

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 always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit.

1 Thess 5:16-19



Celebrating the Feast of St Francis Xavier

■ P5



Advent sessions in ArchKL

■ P6



Youth set ablaze with the Holy Spirit

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No safe place for children in Gaza

GAZA: Over one million children — or the entire child population — in Gaza have been left with nowhere safe to go as ground military operations were launched in Khan Younis following the collapse on December 3 of the truce between the Israeli government and Hamas.

“World leaders must secure a ceasefire now. Every hour without one, more children will pay the price for broken politics with their lives and futures. There will be no safe place in Gaza until then.”

This is the appeal of Save the Children’s country director in the occupied Palestinian territory as the Israeli offensive against Hamas continues unabated and is now focused on the south of the Gaza Strip.

In a statement following the collapse of a

one-week truce between the warring sides, Jason Lee said, “I’m in the south of Gaza where children and their families are scrambling for safety. But there is nowhere safe in Gaza. There is nowhere to go.”

“Families,” he continued, “are being warned by Israeli authorities to move, once again, forcibly displacing them into smaller and smaller areas with no guarantee of safety or return, and without the necessary infrastructure and access to services to support life.”

Lee noted that the entire child population in Gaza has been left with nowhere safe to go as ground military operations began in Khan Younis, a city in the south of Gaza, where the civilian population had previously been told to relocate for safety by Israeli forces, but is now also under attack.

Meanwhile, in northern Gaza, hundreds of thousands of families remain stranded and unsafe, and with critical infrastructure and services like hospitals and sanitation deci-

mated, are at risk of starvation, disease, injury and death.

The al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City is operating at full capacity, struggling to manage the increasing influx of wounded individuals.

On Dec 6, the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, warned that the humanitarian system in Gaza may collapse, and public order could completely break down.

He called for the UN Security Council to “help avert a humanitarian catastrophe” and emphasised that the situation was deteriorating rapidly.

In an exceptional move, he wrote to the president of the Security Council to demand action, invoking Article 99 of the UN Charter for the first time since he became UN Secretary-General.

“We are facing a severe risk of collapse of the humanitarian system,” he wrote. “The situation is fast deteriorating into a catastro-

phe with potentially irreversible implications for Palestinians as a whole and for peace and security in the region. Such an outcome must be avoided at all cost’.

His comments were immediately criticised by the Israel Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, who called Guterres’ tenure a “danger to world peace”.

The toll on Gaza has been devastating, with at least 16,248 Palestinians reported killed since Oct 7, underscoring the asymmetry of the conflict and heightening the urgent need for international intervention.

No aid has reached the north since the humanitarian truce ended earlier this month. Amid all this, the World Health Organisation (WHO) says it is concerned about the spread of disease, as displaced Palestinians wrestle to survive amid Israel’s persistent bombardment. — *Vatican News*

Photo: Violence in Gaza Strip producing devastating effects on children.

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OPINION

Why the Israel-Hamas war is so hard to talk about

Since the October 7 massacre of innocent civilians by Hamas and Israel's subsequent declaration of war on Hamas, a fascinating dynamic has emerged — the Jewish and Palestinian narratives we see posted on social media have converged — with the protagonists and antagonists reversed.

Most Jews, and especially Israeli Jews, view this conflict as an existential threat to their survival. Given that nearly half of all Jews in the world reside in Israel, should Israel lose this war, there could be another Jewish genocide, these Jews say. Palestinians and their supporters make a similar assertion: Israel is committing genocide in Gaza and trying to ethnically cleanse Palestinians from their land, using the attack on Oct 7 as a pretence to do so. Both groups claim that the media is biased against them, that fake news and propaganda are rampant and that these atrocities are only able to take place because too many good people remain silent.

Of course, the views people present of the conflict are rooted in much deeper narratives about the past. What you choose to include or exclude from your retelling of the region's history determines your understanding of the more recent Israeli and Palestinian conflict.

The narratives are so similar that it can be difficult to determine on whose behalf certain social media posts are made.

Yet, a relentless propaganda campaign affords nuance, humanisation, and empathy to only one side.

Perpetrators frame their actions as a result of "having no choice". The choice is framed as an existential one. Propaganda makes the populace believe the same.

Further comparisons between the Israeli and

Palestinian narratives reveal that both people suffer from generational trauma. Jews carry the trauma of pogroms, the Holocaust and the mass expulsions from Middle Eastern and North African countries in 1948. Palestinians carry the trauma of their land being continually colonised by various empires, and they view the establishment of the State of Israel as yet another colonisation. They are scarred from mass expulsions that took place in 1948 as well, when many were forced or encouraged to leave their homes during the war — homes to which many were unable to return. Thus, Jews fear another expulsion from their homes in the diaspora with the rise of antisemitism since Oct 7 and expulsion or even genocide in Israel, while, simultaneously, Palestinians fear expulsion from their homes, ethnic cleansing (what they have deemed as "the second Nakba," the second catastrophe) and genocide in Gaza by way of Israeli military invasion.

With such similar narratives, why is it so difficult for us to agree on anything? Why can't we agree on the basic facts of the current situation? Why can't we agree on each other's generational trauma and the legitimacy of the fears that stem from them?

One group believes that Israel intends to secure its borders and eliminate a terrorist organisation, while another believes that Israel's intent is to remove all Palestinians from the territory. One side believes that pro-Palestinian movements are fronts for perpetrating anti-Jewish hatred, while another believes that pro-Palestinian movements are bringing awareness to injustices that Palestinians face.

A number of individuals have oscillated in their views. Some who initially sympathised with the unjustifiable attack on Israeli civilians

changed their allegiance as soon as Israel began what they characterise as a disproportionately strong military response, suggesting that the Israeli military is perpetrating war crimes or even "genocide," further diminishing Israel's standing in the international community. These individuals often ascribe negative intent on the part of both Palestinians and Israelis or, more problematically, equate the actions of Hamas with those of the Israeli government. This Solomonic solution depicts many villains and few heroes.

Amid the noise, the parallel stories and the self-sealing narratives that claim that opposition to them is but further proof of their correctness, there is a painful core truth: There will be no winners in this war. Both Palestinians and Israelis will endure mass casualties, while the long-hoped-for two-state solution becomes even more unattainable.

If we could begin our discourse with this reality in mind and follow by acknowledging the trauma that both Jews and Palestinians hold, we might yet escape the rhetorical echo chambers that have reduced one of the world's most complicated and intractable conflicts to soundbites that dehumanise everyone involved. While the war in Gaza continues to unfold in excruciating ways on the ground, and our awareness of the depths of Hamas's depravity continues to emerge, we need not allow the unthinkable events of the past two months to ricochet in such harmful ways far from the fighting itself. We all share the responsibility to improve the dialogue through more careful use of our words and more thoughtful presence online in this time of profound hurt. — **By Joshua Stanton and Olivia Brodsky, America**

The tension of "already" and "not yet" in our spiritual life

Tensions are a part of our daily lives

This Sunday's readings bring us to consider that we live between the tension of "already" and "not yet" within our spiritual journey and relationship with God. The word "tension" used here is not stress-related but has another meaning. It is the art of balancing and holding in place a relationship between two opposing realities. In reality, we do this daily, often without conscious realisation.

Consider a couple in a marriage. There are moments when they will feel that they "already" understand each other, maybe even completely. Yet, if they look deeper, they will discern a deeper truth — that is, their understanding is but a snapshot in the evolving story of their life together. It is "not yet" complete, and this realisation will remind them that seeking a complete understanding is part and parcel of their life together.

Tensions are necessary in our spiritual life

Reflecting on this within the context of our life with God, have we felt a profound sense of completeness and fulfilment? These are the "already" moments of our spiritual experiences. It is a moment of communion with the divine where gratitude and love for God overflows that we feel nothing else is needed. Yet, there are times when we crave more and we hunger for a deeper connection with God. In these moments of spiritual hunger, the "not yet" whispers, urging us to

strive, desire, and embark on a journey of continuous discovery.

This tension is then good and necessary for our growth. It teaches us not to shy away from incompleteness but to embrace it as an essential part of the journey. We live within the tension of emptiness and fulfilment, discord and harmony, and between ignorance and understanding.

God is experienced as "already" and "not yet"

In this context, we can say that God is experienced as "already" and "not yet". Theologians usually speak of "already" and "not yet" within the context of God's kingdom or eschatology. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, "Though already present in his Church, Christ's reign is nevertheless yet to be fulfilled 'with power and great glory' by the King's return to earth" (671).

The tension between the "already" and "not yet" is what the season of Advent makes us reflect. We speak of Advent as the period of preparation for the birth of Christ, but Advent also reminds us to reflect on the reality of the second coming of Christ.

Insights from Sunday's reading

The first reading from the *Book of the Prophet Isaiah* speaks of God sending his Spirit to his anointed one. We believe that all these are fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus, as God's anointed,

had brought good news to the poor, healed, and proclaimed liberty. However, Jesus also gives us his Spirit. The words of the prophet are then fulfilled in us too. We "already" received anointing at our Confirmation. Now, we must live out the reality of living by the Spirit to bring the good news and heal hearts that are broken.

How can we bring about this reality? This is where the second reading in St Paul's *Letter to the Thessalonians* gets interesting. We are in the process of being transformed to be as Jesus was because God, who gives us life through His Spirit, makes it possible.

St Paul understood and lived within the tension of "already" and "not yet". He himself was transformed by his experience of Christ on the road of Damascus. Yet, Paul, who proclaims that for him to live is Christ, speaks of fulfilment that can be completed only by the coming of Christ. In today's reading, he prays that the Thessalonians will be kept safe until Christ comes again.

Empowered by our sense of incompleteness

At this point, one might ask, what is the point of reflecting on the tension of "already" and "not yet" in our lives? The point is that we are given all that we need for our journey. However, no matter how complete we feel our life here is, it is not the destination. We must not forget the strivings for God that

Reflecting on our
Sunday Readings
with Fr Dr Lawrence Ng

3rd Sunday of Advent (B)**Readings: Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11;****1 Thessalonians 5:16-24;****Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28**

must always be part of our journey. The tension we derive from our strivings or sense of incompleteness may even prevent us from being complacent.

The Gospel presents us with John the Baptist declaring that he is not Christ. He only witnesses to the fact that Christ is among and unknown to them. A scripture scholar writes, "It is not always easy to find Jesus." The Gospel is littered with stories of those who failed to recognise Jesus. Often, Jesus had to point out or indicate who he was, such as to Mary Magdalene at the tomb or to the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

May our sense of "incompleteness" within the context of the "not yet" of our lives push us to seek always to recognise Jesus in our lives. May it not make us shy of speaking of that which we strive for — a life of complete union with God. May it give us the courage to witness in our lives that true meaning and joy can only come from God. May it make us charitable and merciful. In the meantime, let the words of St Paul in Philippians 3:14 be ours, "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus."

Twenty-five years of yielding fruitful branches

JOHOR BAHRU: Fr James Rajendran, fondly known as Fr JR, celebrated his 25th sacerdotal anniversary at the Church of the Immaculate Conception (CIC) December 4.

Concelebrating at the Mass were Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Archbishop Julian Leow, Bishop Bernard Paul, and Bishop Emeritus Paul Tan.

In his homily, Fr JR reflected on his endeavour to yield abundant fruits in the various churches he served — Church of St Louis, Kluang, Church of St Francis Xavier, Melaka, Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, JB, Church of the Immaculate Conception, JB, Church of St Philip, Segamat, and presently, the Church of Divine Mercy, Skudai. He emphasised that his strength stemmed from trusting in Jesus and adhering to His teachings, the foundation for bearing fruitful branches.

Fr JR's life story is equally compelling. Born on May 15, 1961, in Melaka to a Hindu priest, he grew up with two brothers and two sisters, receiving his education in Alor Gajah. His journey into the Catholic faith began at 19, starting with self-study and guidance from a parish priest at the Church of St Anne, Alor Gajah during his RCIA process.

It took him around three to four years to answer God's call fully. He enrolled at the Good Shepherd seminary in Malacca in 1987 and later pursued studies at College General in Penang from 1989 to 1995. His ordination as a priest took place in 1998 at SFX Melaka on the feast of St Francis Xavier. This was the same church in which he was baptised on April 2, 1983.

Approximately 700 parishioners and 35 priests were treated to a sumptuous dinner and entertained by traditional dance and mu-



Jubilarian Fr James Rajendran (pix inset) presiding over the Eucharistic Celebration.

sic. Fr JR gifted the congregation mugs bearing his motto on one side and the inscription of his 25th sacerdotal anniversary (Dec 3, 1998 to Dec 3, 2023) on the other. His gesture was aimed at inspiring others to emulate fruitful branches.

As we honour Fr JR's milestone, our prayers accompany him, seeking God's

grace to uphold his priestly motto, "I am the vine; you are the branches." May Jesus be his solace in solitude and his strength in challenges as he embarks on the next 25 years. This celebration stands as a testament to Fr JR's unwavering commitment to the Catholic faith, a devotion that ignited at the tender age of 19. — *By Patience Chee*



DIocese OF PENANG

PKK/BDN/2023/12/173

My prayers and blessings are with each one of you as we journey through Advent and Christmas during this beautiful Season of Grace. I wish to invite you to embrace fully and live with intensity these events of the Good News - Hope, Peace, Joy, Love; as we make a conscious effort to BE OF GOOD CHEER in this season of giving and sharing. Let us enlarge the tents of our hearts and welcome Jesus in all persons, situations, challenges, struggles, blessings in disguise and every little blessing bestowed upon us as we strive to live well each pre-

sent moment, as an offering of love for the good of all creation. May God be praised in all we do and the gift of Christ's Love be shared with all!

1. Penang Diocesan Pastoral Assembly 2023, "Enlarge the space of your tent" (Isaiah 54:2)

I praise and thank God for the fruitful and spirit-filled participation by all the faithful throughout our diocese at the recent Diocesan Pastoral Assembly. I wish to thank all those who were involved in the preparation of this event and each one of you who con-

tinue this spirit of solidarity from wherever you are in every way possible. I am pleased to share with you the keynote address and the homily in this continuous journey of synodality. <https://rb.gy/tc0efn>

2. Sacrament of Reconciliation

Sharing with you the schedule for the Sacrament of Reconciliation available throughout the Diocese of Penang during the Season of Advent. United with you as we partake and rejoice in this liberating grace-filled experience of God's Love and Mercy. <https://rb.gy/y9amy9>

3. Episcopal Regional Commission for Social Communication

Daniel Roy Santiagu has been elected as the Chairman of the Episcopal Regional Commission for Social Communication with effect from November 4, 2023. We congratulate him on this new role as he undertakes this new responsibility and mission.

Sebastian Francis

Cardinal Sebastian Francis

Notifications and Updates



PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

December

- 19 **Mass and Meeting with Seminarians of the Diocese of Penang – Bishop's Residence**
- 24 **Christmas Vigil Mass – Cathedral of the Holy Spirit**
- 25 **Christmas Day Mass – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam**



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

December

- 18 **Meeting with all MJD Seminarians**
- 18 **Advent Penitential Service – Church of the Holy Family, Ulu Tiram**
- 19 **Advent Penitential Service – Church of St Theresa, Masai**
- 20 **Advent Penitential Service – Church of Christ the King, Kulai**
- 21 **South Johor Vicariate Clergy Christmas Lunch**



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #157



Greetings to you, dear friends and faithful. Christmas is in the air. Ceasefire and hostage exchanges are on. The rainy season is here with the call to be alert for floods. BM proficiency is non-negotiable, says Home Minister. The COVID scare is back. The RM100 eMADANI credit initiative has attracted scammers too.

Connecting Times: When GOD wanted to create fish, HE spoke to the sea. When GOD wanted to create trees, HE spoke to the earth. But, when GOD wanted to create man, HE turned to himself. Then, GOD said "Let us make man in our image and in our likeness."

If you take a fish out of water, it will die; and when you remove a tree from soil, it will also die. Likewise, when man is disconnected from GOD, he dies.

GOD is our natural environment. We were created to live in HIS presence. We have to be connected to HIM because it is only in HIM that life exists. Stay connected. Stay connected to GOD, to creation, to the world of life, the suffering and the poor—our brothers and sisters, and to those who are part of our lives.

