher, Priest, and Shepherd, helping to build and grow the Church into the people of God, a holy temple.

Reflecting on his journey, Fr Nalerin shared, "During the second week of my arrival at the cathedral here, Archbishop John and some

priests asked me how I found my vocation. I realised that my vocation not only began in this archdiocese but also flourished here. Indeed, I was born and raised in this parish, and I was baptised here as a baby. Baptism is not merely a past event marking entry into the Christian community; it is a sacrament that continues to confer grace in the present.

"Indeed it has been 12 years since I joined the Jesuits. It's a long journey but well worth it. As the Jesuits understand, ordination is not the beginning of a journey, nor the end of formation, but a continuous journey with the risen Lord."

Fr Nalerin expressed gratitude to the Parish Pastoral Council of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Church of Mary Immaculate, and St Paul's Dontozidon, for their efforts in making the celebration memorable.

Archbishop John, in his thanksgiving speech, emphasised the dual joy for the

Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu and the Jesuits of the Malaysia-Singapore region, celebrating one of their own committing his life to the Church and the Society of Jesus. The regional superior, Fr Francis at the thanksgiving dinner, expressed hope that Fr Nalerin would use the gift of the priesthood to further the work of the Lord and the Kingdom of God.

On August 1, Fr Nalerin celebrated his first Mass at the Church of Holy Nativity in Terawi.

Born in Kota Kinabalu, Fr Nalerin joined the Society of Jesus on June 22, 2012, and was ordained a deacon on February 4, 2023, in Madrid, Spain. In May of that year, he completed his theology formation at Universidad Pontificia Comillas in Madrid, where he is currently pursuing a licentiate in Sacred Theology (Spirituality).

He will serve at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart for two months before returning to Madrid to continue his studies.



Fr Nalerin Erone with Archbishop John Wong.

Redemptorists welcome two novices into the community

IPOH: After a 37-year hiatus, the Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help (OMPH) celebrated the first profession of two novices into the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. On July 14, Bro Nicholas Narin Martin and Bro Hilary Handrie Lim, from the Vice-Province of Ipoh, took their first religious vows towards the holy priesthood. The ceremony and Mass was presided over by Fr

Victorino A. Cueto CSsR, the Vice-Provincial Superior of Malaysia and Singapore.

The profession ceremony comprised seven parts: the Calling and Presentation; the Examination of Candidates; the Blessing of the habit, cincture, crucifix, and rosary; the Presentation of the Signs of Profession; the Wearing of the Signs of Profession; the First Profession and Giving of the Rule of Life, and

the Signing of Documents.

In a touching moment, the parents of the two novices stood before the altar, presenting their sons to Holy Mother Church. Fr Victorino warmly welcomed the two young men into the Redemptorist Community. After the examination of the candidates, Fr Victorino blessed the Redemptorist habit, cincture, crucifix, and rosary, each symbolising different aspects of religious life. The habit represents the poverty of Christ, the cincture signifies chastity, the crucifix symbolises obedience to Christ, and the rosary underscores the Redemptorists' dedication to the Blessed Mother.

The ceremony concluded with the two brothers receiving the constitution and statutes of the Congregation and signing the document of their religious profession. The Kiss of Peace, shared with warm smiles and hugs among all the confreres present and the brothers, sealed their admittance and acceptance into the Congregation.

Bro Nicholas and Bro Hilary will continue their journey of learning, training, and service for another four years before being ordained as priests. In his homily, Fr Philip Lai, CSsR, emphasised that God equips ordinary people with extraordinary powers to fulfil His mis-

sion. He noted the priests' authority to preach repentance, cast out demons, and heal the sick, highlighting their essential roles in the community.

The two novices reflected on their journey to the Redemptorist community. Bro Nicholas, previously a physiotherapist contemplating marriage, felt called to the priesthood during a novena to the Holy Spirit amidst his brother's illness. Despite initial uncertainty, he found peace and fulfilment in his decision. Bro Handrie, a former radiographer and the eldest of seven in a non-Christian family, converted to Catholicism and felt an overwhelming love that led him to the priesthood. Despite familial challenges, he embraced his faith and calling, feeling blessed and grateful. Both expressed contentment and a deep sense of purpose in their vocations.

The ceremony was a poignant reminder of the declining number of vocations to the priesthood, particularly in Malaysia. The professions of Bro Nicholas and Bro Hilary bring hope for renewed priestly vocations. The celebration concluded with a lunch hosted by the Redemptorist Community, where the newly professed brothers radiated peace and holiness as they interacted with the congregation.

— By Elaine Jeyakumar-Wong



The two novices taking their first religious vows in front of Fr Victorino A. Cueto, CSsR, Vice-Provincial Superior of Malaysia and Singapore. (photo/James Gough)

Formation for new faith sharers

KULIM, Kedah: The Penang Diocesan Prison Ministry recently conducted a formation and guideline session for new faith sharers at the Church of the Sacred Heart. The session was led by chairperson Anthony Andrew, with Peter Teh managing the administrative tasks, and Steven Phillips Anthony serving as the formator.

Msgr Henry Rajoo opened the session with a prayer and blessing, welcoming both new and current faith sharer members. The parish priest acknowledged everyone present

as being chosen by God's calling and guided by the Holy Spirit. He emphasised their role as instruments to their brothers and sisters in prison, citing Matthew 25:36: "I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."

Msgr Henry highlighted that prisoners are yearning for God's love and missing their families, waiting to return to their loved ones with renewed hope. He stressed the duty of Catholics to proclaim God's Word to them.



At the end of the session, the formator reminded all faith sharers to adhere to the procedures and regulations set by the head of the Prison Department and the Penang

Diocesan Prison Ministry. The event also marked a significant milestone as the ministry celebrated its tenth anniversary. — **By John Kuppasawary**

Alor Gajah chapel celebrates feast of St Anne

By Bernard Anthony

MELAKA: The Chapel of St Anne in Alor Gajah celebrated its parish feast from July 25 -28. Fr Moses Rayappan, chapel administrator and parish priest of the Church of St Francis Xavier, Melaka delivered sermons for all the Masses in Tamil and English, while Msgr Peter Ng from Kluang delivered the homily for the Mass in Mandarin on July 28.

Fr Moses' homilies covered sub-themes such as *Walking Together in Communion* and *Listening with the Heart*. He also administered the anointing of the sick on July 26. The festivities culminated on July 27 with the main feast day Mass, attended by more than 1,000 faithful. The theme for the feast day was *Celebrating God's Love*, which continued to be the focus of the



Fr Moses Rayappan blessing the congregation with holy water.

English Mass on July 28, attended by over 500 parishioners.

Large tents were erected to accommodate the crowds during the daily novenas before

each Mass. Fr Moses highlighted the importance of revering Sts Joachim and Anne, the parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary and maternal grandparents of Jesus Christ. Many

faithful sought St Anne's intercession, offering flowers and lighting candles at a small shrine adjacent to the chapel.

In his homily, Fr Moses emphasised the significance of God's love and the universal need for love as demonstrated through Jesus Christ. He encouraged the congregation to cherish the gift of faith, love, and life given by God. He also stressed the importance of preserving the faith for future generations and understanding the true essence of 'Agape' love — unconditional and sacrificial.

After the Mass, Fr Moses thanked the chapel committee and the choir from SFX Melaka for their contributions to the feast day preparations. He also mentioned the need for a new chapel building to replace the current one, built in 1968 and now old and dilapidated. The celebration concluded with light refreshments in the chapel grounds.

Departure — Pilgrims on a journey

PETALING JAYA: The month-long celebration of the Feast of St Ignatius concluded with a thought-provoking talk titled *Departure – A Pilgrim from Earth to Heaven*, delivered by Fr Lawrence Ng, CDD, parish priest of the Church of St Ignatius (SIC) in Kelana Jaya. Held in the parish's rooftop hall, the event attracted over 300 parishioners from SIC and neighbouring parishes.

Fr Lawrence approached the often-taboo topic of death with both meaningful insights and humour, easing the apprehension among attendees. He guided the audience through a pilgrimage from birth to death, emphasising that while we know our birth dates, the date of our passing remains unknown. He underscored the importance of reflecting on fundamental questions about life and death, quoting Confucius: "While you do not know

life, how can you know death?" Fr Lawrence reassured participants that, through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, death is not the end but a transition to a new existence.

Fr Lawrence shared his experiences with death, both within his family and among parishioners, reassuring the audience that death is a common human experience. He addressed and dispelled several superstitions, such as the belief that one should turn away when a coffin is being closed and carried away. Instead, he emphasised that showing love and respect for our deceased loved ones involves witnessing their departure to their final resting place.

Fr Lawrence also clarified the Church's stance on burial and cremation, noting that ashes may not be scattered at sea or on land, as the body remains the temple of the Holy Spirit, even in death. He confirmed that

Catholics can donate their bodies for medical and scientific research, which is considered an act of charity. Additionally, he mentioned that memorial Masses can be celebrated, and often, the medical department covers the funeral expenses of the donors.

Following a coffee break, a Chinese song about God's grace was played, reinforcing the idea that even death is a grace and sacrament. Fr Lawrence shared four important lessons in love: expressing gratitude, seeking forgiveness, declaring love, and saying goodbye, as essential practices for both living and departing with peace.

The final segment of the event took place in the church proper, where a Catholic Mass for the Dead was re-enacted with a real coffin as the centrepiece. Fr Lawrence's detailed explanations made the liturgy, prayers, and hymns more impactful. Many participants were visibly moved, with some showing emotional responses while paying their last respects. Fr Lawrence's sensitivity extended to those who needed healing from unresolved issues, offering additional time for silent reflection.

Fr Lawrence concluded by reminding everyone that our lives are in God's hands and that death does not have dominion over us. The event was well-received, providing comfort and clarity about the journey from life to death and reaffirming the belief that we return to God, our loving and merciful Creator.

The talk was also a timely observance of World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, established by Pope Francis. Youth engaged with the elderly in tea-time games and lucky draws, with Fr Lawrence and assistant parish priest Fr Martin Then, CDD. — **By Teresa and Agnes Tee**

Sibu cathedral celebrates 39th anniversary



Bishop Joseph Hii with clergy during the Mass.

SIBU: Over 2,000 parishioners gathered for the 39th anniversary dedication Mass of the Sacred Heart Cathedral. The Mass was presided over by Bishop Joseph Hii, with Msgr Michael Lee, Rector Fr Philip Hu, and assistant priests, Capuchin Fr Raphael Samosir and Fr Edward Raymond, concelebrating.

In his homily, Bishop Joseph expressed gratitude for the three pioneering lay leaders instrumental in building the Sacred Heart Church in 1985: Parish Council chairman Sir William Kiew Mee Teck, treasurer Sir Paul Lee Kung Seng, and Building Committee chairman Dato Robert Lau Hoi Chew. "They must be smiling from Heaven, seeing us gathered here tonight to worship in spirit and in truth in this temple of God," he said.

The bishop also emphasised the importance of encountering God in our lives and worshipping Him in spirit and truth, reminding the congregation that "we are the temple of the Holy Spirit."



A Mass for the Dead being re-enacted with a real coffin as the centrepiece.

Caritas MJD leads mangrove restoration project

Karen-Ann Theseira

JOHOR BAHRU: On the morning of July 28, excited participants gathered at Church of the Immaculate Conception, for a bus ride to the mangrove planting site at the Sungai Pulai Forest Reserve, Pontian. Bishop Bernard Paul and 13 staff from MAJODI Centre were among the participants, including Bangladeshi Rahman and Indonesian Erliawan.

Upon arrival at the designated planting area, participants were met by the friendly staff from Jabatan Perhutanan Negeri Johor and a short briefing was provided. Sticks had been placed in rows to indicate where the 450 saplings were to be planted — of which 250 saplings were generously sponsored by the Diocese of Malacca Johore. Participants got down and dirty in the mud amidst the laughter and chatter. The Malaysian Nature Society of Johor works closely with Jabatan Perhutanan Negeri Johor on many such projects and members Belinda, Mark and Lai Peng were on site to support the event with their experience and knowledge.

School teacher and nature enthusiast Anna Tan from the Church of St Theresa, Melaka,



hopes to promote such programmes to her students. Mangroves are vital to Malaysia's ecological-system. Mangroves protect villages near coastlines and riverbanks from environmental risks like flooding and tsunamis. Their dense roots help and build soils while providing critical habitat for diverse marine and terrestrial flora and fauna. *Mangrove Restoration ++*, is a Caritas MJD event, organised by Creation Justice Commission MJD, in conjunction with the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem on July 26.

A hearty lunch and fellowship

followed at Kukup. It was a nice break to interact and appreciate the calm water and lush greenery of the surroundings. Josephine Oracoy from Church of St Simon, Labis reiterated the need to grow more trees to combat rising temperatures. Anna Tay, Founder and President of I-CARE Cancer Support Association JB and a parishioner of Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Johor Bahru, shared her keen interest in the preservation of the environment. Student of Bio-Medical Science, Chloe Lai raised her concerns about nature falling victim to over-development.

A short boat ride from the Kukup



Volunteers planting the mangrove saplings at the Sungai Pulai Forest Reserve in Pontian, Johor.

International Ferry Terminal brought participants to Taman Negara Pulau Kukup, a unique island covering an area of 647 hectares. It is an important protected area for plants and animals associated with mangroves and some species that are considered rare or endangered. Participants had a pleasant time on the boardwalk under the cool shade of the trees. Some used the time to snap pictures; mudskippers, monkeys, the vegetation for the picture taking competition. A spectacular aerial view from the observation platform

was a highlight for many.

