

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.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. *Phil. 4:4-6*



Pusat Kasih Caritas, a haven for all

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Muar parish celebrates 115th anniversary

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Miri Youth Day: Rejoice and Hope

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Calls for hope, reconciliation in the Middle East

JERUSALEM: As the Advent season unfolds, the Middle East remains embroiled in deadly conflicts, with violence spreading across Israel, Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria. Peace is a distant hope for many, and the spirit of joy, which marks this time of year, feels increasingly absent. Yet, amidst the devastation, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, has called on Christians to hold on to hope and work toward reconciliation.



In a recent interview with Renardo Schlegelmilch, editor-in-chief of Germany-based *Domradio.De*, Cardinal Pizzaballa reflected on the ongoing challenges

facing the region, particularly during Advent. "It is a very painful situation, very distressing," the Cardinal stated. "We must be resilient. We cannot give in to this situation. Advent is a time for us as Christians to live in the expectation that Jesus Christ is not just a word but a force for good in our real lives."

The cardinal has lived at the heart of the Middle East for over three decades, witnessing the cyclical nature of violence in the region. Though not the first war in his tenure, he noted that this conflict has a unique emotional and psychological toll on both Israelis and Palestinians. "The emotional impact on both sides is enormous," he explained. "The war creates mistrust and hatred, and while the destroyed infrastructure can be rebuilt, the relationships will take a long time to heal."

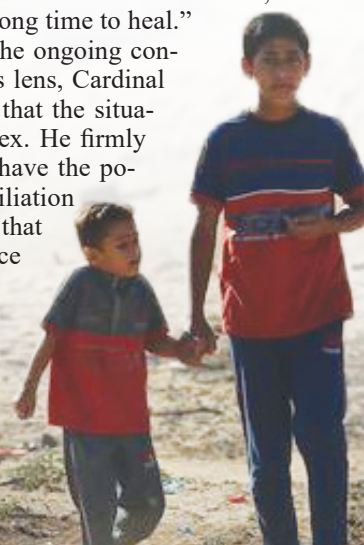
Though many view the ongoing conflict through a religious lens, Cardinal Pizzaballa emphasised that the situation is far more complex. He firmly believes that religions have the potential to drive reconciliation and healing, provided that religious leaders embrace

their roles as agents of peace. "Religion can become a promoter of encounter and life if we do not isolate ourselves and pay more attention to others," he said.

One of the cardinal's most striking gestures occurred at the outset of the Gaza war when he offered himself as a hostage to Hamas. This self-sacrificial act, which made headlines globally, was motivated by his desire to counter the prevailing rhetoric of violence and fear. "I have no family," he explained. "My life is important, but my way of living also involves giving life."

While political solutions may seem elusive in the current climate, Cardinal Pizzaballa believes that hope can still thrive. "Hope comes from within," he reflected. "It is an attitude to life. We see its signs in the selfless actions of people, even in the most difficult of circumstances."

For the cardinal, Advent remains a time of reflection and renewal. Despite the chaos around him, he remains convinced that the spirit of hope, grounded in faith and acts of kindness, can transcend the darkness. "Everywhere, even in war zones, there are wonderful people who give up part of their lives for others. That gives us hope." Agencies



(UNICEF photo)

Vatican launches interactive College of Cardinals map

VATICAN: Anyone interested in Catholic Church can now see a detailed, interactive breakdown of the body that will elect the next pope.

The Vatican launched a "dashboard" for the College of Cardinals December 5, allowing users of the web page to see a comprehensive list of the church's cardinals and sort them by age, rank, country of origin, electoral status and religious order. Initially it was available only in Italian.

The dashboard, created with Microsoft Power BI — an AI tool designed to visually organise data — was published on the Vatican press office's public website just two days before Pope Francis was scheduled to create 21 new cardinals Dec 7.

The page allows users to see a map of where current car-

dinals are from, as well as the percentage of cardinals from each region who are under the age of 80 and eligible to vote in conclave. As of Dec 5, for example, 47.8 per cent of cardinals from Europe are eligible to vote in a conclave while 100 per cent of cardinals from Oceania are eligible electors.

Cardinals lose their right to vote in a conclave on their 80th birthday or when they lose the rights and privileges of a cardinal, as was the case with Cardinal Angelo Becciu, former prefect of the Congregation for Saints' Causes, who was convicted by a Vatican court for financial malfeasance related to when he was substitute for the Vatican Secretariat of State.

Beyond age, rank and geographical distribution, users can also sort cardinals by precedence, which is based on the tim-

ing of their appointment as cardinals and their seniority within their rank and dictates matters such as seating arrangements and the order of liturgical processions. The College of Cardinals is divided into three ranks — cardinal bishops, priests and deacons — which reflect a cardinal's responsibilities or seniority within the church's hierarchy.

Previously, the Vatican website only offered separate lists of cardinals, organised alphabetically by name, by country, by age or grouped according to the pope who appointed them.

According to the Vatican statistics, which include the 21 soon-to-be cardinals, there are 253 members of the College of Cardinals, 140 of whom are eligible to vote in a conclave. CNS

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How the Synod quietly redefined disability in the Church

The final document of the Synod on Synodality has served as a signpost to a quiet revolution in many areas. Not least of these has been the Church's attitude to disability. Until Pope Francis' pontificate, this had hovered uneasily between writing disability off as a legacy of original sin (suggesting that baptism wasn't terribly useful!) and regarding disabled people as 'victim souls', privileged to suffer.

While Francis has previously spoken of the 'magisterium of frailty', noting that the weakness attendant on age opens us to the realisation that all of us are limited, the Synod goes much further. Having noted (in paragraph 54), society's history of discrimination against disabled people, paragraph 63 states that:

63. In promoting co-responsibility for the mission of all the baptised, we recognise the apostolic capacities of people with disabilities who feel called and sent out as active agents of evangelisation. We appreciate the contribution that comes from the immense wealth of humanity they bring with them. We acknowledge their experiences of suffering, marginalisation, and discrimination, sometimes suffered even within the Christian community itself due to attempts at showing compassion that can be paternalistic. In order to encourage their participation in the life and mission of the Church, we propose the establishment of a Church-based research centre on disability.

While it is couched in fairly subdued terms, it is revolutionary for all that. Gone is the

language of disability as either grace or sin, replaced by an acknowledgement that we, as disabled people, are not mere objects of charity or by-products of original sin but are equal in dignity and status with the rest of the baptised. As such, we both bring a wealth of experience to the conversation and have both the right and duty to participate in the Church as active members and agents of its mission.

In addition, the Synod notes that we bring a history of suffering – not by virtue of our impairments as such, but rather because of the response of society (including the Church) to who we are. In short, it aligns itself much more closely with the social view of disability (that it results from exclusion by society) than with the older medical view (that it is purely a problem of the individual, to be dealt with as such).

'We have the opportunity to draw on the good work being done by such organisations as the Church to acknowledge the faults of the past and make the creation of a world without barriers a reality. In doing so, however, we inevitably highlight the gap – whether in Church, state or civil society – between the rhetoric of inclusion and the reality of exclusion.'

Further, and for the first time ever, it recommends that there be a body in and of the Catholic Church itself, which looks to research the status of disabled people and foster the participation of disabled persons as equals within the life and ministry of the Church. In short, the Synod argues for a church of 'us', rather than 'us' and 'them' (who may – or may

not – be 'included' as objects of charity).

The Synod's message is a timely one. While the rhetoric of 'inclusion' is everywhere on this day of people with disability, most of us with lived experience of disability know that the reality is rather different.

This International Day of Disabled People which was celebrated on Dec 3 was an opportunity, once again, to take stock of where we are and, in particular, to see how the stories we tell ourselves about who we are as a society (whether as Church, state or otherwise) stack up against the reality of how that society actually functions.

On it, we have the opportunity to draw on the good work being done by such organisations as the Church to acknowledge the faults of the past and make the creation of a world without barriers a reality. In doing so, however, we inevitably highlight the gap – whether in Church, state or civil society – between the rhetoric of inclusion and the reality of exclusion. It is therefore a twofold invitation. On the one hand, we are invited to gratitude for the notable steps which have been taken – especially, this year, by the Synod. On the other, however, we are invited to repentance for a reality which falls far short of the rhetoric and spurred to generosity in working to bridge the chasm. **Fr Justin Glyn SJ, Eureka Street**

Fr Justin Glyn SJ, General Counsel of the Australian Province, was appointed by Pope Francis as consultor to the Dicastery of Laity, Family and Life.

We become heralds of Christ's coming

Today, the Entrance Antiphon tells us to "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near." This is what we are celebrating today, Gaudete Sunday, or Joyful Sunday, the day we rejoice in the Lord because His coming is very near to us. Henry Nouwen describes to us the difference between happiness and joy. Happiness, he says, is dependent on external circumstances such as celebrating the events of life, birthdays, marriages, graduation etc. Joy, however, takes on a much more deeper meaning. It is the experience of knowing that you are unconditionally loved and that nothing can take that away. Pope Francis tells us that instead of fretting over our Christmas preparations, we should rejoice and be thankful for all the things God has blessed us with.

This call to rejoice is evident in today's first reading. The prophet Zephaniah tells us to be courageous and not be afraid because God is coming to save us. Yes, God is coming to offer us salvation but is that all there is? By virtue of our Baptism, all of us have received this salvation promised by God. Zephaniah tells us that there is much more to rejoice over. The Lord has revealed our sentence and has driven our enemies away. We are told not to fear and not to let our hands fall limp because the Lord God is in our midst as a victorious warrior.

We rejoice because our eyes are open to see the promise and hope of salvation, to see that the coming of Christ is not just

simply an annual event that we celebrate, but it is an event that is both personal and universal. Our hearts are open to the love of God and allows us to see others as brothers and sisters in Christ. When we are able to see in this way, we will be able to share God's love and joy with those around us, regardless of race or creed. The coming of Christ will open the eyes of our faith and love and this is indeed a great reason for rejoicing.

This applies to the opening of our ears to hear as well. Very often, we listen but do not hear. Sunday after Sunday, we listen to the Word of God but how many of us actually hear these words? The coming of Christ opens our ears to truly listen to what God has to tell us through the Scriptures. It also opens our ears to the cry of those around us. How many people go through life not having someone to confide in? The giving of our ears to someone is indeed a commodity these days as we are always so busy with our own lives that we have no time to hear what others have to say or share.

In many countries, there are companies that offer "rent a friend/family" service for a fee, payable by the hour. What should be given for free is now a commodity and a source of income. This is what society has become now. This is why in opening our ears, God is telling us to lend our ears to those who are in need. We should rejoice that we have been given this opportunity to be another Christ to others, just to offer them a listening ear without prejudice or

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Fr Philip Tay, OCD


3rd Sunday of Advent (C)

Readings: Zephaniah 3:14-18;
Philippians 4:4-7;
Gospel: Luke 3:10-18

judgement. However, we should not abuse this generosity either. Those who are in need of a listening ear should also be prudent and not talk peoples' ears off.

In our seeing and hearing, we become heralds of Christ's coming. We become a witness to His light and His good news, which is exactly what John the Baptist is doing. Through our witness, we share in the mission of the Baptist in bringing the good news of salvation to those whom we meet. We are all called to be bearers of joy, not sorrow. An excellent example of joy would be St Teresa of Calcutta. During her lifetime, she brought so much joy to those who were neglected by society. When asked the source of her joy, she said that joy is prayer, joy is strength, joy is love, joy is a net of love. A joyful heart is the normal result of a heart burning with love. Loving as Christ loves, helping as Christ helps, giving as Christ gives, serving as Christ serves, rescuing as Christ rescues and being with Christ 24 hours, touching Christ in his distressing disguise.

Let us share this joy of God with everyone today, because, as the Gospel acclamation tells us, the spirit of the Lord has been given to us and He has sent us to bring the good news to the poor.



**KUALA LUMPUR
ARCHDIOCESE**

**Diary of Archbishop
Julian Leow**

December

- 19 MCCBCHST Exco Meeting
- 21 Christmas Hi Tea – Christian Federation of Malaysia
- 28 Joy to the World - Christmas Gathering
- 29 Launching of Jubilee Year – Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, KL



PENANG DIOCESE

**Diary of Cardinal
Sebastian Francis**

December

- 17 Mass and Meeting with Seminarians of Penang Diocese at 10.00am – Bishop's Residence
- 17 Handing Over of the Parish at 6.00pm – Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang
- 19 Meeting with Province Leader of Good Shepherd Sisters (RGS) Malaysia-Singapore at 11.00pm – Bishop's Office
- 24 Christmas Eve Mass at 7.00pm – Church of Our Lady of Fatima of the Holy Rosary, Kelantan
- 25 Christmas Day Mass at 9.00am – Church of Our Lady of Fatima of the Holy Rosary, Kelantan
- 25 Christmas Day Mass – Chapel of Gereja Bonda Maria Timur Barat, Grik, Perak at 4.00pm
- 29 Opening of the Jubilee 2025: Pilgrims of Hope – Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang at 5.00pm



**MALACCA JOHORE
DIOCESE**

**Diary of Bishop
Bernard Paul**

December

- 16 Sacrament of Reconciliation – Church of the Immaculate Conception, Johor Bahru
- 17 Sacrament of Reconciliation – Church of the Holy Family, Ulu Tiram
- 18 Sacrament of Reconciliation – Church of Christ the King, Kulai
- 19 South Johor Vicariate Clergy Christmas Lunch
- 29 Mass of the Solemn Opening of the Jubilee Year – Sacred Heart Cathedral, JB at 10.30am



DIOCESE OF PENANG
PKK/BDN/2024/12/193

Notifications and Updates

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body. (Philippians 3: 20-21)

1. Major events for the diocese

Sharing with you some of the upcoming major events in the Diocese of Penang for the years 2024 to 2026. To know more, go to <https://shorturl.at/hpoLv>

2. PMPT theme and focus

The 2025 Pastoral Theme and Focus for Peninsular Malaysia is available here in Bahasa Malaysia, English, Mandarin, and Tamil for your easy reference. Go to <https://shorturl.at/zVmnH>

3. Pilgrim Churches for the Jubilee 2025 for the Diocese of Penang

Here are the churches that have been designated as official pilgrimage sites for the Jubilee Year 2025.

- 1) Church of the Assumption, Penang
- 2) Church of the Holy Name of Mary, Permatang Tinggi
- 3) Chapel of Annai Velangani, Jelapang, Ipoh

Jubilee pilgrimages also provide the faithful with an opportunity to receive a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions: sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion, and prayer for the Holy Father's intention. To know more, go to <https://shorturl.at/hzhTh>

4. Appointment of Rector for College General

I am pleased to announce that Fr Ryan Innas Muthu has been appointed Rector

of College General Regional Major Seminary, Penang. He will assume this new role as Rector of College General, Penang with effect from January 1, 2025. Together with him, the team of formators include Fr Stephen Lim, Fr Larry Tan, Fr Surain Raj, Fr Cyril Mannayagam and Fr Joachim Robert.