A Thought for the Week:

The beach house

Caha had a big family with three daughters, two sons, and a beautiful wife and his father and mother, living with them as well. He was the sole breadwinner, a very hard worker, who worked 16 hours a day.

The kids missed him, his wife and parents were disappointed when he accepted weekend jobs for the many expenses. He impressed his company. Promotion came

his way. They moved to new house, had better clothes and food. Caha earned more and more money.

One day his wife asked him **'Why are you working so hard for money? We can be happy with what we have now.'** Caha replied, 'I want you and our family to have the best things in the world and always be happy.'

Two years later, he was offered a partnership in the company; and eventually became one of the richest families in the city, with a beautiful beach house and wealth. They had everything that they could ever dream of but their father was never a part of them.

One day, his daughter asked: **Dad, will you please spend one, just one day at home and stay with us here?** Caha nodded his head and replied, 'Yes darling, tomorrow for sure, I will join you for the lunch and be with you all for next few days. I'm tired of work and need some relaxation!' Hearing this, the entire family were ecstatic.

The next day, in the early morning hours, Caha's entire family perished in a tsunami that hit the shores of their beach home. Caha was busy at work. He did not hear the news. He tried to reach his beach house, and saw only water and debris everywhere. He screamed for his family. But he found no one.

Lesson from the beach: money can't buy everything. Remember the words of Caha's wife: we can **be happy with what we have now.**

Announcements for this Week

1. It's one year after MJD50. It's the feast

day of the diocese. It came and it went. Some signs observed in the diocese: a greater sense of local history, unified liturgies, meaningful celebrations, greater vicariate level clergy and pastoral cooperation, that parish assemblies are for listening to the Spirit, and the call to be a 4E clergy, parish, ministries and diocese.

QnQ: Q asks? What do we exist for?

1. We are created for love, to love and be loved. When our heart fails to love, it becomes cold, hard and indifferent. God dies within because God is love. Our heart is made for God.

2. "If love is the soul of Christian existence, it must be at the heart of every other Christian virtue. Thus, for example, justice without love is legalism; faith without love is ideology; hope without love is self-centredness; forgiveness without love is self-abasement; fortitude without love is recklessness; generosity without love is extravagance; care without love is mere duty; fidelity without love is servitude. Every virtue is an expression of love. No virtue is really a virtue unless it is permeated, or informed, by love." —Richard Rohr

3. Whatever we may do, let these be expressions of love. Be bearers of the Godlife. May these times be a season of hope. The world waits for you and me to be those little lights of hope, in the midst of darkness and gloom. He walks with us. We are never alone.

Bernard Paul

Bishop Bernard Paul

HFK leaders called to “turun padang”

KAJANG: The Church of the Holy Family (HFK) held its Parish Pastoral Assembly on December 3, uniting clergy, apostolates, councils, ministries, and parishioners to navigate the path ahead for our faith community.

In his opening address, HFK parish priest, Fr Michael Chua, reminded us that this assembly stems from the recently concluded Synod on Synodality in Rome, and that the parish is a reflection of the richness and diversity of the Catholic Church.

He reminded the assembly that although for many the Synodal process initiated by Rome has been a novel and invigorating experience, involving clergy, religious, and laity sitting together, attentively hearing one another with empathy, for us Catholics in Malaysia, this synodal approach

is not something new. It has been an integral aspect of our pastoral planning since 1976, marked by periodic pastoral conventions at the Peninsular Malaysia level every ten years, along with the annual pastoral assemblies at the parish level.

As the parish initiates preparations for our upcoming 125th Jubilee celebrations in 2026, focusing on renewal, Fr Michael urged us to perceive renewal as revitalising old practices. He emphasised that true renewal is facilitated by God, who rejuvenates even the “old” through the Holy Spirit’s power, quoting, “Behold, I am making all things new!”

He concluded by urging us to emulate St Paul, expressing confidence in God’s work within us, quoting from Philippians 1:6, “He who began a good work in



Fr Michael Chua addressing the attendees during the parish pastoral assembly.

you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus”.

The assembly was then presented with a summary of the recently concluded Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly, reflecting on Family, Church, Ecology, and Society,

highlighting its alignment with the mid-term review of PMPC IV.

Anticipating the Malaysia Pastoral Convention in 2026, bridging East and West Malaysia, leaders were urged to embody a “turun padang” (hands-on) ap-

proach in their servanthood leadership.

The Parish Pastoral Council (PPC), Parish Co-ordinating Council (PCC), and Parish Finance Committee (PFC) presented their annual reports, marking the progress and challenges faced by each body.

The assembly culminated in a Q&A session, facilitated by the PPC, where concerns about leadership, evangelisation, Human Resources, and financial management were addressed by a panel comprising clergy and council heads. Some suggestions were also put forward from the floor for improvements to the current processes.

Assistant parish priest Fr Bonaventure Rayappan delivered the final blessings, concluding the assembly. — **HFK, PPC**



Fr Xavier Andrew puts in the blessed sacrament to officially open the meditation centre

Visitation parish celebrates inauguration of new meditation centre

SEREMBAN: The Church of the Visitation marked a significant milestone on December 3 with the blessing and official opening of its new Meditation Centre.

Led by Parish Priest Fr Xavier Andrew, the inauguration took place immediately following the 9.30am English Mass. Fr Xavier was joined by assistant parish priests’ Fr Kenneth Gopal, OCD, and Fr Philip Tay, OCD.

The event commenced with a solemn procession from the church to the Meditation Centre, wherein Fr Xavier reverently

carried the blessed sacrament. The focal point of the Centre, a remarkable sculpture of Mother Mary, was unveiled during this ceremony—a masterpiece meticulously crafted by a devoted parishioner. This artistic labour of love symbolised the culmination of efforts that ultimately led to the Centre’s opening.

Expressing profound gratitude, the community offered praise and thanks to God for the abundant blessings bestowed upon them, marking this event as a testament to their faith and dedication. — **By Sabrina Smith**

THM ministry gathers for formation and intercession

JOHOR BAHRU: The Triumph Heart of Mary (THM) ministry convened its second annual family gathering at the MAJODI Centre from November 23 to 27, drawing 65 devoted members from the dioceses of Penang and Malacca Johore.

Under the official endorsement of Bishop Bernard Paul, THM stands as the sole approved intercessory prayer ministry in the diocese. Guided by Fr Benedict Yee as its spiritual director and supported by Agnes Lim as the formator, THM members rigorously follow the ministry’s statutes, emphasising constant formation.

The core objective of this continuous training is to cultivate a discerning and contemplative mindset among the intercessors-in-formation. Equipped with the “armour of

God,” they are poised to serve as prayer warriors dedicated to Mother Mary. Recognising the ever-present spiritual challenges, the ministry stresses the importance of staying grounded through a deep, personal connection with Jesus Christ.

During the gathering, Agnes and trained in-house speaker, Felicia Wong, delivered insightful talks on crucial themes such as priorities, commitments, forgiveness, and community reconciliation. Participants were urged to prioritise God above worldly possessions, facilitating a detachment from materialism and enabling a deeper experience of divine love.

In addition to the formative discussions, the event featured the Jericho Walk—an outdoor spiritual activity where the participants collectively

journeyed and prayed the Rosary, seeking Mother Mary’s guidance in the spiritual battle against adversities, aiming to break the enemy’s strongholds.

On the Solemnity of Christ the King, Fr Jason Wong celebrated the Mass which culminated in individual participants consecrating themselves to Jesus and Mary.

Additionally, THM announced plans for an upcoming “Into The Deep” Weekend Retreat, a three-day, two-night session designed to introduce contemplative prayer focusing on topics such as Prayer, Silence, Solitude, and Penance. Those interested in this transformative experience can contact THM via email at thmmjd20@gmail.com for further information. — **By Patricia Ong and Bernard Wong, THM**



The THM ministry members with Fr Jason Wong at MAJODI Centre, Johor.

PETALING JAYA: Legionaries representing the Mother of Church Curia Petaling Jaya came together for their Annual General Reunion at the Church of St Ignatius (SIC) December 3.

The event witnessed a union of Legionaries from the parishes in the Petaling district comprising Church of the Assumption, Church of St Thomas More, Church of St Ignatius, Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and Church of St Francis Xavier, marking both their reunion and the commencement of Advent.

The celebratory gathering featured an array of activities, including songs, testimonials,

Annual reunion for PJ legionaries



dances, culinary delights, and fellowship, underscoring the spirit of camaraderie among attendees.

Present at the event were SIC parish priest Fr Lawrence Ng CDD and two visiting CDD

priests from Indonesia.

Fr Lawrence extended a warm welcome to the legionaries from diverse parishes, lauding their dedicated services to the Church and the community at large.

The Legion of Mary is a globally recognised international organisation, founded by Frank Duff, a Catholic Lay leader, in Dublin, Ireland in 1921. Operating under a hierarchical structure

with its headquarters in Dublin, the Legion emphasises active engagement in parish ministries and voluntary community service. Their activities span teaching, counselling, providing solace, and sharing the faith, guided by the Holy Spirit and under the revered leadership of Mother Mary.

Weekly meetings form a cornerstone of the Legion’s operations, and membership is open to all Catholics. Those interested in participating are encouraged to reach out to the Legion within their respective parishes for further information and engagement opportunities. — **By Peter J. Pereira**

Let communities lead

BUTTERWORTH: The spirit of solidarity and inclusivity shone brightly at Mercy Home on December 2. Various organisations and youth joined hands to celebrate World AIDS Day 2023 under the theme *Let Communities Lead*, marking a poignant start to the Advent season with a focus on hope.

Hosted by the Penang Catholic HIV & AIDS Welfare, in collaboration with Yayasan AIDS Malaysia, the Department of Orang Asli, and Caritas Penang, the event brought together approximately 80 children, including Orang Asli children from DOA Gerik, Perak, alongside 50 adults, marking a day filled with camaraderie and purpose. This included members of Caritas Holy Name of Mary as well as teachers and students from the Tamil section Catechism classes.

The collaborative efforts of Penang Focolare Youths, Islander Tamil Youth Network (ITYN) and 2023 WYD pilgrims fostered an



A session by Elizabeth Thomas.

atmosphere of joy and togetherness among the children. Engaging games and lively dances were organised by the youth, emphasising the unity and love within the Church community.

The day commenced with carolling by the Mission Church from Johor Bahru, followed

by an array of exciting games curated by the youth, encouraging active participation from children across diverse backgrounds. The gathering provided a platform for interaction and shared happiness among the youth, marked by Christmas gift exchanges and performances.

The event was also a platform to dispel misconceptions about HIV/AIDS. Mercy Home offers refuge to women and children affected by HIV/AIDS, providing care and support during their battles with opportunistic infections, especially for those without a support system. The Home administrator, Elizabeth Thomas, highlighted the need to eliminate stigma and discrimination associated with the infection, emphasising that support and care should be extended to those affected.

Francis Tan, Caritas Penang Pastoral Coordinator, lauded the collaborative efforts of ministries and churches in serving marginalised communities. He challenged the youth to answer the call to serve the vulnerable and advocated for continued support and evangelisation for those affected by HIV/AIDS.

● **Turn to Pg 16 for the experiences of the youth**

Growing in synodality with St Francis Xavier

GEORGE TOWN: Parishioners renewed their zeal for mission and to continue strengthening the spirit of synodality at the recently concluded feast day celebration of the Church of St Francis Xavier in City Parish November 30 to December 3.

Reflecting on the theme of *Growing in Synodality as One Church with St Francis Xavier*, the celebrations followed key focus areas in preparation for the Malaysian Pastoral Convention (MPC) in year 2026.

On the first day of the triduum, Mass in English and Tamil was celebrated by Fr Francis Xavier Selvarajoo with the focus on efforts in the area of ecology to bring about a better tomorrow.

On the second day, the faithful were invited to be witnesses to the society and world at large, with Fr Anthony Liew presiding the English and Mandarin Mass.

The parish then witnessed 12 young adults being conferred with the Sacrament of Confirmation on Dec 2 by Cardinal Sebastian Francis, with a special emphasis on the importance of Christian family life.

After three days of the triduum, the celebration culminated on the actual feast, Dec 3, as parishioners reflected on the role of being a synodal Church emulating St Francis Xavier. Fr Dominic Santhiyagu was the main preacher. Parish priest Fr Edmund Woon and assistant parish priest Fr Desmond Jansen concelebrated with Deacon Paul Kang assisting.

In reflecting on the writings of St Francis Xavier to St Ignatius of Loyola, Fr Dominic provided three key words through quotes from the letters: Prayer — “Lord, I am here, what do you want me to do?”; Crucifixion — “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” and Hope — “I have baptised so many young children.”

He added that prayer must come deep down from our hearts, and that we are to be witnesses of the crucifixion of Christ by bringing hope through reconciling with others.

“Let us ask the Lord each day what He wants of us, carry our crosses and preach the Gospel through our actions as well as



Fr Dominic Santhiyagu presiding over the feast day celebration.

bringing people closer to Christ,” he said.

Fr Dominic then shared that as Church, we must be thankful to all missionaries who had been zealous in proclaiming the Good News of Christ first to our forefathers, and that through their belief we are able to know God and continue to gather as a community of faith.

“When we speak of synodality, St Francis Xavier was very synodal as he was able to reach out to people of all social statuses through listening and dialoguing with them, and he won many souls for Christ in travelling thousand miles through the many villages,” he said.

Fr Dominic then urged the faithful to live

in the spirit of Advent by being awake and alert towards the coming of the Lord and to embrace the power of evangelising through mission as shown by St Francis Xavier.

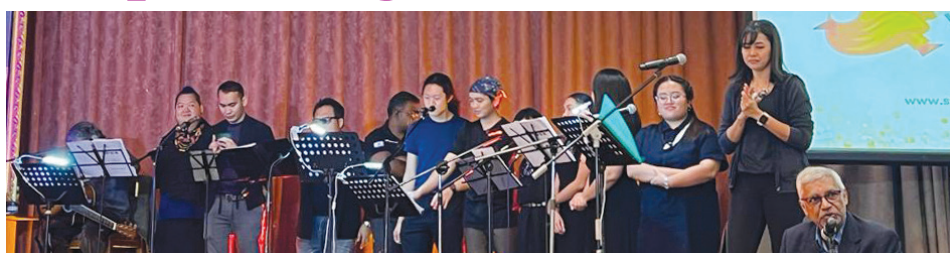
The celebrations concluded with a procession of the statue of St Francis Xavier within the church grounds followed by benediction. — **By Aaron Lim**

Parish feast ignites spiritual growth and mission

PETALING JAYA: The Church of St Francis Xavier (SFX) celebrated the feast of its patron saint with a host of programmes and activities under the theme: *Fire Up Your Church, Fire Up Your Mission*. The elaborate feast day celebrations were aimed at promoting spiritual growth through understanding and desire to follow in the footsteps of St Francis Xavier.

Leading up to the celebrations, two pilgrimage tours were organised to Melaka and Goa, India, respectively. SFX parishioners managed to retrace the journey taken by St Francis Xavier, who visited Melaka five times during his lifetime, as well as his final resting place in the Basilica of Bom Jesus.

A talk *You Will Never Walk Alone* ignited a spiritual Camino amongst parishioners in preparation for the feast. A youth engage-



A performance on The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola.

ment initiative was also organised whereby SFX Youth ministries took part in activities such as Magis Experiment which draws inspiration from the Ignatian experience of reflection, sharing and prayer. The youth also attended two formation sessions on Universal Apostolic Preferences by the Society of Jesus (Jesuits).

Meanwhile, a *Rock Oratorio on The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola* (SPEX) was staged over three spectacular performances reflecting the four weeks of meditation in St Ignatius of Loyola's Spiritual Exercises. SPEX captivated its audience to listen, pray and reflect over the spiritual exercises through vocal music.

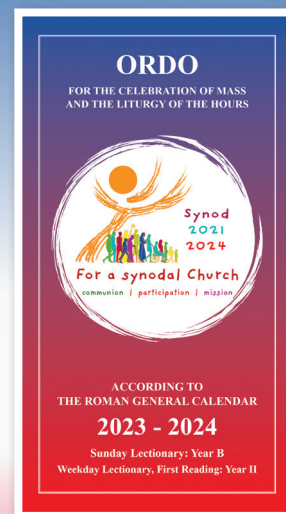
A mini exhibition on St Francis Xavier's missionary journey was also held where SFX parishioners could view an exclusive collection of artefacts, liturgical vestments, and rekindle the church's colourful history through old photographs and a series of short video documentaries. The exhibition attracted more than 200 visitors over three days.

