

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.

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Eph. 5:15-17



Tampin church celebrates patron saint of parish priests

■ P5



Leadership Succession

■ P10



REGIONAL PASTORAL ASSEMBLY 2024
August 25-27, 2024
MAJODI Centre, Johor

Turn to page 6 for more

Unplug & READ

Pope urges a return to literature

VATICAN: Every Christian, but especially seminarians, should set aside their screens regularly and spend time with a book of literature or poetry, Pope Francis said.

In a world that so often prizes efficiency and accomplishment, “we desperately need to counterbalance this inevitable temptation to a frenetic and uncritical lifestyle by stepping back, slowing down, taking time to look and listen,” the Pope wrote. “This can happen when a person simply stops to read a book.”

In a letter *On the Role of Literature in Formation*, published by the Vatican August 4, Pope Francis said he initially intended to write a letter on how important it is for seminarians to devote time to reading novels and poetry but decided to expand it because reading is important for “the formation of all those engaged in pastoral work, indeed of all Christians.”

The Pope’s letter cited his own experience as a high school literature teacher in 1964-65 as well as essays by the writers C.S. Lewis, Marcel Proust and Jorge Luis Borges and texts by Jesuit Fr Karl Rahner, St Paul VI, St John Paul II and the Second Vatican Council. He also referred to evidence in the Acts of the Apostles that St Paul knew the work of the poet Epimenides, who wrote in the sixth century B.C.E., and the poet Aratus of Soli from the third century B.C.E.

Reading, the Pope said, is a healthy form of relaxation, an important way to increase one’s vocabulary and an essential exercise in learning to listen to the experiences of other people and other cultures.

“Often during periods of boredom on holiday, in the heat and quiet of some deserted neighbourhood, finding a good book to read can provide an oasis that keeps us from other choices that are less wholesome,” the Pope said. “Likewise, in moments of weariness, anger, disappointment or failure, when prayer itself does not help us find inner serenity, a good book can help us weather the storm until we find peace of mind.”

Pope Francis insisted reading “is not something completely outdated” and is an antidote to “our present un-

voting time and attention to literature,” he wrote. “They have done this by setting aside time for tranquil reading and for discussing books, new and old, that continue to have much to say to us.”

However, the Pope said, even in those seminaries, literature is often seen merely as a form of healthy entertainment rather than as a subject that is important in their training.

A lack of literature and poetry, he said, “can lead to the serious intellectual and spiritual impoverishment of future priests, who will be deprived of that privileged access which literature grants to the very heart of human culture and, more specifically, to the heart of every individual.”

Literature, he said, is “listening to another person’s voice.”

Especially for those preparing for the priesthood, learning to listen to others, particularly those who challenge one’s point of view, is a necessary skill, the Pope said. Without it, “we immediately fall into self-isolation; we enter into a kind of ‘spiritual deafness,’ which has a negative effect on our relationship with ourselves and our relationship with God, no matter how much theology or psychology we may have studied.”

Literature and poetry, like other arts, also help hone a reader’s ability to be in awe -- of others, of the world and, ultimately, of God, the Pope said.

Literature, he said, “teaches us how to look and see, to discern and explore the reality of individuals and situations as a mystery charged with a surplus of meaning that can only be partially understood through categories, explanatory schemes, linear dynamics of causes and effects, means and ends.”

Learning that lesson is essential for effective evangelisation, which is not first about proclaiming and explaining church doctrines but about helping people “encounter Jesus Christ made flesh, made man, made history,” the Pope wrote.

“We must always take care never to lose sight of the ‘flesh’ of Jesus Christ: that flesh made of passions, emotions and feelings, words that challenge and console, hands that touch and heal, looks that liberate and encourage, flesh made of hospitality, forgiveness, indignation, courage, fearlessness; in a word, love,” Pope Francis said. — **By Cindy Wooden, CNS**



(Pixabay/Amore Seymour)

remitting exposure to social media, mobile phones and other devices.”

“I very much appreciate the fact that at least some seminaries have reacted to the obsession with ‘screens’ and with toxic, superficial and violent fake news by de-

HERALD

ESTABLISHED 1994

Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre
5, Jalan Robertson, 50150, KL
Tel / Whatsapp: 03-20268291

Website : www.heraldmalaysia.com

Facebook : www.facebook.com/heraldmalaysia

Jointly published by the
Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur,
Diocese of Malacca Johore,
Diocese of Penang and
Diocese of Keningau

**EDITOR**

Patricia Pereira
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

EDITOR'S NOTE

Leadership is both a privilege and a responsibility, particularly within the Church. As shared by Archbishop Emeritus John Ha in his talk at the Transforming Parishes 2024 conference (see Page 10), it becomes clear that leadership succession is not just a matter of practicality but a vital element of spiritual stewardship.

Drawing parallels from the ongoing situation in Bangladesh, where Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's prolonged rule led to unrest and her eventual resignation, we can see the dangers of holding onto power for too long. For Church ministries, the lessons are profound, leadership succession is essential to ensure the health, vitality, and mission of our faith communities.

The Church, as a living body, requires leaders who are attuned to the Spirit and capable of responding to the ever-evolving needs of the community. When leaders cling to their positions for too long, they risk becoming disconnected from the people they serve. This disconnection can lead to a stagnation of ideas, a reluctance to embrace necessary change, and ultimately, a weakening of the Church's mission.

The recent events in Bangladesh serve as a stark reminder of the dangers of holding onto power for too long. After over 20 years in leadership (June 1996 to July 2001 and January 2009

to August 2024), marked by increasing authoritarianism, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina faced widespread discontent that led to her resignation. The violent crackdown on student protesters and the subsequent political turmoil highlight the consequences of leadership that fails to adapt, listen, and make way for new voices. While the context of a national government differs from that of a Church ministry, the underlying principle remains the same — leadership that does not embrace renewal can lead to unrest and division.

In the Church, the refusal to step aside when the time is right can similarly hinder the community's spiritual growth. Holding onto power can create an environment where innovation is stifled, younger leaders are not mentored, and the needs of the faithful are not adequately addressed. As Archbishop Emeritus John Ha wisely noted, effective leadership succession involves both human effort and divine guidance. It is an act of humility, recognising that the mission of the Church is greater than any one individual.

Succession planning is not merely a bureaucratic exercise; it is a spiritual and pastoral necessity. Church leaders must be proactive in identifying and nurturing potential successors, ensuring that they are prepared to take on the mantle of leadership when the time comes. This process involves prayer, discernment, and a

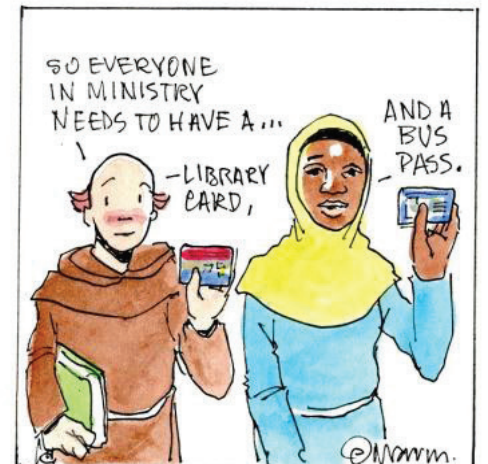
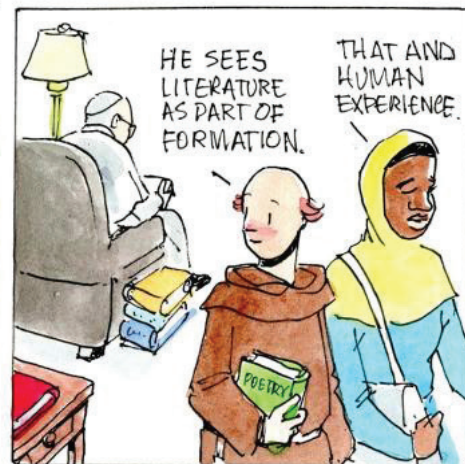
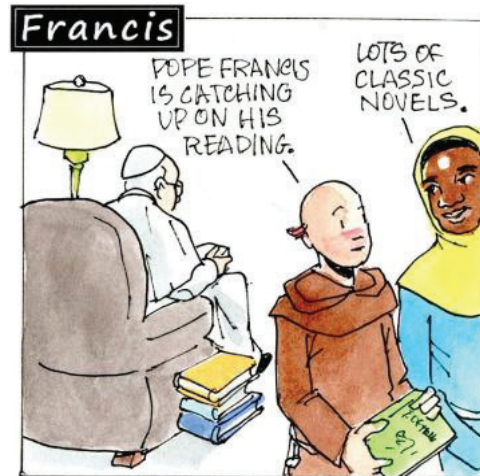
commitment to the ongoing formation of future leaders.

Moreover, succession planning reflects a deep trust in God's providence. Just as He did during Biblical times, God will continue to raise up leaders for our time. Our role is to be attentive to the Spirit, to cultivate the gifts of those around us, and to have the courage to step aside when our season of leadership has come to an end.

The Church must be a place where leadership transitions are marked by grace, continuity, and a shared commitment to the mission of Christ. By embracing the principles of succession planning, we honor the legacy of those who have gone before us and pave the way for future generations to carry forward the work of the Gospel.

The lessons from both Scripture and current events remind us that leadership is not about holding onto power but about serving the community with humility and wisdom. As Church leaders, we are called to be stewards of the gifts entrusted to us, ensuring that the torch of faith is passed on to those who will continue to light the way for others. Succession planning is not just important — it is essential for the health and vitality of our Church ministries.

Patricia Pereira



NCRonline.org/cartoons

Are we truly nourished?

A friend of mine called me recently and asked, "How are you?" It's a common question, one we hear and ask every day. You can probably guess my typical response, "I'm fine. I'm doing well. Things are really busy right now. I'm good." She laughed and said, "Are you trying to convince me or yourself?"

I suspect I'm not the only one who has had this type of conversation. Most of us engage in these exchanges multiple times each day, offering the usual responses. We might add something about our family, health, recent activities, or plans. More often than not, these conversations focus on the circumstances of life. We may be fine and busy, getting our work done, meeting deadlines, fulfilling obligations, volunteering, and caring for our families. But there's a difference — a vast difference — between merely doing life and having life within us.

Doing life versus having life: that's the issue Jesus addresses in today's Gospel. It's a theme that has run through the last several Sundays of Gospel readings, culminating in an unspoken question: Is there life within you?

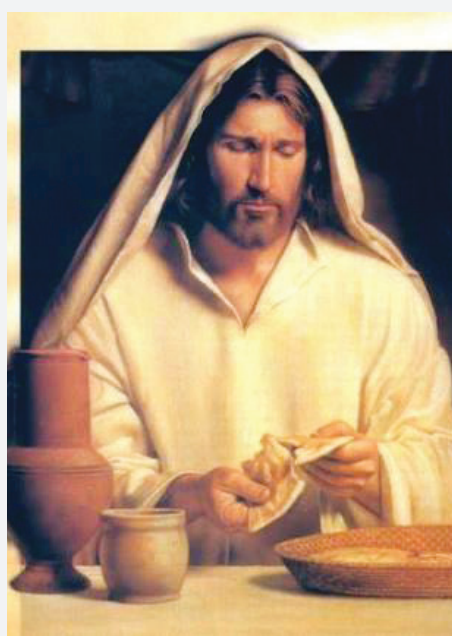
That's a hard question, and many avoid or ignore it. They turn away rather than face it. "Fine," "busy," "good," and "doing well" don't answer the question; they cover it up. The question pushes us to recognise the hunger within us and the life Jesus wants to give us.

Remember when the 5,000 hungry

people were fed with five loaves and two fish? They thought it was about loaves and fish, but it was really about life and its source. Two weeks ago, Jesus challenged us to consider the bread we eat: Is it perishable or does it endure to eternal life? Last week, Jesus declared Himself to be the bread of life, the living bread that came down from heaven.

Today, He says, 'Eat Me. Drink Me.' This is the only way we can have life within us. Jesus is clear and blunt: His flesh is true food, and His blood is true drink. Any other diet leaves us empty, hungry, and bereft of life. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you." These are ominous words that challenge us to consider whether there is life within us.

Jesus speaks of more than just physical or biological life. He's talking about a life beyond words, indescribable, yet unmistakable when experienced. We get a taste of it when we love so deeply and profoundly that everything about us seems to die, yet we become more fully alive than ever before. Sometimes, everything aligns perfectly, and all feels right with the world — not because we got our way, but because we felt part of something larger, more beautiful, and more holy than anything we could have achieved. We were tasting life. There are moments when time stands still, and we wish they would never end. In those moments, we are in the flow, the



wonder, and the unity of life, and it tastes good.

Many of us spend considerable time and energy in prayer, trying to create and possess the life we want. Despite our best efforts, we sometimes live less than fully alive. The outside and inside of who we are may not match. We ask ourselves, "What am I doing with my life?" We wonder if this is all there will ever be. Is this as good as it gets? We lament over what has become of us and our lives. Nothing seems to satisfy. We despair at what is and we think of what will be. Despite having family and friends, we may feel we belong nowhere.

These questions and feelings aren't judgments but diagnoses. They are

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with the Editor

20th Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Readings: *Proverbs 9:1-6;*

Ephesians 5:15-20;

Gospel: John 6:51-58

symptoms of a lack of life within us. We are dying from the inside out. However, there is treatment for our condition and food for our hunger. Life in Christ, not death in the wilderness, is our destiny. The flesh and blood of Christ are the medicine that saves — what St Ignatius called "the medicine of immortality." One dose isn't enough; we need a steady diet of this sacred medicine, this holy food.

Jesus is our medicine and health. He is our life and the means to the life for which we most deeply hunger. We don't work for the life we want; we eat the life we want. Wherever human hunger and the flesh and blood of Christ meet, there is life.

In consuming Christ's flesh and blood, He lives in us, and we live in Him. We partake in His life, His love, His mercy, His forgiveness, His way of being and seeing, His compassion, His presence, and His relationship with the Father. We eat and drink our way to life. So, leave nothing behind. Push nothing aside. Clean your plate!

Canossian Convent fights for land title after century of occupation

MELAKA: The Canossian Convent in Banda Hilir, Melaka, has occupied its land for over a century, the Melaka High Court was informed during a judicial review application on August 7.

Lawyer Joy Appukuttan highlighted that the property has consistently been referred to as the “Portuguese Convent” in historical documents, a name also reflected on its Dutch title deed.

Justice Radzi Abdul Hamid presided over the judicial review application submitted by two statutory bodies: The Mother Superior of the Daughters of Charity of the Canossian Institute (Malaya) (the Canossian Sisters) and The Agent of the Commission of the Estates of the Portuguese Missions in China and Singapore (the Portuguese Mission). The respondents are the state’s director of land titles, the director of land and mines, and the registrar of titles.

Appukuttan explained that Lot 6 has been the Canossian Sisters’ residence and a home for orphans and boarders since 1905. A primary school was established on the land in 1929, followed by a secondary school in 1950. The applicants assert their status as the legal and beneficial owners of Lot 6, where the school was constructed.

Given the overwhelming evidence, the respondents cannot now deny jurisdiction to grant the applicants the title to the land, Joy argued.

In previous court documents, the applicants maintained that the title to Lot 6 was historically held by the Portuguese Mission, with the Canossian Sisters serving as its beneficial owners. They recounted that the title deed was in the possession of Catholic priest Fr Alvaro Martins Corado during World War II. The deed was lost after Fr Corado, then the vicar for both St

Peter’s Church, Melaka, and the Portuguese Convent, was arrested and imprisoned by the Japanese in 1942. Fr Corado died in captivity two years later.

For the past decade, the applicants have engaged with Melaka state authorities to secure a new title to replace the lost deed. However, in a letter dated March 8, 2022, state authorities claimed they lacked jurisdiction to confer the title.

The application for leave to bring the current proceedings was filed in May 2022. On January 6 last year, Radzi granted leave for the matter to be heard inter partes.

Joy was assisted by Kelvynn Foo, while the respondents were represented by Melaka’s state legal adviser, Nor Afiah Saini.

Justice Radzi adjourned the hearing to September 4, when further submissions from Joy and the respondents will be presented.

— FMT



The Sacred Heart Canossian Convent in Banda Hilir, Melaka. (Bernard Anthony facebook)



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

August

- 20-21 Monthly Clergy Recollection
- 22 Archdiocesan Finance Meeting
- 24 Confirmation – Church of St Anthony, KL
- 24 Confirmation – Church of the Holy Rosary, KL
- 25-27 Peninsular Malaysia Regional Pastoral Assembly – MAJODI



PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

August

- 22 Mass – Mt Miriam Feast and Blessing of the Renovated Body Holding Room at 1.00pm
- 23 Opening Address - Holy Spirit Weekend at 8.00pm – Cathedral of the Holy Spirit
- 25-27 Peninsular Malaysia Regional Pastoral Assembly – MAJODI



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

August

- 25-27 Peninsular Malaysia Regional Pastoral Assembly – MAJODI



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #185

F12
NEWS
MJD
UPDATES

Greetings dear friends of MJD, Surprises! The Olympics had its load of surprises. The unexpected and the unknown turned out to be game-changers. Malaysia’s population may stand at 35 million but is fast heading towards becoming an ageing nation. Temperatures have been soaring lately, and it is predicted to reach 40.8c by 2050. The students reacted and the PM fled Bangladesh. Unrest in UK now. Iran and the Hezbollah may go to war. A local offered a kidney for RM300,000 on social media to reclaim pawned land. Expect more surprises to come.