My heartfelt thanks to Fr Simon Labrooy as Rector and Fr Eugene Fernandez, CSsR as Spiritual Father of the House, for having served generously for the past few years. My prayers and blessings for the seminary community at College General, Penang. To know more, go to <https://shorturl.at/JCFCS>

Sebastian Francis

Cardinal Sebastian Francis
December 1, 2024



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #202



Greetings dear friends of MJD

Not seeing the elephant in the room. Do you know that insurance premiums are soaring making it harder for people to afford?

The DBKL fiasco, the 172 Swatch Pride Collection watches seizure, "the RIBIs are not entitled to annual maintenance aid" cries, reflect how a few loudmouths hijack national policies and protocols.

Floods are managed well but wastages, damage, destruction and displacement as usual, continues. People see some ministries as crowd pleasers, with only a few who are clear and level headed as civil servants.

Australia's parliament passed a world-first law banning social media for children under 16, putting tech companies on notice to tighten security before a cut-off date that's yet to be set.

Maybe the Sultan of Perak has summed it up well: "*Budaya rasuah (corruption), ketirisan (leakage) dan salah guna (abuses) yang dilaporkan berlaku ketika ini sesuatu yang mengaibkan negara. Perbuatan itu menyebabkan rakyat terpaksa menanggung beban dengan menyifatkan ia ibarat barah yang merosak anatomi negara.*"

Many see and avoid or deny or deflect the elephant issue.

Advent Times:

Giant Christmas trees! Decorated malls. Selective carols on the airwaves! It is always a case of Christmas with Jesus Christ or minus the God who became man. But for the first time, visitors to Times Square, NY were in for a surprise. On November 27, its famous billboards gave tribute to the true reason for Christmas: Jesus Christ. A beautiful nativity scene emerged from the blackout, reminding us of the Saviour's birth and why we need His light and love in our lives.

People ignore the elephant in the room. Can we ignore the Messiah, the Good News, the Prince of Peace? Does He question us? Is He a problem to us? Is He a controversy to be avoided? We can face Him with our questions, our embarrassment, our sadness and our arguments. He is not an elephant to be avoided.

A Thought For The Week: A Bus Ride

A young lady sat in a bus. At the next stop, a loud and grumpy old lady came and sat by her. She squeezed into the seat and bumped her with her numerous bags.

The person sitting on the other side of the young lady got upset, and asked her why she did not speak up and say something.

The young lady responded with a smile:

"It is not necessary to be rude or argue over something so insignificant, the journey together is so short. I get off at the next stop."

The lesson from the young lady:

"It is not necessary to argue over something so insignificant, our journey together is so short."

If only each one of us realised that our time here is so short; that to darken it with quarrels, futile arguments, not forgiving others, discontentment and a fault-finding attitude would be a waste of time and energy. No one knows the duration of this journey. No one knows when their stop will come. Our journey together is so short.

Announcements for the Week:

1. The Jubilee Year 2025 opens on December 29 at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart for our diocese. Three parishes have been designated as pilgrim centres: the Cathedral, Church of St Louis Kluang and Church of St Mary's Air Salak.

QnQ? Q asks:

How can one be happy?

We had been focusing on resetting our minds; debugging our brains and finding happiness. Here is the last instalment on the arts that can change us.

a) The *art of reducing influences*: address hidden triggers by reducing exposure to mass media; desensitise violence in shows and games; discard opinions of influencers.

b) The *art of routine purging*: balancing polarities by practising the use of both brains — be, learn, do!

c) The art of useful thinking: joyful, experiential thinking, practising mindfulness, and solving problems.

d) The *art of flowing*: achieving flow state, doing everything happily and skilfully.

e) The *art of giving*: anything from a smile to, donation and volunteerism.

A Little Thought In The Head - Mo Gawdat

See The Holy Spirit @ Work:

If we think of the Holy Spirit only as an impersonal power or influence, then our thought will constantly be, how can I get hold of and use the Holy Spirit; but if we think of Him in the biblical way as a divine Person, infinitely wise, infinitely holy, infinitely tender, then our thought will constantly be, 'How can the Holy Spirit get hold of and use me?' **R. A. Torrey**

Something To Tickle You:

Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says "I'll try again tomorrow." **Mary Anne Radmacher**

Bernard Paul

Bishop Bernard Paul



The participants in small groups giving their sharing.

A call to renewal and service

CHERAS: The annual Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA) at the Church of St Francis of Assisi served as a time of reflection, discernment, and renewal as the parishioners continued their shared journey of faith. One hundred and sixty parishioners gathered on November 30 for this significant event.

Parish Pastoral Council chairman, Danny Nesan, presented the parish's 2025 pastoral plan which aligns with the 2025 Jubilee and the four thrusts guiding our local Church's journey towards the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026 (MPC2026): Family, Church, Ecology and Society.

Parishioners were placed in small groups to engage in Spiritual Conversations sharing insights and perspectives on the proposed parish plan. The fruits of these discussions would help refine and enhance the parish's plans for 2025.

Archbishop Julian Leow, in his speech, challenged everyone present to: evaluate the effectiveness of parish activities and events,



A youth reporting her group.

identifying areas for improvement and opportunities for growth. He also reminded them to prioritise the community's needs to ensure that no one is left behind as we journey together in faith.

In his closing remarks, parish priest, Fr Paul Cheong OFM Cap posed a question: "Are we growing in holiness, communion and mission through our parish activities and events?"

Fr Paul emphasised that discipleship is formed within and through the community. He urged everyone gathered to foster the work of the Holy Spirit, intensify the practice of the *Eight Habits of Effective Christian Living*, and ignite the fire of faith in others.

The assembly concluded with prayer and worship, as Fr Paul led everyone in singing *Spirit of the Living God*, inviting the Holy Spirit to renew, empower and guide everyone in the days ahead.

OLL strives to be an inclusive parish

Nesa Dhevasahayam

KLANG: The Church of Our Lady of Lourdes held its annual Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA) on November 24. The event brought together 160 leaders and parishioners, including representatives from various ministries and groups in the parish.

The day began with an opening speech by parish priest, Fr Gregory Chan, who set the tone for the assembly which was facilitated by Rita Krishnan from the Archdiocesan BEC Animating Team.

The assembly focused on four key topics: Family, Church, Ecology, and Society. To encourage active participation and meaningful dialogue, attendees were divided into 32 groups, each catering to the three language communities. A significant part of the day involved small group discussions, where participants shared personal experiences, challenges, and ideas. With prayerful reflection and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they worked on practical solutions to address parish needs.

After the discussions, each group shared their insights and key points, with all language groups contributing to the conversation. This ensured that we fostered a sense of unity within diversity.



Parishioners during the Conversation in the Spirit session.

One of the highlights of the assembly was the closing message from Archbishop Julian Leow, who reflected on his experiences at the Synod of Bishops on Synodality in Rome. He stressed the importance of involving all language groups and the need for translation to ensure inclusivity. He also encouraged participants to reflect on five important questions:

- What is the purpose of the Church?
- Why are you still a Catholic?
- Do I understand my role in the Catholic Church?

- Am I passionate about the Catholic Church?
- How can we become a synodal Church?

The 2024 PPA wasn't just a meeting; it was an inspiring day of dialogue, reflection, and renewed commitment. It reminded us of the power of unity and the possibilities that emerge when faith and action come together.

With the Holy Spirit as our guide, the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes will continue to journey as a vibrant, inclusive, and united parish.



Seventy couples commissioned for CMPC

KUALA LUMPUR: With the troubling rise in divorce rates globally — including over 60,000 divorces in Malaysia in 2022 — Pope Francis' emphasis on marriage preparation in his exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* has never been more relevant. In response to the pressing need for stronger marriages, the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur began its marriage preparation programme in 1983, initially known as Evenings for the Engaged, and later renamed Catholic Marriage Preparation Course (CMPC).

On November 30, over 70 CMPC presenting couples were commissioned into this vital ministry, tasked with preparing engaged couples for the sacrament of Holy Matrimony. The commissioning took place during a Eucharistic celebration

at the Church of Christ the Light, celebrated by Archbishop Julian Leow with the archdiocese's Ecclesiastical Assistants, Fr Peter Anthony and Fr Andrew Kooi co-celebrating.

The CMPC programme is delivered in four languages — English, Mandarin, Tamil, and Bahasa Malaysia — to cater to the diverse linguistic groups within the archdiocese. This diversity was highlighted during the procession into the church, where four banners representing each language were proudly displayed.

During the Offertory, a basket of mixed fruits was presented, symbolising the variety of gifts offered by the different language communities. Additionally, a compilation of Couple Packs, the Mission Statement, and a list of all the presenting couples was



ME couples from the different parishes of the archdiocese at the Mass.

brought forward, representing the deep commitment of these couples to the engaged couples they will guide towards the sacrament of matrimony.

The evening concluded with

dinner and a lively band, allowing everyone to relax and celebrate the commissioning in a joyous, festive atmosphere. **Archdiocese Catholic Marriage Preparation Course**



Representatives walking in the Entrance Procession with the four different language banners.

Pusat Kasih Caritas, a haven for all

Brent Ah Kee

JOHOR BAHRU: Pusat Kasih Caritas was blessed and opened by Bishop Bernard Paul, President of Caritas Malaysia and Caritas MJD, December 1.

“My prayer for Pusat Kasih Caritas is that it will be a little haven for the lost, for the least, for the little, for the last and the “lepers” also,” said Bishop Bernard. He added that his wish is for the centre to be the MJD’s Social Mission Hub, with an open-door policy and offering a haven to all who need some respite from the rigours of everyday life whilst always upholding the philosophy of “we see, we judge, we act”.

Set within the grounds of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, the centre features a hall, reception area, kitchen, office, rooms and the Caritas Kindness Boutique (thrift shop).

The building has a rich history, having previously housed the Gabrielite Brothers who served as the cornerstone of the neighbouring

St Joseph School. It also served as the hub for the Catholic AIDS Ministry and later, as a gathering point for the vibrant Young Adults ministry, and as a sanctuary for the sacristans and priests of the Church of the Immaculate Conception.

Ecclesiastical Assistant of Caritas MJD, Fr Martinian Lee, expressed his gratitude to all those who made the opening possible. He thanked attendees, especially representatives from various NGOs such as Pertubuhan Kebajikan Sulaman Kaseh, Shechinah Association, SSVP, and ministries like the Creation Justice Commission, Diocesan Migrant and Itinerant Ministry, and the Arubumi (Orang Asli Ministry).

He also acknowledged the volunteers, donors, and the individuals involved in the renovations and setting up of the new facilities. Fr Martinian emphasised the importance of utilising the new space to serve others better.

The centre’s mission is to be a walk-in service centre that caters

to the needs of individuals and families in crisis. It will also serve as a gathering space for those dedicated to caring for the community, offering a place for meetings, training sessions, retreats, fellowships, and even occasional barbecues.

A special feature of the centre is the Caritas Kindness Boutique, which was set up by the CIC Creation Justice Commission team. The boutique offers a space where those in need can find affordable, preloved items. Donors are also encouraged to give their items a second life, embodying the spirit of repurposing and renewal.

With the official opening of Pusat Kasih Caritas, it is now up to all of us to embrace it as a sanctuary for service.

“May Pusat Kasih Caritas be a beacon of hope and love, bringing light to those in need and inspiring us all to serve with compassion and kindness,” said James Issachar of the Shechinah Association.

Haryati Radi of Pertubuhan Kebajikan Sulaman Kaseh said,



Above: Bishop Bernard Paul officially opens Pusat Kasih Caritas. Right: A prayer room at the centre.

“May this new chapter bring hope, kindness, and positive change to all those you serve. Wishing you great success as you continue your valuable work in making a difference in the lives of many.” She also added that she was impressed with the setup and design of the centre.

For those interested in utilising the facilities or learning more about the services, please contact Albert at caritasmj@mjdiocese.my.



Kasih Meals 3.0: Uplifting menial workers and the homeless



Meals handed to public contract workers at Taman Seputeh.

KUALA LUMPUR: In conjunction with the World Day of the Poor, declared by Pope Francis on November 17 this year, 15 parishioners from the Church of Our Lady of Fatima (OLF), Brickfields, ranging from youth to senior citizens gathered at OLF on November 30. Initiated by parish administrator Fr Andrew Manickam, OFM Cap, the volunteers participated in Kasih Meals 3.0, a street-feeding project organised by OLF’s BECCOT.

This corporal work of mercy served multiple purposes:

First, it sought to recognise, value, and empathise with our unsung heroes — the lowest rungs of the B40 group — by highlighting their challenging working and living conditions. This includes DBKL contract workers who perform essential yet undervalued 3D (dirty, dangerous, and demeaning) jobs,

such as keeping our streets clean. Their contributions often go unnoticed, yet imagining a scenario where they go on strike — leaving trash uncollected and streets unswept — underscores the critical role they play in preventing hygiene and health crises.

Second, it brought attention to the difficulties and challenges faced by the homeless, who live without the basic creature comforts of running water, a working toilet, or electricity. These individuals are constantly exposed to health risks from natural elements and pests, making their plight a stark reminder of the need for compassion and support.

Lastly, the outreach served as an opportunity for inter-BEC exchange, fostering connections among parishioners from different BECs and parishes. This initiative not only strengthened the bonds

within OLF but also nurtured the growth of the Catholic faith and community spirit.

The broad smiles of the beneficiaries reveal it all — to be remembered — that there are segments in society who acknowledge and take cognisance of their humble, yet crucial professions which society in general tends to look down upon.

Jude Martin from BEC St John Paul succinctly observed, “We found six workers living in a shed no bigger than one of our catechism rooms, shared by all six of them. We should always be grateful for what we have and never take our blessings for granted.”

Fr Andrew shared that plans are already underway for Kasih Meals 4.0 next year. We hope that more volunteers will join us in this deeply moving and meaningful project. Ivy Tan

Fostering entrepreneurial aspirations among low-income families

KUALA LUMPUR: In observance of the World Day of the Poor, the Parish Integral Human Development (PIHD) team at the Church of Christ the Light, Kepong, hosted an inspiring event aimed at uplifting low-income families and encouraging entrepreneurial aspirations. Supported by parish priest Fr Peter Anthony and led by PIHD head Maghimmadoss, the event brought together 32 families and featured powerful sharing sessions from local entrepreneurs, highlighting their journeys of resilience and success.

The event highlighted vari-

ous business ventures undertaken by individuals who turned challenges into opportunities. These speakers, including homemakers and small-scale entrepreneurs, shared their experiences of starting home-based businesses, leveraging social media for promotion, and overcoming obstacles with determination and family support. Their stories offered practical advice and encouragement to the attendees, fostering a spirit of empowerment and community growth.

Participants also had the opportunity to interact directly with the speakers, explore business ideas,

and view product displays set up at the event. A hi-tea session provided a platform for networking, while families received grocery boxes as a token of support. The program concluded with a heartfelt closing speech, reflecting the success of the initiative in inspiring participants to consider entrepreneurial paths as a means of improving their livelihoods.

