

HERALD

The Catholic Weekly

Mission Statement

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

TERHAD

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For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

2 Peter 1:16



IJ Superiors visit Malaysian province ■ P4



We all belong to one community of faith

■ P6



The Catholic responsibility to vote

■ P9

THE CHURCH IS NOT A 'CLUB' for the elderly

VATICAN: The Catholic Church is not a “club” for the elderly; nor is it a youth club, but it needs the participation of young people to keep it alive and ensure it does not “grow old.” If it becomes something for old people it is going to die, said Pope Francis.

Citing St John Paul II, the Pope said that “if you live with young people, you will also become young, and the Church needs young people to not grow old.”

Pope Francis in his special prayer intention for August invites young people to take the path of bearing joyful witness to the Gospel, to build “a world where love is at the centre, where we can sense that we are sisters and brothers.”

The prayer intention video was dedicated to the World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal, and begins with the Pope reassuring young people of their importance for the Church, noting the Church needs young people in order to survive. Francis also invites young people to set aside fear and embark on a joyful journey to bear witness to Christ in our world.

The “Pope Video” was created in collaboration with the Lisbon 2023 WYD Foundation and the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life. The Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network of the Apostleship of Prayer developed “The Pope Video” initiative to assist in the worldwide dissemination of monthly intentions of the Pope in relation to the challenges facing humanity. Today, the network connects millions of Catholics around the world from diverse countries, cultures, and social and ecclesial contexts, through prayer.

In the video, released ahead of the August 1-6 World Youth Day celebrations in Lisbon, Pope Francis responded to several young people from different continents who posed questions in various languages. He expressed the hope that today’s young people will plant “a seed for the world’s future,” and prayed for a world that puts love at the centre,

especially at a time when “we are at war,” as well as joy, “because if we Christians have no joy, we are not credible, no one will believe us.”

Francis chose a Marian theme for the World Youth Day — *Mary arose and went with haste* (Lk 1:39). The 37th World Youth Day, after being pushed back one year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, gathers hundreds of thousands of young people around the Pope every three years. “As soon as Mary knew she was going to be the mother of God, she didn’t stay there taking a selfie or showing off ... The first thing she did was to set out on a journey, in haste, to serve, to help,” the Pope said.

Last year, Pope Francis, in his prayer intention for the month of May, invited the Church to pray for young Catholics to be courageous in their response to God’s call to holiness. “When I think of a model with whom young people can identify, our Mother, Mary always comes to mind: her courage, the way she knew how to listen, and her dedication to service,” the Pope said in his May 2022 video message.

In addition to the Blessed Mother’s example, the Pope also recommended to young people that, in their process of discernment, they listen “to the words of their grandparents,” since in them “you will find a wisdom that will take you beyond the issues of the moment.” However, young people must also be listened to. “We need to make more room for the voices of young people to be heard,” Francis said in his apostolic exhortation *Christus Vivit*. — *Agencies*

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(photo/SIC WYD Pilgrims facebook)



(photo/Wilson Sanguet facebook)

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**EDITOR**

Patricia Pereira

editor1@herald.com.my**ASSISTANT EDITOR***Social Media Coordinator*

Sandra Ann Inbaraj

sandra@herald.com.my**WRITER***Children's Section*

Gwen Manickam

gwen@herald.com.my**GRAPHIC DESIGNER***Youth Section*

Amanda Mah

amanda@herald.com.my**BAHASA MALAYSIA**

Melania Liza Magnus

liza@herald.com.my**MANDARIN**

Adelina Wong

yin4482@gmail.com**TAMIL**

RK Samy

rksamy3@hotmail.com**ADMINISTRATOR***Advertisements/Memoriam*advertisement@herald.com.my**LETTERS**letterseditor@herald.com.my

OPINION

Youth, lights in the dark night

We live in an increasingly secular world. Pope Francis has stated that modern societies belittle the practice of the faith through cultural irony, considering faith something for the old to practise. Faith, he says, “is a sign of strength and not of weakness. Faith deserves respect and honour. It has changed our lives, purified our minds, and taught us to adore God and love our neighbour. Faith is a blessing for everyone!”

To revitalise ‘Catholic Culture and Identity’, we must help to build up the faith of our youth. This is an ongoing process and elders play a key role in passing on the faith to youth. Pope St John Paul II instituted the first World Youth Day (WYD) on December 20, 1985. The first official WYD was held in 1986. It’s an international event, held every three years, bringing youths and young adults together for prayer, worship, and celebration of the Catholic faith. The 37th WYD is taking place in Lisbon, Portugal – from August 1 until August 6, the Feast of the Transfiguration. It was originally scheduled to be held from Aug 2-7, 2022, but was postponed due to the pandemic.

This is the fourth WYD over which Pope Francis is presiding. The theme this year: *Mary arose and went with haste* (Luke 1:39) is the scriptural quote chosen by Pope Francis as the motto of WYD 2023. As the Vatican states: “The biblical phrase opens the account of the Visitation (Mary’s visit to her cousin Elizabeth), a biblical episode following the Annunciation (the angel’s announcement to Mary that she would be the mother of the Son of God, and the theme of the last WYD, in Panama” (Jan 2019). During WYD, there are Catechesis sessions that challenge young people to reflect on major themes such as integral ecology/climate change, conflict, social friendship, and mercy.

In his 2019 post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Christus Vivit* (*Christ is alive*), addressed to young people and to the entire people of God, Pope Francis reminded youths: “The Church needs your momentum, your intuitions, your faith. We need them! And when you arrive where we have not yet reached, have the patience to wait for us”.

In June, Pope Francis told young people they have “three languages of life” on their side: the language of the head to think clearly, the language of the heart to feel deeply, and the language of the hands to put what they think and feel into action. But our youths need a supporting environment in which they can let their

lights “shine” in the dark night that threatens to overwhelm them and us.

Youth can and do make a difference in our country and in our world. The challenge for us is to review policies, systems, structures and practices that will allow our youths to thrive. As one youth said to me: “Being young in Trinidad & Tobago is hard. The challenges we face are complex.” The reasons he gave to justify his statement are reasons that are well known – crime and violence, including the proliferation of gangs, guns, substance abuse; poverty, social exclusion, unemployment/underemployment, failure of the education system to meet the needs of 21st century students, poor parenting, housing and infrastructural problems, lack of programmes providing mentors and role models to support youths, lack of opportunities to develop non-cognitive and soft skills e.g. via apprenticeship schemes, peer pressure, mental health challenges, the pressure of materialism, body image anxieties, the potential risks that are involved with the internet e.g. cyberbullying, pornography etc.

Every youth matters! Our task is to remove the barriers that stand as obstacles in their way. Pope Francis highlights the fact that WYD offers young people the chance to expand their horizons and to “look beyond”. He recognises that they are “thirsting for horizons.” In one of his messages to youth as they prepared to participate in WYD, he urged them to open their horizons and hearts to other pilgrims. He said: “Don’t put up a wall in front of your life. Walls close you in; the horizon makes you grow. Always look at the horizon with your eyes, but look, above all, with your heart.”

Let’s create conditions that are based on the interconnected concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion, so that each one can live out his/her life with dignity.

I end with some wise words by Pope Francis in his Message for WYD 2023: “In this beautiful season of your lives, press ahead and do not postpone all the good that the Holy Spirit can accomplish in you!” — By Leela Ramdeen, ICN (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

Leela Ramdeen is Consultant of Trinidad & Tobago’s Catholic Commission for Social Justice & the Archdiocese’s Ministry for Migrants and Refugees.

Called to witness something glorious

World Youth Day. Lisbon. Pope Francis. Catholic Church. What has these to do with the Transfiguration of the Lord that we are celebrating today? What a wonderful spectacle it has been over these past few decades since St John Paul II began this celebration in Rome by welcoming youth from all over the world to come and meet him, to be with him and listen to him and celebrate the mysteries of our faith together with joy.

Perhaps, over the years, some may have mistaken it to be somewhat of a large concert or a loud and noisy party or a social meeting that brought all the youth together for an emotional high. Maybe, from a human and sociological aspect, there’s some truth to that since not every young person could come for World Youth Day that is celebrated in different parts of the world every two to three years. It can be expensive, distant from home and almost seemingly exclusive and just for a select few.

Contrast this with the Transfiguration; among the disciples and the 12 Apostles, Jesus took only three of the Apostles to follow Him up a high mountain and to be alone with Him. It seems that even Jesus had favourites within His own exclusive group who were much closer to Him than the other nine Apostles. But is that the full truth?

We may never truly know and are only speculating but what is more important to consider than the aspect of favouritism, exclusiveness or selectiveness, is the truth that Jesus had a greater purpose in doing that



than making them ‘feel’ special. They were ‘taken’ by Jesus and called to climb a higher mountain in order to witness to something more glorious than what the world had to offer, to something beyond the imagination of mere man, a mind boggling, powerfully experiential and core-shaking truth about Jesus.

Peter, James and John saw Jesus in His divine splendour, and heard the assuring voice of the Father and felt the magnificent presence of the Holy Spirit revealed in a special, spectacular moment. In following Jesus, without knowing why or where Jesus was taking them, their faith in Him brought them into a more intimate relationship with Jesus, and not just with Jesus, but introduced to them the divine persons of the Father and

the Holy Spirit. How marvellous, and also terrifying it must have been at the same time for them. Their eyes and ears were opened.

Being in the presence of Moses and Elijah — the two figures of the Old Testament that had climbed the mountain and experienced God themselves in their own life stories — they were assured in a split moment that they were in good company and that they were truly in the presence of God. Divinity had descended upon man, upon them and pointed them to Jesus alone, the ‘God-Man’. But not just that, they were commanded to ‘Listen’ to Jesus, the Beloved Son.

What a fantastic mid-point journey in the exciting adventures of the three Apostles, especially Peter whom, earlier, Jesus had called the Rock on whom He would build His Church.

And in the second reading today, we hear Peter recalling, repeating and confirming what he, James and John had witnessed at the mount of Transfiguration and what they had been commanded to do by listening to Jesus ‘alone’.

Now, can you imagine how similar this is when Jesus ‘takes’ the Pope (Peter) and the young people from all over the world (James and John) and brings them up a high mountain (the Catholic Church, the Eucharist) to be alone with Him, away from the world, away from the rest of the crowd and to witness to His glory and splendour and invite them to a more intimate relationship - friendship with God.

World Youth Day is that moment of

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Alexuchelvam Mariasoosai

18th Sunday of Ordinary Time (A)

Readings: Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

2 Peter 1:16-19;

Gospel: Matthew 17:1-9

‘transfiguration’ offered to those who have been ‘taken’ and who struggled up the high mountain (the Catholic Church, the Eucharist) together with the Pope, in order to witness to Jesus, the Father and the Holy Spirit again.

What would it do to them? God knows and we must trust the Lord that He is bringing new disciples to new adventures with Him. How wonderful are the feet of those who bring Good News just like Peter, James and John.

By the time this is read, World Youth Day will be ending in Lisbon. But the Lord has been with the young and the young people have experienced the one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church in all its beautiful diversity, mirroring the face of Jesus.

Let us keep every young person that we know in our prayers, that they too may be ‘taken’ by Jesus and have that Transfiguration moment so as to listen more closely to Jesus and spread the Good News like the Apostles did.

First Mill Hill ordination in Sabah

By George Omuto MHM

PAPAR, SABAH: The sacerdotal ordination of Deacon Elvost Lunchi, *pic*, on July 22 was a momentous occasion filled with joy and colour. It marked a significant historical milestone as it was the second ordination of a Malaysian Mill Hill missionary and the first in Sabah.

The ceremony was presided over by Archbishop John Wong. In his address, he warmly encouraged Elvost to spread the message of the Lord's love with gladness and enthusiasm.

The event drew a large and diverse crowd. Also present were the religious, Mill Hill

Family (as friends of Mill Hill are known in Malaysia), parishioners and Elvost's family members, relatives and friends.

Fr Bernie Luna MHM, the Councillor for Asia, represented the General Council and encouraged the Church in Sabah to support their missionaries, especially through prayers.

The ordination ceremony at Holy Rosary Church, Limbahau was significant. Papar was the first mission station in Sabah. Back in 1881, when the Mill Hill Missionaries first arrived in Borneo, Fr Daniel Kilty, MHM, was sent to British North Borneo (as Sabah was known then) and he made Papar his primary

mission station. In 1888, Fr Bernard Kurz MHM, built the Limbahau church.

Now, 135 years later, Papar has produced her first Mill Hill missionary, who will carry the message of the Risen Christ to the world.

Although the Mill Hill Missionaries do not serve in Sabah anymore, Elvost's ordination brings a ray of hope and is a manifestation of the maturity of the Sabah Church, which is now ready to send missionaries to foreign lands.

Let us continue to pray for Fr Elvost as he prepares to take up his appointment among the loving Kutchi Kohli people of Pakistan.



God calls, prepares and sends

Born to Catherine Telin Lahindun and Lunchi Linjanun from Kg Sabandil, Papar, Elvost Lunchi began his priestly journey by entering the Initiation Year at the Catholic Diocesan Centre, Kota Kinabalu in 2013. The following year, he continued his studies in Philosophy at St Peter's College Seminary, Kuching. From 2015-2017, Elvost joined the Mill Hill basic formation and studied Philosophy in Iloilo, Philippines before pursuing his Theological studies at the Tangaza University in Kenya.

During his Theological studies, Elvost underwent a two-year mission programme in Pakistan from 2017-2019. He completed his studies in Theology at Tangaza University earlier this year.

"A vocation in life is a divine gift, bestowed directly by God Himself. In essence, it is God who calls, prepares, and sends each individual on their unique journey. I wholeheartedly embraced my vocation in a quest to unravel life's purpose and to connect with God, pondering the question, "What does God want from me in this life?"

"Throughout my journey, I have witnessed the continuous intervention of God's guiding hands in my life. In both moments of joy and sorrow, I experienced God's gentle warnings, profound teachings, unwavering guidance, and timely salvation

"I am the fourth of six children. Born with a birthmark on my left cheek, I grew up as a shy child. The experience of enduring interrogation, scorn, mockery, and rejection from those around me instilled a profound fear of people within me, leading me to withdraw from social interactions. This left me feeling set apart from others. I often asked God, 'Why does this have to happen? Why did God create me this way?'

"Since young, I faced identity turmoil and alienation. Over time, I discovered this struggle was a hidden blessing, drawing me closer to God and enriching my spirituality, guiding me to find meaning and divine connection in all aspects of life.

"Growing closer to God, I developed sensitivity and compassion towards others. I became motivated to reach out to the isolated

and appreciate God's gifts. Everything in God's creation is beautiful, our interpretations shape our perspectives, and God's presence makes life truly beautiful.

"When I was in primary school, I remember once telling my teacher that I wanted to be a 'father'. It was the long white robe (which symbolises holiness, but I didn't understand it as a child) that drew my attention back then. However, as I grew up and battled other challenges in life, this desire slipped onto the back burner and was forgotten.

"Through hard work and determination, I achieved excellent results in the 1999 SPM examination and was awarded the Sabah State Excellent Scholarship.

"During my time at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), Johor, I prayed to understand life's meaning. God answered, transforming me from a shy student to an active GIFT (Growing In Faith Together) member. These experiences of serving with GIFT shaped my faith and character, preparing me to face the world confidently.

"Not graduating taught me valuable les-

sons, fostering resilience, humility, and hope. Suffering purified me. It deepened my faith and prepared me for missionary life, while my failures led to growth and readiness for my calling.

"Through diligence, I progressed from a part-time worker to a Group Leader at AEON Co. While focusing on stability and being engaged, God had different plans. I resigned in 2010 and began life anew in Sabah.

"Three key lessons I learnt from the experience are to trust God's plan, beyond our efforts, value hard work and contributions to the Church and mission's growth, and respect the significance of marriage and remain open-hearted to God's guidance in life.

"From the end of 2010 to 2011, I seriously discerned my purpose in life and God's will. After attending a vocation seminar in Bundu Tuhan in 2011, the following year, I was accepted into priestly formation in Kota Kinabalu and later, I embraced the call to become a missionary priest. God's guidance prevailed, shaping my journey to serve others worldwide. Glory to the Trinity. Amen."