“Rules” Times”: Archbishop FX Nguyen Van Thuan was arrested and imprisoned when the communist regime seized power in South Vietnam. He became so effective at evangelising his jailers that the prison had to change them regularly. Van Thuan once said of his confinement that he was happy there, as it was God’s turn to speak and for him to listen. It was here that he also devised the following “10 Rules of Life”:

1. I will live the present moment to the fullest.
2. I will discern between God and God’s works.
3. I will hold firmly to one secret: prayer.
4. I will see in the holy Eucharist my only power.
5. I will have only one wisdom: the science of the cross.
6. I will remain faithful to my mission in the Church and for the Church as a witness of Jesus Christ.
7. I will seek the peace the world cannot give.
8. I will carry out a revolution by renewal in the Holy Spirit.
9. I will speak one language and wear one uniform: charity.
10. I will have one very special love: the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Rules can be offensive, yet some rules make a person. Noble people live noble ideals. Prisons, chains and people do not define what we become. The archbishop was one of them.

A Thought for the Week: From the Rubble

A major earthquake struck Japan, and when rescuers were searching for victims, they found a woman under the rubble of a house. The woman was on her knees, and the rescuers were surprised by the position of her body.

The team leader inserted his hand between the cracks to see if the woman was alive or not, but unfortunately, her cold body made it clear that she was dead, so the rescue team left this building and went to the next one.

While the rescue team was looking for the people who were still alive, the team leader returned to the dead woman again and inserted his head between the cracks and approached her. Here was the surprise — as soon as the man moved the woman, he found underneath her a small child wrapped in a blanket.

The child was three months old, and it was clear that his mother had sacrificed herself to save his life. When the house began to fall, the mother covered her son with her body so that he would not be hurt. And when the doctor examined the child, he found a message in his clothes that said, “If you survive, remember that I love you.”

The lesson from the rubble: Love and sacrifice puts others first. Their love saves and gives life to the others. Mothers and Martyrs have it.

Announcements For The Week:

1. The Peninsular Malaysian Church prepares for the **Regional Pastoral Assembly (RPA)**, which is set for August 25-27. The expected number of participants is 550. Pray for a Spirit-led outcome.
2. September is dedicated as the **Season of Creation**, with the World Day of the Poor and Migrant Sunday slotted in.
3. The Clergy will be away for the **Annual Retreat** in September. Pray for them.

QnQ? Q asks: Who are the Indigenous People? Why celebrate?

1. The United Nations since 1995 observes the **International Day of the World’s Indigenous People** annually on August 9. The theme for 2024 is *Protecting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation and Initial Contact*. Watch this video [https://](https://youtu.be/EuJ2HZstktw)

youtu.be/EuJ2HZstktw.

2. This day serves as a platform to **raise awareness and protect** the rights of the world’s indigenous population, basic human rights of physical survival and integrity, the rights over their land (including native title), language, religion, and other elements of cultural heritage that are a part of their existence and identity as a people, and to recognise the achievements and contributions of Indigenous Peoples as guardians of most of the world’s remaining biodiversity.

3. Some facts: **Estimated 476 million in the world** living across 90 countries (less than five per cent of the world’s population, 15 per cent of the poorest), represent 5,000 different cultures.

4. In Malaysia, according to Census 2020, they make up **11 per cent of the 32.4 million national population**, with 206,777 in Peninsular Malaysia. They are known as **Orang Asal in East Malaysia and Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia**. Their main plight is access to health care and education and issue of land rights

5. The International Day of the World’s Indigenous People calls on individuals, organisations, and governments to take meaningful action to support indigenous communities. You can **do something: #Join Aru Bumi-Caritas MJD** to care for the orang Asli in the diocese. Visit this site for more information: **Caritas MJD - About AruBumi** (google.com). Learn more about indigenous people in Malaysia and their plight and **lend your voices in advocacy for their rights**. For the full content and links visit the CJC MJD facebookpage, <https://rb.gy/1tl4bq>

See the Holy Spirit @ work: “Relationships are the Holy Spirit’s laboratories in which He brings together people who have the maximal opportunity for mutual growth.” — *Marianne Williamson*

Something to tickle you: The Sun himself is weak when he first rises, and gathers strength and courage as the day gets on. — *Charles Dickens*

Bernard

Bishop Bernard Paul

Creating a safe space for our children



By Elvina Fernandez

Fr Gregory Chan addressing the participants.

KUALA LUMPUR: In-Person Safeguarding and Protection of Children (PSO) trainings by the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur are currently being conducted in multiple languages throughout the year to ensure inclusivity.

As a Church community, safeguarding God's children is the duty of each one of us. In line with this, the fourth Professional Standards Officer (PSO) training session for the year was recently held at the Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam, bringing together representatives from various ministries of churches in the Klang Valley to ensure that churches remain a safe haven for our children.

Held on August 3, in Bahasa Melayu, the three-hour training session further amplifies the archdiocese's commitment to safeguarding children within the church communities. The training saw the participation of 25 individuals from various ministries, including representatives from the liturgy, catechist, choir, and music ministry coming together to learn about safeguarding our children.

PSO training is established to ensure individuals working in various roles in the church understand the importance of creating a safe environment for children, by putting in place protocols and best practices for religious employees and volunteers within the archdiocese who work with children up to the age of 18 years old.

The training saw participants taking a deep dive into the guidelines on how church workers and every individual in the parish can ensure a safe environment for minors, protocols to be followed when a complaint is received, and the repercussions of not reporting or hiding a possible injustice to a minor. This diversity in representation underscored the importance of safeguarding across all facets of church life.

Fr Gregory Chan who dropped in to meet the participants during the training session said, in *Vos estis lux mundi*, the scope of safeguarding has expanded from "children" to "any vulnerable person." "Hence, we have to be vigilant to a larger community. And safeguarding makes us more attuned with the community," he added.

Facilitated by three distinguished individuals: Sumathy, a nationally recognised advocate and expert in child safety; Devamary, a child support worker with JKM and Edmund, a lawyer, who brought a wealth of knowledge to the session, participants received comprehensive guidance in the areas of child safety and protection of all individuals within the church.

The training focused on understanding the types of injustice a child may face, becoming the individual who is able to identify that a child needs help, how to report an injustice, and the laws protecting a child, as well as each individual in the parish community.

Their combined experience and dedication to safeguarding were evident throughout the training, making it an enriching experience for all attendees.

Acknowledging the linguistic diversity of the Klang Valley, training sessions were conducted in four languages throughout the year — English, Mandarin, Tamil, and Bahasa Melayu. This inclusive approach ensured that language barriers did not impede the learning process. Earlier sessions were held in English at the Church of St Francis Xavier in April, in Mandarin at the Church of St Ignatius in May, and in Tamil at the Church of St Anthony in June.

The PSO training was not just about imparting knowledge, but it was also an opportunity for participants to share their experiences in providing a more conducive and inclusive environment for children in their respective parishes. The interactive sessions provided an avenue for meaningful discussions, where participants had the opportunity to learn from each other's challenges and successes.

Looking ahead, the PSO team will be planning training sessions to continue the important work of safeguarding our children within our churches. A Google registration link for sessions will be shared with all respective parish priests. Interested individuals are encouraged to contact their parish priests to obtain the registration link and participate in the upcoming training sessions.

Caritas Penang Diocese hosts formation day on safeguarding

GEORGETOWN: Caritas Penang Diocese held its *Love Your Neighbour: Luke 10:7* formation day on August 3, featuring a session on the Caritas Malaysia Children and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy. Approximately 50 participants from the Penang Island and Northern deaneries attended, including members from parish Caritas, SSVP, Prison Ministry, Ministry to the Poor, and various volunteers.

Lawyer Christopher Kushi highlighted the importance of safeguarding not only children but also vulnerable adults, given Caritas' mission to support individuals in precarious situations such as the poor, elderly, sick, migrants, refugees, and displaced persons. He explained that vulnerable persons are defined under various laws and guidelines, including the Dicastery for the Doctrine of Faith and the Code of Canon Law, as individuals with impaired ability to reason or those facing significant risks due to physical or mental deficiencies, or deprivation of personal liberty.

Caritas Internationalis describes vulnerable adults as those over 18 at risk of significant harm due to factors such as gender, age, health, poverty, or displacement. This definition addresses the power imbalances that potential abusers may exploit.

The training covered several key issues. For cases of child abuse, including physical, emotional, sexual abuse, and neglect,

individuals should contact the Social Welfare Department's officer known as the Protector or 'Pelindung' in Bahasa Melayu, or file a police report. Participants were informed that Section 116 of the Child Act 2001 ensures protection and confidentiality for those who report abuse. The Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017 redefines child pornography as child sexual abuse material. The seminar also addressed the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act 2022 and the impacts of cyberbullying, which can lead to emotional abuse, and even fatal consequences. The Professional Standards Office of the Diocese of Penang is available to provide full support and guidance on all complaints received.

Fr Joachim Roberts, Head of Caritas Penang Diocese, expressed satisfaction seeing participants sign the acknowledgement form for the Safeguarding Policy, committing to adhere to its standards. Administrator Juanita Chin explained that this training was a response to the third Caritas National Assembly held in Sibu in 2023, where Caritas Malaysia National Office Director, Fr Fabian Dicom, tasked delegates with implementing awareness training on the Safeguarding Policy.

Participants were invited to sign the Caritas Malaysia Children and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy, affirming their commitment to preventing and reporting any form of abuse against children and vulnerable adults.



Participants at the "Love Your Neighbour" session.

Diocesan collaboration to strengthen evangelisation efforts

IPOH: Members of the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan Mission of New Evangelisation for Christ (AMNEC) participated in a Catholic Formation for Evangelisers (CFE) seminar on August 3 and 4 at the Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help. The event, organised by the School for New Evangelisation (SNE) of the Diocese of Penang, was themed *Let's Become Missionary Disciples*.

The seminar aimed to inspire and equip Catholics to effectively witness and present the Gospel of Jesus Christ, fostering their role



as missionary disciples. Fr Patrick Massang CSsR opened the seminar, which featured talks on topics

such as *Kerygma - Good News for the World, Faith - A Personal Relationship with Jesus*, and *Be a*

Witness to Christ: Sharing Your Story. These were delivered by Fr Desmond Jansen and renowned

Catholic speaker, Martin Jalleh.

Participants engaged in spiritual conversations, silent reflections, personal testimonies, and role plays, making the sessions more practical and meaningful. The seminar concluded with a "Pentecost Experience" by Fr Patrick and a commissioning by Fr Desmond, who encouraged participants to be bold messengers of salvation and peace.

The seminar strengthened the collaboration between AMNEC and Penang Diocesan New Evangelisation Commission in their evangelisation efforts.

Tampin church celebrates patron saint of parish priests

NEGERI SEMBILAN: The Church of St John Marie Vianney in Tampin celebrated its parish feast from August 1 to 4, with the theme *Be Rooted in Christ*. In preparation, the parish held a recollection led by seminarian, Bro Richard Ganesh, to help the faithful understand what it means to be truly 'rooted in Christ.'

The feast day committee organised several meetings to pray, discuss, listen, and plan for the triduum and Mass on Sunday. Each day, the triduum began with the recitation of the rosary, the litany of St John Vianney, and a prayer to St John Vianney, followed by Mass.

The subtheme for the first day was *Priest — Serving the Kingdom of God*. The day began with a liturgical celebration led by Archbishop Julian Leow, accompanied by 24 priests from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur and other dioceses. Preachers for the day, Frs Vincent Thomas and Lawrence Ng, CDD, encouraged priests to follow the example of St John Marie Vianney and urged the congregation to emulate acts of service in the common priesthood. After the Mass, Fr Peter Anthony presided over the rededication of the grotto, and Archbishop Julian blessed the grotto and conducted the opening ceremony.

On the second day, Fr Joseph Heng from the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Krubong, Melaka, celebrated the Mass, with six priests concelebrating. Notably, this year saw pilgrims from various parishes across different districts and states, com-

ing to worship, give thanks, fulfil vows, and pray for the priests who minister to them.

The festivities included a Mass for catechism students, celebrated by Fr Christopher Wilvaraj at 9.30am on Saturday, August 3. In the afternoon, at 2.30pm, pilgrims experienced the healing grace of God during the Anointing Mass for the sick and elderly, which concluded with a blessing from Cardinal Sebastian Francis.

Before the Mass at 4.00pm, the royal visit of YTM Tunku Besar Tampin, YAM Che Puan Anis, and their children, added to the joy of all present.

The celebration reached its zenith with Cardinal Sebastian presiding over the Eucharist. The cardinal preached about the spiritual revolution that must occur in our daily lives as disciples of Christ, following the example of our patron saint. After the Eucharistic celebration, the beautifully adorned statue of St John Vianney was processed with the Blessed Sacrament by the celebrants. Approximately a thousand pilgrims and parishioners participated in the celebration, which concluded with a benediction and a dinner served by the parish.

On Sunday, August 4, the actual feast of St John Marie Vianney, the triduum concluded with Mass attended by matriculation students, Bomba trainees, pilgrims, and parishioners. The gathering was a spiritually enriching and unforgettable experience, marked by lively involvement and a strong sense of community.



Top: Cardinal Sebastian Francis lifts up the monstrance during the procession.
Bottom: Pilgrims walking solemnly during the procession.



Graduation of refugee community health workers

KUALA LUMPUR: The graduation ceremony for the 2024 batch of refugee Community Health Workers (CHWs) specialising in Mental Health, trained by the NGO Health Equity Initiatives (HEI), was celebrated on August 3 at the YMCA.

The 22 refugee graduates came from four countries — Myanmar, Afghanistan, Yemen,

and South Sudan — with the majority from Myanmar. The event was attended by HEI team members, family and friends of the graduates, leaders and representatives from various refugee ethnic communities in Malaysia, and representatives of Malaysian and international NGOs working with refugees in the country.



From left: Co-founder and director of Health Equity Initiatives (HEI) Prof Dr Xavier V. Pereira, HEI executive director Alice Tan, a refugee graduate and UNHCR Malaysia representative, Jason Teo.



The 22 refugee Community Health Workers (CHWs) with Prof Dr Xavier V. Pereira, Jason Yeo and Alice Tan.

The ceremony began with a graduation march. Once the graduates were seated, Alice Tan, the executive director of HEI, delivered the welcome address. She warmly greeted all attendees and provided a brief overview of HEI and its training programme for refugee CHWs. This was followed by four graduates sharing their experiences from the training and a well-performed song, 'Part of Your World,' by graduate Sui Cer Chin.

Prof Dr Xavier V. Pereira, the co-founder and director of HEI, delivered the keynote speech congratulating the graduates and the HEI team for their efforts in completing the training and also thanked the family and community members of the graduates for their support. He exhorted the new CHWs to use the knowledge and skills gained in the training to serve their communities and commissioned the graduates, saying that they now had a mission to fulfil. He ended with an affirmation exercise that everyone enjoyed. This was followed by a speech by

the UNHCR Malaysia representative, Jason Yeo. All the graduates then coordinated well to sing a song they had chosen titled *Extend A Hand*.

The presentation of certificates was by Jason Yeo and Alice Tan. This was followed by a traditional dance performance by a trio of young Myanmar women.

The closing remarks were given by Aneesha Gnana Kumar, Programmes Coordinator of HEI. The MC of the programme was Mewish Alam, a Pakistani Christian refugee CHW with HEI.

The celebrations ended with a group photo session and lunch.

HEI was co-founded by Catholic couple Dr Sharuna Verghis and Dr Xavier Pereira in 2007 – 2008. The first programme conducted by HEI was the Training of Refugees on Community Mental Health in 2008, with the support of UNHCR and the late Fr Phillips Muthu, who provided a venue for the training at the Church of the Assumption, Petaling Jaya. This programme was developed by Dr Xavier, Dr Sharuna and Mary Chuah. The programme has been conducted every year to empower the refugees in the greater Kuala Lumpur area to serve their communities.

Since 2008, HEI, which is a Health and Human Rights NGO and community-based organisation (CBO), has been providing comprehensive mental health services to refugees which include psycho-social support services, counselling and psychological based interventions, and psychiatric treatment. The current HEI team consists of people from a variety of ethnicities, religious backgrounds and nationalities serving refugees in the greater Kuala Lumpur/Klang Valley area.

Reflections from our shepherds on the RPA2024

By Y. K. Ng

As the Peninsular Malaysia Church prepares for the Regional Pastoral Assembly 2024 (RPA2024), August 25-27 at MAJODI Centre in Plentong Johor, Archbishop Julian Leow, Cardinal Sebastian Francis and Bishop Bernard Paul share their insights and reflections on its significance. Their perspectives illuminate the broader journey of RPA2024 towards the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026 (MPC2026), which is a journey towards communion of the Catholic Church of Sabah, Sarawak, and Peninsular Malaysia.

Vision for Youth in the Church

Archbishop Julian Leow of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, shared his vision for the Church, particularly focusing on the role of youth in shaping the future. Reflecting on the four key areas to be discussed at the RPA — Family, Church, Ecology, and Society — Archbishop Julian highlighted youth as the connecting thread. “The hope for the Peninsular Malaysia Church lies with her youth,” he stated.