This meaningful event exemplified the church’s commitment to uplifting the community, providing not just material support but also the tools and motivation to achieve self-sustainability. Irene Ann Maghimmadass



Parishioners buying the products of a small-scale entrepreneur.

Golden Eagles host Advent fellowship



Golden Eagles choir and musicians setting the mood.

KUALA LUMPUR: The Golden Eagles celebrated a joyful Advent praise and worship thanksgiving fellowship, reflecting on deepening their faith.

On December 3, around 70 seniors from the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, joined by guests from five parishes across the archdiocese, spent three meaningful hours together as a community in Christ.

The 10-member Golden Eagles Choir set the tone with heartfelt renditions of *On Eagle's Wings*, *Amazing Grace*, and *Bless the Lord*, inspiring enthusiastic singalongs from the congregation. Supporting the choir were talented teenage twins, guitarist Eva and keyboardist Emma. Their grandmother and choir coordinator, Christine Suan, introduced the songs, adding a personal touch to the performance.

Deacon Jonathan Rao delivered a reflection based on Matthew 18:3: "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." He encouraged the Golden Eagles to age gracefully, embracing

a childlike faith in Jesus. "Be like a child and surrender all to Jesus," he urged.

The programme continued with lively chair exercises to the tune of *Feliz Navidad* and engaging games, followed by a sumptuous lunch that recharged everyone.

Archbishop Julian Leow brought laughter and cheer with his light-hearted address. He humorously noted that seniors in many parishes are often the most active group, joking, "You have a lot of free time and a lot of money." On a more reflective note, he added, "As we grow older, we have fewer enemies, more peace, and are better prepared to meet God." His quip about songs transitioning to *I Am Coming Home* or *Nearer My God to Thee* left the audience in stitches.

Parish priest Fr Gerard Theraviam encouraged the Golden Eagles to remember those unable to attend. "Reach out to the homebound elderly. Bring not only Holy Communion but also Jesus through your smiles and presence," he reminded them. **Bob Ho**

BSM launches three local bibles

PETALING JAYA: The Bible Society Malaysia (BSM) recently launched the *Alkitab Kudus Malaysia (BM Formal)*, *Alkitab Berita Baik (Edisi Studi)* and the Iban Study Bible (Trial Edition), during its 40th anniversary celebration held in the PJ Evangelical Free Church. The event was graced by many dignitaries from the various churches in Malaysia, including representatives from the Bible Society of Indonesia.

BSM embarked on the *Alkitab Kudus Malaysia* translation in the year 2011, to meet a long-standing demand from the BM-speaking churches. It is a formal translation of the Bible, closer to the original text, and will be mainly used for scholarly research, study and preaching purposes.

The *Alkitab Berita Baik* study Bible took almost 20 years to complete. This Bible was the result of the demand from the BM-speaking churches for a good study Bible in Malaysia. The Iban study Bible trial edition was also in the pipeline since the year 2015, to serve the Iban community in Sarawak and elsewhere in Malaysia.

At the launch, Tan Hwee Yong, one of the translators, read out several verses from different parts of the *Alkitab Kudus Malaysia*.



Rev Mathew Punnoose and Most Reverend Datuk Ng Moon Hing displaying the three local Bibles.

A token of appreciation was also given to Rev Dr Anwar Tjen and Rev Dr Daniel See, who were the translation consultants for the *Alkitab Kudus Malaysia* and *Alkitab Berita Baik (Edisi Studi)* respectively.

Rev Mathew Punnoose, the general secretary for BSM, gave a brief history and achievements of BSM, beginning from the founding years of the Bible Society in Wales, United Kingdom in the year 1804, until the formation of

the Malaysian chapter in 1984. He highlighted an impressive list of local Bibles translated and published in Malaysia in the last 30 years, and the many new on-going language projects that are underway.

One of the challenges it faces is the lack of sufficient warehouse space to facilitate inventory and logistics management. In conjunction with its 40th anniversary, it also launched its building fund to procure a larger warehouse.

A harmonious beginning to Advent at OLL Klang

KLANG: The Advent season began on a high note at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes (OLL), with a remarkable choir performance by the Bave Chamber Choir in collaboration with the OLL Choir on November 30.

Fr Gnana Selvam Berentis spearheaded this special event, bringing together talents from near and far to prepare hearts for the sacred season. Fr Gregory Chan graced the occasion with an opening prayer, setting a reflective and joyful tone for the evening.

The highlight of the event was the collaboration between the renowned Bave Chamber Choir, also known as the Catholic Singing Ambassadors, under the skilled direction of

Dr Casey Broadway and the OLL English, Bahasa and Tamil choir to present *Laudes Adventus II*, a breathtaking Advent concert of Sacred Music.

The programme featured a harmonious blend of sacred and traditional hymns, including *O Come Divine Messiah*, *O Come O Come Emmanuel* and *O Holy Night* amongst others. These timeless pieces, beautifully performed, captured the essence of Advent — a season of anticipation, hope, and joy. Each choir brought its unique flavour to the performance, while the Bave Choir stood out with their exceptional tone and artistry, leaving the audience in awe.

This collaboration symbolised unity within diversity as all lan-

guage choirs from OLL joined together in worship. The synergy among the choirs reflected the spirit of the Advent season, reminding everyone of the importance of togetherness and shared faith.

The evening wasn't just about the music but also about the deeper spiritual preparation for Christmas. The narration by Mary Anne, interwoven with gospel readings, enriched the experience, inviting the congregation to reflect on the messages of the season.

It was a heartfelt celebration of faith and community that set the stage for Advent with a blend of joy, reverence, and artistic excellence, leaving a lasting impression on all who attended. **Arvin Ross Alexander**

OLOL Ipoh illuminates 55-foot Christmas tree

IPOH: On December 1, the First Sunday of Advent, the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes illuminated a stunning 55-foot Christmas tree. The tree's radiant glow, followed by a spectacular feast of fireworks, filled the air with excitement and joy, delighting both the young and the elderly.

The Christmas tree, evergreen and enduring, is a reflection of the biblical tree of life, which symbolises eternal life and God's provision. It serves as a powerful reminder of the everlasting life offered through Jesus Christ, whose birth we celebrate during the Christmas season.

The Star of Bethlehem led the Magi to the Christ-child; in the same way, the stars adorning our tree invite us to come before Him in humble adoration and gratitude, offering our gifts and talents. Christmas lights not only remind us that Jesus Christ is the Light of the world but also inspire us to be lights to others, guiding them closer to Him.

The construction of the tree was a beautiful example of collective teamwork by the Lourdes Elf Ministry, who poured their love and dedication into creating this magnificent symbol for their parish. Their priceless effort reflects the spirit of the season — giving and sharing in Christ's love.

The parishioners who were present to witness the lighting of the



The 55-foot Christmas tree on the grounds at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Ipoh.

Christmas tree were treated to some beautiful and enchanting carols, games, lucky draw as well as some light refreshments.

As we step into the Jubilee 2025, with the theme, Pilgrim of Hope, it is an opportunity to pause and give thanks for the love, hope and joy found in Jesus. May you rejoice in the miracle, the gift and the promise of Christmas. **Pauline Sundram**



BAVE Chamber Choir with the choir members of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes.

Identity-Identified, a useful tool for young people

KUALA LUMPUR: Catechists from the parishes of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur gathered for a session on *Identity-Identified* at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre on Saturday, November 23. This was an initiative by the Archdiocesan Catechetical Ministry in collaboration with the Archdiocesan Bible Ministry.

When the catechists first heard of this upcoming session, doubts, hesitation, and change were some of the lingering thoughts in their minds. However, as the session progressed and with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, transformation and renewal of mind set the stage. The flow of reactions switched to interesting, engaging, fun, appealing, different...

The session kicked off with an introductory talk by Dr Steven Selvaraju, the director of the Archdiocesan Catechetical

Centre, addressing the questions that came to the minds of the catechists present. He clarified that the KL Archdiocesan Bible Ministry is not going to make any change; only to introduce the youth Bible *Identity-Identified* as an appropriate option for the Form 5 students. He is in favour of this youth bible, but the onus is on the parish coordinator and parish priest to take up the offer.

In addressing the catechists, Msgr James Gnanapiragasam asked if they could identify some of the issues facing our youth today. In response, some spoke of identity issues, mixed-marriage background of parents, gender identity, and so forth. The youth of today need direction. Many youth he said, are not seen after confirmation. As one recent article on a different subject mentioned on the front page headline of *The Star*,

they are “untamed wildcards”, i.e. unpredictable.

After 11 years of catechism, many are in crisis mode. Our young people need a tool to reflect on moral issues so that when they journey into the world of adults where they meet new friends, new challenges, and new environments, they can face the challenges and uncertainties positively.

Form 5 catechism classes run only for six months and they must be given a method to continue their faith reflection. Msgr James then guided the participants on how to use this youth bible practically with the “See, Judge, Act” approach. As an exercise, the topic of “Why am I so worried and anxious?” was discussed during the group sharing. During the discussions, many catechists were moved with a deeper realisation that our young people needed help



The catechists using *Identity-Identified* with the *See-Judge-Act* method.

in their faith journey. The *See, Judge, Act* approach to engaging our youth is fitting as they find their place in the Sacred Scriptures and the teaching of the Church.

At the end of the session, some catechists found *Identity-Identified* a useful tool to consider. They found it more engaging and interactive with fuller participation. It was good to see that the initial apprehension and

uncertainties had fizzled out. Here the fig tree parable where Jesus speaks about missed opportunities and last chances comes to mind.

Identity-Identified is available for purchase from the KL Archdiocese Bible Ministry via email bible@archkl.org. An order form will be issued to the respective parish followed by delivery. **KL Archdiocesan Bible Ministry Team**

PD parish celebrates faith and talent with ‘Unity in Christ’ concert



PORT DICKSON: The Church of the Immaculate Conception, hosted its highly anticipated year-end children’s concert, themed *Unity in Christ*, on the last Saturday of November. Organised by the Catechetical Ministry, this marked the first concert since the COVID-19 pandemic. The event brought together approximately 180 enthusiastic parishioners to celebrate faith and talent, featuring vibrant performances by students, youth, and parents.

To support the programme, a collaborative initiative by parents and catechists has been organising monthly breakfast sales since July, held on the first Sunday of each month. These efforts not only funded the event but also strengthened the spirit of unity within the parish community. The programme began with an opening prayer, followed by a welcome speech from parish priest, Fr Edwin Peter. In his address, Fr Edwin expressed his gratitude to the parents for their continued support. “Your encouragement has not only enabled your children to participate today but will also inspire their involvement in the Youth Ministry as they grow,” he said.



Top: The participants of the Fashion show of Saints’ Costumes.
Bottom: East Malaysian mothers with their hamper.

He also thanked the catechists and youth for their hard work in preparing the classrooms for the event.

The performances included a Fashion Show of Saints’ Costumes by young children, a lively *Chogada Tara* Bollywood dance, serene songs by the younger children, and a moving drama of The Prodigal Son by the Tamil Catechism group. A traditional dance, *Keluarga Malaysia*, celebrated Malaysia’s cultural diversity, while a re-enactment of David and Goliath showcased faith and courage. East Malaysian mothers performed *Bujang Senang Sarawak*, adding cultural flavour, followed by an energetic

youth dance.

Adding excitement to the evening, multiple rounds of lucky draws were held, offering a variety of prizes, including hampers and grand prizes. The event concluded with a prize-giving ceremony, where all participants were recognised for their efforts and contributions and followed by fellowship.

The *Unity in Christ* concert was a resounding success, bringing together parishioners of all ages to celebrate their shared faith and talents. It served as a reminder of the strength and unity within the Church, as everyone looks forward to more such gatherings in the future. **Clare Ong**

‘I will serve God as long as He wills’

IPOH: Fr Aloysius Tan, recently returned from Malta, has officially assumed the post of parish priest of the Church of St Michael (SMC), effective November 30.

He succeeds Fr Philip Lai CSsR, who briefly served as Parish Administrator from Oct. During the interim, Fr Charles Chin, the priest-in-residence at SMC, was entrusted with celebrating sacraments, including daily Masses, pending the appointment of a new parish priest by the Bishop of Penang.

In his two-month tenure at the Church of SMC Fr Charles endeared himself to parishioners with his unassuming and kind demeanour. Both Chinese- and English-speaking parishioners expressed gratitude for his service, appreciating his ‘shepherd-like’ presence.

Fr Charles, known for his guidance on stress relief, recently conducted a two-day silent meditation session at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Setapak, Kuala Lumpur, on November 9 and 10, which was attended by over 70 participants.

On Nov 18, Fr Charles marked his 81st birthday with quiet joy.

He shared how blessed he felt to receive a birthday cake from friends who visited him during the day. That evening, the SMC Parish Pastoral Council hosted a celebratory dinner for him at a local Chinese restaurant. Reflecting on his milestone, Fr Charles remarked, “At my age, every new day is a bonus from God. Each morning, I wake up with a spirit of gratitude for the good health He grants me to continue serving as His priest.”

Fr Charles celebrated his final daily Mass at SMC on the morning of Nov 27. The following day, he departed Ipoh to return to his previous posting as Priest-in-Residence at the Church of St Michael in Alor Setar, Kedah.

As he bid farewell, Fr Charles expressed heartfelt gratitude for the time he spent at St Michael’s in Ipoh. “It has been a wonderful two months with the friendly parishioners here. I thank Jesus for allowing me to serve the faithful at SMC, Ipoh, and His Church with dedication and joy.” He remains eager to continue his priestly ministry, saying, “I will serve God as long as He wills.” **Bernard Anthony**



Fr Charles Chin at the thanksgiving dinner organised by the Chinese-speaking choir in his honour.

Muar parish celebrates 115th anniversary

Bernard Anthony

MUAR: Parishioners of the Church of St Andrew celebrated the parish's 115th anniversary on November 30, marking the momentous occasion with their parish feast day. The celebration was made even more memorable by the presence of the Bishop of Malacca-Johore, Rt Rev Bernard Paul, who presided over the Mass, alongside the parish priest, Fr Jason Wong, and assistant priest, Fr Aaron Alammalay, as concelebrants.

Bishop Bernard extended heartfelt feast day greetings to all those in attendance, adding that the day was also significant for 21 young people who were receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation.

In his homily, Bishop Bernard spoke of the long history of the church, a parish that has grown from humble beginnings into the vibrant community it is today. He emphasised the importance of knowing the parish's history, a story of growth from a small church building to the expansive parish it is now, and from a small Catholic community to one that continues to flourish.

