

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.

And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.
1 Thess. 3:12-13



Empowering the marginalised towards independence

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Church of St Elizabeth turns seventy

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Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific Youth Ministers Meeting 2024

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Church history is more than dates

VATICAN: In a letter published on November 21, Pope Francis called for a profound renewal in the study of Church history, urging seminarians, clergy, and the faithful to embrace history, which continues to play a role in their daily lives.

In the letter, the Pope reflected on the value of history as a communal inheritance, stressing that the study of the Church goes beyond memorising dates and events.

It is about keeping “the flame of collective conscience alive,” he said, explaining that by doing so, the faithful can navigate the present with a clearer sense of perspective, rooted in the Church’s lived experience across centuries.

Pope Francis went on to speak of “deconstructionism,” which he described as being a growing trend in today’s culture.

The one thing deconstructionism can leave in its wake, he wrote, “is the drive to limitless consumption and expressions of empty individualism.”

These tendencies, the Pope warned, often appear as “a form of blindness that drive us to waste our energies on a world that does not exist, raising false problems and veering towards inadequate solutions.”

Pope Francis then warned against idealising the Church to the point of detachment from her human, and often flawed, journey.

True love for the Church, the Pope insisted, is rooted in her authenticity, not an imagined perfection.

He stressed the importance of loving the Church as she truly is, emphasising the strength of learning from her failures.

“A Church that, even in her darkest moments, is conscious of her deepest identity can be capable of understanding the imperfect and wounded world in which she lives,” he said. “In her efforts to bring healing and renewal to the world, she will use the same means by which she strives to heal and renew herself, even if she at times does not succeed.”

Speaking of the importance of preserv-



(Faithworks.life)

ing history within the Church and in society, Pope Francis cautioned against the “cancel culture” and partisan historical narratives that distort the past to justify present ideologies.

Instead, he continued, we need a balanced engagement with history, recognising both humanity’s darkest chapters and moments of extraordinary grace.

Memory, he stressed, “is not an obstacle to progress but a foundation for justice and fraternity.”

Near the end of his letter, Pope Francis touched on several areas for renewal in the study of the history of the Church.

He criticised approaches that reduce

Church history to mere chronological facts, and highlighted the need for a passionate, engaged study of history.

He also called for greater emphasis on primary sources, urging seminarians to engage deeply with early Christian writings.

“What is needed is a personal and collective passion, an engagement proper to those who are committed to evangelisation, and who have not chosen a neutral or sterile position,” said the Pope, emphasising the importance of giving volume to the voices of the marginalised.

Finally, the Pope reflected on the centrality of martyrdom in Church history,

reminding the faithful that the Church has often found her greatest beauty in moments of persecution and suffering, when her witness to Christ shone brightest.

“The Church herself also recognises that she has benefited and is still benefiting from the opposition of her enemies and persecutors,” explained the Pope.

Bringing his letter to a close, the Pope emphasised the importance of studying history, reminding the faithful that “study is not gossip.”

True study, he concluded, requires the courage to ask deep questions and resist the distractions of cultural consumerism.

Francesca Merlo, Vatican News

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

As we enter the first Sunday of Advent, we are reminded that this is not just a time to eagerly anticipate Christmas but a season that calls for reflection, preparation, and spiritual renewal. Advent, which begins the Church's liturgical year, is often overshadowed by the overwhelming Christmas commercialism that surrounds us. From the moment we step into the malls, we are greeted by sparkling Christmas decorations, festive music, and even invitations to holiday gatherings — well ahead of Christmas Day. In fact, I know friends who already have their Christmas trees set up, and some BECs have planned their carolling and potluck dinners, all taking place during Advent. While there's nothing wrong with early celebrations, this rush to jump straight into Christmas can cause us to overlook the deeper purpose of Advent itself.

Pope Francis, in his messages over the years, has often reminded us that Advent is a time of spiritual preparation, a season of waiting and expectation for the coming of Christ. In his 2022 Advent message, he emphasised the importance of looking inward and allowing the Holy Spirit to guide our hearts as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Advent is not just about the outward preparation of our homes or the festive season; it is primarily about preparing our hearts to receive the Saviour.

One of the key aspects of Advent, is the call to vigilance and openness to the grace of God. We are urged to "be awake, be alert" as we await Christ's coming. This vigilance is

not merely about avoiding distractions or the busyness of life, but also about focusing on the things that matter — our faith, our relationship with God, and our commitment to living as Christ taught us. Advent is an opportunity to pause and reflect on our own spiritual journey, to examine where we stand in our relationship with God, and to prepare ourselves for the renewal that Christmas brings.

In a world where distractions are abundant and the rush to get everything done often takes precedence, the Church invites us to slow down during Advent and take time for reflection. It's not just about the external celebrations, but about preparing ourselves spiritually. This can be done in a number of ways: through prayer, reflection, attending Mass, and taking part in Advent talks, retreats, or online sessions that offer insights into the season. Advent is also a time for reconciliation. It is a time for personal renewal, where we turn to God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, asking for His forgiveness and preparing ourselves to receive His grace more fully.

Advent invites us to focus on the waiting aspect of the season, just as the Jewish people waited for the coming of the Messiah. It is a time to reflect on the virtue of patience in a world that often demands instant results. Advent calls us into a period of hope, trust, and expectation, knowing that Christ comes to us in the most unexpected ways. The waiting is not a passive activity, but one that encourages us to be actively engaged in our spiritual lives. It's an opportunity to open our hearts more

fully to God, seek His guidance, and listen for His voice in the quiet moments.

Another important practice during Advent is charity and almsgiving. Advent is a time to focus on those in need, to remember the marginalised, and to serve those who may be suffering. By reaching out to others in love and kindness, we imitate Christ's own compassion and prepare our hearts to welcome Him more fully at Christmas.

As we enter this holy season, let us remember that Advent is a time not only for outward preparations but, more importantly, for an inner renewal of our hearts and minds. Let us resist the temptation to skip ahead to Christmas celebrations without first reflecting on the meaning of this season. Let us approach Advent with the same anticipation and joy that the Church has for Christ's coming. In doing so, we ensure that we prepare ourselves adequately — spiritually and mentally — for the gift of Christmas.

Whether through prayer, reconciliation, attending talks and reflections, or engaging in acts of charity, let us commit to making this Advent a time of true preparation. Let us use this season to deepen our faith, renew our spiritual life, and ready our hearts for the joy and peace that only Christ can bring. As Pope Francis reminds us, "Advent is the time to listen to God's voice and to make space for Him in our hearts."

May this Advent be a time of grace, renewal, and peace as we await the birth of our Saviour.

Patricia Pereira

Trusting God's promises, preparing our hearts, and looking beyond the noise

As you are reading this reflection of the First Sunday of Advent, it is the weekend of our *gotong royong* to get the church ready for Christmas. The parishioners of the Church of the Divine Mercy (CDM) in Skudai, Johor will be planning on where to put the Christmas crib, wreath, lights, and so on. By that time, the shopping centres will already be putting up Christmas decorations and playing Christmas songs. Even now, all four language groups of CDM are already practising and getting ready to start their one or two-week-long carolling at the homes of their respective language communities.

All that is nice and, for many people, Advent is a nice time. We are beginning to close the current year and getting ready to welcome the next. Many of us know already that the purpose of Advent is not to merely prepare for Christmas festivities because Advent offers us a chance to reset. Advent is a season that pulls us out of just moving from one thing to the next. It is a season that reminds us of what matters. Advent asks us to prepare for something bigger than ourselves.

Many of us think of Advent as preparing for Christmas but Advent is about preparing for the second coming of Jesus at the end of time, too. Sometimes, the second coming is like a fantasy or something unreal. As Christians, we do not forget about the second coming of Jesus though it is beyond our imagination of how this can be.

What we can do is take a step back to reflect on our lives, about where we are, where we are going, and where God is in our lives. The readings today really help us understand this. They remind us of God's promises, challenge us to prepare our hearts, and invite us to look beyond the noise of our

life toward our redemption.

In the first reading, the people of Judah were going through a hard time. They experienced wars, instability, and fear. God gave them a promise, "The days are coming when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah. I will raise up for David a just shoot." That's the promise of Jesus. Even in their darkest moments, God hadn't forgotten them and was already working towards their salvation.

We all need that reminder sometimes. It's easy to get discouraged when things get hard, like when our work gets overwhelming, relationships are strained, or the world feels crazy and messy. But God doesn't forget us. Just like with Judah, God's promises are real. Christ has come, and Christ will come again. That is the Christian hope we hold even when things seem uncertain.

However, we are invited to go deeper. Trusting God's promise is just the beginning. Advent is also about preparing. The psalmist today prays, "Your ways, O Lord, make known to me, teach me your paths." That's what preparation should be like, that is, asking God to teach, guide, to help us see where we need to grow.

St Paul, in the second reading, makes this point even clearer. He writes, "May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all." Love is the heart of our preparation. It is not just about celebrating the festivities of Christmas and shopping or trying to make everything perfect for Christmas. Can we ask ourselves or reflect about how we are loving the people around us? Are we holding onto grudges? Are we too busy to really see the needs of others? Advent is a time to clear out the mess and the noise in our hearts to

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Dr Lawrence Ng

1st Sunday of Advent (C)

Readings: **Jeremiah 33:14-16;**

1 Thessalonians 3:12 - 4:2;

Gospel: Luke 21: 25-28, 34-36

make space for Christ by growing in love.

Jesus' words in the Gospel today might sound a little intimidating. Jesus says, "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars... People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world." Wow, but His message isn't meant to scare us but to wake us up.

He continues by saying, "Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing, drunkenness, and the anxieties of daily life." We should be watching that there is perhaps not too much carousing or drunkenness lest we get dull and blur about our Christian life. However, the anxieties of life are something for us to ponder on. It's so easy to get caught up in the busyness, the stress, and the never-ending noise of the world. Jesus is now clearly warning us by saying, hey, do not let all these things distract you. Lift up your head. Look beyond the moment. Your redemption is at hand.

Advent is our chance to do just that. Therefore, let us take a step back to reflect on what really matters. Let us look beyond the festivities surrounding Christmas. Can we ask ourselves - are we ready to meet Christ? Not just at the end of time, but today, in the people around us, in the Eucharist, in prayer? Advent reminds us that this life isn't all there is. Christ is coming again, and everything we do now should reflect that hope.

Therefore, in this season of Advent, let us trust in God's promises, prepare our hearts, and lift our eyes beyond the moment so that we do not miss Christ right in front of us.



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

December

- 1 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of the Holy Family, Kajang
- 2 Meeting – AOHD Board of Management
- 5 Meeting – MCCBCHST Exco
- 7 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of St Thomas More, Subang
- 8 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Mentakab



PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

December

- 1 Confirmation at 9.00am – Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Butterworth
- 3 Mass and Launch of Scholarship – Stonyhurst International School, Penang at 4.20pm
- 6 Handing Over of the Parish – Church of St Michael, Ipoh at 11.00am
- 7 Hospital Fatimah's 50th Anniversary Commemorative Plaque Unveiling Ceremony at 10.00am
- 7 Hospital Fatimah's 50th Anniversary Dinner at 7.00pm
- 8 Confirmation – Church of St Anthony, Nibong Tebal, at 10.30am



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

December

- 1 Caritas MJD Centre Launch and Appreciation Lunch
- 3 Meeting – 4 D Team (formerly known as DAT-Dioecese Animating Team)
- 7 Opening and Blessing of New Church – Church of St Theresa, Masai, Johor
- 10 Sacrament of Reconciliation – Church of St Theresa, Masai
- 11 Sacrament of Reconciliation – Church of Divine Mercy, Skudai

MCCBCHST urges Parliament to review constitutionality of Mufti Bill

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Taoism (MCCBCHST) has called on Members of Parliament to address the constitutional implications of the Federal Territories Mufti Bill 2024, which it claims could infringe on the rights of non-Muslims.

In a statement, November 15, the MCCBCHST expressed gratitude to the Institute Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (IKIM) for organising a special briefing for non-Muslim religious bodies on November 6. While the briefing was informative, participants raised significant concerns about the proposed bill. IKIM representatives assured that these concerns would be reviewed.

The Mufti Bill, if passed, would grant the Mufti and a designated Fatwa Committee legislative powers to issue fatwas with the force of law, bypassing the parliamentary process. Critics, including MCCBCHST, argue that this is a violation of the Federal Constitution, specifically regarding the separation of powers and the rights of non-Muslims.

Prominent voices such as G25, former MACC Chief Commissioner Latheefa Koya, Sisters in Islam, and retired Court of Appeal Judge Hamid Sultan Abu Bakar have previously raised alarms over the bill. Hamid Sultan described the proposal as “a direct attack on the spine of the Federal

Constitution,” stating that the Mufti and the Fatwa Committee “do not exist within the framework of governance envisaged by the Constitution.”

The MCCBCHST highlighted several key constitutional concerns:

Legislative Overreach

The bill relies on Article 74(1) of the Federal Constitution, allowing Parliament to legislate on matters in the Federal List. However, the Mufti and Fatwa Committees are not explicitly mentioned in the list, raising questions about the bill's legal foundation.

Fatwas, traditionally advisory, would gain the force of law, creating potential conflicts with parliamentary authority.

Encroachment on Executive Powers

Article 3(5) designates the Yang di-Pertuan Agong as the Head of Religion for the Federal Territories, with advisory support from the Muzakarah Committee under the Malaysian National Council of Islamic Religious Affairs (MKI). The Mufti Bill proposes a parallel Fatwa Committee, a structure not provided for in the Constitution.

National Interest Ambiguity

Section 13 of the bill allows fatwas to address “national interest,” a term left undefined. Critics argue that decisions affecting national interest should remain under the Cabinet's jurisdiction, as stipulated in Article 39 of the Federal Constitution.

Potential Implications for Non-Muslims

The MCCBCHST also noted past instances where non-Muslim rights were affected, including:

- Statements permitting Muslims to enter non-Muslim places of worship for proselytisation.
- Restrictions on the sale of alcohol and gambling activities in certain states.
- Controversial conversion cases, such as those of Indira Gandhi and Loh Siew Hong.

The bill's provisions, such as immunity from lawsuits for the Mufti and Fatwa Committee acting in good faith, further amplify concerns. This could leave non-Muslims without legal recourse, if adversely affected by a fatwa.

The MCCBCHST has appealed to lawmakers to uphold their oath to “preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution.” It urged a re-evaluation of the bill, emphasising that its provisions risk undermining Malaysia's constitutional framework and the rights of all citizens.

“The Mufti Bill would fundamentally alter the balance of power and infringe upon the basic structure of the Constitution, which vests legislative power solely in Parliament,” the statement concluded.