The final stop was Uncle Tan Orchard and Stingless Bee Farm. Participants sampled organic fruit and drinks, with owner Jackie Tan explaining the role of the bees as pollinators. It was quite a treat to see the bees up close and taste the honey from their propolis rich egg-shaped honey pots. There were many products available for sale; bottles of honey, soap and lip balm. As participants made their way up the bus, they were undoubtedly taking home with them a renewed appreciation and love for creation.

Holy Redeemer parish celebrates the elderly

KLANG: The Church of the Holy Redeemer marked the Fourth World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly with a special Mass for the elderly, celebrated by parish priest Fr Andrew Kooi.

Reflecting on the Pope's recent message, "Do not cast me off in my old age," Fr Andrew highlighted the invaluable role grandparents play in our lives. After the Mass, he offered blessings to all the grandparents and elderly present.

The event, organised by the Family Life Ministry in collaboration with the Senior Parishioners Ministry, attracted approximately 300 attendees. The celebration featured a variety of delicious foods and a lively programme of entertainment from various lan-

guage groups.

Highlights included a captivating performance by Gerard, the in-house busking master, a delightful presentation from the Chinese Catechism group, and mesmerising dances by the KUBM group.

The seniors also took to the dance floor, demonstrating their spirited enthusiasm. A particularly touching highlight of the day was when grandchildren served lunch to their grandparents, adding a personal and loving touch to the festivities.

A heartfelt thank you was extended to Fr Andrew and the council members for their support in making the celebration a success, honouring the cherished grandparents and elderly in the parish. —

By Betty Kandavanam



Message of love and unity from Dubai group

SEGAMAT: On July 16, a diverse and motivated group from the City Gates non-Denominational Church in Dubai arrived in Malaysia with a mission to foster love, friendship, and understanding. Comprising individuals of all ages, this group was dedicated to breaking down barriers and building trust and compassion among communities.

The visit was made possible through the efforts of leaders from member churches of the Segamat Pastors' Fellowship. After months of meticulous planning and prayer, the mission came to fruition. The group, which includes entire families, couples, and single individuals, shares a common goal reminiscent of the early Christians: to spread the Gospel and share the Good News.

These ordinary individuals, with regular jobs and responsibilities, took time off to pursue their spiritual mission, demonstrating a strong commitment to their faith. The group funded their trip entirely on their own, showcasing their dedication and missionary spirit.

During their stay in Segamat, the group engaged in various programmes organised in collaboration with the Segamat Pastors' Fellowship. Despite a demanding schedule, they were enthusiastic participants, eager to contribute and connect with the local Christian community. The Fellowship made every effort to ensure a memorable and pleasant experience for the visitors, as a gesture of appreciation for their missionary zeal.

On July 20 and 21, the group

led a three-hour 'praise & worship' session at the St Joseph's Hall, Church of St Philip. The sessions were filled with joyful singing, inspiring sharing and prayer, leaving a profound impact on all attendees. The congregation felt deeply blessed and uplifted by the experience, with many expressing gratitude for the outpouring of the Spirit's love and grace.

The Church of St Philip, a pioneer member of the Segamat Pastors' Fellowship, has collaborated with other Christian groups for over two decades to spread the Good News and support the poor and marginalised. The visit of the Dubai group was another testament to the ongoing commitment to unity and service within the Christian community. — By Philip Packium



Fr Andrew Kooi celebrating with grandparents and the elderly of his parish.



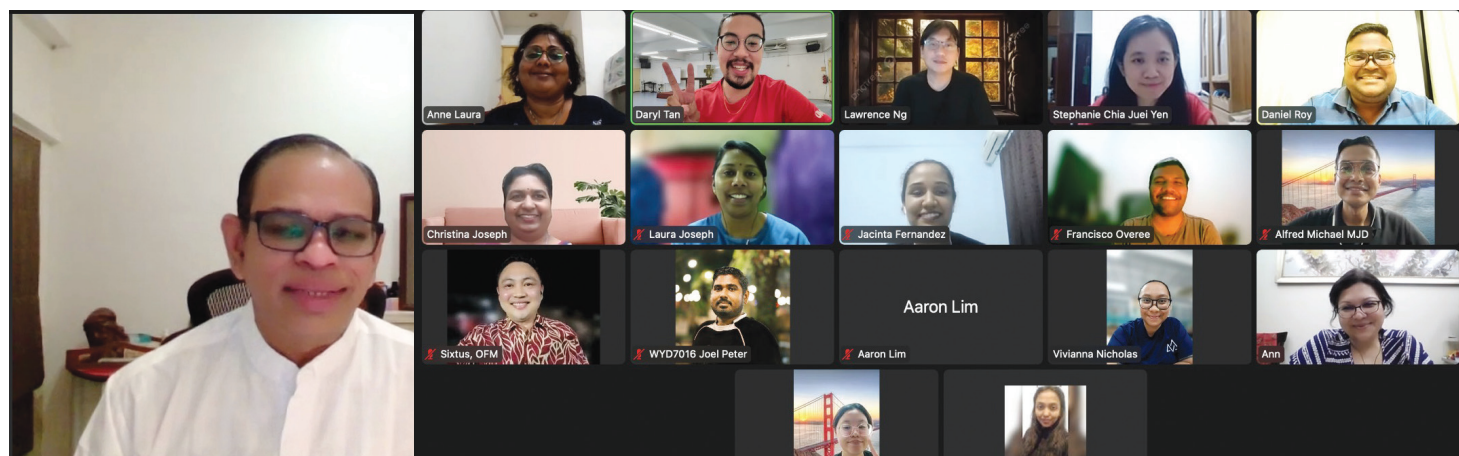
Preparing participants for the RPA2024

KUALA LUMPUR: In anticipation of the upcoming Regional Pastoral Assembly 2024 (RPA2024), scheduled to take place from August 25 – 27 at MAJODI Centre in Plentong, Johor, a zoom session was held recently for participants from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

The session, facilitated by the Core-Animating Team consisting of Msgr Jude Miranda, Fr Simon Labrooy, and Fr Dr Lawrence Ng, provided essential tools and insights to help participants prepare for the assembly.

Daryl Tan, Head of the RPA Secretariat, moderated the session, opening with a warm welcome and an introduction of the speakers. He emphasised the significance of the RPA2024 as a pivotal step towards the Malaysian Pastoral Convention 2026 (MPC2026), highlighting its importance in the journey towards a unified Malaysian Church, including Sabah, Sarawak, and Semenanjung.

Msgr Jude Miranda elaborated on the purpose of the RPA2024, stressing its role in discerning key areas of concern such as Family, Church, Ecology, and Society, as outlined by the Malaysian Bishops. He noted that the assembly's insights would provide valuable pastoral guidance for the Church in Malaysia. "The RPA will discern the areas of



Family, Church, Ecology, and Society, as set by the Malaysian Bishops. These are pastoral concerns we all share in common," he said.

Fr Simon Labrooy detailed the timetable and structure of the assembly, emphasising the importance of the synodal process, particularly the "Conversation in the Spirit" method. He highlighted that this method is central to the assembly's activities, fostering a spirit of communion, participation, and mission. "This process is at the heart of the RPA," Fr. Simon explained. "It ensures that all participants engage in deep, prayerful discernment, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide our discussions and decisions."

Fr Dr Lawrence Ng provided practical guidance on preparing for the RPA2024. He underscored the importance of reviewing the synthesis document covering the four key areas and reflecting on the issues raised during the diocesan assemblies. He urged participants to write down their reflections and be ready to share them during the assembly. "Your attendance and participation in this pre-meeting are invaluable," Fr Lawrence added. "This preparation is not just for you, but a service to the entire Church."

Christina Joseph, another member of the secretariat from the KL Archdiocese, offered practical advice, reminding participants to

travel light and bring their own towels and toiletries. This ensured that participants were well-prepared for the event's logistics. Similar zoom sessions will be conducted for the Penang and Malacca Johore Dioceses to prepare participants remotely.

The facilitators emphasised that the success of the assembly depends on the participants' commitment to deep, prayerful discernment and active participation. As the Church in Peninsular Malaysia continues its journey towards MPC2026, the RPA2024 stands as a crucial step in shaping the future of the Church and ensuring its responsiveness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

SFA holds discernment of the Spirit session

CHERAS: "Everything can draw us closer to God, or away from Him". Fr Larry Tan SJ (*pic*) said this during a session on discernment of the Spirit, at the Church of St Francis of Assisi (SFA) recently. The Jesuit priest drew upon the teachings of St Ignatius of Loyola to illustrate how God can be found in all aspects of life — the good and the bad; the miracles and the disasters.

Fr Larry shared his experience as a cancer survivor. In 2020, he was diagnosed with prostate cancer, a situation initially filled with anxiety and uncertainty. However, this challenging experience drew him closer to God. He felt that the Lord used this time to reveal deeper truths about himself, echoing the journey of St Ignatius. Similarly, St Ignatius, after being bedridden for a year due to a leg injury from a cannonball, discovered the lives of saints, which ultimately led to his own sainthood.

One of the activities that aided Fr Larry's recovery was laughter therapy. He recounted the story of three monks who would visit

communities without speaking a word, instead sharing the gift of laughter. This simple act proved to be a powerful way to relieve stress and fill people's hearts with joy.

When discerning whether to keep a certain item, habit or lifestyle choice, it's important to assess its impact on our relationship with God. Often, we see things through a "dualistic mindset" (also known as an 'either or' mentality). This prevents us from finding the goodness in what we label as 'bad' or the negative side of 'good'. Instead, we must take a "holistic and inclusive approach" towards life, realising that some events are preordained by God. To do this, Fr Larry introduced a new concept: Spiritual Snacking. This means reciting the Trinitarian Mantra twice a day for either three or five minutes as a reminder to invite the Spirit into our everyday lives.

He also introduced spiritual exercises, which would lead to freedom from and freedom for. This is built upon several principles by St Ignatius: we exist to love

and serve God as best we can, we are the stewards of creation, and we consciously choose who we will be, in relation to His love. St Ignatius lived life as if everything was a miracle. We, too, should pray for the faith to share in this belief.

Lastly, he set out the guidelines for discernment of the Spirit. For individuals who continuously struggle with sin, destructive elements will draw them away from God, providing a false sense of comfort. Yet, it is in the sting of conscience that God will attempt to call them back to the right path. On the other hand, for those who cleanse their sins and strive towards a holy life, the evil one places obstacles in their way. The messages that bring inner joy and peace are from God, whereas the evil spirit causes agitation and turmoil. Fr Larry also spoke about dealing with desolation. We must accept it as either a test or an opportunity to deepen our relationship with God, while remembering that the Holy Spirit is always there to help us. Patience, perseverance and prayer would



help with this.

On behalf of the parish of St Francis of Assisi, Fr Paul Cheong OFM Cap expressed his gratitude to Fr Larry for his teachings. The participants left feeling enlightened and in anticipation of more similar events to come. — **By Isabel Lee Xin Ying**

'Deliver us from evil'

PLENTONG, Johor: The Diocese of Malacca Johore's Deliverance and Exorcism Office (DEO) held its second Deliverance and Healing Programme (DHP2) over five consecutive days, from July 5 to 10, featuring speaker Agnes Lim.

The programme attracted two priests and 20 lay participants, some of whom returned for a refresher course. Attendees included individuals from Melaka, Singapore, and local Johoreans. The objective was to equip both clergy and laity with the necessary training strategies and essential activities to achieve the desired outcomes for the Deliverance and Healing Ministry (DHM) and the DEO.

Participants were also taught to identify

their own 'Open Doors' — such as wounds and traumas from childhood or adulthood — and to use the 5 Keys Formula to find true freedom as children of God. This self-awareness approach is a crucial tool for ministering to others, as the saying goes, "you can't give what you don't have."

The essential spirit needed in this ministry is LOVE, as only love heals and frees. On the final day, Bishop Bernard Paul spoke words of encouragement to the participants and distributed certificates of participation. Feedback from attendees included remarks such as, "I was enlightened!", "It was uplifting!", and "My faith was strengthened." Deliverance is ultimately about glorifying the Lord Who is active in our lives.



Catholic basilica to be built in Indonesia's new capital

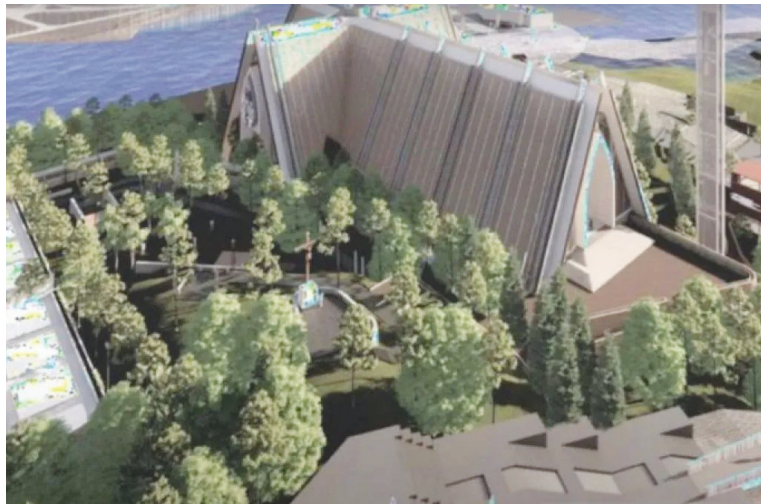
JAKARTA: In a significant development, a Catholic basilica dedicated to St Francis Xavier is set to be constructed in Nusantara, the new Indonesian capital located on the east coast of the island of Borneo, in the province of East Kalimantan.