For Archbishop Julian, engaging and



empowering the youth is critical for the Church's future. He envisions a Church where young people are not just participants but leaders who drive the Church's mission forward. “Let us engage them, empower them, and trust that they can do anything as the Lord strengthens them,” he urged.

Archbishop Julian's dream is for the youth to rise up and take the Church as a beacon of hope and peace for the world, ensuring its relevance and vibrancy in the years to come.

His focus on youth reflects a broader strategy for the Church's mission, where the involvement of young people is seen as essential to addressing the challenges in each of the four focus areas. Whether in the family, within the Church, in ecological stewardship, or in society at large, the youth are viewed as the lifeblood of the Church's future, capable of carrying its mission forward with energy and conviction.



REGIONAL PASTORAL ASSEMBLY 2024
August 25-27, 2024
MAJODI Centre, Johor

Synodality and the RPA2024

Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang, emphasised the continuity of the Church's journey from the local level to the universal Church under the guidance of Pope Francis. He noted the importance of the synodal process that began with Pope Francis' call for a Synod on Synodality and its alignment with the Malaysian Bishops' vision for MPC2026. “Celebrate-Listen-Walk is a good strategy, a process that does not start from ground zero but is true to the process that began from the start of this journey,” Cardinal Sebastian explained.

He further elaborated on the seamless blending of the synodal journey with the local Church's ongoing efforts, stating, “The process



has faithfully blended the Synodal journey initiated by Pope Francis with the decision of the Malaysian Bishops to have a first Malaysian Pastoral Convention in 2026.” For Cardinal Sebastian, the focus is not on setting specific outcomes but on remaining open and obedient to the Holy Spirit's guidance. “At this stage of our journey, we should not presume the outcome... but invite

all to be faithful and obedient to the Call of the Holy Spirit through the Bishops of Malaysia,” he urged.

As the RPA2024 approaches, Cardinal Sebastian sees this gathering as an essential step towards the larger goal of MPC2026. He expressed hope that the Spirit of Unity and the mission of Christ will guide every thought, word, and deed



leading to the assembly. “Let us move forward with confidence, especially in Conversations of the Holy Spirit as we celebrate our past and present with humility, conversion, and joy,” he said.

Cardinal Sebastian's message is clear — fidelity to the process is fidelity to the Holy Spirit, and this faithfulness will direct the Church's path forward.

Conclusion

As the RPA2024 approaches, the reflections from our shepherds provide valuable insights into the assembly's purpose and significance. Their words call us to a deeper engagement with the synodal process, emphasising the need for faithfulness, discernment, and a shared commitment to the Church's mission. The RPA2024 is not just a meeting but a continuation of the synodal journey — a journey that requires deep listening, communal discernment, and a focus on the future of the Church in Malaysia.

As the Church looks ahead to MPC2026, the RPA2024 will play a crucial role in shaping its path forward, ensuring that it remains responsive to the Holy Spirit's guidance and committed to its mission of evangelisation and communion.



Call to Evangelisation

Bishop Bernard Paul of the Diocese of Malacca Johore, emphasised the need for the Church to remain a source of hope and light in a world that often struggles with despair and a sense of irrelevance. “The RPA is a way to move forward, seeking the will of God for the local Church and listening to what the Spirit is saying to the churches,” he explained.

Bishop Bernard sees the RPA2024 as an op-

portunity to listen to the Holy Spirit and respond to the pastoral needs of the Church with faith and courage. He highlighted the importance of the “Conversation in the Spirit” (CIS) process, which opens participants to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. “The CIS process opens us to the promptings or pastoral counsels, which may be subtly or strongly suggested,” he said.

His vision for the Church remains connected to its mission of evangelisation, even in the face of growing scepticism and the perception that the Church is losing its relevance. “Hope does not disappoint. In the midst of negativism, scepticism, and a growing sense of seeing the

Church as irrelevant, the Church will continue to be beacons of hope,” Bishop Bernard affirmed. He emphasised that the Church's role is not to be a towering lighthouse but rather “small fireplaces of comfort, consolation, and communion.”

Bishop Bernard reminds us that evangelisation is at the heart of the Church's mission. “Everything is evangelisation. What we do must glorify God and point out the hidden God and the Kingdom in our midst,” he stated. His call is for a Church that lives out its mission in every action, no matter how small, as a testimony to God's presence and love in the world.

Hearing the voices of resilience

PETALING JAYA: *Voices of Resilience*, a storytelling night organised by Young Lives Malaysia and PWPN (the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network Malaysia) under the stewardship of Fr Alberto Irenus David, SJ, was held on July 25 at the Church of St Francis Xavier. This gathering brought together over 23 refugees, 47 local community members, two priests, and Archbishop Julian Leow for an evening that transcended mere storytelling — an event of profound exchange of humanity and resilience.

The evening began with a sumptuous dinner, thoughtfully prepared and generously provided. As attendees shared a meal, the barriers of unfamiliarity and prejudice began to dissolve, replaced by a palpable sense of camaraderie. The atmosphere was warm and inviting, an apt setting conducive to a night of vulnerable sharing.

As the dinner concluded, the lights dimmed, and the main event began. The refugees, mostly from Myanmar, took to the

stage, one by one, to relay their stories. Each narrative was a tapestry woven with threads of struggle, pain, tears and an indomitable spirit. They spoke of the brutal military junta, the harrowing experiences of sex trafficking, and the myriad challenges they faced on their perilous journeys to safety.

Despite the darkness of their tales, there was an eventual light in their eyes, an optimism, a reflection of their unwavering hope and resilience. They were all driven by a dream of a better future and their stories were not just of survival, but of the incredible strength of the human spirit.

The audience listened with rapt attention, some moved to tears by the sheer courage and resilience displayed by these strong-willed individuals. It was a powerful reminder of the trials faced by refugees and the amazing fortitude they exhibit in the face of unimaginable adversity.

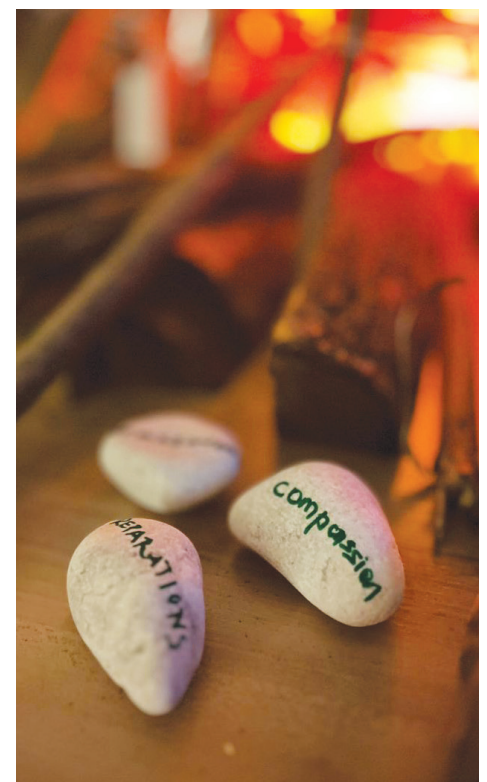
The event provided a platform for refugees to be heard, to be seen, and to share their truths. It fostered a deeper understand-

ing among the local community, breaking down stereotypes and building a foundation of support and solidarity.

As the night drew to a close, there was a collective recognition of the importance of such events. By creating safe spaces where stories of struggle and triumph can be shared, we can cultivate a more compassionate and supportive community. In doing so, we honour the courage of those who have faced the worst of humanity and emerged with their spirits unbroken.

The evening at Loyola Hall was a poignant reminder that in listening to each other's stories, we find our common humanity. The dynamic team from Young Lives has set a remarkable example in organising this eye-opening event, and it is imperative that we continue to build on this foundation. More such events can pave the way for greater awareness, empathy, and action in support of refugees, fostering a world where every voice is heard and every story matters. —

By Mark Suresh



Legionaries enhance pastoral visitation skills

SARAWAK: The Legion of Mary Bintulu, Mother of Good Counsel, hosted a three-day seminar on Pastoral Visitation Skills Training at the Church of St Anthony's parish hall from July 20 to 22. Led by the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan Mental Health Ministry's (AMHM) Ecclesiastical Assistant, Fr Philip Chua and counsellors Warren Lee and Vivian Lock, the event drew over 80 Legion members.

The seminar aimed to enhance the visitation and psychological support skills of the Legion members, aligning with the AMHM's commitment to mental health awareness and community support. In partnering with the Bintulu Legion of Mary, they aim to enhance the visitation and psychological support skills of its members. The Legion of Mary,

a key group within the Catholic Church, has a rich history of community service and visitation, offering comfort and aid to those in need. This collaboration not only bolsters their current efforts but also equips them with essential tools for providing more effective and compassionate support.

The seminar offered a thorough exploration of essential visitation ministry skills and key mental health concepts. Key topics included:

- Enhancing self-awareness and emotion management.
- Catholic Perspectives on Life and Death: Using faith to cope with mortality.
- Empathy and Emotional Support: Techniques for providing empathetic



Fr Philip Chua sharing insights with the participants.

support during visits.

- Effective Communication and Listening Skills: Building trust and communicating effectively.
- Proper Visitation Techniques: Best practices for conducting meaningful visits.
- Addressing Common Issues During

Visits: Solutions for typical challenges in patient interactions.

- Self-Care: The importance of maintaining personal well-being.
- Role-Playing Exercises: Practising new techniques and understanding emotions through role play.

The seminar combined theoretical insights with practical exercises, allowing participants to both learn and apply new skills. Attendees engaged actively, asking insightful questions and expressing plans to utilise the skills in future visits.

The training enhanced not only visitation techniques but also the ability to provide psychological support. The collaboration with the AMHM proved highly beneficial. Future activities are anticipated to continue supporting the community effectively.

For more information about AMHM, visit their official website or call 03-8211 8214.



OLGH Parit Buntar to undergo major renovations

PARIT BUNTAR: The Church of Our Lady of Good Health under the leadership of parish priest Fr Martin Arlando and his team will be launching a major renovation project aimed at transforming the church building into a space more fitting for sacred worship. The project



The donation box.

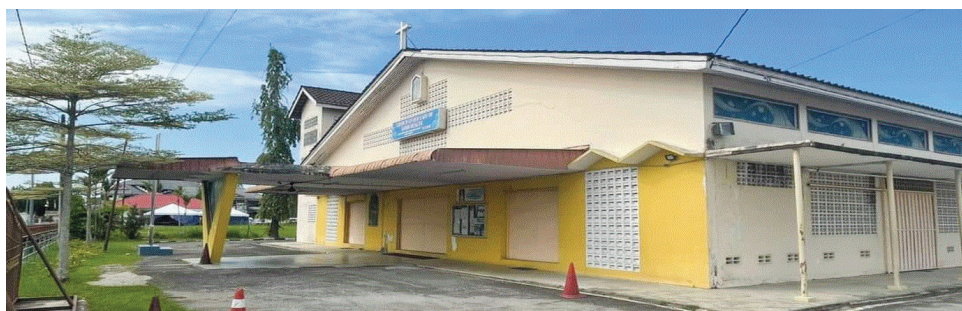
will upgrade the 60-year-old structure to reflect traditional Christian architectural designs.

Established in 1903, the parish is dedicated to Our Lady of Good Health (Annai Velangkanni), a title given to the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is traditionally believed to have appeared in Velankanni, Tamil Nadu, India, during the 16th and 17th centuries. This title was officially approved by the Holy See under Pope John XXIII in 1962.

Fr Martin noted that the current church building, which has been likened to a 'warehouse,' has deteriorated over the years and lacks the distinctive features of a Catholic church. Additionally, the location is prone to flooding, which has previously damaged the church's kneelers during heavy rain.

The renovation, costing RM3.5 million, is set to begin in late September 2024, immediately following the parish's feast day celebrations for Our Lady of Good Health. The parish has secured the necessary approvals from local authorities and is currently seeking tenders for a qualified contractor.

Plans for the renovation include raising the



church's flooring to prevent flooding and extending the building by 10 feet from the sanctuary side. The project will also feature a new sanctuary with stained glass windows and the relocation of the tabernacle to its central position. The renovation is expected to be completed by the end of June 2025.

Fr Martin emphasised that the renovated church will enhance the worship experience with its new architectural features, creating a more fitting atmosphere for contemplation and adoration. He believes that good church architecture frames and enhances worship in a way that honours God.

Despite the parish being considered poor,

with only 120 Catholic families, Fr Martin has called for contributions of RM2,000 per family to help raise RM500,000 for the project. To date, the parish has collected RM500,000 through various fund raising activities, including a family day event. They are still seeking additional donations to cover the remaining RM3 million needed.

Fr Martin plans to use the renovated church as a pilgrimage centre to attract visitors and foster deeper devotion to Our Lady of Good Health. The parish aims to become a centre for evangelisation, reflecting the broader rationale behind the renovation project. — **By Bernard Anthony**

Letters to Editor

Dear Editor

I am responding to Jacelyn Johnson's article titled *I Will Always Choose Malaysia*, (HERALD, August 4, 2024). While I agree with her sentiment that I, too, will always choose Malaysia, my choice isn't about comparing it with Nepal or any other country.

I choose Malaysia because we are already

I too, will always choose Malaysia

living in "paradise." We don't experience destructive hurricanes, tornadoes, or cyclones — our annual monsoons are mild in comparison. We are free from massive earthquakes, sweeping wildfires, senseless mass killings, or riots and mass protests causing injuries or fatalities. We don't face sub-zero freezing weather, sweltering heat waves causing heat strokes, or terrorist attacks — the only such incident I can recall was in 1975 when the Japanese Red Army

took 53 hostages in the AIA building in Kuala Lumpur.

Yes, we may experience some forms of discrimination and encounter restrictive laws and regulations that seem to impede freedom. Yes, we may face political tensions, religious and cultural challenges, economic downturns, and high unemployment. But which nation in the world doesn't?

For senior citizens and school-going children, there are numerous government subsi-

dies, incentives, and benefits. Where else in the world can one find government health-care costing RM1 for medical consultation and medicine? Where else can one find affordable street food for less than RM10 (USD 2.20) in the early morning hours, or pay RM2.05 (USD 0.45) per litre for petrol?

For these simple reasons, I will always choose Malaysia.

Richard Chia
Kuala Lumpur

Send your letters to ► letterseditor@herald.com.my

The Editor, HERALD, 5 Jalan Robertson, 50150 KL | Please include your name and address. *Letters without name and address will not be entertained.*

Church lauds Filipino gymnast's double Olympic gold

MANILA: A Church official in the Philippines has joined others to celebrate a historic double gold that gymnast Carlos Yulo won at the Paris Olympics.

The 24-year-old Filipino won a gold medal in the artistic gymnastic floor exercise on August 3 and another gold in the vault event the next day.

Yulo became the first Filipino to win two gold medals and only the second to win an Olympic gold after weightlifter Hidilyn Diaz in 2020.

The Philippines' participation in the 2024 Olympics marks the country's 100th year of competing in the Games.

Yulo's was an "extraordinary achievement in the Olympics," said Jing Rey Henderson, head of communications and partnership development at Caritas Philippines.

The official of the national bishops' conference's humanitarian arm lauded Yulo's "perseverance, dedication, and unwavering faith."

Yulo will "inspire millions of Filipinos to dream big and strive for excellence," he said.

Challengers marked Yulo's journey, and his victory "is a testament to the indomitable spirit of the Filipino people," Henderson said on Aug 5.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. also joined the nation in congratulating Yulo's historic performance at the Olympics.



Gold medalist Carlos Edriel Yulo of the Philippines (center) with Armenia's Artur Davtyan (left) and Britain's Harry Hepworth (right) on the podium after the men's vault during the Paris Olympics, August 4, 2024. (Carlos Edriel Yulo instagram)

"No words can express how proud we are of you, Caloy! You have achieved GOLD for the Philippines not once, but twice! Filipinos all over the world stood united, cheering and rooting for you," Marcos said in a social media post.

"We will take pride in your shining vic-

tory! We salute you!" the president added.

Diaz, who brought the Philippines its first gold medal at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, also lauded Yulo's achievement.

"Enjoy the fruits of your hard work. Always give back to God and the country because all our successes are not just for our-

selves," read part of Diaz' Instagram post on Aug 3.

Filipinos in the country and abroad showered the gymnast with congratulatory messages.

The government and several companies have pledged rewards for Yulo's performance in gymnastics, a popular sport among Filipinos.

The House of Representatives will gift Yulo six million pesos (MYR 470,000.00) in addition to the 10 million pesos incentive paid to athletes by the Philippine Sports Commission.

A real estate company offered Yulo a three-bedroom property worth 32 million pesos and some private enterprises offered cash gifts.

"All the struggles that brought me down, all the people who didn't believe in me and put me down – this is for those who truly believed in me," Yulo said in a media interview shortly after clinching his second gold medal.

He thanked God and dedicated the win to his country.

"It's one of the challenges given to me by the Lord, and I know He gave it to me because He knows I can overcome it. I'm super thankful for the challenges He gave me; I draw strength from Him," Yulo said in his message to the Filipino people. — **By Ronald O. Reyes, OSV**

Djokovic gives glory to God for gold medal victory

PARIS: Novak Djokovic became the first tennis player in a dozen years, male or female, to complete a tennis "Golden Slam," winning all four major annual tournaments and an Olympic gold medal.