The council hopes that the government will reconsider the bill considering its far-reaching implications, advocating for inclusive governance that respects Malaysia's multireligious and multicultural identity.



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #200



Greetings dear friends of MJD

From one scare to another. After the COVID scare, over 80,000 Malaysians are expected to die of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), the “superbug” infections by 2030, says the Health Minister. An estimated 620,000 jobs across 10 key sectors of the Malaysian economy are at risk of convergence or displacement if they do not reskill to the impact of artificial intelligence (AI), digital technology, and the green economy.

A total of 1,074 permanent forest reserve areas in the Peninsular, equivalent to over 53,700 football fields, were illegally cleared as of December 31 last year. Within 10 years, the peninsula's oil and gas reserves will be depleted, said the economy minister. MACC chief asks: Why is there no trust in us?

On the Church's World Day of the Poor with the theme *The Prayer of the Poor Ascends to God*, the Pope welcomed 1300 poor people. Bhutan, that introduced Gross National Happiness to the world, that boasts free health care, free education, a rising life expectancy and a growing economy has a problem: young people are leaving the country in record numbers. No end to scares. Is it a real one or a created one?

Choosing Times: “If someone hasn't changed, why expect a different response and outcome? It's like choosing to be repeatedly run over by the same train!” Stop seeking validation from people who keep hurting, disappointing and belittling you. Choose people who bring healing, hope and inspiration, not harm. We give thanks and call upon Your name.

We recount your wonderful deeds.

“When I reach the appointed time, then I will judge with justice.

Though the earth and all who dwell in it may rock, it is I who uphold its pillars.

To the boastful I say: “Do not boast,”

To the wicked: “Do not flaunt your strength, do not flaunt your strength on high. Do not speak with insolent pride.”

For neither from the east nor from the west, nor from desert or mountains comes judgement, but God Himself is the judge. One He humbles, another He exalts.

A Thought For The Week: Butter vs Bread

There was a farmer who sold a pound of butter to the baker. One day the baker decided to weigh the butter to see if he was getting a pound and he found that he was not. This angered him and he took the farmer to court. The judge asked the farmer if he was using any measure.

The farmer replied, “Your Honour, I am primitive. I don't have a proper measure, but I do have a scale.” The judge asked, “Then how do you weigh the butter?” The farmer replied “Your Honour, long before the baker started buying butter from me, I have been buying a pound loaf of bread from him. Every day when the baker brings the bread, I put it on the scale and give him the same weight in butter. If anyone is to be blamed, it is the baker.”

The lesson from the farmer: “We get back in life what we give to others”

Announcement for the Week:

1. The *second collection on the Second*

Sunday Advent is for the KASIH

INITIATIVE, a fund called for by the Malaysian Bishops to operate projects, pastoral work and staffing for Creation Justice, Migrant-Itinerants and Caritas Malaysia. Give generously.

QnQ? The Q asks: Is there a way to recognise inspiring people?

“I've noticed something about people who make a difference in the world: They hold the unshakable conviction that individuals are extremely important, that every life matters. They get excited over one smile. They are willing to feed one stomach, educate one mind, and treat one wound. They aren't determined to revolutionise the world all at once; they're satisfied with small changes. Over time though, the small changes add up. Sometimes they even transform cities and nations, and yes, the world.” **Beth Clark**

Inspiring people make a difference.

See The Holy Spirit @ Work: Many saints cannot distinguish inspiration from emotion. Actually, these two can be defined readily. Emotion always enters from man's outside, whereas inspiration originates with the Holy Spirit in man's spirit. **Watchman Nee**

Something To Tickle You: “Focusing on difficulties intensifies and enlarges the problem. When we focus our attention on God, the problem is put into its proper perspective and it no longer overwhelms us.” **Charles Stanley**

Bishop Bernard Paul

Sacred Heart Cathedral charts course for growth at PPA

Angila Yong

JOHOR BAHRU: Over 100 ministry members and parishioners of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus convened for the Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA) on November 17 at St. James' Hall. To accommodate this important gathering, the 12.30pm Mass was cancelled, as the hall currently serves as a temporary place of worship while the church undergoes renovations that began after Easter this year.

The Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus serves a vibrant community comprising English and Mandarin-speaking parishioners, as well as members of the Filipino community, reflecting its rich diversity and unity in faith.

Fr Simon Yong SJ, parish priest of the Cathedral since 2018, is marking his third Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA), having previously participated in 2019 and 2022.

In his opening address, Fr Simon expressed heartfelt appreciation for the parish community, emphasising the collaborative nature of parish leadership. "A parish priest is only as good as the people are. While a parish priest may provide leadership, it is the people who provide the strength. A good leader cannot do much if he does not have the support of the people," he remarked.

He also extended special thanks to those who have worked closely with him over the years, particularly acknowledging his assistant parish priest, Fr. Paul Sia, who joined the parish in 2023. "His wholehearted support for



The parishioners during their group discussion.

the programmes of the Cathedral has been instrumental to the achievement of our goals," Fr Simon noted.

He concluded by encouraging the congregation with a call to action: "A parish can only progress when there is an infusion of new blood to take over leadership." He challenged those present to bring in 50 new individuals to join as active collaborators in the parish's mission.

Prior to the PPA, questionnaires were distributed to gather feedback from parishioners and ministry members. While most respondents appeared well-informed about parish activities, many admitted to having limited familiarity with the concept of Synodality.

During the open forum, several concerns were raised, including the rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the implica-

tions of the Johor-Singapore Economic Zone, and the limited time many parishioners can dedicate to Church activities, often only a few hours or less. Catechism heads from both the English and Mandarin-speaking communities highlighted challenges such as inconsistent attendance of children between the Sacraments of Holy Communion and Confirmation, and the lack of parental involvement, with some parents dropping off their children for classes but not attending Mass themselves. Additionally, there were calls to address the needs of the elderly and youths facing transportation difficulties in attending Mass.

Key highlights of the parish's plans for 2025 include the Rededication of the Cathedral on the Anniversary of its Dedication, the return of the Corpus Christi procession — cancelled this year due to renovations — and

the celebration of the 350th Anniversary of the Apparitions of the Sacred Heart to St Margaret Mary Alacoque, coinciding with the cathedral's feast day.

In 2025, the parish will also celebrate the 25th sacerdotal anniversary of Fr Simon and embark on a Parish Pilgrimage to Penang as part of the Jubilee Year. This year's pilgrimage saw 200 parishioners travelling in five buses to churches in North Johor. The smaller churches and chapels visited were delighted to witness their spaces filled to capacity, creating a vibrant and memorable experience for both the pilgrims and local communities.

Bishop Bernard Paul expressed joy at witnessing the unity among parishioners and their outreach to the poor, noting the cathedral's efforts in sharing food parcels with other parishes during times of need. He emphasised that a Synodal Church embodies communion, with the most significant transformation beginning within. He was particularly heartened to see this spirit alive at the cathedral, where all language groups are journeying together in harmony.

He acknowledged the shifting demographics of the elderly and anticipating more Singaporeans relocating to the area as their children enrol in local schools. Emphasising the importance of preparing for the future, he stressed the need for leadership to establish succession plans involving the younger generation. This call aligned with the parish priest's appeal to welcome fresh talent into the parish community.

CDM parishioners ready for jubilee journey

PENANG: Around 150 parishioners from the Church of Divine Mercy (CDM), Sg Ara, embraced the spirit of synodality at their recent Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA). On November 17, coinciding with the World Day of the Poor, the diverse group — including seniors, youth, ministry leaders, and Sunday parishioners — responded to the call to reach out to those on the fringes. Together, they listened, discerned, and brainstormed ways to foster a more inclusive church.

The Assembly convened shortly after the Sunday morning Mass. The PPC chairman, Zeckry Chan, reinforced the sense of belonging to CDM by walking through the major highlights and events of the year. He also presented the progress of the new building plan's status and various approvals obtained to date, which was set to be built on the land sitting next to the present church.

Suresh Chandra presented the parish's financial overview, detailing the breakdown of funds and upcoming projects planned for 2025. Parish priest, Fr Michael Raymond

OFM Cap, then introduced the Jubilee Year theme, Pilgrims of Hope, setting the tone for the discussions that followed. He emphasised the importance of "broadening and deepening their tents" through communion, encountering others, and reaching out to become a beacon of hope for all. Fr Michael underscored the core objective: transforming CDM into a truly welcoming parish.

The morning's highlight was the use of spiritual conversations, an approach that encouraged all parishioners to share their voices and opinions. This inclusive method aimed to shape parish directives and activities for the Jubilee Year 2025.

Aligned with the central themes of the Regional Pastoral Assembly held at MAJODI, Johor, in preparation for the Malaysian Pastoral Convention 2026, the discussions focused on four key concerns: Family, Church, Ecology, and Society.

The attendees were gathered into groups of 10, each covering targeted questions focused on the four core topics. The breakout groups



A parishioner sharing the results of her group's discussion.

each had a facilitator and note-taker to preside over and record all input.

A total of 10 questions guided the discussions. These included:

- In what ways can the Church build and strengthen faith life within families?
- How can our parish be more inclusive and respond to the needs of our migrants?
- Other than the 5R's (Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose, Recycle) what different ways can you think of for a household to protect the environment?
- How can we as a parish, foster a spirit of dialogue with people from different cultures, social and religious backgrounds?

A key element of the discussions was dedicating time to prayer and two minutes of silence before beginning. The spiritual conversations unfolded in three cycles. In the first round, each participant had a few minutes to share their thoughts and insights on the group's assigned question. In the second round, participants highlighted ideas or reflections that resonated with them from others' contributions. Finally, in the pivotal third

round, groups discerned and agreed on one or more practical proposals to present as their collective suggestions.

Suggestions from the three-round spiritual conversations included calls for "less churchy" and more relevant and accessible formation programmes held in neutral spaces rather than strictly within the church. One group highlighted the need to engage the parish's growing migrant community by offering fellowship opportunities, such as running their own coffee morning stall after Sunday Mass and having a dedicated gathering space — currently limited by space constraints.

The group focusing on "society" proposed increasing interfaith dialogue through cultural exchanges and shared practices. Another suggestion was to create more opportunities for youth to engage in outreach activities, such as visiting hospitals and the elderly, typically roles taken on by older parishioners. Additionally, a group advocated for forums or platforms to address hidden challenges and provide support for mixed-marriage families.

In the spirit of growing as one body of Christ, the Assembly ended on a high note with the spirit of hope burning bright.



The attendees sharing their thoughts on one of the four topics of family, church, ecology and society.

Empowering the marginalised towards independence

KUALA LUMPUR: The Cathedral of St John the Evangelist marked the World Day of the Poor on November 17 with a celebration, embodying a community spirit of sharing and caring for the last, the lost, the least, and the little.

Sunday morning Masses began with a reflection on Pope Francis' message for the World Day of the Poor. During the offertory, symbolic items such as a Bible, incense, a miniature house, a book, a stethoscope, and a backpack were presented alongside the bread and wine. These offerings served as a poignant reminder to pray and respond to the cry of the poor, emphasising the essentials every person needs: food, shelter, education, and medical care.

After Mass, parishioners were invited to purchase food and drinks at stalls manned by Samaritan Hope Home, Myanmar Community Learning Centre (MCLC) and PIHDM adoptee families. Fatima Emmanuel and the Samaritan Hope Home brothers had a stall promoting their signature *achar*, pineapple tarts, almond cookies and their new bestseller dried fruit *achar*. A Pakistani adoptee family had a live cooking station making fresh *chapati* and *dhal*. MCLC representatives sold Myanmar chicken rice and *mee hoon*. Another adoptee family sold *pakora* and curry puffs. The African community also took part, offering a wide array of food including skewered meat, meat pies, *jollof* rice and hibiscus drinks.

"We are encouraged by the active participation of the various groups whom we support. By empowering our sisters and brothers to cook and sell, they can earn some income for themselves. We hope that they will continue to find ways to support themselves and eventually be financially independent. It is also a lovely opportunity for them to meet and mingle with other parishioners," said Gloria Bon, the cathedral's PIHDM leader for this project.

Aside from the food stalls, there was a tent



Stylists and students from Le Classic Hair Academy were on hand to offer hair cuts.

for free health checks and another tent offering free haircuts. "It is our small way of reminding everyone to look after their health and wellbeing. We are grateful for the help from various parties, including ACTS Clinic Brickfields, mobile clinic veterans, the cathedral's PMRT team, CAPO student caretakers and the hairstylist teachers and students from Le Classic Hair Academy," said Dolly Cox, the PIHDM coordinator. More than 120 persons tested their blood pressure, sugar level and where required, had consultations with the medical doctors present. Another 60 sported fresh hairstyles, including three brothers from Samaritan Hope Home and many MCLC teenagers.

One hundred Samaritan Hope Home brothers, MCLC students and PIHDM adoptee families were offered lunch by PIHDM and a gift bag, courtesy of Lost Food Project and other sponsors.

Besides these activities, parishioners were also invited to donate non-perishable essentials to the needy by dropping them off at the church. Eight new families in need were identified and a small group of PIHDM members participated in an outreach to Ampang Permai to deliver these items



Parishioners at the medical tent.

to them. MCLC also received rice and stationery from these donations.

The Cathedral's World Day of the Poor worked well because of the generosity of donors and the unwavering support of volunteers. This is what motivates our PIHDM team to continue working hard to reach out and help the poor and the marginalised.

Kuantan parish observes World Day of the Poor with community celebration

KUANTAN: The Church of St Thomas the Apostle marked the World Day of the Poor on November 16 with a celebration aimed at fostering unity and support for the less fortunate.

Fr George Packiasamy, the parish priest, reflected on the significance of the day, calling it "an essential observance for every

Christian community." He highlighted the opportunity to listen to the prayers of the poor and respond to their needs.

"The poor teach us valuable lessons, challenging a culture that prioritises wealth and often undermines human dignity. They remind us that the true essentials for life lie elsewhere," said Fr George.

In previous years, the parish held numerous events, including fundraising projects to assist victims of natural disasters, particularly those impacted by floods. This year, the celebration was scaled back but remained impactful, focusing on a dinner for the poor, the Orang Asli, and migrant communities.

Following the Sunset Mass, around 250 attendees, including local parishioners, the Orang Asli, and migrants from Indonesia, Myanmar, and East Malaysia, gathered for a communal meal. Buses were provided for those from remote areas to ensure their participation.

The evening proved to be a touching occasion, with parishioners and the marginalised sharing in fellowship.

The following day, the parish held a Family Day celebration, marking a successful year of growth and collaboration. The event featured a thanksgiving dinner with a sumptuous eight-course Chinese meal prepared on-site by a caterer from Sekinchan, Selangor. The evening was filled with laughter and heartfelt stories, strengthening the bonds within the parish community.



The guests enjoying their meal.