This announcement comes from the "General Direction for the Orientation of the Catholic Community" within the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. The Ministry, which has six General Directions for each of the recognised religions in Indonesia – Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism – plays a pivotal role in managing state relations with these religious communities.

The basilica project, which has been approved by the Indonesian Bishops' Conference, is scheduled to commence in October with the laying of the first stone. In

addition to the basilica, the project will include a bishopric seat, pastoral facilities, and necessary offices. This dedication to St Francis Xavier honours the Jesuit missionary who landed on the Moluccas Islands on February 14, 1546, marking the beginning of his mission in the Indonesian archipelago. The saint is already commemorated in the diocese of Amboina with a cathedral and a monument in Ambon, the capital of the Moluccas.

The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, particularly its Direction for the Catholic Community, is overseeing the design of the basilica. The Ministry of Public Works will handle the construction, while the Direction for the Catholic Community, in collaboration with the Indonesian Church, will manage the interiors, decoration, and liturgical furnishings. The basilica's location,



The design of Basilica St Fransiskus Xaverius in Nusantara, East Kalimantan.

close to the National Mosque, mirrors the model in Jakarta where the Catholic Cathedral of "Our Lady of the Assumption" and the Istiqlal Mosque stand opposite each other, symbolising religious harmony.

This news comes as part of the broader Nusantara project, a \$32 billion (RM144.46 billion) initiative championed by President Joko Widodo. Known as "Jokowi," the president has recently moved into the newly completed eagle-

shaped presidential palace, the "Garuda Palace," and is pushing to complete state-building work before his resignation in October. President-elect Prabowo Subianto has vowed to continue the development of Nusantara after taking office.

President Widodo aims to celebrate Indonesia's Independence Day on August 17 at the Nusantara palace, further accelerating the work schedule of the presidential staff. Despite challenges such as a lack of foreign investment and land-related issues, Jokowi has initiated the construction of various infrastructures, including schools and offices, to ensure the project's progress.

This basilica project not only marks a significant milestone for the Catholic community in Indonesia but also underscores the spirit of religious harmony envisioned in the planning of Nusantara. — *Fides*

HK diocese to send delegation to Singapore for papal visit

HONG KONG: The Hong Kong diocese plans to send a 40-member delegation to Singapore to help them experience the Church's unity when Pope Francis visits the island nation in September, says a Church official.

Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Ha Chishing of Hong Kong, who is scheduled to lead the delegation, said delegates will be able to "appreciate the unity and communion of the universal Church" during the papal programme.

The delegates will get a chance to meet "other delegations from different dioceses all over the world, especially in Asia," and it "demonstrates the universal character of the Church and its unity," Bishop Ha said, according to a July 26 report



in the diocesan weekly Sunday Examiner.

The prelate is scheduled to lead the delegation to attend Pope Francis' visit to Singapore, themed *Unity — Hope*.

The delegation is scheduled to leave for Singapore on Sept 11, when Pope Francis arrives for a three-day visit. The report said Cardinal Stephen Chow of Hong Kong will also join them.

"As the Pope comes to Singapore, we have to realise that he is a symbol of the communion of the Church,"

said Ha, stressing that the trip to Singapore remains an opportunity to witness the Church's unity.

The report said the Hong Kong diocese is sending a delegation following the Singapore archdiocese's invitation to all members of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) to organise a group to attend the papal Mass in Singapore.

Although Hong Kong does not have a bishops' conference to become an FABC member, it is considered an associate member. — *ucanews.com*

Additional tickets to be released for Singapore Papal Mass

SINGAPORE: The demand for Papal Mass seats in Singapore has exceeded expectations, leading organisers to release more tickets through a second ballot.

Lawrence Chan, head of the Pope Francis Singapore 2024 Ticketing Subcommittee, said that at least six out of ten registrants in the initial ballot are likely to secure a seat.

Results of the first ballot was on August 5. "Those unsuccessful in this round will be automatically enrolled into a second ballot," said Lawrence

Registration for the second ballot opened on August 5 and will close on August 18 at

11.59pm, with results released on August 19, according to *Catholic News*, the official newspaper of the Archdiocese of Singapore.

In response to high demand, organisers have worked with National Stadium officials to create 6,000 more seats, increasing the total capacity to 48,600.

These new seats offer limited views of the altar and stage, but attendees can follow the proceedings on video screens.

For those unable to attend, the Archdiocese will livestream the Papal Mass on its YouTube channel, enabling broader participation from home. — *LiCAS News*

Diocesan Youth Day events inspire hope in the youth of Port-Gentil

GABON: The Diocese of Port-Gentil recently celebrated the third edition of its Diocesan Youth Day, a milestone event marked by Bishop Eusebius Chinekezi's positive assessment.

Bishop Chinekezi highlighted that the event aimed to infuse joy and hope among the youth while nurturing their faith. Central to this year's celebration was the theme of hope, reflecting the day's focus on inspiring young people to stay united with Christ and live out their faith actively.

In the context of Gabon's ongoing political transition, following the August 30, 2023 coup d'état that deposed President Ali Bongo, the event provided a timely opportunity for youth engagement. The interim president, General Brice Oligui Nguema, has since initiated a

national dialogue aimed at restoring civilian governance and revitalizing the country.

Bishop Chinekezi noted that the Diocesan Youth Day offered a platform for young people from various parishes to unite and strengthen their commitment to Christ amidst their challenges. He emphasised that while the event was particularly suited for the holiday period when youth have more free time, the Diocese remains dedicated to supporting their spiritual journey throughout the year, including during school periods.

The Port-Gentil Diocese's initiative also aimed to include those who could not attend World Youth Day in Portugal or the National Youth Day in Libreville, underscoring the Diocese's commitment to reaching out to all young people in its care. — *Vatican News*



Young people in the Diocese of Port-Gentil, Gabon.

Seven pilgrimage routes to Notre-Dame

PARIS: In anticipation of the reopening of Notre-Dame de Paris, seven French pilgrimages began on July 28 to meet at the medieval Catholic cathedral in September.

The legendary church's reopening "is a historic moment and an opportunity to march behind the Blessed Virgin," reads the Les 7 Routes Notre-Dame website.

Named for the Blessed Mother, Notre-Dame de Paris (Our Lady of Paris) is an 861-year-old monument beloved and revered by Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

In 2019 the world mourned the damage done to the 315-foot-tall spire and roof of the cathedral in a devastating fire. The fire originated under the roof, spreading through the wooden rafters of the attic and consuming the spire, which collapsed.

Except for the main altar, all the works of art in the cathedral and the reliquary containing what is believed to be the crown of thorns were rescued.

People around the world contributed to the restoration of the structure. Worldwide donors from 150 countries gave about \$928 million (RM4,173 million). The cathedral is set to reopen on December 8.

For seven weeks, pilgrims on seven different routes will process under the patronage of seven different states. Each pilgrim-



The main facade of Notre Dame de Paris Cathedral in Paris. (CNAphoto/Riccardo Milani/Hans Lucas)

age started in a religiously significant site usually named for its patron saint, each located along the French border.

Pilgrims will meet in front of Notre-Dame at the end of the pilgrimage on Sept 14 and will take part in a prayer vigil. The

following day, pilgrims are set to attend a Mass celebrated at the Church of Saint-Sulpice by Archbishop Laurent Ulrich of Paris.

The endeavour is supported by the president of the French Bishops' Conference,

Archbishop Éric de Moulins-Beaufort of Reims, as well as many other bishops, according to the pilgrimage website.

The pilgrimages began at religiously significant sites bordering France, from the stunning Mont-Saint-Michel, a tidal island town topped with an abbey, to Saint-Martin-de-Ré, a port town off the coast of France.

The routes are named for the following saints: St Michael the Archangel; St Anne, the mother of Mary; St Martin; St James the Greater; St Joseph the Carpenter; St Joan of Arc; and the great pilgrim St Benoit-Joseph Labre.

Each set of pilgrims will carry an image of the route's patron saint.

A special Marian crown route will circle the suburbs of Paris carrying a statue of Our Lady of Tenderness, stopping by historic churches and visiting those in need in places like nursing homes.

"At a time when the Church seems to be crumbling, a new fervour is taking shape," the pilgrimage's website reads.

"God's people are on the march. They are called to give thanks and to implore Mary to spread the good news of the Gospel in people's hearts." — **By Kate Quiñones, CNA**

Mexican government urged to 'rebuild the mental health system'

NEW MEXICO: Echoing recent calls to action from Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, the Catholic Bishops of New Mexico have spoken out on the need for the government, non-profits, and citizens, to all come together to address public safety challenges in the state.

In a joint statement issued on July 29, the bishops specifically highlighted the need to tackle mental health issues and alcohol and drug addictions, which they identify as the primary root causes of public safety concerns in New Mexico. They proposed that a starting point should be the creation of a public-private campaign.

"We believe that state leaders, anchor organisations, and advocates can collaborate to secure funding for the treatment of mental health, alcohol, and drug addictions,"

the bishops stated. "This approach would prioritise necessary resources before discussing mandatory court-ordered treatments."

The bishops emphasised that addressing behavioural health issues is crucial before considering court-mandated treatment. "If we can't provide services for voluntary treatment, how can we ever implement a system for mandatory treatment?" they questioned. "This responsibility lies with the government, non-profits, and every citizen of the state, as the crisis includes individuals with mental health issues who often turn to drugs for self-medication."

Governor Grisham has proposed multiple initiatives related to mandatory court-ordered treatment, including expanding court-supervised outpatient treatment for

individuals with mental illness and broadening eligibility for involuntary mental health treatment. The bishops argue that before these proposals are discussed by lawmakers, it is crucial to increase the availability of resources.

The bishops of New Mexico maintained a focus on the urgent need for mental health resources in the state, expressing optimism that collective efforts can lead to significant improvements. "Together, we can rebuild the state's mental health system," the bishops concluded. "We, the Catholic Bishops of New Mexico, remain hopeful that we can accomplish this task as successfully as the Early Childhood campaign, with the hope that these challenges will not take a decade to resolve." — **By John Lavenburg, Crux**



(Unsplash photo)

French bishops issue statement on Olympic ceremony backlash

PARIS: In a statement released the day after the Olympic Games' opening ceremony, the French Bishops' Conference (CEF) praised the "wonderful moments of beauty, joy, and rich emotions," but expressed their thoughts "to Christians worldwide who were hurt by the excess, and provocation of certain scenes."

Although the ceremony was a "marvelous display of beauty and joy, rich in emo-

tion and universally acclaimed," they said, it "unfortunately included scenes of mockery and derision of Christianity, which we deeply regret."

"We would like to thank the members of other religious denominations who have expressed their solidarity with us," the French bishops wrote. "We are thinking of all the Christians on every continent who have been hurt by the outrageousness and provocation

of certain scenes. We want them to understand that the Olympic celebration goes far beyond the ideological biases of a few artists," they added.

The bishops also stated that the values promoted by sport and Olympism must contribute to the "need for unity and fraternity that our world so desperately needs, while respecting everyone's convictions, around the sport that brings us together."

The General Secretary of the CEF, Fr Hugues de Woillemont, highlighted on the social network X the contradiction between the "displayed inclusivity and the actual exclusion of certain believers. It is unnecessary to hurt consciences to promote fraternity and sisterhood."

Bishop François Touvet, President of the CEF's Communication Council and coadjutor Bishop of the Diocese of Fréjus-Toulon, "strongly associated" himself with the Church of France's statement. On social media, he declared, "I protest, like many, against this scandalous and grave insult to Christians worldwide, not forgetting the other excesses of the show."

Bishop Emmanuel Gobilliard of Digne, the special representative of the Holy See for the

2024 Paris Olympics, said that he was "deeply hurt" after seeing the images of the drag queen table scene on social media.

"What shocked me most is that the freedom of spirit and tone claimed by those who set this up shouldn't be directed against others," Bishop Gobilliard said. "You can make fun of your own ideas, laugh at yourself, why not? But to mock the faith and religion of others in this way ... is very shocking. That was my first reaction."

He contended that the Olympic Games are the last place to create such divisions.

"Why there?" Bishop Gobilliard asked in a conversation with *OSV News*. "It is contrary to the Olympic Charter, to the dimension of unity that is present in its values, to the idea of bringing everyone together, without political and religious demonstrations. Why exclude believers and Christians? It was the last place to do that. We were to respect the spirit of the Olympic Charter. We are out of it now."

In response to requests for explanations, Michaël Aloïsis, spokesperson for the Paris 2024 Olympic Organising Committee, responded, July 27, on Franceinfo: "We stand by our decision to push boundaries." — **Agencies**



Olympic rings seen in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris.



The Jesuit roots of the synod's 'conversations in the spirit'

How do you conduct a “conversation in the Spirit?” At last year’s Synod on Synodality, Catholics heard this term frequently, and they surely will, again, when the second and final session begins in October.

The method, it turns out, has deep roots in a Jesuit form of communal discernment that was developed in Canada after the Second Vatican Council.