The 37-year-old Serb, considered by many the greatest male tennis player in history, defeated the young Spanish superstar Carlos Alcaraz to win the gold at the Paris Olympics.

Many Catholics took note of the fact that an elated Djokovic made the sign of the cross several times after winning the match on August 4, but you may also have noticed that he did the sign of the cross from right to left, rather than the typical Catholic left to right.

Djokovic is a Serbian Orthodox Christian. The sign of the cross is rich with meaning for all Christians, including Catholics, but the Orthodox practice,

which is arguably more ancient, adds additional levels of meaning.

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, the very earliest Christian practice appears to be the tracing of the sign of the cross of one's forehead, which later evolved into the practice of making a sign of the cross across a larger portion of the body. St Basil (329–379) wrote that the apostles "taught us to mark with the sign of the cross those who put their hope in the Lord."

When Catholics do the sign of the cross today, they cross themselves with their hand starting at the top, going down, and then from left to right. When Orthodox Christians do the sign of the cross, they start at the top, go down, and then from right to left.

Many Orthodox sources say part of the reason that the sign of the cross is done in this direction is because during the Ortho-

dox Divine Liturgy — the equivalent of the Mass — the Orthodox priest does the sign of the cross from left to right, facing the people, who copy his movements in mirror image. That said, the exact reasons for the differences are ancient and not entirely clear even to the Orthodox themselves.

There's another level of meaning in the Orthodox sign of the cross, though, that is more readily documented. The Orthodox hold their hand with the index and middle fingers and thumb together, a symbol of the three persons of the Holy Trinity — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit — together as one God. The two fingers, ring and pinky, that remain down symbolize the two natures of Jesus: fully human and fully divine.

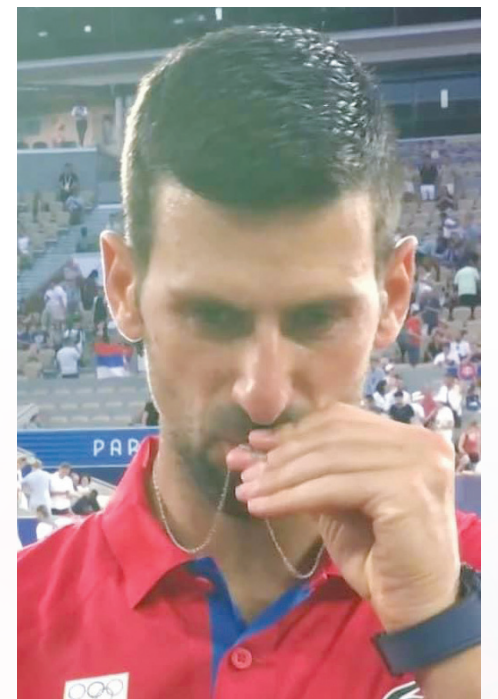
Djokovic was brought up in the Serbian Orthodox Church, which claims the majority of the country's citizens and several million members worldwide. He grew up during a tumultuous time in the region and survived the wars between the Yugoslavian states.

In 2011, Djokovic was awarded the Serbian Orthodox Church's highest honour "for his active love toward Mother Church, particularly fervent and persistent helping [of] the Serbian people and the sanctuaries of our Holy Church."

He has donated several million dollars to the Serbian public health system and to charities run by the Serbian Orthodox Church.

"This is the most important title of my life, because before being an athlete, I am an Orthodox Christian," he said upon receiving the award.

Despite Djokovic's frequent displays of a cross necklace, performance of the sign of the cross, and talk of God, a 2015 biography of Djokovic opined that "[it] would



Gold medalist Novak Djokovic of Serbia kissing his cross necklace after winning the gold medal in men's singles at the Paris Olympics. (twitter/ Sachin Jose)

wrong to suggest that he is devoutly religious, but the ritualistic role the church plays in the life of Serbia is sufficiently strong that it is very much a part of his life."

Still, the tennis champ has shown himself to be a person animated by love of neighbour. He runs the Novak Djokovic Foundation, which primarily focuses on rebuilding preschools and supporting teachers and parents of young schoolchildren. And in 2017, he opened a restaurant in Serbia that provides free food to the homeless. — **By Jonah McKeown, CNA**

REPA TRIATION OF REMAINS • EXHUMATION SERVICES

• PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY & CONSULTATION ON BEREAVEMENT MATTERS •

COMPLETE FUNERAL ARRANGEMENT FOR ALL FAITHS

诺曼殯儀服務
NORMAN FUNERAL SERVICES

Honouring Lives Since 1966

24 HOURS

012 212 0677 / 012 333 5753 / 019 333 5753

Norman Christian Funeral Services (002882028-X)
No. 112, Jalan Gasing, 46000 Petaling Jaya
Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia
603 7931 6639
✉ normanfuneralservice@gmail.com
f Norman Funeral Services
www.normanfuneralservices.com



• BUILDING OF MONUMENTS • SUPPLY OF CONDOLENCE WREATHS •

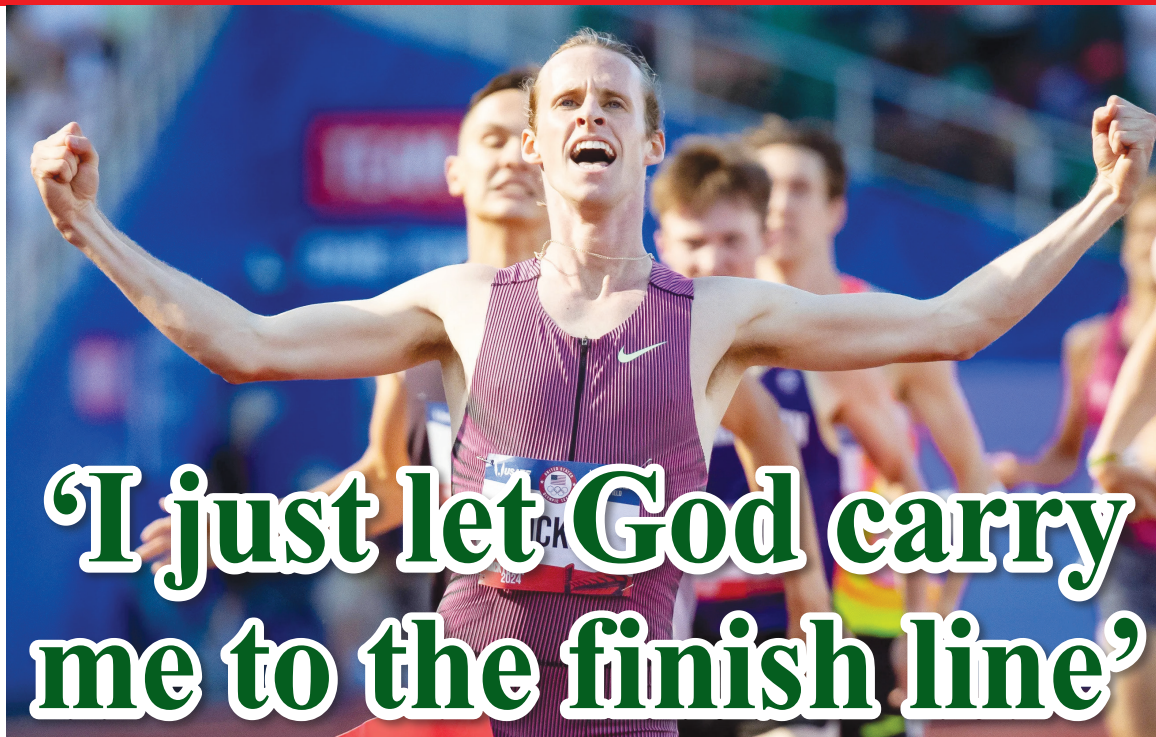
PARIS: When Cole Hocker raced to a gold medal and an Olympic record in the 1500-metre run in Paris on August 6, a television commentator called it a moment that “shocked the world.”

All hype aside, the thrilling surge by the 2019 graduate of Cathedral High School in Indianapolis past previous world and Olympic champions in the final stretch of the race was breathtaking and historic — making him just the fourth American in Olympic history to win this signature race.

And while the 23-year-old Hocker believes he can win any race he runs — and he had that belief about the 2024 Olympics—the fire and joy he showed immediately after crossing the finish line also soon turned to a stunned expression of awe, reflecting that what he had just done was true, that the dream he was now living was real.

So were the words of thanks and praise that he shared in a post-race interview at the stadium where more than 70,000 fans — including his parents, Kyle and Janet Hocker — had risen to their feet and roared for his gutsy, dramatic win.

Recalling the moment when he found the homestretch opening along the rail of the track to sprint past the two heavy favourites in



the race, Hocker said, “When it opened up, I just let God carry me to the finish line.”

In a later interview, hours after the race on the NBC television network, Hocker also used the words “divine intervention” to describe that defining moment.

Those references to God recalled some of the comments he made in a conversation with *The Criterion* in 2021, after having just qualified to represent the United States in

the 1500-metre run in the Olympics in Tokyo that year.

Recalling the 2021 qualifying race that led him to represent the United States for the first time as an Olympian, Hocker talked about how he had followed his usual pre-race routine of saying a prayer, asking God to be with him as he pursued his goal.

He also noted, “The reason I run is because I have a God-given talent. I just feel God has given me

the gift of running, and my job is to give it my best.

“On top of that, because I’ve been given that, I want to take advantage of it. And it’s more gratifying because of how hard I have worked. This year, more than ever, I’ve held myself to a higher standard. Every race I’ve entered, I thought I could win. After years of thinking about running in the Olympics and dreaming about it, to have it all come to fruition is

awesome.”

Three years later, that dream took on another dimension as he continued to follow a routine that he began as a child — writing down his goals on a piece of paper.

“Winning gold was my goal this entire year,” Hocker said after his gold medal victory in Paris. “I wrote that down, and I repeated it to myself even if I didn’t believe it. I knew I was a medal contender, and I knew that if I get it right, it would be a gold medal. I’ve been saying that.”

Talking about the moment when the goal became realised, Hocker smiled and said, “It felt like a dream.”

It’s a dream-come-true that has already involved celebrating with an American flag draped around his shoulders, ringing the ceremonial “Paris 2024” bell that will eventually be placed in the rebuilt Notre Dame Cathedral, and standing in awe as “The Star-Spangled Banner” was played in his honour.

Most of all it’s a dream-come-true built on the foundation of a desire to make the most of a God-given gift — and a deep appreciation for the source of that gift.

“When it opened up, I just let God carry me to the finish line.” — *The Criterion*

Couples celebrating anniversaries urged to inspire youth

ZIMBABWE: On August 3, ten couples from Karoi’s St Paul Parish, Holy Trinity, St Theresa, and Tengwe centres in the Diocese of Chinhoyi, celebrated their marriage anniversaries in a vibrant ceremony. Each couple was honoured with papal blessing parchments, marking their commitment and dedication to one another.

The event was officiated by the parish priest, Fr James Allen, with Fr Chazunguza and the Spiritual Director for the Couples Association, Fr Simbarashe Chigumbura, concelebrating. The couples renewed their vows, exchanged rings, and shared a kiss to reaffirm their devotion.

Among the couples were Albert Chikuvadze, Diocesan Pastoral chairperson, and his wife Rhoda, as well as Joseph Masikati, Diocesan chairperson for the Sacred Heart Guild, and his wife Judith. Both

couples joyfully reiterated their vows with heartfelt “I do’s.”

Despite the well-known challenges of marriage, symbolised by the saying “marriage is not a bed of roses,” the ten couples demonstrated love, commitment, and perseverance. Their journey was celebrated by many well-wishers who praised their dedication.

The couples were reminded that their anniversaries symbolised not just longevity but also a well-lived marital bond characterised by sacrifices, tolerance, forgiveness, and conflict resolution. The oldest couple, Wibert and Clothilda Sengai, who have been married for 40 years, shared insights into their unique journey. They emphasised the importance of developing personalised strategies to handle challenges, openness to growth, learning, tolerance, humility, and adaptation as pillars of a lasting union.

The Sengais advised couples to respect each other’s views, backgrounds, and cultures to build mutual understanding and trust. They also stressed the importance of sharing responsibilities, setting family goals, and basing their marriage on prayer, particularly the Holy Eucharist.

In their closing remarks, the Sengais called for mutual support in each other’s growth, individual goals, aspirations, and personal development while discouraging competition within marriage. They highlighted the significance of confidentiality, respect, and effective communication in fostering intimacy.

During his homily at the anniversary Mass, Fr Chigumbura encouraged the couples to remain focused and dedicated in their love, serving as role models for younger generations. He urged them to practise forgiveness, understanding, and resilience, which are crucial for family stability.

“Being in a marriage is not easy, and achieving this feat does not mean you have accomplished everything. It is a sign that you are journeying with God, the author of your marriage and family. You should be grateful to Him and reflect His love to others through your way of life so that they can follow Him and keep their marriages intact,” Fr Chigumbura said.

Addressing young couples and the youth, Fr Chigumbura encouraged them to seek guidance from God-fearing individuals and to follow the excellent example set by the couples renewing their vows. — **By Bro Alfonce Kugwa, Vatican News**



A couple receiving a papal blessing. (Vatican Media)

Groups unite for Kerala landslide recovery



The interreligious “Wayanad Relief Group,” led by Claretian Fr George Kannanthanam, aims to provide immediate temporary family shelters and eventually construct permanent homes. (Matters India photo)

INDIA: A coalition of dioceses, religious congregations, and laity in India has joined forces with Hindu and Muslim communities to lead rehabilitation efforts for survivors of a devastating landslide in Kerala’s Wayanad district. The landslide, which struck on July 30, is one of the worst in the region’s history, resulting in over 400 deaths and injuring many others. More than 2,000 people are currently housed in temporary camps.

The interreligious “Wayanad Relief Group,” headed by Claretian Fr George Kannanthanam, aims to provide immediate temporary shelters and eventually build permanent homes. The group has conducted a rapid assessment of the affected areas, relief camps, and victims’ families to determine urgent needs.

On August 6, the team, coordinated by parish priest, Fr Mathew Periappuram, met at St Vincent De Paul Forane Church in Kalpetta with over 40 representatives from various

religious congregations, including the Mananthavady Syro-Malabar diocese, the Latin Archdiocese of Bangalore, and the diocese of Calicut. They briefed district collector D. R. Meghashree on their plans and expressed their commitment to supporting the government’s initiative to develop a dedicated township with comprehensive amenities for the victims.

Fr Kannanthanam highlighted the urgent need for transitional housing to help families return to normal life. The group explored various cost-effective prefabricated housing models, proposing structures of approximately 200 square feet with a kitchenette and toilet, estimated to cost around 300,000 rupees (approx RM15,645). While some members favoured community shelters, others preferred individual family accommodations. The group decided to present their plan to the government and offer to oversee its implementation as permanent housing is developed. — *LiCAS*



Leadership Succession

Lessons from Scripture and Service

Archbishop Emeritus John Ha of Kuching (pic) was one of the speakers at the Transforming Parishes 2024 (TP24), hosted by the Alpha Hub in Kuala Lumpur as part of the wider Alpha Regional Gathering (ARG). The archbishop emeritus addressed various aspects of leadership within the Church, focusing on leadership succession, servant leadership, and decision-making. The session concluded with a Q&A segment, where attendees sought the prelate's insights on these critical issues. We feature some highlights of his talk.

Archbishop Emeritus (ABE) John Ha began by recounting his own experience of passing the baton to his successor, Archbishop Simon Poh in 2017. Observing the capability of younger bishops, he felt it was time for a change and requested the Holy Father's approval for his resignation from the Archbishop's Office, ahead of the canonical age. The subsequent appointment of Archbishop Simon, who was at that time the auxiliary bishop, was a testament to the careful discernment and consultation involved in such decisions.

During the succession Mass, an unexpected incident occurred when ABE John's pectoral cross became snagged and broke as he kissed the altar at the beginning of the service. The prelate saw this as a divine sign supporting his decision to retire early. However, he shared a humorous anecdote, when he was later approached by a Chinese catechist who remarked in Mandarin, "You're so lazy, retiring so early," offering a different interpretation of the event — ABE John had chosen to retire at 70, ahead of the canonical age of 75.

Biblical Foundations of Leadership Succession

Turning to the biblical foundations of leadership succession, ABE John emphasised

the necessity of such transitions due to the impermanence of earthly life and the need for effective and new leaders in cases of ineffective or self-serving leadership. He referenced three key biblical examples: Moses appointing Joshua, Jesus selecting His apostles, and the replacement of Judas by Matthias.

1. Moses to Joshua – A Model of Succession

In the Old Testament, the succession of Moses by Joshua serves as a foundational example of leadership transition. As Moses neared the end of his life and, recognising his age and limitations, he appointed Joshua as his successor. Deuteronomy 34 describes how Moses ascended Mount Nebo to view the Promised Land before his death. In a significant act, Moses laid hands on Joshua, a gesture symbolising both human preparation and divine endorsement. This act endowed Joshua with wisdom and leadership, marking the transition of authority. God's assurance to Joshua, as described in the Book of Joshua, reaffirmed the divine approval of this succession.