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

August

- 6 Mass — AOHD Commissioning
- 12 Confirmation — Church of St Anthony, KL
- 13 Confirmation — Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Mentakab
- 14 EXCO Meeting — Christian Federation of Malaysia
- 17 Archdiocesan Finance Meeting



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

August

- 6 Confirmation — Church of St Theresa, Melaka
- 7 Fr Nelson Joseph's 25th Sacerdotal Anniversary — Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam
- 16 Meeting — Diocesan Finance Committee, MAJODI Centre
- 19 Meeting — MJ Mission School Committee, Oasis, Kluang



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #141

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MJD NEWS
UPDATES

Greetings to you from Majodi Centre

The young people have gathered at Lisbon for World Youth Day 2023. The US Church commits to 'One Church, One Mission'. The richer churches are setting up solidarity funds for the poor and marginalised nations. The PM forgives those who sent him to prison, but not those who stole the nation's wealth and betrayed the Malays. Abuse of power still goes on. But the people are hopeful.

Passover Times: What do we leave behind when it is our time to pass over? A wise man once said: *money* which cannot follow us; *friends* who follow us to the grave only; and *good deeds* — the only thing that goes beyond the grave to speak for us before the judgement seat. Some build monuments and monstrosities to live perpetually in the *rakyat*.

But great men and women leave their mark and impression in the minds and hearts of the people they loved. *They left people enlightened, empowered and emancipated. Today we remember fondly Tok Guru or Tunku Abdul Rahman or the recent late Salahuddin, who introduced the Rahmah Initiatives, who said: Let not a single person go with an empty stomach.*

When it is our time to cross over, what will we leave behind? How will we be remembered? We have a destiny to leave behind a legacy. We are born to leave a

mark, an impression, footprint or a memory that we have walked this way. *Leave behind what is true, good and beautiful.*

A Thought for the Week: Black Ants, Red Ants

If you put 100 black ants and 100 red ants in a jar, nothing will happen. But if you shake the jar hard, the ants will start killing each other. The red ants will consider the black ants their enemies, and the black ants will consider the red ones their enemies.

Lesson from the jar: The real enemy is the one who shakes the jar. The same thing happens in our society. So, before we attack each other, we should think about who is shaking the jar.

Announcements for this Week:

1. The Bible Apostolate of MJD is organising *Discipleship in the Gospel of St Matthew* with Fr Ryan Innas Muthu, August 7-9 at the Church of the Immaculate Conception (CIC), JB nightly from 8.00pm to 10.00pm. Contact CIC JB.

2. The *MJD Vocation Promotion Team*, headed by Fr Adrian Francis, is organising a talk on the diocesan priesthood entitled "I Am Mission" on August 31 at St Peter's Church Malacca, from 10.00am to 1.00pm. A Facebook account on vocations is now available for your viewing. Young people, the Lord has not stopped calling.

This Week's Question and Query.

The Q asks: Can one let go of the past?

1. Of course, one can let go and be free. But many find it difficult.

A difficulty with letting go of the past will likely be related to one or more of the following key emotions: guilt, regret, sadness or anger.

Guilt is an emotion that tells us we have violated some rule or norm. For example, "I should have done this" or "Why did I do that?"

2. *"Accepting that I can't change the past, BUT I can change the way I look at it* and how it makes me feel, saved my life. I could cry and be so angry at people and myself, but what is that going to do, besides hurting myself?

Making the decision to forgive myself and others gave back my power! Do not let your past define you." (Anonymous)

3. Almost all the biblical characters had a past, they came with a past. But upon *meeting the Lord, they were invited to become better.* Mary Magdalene was one of them. What we become is our gift to God.

How do you cope with "runaway" thoughts? Try this: I stop...I breathe.... I observe ... I re-imagine and I rebuild.

Keep safe. Be safe.

Bishop Bernard Paul

IJ Superiors visit Malaysian province

KUALA LUMPUR: The Sisters of the Infant Jesus (IJS) in Malaysia joyfully welcomed their Superior General, Sr Brigitte Flourez, and her Asian Councillor, Sr Jane Sinprayoon, on June 30.

During their three-week visit to the IJ Malaysia Province, the two Sisters of the General Council met the 74 Sisters during the four regional assemblies in Sitiawan, Bukit Mertajam, Cheras (Kuala Lumpur) and Melaka.

At these regional assemblies, the Provincial Team of Malaysia (Srs M. Theresa Chua, Stephanie Samy, Amy Sam and Elizabeth Wong) shared with their guests the realities of the province and the challenges they face in today's Malaysian context.

Among the main topics discussed were:

1. Care of the Elderly
2. Lay participation in mission
3. Formation (Sisters & Lay)
4. Financial Management
5. Management of IJ Schools

In addition to these Malaysian realities,



The Community of Asrama Cahaya with Superior General Sr Brigitte Flourez, and her Asian Councillor, Sr Jane Sinprayoon on July 11, 2023.

Srs Brigitte and Jane shared the realities of the Institute as a whole, in the 16 countries, providing inspiration based on the Spirit of their founder, Blessed Nicolas Barre.

The IJ Sisters have a rich and long history in Malaysia that dates back to 1852 when the first Sisters arrived in Penang. From the get-go, their immediate responses were toward the human and faith development of the girls and the orphans dropped at the convent

gates. Over 171 years, the Sisters' diligently served the communities, including establishing numerous schools from the North to the South of Peninsular Malaysia.

Wherever the Sisters went, they served the communities regardless of religion/creed, race, and culture, bringing forth their main aim of "Making Jesus Christ known and loved", sharing the faith, Gospel values, and IJ ethos to the young girls in their schools. Although no Sisters are teaching in the schools anymore, they continue to play their roles, in ensuring a conducive environment is available for those studying in these schools. The IJ Sisters accept these time challenging realities but always trust in God's providence in the spirit of abandonment, detachment, humility with courage and zeal for the Kingdom of God in this part of the world.

Several years ago, the IJ Sisters found alternatives to continue their mission in education by running Learning Centres in both West and East Malaysia and or non-formal education programmes.

In 2019, the International Assembly (General Chapter) of the Institute called the IJ Sisters to respond to God's will by following the new paths directed by the Holy Spirit. They have to be creative in their approach to restore human dignity of the women and the young in Malaysia. Their missionary journey involves deep listening, participating and walking together with their lay companions on mission.

Srs Brigitte and Jane met bishops, priests and their lay collaborators during their time here. They shared the Spirit of Hope as Blessed Nicolas Barre said:

".....Whatever happens.....

Be always at peace and trust in God.

What you will experience will be

in proportion to your

Faith, Your Hope and Your Love:

And even more abundantly than that....."

The IJ Sisters thank God for this grace-filled time and challenge to move forward with greater zeal and courage, despite their aging conditions.



Mass with the students of both primary and secondary schools in their school chapel on July 14, 2023 in Melaka.

Lay collaborators urged to take risks

CHERAS: Nineteen lay collaborators met the Sisters of the Infant Jesus Superior General Sr Brigitte Flourez, the Asian Councillor from Thailand, Sr Jane Sinprayoon, IJ Sisters Malaysia Provincial, Sr Theresa Chua, and her team of Sisters on July 16. IJ spiritual advisor, Fr Lawrence Andrew SJ was also present at the meeting, taking on the moderator's role.

The meeting at the Cheras Convent, was well represented by the lay people serving at the IJ Learning Centres, namely Desa Mentari, Kampung Pasir and Selayang, and those working at the Convent Infirmary and the IJ

Secretariat.

The meeting started with an opening prayer led by Sr Amy Sam, exhorting the Holy Spirit to fill the hearts of everyone present. Sr Theresa then explained that since the General Chapter of 1989, the IJ's highest decision making body, tried to define the status of lay involvement in the Institute.

In 2001 and 2002, Malaysia hosted a retreat and formation session for friends of IJ at Port Dickson. This event marked the Sisters' first endeavour in the country to bring together individuals interested in the IJ spirituality and charism. The aim was to foster a sense of community and connection among those involved in various mission areas associated with the IJ Sisters. During the 2016 Asian Forum held in Thailand, both the IJ Sisters and the lay collaborators participated. This gathering provided a great opportunity for a deeper exchange of insights about the origins of the Sisters in Malaysia and their spirituality and charism.

In 2019 the General Chapter officially recognised the valuable contribution of the laity in sharing their charism with the IJ Sisters. In 2022, the laity actively involved in serving within various IJ faculties in Malaysia partic-



Ho Chee Kit, a lay collaborator and legal advisor to the Sisters — giving her suggestions during the Interactive Session.

ipated in a one-year formation programme. They were encouraged to engage in the official acknowledgment process of the Institute. Hopefully, this will take place sometime this year.

In her call to the lay collaborators, Sr Brigitte advised them to share their hidden charism with others as the Bible teaches us not to light a candle and put it under a shade. For this to happen, the lay needs to know their vision and mission before reaching out to serve others neglected in society. She reminded the lay collaborators to share God's love by serving the presence of God in our world through an attitude of simplicity, humility and trust in God.

The lay collaborators were exhorted to take risks in missions like the founder of the Institute, Blessed Nicolas Barre, who encouraged the Sisters to go to places where no one wanted to go. They were also called to challenge themselves to grow and live out the IJ spirit in their personal lives.

After lunch, there was an interactive session about the realities faced by the lay collaborators and IJ Sisters. Many spoke about the challenges they endured at the Learning Centres. Sr Theresa spoke about the need to reflect on the Spirit that moves the Sisters and to draw inspiration from Blessed Nicolas Barre to value education, believe in God and focus on the child without merely looking for academic results. This is what 'disinterestedness' means.

Sr Brigitte proposed to set up a small organisation with flexible leadership for the lay collaborators. She also shared about the lay involvement in other countries so they do not feel isolated.

Sr Theresa thanked everyone for their courage and enthusiasm and hoped for the laity's continued collaboration with the IJ Sisters. As Fr Lawrence summed it, the IJ Sisters and the lay collaborators must journey together to make this a reality. He echoed Sr Brigitte's call for the lay collaborators and the Sisters to be creative in their mission approaches. —

By Elizabeth Chong, a lay collaborator



Sr Brigitte Flourez advising the lay collaborators and the sisters on what they are called to do.



The lay collaborators at the meeting with the IJ Sisters and Fr Lawrence Andrew, SJ.

Grandparents, elderly are prayer towers

By Deacon Dr Leslie Petrus

JOHOR BAHRU: Grandparents and the elderly can be likened to “prayer towers” due to their steadfast faith demonstrated throughout a lifetime filled with joys and challenges. These were some of the statements made during an online Zoom presentation on “His Mercy is from age to age (Lk 1:46-55) to celebrate World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, July 23.

Johor Specialist Hospital’s Geriatric specialists Dr Peter Selestine and Regina Williams shared the 90-minute conversation. Regina is a professional journalist and a columnist for the *HERALD*, and also happens to be a grandmother of three. There was a free flow of conversation ranging over issues facing the elderly, in terms of physical, mental and emotional well-being and challenges in being a grandparent in the current context.

Dr Peter raised several important points that warrant attention. Firstly, there has been a notable increase in dementia cases in recent times, particularly after the pan-

demie. Secondly, there is a concerning rise in depression among the elderly residing in nursing homes. Lastly, the occurrence of delirium cases has been linked to the high number of medications some elderly individuals are taking. “We are becoming an aging nation and therefore the Church must be prepared for it,” he said.

Regina shared her faith journey, which played a significant role in moulding the person she is today. As part of this journey, she found a new vocation — to be a full-time grandmother — and took the brave step of embracing this new calling by opting for early retirement from her high-paying job.

Today’s growing children need proper care and discipline and she chose to help her daughters instil the faith element and the presence of God in her grandchildren. She said, “When I see my grandson say a prayer before meals, it means so much to me. It reaffirms that my faith and belief in God influenced him, somehow.” She further reiterated how the grand-parenting styles of 30 years ago are so different from today.

“Listening to them in their language and



Dr Peter Selestine



Regina Williams

learning from them is the way forward, to being an effective grandparent. The key word here is adaptation and striving to be relevant,” she said. One strong statement Regina made was that, although her mother was a strict grandmother, her daughters always went to her for prayers and blessings as if their grandmother had special connections with God. Grandparents seem to be seen as “prayer towers”. Her daughters feel safe and comfortable when their children are being taken care of by the grandparent.

According to Dr Peter, children of elderly parents are currently facing various constraints, like living space in condominiums, the pursuit of job and career advancements, and the need to work overseas, among others. Many children find themselves in a predicament when they have to make the difficult decision of placing their elderly

parents in nursing homes due to the need for 24-hour nursing care that they are unable to provide. This situation often leads to feelings of guilt among the children.

Therefore, the elderly must prioritise their health as much as possible by maintaining their medications and engaging in daily exercise. Dr Peter also stressed the importance of getting annual vaccinations for pneumonia and influenza to protect their health and well-being.

Regina said her recipe for being in good health is to “Run after your grandchildren. It can be tiring and exhausting, but it keeps one’s mind alert and active. Ultimately, being a full-time grandparent is a joy. I hope I leave this legacy to all my loved ones.”

The Malacca Johore Diocesan Commission for Family, Life & Laity coordinated the online Zoom presentation.

Honouring the seniors



Grandparents and the elderly with Fr Peter Anthony before the cutting of the cake.

KEPONG: In conjunction with the Third World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, Mass was celebrated for the grandparents, the elderly and the homebound on July 22 at the Chapel of Christ the Light.

Chapel Administrator, Fr Peter Anthony in his homily reminded the congregation that our God is loving and forgiving and that the Vatican offered plenary indulgence to the grandparents, the elderly and all Catholics who participated in that day’s Eucharistic celebration and followed other protocols. Many who struggle to come for Mass every week, made a big effort to attend this celebration.

We are called to mature in faith and our spiritual life as we grow older, as reflected in the parable of the dandel and the wheat. It’s difficult to separate the dandel and wheat in the world. Fr Peter stressed that in growing older, there is a further need for nourishment in our spiritual life, and with all the challenges in life, our faith needs to be strengthened. He invited the congregation to apply the five H and one W methods instead of the usual five W and one H in their maturing age. He reminded everyone that, as we age, it comes with ailments and adversities. Sickness is part and parcel of purification.

The first H depicts physical and mental **health**. We need to stay positive despite the many challenges we face, as aging increases the risk of chronic diseases. The second H is for **holiness**. We need to age gracefully

even when we feel weary or anxious. We also need to stay holy and to be purified, as Jesus says, “Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28). The third H, **humility** is a great virtue and it helps keep us down to earth. He encouraged the elderly to spend more time with the Word of God and to live joyfully as old age is a gift from God. Continuing with the fourth H, he asked the seniors to stay **happy**. He said, Jesus will send someone in our time of loneliness and we should not lose happiness due to health, as good health is the wealth of a happy soul.

The final H, he stressed on was **hope**. We should always receive the forgiveness and goodness of our Lord. He urged the congregation to have hope in the Resurrection, as Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Hope can bring us joy and peace amid turmoils. Hoping in the Lord, can give us courage, strength and confidence in our senior age.

At the end of the Mass, Fr Peter blessed the grandparents, the elderly and the homebound before cutting a cake. The congregation adjourned for lunch at the chapel foyer. A karaoke session to entertain the special guests was organised by the youth. It was heartwarming to witness children feeding their elderly parents, spending quality time together at the chapel. Caring for your parents in their senior years allows you rebuild your relationship with each other and with God. — **By Moses Sinnappen**

Evergreens animate Mass

SETAPAK, Kuala Lumpur: The Church of the Good Shepherd joyfully commemorated the third World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, July 23. The Evergreens (Seniors) group along with the support of the KL Archdiocese GEM (Grandparents and Elderly Ministry), parish priest Fr Mitchel Joseph, and various other relevant ministries in the parish, coordinated and animated the Sunday Mass.

Tribute messages, filled with love and gratitude for the grandparents, were read out by representatives from the youth and catechetical students, highlighting the importance of honouring and cherishing the elderly in our community.

This was followed by a message from the GEM chair-couple and grandparents themselves, Andrew and Andrene Teoh.

Memorabilia like flowers, bookmarks and brochures for the occasion were distributed to the seniors and other parishioners.



The Offertory bearers at the Mass were represented by both the youth and Evergreens.

Heartwarming gifts for the aged

CHERAS: The Silver Liners Ministry (ministry for the elderly) from the Church of St Francis of Assisi organised activities for the aged to celebrate World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly.

On July 23, they joined the aged IJ Sisters residing in the Infant Jesus Convent for their afternoon tea.

Besides that, around 50 home-bound elderly individuals received thoughtful gifts,

courtesy of the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC).