Conversations in the Spirit is a method of communal discernment that aims to help a group of people listen to the Holy Spirit through conversations with one another. Participants, having reflected privately on questions distributed earlier, gather in a circle with a facilitator. They begin with personal introductions, if necessary, and a prayer. Then each person shares for a limited amount of time (at the synod this was three minutes’ maximum) those things that stood out to them during their prayer and reflection on the questions.

The group takes a few minutes of silence to reflect on what they have heard, and then, in the second round of sharing, each person takes a turn saying what stood out to them from what the others shared. During this phase, some throughlines or tensions may emerge, but they are not yet discussed. The group again takes a few minutes of silence, and then, in the third round, they discuss what emerged in the previous rounds. At the synod, each group was invited to document at this point “convergences” and “divergences” of opinions from their conversations, along with any proposals or open questions they wanted to raise.

Historical developments and key figures

While the method has certainly gained popularity in the last two years because of its use in the synod, it is not new. The method is rooted in what Jesuits call the “Canadian method” of spiritual conversation, which was developed in Canada and the northeastern United States beginning in the 1970s, and the method grew richer in Canada and Belgium in subsequent decades.

After Vatican II, interest in individually

directed retreats swelled, and some Jesuits, including the Canadians John English, John Veltri, and John Wickham, began to explore how to create something similar for groups. The three were seen as seminal members of the Montreal Directed Retreats movement rooted at the Guelph Centre of Spirituality (now called Loyola House/Ignatian Jesuit Centre) in the city of Guelph, Ontario.

Because the Spiritual Exercises are meant to guide individual retreatants through discernment of a decision, the exercises done by a group could be a type of communal discernment — for example, about the identity and future of the group.

With Fr English, the American Jesuit George Schemel, himself the founder of multiple spirituality centres in the United States, co-founded a group called Ignatian Spiritual Exercises for the Corporate Person (ISECP), which included James Borbely, SJ, Maria Carew, RSHM, John Haley, and Sr Judith Roemer. The group developed a method for discernment in common, which it published in three volumes, one of which was released in 1989. The method guided groups through three questions: Who are you, as a group, before God? What do you do (or what are you called to do)? How do you do it?

Peter Bisson, SJ, recalls Fr Schemel visiting Guelph often to work with Fr English and the ISECP group in the early 1980s, when Fr Bisson was a novice there. He later returned for his tertianship — the final phase of Jesuit formation — to Guelph, where he and the other tertians “breathed, ate and dreamed spiritual conversation and discernment in common” under Fr English’s direction, Fr Bisson wrote in an email interview.

“Because of the influence of ISECP on Loyola House [novitiate in Guelph] and the centrality of Loyola House in the life of the English Canada province, many of the Jesuits of my generation had some exposure to it,” Fr Bisson continued.

Meanwhile, in the mid-1980s, Fr Wickham wrote and gave the first version of his commu-

nal exercises to small groups; he would expand this into a guide whose second edition was published in two parts in 1991. The same year, Fr Schemel and Sr Roemer published a 16-part video series called “Ignatian Spirituality and the Directed Retreat,” geared toward groups, to meet the growing desire from groups for directed Ignatian retreats.

Canadian and Belgian contributions

By the mid-1990s, the communal retreat and discernment model had caught on internationally. In 1995, a Belgian group called ESDAC (*Exercices Spirituelles pour Discernement Apostolique en Commun*) was formed by some Jesuits, translating ISECP’s work into French. To this day, ESDAC leads groups in discernment and has a presence across Europe and in Canada and Lebanon. As the method grew in Belgium, though, it waned in popularity in Canada.

In 2002, Fr Bisson, today one of the most significant promoters of the “Canadian method” in Canada, returned from his doctoral studies in Rome and was tasked with “strengthening [the English Jesuits’] social justice sector with spiritual conversation and discernment in common.” He said the effort was “fruitful, and was the beginning of discernment in common taking root in the English Canada province.”

In 2008, he was asked to put together a toolkit on spiritual conversation and discernment in common, which he did with Earl Smith, SJ and Elaine Regan-Nightingale, who had both been involved in the Jesuits’ Christian Life Communities in Canada. The communities had been working with Fr English and had become “a strong repository of these skills,” Fr Bisson said, “and their skills and knowledge in turn helped renew and spread these skills in the Jesuit province.”

By that point, he said, all of the Jesuit novices in Canada were learning the “Canadian method,” and it was used at province gatherings, including those attended by now-Cardinal Michael Czerny, SJ the prefect of the Vatican’s Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development,

who was influenced by the method.

Global recognition and integration

The “discernment in common” or “spiritual conversation” method gained a global spotlight when it was used at the Jesuits’ 36th General Congregation in 2017 to get the order past an impasse in their conversations. The following year, the French- and English-speaking provinces of the Canadian Jesuits merged and, in 2019, the new province founded a committee called Service for Discernment in Common, which incorporated some of the French province’s work with ESDAC and the English province’s developments from the Guelph school of thought. The group was headed by Laurence Loubières, XMCI who is now superior general of the small (about 100 members) Ignatian-inspired order of Xavières — of which Sr Nathalie Becquart, one of two undersecretaries for the Synod on Synodality, is a member.

The method has now spread through the Jesuits and other Ignatian-inspired orders well beyond Canada — so much so that, according to Fr Bisson, it is no longer widely referred to as the “Canadian method” but simply “spiritual conversation” or “discernment in common.”

Role in the Synod on Synodality

So, how exactly did what was once known as the “Canadian method” make the jump from the Jesuits of Canada to the global Synod on Synodality?

The method was proposed by the synod’s commission on methodology, which was headed by Sr Becquart, she confirmed in an email to America. She had learned the method from the Xavières of Canada, and others on the commission had had personal experience with it as well. Because the commission had been tasked with finding best practices for use at the synod, and because its members had heard from members of the Australian Plenary Council that the method had had positive results there, they proposed it for use at the synod assemblies. — **By Colleen Dulle, America**

Manila Cardinal urges deeper synodality at national meeting of parish priests

MANILA: The Archbishop of Manila urged a renewed focus on the virtues of hospitality, boldness, and hope to enhance the Church’s synodality.

In his homily during the opening Mass of the National Meeting of Parish Priests for the Synod in Manila, on July 29, Cardinal Jose Advincula (*pic*) stressed the need for a welcoming Church, drawing on the example of Martha from the Gospel of Luke.

“Martha was willing to let go of her systems, to let go of her arrangements, to let go of her ‘order,’ so that Jesus could be fully welcomed as He is, as He wills, as He needs, and as He loves,” he said.

The prelate emphasised that the Church must expand its tent and take off its sandals to be a truly welcoming community.

“We might be unconsciously pushing away

the people who need our communion the most, people who often feel that they cannot fit in the Church — sinners, the poor, the marginalised,” he said.

The cardinal highlighted Mary’s defiance of social norms as a model for increasing participation in parish life. He praised Mary’s “boldness of faith” and urged priests to recognise and encourage such boldness in their parishioners.

“Let us include such voices and contributions in the life of our parish communities,” he said.

Cardinal Advincula cited examples of laity who demonstrate remarkable dedication, including those who cross jungles to lead liturgies, and those who remain just amidst corruption. “Let us seek the boldness of Mary so that there can be greater participation in the Church.”

The cardinal called for a revitalised sense of mission, inspired by Lazarus’s emergence from the tomb. “Let us not give in to those factions

who say that our Church is dying, if not dead. The synodal consultations have revealed to us that the Church is alive!”

He encouraged the faithful to reject despair and engage actively in the Church’s mission.

The “National Meeting of Parish Priests for the Synod” brought together over 250 priests from various dioceses to discern ways to rejuvenate their priesthood and parish life. The participants were selected by their bishops to represent a range of experiences and environments.

Organised by the bishops’ conference and the Office for the Promotion of New Evangelization (OPNE), the four-day gathering follows the Vatican-organised international meeting of parish priests held in Sacrofano, Italy from April 29 to May 1.

Fr Jayson Laguerta, OPNE director and one of the 10 Filipino delegates to the international event, said the Manila gathering is a response to Pope Francis’ call to continue the synodal

conversation.

Pope Francis has underscored the vital role of parish priests in the synodal process, asserting that without their commitment, a truly synodal Church cannot be realised.

Laguerta expressed hopes that the gathering would inspire priests to embrace a more communal and participatory leadership style and strengthen the unity among the clergy, setting an example for laypeople to follow.

“We hope to inspire them to be more communal and participatory in their leadership. And so, we would like to introduce and promote the conversation in the spirit as a synodal methodology,” Laguerta said.

“We also hope that this gathering could strengthen the brotherhood of priests because we need to show first that we are synodal so that the lay people that we serve will also be given the cue to be synodal,” he also said. — **LiCAS with reports from Roy Lagarde, CBCP News**

Being a Missionary of Synodality

Vatican News: Tell us how the meeting, 'Parish Priests for the Synod' and Pope Francis' mandate to be 'Missionaries of Synodality' impacted your ministry?

Fr Mwiila: The meeting in Rome on Parish Priests for the Synod remains memorable in my priestly life and as a Christian. It became an eye-opener in my missionary disposition as a Parish Priest. It ignited in me the faith response that demands the courage in me to enter the cloud of mystery, encountering a God who comes as a future. Our deliberations in the Synod of Parish Priests reawakened in me a God who is a surprising future. During the Synod meeting, I realised, and I still do, that the stories told by the Parish Priests became the stories of God because we had gathered in the name of God.

The other impact the Synod meeting left on me is the acceptance that, as Parish Priests, we live among people and journey daily with them. We are the closest to their reality of the Church in the world. We are part of the joys and the sorrows of our parishioners. The joys and sorrows of the parishioners become ours, and our own joys and sorrows become their joys and sorrows. As a Parish Priest, I can truly animate the birth of a synodal Church as I remain open to the dictates of the Holy Spirit.

What are some of the Synodal sessions that you have conducted in Zambia since your return from Rome?

Since my return to Zambia after the meeting in Rome, I have had several formation engagements, and there are still a number lined up in the country. I have since animated diocesan gatherings not just in my diocese but in other dioceses as well. I have spoken with priests, parish communities, lay groups, and seminarians. I have had formation meetings with religious women and men, as well as with members of parliament. People have opened their doors and hearts and want to know and be part of the Synod.

I have participated in a national TV discussion and been on Zambia's national Radio Stations 1 and 2 for interviews and a phone-in programme. It was amazing to answer phone calls from people — some who are not even Catholics!

I have also done some local FM Radio stations such as Byta FM — a private radio station. Not too long ago, I was on Jesuit Chikuni FM Radio. All these have helped animate the synodal process in the country and the Church.

What exactly do you say to the people, priests, or groups you meet about the Synod on Synodality? How do you make it concrete for them?

The message I share concerns the Face of the Synodal Church in the world and the respective communities: We are all disciples

Since returning from a "Parish Priests for the Synod" meeting held in Rome this year, Fr Cletus Mwiila, parish priest of St Mary's Choma Parish in Zambia's Monze Diocese, has been bringing the synodal message to Zambia's parish priests, seminarians, women religious, and local communities. Vatican News spoke to Fr Mwiila about his mission and experiences in Zambia.



Fr Cletus Mwiila, with a community of Masuku in Zambia.

and missionaries. This helps reawaken communities to their Sacramental lives. I also share about the call to weave ties and build communities.

In Zambia, we already have a strong history of Small Christian Communities (SCCs), so I share the message of making the SCCs become communities of change in the light of Synodality. The message promotes active participation in the Church, listening to one another and making sure no one is left behind, promoting a self-sustaining Church lived in communion and the use of leadership as a service rather than the power of domination. My message also facilitates the discovery and use of charisms, vocations and ministries in the communities and among members. Finally, through the Synodal message, I encourage Pope Francis' concept of the Church or parish life, defined as a Hotel of Saints and a Hospital of Sinners. It is a call to inclusivity and a participatory Church that brings everyone on board. No one feels judged or excluded.

You have pioneered Small Christian Communities for children in the Diocese of Monze. What led you to do this, and what



Monze Diocese Bishop Raphael Mweempwa interacts with friends at St Mary's Parish

has been the response from the children and parishioners?

Among the Synodal messages is a call to foster connections and build communities for change. Over the past 50 years in Zambia and the AMECEA Region, the Church has endeavoured to promote the image of the Church as Family, a concept emphasised at the 1994 African Synod. However, the reality on the ground can be challenging, with gaps still existing, such as those between parents, youth, and children. These gaps are often cultural, as many African societies have clearly defined roles for parents, adults, and children.

As we celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) in the AMECEA region, this celebration should be informed by the Synod on Synodality. In our parishes, SCCs for children bear the names of priests, religious men and women, and lay leaders who have served in the local diocese. This helps children understand and appreciate the history of their faith, aligning with Pope Francis's emphasis on the importance of stories and preserving memory.

Children are naturally receptive to their environment and what they are taught. They are empathetic, responsive to goodness, and open to the message and mission of Christ. In our Zambian parishes, the apostolate to children has often centred around Holy

Childhood and similar associations. While these are wonderful, we realised that more could be done with the children. Through SCCs tailored to their interests and level, they have become an integral part of the synodal Church on mission. They exhibit leadership, generosity, and a willingness to share with other children from the resources they gather and save. For example, they visit and donate to children in the local hospital's paediatric ward every three months. This activity is manageable for them and is always done with adult supervision, ensuring a positive experience for both the visiting and the sick children.