The bishop also reflected on the life of St Andrew the Apostle, the parish's patron saint. He described Andrew as a courageous and strong figure, noting that his name in Greek, *aner* or *andros*, means "man" and symbolises strength and bravery. He highlighted that Andrew was the first to be called by Jesus (before his brother, Peter), initially a follower of St John the Baptist. After recognising Jesus as the Messiah, Andrew introduced his brother Peter to Christ. The bishop remarked that Andrew's



Bishop Bernard Paul officially launches the new parish logo.



mission was one of connection — bringing others to Jesus. Whether it was Peter, the boy with five loaves and two fish, or the Greek people who came seeking Jesus, Andrew was always introducing people to Christ. He continued his mission until his martyrdom, when he was crucified.

Bishop Bernard then shared three key lessons drawn from the life of St Andrew:

1. Immediate response to God's call: Andrew left everything behind to follow Jesus without hesitation. The bishop encouraged the congregation to always listen and respond to God's calling.
2. Bridging people to Jesus: Andrew was a "bridge builder," connecting others to Christ. The bishop invited the congregation to be like Andrew, helping others find their way to Jesus.
3. The power of small things: The bishop emphasised that small offerings can lead to great things. Just as the small boy's five loaves and two fish fed thousands, small acts of faith can grow into something much

greater. He likened this to the Church in Muar, which began as a small community but has now grown and flourished over 115 years.

After the Prayer of the Faithful, the assembly prayed the Prayer to St Andrew the Apostle, and following the Concluding Rites, a celebratory anniversary cake was presented. Bishop Bernard, along with the priests and lay leaders, cut the cake to mark the 115 years of the parish. The assembly sang "Happy Anniversary," and the cake was shared during a dinner fellowship held in the parish hall.

To commemorate the occasion, prayer cards, keychains featuring the new parish logo, and T-shirts were distributed for sale. Fr Jason also took the opportunity to express his gratitude to the parish's liturgical members and all those who contributed to the successful organisation of the celebration. He invited everyone to join the dinner fellowship, where many parishioners mingled with Bishop Bernard and the priests.

The triduum Masses held from November 27-29 were presided over by Fr Matthew Bun from Kulai, Johor, further enriching the anniversary celebrations.

New logo for St Andrew, Muar

MUAR, Johor: The Church of St Andrew (SAC) has persevered in Muar, also known as Bandar Maharani, the Royal Town, for 115 years

On November 30, at the Feast of St Andrew the Apostle, Bishop Bernard Paul officially launched the new parish logo following the feast Mass, to the applause of the congregation. The prelate unveiled a banner featuring the new logo in white and blue, with the words "Church of St. Andrew Muar" in black, written in both English and Mandarin, alongside the year of establishment. The new logo represents a united, synodal church and parish.

Joining the launch were parish priest Fr Jason Wong, his assistant Fr Aaron Alammalay, and PPC chairperson James Lee.

The parish received 24 submissions for the SAC Logo Design Competition, and Bishop Bernard presented prizes to the top three winners. The first prize was awarded to Vincent Koh, whose design is now



Bishop Bernard Paul presenting a plaque to the winner.

the official parish logo. All 24 participants were also presented with certificates of participation, which they collected later at the parish office.

During the same event, Bishop Bernard presented a trophy, along with smaller ones, to the Timotius Group, winners of the recently held parish "St Andrew's Cup 2024." Representatives of the group were present to receive their award from the prelate.

Bernard Anthony



The Timotius group receiving their trophy from Bishop Bernard Paul.

Planting the seeds of faith: A catechist's reflection

NILAI, Negeri Sembilan: As I stood at the back of the Church of St Theresa on Sunday morning, watching the children line up for their First Holy Communion, my heart brimmed with gratitude. The Feast of Christ the King — a celebration of God's eternal reign — felt like the perfect day to witness these young souls receiving Jesus for the first time.

This year has not been easy. I often wondered how we would manage with a shortage of catechists and so many holidays disrupting our rhythm. By God's grace, we stayed committed, ensuring the children learned everything they needed for their First Confession and this precious moment of Holy Communion.

Teaching in a small town like Nilai presents unique challenges. Unlike bigger churches in Seremban or Selangor, where classes can be conducted in separate languages, we work with what we have — often switching between English and Malay to ensure every child understands. Yet, amidst the challenges, the children's eagerness to learn their prayers and participate in class strengthened me.

I've learned to lean deeply on my role



The communicants with Fr Christopher Soosaipillai cutting the cake.

as a catechist. It is not just about imparting knowledge but about echoing God's Word, setting good examples, and sharing my faith journey. Most importantly, it's about loving these children and trusting that God will do the rest — planting seeds of faith in their hearts and letting His "magic touch" bring them to life.

As I reflect on the months of preparation leading up to today, I am reminded

of the simple yet profound moments, a shy child reciting the Hail Mary for the first time, the sparkle in their eyes when they understood a parable, or their earnest confessions as they prepared their hearts for Jesus. These moments remind me why I do this work.

But there is more to be done. Many children do not read the Bible at home, and some have never heard the incredible

stories within its pages. It is my hope — and my prayer — that I can share more of these stories with them in the coming years. Stories of courage, love, and redemption are not just tales but living testaments of God's love.

I also pray for the parents that they may find time to journey with their children through the Bible. A shared moment reading about Noah's Ark, David's bravery or Jesus's miracles can light a spark of faith in their hearts. The Bible, after all, is the greatest love story ever told — a story that invites us all to be part of it.

As the children returned to their seats after receiving the Eucharist, their faces radiant with joy, I whispered a silent prayer of thanksgiving. The Feast of Christ the King reminds us that Jesus reigns not in distant realms but in our hearts. And today, these children took their first step in welcoming Him into theirs.

May this day be the beginning of a lifelong journey of faith for them, and may God continue to guide me — and all of us — in echoing His love to the next generation. **Stella Chok**

Collegiality, role of women discussed at council

VATICAN: The Pope and his international Council of Cardinals met on December 2 and 3 in the Domus Sanctae Marthae, the Pope's residence, the Vatican press office said.

The discussion on collegiality in the Church and "the relationship between the particular churches and ecclesial assemblies" was led by Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, who is not a member of the council, but served as

its secretary from 2013 to 2020.

The council also discussed the recently concluded Synod of Bishops on Synodality, the Vatican said.

"In addition, the theme of the role of women in the Church was explored, seeking a synthesis of the issues that emerged during the last four council sessions," the statement added.

At their meetings in December 2023 and

February, April and June 2024, the Pope and cardinals invited women experts – including religious sisters, a consecrated virgin and an Anglican bishop – to their meetings to continue conversations on the role of women in the Church.

The council also dedicated time at their December meeting to discussing the implementation of Francis' 2022 apostolic constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* (*Preach the Gospel*) in dioceses.

The Pope and cardinals discussed the work of a study group, led by council member Cardinal Oswald Gracias, on the role of nuncios and other representatives "in a synodal perspective," the statement said.

"As always, the council was an opportunity for an overall reflection on the situation of the Church and the world in the cardinals' various areas of origin, to share concerns and hopes about the current conditions of conflict and crisis," the Vatican statement said.

The next meeting of the council is scheduled for April 2025. **CathNews**



Pope Francis with the Council for Cardinals at their meeting. (Vatican Media)

South Korean bishops tell President Yoon to apologise, take responsibility

SEOUL: In a strongly worded statement released on December 4, the Korean Bishops' Conference emphasised the importance of safeguarding democracy and called for an explanation and apology from President Yoon Suk Yeol over his declaration of martial law.

"The imposition of a state of emergency last night must have kept many Koreans awake," the statement read. "Unless there is an urgent need, the government and administrative procedures of a state should be carried out in a normal manner and be known to the citizens."

The unprecedented move by President Yoon was announced live on television at 10.00 pm on Dec 3. He declared martial law, citing the need to "eliminate the pro-North Korean forces and protect the democratic constitutional order."

However, the declaration was met with swift opposition, and by 2.00 am, a parliamentary vote overwhelmingly repealed the order, with 190 out of 300 members voting against it. Lawmakers convened despite a military blockade to secure the vote.

The bishops raised concerns over the justification and urgency of the martial law declaration, noting the lack of visible external or



People take part in a candlelight vigil in Seoul to protest the South Korean president's short-lived declaration of martial law. (Vatican News)

wartime threats.

"Constitutional lawyers agree that President Yoon's declaration of the state of emergency raises numerous problems of procedural legitimacy. Although the state of emergency was lifted following a parliamentary vote, it is questionable whether the matter was serious and urgent enough to justify such a

declaration, which was lifted after only six hours," the statement read.

Referencing South Korea's painful history, including the Gwangju massacre of May 1980, the bishops warned against actions that could undermine the country's hard-earned democracy.

"Our democracy was built at great sacrifice," the bishops wrote. "The Catholic Church in Korea actively supports and stands in solidarity with the Korean people to protect our democracy."

The statement, signed by Bishop Matthias Long-hoon RI, spokesman of the Korean Bishops' Conference and Bishop of Suwon, called on President Yoon to address the public.

"It is imperative that the President personally go before the people to explain what happened, sincerely apologise to the people, and take responsibility for the process of imposing and lifting martial law," the bishops said.

The Korean bishops called for accountability and dialogue, urging the president and the government "to sincerely respond to the requests of the Catholic Church of Korea and the Korean people." **Vatican News**

Pope receives new all-electric popemobile



VATICAN: Pope Francis received a new, emission-free, all-electric popemobile from representatives of Mercedes-Benz, the German car manufacturer that has been supplying vehicles for the popes for nearly 100 years.

"We are overjoyed to be able to fulfil the Holy Father's wish for an electric popemobile and are particularly proud to be able to build the vehicle according to his requirements," Britta Seeger, head of sales and marketing and member of the board of management of Mercedes-Benz Group AG, said in a press release December 4.

It is the first time the company has manufactured an all-electric popemobile and "this cooperation ... is a valuable symbol of sustainable change together," she said.

The Pope met with the representatives, which included engineers who led the project, in a courtyard at the Vatican. Ola Källenius, Mercedes-Benz CEO, presented the pope with the white and chrome key fob and showed him the vehicle's interior.

The new popemobile sends "a clear call for electromobility and decarbonisation," Källenius said.

A team of specialists worked for a year to complete the handcrafted vehicle, which is based on the new G580 model. It is outfitted with "an electric drivetrain, which was adapted to the particularly low speeds required for public appearances," the press release said.

"The vehicle represents an incredible amount of manual labour and passion – but it's also full of state-of-the-art technology," said Klaus Millerferli, one of the development engineers. "The fact that Pope Francis has invited some of us to hand it over personally really tops everything off. It's an experience that you'll tell your grandchildren about." **CNS**

New appointments revive dispute in India's Syro-Malabar Church

INDIA: The decades-old liturgy dispute in an Eastern rite Indian archdiocese resurfaced on December 3, when parishioners blocked the entry of newly appointed priest administrators at three parishes.

The parishioners gathered outside the main gates of the parishes in Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese in southern Kerala. They did not allow the administrators, appointed by apostolic administrator Bishop Bosco Puthur, to enter the church premises.

The archdiocese is the seat of Major Archbishop Raphael Thattil, the head of the second-largest Eastern Rite Church in India.

The newly appointed administrators came to take charge with police escort on Dec 3.

Fr Kurian Bharanikulangara, appointed to St Mary's Forane Church in Tripunithura, was prevented from entering its premises.

However, before leaving, the priest stuck a notice outside the church, claiming he had taken charge.

Similar unruly scenes were witnessed in Martin De Porres church in Palarivattom and Our Lady of Velankanni Church in Mathanagar.

The parishioners shouted slogans against Puthur, accusing him of creating fresh unrest during the advent season by appointing administrators over parish priests.

The dispute stems from liturgical rubrics. The archdiocesan priests and Catholics refuse to accept the rubrics of the Church's Synod-approved Mass, which asks the celebrant to face the altar during the Eucharistic prayer. They want to continue celebrating Mass with priests facing the congregation throughout the Mass.



Newly appointed parish administrator Father Kurian Bharanikulangara near St Mary's Forane Church in Tripunithura with police escort on December 3, 2024. (Ucanews photo)

Among the 470 priests in the archdiocese, home to more than half a million Eastern

Rite Church followers, less than 20 support the Synod-approved rubrics. **ucanews.com**



Pope Francis' eco-village to promote ecological conversion at 2025 Jubilee

Pope Francis' plan to build an eco-village in the historic gardens of Castel Gandolfo, the summer residence of the popes, will be complete for the 2025 Jubilee, allowing pilgrims and tourists to participate in an immersive experience of "ecological conversion," organisers said.

In February 2023, after delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Francis finally launched his "Borgo Laudato Si" project, which combines sustainable agriculture with environmentally friendly teaching programmes aimed especially at vulnerable and marginalised groups. The Pope's ambitious project, inspired by his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*, emphasises sustainability, a circular economy and integral human ecology, which places the human being at the centre and in connection with the environment.

The aim of the Borgo is to become self-sustainable through the use of solar panels and to achieve zero water waste. Francis, who reinforced the care of creation in his 2023 apostolic exhortation *Laudato Deum*, describes water as a fundamental human right in his encyclical, and the Borgo will reflect this principle by using containers to collect rainwater and restructuring the plumbing of the garden's many fountains to recycle water. Organisers are working to make all intra-garden transport electric. Plastic is banned within the garden.

The goal of the project "is to share with as many people as possible the beauty that there is in caring for creation", explained Donatella Parisi, communication coordinator of *Laudato Si'* Higher Education Centre, speaking to a group of Vatican journalists who were among the first to preview the papal gardens on Wednesday (November 27). The visit was organized by the Pontifical University of Santa Croce in Rome.

The lush gardens, about an hour's drive south of Rome and extending across 140 acres on the slopes surrounding Lake Albano, were chosen by Roman Emperor Hadrian in 100 C.E. to build his monumental villa, and in the late 1500s, the popes adopted it as their summer residence to escape the bustle and heat of Rome.

Pope Benedict XVI had a special appreciation for the summer estate and could often be seen walking through its manicured topiaries



The Pontifical Villas' Gardens in Castel Gandolfo, Italy. (RNS/Claire Giangravé)

and shady groves. But Francis made clear once he was elected that he had no intention of spending his time at the estate during the summer, or of taking any vacation time. He decided to restructure the estate, devoting over 60 acres of land to the Borgo project. The rest is UNESCO protected land, and the Vatican will limit itself to improving its sustainability and efficiency.

The Borgo will not impact Vatican finances, Parisi said, relying on partnerships with external companies and organisations to pay for the projects.

The Jubilee celebrations, which will last all of 2025, occur on the 10th anniversary of *Laudato Si'* and the 800th anniversary of the "Canticle of the Sun," St Francis of Assisi's famed song honouring creation. The Borgo will inaugurate its farm and agriculture projects in February and will be among the suggested visits for the 30 million pilgrims expected to visit Rome for the Jubilee.

For decades, the popes oversaw a small farm in the garden that produced dairy products and a vineyard that made a modest "wine of the popes". The Borgo plans to resume this activity, with an eye for sustainability. "It will adopt the most modern techniques to develop an agriculture system that will waste nothing," Parisi explained, adding that they will not use pesticides.