These gifts, adorned with the emblem of the Silver Liners ministry, included either hand towels or foldable tote cloth bags. The EMHC take turns visiting and administering Holy Communion every week. The ministers shared that all recipients were happy and touched by this gesture for they were not forgotten. — **By Y Santiago**

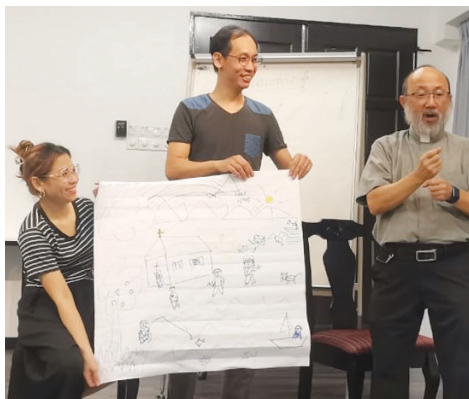


Silver Liners having tea with the IJ Sisters at the convent in Cheras.

We all belong to one community of faith

By Jomeilyn Fogata

GENTING HIGHLANDS: The Catholic Ministry for the Deaf (CMfD) held its annual retreat recently at the Villa Dominic Retreat House. Fr Rowland Yeo Teck Heng, a Singaporean priest from St Francis Holy Orders, facilitated the retreat. He is the first South East Asian deaf Catholic priest who ministers to the Catholic Deaf Ministry across the continent.



Fr Rowland conducting the retreat.

During the retreat, Fr Rowland conducted deep-dive theological teachings. These sessions were on Grace and Sacraments,

Plagues, the Passover, the Four Cups, Moses and Jesus, Covenants, the Bread of Life Discourse, and Mary, the new Ark of the Covenant.

Fr Rowland said, "I spoke about the community of faith to the attendees. As a fellowship of believers, we manifest our love and unity. We gather to celebrate the Eucharist by sharing in Holy Communion. We receive the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation. Holy Communion symbolises and affects our unity. We pray for each other. We help each other in need. We support the members of Christ who are labouring in the missions with our prayers and alms. We work together to renew the face of the earth, and associate and cooperate in the work of the parish to which we belong and in social, economic, and civic life."

Through these topics, our CMfD brothers and sisters gained deeper knowledge and understanding of how the Catholic faith has such a great part in the history of mankind and how it brings us to today's generation of the practice of faith. They were able to re-align what they learnt and understood. They also expressed real and deeper acceptance of every symbolism and representation of our faith in God through Catholicism.

The CMfD community also strengthened their ties during the retreat through bonding



The Catholic Ministry for the Deaf community with Fr Rowland Yeo.

activities and fellowship, while in reflection. Our gratitude to Fr Rowland for guiding our community to lift their spirits back to God and living the retreat theme "Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practise hospitality – Romans 12:13"

The CODA (Children of Deaf Adults) also attended a children's camp run by volunteer Special Ed Teacher, Rachel Sebastian, and three other visiting volunteers.

"I hope the deaf's need for priests who know sign language is realised and they

also listen and act on behalf of the deaf who can go to Mass and receive the Sacrament of Confession in sign language," said Fr Rowland.

Over the weekend, members of the CMfD community had an awakening and deepening of faith and relationships, thus creating the desire to continue serving our Lord and the Catholic Church through the power of the Holy Spirit and the everlasting grace of our Lord. May all the works for the Lord be to His praise.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit through Spiritual Growth programme

SUBANG JAYA: Several parishioners of the Church of St Thomas More (STM) participated in a four-month programme on Spiritual Growth led by Augustine Tan from the Holy Cross Centre in Kuching.

The STM Holy Cross Ministry chief coordinator, Stephen Chung, said this is the

eighth programme conducted at their parish. "Participants are required to attend a two-hour prayer session weekly and watch a video recording by Alexis Bong. The programme culminates in a one-day practical session, centred on the gifts of the Holy Spirit — like speaking in tongues,

prophecy, knowledge, wisdom, healing, and miracles," he added. This faith formation programme is by the Holy Cross Ministry of Deliverance and Healing in Kuching.

"It was a spiritually filled programme. Thanks to the facilitators for empowering us with the Holy Spirit," remarked participant Peter Hon.

Angeline Mitchell was grateful to the

leaders and Augustine for teaching her to grow with the Holy Spirit.

"The practical session was a phenomenal experience," commented Annette Robson.

The Ministry hopes to attract parishioners who want to grow spiritually and enhance their relationship with God through the fruits, gifts and power of the Holy Spirit. — **By Angeline Lesslar**



An activity for the participants to experience the Visitation of the Holy Spirit.

Wisdom – God's vision for life

IPOH: Over the span of eight consecutive weeks, starting from June 3, about 70 participants enrolled in a course titled *Wisdom – God's Vision for Life* at the Church of St Michael (SMC). The experience was an eye-opener for many, as they gained insight into looking at life through the eyes of Jesus and trying to act accordingly.

They were made aware of godly wisdom and earthly wisdom, making decisions based on principles and preferences and having the hand of God in all aspects of life, even finances and relationships.

Felix Webber, a participant, commented that the sessions brought new light on how to live a better life by seeking God's help to overcome human weaknesses.

SMC's parish priest, Fr Anthony Liew, thanked the Faith Formation Ministry at his parish for their hard work in organising

the sessions. He also advised that knowledge alone was not enough and would not satisfy.

"We have to build a relationship with Christ so we grow and hunger to know more. As we improve ourselves, our relationship with God and with one another will also grow," he said. Fr Anthony encouraged the participants to make time for themselves and God.

He also commented that coming together for this form of Bible Study was good as the participants grew together by listening to the talks and participating in the group sharing.

Participant June Gabato said, "Sharing real-life experiences and having frank discussions in the groups gave insights which the participants will treasure for a long time." — **By Jennifer Duarte**



The participants at the conclusion of the eight-week 'Wisdom' session.

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Encountering the living Christ in the Blessed Sacrament

By Christine H Lee

JOHORE BAHRU: The Malacca Johore Diocese Evangelical Commission held a Eucharistic Adoration at the MAJODI Centre for the catechism students, families and catechists from the South Johor parishes on July 15.

The session started with a talk about the apparition of Our Lady of Knock, Ireland to remind the faithful about the importance of Mass, prayer and to maintain hope in God.

After the attendees recited the Rosary, Fr Moses Yap, OFM promulgated the Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist and the Blessed Sacrament as the centre and summit of life. As a priest, it is important that he constantly reminds the faithful to focus on the Living Christ in the Blessed Sacrament by frequent prayers before the Tabernacle or in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. As Christ says, "I am the Living Wa-



Fr Moses Yap placing the brown scapular on a participant.

ter," Jesus will give us genuine rest for our spirit and our soul.

Fr Moses reminded the attendees that "the peace we long for can never be obtained in this world, only in Christ. Let us turn our focus and lives back to Christ to experience His divine love in silent adoration before the Blessed Sacrament."

Throughout history, hundreds of Eucharistic miracles have served as

poignant reminders of Jesus' true presence in the Holy Eucharist. At the venue, an exhibition showcasing several Eucharistic Miracles from different parts of the world was available for all to view.

Towards the end of the session, about 700 retreatants took part in the Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament followed by Benediction. The event concluded on a

meaningful note with the distribution of Brown Scapulars to the faithful, symbolising their devotion to the Virgin Mary. Hundreds of miraculous medals were also handed out as encouragement to engage in daily prayer, seeking the intercession of the Mother of God, and fostering a deeper connection with the Holy Trinity.

The essence of the brown scapu-

lar centres on us being clothed in the garment of Our Lady, a precious gift given to humanity through St Simon Stock in the 12th century. By wearing this scapular, we engage in a continuous and unwavering act of love devoted to Our Lady. According to her promise to St Simon, whoever faithfully wears the scapular is assured protection from hellfire. Therefore, we seek Our Lady's shield and with strong faith, pray for the grace of final perseverance. As part of this devotion, we are also encouraged to pray the Rosary daily. From the response of the faithful, there is a need to conduct similar devotions to deepen their spirituality and relationship with God, so they may encounter the Living Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

The event was an enriching experience for the congregation which helped them enhance their prayer life and spirituality.



Blood donation drive at the Church of St Theresa, Nilai.

Blood donation drive in Nilai parish

NILAI: About 60 individuals participated in the Blood Donation drive organised by the Church of St Theresa's Parish Integral Human Development Ministry (PIHDM), July 16. Opened to the public, the initiative saw people from all walks of life

unite for the common good.

"The organising team and the Hospital Tuanku Jaafar, Seremban's Blood Bank staff were willing to stay beyond the stipulated time to cater to the overwhelming response," said parish priest Fr Christopher Soosa-

ipillai. "These are little examples of how the Holy Spirit guides our journey as a Synodal Church," said Karen Kavetha, PIHDM Chairperson. "We continue to pray for greater inspiration from the Spirit," she added.

— By Aileen Anthony Jason

Disaster response training

KLUANG: Caritas Malacca Johore Diocese Office of Human Development (Caritas MJDOHD) organised a training session on disaster response at the Church of St Louis on July 19.

The primary objective of the training was to provide volunteers with basic disaster preparedness, skill, knowledge about disaster response and establishing an emergency response team. The session also included discussions on local coordination and operations in disaster-affected areas.

The Asia Crisis Response Alliance (ACRA) chairman CK Cheong, was invited to share his years of experience and knowledge and train the participants. Most of the 21 participants, from several parishes across the diocese, were volunteers involved

in the Cha'ah flood response in March 2023.

During the training, participants were taught how to make good assessments to prioritise response actions and identify urgent needs. Leveraging the trainer's extensive experience, participants' doubts and queries were addressed and clarified effectively. Throughout the session, several questions were raised, and the trainer shared actual response experiences, providing the participants with a comprehensive understanding of potential real-life scenarios that could occur in the event of a disaster.

No one-way method can be applied as situations change every time. Volunteers need to be ready to re-design and modify response plans according to the needs or when the situation demands a

change of operation method.

At the end of the session, participants shared feedback on the training received. Many benefitted in terms of knowledge and how to manage expectations. As seeds of volunteerism were planted in the participants, we hope more will offer their help and act in solidarity to respond in an emergency.

The constructive feedback created an opportunity for Caritas Malaysia to listen to the local community. Facing the reality that disasters are increasing and the severity getting worse, part of Caritas Malaysia's midterm plans is to introduce a Segment Committee. This committee will consist of a group of experts to head various needs. One of the identified groups will be disaster response. Given the existing environmental challenges like floods, landslides, and earthquakes, Caritas Malaysia will conduct additional training sessions.

These initiatives aim to empower and educate the local community, equipping them with the necessary skills to respond effectively and take the lead in crises. Mobilising the right volunteers, resources, and equipment could significantly reduce the impact of disasters so that lives can be restored in a timely and coordinated manner. — Caritas Malaysia



Trainer CK Cheong sharing his personal experiences on community-based disaster response.

Anniversary celebration for joint Armed Forces headquarters



The eight members from the Armed Forces with Fr George Packiasamy.

KUANTAN: The Church of St Thomas the Apostle was honoured to host the 16th anniversary celebration of the Joint Armed Forces Headquarters, Al-Sultan Abdullah Camp of Sungai Panching, on July 21. Themed *Berjuang Bersama (Together We Fight)*, the event was initiated by Commander Jeffrey ak Nerat RMN, supported by the small group of Christian personnel serving there.

According to Commander Jeffrey, the event aimed at offering prayers for the well-being and success of the Joint Forces Headquarters. It was also to promote comradeship among the three services of the Armed Forces and to enhance the spirituality of their Christian members.

It was the first time the celebration was held in Kuantan. The spe-

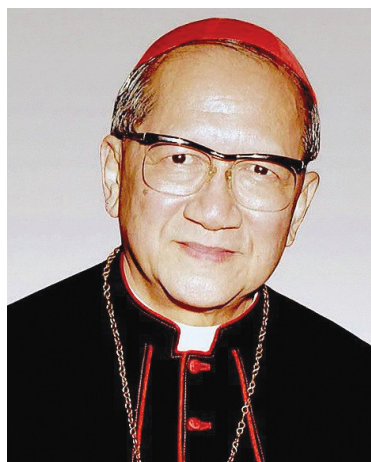
cial noon-day Mass was presided over by parish priest Fr George Packiasamy. In attendance were eight members from the Armed Forces (five Catholics and three from other Christian denominations) and a group of parishioners who came to support the celebration.

At the end of Mass, Commander Jeffrey, on behalf of his fellow Christian personnel thanked Fr George for his permission to celebrate the anniversary event and the church, for supporting them in their Christian faith. He said he also looked forward to many such celebrations in the future. After the group photographs, all were invited for a light meal at the nearby community centre breakfast corner. — By Dr Francis Leong

Vatican honours Venerable Cardinal Văn Thuận with new foundation

ROME: The Vatican has united two foundations into a single new foundation named for Venerable Cardinal Nguyễn Văn Thuận, a Vietnamese cardinal known for his spiritual reflections on hope, written during and following 13 years of confinement in a communist prison.

The Văn Thuận Foundation replaces the Good Samaritan and Justice and Peace Foundations, according to a July 25 rescript issued by Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, with the permission of Pope Francis.



Venerable Cardinal Nguyễn Văn Thuận

Venerable Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận was born in Vietnam in 1928. In 1967, he became bishop of Nha Trang. He was appointed coadjutor archbishop of Saigon in April 1975, just six days before the city fell to the North Vietnamese army.

He was arrested and spent 13 years in a Vietnamese communist re-education camp. During his imprisonment, which included nine years in solitary confinement, he smuggled out handwritten messages to be circulated among the Catholic community.

Văn Thuận's messages from

prison were printed as the book *The Road of Hope: A Gospel from Prison* in 2013. The prayers he wrote during that time were also later published as *Prayers of Hope*.

Văn Thuận was not allowed to have any religious items in prison, but he was able to craft a small crucifix after guards smuggled him a piece of wood and some wire.

After he was released in 1988, the bishop spent three years under house arrest before he was permitted to visit Rome in 1991. He was not permitted to return to Vietnam, however, and was effectively ex-

iled for the rest of his life.

He resigned as Saigon's coadjutor archbishop in 1994 when he was appointed vice president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. He became the council's president in 1998.

In 2000, Văn Thuận was asked to preach the spiritual exercises for Pope John Paul II and the Roman Curia. He died of cancer in Rome on Sept 16, 2002, at the age of 74.

Văn Thuận's cause for beatification was opened in 2007 and he was named venerable by Pope Francis in 2017. — **By Kevin J. Jones, CNA**

African seminarians learn to translate liturgy into local languages

BENIN: Saint Andrew's parish in Banigbé, a town located about 30 kilometres from the headquarters of the Catholic Diocese of Porto-Novo in the capital of Benin, is the site of a unique endeavour. For the entire month of July, young men in a major seminary were being instructed on how to translate Church texts and worship aids.

"On the menu is the translation of catechism books, texts from the Roman Missal, the daily Mass prayers, the various rituals for funerals, baptisms, marriages, etc," explained Fr Épiphane Okou, head of the diocesan translation commission, to the eight seminarians who made up the second group of budding translators.

The initiative dates back to 1991 and is the brainchild of the late Bishop Vincent Mensah (d. 2010) who led the diocese from 1970-2000.

"Bishop Mensah, of revered memory, wanted students from the major seminary who are on vacation to meet for reflection, fraternisation,

prayer and working on local liturgical languages," said Okou, who was ordained to the priesthood in 2004.

The annual translation school "allows seminarians to put the Holy Scriptures into their mother tongues, so that in future pastoral situations they can help the faithful of the diocese — many of whom do not speak French — listen to the Word of God in their languages" of African origin. "It is already an apprenticeship for their future ministry," the priest emphasised.

This year, the session brought together two groups of eight seminarians each. The first carried out its work from July 3-16. The second began on July 17 and ended on the 31st.

After he gave his introductory remarks to the second group of eight on July 17, Fr Okou outlined "principles of a good translation: fidelity, clarity and being natural in what one renders". Then, to provide an example, he showed them how to translate from a source language to a target language. For those in the group

who are not yet literate in the three languages of the diocese, manuals are offered for personal learning.

The next day the priest showed them how to enter data on the computer from the work the first group of seminarians carried out in the Gungbé language.

After their work, it will be up to the members of the diocesan translation commission to look into these first drafts in order to improve their quality.

The diocesan translation commission of Porto-Novo Diocese is made up of eight priests and some lay people — men and women — all knowledgeable speakers of one or another of the three liturgical languages of the diocese.

This is where the mode of operation is broken down into several stages.