When SCCs for children were first introduced, there was understandable scepticism. However, they have now been fully embraced by many parishioners, as the children have demonstrated their commitment. Parents are pleased to see their children involved in meaningful activities beyond traditional roles like liturgical dancing or serving as altar boys. The children are now an essential part of parish life, actively participating in a broader mission while still engaging in familiar roles.

Can children really understand Synodality?

Yes. Children understand Synodality, and this is exemplified by how they work together and accompany one another in their daily lives.

You recently had sessions with major seminarians of the Diocese of Monze. If Synodality is to take root, what kind of future priests should Zambia be training?

On the formation of future priests in Zambia, and speaking as one who has taught in our Theological major seminary before, there is need to take a leaf from the wisdom of Pope Francis' teaching on Synodality. Our future priests need to be brought on board and up to speed with what is happening in the wider Church. I believe our seminaries may already be moving in this direction. However, we also need to glean from the wisdom of Pope Saint John Paul II. The priestly formation would do well to tackle the crisis of priestly identity in the modern world. We need to form priests who will be necessary for the Synodal Church of today and tomorrow. Perhaps the challenge is to look at what we teach in the seminaries or even in religious houses of formation.

On the one hand, an appropriate seminary formation that responds to Synodality will probably need to be conducted in conjunction with the universal Church. But we must keep asking the question: Does the formation foster the values of a Synodal Church as envisaged by the Holy Father?

I further believe that the Church can no longer ignore the power of the media, especially social media, in its mission of evangelisation. In today's digital age, media is no longer a luxury but a tool for the Gospel. Hence, those in formation must familiarise themselves with a digital Synodal church. The students or seminarians must be helped to know that mission is not just one of the activities of the Church; it is its essence. The goal of the mission is the transformation of the world. The future of priesthood and religious life in Zambia should not be the new aristocracy or a ruling class but rather a family of service.



Fr Cletus Mwiila meeting with priests of Solwezi Diocese

Olympics' praying athletes

Swimming superstar Katie Ledecky was the bronze medallist for the women's 400m freestyle swimming event, July 27. She's one of the athletes who prays before her races, does charitable works and continues to hold her Catholic faith close to her heart.

Her strong faith and humility are the cornerstones of her character, the nun who was her grade-school principal at Little Flower School in Bethesda, Maryland, said. Ledecky burst onto the scene by unexpectedly winning a gold medal as a 15-year-old at the 2012 London Games and has since won six other gold medals. She prays before events, has advocated for refugees and serves meals to the homeless.

Ledecky told the *Register* in 2016 that she often prays a Hail Mary before her races: "It gives me peace, knowing I'm in good hands."

"I think our devotion to Mary is very beautiful," Ledecky added. "She has a sacred role in Catholicism, and her strong faith and humility are things we can learn from."

"I think the beauty of Catholicism is its consistency through both successes and difficulties," she said in 2016. "I've counted on my faith to give me strength through both training and competition — but also in school, with my family and everyday life. So, while my goals in the pool have changed, my faith remains something that's consistent and something I can always rely on."

Ledecky was one of more than 100 US athletes at the Olympics who are Catholic or attended Catholic schools. The others include the well-known and highly celebrated, such as hurdler Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone, gymnast Simone Biles and WNBA stalwarts Jackie Young and Jewell Loyd, both of whom played at Notre Dame, to relative unknowns such as rower Michael Grady, a graduate of Central Catholic High School in Pittsburgh, and sisters Juliette and Isabella



Bronze medallist Katie Ledecky stands on the podium of the women's 400m freestyle swimming event at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Paris La Defense Arena in Nanterre, west of Paris, on July 27, 2024. (NCRRegister photo/Jonathan Nackstrand)

Whittaker, middle-distance runners who graduated from Mount de Sales Academy in Catonsville, Maryland.

Like Ledecky, many of them relied on their faith during the gruelling US Olympic trials to qualify for Paris, as well as amid the everyday tribulations faced by world-class athletes. The pressure and intensity of high-stakes athletics led them to question and clarify their most cherished values and ultimate goals. For some, even those who stand on the gold-medal podium, competing and winning, however satisfying, has proven to be less important than their relationship with God.

For her part, Simone Biles is back competing in Paris after her Tokyo silver and bronze medals following "the twisties," a loss of muscle memory that sidelined

her from four events. Biles has said she is "pro-choice" on social media — but she has also spoken of her faith, from Sunday Mass attendance to seeking the intercession of St Sebastian, the patron saint of athletes.

Biles led the US women's gymnastics team to a gold medal in the team final, marking Biles fifth Olympic gold medal and her eighth overall Olympic medal.

Few Olympics athletes at Paris personify the spiritual quest often overshadowed by the chase for medals better than Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone, a graduate of Union Catholic High School in Scotch Plains, New Jersey. She won the 400-meters hurdles at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and broke her own world record in June in qualifying for the race for the Paris

Games. But her climb to the top was riddled with anxiety and fear.

"Fear had always supercharged my conscience," she writes in her 2024 memoir, *Far Beyond Gold: Running from Fear to Faith*. Even at a young age, "I was terrified of losing, of having failure attached to me." Overwhelmed by fear, she almost pulled out of the 2016 Olympics trials as a "terrified 16-year-old."

It has taken years, but, over time, through prayer and persistence, "God delivered me from the anxiety of failing," she writes. "Christ saved me. He taught me that my identity is in Him, not in my achievements, relationships, words or physical features. ... It's not about what medals I win. It's about glorifying God."

Today, she is a member of Grace Community Church in Los Angeles with her husband, Andre Levrone Jr., a wide receiver for the NFL's Baltimore Ravens. She credits her Catholic education for deepening her faith, and the nun who was her high-school principal has hailed her for her being "a beacon of faith and excellence."

For McLaughlin-Levrone, as for many of the athletes in Paris, the Olympics creed — not the triumph but the struggle — carries a powerful spiritual resonance.

Other notable US Olympians who are Catholic or attended Catholic schools include beach-volleyball player Kristen Nuss, a graduate of Mount Carmel Academy in New Orleans; volleyball players Thomas Jaeschke and Jeff Jendryk, graduates of Loyola University, Chicago (Jendryk attended St Francis High School in Wheaton, Illinois); decathlete Heath Baldwin, an alumnus of Hackett Central Catholic in Kalamazoo, Michigan; long-distance runner Karissa Schweizer, a graduate of Dowling Catholic High School in West Des Moines, Iowa, and rower Meghan Musnicki, a four-time Olympian who grew up attending St Januarius Church in Naples, New York. — *Register*



Rayssa Leal holds her bronze medal up after her big win at the Paris Olympic Games. (photo: Screenshot / X account of Rayssa Leal last visited July 31, 2024)

Olympic skateboarder uses sign language to quote Scripture before winning bronze

Rayssa Leal, a 16-year-old Brazilian skateboarder competing in the Paris Olympics, used sign language to quote Scripture before winning the bronze medal in the competition.

Leal, a Christian, won the bronze medal in the women's street skateboarding final on July 28. At one point during the competition, Leal smiled into the camera and signed John 14:6, which reads: "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'"

The expression of faith was noteworthy, given that French Olympians are barred from displaying religious symbols due to France's secularism principle. In fact, Rule 50 of the International Olympic Committee charter states the importance "on both a personal and a global level, that we keep the venues, the Olympic Village, and the podium neutral and free from any form of political, religious, or ethnic demonstrations."

Speaking to reporters following her win, Leal recounted her dreams "of becoming a skateboard athlete" from a very young age.

"And here I am, with a second Olympic

medal from the Games," she continued. "Once again, thank God I won a medal. I'm very happy to be here."

Leal first rose to fame at age seven when a viral video of her skateboarding in a blue fairy princess costume was shared by skateboarder Tony Hawk. She was also the youngest Brazilian to ever participate in the Olympics when she won the silver in street skateboarding at just 13 years old in 2021.

The skateboarder often thanks God and cites Scripture on her Instagram page. Her July 29 post featured a section of Joshua 1:9: "Didn't I command you? Be strong and courageous! Don't get carried away or discouraged."

Regarding her religious gesture at the games, Leal told the Brazilian media outlet UOL that "I did it because I do it in every competition."

"For me it is important; I am Christian, I believe a lot in God," she stated. "There I asked for strength and sent a message to everyone, that God really is the way, the truth, and the life." — **By Gigi Duncan, CNA**



WORD IN PROGRESS

Karen-Michaela Tan

Small circle, big heart



The protagonist in Rudyard Kipling's book, *Kim*, was given the title 'friend of the world' because of the way he — even though of Caucasian ancestry — managed to merge into the fabric of life in colonial India, mixing freely among peoples of different castes, colours and beliefs. The only way I could have known this as a teen engrossed in fantasy books was because my mother used the same descriptor on me at the dinner table where I announced to the family that for the next week or so, we would have a guest at lunch. My friend Trish, daughter of a single mother, had no recourse to eat out when her parent was away for work, and so I had taken it upon myself to offer hearth and vittles.

My parents, bemused that a white bred union such as theirs could have birthed such a black sheep, took it as par for the course, much as they accepted the smuggled-in white mouse whom they pretended not to know lived in a basket under the sewing machine, and the cans of soda which were offered to the DBKL contractors trimming our verges.

Over the years, I developed the personality of a giver-nurturer, always on the lookout to help. Undoubtedly, some of this was a result of a comic on the life of St Josephine Bakhita, a Canossian religious sister who lived in Italy for 45 years, after having been captured and sold as part of the slave trade in Sudan. The comic graphically illustrated her whippings, and how her lashes were rubbed with salt so as to form brands which identified her as chattel.

When she obtained her freedom (Google for

how, instead of watching another silly video on your phone!) she made a decision to become a Canossian nun, and was known to famously declare that if she had met her slavers again, she would have, "knelt and kissed their hands, for, if these things had not happened, I would not have been a Christian and a religious today." Josephine Bakhita was declared a saint in 2000, her quiet life an example of the joy of service. As the first black woman to be canonised in the modern era, she is also the Patron Saint of victims of human trafficking.

While religious life never appealed to me, I now know that Service is one of my major Love Languages as outlined by Baptist minister Gary Chapman, and author of *The Five Love Languages*. I have also learnt that Service without being refuelled is a recipe for disaster.

Well aware of the privileges in my life: parents who remained married until my mother died three weeks short of my parents' 50th wedding anniversary, a secure childhood devoid of trauma, abuse or neglect, and economic security, I embarked on a series of humanitarian crusades through my twenties (Riding for the Disabled), thirties (protection for children at risk of neglect and abuse), and forties (food security and adaptive classrooms for the neurologically divergent learners). By 46, I was all 'given out'. The pandemic and its enforced home stay made me see that I was existing solely on the adrenaline of giving and doing. Without it, I deflated. And so nearly did my marriage and family life.

Therapists caution all the time about pouring from an empty cup. My vessel was bone dry. I was resentful because my family did not seem to see my need for refuelling. I began looking on-line for emotional fulfilment. It took nearly two years of debating the merits of divorce and life as a single again person before I began to realise that there was a magic number to life and it was 12.

There were 12 tribes of Israel. Jesus Himself called 12 apostles. At the height of His ministry, He must have been the Taylor Swift of His time, able to jump in anyone to His posse. Surely there must have been some pretty cool, influential, rich and powerful people in the masses He ministered to, right? Yet Jesus kept His circle small. Small enough to hear each friend when they sat at table together. Intimate enough to be able to tell one to go look for a colt, and have the order carried out immediately. Close enough to still go fishing with. Jesus served everyone, but He chose His inner circle carefully and kept it small.

These days, with the number of Friends on Facebook and followers on Instagram being a measure of success, it is easy to get caught up in the myth of more. We forget that quality should be measured by intimacy, not immediacy. By paring down my life so that my objectives reflect what I believe is God's design for my life, I have learnt the true

meaning of service, and that is not to give until I am bloodless and drained, but to give as I am able, and when I still have enough strength and faith in me, to commend it back to the One who fulfils all things in His time. In giving my God complex back to the one rightful God, I have reintroduced peace into my life. I have learnt that service done correctly should not leave one a drained husk. True service lights a flame in us. That flame can be used to light another wick, thus increasing the intensity of God's light in the world. That's why Jesus sent His apostles out in pairs. A duo can help each other up steep paths, four legs are safer fording a river than two, and it takes two to make a hug a hug.

Once I cut down the number of people on my 'friend' list, my friendships grew deeper, and the support I received was far greater from my inner circle than my social media public. The fact that among the 12 of my closest are my husband and my child, is a testament to why the Church stands so fixedly on marriage and family. So maybe it's time that you narrow down your circle and identify the 12 that will take you through the rest of your life too.

● **Karen-Michaela Tan** is a poet, writer and editor who seeks out God's presence in the human condition and looks for ways to put the Word of God into real action.



FAITHFULLY SPEAKING

Julie Lim Seet Yin

Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul.

— 3 John 1:2

I went for a surgery in early June. Since the procedure was non-invasive, the downtime was minimal and I could return to my usual routine within two weeks.

Despite the low downtime, I felt discomfort and was physically weak. I could not walk for a short distance without feeling tired. My body was also bloated as a result of the medication. There were five different types of pills that I had to take before and after meals.

The whole experience underscores (once again) the importance of taking care of our health. And good health does not mean good health in body only, but also in the mind and soul. And when we are unwell, we learn new things and are reminded of what is important.

Anointing of the Sick

Before going for surgery, I arranged to receive the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. I don't remember receiving the sacrament before and did not give a thought about it. But I was encouraged by a church friend who received the sacrament before her cataract surgery.