Assumption's SSVP raises RM97,000 at tea dance

PETALING JAYA: The St Vincent De Paul Conference of Assumption held its annual fundraising tea dance on November 10 at Jasmine Banquet Hall. This event is the conference's biggest yearly fundraising exercise, and has happened for four years consecutively. The initiative was born out of the heartfelt desire to do more for the 'Friends in Need' (FINs), as the poor and underprivileged under the care of the Conference are collectively known.

Five hundred guests attended the event, and were delighted by the Night Birds band and DJ Lollipop who played a song selection spanning multiple musical decades, which enticed guests out of their seats and onto the dance floor. Guest violinist Helga's performance added an air of sophistication to the evening, while the raffle draw added much suspense. The auction of three paintings — two of which were by local artist Patric Rozario and one art piece, added to the pot. This year a total of RM97,000.00 was raised.

Guests of honour at the tea dance were the President of SSVP, National Council Malaysia, Raj Narayanan; Fr Leonard Lexson, parish priest of the Church of the Assumption and Fr Frederick Joseph, ecclesiastical assistant for the SSVP. Also present were children from Rumah Ozanam, PJ, Rumah Kanak-Kanak Impian and Rumah SVP Klang.

While the basic needs of the FINs are met via monthly rations and cash aid, the conference takes a long-term approach to breaking the cycle of poverty by educating the young people in these families, as well as many other children, which hopefully will open doors to better careers and wage-earning abilities.



One of the performances at the tea dance.

The Ozanam Education Centre is already nurturing the seeds of hope by providing quality preschool education to 42 children from underprivileged families. Due to space constraints at the current premise, intake is limited. The conference has set itself the goal of raising funds to purchase a premises that can accommodate more children with space to learn, play and bloom.

As Marie-Joséphine Jean-Pierre, President of the Conference, said in her speech, "We need to do more to empower our FINs. Although we help them with job placement and empowerment programmes, we know that the key to breaking the cycle of poverty is education."

If you want to be part of the dream, email the Conference at ssvpassumptionpj1@gmail.com to know more. **Karen Michaela Tan**

From old candle wax to scented Christmas candles

Elvina Fernandez

KUALA LUMPUR: In its commitment to eco-friendly practices, the Parish Integral Human Development Ministry (PIHDM) Ecology and Environment team of the Church of St Anthony has launched a creative initiative to repurpose old candle wax from the grotto of Mother Mary. This innovative project involves transforming the used wax into beautiful, scented Christmas candles, marking a significant step towards the church's goal of fostering a more sustainable environment.

By repurposing the old candle wax, the team has created a product that is both practical and symbolic. It embodies the spirit of the season while promoting environmental consciousness. The new Christmas candles, infused with delightful scents, are set to bring warmth and joy to many homes this festive season.

The initiative is a collaborative effort led by the PIHDM Ecology and Environment team, with the support of the sacristan, volunteers, and parishioners. Every week, they take the time to scrape candle wax from the grotto and store it in boxes for the team to collect. The team then cleans, melts, and pours the collected wax into moulds, leaving it to set overnight. This wax collection and candle-making activity began on October 1, during



A volunteer scraping the candle wax from the grotto.

the Marian month, as part of the preparations for Christmas.

Parish priest Fr Clarence Devadass lauded the initiative, highlighting it as a prime example of turning what was deemed waste into something beautiful and useful for the season, and the start towards more such projects in the future.

"This is a fine example of how, by just putting in some time and effort, something that we think no longer has any use can be transformed into what adds Christmas cheer in one's home or given as a lovely Christmas gift to loved ones."

He added that this is very similar to the challenges we go through.

"When we think there is no longer any hope, put in some time in prayer, accompanied with efforts towards what we desire, and the despair will turn into happiness."

This endeavour is just the beginning of the parish's broader mission to integrate eco-friendly practices into the church's operations. The church aims to inspire its congregation to adopt more sustainable habits and contribute to a greener planet. Future projects are already in the pipeline, promising more innovative solutions to environmental challenges.

Through this initiative, the team



The Christmas candles made from the recycled wax.

and parish not only address the practical need to manage waste but also sets an example of how communities can come together to make a positive impact on the environment. As the Christmas candles light up homes and hearts this season, they will also shine a light on the importance of sustainability and environmental stewardship.

The Ecology and Environment Team invites everyone to support this noble cause and join them on their journey towards an eco-friendly future. The team also plans to organise workshops to teach parishioners how to do it themselves

and invites neighbouring parishes to join in. With each small step, the Church of St Anthony is paving the way for a brighter, greener tomorrow.

The candles are priced at RM10.00 for a box of two; RM15.00 for a box of three, and RM20.00 for a box of four. Additionally, there is a special promotion: receive one free box of two candles with every purchase of 10 boxes. To purchase the candles or learn how to implement this initiative at your own parish, visit the team's booth at the Church of St Anthony on December 1, 8, 15, and 22, from 8.30am to 1.30pm.



ARCHDIOCESE OF
KUALA LUMPUR

CHAN/CD/12/2024

Chancery Notice

Banns of Sacerdotal Ordination: Rev Deacon Jonathan Andrew Rao A/L James

Having consulted the College of Consultors, Most Reverend Julian Leow D.D., the Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, has agreed to ordain Rev. Deacon Jonathan Andrew Rao A/L James to the Order of Presbyterate at the Church of St Francis Assisi, Cheras, Selangor on Saturday, January 25, 2025 at 10.30am.

Canon Law obliges Catholics to reveal any impediment or circumstances that would prevent the above candidate from receiving Sacred Orders and anyone with such information should contact the Chancery or the Archbishop with such information as soon as possible.

You may contact the Chancery by emailing us at chancery@archkl.org

Let us offer our prayerful support for Rev Deacon Jonathan Rao A/L James as he prepares for presbyteral ministry to serve the People of God in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

Clarence Devadass

Rev Fr Dr Clarence Devadass
Chancellor
Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur

November 21, 2024

Parish health screening highlights cancer awareness and prevention

KUALA LUMPUR: Dewan Fatima, at the Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Brickfields was transformed into a bustling clinic on November 16, as doctors and medical practitioners offered health screenings to parishioners.

Organised by the National Cancer Society (NCS) of Malaysia, the initiative saw 32 individuals undergo screenings for breast, colon, lung, and liver cancer caused by Hepatitis. Bilik Soter served as an examination room, where a doctor conducted breast examinations, ensuring privacy and comfort for participants.

The event commenced with an informative talk on cancer prevention by Dr Jason Chin of NCS, highlighting the importance of early detection and proactive health care.

The programme was spearheaded by Fr Andrew Manickam, OFM Cap, in collaboration with the Parish Integral Human Development Ministry (PIHDM).

Programme coordinator Heidi Lai presented a token of appreciation to the NCS team for their



Parishioners and medical practitioners at the health screening.

dedicated efforts.

This health outreach reflects the parish's commitment to holistic

care, addressing both spiritual and physical well-being within its community.

Church of St Elizabeth turns seventy

Bernard Anthony

KOTA TINGGI, Johor: It was a memorable and significant occasion for the parishioners of the Church of St Elizabeth as they celebrated their parish's 70th anniversary on November 16. The festivities included the recitation of the Rosary, a Thanksgiving Mass, and a fellowship dinner. The milestone coincided with the parish feast day of St Elizabeth of Hungary, the patron saint of this 70-year-old community.

Bishop Bernard Paul presided over the Thanksgiving Mass as the main celebrant, joined by parish priest, Fr Martinian Lee, as concelebrant, with Deacon Steven Wong assisting. The church was filled with local parishioners and faithful who had travelled from Ulu Tiram, Kuala Lumpur, and other places to join the celebration.

Bishop Bernard reflected on the journey of the parish, saying, "Seventy years ago, someone began, and others continued — that is how the Church grows. Thank God for seventy years of faithfulness, and let us pray for this parish to continue flourishing. Let St Elizabeth be your model — caring for the poor and neighbours in need."

He emphasised the parish's welcoming spirit noting, "In this place, all are welcome — whether from near or far — as the parishioners of this church embrace everyone for the feast and 70th-anniversary celebrations."

The bishop also highlighted a unique aspect of the parish, stating, "In the whole of Malaysia, this is the only church dedicated to St Elizabeth of Hungary."

In his homily, Bishop Bernard addressed the pressing challenges faced by the world today, saying, "What's in the headlines now? Devastating floods, wars in Ukraine and Gaza, destruction, homelessness, and other calamities"

He noted that the Liturgical Year B is drawing to a close, with Year C beginning on the First Sunday of Advent. Reflecting on the Gospel reading about the end times, he remarked, "We see innocent lives lost to war and disease, resources wasted, and people struggling under the burden of long hours and relentless stress. Hearts are becoming indifferent, cold, and hard in these difficult times."

Yet, Bishop Bernard reminded the faithful of God's enduring presence: "Scripture assures us that God is always with those who love Him and keep Him at the centre of their lives. He sends His archangels to pro-



Bishop Bernard Paul, Fr Martinian Lee, Deacon Steven Wong, and parish lay leaders with the anniversary cake.

tect us and 'human angels' like St Elizabeth of Hungary, who cared for the poor, sharing bread from her court to feed the hungry."

He concluded with a message of hope, saying, "God brings life where there is death. He opens hearts where there is need. In every crisis, God sends people to uplift and support the poor. Let us be those human angels in our world today."

"Let this parish in Kota Tinggi, and everyone gathered here, pray for hearts filled with love and charity — to care for others in need, for it is only love that can save us. Be angels. Touch lives and make the world a better place, whether at work, in your community, or at home. Be honest, be kind, and do good. This is my prayer for you: be God's angel, caring for and loving the poor and those in need."

"As you receive Jesus into your heart during Communion, thank Him for coming into your life. Let the fire of His love burn brightly within you, just as it did for St Elizabeth of Hungary. Each week, strive to be charitable; each week, share what you have with others."

The prelate delivered his sermon in both English and Bahasa Malaysia, while Fr Martinian translated the bishop's homily into Mandarin.

After Mass, Fr Martinian, who is also the parish priest of the Church of the Holy Family in Ulu Tiram, expressed his gratitude to all who attended. In his speech, he shared his mixed feelings, saying he wished the weekly congregation could be as large as it was that day. He encouraged everyone to pray for the parish's growth, to reach out to others, and to invite them to attend weekly Mass.

Fr Martinian extended his heartfelt thanks to Bishop Bernard for making time in his busy schedule to preside over the feast day Mass. He also commended his parishioners and everyone who worked tirelessly in the weeks leading up to the event to ensure the feast and anniversary celebrations proceeded smoothly. Additionally, he thanked Fr Leo Arul for celebrating Mass on Nov 15. Fr Martinian then invited everyone to adjourn to the adjacent parish community hall for a fellowship dinner.

During the celebration, a 10-minute video documenting the 70-year history of the parish was shown. The video traced the parish's journey, from its humble beginnings as a wooden church in 1954 to the present brick structure completed in 1991. It also highlighted the priests who had served the community since 1954, the challenges and blessings the parish has faced, and the cherished memories shared by priests and parishioners over the past seven decades.



The congregation at the Eucharistic celebration.

About St Elizabeth of Hungary

St Elizabeth of Hungary, despite her noble status, chose to lead a life of austere simplicity, practising penance and dedicating herself to charitable works. After losing her husband, who died enroute to join the Sixth Crusade, she renounced worldly pleasures and became a tertiary of St Francis of Assisi. St Elizabeth established a hospital where she personally cared for the sick and the poor until her untimely death at the age of 24 on November 17, 1231.

She is revered as the patron saint of bakers, countesses, the homeless, widows, lace-makers, exiles, nurses, hospitals, falsely accused people, brides, and dying children. Often depicted holding a basket of bread, St Elizabeth is remembered for her compassion for the poor and hungry. She was canonised in 1235, just four years after her death.

The highlight of the evening was the cutting of the anniversary cake by Bishop Bernard, Fr Martinian, Deacon Steven, and the parish lay leaders, assembled near the sanctuary area. The congregation joyfully sang "Happy Anniversary" before the cake was distributed to all during the dinner fellowship.

In conjunction with the 70th-anniversary celebrations, commemorative T-shirts were on sale. A beautifully decorated statue of St Elizabeth, adorned with flowers, which had been blessed earlier by Bishop Bernard, was placed on the right side of the church. Many parishioners visited the statue after Mass, seeking the saint's intercession.

St Joseph's parish celebrates students' dedication and commitment

KUALA LUMPUR: November 17 was a memorable day for the parish community of the Church of St Joseph, Sentul, as more than 100 students were honoured for their dedication and commitment to completing the catechetical year at the 2024 Catechetical Awards ceremony.

The event was graced by the presence of Fr Frederick Joseph, Monsignor James Gnanapiragasam, and other parish leaders.

The celebration kicked off with the grand entrance of the priests, greeted with cheers and excitement from the audience. The day featured captivating performances, including enchanting pieces by Standard 1 and 2 students, whose innocence and enthusiasm charmed everyone. Talented individuals like Bastian, Shasha, and Abigail, moved the audience to tears with their heartfelt renditions of *Mary Did You Know*, *How Great Thou Art*, and *Oceans*. The grand finale, *10,000 Reasons*, performed by Nayden, Nadine, Maryssa,



The catechism children with their awards.

and Irenea with ukulele accompaniment, left the hall echoing with praise.

The event also highlighted a video, showcasing the Catechetical Ministry's journey

in 2024. It captured the impact of various outreach programmes, Marian activities, camps, and World Children's Day celebrations, all of which have played a key role in

nurturing the students' faith and deepening their love for the Church.

The Catechetical Ministry coordinator, Nelson Dass, delivered an inspiring message, urging everyone to look forward to the Jubilee Year 2025, themed *Pilgrims of Hope*. The symbolic design of the Jubilee Year T-shirts, unveiled during the event, added to the anticipation for the upcoming celebrations.

A heartfelt note of thanks goes to Abigail and Nazarene, who hosted the event with charm and energy, ensuring the evening was both lively and memorable. As Philippians 1:3 reminds us, "I thank my God every time I remember you," this sentiment truly resonates with the Catechetical Ministry as they express their gratitude to the students, teachers, and parents whose dedication made the year a resounding success.

Congratulations to all for wrapping up the catechetical year with faith, passion, and a celebration to remember! **Jane Buniel**

Understanding Church teachings on marriage and annulment

KUALA LUMPUR: The Family Life Ministry of the Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras, recently organised an informative session on *Marriage and Annulment According to Canon Law*.

Led by Fr William Michael from the Peninsular Malaysia Ecclesiastical Tribunal (PMET), the talk attracted participants from various ministries interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the Church's teachings on marriage and annulment.