"When we have work to do, I send them the texts; they do a first individual work and then we come together to pool the work, a stage where sometimes stormy discussions bring about a final text having



Major seminarians from the Diocese of Porto-Novo carefully follow the instructions of Fr Epiphane Okou, head of the Diocesan Translation Commission, on the second day of their session, July 18, 2023 (LCA Photo/Juste Hlannon)

a consensus, which is submitted to the bishop before its publication," said Fr Okou.

From 1991 to 2023, his commission has translated into local languages numerous liturgical materials, some of which have been published and then republished because they have been revised and improved: the lectionaries A, B and C, the lectionaries for feast days and solemnities, the first part of the Roman Missal, the funeral celebration ritual, the catechetical books for first to fifth year, new documents that have just been proposed by the di-

ocesan commission for catechesis, etc.

Although Fr Okou points out the commission's limited means, he also dreams of constructing permanent headquarters for the commission in order to provide it with better conditions. He said the goal is to be able to produce more, "when, thanks to translated materials, we pray in the mother tongue of the faithful, when we announce the Word of God to them in their languages, they are happier and are hooked".

— **By Juste Hlannon, LCI, <https://international.la-croix.com/>**

Beirut organisation cares for 'grandmas and grandpas' in need

BEIRUT: They have survived life's multiple hardships, including Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war. Now, the elderly in Lebanon have been thrown into poverty amid the country's crippling economic crisis.

"This last part of their life should have been a reward for everything they've done. It is very sad to realise how much they are wounded by the circumstances of life. It is so hard to see their suffering," said Fr Guillaume Bruté de Rémur, rector of the Redemptoris Mater Seminary in Beirut.

In response, Fr Bruté de Rémur founded *Teta w Jeddo* ("Grandma and Grandpa" in the Lebanese language), an organisation that provides hot meals, food packages, medicine and human support to needy elderly in Beirut. It reverberates with Pope Francis' appeal to bring the elderly to the centre of



A volunteer is pictured promoting the products and services of Teta w Jeddo on July 4. (Facebook Photo/Teta w Jeddo)

Christians' lives and away from the margins of families, as he urged on July 23, when the Church celebrated World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly.

The initiative was born out of the Aug 4, 2020 catastrophic Bei-

rut port blast, in which 218 people were killed, according to Human Rights Watch; more than 7,000 injured, of whom at least 150 acquired a physical disability; and at least 300,000 displaced.

Fr Bruté de Rémur and some vol-

unteers, in helping the blast victims, realised that while many non-governmental organisations were making repairs to homes, there was unaddressed suffering among the aged as a result of the economic crisis.

The priest notes that in Lebanese society, where life centres around the family, the elderly are highly esteemed. "They are considered wise people," he pointed out.

There is no social security system in Lebanon. It is normal for adult children to look after their parents and elderly relatives, as well as supporting them financially.

"This is one of the huge problems we have now in Lebanon. The economic crisis is destroying this ability of the family to take care of their elderly. It's very dangerous," said Fr Bruté de Rémur.

"Little by little, these natural bonds of solidarity between genera-

tions are fragilised by the economic crisis," he said.

Since late 2019, Lebanon has been in a state of economic collapse that the World Bank describes as one of the worst in over a century. The local currency has lost around 98 per cent of its value, unemployment has risen to more than 30 per cent, and inflation continues in triple digits.

Poverty has overtaken nearly 80 per cent of the population in the once middle-income country.

The French-born priest, who has served in Lebanon for 23 years, sums up the country's dire situation by saying "it's a disaster. It is difficult for people in the West to understand. We are like living in purgatory".

Teta w Jeddo is currently helping 150 elderly people. — **ucanews.com**

The Catholic responsibility to vote

By Jacelyn Johnson

The upcoming state elections may seem like an afterthought to many, as the nation went to polls not longer than nine months ago. However, six states chose not to dissolve their state assemblies in 2022 when the federal elections were held. August 12 will see Kedah, Kelantan, Terengganu, Penang, Selangor, and Negeri Sembilan going out to vote in their state legislative assemblies.

By and large, these state elections will be significant in solidifying the popularity of the Unity government, and perhaps the future of our current Prime Minister. Whether we like to admit it or not, ethnic division is at the forefront of our political system. On the one

hand, you have three states with a significant Malay population, currently under the Perikatan Nasional coalition, who embrace Malay supremacy and conservative Islamic ideologies. Then you have three other states, under the more liberal Unity government.

The problem with race based politics is, it has created an intrinsic beleaguering mentality amongst Malaysians, that they should only vote for the politician or a party with stereotypical racial divide ideologies, and politicians too, do play up the racial insecurities card to further create a toxic environment that divides the nation. This causes a disconnect from educating people to understand actual economical and developmental benefits a party or a candidate can bring to the table.



Six states, Selangor, Kedah, Kelantan, Negeri Sembilan, Penang and Terengganu will have their state election on August 12, 2023.

What does the State Legislative Assembly do?

In Malaysia, state government powers are rather limited or restrained. The federal government takes on the major accountabilities, from defence to education, external affairs, communications, trade and transport. Our Parliament holds sessions for almost 20 weeks a year, while state assemblies sit for perhaps two weeks annually.

State legislators basically have enormous control over land utilisation within their state, and decidedly so, as the case in Selangor, where the state's income is derived predominantly (67 per cent in 2022) from land title premiums and land tax. However, aside from responsibilities with overlapping federal and state jurisdictions such as public health and town planning, state governments are also primarily responsible for social welfare and dispensing aid, which makes them a focal instrument for the people's wellbeing.



Selangor State Legislative Assembly, Shah Alam. (Selangorkini photo/Fikri Yusoff)

A good state legislator (ADUN) would be one who is accessible to the rakyat, and be able to not only listen to the complaints, but actually fix physical issues for the betterment of their area, and provide just and equitable social welfare to the people within

their jurisdiction. This would be one of the main reasons the state elections are important, as you are given the opportunity to vote for a suitable candidate that will go on to provide the services required that contributes to a developing society.

What does the Church say about your right to vote?

The Church and the political community in their own fields are autonomous and independent from each other. Yet both, under different titles, are devoted to the personal and social vocation of the same men. All citizens, therefore, should be mindful of the right and also the duty to use their free vote to further the common good. (*Gaudium et spes*, 1965, n76; n75)

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) states that "submission to authority and co-re-

sponsibility for the common good make it morally obligatory to pay taxes, to exercise the right to vote, and to defend one's country." (CCC, n 2240)

While there are many Bible verses that tell us to obey the authorities, there is no explicit Bible verse that spells out a right to vote, simply because free elections weren't exactly practised in the biblical era. In the Old Testament, the Lord assigned a priest to anoint kings, who mostly came

into authority through triumph in wars. Similarly, in the New Testament, the people did not get to vote in their Roman Emperors.

However, the Bible does tell us to pay our taxes. "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." (Mark 12:17), and this, by modern democratic principles, translates into a right or an obligation to vote. Even Jesus paid temple taxes (Matt 17:24-27).

The Bible also tells us to pray for political leaders. "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way" (1 Timothy 2:1-2), and show them the appropriate respect and honour (1 Peter 2:17). The Scripture is clear about our responsibilities as Christians, despite it being a time where the authorities were oppressive, hostile and unjust compared to our current times.

So, what then is our Catholic responsibility?

We are asked "to do what is good and avoid what is evil." Everyone is obliged to follow this law, which makes itself heard in conscience and is fulfilled in the love of God and neighbour. Living a moral life bears witness to the dignity of person. (CCC 1706).

The Magisterium teaches that "a well-formed Christian conscience does not permit one to vote for a political programme or an individual law which contradicts the fundamental contents of faith and morals" (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, n 570)

They often say 'vote wisely' – but what does this mean? Exodus 18:21 says "But select capable men from all the people — men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain — and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens."

In this age of information, we tend to sway with any content that comes our way, without discerning, understanding and educating ourselves further, what is for the common good. When it's time to vote, are we voting for the most capable person to lead us, or are we voting based on race, stereotypical beliefs, emotions and pride? As Christians, we are called to pray, and to educate ourselves, and to be responsible in exercising our civic duties.

Our political climate has shown us that no one party, and not every politician do as they say once they get into power. As Rafizi Ramli recently put it, "When they want to be candidates, they lobby for it

heavily. But after becoming our candidates, they act like kings even before being elected."

Pope Francis wrote that "Experience shows how easy it is to become mired in corruption, ensnared in the daily politics of quid pro quo, where everything becomes business. How many people suffer injustice, standing by powerlessly while others divvy up the good things of this life. Some give up fighting for real justice and opt to follow in the train of the winners." (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, n 78)

As you go out to fulfil your civic and Catholic duty to cast your vote on August 12, do take some time to pray and discern, research about the candidates that you will be voting for, understand their manifestos, cast your doubts, but also look at what they have previously accomplished, whether they are practically and morally capable of carrying out their duties and responsibilities to the people and choose the right candidate to work for your jurisdiction. And then, continue to pray for your chosen leaders. "For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers." (Proverbs 11:14)

● Jacelyn Johnson

holds an LLB and an MBA, with a day job in change management and digital transformation. She enjoys the occasional religious discourse just to shake up and make sense of the stereotypical mentalities.



(Malay Mail photo/Sayuti Zainudin)

Check your voter status, constituency etc

If you are over 18, you should be automatically registered.

You can check your voting information at the:

- a) SPR portal at <https://mysprsemak.spr.gov.my>
 - b) check MySPR mobile application
 - c) official portal of the state Election
- Offices at the link:
<http://ppn.spr.gov.my>

- d) SPR Hotline at 03-8892 7018.



Faith in the future as an act of remembering the past

It is we who keep the ongoing legacy of the Second Vatican Council alive, and together we will help to map the future that lies ahead of us

We live in a time of outsourced memory. No longer do we need to remember the many intricate passwords required to enter before enjoying yet another convenience or necessity in our daily lives. Computers do the work for us, leaving us free to divert our attention elsewhere. While I am deeply grateful not to have to memorise such increasingly hard-to-remember passwords, I must admit that I seem to be losing a certain memory muscle.

It's not just the onset of middle age, I think (I hope not!).

Yet in this age of the convenient outsourcing of memory, we suddenly find ourselves easily forgetting not just the small things, but also losing a greater appreciation for the larger story behind events. History is becoming increasingly irrelevant under the ever-more demanding pressures of the "now", and our growing anxieties about the future. With such concerns in front of us, history seems

antiquated, even irrelevant.

Let me give an example. In my professional life as an academic theologian, I encounter an analogous loss of memory regarding what was perhaps the most significant event in recent Catholic cultural memory, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). When I mention that I am the director of a research centre devoted to studying this Council, I have experienced two very opposite reactions.



Second Vatican Council (Photo/Wikimedia Commons).

The opposite ends of the spectrum

The first is one of visible and audible despair that "Vatican Two" represented an unmitigated disaster; the Catholic Church, I am told, turned its back 60 years ago on all that was good, true and beautiful. This loss of an aesthetic sense of Catholic tradition is then articulated back to me as the need for a "reform of the reform". We should only ever have had one Vatican Council, the first one, held from 1869-1870. In fact, sometimes, the nostalgia for a lost past is so strong that it stretches all the way back to the Council of Trent (held between 1545 and 1563). But how would going back even further in time alleviate our dissatisfaction with events of only 60 years ago?

The second, opposite, reaction comes from people who feel that the Second Vatican Council did not go far enough. Yes, maybe it was relevant for its time, but how much of its vision for a Church engaged in the modern world was actually successfully implemented? Instead, how many hopes of that generation, particularly of women and lay people, were eventually dashed in the decades that followed? If the Second Vatican Council was not the answer, holding a third one today would fail to capture the imagination of those that remain.



Council of Trent, painting in the Museo del Palazzo del Buonconsiglio. (Wikimedia Commons/Self-photographed Lauro)

Both groups of people, coming from opposite ends of the spectrum, and who normally disagree on most things, would actually, in this case, both agree that the Second Vatican Council is of little relevance today. What I miss, however, from both views is a proper historical appreciation of the Council. Both views are usu-

ally emotive responses, admittedly uttered in conversation without sufficient nuance, but nonetheless reflecting popular perceptions. My own dismay is that awareness of the careful historical work that has gone into situating the Council, and the long drafting process of its documents, is almost always lacking from such gut reactions.

Passing on the commitment to faith

But, while I could spend this time pleading for greater awareness of the careful historical studies of the Council, perhaps I can add a personal dimension to my plea for a greater appreciation of history, certainly when it comes to remembering the Second Vatican Council. My connection to this Council is neither direct nor immediate. To be honest, it was my late parents who fully experienced the theological, liturgical, and practical changes of the Council's implementation. This wasn't simply about whether the priest faced the congregation or not.

Instead, before meeting each other they had both contemplated a more committed religious life. The option before them was a consecrated life either as a priest or nun. This would still be the case today, but the Second Vatican Council also made it possible for them to pursue further studies in academic theology as lay people, something that was not common before the Council. This resulted in the sense of validation that one could live a more committed religious life as lay people. The issue here is not whether they were pious Church-going Catholics. More fundamentally, they remained committed to

faith. So strong was this commitment that it took hold in their children.

My own journey into academic theology flows directly from their commitment. So, even though I do not owe, nor have, a direct link back to the Second Vatican Council, nonetheless my parents' commitment to religiosity in an increasingly secular and complex world, can in fact be traced back to the vision of those who worked tirelessly at the Council. One of my colleagues correctly refers to the Council as an "event", meaning it cannot be reduced to one point in time, or just the documents. It was a whole process. In fact, it is a process that continues to this day.

As a child of Singaporean parents yet born in Belgium and married to a Lithuanian wife, I reflect the global, multicultural community that the Catholic Church embraced as it lived into the vision of the Council, a Church very much in and of the modern world. Only last year, the Catholic Church appointed the first Singaporean cardinal. Imagine what it means for people like me to see the Catholic Church gradually begin to reflect back in its hierarchy the global Church that is present in the pews.

We 're-member' the past and together map out the future

As a trained biblical scholar, I have found that the Second Vatican Council offers an anchor to my work in academic theology. For instance, the Council's document on revelation, *Dei Verbum*, always reminds me that I am more than just a biblical historian. I have a theological responsibility to bring the fruits of my research back to my faith community and help nourish their faith needs.

In addition, the Second Vatican Council has made it possible for lay academics like me to be in-

volved in important theological encounters. I am honoured to be involved in ecumenical dialogue as a member of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission by appointment from the Vatican. Then there is my inter-faith work, in Jewish-Christian and Christian-Muslim relations, which flows directly from the Council's document, *Nostra aetate*, a document that considers dialogue with other religions as a theological necessity.

I would therefore like to suggest

that we can bypass the seeming impasse of competing and opposite views of the Council by concentrating on the personal reasons and connections that link us back indirectly, and yet vitally, to that momentous event in recent Catholic history. In remembering the past, our involvement in that act of remembering matters.

We 're-member' the past. It is we who keep the ongoing legacy of the Second Vatican Council alive. We cannot outsource memories of the Council to perceptions

borrowed from others. We owe it to ourselves, if we are to remain committed as people of faith, to recognise that it is we who give meaning to that faith. It is a collaborative process in every much the same way that the Second Vatican Council was a collaborative process in its time. It wasn't simply left to the pope (for there were two popes who presided) or the Council fathers, or the theologian consultants. It was all of us. So too is the task that lies ahead of us today. It is we, all of us, and not sim-

ply the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, who are entrusted with the task of weaving further the great story of faith that precedes us. And together we will help to map the future that lies ahead of us. — **By Emmanuel Nathan, LCI** (<https://international.la-croix.com>)

Emmanuel Nathan is Director of the Research Centre for Studies of the Second Vatican Council at the Faculty of Theology and Philosophy, Australian Catholic University. He is based in Sydney.



‘I feel I have arrived home’

Former Anglican bishop discusses his journey to the Catholic Church

“I honestly feel I have arrived home,” says Richard Pain who, on July 2, became the 11th former Anglican bishop — and the first Anglican bishop of Wales — to be received into the Catholic Church through the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham, since its creation in 2011.

In July 18 comments to the *Register*, the former Bishop of Monmouth in Wales discussed his journey to the Catholic Church and explained how, although he has found “a delightful home” in the Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham, he does not see becoming a Catholic as “a panacea for those disillusioned by Anglicanism” but as “a step in the right direction for me personally.”

Born in London in 1956, Pain was ordained an Anglican priest in the Church in Wales at Newport Cathedral in 1986. He served all his ministry in the diocese of Monmouth, much of it in forming clergy, and was elected bishop of Monmouth in 2013. Married with two sons, he retired as bishop of Monmouth in 2019.