Many Catholics confuse the Anointing of the Sick with Extreme Unction. They think that the sacrament is solely for those who are at the throes of death. However, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states the

Good health in body, mind and soul



(Unsplash/Andrey Popov)

following:

The Anointing of the Sick is not a sacrament for those who are at the point of death. Hence, as soon as any of the faithful begins to be in danger of death from sickness or old age, the fitting time for him to receive the sacrament has certainly already arrived. (CCC 1515).

The sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is given to those who are seriously ill by anointing their forehead and hands with duly pressed oil — pressed from olives or other plants — saying, only once: "Through this holy anointing may the Lord, in His love and mercy help you with the grace of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord who frees you from sin save you and raise you up. (CCC 1513)

Receiving the Anointing of the Sick a couple of days before surgery gave me hope that the procedure would proceed well. I was particularly moved by this prayer that the priest said whilst anointing my forehead with the oil:

God our healer, in this time of sickness you have come to bless (N) with your grace. Restore him/her to health and strength, and make him/her joyful in spirit, and ready to embrace Your will. Grant this through Christ our Lord.

Letting go

I make it a habit to clean my flat every weekend. A complete process would include wiping down surfaces, as well as vacuuming and moping the entire floor space.

In the two weeks after surgery, I could not do the cleaning as per my usual routine. As I mentioned earlier, my body was physically weak and I could not walk for a short distance without feeling tired. Therefore, standing for long periods and carrying pails of water were out of the question. In the end, I left my dwelling place uncleaned for two whole weeks! It is something that I don't usually allow to happen under normal circumstances. However, this time I had to let go. And the flat was cleaned again after I got back on my feet.

In many situations in life, we have to learn to trust God and let go. And the situation often turns out for the best.

Decluttering is therapeutic

During the two weeks of post-surgery medical leave, I took the opportunity to declutter my flat. And what a therapeutic experience it was.

I went through my overflowing book-

shelf and donated three bags of books to a preloved bookshop at GMBB. With help from a friend, I cleaned and sent plastic containers and glass jars to a recycling centre. I packed worn out clothing and dropped off the items into the Kloth Care bin at my parish.

At the end of two weeks medical leave, my flat looked much neater than what it was before. I felt good living in an environment with less clutter. The key now is to ensure that the neatness and less clutter environment stays that way, for the good of my mental health.

Conclusion

The experience of undergoing surgery and temporarily being unable to go about my usual routine reminded me of the saying, "Health is wealth." All the money in the world certainly cannot buy us good health. However, even though we are aware of its importance, many of us neglect taking care of ourselves. We don't exercise enough, we don't watch what we eat, and we don't manage stress properly. Perhaps having to undergo the surgery and the experiences thereafter was a reminder to double down my efforts to take care of my health. There is no quality of life if we don't have good health and are unable to enjoy the gift of life.

Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. All that you have is from God, and not your own. For you were bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body.

● **Julie Lim Seet Yin** believes that a satisfied life measured by one's heart, mind and soul is better than a successful life measured by worldly yardsticks.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

The road less travelled

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I
—
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

Most of us are familiar with these words from Robert Frost which have been used countless times, in graduation and commencement addresses and other inspirational talks, as a challenge to not just follow the crowd but rather, to risk carrying yourself and your solitude to a higher level. Well, Jesus offers us that same invitation daily as we stand looking at two very different roads.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus summarises many of His key teachings. However, they are easy to misunderstand and rationalise. Mostly though, we don't pick up on what lies front and centre in those teachings, that is, how our virtue must go deeper than that of the Scribes and the Pharisees. What's at issue here?

Most of the Scribes and Pharisees were good, sincere, committed, religious people with a high virtue. They kept the Commandments and were women and men who practised strict justice. They were fair to everyone and indeed were extra gracious and generous to strangers. So, what's lacking in this? Well, good as this is, it doesn't go far enough. Why not?

Because you can be a person of moral integrity, fully just and generous, and still be hateful, vengeful, and violent because

these can still be done in justice. In strict justice you may hate someone who hates you, you may exact revenge when you are wronged, and you may practise capital punishment. An eye for an eye!

But, in doing that, you are still doing what comes naturally. It is natural to love those who love you, just as it is natural to hate those who hate you. Real virtue asks more than this. Jesus invites us to something higher. He invites us to love those who hate us, to bless those who curse us, to never seek revenge, and to forgive those who kill us — even mass murderers.

Admittedly, that isn't an easy road to take. Almost every natural instinct inside us resists this. What's our spontaneous reaction when we are wronged? We feel vengeful. What's our natural reaction when we hear that the gunman at a mass killing was killed? We feel relieved. What's our natural reaction when an unrepentant murderer is executed? We feel happy he died; and we cannot help ourselves in that reaction. There's the sense that justice has been served. Something has been righted in the universe. Our moral indignation has been assuaged. There's closure.

Or is there? Not really. What we feel, rather, is emotional release, catharsis; but there's a huge difference between catharsis and real closure. While the emotional release may even be healthy psychologi-

cally, we are invited (by Jesus and by all that's highest inside us) to something else, to a road beyond feeling emotional release, namely, the less travelled road towards wide compassion, understanding, and forgiveness.

In assessing this, it can be helpful to look at how Pope John Paul II addressed the question of capital punishment. He was the first pope in the Church's two-thousand-year history to speak out against capital punishment. Interestingly, he didn't say it was wrong. Indeed, in strict justice it may be done. What he said was simply that we shouldn't do it because Jesus invites us to something else, namely, to forgive murderers.

Easier said than done! When I hear of a mass shooting, my thoughts and feelings don't naturally turn toward understanding and empathy for the shooter. I don't agonise about how he must have suffered to bring himself to do something like this. I don't naturally feel sympathy for those who, because of fragile or broken mental health, might do something like that. Rather, my emotions naturally put me on the road more travelled, telling me that this is a terrible human being who deserves to die! Empathy and forgiveness aren't the first things that find me in these situations. Hateful and vengeful feelings do.

However, that is the road of our emotions, the road more taken. Understand-

able. Who wants to feel sympathy for a killer, an abuser, a bully?

But that's only our emotions venting. Something else inside us is forever calling us to what's higher, namely, to the empathy and understanding to which Jesus invites us to in the Sermon on the Mount. Love those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Forgive those who murder you.

Moreover, such virtue is not something we ever achieve once and for all. Faith works this way: some days we walk on water and some days we sink like a stone.

So, like Robert Frost, on any given day I find myself standing where two roads diverge. One, the road more travelled, invites me to walk the road of hate, vengeance, and feeling I am a victim; the other, the road less taken, invites me to walk the road of wider compassion, empathy, and forgiveness.

Which one do I take? Sometimes one, sometimes the other; though always I know the one to which Jesus is inviting me.

● **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**

No other tradition can compete with forms of prayer from the Bible

As the Church summarises what her life of prayer looks like, she turns to the Acts of the Apostles and describes the place of the apostolic teaching, holy fellowship, the Breaking of the Bread, and the prayers in her own life and supplications before God.

On this foundation, the Church prays with an open heart and a docile spirit. She welcomes the Holy Spirit and pines for the coming of the Lord.

In describing the prayers of the Church, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains: "In the first place, these are prayers that the faithful hear and read in the Scriptures, but also that they make their own — especially those of the Psalms, given their fulfilment in Christ."

And so, the faithful are to know the prayers contained in the Sacred Scriptures, especially the Psalms. These prayers are the highest expression of the human spirit yearning to see God and have a union with Him. The psalms, along with the various canticles, hymns, songs, and prayers throughout the Bible, are to be a ready resource to help the faithful as they labour to pray.

The use of the psalms and the other spiritual resources of the Bible are not meant to be cold and removed from the hearts of those who pray. We are not to be parrots, rattling off the heartfelt prayers of others. The *Catechism* makes the point that the faithful are to "make their own" the prayers of the Bible. We are to dive into the depth of the biblical prayers and make connections between them and our own lives and struggles, joys, and hopes. We are to understand the Bible as a living word and allowed the inspired prayers, especially the psalms, to mould and mature our own prayers.

The *Catechism* repeats a previous point and stresses to us: "The Holy Spirit, who thus keeps the memory of Christ alive in His church at prayer, also leads her toward the fullness of truth and inspires new formulations expressing the unfathomable mystery of Christ at work in His Church's life, sacraments, and mission."

The Holy Spirit is again given His rightful and necessary place as the one who keeps the Church on track and on target. The Spirit preserves the memory of the

Church about Jesus Christ. He "keeps the memory of Christ alive." While retaining the memory of the Church about her Saviour, the Spirit also leads and inspires the Church to express the mystery of Christ. The prayers and supplications of God's people are not stagnant and without life.

The prayers come from the inner depths of man's heart and soar to the height of God's majesty.

This movement of the Holy Spirit has given birth to new expressions of prayer within the life of the Church. The *Catechism* explains: "These formulations [of prayer] are developed in the great liturgical and spiritual traditions."

The spiritual treasury of the Church is deepened and enriched by the great liturgical and spiritual traditions of God's people. Each liturgical and spiritual tradition highlights and emphasises some shared revelation among God's people.

Each tradition is needed and has oftentimes arisen at a moment when some aspect of God's revelation has been eclipsed, or waned. The various traditions have oftentimes come to us through founders of religious orders or other spiritual masters who were attuned to God and His revelations and were raised up by God to retrieve a forgotten truth or some declining aspect of the living God.

As much as the liturgical and spiritual

traditions are valued and needed, and recognising the immense part they have played — and continue to play — in the life of the Church, the *Catechism* still makes the important point: "The forms of prayer revealed in the apostolic and canonical Scriptures remain normative for Christian prayer."

And so, as much as we love the various prayers, novenas, litanies, and other resources of the various liturgical and spiritual traditions throughout the history of the Church, none of them compete or rival the forms of prayer given to us in the Sacred Scriptures.

Such a clarification should not present any tension or antagonism between the Bible and the liturgical and spiritual traditions. Quite the opposite. The liturgical and spiritual traditions are enriched and elevated by the presence and power of the inspired Word of God. — **By Fr Jeffrey F. Kirby, Crux**



Little Catholics' Corner

Dear children,

In today's Gospel reading, some people were grumbling about Jesus when He said that He had come down from Heaven.

They thought they knew who He was because they knew His family

on earth, and they didn't want to listen to what He was saying.

Jesus told the people that He really is from Heaven - and He is the way to Heaven.

He gives us His Body and Blood in Holy Communion. He is the food that our souls need to stay alive

and get to Heaven.

Sometimes, people around you might not believe in Jesus or what He says.

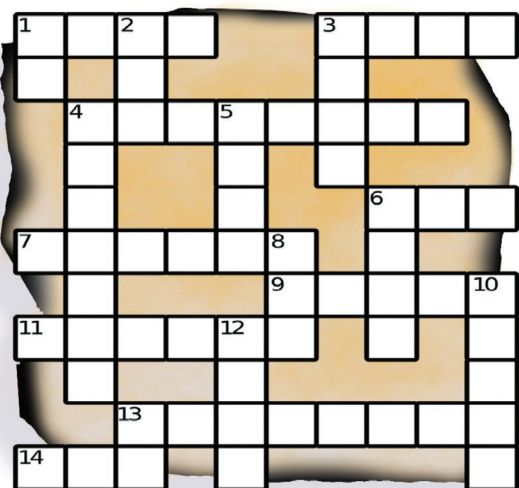
If that happens, remember to trust Jesus.

Even in His own time, some people didn't believe in Him.

But Jesus has given us faith to believe in Him and wants us to be happy with Him forever in Heaven!

See you next time, be good, okay?

Love
Aunty Eliz



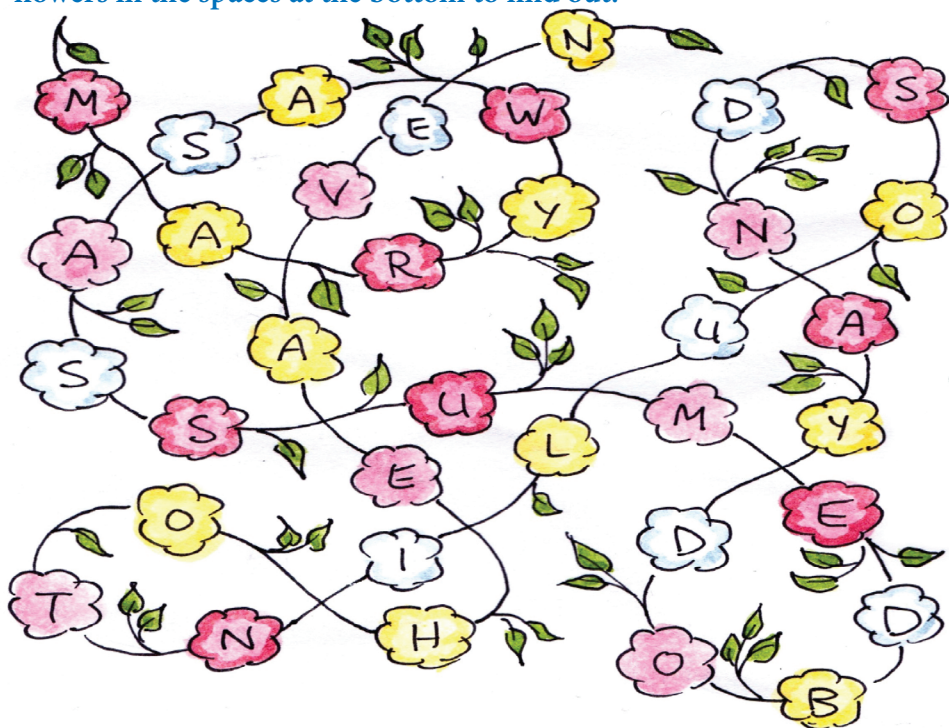
ANSWERED
TO
ASHAMED
FOR
SAINTS
WHO
EXALT
NAME
LORD
LOOK
WANT
FEAR
GOOD
MAN
THOSE
SEE
REFUGE
NO
TROUBLES

My soul makes its boast in the _____ (3D);
let the afflicted hear and be glad.
O magnify the LORD with me,
and let us _____ (9A) his _____ (1A) together!
I sought the LORD, and he _____ (4A) me,
and delivered me from all my fears.
_____ (3A) _____ (13D) him, and be radiant;
so your faces shall never be _____ (4D).
This poor _____ (2D) cried, and the LORD heard him,
and saved him out of all his _____ (13A).
The angel of the LORD encamps
around _____ (10D) _____ (14A) fear him,
and delivers them.
O taste and _____ (8D) that the LORD is _____ (12D)!
Happy is the man who takes _____ (11A) in him!
O _____ (6D) the LORD, you his _____ (7A),
_____ (6A) those who fear him
have _____ (1D) _____ (5D)!