Olive oil will be made from the 1,000 olive trees of the Borgo, and the garden will produce its own honey and tea. The cow farm is set to become an interactive experience for visitors and will produce organic milk, cheese

and even ice cream. As visitors walk through the garden, they will encounter 30 signs, each with one word — such as "water," "silence" or "tree" — followed by a spiritual and environmental reflection, highlighting both the botanical and spiritual significance of the over 3,000 plant species in the garden.

Trees will guide the visitors through the park, Parisi said. They will be greeted by Mithusalem, a 700-year-old oak. "Trees have a lot to teach us about human relations," she said, pointing to how they communicate in a horizontal model and warn each other of threats.

To highlight the Pope's support for the project, he recently announced that he will make the general director of the Borgo, the Cardinal Fabio Baggio, who was elevated to a cardinal at the Dec 7 consistory. "It was a kind of seal of approval of the assignments that I had been given recently," Baggio said shortly after the announcement in a video published by the Borgo.

"We want to prove that it's possible to be stewards of creation today," he said. "Small changes can lead to big changes, which can address human challenges."

A large greenhouse will feature symbolic and ancient plants. Nearby, the Borgo will host teaching projects for groups wanting to learn more about the Pope's ecological vision at the Laudato Si Centre for Higher Education. In collaboration with the charitable cooperative Paths to Citizenship, the Borgo will teach vulnerable groups — including migrants and refugees, former prisoners,

disabled individuals and victims of human trafficking — how to care for gardens and land in a sustainable way.

Twenty people from these marginalised groups have already gone through the formation process, and 10 have found stable employment. The 20 experienced gardeners of the Borgo teach the classes. "It's aimed at people who wish to prove that their vulnerability can be a strength for a community that wants to be welcoming and inclusive," Parisi said.

Students and children will also be invited to participate in summer schools and projects to raise environmental awareness, and the Borgo will host cultural and artistic events. Businesses that want to be inspired by the principles of *Laudato Si'* will have the chance to participate as well, after passing a rigorous vetting process, Parisi explained.

Francis selected the parish priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago, the Rev Manuel Dorantes, to become the director of the Borgo's Centre for Higher Education starting Dec 1. In a statement, Dorantes expressed "humility and gratitude" for the appointment, which will take him away from his urban ministry to serve the marginalised groups welcomed at the Borgo.

Francis' decision to turn the papal gardens into a sustainable haven has also been met with criticism. Ten families currently live and work on the land and feared, according to recent reports on Italian media, that the Pope's activity would upend their way of living.

At least one of the families living and serving in the Pope's garden has decided to go elsewhere. Parisi said the Borgo hopes to begin a "positive dialogue" with everyone involved. "The Holy See will leave no one on the street," she said, responding to reports suggesting the families would soon be evicted.

Francis' changes to the way of life of Castel Gandolfo were not immediately welcomed. The mayor of the town at the time said citizens and shop owners were "in mourning". But 11 years into this pontificate, the town continues to thrive, attracting visitors who wish to experience its beauty, art and rustic cuisine all year round.

Organisers hope this newest project will attract the faithful, especially young people, wishing to be inspired by Francis' vision for a sustainable, faith-filled and human-centred environment. **Claire Giangravé, NCR**

The priest as catechetical leader

In the previous article, entitled *The Role of the Priest in Catechesis*, I had examined the role of the priest, and especially the parish priest, as educator of the Faith and catechetical leader of the community. In this article, I will focus specifically on his role as the catechetical leader in the parish.

The parish as a locus for catechesis

According to the *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997), the parish is, without doubt, the most important locus (context) in which “the Christian community is formed and expressed” (GDC, 257). The *Directory for Catechesis* (2020) states that the parish is the ideal place of formation since most Catholics experience the power of faith, love and charity, live and bear witness within the parish community. As the most visible form of community in the Church, the parish is also where many Catholics truly become aware of themselves as being the People of God.

In relation to catechesis, both directories state that the parish is the prime mover and pre-eminent place for catechesis, while recognising that it is not the only locus for the ministry. Catechesis is expected to take place in the family, schools, basic ecclesial communities and in other forms of Christian communities too. In the parish, catechesis is to be organised not only for children and young people, but also for adults. Adult catechesis may include Bible studies, theological and spirituality courses, Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and others. It is also where catechesis for the family, the elderly, migrants and other groups of people may be held.

The *Directory for Catechesis* also points out that the parish is “the womb in which for some of its members, the specific vocation to the service of catechesis is born and grows...”. It means it is within the parish community that new vocations to the ministry of catechists are “born” and where lay catechists are formed to

grow and become mature in their ministry. In light of the above, as the catechetical leader of the community, the parish priest has several responsibilities.

Here, I wish to highlight the responsibilities as stated in the *Code of Canon Law* (1993) and *Directory for Catechesis* (2020).

Code of Canon Law (1983)

According to the *Code of Canon Law* (CIC, 776-777) the parish priest is “bound to ensure the catechetical formation of adults, young people and children”. He has to carry out the responsibility with the help of other priests attached to the parish, deacons, the religious, lay members of the parish and especially lay catechists. For his part, the priest has to ensure that:

- Proper catechesis is given to children, young people and adults for the reception and celebration of the sacraments.
- Children are adequately prepared for first Confession and First Holy Communion, and young people for the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- After having received first Holy Communion, children are to be given a “richer and deeper catechetical formation”.
- As far as their conditions allow, catechetical formation is to be provided to those with Special Needs, such as the mentally and physically disabled.
- The faith of young people and adults is “strengthened, enlightened and developed” by continuous catechetical initiatives and ongoing formation.

It can be seen that CIC mainly emphasises the responsibilities of the



Echoing the Faith

DR STEVEN SELVARAJU

parish priest in relation to the sacramental preparation of the members of the community. However, a point to note is the importance of catechesis for persons with Special Needs. As such, where possible, classes have to be organised for this purpose.

Directory for Catechesis (2020)

The Directory provides a more pastoral thrust when speaking about the responsibilities of the parish priests in catechesis.

These require priests to:

- ❖ Dedicate themselves with “competent and generous commitment” to the catechesis of the faithful in the parish. This means the priests themselves must have a certain amount of knowledge and competency in the field of catechesis.
- ❖ To keep the connection between liturgy, catechesis and charity in the parish. In this regard, the Sunday Mass serves as an excellent means by which the priest may achieve this, as he celebrates, teaches and leads by example to serve others.
- ❖ Elicit a sense of responsibility from the whole community for the ministry of catechesis. He is to remind them that by virtue of the Sacrament of Baptism, all members of the parish are responsible for the task.
- ❖ Help members who feel called to become lay catechists in their discernment and to assess their capability and preparedness for the ministry, as well as, to give their utmost attention to the formation of the lay catechists.
- ❖ Show a sense of gratitude and give support to those who are offering themselves to serve as lay catechists.

The priest has to encourage the parish community to do the same.

- ❖ Seek the assistance and advice of the lay catechists when organising and implementing the catechetical plan of the parish.
- ❖ Take into consideration the catechetical ministry and all its aspects when drawing up the overall pastoral plan of the parish.
- ❖ Ensure a close link between catechetical plan and programs in the parish and those of the diocese so as to avoid all forms of subjectivism with regards to catechesis.

Conclusion

The responsibilities of parish priests as stated in the CIC and *Directory for Catechesis* indicate the necessity of their active and regular commitment to the ministry. While a priest may depend on the catechetical coordinator and lay catechists to perform their duties faithfully and effectively, it is imperative that he himself, as the catechetical leader, is fully involved too. It is a task of immense importance that St John Paul II once said:

“... with all my strength I beg you, ministers of Jesus Christ: Do not for lack zeal or because of some unfortunate preconceived idea, leave the faithful without catechesis. Let it not be said that “the children beg for food, but no one gives to them”.”
(*Catechesis Tradendae*, 64).

The key ideas in the article are presented in a simple illustrated format below.

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

The parish is the prime mover and pre-eminent place for catechesis. It is also where new vocations to the ministry of catechist are “born”.

According to the Code of Canon Law, the parish priest has to ensure that children, young people and adults are properly prepared to receive and celebrate the sacraments. And if their condition allows, catechesis is to be provided to children with Special Needs.

Are the children ready to receive Holy Communion?

Yes, Father. They are looking forward to the special day.

The parish priest also has to ensure that catechesis is provided to the adult members of the parish. These include the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), bible and theological studies and others.

And how are things going with the RCIA catechumens?

They are all doing well, Father.

The Directory for Catechesis states that parish priests are to dedicate themselves “with competent and generous commitment” to the catechesis of the faithful. They have to show a sense of appreciation to those serving as lay catechists and give them his support.

Dear catechists. I am happy with the work that you are doing. Keep it up!

Although I have plenty of other commitments as the parish priest, be assured that you have my appreciation and support.

The responsibilities of parish priests as stated in the Code of Canon Law and Directory for Catechesis indicate the necessity of their active and regular commitment to the ministry of catechesis.

Thank you, Father. We truly appreciate your support.

The role of the parish priest in catechesis is so important that Saint John Paul II, in his encyclical, *Catechesi tradendae* said...

“... with all my strength I beg you ministers of Jesus Christ: Do not for lack zeal or because of some unfortunate preconceived idea, leave the faithful without catechesis. Let it not be said that “the children beg for food, but no one gives to them”.” (*Catechesis tradendae*, 64).

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Migrants and locals making soaps for prisoners.



Diverse nationality participating at Mass.

I see the Church as a place of refuge

Elvina Fernandez

Fr Simon Anand, parish priest of the Church of the Sacred Heart Kampar and head of the Penang Diocesan Youth Network (PDYN), reflects on his vocation journey with humility and grace, sharing that the Holy Spirit guided his journey to bring hope to everyone, particularly with the migrants and youth whom he works closely with now.

His decision to join the priesthood was not marked by a single moment but by a spectrum of experiences over the years. Coming from a mixed marriage, with both parents now Catholic, his gradual involvement in church activities at the parish and diocesan levels eventually led him to consider the priesthood seriously.

Inspired by numerous priests who became his mentors and guided him along his spiritual journey, as well as with the support from family and friends, Fr Simon found joy and fulfilment in his vocation, a journey that began in earnest at 21. Fr Simon's vocation journey has deeply influenced his approach to ministry.

"I see the Church as a place of refuge," he said, adding that he is particularly drawn to reaching out to those who cannot be physically present, such as migrants and the young people whose campuses are far away from the parish. "Our parish also provides transportation to students in tertiary institutes who live up to 45 minutes away from the parish to participate at Mass."

As the head of PDYN, Fr Simon aspires to see young people actively influencing the various facets of their lives in the country, and globally, from politics to NGOs and advocacy work and bringing about a positive change in policy-making to benefit the

community at large.

"I believe that this is the Age of the Holy Spirit, where ministry extends beyond the church walls. In essence, it is like Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came down, the Apostles went beyond Jerusalem."

Fr Simon encourages young people to cultivate their diverse vocations using their personal charism.

His initiative in the Penang Diocesan Youth network with various social programmes have successfully engaged youth in faith formation and community service.

Fr Simon shares inspiring stories of youth transformation through PDYN's

programmes. "One recent highlight was sending 33 young people to World Youth Day, where they bonded, fundraised, and were touched lading them on their return to serve in the diverse ministries in the Church and contribute to the society.

"We have had one who has chosen to enter the seminary, while some others chose to work for Caritas, the tribunal, the PDYN, social communications and run even independent youth programmes for the community."

Fr Simon's passion for working with migrants stems from his deep empathy for their struggles and vulnerabilities. His ministry in Kampar includes organising monthly gatherings for migrant groups and providing spiritual and practical support for the most vulnerable group in our society.

"The church also offers medical camps, documentation assistance with the help of the Indonesian embassy, educational

programs, and community events, not only to help create a sense of belonging for migrants but also to ensure they are not left out."

The Church of the Sacred Heart Kampar is a diverse community with parishioners from various nationalities, including Indonesians, Myanmar nationals, Vietnamese, Filipinos, Koreans, Africans, Sri Lankans, and locals from different ethnic backgrounds.

"For these communities, what they need is a safe space to spend time together once a week and know that the church is there for them."

Fr Simon has played a part in the renovation of the community hall to provide migrant groups with this safe space for gatherings and to foster a sense of belonging, while the monthly coffee mornings and migrant-local initiatives help build a cohesive community.

Looking ahead, Fr Simon said that in 2015, the church was designated as one of the pilgrimage churches for the Year of Mercy, and has been a strong theme since, emphasising that the church should be a welcoming place for everyone.

"I envision the church as a centre of mercy, with initiatives like the Mercy Hall and Mercy Kitchen serving the community's diverse needs. We are here to serve the people, and especially those who are most in need."

When asked what he would like to be remembered for, Fr Simon shared that he humbly leaves his legacy in the hands of the Holy Spirit and the people of God. "I hope to inspire a community that fosters and embraces everyone and serves as a beacon of mercy and love to those looking for a little glimmer of hope."

Fr Simon Anand's journey and ministry remind us of the profound impact of faith, community, and service. His dedication to youth, migrants, and the diverse parish community of Kampar is truly inspiring.



Monthly medical camps which include migrants and non-Catholics.

Celebrating 25 years of consecrated life in small 'bites'

Sr Mampheteli Clementine Sekantsi, a member of the Congregation of the Holy Family Sisters of Bordeaux, celebrated the 25th anniversary of her religious profession in a unique way by feeding the homeless for 25 weeks. She invited family and friends to assist her financially, allowing them to share in her mission of helping people on the streets of Pietermaritzburg, where she works with St Mary's Catholic Church Soup Kitchen and Life Changer.

Sr Sekantsi, whose apostolate includes cooking and counseling, feels called to offer hope and encouragement to young people on the streets, often organising prayer meetings and sharing the Word of God. Her ministry is deeply rooted in the spirituality of the Holy Family, which has inspired her throughout her 25 years in religious life. She has worked

in various roles, including as a catechist, radio presenter, social worker, and aid worker for the homeless.

Reflecting on the selfless missionary women who came before her, Sr Sekantsi feels inspired by their commitment and continues to serve in their spirit. Her previous missionary work in Rwanda and South Africa has involved pastoral care, child protection, and supporting families. Sr Sekantsi is committed to creating communion in every community she serves, embodying the simplicity and compassion of the Holy Family in her work with the homeless.

Her efforts aim to offer a loving, non-judgmental environment for those struggling with addiction, providing hope and empowerment for a better life. **Sr Katleho Khang, SNJM, Vatican News**



Sr Mampheteli Clementine Sekantsi preparing food for those in need in Pietermaritzburg.

Putting Christ back into Christmas

Christians all over the world celebrate Christmas to remember the birth of Jesus Christ. For Roman Catholics, the First Sunday of Advent is when we begin preparing ourselves spiritually for the coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ. When Christmas arrives, we participate at Mass on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning. Then we return home to have a delightful meal with our family members, exchange presents and sing carols.