Of the 11 former Anglican bishops who have been received into the Catholic Church since 2011, eight have entered the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham and three have joined a diocese. So far, nine have been ordained to the priesthood.

What led you to become an Anglican clergyman and how did you become a Church of Wales bishop?

My vocation started when I was about 13 and was nurtured by being a server at the local Anglican church. I believed God was calling me to be a priest and I followed the formation pathway, which eventually led me to being ordained in the Church in Wales. My ministry as a priest was centred around Monmouthshire, South Wales, and I served in parishes and then became an archdeacon. I was also greatly involved in the discernment and selection of clergy across Wales.

In the Church in Wales, you are elected a bishop by the electoral college which comprises of clerical and lay representatives from the six dioceses of the province. It is a great honour to be elected by such a widely diverse group of Christians.

Can you tell us about your journey into being received into the Catholic Church — what attracted you to the Catholic Church and led you to this decision?

I retired from being a bishop on grounds of ill health and it took a couple of years to recuperate. Thankfully I am well again and the time out of ministry gave me an opportunity to reflect afresh upon my spiritual journey. As a High Anglican, I have always been drawn to the Catholic Church. The spiritual culture is very similar, with many local variations.

Personally, it did not take much of a leap of faith to become Catholic. Yes, there is an adjustment in teaching and emphasis but the formation is mainly spiritual in context and thankfully, I am not engaged in the politics. At one level I am surprised how easy it is to make the decision and I honestly feel I have arrived home.

Some have expressed surprise that so many former Anglican bishops have become Catholic when the Catholic Church appears to be undergoing similar struggles to the Anglican Communion during this pontificate. What reasons would you give for this?

I have, not unsurprisingly, reflected upon the internal struggles of the Catholic Church and how they mirror the long and painful discussions in Anglicanism. Much of it gathers around our response to the spirit of the age. The Church of England, in its role as the established church, has been particularly aware of the changes in attitude in religion and morality and has tried to address them and offer a way forward that remains biblically aligned and in the spirit of the church’s tradition.

The Catholic Church also has a series of mechanisms to navigate the present day challenges and the charism of the Pope is essential for stability and unity. There is a weight, a

gravitas, to the Catholic way which suggests that although it can change (as it did with Vatican II), it will do so without tearing itself apart. The danger is when people hold entrenched positions and do not seek genuine dialogue. It is very brave of Pope Francis to offer a process of synodality. Obviously, he believes that God can work through the various voices. I just hope and pray that synodality begins in the life of the Holy Trinity, so there has to be more silence and attentive listening for the process to flourish.

Do you foresee other Anglican leaders in Wales and elsewhere being received into the Catholic Church in the coming years?

I cannot speak for others on such a personal matter. The forecast suggests a trickle rather than a downpour.

How do you see your future role in the Catholic Church? Do you hope to be ordained a priest within the Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham?

I am finding a delightful home in the ordinariate: The welcome has been warm and open. Like so many parishes, the clergy are very busy and if I may become an assistant priest and prove useful, then let’s see if that’s God’s will.

The Anglican archbishop of York said recently that the Our Father has patriarchal connotations and is therefore “problematic.” Do you see such statements as a catalyst for Anglican clergy and laity to return home to the Catholic Church?

I know there was a backlash from the archbishop’s statement and I can see he wants to be open to those who are affected by patriarchal language. I sympathise, but somehow, we need to move people to see God in His mysterious being which is neither male nor female. The *Catechism* teaching on God the Father makes this clear. Prayer which opens us to God’s love and healing transcends and redeems our experience and our relationships. To be fair, the archbishop’s address centred more on the word ‘our father’ as he reminded us that we are

united in the Lord’s Prayer.

He spoke in the context of his recent encounter with Pope Francis and said that the Our Father is a dangerous prayer because it guides us towards unity which is transformative. Such statements can only act as a catalyst if you are making up your mind where you belong.

To what extent do you see true ecumenism as a return to the Catholic Church?

In terms of true ecumenism, although acknowledging the richness of my Anglican heritage and experience, I am inclined to consider turning to the Catholic Church is a step in the right direction for me, personally. It’s another matter to consider denominational unity. Anglicanism may appear as a branch that came away from the Catholic Church but it has grown and developed towards its own identity which envelops many theological positions and structures. Likewise, it is not as if the Catholic Church has remained the same and the struggles within have been highlighted by the synodical process. Both Anglican and Catholic Churches are trying to work out how to be in the world and yet also present an authentic Gospel. There is commonality in the struggle but not unity. Learning to live in the presence of Christ’s body is our way forward.

What advice would you give to other Anglican clergy and laity thinking of swimming the Tiber, especially those who have become disenchanted with the Church of England and Wales?

As I have indicated, coming to Rome is not a panacea for those disillusioned by Anglicanism. You still face some hard thinking and praying about what God is doing in His Church as He redeems the world. What is clearer to me is that you cannot come only as an individual, wanting the Church to fit your world view. Giving yourself into the life of the Church and recognising its authority and believing in its integrity as the holder of truth and as the way of life requires faith and trust. But that applies to life-long Catholics as it does to fresh converts. — **By Edward Pentin, National Catholic Register**

Anglican appointed at the helm of the Taizé community

Brother Alois Löser, prior of the Taizé Community the past nearly two decades, announced that he’s stepping down as leader of the world renowned ecumenical monastery in France, founded by the late Bro Roger Schutz.

In a message on July 23 to the community, the 69-year-old prior — a German Catholic — said he has chosen Bro Matthew Thorpe, a 58-year old Anglican from England as his successor.

“Eighteen years after having succeeded Bro Roger, and as the world and the Church have changed so much over the last two decades, I feel that the time has come for a brother who joined our community after me to take over my responsibility,” said Bro Alois, who has been prior of Taizé since 2005.

The announcement of the resignation, which will officially take place on December 3, was completely unexpected since the post of prior is without a term limit. Bro Roger was Taizé’s prior from 1941 when he founded the community until his tragic murder in 2005.

“I have been thinking about this for several years now, and I spoke to all the brothers about it two years ago so that they could initiate the reflection,” Bro Alois told *La Croix*.

“I felt the need to bring the community into



Bro Matthew (left) and Bro Alois of Taizé (Photo source: Anglican Ink)

a new stage of its existence. The Church and the world are changing so much that I wondered: What is the Gospel calling us to do today?” he explained.

The change of leadership is significant for Taizé. Bro Alois, known as a man of listening and speaking, represented a form of continuity with Bro Roger.

He has retained the founder’s major thoughts from the beginning, while developing the brothers’ presence beyond Taizé’s “mother house”, as it were, in the hills of

Burgundy and setting up small communities of brothers all over the world. While Taizé’s rule simply states that “the prior appoints a brother to ensure continuity after him”, Alois said he felt “the need to consult all the brothers before deciding who would be the new prior”.

But after “prayer and reflection” with the community, it was he who chose Bro Matthew as his successor. The new prior was born in 1965 in the market town of Pudsey in Leeds (West Yorkshire) and was baptised into

the Church of England as Andrew Thorpe. He joined the Taizé Community at the age of 21 and took the monastic name Mathew.

Bro Alois said this “alternation of denominational affiliation from one prior to the next” is “an important sign” that underlines the community leader’s vocation to seek Christian unity, and even to be, “according to the vision of its founder, a ‘little parable of communion’”.

The handover will take place on Dec 3, the First Sunday of Advent, following several major events for the Taizé Community. The first of those is the large ecumenical prayer vigil St Peter’s Square in Rome that Pope Francis asked the community to organise. It will take place on Sept 30, just days before the Synod assembly on the future of the Church. The Pope has also invited Bro Alois to take part in the month-long gathering of Catholic bishops and lay people.

The Taizé Community currently numbers about 100 brothers of 30 nationalities who come from Catholic and Protestant traditions. Around 75 of them live at Taizé, while another 25 or so are part of the seven fraternities located in Asia, Africa and Latin America. — **By Céline Hoyeau and Anne-Bénédicte Hoffner, LCI ([https:// international.la-croix.com/](https://international.la-croix.com/))**

Give your life to Jesus

How WYD put a young man on the path to priesthood

At World Youth Day (WYD) 2011 in Madrid, Nelson Cintra knelt and prayed, “Christ, I give you my whole life.”

Those heartfelt words sent him on a surprising journey to the priesthood.

After graduating from Ohio State in 2008, Cintra began questioning his life and pondering the more profound questions: “What is the meaning of life?” and “Why am I here?”

Though he had received all the sacraments, his family were nominal Catholics. During high school and college, he questioned God’s existence, especially since he had experienced a great deal of hurt, including losing his father to cancer.

Fr Nelson Cintra, parochial vicar of Pope St John Paul II parish in Idaho Falls, Idaho, told the *Register*, “Growing up, I didn’t really know what Catholicism was.”

However, a crisis in his life motivated Fr Cintra to pray and ask for God’s guidance and help, and he began looking to the Church for answers.

“I knew some of the major tenets of Catholicism, and so I started investigating them and seeing if there was good reason to believe in them,” recalled the now-37-year-old.

A Ticket to WYD Madrid

A ticket to Madrid further encouraged Fr Cintra on his conversion path. His sister, Nalita Maria Mugayar, purchased a ticket and made plans for him to attend. Fr Cintra didn’t know what to expect from WYD, even though, as a child, he and his family attended a papal gathering for a World Meeting of Families in Brazil (Cintra lived in Brazil until he was 13).

What surprised him the most about the WYD event wasn’t the enormity of the crowd but the faith of his travelling companions.

“For the first time, I was around people that were all in with the faith. They weren’t picking and choosing what to believe,” he said. “I saw the love that that produced.”

Fr Cintra felt impressed by how the people in his group were more respectful, thoughtful, modest and humble than he had encountered in the secular world.

Seeing Pope Benedict XVI

In Madrid, Fr Cintra recalled waiting for Pope Benedict to arrive in his popemobile, noting the expectation and eagerness of the crowd. To see the Holy Father up close, he



At World Youth Day 2011 in Madrid, Nelson Cintra (in right photo, at left in top row) was changed by Christ — and now he will go to Lisbon as a new priest; he celebrated his first Mass at Holy Apostles Church, in the Diocese of Boise, Idaho, this June. (NCR photo/Emily Woodham and courtesy of Father Nelson Cintra)

and his group had made their way to the fence early in the morning. During the long hours of waiting for the Pope to arrive, he listened to other pilgrims speak about Pope Benedict’s teachings and share stories about him. It struck Fr Cintra how the pope, the Vicar of Christ, “is the primary representative of Christ on earth.”

“All these people are flocking to him because he’s representing Christ,” Fr Cintra recalled. “Though some people might have had an allergy to that, I understood the attraction.”

Hearing Pope Benedict speak was an eye-opener for him. In one of his speeches, Benedict spoke about the dictatorship of relativism — one of the major themes in his pontificate. It dawned on the future priest that relativism was precisely the moral system in which he had been raised.

“It’s not like my parents were teaching that to me that intentionally, but it’s what I had absorbed through the culture, both in Brazil and the United States,” he said, “this sense of ‘we can all define our own truths and our own moral values.’”

Pope Benedict addressed the crowd about how relativism enslaves and how freedom is only found in the truth and in Christ. His words hit the young man hard.

“I remember sitting in the plaza, hearing him say that, and feeling like he was speaking to me very directly,” he recalled.

Fr Cintra said the Pope’s speech illuminated the core reasons for many of the problems troubling him.



‘Christ, I give you my whole life’

Later in the day, dark storm clouds began rolling in, along with thunder and lightning: A storm began dumping torrents of rain upon the crowd of approximately 2.5 million pilgrims — and their sleeping bags — packed into an air field. With no place to escape the weather, everyone either braced for the storm or revelled in it.

“During this time, people are jumping and dancing and singing songs and celebrating and waving their flags, and we’re just getting dumped on buckets upon buckets,” he remembered.

Fr Cintra said he decided to take some time away from his group and knelt to pray. As the rain pummelled him, he vowed, “Christ, I give you my whole life,” adding: “I don’t know what that means, I don’t know where this is going to go, but whatever it is that you want to do with me, I give you permission.”

“Until this point, I’d been trying to live my life my way,” Fr Cintra said. “And that hadn’t been working out very well.”

Being open

That short, sincere prayer became a turning point for Fr Cintra, but he didn’t immediately recognise that God was calling him to the priesthood. Not 12 hours later, someone in his group asked him if he had considered becoming a priest. His knee-jerk reaction was a dismissive, “No.” Fr Cintra thought he had lived too sinful a life to become a man of the cloth.

“I said to her, ‘You don’t know me; you

don’t know the life I’ve lived. ... I can’t be a priest,’” he recalled.

But the woman smiled and shot back: “Have you heard of St Augustine?”

St Augustine had existed in the periphery most of the young man’s life: He attended an Augustinian Catholic school from first to seventh grade, chose Augustine as his Confirmation name, and owned Augustine’s *Confessions*, but he had never cracked open the book.

Even though he initially rejected the idea of the priesthood, when Cintra returned home, he realised he would need to open himself up to the idea. He returned to his job at a boarding high school for at-risk youth outside Arco, Idaho, but his life didn’t look the same.

He began praying the Rosary daily, reading the daily readings in Magnificat, listening to Catholic radio and religious podcasts, and reading about the Church.

“I was consuming as much as possible,” he shared.

“I’d [also] tried to talk to my co-workers about Jesus and the Catholic faith, but way too aggressively, and I quickly burned bridges and pushed people away.”

Getting heavily involved in his local parish over the next two years was the final step.

In 2013, he decided to go to the seminary, but he needed to spend a year fundraising with the Labouré Society to pay his remaining school debt.

That same year he attended WYD in Brazil, but this time in a leadership role. This second WYD solidified his decision to enter the priesthood.

Returning to WYD as a Priest

On June 9 of this year, Cintra was ordained a priest in the Diocese of Boise — and it all began with a promise at World Youth Day. It’s exciting for him to return to WYD 2023 in Lisbon as a priest. He hopes he will have the chance to hear many confessions.

“In WYD, Madrid, I made a general confession to a Mexican priest sitting on a park bench. The patience of this priest left a mark [on me]; a novice penitent,” he shared.

“I am looking forward to being available to pilgrims in the same way [that priest was for me].”

Overall, his advice to young people attending World Youth Day is: “Give your life — your whole life — to Jesus! Hold nothing back!” — **By Lori Hadacek Chaplin, Register**



Kindergartener presents Jesus as his hero

When children were tasked with picking a hero and talking about them in first person, this young boy had a moving answer.

Sometimes, the sincere and heartfelt testimony of children about their religious beliefs can be inspiring for us adults. Such is the case of young Kai Madison Bradford.

Kai’s mom, Kristy Kendall Bradford, shared a video of her son’s presentation on Instagram.

“Kai’s kindergarten assignment was for a living hero museum where he got to pick his hero and tell about them as if he were that person,” his mother explains in the post. Part of the assignment was to make a poster that included images and a summary of the life of their chosen hero. In the video, Kai is seen turning to the

poster for cues several times during his presentation before his peers.

He begins his presentation by saying, “I am Jesus Christ. I was born in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago. I am the Son of God.” The other children, sitting on the floor, listen attentively in silence.

Kai continues to talk about his special hero, visibly a little bit nervous. “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one gets to the Father except through me,” he says, quoting the Gospel of John (Jn 14:1-6).

His presentation is short, but he covers all the main truths of the faith regarding Christ. He shared with his classmates the reasons why Jesus is, for him, the greatest hero of all.

“I am a hero because I came as a baby, lived a perfect sinless life, I died on the cross for your sins, and rose again three

days later so that you might have eternal life with Me in heaven,” he carefully proclaims.

Kai ends his presentation by saying proudly, “That is the Good News!”

In the text accompanying the video, his mother says she’s very proud of her son, because he couldn’t have chosen a greater hero.

Many of the people who follow the account or happened across the post made positive comments about the presentation and expressed their appreciation for the child’s Christian education. Others comment that this is the kind of education that should be given in schools.

There can be no doubt that Kai’s parents are giving him a Christian education. His example should inspire us all. — **By Merche Crespo, Aleteia**

Appreciating and cherishing our Christian roots

*I love those who love me,
And those who seek me diligently will find me –
Proverbs 8:17*

Many of us who are cradle Catholics often take our birth right as a Catholic for granted. We believe it is a given, when you have parents who are practising Catholics, to be granted Baptism at birth, followed by all the sacraments if you're active members of the parish.

It's not the case for those who learn about the faith later in life, as they have to go through the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA). RCIA is the process in which adults become full, participating members of the Catholic Church. Participants, known as catechumens, go through a process of studying the Gospel, nurturing their relationship with God, becoming familiar with Catholic teachings and practices, professing their faith in Jesus and the Church, and receiving the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Communion and Confirmation.