The session began with Ivy Chew, a notary at PMET introducing the role of the Peninsular Malaysia

Ecclesiastical Tribunal in handling marriage-related cases within the Catholic Church.

Fr William then outlined key aspects of Canon Law governing marriage, focusing on the validity and nature of the sacrament.

Key points of discussion included:

Essential Properties of Marriage (Canon 1056): The unity and indissolubility of marriage, emphasising its exclusive and permanent bond.

Marriage Preparation (Canons 1062-1072): The importance of engagement, required documen-

tation, pre-marriage counselling, and the Church's role in preparing couples.

Impediments to Marriage (Canons 1083-1094): Factors that can invalidate a marriage, such as age requirements, previous marriage bonds, close blood relationships, and religious differences.

Consent in Marriage (Canons 1095-1103): The mental capacity and freedom required for valid consent in marriage, along with factors that may invalidate it.

Form of Marriage Celebration (Canons 1108, 1116, 1127): The

proper form for celebrating a valid marriage, including requirements for the officiating priest, witnesses, and necessary documentation.

The talk provided participants with a thorough understanding of the Church's teachings on marriage and annulment, enhancing their ability to support couples in their parishes while upholding the sanctity of the sacrament.

For more information on annulment processes, contact the Peninsular Malaysia Ecclesiastical Tribunal to make an appointment, at 03-20705878, Mondays to Fridays from 8.30am. to 5.00pm.



Fr William Michael

Call to reintroduce Bible Studies in Sarawak schools

KUCHING: The proposal to reintroduce Bible Studies in Sarawak's primary schools has sparked significant discussion, with various perspectives emerging from political leaders, educators, and the public.

Bukit Semuja assemblyman, John Ilus, recently called for the revival of Bible Studies, which he described as a foundational aspect of Sarawak's educational history. In a speech delivered during the State Legislative Assembly (DUN) on November 14, he emphasised that Bible Studies played a crucial role in fostering tolerance and respect among students of various religious backgrounds during the Brooke era and beyond. "Missionaries from Roman Catholic, Anglican,

and Methodist denominations laid the groundwork for Sarawak's educational system, introducing Bible Studies as an inclusive subject accessible to all students," Ilus noted.

According to Ilus, reintroducing Bible Studies could strengthen religious tolerance and promote moral and spiritual development among students. He expressed hope that the state's Education Ministry would consider making the subject an optional, structured part of the curriculum, allowing students to learn about the Christian faith alongside other religions.

The proposal has garnered support from various quarters. Political scientist Prof Datuk Dr Jayum Javan, a member of the National



Bukit Semuja assemblyman, John Ilus

Unity Advisory Council, hailed the idea as beneficial not only for Christian students but also

for non-Christian students who would gain a deeper understanding of their peers' faith. He pointed out that Bible Studies was once a part of Sarawak's education system under the Sarawak Junior Certificate and Senior Cambridge syllabi, open to all students. "This subject helped non-Christian students understand their Christian peers, promoting understanding and acceptance in a plural society," he said.

However, Jayum also noted that the proposal could face resistance if Christian lawmakers do not actively support it. He suggested that instead of waiting for formal approval from the Ministry of Education, Christian institutions such as the Catholic, Methodist, and Anglican missions could pro-

vide Bible education through after-school classes or expand their existing Sunday Bible programs.

In response to the proposal, Sarawak's Minister of Education, Innovation, and Talent Development, Dato Sri Roland Sagah Wee Inn, acknowledged the concerns raised by Ilus and assured that the matter would be discussed further with the Ministry of Education. During his winding-up speech in the DUN on Nov 18, Sagah said, "My ministry will raise this matter to MoE for further discussions."

The call for the reintroduction of Bible Studies highlights ongoing conversations about religious education and its role in shaping Sarawak's multi-ethnic, multi-religious society.

Scripturally-themed exhibition at OLL Klang

KLANG: Echoing the sentiments of Pope Francis' 2024 message for the Sunday of the Word of God, which carries the motto *Remain in My Word* from John 8:31, the Catechetical Ministry of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, organised a scripturally themed exhibition recently. The exhibition, led by the parish's multilingual Catechetical students, was part of the parish's ongoing Word of God project, which began in July 2024 and will continue with ministry-led, parish-wide activities through February 2025.

The exhibition was the result of months of preparation, with Catechetical students presenting exhibits in both written form and through their craftwork. These exhibits explored various scriptural parables, themes from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), and topics from the Malaysian Catechetical Series (MCS) textbooks. Themes included *God's Creation*; *The Holy Spirit and His Fruits*; *The Seven Sacraments*; *The All Saints' Prayer*; *Let the Children Come to Me*; *The Ten Commandments*; *The Martyrs of the Church*; *God's*



Depiction of Noah's ark.

Salvation Plan, and *The Holy Spirit's Action in Jesus' Life*. Additionally, a biblically themed *Treasure Hunt* was organised by one of the lower secondary classes, with prizes awarded to the winners.

Meanwhile, the parish's SPM Bible Knowledge (BK) ministry set up a booth focusing on the Gospel of St Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. This exhibit featured printed materials on topics such as St Luke's background, his Byzantine-inspired icon; the Map

of Palestine during Jesus' time; The Family Tree of Jesus; Jewish Festivals; Bar & Bat Mitzvah rituals; the Sects in Jerusalem/Israel during Jesus' time; parables and miracles in St Luke's Gospel, and the role of the Holy Spirit in the early Church. The booth also displayed Jewish-related items, including a Menorah, Jewish life symbol tapestries, and a Kippah, offering visitors deeper insights into Jewish culture and traditions.

The exhibition saw a steady flow of visitors, including clergy



The children dressed as biblical characters.

and members of the Parish Pastoral Council, who were present to assess and award participation marks for the students' final assessment in the 2024 Catechetical Evaluation.

This event also highlighted the importance of interpreting the Word of God in a communal context, as emphasised by Pauline Rinnalyn, the Catechetical Coordinator. She shared how such events foster dialogue and discussion among parishioners, creating an environment where

diverse perspectives enhance the understanding of scripture. This communal engagement, she noted, helps break down barriers and encourages inclusivity and mutual support.

The exhibition concluded around 2.00pm with many parishioners complimenting the students for their creativity, biblical character cosplays, and ability to articulate the lessons learned in their classes, demonstrating their deep understanding of Scripture.

Bernadette Anne Fernandez

Churches can honour their local saints on November 9

VATICAN: Beginning in 2025, Pope Francis said local churches will remember their local saints every November 9, those spiritual individuals who have “marked the Christian journey and local spirituality” and “enriched history.”

In a letter published November 16, the Pope emphasised that the call to holiness is at the heart of Christian life. “Holiness is not just the result of human effort, but making space for the action of God,” he explained. Thus, saints and blessed are given to Christians “to be examples of life and intercessors.”

Furthermore, he added, they are “friends, companions on the journey who help us fully realise our baptismal vocation.”

More broadly, the Pope mentioned at the beginning of his letter “the ‘everyday’ and ‘next door’ holiness with which the church is enriched worldwide”: couples who have

lived their love faithfully, fathers and mothers who have “supported their families and contributed to the spread of the Kingdom of God,” priests, religious brothers, and sisters who have “bestowed grace upon God’s holy people” and “have been a living image of Christ the Bridegroom.”

Also, he continued, the poor and sick who “found support in the Divine Master” must not be forgotten.

Local churches can honour their prominent or lesser-known saintly figures during the homily on that day or “through appropriate initiatives” outside the liturgy. For Francis, rediscovering and transmitting the memory of these “extraordinary disciples of Christ” is a way of finding “sure guides” who protect and support today’s Christians, inspiring in them the desire and aspiration to become holy themselves. LCI (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)



Mass with canonisations in St Peter's Square. (Vatican Media)

Thousands attend St Francis Xavier's relics exposition in Goa

GOA, India: St Francis Xavier lived the life of a missionary, baptising tens of thousands in India and Japan. In death, he continues to give himself to Christ's Church, as his relics offer pilgrims spiritual consolation in Italy and India.

The saint's right arm is kept in Italy, while a toe is in India after it was reportedly bitten off by an overzealous pilgrim. But the most intact relic of St Francis Xavier is his body (nearly whole), which is displayed for veneration every 10 years — in a glass casket to avoid any more toe-related incidents.

At least 12,000 people gathered in the western state of Goa, India, on November 21, for the opening of a decennial exposition of the saint's partially incorrupt remains. This marked the beginning of a 45-day event where St Francis Xavier's relics — normally kept in a casket in the Basilica of Bom Jesus — are displayed at the nearby Se Cathedral for veneration.

Archbishop Anil Couto of Delhi celebrated the morning Mass at the Basilica of Bom Jesus, joined by more than 400 priests and bishops. Afterward, attendees processed through the streets with the four-century-old glass casket on a carriage to Se Cathedral, less than 1,000 feet away.

Local reports called the exposition an opportunity for religious unity, as many religious groups in India respect the Catholic



Indian Christians pay their respects to the remains of St Francis Xavier during the 17th exposition of the saint's body at the Se Cathedral in Goa on November 22, 2014. (CNA photo/Punit Paranjpe)

saint. In anticipation of the decennial exposition, India Prime Minister Narendra Modi called the saint “a symbol of peace,” while locals affectionately call Xavier “Goencho Saib,” meaning “protector of Goa.”

The celebration takes place amid growing violence toward Indian Christians, which has “skyrocketed” according to a 2024 report by US Christian leaders who urged the US State Department to add India to the watchlist for

religious freedom violations.

To prepare for the exposition, the Goa state government built 33 cottages for pilgrims, with a total capacity of 400 people per day. They expect 8 million to visit the relics during the 45-day period. The last exposition, in 2014, received at least 5.5 million people.

While a group of people traditionally carries the casket on their shoulders, this year's exposition featured an electric carriage, which an organizer said is being employed to avoid chaos. Goa authorities provided more than 700 police personnel for security and traffic.

The display will continue until January 5, 2025. Pilgrims may visit his relics from 7.00am to 6.00pm at the cathedral.

The saint's body was displayed several times after his death, but the tradition of semi-frequent public exposition began after rumours circulated in 1782 that the saint's body had been replaced by another's remains. The church held a public exposition to address the rumours, beginning a tradition of expositions on special occasions. In recent decades, the tradition has been observed more consistently. This is the 18th exposition of its kind, a part of the saint's 472-year legacy. Kate Quiñones, CNA



The Sacred Relics of St Francis Xavier was taken in procession from the Basilica of Bom Jesus to Se Cathedral Church. (DIP Goa photo)

Nairobi archbishop rejects donations from Kenyan President

KENYA: Archbishop Philip Anyolo of Nairobi *pic* has declined over 5 million Kenyan shillings (RM172,642.00) in donations from President William Ruto, intended for the Soweto Catholic Church's rectory construction.

In a November 18 statement, the archbishop also refused a promised parish bus and cash rewards for the parish choir and Pontifical Missionary Childhood, citing the need to uphold the Church's integrity and independence.



Anyolo highlighted Kenya's Public Fundraising Appeals Bill 2024, which requires permits for such donations, and emphasised the Catholic Church's long-standing stance against using religious events for political gain.

“The Church must remain neutral and avoid contributions that could compromise her independence or facilitate unjust enrichment,” Anyolo said, urging politicians to focus on addressing corruption, human rights violations, and other pressing national issues.

The archbishop reiterated that political leaders are welcome to participate in worship but must refrain from using the pulpit as a platform for political self-promotion. — CNA

Laypeople should have a greater voice in choosing their bishop

Since the role of bishops in the Catholic Church is so important to the life of a local church, the process by which a bishop is chosen has tremendous consequences for ordinary Catholics, and yet, they currently have no say in choosing their bishop.

The members of the Synod on Synodality recognised that this is a problem and in their final document expressed the desire “that the People of God have a greater voice in choosing bishops.”

The current selection process is centralised in the Vatican, giving the Pope ultimate authority in the process.

It begins with the bishops of a province drawing up a list of priests they think could be candidates for the episcopacy. These names are given to the nuncio, the Pope’s representative in a country, who is responsible for drawing up a *terna*, a list of three candidates for a vacant see. He can nominate someone outside of these lists if he wants.

The nuncio writes a report on each candidate using any source available, including a confidential questionnaire that he sends to selected clergy and laypeople who know the candidate. This questionnaire has been revised in different papacies.

Normally, the nuncio also seeks the opinion of the bishops of the province, as well as officers of the bishops’ conference and other important prelates in the country.

The nuncio writes a report describing the diocese needing a new bishop. Pio Laghi, the Pope’s representative to the United States from 1980-1990, compared the process to an architect trying to find a statue of a saint to fit a niche in a cathedral.

For example, if the diocese had been rocked by sexual abuse, they would look for someone who has credibility in dealing with abuse. If the diocese was in financial straits, they would look for a fundraiser with financial skills. If the diocese was divided, they



Bishops and cardinals concelebrate Mass with Pope Francis to open the second assembly of the Synod on Synodality on October 2, 2024, in St. Peter’s Square. (Vatican Media)

would look for a peacemaker.

Each pope also has criteria that he wants the nuncio to look for in candidates. Prior to the Second Vatican Council, many complained that the American bishops were more like bankers and builders than pastors. Paul VI wanted more pastoral bishops. John Paul II stressed the importance of unity with, and loyalty to, the papacy. Pope Francis wants bishops who are pastoral and close to the poor, “shepherds who smell like their sheep.”

The *terna* and reports are sent to the Dicastery for Bishops, where they are examined by the staff and submitted to the committee of cardinals and bishops in charge of the dicastery. If they don’t like the candidates, the nuncio is asked to submit another list. Ultimately, the committee votes on the candidates and submits its recommendation to the pope, who can accept or reject their suggestion.

There is very little room in the process for input from the clergy and laity of the diocese, except for the individuals who are sent questionnaires by the nuncio.

The process does allow for consulting the

local Church about the needs of the diocese and the type of bishop needed, but people usually want Jesus Christ with an MBA from Harvard, and he is not available. Under the current rules, there can be no public discussion of names, either for or against. The Vatican believes any public discussion of candidates would be divisive and lead to factions supporting and opposing candidates.

The central role of the pope in the selection of bishops is a modern phenomenon. In the early Church, when a bishop died, the people would gather in the cathedral and choose a new bishop, who could be a priest or layman. Eventually, the suffrage was limited to the clergy or a part of the clergy, for example, the cathedral chapter.

However this did not necessarily eliminate the laity from the process. Pope Leo the Great in the fifth century believed a true bishop should be elected by the clergy, accepted by the people and ordained by the bishops of the surrounding dioceses.

Sadly, as the Church grew rich and powerful, kings and nobles interfered in the process through threats or bribery. With the destruction of the monarchies in the 19th century,

reformers saw the papacy as the institution that would appoint bishops who would serve the good of the Church rather than the political ends of the state.