Faithfully Speaking

JULIE LIM SEET YIN

true meaning of Christmas, especially when we're lost in the business of merry-making. We forget about the "Christ" in "Christ-mas". Interestingly, the name of Christmas was cleverly conceived so that we don't forget the true reason for the season.

Despite of the commercialisation of Christmas, there are subtle signs of Christianity amidst secularism. A few weeks before the start of Advent, I was browsing Christmas

decorations on sale at a major shopping mall in Kuala Lumpur. I was surprised to see three statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary displayed for sale together with the decorations. They were made of porcelain and decently priced. In Malaysia, Catholic religious items are only sold at religious stores. Therefore, to see statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary on sale at a non-religious, commercial store is heartwarming, at least for me. The significant role of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the birth of Christ is another aspect that we tend to forget at Christmas. I was tempted to purchase one of the statues but I already have enough statues at home.

The other pet peeve I have about the commercialisation of Christmas is when malls and shops don't play Christmas songs that has "Christ" mentioned in



the lyrics. But having said that, there are certain commercial places that do so, like hotels and smaller shops.

The importance of singing religious Christmas songs reminded me of my teenage years growing up in Port Klang. I joined the youth group and we would go carolling from house to house during the yuletide season to spread festive cheer. In keeping to the true meaning of Christmas, the parish priest at that time requested that we only sing religious songs such as *Silent Night*, *O Holy Night* and *When a Child Is Born*. No commercial Christmas songs were allowed. Our carolling booklet certainly did not have *I Saw Mummy*

Kissing Santa Clause or Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer.

As Christmas draws near, let us not forget the Christ whom we are anticipating. May we continue to share His messages of love, peace, joy and hope to the people around us – our family members, friends, colleagues and loved ones. When we make that a mission for our faith, it is only then that we put Christ back into Christmas.

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

BE OUR GUEST

A spiritual feast for your home

By Kristen Priya Krishnan



What is your family's favourite meal? Is it a holiday recipe, a simple weeknight dinner, or a gourmet dessert treat?

The Second Vatican Council teaches that "the treasures of the Bible are to be opened more lavishly, so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God's Word". Is the Bible a special table around which your family gathers, as it does for a favourite meal?

As we consider ways to share the Old Testament in the family, we discover that the Bible, whether prominently displayed or gathering dust on a shelf, offers rich spiritual nourishment for children, teenagers and adults in your home. It is the key that opens the treasury of God.

It is said that we live in the Age of Information. The information superhighway moves us through the high-speed traffic of news conveyed through television, the Internet, blogs, and instant messaging. We may have instant and high-speed access to information at our fingertips. But the search for human happiness and daily wisdom remains. What is the place of the Bible in this Information Age?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us that the books of the Old Testament "are a storehouse of sublime teaching on God and of sound wisdom on human life, as well as a wonderful treasury of prayers; in them, too, the mystery of our salvation is present in a hidden way."

Much of the Old Testament takes the

form of stories. The way God teaches resounds with human doubt, apathy and infidelity. In the drama of the biblical stories is reflected our own journeys of faith with our daily joys, works, struggles, and hopes which can become our prayer. Daily prayer can bless you, your family, and those you pray for. It can also invite more peace into your life, help you learn more about God's plan for you.

Old Testament stories are especially compelling for young children who, with their natural capacity for awe and wonder, marvel at the unfolding of God's saving action and living presence in the world. Biblical stories that reveal weakness and sin are opportunities to discuss, at age appropriate levels, our humanness in light of God's love and mercy. Through the biblical range of human experiences, we learn God's ways and our response of faith. As in human communication, our communication with God can be expressed in a variety of ways. We communicate with God using words and songs, in imagination and silence, and ritually or spontaneously. We can pray in church, our gardens, our cars, or in the workplace too. We can also pray lying in bed, as the first thing we do when we awake, and as the last thing we do as we drift off to sleep.

To bring the Old Testament to life, assign family members to gather artistic images that depict biblical stories and themes. Let the painting, sculpture, stained glass, or piece of sacred music serve as a discussion starter for the family reflection on God's

Word expressed in artistic forms.

The Psalms are a rich storehouse of prayers. In spite of overloaded family schedules, taking brief moments to pray together the Liturgy of the Hours, whether Morning or Evening Prayer, connects your home to the Church's rhythm of praise, thanksgiving and intercession. There are many handy Catholic resources now available that makes daily praying of Morning and Evening prayers simple and sustainable.

Finally, *Lectio Divina* is another practical way to feast on the Old Testament in your home. It is a flexible and easy way to pray. This ancient Christian practice is very essential in our time and strongly encourages the Word of God. One first listens, notes what is given and responds in a way one is directed by the Holy Spirit. Tradition, as understood by the Church, is more than a collection of customs or time-honoured habits. It encompasses the Church's teaching, life and worship. The *Lectio Divina* can also be an effective form of group prayer within the family. This kind of reflective listening allows the Holy Spirit to deepen awareness of God's taking the initiative to speak to us. Prayer should always be our normal way of life – a sustained connection with God. Being persistent, constant, and untiring in prayer is crucial. God is untiring in trying to reach us, untiring in trying to come into our hearts. And, so must we too.

God's ways are found in the Bible. The Bible is the world's best bestseller. The Bible reveals that God fulfilled His

saving plan of love to free us from sin, both in an explicit and implicit way. Some beliefs are more hidden. Love loves to hide secrets, so that when we find them, we are enraptured even more by their beauty. Not only is it God's inspired Word, it is a great work of literature. It is a collection of books composed over many centuries, with many literary forms, including history, historical novels, parables, allegories, and poems. It tells a tale that stretches back to the creation of the world and forward to the end of time. It speaks of faith, hope, love and forgiveness, describes every human emotion, depicts the heights and depths of human courage and depravity, and above all God's unconditional love for humanity and His salvific plan. Such attitudinal changes bode well for Catholics, especially when reading and praying with the Word of God leads to lessons learned, hearts inspired and lives profoundly moved for good.

Through the steps of *Lectio Divina* – reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation – the wisdom of the Old Testament can bear rich fruit in your home and may even become your family's favourite spiritual food.

Kristen Priya Krishnan is an educationist by profession, a trained chef by passion, and an inspirationalist at heart. She actively serves in her parish within the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, contributing to the Formation Ministry as well as the Lectors and Commentators Ministry.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Vows we don't choose

As a member of a religious order, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, I chose to make four religious vows: poverty, chastity, obedience, and perseverance. I did this freely, with no other compulsion than a strong inner sense that this was being asked of me. That freedom to make vows, with no outside pressures, is a luxury millions of men and women don't have. On their part, they take these same vows (albeit in a different modality) because they are compelled by circumstance to do so. In effect, these are vows that someone else makes for them.

William Wordsworth once gave this poetic expression:

*My heart was full;
I made no vows, but vows
Were then made for me;
bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be,
else sinning greatly.*

Most of us, I suspect, have known people for which this is true, that is, persons who, without ever formally professing religious vows, lived out their own version of obedience, celibacy, poverty, and perseverance. For most of their lives, circumstances conscripted them and, in effect, took away their freedom so that they were never able to make their own choices about where to go in life, about educational opportunities, about where

to live, about what job to have, and (not least) about whether to marry or not. Rather, they spend their adult years existentially unfree, bound by circumstance and duty, sacrificing their own dreams and plans to serve others.

Many of us still know people who, because of circumstances like poverty, the death of a parent, a family situation, or personal illness, have had vows made for them. Several of my older brothers fall into that category. But and this is the point, even though those vows are not made explicitly or publicly, they are consecrated vows, sacred in the biblical sense.

What does it mean to be consecrated? What is consecration?

Sadly today, we have turned this word into a "church word", and we speak of consecrated buildings (churches), consecrated cups (chalices), and consecrated persons (ministers in our churches and vowed religious). Why do we speak of them as consecrated? The answer lies in the original meaning of what it means to be consecrated.

To be consecrated simply means to be "set aside" – though not first of all for church purposes. Rather, imagine this scenario: You have just left work and are driving home when you come upon the scene of an accident. You are not in the accident but are first to arrive there. At

that moment you lose your freedom. You are no longer free to simply drive off. People are injured and you are there! You are conscripted and have to respond simply because you are there. At that moment you become a consecrated person, consecrated by circumstance, by need. At that moment, in Wordsworth's words, certain vows are made for you.

There's an interesting parallel to the situation Moses finds himself in when God asks him to be the person to lead the Israelites out of slavery. Moses does not want the job, nor does he volunteer for it. He gives God various excuses as to why he isn't the right person, and ends up by asking God, "Why me? Why not my brother?" In essence, God's answer is this: "Because you saw the oppression of the people. Because you've seen it, you're no longer free. You're like the first person at the scene of an accident."

That's what it means to be consecrated, to be called, to have a vocation. While you remain radically free (you can drive away from the accident) you are no longer existentially or morally free – else, as Wordsworth says, you should sin gravely. Your choice is not whether to get on with life or to stay and help. Your only question is: what's my responsibility here? Circumstance has made a vow for you.

It can be helpful to understand voca-

tion, vows, and consecration through this lens. I once chose freely to give myself over to a vocation which asked me to publicly make a set of vows, that is, to live in a certain simplicity, to forego marriage and having my own family, to make myself available for the service of others, and to persevere in that for the rest of my life. Several of my own siblings (and millions of women and men) have done the same thing, without the recognition and communal support that comes with public vows. They too lived consecrated lives, though without public recognition.

In affirming this, I do not exclude married persons, except to say that, in marriage, like me, they made public vows and thus receive a certain recognition and communal support that comes with that; albeit their vows, save for celibacy, are the same.

All of us are perennially at the scene of an accident, unfree to drive away, conscripted, bound by vows that are made for us. It's called having a vocation.

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

Public prayer is a living thing, but that doesn't mean anything goes

The personal prayer of believers is ordered and flows from the public prayer of the Church. The public prayer and worship of God is the height of the spiritual life.

There is no contradiction between the personal prayer of the Christian and the public prayer of the Church. The two are intended to intertwine in a beautiful synergy that directs the soul to God.

While the public prayer of the Church has undergone many developments within the past several decades, it should not be thought that it is somehow a free-for-all in which anyone can adjust or change it at their whim. The public prayer of the Church, along with its words, gestures, music, and language, belong to the Church herself and is under the direct care of the appointed shepherds of the Church. It is the shepherds of the Church who discern and guide developments to public prayer and worship.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: "In the living tradition of prayer, each Church proposes to its faithful, according to its historic, social, and cultural context, a language for prayer: words, melodies, gestures, iconography."

Abrupt changes to the words, melodies, gestures, and art of the public prayer of the Church, or whimsical changes on the local level, can cause great spiritual harm to the interior life of believers. Since the personal prayer of believers is connected to the public prayer of the

Church, any developments to it must be led and directed solely by the shepherds of the Church who discern and seek to act according to the movements of the Holy Spirit.

The public prayer of the Church is "living," since it moves through the ages and within all the cultures of the human family, and the Holy Spirit calls for developments to it according to the historical, social, and cultural context in which the Church finds herself.

The *Catechism* continues: "The Magisterium of the Church has the task of discerning the fidelity of these ways of praying to the tradition of apostolic faith."

As the Holy Spirit moves through the various historical, social, and cultural contexts of the human family, the shepherds of the Church evaluate and assess where and how the Holy Spirit is moving, and where and how He is not. There are many claims to "the Spirit" when changes are wanted, but the shepherds of the Church are the ones with the grace and authority to examine and decide where and how the Holy Spirit is moving and what He wants from the Church.

As the shepherds undergo such a review and look at the various areas relating to public prayer and worship, they use the doctrinal tradition to help them. As the maxim goes, "the law of prayer is the law of belief." The two always complement one another. The



Cardinal Charles Bo celebrates Mass in St Peter's Basilica. (Vatican Media)

Holy Spirit will never call for something that is in opposition to the teachings of the Lord Jesus.

When it comes to the spiritual life, the Holy Spirit is the source of vitality and inspiration. There is no higher authority. In their discernment, the shepherds of the Church do not take their duty lightly. They submit to the Holy Spirit since they understand that they are dealing and helping to navigate people's spiritual lives and how they encounter God.

The public prayer and worship of the Church directs and shapes all areas of the interior life of believers and so shepherds give an attentive and watchful eye to its words, melodies, gestures, music, and art. There is nothing trivial about the areas relating to public prayer and worship.

As the shepherds make their decisions, it falls on local pastors to accept their guidance and direction and to teach the faithful why decisions have been made

and how they can help us to be closer to God.

The *Catechism* reminds pastors: "It is for pastors and catechists to explain [the] meaning [of the words, melodies, gestures, and art], always in relation to Jesus Christ."

The local pastors (and the catechists who assist them) are to take the responsibility of teaching very seriously. If the faithful do not know what the Church is doing or why, it is because they have not been taught by their pastor, who is their spiritual father and teacher in the ways of the Lord.

It is the duty and the joy of the local pastor, therefore, to instruct his people in all the areas of the spiritual life within the mystery of Jesus Christ. He is to always model a love for the Lord Jesus and a spirit of docility to the Holy Spirit through the decisions of the magisterium, the leading shepherds of the Church. **Fr Jeffrey F. Kirby, Crux**

Little Catholics' corner

Dear children,

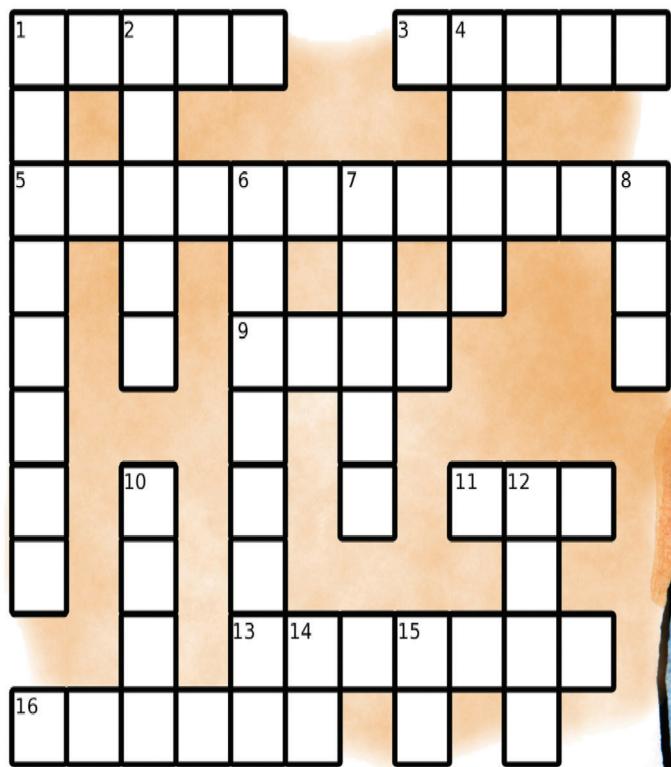
In our Sunday Gospel reading, we learnt that many people had heard John calling them to repent of their sins and be baptised so that they would be ready for the coming Messiah. Large crowds of people came to

be baptised by John. John said to them, "First do something to show that you have really repented of your sin." The people asked, "What should we do?" John said, "If you have two coats, give one to someone who doesn't have one. If you have

food, share it with someone else." In other words, John was saying, "Stop thinking only of yourself and start thinking about others." Children, Christmas is only a few days away. How much thought have we given to what we can do for others during the Christmas

season? Sharing with others — that's the spirit — the spirit of Christmas. Let's all show the true spirit of Christmas this year! Love Aunty Eliz

Philippians 4 Cross-Word



Fill in the blanks with the words at the bottom and fit them into the puzzle. a=across d=down



Brothers and _____ (13a): Rejoice in the _____ (12d) always. I _____ (3a) say _____ (14d) _____ (2d): rejoice! Your _____ (6d) should be known _____ (15d) all. The Lord is _____ (9a). _____ (4d) no anxiety at _____ (11a), but in everything, by prayer and _____ (1d), with _____ (5a), make _____ (10d) requests known to _____ (8d). Then the _____ (1a) of God that surpasses all understanding will _____ (7d) your hearts and minds in _____ (16a) Jesus.