Growing up, I never knew when or how exactly my ancestors embraced Christianity but when I learnt of it, it was awe inspiring how they overcame the odds to remain steadfast in their faith.

It was in the late 1990s or early 2000s when a cousin living in Kulim, Kedah, stumbled upon a website about the Pagasalai families in Kurumbagaram. He was fascinated with the contents of the website as my maternal grandmother, Arokiammal Danapakiam, was mentioned in it. He then asked me to read the contents of the website, and to ask Mom about how the family converted to Christianity. It was indeed a revelation, as her narration was exactly what was mentioned on the website.

To give you a brief history about my ancestors, they were Catholics who belonged to the parish of St Andrew's Church, Kurumbagaram, Tamil Nadu. They were mainly Pagasalai Sozhia Vellalars who migrated from Pagasalai



FROM THE OTHER SIDE

Regina William

during the period 1750 to 1800, after they had converted to Christianity. The Sozhia Vellalars were mainly farmers who thrived by their hard work in farming and were called Mirasdharas (a title given to the rich farmers).

Pagasalai is a village in Nanceelam Taluk and this small village is surrounded by six smaller villages whose inhabitants were known as Ailur Vellalars. They were a conservative community and had very little contact or relationship with outsiders.

In the year 1750, two brothers, Arumugatha Pillai and Shanmugatha Pillai, and their brother in law Thandavaraya Pillai, resided in the Pagasalai village. One of the daughters of Arumugatha Pillai was mentally afflicted and very ill. They tried all methods of treatment prevalent in those days but cure seemed impossible. The daughter's condition worsened and she became aggressive and unmanageable, creating a great commotion in the village.

It was at this time that a devout, poor Catholic woman, passing through the village on a pilgrimage to the Church of Our Lady of Velankani, stopped by the house of Arumugatha Pillai and enquired about the commotion. It was common then for pilgrims to walk through the villages to get to the church. Often, they relied on the good will of the families in the village to spend the night sleeping at the thinnai, a covered verandah or sit-out with built-in seating near the front door of a house.

The mother of the sick girl explained about her daughter's condition and their fruitless efforts to cure her. The devout woman assured

the mother that her daughter would be cured through prayers and the intercession of Our Lady of Velankani, and went on to explain about Christianity.

The mother was so overwhelmed by the faith and devotion of the old lady that she was fully convinced of her daughter's recovery. The old lady took her Rosary and placed it on the neck of the sick girl. The girl became silent. Before departing for the church, the old lady sought an assurance from the families that, should the girl fully recover, all the three families would convert to Christianity. The mother discussed with all the members of the three families and assured her that they would convert to Christianity if the sick girl fully recovered.

The old lady proceeded to Velankani and prayed for the cure of Arumugatha's sick daughter. On her journey back after attending the Velankani festival, she returned to Pagasalai village to enquire about the sick girl. The old lady was overjoyed to learn that her prayers were answered and the sick girl was fully cured of her disease, which had taunted them for four to five years.

Thereafter, the three families learned all about Christianity and were taught all the prayers from the Catholic church nearest to their village. Later on, all the three families were baptised and they continued to remain in the village and maintained harmonious relationships with all their relatives.

However, this did not last long as their relatives, who were still practising the Hindu faith, refused to marry members of their Christian faith, and most of them were ostracised. This was a big blow to the three Christian families who then decided to move to the French colony of Karaikal and settle down in Kurumbagaram around the year 1755. In the ensuing years from 1755 to 1853, the families spread to various villages in Karaikal.

In the year 1854, approval for a church to

be built in Kurumbagaram was accorded by the bishop due to the efforts of the families. St Andrew's Church started in a temporary building till the permanent structure was completed in 1869. The church offered a rallying point for consolidation of the Pagasalai Sozhia Vellalar Community in the region.

On Aug 15, 1947, India became independent and the post-independence era saw a lot of developments in Tamil Nadu.

Following the land reform act enacted in 1960, many of the new generation of Pagasalai Sozhia Vellalars (post-independent era) sold the farmlands and sought jobs in government organisations, industries, schools and colleges, or migrated abroad, with the sole aim of improving their career prospects and economic status.

Many have since settled in Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Saigon, Indo-China, France and its Territories while those who remained settled in Karaikal, Pondicherry, Chennai, Trichy, Coimbatore and Hyderabad for better education facilities and job opportunities.

A Facebook page which was set up for the family members constantly keeps the families updated on the latest developments among the group.

After learning about the history, though a cradle Catholic myself, makes me even more appreciative of the struggles and trials my ancestors had to overcome to practise their faith. Hence, it is very important for us to impart to the young ones the history of our faith journey over the years. Hopefully, our future generations will not take their faith for granted, and through their actions as good Christians, bring greater glory to God.

Note: Historical excerpts taken from the Pagasalai Families of Kurumbagaram website.

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



THE MUSTARD SEED JOURNEYS

Joanne Wong

“What a beautiful name it is, Nothing compares to this, What a beautiful name it is, The name of Jesus...” — these are the lyrics of a beautiful Christian song that speaks about the beauty, wonder, power and majesty of Jesus our God.

What is amazing is that there are more than 100 names and titles given to Jesus throughout the Bible. Some well-known ones include the ‘Alpha and Omega’, ‘Immanuel’, ‘Son of the Living God’, ‘Bread of Life’, ‘Prince of Peace’ and King of Kings’.

You must be wondering, “Say the name ‘God’ already can la right? Why must we know His other names in Hebrew also — so susah la!” There is nothing wrong just calling God, well ‘God’ in our prayers, but by using the specific names of God, can help us when we pray and gives depth and meaning to our prayers.

An article I read shared that names carry powerful significance and is not merely used to identify a person. A name reflects a person's character and nature. So, the more we experience God and study His Word and know His different characteristics, the more we build our faith and trust in His immense power and majesty. And this awe, power, authority and praise we feel towards Him can be channelled in our prayer. Indeed, there is no other name like the name of Jesus.

There are also some very unique names

of God which are extremely powerful, and I would like to share with you seven names that I have used during different seasons and moments of my life:

Elohim means “God the Creator” is the first Hebrew name for God and is found in the first sentence of the Bible. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” — Genesis 1:1. In the beginning, He created — just by the power of His spoken Word. So, when we pray to Elohim, we remember the God who created the world and all the beauty around us, the God who created us in His image, the God who created us and knitted us together and who knows each one of us by name. Call on Elohim when you worship and marvel at everything you have been gifted. It is a great way to praise, wonder and meditate upon His mighty works.

El Roi means the “God who sees me”. We encounter this name in the story of Hagar. Praying to El Roi, you are calling out to the One that sees you. The One that has the power to lift you out of every sadness and trouble you face. It is the name you can call when you feel alone when no one seems to understand or care. With El Roi, never believe you are alone, even in your darkest troubles for He is a God that neither slumbers nor sleeps. No matter how lost or alone you feel, El Roi, knows exactly where you are. After all, if He sees the sparrows and takes care of them, how much more will He care for us in our time of need and our struggles?

Jehovah Rapha is the name of the “Lord who heals” our body, mind and soul. This name can be found in Exodus when God says to His people that if they listen and obey His commands, He will not make them suffer any diseases sent on the Egyptians for He is the

What a beautiful name it is

Lord who heals. Call upon Jehovah Rapha when you are in need of healing, and He will make you whole. He is the Great Physician. Throughout the Bible, we see God healing the blind, the lame, lepers and even raised the dead back to life. So, if you need healing, bring your brokenness to God for He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.

Jehovah Shalom means the “God of peace”. The name of Jehovah Shalom can be found in Judges 6: 22-24. When Gideon met with an angel of the Lord, the angel said to him “Peace be upon you” which so impacted Gideon that he built an altar to the Lord and named it Jehovah Shalom. God is the source of all peace and Shalom speaks of wholeness, harmony, and completeness. When we need peace, Jehovah Shalom becomes the cry from our hearts. He will give us peace beyond our understanding. He will give us calm amidst the storms of life. “Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!” — 2 Thessalonians 3:16

Jehovah Jireh means the “Lord will provide”. Abraham used the name Jehovah Jireh when he saw a ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son Isaac. Abraham memorialised that place with the name Jireh ‘The Lord Will Provide’ — Genesis 22:14. This blessed name of God can be invoked when we are going through challenging times. Bring your needs and worries to Jehovah Jireh the one who will provide. When we worry about how we are going to pay the bills and put food on the table, when we worry about our future, the Lord tells us to pray for He provides for our needs because He is the Provider God.

Jehovah Roi means the “Lord is my shep-

herd”. My favourite psalm, Psalm 23, captures the essence of Jehovah Roi, The Lord is my shepherd, I have all that I need. You are speaking to the one that knows you by name, the who watches over you day and night, feeding you and guiding you to the paths of righteousness. Our Lord is both shepherd and friend — he leads and guides us to safety, there is nothing to fear. “He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young” — Jeremiah 31:10.

Jehovah Tsur means “God is my rock”. The beautiful Psalm 18 shares that God is our rock in whom we can find protection. He is our shield, the power that saves us, and our place of safety. He is our fortress, a safe place for retreat. He is our source of strength, our firm foundation. Jehovah Tsur is also the cornerstone of God's church. When your faith is shaken, remember that you are praying to the God who can always be counted on. He never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. “Trust in the Lord forever, for in God the Lord, we have an everlasting Rock.” — Isaiah 26:4

So dear readers, remember that, regardless of how you call God, He will answer you... in His time. “And those who know Your name will put their trust in You, For You, Lord, have not abandoned those who seek You” — Psalm 9:10

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



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Private integrity

In a 1990s movie, *City Slickers*, there's a scene that sheds light on the importance of private integrity. Three men, New Yorkers, close friends, have gone off together for a summer to ride on a cattle drive in the hope that this experience will help them sort through their respective mid-life issues.

At one point, riding along on the trail, they are discussing the morality of having a sexual affair. Initially their conversation focuses mostly on the fear of getting caught, and two of them agree that an affair isn't worth the risk. You're too likely to get caught. But their friend poses the question again, this time asking them if they would have an affair if there was the absolute assurance that they wouldn't be caught:

"Imagine," he says, "that a spaceship touches down. A beautiful woman emerges from the spaceship. You make love and she returns to Mars. There are no consequences. Nobody can possibly know. Would you do it?"

Billy Crystal, who plays the lead role, answers that he doubts that this is ever possible. "You always get caught," he submits, "people smell dishonesty on you." "But," his friend protests, "what if it was really possible to have an affair and not get caught. What if nobody would know? Would you do it?"

Billy Crystal's answer: "But I'd know, and I'd hate myself for it!"

His answer highlights an important truth. What we do in private, in secret, has consequences that are not dependent upon whether or not our secret leaks out. The damage is the same. What we do in secret moulds our character and influences how we relate to others in more ways than we suspect. There is no such thing as a secret act. One person always knows. We know. And we hate ourselves for it, hate ourselves for having to lie. And this gives off its own scent.

What we do in secret ultimately shapes what we look like in public. Dishonesty changes the way we look because it changes who we are. That's the reason why, so often, those around us will intuit the truth about us, smell the lie, even when they don't have any hard evidence on which to suspect us.

Doing something in secret that we can't admit in public is the very definition of hypocrisy, and that forces us to lie. And, among all sins, lying is the most dangerous. Why? Because we hate ourselves for it, stop respecting ourselves, and when we stop respecting ourselves, we will, all too soon, notice that other people stop respecting us too. That's the intuitive place where we "smell" each other's lies.

Worse still, lying forces us to harden ourselves so that we can live with our lie. Sin doesn't always make us humble and repentant. We have the all-too-easy, popular image of the honest sinner, like the sinners in Gospels who more easily accepted Jesus than did the religiously upright. That's sometimes the case, but not always.

The biblical image of the honest sinner humbly turning towards God is predicated on honesty, on a sinner not hiding or lying about his or her sin. But sin can have a very different effect on us. When we don't honestly admit our sin, we move in the opposite direction, namely, towards rationalisation, hardness of attitude, and cynicism. Moreover, it's the lying, not the original weakness, that then becomes the real canker and constitutes the real danger. When we hide a sin, we are forced to lie, and with that lie we immediately begin to harden and reshape our souls. There's a moral axiom that says: *You can do anything as long as you don't have to lie about it.* That's quite different than saying that you can do anything as long as nobody finds out about it.

The quality of our person depends upon the degree of our private integrity. We are as sick as our sickest secret, and we are as healthy as our most hidden virtue. We cannot be doing one thing in private and radiate something

else in public. It doesn't matter whether others know our secrets or not. We know, and, when those secrets are unhealthy, we hate ourselves for them and our hearts harden so as to live with our lie.

We should never delude ourselves into thinking that the things we do in private, including very small actions of infidelity, self-indulgence, bigotry, jealousy, or slander, are of no consequence since no one knows about them. Inside the mystery of our interconnectedness as a human family and as a family of faith predicated on trust, even our most private actions, good or bad, like invisible enzymes inside the blood stream, affect the whole. Everything is known, felt, in one way or another. There is no such thing as a private act, inside the family of humanity or inside the body of Christ.

Others know us, even when they don't exactly know everything about us. They smell our vices, just as they smell our virtues.

● **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

My life went off script Mary Magdalene showed up to help

Last September, three days after my 37th birthday, I embarked on a journey I have long wanted to take: a visit to the Holy Land.

There were many sacred moments that expanded my faith and perspective on this trip: praying at the Wailing Wall, sharing dinner in the homes of Palestinian Christians in Bethlehem, celebrating Mass in the Easter tomb, walking the Via Dolorosa. And yet, the most healing and powerful place was Magdala, the small seaside town right on the Sea of Galilee, home to a now-well-known follower of Jesus named Mary.

You see, the previous day, our group had gone to Cana, the site of the first public miracle of Jesus at a wedding. To be honest, I was dreading it. As a Catholic woman in my late 30s who has been divorced and annulled despite deeply desiring lifetime marriage and partnership, I was not looking forward to a bunch of married couples renewing their wedding vows.

While I tried to time "going to the bathroom" in hopes of avoiding having to watch wedding vow renewals, it didn't turn out that way. I sat in the back of the church with big tears rolling down my face. My heart felt heavy with the grief that the deepest desire of my heart may never happen.

But then came Magdala. Our day began with a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee. By mid-morning and after a short bus ride to Magdala, we had Mass in the main church.

The most striking thing about Magdala is that the altar is made out of a boat — similar to the style of fishing boats in the time of Jesus. If you get close, you can see that the altar is set up against open glass and sits directly upon the Sea of Galilee. It looks as if the boat is sitting on top of the sea.

Somehow, I ended up as a lector. After the

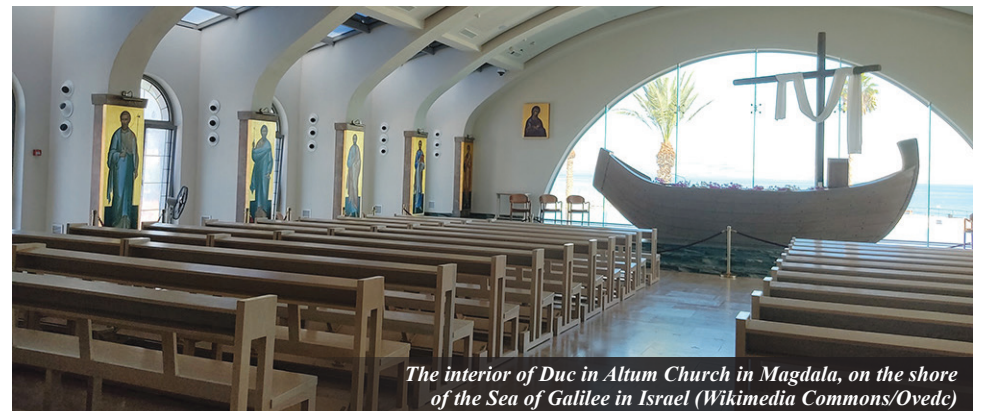
first reading, I went back to my spot in the front pew. I can't even remember what the homily was about, but at some point during Mass, I put my head in my lap and began to weep. I couldn't stop: The fear of spending my life alone, the ache of my unfulfilled desire, having to watch everyone else's life come together so neatly, it all came up, uncontrollable.

As tears and snot poured down my face, it was suddenly as if I felt Mary of Magdala come and sit next to me in the pew, put her arms around me, and accompany me through the immensity of what I was feeling. Oh, sweet Patty, I understand what it is to not have life go the way you imagine. I understand. I can relate to what you are feeling.