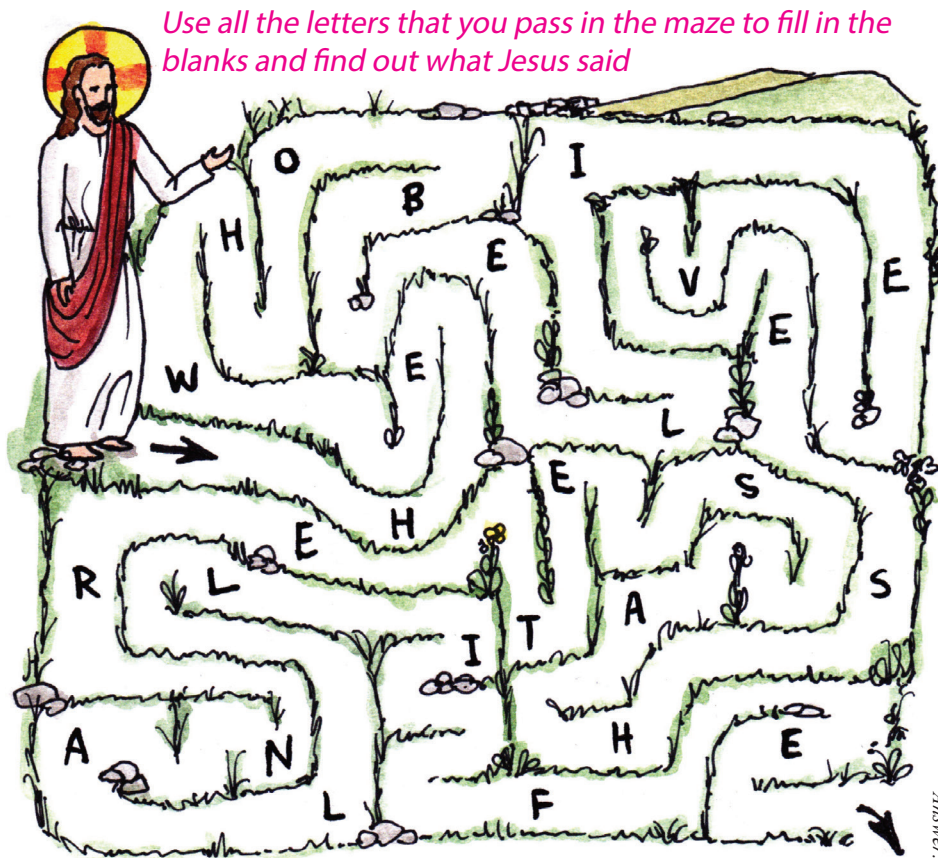
A=Across D=Down

Across: 1. name, 3. look, 4. answered, 6. for, 7. saints, 9. exalt, 11. refuge, 13. troubles, 14. who.
Down: 1. no, 2. man, 3. Lord, 4. ashamed, 5. want, 6. fear, 8. see, 10. those, 12. good, 13. no.

This Thursday, August 15, is a feast day of Our Lady. What are we celebrating? Follow the line, starting at M, and put the letters from the flowers in the spaces at the bottom to find out.



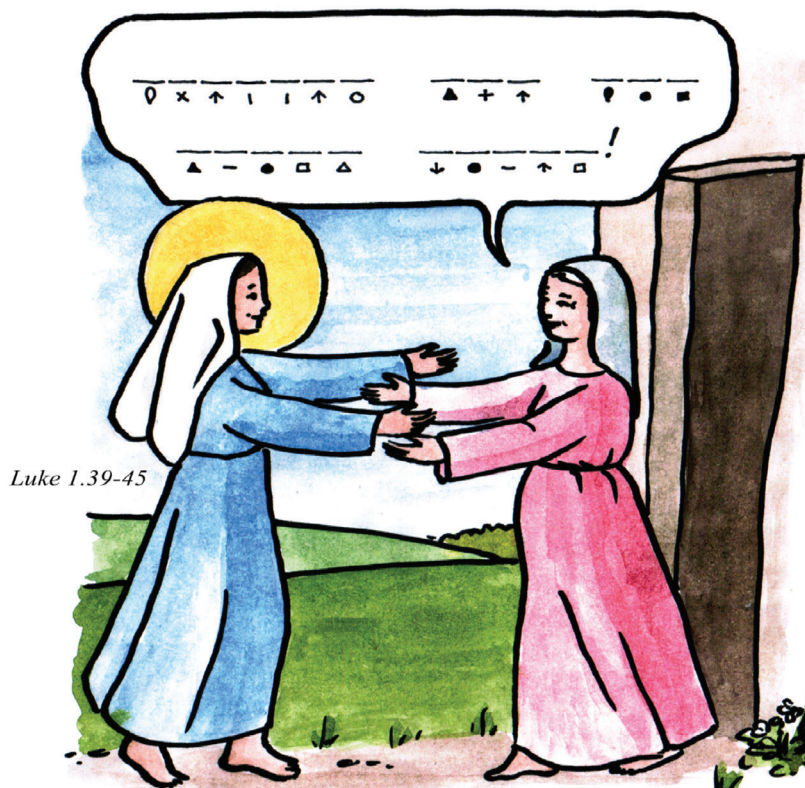
Mary was assumed, body and soul, into Heaven!



Use all the letters that you pass in the maze to fill in the blanks and find out what Jesus said

JESUS TOLD THE PEOPLE THAT HE WAS THE BREAD OF LIFE, THE PEOPLE WERE CONFUSED AND WONDERED WHAT HE WAS TALKING ABOUT, SO, HE EXPLAINED AGAIN, AND TOLD THEM THIS:

Answer: He who believes has eternal life.



Luke 1.39-45

Answer: Blessed are you among women!

Elizabeth knew that Mary was the mother of the Messiah. What did she say to Mary when she came to visit her?

Use the code to find out!

A B D E G L M N O R S U W Y
▲ ♡ ○ ↑ △ × - □ ● + ! ■ ↓ ♠

YOUTH

August 11, 2024



Seoul holds launch event for World Youth Day 2027

SEOUL: Under the theme *Hope Ignites in Seoul, Success for WYD Seoul 2027*, the ceremony, held on July 28 marked the beginning of preparations for the highly anticipated international gathering.

The event drew a diverse crowd of over 1,000 young attendees, including North Korean defectors, youth with disabilities, and military personnel.

The launch event kicked off with a colourful flag parade, where young Koreans and international participants carried 193 flags into the cathedral.

This parade symbolised the universal call and enthusiasm for WYD, highlighting Seoul's role as a global hub for young Catholics.

A highlight of the ceremony was the Kick-off Declaration, led by Archbishop Peter Soon-taek Chung, Chair of the Local Organising Committee for WYD Seoul 2027, alongside two young Korean delegates.

This declaration marked the official commencement of preparations for WYD 2027, emphasising the Church's dedication to youth engagement.

The event also showcased the anticipated

economic impact of WYD Seoul 2027. The research team, conducted by Prof Taejun Lee from the KDI School of Public Policy and Management, presented an analysis forecasting KRW 11.3698 trillion in production impacts, KRW 1.5908 trillion in value-added effects, and the creation of 24,725 jobs, demonstrating the potential benefits for Seoul and the broader region.

The ceremony concluded with a Mass celebrated by Archbishop Chung, joined by Car-

dinal Andrew Soo-jung Yeom, Bishop Job Yo-bi Koo, Bishop Paul Kyung-sang Lee, and Bishop Titus Sang-Bum Seo.

In his homily, Archbishop Chung spoke of the Church's mission to provide a platform for young people, urging them to unite in hope and prayer as they prepare for this significant event.

"I harbour a profound aspiration that the Church will offer a platform for the youth of our time—a stage where they can emerge as

the protagonists of their own narratives. I am confident that this stage will serve as an opportunity and a space of hope for all of you," the prelate said.

"Together, I wish to cultivate this shared hope through WYD. I believe that WYD represents an invaluable opportunity for youth from across the globe, including our Korean youth, to reflect upon and engage with these challenging tasks. It is imperative that we unite our hearts, pray together, and discern the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we earnestly prepare for this journey," he added.

The Mass included a Universal Prayer in multiple languages, reflecting the global spirit of WYD. Archbishop Giovanni Gaspari and Dr Gleison De Paula Souza delivered messages of encouragement, with Dr Souza highlighting Seoul's selection as the host city, recognising its rich cultural heritage and spirit of innovation.

The event's motto will be announced in September, followed by the ceremonial hand-over of WYD symbols to Seoul in November.

Key figures present included Archbishop Giovanni Gaspari, Apostolic Nuncio to Korea; Dr Gleison De Paula Souza, Secretary of the Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life; diplomatic representatives from eight countries; and, high-ranking Korean officials.

— LiCas News



Archbishop Peter Chung Soon-taek delivering the official statement. Young participants carry flags from 193 countries during the launch ceremony of World Youth Day 2027 at Myeongdong Cathedral in Seoul. The event, themed "Hope Ignites in Seoul," marked the beginning of preparations for the international gathering. (LiCas News photo/Archdiocese of Seoul)



Are you called to go on Mission?

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "Be the change that you wish to see in the world." Imagine not just witnessing others bring impact and empowerment to communities, but actually being a part of it. The Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD) is making this vision a reality through its new initiative called Missions.

"We saw an opportunity to experience and practise Catholic Social Teaching through an exposure immersion programme in the form of mission trips catered to the young," said AOHD director, Dr Gary Liew. "When this idea was proposed, I thought, there are pilgrimages every year for those who have the time and money to travel — usually the older generation. But why isn't there an avenue for young people to have more accessible, mission-oriented trips?"

For the young director, mission trips are familiar territory, having embarked on one annually in recent years, with his first trip to Kenya at age 21. "The entire process — raising funds, preparing, and being among the community — really broadens your perspective. It's humbling to return and discern where you are being called to serve next," he shared.

Dwayne Sadris, the Missions coordinator at AOHD, emphasised the unique contributions of young people: "You bring amazing energy and passion to any project. Your desire to make a difference and take on new challenges is exactly what the world needs. By getting involved in mission work, you can be real agents of change today. Your fresh ideas and fearless attitude can drive impactful solutions."

"Mission work instils values like

empathy, compassion, and social responsibility, often shaping participants into mindful leaders committed to making the world better," Dwayne added. "By focusing on the young, we're fostering a generation deeply invested in humanitarian efforts and social justice."

According to Dr Gary, the introduction of Missions under AOHD complements its existing structure and outreach, offering a holistic approach to integral human development, interfaith learning, and community building. This new chapter in AOHD's 30-year plus history aims to provide young people with opportunities to become changemakers, responding to the stirrings in their hearts and discerning their call to serve.

"There are outreach trips planned both locally and internationally, and with Missions as part of this new chapter for AOHD,

we sincerely hope it offers young people the opportunity to join a generation of changemakers. This initiative aims to inspire those who feel a stirring in their hearts and are discerning their call to serve," he added.

Echoing this sentiment, Dwayne added, "As Isaiah 6:8 says, 'Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here I am; send me!' In the Great Commission, Jesus commands us to share the message of salvation with all nations. He is waiting for those willing to answer the call to missions. We must pray for people to rise with willing hearts, like Isaiah, who immediately volunteered to serve the Lord."

To find out more on the upcoming Mission Trips, contact missions@aohd.org or WhatsApp Dwayne at 017 390 6076.

Eight Years of fruitful ministry for The Seeds

By Elicia Wong

IPOH: The Seeds, a young adults' ministry, celebrated their eighth anniversary on July 13 with a thanksgiving Eucharistic celebration at the Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. The Mass, which also had a commissioning, was presided over by Cardinal Sebastian Francis, with

Fr Patrick Massang, CSsR, concelebrating. This special occasion brought together family and friends of The Seeds to give thanks and celebrate God's faithfulness and blessings on the ministry over the years.

In his homily, Cardinal Sebastian emphasised that all vocations begin with the primacy of God, rather than our own desires to serve.