GOD SHALL TO LORD YOUR
CHRIST ALL KINDNESS SISTERS
THANKSGIVING PEACE IT PETITION
NEAR AGAIN GUARD HAVE

COLOUR THE PICTURE



John answered, "Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same." (Luke 3:11)



Luke 3:10-18

God sent Saint John the Baptist to prepare the people for the coming of Jesus. What did he say when some of the people thought that he might be the saviour? Look in the mirror to find out!

Answer: Across: 1. peace 3. shall 5. thanksgiving 9. near 11. all 13. sisters 16. Christ Down: 1. petition 2. again 4. have 6. kindness 7. guard 8. God 10. your 12. Lord 14. it 15. to

YOUTH

REJOICE AND HOPE

Antonia Laleng Mering

MIRI: The Miri Youth Day was celebrated at the Church of the Holy Family Lapok from November 22-24. Over 400 young people from various parishes came together to unite, learn, and grow. The theme was *Rejoice and Hope*, focusing on how young people can collaborate, contribute to society, and make a difference.

The celebration kicked off at 6.30pm with Mass where the youth gathered excitedly in great anticipation. Rt Rev Richard Ng, the bishop of Miri gave an inspiring homily, encouraging the young people to embrace their power in joy and hope of the Lord. He said, "My dear young friends, remember to always find your joy and hope in the Lord in this world full of challenges and uncertainties. For it is written in His Word: 'Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice!' (Philippians 4:4). No matter the trials you face, the Lord is with you, and He will never leave you. Hold fast to His promises and let His light fill your hearts with hope for a brighter tomorrow."

After Mass, the youth were led to differ-



Participants listening to one of the talk

ent activity stations in the hall for Cultural Night. Representatives from every parish performed their cultural dance and songs with enthusiasm and joy. The goal was not just to create a sense of belonging, but also to bring young people together to celebrate both their differences and common values as one in the love of Jesus Christ.

The first segment of the event featured a series of inspirational talks. Local youth leaders and invited speakers shared powerful messages about faith, leadership, and the importance of staying grounded in spiritual values. Topics such as *Building Discipline through Faith* and *Rejoice and Hope in Christ* were discussed. The talks

encouraged reflection and sparked thought-provoking conversations among the youth.

One of the most moving parts of the day was the *Stations of the Cross*, where the youth walked together through the different stages of Christ's Passion. Guided by reflections and prayers, each station helped the youth meditate on the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus. This time of reflection provided an opportunity for deep spiritual renewal and was a powerful reminder of Christ's love and sacrifice.

After the talks, participants engaged in *Sukaneka*, a series of fun and competitive games designed to foster teamwork and cooperation. Activities included relay races,

tug-of-war, and problem-solving challenges. These games allowed the youth to build stronger relationships and work together to achieve common goals.

The highlight of the event was the *Festival of Praise*, a time for collective worship and celebration. The Festival of Praise included live music performances, dance, and testimonies from participants, creating an uplifting atmosphere of spiritual connection and joy and the youth also had time for personal reflection during a Eucharistic adoration session. This quiet time allowed the youth to pray and meditate on the experiences of the day, deepening their connection with Christ.

Miri Youth Day was a day of faith, fellowship, and reflection, offering the youth an opportunity to deepen their relationship with Christ and each other. From the Stations of the Cross to the Festival of Praise, the day was filled with spiritual and joyful moments that will remain in the hearts of all who attended.

After the Sunday Mass, there was the passing of the MYD cross to the Church of St Dominic and Holy Rosary the next hosts of the Miri Youth Day. This was followed by photo sessions. The sending off of the youth with blessings helped to solidify the messages of faith, hope, and unity, inspiring the youth to continue living as disciples of Christ in the world.



The presenters



Games on second day of Miri Youth Day.

PUT GOD FIRST in YOUR LIVES

KUALA KUBU BAHRU: Seven youth received the Sacrament of Confirmation during the Sunday Mass on November 24, the Solemnity of Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, at the Church of St Paul the Apostle.

Archbishop Julian Leow was the main celebrant, with parish priest, Fr V. A. Michael concelebrating.

Before the Confirmation rite began, Fr Michael presented the candidates to the archbishop, affirming their preparation and instruction in the faith.

In his homily, Archbishop Julian posed a thought-provoking question to the congregation: "Who takes first place in your life — money, career, spouse, children, or God?" He emphasised that God should always be in first place, for He is the King of the Universe. However, the Archbishop acknowledged that at times, people forget God when things are going well and only



Confirmants with Archbishop Julian Leow and Fr VA Michael.

turn to Him in times of struggle.

He urged the faithful to develop an intimate relationship with Jesus, knowing Him personally, and remaining faithful to Him. He also reminded the confirmants to welcome Jesus into their lives as King and Lord.

Archbishop Julian prayed for the confirmants, asking the Holy Spirit to be their Advocate, defending them and guiding them to stay faithful to Jesus. After Mass, Fr Michael congratulated the confirmants and expressed gratitude to

Archbishop Julian, the parish Liturgical Committee, sponsors, and parents. He stressed that faith formation is a lifelong process, encouraging the confirmants to continue their journey of deepening their faith, particularly through the youth group. He also thanked those who provided food for the fellowship brunch after the Mass.

In his closing remarks, Archbishop Julian encouraged the confirmants to remain anchored in their faith in Jesus Christ, who will never fail them or forget them. He reminded them to be reflections of Christ wherever they go. Despite the small size of the congregation, the archbishop highlighted the importance of a vibrant and resilient faith to face life's challenges.

Prior to their Confirmation, the seven confirmants had participated in a confirmation camp from Nov 8-10 and engaged in an outreach programme at Taman Sinar Harapan on Nov 10. **Bernard Anthony**

Confirmands urged to be missionaries

MUAR: Twenty-one young Catholics received the Sacrament of Confirmation at the Church of St Andrew during the parish feast day celebration, November 30.

The bishop of Malacca Johore, Rt Rev Bernard Paul, welcomed the candidates and urged them to always listen to the Lord. He encouraged them to answer His call, be brave, and follow Jesus wherever He leads. "Say yes to Jesus, spend time with God, and share your encounters with others. Be witnesses of Christ to everyone you meet along your journey," the bishop said. He emphasized that by drawing closer to Jesus, they would experience God's presence and learn to imitate Him.

Bishop Bernard also acknowledged the different types of Catholics within the Church, with some still struggling in faith. He urged everyone to deepen their relationship with the Lord and to share Jesus with others, a message particularly addressed to the confirmands and the assembly at large.



Confirmands with Bishop Bernard Paul, Fr James Wong and Fr Aaron Alammalay.

bly at large.

The bishop was the main celebrant and preacher for the feast day, with Fr Jason Wong and Fr Aaron Alammalay concelebrating. The church was filled with the families and friends of the confirmands, their godparents, and parishioners.

After the homily, Fr Jason, the parish

priest, presented the 21 candidates to the bishop, affirming that they had been well-prepared for the sacrament. Bishop Bernard acknowledged their readiness to receive the Holy Spirit and encouraged them to invite the Spirit into their lives: "Please come, I need You," he said, urging them to always listen for the voice of Jesus.

The Rite of Confirmation began as Bishop Bernard prayed that the light of Christ would fill the confirmands. He invited the godparents and the assembly to pray silently for them before proceeding with the laying on of hands and anointing with the oil of Chrism.

Following the Mass, Bishop Bernard and the priests presented the Confirmation certificates, with one confirmand representing the group. The certificates were later distributed to each confirmand.

Fr Jason and Fr Aaron also congratulated the confirmands, posing for a group photo with them and the bishop at the grotto area. The confirmands expressed great joy at receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, which strengthened their faith and commitment to their baptismal promises. With the seal and gifts of the Holy Spirit, they pledged to remain faithful to Christ, serve others, and continue to deepen their relationship with God. **Bernard Anthony**

Pesta K.A.M.I. ArchKL Youth Day 2024

PETALING JAYA: In conjunction with World Youth Day, Pesta K.A.M.I. (*Kerana Allah Mengasihi I*) the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur's Youth Day was held at the Church of St Ignatius (SIC), November 16.

This event brought together about 250 young people and collaborators from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. Themed *Those Who Hope in the Lord will Run and not be Weary (Is 40:31)* the theme for the 39th World Youth Day, it was organised by ASAYO, together with committed young volunteers under the guidance of directors, Frs Simon Lau and Michel Dass.

The participants were welcomed by emcees Andre Stephen Richard and Aganta Miriam Francis. Their joyful energy filled the space, allowing for an easy ice-breaking session among the participants. The young people from SIC KUBM and SIC CYS led the praise and worship before the plenary session where Fr Michel shared about Hope, reflecting on Pope Francis' Message for the 39th World Youth Day.

The central focus of this year's Pesta K.A.M.I. celebration was to have meaningful encounters with one another in faith, love and HOPE. Plenary sharings and a space for meaningful interactions at the Insightful Vibes Lounge were the main attractions.

Collaborators representing the various vocations, congregations and ways of life were part of the Insightful **Vibes Lounge** - where young people interacted and discovered more in a casual, warm and inviting setting. Various religious brothers and sisters shared some insights on their faith and journey too. This was a good approach as the participants got to hear and experience it first-hand. There were conversations, Q&A, and reflections to invite those who participated in deeper discernment.

The participants were entertained with games and activities while discovering the various vocations, not forgetting some



Ice-breaking session

childhood games that also brought back so many good memories such as *Congkak*, Snakes & Ladders, and a few legendary card games. There were also opportunities for artistic expression at the Insight Oasis corner where participants could decorate their very own sand art creations or henna art.

The day was filled with testimonies from World Youth Day (WYD) 2023 Lisbon pilgrims. Fraternal bonds were fostered through a time of prayer, music and sharing of life experiences. A safe space for encounters was made available where everyone had a chance to discover the joys of vocation and mission. There was ample time for games, food, and fellowship while participants

learned more about the Malaysian Catholic Youth Day (MCYD). The day culminated with the Eucharistic celebration.

For Mass, the participants, along with the facilitators, made their way to the church to join the parish community. They were greeted with a warm welcome at the end of Mass with their welcoming song. After Mass, the event continued with dinner and fellowship. There were performances by talented young people from various parishes which everyone enjoyed. **Davina Duraisingam and Nelson Christie**



Youth learning about vocation at the Vibes Lounge.



Youth leaders demonstrating an action dance.

The Malaysian Catholic Youth Day (MCYD) 2025 is the first national gathering of young Malaysian Catholics, conceived to listen to the voice of young people and to discover their needs as the NOW of God. Through this gathering, the young people seek to walk in communion with the larger Malaysian Catholic Church in her journey towards the Malaysian Pastoral Convention (MPC) 2026. It is organised by the Malaysian Catholic Youth Ministers' Committee (MCYMC).

Details for MCYD:

Date : 31/3/2025 - 6/4/2025
(Hari Raya holidays)

Age Group: 18-35 years old

Venue : Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah

The registration is now open!

Do contact your respective Diocesan Youth Office to register.

For updates, do follow MCYD2025 on social media:

Facebook

<https://web.facebook.com/mcyd2025/>

Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/mcyd2025/>

Testimonies from Participants and Facilitators during Pesta K.A.M.I

"Hope" was the central theme of Pesta K.A.M.I this year. Such an important message for us youth who are experiencing a phase of growing up, changes and transitions. I loved that the message of Hope was not sugar-coated, in fact it was given to us in a very real manner during this event. Fr Michel Dass shared the importance of embracing life's challenges with the mindset of "What lessons can I take away from these challenges in my life". Having our lanyard cards with the "I am hopeful because..." column also helped me reflect on what exactly keeps me going. I am glad to know that my hope lies in the Lord. Dear youth, this year let us live the true meaning of Hope; an act of courage, faith and expectation! **Rachel Patrick, Church of St Ignatius, Petaling Jaya**

Pesta K.A.M.I. was my first ArchKL World Youth Day celebration. Meeting young people from across the diocese and coming together as the future of the Church filled me with joy and hope. This incredible gathering has only heightened my excitement for the Malaysian Catholic Youth Day (MCYD) next year in Sabah! I can't wait to see what awaits us. **Aganta Miriam Francis, Church of Christ the Light**

Volunteering for Pesta K.A.M.I. was an experience I'll always cherish. I handled social media updates, live stories, and photography, and capturing moments through my lens brought me so much joy. Seeing everyone's smiles and laughter reminded me why I love doing this.

The event was truly special. From music and prayer to inspiring testimonies from the Lisbon pilgrims, there was a deep sense of unity in Christ. My favourite part was watching everyone perform, sing, and dance with such passion, celebrating our community of faith.

I've always loved serving because it's a way to give back and share God's love. Seeing the happiness on people's faces as they come together in faith makes it all worth it. It's about being part of something bigger that unites us in joy.

I'm excited for MCYD next year in Kota Kinabalu, where we'll meet new people, create new experiences, and grow in faith together. Pesta K.A.M.I. reminded me of the beauty in serving, loving, and sharing this journey. I'm so grateful for this experience and eager for what's next! **Sarah Ann, Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang**

Vietnamese martyr priest's legacy goes beyond faith

VIETNAM: On November 25, Pope Francis and the Holy See declared no objections to the martyrdom of Fr Trương Bửu Diệp, marking a major milestone in his path toward beatification and canonisation.

This announcement sparked joy among Vietnamese Catholics, who see it as a long-awaited recognition of his sacrifice. Many dream of a historic papal visit to Vietnam to celebrate his beatification, a moment that would be deeply symbolic for both the Church and the faithful.

Fr Diệp's story, however, is not confined to the Catholic community. His life, martyrdom, and continuing influence resonate widely across religious and cultural lines in Vietnam.