The Triduum Masses were presided over by Fr Arnel Aquino, SJ from the Philippines, who was specially invited by the parish. — **By Harry Kek**



Visitors at the mini exhibition.

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From Camino to Christmas



Msgr James Gnanapiragasam explaining the Gospel of Luke. (photo/Antoney Cross)

By Cathy Marshall

KUALA LUMPUR: As a preparation for Christmas, the Church of the Risen Christ organised a three-day session on *Introduction to the Gospel of St Luke*, led by Msgr James Gnanapiragasam.

Held from November 28 to 30, the sessions were aimed at guiding parishioners towards a deeper understanding of the true essence of the Advent season amidst the bustling activities associated with Christmas preparations.

Msgr James, adeptly steered the group through the sessions with efficiency, patience, and care, foster-

ing active participation among the participants. Despite intermittent technical glitches, he navigated these hurdles, redirecting the focus of the group back to the core teachings.

Drawing from his extensive experience, Msgr James encouraged participants to prioritise engaging with the Word of God directly, emphasising the importance of seeking God earnestly and purely through scripture rather than relying solely on internet searches.

The congregation was encouraged to commit to a daily practice of reading one chapter from the *Book of Luke* commencing from

Dec 1, encompassing the life of Jesus across its 24 chapters, culminating on December 24.

On the final day of the session, Msgr James delved into the practice of *Lectio Divina* (Divine Reading), comprising four stages: *Lectio* (Reading), *Meditatio* (Meditation), *Oratio* (Prayer), and *Contemplatio* (Contemplation). Participants were instructed to read a chapter, select a passage, reflect on what resonated with them, and, upon sensing God's message, offer a prayer to allow God to speak to their hearts. Consistent daily commitment to this practice was recommended for a more profound spiritual experience.

A time of conversion, repentance and healing

RAWANG: Thirty-three English-speaking parishioners from the Church of St Jude attended a Parish Renewal Experience (PRE) November 24 to 26, conducted by Fr Simon Labrooy, assisted by a PRE team.

The essence of PRE lies in revitalising the parish community, fostering unity among its members, and deepening their connection to the Christian faith.

Evelyn Victoria Rajan, the youngest participant, attended the session alongside her older sibling, Evangeline Monica. Reflecting on the experience, she remarked, "The talks and discussions made me profoundly aware of my role within the



The participants of the Parish Renewal Experience. at the Church of St Jude, Rawang.

church."

Suresh Pragasam echoed her sentiments, expressing gratitude for the invaluable experience gained during the session.

The PRE core team, having devoted weeks to the effort, found themselves deeply moved. Many among them had never attended a PRE session before, and contribut-

ing to its organisation proved to be a profoundly meaningful journey.

Marilyn Visuasam and Mea Mea conveyed their extreme exhaustion by the session's end. Marilyn

shared, "We underestimated the amount of work required, but we're gratified that our efforts contributed to the success of the facilitators and participants."

Under the leadership of Pathinathan Irrudayam, the core team diligently met almost nightly for a week preceding the event, ensuring every detail was meticulously prepared.

On Sunday, Fr Simon celebrated the Mass with St Jude's parish priest, Fr Vincent Thomas, who was also a PRE participant, concelebrated.

The event culminated in the commissioning of the participants and the presentation of the PRE certificates. — **By Mercy Almeida Stellus**

A journey through Advent



Children and adults at the Advent formation with Fr Paulino Miranda at the Church of St John Marie Vianney, Tampin on December 3, 2023.

TAMPIN: To prepare ourselves in this journey to celebrate the birth of Christ, the Church of St John Marie Vianney, organised an Advent formation on the First Sunday of Advent. It was presented by former parish priest, Fr Paulino Miranda.

The day started with the morning Mass followed by the formation. The main theme of the talk was *What does ADVENT mean to me?* The formation began with a praise and worship session. Fr Paulino touched on *Giving God a Chance* in the first session. The most important way to give God a chance is by clearing blockages in our lives. We especially need to eliminate the thinking of Edging God Out (EGO) a selfish person,

concerned only for his/her welfare. Fr Paulino walked us through the journey of his life, where we were able to witness the Holy Spirit at work in miraculous ways. We were also advised to make a good confession before Advent to enter into the joy of the nativity with a clean heart, light and love.

The second session was on *God has plans and purpose in life*. Fr Paulino shared that God created a plan for us to grow and live by faith. Most importantly, we learnt that privilege comes with responsibility. Who we are today and who we are going to be is a cry for someone's needs. A verse from Romans 12: 6-9 was read to us,

we have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy by your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then encourage; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Above all, we need to always help the poor and the needy, by spending our time, energy and gifts with them, especially for this Christmas. After the session, all the participants were divided into groups for sharing sessions and ended with fellowship. — **By Joan Priscilla Wilson**

Failure to prepare is preparing to fail

CHERAS: On December 2, the Church of St Francis of Assisi organised a formation on the theme *Prepare the Way for the Lord* (Matthew 3:3). A total of 56 participants, including parishioners and some from different parishes, came for an inner transformation journey led by Fr Xavier Andrew, parish priest of the Church of the Visitation, Seremban.

Fr Xavier started by imparting the essence of nurturing a thirst for God. He highlighted the need to quench this thirst by mastering the art of complete surrender to God, fostering a fearless dependence on Him, and harmonising our desires with His — a crucial step toward spiritual awakening.

Next, he emphasised the significance of readiness, drawing from the parable of the ten bridesmaids in Matthew 25. He proclaimed, "Failure to prepare is preparing to fail." Both triumph and salvation sprouted from a devotion to preparation. Advent serves as a period for cultivating our inner spiritual growth, involving examination of conscience, gauging our spiritual journey, embracing moments of sensory silence, fostering a deeper communion with God, and a dedication to going the 'extra mile' in our daily lives — by showing extra love, extending service, exercising patience, and more.

Fr Xavier shared with us a blue-



Fr Xavier Andrew giving his input during the Advent formation.

print for spiritual growth: Value Knowledge → Strengthen Faith → Increase Love for God. Put plainly, understanding God brings about change within us. It doesn't just bolster our faith; it ignites a genuine and profound affection for the divine. Miracles stem from faith, not the reverse. The session concluded with 14 actionable steps to enhance our daily journey with the Lord.

We thank Fr Xavier for his lively and humorous insights, wisdom, and knowledge in preparing us for Advent. May the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love light our path. May this Advent transform us and culminate in a joyful celebration of the miracle ahead. — **By Christina Ng**



Fr Andrew Manickam OFM Cap briefing the people.

KUALA LUMPUR: More than 100 faithful turned up to walk for peace in harmony with mother nature in Taman Botanik Perdana on December 2.

It was a fruitful and fun-loving Saturday morning of making new friends with a spirit of togetherness in a love of nature. They enjoyed each other's company and the sharing about peace and their encounters in the lake garden trail.

Archbishop Julian Leow praised the group for their desire to be an instrument of peace, and advised that the first step forward was to be at peace with one's self before finding peace with our families and circles of friends and people at work and places of worship as well as mother nature.

The walk of peace, organised by the Archdiocesan Creation Justice Ministry, brought together Catholics from 14 parishes, Christians of diverse denominations, individu-

als from various faiths, and an active elderly group, Senior Aloud.

As the walkers started arriving at 7.00am, they were handed paper doves to inscribe messages of peace, which were later exchanged among them — a symbolic gesture of sharing collective aspirations. Additionally, each person received a hibiscus pin, symbolising unity within Malaysia's multicultural fabric.

Veteran conservationist Dato' Dr Dionysius Sharma spoke on the need to end wars and the destruction of God's natural gifts to humanity. "If we can all be agents of peace, we can help reprogramme society to love one another as fellow human beings ... May each of us take positive action to be a nucleus of peace."

He asked everyone to walk with strangers in order to have new friends.

Nelly, of the Philippines, was

inspired by the sight of schools of fish moving in harmony in the lake. "They taught me that in whatever situation, peace begins with me. We can only move forward when we are at peace, loving and caring."

Mohd Hilmi from Sabah relished the walk and the opportunity to forge new friendships.

Fr Andrew Manickam, OFM Cap, the ministry's ecclesiastical assistant, expressed gratitude for everyone's weekend commitment, pledging to organise more events that deepen people's connection with nature.

The walk ended on a high note with the group led by Archbishop Julian singing "Let there be peace on earth". The song aptly described what the faithful did in the lake garden, with a renewed commitment to always "let peace begin with me ... with every step I take".

— *Creation Justice Ministry*

Recognition for catechists and students

SENTUL: The Church of St Joseph organised a Catechetical Concert and Recognition Ceremony on November 19. Welcoming over 500 parents, catechists, children, and parishioners, the event served as a grand culmination of a spiritually enriching year for the parish.

A highlight of the evening was the unveiling of the Catechetical Ministry Milestone video. This cinematic journey chronicled the significant events that defined 2023, from engaging competitions like the Bible Dress-up, Art, and Public Speaking contests to heartfelt gatherings like the joyous Family Day celebration and the solemn rites of Confirmation and the First Holy Communion camp.

Another highlight was the presentation of the Tan Sri Dominic Vendargon Award for 2023 to Angeline Marie Tuan for her exceptional academic performance in the SPM examination and Bible Knowledge. Parish priest Fr Frederick Joseph presented the award to the young lady.

The stage was then transformed into a platform where the youngsters from the different classes showcased their skills through

captivating performances, including song, dance, and a fashion show. The event also took a moment to recognise outstanding students through Faithful Presence awards for attendance, Active Learner Accolades for enthusiastic participation, and the esteemed St Joseph's Star Awards for academic excellence.

The event also paid tribute to dedicated catechists whose have served for a decade or more. These individuals received well-deserved recognition for their enduring commitment, cementing their place in the ministry's legacy.

Acknowledging the tireless efforts of the organising committee and the dedicated Catechetical Response Team, the ceremony drew to a close, leaving attendees inspired by the Gospel of Matthew 5:13-16: "You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world... Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Congratulations to all winners, the Catechetical Ministry, and the parents involved in nurturing these spiritual endeavours! — *By Mary Jane Buniel*



The young performers at the catechetical concert November 19.

An experience through creative writing

PETALING JAYA: A transformative creative writing workshop for social media on December 2 was held at La Salle Hall. Organised by the Social Communications Office of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, the workshop provided a nurturing environment where writers of all levels gathered to explore the depths of their creativity and refine their craft.

The workshop began with a simple icebreaker, instantly breaking down the barriers between participants. The facilitator, Augustine Anthuvan, a seasoned writer with a passion for nurturing creativity, set the tone by emphasising the importance of a supportive community in the writing. Augustine who resides in Singapore, is also a journalist and has been working closely with the media most of his life.

As the workshop went on, it became apparent that the room was a mosaic of diverse voices, each with a unique story to tell. One of the workshop's highlights was the exploration of various writing prompts designed to ignite our creative sparks.

These prompts ranged from evocative images to thought-provoking questions, pushing us to think beyond the conventional



Participants listening attentively to facilitator, Augustine Anthuvan (pic right).

boundaries of our narratives. It was fascinating to witness the diverse interpretations and stories that sprang forth from a single prompt, highlighting the infinite possibilities nestled within the minds of the participants.

The workshop delved into the art of photo language, urging us to breathe life into any photograph, telling a story by simply looking at it. It was refreshing to see different ideas and perspectives put forward.

The power of asking questions was a recurring theme throughout the workshop. We engaged in exercises that encouraged us to paint vivid scenes about ourselves, others, the role of the Catholic church



and life. Questions about suicide and AIDS, although deep and uncomfortable, made us think about the importance of our roles in our communities.

Augustine also emphasised the importance of the UN calendar and all its special days of the year. He mentioned that the Catholic Church must be aware of current

world news in order to stay connected with our communities. Moreover, when writing any article, we were taught to ask piercing questions to our readers in order to bring about awareness.

Augustine's feedback sessions were a cornerstone of the workshop, providing a platform for constructive critique and encouragement. In a supportive and respectful environment, we shared excerpts from our works in progress and received valuable insights from our facilitator. This collaborative exchange of ideas from all those who participated, fostered a sense of community, reinforcing the notion that writing is not a solitary endeavour but a shared journey of growth and exploration.

As the workshop unfolded, the facilitator introduced us to the concept of news report. We explored techniques on how to write scripts for short videos. These videos can range from educational videos, announcements to invitations for events, especially to be posted on social media. All the participants were called to record themselves doing a short video on the topic of suicide cases. Through guided exercises and open discussions, we learned how to properly address

the people with this difficult but necessary topic of discussion.

In the final session, we reflected on our writing journey during the workshop and set personal goals for the future. It was fitting because the topic of discussion was about the call to celebrate Christmas and New Year. We were all reminded that no one should be left alone on festive days the church celebrates and writers have the responsibility of reminding the people in our respective parishes. The session also included word play on how to invite people to the church during Christmas and New Year's Day. It was taught with the emphasis on how God never abandons anyone.

The creative writing workshop for social media was an enriching experience. It not only honed our writing skills but also cultivated a supportive community of writers who, united by their passion for writing, embarked on a collective journey of creative exploration. As we carry the lessons from the workshop into our writing endeavours, we are reminded that the power of storytelling lies not only in the words on a page but in the vibrant community that breathes life into those stories. — *By Stephanie Sebastian*



Christmas carols draw thousands

KUCHING: A state-sponsored ecumenical Christmas carol programme drew thousands of participants becoming the largest gathering of its kind in the country.

A total of 2,479 participants joined in Christmas carol singing during *A Christmas Carol, Sarawak in Diversity* event on December 3.

The gathering in Kuching was registered as the largest Christian gathering of its kind in the Malaysia Book of Records.

It was hosted by the Unit for Other Religions (Unifor) and will be aired on the TV Sarawak channel on Dec 23.

The event held in front of the Plaza Merdeka shopping mall was officiated by Sarawak's Deputy Premier Datuk Amar Dr Sim Kui Hian, and accompanied by Dato Sri John Sikie Tayai a minister in the Premier's Department, among others.

Among the dignitaries present were Sarawak's Deputy Premier Sim Kui Hian, Archbishop Simon Poh of Kuching, and five state cabinet ministers.

Among the participants were those from St Ann Church, Association of Churches Sarawak, St Mark Church, St Joseph Cathedral, Holy Trinity Church, Sarawak Evangelical Church and Sarawak Blessed Church (SECA), Ngajat Asal Iban (NGASI) Association and the Taoist community.

There were also participants from the Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh and Baha'i communities.

Participants sang popular Christmas songs such as *O Holy Night*, *Feliz Navidad*, *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*, *Carols of the Bells*, *Deck the Halls*, *12 Days of Christmas*, and *Last Christmas*.

The organisers earlier courted controversy when the Association

of Churches in Sarawak (ACS), the largest ecumenical forum, declined to take part in the programme after TV Sarawak denied its request to replace the song *Jingle Bell Rock* with *O Holy Night*.

The state broadcaster had rejected the request to replace the Christmas pop song with a hymn citing "religious elements" and "protocol" from the Film Censorship Board of Malaysia and the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission.

The state broadcaster's stance sparked criticism from Christian groups and politicians who said it was a "grave insult" to the community.

Sarawak Premier Abang Abdul Rahman Zohari and Deputy Premier Douglas Uggah Embas intervened to end the stalemate and the changes requested by ACS were implemented. — *Agencies*

St Joseph plays host to the differently-abled

SENTUL: On December 3, the world observed the International Day of the Differently Abled under the inspiring theme, *Faith Conquers All*. This annual celebration pays tribute to the exceptional talents, abilities, and unexplored potential residing within each differently-abled individual, navigating their unique life journey.

In the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, the Church of St Joseph played host to this significant event. It commenced with Mass celebrated by Archbishop Julian Leow, with St Joseph's parish priest Fr Frederick Joseph and Fr Edwin Paul from the Church of the Risen Christ concelebrating.

What made this celebration truly special was the active participation of the CMfD deaf community from the Church of the Holy Family, Kajang, the Assisi Beloved special needs community from the Church of St Francis of Assisi, Wheels Ministry from the Church

of the Assumption, Petaling Jaya and Eagles Wing from the Church of St Joseph, along with individuals, families, friends, and dedicated volunteers.