2. Jesus and the Apostles – Formation and Appointment

The New Testament provides a founda-

tional example of leadership succession through Jesus' deliberate selection of the twelve Apostles. This process, described in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, was marked by prayer and discernment, emphasising the importance of divine guidance in leadership decisions. According to Luke 6:12-16, Jesus spent a night in prayer on a mountain before choosing the twelve Apostles, symbolising the continuity of God's covenant with the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jesus' choice of the Apostles was guided by divine inspiration, and He personally formed them through His teaching, example, and hands-on experience. By naming the Apostles, Jesus assigned them unique roles and responsibilities to continue His mission. This selection not only demonstrated a model of leadership formation but also set a standard for leadership development, ensuring the continuity of His work of salvation.

3. Matthias – The Role of the Holy Spirit in Succession

After Judas Iscariot's betrayal and death, the remaining Apostles needed to select a successor. In Acts 1, Peter addressed the group, emphasising the need to fulfil Scripture and find someone who had

been with Jesus from His baptism to His resurrection. Two candidates were proposed — Barsabbas and Matthias. After prayer and casting lots, Matthias was chosen to complete the number of Apostles. The election of Matthias underscores the importance of prayer and the Holy Spirit's role in guiding the selection process.

The mark of a leader

ABE John emphasised the importance of servant leadership, highlighting that true leaders should be filled with the Holy Spirit and focused on building up the community, rather than seeking self-glorification. He stressed that the Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in leadership succession, ensuring that leaders are both well-prepared and spiritually equipped to serve. If a leader fails to serve effectively, succession becomes necessary to meet the community's needs and continue its mission. True Church leadership involves serving with humility, using one's gifts for the common good, and following the Spirit's guidance to fulfil the Church's mission.

In his closing remarks, the prelate encouraged reflection on the nature of leadership within the Church, the importance of careful planning and spiritual guidance in ensuring that successors are well-prepared to carry forward the Church's mission effectively.

"We all know that our Catholic Church has faced some challenges, including failures among top leadership — cardinals, bishops, priests, and religious. But God never fails us. He ensures that there are always leaders to guide us, fulfilling His promise to continue His plan of salvation. We must remain diligent and open to the Spirit, trusting that God is ever so faithful to His Word," he concluded.

The talk offered valuable insights into the complexities and spiritual dimensions of leadership succession, emphasising that both human effort and divine intervention are crucial in shaping the future of our faith communities. Leadership succession is a process that requires careful preparation, divine guidance, and a commitment to serving others. As exemplified by Moses, Jesus and the early Apostles, effective leadership transitions involve human diligence and reliance on the Holy Spirit to continue God's mission.



Participants at the Transforming Parishes 2024 event.

Question & Answer Session

The talk ended with an invitation for questions, offering attendees an opportunity to engage further with the principles of effective and spiritually guided leadership.

One question posed to ABE John was about the role of mentoring in leadership succession within parish ministries. He emphasised the importance of mentoring, stating, "Mentoring is crucial. It can take various forms, but it should always focus on the faith growth of potential leaders." The prelate further advised against grooming just one individual, suggesting instead to nurture several potential leaders. "When the time comes for the leader to step down, there should be multiple candidates to choose from," he explained. ABE John also highlighted the long duration of seminary formation for priests, underscoring the need for leaders to be open to the Spirit and rooted in faith.

Another participant asked for clarification on the concept of servant leadership, noting the hierarchical structure within the Church. The prelate defined servant leadership as a

model where leaders are prepared to serve rather than seek personal glory. "A servant leader gathers the community, listens to everyone, and, with discernment and guidance from the Spirit, chooses the best course of action for the community," he elaborated, while expressing hope for the future of the Church, particularly if members embrace Pope Francis' call for synodality.

When asked about ineffective leaders within the Church and how they might be replaced, the archbishop emeritus responded with humour, acknowledging the sensitivity of the question. He pointed to the importance of patience and the gradual adoption of synodality, referencing the imperfections even among Jesus' Apostles. "Let's have faith in God and trust that He will provide and compensate for our shortcomings," he advised.

A young priest sought advice on leadership succession. ABE John cautioned against simply imitating past practices, given the evolving understanding of Church leader-



Participants having a discussion during one of the sessions at the Transforming Parishes 2024 event.

ship. He encouraged listening to parishioners and fostering a collaborative approach. "It's not easy, but with the guidance of the Spirit, we can achieve it," he reassured.

Finally, a question was raised about the use of democratic voting in parish decision-making. The archbishop acknowledged the

challenges of balancing discernment with community consensus. He stressed the importance of allowing the Spirit to guide the process and accepting the community's decisions, even if they result in mistakes. "Mistakes are also a process of growth and learning," he concluded.

“Let the bishop... exert even greater care and diligence...”

In the previous article, I examined briefly the role of the bishop in catechesis, from the period of the early Church to the Protestant Reformation. What is clear is that regardless of the changes in the ministry of catechesis, two key functions of the bishop become more evident, namely, the bishop as teacher and guardian of the Faith. In this article, I will discuss the development of the role of the bishop in catechesis, from the First Vatican Council to the early 20th century, in particular, as described in the documents, *Acerbo Nimis* and *Provido sane concilio*.

First Vatican Council (1869 – 1870)

Between the 16th to 19th centuries, the Catholic Faith began to spread to Asia, Africa and Latin America. As a result, there was a need for catechisms to teach the Faith to the people in the mission lands. Individuals and religious congregations, missionary groups and theological schools, began to produce their own catechisms. Many were translated into the local languages. In addition, catechisms were also written by catechetical experts on the orders of bishops for their dioceses. This led to a large and varied number of catechisms in the Church.

Concerned that the different versions of catechism may confuse the faithful, many bishops who gathered at the First Vatican Council expressed the need for a universal catechism. They argued that Catholics were confused about the Faith since there were too many catechisms. A uniform text would overcome the increasing ignorance and indifference among the people.

Some bishops, however, were not agreeable to the introduction of a universal catechism, since a single catechism would not be able to take into consideration the diverse pastoral needs in the local churches. Others thought that a universal catechism would take away the right of the bishop to produce his own catechism or that it would confuse the people



ECHOING THE FAITH

Dr Steven Selvaraju

who were used to the existing catechisms.

After much discussion, the Council decided that a universal catechism should be produced. With the approval of Pope Pius IX, a new catechism was to be written and translated into different vernacular languages, with the approval of the local bishops. However, work on the catechism was put on hold when the Council ended abruptly due to the Franco-Prussian war. After the Council, attempts were made to revive the preparation of a universal catechism but it did not materialise.

Acerbo Nimis (1905)

An important event in the modern history of catechetics was the publication of the encyclical *Acerbo Nimis* (Handing on the Christian Doctrine) on April 15, 1905. In this document Pope Pius X attributes, the religious crisis in the Church to the “widespread ignorance of Divine truth” and lays down strict regulations concerning the duty of catechising. In addressing the bishops, the Pope reminded them of their responsibility for catechesis. These include:

1. On every Sunday and holy day, with no exception, throughout the year, all parish priests and all those having the care of souls, “shall instruct the boys and girls, for the space of an hour from the text of the Catechism on those things they must believe and do to attain salvation.”
2. At certain times throughout the year, they shall prepare boys and girls to receive properly the Sacraments of Pen-

ance and Confirmation...”

3. In every parish, the society known as the ‘Confraternity of Christian Doctrine’ is to be established. Through this Confraternity, the pastors, especially in places where there is a scarcity of priests, will have lay helpers in the teaching of the Catechism, who will take up the work of imparting knowledge both from a zeal for the glory of God...”

4. Since adults also require instructions in the faith, all pastors and those having the care of souls “shall explain the Catechism to the people in a plain and simple style adapted to the intelligence of their hearers.”

The Pope concludes the document by pointing out to the bishop that:

“You have no doubt accomplished many useful and praiseworthy works in your respective dioceses for the good of the flock entrusted to your care, but before all else, and with all possible zeal and diligence and care, see to it and urge on others that the knowledge of Christian doctrine pervades and imbues fully and deeply the minds of all”.

Provido sane concilio (1935)

About thirty years later, the document on catechesis entitled *Provido sane Concilio* (On the Better Care and Promotion of Catechetical Education) was published by the Catechetical Office of the Holy See, at the directive of Pope Pius XI in January, 1935. It highlights the responsibility of bishops as follows:

“In the first place, let the bishop, mindful of the duty and office entrusted to them, exert even greater care and diligence than theretofore has been their custom, to encourage greater efforts and labour to spread catechetical instruction.”

Among the responsibilities of the bishop, the

following are included:

1. To ensure that the “food of Christian doctrine be given to the faithful, especially to the children and the uneducated, and that the schools and education of children and youth be carried out according to the principles of the Catholic religion.”
2. To legislate in his diocese in all matters that pertain to the instruction of people in Christian doctrine. The bishop should consider “what preparations are to be made, what laws should be laid down for this most important and necessary work, and by what means he can most easily and effectively carry out his plans in this matter”.
3. If possible, to set up a diocesan catechetical office, which under their supervision will direct all catechetical education in the diocese.

Conclusion

In this article, the role of the bishop in the development of catechesis in the Church from the First Vatican Council up to the early 20th centuries was briefly examined. It is evident that as new developments take place in the Church and in the world, the role of the bishop in catechesis also means new and added responsibilities and tasks. In the next article, I will examine the role of the bishop in catechesis from the Second Vatican Council onwards.

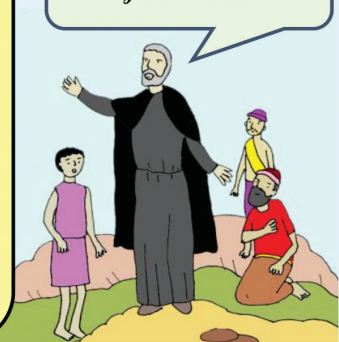
The key ideas of the article are presented in simple illustrated format below. The illustrations and text are by Dr Steven Selvaraju.

● Dr Steven Selvaraju, STD, STL, holds a Doctorate in Theology with Specialisation in Catechetics and Youth Ministry from Pontifical Salesian University, Rome. He serves as Director of the Archdiocesan Catechetical Centre, Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

“LET THE BISHOP... EXERT EVEN GREATER CARE AND DILIGENCE...”

From the 16th- 19th centuries, the Catholic Faith spread to many nations. There was a need for catechisms to teach the Faith to the local people. As a result, many catechisms were produced and translated into the vernacular languages.

Believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ!



In view of the existence of many and varied catechisms, at the **First Vatican Council** (1869-1871), there was a request by the bishops for a universal catechism so that the people would not be confused about the Faith. Pope Pius IX approved the preparation of a universal catechism but it did not materialise.



In April, 1905, an important document on catechesis, called **Acerbo nimis**, was promulgated by Pope Pius X. In addressing the bishops, the Pope reminded them about their responsibility for catechesis.

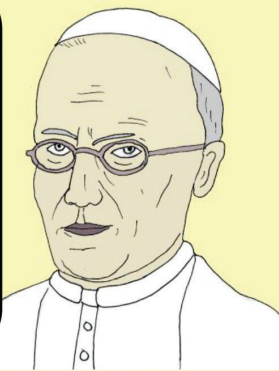
... before all else, and with all possible zeal and diligence and care, see to it and urge on others that the knowledge of Christian doctrine pervades and imbues fully and deeply the minds of all.



Among the responsibilities of the bishop include...

1. Ensure that on Sundays and holy days throughout the year, children and teenagers must be instructed for an hour from the text of the catechism.
2. Children and teenagers must be properly prepared for the Sacraments of Penance and Confirmation.
3. Train lay people to help the parish priests in the teaching of catechism.

In January 1935, a document on catechesis entitled, **Provido sane Concilio** was prepared by the Catechetical Office of the Holy See at the directive of Pope Pius XI.



In the document, the pope states...



In the first place, let the bishop, mindful of the duty and office entrusted to them, exert even greater care and diligence than theretofore has been their custom, to encourage greater efforts and labor to spread catechetical instruction.

Remembering the guardian of *Kristang* heritage

Joan Margaret Marbeck passed away on July 28 at the age of 80, leaving behind a legacy that will be cherished by the Eurasian community for generations to come. Known for her distinctive bohemian style — vibrant gypsy skirts, colourful scarves, and hoop earrings — Joan embodied the spirit of freedom, art, peace, love, and joy, which defined her life and work.

Born and raised in Melaka, Joan dedicated her life to preserving the cultural heritage of the community that settled in the state after the Portuguese conquest in 1511. Central to this heritage is *Kristang*, a creolised version of the Portuguese language enriched with cultural expressions like songs and dances. Joan's passion for *Kristang* was boundless. Reflecting on its historical significance, she once remarked, "There was a time when even Chinese shopkeepers in Melaka would speak *Kristang*. That's how popular it was, how commonly spoken. My hope is that children show an interest in the language and start speaking it at home again, the way they used to."

In 1995, Joan published her first book, *Ungua Adanza (An Inheritance)*, an introspective account of the *Kristang* community drawn from her memories and observations. A decade later, she released *Linggu Mai (Mother Tongue)*, a resource for the *Kristang* community and anyone interested in learning the language.

Joan's talents extended beyond writing. After attending an intensive drama course at the Hitchen Priory in Hertfordshire, London, she became an accomplished actress and theatre director. In 1984, she co-founded The Malacca Theatre Group and directed its first stage production, *Love's A Luxury*. In 2006, Joan launched 'The *Kristang* Poet of Melaka', a project that saw children of Portuguese descent gather every weekend for four months at SMK Canossa Convent in the Portuguese Settlement. There, they practised *Kazamintu la Praiya*, a *Kristang* musical she wrote. This endeavour instilled a sense of pride in the children, who also learned traditional dances like the Branyo and Farapeira, both featured in the musical.

Joan was also a specialist music teacher in primary and secondary schools across Malaysia for 24 years. She wrote Seng Marianne (Without Marianne), a monodrama thought to be the first-ever *Kristang* play, for the 2007 Lusophonia Festival in Macau. For her work in preserving the *Kristang* language, Joan was honoured as one of DIGI's *Amazing Malaysians* in 2007.

Beyond her artistic contributions, Joan served as the President of the YWCA of Ayer Keroh, Melaka, from 1978 to 1981. During her tenure, she initiated 'The Pedro Project' at the Portuguese Settlement, which offered art and needlework classes to women, enhancing their skills and livelihood. Joan also

contributed to the Malacca Community Museum, where she helped set up a mini exhibition featuring artefacts from the Selangor and Federal Territory Eurasian Association's (SAFTEA) Heritage Exhibition, which she played a significant role in organising in 1993. This exhibition remains on display at the museum to this day.

In 2012, when the state celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Voice of Melaka, Joan released the Commemorative Bahasa Serani Dictionary, which is still available for purchase through SAFTEA.

Joan was an extraordinary individual whose unwavering dedication to her mission was evident in every challenge she faced. When asked about her motivation to preserve the *Kristang* language, she shared, "Someone had to document this unique language, and after receiving inspiration and encouragement from Pierre F.G. Guisan, a linguist from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, I took on this demanding task."

Her journey was not without obstacles. She faced substantial criticism from the native *Kristang* community, who initially refused to acknowledge the endangered status of their language. Despite the challenges, Joan's perseverance and dedication shone through. She remained committed to uniting all Eurasians under the Malaysian-Eurasian banner and reviving the use of *Kristang*. Her efforts won



Joan Margaret Marbeck
July 28, 2024

over many detractors and solidified her as a key figure in preserving this cultural heritage.

Joan's passing leaves a profound void in the Eurasian community, but her legacy endures. Datuk Sheila de Costa, President of SAFTEA, said, "Joan was an icon. Much of what we know today about our heritage began with her. Long after we're gone, her books and dictionaries will continue to educate and inspire. Joan, you were the trailblazer!"

Joan's funeral, held on August 1 at the Church of the Assumption in Praya Lane, Melaka, was a testament to her impact, with many gathering to honour her contributions. Her work will continue to inspire and guide future generations, ensuring the *Kristang* language lives on.

The Church of the Risen Christ in Air Itam, Penang, was filled with the solemn yet hopeful air of remembrance on August 5 as family, friends and community members gathered to honour the life of Bele Joseph, who passed away on August 1.

Fr Fabian Dicom, delivering the homily at the funeral Mass, reflected on Bele's extraordinary journey and the profound impact he made on those around him. "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also," Fr Fabian quoted from Matthew 6:21, setting the tone for a celebration of a life dedicated to serving others and glorifying God. Bele's life embodied this teaching, as his heart was always set on helping those in need and living out his faith with unparalleled commitment.

Bele's life was a vivid illustration of God's grace and love. He embodied the

Honouring a legacy of service

Bele Joseph

(Dec 5, 1960 – Aug 1, 2024)

principle of "use things and love people." This was more than a catchphrase; it was a way of life. His commitment to this principle was evident in his cherished relationships with his wife, Anne, and their children, Gideon and Odelia.

Bele faced his illness with remarkable strength and dignity, never losing his capacity for love. His journey was a testament to the

finite nature of our time on earth, yet also a reminder that beauty and grace can be found even in the midst of adversity. "Illness and death are part of being human," Fr Fabian reminded the congregation. "They do not discriminate and often defy our understanding. Our love and support for Bele were important, and we must remember that our compassion was a valuable gift, even when circumstances were beyond our control."