Today, reformers would like to see the Church return to the more ancient practice of electing bishops at the local level, either by the laity or the clergy. While this might work in democratic countries that respect the independence of the Church, history warns us that political elites and dictators would likely interfere in the elections.

The Synod on Synodality is inviting us to a conversation about how to give the people a greater voice in the selection of bishops. This conversation should be done in a synodal fashion where we listen to all voices in determining where the Spirit is leading us today.

Diocesan consultative bodies (presbyteral councils, pastoral councils, synods) should be given a role since they are representative of the laity and priests. Could they nominate candidates or be given a consultative vote on the *terna* prepared by the nuncio? Should such participation be public or confidential?

The Catholic Church could also learn from other churches that use different methods of choosing their leaders.

All this discussion could lead to the development of several models of selecting bishops that could be tested in various situations at the discretion of a nuncio.

History shows us that bishops have been selected in many ways over the centuries, and each way had its problems. There is no perfect way of selecting bishops. Even Jesus got it wrong one out of 12 times.

Pope Leo was wise in proposing a system of checks and balances that involved the clergy, laity and the college of bishops. It is time to experiment with new ways of selecting bishops so “that the People of God have a greater voice in choosing bishops.”

Fr Thomas J. Reese, America

Pedro Arrupe: A step further in the Jesuit’s beatification process

In a step closer towards the beatification, the diocesan phase of the sainthood cause of Jesuit Fr Pedro Arrupe, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus from 1965 to 1983, concluded in Rome.

The diocesan process concluded November 14, the anniversary of Arrupe’s birth, at the Apostolic Palace of the Lateran in Rome. It brings to a close the initial phase of an extensive investigation into Arrupe’s life. Following the opening of his beatification cause in 2019, the tribunal began collecting oral and documentary evidence to support what is known as his “reputation for holiness.”

The investigation took over six years, with more than 70 witnesses interviewed in Rome, Madrid, and Japan, where the former Superior General lived.

Ten thousand pages of unpublished writings

A historical commission composed of Gianni La Bella, Monica Borsari, Robert Danieluk SJ, Massimo De Giuseppe, and Carlo Luongo also compiled nearly 10,000 pages of unpublished writings by Fr Arrupe, particularly his correspondence with Jesuits and others during his leadership in Rome. “It’s not an exaggeration to think he wrote an average of 20 letters per day during

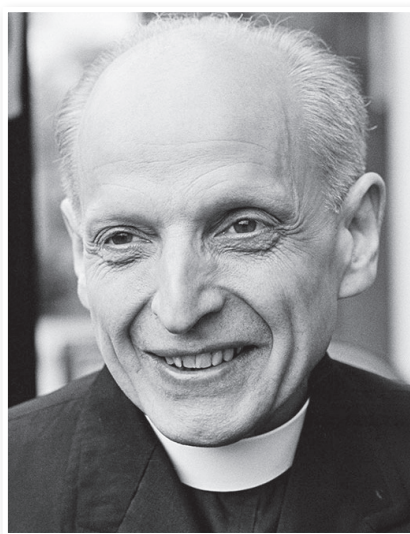
his 18 years at the head of the Society and the 15 years he presided over the male religious life,” noted the Society of Jesus in a Nov 8 communiqué announcing the closing of the diocesan phase.

“All this documentation has been consulted to find the most significant aspects of his personality and activity,” the Jesuits said. “Several theological censors examined his numerous published writings – some of which are in Japanese only – and found that they contained nothing contrary to the Church’s ‘faith and morals.’”

The historical commission prepared a detailed report based on the collected documents, which was presented Nov 14 at a public session and sealed in wax-stamped boxes.

Acts of Fr Arrupe

The Acts will then be sent to the Dicastery for Saints’ Causes, where the canonical process’ so-called “Roman” phase will begin. Once



the Acts are certified, the dicastery will open the drafting of the Positio by the Jesuit’s General Postulation. Consolidated into one or two volumes, the Acts will finally be reviewed and judged by the “Church,” meaning theologians, bishops, and cardinals. This phase, which may take several years, could result in Fr Arrupe being declared venerable.

Born in the Spanish Basque country in 1907, Pedro Arrupe joined the Jesuits in 1927 and continued his studies in Belgium, the Netherlands, and the United States. Ordained in 1936, he was sent as a missionary to Japan in 1938, where he was arrested under suspicion of espionage after the Dec 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbour.

As novice master at the Jesuit novitiate on the outskirts of Hiroshima, he witnessed the city turn into a lake of fire following the atomic bombing on Aug 6, 1945, and was among the first to aid the thousands of victims, converting the novitiate into an impro-

vised hospital.

He was elected Father General of the Society of Jesus on May 22, 1965, six months before the end of Vatican II. As the 28th Superior General of the Society, Fr Arrupe faced the formidable task of guiding the then 28,500 Jesuits through the societal and ecclesial changes that followed the Council (1962-1965).

Founder of the Jesuit Refugee Service

He convened the 32nd General Congregation (from December 1974 to March 1975), which directed the Jesuits with a “Faith and Justice” mission and adopted the decree: *Our Mission Today: The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice*. His commitment to justice also led Fr Arrupe to establish the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS).

Suffering a stroke in 1981, Fr Arrupe was forced to step down. “More than ever, I find myself in God’s hands. This is what I wanted from my youth. Now, the initiative belongs entirely to God. It is a profound spiritual experience to feel so completely in God’s hands,” he said at the opening session of the 33rd General Congregation in 1983.

Fr Arrupe passed away on Feb 5, 1991. His beatification cause was officially opened exactly 28 years later. **Marguerite de Lasa, LCI** (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

Pilgrims of Hope: Strengthened by faith, guided by Christ, and transformed for the world



PRAYER PRISM

Fr Fabian Dicom

Pope Francis' prayer intention for December, *For Pilgrims of Hope*, invites us to journey into the heart of this Jubilee Year with three crucial calls: to strengthen our faith, to recognise the Risen Christ in our daily lives, and to be transformed into true Pilgrims of Christian Hope.

This Jubilee Year is more than a celebration. It is a providential, spiritual, and communal opportunity to reimagine how we live as disciples of Christ. It asks us to examine our faith, our encounters with Christ, and our commitment to hope in a way that reshapes our lives and our world.

Strengthened by Faith

Faith, the first pillar of the Pope's prayer intention, calls us into deeper trust and reliance on God. Faith is not merely belief but a dynamic relationship with the living God. I believe that it is a call to move beyond routine religious practices and rediscover a faith that transforms our hearts and communities. This call invites us to focus not on the pursuit of external piety but on fostering an interior conversion that leads us closer to Christ. As Pope Francis has often emphasised, faith is not static; it grows through prayer, sacramental life, and acts of love that embody God's unconditional love and mercy in the world.

In the Malaysian context, strengthening our faith includes confronting the realities around us with a Gospel perspective. Poverty, inequality, and marginalisation are not abstract concepts; they touch the lives of many in our country. Faith that does not lead us to action risks becoming a sterile exercise. This Jubilee challenges us to ensure that our faith inspires and sustains efforts for justice, inclusion, and care for the least among us. These in turn strengthen our faith.

Recognising the Risen Christ in daily life

The second invitation of the Pope's prayer intention is to recognise the Risen Christ in our daily lives. This recognition requires a spiritual vision that sees beyond appearances, discerning Christ's presence in the poor, the

suffering, and the marginalised.

In Malaysia, the face of Christ is visible in the urban poor, rural communities struggling for necessities, migrant workers, and refugees. Their struggles and resilience reveal the living Christ, who walks among us today. Jesus' words in Matthew 25:40 — "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of My family, you did it to Me." — challenge us to seek Him not only in the Eucharist but also in the peripheries of our society.

The Latin American Bishops (CELAM) in the *Aparecida Document* (2007), drafted under the leadership of then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio (now Pope Francis), highlight the evangelising role of the poor. The poor evangelise us by showing us the suffering face of Christ, reminding us that encountering Jesus in them is central to our faith. Defending their rights and recognising their dignity is essential for the Church's faithfulness to Christ, for it is in friendship with the poor that we truly unite ourselves to Him. (*Aparecida Document* 257).

This Jubilee Year reminds us that true encounter with Christ is not one-sided. When we walk with the marginalised, listening to their stories and accompanying their struggles, we allow them to teach and transform us. Such encounters deepen our faith, widen our compassion, and bring us closer to the heart of the Gospel.

Recognising the Risen Christ also means seeing Him in the ordinary. Pope Francis often emphasises that Christ is present in our relationships, in acts of kindness, and in the beauty of creation. This Jubilee calls us to cultivate awareness of His presence in every moment, making each day a sacred pilgrimage.

Transformed into Pilgrims of Hope

The final aspect of the Pope's prayer intention is the transformation into Pilgrims of Christian Hope. What does it mean to be

such pilgrims? It means embracing hope as both a gift and a mission. Hope, as moral theologian Fr James Keenan SJ, explains, is God's concrete interest in us, sustaining us in our darkest moments. It is not loud or overwhelming but gentle and steady — often when we are most exhausted or uncertain — a breath of the Spirit assuring us of God's steadfast presence. It enables us to hold on, even amid the challenges of life.

To be a pilgrim of hope is to trust in this divine gift while actively working to bring hope to others. Pope Francis calls us to a hope that engages the world — a hope that feeds the hungry, welcomes the stranger, and heals the wounds of creation. Hope is not passive waiting but a commitment to building a future shaped by God's love and justice.

This Jubilee Year invites us to rethink the pilgrimage itself. Traditional pilgrimages to sacred sites are valuable, but the Jubilee challenges us to expand our understanding. What if our most meaningful pilgrimages are to the peripheries — walking with the poor, accompanying the excluded, and standing in solidarity with the marginalised?

In Malaysia, such pilgrimages might include advocating for fair wages for migrant workers, supporting education for refugee children, or engaging in ecological stewardship in line with *Laudato Si'*. These journeys are not just acts of service but deep and meaningful encounters with Christ, who transforms us through our solidarity with the least of our brothers and sisters.

Fr Gustavo Gutiérrez, the father of liberation theology, reminds us that the poor are not merely recipients of our charity but active agents in God's salvific plan. By journeying with them, we become participants in God's work of liberation and transformation.

A Call to the Malaysian Church

For the Church in Malaysia, the Jubilee

Year is a call to renewal. It asks us to move beyond superficial practices and embrace the transformative mission of Christ. Imagine pilgrimages that lead us not only to physical destinations but into solidarity with the poor. What if parishes prioritised outreach to marginalised communities' over-elaborate devotional activities? What if dioceses organised pilgrimages of service, where the faithful accompanied the excluded and advocated for justice?

The Malaysian Church is also called to care for creation, recognising the interconnectedness of environmental degradation and human suffering. Our response to the ecological crisis in the form of an ecological pilgrimage of stewardship and care for creation will be a testament to our faith and hope, reflecting our commitment to the common good and future generations.

Hope for Today and Tomorrow

Hope is the thread that runs through the entire Jubilee Year. It is the trust that God's Kingdom is breaking through, even amid adversity. It is the conviction that our small acts of love and justice contribute to the transformation of the world.

As Pilgrims of Hope, we are invited to walk together, drawing strength from one another and from God. In our families, workplaces, and communities, we are called to act with courage and compassion, building a future that reflects God's love.

Pope Francis reminds us that hope is not just about waiting for a better future; it is about building it. This Jubilee Year is our opportunity to participate in this sacred work, walking together as disciples who listen, serve, and hope.

Conclusion

The Jubilee Year is a sacred journey — a pilgrimage not just to holy sites but to the heart of our faith. It calls us to strengthen our trust in God, recognise Christ in the faces of the marginalised, and be transformed by hope.

For the Malaysian Church, this is a call to act boldly: to centre the margins, walk with the poor, and care for creation. Let us answer this call, trusting that as we walk together in faith and hope, we draw closer to Christ and to the world He envisions.

Fr Fabian Dicom is the National Office Director for Caritas Malaysia.



(Caritas Malaysia facebook)

Why a well-loved diocesan priest traded city life for a hut in Malaysia's forests — and the people who now call him family.

Leaving comfort for the call of the jungle

He was the youngest in his graduating class of 1968 at College General, the regional major seminary in Penang, then under the care of the MEP Mission.

Following his ordination, Fr Anthony Naden seemed to have everything a parish priest could hope for — a vibrant congregation, a strong connection with parishioners, and fluency in both Tamil and English, which allowed him to engage deeply with his community. Serving in several parishes in the city, he was young, well-loved, and highly respected. Yet, despite these blessings, he felt unfulfilled, haunted by a sense that he had not yet found his true calling. He realised he was meant for something beyond the comfortable life he was leading in Kuala Lumpur.

In a decision both radical and inspired, Fr Naden chose to follow in the footsteps of St Francis of Assisi, leaving behind the comforts of parish life to live among the Orang Asli, Malaysia's indigenous people. Over 30 years ago, with a somewhat reluctant blessing from the then archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, Most Rev Soter Fernandez, Fr Naden packed his meagre belongings, left the city, and ventured into the jungles of Malaysia — without bidding farewell to anyone. Among the forgotten, underprivileged, and underserved, he sought the deeper purpose that had long evaded him.

With the support of a generous Catholic businessman, Fr Naden was gifted a five-acre plot of untouched, forested land (over 20,000 square metres) to establish his ministry. He began with a humble hut as his shelter and a small adjacent hut, which served as a chapel for any visitors who might arrive.

Grateful and determined, Fr Naden employed members of the Orang Asli community to help clear and cultivate the land, planting coconuts, rambutans, mangosteens, durians, and a variety of vegetables. Together, they also dug a large pond, stocking it with fish for sale at local markets. This farm not only provided a sustainable income but also restored a sense of dignity to the Orang Asli, many of whom had faced poverty and limited job opportunities. The fishpond, in particular, became a reliable source of income, with local restaurant owners regularly purchasing fresh fish for their menus. Fr Naden was proud that he could offer employment and a better future for the community's members.

Unfortunately, the venture encountered a devastating setback when a neighbouring farmer began



Fr Naden with members of the Recycling Team from the Church of the Visitation, Seremban during their visit in September 2023. (Pic Visitation parish website)

cultivating an acre of dragon fruit. Heavy rainfall caused fertiliser runoff from the plantation to flow into Fr Naden's pond, resulting in the sudden death of over 800 fish overnight. Following this incident, the pond was closed, bringing that part of the business to an abrupt halt.