The joyous celebration echoed with the spirit of unity, as we, as one faith family, conquered all odds, hurdles, and obstacles. It was a poignant moment of gratitude to God for the precious gift of life, exemplifying our collective commitment to spreading love, hope, and peace. The lighting of candles symbolised our shared mission to illuminate the world with compassion.

After the Mass and a memorable photo session capturing the essence of togetherness, the congregation adjourned to the hall for lunch and fellowship. The occasion, filled with laughter and camaraderie, exemplified the power of faith in fostering a sense of community and acceptance. — *By Reena Josepha*



The differently-abled from the various parishes at the Church of St Joseph, KL.

Medical camp for migrants

SUNGAI PETANI, Kedah: On the first Sunday of Advent, a medical camp was held in one of the kongsi. It was in collaboration with the Church of Christ the King, Caritas of the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, and doctors and students from AIMST University.

Fifty-five migrants were screened. We provided treatment and consultation for 49 adults and 6 children. Some were referred to private clinic/hospital for further investigation and treatment.

After the medical camp, parish priest Fr Victor Louis celebrated Mass followed by a fellowship meal.

The migrants were overwhelmed with the programme. — *By Emily Francis*



Doctors checking blood pressure.

CHARIS celebrates five-year journey

KUALA LUMPUR: The *Called, Transformed, and Sent* event, organised by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal International Service (CHARIS) from November 2 to 4 in Rome, hosted 3,000 participants representing diverse charismatic backgrounds globally.

This gathering celebrated the five-year journey of CHARIS since its inception in 2019, envisioned as the unified global entity overseeing all expressions of Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR).

Fifteen CCR leaders and members, comprising a priest and lay people from Malaysia participated in this event. They represented CHARIS Malaysia and the various expressions of CCR from the Archdioceses of Kuala Lumpur and Kota Kinabalu and the Dioceses of Penang and Miri.

At its core, the event served as a reflective juncture for CHARIS leaders worldwide, appraising both the international and local strides of CHARIS. The focus extended to evaluating the holistic growth and ecclesial maturity of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

Cardinal Raniero Cantalamessa OFM Cap, Patti Mansfield — pioneer of the CCR in America, José Prado Flores — founder of the San



The 15 members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal from Malaysia.

Andrés Schools of Evangelisation, of Mexico, Fr James Mallon — founder of Divine Renovation Ministry, of Canada, Matt Lozano — Director of Formation of Unbound Ministry, United States and Michelle Moran — leader of the CCR among others, were the key speakers.

The speakers lent their wisdom, enriching discussions on the evolution of CCR during workshops, testimonies, and thematic reflections. These sessions encompassed topics spanning evangelisation, Christian unity, human welfare, intercession, and the significance of charismatic prayer within the Church.

The event's venues across various Roman Basilicas, including the Basilica of Santa Maria in Minerva, Basilica of Sant'Andrea della Valle, and the Church of St Ignatius of Loyola at Campo Marzio, added depth and sacredness to the experience.

The gathering converged on the second day at the Paul VI Hall in Vatican City, hosting impactful addresses from influential personalities within the CCR. Deliberations revolved around the Christian imperative to evangelise, embrace charismatic gifts, and nurture fresh leadership for the Church's ongoing renewal. The day culminated in a Mass presided over by Arch-

bishop Angelo De Donatis.

Continuing the discourse on the final day at the Paul VI Hall, Fr Hayden Williams, OFM Cap, emphasised contemplation of God's desire and unity among believers. The discussions on Christian unity resonated strongly, involving contributions from Pentecostal and Evangelical pastors, affirming the shared vision of unity among different denominations.

Cardinal Cantalamessa highlighted Pope Francis's significance to the Charismatic Renewal, stressing the steadfast commitment to evangelisation, service to the marginalised, and the pivotal role of fostering Christian unity.

The afternoon also saw the arrival of Pope Francis who greeted the participants and urged them to reflect on CHARIS' journey and the global status of the CCR, underscoring the vital essence of prayer, peace, and the collective pursuit of conflict resolution.

The event culminated vibrantly with the *Youth Concert for Peace*, featuring inspiring performances by the Criança Cidadã Orchestra, Hillsong Spain, the Music Ministry of France, Korean dances, and compelling testimonials from the youth within the CCR. — *By Neil Mah*

Remain in the Catholic Church

VATICAN: In the face of a long-simmering dispute over the liturgy, Pope Francis is calling on the faithful of the Syro-Malabar Archeparchy of Ernakulam to conform to the decisions of the Holy Synod or risk being declared outside of communion with the Church.

The Syro-Malabar Church is the second largest of the Eastern churches in union with Rome, numbering some 4.25 million faithful. The Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly is the primatial see of the Syro-Malabar Church and home of the Major Archbishop.

The Archeparchy has been the centre of an ongoing conflict concerning the way the Holy Eucharist is celebrated. A compromise liturgical practice was endorsed and imposed by the Holy Synod — the highest ecclesial authority in the Syro-Malabar Church. Although the Synod's decision concerning the Eucharistic liturgy, or "Qurbana", was received by the other dioceses within the Church, the Major Archeparchy has largely refused to conform, leading to conflict and at times even violence, as the Pope notes.

In his video message, the Pope assures the Syro-Malabar faithful in the Archep-



A priest of the Syro-Malabar Church in India celebrates Mass in this undated photo courtesy of the Holy Qurbana of the Syro-Malabar Church Facebook page.

archy that he has personally studied the issues involved, noting that he has written to them several times in the past. However, as not everyone has read those letters, the Pope says he is now addressing the faithful "in a slightly unusual way, so that no one may have any more doubts what the Pope thinks."

Pope Francis goes on to make a forceful appeal: "In the name of the Lord, for the spiritual good of your Church, of our

Church, I ask you to heal this rupture. It is your Church; it is our Church. Restore communion, remain in the Catholic Church!"

In particular, he calls on priests to remember their ordination and the promises they made at the time, calling on them not to separate themselves from the Church, but to walk together with the Synod, with their Bishops, and with the Major Archbishop by implementing the liturgical decisions of the Synod by Christmas, 2023.

"I ask you to be careful," the Pope says. "Be careful that the devil does not lead you to transform yourselves into a sect."

He pleads with them not to force "the competent ecclesiastical authority" to recognise they have left the Church because they are "no longer in communion" with their Pastors and with the Successor of St Peter, the Pope. If that should happen, he warns, "with great sorrow, sanctions would be incurred."

"I do not want to reach that stage," the Pope says.

Pope Francis concludes his message by calling on the faithful of the Archeparchy, priests and people, to celebrate the Qurbana "in communion according to the directions of the Synod," and to commemorate the Major Archbishop in their liturgies.

"Please do not continue to wound the Body of Christ!" the Pope says in conclusion. "Do not separate yourselves from it! And even though there have been some grievances against you, forgive them with generosity. May the Eucharist be the model of your unity. Do not shatter the Body of Christ which is the Church, so as not to eat and drink judgment upon yourselves." —

By Christopher Wells, *Vatican News*

Caritas launched in South Korea

SEOUL: The Catholic Church in South Korea has launched an association that aims to become the official communication channel between the government and the church's various social welfare groups.

Korea Caritas Association was launched by Bishop Basil Cho Kyu-man of Wonju at the Myeongdong Cathedral in the capital Seoul on December 1.

Bishop Cho presided over the inaugural Mass and the first general meeting of the association. He urged the association members to not become "middle managers" but good leaders inspired by St Paul, the apostle.

"In a world where love seems to have left and only work remains, we need to recall the definition of love given by St Paul," Bishop Cho said, referring to St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians which speaks about "The Gift of Love."

"If we do our social work without losing that sense that we are nothing without love, we will not fall into 'self-welfare' and priests and religious will not be reduced to 'middle managers,'" warned the prelate.

He lamented that many welfare organisations worldwide are operating with the Latin word "Caritas" (love) included in their names, yet many "have become numb to love."

The association's inaugural meeting was attended by 69 of the 75 members of the association along with priests and religious from across the country.

The gathering elected Bishop Cho as the first chairman of the association's board and Fr Jung Sung-hwan, secretary general of Caritas Korea, as its first executive director.

In its founding declaration, the association said that it will "serve as the right and good voice of Catholic social welfare to the public and as a focal point for all Catholic social welfare facilities." — *ucanews.com*

Pope accepts resignation of Cardinal Alencherry

VATICAN: Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Major Archbishop Cardinal George Alencherry of the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, based in India, commending the prelate's faithfulness after decades of leadership in that Church.

Canon law dictates that bishops must submit their resignations to the Pope at age 75. Alencherry turned 78 this year. In his letter on December 7, Pope Francis told the cardinal he "decided to accept your resignation as a sign of your openness and docility to the Holy Spirit."

Last year, Pope Francis noted, was Cardinal



Alencherry's "50th anniversary of priestly ordination and 25th anniversary as a bishop."

"Now that you have reached two significant jubilees and accomplished the pastoral objectives set for the flock entrusted to your care, I consider your resignation not as the conclusion but the fulfilment of your service," the Holy Father told the prelate.

The Vatican said Curia Bishop Sebastian Vaniyapurackal, titular bishop of Troina, would serve as the interim administrator of the Syro-Malabar Church until the election of the new major archbishop.

Italy's 'most handsome man' leaves modeling career to become a priest

FLORENCE: Young Edoardo Santini (*pic*), considered "the most handsome man in Italy," has decided to leave his promising career as a model and enter a seminary to become a priest.

Dancer, swimmer, actor — these were a few of the dreams of Santini, a 21-year-old Italian who in 2019 when he was 17 earned the title of the most handsome young man in his country after winning a national contest.

This award opened the doors to the world of fashion, and his future seemed clear: He was destined to become a big star. However, God's plans were different. Santini was going to continue shining, but away from the spotlight and catwalks.

In a video posted on social media November 23, Santini explained that he is on his way "to become, God willing, a priest."

He says that during these years he has met people who, "by showing me what it means to 'be Church,' have given me the strength to investigate this question that I had been carrying around since I was little" but which, he says, "I didn't delve into because of fear."

In January 2020 he discovered "the real Church," and that was when on social me-

dia he began to talk about God and the call he felt.

"Living in God doesn't mean locking yourself inside the church but rather living one's life more fully," he told his more than 11,000 followers on Instagram.

He also mentioned the opposition of his grandmother, who "expected something else" from her grandson. However, he stressed that he didn't feel "alone" in his decision and that he was "tired of satisfying the will of others and posting photos where I am apparently secure and happy."

The young man from the Tuscany region took "a first step" and last year he went to live with two priests, which he described as "the most beautiful experience of my life."

Sharing his daily life with the priests allowed him to "find in everyday life the answer that I hoped for, which has come to me from above."

"At the end of the year, it was natural for me to ask the bishop to enter the preparatory course, the year preceding life in the seminary. And here I am, studying theology and serving in two parishes of the Diocese of Florence," he said in his video.

He also shared that he was slow in tak-

The Vatican said Pope Francis had also accepted the resignation of Archbishop Andrews Thazhath, apostolic administrator of the archeparchy since July of last year. Archbishop Thazhath remains metropolitan archbishop of Trichur of the Syro-Malabars.

Archbishop Thazhath was appointed the apostolic administrator on July 30, 2022, to find an amicable settlement to a five-decade-old liturgy dispute in the Church. However, he faced a public boycott and the Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese plunged into an unprecedented crisis over the liturgy dispute.

Bosco Puthur, bishop emeritus of the Eparchy of St. Thomas the Apostle of Melbourne of the Syro-Malabars (Australia), will serve in that role "sede vacante et ad nutum Sanctae Sedis," the Holy See said. — *CNA/ucanews.com*



ing the first step "for fear of not being accepted" and that making this decision was something "that terrified him" although, he said honestly, "I built more walls for myself than there were."

Santini also shared on Instagram his experience during World Youth Day in August in Lisbon, Portugal.

Through different videos, he showed how this gathering of young people marked a before and after in his life.

Between "laughter, dancing, jumping up and down," and new friendships, Santini discovered that "the Church is beautiful." Now, at the age of 21 and after having dared to say "yes" to the call of the Lord, he said he feels really "happy." — **By Almudena Martínez-Bordiú, CNA**

How to spot a “synodal bishop”



Pope Francis at the Synod on Synodality's closing Mass in St Peter's Basilica on October 29, 2023. (Vatican Media)

The role of a “synodal bishop” within the Roman Catholic Church is a nuanced consideration intertwined with the transformative synodal process that has been initiated by Pope Francis.

Synodality, in essence, refers to assemblies of bishops convened to deliberate on doctrinal, disciplinary, or pastoral challenges facing the Church. But what are the actual characteristics that define a synodal bishop within the context of the evolving Catholic landscape shaped by the Jesuit pope's visionary approach?

The synodal process unveiled

Francis' synodal process, though intricate, has sparked significant discourse within the Catholic community. It serves as a platform for positive debate, yet concurrently elicits dissent and division.

Unlike a parliamentary process, the synodal approach encourages collaboration, dialogue, and collective discernment among the Church's leadership. For some, it represents a school for bishops to learn the art of listening, while others view it as a transformative force challenging the established structures of the Church.

Defining a synodal bishop

A synodal bishop is a classification or a type, not a particular person. This type is the summation of many possible characteristics from which I have chosen nine. Thus, a synodal bishop is not merely a classification but a manifestation of the attributes embedded in the synodal process the Pope has outlined.

Not merely a classification, the synodal bishop is a manifestation of diverse attributes embedded in the synodal process outlined by Pope Francis

These attributes, including collegiality, active participation, and collaborative decision-making, extend beyond the episcopal role. They are indicative of the characteristics necessary for the success of the synodal process, applicable to priests, parishioners, teachers, deacons, and religious individuals alike.

1-3: Collegiality, active participation, and collaborative decision-making

The foundation of a synodal bishop's characteristics lies in the principles of collegiality. Drawing from the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), collegiality underscores shared decision-making and collaboration among bishops, extending to diocesan administration and care for clergy, laity, and religious.

Active participation in synodal gatherings at various levels ensures a synodal bishop's commitment to fostering dialogue and collective discernment. Collaborative decision-making, involving bishops in the decision-making process alongside the Pope, cultivates shared responsibility and ownership among the Church's leaders.

4-6: Open dialogue, pastoral sensitivity, and liturgical leadership

The synodal bishop further embodies open dialogue, actively listening to diverse perspectives within and outside the Church. This commitment extends to engaging with the contemporary world and the needs of the faithful, guided by the desire for dialogue with the divine.

Pastoral sensitivity, an essential characteristic, involves understanding and responding to the evolving needs of the Church's members. Liturgical leadership, grounded in the principles of the Second Vatican Council, becomes a crucial aspect of a synodal bishop's role, transcending mere adherence to liturgical norms.

7-9: Implementing synodal insights, adapting to local realities, and emphasising inclusivity

Action-oriented characteristics define a synodal bishop's commitment to implementing insights and decisions arising from synodal gatherings. This involves incorporating recommendations into diocesan plans, foster-

ing ongoing dialogue, and communicating outcomes within the local Church.

Adaptability becomes paramount in navigating the tension between the local and universal Church, tailoring pastoral approaches to specific contexts. Emphasising inclusivity, a synodal bishop recognises and values diverse voices within the Church community, ensuring that all contributions are heard and acknowledged.

Conclusion

In the realm of the Catholic Church, the synodal bishop emerges as a pivotal figure aligned with the broader vision of synodality. Actively engaging in the synodal process, the synodal bishop exemplifies dialogue, collegiality, and pastoral sensitivity as essential components in addressing the challenges and opportunities facing the Church in the contemporary world.

As the Church continues to evolve, the synodal bishop stands at the forefront, embodying a collaborative and discerning approach to governance. — **By J. P. Grayland, LCI** (<https://international.lacroix.com>)



Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, celebrates Mass to pray for peace in Ukraine, November 17, 2022, in Rome's Basilica of St Mary Major. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

The only way to carry out the new evangelisation called for by Pope Francis is to adopt the pastoral style of a compassionate, humble, patient and simple priest who walks at the same pace as his people, Cardinal Pietro Parolin told seminarians.