Born in 1897 in An Giang Province, Fr Diệp entered the seminary at a young age and was ordained in 1924. For over 20 years, he served as a pastor in various parishes in the Mekong Delta, including the parish of Tac Say, where he is now buried.

His ministry was defined by deep compassion and unwavering dedication to his parishioners, especially during times of political instability and social upheaval.

In March 1946, as violence engulfed the region, Fr Diệp was arrested alongside several parishioners. Despite opportunities to escape, he chose to remain with his flock, declaring, "I will die in place of my people."

His captors executed him, and his mutilated body was later discovered. Despite the visible wounds, witnesses reported his serene expression and hands still clasped in prayer, a testament to his faith, even in death.

Fr Diệp's story does not end with his martyrdom. Over the decades, he has become a revered figure not only among Catholics, but also among Vietnam's broader population. What sets him apart is the significant number of non-Catholics who venerate him.

At his shrine in Tac Say Church, millions of pilgrims visit each year

to seek blessings, healing, and solace. Remarkably, the majority of these visitors are non-Catholics, who keep his image or statues in their homes and workplaces. They believe in his intercession and his ability to provide protection or guidance.

This phenomenon is unprecedented in Vietnam, where Catholics are a minority, and underscores the universal appeal of Fr Diệp's values of compassion and sacrifice.

Fr Diệp has become a unifying figure, transcending religious boundaries to embody hope and resilience for all.

Fr Diệp's life is a profound example of the Gospel in action. His ministry and martyrdom reflect the core mission of evangelisation — not merely through words but through love and sacrifice.

As emphasised by theologians, Fr Diệp's approach aligns with the Church's call for inculturation, where the message of Christ is integrated into the cultural realities of a community.

His deep connection with people of all faiths exemplifies how evangelisation can transcend doctrinal boundaries, focusing instead on shared humanity and values.

The recognition of Fr Diệp's martyrdom also raises questions about its timing in the context of Vatican-Vietnam relations.

In recent years, the Holy See and Vietnam have taken significant steps to improve their relationship. The appointment of a permanent Vatican representative in Hanoi in 2023 marked a historic breakthrough, reflecting mutual efforts to build trust.

Could the advancement of Fr Diệp's cause for sainthood be seen as part of this evolving relationship? While there is no direct evidence linking the two, one might deduce that the announcement underscores the Church's commitment to honouring figures who embody both faith and cultural heritage. ucanews.com



Vietnamese pilgrims pray by the tomb of Servant of God, Fr Francis Xavier Trương Bửu Diệp, at Tac Say Church in Bac Lieu province. (UCA News photo)

MEMORIAM

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

40th Day Memorial



A Lifetime on Earth, An Eternity in Heaven

SAWARIAMAH RAYAPPAN
(Mary Paul Raju)

December 9, 1955 – November 7, 2024

A Requiem Mass will be held at
Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam
26, Jalan Pemaju U1/15, Seksyen U1,
40150 Shah Alam, Selangor

on
Saturday, December 21, 2024

5pm Advent Reflection, Prayer & Benediction
6 pm Mass
followed by fellowship
at **Mother Theresa Cafeteria**
after Mass.

Kindly RSVP to Catherine (012-9201516) /
Elizabeth (012-2025253) / Gabrielle (012-3858621)
or Andrew (012-2691190)

In Loving Memory 5th Year Anniversary

Jesus said to her,
'I am the Resurrection and the Life,
whoever believes in Me, will live even
though He dies, and whoever lives
and believes in Me will never die.'
(John 11:25)



Monica Ei Roger

Born: 9-2-1946

Departed: 18-12-2019

Age: 73

A Loving wife and a caring mother.

Leaving behind
Husband: Rasindaram Patrick Roger
(Ex-American Embassy Employee)
36 years

Son: Paul Reuben Roger
Son: Dato John Ron Roger and
Wife: Datin Carrie Wan
Grandson: Steve Ryan Roger
May Her Soul Rest in Peace.

13th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Dolly Antony Silva
13/2/1942 – 19/12/2011

Memories is a lovely lane,
a keep sake, with which we
will never part, where hearts
are ever true.

A lane, we so often travel
down, with you in God's
keeping and in our hearts,
aching and missing you.

Deeply missed and
cherished by Loved ones.

IN MEMORY OF

2nd Anniversary

**MICHAEL
EDWARD DANKER**

Departed:
14th December 2022

15th Anniversary

**CATHERINE
DE WITT**

Departed:
18th November 2009



I said a little prayer for you
And I asked the Lord above
To keep you safely in His care
And enfold you in His love

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

Dearly missed and cherished by children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren.

NOTICE

Effective
September 8, 2024,
the cost for placing
a memoriam is
RM150 per column
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transitions to full
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This is my
comfort in my
affliction,
that your
promise gives
me life.

Psalms 119:50

1st Year Memorial Celebrating the life of Mary Rose De'cruz



April 15, 1947 - December 19, 2023

Mass: Church of the Divine Mercy
Saturday, December 21st at 6pm

Followed by fellowship at
Penduline @ Bandar Rimbayu,
No.29, Jalan 2B/6, Kota Kemuning, Shah
Alam, Selangor

Kota Kinabalu to inaugurate the jubilee year with Mass at the cathedral

KOTA KINABALU: The Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu will officially launch its year-long Jubilee of Hope on December 29 with a Eucharistic celebration at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart at 5.00pm.

This jubilee will focus on renewal, faith, and hope, with five designated pilgrimage churches: the Church of St Michael in Penampang, the Church of the Holy Rosary in Limbahau, the Church of St Peter in Kudat, and the Church of St Peter Claver in Ranau.

Each church has also been assigned a colour based on the Jubilee logo. The assigned colours are red for the Church of the Holy Rosary; blue for the Church of St Michael in Penampang, yellow for the Church St Peter Claver, green for the Church of St Peter, and silver for the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart.

The pilgrimage sites will also focus on specific themes in line with the four key

pastoral concerns identified by the bishops of Malaysia for the 2026 Malaysia Pastoral Convention. The Church of the Holy Rosary will centre on *Ecology*, the Church of St Michael on *Social issues*, the Church of St Peter Claver on *Family*, and the Church of St Peter on *Church*.

Pilgrims visiting these sites will receive a stamp on their 'Pilgrim Card,' acknowledging their participation. Keychains and car stickers will also be available for pilgrims to commemorate the Jubilee of Hope.

The programme for the pilgrimage includes a walk, a para-liturgy with Bible enthronement, a brief history of the parish, catechesis based on the assigned theme, and a Spiritual Conversation. The visit will conclude with Mass, although parishes are free to add additional activities. For more details or to make pilgrimage arrangements,

Catholics are encouraged to contact their local parish office.

For the 2025 Jubilee of Hope, it has been announced that the Holy Doors will only be opened in Rome. This decision marks a departure from the tradition of opening Holy Doors at major cathedrals and designated churches worldwide.

The Holy Door at St Peter's Basilica will open on December 24, marking the start of the Jubilee of Hope. Other Holy Doors will be located at the Archbasilica of St John Lateran, the Basilica of St Mary Major, and the Basilica of St Paul Outside the Walls. A fifth door, located at a prison, will also be announced.

The Jubilee provides a special opportunity for plenary indulgence, conversion, and grace, offering renewed hope for daily life and the proclamation of the Gospel. CS



Jubilee pilgrimage centres in Peninsular Malaysia

Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese

- Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, KL
- Church of the Immaculate Conception, PD
- Church of Jesus Caritas, Kepong
- Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras
- Church of St Thomas, Kuantan

Penang Diocese

- Chapel of Annai Velangani, Ipoh
- Church of the Assumption, Penang
- Church of the Holy Name of Mary, Permatang Tinggi

Malacca Johore Diocese

- Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, JB
- Church of St Louis, Kluang
- Church of St Mary, Ayer Salak

Notre Dame de Paris is now open

PARIS: Five years after Parisians lined the streets of their city, wiping their tears as Notre Dame Cathedral burned, the faithful have their jewel back as it victoriously reopened December 7 and 8.

While the reopening of Notre Dame took place on the second weekend of Advent, the celebrations will span from December to Pentecost, on June 8, 2025, so that more faithful can participate in the joyous rebirth of the cathedral.

French president and top politicians were there for the reopening, with other heads of state and President-elect Donald Trump joining, and nearly 170 bishops from France and around the world travelled to Paris for the special weekend, with the reopening Mass to be celebrated Dec 8.

On Dec 7, the reopening service, presided over by the archbishop of Paris, President Emmanuel Macron, officials, donors, representatives of all the parishes of Paris, members of the cathedral board and the Parisian clergy were present.

During the rite of the opening of the doors, Archbishop Laurent Ulrich of Paris struck the closed door of Notre Dame with his staff. The cathedral "responded" with the singing of Psalm 121 three times.

"I rejoiced when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD.' And now our feet are standing within your gates, Jerusalem. Jerusalem, built as a city, walled round about," the psalm read.

The cathedral, which has been silent for five years since the April 15, 2019, fire, "once again resonated with the song of praise," and the third time the psalm was sung, the doors opened.

Following the initial door-opening rite, the service unfolded in three parts.

First was awakening the great organ. After beginning the service with the Sign of the Cross, the archbishop blessed the instrument and addressed the great organ eight times, and the organ responded each time.

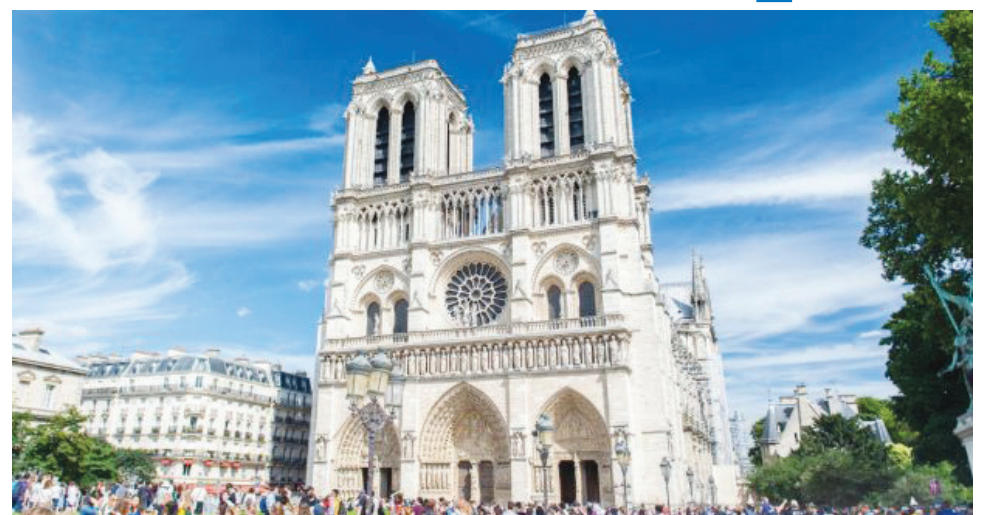
Olivier Latry, one of the cathedral's four organists, awakened the organ a few times in his career before, and said it's something that "profoundly affects you. You need to improvise with your gut. You are left completely shaken," he said.

Latry travelled around the world with organ concerts for the last five years and said that for him, "I finally realised that Notre Dame de Paris is in fact Notre Dame du Monde."

Vincent Dubois, Thierry Escaich and Thibault Fajoles also played the great organ along with Latry, while Yves Castagnet accompanied from the cathedral's choir using a temporary organ, until the original choir organ was restored.

Another part of the reopening ceremony was chanting the Divine Office.

Finally, the archbishop gave the final blessing, followed by the singing of the



Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris. (Shutterstock)

Te Deum.

The reopening service was accompanied by the La Maîtrise Notre Dame de Paris choir.

The Maîtrise choir that "found itself orphaned" after the devastating fire that collapsed the spire and part of Notre Dame's roof is now back and for eight days, Paris' famous musicians will be mobilised for a packed schedule of ceremonies, including a special concert on Dec 17 and 18, featuring Johann Sebastian Bach's "Magnificat."

"We have sung in a lot of beautiful places in recent years," said Henri Chalet, a qualified organist and director of the choir.

"But at Notre Dame, there is 'something extra.' It is a place that speaks to everyone, and to the whole world. It was a great thrill to be able to return there," he said.

On Dec 8, the second Sunday of Advent, the inaugural Mass, with the consecration of the high altar, was presided over by Archbishop Ulrich with President Macron attending.

Nearly 170 bishops from France and around the world participated in the celebration, along with one priest from each of the 106 parishes in the Archdiocese of Paris, and one priest from each of the seven Eastern Catholic churches, accompanied by faithful from these communities.

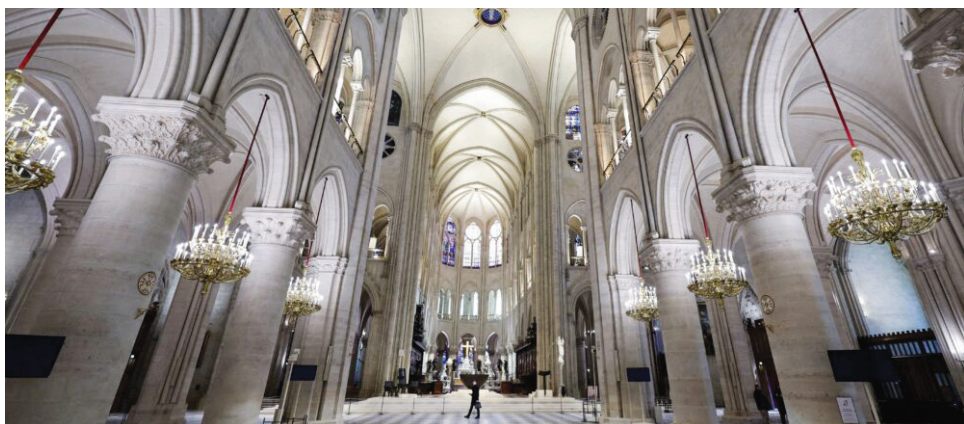
The consecration of the altar was carried out in five steps, the Notre Dame de Paris website said. First, the relics of five saints were placed and sealed in the altar. These relics, belonging to three women and two men who marked the history of the Catholic Church in Paris, include those of St Marie Eugénie Milleret, St Madeleine Sophie Barat, St Catherine Labouré, St Charles de Foucauld and Blessed Vladimir Ghika.

The prayer of dedication was then recited, followed by the anointing with oil, the central moment of the consecration. This was followed by the offering of incense, before the altar was adorned and illuminated.

The Mass was followed by a fraternal buffet to welcome the most disadvantaged and those who support them daily through charitable organisations in the Archdiocese of Paris.

The consecration Mass marked the beginning of the octave, inviting the faithful of Paris in their great diversity, along with many individuals who helped make the reopening of Notre Dame possible, to join the services presided over by the archbishop.

Weekly concerts will take place on Tuesdays and numerous events will continue until Pentecost in June, "offering an opportunity for many to rediscover Notre-Dame", the organisers said. OSV



The nave of Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral. (CNA photo/Stephane De Sakutin)