A man of deep faith, Bele made a courageous decision that would define his legacy. In 2002, he responded to a divine calling by leaving behind a secure job to minister to those who were mentally and emotionally troubled. This leap of faith required immense trust in God's plan. While Bele was still fine-tuning his plans, the organisation he joined, the Penang Office for Human Development (POHD), had already committed to starting a new project, securing the location and resources necessary. At this point, it seemed that Bele's initial project was still at the planning stage.

"When the opportunity arose to run the Lighthouse Feeding Centre — an urgent need for which we, at that point, did not have the right person — Bele was faced

with a choice. Despite having no prior experience and being deeply invested in his original project, he chose to embrace this new challenge. Once again, Bele demonstrated his characteristic faith and surrender to God. He set aside his own plans and desires, trusting that this was where he was being called to serve," said Fr Fabian.

Fr Fabian went on to share how this act of selflessness was so typical of Bele. "His life was never about advancing his own interests but about responding to what was asked of him with total generosity. He took on the leadership of the Feeding Centre with a heart full of faith and a willingness to serve, even though he knew not what lay ahead."

Fr Fabian acknowledged the incredible support Bele received from his colleagues at POHD — Joachim Xavier, Susan Lim, Damian Denis, Vincent Lim, and the many volunteers and members of the POHD board — who stood by him through the many challenges and helped turn this vision of the diocese into a reality. Their dedication and support were instrumental in the success of the Lighthouse Feeding Centre, transforming it from a modest beginning into a beacon of hope for 120 individuals. Bele's compassion, patience, and faith touched countless lives, becoming a symbol of the transformative power of one person's dedication.

As the community bid farewell to Bele, Fr Fabian encouraged all to carry forward his legacy. "Bele's life was characterised by selflessness, compassion, and unwavering devotion. His spirit lives on in each of us, reminding us to live with courage and hope."

Bele Joseph's life and legacy will be remembered and cherished as a shining example of love and devotion.



(Kevin Eruthayanathan facebook)



MAKING SENSE

Emmanuel Joseph

Navigating sensitive issues on the social media landmine

If the first week of the Olympics saw heated discussions about the opening ceremony — where Christians were upset over the mockery of the Last Supper, the second week saw equally angry mobs take on a far more technical, sensitive, even universal issue of gender and sports, in this case, women's boxing.

Algeria's representative to the sport, Imane Khelif, was accused by the coach of her Italian counterpart, Angelina Carini, among other things, of being "male". Carini withdrew from her match, citing safety concerns, impliedly agreeing with her coach.

This led to a chorus of opinion decrying the injustice, unfairness and inequality in having a man beat up a woman in a sport category reserved for the latter. The Prime Minister of Italy, billionaire Elon Musk, US Presidential candidate Donald Trump and British author J.K. Rowling all weighed in on the issue, siding with the Italian boxer and denouncing the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for allowing the 'travesty'.

Days later, many facts came to light — Khelif was, according to the IOC, for all intents and purposes, indeed female, "born female, was registered female, lived her life as a female, boxed as a female, has a female passport." She had grown up poor, and her sports records show she has been beaten not once, but nine times in recent years. Her past opponents came to her defence, even her accuser has attempted to apologise to her. The details of the testing that started the controversy in 2023 was sketchy and

no one really had any idea why it sparked off a chromosome controversy to begin with.

This clearly isn't the same case as American transgender swimmer Lia Thomas, whose career skyrocketed after her transition as a male, ranking 554th in the 200m freestyle, 65th in the 500m freestyle and 32nd in the 1650m freestyle events, which moved up to fifth, first and eighth in those respective events as a female.

Though the highly publicised case of Lia has near-irrefutable indications, two other female-to male transgenders did improve their performances, without the hormone therapy advantages to hold top 15 per cent finishes within US university swimming meets — Iszac Henig and Schuyler Bailar.

Religious perspective notwithstanding, there remains many more studies needed on the secular perspective of these sports as it is a complicated topic involving many fields of expertise — sports science, gender studies, social anthropology, genetics, cellular biology and many related fields before a truly scientific answer can be reached on what is a 'woman' or 'man' in competitive sports. This doesn't only encompass the 'transgender' part but cases of intersex, genetic sexual differentiation disorders and so on.

What's obvious at this point, is, at least, Khelif was born and lived a woman, and apart from one disputed test, no one questioned this.

She went on to secure herself a minimum of a bronze medal in her event, with a chance of even clinching a gold.

Meanwhile, those who raised this issue, have all but helped lower the temperature they created.

The relative anonymity of social media, coupled with the free flow of information, some fact, a whole lot of others, opinions, have emboldened to present their personal thoughts, whether backed by scientific, religious or social proof, as the gospel truth. The affinity we have to listen to thoughts that mirror our own, has created echo chambers of ideas that reinforce our own perception of what we believe is an ideal world.

This isolationism convinces us we are perpetually right, and inversely, that others are wrong, and so turns social media from a potential tool for discourse and dialogue, to a weaponised form of preaching, to yell our opinions to drown out the thoughts and ideas of other people.

To compound the problem, we forget that social media is a business at the end of the day — people spend an average of six hours and 40 minutes a day on their phones — two hours and 23 minutes of that is on consuming news, ideas and 'facts' on social media. The owners of these apps want to keep us glued on as long as they can — meaning their interests would not be that we consume safely, but that we continue consuming, so "we" as "products" have more billable ad revenue. Facebook alone is said to have made USD600 million (RM2,688.90 million) off Malaysian users in 2023.

Social media companies have their own

ideologies and agenda, as neutral as they try, or claim to try, to be.

Biz Stone, the former owner of Twitter (now X) was known to fact-check tweets during the Trump-Clinton election campaign.

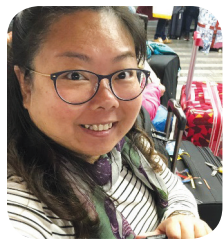
Facebook and Meta platforms are known to censor some content sympathetic to the Palestinian cause.

This probably led our Prime Minister and Communications Ministry to mull setting up a "Malaysian" social media, after the censorship of Meta over a condolence message for the late Ismail Haniyeh, the assassinated leader of Hamas.

But will making demands by segmenting social media to serve our specific ideologies to be able to say what we think needs to be said, as citizens of a country, members of a community or adherents of a religion, without being able to reach across the aisle and increase our understanding about each other, in this shared space called Earth bring about the desired outcome?

Otherwise, we will be preaching to the converted, and instead of learning about and respecting each other more, social media to us, will just serve to build walls instead of bridges.

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



GETTING SIDETRACKED

Agnes Ong

Tracing the footsteps of the Arabs in Spain



Baking implements used by the nuns at Convent San Clemente in Toledo.

I was fortunate to witness the annual La Fiesta de los Patios de Córdoba, a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity that celebrates the most beautifully decorated courtyards in the city. While in Cordoba, I also had the privilege of visiting the exquisite Mezquita of Cordoba, or Mosque-Cathedral of Cordoba, another UNESCO World Heritage Site, and a few other jewels of architecture such as the *Alcazar de los Reyes Cristianos* (The Alcazar of the Christian Monarchs) and those of the Umayyad state such as the Baños del Alcazar Califal.

Seville

Plenty of stories about the Gothic-built, UNESCO World Heritage Site Cathedral and its architecture exist. The only son of Christian monarchs, Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castille, was baptised here. Royals and famous explorers are also buried in the Cathedral. One such tomb belonged to Christopher Columbus and his son, Diego Columbus.

Nearby the Cathedral is the Giralda, a tall

minaret where the imam used to ride a donkey up the tower to call the faithful to prayers five times a day. When the Christians took over the city, the Muslim minaret transitioned to be a church bell tower. Today, tourists can walk up inside the minaret to reach the top for a panoramic view of the city.

The Alcazar, another UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a testament to the city's diverse history. It began as an Islamic citadel and evolved into a palace still used by the Spanish royal family. The complex is a unique blend of Islamic, Gothic, Baroque, and Renaissance influences, offering a fascinating glimpse into the city's past.

Toledo

My journey through Spain culminated in Toledo, a city that captivates with its unique charm and rich history. It's a place that I've returned to time and again, drawn by its distinct character and the echoes of its past.

Toledo, located barely an hour's ride from Madrid, is a city where the pace of the evenings slows down tremendously, offering a

relaxing contrast to the bustling day tourists.

The first time I arrived at Toledo, I was hitting on empty energy. Being a typical Asian, I had hit the ground running, trying to cram as many sights and experiences as possible. I was spent by the time I arrived at Toledo for the first time in mid-October. Having missed properly visiting Toledo for the first time, I was back in the city six months later.

Toledo was the poster child for religious tolerance under Islamic rule, and this is most evident in the buildings that have withstood the test of time. There's the Islamic Cristo de la Luz Mosque, with its Islamic elements and decorative details, the exquisite Synagogue of Santa Maria la Blanca, the jaw-dropping El Transito Synagogue, and the ever-popular Santa Iglesia Catedral Primada de Toledo.

The city's streets, intentionally designed by the Arabs to confuse invaders, are a testament to Toledo's rich history. This clever survival strategy adds a layer of intrigue to the city's charm, inviting one to explore its secrets.

And the sweets! This is the city for those who have sweet tooth. The nuns at the nondescript Convent of San Clemente have been baking the most delicious marzipans since 1212, and their recipe is famous worldwide.

All too soon, my month-long journey tracing the legacy of the Arabs in Spain ended. It was a dream come true, and I felt very privileged to have been able to spend the time discovering and learning about the profound impact the Arabs had on Spain. The beauty of the landmarks and art left me in awe.

● Agnes Ong is a self-professed curious traveller and lifelong learner with a lamentable tendency to get into sidetracked experiences. She aspires to explore as many historical UNESCO sites as possible, funds permitting. Agnes has a travel-slash-work-slash-dump everything IG at @agnes_gets_sidetracked.

A reminder to self: when they say it's hot in Spain, it is blisteringly HOT.

And there's plenty of wisdom in staying in the shadows or just getting out of the sun when it is at its peak at midday.

Heatstroke is a genuine concern in these conditions. I had a few challenging days in Cordoba when temperatures soared past 40 degrees Celsius. It was a stark reminder of the importance of staying hydrated and seeking refuge in the calm oasis of my air-conditioned room.

That was my reality when I rode the tracks from Cordoba to Seville, continuing my quest to trace the Arabs' influence in Spain through its cultural artefacts.

Traipsing through Valencia, Granda and Cordoba

With my less-than-seven kg backpack, I embarked on a one-month odyssey to trace the Arab influence in Spain over eight centuries. My fascination with the Islamic civilisation in the Iberian Peninsula, which sparked during my teenage years, had kindled a deep desire to experience the romanticism of the Arabs' legacy in Spain firsthand. This personal connection fuelled my journey.

I started my journey at Valencia and learnt the origins of the beloved national dish, the *paella*, and the Arabs ingenuity in taming the land. Then, I moved on to Granada and was utterly captivated by the breathtaking beauty of the Al-Hambra and the Generalife, the Albaycin, and the haunting wails of the gypsy flamenco music, as well as the haunting story of the end of the Nasrid dynasty.

My travels then took me to Cordoba, where



Fr Ron Rolheiser

What shapes a soul?

In a section of her poem *The Leaf and the Cloud*, Mary Oliver describes her feelings as she stands by the gravesite of her father and mother. She reflects on how both their virtues and faults influenced her life. Then she ends the reflection with these words:

*I give them – one, two, three, four –
the kiss of courtesy,
of sweet thanks.*

*May they sleep well. May they soften.
But I will not give them the kiss
of complicity.*

*I will not give them the responsibility
for my life.*

What shapes our souls? How much is
a mystery? How
much is

genetics? How much is the influence of others? How much is our own responsibility? For instance, when I reflect on what helped shape my own soul, the influence of my parents looms large.

Part of me is my mother. She was a sensitive person, someone who sometimes couldn't say no when it was called for. So, she often found herself overstretched and tired. Today some would say that she didn't keep proper boundaries. She had sixteen children. Her critics can rest their case.

She was a generous person, always giving things away. As a child, I was sometimes angry with her for that. I didn't want a generous mother. I wanted things. What she wanted was harmony in her family. I remember her coming to tears one Saturday morning as she was cleaning the house and trying to keep peace and order in a family that, on that particular day, was given over to disorder and arguments. She told us how disappointed she was that our family wasn't like the Holy Family.

We weren't the Holy Family and she was sometimes frustrated, not so much with us as with the plain inadequacy of life. Beyond this, she was a happy person, more naturally buoyant in spirit than my father. She danced more easily than he, laughed more spontaneously,

and was an easier touch for us as kids. She took life less reflectively than he, though not as unreflectively as we naively supposed. During one period of her life, she kept a diary and it testified to the fact that she'd thought more deeply about things than we'd supposed.

Her deepest longing was for a true home and here she got lucky. She met my father. From soon after they met until the day he died, they became soulmates in every sense of the word. She didn't have to tell him her secrets or share with him her frustrations, and neither did he in reverse. They understood each other without having to explain themselves. In all my years of growing up, I cannot ever recall them having a single misunderstanding or even being angry with each other.

My father died of cancer and she, who had been strong until his death, died three months later of pancreatitis and a loneliness nobody could cure. Today some would look at that and say she was a co-dependent. But she would laugh and tell you that she got what she wanted from life. She died of missing my father and died happy. There's something to be envied in that.

I'm her son and when I contemplate these things, my own soul becomes less of a mystery, as do my struggles, my faults, my longings, and my strengths. I even understand why I'm tired a lot!

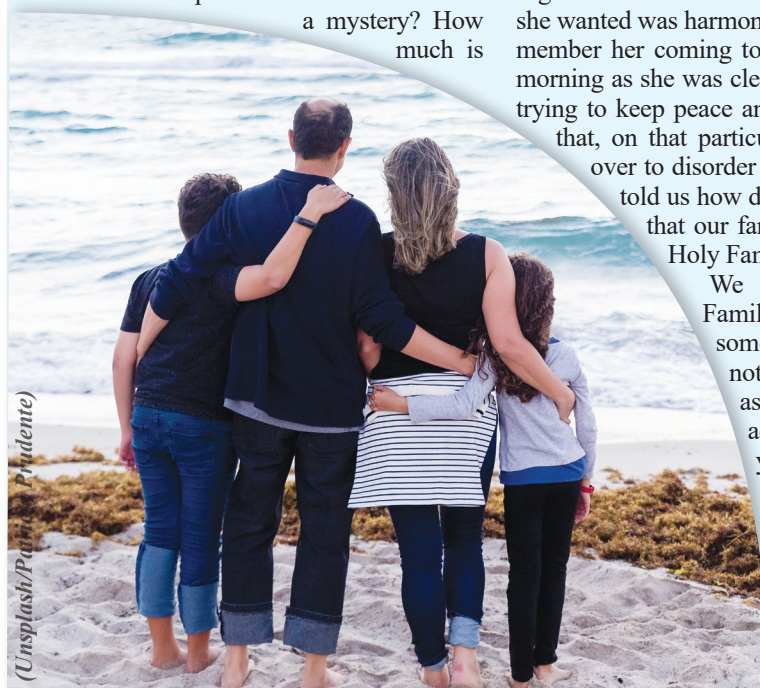
And then, a good part of me is my father. There's a lot in me that can be explained by my genes. My father didn't dance easily, though he was a deeply affectionate man. Dancing was too public for him. He preferred to express affection in private. He

loved my mother, his family, and most everyone, but his way was not to trumpet this in public. There was a reticence here that could sometimes look like coldness, but you had to read his actions and his eyes. They told a different story. He had an abhorrence of all exhibitionism, hated long ceremonies, and loathed cheap public displays of anything. He also disliked excess in anything. His was the way of moderation, proper restraint in everything. Our family likes to quip that moderation was his only excess.

He was the stubborn uncompromising moral principle in my upbringing. He agonised over all that was not right in the world and his patience didn't always meet the test. I feared his eyes at those times when I disappointed him. I also feared, and still do, ever disappointing him. He was one of the most moral people I've ever met and he had a sixth sense that was nearly infallible. He knew right from wrong in a way I couldn't doubt. He instructed me on that – often against my protests. If I end up in hell, I can't plead ignorance. My father equipped me, faith-wise and morally, for life. But I have the faults that come with that too, his faults, compounded by my own.

So much of us, our strengths and weaknesses, take root in our upbringing – but still, we are responsible for our own lives.

● **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



(Unsplash/Paula Prudente)

Unveiling the chronicles of the local Church

BOOK REVIEW

On August 3, the Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya, hosted the presentation of Fr Paul Dass, SJ's new book, *Integral Human Development: History and Memory, A Local Church Chronicle*. Held at Loyola Hall, the event, which celebrated the rich history of the local Church through personal narratives and community stories, drew an eager audience.

Jesuit priest Fr Paul, known for his extensive work with migrant labourers and refugees, shared insights from his book, offering a deep dive into the chronicles of the local church. His decade-long tenure as the Director of the St Aloysius Gonzaga Institute of Higher Studies in Taunggyi, Myanmar, and his experience teaching sacramental and liturgical theology at the Loyola School of Theology in the Philippines, have provided him with profound insights into the mission and challenges of the Church. His experiences have shaped a ministry deeply connected to the struggles and triumphs of the marginalised.