“This is how the priest will touch the hearts of his faithful, win their trust and bring them face to face with Christ,” the cardinal wrote in a message sent on behalf of Pope Francis to seminarians in France. The Vatican published the written message from the Vatican secretary of state December 1.

The Pope sent his prayers and thanks to the seminarians who were attending a meeting in Paris, the cardinal wrote.

“Thank you for giving joy and hope to the Church of France, which is waiting for you and needs you. And it needs you to be what the priest should be, what he has always been and what he will always be by divine will: ‘Sharing the authority by which Christ builds up, sanctifies and rules his Body,’” he wrote.

No one can change the priesthood
“No one has the power to change the na-

No one can or will change the nature of the priesthood

ture of the priesthood and no one ever will, even if the ways in which it is exercised must necessarily take account of changes in today's society and the serious vocational crisis we are experiencing,” he wrote.

At the very heart of the priestly identity is celibacy, the cardinal wrote.

“Priests are celibate — and they wish to be — simply because Jesus was celibate. The requirement of celibacy is not primarily theological, but mystical: may this be understood by he who is able,” he wrote.

One thing that has changed, however, is the image of the Church, he said, and with that change the figure of the priest has lost “its prestige and natural authority in the eyes of the majority of people and has even unfortunately been tarnished.”

That means “we can no longer rely on it to reach out to the people we meet,” he added.

“This is why the only possible way to carry out the new evangelisation called for by Pope Francis, so that everyone can have a personal encounter with Christ, is to adopt a pastoral style of closeness, compassion, humility, gratuitousness, patience, gentleness, radical self-giving to others, simplicity and poverty,” Cardinal Parolin wrote. The priest must know the “smell” of his sheep and walk with them “at their pace.”

This is nothing new, he said, “but today it

has become a necessity on pain of not being credible or heard.”

‘Let this love be enough for you’

“In order to live this demanding, and sometimes harsh, priestly perfection, and face the challenges and temptations you will encounter along the way, there is only one solution,” he wrote. Priests must nurture “a strong, living and authentic personal relationship with Jesus” and love Jesus more than anything else.

“Let his love be enough for you, and you will emerge victorious from every crisis and every difficulty,” he wrote.

“If Jesus is enough,” Cardinal Parolin said, then a priest will not need success, great comforts, to be at the centre of big networks, disordered affections, fame, important responsibilities, to advance a career, to shine in the eyes of the world, to be better than others, have great material possessions or security for the future.

“If, on the other hand, I succumb to any of these temptations or weaknesses, it is because Jesus is not enough for me and that I lack love,” he wrote, emphasising the need to “strengthen your union with the One who deigns to make you his friend.”

“He is faithful and will be your greatest joy,” the cardinal said. — **By Carol Glatz, OSV**

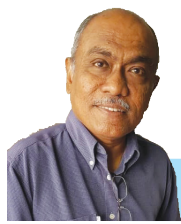
Catechesis and the way of beauty

Most people look at beauty in the form of aesthetics. However, beauty cannot be confined to aesthetics only. As such, it is essential that Christians discern the difference between true beauty and the type of beauty “which may be apparently beautiful but empty, or even harmful...” (*Directory for Catechesis*, 108). Ultimately, true beauty is the work of the Holy Spirit. For all that is good, all that is true, all that is beautiful brings us to God. In this article, I will examine beauty as a source of catechesis from the perspective of Sacred Scripture, works of art and as a form of attraction to faith in Jesus.

The way of beauty

In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*), Pope Francis speaks about the “way of beauty”. According to the Pope: “Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow Him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful, capable of filling life with splendour and profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties. Every expression of true beauty can thus be acknowledged as a path leading to an encounter with the Lord Jesus” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 167).

Beauty, therefore, can serve as a privileged path through which the message of Christ can be transmitted or shared to others. Every form of true beauty is a source of catechesis. It inspires the desire for God and renders glory to Him. The Pope states that this is why it would be good for every form of catechesis to pay attention to the “way of beauty”. Catechesis can show concretely through the works of human beings the infinite beauty of God.



ECHOING THE FAITH

Dr Steven Selvaraju

The way of beauty in the Scriptures

We have to see the “way of beauty” in the Sacred Scriptures. The Scriptures present God as the source of all splendour and beauty. This can be seen in God’s work of creation and in the unfolding of His plan of salvation. In the Old Testament, we can discover the beauty of God’s nature and divine glory: “Yahweh, God of gods speaks, he summons the earth. From east to west, from Zion, perfection of beauty, he shines.” (Ps. 50: 2).

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ is Himself beauty personified in all its goodness and perfection. His message of salvation is beautiful, good, joyful and full of hope. When He relates with people, especially the poor and marginalised, and sinners, He shows the beauty of the Father’s love and mercy. By healing the hurts of wounded humanity, He demonstrates the beauty of the power of God. By His suffering, death and resurrection, Jesus opens the eyes of humanity to the beauty of the salvation that He achieves for every person.

It means that in catechesis, attention has to be given in presenting the faith not merely as a dogmatic, theological or moral truth but as a beautiful message of God’s love for His people. This is why Pope Francis reminds us that, “Rather than experts in dire predictions, our judges bent on rooting out every threat and deviation, we should appear as joyful messengers of challenging proposals, guardians of the goodness and beauty which shine forth in a life of fidelity to the Gospel” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 168).

The way of beauty in art

Forming Catholics in the faith also means using the beauty of art as a source of catechesis. From her beginnings, the Church has allowed and encouraged the use of paintings, icons, statues, sculptures, mosaics, tapestries, stained glasses and other forms of art to depict the images of Jesus, Mother Mary and the saints as a means for believers to contemplate and draw closer to God.

In fact, from the sixth century up to the Middle Ages, at a time when most people were largely uneducated, such works of art served the main tools of catechesis. For example, when they went to the village church or to the cathedral in the city, people would “see” the sacred images and use them as “visual aids” to understand the faith. They would also use the works of art to teach the faith to their children.

These days, however, the sacred images in our churches, while they may be aesthetically pleasing to the eyes, are rarely used as catechetical aids by catechists or parents to teach the faith to the children. Here, we keep in mind the words of Pope Francis, “... art in all its forms, does not exist only for simple aesthetic enjoyment but because through art, the Church in every moment of history and in every culture explains and interprets the revelation for the good of the People of God” (Pope Francis, *Message to the Moscow Synodal Choir*, 2013). Consequently, we have to find ways to use the works of sacred art more frequently and effectively in catechesis.

The way of beauty as a form of attraction to faith in Jesus

The Church grows not by proselytising but by attraction, says Pope Francis. In the same way, faith has to be transmitted not merely to instruct or inform but to at-

tract the people — adults, teenagers and children — to the beauty of the Person of Christ and his message. In order to do this, those serving in the ministry of catechesis have themselves to be attracted to and by Christ. They are to serve as His disciples filled with joy, hope and love so that others may be attracted to Christ through them.

At the same time, in our catechesis, we have to increasingly find new ways of expressing the beauty of the faith so as to lead others to God. Pope Francis states, “we must be bold enough to discover new signs and new symbols, new flesh to embody and communicate the Word and different forms of beauty which are valued in different cultures (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 167).

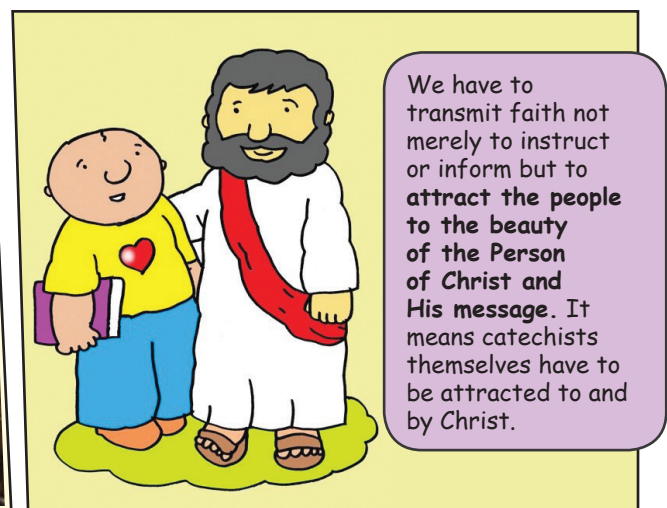
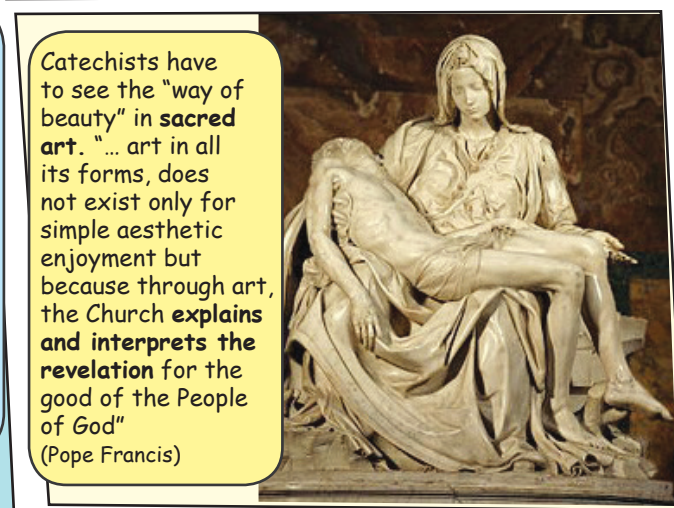
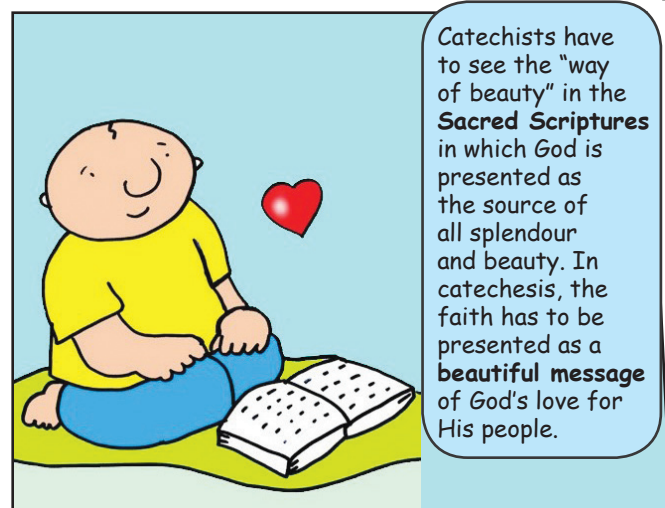
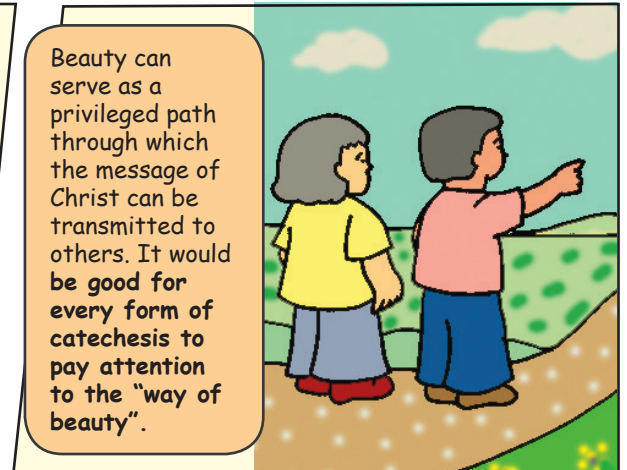
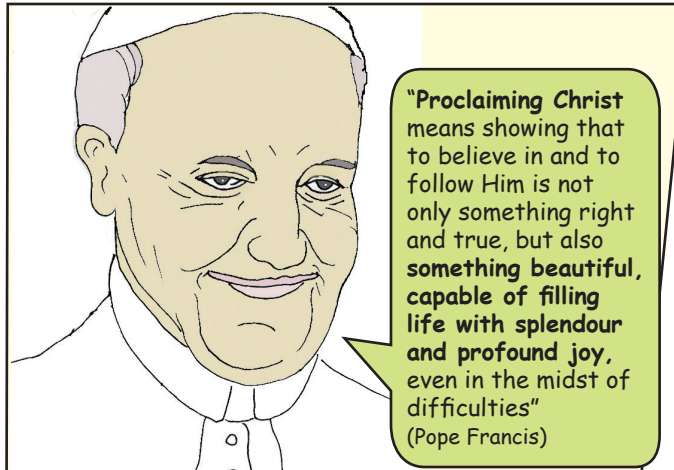
Conclusion

St Pope Paul VI once said, “The world in which we live needs beauty in order not to despair”. In his book, *Confessions*, St Augustine wrote, “Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you.” The “beauty” that both saints speak of is God. Since God is the true source of beauty, it is only natural that He uses beauty to draw humanity to Himself. In giving attention to the “way of beauty”, catechesis can play an important role to help people encounter Him.

The key ideas of the article are presented in a simple illustrated format below. The images used are my own, as well as, taken from the public domain.

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CATECHESIS AND THE WAY OF BEAUTY



Loved, cherished and called



(NCR photo/Courtesy of Marie Miller)

Marie Miller, a folk singer and songwriter, has recently started transitioning from secular pop-folk music to more faith-filled music after a decade-plus in the music industry.

She is now performing more for a Catholic audience than ever before, hoping she (and listeners) will have a deeper encounter with Christ through her songs.

Faith Background

A native Virginian, Miller grew up in a big Catholic family where Catholicism was the centre of daily life. Even from a young age, she has loved music and performing.

Miller then connected her love of music to her faith after she read Pope St John Paul II's *Letter to Artists*. In this letter, John Paul II talks about how "beauty is a call to transcendence" and how it stirs in the faithful a "hidden nostalgia for God."

Consequently, Miller felt a call from God.

Those words inspired the young woman to connect both her music and her faith, discovering how the beauty that she was searching for was found in God through Catholicism. She then began writing songs and learning different instruments such as the mandolin, piano and guitar.

"Each one of us has a unique quest, something only we can do to make the world more beautiful, more humane, more fraternal. If it feels like we're too small, it's a mistake," Miller says on her website.

Early Musical Career

Miller, 34, focused more on pop-folk songs at the time. But that was just the beginning of her musical path. She was signed by Curb Records when she was only 16 and continued her songful pursuit, before taking a break and attending Christendom College for a year.

Back in 2015, Miller even performed for Pope Francis during his visit to Philadelphia for the Festival of Families. She opened for the Backstreet Boys and toured with American Idol winner Kris Allen and the group Five for Fighting.

In 2018, Miller left her label company and began recording independently, and she produced her first album with the fitting title *Little Dreams*. In the title song, Miller chose to return to a more acoustic and folk-oriented approach, giving a nod to her roots.

Over the years, Miller began forming a team and fundraised with her initial invest-

ment to start producing new music. Her released singles were being streamed on platforms such as Amazon and Apple Music.

Miller started to gain popularity in the music industry and with her audience. Her 2019 song *Imaginary Friend* was streamed more than 300,000 times in the first two months on Apple Music. And on Jan 24, 2020, the music video for *Little Dreams* premiered at *Billboard.com*.

She loved pop and folk music and writing in this genre felt natural to her, she explained.

Pivot to Catholic Music

It wasn't until Miller started watching *The Chosen*, a popular TV series that illustrates the life of Jesus and his disciples, that she realised her view of what it means to be "perfect" needed to change. From this show, she realised that Christ was choosing these "imperfect" people to be his closest friends and to tell his story to others.

Taking this message to heart, she recently decided to start singing about Christ and focusing more on her faith in her music.

"We all want to be saints," she said when talking about how her music influences her faith.

She asks herself, "Am I doing something that will make me holier?"

She says that her faith influences her music since "you write about what you love and what moves you."

"As I have gotten older and grown in my faith, Jesus continues to be who I love the most," Miller said, "and he moves me the most. I can't help but sing about him."

According to a recent article, Miller says that she is still creating music for the same reason she always has — to connect people to beauty, solace and cheer.

Recent Music

Miller released her latest single — *Woman* — with fellow Catholic songwriters Sarah Hart and Sarah Kroger on Nov 3. The song is the first part of a larger project that will be released in spring 2024.

"Woman is about three women in Scripture who are transformed by their encounter with Jesus," said Miller.