Fr Naden devotes much of his time to personal prayer and meditation, spending an hour each day in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in a small hut which serves as a chapel, where he celebrates daily Mass, often alone. For guests seeking quiet reflection and spiritual guidance, he offers a simple, unassuming hut with minimal comforts — a wooden bed and a straw mat. These humble conditions, however, are not for the faint-hearted, and many politely decline, especially after hearing him tell of one unforgettable morning, when he awoke to find a massive python curled up beside him, resting near his bed as if it too had come to seek sanctuary. Responding to his call for help, the villagers arrived quickly, skilfully capturing the serpent and selling it to the Chinese medicine man for RM50.00, leaving Fr Naden with yet another remarkable tale from his life in the wilderness.

During a recent visit from a clergy friend, Fr Naden spoke with remarkable joy and serenity about his own death, viewing it as a natural passage rather

than an end. With characteristic simplicity, he shared his wishes for his funeral. His nephew, who is also a priest, visits him monthly, and Fr Naden has carefully instructed him about carrying out these final requests.

"Make it simple," he said with a peaceful smile. "No coffin — just wrap me in plain cloth." He envisions his

nephew leading the funeral service, offering heartfelt Scripture readings, psalms, and final prayers before gently lowering him into the grave. This final act of love and devotion reflects the humility and simplicity that have defined Fr Naden's life of faith and service.

He remains an avid reader and, as he says, a lifelong student of theology. His love for books

took root in his seminary days when, as a major seminarian, he was appointed chief librarian and given the task of building a complete library of English Scripture and Theology books following Vatican II's shift away from Latin, which he carried out with dedication.

As Fr Naden lived out his faith through acts of kindness and service, his nightly teachings drew the interest of the Asli community. Small groups soon started gathering, and several individuals embraced Christianity. This journey of faith culminated in the first of many baptisms, held during the Easter Vigil the following year.



Fr Anthony Naden

Beyond just providing work, Fr Naden became a father figure to the community, offering fair wages while teaching the people of his new home essential skills like fishing, farming, and financial independence. His efforts have transformed countless lives, enabling some families to move to urban areas, provide education for their children, and break free from the cycle of poverty. One poignant success story is that of a family whose daughter, now a registered nurse in Singapore, credits her achievements to Fr Naden's unwavering support and encouragement. The entire family visited him recently to express their heartfelt gratitude.

At 81, Fr Naden, now frail and struggling with mobility issues, continues his ministry of prayer, offering intercessions for those who reach out to him by mail or on his humble first-generation mobile phone. His prayers extend to his classmates, fellow priests who are now retired or facing illness after years of dedicated service in parishes across Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. Despite his health challenges, Fr Naden remains steadfast in his commitment to the people and the place he calls home. Archbishop Julian Leow, the Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, makes time to visit him in the jungle, offering opportunities for a quiet retirement back in the city. Yet, Fr Naden declines each time, finding his peace and purpose in the simplicity of his surroundings and the community he loves and cherishes.

When asked if he worries about his legacy, Fr Naden responds with a gentle smile and a slight shrug, pointing heavenward. "He knows," he says simply. And indeed, God does. The archdiocese is deeply committed to continuing Fr Naden's mission. Diocesan priest Fr Paulino Miranda is currently working with the Orang Asli in another location, carrying forward this vital ministry. Moreover, Fr Naden has spent years equipping native leaders to minister within their own communities, ensuring that the seeds he has planted will continue to bear fruit for generations to come.

With every soul touched, Fr Anthony Naden's life speaks of faith, service, and a deep-rooted sense of belonging that transcends the allure of city comforts. He remains a truly joyful priest — a rare gem who reflects the heart of Jesus, the Eternal High Priest. **JF**

The Christmas obsession

And finally, Advent 2024 has dawned on us, and for most people, the Christmas frenzy will now begin. Not for me though, as I've started my Christmas a month ago. Or maybe more.

Yes, for the uninitiated, I'm one of those Christmas-obsessed people who begin the season mania way before it is generally acceptable. Last year, I had my tree up in September, this year, I waited until after All Souls Day at least. But of course, the carols have been ringing in my home since August, to the chagrin of many.

While these days, it may seem cool to mock or dismiss the Christmas obsession, I, for one, am not ashamed to admit that I love everything the Christmas season brings – the tree, the baubles and bows and tinsel, the carols, the baking, the shopping, the food, the message, the reason for the season, the presents, the family and friends get-togethers, and mostly, that little hope and joy and Christmas magic you feel in your heart which rises to your brain, and makes you all aglow from the inside. So why not make these feelings last just a little longer?

Psychology states Christmas joy is associated with nostalgia, and true to its word, I've been blessed with wonderful memories of Christmases all my life. Looking back, I realise that my obsession with Christmas goes back to a time in my life that was associated with those holly-jolly memories.

Christmas Past

Growing up, Christmas was always pomp and splendour, both in my family and the community I grew up in, despite the little that we had, tacky deco and all. That said, Christmas Day itself was

usually dull in comparison to the days and weeks that led up to it. As I got older, Christmas festivities would begin in early November with carolling practice in our BEC and Christmas play preparations in our parish.

Most of this spirit is associated with my mom who, to this day, goes out of her way to make Christmas special. There was a time when sending Christmas cards was a thing. I would sit with my mom as she wrote cards for everyone, and like an obedient child, my job was to seal the envelopes and put stamps on them. My mom used to buy presents for everyone in the wider family, both on my mom's and dad's side, and again, we used to spend a lot of time, making lists of people we needed to buy gifts for, going shopping for them, and spend nights wrapping up the gifts, and writing names on them.

Then, of course, there was all that baking to be done. Again, I've been blessed with a collective family where, to this day, the Christmas cookies baking is a few days' event on its own, where we will all gather in one house (usually my aunt's) and go on a baking escapade. My task evolved as I grew, it started with arranging cookies in the jar, and from then it just spiralled to helping with putting on jam on the tarts, to rolling and cutting, managing the oven and bake time, and these days, I can make the dough, but it was always a big family activity and I love every moment of it. This tradition is still alive in our families.

As a child, we used to spend Christmas



On the Fence

JACELYN JOHNSON

with my dad's side of the family, whom we met once a year. My grandma lived in a village in Sitiawan, Perak, and every year, we would wrap things up at home, and pack the car with all the presents and cookies, and my dad would take us in his tiny car on a four-hour drive with Christmas songs playing and we would sing along throughout the journey. We would arrive at my grandma's in time to put up a huge Christmas tree (seemed huge at that time) and there would be mountains of presents under the tree – something from everyone for everyone. Because it was a village, and my grandma had a farm, Christmas Eve would include catching a turkey from her backyard, culling it, and my aunt would make a beautiful roast for our Christmas Eve supper, which would be after the midnight Mass. This was a time when all my dad's siblings and their families would gather, and it was the only time of year when everyone gathered under one roof.

Christmas Present

Now that I am an adult in my own right, and we no longer have carolling practices to go to, Christmas plays to organise, or grandma's house to drive to, I have taken it into my own hands. We decorate my mom's place like a mall, because of the amount of decorations we have collected over the years, and each year, we compete with ourselves, so that it is more extravagant than the last. We make it a point to have a Christmas Eve dinner so that all my aunts, uncles and cousins

have a place to come to, and no one is on their own on Christmas Eve, and there are presents for everyone under the tree.

When I started living on my own, I also started a tradition where I have little Christmas parties every weekend of Advent for different groups of friends or family, and I love hosting them, as, firstly, I get to make all those Christmas foods I see on Instagram, and also, sometimes, it's the only time of year that I meet some of the people. It gives me that chance to keep in touch with everyone despite the year we've had. To me, this is the true embodiment of the Christmas spirit I grew up with, spreading love and joy, and cheer and food with our nearest and dearest.

Christmas Future

I do not know what the future holds, but Christmas this year is extra special as I start a new tradition for our little bundle of joy. As a first-time mom, I intend to make Christmas special for my little one, so that he too will get to experience that Christmas magic that my mom had created for me all my life. And although he is a wee bit little at four months old and may not remember much, it's never too early to start a tradition, and at least for him, he will have pictures of his first Christmas.

Wishing everyone a blessed Advent, and I hope this Christmas, you do what makes you happy, and always believe in the magic of Christmas, and celebrate Jesus as the reason for the season.

Jacelyn Johnson enjoys the occasional religious discourse and says it as it is, in an attempt to diffuse stereotypical observations.

What I demand for Christmas

When I realised that I would not be in time for the weekday Mass, even though I was already on my way to church, I felt invited by the Lord to have an early dinner instead.

As I sat down at my favourite chicken rice stall, and given that I had more than an hour to spare before the start of the workshop I was running that evening, I felt led to take my time to quietly enjoy my meal. This eventually reminded me of

my time during a silent retreat, where we learnt as retreatants to slow down and take our time to be present to God by being present to what we were eating. It was therefore in this moment of enjoying my meal and being present to everything that was happening around me, including the people who were walking past me or talking beside me, that I suddenly and deeply felt the strong presence of God.

"If it were easy to live in the now, everyone would do it... What you must learn in order to be not dead but alive – in this moment – is to drop your demands... That is our basic problem... We are not willing to accept what simply is." (From *Losing Your Faith, Finding Your Soul*, David Anderson)

It would have been easy for me to get upset with myself for not making it in time for Mass, to blame the traffic on



Word Made Fresh

NICHOLAS LYE

the road that prolonged the travel time and caused the delay, or to let this event of not making it for Mass ruin the rest of the day for me.

Instead, I chose to drop the demand for the roads to be clear for my sake, the demand for everything to go according to my plan for my benefit, and even the demand to go for Mass every day, even though it is encouraged and good for me. In place of my demands, I chose to accept the situation

simply for what it was and embrace the given moment to do what I still have control over and what I felt led by the Lord to do, which was to slow down and savour my meal and my surroundings in the holy presence of God.

"The only way to stay alive is to embrace the world – the whole thing, in all its contradictions and benedictions... consciously (deciding) that today, right now, I will love what is... Your only salvation in this moment is to admit that you cannot change the world, that the one who needs to be changed is you." (From *Losing Your Faith, Finding Your Soul*, David Anderson)

As I reflect on Mary and Joseph in this season of Advent, I believe that they too learnt to drop their demands and desires amidst the confusion and controversy of Mary's virgin birth, and simply accept all

that the Lord had planned and desired for them. Mary could not control what the people in her village might think of her. Joseph could not change the decree for a census to be conducted, which 'forced' them to leave Nazareth to go to Bethlehem. Neither could Mary and Joseph change the fact that there was no other room to have their child apart from a dirty, smelly stable.

Still, they chose to embrace the world as it was, with all the challenging things, along with all the blessings that still came their way in terms of God's providence and grace at work in their lives. By allowing themselves to be changed according to God's will and plan for them, and dropping their demands based on their limited understanding of what was best for them, it was through Mary's visit that Elizabeth encountered the strong presence of God; it was in a worn-out stable that Mary, Joseph and all the shepherds and wise men could experience the real presence of God in their midst.

"When you drop your demands for a better world than God created, you realise that you don't have to fix yourself and all those other faulty people... The people who are best prepared to change the world are those who have confronted their egos and no longer need to impose them on the world. These are finally the people who can cooperate with the Creator and Sustainer of it all, who can truly change the world because they

have allowed themselves to be changed... When we learn to accept things as they are, we are freed from the need to be the saviour of the world and can humbly allow God to work through us." (From 'Losing Your Faith, Finding Your Soul', David Anderson)

I too have been learning to drop my demands on situations around me, and on the people who sometimes hurt me or annoy me. I have been learning to be more present in God's presence amid circumstances that at first seem unlikely to reveal His presence. And the more I embrace people and the situation for what it is, and allow God to work in and through me, I begin to experience the birth of Christ in every unexpected, unwelcomed, untidy place and situation in my life and the world.

I pray that in this season of Advent, you may learn not to demand gifts from the Lord according to your plans and desires. Rather, may we learn to better drop our demands, embrace the world for what it is just as Christ does, so that we can be more open to letting God gift us with His true presence even in the most unlikely of situations, places and people. For when that truly happens, it is ultimately what God wants for us this Christmas.

Nicholas Lye is a lay missionary and creative evangelist who loves to use creativity and various art forms to share the faith and help people encounter God's truths in a fun and meaningful way



Fr Ron Rolheiser

The Tower of Babel

The opening pages of the Bible offer us a series of stories set at the beginning of history which are meant to explain why the world today is as it is. The Adam and Eve story about original sin is one of those stories. There are others. These stories, because they use imagery that might make them sound like fairy tales, can seem total fantasy to us, but they are stories that are truer than true. They happened. They happened to the first man and woman on this planet, and they continue to happen today in a way that affects every man and woman throughout history. They are stories of the heart, not meant to be taken literally, but carrying lessons for the heart.

One of these “in the beginning”, foundational, archetypal, stories is the story of the *Tower of Babel*. In street language, it goes like this: In the beginning (before time was like it is now) there was a town called Babel which decided it would make a name for itself by building a tower so impressive that all the other towns would have to admire it. They began building the tower, but something strange happened. As they were building it, they suddenly all began to speak different languages, were no longer able to understand each other, and scattered around the world, each now speaking in a language incomprehensible to everyone else.

What’s the lesson? Is this meant to ex-

plain the origin of the different languages of the world? No, rather, it is meant to explain the deep, seemingly irreconcilable misunderstandings among us. Why do we forever misunderstand each other? What’s at the origin of this?

There are multiple ways this story can be used to shed light on the divisions in our world today. Here’s one: Writing in *The Atlantic* last year, social psychologist Jonathan Haidt suggested that there is perhaps no better metaphor to explain the divisions among us today than the *Tower of Babel*. His argument runs this way: Social media, the very thing that was meant to connect us not only to our friends and families but to people from around the globe has, led to a radical fragmentation of our society and to the shattering of all that had seemed solid, the scattering of people who had been a community. Take America, for example; while we might still be speaking the same language, social media and cable news echo chambers have supplied us with different sets of facts, values, and visions that make actual conversation increasingly impossible.

As the recent tensions around the US Presidential elections made evident, as a society we no longer speak the same language in that we can no longer understand each other on virtually every key issue – global warming, immigration, poverty,

gender, health, abortion, the place of religion in the public sphere, whose side truth is on, and, most important of all, what truth is. We no longer share any common truths. Rather, we all have our own truth, our own individual language. As the popular saying goes, *I have done my own research! I don’t trust science. I don’t trust any mainstream truths. I have my own sources.*

And those sources are many, too many to count! Hundreds of television channels, countless podcasts and millions of persons feeding us their idiosyncratic version of things on social media so that now there is scepticism about any fact or truth. This is dividing us at every level: family, neighbourhood, church, country, and world. We are all now speaking different languages and, like the original inhabitants of Babel, are being scattered around the world.

In light of this, it is noteworthy how the original Pentecost is described in Scripture. The *Acts of the Apostles* describes Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, as an event which reverses what happened at the *Tower of Babel*. At the *Tower of Babel*, the languages (the “tongues”) of the earth divided and scattered. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descends on each person as a “tongue of fire” so that, to everyone’s great surprise, everyone now understands everyone one

else in his or her own language.