The event began with a congratulatory note recognising the labour of love behind this work. Fr Paul, in his characteristic humility, described the nature of the book as a "chronicle" — not just a historical record, but a collection of stories that embody the memories and soul of a community. He likened it to great literary chronicles like the Narnia Chronicles and the Martian Chronicles, emphasising that his book is fundamentally about storytelling.

"In the grand narrative of the local Church," Fr Paul remarked, "we find our

own stories — exposition, rising action, conflict, climax, and resolution — set against the over-arching plot of the Paschal Mystery." This profound connection between personal experiences and the divine is what gives the book its unique heart.

The structure of *Integral Human Development: History and Memory, A Local Church Chronicle*, spans various eras, from patristic times through the Portuguese, Dutch, and British periods, culminating in the transformative years following Vatican II. Fr Paul eloquently outlined how the Church's evolution wasn't merely institutional growth but a blossoming of communities deeply rooted in local cultures. He recounted the "giant re-birth" during the British era, a time when the Church thrived under the guidance of MEP Fathers like Fr Coude and Fr Garnault, even in adversity. He highlighted the significance of Malay prayer books and catechisms and the support received from the Sultan of Kedah.

The discussion then shifted to the sweeping changes post-Vatican II and the formation of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) in 1970. Fr Paul spoke passionately about the Aggiornamento, where, for a month, the churches operated without clergy, marking a radical shift towards a self-defining local Church. This laid the foundation for the upcoming Malaysian Pastoral Convention

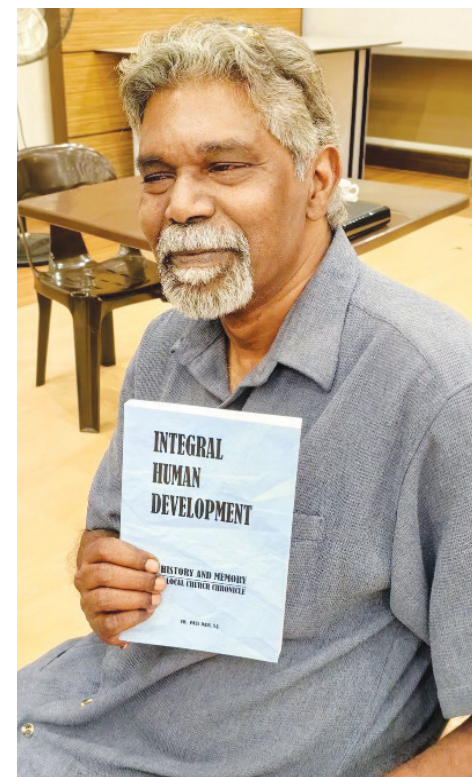
of 2026, where the Churches of East and West Malaysia will synodally unite as a cohesive local Church.

Fr Paul's reflections also touched on the Young Christian Workers (YCW) movement, which began in Peninsular Malaysia in 1958. He emphasised that YCW was more than a charity — it was a movement advocating for workers' rights, minimum wage, and protective legislation. This, he argued, was a reflection of the Church's mission to address real-life issues faced by the people it served.

The book doesn't shy away from darker chapters, such as the ISA arrests of 1987 and the White Paper of 1988. Fr Paul recounted these events, highlighting the local Church's unwavering commitment to Catholic Social Teaching, even when it clashed with state authorities. He argued that this bold proclamation of faith defined the Church's mission and societal role.

In closing, Fr Paul expressed his hopes for the future, urging the Church to continue its journey of integral human development, educating and empowering the youth with a deep understanding of their heritage, and growing in synodality as they approach the Malaysian Pastoral Convention in 2026. "We are within a time frame where history will be made again," he declared with a quiet but firm resolve.

The event concluded on a note of inspiration and a call to action. *Integral Human Development: History and Memory, A Local Church Chronicle* is not just a recounting of the past but a guiding light for the future — a future



Fr Paul Dass, SJ holding a copy of his book, *Integral Human Development: History and Memory, A Local Church Chronicle* at the book presentation held at Loyola Hall, Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya on August 3, 2024. (photo/Hilary Narcis Facebook)

where the local Church, in all its richness and diversity, continues to thrive and rise anew. — *Archdiocesan Office for Human Development*

This book is being sold at RM30.00. To purchase, please contact AOHD at 03-20785888 (WhatsApp only).

Little Catholics' Corner

Dear children,

Bread has always been considered to be one of our most important foods.

Even way back in Bible times, bread was very important to life.

Do you remember the time God provided bread for the Israelites when they were starving in the de-

sert?

Every morning God sent bread from heaven for the people to eat.

I'm sure you also remember the time when Jesus fed a crowd of 5000 people with just five loaves of bread and two small fish.

Even though Jesus knew that

bread was very important to life, He wanted something more for His children.

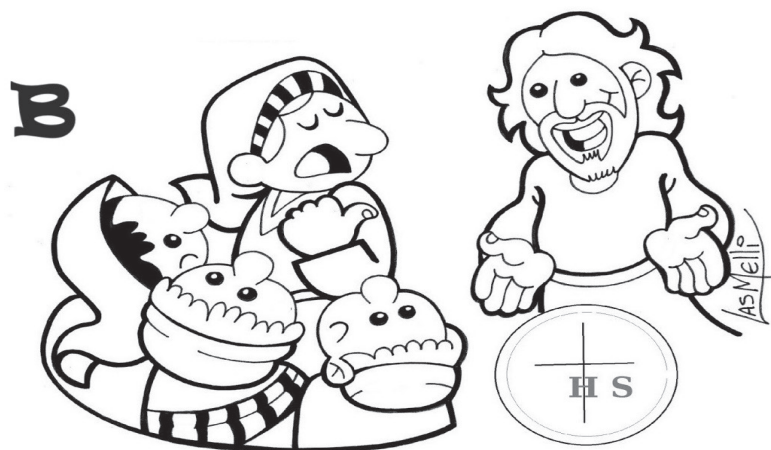
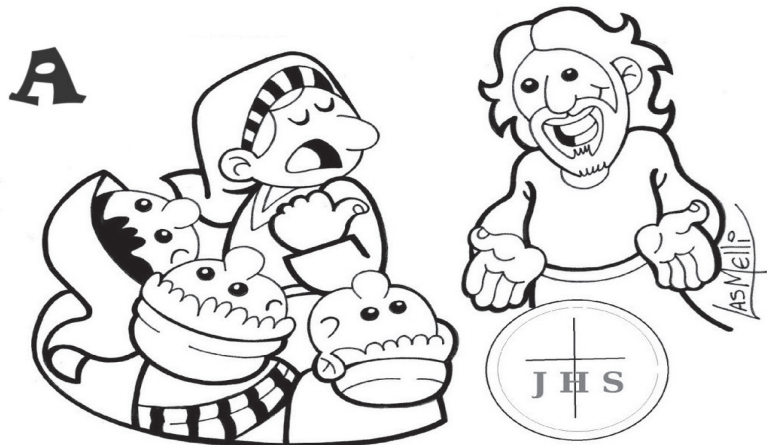
One day, as He was teaching, Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone

eats of this bread, he will live for-ever."

Children, if we want to live, we need bread. If we want to live for-ever, we need Jesus — the Bread of Life.

Love
Aunty Eliz

Can you spot the EIGHT differences in the picture below?



COMPLETE THE PARAGRAPH BY FILLING IN THE BLANKS USING WORDS FROM THE WORD BANK PROVIDED.

1) I am the living bread which has come down from _____. Anyone who eats this bread will live _____; and the bread that I shall give is my _____, for the life of the _____. (John 6:51).

2) Whoever _____ my flesh and drinks my _____ lives in me and I live in that _____. (John 6: 56).

3) As the living _____ sent me and I draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will also _____ life from me (John 6:57).

4) This is the bread which has come _____ from heaven; it is not like the bread our _____ ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will _____ forever. (John 6: 58).

ancestors
heaven
live

forever
world
eat

person
blood
Father

draw
down

Fill in the missing letters



CH _ L _ _ E



PR _ _ S T



C _ M _ U _ ION
B _ EA _



_ L _ AR

T _ B _ _ NA _ LE

TABERNACLE
CHALICE

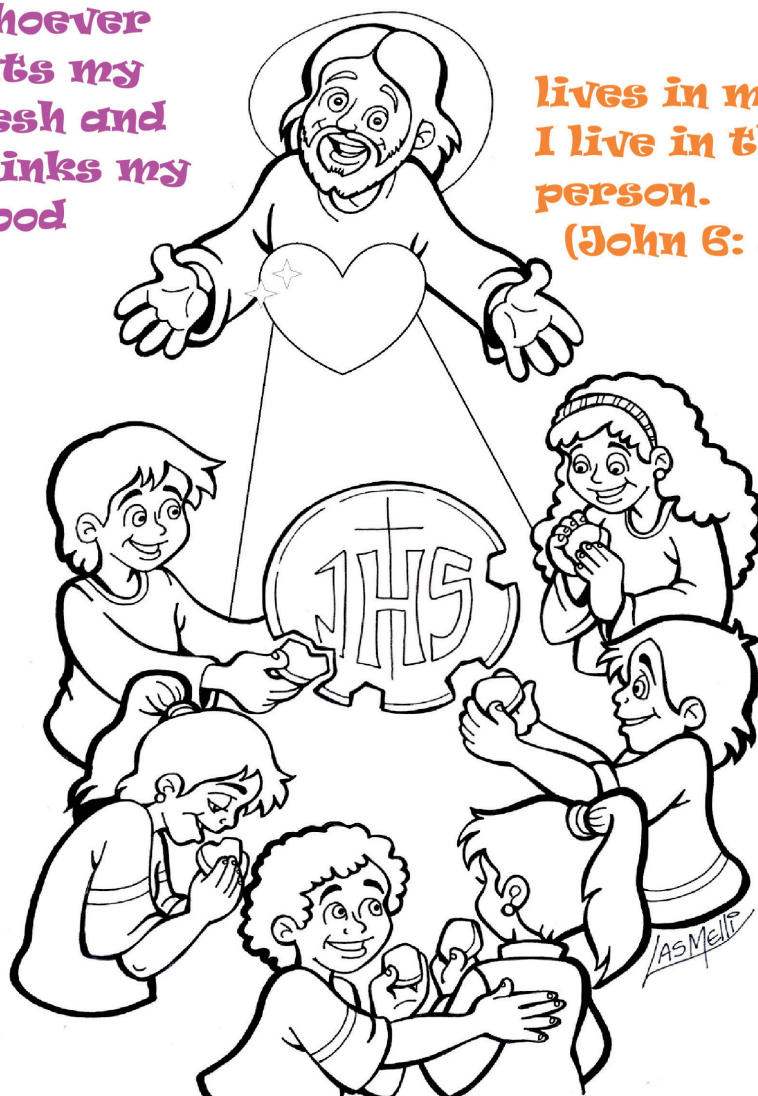
COMMUNION
BREAD

PRIEST
ALTAR

Let's colour

Whoever
eats my
flesh and
drinks my
blood

lives in me and
I live in that
person.
(John 6: 56)



YOUTH

August 18, 2024

By the youth

CHERAS: The Church of St Francis of Assisi held a Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) Youth Rally on August 3. This event was planned by the youth, for the youth. The two speakers, Norman Bismer and Michelle Ann, were founders of the Ablaze Ministry. They talked about the theme A call to renewal, which resonated deeply with the young audience and reignited the flame of their faith.

Both of these speakers brought up unique

struggles associated with today's youth. Oftentimes, the voices of the world may influence the hearts of young people, so a call to renewal is needed for them to return to God. In one of the activities, attendees took turns role-playing an angel, a devil, and a human. This exercise showed the dangers of heeding the wrong voice; it is a cautionary tale about the prevalence of modern-day media attempting to dictate the choices of the public and obstruct free will.

Another activity separated participants into groups and required them to build the longest bridge using the items around them. It was not an easy task. This portrayed that when building a bridge to God, it may be difficult to find the resources and time, but



CCR Youth Rally 2024



no one is an island — relying on friends and family makes the journey easier. Hence, it is imperative to form relationships that bring one closer to God.

Norman and Michelle were lively and highly engaging throughout the session. They reminded the audience that, out of many, we have been chosen by Him. God

has shown us His love through prophets, kings, and even the death of His son. Therefore, as Catholics, we are here for a reason: to live a life that glorifies our God.

The youth participants enjoyed the event and were inspired by the notion that no matter where life brings us, we always have God on our side.

Sixteen-year-old Anna Le feels miserable every time her classmates label her as a “factory chicken” because she never joins them for extracurricular activities such as beach trips or summer camps.

The student from Huong Tra High School in Thua Thien Hue province, in north-central Vietnam hails from an affluent Catholic family, uses an iPhone and wears expensive clothes and shoes.

Her mechanical engineer father and grocery store owner mother never allow her to do other activities except study because they might expose her to “dangers” and

spoil her.

As her parents have little time to spend with their only child, she remains confined at home most of the day. She feels lonely, depressed and harbours suicidal thoughts.

“I stay at home after school because they’re afraid of me encountering danger outside. Sometimes I feel so frustrated, I contemplate suicide,” she told *UCA News*.

When she is not studying, Anna usually

passes her time surfing social media sites on her smart phone.

“I feel lonely at home because my parents rarely engage in conversation with me, and I cannot share my personal worries and concerns with them,” she said.

A rising phenomenon

Thousands of young Generation Z Vietnamese boys and girls like Anna face similar challenges and many attempt suicide out of depression, studies have found.

In 2021, a joint survey of 7,800 students by the World Health Organization and the ministries of Health and Education found 12.6 per cent of children aged 13-17 suffer from loneliness.

About 16.8 per cent struggled to concentrate on their homework, 15.6 per cent had contemplated suicide and three per cent had attempted suicide one or more times.

In 2022, ActionAid International Vietnam, released a mental healthcare survey conducted among 1,000 students, parents, and teachers.

The study found nearly 50 per cent of respondents identified strict parenting and academic pressure as significant factors negatively impacting their mental health.

A Health Ministry report in 2023 revealed that more than three million children in

Vietnam grappled with mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, loneliness, and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders.

The number of youths seeking treatment for stress and prolonged fatigue surges by 15-25 per cent annually, the report said.

Psychologists assert that many parents are reluctant to confront their children's mental health issues. Instead, they blame their children's perceived slackness, and believe that only working adults suffer mental stress.

Psychologists point out that attending school is, in essence, a job for children. Their experiences — interacting with peers, adhering to schedules, completing assignments, and managing relationships with teachers — mirror the responsibilities and pressures faced by adults in the workplace.

Consequently, children are equally susceptible to difficulties and stressors like social isolation, bullying, a tense home environment, and the expectations or criticism from parents, psychologists say.

Psychologists also warn that prolonged sadness and fatigue can lead children to a state of deep despair, characterised by a sense of emotional stagnation and a perception of life as meaningless. Over time, these negative emotions can foster harmful thoughts and suicidal tendencies.

Continued on page 17 →

Celebrating Confirmation and Community

It's Confirmation season in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, and Archbishop Julian Leow has been busy travelling from parish to parish, administering the Sacrament of Confirmation. On July 27, twelve candidates — comprising five youth and seven adults



— received the sacrament at the **CHURCH OF THE RISEN CHRIST**, Kuala Lumpur.

Archbishop Julian, known for his warm and engaging demeanour, delivered a heartfelt homily that deeply resonated with the congregation. He spoke of the importance of faith, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the responsibilities that come with being a confirmed member of the Church. His words were a source of inspiration, not only to the confirmands but to all present.

Each candidate approached the altar with reverence and commitment, ready to reaffirm their faith as the archbishop anointed them with holy chrism and laid hands on them. The confirmands, now fully initiated into the Christian faith, radiated joy and a newfound sense of purpose. The ceremony concluded with a communal prayer and a melodious hymn that echoed the enlightened spirit and jubilation of the congregation. After the event, the confirmands and their families gathered for a photography session with the archbishop.

The following day, Archbishop Julian was at the **CHURCH OF ST THOMAS THE**



Confirmands of Risen Christ Church, KL.



Confirmands with Archbishop Julian Leow, Frs George Packiasamy and Danny Mathews.

APOSTLE in Kuantan, where he administered the rite of Confirmation to 19 candidates, including those from **CATHOLIC MISSION**, Terengganu, and the **CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP**, Mentakab. The multilingual Mass was concelebrated by Frs Danny Mathews and George Packiasamy.

The eleven candidates from the Church of St Thomas attended a stay-in Confirmation camp a week prior to the event. This transformative experience, led by Nicholas Kuan and his team of four facilitators from Kuala Lumpur, known as “The Beloved Ministry”, was centred around the theme *Ablaze with the Fire*. The camp featured engaging inputs, prayers, meditation, games, activities, and a campfire, all contributing to a deep and meaningful experience. Dorcas Lee, their catechist, along with other catechists, played a crucial role in making the camp an exciting adventure.

During his homily, Archbishop Julian emphasised the importance of avoiding waste, particularly with food. He encouraged the faithful to recognize and give thanks for the abundant blessings they have received and to share these blessings with others, using the example of Jesus multiplying loaves to feed many. He also underscored the impor-

tance of holding onto our faith in Christ.