Miller sings the part of the woman at the well, cited in Scripture, starting at John 4:7. The other two women mentioned are the woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8) and St. Mary Magdalene during her encounter with Jesus after his resurrection (John 20).

The song is about Catholic femininity.

Jesus says to the woman at the well, "Give me a drink," and she realises she can now serve Christ through this desire to be satisfied.

When discussing the impact of the song, Miller recalled that Kroger, one of the female songwriters, says that "Jesus would meet your needs."

Miller is hoping to release a *Hymns by Her* series on Instagram comprised of one-minute snippets of all of her favourite hymns, which will incorporate Advent and Christmas songs.

For now, Miller prays that *Woman* inspires modern women.

"It's a song that I hope reminds women they are loved, cherished and called to share the very hearts of God." — **By Elaine Gunthorpe, Register**

Hard-living Irish musician received last rites before he died

Irish songwriter and former Pogues lead singer Shane MacGowan (*pic*) received last rites before he died November 30, his family said.

"Prayers and the last rites were read during his passing," the family said in a written statement.

MacGowan, 65, is best known as the co-author of the 1987 Christmas mega-hit *Fairytale of New York*, which still enters the charts each December, more than 35 years after its initial release.

He was also the frontman and founder of the Pogues, a London band that fused Irish traditional music and punk rock, along with occasional forays into other genres.

MacGowan was raised a Catholic and often used Catholic imagery in his songs, though he did not practise the faith for most of his adult life, which included decades of heavy drug and alcohol use and frequent infidelity.

Yet he told an interviewer that he often prayed to Jesus, Mary, St Martin, St Francis and his dead relatives who he thought were in heaven.

"His anxiety around loss and death, including almost certainly his own, was presented as one of the reasons behind his strong Irish Catholic faith," wrote his biographer, Richard Balls, in his 2021 book *A Furious Devotion: The Life of Shane MacGowan*.

Irish Catholic identity

Born and raised in England to Irish parents, as a boy Shane visited Ireland often, staying with his extended family in a stone cottage in County Tipperary for as long as six weeks at a time. The arrival of Shane and his parents and sister would cause a stir, and his aunts would get emotional to the point of crying.

"When they came to leave, the tears would flow all over again and holy water would be sprinkled over them to keep them safe," his biographer wrote.

The Ireland side of the family was steeped in Catholicism. They had collies named Peter and Paul. As a lad, Shane used to walk to daily Mass with his aunt Nora as she prayed the rosary on the way. His aunt would also tune in at 6pm every night to the broadcast of the Angelus on RTE, the national television network.

MacGowan was fascinated by the Catholic Church.

"I might have become a priest if I hadn't been a singer," MacGowan told his biographer.

Drugs, alcohol, violence

As a teenager, MacGowan got into drugs, particularly LSD, which affected his grip on reality and led him at 17 to a six-month stay at a psychiatric hospital. His loving but permissive parents did little to stop his drug use.

For most of the rest of his life, MacGowan drank large amounts of whatever alcohol happened to be near and consumed large amounts of illicit substances, including heroin. His famously self-destructive behaviour led the author of a humorous 2000 book about Irish culture to call it *Is Shane MacGowan Still Alive?*

Even while almost constantly inebriated, he pumped out songs, which drew praise from fans and well-known musicians for their sound, imagery, detail, candour, comedy, and connection.

Intercession

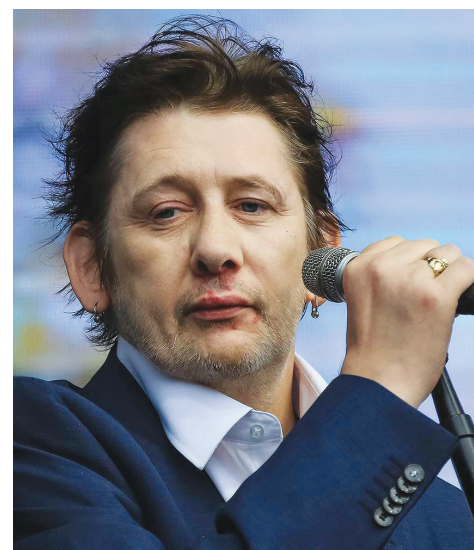
MacGowan's faith wasn't doctrinaire. He explored Eastern religions and philosophies, and he called himself a "free-thinking Catholic."

But he felt a strong connection to the Church.

"The Sacred Heart of Jesus and a statue of Mary holding Jesus have pride of place on the mantelpiece of his flat in Dublin to this day and he wears a crucifix around his neck," his biographer wrote in 2021.

MacGowan's songs explored degradation and violence, but often with humour and a hint of redemption.

Lorca's Novena, for instance, on the 1990 Pogues album *Hell's Ditch*, includes a murder but also a suggestion of resurrection,



linked to women in a nearby chapel praying "*Mother of all our joys / Mother of all our sorrows / Intercede with him tonight / For all of our tomorrows.*"

MacGowan had been in declining health for years. A 2015 fall fractured his pelvis and left him wheelchair-bound for the rest of his life. The time in the hospital helped him stop using heroin, but he continued to drink alcohol.

In 2018 he married his longtime on-again/off-again girlfriend Victoria Mary Clarke, who took care of him in his declining years.

He spent most of the last four months of his life in a hospital.

Clarke, MacGowan's younger sister Siobhan, and their father (in his 90s) were at MacGowan's side when he died at a hospital in Dublin. — **By Matt McDonald, CNA**

Balancing Christmas as Malaysians

Spiritual vs Secular Christmas?

In a week's time, we will be celebrating Christmas. Every year we hear the same lamentations on decorations getting more elaborate, celebrations getting more luxurious and so on. Christmas is becoming worldly and secular.

The reality is, it isn't Christmas that is getting more secular, it is the world in general. Consumerism is driving us, with more malls than churches, and growing. Hotels, shopping centres, restaurants offer promotions to stay relevant, especially in a post-COVID economy that has yet to recover.

Festivities, like Christmas, therefore, have become a competition to outdo each other — to get the most footfall. It has more to do with business and economic interests than it does to celebrate a Christian holiday.

For individuals, it could be a celebration marking the end of another year of working and striving and surviving. To celebrate being able to put food on the table, educate their children and manage to stay healthy in a hectic world.

In response to all this, we hear the same exhortations from Christian leaders with oft-repeated slogans, "keep Christ in Christmas", "Jesus is the Reason for the Season", usually with recommendations of reflection, bible-reading, family prayer or similar.

Christians are also often advised to keep their celebrations moderate, refrain from overindulgence and merriment, as that is unchristian.

But even at a secular level, with the same breath, Christmas is often paired with a thematic 'spirit', 'message' or 'magic' — made popular perhaps by Christmas popular culture via holiday movies and songs.

It is as synonymous with Christmas as



MAKING SENSE

Emmanuel Joseph

'good fortune' is with Chinese New Year, or 'forgiveness' is with *Hari Raya*.

Unlike the succinct nature of the other two, this 'Christmas Spirit' can be open to interpretation.

To some, it is forgiveness, to live and let live. To others, it's exchanging presents, to give and get gifts.

More Blessed to Give

At the heart of it though, as a common golden thread, would lie some form of benevolence, compassion, or goodness, which would be extraordinary, above and beyond our usual lives.

Some manage to include the less fortunate in their celebrations — hosting Christmas parties for orphanages and old folks' homes, street feeding endeavours and so forth.

Others donate old clothes, books, toys, and decorations. Even if it is to make way for new ones, is not some good derived from the 'secularism'?

A balance can be made from celebrating the season, keeping the focus on Christ, while still sharing it with others, be it friends or the less fortunate.

For every few new clothes or toys that we buy, buy an extra to donate (on top of any pre-loved ones).

For every celebratory meal, allocate a portion aside to feed the next hungry person you see.

For every few gifts we give out, take a card from one of those charity Christmas trees and make someone's holiday!

For every party we attend, listen to a religious reflection on the season.

The list goes on, the idea being to increase our giving in thanksgiving for whatever we receive.

No Peace in the Manger

This Christmas too, as Christians in Muslim majority Malaysia, we can't escape being affected by what's going on in the Middle East.

The concern is twofold — the discomfort over celebrations itself, as seen by the issues with the *Coldplay* concert.

The second is the celebration of Christmas — seen by the issue raised in Sarawak over the singing of *O Holy Night* at a government event (which has since been resolved)

Perhaps to complicate matters further, Christians have historical ties with Israel and the Jewish people, so it is natural to have mixed feelings about the situation.

It is important to differentiate the prophets and people of Israel of the Bible with the present-day state and political situation which have little to do with each other apart from happening in the same geographical area.

Loss of lives, whichever side, is wrong and to take it, morally reprehensible.

Jesus Himself rebuked moral wrongdoings, even arguing with teachers and religious teachers during His ministry, and exposed hypocrisy.

Moreover, the ongoing war isn't a question of religion, despite anyone's attempt to paint the narrative as such. To put into context, 18 per cent of Israelis are Muslim, and only 1.9 per cent Christian. There are proportionally more

Muslims in Israel then there are Christians in Malaysia.

It is a geopolitical issue that deserves our sympathy and action.

But how do we reconcile the troubles at Jesus' birthplace, the realities and sensitivity around it, and our own celebration of Christmas?

With wisdom and compassion for the suffering of our fellow human beings, descendants of the shepherds who first received the good news from the angelic herald.

O Come Divine Messiah

More than ever, should we remind ourselves now of the celebration that is Christmas — God becoming man to be with us.

Now, more so than ever, in the uncertainty of politics and the economy. With war and strife in Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Of rising intolerance, radicalism, and counterradicalism everywhere.

To be vigilant, faithful, trusting in the Infant Jesus and the greater plan He brings.

To be mindful of the sufferings of others, the concerns of our neighbours, the needs of those who have less than us, and our own spiritual need to grow.

To wait in faith, hope and love, and to celebrate it with compassion and charity.

A blessed Christmas to all *HERALD* readers, wishing you peace and love for the coming year.

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



... meanwhile

Joanne Lim

I often romanticise about my faith — I get excited about the Rosary, about going for daily Mass whenever I can, and being called to serve in church. Near Christmas, I put up a tree, start a shopping list, order a well-boozed XL rich fruit cake and ensure the 15-pound turkey has started its defrosting process. The feeling of being a Catholic is exciting.

But while I'm so excited *about* Jesus, I have to constantly ask myself: am I living *for* Jesus? Jesus has many fans, *Coldplay* (which recently came to Malaysia) has many fans too. How many of us can say that we are a real 'friend' to Jesus? Does my excitement remain at an emotional level — at my *feeling* good, or in my doing good? Do I do good just to feel *good* about myself? Or am I truly a steward for Christ, for His glory?

I am sure we have had at some point this inward discussion with ourselves about the simple yet overused expression: "I love you". Do we say it because it makes us feel good to hear the desired response of "I love you too/ I love you more"? Or do we say it without expecting a response because we love unconditionally. Going further — do we say it because we like the *thought* of loving someone; or of being "in love"? Again, the question boils down to whether we love Jesus unconditionally (as He loves us).

Ofttimes, we latch onto the idea of Christ but not Christ Himself. We attend formations and BECs because we seek a sense of belonging to a community, and when community fails

us, we leave the chatgroup, we resign from the ministry, and we join another denomination. Only for that cycle to start again and by that point, we would be too entrenched in another strange delirium about our faith. In all of this, God never failed us, yet we punish Him (or so we think) by withholding our service, even taking extreme measures by renouncing our faith. In truth, we punish ourselves...because sooner or later, slowly but surely (sometimes only at the point of death) we start to regret our decisions, we feel a deep sense of remorse, followed by hopelessness.

In all of this, we are only safeguarding one thing — as human beings, we have become obsessed about our emotions, and entwined in Me, Myself and I. Whatever happened to Luke's advice of "*dying to self*"? (Luke 9:23). *That's such a huge ask. I'm important! How I feel matters...hey, even my Instagram feed tells me that I should focus on myself!*

When you lose your sense of self, you cultivate a deep sense of awareness of God and all that is happening around you. Can I let go of my emotions? But my emotions keep me safe, it's familiar to me, I can withstand any currents that come my way. And yet, armed with our 'emotions', we encounter the temptations of the devil and of the world. We fight it with anger, fight fire with fire, and we succumb to the disorders of the world. Dying to self and living for Christ doesn't feel safe — because it requires us to take a stand on our position about so many conflicts within us — like the Sacrament of Matrimony, it is way too risky to jeopardise our reputation, our job, our friendships, if we were to act according to what the faith requires of us. The secular

A hopeless or hopeful romantic?

world dishes out tantalising invitations and ultimatums...and let's face it, we just can't bear to give it all up (especially what makes us 'feel good')...not even for Jesus, our friend. When our emotions are at stake, we succumb to becoming a hopeless and not a hopeful romantic. Our heart rules, and our mind is crowded out, our emotions can take centre stage over matters that are even non-negotiable in our faith.

Jesus gave us His Mother, and the Church — our family, our community. But is our community an environment where it is safe to grow? Are we nurturing saints, or are we breeding sinners? How are we nurturing a parish that is headed towards sainthood? (or is that so unattainable today that we've just unconsciously let out a snigger). I spend weeks trying to convince my catechism learners that it's not impossible to be living saints...you don't need to do big things, be martyred, or give up your dream of being an engineer — they look at me as if I'm mad... but as the year goes by, they get it — be kind and considerate, share what you have, even a simple but meaningful prayer for someone in need and for the deceased...so easy but so often overlooked. Not everyone can pledge RM1million to the poor, but RM10 given with all sincerity is far-reaching. A priest in his recent homily shared, "it is the poor and the homeless who will be standing at the gates of heaven ready to judge us...and at that point, Jesus will ask them, which of these do you recognise who had helped you, when you were hungry, fed you; when you were thirsty, gave you drink; when you were naked, clothed you; when you were sick or imprisoned,

visited you; when you were homeless, gave you shelter?" That question hit me hard. Am I a 'fan of' or 'friend to' Jesus. Just as love is a verb, so is faith. Indeed, LOVE is in itself an act of faith, would you agree?

...meanwhile, here's the burning question — is it enough to attend Mass, recite the Rosary, or even religiously pray five times a day. We can sometimes fall in love with the routine. It's easy to be patient when you have no one to wait upon; easy to be forgiving when there's no one to forgive; easy to be generous when there's no one to give to. It's easy to be Catholic until... we are tested on our discipline and fortitude. It is then that we realise whether we are His friends or merely His fans...if we are the hopeless romantic or the *hopeful* romantic — the latter based on trust, and not shying away from difficult and uncomfortable circumstances and situations pertaining to our faith.

May the celebration of Christ's birth this Christmas bring about the hopeful romantic in us...that we will see His birth as the promise of God's unconditional love for us; and that we will in turn be able to speak and live out our love for Him as our Saviour...Jesus, our Emmanuel — God with us!

Feliz Navidad, dear readers of the *HERALD* and nurture this meaningful friendship with Jesus our Lord and await as hopeful Catholics for this special coming of our infant King of Kings.

● **Professor Joanne Lim** shares the faith in *Catechism and music in Church*. She is Deputy Dean and lectures on media and society at the University of Nottingham Malaysia.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Our over-complex, tortured selves

When all is said and done, our lives are not all that serene and peaceful. In a manner of speaking, we are always somewhat pathetic. That shouldn't scare us. Pathetic is not a pejorative term. The word comes from the Greek, *pathos*, which means pain. To be pathetic is to live in pain, and we all do because of the very way we are made.

You might say that doesn't sound right. Aren't we made in the image and likeness of God so that each of us, no matter how messed up our lives might be, carry a special dignity and a certain godliness within us? We do carry that special dignity. However, despite that and largely because of it, our lives tend to be so complex as to be pain filled. Why?

Godliness isn't easy to carry. The infinite inside us doesn't easily fit itself into the finite. We carry too much divine fire inside to find much peace in this life.

That struggle begins early in life. To create a self-identity as a very young child, we need to make a series of mental contractions which ultimately limit our awareness. First, we need to differentiate ourselves from others (*That's mom — I'm me*); then, we need to differentiate between what is living and what is not (*the puppy is alive — my doll isn't*); next, we need to differentiate between

what is physical and what is mental (*this is my body — but I think with my mind*). Finally, and critically, as we are doing all this, we need split off as much of our luminosity we can consciously handle from what is too much to consciously handle. With that we create a self-identity — but *we also create a shadow*, namely, an area inside us which is split off from our consciousness.