Again, what is being described here is not about literal human languages – where at Pentecost everyone suddenly understood Greek or Latin. Rather, everyone now understood everyone else in his or her own language. All languages became one language.

What is that common language? It’s neither Greek nor Latin nor English nor French nor Spanish nor Yiddish nor Chinese nor Arabic, nor any other of the world’s spoken languages. Neither is it the less-than-fully-compassionate language of the conservatives or the liberals. It is, as Jesus and our scriptures make clear, the language of *charity, joy, peace, patience, goodness, long-suffering, fidelity, gentleness, faith, and chastity.*

This is the only language which can bridge the misunderstandings and differences among us – and when we are speaking it, we will not be trying to build a tower to impress anyone.

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

Children should be seen and heard.... and celebrated!

I have just come away from my parish children’s choir practice, having enjoyed a few minutes of their angelic singing which enthralled me at the Masses for children. They don’t always behave like angels but children will be children and I simply cannot impose my grown-up expectations on them, at least nowadays. I remember my own niece suddenly crying out, ‘Tilam lama, tilam lama’ in a silent period at Mass in imitation of a man on a lorry in their neighbourhood selling mattresses – a case of wrong song, wrong place. Yet, the same child would sing her heart out at the Alleluia – and I wonder how she felt at Lent when we didn’t sing it.

The old adage that ‘Children should be seen not heard’ simply goes against my sensitivities when I see Jesus in the Gospels insisting that the children be brought to Him for a blessing, something that went against the grain of His time when they were not considered as important. Even His own disciples tried keeping them away! He went on to say that the kingdom of heaven belonged to people like them!

Maybe children today have a harder time being quiet and still in church, coming from a generation that is used to electronic gadgets and media – they find it hard to concentrate for long periods sometimes. In my childhood, my parents kept my brother and I apart in between them to stop us from fighting, and a pinch from my mother would certainly set us right. Parents have a responsibility to see that their children do not disrupt others in

prayer. Yet, I stand opposed to relegating children to so-called ‘cry-rooms’ (where there is more noise since they set each other off!), away from the community. I firmly believe that the cries of children at church are a good sign that the church will be alive in the next generation too. Yes, parents may have to take a particularly disruptive child out for a bit for some ‘time-out’ but I would be sorry if parents, embarrassed by their children, become permanently ‘out-standing’ Catholics. And surely, children with special needs like autism should find their place with us all.

Don’t get me wrong! I am all for discipline and order, but these come gradually. We were all kids once! Tell a child to be quiet and you may get a series of whys? I have found that when children have been exposed to special Masses for children (with the community) they begin to participate better at all Masses. Children love to sing and maybe we should consider them too in our hymn choices. Lyrics with over-heavy theology may be tough on them and even some adults too! Having the Living the Sunday Word (LSW), where children are taken away for the readings and homily made suitable for them and then joining the community again at the Offertory may be of great help, even though it may not be possible at every Mass. I have found children’s



**As I was
Contemplating**

FR GERARD THERAVIAM

missals, with the order of Mass with pictures, a great tool that can be used at home as well. Special celebrations after Mass on the Feast of Holy Innocents and other special days allow children to make happy memories of the church community and their place within it.

Having said all this, it is imperative that parents actually bring their children to Mass weekly. It pains me to see that some children come to catechism (where attendance is taken) but not for Mass. Straight after catechism, some of them are whisked away for ‘other activities’, and I wonder when the parents and family ever come to Mass. Some are very casual about skipping Masses in favour of trips and treats. On holy days of obligation, one realises that the parents have not made the point of bringing their children along, while many have also absented themselves.

Faith is caught, not taught – by the good example of their parents, whether at home or in church. You cannot tell your children to do what you don’t practise in your own life. The same for family prayer... No wonder many of these children fall away from the church right after Confirmation, maybe to re-emerge when it is time for a church wedding! They have gone through the motions, but we have failed to bring about a conversion

to Jesus and His church.

Staying on catechism, I realise that we must make it a point to not just touch the minds or intellect of our children and youth. Too often, catechism classes are poorly prepared, with the emphasis on facts and figures without ensuring that the heart is also touched. Our youngsters have enough of textbook teaching in school – they need creative experiential teaching that touches them and allows them to question – for when they do indeed question, they are more likely to come eventually to an informed and tested faith, rather than a superficial faith that hasn’t been worked at through life experiences and prayer.

It is good to see churches also nowadays having special changing areas for babies and special spaces for nursing mothers. This encourages new mothers to bring their babies along rather than staying at home with them. Also, churches have seen the importance of safeguarding children in the wake of abuse cases around us. All this augurs well to welcome the presence of children in our community.

May we welcome our children with joy into our churches as they have their important role TODAY, and they will lead the Church in the future.

Fr Gerard Theraviam is the parish priest of the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist in Kuala Lumpur, as well as the Spiritual Director to the World Community of Christian Meditation, Malaysia.

Little Catholics' corner

Dear children,

Today is the beginning of Advent when we start preparing for Christmas.

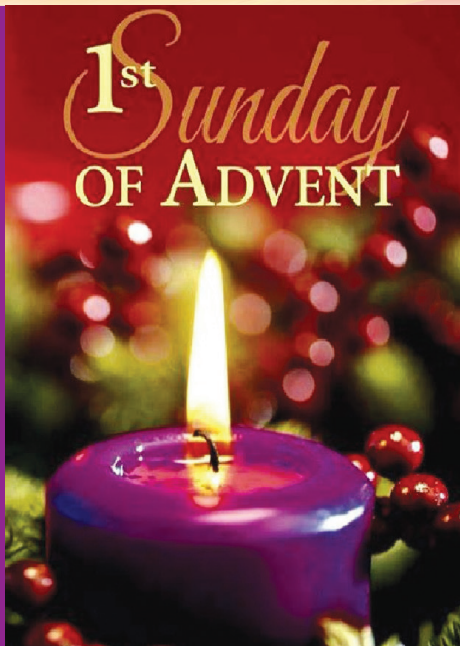
The word "advent" comes from the Latin word "coming".

In Advent, we prepare for Jesus' coming. We look forward to Christmas, which celebrates His first coming, and we also look forward to His second coming.

Did you know that the most important thing to have ready for Christmas is a clean soul?

During Advent, you can try extra hard to be good.

It is also a very good



idea to go to Confession before Christmas so that your soul will be good and clean when Jesus comes!

Love
Aunty Eliz

The Advent

Prophecy Candle

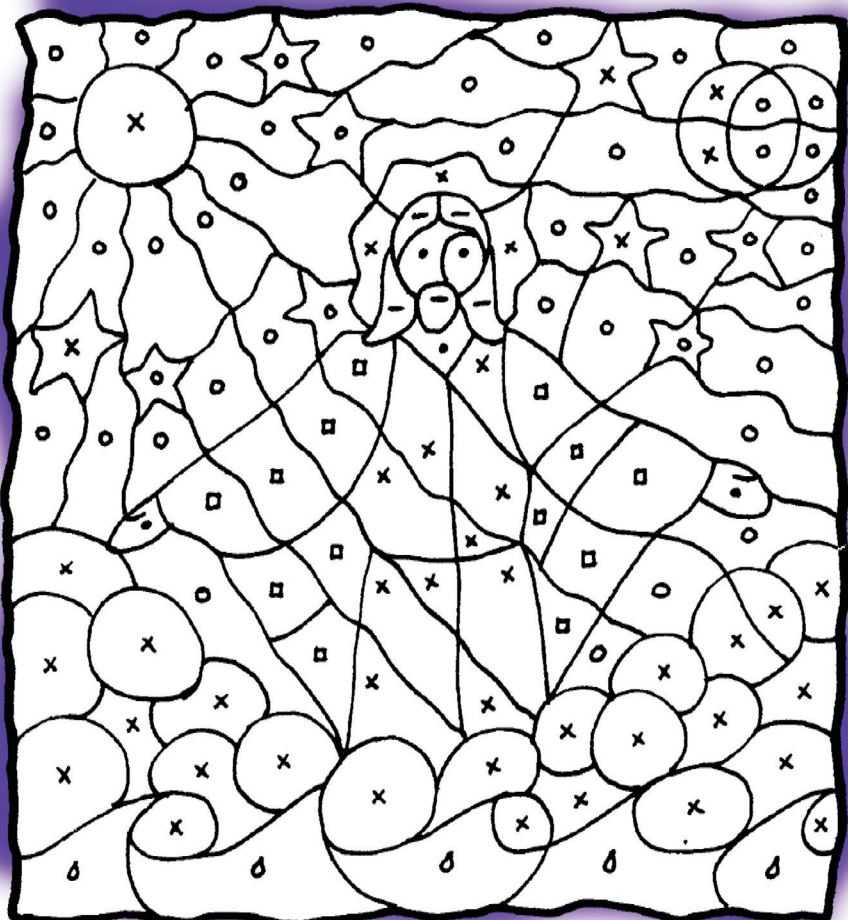
Bethlehem Candle

Find the hidden words

Word Search

Shepherds Candle

Angels Candle



Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

In today's Gospel reading Jesus talks about what is going to happen when He comes back at the end of the world.

Use the code to colour in the picture!

- | | | |
|---------|--------|---------------|
| × white | ◊ blue | • skin colour |
| ◦ black | ◻ red | - brown |

The Second Coming Word Puzzle

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Fill in the missing letters from today's first reading and copy them to finish the last line.

The days are c__ming (5), says __he (14)

Lo__d, (10) when I will f__llfill (9) the p__omise (6) I made to the __ouse (2) of Israel and Judah. In tho__e (13) days, in that tim__, (3) I will raise up for __avid (7) a just shoot; he shall d__ (8) what is right and jus__ (1) in the __and.(4) In those days __udah (11) shall be safe and Jer__salem (12) shall dw__ll (17) secure; th__s (15) is what they shall __all (16) her:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17			



Answer: The Lord our Justice



Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific Youth Ministers Meeting 2024



Ardie Barry Sailis

KUALA LUMPUR: The Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (JCAP) hosted the Youth Ministers Meeting 2024 from November 4 to November 7 at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre.

The delegates were from South Korea, Japan, the Chinese Province, the Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Singapore, Indonesia, East Timor, Australia, Pakistan, and Malaysia.

The meeting officially opened with Mass, presided over by Fr Jerome Leon, SJ, from Singapore followed by dinner. Delegates were given free time on the first night, providing them with an opportunity to network and set a collaborative and welcoming tone for the discussions and activities in the days ahead.

DAY 2

Each country representative was provided updates on the activities carried out since the last Asia Pacific Youth Ministers' meeting. Many shared successful initiatives that promoted skill development, leadership, and social engagement, which have had a positive impact on young people in their respective countries. It is also worth noting that a significant number of countries have MAGIS-trained youth who

have helped integrate MAGIS elements into youth activities, even in places where a formal MAGIS team has not been established.

The country representatives also highlighted their challenges in running MAGIS programmes, primarily due to limited resources, lack of local support, and scheduling conflicts. Many regions struggle to engage young people consistently, as school and work commitments make regular participation difficult. A shortage of trained leaders and volunteers further complicates efforts, particularly in places like Thailand, Cambodia, and Macau, where organised youth programmes are still developing. Political issues in some regions also hinder young people's involvement, as they face safety risks

and fewer opportunities for faith-based activities. Cultural factors, such as the rise of social media and secular lifestyles, contribute to feelings of isolation. Despite these challenges, each country remains committed to creating welcoming spaces for young people to grow in faith, develop resilience, and engage in social justice, supporting one another's work along the way. One key takeaway is that all participants are eager to collaborate on activities with other countries, learning from one another's experiences.

DAY 3

The third day centred on the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network (PWP), a Pontifical Society established in 1844 to mobilise Catholics worldwide in prayer

and action, particularly on issues of social and Church importance. Fr Alberto Irenus, SJ from Malaysia, provided a historical overview, explaining that PWP encompasses both traditional prayer practices and digital platforms, such as "Click To Pray" and "The Pope Video", which connect Catholics globally with the Pope's monthly prayer intentions. These platforms foster a sense of community and encourage shared prayer, making it more accessible and impactful in the modern age.

Fr Primitivo 'Jun' E. Viray, SJ, President of JCAP, also provided input on the third day where he discussed the broader mission of JCAP, which oversees the Jesuits' work across 16 nations in the Asia Pacific region. JCAP coordinates social ministries, education, and pastoral activities with a strong emphasis on local-global collaboration. He highlighted JCAP's 2021-2025 Apostolic Plan which focuses on integrating Ignatian spirituality, ecological conversion, and intercultural understanding. Key themes include fostering youth collaboration, promoting social justice, and building partnerships across faiths and cultures. Participants shared insights on the importance of dreaming together for the apostolic mission, particularly in the face of modern-day challenges such as globalisation and the impact of social media on youth perceptions, especially regarding Gen-Z, and the depth of their faith.



Fr Alberto Irenus SJ with the MAGIS youth.

● Continued on Pg 17

TAMPIN PARISH HOSTS YOUTH EMPOWERMENT CAMP

Jennifer Junita Franklin

NEGERI SEMBILAN: The youth from Tampin gathered for a transformative Empowerment Camp at the Church of St John Marie Vianney from November 1-3. The enriching programme brought together 35 participants, including matriculation students from Kuala Pilah and Gemas, alongside local youth, for an immersive spiritual experience.

The camp provided a vibrant platform to deepen their faith, nurture devotion, strengthen community bonds, and delve into the essence of Catholic teachings and spiritual relationships.

The camp commenced with registration, followed by Saints' Day Mass, which featured a solemn procession in honour of the saints. That evening, participants joined the "Puji Sembah" session, a time of heartfelt praise and worship, before engaging in ice-breaking activities. The day concluded with evening prayers, creating a reflective and spiritual atmosphere for the activities to come.

Thesecond day began with morning prayers, followed by small group spiritual discussions. Participants then participated in the All Souls' Day Mass at a local cemetery, walking



Youth lighting the candles before praying the Rosary.

there while collecting litter along the way as an act of environmental stewardship. This activity highlighted themes of eternal life, care for creation, and service to the world.

Bro Charles Borromeo delivered an inspiring talk on *Vocation and Ministry in the Catholic Church*, reminding the youth that every baptised individual is called to witness

Christ's love. Drawing from Mary's example of unwavering faith and submission to God's will, Bro Charles encouraged the youth to embrace ministry and reflect Christ's love through their lives.

A session led by Fennedy Finjau explored the role of advocacy among Catholic youth. He emphasised that advocacy is

not only a reflection of living faith but also a powerful means to address pressing issues such as human rights, social justice, and community welfare. Fennedy urged the youth to become voices for the marginalised and

to integrate Gospel values into their efforts for societal change.