I cried harder and harder, just letting Mary's presence nurture my tired spirit. I cried until I had no tears left. I just sat in the pew with my big sister Mary, overlooking the Sea of Galilee together.

Mary of Magdala was not a typical woman of her day.

At the time of Jesus, the city of Magdala was a major trade centre on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. Local fishermen would sell their catch of fish to be salted and preserved for export to Rome and other places



The interior of Duc in Altum Church in Magdala, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee in Israel (Wikimedia Commons/Ovedc)

across the empire.

But now, Magdala's fame rests on its relationship to Mary Magdalene. It is interesting that she is not identified as the daughter of a father or husband, but rather the city in which she lived and came from. This likely points to the fact that Mary was unmarried, independent and perhaps even able to support herself.

While Mary of Magdala has had her name dragged through the mud over Christian history, she is first identified in the Gospels as the woman from whom Jesus cast out seven demons (see Luke 8:2, Mark 16:9). Luke lists Mary as the first of many women who accompanied Jesus and supported His public ministry from her resources.

Here is a strong, brave, tenacious woman in the Scriptures that I can relate to as a single woman — but, more importantly, one who understands and sees me in this 'right now' season of my life.

She followed Jesus all the way to Jerusalem,

and was one of the few people at the foot of the cross. The first recorded witness to His resurrection, she was given the exalted title "Apostle to the Apostles."

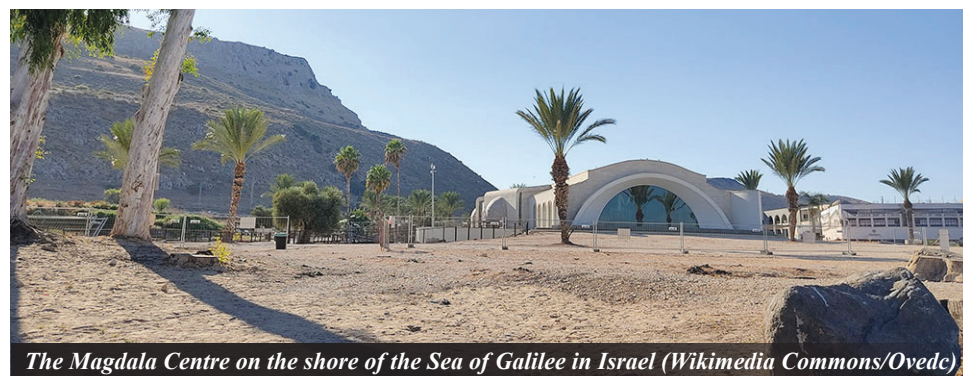
While much is unknown of her life before she met Jesus, I wonder if the life that opened up to her might not have been the one she'd imagined. What mental and emotional distress did she suffer from before Jesus cast out the demons? Was she ostracised from her family and community?

What were the desires of her heart as a little girl — and as she became a woman? What brought her joy? What were her passions? Had she ever fallen in love, or wanted to be married? Did she have regrets or unfulfilled longings?

Here is a strong, brave, tenacious woman in the Scriptures that I can relate to as a single woman — but, more importantly, one who understands and sees me in this "right now" season of my life.

Maybe you are single like me. Perhaps you're divorced, civilly remarried or just feel lost in your own life sometimes. Maybe your path has not gone the way you imagined or hoped. This daughter of Magdala just might be the spiritual companion you need to move forward, wherever the journey takes you. —
By Patty Breen, NCR

● **Patty Breen** is a lay minister based out of the metro Detroit area. With over a decade of ministerial experience, she is currently serving as a ministry formation manager for Ascension Michigan.



The Magdala Centre on the shore of the Sea of Galilee in Israel (Wikimedia Commons/Ovedc)

Little Catholics' Corner

Hello children of God,

In today's Gospel reading, the disciples see the hungry people who came to listen to Jesus and be healed. They know they can't feed them all, but Jesus isn't limited by nature, because He is God. He blesses a bit of bread and fish and they

became enough to feed over 5,000 people!

The story of stretching loaves and fishes is always a hit among miracle lessons which aims to remind us of how God takes care of all our needs and can do anything, even the seemingly impossible.

Remember, God can do fantastic and

miraculous things in our lives if we trust Him and let Him do His will.

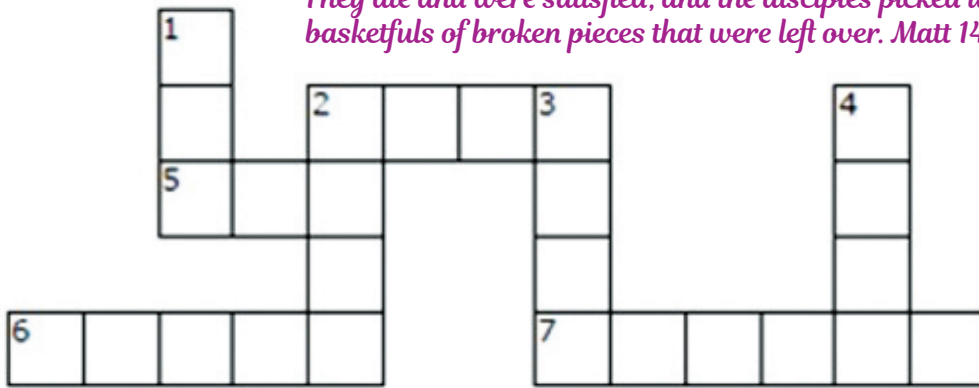
August 6 is also the Feast of the Transfiguration of Jesus. The Transfiguration is a special story about showing a different, radiant side of Jesus that revealed His divine nature and glory while He was on a mountain with His

friends Peter, James and John. Jesus suddenly becomes super bright and shiny, like a glowing star! His friends Moses and Elijah appeared too. It was like a magical moment, showing how special and powerful Jesus really is.

Love
Aunty Gwen

Five Loaves and Two Fish

They ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up 12 basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. Matt 14:20



ACROSS

2. An animal without legs that lives in the water.
5. The number equal to one plus one.
6. A basic food made from flour, water, and yeast, mixed together and baked.
7. What is the term for baked bread products typically shaped as elongated.

DOWN

1. To put food in the mouth, chew and swallow it.
2. What we eat to give us energy and help us grow strong.
3. To cure someone of an illness or disease; to make them well again.
4. The number between four and six.



FIVE
FISH

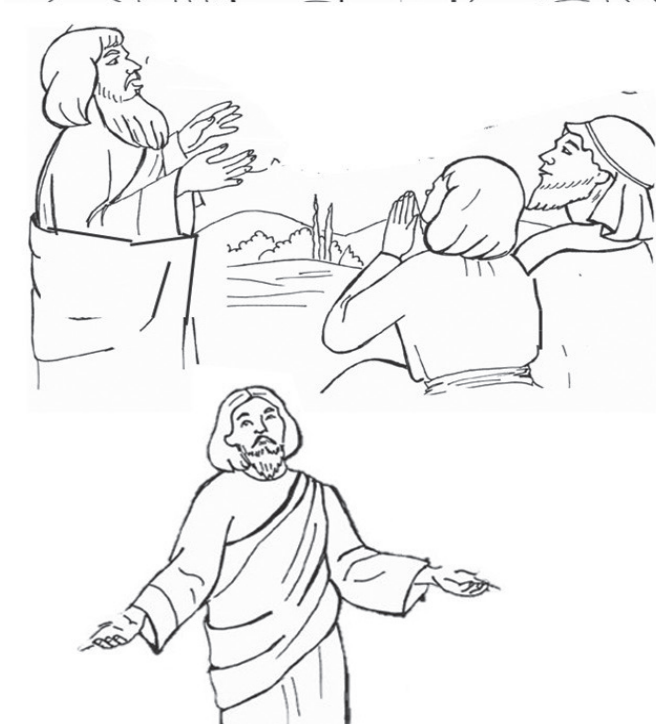
BREAD
LOAVES

EAT
FOOD

TWO
HEAL

TRANSFIGURATION CRAFT

Cut out each figure



Instructions for the Transfiguration of Jesus craft

MATERIALS

- The above Transfiguration colouring page
- 1 sheet of white cardboard paper
- 1 sheet of black, grey, or brown construction paper
- 1 ice cream stick
- 1 scrap piece of shiny white paper or cloth

TOOLS

- Scissors / Glue stick / Crayons

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Cut a two-humped curve from cardboard, forming two mountains for Jesus to climb.
2. Bend one piece of cut cardboard in half and make a small cut below the hilly edge.
3. Unbend the mountain cutout and create a cut line along the hill for Jesus to "walk up".
4. Cut around each person in the Gospel reading from the colouring page.
5. Use shiny white paper to make a garment shape for Jesus.
6. Tear paper into "rocks" and glue them onto the mountain, avoiding Jesus' walking path.

JESUS FEEDS 5000

Spot 8 differences between the two pictures.



TRANSFIGURATION CRAFT

Cut out each figure



7. Colour the people cutouts and glue Moses and Elijah at the top, and Apostles, Peter, James, and John, near the bottom of the mountain.
8. Attach an image of Jesus to an ice cream stick and the duplicate with the white garment on the other side.
9. Insert Jesus into the walking slot and move him up the mountain. When he is coming down the mountain turn him around for the shiny side to see and help understanding the image of his Transfiguration.
10. Read the Gospel to the kids and let them illustrate the movements of Jesus using the mountain craft.

YOUTH

AUGUST 6, 2023

Katholikos formation for diocesan youth leaders



By Francisco Overee

KLUANG, Johor: “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” (cf. John 21:17, NAB). This was the question posed by Bishop Bernard Paul to the youth leaders of the Diocese of Malacca Johore (MJD) during the second *Katholikos* 2023.

Organised by the Malacca Johore Diocese Young People Network (MJDYPN), the programme this year was in two phases, a pre-*Katholikos* at MAJODI Centre for the South Johore Vicariate and in ROSA Centre for the North Central Johore and Malacca Vicariates. The MJDYPN team conducted the pre-*Katholikos* formative talks and activities. The main *Katholikos* event, which took place later, at Dewan Bakhita in Kluang, was presided over by Bishop Bernard.

Katholikos is the Greek word for Catholic and it was chosen as the name of this annual event last year, to specifically denote the Catholicity of every young person, especially the youth leaders in the diocese.

This year, the main topic of focus for the

leaders was the 4E Pastoral Thrust of the diocese, namely Encountered, Enlightened, Empowered and Evangelising. The prelate gave the scriptural basis for the 4Es in his talks. He invited the young people to read the texts themselves, share, discuss, and give feedback about it among themselves and to him, before explaining the different topics to them.

Eighty-eight participants joined the day-long programme in Kluang and 22 youth leaders from across the diocese, representing Youth Groups, Young Adult Groups and Campus Ministries in the various parishes and campuses throughout the diocese, were commissioned at the end of the day's Eucharistic Celebration. It was a joyous event for them as it was the Solemnity of Sts Peter and Paul, who were both fundamental figures who charted the course of the Catholic faith in the early Church.

Bishop Bernard, in his homily, pointed out that the young people could identify these two saints from how they are represented artistically in paintings and statues in the Catholic tradition. He impressed upon them that even though they were weak and fragile human beings, Jesus chose them and

they responded by finishing strong in their response to discipleship.

It was the first time the commissioning of youth leaders was carried out publicly in the diocese, making it a historic occasion. These leaders officially become part of the Malacca Johore Diocese Young People Council (MJDYPC) which is divided into three vicariates — Malacca, North-Central Johore and the South Johore.

The MJDYPC consists of all the official young people leaders in the parishes, regardless of age, language or ethnic background, and it is a space for them to meet, pray, and learn from one another how to deal with the different challenges of being in youth ministry while supporting one another in their endeavours. MJDYPN works closely with the MJDYPC to plan and execute different events and formation programmes throughout the diocese and it is hoped that the MJDYPC will impress upon the leaders, the young people themselves and all others who work with it a truly Malaysian Catholic experience with all its different unique strengths that do not divide but, rather, accentuates its Catholicity, universality and unity.

Andrew Goh, a young leader from the Church of St Peter, Melaka and a member of the Campus Ministry Team had this to share about the event, “It was a great opportunity to connect with fellow



youth and young adult ministry leaders from across the diocese and hear their unique experiences and perspectives. It was also good to hear that we are not alone in the challenges we are facing in our ministry and that leaders from other parishes are also going through similar issues. Overall, the biggest takeaway for me is that *Katholikos* helped affirm that we are all part of a much larger family and the Church, and that we don't have to face the challenges of our ministries alone.”



Lydia Mina from the Church of the Divine Mercy, Skudai, Johor, said: “As a first-time participant, I am happy to join youth leaders from parishes in the diocese. Bishop Bernard's sessions where he emphasised the 4Es and the formation of the 4Es in the life of young people was very interesting. I hope my fellow young leaders and I can live out the 4Es to bring more young people together to serve for the glory of God's name.”

Nineteen confirmed At the CHURCH of St Theresa, Nilai

NILAI: Nineteen confirmands, including candidates from the Chapel of Bonda Maria, Kampung Tekir, received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Archbishop Julian Leow at the Church of St Theresa on July 15.

Parish priest Fr Christopher Soosaipillai, told the confirmands, “Today marks a significant milestone in your faith life. You may be done with your Catechism classes, but I expect to see all of you playing a bigger role in church activities.”

Confirmand Bernadette Grace shared, “I feel scared and happy,

but I am grateful because I have gone through a lot to get to this point. This Sacrament will help me become a better daughter of God and live life with His guidance.” Feelings of nervousness wrapped in blessing were also shared by Lesley Ann Revi, who believes that confirmation “will bring me closer to God”.

Timotius Setya Roslan Jani, a candidate from Kampung Tekir shared, “I feel blessed, and I want to be a faithful follower of Jesus.” Marie Bernadette Jaslin Farhani was happy she and her friends received the Sacrament and believed

the Holy Spirit would guide them in their faith. Fellow parishioner Rosario Raman shared similar thoughts and wants to be a ‘good follower of Christ’.

Husband and wife Deno Daimon and Stella Enson @ Benedict were among the adult confirmands. While facing challenges in their faith journey, the couple believes, “The Sacrament of Confirmation deepens our faith as it strengthens our bond as husband and wife and as parents to our son.”

Another adult confirmand, Sharmeesha Jayendra Prashad, shared, “Preparing for my confirmation has



Confirmands with Archbishop Julian Leow and Fr Christopher Soosaipillai.

given me a sense of purpose and direction as I strive to live a life guided by my faith and values. I believe my faith will help me find peace and joy in difficult circumstances.”

The catechists also felt the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Confirmation class catechist Charlene Nicholas said, “I trusted the Holy Spirit to guide and empower me

as I taught the students about the beauty of our faith.”

Fr Christopher thanked the catechists, including Joanne Wee, who prepared the candidates for the adult Confirmation, Lasar Raj, who prepared the Tamil-speaking group and Noel Petrus, for the candidates from Kampung Tekir. — *By Aileen Anthony Jason*

Confirmations in Negeri District

The Sacrament of Confirmation was conferred on 19 candidates, July 16, at the **CHURCH OF ST JOHN MARIE VIANNEY**, by Archbishop Julian Leow, with Fr Albet Arockiasamy concelebrating. Besides the seven candidates from the parish, there were nine from the Chapel of St Christopher, Gemas, two from Palong, and one from the Chapel of Mary Mother of God, Bahau.

On July 8, the candidates attended a one-day course conducted by catechists.

During the homily, Archbishop Julian spoke about our belief in Christ. He asked the congregation, "Do we listen and fulfil God's will?"

"Ask yourself, has the Word of God made any changes or difference to my mind, or has the little that I listen to faded out?" The prelate also highlighted the phrase, we are created in God's image not our own. He continued to ask the congregation if they believed in God during their difficult moments or only when God answers their prayers. He ended the homily by saying, "Lord Jesus will always be with us and He loves us. He will not hide His face during our lowest moments cause that is the promise made to us".

After the final blessing, Fr Albet gifted the candidates a money plant as a symbol for them to grow their faith and glow in spirit. The day ended with fellowship. — *By Priscilla Wilson*



Fr Albet Arockiasamy gifting money plant to a confirmand.