Notice that our shadow is not first of all a looming darkness. Rather, it's all the light and energy inside us that we cannot consciously handle. Most of us, I suspect, are familiar with the words of Marianne Williamson made famous by Nelson Mandela in his inauguration speech: *Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.*

Our light frightens us because it is not easy to carry. It gives us great dignity and infinite depth, but it also makes us pathologically complex and restless. Ruth Burrows, one of the foremost spiritual writers of our time, begins her autobiography with these words: *I was born into this world with a tortured sensitivity and my life has not been an easy one.* You wouldn't expect those words from a mystic, from someone who has been a faithful nun for more than

seventy-five years. You wouldn't expect that her struggle in life was as much with the light within herself as with the darkness within and around her. That's also true for each of us.

There's a famous passage in the *Book of Qoheleth* where the sacred writer tells us that God has made everything beautiful in its own time. However, the passage doesn't end on a peaceful note. It ends by telling us that, while God has made everything beautiful in its own time, God has put timelessness into the human heart so that we are congenitally out of sync with time and the seasons from beginning to end. Both our special dignity and our pathological complexity take their origins in that anomaly in our nature. We are overcharged for life on this planet.

St Augustine gave this classic expression in his famous line: *You have made us for Yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.* There is an entire anthropology and spirituality in that single line. Our dignity and our perpetual restlessness have one and the same source.

Thus, you need to give yourself sacred permission for being wild of heart, restless of heart, insatiable of heart, complex of heart, and driven of heart. Too often, where both psychology and spirituality have failed

you is in giving you the impression that you should be living without chaos and restlessness in your life. Admittedly, these can beset you more acutely because of moral inadequacy, but they will beset you no matter how good a life you are living. Indeed, if you are a deeply sensitive person, you will probably feel your complexity more acutely than if you are less sensitive or are deadening your sensitivity with distractions.

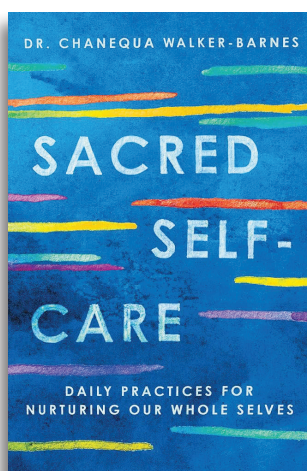
Karl Rahner once wrote to a friend who had written to him complaining that he wasn't finding the fulfilment he longed for in life. His friend expressed disappointment with himself, his marriage, and his job. Rahner gave him this counsel: **In the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable, we ultimately learn that in this life there is no finished symphony.**

There can be no finished symphony in this life — not because our souls are defective, but because they carry godliness.

● **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**

Care for the sacred self

As an African American woman and two-time breast cancer survivor working and writing in the early post-pandemic years of COVID-19, Chanequa Walker-Barnes wrote *Sacred Self-Care: Daily Practices for Nurturing Our Whole Selves* with the intention of establishing practices that foster a spirit of rest to usher her into a life of resurrection at a time she needed it most. Walker-Barnes now offers these practices as a devotional to all those in need of the same.



as persons created in the image and likeness of God. Each week builds on the last, covering an array of themes from Christian discipleship and stewardship to personal awareness and responsibility to establishing boundaries and healthy habits to love and relationality.

In an age where self-care is in vogue and corporations are endlessly finding new ways to cash in on its concept, Walker-Barnes explains that "the idea that self-care is dependent upon

a product — or even upon money — is a misperception, and a dangerous one at that. Developing sustainable self-care practices requires knowing what self-care is and how it connects to Christian discipleship." Moving away from its normative standard, Walker-Barnes identifies "self-care" as a practice that must be grounded in a theological reflection of our divine creation. She says:

Our self — the body-mind-spirit that makes up who we are and that shapes our experiences of the world — is God's first and best gift to each one of us. How we care for ourselves is our response of gratitude for that gift.

Being made in the image and likeness of God, we are sacred persons and, as such, we are the embodied expressions of gift. This understanding of personhood, which is central to Walker-Barnes' analysis and invitation to care for ourselves, is not selfish or indulging. Rather, it is both a response and resistance to the areas in our lives we have experienced self-neglect, trauma, and pain. It is the first step to



(Unsplash/William Farlow)

healing and the self-discovery process to wholeness.

At its core, Walker-Barnes describes self-care as attending to our body's daily needs. However, before we can ever respond to these needs, a mastery of attentive listening to and awareness of our own body is imperative. From the basic necessities of food and water to the more personalised essentials of exercise and meditation, Walker-Barnes explains that there is a wide spectrum of what each unique body might require as pathways to rest, restoration and rejuvenation — and that it is only once these are reached that we can begin making the daily practice of self-care a new life ritual.

What Walker-Barnes makes evident in the latter half of her book is that caring for ourselves leads to a greater sense of self, and a greater sense of self leads to a greater sense of how we relate to others. When we begin to see ourselves how God sees us, know ourselves how God knows us, love ourselves how God loves us, by extension, that perception sheds light on and corrects other areas and relationships in our lives too. As co-creators with God (1 Corinthians

3:9), it is entirely in our jurisdiction to create boundaries, honour our limits, and acknowledge our emotions. It is in doing so that we honour the gift of our selves more wholeheartedly by growing in our capacity to give of ourselves more fully, as has been done for us.

Sacred Self-Care is funny, witty, and relatable. Walker-Barnes is practical in her approach to self-care practices and the theological reflections that guide them, making for an equally inspiring and empowering read. Alongside these reflections are varying key passages from Scripture that accompany them, thorough analyses of important Christian themes, and guiding practices to adopt in our waking lives.

While the book's approach to self-care may feel unconventional to the spiritual practice of some Catholics, it serves as a good reminder that while suffering in this life is inevitable, the Lord still desires to give us life and in abundance. We may not always be able to control what that looks like, but we can certainly play our part in learning how to respond to such seasons well. — **By Ashley Hinojosa, NCR**

Little Catholics' Corner

Dear children,

Today's Gospel reading tells us about Saint John the Baptist, who prepared the people for the coming of Jesus.

At first people thought that he might be the saviour they were all waiting for, but he was very clear when he told them that he wasn't — there was one coming after him Who would be

the truly great One.

Sometimes we hear about great or important people. We know about movie stars and singers and government leaders. Who are some important people you know of?

Do those people that you've thought about help to bring you closer to God?

Do they teach you well and set good examples?

Or do they lead people away from God by doing wrong things or making fun of God's truth?

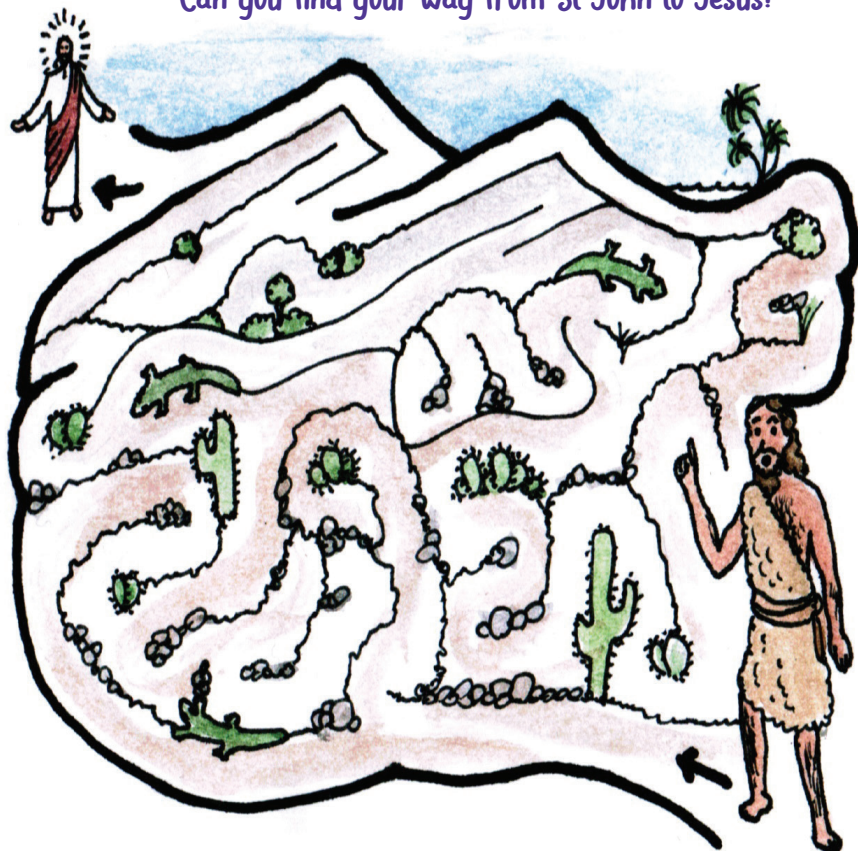
We can know which people are really great by thinking about whether they lead us closer to God, like Saint John the Baptist did, or further away from Him. Which sort of people do you want to follow?

Love
Aunty Eliz

In Advent we hear about Saint John the Baptist. Jesus' cousin who prepared the way for Jesus' coming. He preached to the people, telling them to repent and baptised them.

When Jesus came St John told the people to follow Jesus because He was the Messiah.

Can you find your way from St John to Jesus?



HONEY

STRAP

SANDALS

RIVER

WILDERNESS

CAMELSKIN

SPIRIT

ISAIAH

MESSANGER

REPENTANCE

LOCUSTS

BAPTISM

S	M	E	S	S	E	N	G	E	R
T	S	L	A	D	N	A	S	E	E
S	T	E	M	S	I	T	P	A	B
U	R	W	N	S	P	E	S	R	O
C	A	F	A	R	N	I	E	E	O
O	P	I	S	T	E	T	R	V	K
L	A	T	A	N	E	D	E	I	A
H	O	N	E	Y	I	R	L	R	T
K	C	A	M	E	L	S	K	I	N
E	R	T	N	E	T	T	I	R	W

Word Search



Break the CODE

- +++ - GOD
- ☺☺☺ - John
- ☺☺☺ - Witness
- 🔔🔔🔔 - Light
- ✂✂✂ - Believe
- 👍👍👍 - Testify
- ✂✂✂ -

THERE WAS A MAN SENT FROM

+++ WHOSE NAME WAS ☺☺☺.

HE CAME AS A 🔔🔔🔔 TO ✂✂✂

CONCERNING THAT ✂✂✂, SO THAT

THROUGH HIM ALL MIGHT 👍👍👍.

John 1:6-8

Let's
Colour



Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

YOUTH

DECEMBER 17, 2023

YOUTH SET ABLAZE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

IPOH, Perak: Ablaze Ministry, the Ipoh outreach of *The Seeds*, hosted a Life in the Spirit Seminar for young adults November 24 to 26.

Thirty-eight young adults throughout Malaysia came together for a transformative weekend centred around the theme *Be Renewed*, drawing inspiration from Romans 12:2.

Over the course of the seminar, the young people were immersed in a journey toward renewal through worship, insightful talks, and engaging spiritual discussions. Paul Julianose, The Seeds' advisor, and Jonathan Charanraj led the informative sessions, tailored to address the challenges that today's young adults encounter. Both speakers emphasised Christ's call to move away from these challenges and embrace renewal



through the Holy Spirit.

The worship sessions and spiritual conversations were skillfully facilitated by Seeds members, creating spaces for participants to connect with Christ and each other through reflective conversations and shared experiences.

Throughout the weekend, the Sacrament of Reconciliation was offered to all, providing a profound opportunity for healing and experiencing God's unconditional love and mercy, as shared by many participants afterward.

The event culminated in a Mass presided over by Fr Simon Anand, the head of Penang Diocesan Youth Network (PDYN). In his homily, Fr Simon challenged everyone present to ponder the risks they were willing to take for Christ in every decision they make.



Testimonies:

Carl Ezekiel from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang, expressed his realisation of God's boundless repentance and mercy for all.

Adeline Phang from the Church of St Michael, Ipoh, shared her experience of renewal and encountering the Holy Spirit.

Jennifer Manikadass from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Ipoh, likened the

weekend to reconnecting with an old friend, describing it as a renewed encounter with the Holy Spirit and hoping more young adults could share the same experience.

The Seeds is a young adults' ministry under the umbrella of Charis Malaysia. For further information and updates on *The Seeds*, you may follow us on Instagram (seedsministry) or find us on Facebook, *The Seeds*.

COMING TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE WORLD AIDS DAY

A group of young people from various church groups share their experiences on celebrating World Aids Day at Mercy Home in Butterworth

"Tis the season to be jolly" and remarkably we all were at Mercy Home's World HIV Day and Christmas celebration, together with Caritas, Islanders Tamil Youth Network (ITYN) and the World Youth Day (WYD) youth, the Focolare Gen also had the opportunity to volunteer and spread joy to each and every one present during that day. It was a very heart-warming experience especially when we were able to put into practice the words of the

Gospel in concrete ways by loving one another as God has loved us and by giving our time, energy, effort, help and smiles to those around us. Through little concrete actions, I believe we can all make the world a better place to live in. Merry Christmas, everyone! Jesus is the reason for this season." — *Desiree, Focolare Gen*

"It was my first-time volunteering in such an activity but I would say I'm just blessed to be part of them and I would love to join then for future events too. The world is in need of love and let's spread God's love to everyone we meet." — *Monica, ITYN Youth*

"It was a wonderful and fruitful experience to be part of bringing the joy and our experiences of WYD to the 80 children from Mercy Home to celebrate World AIDS Day. Joining with other ministries as we came together to build bridges among the young people in breaking the stigma of HIV. It was my first time visiting this Home and the children are so adorable with so much joy in them. I'm truly blessed that I could spend my time and talent with the children in the Home. I received joy and created memories with the children. This Home has come close to my heart and I intend to visit this Home as often as I can." — *Linda Shalini Thomas, ITYN Youth and WYD'23 pilgrim*

"Experiencing the love of God in the community is such a beautiful experience. It was a great way for us to



start our Advent by welcoming Christ in our hearts by sharing joy and happiness. Seeing through the eyes of Christ will break the stigma and discrimination against HIV/AIDS. No one is less than us and we are not greater than anyone in the eyes of God. Jesus chose mercy over judgement in John 8:7. I believe we young people of the Church are already in the mission of breaking discriminations, let's keep the spark burning." — *Rachel, Focolare Gen, WYD'23 pilgrim*

"I was a part of the World HIV/AIDS Day Celebration at Mercy Home, I felt it was the right way to commemorate the first Sunday of Advent with the children, an experience that became one of the most cherished moments of my life, the joy on their faces and the shared games filled the day with happiness. Those who came to visit them were truly blessed by the warmth of their presence. God wants us to love and not discriminate, just like He does. It was a day full of love and joy. — *Jeremeah John, Focolare Gen*

● Turn to Page 5 to read the news report of the event.



Focolare Youths, ITYN, WYD Pilgrims

IT WAS A SUCCESSFUL GSC YOUTH CAMP!



By Jayden Pradeep

KUALA LUMPUR: It's been three years since Good Shepherd Camp last had its annual youth camp. Hence, there were a lot of challenges faced going into this year's youth camp. Various members of the planning committee came and went throughout the year and the position of youth leader changed hands during that period. When the time came to finally plan the camp, most of the committee had no experience planning youth events let alone one as big as a youth camp. However, with the grace of God we managed to pull it off and all things considered it was a success.

This year's camp from November 17 to 19 at El Sanctuary, Melaka, was attended by 38 people. The camp began at 8.00pm at the parish for attendance and briefing followed by the three-hour bus ride to El Sanctuary. Upon arrival, everyone simply hung around and chatted before going to bed.

The second day began with a short ice-

breaking session. Then Alvin Teoh facilitated the first session on one's self-worth being based in God and His love for us. He has a reputation for being a prolific speaker and has worked on many youth camps in the past. After lunch, we gathered again for another session by Alvin. This session was an extension of the first, where he shared stories and spoke about events he had witnessed throughout his life pertaining to the Catholic faith.

In the evening, we had outdoor games where everyone went back soaking wet, covered in flour or both.

Come night we had a Taize session which I personally had been looking forward to for a long time. The session was very spiritually uplifting and made me want to attend Taize sessions in the future.