The final day began with the Rosary and Mass, culminating in a mission blessing to send the youth forth with renewed faith. Throughout the camp, parish priest, Fr Albet Arockiasamy, delivered a series of reflections centred on Jesus' message in John

10:10 about living a full and abundant life. He emphasised the importance of testimony, love for others, adherence to God's law, and prayer, encouraging the youth to follow Jesus' commandments and the example of Mother Mary.

Fr Albet also highlighted the interconnectedness of ecology, the Church, family, and society in Christian service, urging the youth to become agents of love and care within their communities.

With 35 participants, the camp successfully deepened their faith, inspired a sense of mission, and empowered the youth to become catalysts of change, spreading Christ's love, justice, and compassion within their communities.



Be Pilgrims of Hope

● Continued from Pg 16

DAY 4

The final day of the meeting was an exciting one. Taiwan, the host for the 2025 MAGIS Asia Pacific proposed the theme "Pilgrims of Hope" for the upcoming event. Drawing from their own MAGIS journey, which includes early development, tailored adaptations for local youth, and ongoing improvements, they proposed that the programme include pilgrimages that connect participants with local culture and ecology, concluding with a cultural night and Mass celebration. Participants expressed hope that MAGIS Asia Pacific will provide youth

with faith-sharing opportunities across various countries, but they also acknowledged challenges, such as insufficient manpower. The date for the event was confirmed during the meeting.

Korea also provided updates on the planning for the upcoming MAGIS World Youth Day 2027, which will be held in Seoul. Korea addressed the challenges involved in organising this global event, including language barriers, cultural differences, and the logistical demands of hosting a large-scale event in a megacity. The possibility of JCAP collaborating in the organisation of the next World Youth Day was also explored. The closing sessions reviewed JCAP's vision and discussed how it can continue to inspire young people amid rapid globalisation and the challenges of maintaining spiritual depth.

All the delegates then adjourned to the Church of St Francis Xavier (SFX) in Petaling Jaya, where they were given a tour of the church. The closing Mass, animated by the youth of the parish, was held at the church, followed by a fellowship gathering. Youth from various youth ministries at SFX participated in the fellowship, taking the opportunity to mingle and connect with the delegates. It was truly a beautiful celebration to close the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific Youth Ministers' Meeting 2024.



Korean representative sharing the planning of the 2027 World Youth Day.



Korean Catholics welcome saintly Italian teen's relics



South Korean clergy and young Catholics pose for a photo after receiving the relics of Italian teen and youth idol Carlo Acutis in Seoul on November 15, 2024. (ucanews/Archdiocese of Seoul)

SEOUL: South Korean clergy and young Catholics have welcomed the relics of Italian teen and youth idol Carlo Acutis who will be canonised on April 27, 2025 during the Jubilee of Youth.

Archbishop Peter Chung Soon-taick of Seoul archdiocese received 16 pieces of hair belonging to Acutis from Fr Will Conquer of the Paris Foreign Missions Society (MEP) on Nov 15, a press release from the archdiocese said.

The relics, accompanied by a certificate of authenticity, arrived as the archdiocese prepares to host World Youth Day 2027 in the national capital.

During the ceremony, Fr Dominic Jung Young-jin Jung, archdiocesan chancellor, Fr Matteo Choi Kwang-hee, archdiocesan spokesperson, Fr Peter Yang Joo-yul, executive secretary of the Local Organising Committee for WYD Seoul 2027

and six representatives of the youth community were present.

A press release from the archdiocese stated, "The Archdiocese of Seoul eagerly anticipates sharing the enduring message of Blessed Carlo Acutis as it prepares for the forthcoming WYD celebration, ensuring that his journey of faith resonates profoundly with the youth of Korea and beyond."

Pope Francis announced Seoul as the next WYD venue during the last gathering in Lisbon, Portugal in August last year.

World Youth Day is a triennial global Catholic event initiated by Pope John Paul II in 1985.

The weeklong event draws tens of thousands of Catholic youths from various parts of the world to celebrate faith through song, dance, prayer, and the sharing of experiences in the presence of the Pope. ucanews.com

Seeking viable paths to achieve peace in Ukraine

November 18 marked one thousand days since February 24, 2022, when the Russian Federation's army, under the orders of President Vladimir Putin, attacked and invaded Ukraine.

They have been one thousand days marked by an incalculable — but staggering — number of deaths, both civilian and military, as well as innocent victims, including children killed in the streets, in schools, and in their homes.

These one thousand days were filled with hundreds of thousands of wounded and traumatised individuals, many left permanently disabled, and families left homeless, leaving a nation martyred and devastated.

Nothing can justify this tragedy, which could have been avoided if everyone had placed their bets on what Pope Francis calls "patterns of peace," rather than succumbing to the presumed inevitability of conflict.

This war, like every other, is always accompanied by vested interests — chiefly, the global arms industry, a business that knows no crisis and has thrived even during the recent pandemic, in both East and West alike.

The sombre milestone of one thousand days since the beginning of the military aggression against Ukraine should prompt a single

question: How can this conflict be ended? How can we achieve a ceasefire and, eventually, a just peace? How can negotiations — the "honest talks" recently referred to by the Successor of Peter — be initiated to reach "honourable compromises" and put an end to a harrowing spiral that risks dragging the world towards the abyss of nuclear war?

We cannot turn a blind eye. The diplomatic landscape seems lifeless, with little to inspire hope beyond the electoral promises of the newly-elected President of the United States.

However, a truce — and subsequently, negotiated peace — should be a goal pursued by all and cannot rest on the commitments of a single leader.

What, then, can be done? How can Europe, in particular, reclaim a role worthy of its history and of the leaders who, in the postwar period, built a community of nations that guaranteed decades of peace and cooperation on the Old Continent?

Instead of focusing on a frenzied arms race and military alliances that seemed obsolete relics of the Cold War, the West might consider the growing number of nations that do not align with this framework. **Andrea Tornielli, Vatican News**

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IN LOVING MEMORY OF

24th Anniversary

1st Anniversary



Vincent Gabriel Pereira

Departed:
4 December 2000

"Acknowledge that the Lord is God. He made us and we belong to him."
Psalm 100:3

Our thoughts are forever with you,
Though you have passed away,
But those who loved you dearly,
Are thinking of you today.

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

Fondly remembered by
Dr Xavier Pereira,
Dr Emmanuel Pereira,
Dr Sharuna Verghis, Rita Morris,
Molly Anne, Michael Raja,
grandchildren, relatives and friends.



Gregory Lily Pereira

Departed:
5 December 2023

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith"
2 Timothy 4:7



12th Anniversary In Loving Memory of

Betty Sivasothy nee Scully

From the Lord:
07-07-1926
To the Lord:
01-12-2012

"We want you to be quite certain, brothers, about those who have fallen asleep, to make sure that you do not grieve for them, as others do who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and that in the same way God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14."

Always remembered and deeply missed by sons, in-laws, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and friends.

26th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



**EDWARD FERNANDEZ
(Razak Mansion)**
6.6.1930 - 4.12.1998

In loving memory of our Papa, a kind & giving man who touched the hearts of many.
His legacy of generosity & compassion continues to inspire us everyday.
If you're reading this, offer him a prayer.

In Loving Memory of 8th Anniversary 33rd Anniversary



R. Anthonysamy
Departed:
13/10/2016

Our hearts will always love and cherish you.

Deeply missed and always remembered by
Loved ones.



Michael Peter Anthonysamy
Departed: 29/6/1991

In Loving Memory of 34th Anniversary 38th Anniversary



Philip Anthony D'Cruz
Departed: 27-11-1990

Our hearts will always love and cherish you.

Deeply missed and always remembered by
Loved ones.



Rajamah D'Cruz
Departed: 2-12-1986

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KASIH 2024: Empowering the Church's social mission in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR: "What difference can I make?" It's a question many ask, yet the answer lies in the power of collective action. When individuals, communities, and organisations unite, they can bring about extraordinary change.

Our vision and mission

Caritas Malaysia, the Episcopal Commission for Migrants and Itinerants (ECMI), and the Episcopal Commission for Creation Justice (ECCJ) exemplify this unity. These Church bodies are committed to uplifting marginalised communities while building a sustainable future. Their mission is to create a world where the voices of the poor are heard, dignity is upheld, and God's creation is protected for generations

to come.

To advance this vision, the KASIH Initiative was launched in 2023 as a special fundraising campaign, empowering the Malaysian Catholic Church's social mission through the work of Caritas, ECMI, and ECCJ. The 2024 edition of KASIH aims to deepen its impact by transforming good intentions into meaningful actions. The funds raised will support these vital commissions and their life-changing work.

Nationwide Special Collection

The Malaysian bishops have designated the **second collection at all Masses of the Second Sunday of Advent** (December 7 and 8) for this purpose, calling all the faithful to contribute to this important initiative.

Your role in this mission

Caritas Malaysia will focus on delivering immediate aid, running empowerment programmes, and fostering community development to address critical social needs. ECMI will advocate for the rights and dignity of refugees and migrants, providing pastoral care and essential support. Meanwhile, ECCJ will prioritise environmental stewardship and justice through education, policy advocacy, and sustainable projects. Additionally, a portion of the funds will be allocated to cover operational costs, ensuring the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of these efforts.

The interconnectedness of these commissions' work is clear when considering the challenges Malaysia faces

— environmental degradation, migration, and poverty are all intricately linked. Caritas, ECMI, and ECCJ are preparing early disaster response systems to provide immediate aid and resources for recovery. They are also working to foster economic inclusion through job training, fair opportunities, and spiritual and community support for those in need.

The time to act is now. KASIH 2024 calls on all to turn commitment into action — advocating for change, supporting vulnerable communities, and building a just and sustainable future. As the Church continues to serve the most vulnerable, every individual has a role to play. Together, we can transform intentions into real change and build a better tomorrow.

Pope Francis champions children's rights

VATICAN: Pope Francis has placed significant emphasis on the dignity and rights of children, reflecting on their essential role in both the Church and society. In a Chirograph released on November 20, he established the Pontifical Committee for the World Day of Children, a body entrusted with promoting, organising, and animating this special day. The Pope appointed Fr Enzo Fortunato, OFM, Conv., as its first president, marking a pivotal step in the Church's efforts to recognise the vital importance of children.

In his message, Pope Francis highlighted the historical shift in how children are regarded. He noted that in Jesus' time, children were not highly valued and were even seen as a hindrance to the rabbinical teachings. However, Jesus upended this mindset by urging His disciples to emulate the wonder and trust with which children approach life. The Pope stressed that children, redeemed by Christ's Blood, possess inherent value not only for their future contributions but also in their current state. "Family, Church, and



Pope Francis meets with children at the Wednesday General Audience. (Vatican Media)

State exist for children, not the other way around," he emphasised, affirming their inalienable rights from birth.

In a broader effort to uplift and protect children, Pope Francis also marked Nov 20 as the International Day for the Rights of Chil-

dren and Adolescents, dedicating his weekly General Audience to this cause. During the audience, he announced the World Meeting on Children's Rights, scheduled to take place at the Vatican on Feb 3, 2025. The summit, themed *Love Them and Protect Them*, will

bring together experts and global leaders to discuss the plight of millions of children who continue to suffer from exploitation, abuse, and the devastating effects of conflict.

The Pope's call to action is clear: children must be given a voice, recognised, welcomed, and understood by their families, communities, and the Church. The World Day of Children offers an opportunity for dioceses worldwide to place children at the heart of pastoral action, ensuring that the care and protection of children become a priority in evangelical and pedagogical terms.

Pope Francis also expressed his hope that the World Day of Children would not be an isolated event but a sustained effort to champion children's rights, encouraging continued dialogue and action to safeguard their future. Through these efforts, the Church strives to help children know, love, and serve Jesus Christ as the Friend and Good Shepherd, while grounding their faith in the rich spiritual heritage of the holy children the Church treasures. **Vatican News**

'Techie teen', mountaineer to get halos during jubilee year

VATICAN: During his weekly general audience November 20, Pope Francis announced the long-anticipated canonisations of two of the Catholic Church's most beloved young role models: Carlo Acutis, known as the "techie saint," and Pier Giorgio Frassati, the outdoorsman and activist.

Acutis will be canonised during the Jubilee of Teenagers, held from April 25–27, 2025, while Frassati's canonisation is set for the Jubilee of Youth, taking place from July 28 to Aug 3, 2025. Acutis' ceremony is scheduled for Apr 27 in St Peter's Square during a Mass celebrated by Pope Francis.

Carlo Acutis, born in London in 1991 to Italian parents and raised in Milan, is set to become the Catholic Church's first millennial saint. Known for his passion for computers, Acutis created an online exhibition on Eucharistic miracles that continues to inspire Catholics worldwide.

Despite his young age, Acutis demonstrated profound spiritual maturity. He attended daily Mass, had a deep devotion to the Eucharist

— calling it his "highway to heaven" — and encouraged others to rediscover their faith. His work in evangelisation earned him the title of "saint of the ordinary" and positioned him as a potential patron saint for IT workers.

Acutis succumbed to leukaemia in 2006 at the age of 15, offering his suffering for the Church and the pope. Pope Francis highlighted his life as an example for youth in the exhortation *Christus Vivit*, emphasising Acutis' awareness of the pitfalls of consumerism and the distractions of digital media.

Beatified in 2020 following the recognition of a miraculous healing attributed to his intercession, Acutis continues to be a role model for young people seeking holiness in everyday life.

Pier Giorgio Frassati, born in Turin in 1901 to a wealthy and influential family, embraced a life of faith, service, and activism. Known for his vibrant joy and adventurous spirit, he was an avid mountaineer and a passionate advocate for social justice, often serving the



Carlo Acutis (L) and Pier Giorgio Frassati (R)

poor in the city slums.

Frassati's faith guided his political activism, which aligned with Catholic social teaching. He opposed both communism and fascism, once rallying fellow students by boldly reclaiming a Church-sponsored protest banner from police during a confrontation.

A member of the Third Order of St Dominic, Frassati lived out the Beatitudes, earning him the title "Man of the Eight Beatitudes" from Pope John Paul II at his beatification in 1990.

Frassati died of polio at the age of 24 in

1925, likely contracted while tending to the sick. His final act of charity was writing a note to deliver medicine to a poor man. His incorrupt remains were later transferred to the Cathedral of St John the Baptist in Turin.

Both canonisations are set to draw large crowds, especially youth, to Rome for the Church's Jubilee celebrations. These events will honour the legacies of two young Catholics who lived ordinary lives with extraordinary faith, inspiring generations to embrace the call to holiness. **Elise Ann Allen, Crux**