"It begins with an experience of the holiness of God, Who is both transcendent and immanent. This encounter helps us recognise our own unworthiness, yet it is not an excuse to retreat inward but a call to focus on His holiness, followed by a sense of mission."

On this joyous occasion, the ministry also welcomed two new



Jonathan Charanraj and Samuel Theivendran professing their promise and commitment before Cardinal Sebastian Francis.

full-time Catholic lay missionaries, Jonathan Charanraj and Samuel Theivendran. They made a promise and commitment before God, the president of The Seeds, Paul Julianose, the cardinal, and all present, committing to serve as lay missionary evangelists, bringing the Gospel throughout the Diocese of Penang and beyond.

The Mass concluded with the promulgation of The Seeds' statutes, which were signed by Paul Julianose, President of The Seeds, and Cardinal Sebastian as Bishop of Penang and Episcopal Advisor of The Seeds. This marked The Seeds Ministry as a Catholic Private Association of the Lay Faithful.

Following the Mass, close friends and family members of The Seeds enjoyed a time of fellowship.

The Seeds Ministry is a Catholic Young Adults ministry under the umbrella of CHARIS Malaysia, reaching out to young people across the Diocese of Penang and beyond. Our vision is to equip a communion of young adult leaders in Malaysia to be Spirit-filled missionary disciples. Our mission is to promote baptism in the Holy Spirit to young adults through relevant formation, provide an avenue for spiritual nourishment, and nurture spiritual maturity among committed members of The Seeds Ministry through community living.



The members of the Seeds Ministry.

Confirmands urged to build a relationship with the Lord

SENTUL, Kuala Lumpur: Forty-four youth and young adults were confirmed at the Church of St Joseph on July 21. The diverse group included Form 5 students from the Church of St Joseph and the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Puchong, young adults from the Zomi Community (Myanmar), and RCIA candidates.

The multilingual celebration (English, Tamil, Bahasa Malaysia, and Myanmar), was presided over by Archbishop Julian Leow with Fr Frederick Joseph, and Msgr James Gnanapiragasam concelebrating.

In his homily, Archbishop Julian emphasised the importance of knowing Jesus, urging everyone to build a relationship with the Lord, as our lives are incomplete without Him. He also encouraged parents to support their children in their faith formation and strengths.



formation and strengths.

At the end of the Mass, Form 5 student Jonathan Edward, speaking on behalf of the confirmands, expressed heartfelt thanks to Archbishop Julian for celebrating and administering the sacrament. He also thanked Fr Frederick and Msgr James for guiding them in their devotion to serving God and others, especially as the first batch to be guided under the new syllabus,

"Identity-Identify" introduced by Msgr James this year. This syllabus offered meaningful insights to the youngsters, helping them find their belonging and cope with challenges like depression, anxiety, and rejection, while also strengthening their faith.

Jonathan extended gratitude to their catechists for preparing them for this significant commitment and to everyone whose efforts made the

Confirmation retreat and celebration memorable. In addition to their weekly enrichment classes, the confirmands had several enriching experiences, including a two-day Theology of the Body session in March, led by Sister Retta Savariannan, FDCC, and her team from the Archdiocese Catechetical Ministry. This session offered valuable insights into the expectations and experiences of life as young adults.

In May, the confirmands participated in an outreach programme at Bernice Home in Sentul, where they spent the day interacting with seniors, singing songs, and enjoying fellowship. They also attended a memorable three-day retreat at Champagnat Youth Centre in Port Dickson in June which included participants from the Church of St Anthony and the Church of the Risen Christ. The confirmands made new friends, engaged in sessions and activities, and deepened their faith and friendships.

The Confirmation Mass concluded with a thanksgiving reception in the church hall, attended by over 250 guests, including the archbishop, clergy, catechists, facilitators, families, and friends — **By Geraldine Nathan**

Pioneering communicator nun called to rest



PASAY CITY, Philippines: Daughter of St Paul Sr Maria Consolata Manding, who helped set up the fledgling Kota Kinabalu Archdiocesan Social Communication Commission (SOC-COM) in 2002, was called to eternal life on July 27. She was 77.

Born in Bohol, Philippines, she entered the Daughters of St Paul in 1963. She made her first profession in 1968 and took her final vows in 1974. After a few years in typography, she dedicated herself to studying the phenomenon of television. She then worked in the communication centres in the archdioceses of Manila and Davao. Later, in Cebu, she wrote and produced daily radio programmes. She served as provincial superior from 1988-1991. After her mandate, she continued to dedicate herself to television production in Cebu. In 1994, she obtained a master's degree in development management, which she applied to her assignment as the province's general production coordinator and provincial councillor for the apostolate.

In 2002, she obtained a doctorate in communication from the University of the Philippines, Diliman. In that same year, she was tasked to begin the Paulines Institute of Communication for Asia (PICA), a communication and media education for evangelisation pastoral training centre that offers a master's degree programme and certificate in Media Literacy Education to teachers, pastoral workers, and seminarians. She was often invited — in the Philippines as well as in Malaysia — to give lectures and seminars on various topics, including the role of the

media in interreligious dialogue and peace-making.

In November 2002, she came over to help set up the newly formed Archdiocesan Social Communication Commission in Kota Kinabalu. She guided the members under Sr Bibianah Dunsia fsp in the Organisational Planning Strategies (OPS) based on the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) format. She also helped the members to understand clearly the roles and functions of media for evangelisation based on *Inter Mirifica* (Vatican Council II decree on communication). She also travelled to Petaling Jaya in December 2003 to conduct OPS to the Association of Pauline Cooperators.

In 2019, at the height of her activities, she was diagnosed with breast cancer, which soon spread to the lungs. In spite of this, she still carried on with her online classes (propelled by the COVID-19 pandemic). In 2024, she facilitated the online course on managing diocesan newspapers which was attended by Sr Bibianah and Linda Edward of *Catholic Sabah* (CS). On June 28, she helped CS staff (Peter Zeter, Linda Edward and Alice) to review the proposed vision and mission statement of CS.

On July 24, Sr Consolata was hospitalised due to pneumonia and difficulty in breathing and on July 27, she passed away quietly, surrounded by her fellow-sisters. Her funeral and burial took place on Aug 2. Now, with the Father, may she continue to pray for all communicators so that they will speak of the beauty and love of God through the communication media. — **By Sr Anna Yap, fsc**

MEMORIAM

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

23rd Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Arul Dass
Departed: 10-08-2001

"Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul rest in peace."

Dearly missed and forever remembered by:
Wife, children, son-in-law, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, relatives and loved ones.

7th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Mark Toh
Departed: 13 August 2017

"Though sad, memories of you always bring smiles to our faces. Though painful, we are still learning to live without you. Though you are gone, we will always love and cherish you in our hearts."

Deeply missed and fondly remembered by family and loved ones.

21st Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Margaret Boniface Gomez
Departed: 13-08-2003

Even after we lose one we hold so dear, The warmth of her love keeps her memory near.

Sadly missed by loved ones.



R.I.P



**1st Anniversary
In Loving Memory of
THOMAS TAN BOON BENG**
12 July 1947 – 9 August 2023

A quiet man with a gentle touch. With smiling eyes and a loving heart.

In silence you left, with peace in your heart to be with the Lord and forever in my heart
~ JULIA ~

22nd Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Nepoans James
Departed:
07-08-2002

The Lord bless you, and keep you: the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you: the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Always remembered by loving children, grandchildren and loved ones.

May he rest in peace.

24th Anniversary



**10th August 2024
In Ever Loving Memory of
Datin Marjorie
Rukumani Subramaniam
@ Margaret Bonney**

*Hands that never stopped giving
A heart that never stopped loving
and A soul that never stopped believing*

Fondly remembered
and missed by
family and friends.

NOTICE

**The cost for
placing a
memoriam is
RM100
per column.**

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Email: memoriam@herald.com.my

*For though
I am absent in
body, yet I am
with you
in spirit,
rejoicing to
see your good
order and the
firmness of
your faith in
Christ.*

Colossians 2:5

14th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



**Anthony s/o
Savrimuthoo**
From the Lord:
13 Aug 1940
Returned to the Lord:
6 Aug 2010

"I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live even though they die."
(Jn 11:25)

"Although time has passed, your presence is dearly missed and not forgotten."

Lovingly remembered by
beloved wife, sons, daughters, sons-in-law,
daughters-in-law, grandchildren, great-grandchildren,
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REST IN PEACE

Vatican issues clarification on Holy Doors during 2025 Jubilee

VATICAN: The Vatican's Dicastery for Evangelisation has issued a clarifying note regarding the 2025 Jubilee, specifying that Holy Doors will only be open at the four Papal Basilicas in Rome and in one prison.

Ahead of the upcoming Ordinary Jubilee of 2025, Pope Francis, in his Bull of Indiction, entitled *Spes non confundit* (Hope does not disappoint), indicated as the Holy Door "of St Peter's Basilica and the other three Papal Basilicas, namely St John Lateran, St Mary Major, and St Paul Outside the Walls, with the exception of the Holy Father's expressed desire to personally open a Holy Door in a prison 'to offer prisoners a concrete sign of closeness'."

This was reaffirmed in a note issued August 1, by the Dicastery for Evangelisation's Section for Fundamental Questions regarding Evangelisation in the World.

The note specifically provided guidance regarding the opening of the Holy Door in places besides Rome.

"Given the imminent start of the Jubilee 2025," the Dicastery's note began, "the question has recently been raised about the possibility of planning the configuration and opening of the Holy Door in Cathedral Churches, International and National Shrines, as well as in other particularly significant places of worship."



Pope Francis opened the Holy Door at St Peter's Basilica for the Jubilee of Mercy on December 8, 2015. (Vatican Media)

"In this regard, while sensitively considering the pastoral and devotional motivations that may have suggested such commendable aspiration," it continued, "it is nevertheless deemed necessary to recall the precise indications established by the Holy Father in the Bull *Spes non confundit*", which reasserts the sites of Holy Doors for the imminent Jubilee.

In the text, the Dicastery also took the opportunity to recall that "the peculiar and identifying sign of the Jubilee Year, as handed down since the first Jubilee of the year 1300, is the indulgence that 'intends to express the fullness of God's forgiveness which

knows no bounds,' through the Sacrament of Penance and signs of charity and hope."

Given this, they urge the faithful to consult "the particular places and different modalities indicated by the Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary of May 13, 2024," in order to "fully live this moment of grace."

In *Spes non confundit*, Pope Francis announced that the Jubilee Year will begin with the opening of the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica on Christmas Eve, 2024.

The Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica is opened by the Pope only at the beginning of a Jubilee Year. It is usually the first door to be opened to indicate the beginning of the Holy

Year. This first evidence of the rite happening in St Peter's was in the year 1500 during the papacy of Alexander VI.

Later, on Dec 29, the Pope will open the Holy Door of the Archbasilica of St John Lateran, the Cathedral of Rome. On the same day, every Cathedral and co-Cathedral throughout the world will have Mass celebrated by the local Bishop to mark the opening of the Jubilee.

On the Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God, January 1, 2025, Pope Francis will open the Holy Door for the Basilica of St Mary Major, with the Holy Door for the Basilica of St Paul's Outside the Walls being opened on Sunday, January 5, the Vigil of Epiphany.

"In the course of the year," Pope Francis had written, "every effort should be made to enable the People of God to participate fully in its proclamation of hope in God's grace and in the signs that attest to their efficacy."

On Dec 28, 2025, the Jubilee will end in the particular Churches throughout the world, with the Holy Doors of St John Lateran, St Mary Major, and St Paul's Outside the Walls being closed on that same date.

Finally, the Jubilee Year will formally conclude in Rome on the Solemnity of Epiphany, January 6, 2026. — By Deborah Castellano Lubov, *Vatican News*

Pope thanks circus workers for bringing joy to people



Pope Francis visiting with workers at Luna Park. (Vatican Media)

VATICAN: Pope Francis took a break from his July "summer vacation" to spend the afternoon of July 31 visiting with workers and those who offer pastoral assistance to them at a historic amusement park just about an hour southwest of Rome. Travelling to the Luna Park of Ostia Lido, the Pope gave them his warm wishes and support, saying he wished to personally express his gratitude as they help bring smiles on the faces of people.

The Pope stopped for a few moments on his arrival, making the sign of the cross, before the image of the Blessed Mother, where a sign read "We need Our Lady to be our protector."

Arriving at around 3.05pm in 35-degree heat (95° Fahrenheit) with the Fiat 500 L advancing between swing sets and bumper cars, Pope Francis was greeted by French nun Sr Geneviève Jeanningros, a member of the Little Sisters of Jesus for over 56 years now. She was accompanied by her fellow Sister Anna Amelia. The Little Sisters of Jesus draw

their inspiration from the writings and witness of Saint Charles de Foucauld who made service to his poorest brothers and sisters his life passion. Sister Geneviève has met Pope Francis on previous occasions, bringing various groups she has assisted over the years to meet the Pope at the conclusion of the Wednesday General Audience.

Exclaiming "what a great joy you give us!," Sr Geneviève together with the parish priest of the nearby Regina Pacis parish, Fr Giovanni Vincenzo Patané, brought the Pope into a room used for children's birthday parties. Thunderous applause resounded as Pope entered with his wheelchair and his assistants holding candies and rosaries to hand out to everyone.

The Pope took the microphone and said a few words, saying, "I thank you all for what you do to make people smile...thank you for helping to bring joy." — By Salvatore Cernuzio, *Vatican News*

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- Via Dolorosa (14 Stations of the Cross)
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