During the bilingual Mass at the **CHURCH OF ST ALOYSIUS** on July 15, 13 youth and adults received the Sacrament of Confirmation. Archbishop Julian Leow presided over the Eucharistic celebration with parish priest Fr Christopher Soosaipillai concelebrating. During his homily, the prelate reminded the congregation of the importance of attentively listening to God's voice. — *By Selva Manogary Arikrishnan*

Confirmation at the **CHURCH OF THE VISITATION** was on July 16. Archbishop Julian Leow presided over the Mass. Visitation's parish priest Fr Xavier Andrew, and assistant priests Fr Kenneth Gopal, OCD and Fr Philip Tay, OCD and Fr Albet Arockiasamy, concelebrated.

The ceremony was attended by sponsors, parents, family members, and friends of the 97 confirmands from different language groups within the Catechetical Ministry of the parish.

In his homily, the prelate urged the congregation to reflect

Sharings by confirmands

Shayne Danile Ives, who was initially nervous, expressed immense happiness and heartfelt gratitude towards his catechists. Gary shared that he was feeling good after his confirmation, while Everinus Markus beamed with joy, grateful for the guidance and teachings he had received, feeling closer to God. Aiden Sudheish said he felt a sense of peace within himself. Lucas Joshua Raj Andrew, expressed his happiness and a feeling of fulfilment.

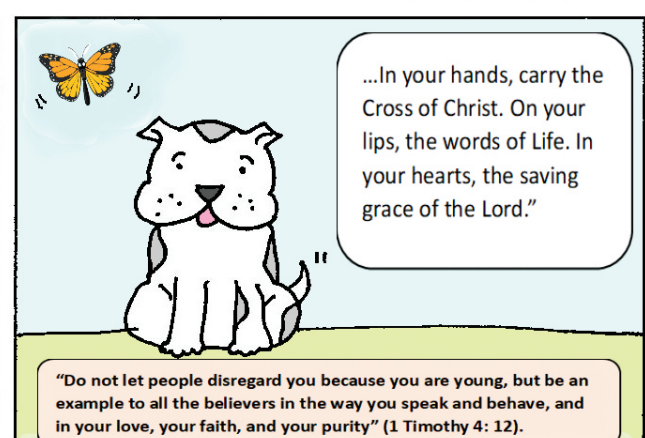
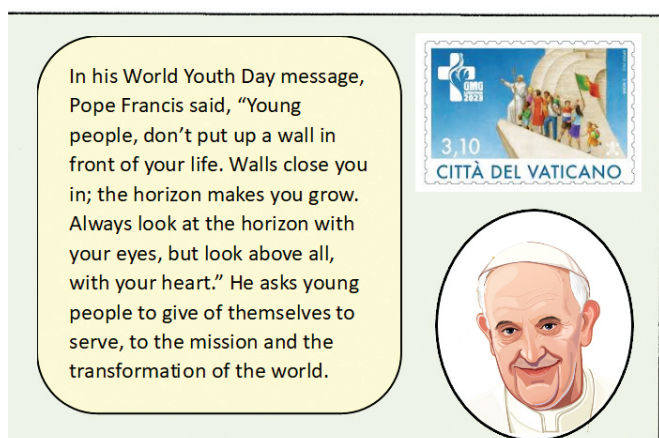
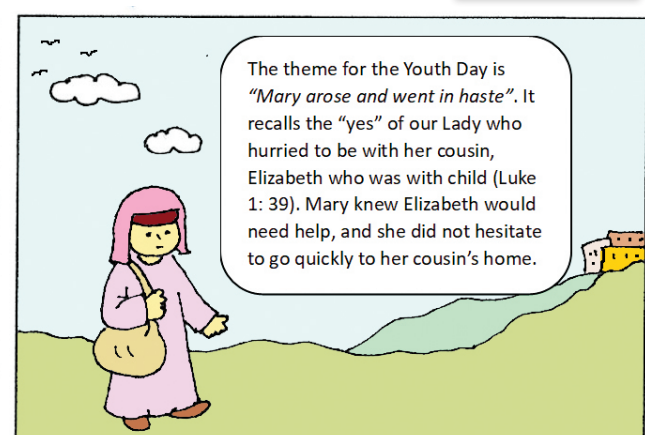
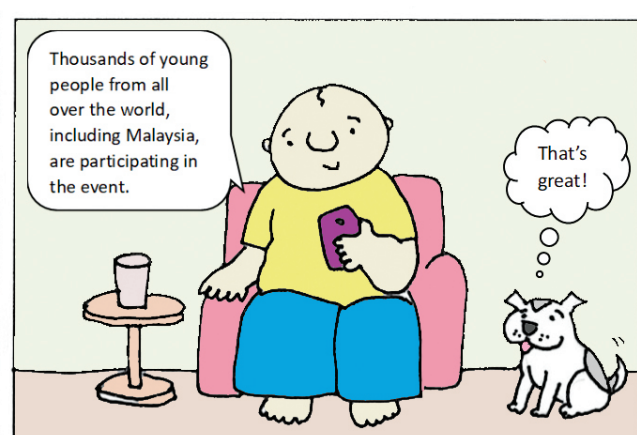
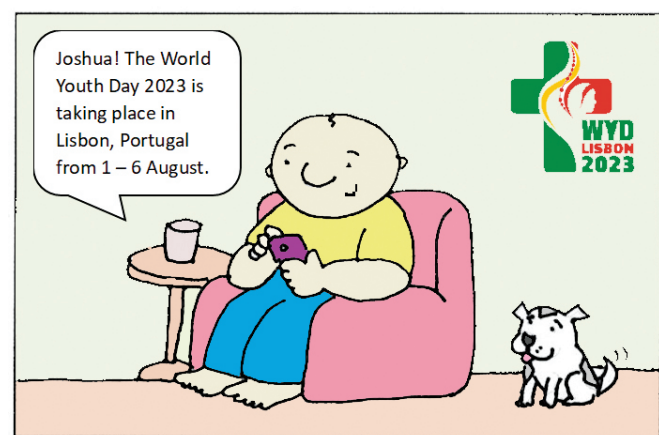
on how they receive and perceive the Word of God. He emphasised the significance of the Sacrament of Confirmation and encouraged the confirmands to confirm their faith and become faithful disciples of Jesus. The archbishop highlighted the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding and revealing the mysteries of the faith to help them grow.

At the end of the celebration, the Archbishop Julian said that catechesis is a lifelong journey, beginning in preschool and continuing until the day one dies. He encouraged everyone to take responsibility for each other's faith by guiding and instructing one another.



THE SIMPLE LIFE...

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



MEMORIAM

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

23rd Anniversary



10th August 2023
In Ever Loving Memory of
Datin Marjorie
Rukumani Subramaniam
@ Margaret Bonney

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

Fondly remembered
and missed by
family and friends.



2nd Year Anniversary
In Loving Memory of

Robert Ganesan
A/L Kuppen

Born:
4th January 1971
Departed:
10th August 2021

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

*Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed
about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve
like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe
that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God
will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.*

Deeply missed and forever cherished by
Wife Elizabeth Amutha, Son Maxximillan Robert,
Goopenthiran and Daughter Sylvia Robert.

In Loving Memory



A. SIMON LOPEZ
Called to the Lord: 8 August 2016

*Bless the Lord, Oh my soul!
And all that is within me,
Bless His Holy Name!*

Miss and love you dearly
Sampson, Clifton and Ewan, Sharon & Ben.

21st Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



Nepoans James
Departed:
07-08-2002

*The Lord bless you, and keep you:
the Lord make his face
to shine upon you, and be
gracious unto you:
the Lord lift up the light of his
countenance upon you,
and give you peace.*
Always remembered by
loving children, grandchildren
and loved ones.
May he rest in peace.

4th Year Anniversary
In Ever Loving Memory of



Sandanasamy Anthony Pillay (JPN)

Gift from God: 8th April 1934
Returned to the Lord: 7th August 2019
Wife: Late Ruth Mary Michael Pillay

*Eternal rest grant unto him,
Oh Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him.
May his soul rest in peace. AMEN.*

We Love and Miss you
Forever loved & dearly missed by
family members, relatives and friends.

8th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



Thomas Fong Choon Tuck
Called home to be with the Lord
on 10th August 2015

*"You are forever in our hearts and minds.
The most precious and dearest memories of you,
and the legacy of kindness you left behind will
carry us through until we meet again."*

Deeply missed by family, relatives and friends.



10TH
ANNIVERSARY
Always in
our Hearts
Ceceilia Netto

28th Nov 1929 to
18th Aug 2013

*In loving memory of Ceceilia, our mother dear,
Whose spirit still lingers, like she's still so near.
Ten children she raised in the toughest of times,
With unwavering strength, she scaled uphill climbs.*

*A disciplinarian and a stickler for time,
She taught us values till our prime.
Education, her beacon, shining so bright,
She nurtured our minds, guiding us to the light.*

*Her resilience shone through, like a beacon of hope,
In the face of adversity, she learned how to cope.
Through struggles and hardships, she never gave in,
Her unwavering spirit, a battle to win.*

*Her grandchildren, her joy, brought a twinkle to her eye,
Their laughter, their innocence, made her heart soar high.
Family, her cornerstone, foundation so strong,
She taught us the importance of where we belong.*

*Gatherings were sacred, moments to treasure,
Creating memories that would last beyond measure.
Respect was the cornerstone of her noble creed,
For all, she showed kindness, fulfilling every need.*

*Her mental and emotional strength, a force to behold,
In times of despair, she lent a hand to unfold.
A tower of compassion, a beacon of care,
She embraced those around her with love to share.*

*Though she's no longer with us, her spirit remains,
In every act of kindness, in life's intricate chains.
Her legacy lives on, in the lessons we've learned,
In the love that we carry, for which we've yearned.*

*Ceceilia, our mother, forever in our hearts,
Your memory, a flame that will never depart.
We honour your life, your virtues we hold dear,
In this poem, a tribute, our happy tear.*

18th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



Clarence F. Sta Maria
Departed: 04-08-2005

*I lie down and sleep in peace
for you alone, O Lord.
Make me feel safe and secure.*

We miss you dearly.
You are always in our
thoughts and in our prayers.

Fondly remembered by
your loving wife, son,
daughter, son-in-law
and grandson.



10th
Anniversary
In Loving
Memory of
Gerard Errol
de Cruz

From God
July 11, 1954
To God
August 13, 2013

*We hold you close within our hearts and there you shall
remain until we hold you again in Heaven.
Unseen, unheard but always near.
Still loved, still missed and very dear.*

Deeply missed by
your loving wife Alice and precious children.
May your country soul R.I.P.

14th Anniversary
In Loving
Memory of

Sr Betilda
D' Cruz, fdcc

Born on
22nd March 1949
Called home
to the Lord on
10th August 2009



*God created you.
Jesus loves you.*

*The Holy Spirit dwells within you,
Entrusting you and every need you have,
To the Lord's ever present faithful care.*

Deeply missed and forever cherished by
loved ones.

29th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



Selina Lazer Pereira
Departed:
4th August 1994

Lovingly remembered
and deeply cherished by
Children, In-laws,
Grandchildren
and loved ones.

13th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of

Anthoney s/o
Savrimuthoo

From the Lord:
13 Aug 1940
Returned to the Lord:
6 Aug 2010



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

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

Lovingly remembered by
beloved wife, sons, daughters, sons-in-law,
daughters-in-law, grandchildren, great-grandchildren,
relatives and friends.

27th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



Joseph Paul
Recalled to the Lord on
6th August 1996

*"Their Life – A Beautiful Memory,
Their Absence – A Silent Grief"*

*"Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord and let your perpetual
light shine upon them. May their souls rest in peace. Amen"*

Deeply missed by:
Louise Paul, Arokiamary, Pritashini M. Paul,
Siddesh J. Paul, Mishalini M. Paul
and all extended family members.

29th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



Mary Magdelene Paul
Recalled to the Lord on
22nd November 1994

14th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of
Steven Subramaniam



*Remembering and honouring you on this day,
fourteen years after this world
lost a precious soul.*

Deeply missed by wife, children,
sons and daughter-in-law, grandchildren,
all relatives and family members.

OUR YOUTH AT WYD LISBON

Malaysians are part of the more than 600,000 pilgrims at the World Youth Day celebrations in Lisbon, Portugal.

Some registered under the Malaysian contingent while others came under religious congregations or their parishes, all with one purpose — to celebrate our Catholic faith.

Here are some of their sharings and photos. More to come in our next issue.

TOUCHED BY THE HOSPITALITY



This is the first time that I am participating in the World Youth Day celebration and the Days in Diocese (DID). I was happy and grateful to be part of the Church of Fonte Arcada, located in a small village east of Porto District. We were divided into groups and stayed with foster families. I was placed with three other youth. Our foster family lived in a large home and was made up of Nuno, his wife Elizabeth, and their five children. They were all very hospitable, friendly and nice. They prepared a lot of food and beverages for us. They even helped us wash our clothes and provided for our needs. Their hospitality and the spirit to serve us touched me deeply. — *Ivan Yeo Paw Sim, Diocese of Malacca Johore*



CULTURE SHOCK

When I first arrived, it was a bit of a culture shock. I learnt that the Portuguese are very friendly and they greet each other by kissing on both cheeks.

Even at the parish we stayed at, St Vincent in the Diocese of Porto, the parishioners were friendly. I loved how everyone in this village knew each other. You could see they treated everyone like family. Throughout my days in Irivo, I don't think any pilgrim felt out of place. We were thousands of kilometres from home but somehow, we still felt like we were home. The parishioners went out of their way to make sure we had home-cooked food.

We did not stay with a foster family. Some 28 of us from the Malaysian contingent stayed at a place prepared by the parish. Although we are all Malaysians, at first it was awkward, as members from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur and those from East Malaysia didn't know each other. But God brought



us together as we started singing songs and playing games.

We also met pilgrims from other countries. There was time for sightseeing too. One interesting place was the Castro of Monte Mozinho, a Neolithic fortified settlement, sometimes referred to as the Dead City. It is situated in the civil parish of Oldrões, in the municipality of Penafiel in the Tâmega Sub-region of the Portuguese district of Porto.

No words could describe the emotions I was feeling. Wherever I looked, there were

youths from all over the world. Never in a million years would I have thought I would have the opportunity to participate in the WYD celebrations. Throughout the Days in Diocese (DID), I met people from so many countries. It was nice to meet people who shared my energy, no matter where I was — on the train, the road, or on a bus, there was always singing, jumping, and dancing. I found my faith in God becoming stronger than ever. — *Brendan Sanjay, Diocese of Penang*

THE MAGIS EXPERIENCE

MAGIS is the gathering organised by the Society of Jesus in which young adults (18-35 years old) from the Ignatian Family come together from all over the world.

This major meeting happens 10 days leading up to World Youth Day (WYD).

These days are full of experiences that help celebrate faith and service in a space of sharing and prayer.

Malaysian Experience

Ten Malaysians from the Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya attended the MAGIS and WYD Journey. They first stayed at Vila MAGIS in Estrada da Torres Lumiar, Lisbon where all MAGIS delegates gather before and after experiments..



SFX MAGIS team



Painting the Capela Santa Eufémia.

This time, there were young pilgrims from more than 80 countries gathered at Villa MAGIS. There were sessions, reflections and Mass before the pilgrims went for the MAGIS experience.

The Malaysian team of Nalerin, Jacob, Cassandra, Roziama and Leona opted for the experience in solidarity and service at Vila Real. They travelled for many hours and safely arrived at Vila Real. They participated at Mass with the elderly community and at night, in the feast of St Martin Tours celebrated by the Community of Vila Real.

On July 25, Team Solidarity and Service's

mission was to rebuild/renovate Capela Santa Eufémia, which is around 200 years old. Before lunch, we attended Mass at Igreja de Arroios, Vila Real.

Aaron, Basilika, Yvonne, Rachel and Marcela went for the Faith and Spirituality at Soutelo experience. They had a cup of coffee and some pastries at Santo Antonio Cafe before embarking on their MAGIS experiment. Fr Jose Antonio Rubio SJ of Centro America was the spiritual director.

This group stayed at Casa Da Torre - Spiritual and Cultural Centre, Soutelo to learn how to pray through the body by connecting with the five dimensions of physics/biology, emotional, rational, relation, and spirituality.



The Faith and Spirituality experience.

FRANCISCANS BEGIN AT ASSISI



Being a Franciscan Contingent, we chose to have our pilgrimage in Assisi before entering the WYD proper. In Assisi, we had time of prayer and contemplation at the Basilica of St Francis, Basilica of St Agnes, Basilica of St Mary of the Angels, the resting place of Blessed Carlo Acutis, La Verna Sanctuary, San Rufino Cathedral where Sts Francis and Clare were baptised, the family home of St Francis to name a few. (photo/Friar Sixtus Peter OFM)