Following the Confirmation Mass, St Thomas' parish priest, Fr George Packiasamy, invited the grandparents and elderly to gather at the Soup Kitchen area for a blessing by the archbishop. The Soup Kitchen, first established in 2007, has seen significant growth. It was closed for some time due to insufficient manpower and support but was recently revitalised by a dedicated group of volunteers, led by Ignatius Tan and his team. Their hard work led to the reopening of the feeding programme in May 2024, initially serving ten people and now expanded to 50. In July 2024, the Old Thomasian Association Kuantan (OTAK) renovated the kitchen with a new roof and floor tiles, demonstrating their unwavering support and generosity.

Archbishop Julian blessed the soup kitchen and distributed 50 food packets to underprivileged people. To commemorate the Fourth World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly, about 30 grandparents, elderly parishioners, and OTAK members shared a fellowship breakfast with the archbishop. We pray for the continued success and growth of the St Thomas Soup Kitchen and the enthusiasm and strength of all those involved in it.

on Vietnam's young generation

• Continued from page 16

Youths are more vulnerable

Psychologist and Catholic nun Sr Mary Anna Hoang Yen asserts that modern families, often with only one or two children, tend to excessively pamper their kids and provide optimal conditions for their education.

Sr Yen, a member of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate congregation, offers counseling to young people in Hue, in north-central Vietnam. She said parents set unrealistic expectations for their children that far exceed their abilities.

“When those expectations are not met, children are frequently compared to others, which can lead to severe psychological stress, feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and dissatisfaction,” she said.

The nun cited two recent cases of extreme depression among students.

Two students developed mental health issues after failing their high school graduation exams, and another committed suicide by jumping from a building due to overwhelming pressure to gain admission into a renowned local school.

Experts argue that Generation Z people are often viewed as a fragile, “snowflake” generation, navigating a world filled with in-

tense pressure, constant internet connectivity, information overload, and frequent distractions.

They say this generation benefits from extensive parental investment and care, which has fostered an expectation that failure is unacceptable. Consequently, they face heightened stress and anxiety when confronted with challenges.

Dr. Tran Thanh Nam, deputy director of the Association of Educational Psychology, noted that social media is a significant cause of anxiety for youths.

They constantly compare themselves with peers worldwide, and the pressure of comparison greatly heightens their vulnerability to mental health issues, he said.

Academic education over faith formation

Anna dropped out of catechism classes in her local parish four years ago as her parents prioritised academic achievements over religion.

She is now frightened by her parents' demands that she must do well in studies so they can send her abroad for higher education.

“There are many talented people around, and many things that make me feel scared

and inferior,” she said.

Anna said she suffers from an “inferiority complex” as she keeps comparing herself with others. Spending too much time on social media distracts and disorients her from real life, so she panics easily when any problem confronts her.

“I don't have a clue as to what to do.”

Mary Tran Thi Tram, a catechist from Ke Van Parish, said students need to study catechism to balance their lives, discern right from wrong, and manage themselves in a fast-changing society.

“Faith education is crucial in a society where people chase material needs, indulgence, and fame,” Tram said.

She said many students who drop out of catechism classes often end up leaving school. They leave home, get involved in drugs and computer games, and even become intermediaries for prostitution.

Tram said that most local students stop attending catechism after receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation. Of 70 students who received Confirmation in 2023, only 17 continue weekly Bible classes.

“Parents prioritise academic education over faith education. Their children spend a lot of time on schoolwork to get into top schools or study abroad. Some parents are too busy to



take children to catechism classes,” she said.

Doan Viet Thieu, 49, who runs a garage in Hue, said his two children gave up their studies at school and became addicted to alcohol and drugs after he and his wife divorced in 2022.

“I feel guilty for focusing too much on making money and not spending enough time caring for my children. I lost all,” Thieu said.

Sr Yen emphasised that children could lead more balanced lives only when their physical and mental well-being is ensured.

“They should be taught how to appreciate nature, be willing to help others, and integrate into the community so they are valued and loved,” she said. — ucanews.com

Togo mourns sudden death of archbishop

TOGO: The Bishops' Conference of Togo announced August 4 the "sad and unexpected" demise of Archbishop Nicodème Barrigah-Bénissan's (pic) at the Dogta-Lafie Hospital in Lomé, the country's capital.

Bishop Benoît Alowonou of Kpalimé, president of the bishops' conference, informed the public of the prelate's death. Archbishop Barrigah-Bénissan had led the Archdiocese of Lomé since 2019.

"This news comes at a time when it was least expected. As Christians, we ask ourselves: why so soon?" questioned Fr Moïse Dadja, a priest of the Diocese of Sokodé, located 340 km from Lomé. Like him, many are shocked by this sudden passing.

"The announcement of Bishop Barrigah's death is a shock that crosses religious boundaries, both nationally and internationally," said Fr Joseph Kwalu Amegbleame, a researcher at the Catholic University of West Africa. "It is a shock that silences socio-political divisions."

For Fr Gustave Wanme, vicar general of the Diocese of Dapaong, about 600 km north of the capital, "Bishop Nicodème was a man of excellence and a man of heart. Since the seminary, he exuded natural and spontaneous talents in almost all areas: great capacity and ease of assimilating lessons, beautiful voice, great musician, exceptional entertainer of recreational evenings, perfect actor, theatre comedian," shared the priest who studied alongside Bishop Barrigah. "Having later lived at least three years with him at the headquarters of the Bishops' Conference of Togo", continued the former secretary general and spokesperson for the country's bishops, "I can testify that he was a man of great heart."

"We have lost a model, a reference who had a great sense of justice and a particular love for the Church. He did everything with great care," confided Christian Barrigah, programme and social media manager at Radio Maria Togo and a



close relative of the deceased archbishop.

Born on May 19, 1963, in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, Bishop Yves-Nicodème Anani Barrigah-Bénissan, a Togolese national, was a "highly gifted" bishop, according to those who knew or collaborated with him. Indeed, Bishop Barrigah was a bishop and an artist with multiple talents: theatre actor, writer, poet, musician, theologian, exegete, and diplomat. He composed and performed over a hundred songs.

Born on May 19, 1963, in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, Bishop Yves-Nicodème Anani Barrigah-Bénissan, a Togolese national, was a "highly gifted" bishop, according to those who knew or collaborated with him. Indeed, Bishop Barrigah was a bishop and an artist with multiple talents: theater actor, writer, poet, musician, theologian, exegete, and diplomat. He composed and performed over a hundred songs.

After his presbyteral ordination on August 8, 1987, in Atakpamé and a year of service as a parochial vicar at the cathedral of Lomé, he studied dogmatic theology at the Catholic Institute of Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire (1988-1990). He trained in Rome, in exegesis at the Biblicum (1990-1993), in canon law (1993-1997) at the Urbaniana University, and in diplomacy at the Pontifical Academy.

MEMORIAM

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

16th Year Anniversary



"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

PATRICK IGNATIUS ANUGRAHAM

Born: 21-01-1946
Returned to the Lord: 20-08-2008

Psalm 23:1-3
The Lord is my shepherd.
I shall not want.
He makes me to lie down in green pastures:
He leads me beside the still waters.
He restores my soul
He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Deeply missed by

Loving Wife:
Adeline Madeliene De Souza
Children: Ignatius (Danny), Jennifer, Joshua & Michelle

Daughters-in-law & Sons -in-law: Sharon, Carlos, Pauline & Late Steven
Grandchildren: Adelina, Anthony, John, Catherine, Mark, Ignatius, Gerard & Sarah

2nd YEAR ANNIVERSARY



Thirasa Sinnappan (Mrs Raymond)

Came from the Lord: 21.11.1960
Returned to the Lord: 20.08.2022

"Your life was a blessing, Your memory a treasure, You are loved beyond words and missed beyond treasure".

Fondly missed by:
Husband: Raymond
Daughter: Diane Pravina
Son: Yogamainthan @ Joshua
Daughter-in-law: Marissa
Granddaughter: Yhovela Thirasanne

FIRST ANNIVERSARY In Loving Memory of

Augustine Ng Aik Huat
(18 August 1939 – 21 August 2023)



May the Lord grant you eternal rest and may His perpetual light shine on you.

Deeply missed by:

Wife – Bernadette Loh Swee Cheong
Children – Angelina Ng, Carolina Ng, Geraldine Ng, Christopher Ng, Marianne Ng, sons-in-law and grandchildren.



வின்க வாழ்வின் மன்றம் ஆண்ட



அம்மா திருமதி அந்தோணியம்மாள்
(16.11.1934 - 20.8.2021)

'என் ஆயன் ஆண்டவர், எனக்கென்ன கற்றவை' சங் 23:11

நினவையில் வாழும் கட்டும்பத்தினர் (கோல்பில்)

6th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Pray for Justice

Soosaimanikam @ Sam s/o Joseph
(Ex-Military Navy Officer)

Departed: 19th May 2018

Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: Instruction will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations.

Isaiah 51:4-5

23rd Anniversary In Loving Memory of

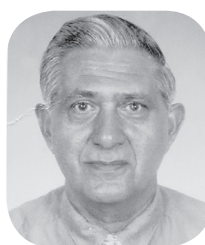


Joackim Jeyapragasam Manikam
Departed: 23-08-2001

Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life. In the Lord's own house shall I dwell forever and ever. - Ps. 23.

Deeply missed and always remembered by wife, daughter, son, brothers, sisters and friends.

11th Anniversary In Loving Memory of our beloved Dad



J. D. NEVIS RAJ
Gift from God: 25-03-1928

Returned to the Lord: 16-08-2013

Forever cherished and loved by Children, daughter-in-law, grand-daughter and loved ones.

Casket Paradise & Funeral Care Sdn. Bhd.

(311899-W)

PERSONAL ATTENTION AT ALL TIMES

- * Specialised In Christian Funerals
- * Exclusive Handmade And Polished Wooden Casket
- * Restoration And Cosmetology
- * British Trained & Qualified MBIE Embalming Service (Only One In Malaysia)
- * Member Of The European Association Of Embalmers
- * Private Chapel Of Rest And Coldroom Facilities
- * Economical, Budget Planned & 24 hrs Service

TEL: 03-2148 5776 / 2148 4855
FAX: 03-2143 1442

19B, Jalan Jalan Dewan Bahasa, Bukit Seputeh, 50460 Kuala Lumpur.
H/P: 012-333 4899 / 012-333 4646 / 019-777 5537

NOTICE

The cost for placing a memoriam is RM100 per column.

For enquiries please contact us:

Tel/WhatsApp: 03-2026 8291
Email: memoriam@herald.com.my

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 8:38-39

Calling all song composers!

KUALA LUMPUR: The Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur is inviting creative composers to contribute to the sacred music repertoire for the Malaysian Catholic Church. This initiative seeks hymns and songs that glorify God and uplift the faithful, suitable for both liturgical and non-liturgical settings.

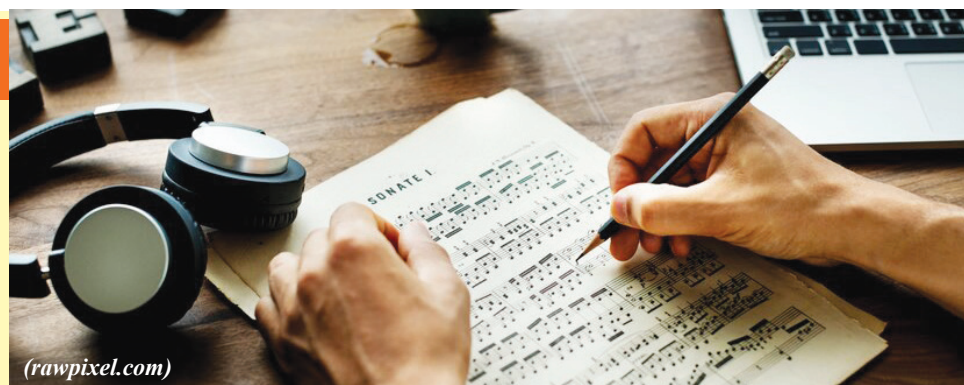
Compositions are welcomed for various occasions, including Masses, weddings, funerals, anniversaries, baptisms, and baby blessings, covering both joyous and solemn events.

Submitted works will be reviewed and approved by the Liturgical Commission for general use. It is important to note that not every submission will be accepted. Approved

compositions will credit the composer, but the copyright will be placed in the public domain. This policy ensures that no composer can assert copyright over any hymn or song, fostering a treasury of sacred music and providing the Catholic community with free and open access to these resources.

"This initiative is a wonderful opportunity for Malaysian composers to enrich our own collection of hymns, songs, and sacred music," said Fr Gregory Chan, who has been tasked to spearhead and coordinate this endeavour.

"Composers have a unique chance to exercise their creative talents within the Liturgy, filling our Masses and other occasions with



sacred music," said Fr Gregory, adding that there is no stipulated time frame for compositions to be submitted as this will be an ongoing project.

Although this is an initiative of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, contributions

from individuals in other dioceses or from abroad are warmly welcomed.

For more details and guidelines to assist composers in creating hymns for Mass, please click on this link: <https://www.archkl.org/guidelines-composition-sacred-music>

Theme for World Day of Peace 2025

VATICAN: The Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development has announced the theme chosen by Pope Francis for the 58th World Day of Peace 2025, which will be celebrated on January 1: *Forgive Us Our Trespasses, Grant Us Your Peace*.

The theme, the dicastery explained, "manifests a natural consonance with the biblical and ecclesial meaning of the jubilee year and is inspired in particular by the encyclical letters *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*, especially around the concepts of hope and forgiveness, the heart of the jubilee" called by Pope Francis for the year 2025.

According to the Vatican office, the theme represents "a call to conversion, not oriented toward condemnation but toward reconciling and being reconciled".

The dicastery noted that by "considering the reality of conflicts and social sins afflicting humanity today in light of the hope inherent in the jubilee tradition of the forgiveness of sins ... concrete principles emerge that can lead to a much-needed spiritual,



Pope Francis greets pilgrims at his Wednesday general audience August 7, 2024. (Vatican Media)

social, economic, ecological, and cultural change."

"Only through a true conversion, personal, communal, and international, can true peace flourish, which is not manifested only in the end of conflicts but in a new reality in which

wounds are healed and the dignity of each person is recognised," the dicastery stated.

In previous years, the themes proposed by Pope Francis for this day have focused on artificial intelligence, dialogue between generations, the culture of care, or good

politics.

The call to observe this day was first made by St Paul VI, who established that on Jan 1, 1968, the Day of Peace, now the World Day of Peace, would be held.

In his first message, the pontiff expressed his belief that "this proposal interprets the aspirations of peoples, of their governments, of international organisms which strive to preserve peace in the world, of those religious institutions so interested in the promotion of peace, of cultural, political, and social movements which make peace their ideal; of youth, whose perspicacity regarding the new paths of civilisation, dutifully oriented toward its peaceful developments is more lively; of wise men who see how much, today, peace is both necessary and threatened."

The Pope's initiative preceded that of the United Nations, which in 1981 designated Sept 21 as the International Day of Peace. In 2001, the General Assembly voted unanimously to designate the day as a period of nonviolence and cease-fire. — CNA

Vatican approves India's Sanctuary of Our Lady of Good Health

ROME: The Vatican has approved devotion at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Good Health in Vailankanni, India, the site of reported apparitions of the Virgin Mary in the 16th century.

One month before the September 8 feast

day of Our Lady of Good Health in India, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) confirmed in a letter to Bishop Sagayaraj Thamburaj of Thanjavur that the action of God is present at the shrine.

"Through the centuries, Mary has contin-

ued to act in this place," DDF prefect Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández wrote. "The millions of pilgrims who travel here out of faith, and the many spiritual fruits that are produced at this shrine, make us recognise the constant action of the Holy Spirit in this place.

According to a Thanjavur tourism website, approximately 20 million pilgrims from India and abroad visit the shrine each year, three million of whom visit during the 11-day festival held Aug 29 to Sept 8 in honour of Our Lady of Good Health.

Devotion to Our Lady of Good Health began in the late 16th century following three different oral accounts of the apparition of the Virgin Mary in Vailankanni, a town in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

The first apparition account of the Virgin Mary acknowledged by the DDF is that of a local shepherd boy who, upon seeing the beautiful woman, offered the milk he was carrying with him for the child in her arms.

"This was an expression of the generosity of those who are willing to give something to others, in their own poverty. You do not need to have much in order to be generous. May this call to share, to assist, to be close to those

who need us always resonate in this place," the Aug 1 letter reads.

The DDF also specifically recognised the account of Portuguese merchant sailors who landed safely in Vailankanni after a violent storm at sea on Sept 8, 1650. That day, which was also the feast of the Nativity of Mary, the sailors vowed to build a church in thanksgiving to Our Lady of Good Health.

More than 300 years after the construction of the original church, St John XXIII raised the Marian shrine to the status of basilica on Nov 3, 1962.

In 2002, Pope John Paul II celebrated the annual World Day of the Sick at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Good Health.

In the letter to the bishop of Thanjavur, Fernández said Pope Francis "extends his paternal blessings to all pilgrims" ahead of the shrine's Sept 8 feast day.

"The Holy Father cares a lot about the popular piety of the faithful pilgrims, because they reflect the beauty of the Church on the move, which seeks Jesus in the arms of Mary and entrusts its pain and hope to the heart of his mother," Fernández wrote. — By Kristina Millare, CNA



Sanctuary of Our Lady of Good Health in Vailankanni, India. (CNA photo/Sajani/Wikimedia, CC BY-SA 3.0)