Finally, we had a jungle trekking activity at around 10.00pm. It was fun navigating the jungle in pitch-darkness with only a rope to guide us, all the while having to deal with ants biting our ankles and steep ascents and

descents. Needless to say not all of the participants managed to complete the trek calmly.

On the third day, we attended morning Mass at the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Krubong. After Mass, one of the nuns explained the history of the church. Later, we walked around taking pictures and bought souvenirs as well. We then returned to our camp for lunch followed by another round of outdoor games. This time we played captain ball. Many had never played this before and so the whole game was very chaotic as a result but in a very fun way. Finally, it was time for us to pack and return to KL.

All in all, it was a fun camp. Perhaps there were many things that could have been improved but it was a good start considering it had been three years since the last one. Above all we had accomplished the main goal of the camp which was to renew interest in the youth community of the parish. Many who attended are now looking forward to future youth events at our parish.

What growing 'phone phobia' among young people reveals

A recent survey conducted by a Tokyo-based IT firm has revealed that over 70 per cent of individuals in their 20s and 30s in Japan experience a phobia of using their phones for calling.

The survey, which targeted 562 respondents aged 20 or older working in offices with landline phones, found that 57.8 per cent of all participants felt uncomfortable talking on the phone. This discomfort was even more pronounced among those in their 20s and 30s, with 72.7 per cent expressing a lack of comfort with telephone conversations.

The survey clearly suggests that the rise of social media messaging functions may have contributed to this "phone phobia" trend by reducing opportunities for phone communication.

In fact, the implications of this study extend far beyond its immediate scope when we delve into the everyday experiences that corroborate its findings.

As someone deeply engaged in conversations with young people due to my profession, the revelations of the study did not surprise me at all. Rather, they seemed long overdue. The detrimental impact of new media communication on the face-to-face interactions of the younger generation in Japan is glaringly evident in their daily lives.

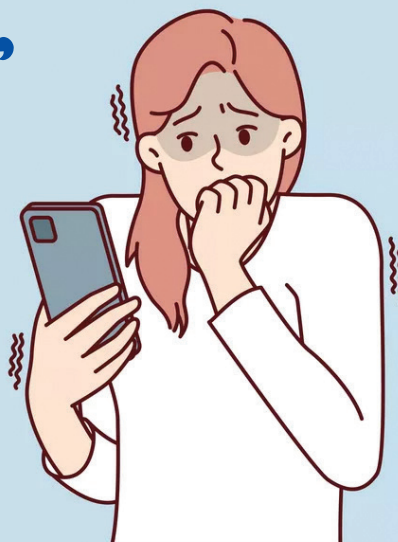
A recent encounter I had on a crowded train exemplifies this broader trend. I had a conversation with a 21-year-old nurse, and soon we transitioned from casual chit-chat to more profound topics.

While discussing her aspirations for family and children, her response, although not surprising, shed light on a concerning shift in societal values. Despite societal pressures and media narratives discouraging the younger generation from embracing traditional family structures, she expressed a genuine desire for a large family.

However, the catch was somewhat surprising; she didn't necessarily envision marriage or even having a boyfriend.

Upon further exploration, she openly shared that, like many of her peers, the need for a life partner was not on the table even in the face of a yearning for parenthood. Her perspective revealed a willingness to embrace motherhood but without the conventional trappings of a committed relationship.

The prevalent reason for this unconventional viewpoint is palpable to anyone who observes the social landscape, particularly in Japanese cafes or restaurants. Couples under the age of 25, when encountered, often sit across from each other, engrossed



not in conversation but in endless scrolling on their phones.

This pervasive trend paints a blunt picture of how the younger generation perceives relationships.

The partner, instead of being a source of joy, is viewed as a potential hindrance, a sentiment reinforced by the apparent disconnection exhibited in these public spaces.

The prioritisation of virtual interactions over genuine face-to-face communication is reshaping not only personal relationships but also the very fabric of societal expectations.

It prompts a critical examination of the evolving dynamics between individuals, revealing a complex interplay between technology, societal norms, and the fundamental human desire for connection. —

By Cristian Martini Grimaldi, ucanews.com

Boy walks miles to receive confirmation, gets blessing from the Pope



ARGENTINA: An Argentine boy recently made effort to walk 11 kilometres (about seven miles) on muddy roads to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, and the news reached Pope Francis, who sent him a blessing.

Maximiliano Pavillaux, 11, lives with his parents and four siblings in the rural area around Suipacha, a small town in Buenos Aires province, since December 2022.

Throughout the year, the boy has been preparing to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, which was scheduled for Nov 11.

To help him prepare, week after week, his catechist, Eva, sent the study materials to his house. However, as the date for the sacrament approached, worsening weather conditions threatened his being confirmed.

The night before confirmation, and in the midst of incessant rain, Carola and Rolando, Maximiliano's parents, began to worry because the family vehicles were not going to be able to make it to town on the muddy country roads, and the tractor they use to work the fields had broken down that same week.

There was an alternative, but the parents thought the child wouldn't accept it: walk seven miles in the mud. However, to their surprise, Maxi said yes.

The boy and his parents left at 7.00am so they could reach the church in time for the ceremony that would begin at 10.30am.

"Our boots sank in the mud, we slid," Maximiliano recalled. On the way, the father joked with the little boy: "When you grow up, you're going to have a good story to tell." But they didn't expect his story to reach so many people.

Upon arriving at Our Lady of the Rosary Parish in Suipacha, Eva, his catechist, was waiting for him in tears: "She was very happy," the newly confirmed said.

The priest who offered the Mass mentioned the little boy's feat as an example to follow, and many came up later to congratulate him.

After the ceremony, "we came away relieved. I was 'on cloud nine' all week," the boy's mother confessed. "We didn't regret anything, we were happy."

But the impact did not end there. Maximiliano's story reached the ears of Pope Francis, who sent him his apostolic blessing and a gift from Rome.

The framed apostolic blessing and the gifts of the Holy Father were given to Maxi at the Dec 3 Sunday Mass, which was celebrated by Bishop Mauricio Landra, the auxiliary bishop of Mercedes-Luján, who made a special trip to Suipacha to place the recognition from the Pope in the boy's hands.

"I can't stop crying," said Maxi's mother, highlighting the warmth of the Suipacha community, which came to visit her son and also brought him gifts. "It's a paradise," she said.

The protagonist of the story shared that "everyone was very happy," even his rural school classmates, who were "impressed."

To other children who are preparing to receive the sacrament of confirmation, Maximilian reminded them "that Jesus awaits you and will always be with you, just as he will be with me." — By Julieta Villar, CNA

Fr Jestus Pereira returns to the Lord

KUALA LUMPUR: Fr Jestus Pereira, the parish priest of the Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan, passed away on December 6 at the age of 68.

Born in 1955 as the sixth of eight children (four girls and four boys), Fr Jestus joined the preparatory seminary in St Francis Xavier's Minor Seminary, Singapore in 1976. He later entered the College General Major Seminary in 1978 and after taking a short break, he re-joined the Major Seminary in 1986.

Fr Jestus was ordained a priest on October 21, 1987 by then Archbishop Anthony Soter Fernandez at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Setapak, Kuala Lumpur. He was the first priest to be ordained from the parish.

Following his ordination, he was posted to the Church of St Joseph, Sentul, as assistant parish priest and also took responsibility to assist at the Church of the Risen Christ, Jalan Ipoh and the Church of Christ the Light, Selayang.

During his 36 years as a diocesan priest, Fr Jestus served in several parishes in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. Below is a summary of his postings:

Nov 1987

Assistant parish priest
Church of St Joseph, Sentul
(Church of Risen Christ, Jalan Ipoh
Church of Christ the Light, Selayang)

Feb 1991 - June 1994

Parish Priest,
Church of St Jude, Rawang.



Aug 1996 - Apr 2002

Assistant Parish Priest,
Church of the Holy Family, Kajang.

May 2002 - Aug 2009

Parish Priest, Church of St Anthony, KL.

July 2014 - May 2015

Administrator,
Church of the Holy Redeemer, Klang.

June 2015 - December 2021

Parish Priest,
Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help,
Mentakab.

January 2022 - December 2023

Parish Priest,
Church of the Immaculate Conception,
Port Dickson.

In 1994, Fr Jestus left for Rome, Italy to pursue his post-graduate studies and obtained a Licentiate in Canon Law. In 1997, he continued his studies at the Institute of Tribunal Practice in Sydney and Brisbane, Australia, for two years.

He also held terms as Judicial Vicar at the Peninsular Malaysia Ecclesiastical Tribunal (PMET) with jurisdiction

for the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu and Apostolic Vicariate of Brunei Darussalam.

From 1999 to 2014, he was the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. Over the years, he was also the Ecclesiastical Assistant for the Catholic Lawyers' Society and the Archdiocesan Bahasa Malaysia Language Apostolate (ABMA).

Fr Jestus wrote an amazing article titled *My Twelve Days of Advent and Christmas...in the Floods* that was published in *HERALD* December 31, 2021. His experience touched the hearts of many who did not know him personally.

Fr Jestus will be fondly remembered as a kind, caring and dedicated priest who was ever willing to give a helping hand to those in need. He leaves behind two sisters, a brother and a host of relatives and friends to mourn his loss.

The wake was held at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Port Dickson on Dec 7 and 8. After the morning Mass on Dec 9, the body of Fr Jestus was taken to the Church of the Sacred Heart, Jalan Peel, Kuala Lumpur.

After a two-day wake on Dec 9 and 10 at the church parlour, the funeral was held on Dec 11 at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jalan Peel followed by cremation at the Cheras DBKL Crematorium.

As per the wishes of Fr Jestus, his ashes were interred in his family grave at the Cheras Christian Cemetery.

All clergy, religious, and faithful are invited to remember him in their prayers.

MEMORIAM

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11th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Anthony Dass P. Arokiam

Departed: 18.12.2012

1st Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Rebecca @ Rebena C. Lawrence

Departed: 19.12.2022

*No length of time can take away
our thoughts of you from day to day.
Though absent, you are always near,
still loved and missed.*

We shall meet again on the other shore.

Forever loved and missed by
Loving daughters, sons-in-law,
grandchildren, relatives and friends.

In Loving Memory 4th 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 Roger
Grandson: Steven Rayan Roger

May Her Soul Rest in Peace.

Fr Conor Sullivan, a licensed psychologist who works with the Archdiocese of St Louis, the Vocations Office and Kenrick-Glennon Seminary, offered these tips for those who are grieving during the Advent and Christmas seasons and those who want to support others who are grieving.

For the grieving:

1. People experience grief differently. There is no one "right" way to grieve. You don't have to check boxes or do things in the right order. Your grief is as unique as you and your relationships are.

2. Faith in the Resurrection does not mean that our tears are unholy, unnecessary or wrong. After all, Jesus wept for Lazarus just minutes before He raised him from the dead. Faith and grief are not opposed to one another.

Grief and accompaniment

3. Your sadness is a testament to the love you have for the one you lost. Your sadness is sacred. Don't feel like you have to get rid of it or get over it.

4. Moving on in life does not mean that you do not love the one you lost. We can 'remember' and 'embark' at the same time.

5. Hope and gratitude are very helpful ways to maintain peace while we grieve: hope that we will be reunited someday with the ones we love, and gratitude for the gift that they were to us.

For those accompanying the grieving:

1. Your presence means more than you know. You don't have to fix anything or

know the right answer.

2. Don't wait for a grieving person to reach out to you — make the first move.

3. Give a person the space to grieve the way he or she feels most comfortable. Just because the other grieves differently than you, doesn't mean that they're grieving incorrectly.

4. People often stop offering support shortly after a funeral. Giving a grieving person a call at three months, six months, and a year after the loss can be very helpful. This can be helpful to get someone through their "year of firsts."

5. Your prayers go a long way. Don't hesitate to reach out and pray with a person who's lost a loved one.

Source: *St Louis Review*

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Climate change is a 'religious problem'

VATICAN: Though absent from the COP-28 summit in Dubai due to ongoing concerns for his health, Pope Francis sent a message for the inauguration of the first-ever Faith Pavilion at a United Nations climate event, stressing the responsibility of religious leaders in caring for the planet.

In prepared remarks read aloud by Italian Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican's Secretary of State, Pope Francis thanked the various representatives present for the December 3 inauguration of the COP-28 Faith Pavilion, including the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, and the President of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, for their presence.

The Faith Pavilion, the Pope said, "is the first of its kind at the heart of a COP, and it shows that all authentic religious beliefs are a source of encounter and action."

"It is important to see ourselves, beyond our differences, as brothers and sisters in the one human family, and, as believers, to remind ourselves and the world that, as sojourners on this earth, we have a duty to protect our common home," he said.

Religions are a reminder that humanity is finite and has limits, Francis said, insisting that life must be protected and that this is done by "opposing the rapacious illusion of

omnipotence that is devastating our planet."

"That insatiable desire for power wells up whenever we consider ourselves lords of the world, whenever we live as though God did not exist and, as a result, end up prey to passing things," he said.

When this happens, human beings become "mere commodities, desensitised, incapable of sorrow and compassion, self-absorbed and, turning our backs on morality and prudence, we destroy the very sources of life," the Pope said.

This, he said, "is why the problem of climate change is also a religious problem: its roots lie in the creature's presumption of self-sufficiency."

Calling attendees to action, Pope Francis said there is an urgent need to act "for the sake of the environment" and that it is not enough to simply increase spending. Rather, "We need to change our way of life and thus educate everyone to sober and fraternal lifestyles."

"This is an essential obligation for religions, which are called to teach contemplation, since creation is not only an ecosystem to preserve, but also a gift to embrace," he said, saying, "A world poor in contemplation will be a world polluted in soul, a world that will continue to discard people and produce waste."



From left: Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmed Mohamed Ahmed El-Tayeb; COP28 President Dr Sultan Al Jaber; Vatican's Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin; UAE Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan and Prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for Interreligious Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot at the Faith Pavilion at COP28 at Expo City Dubai on December 3, 2023. (Gulf News pic)

When prayer is lacking, the world will be filled with words but "bereft of compassion and tears," and it will live off "a materialism made of money and weapons," he said.

Pope Francis also said that peace and the care of creation "are interdependent," and lamented that the many wars and conflicts ravaging the world are destroying the environment and dividing nations.

"A home is only livable when a climate of peace reigns within," he said, saying religions have a specific role to play in peace-keeping.

"Please, let there be no inconsistency in this regard," he said. "May our actions not contradict the words we speak; may we not merely speak about peace, but take a stand against those who claim to be believers yet fuel hatred and do not oppose violence."

The Faith Pavilion, established at Expo City in Dubai, is a project of the Inter-

faith Centre for Sustainable Development (ICSD), the Muslim Council of Elders, and the UN Environment Programme's Faith for Earth Coalition, among others.

It is intended to serve as a global platform to promote religious engagement and interfaith dialogue in the implementation of measures to combat climate change. It also serves to draw together various religious leaders and representatives to develop strategies for addressing global challenges such as environmental justice through the exchange of proposals and ideas across nations.

The COP-28 UAE team posted a brief video of the inauguration on social media platform X, previously known as Twitter, saying the Pavilion "brings together religious leaders, officials, scientists and more to discuss the role of faith communities and religious institutions in addressing the climate crisis." — **By Elise Ann Allen, Crux**

Haiti bishops pray for peaceful Christmas under sign of rebirth



PORT-AU-PRINCE: "It is time to work with determination to build fraternity among the people of Haiti, who are today wounded and torn by fratricidal struggles for power, greed, divisive policies, unrestrained profit systems, and the hateful ideological tendencies that manipulate the actions and destinies of our people."

The bishops of Haiti launched this appeal in a Christmas message released at the start of Advent.

In their message, the bishops invite Haitians to embark on a path of dialogue and to work together to help engender the hope represented by the birth of Jesus.

Christmas "enlightens us and invites us to take our destiny into our hands," say the bishops.

They also expressed their solidarity with the suffering of the Haitian people and offer their condolences for the victims of senseless violence.

"The dramatic situation of our people worsens by the day," say the bishops, "with the hellish grip of armed groups, skyrocketing cost of living, disorientation of young people leaving the country, manifest indifference of the authorities, and intransigence of political actors who cannot reach a com-

promise."

"On the other hand," the message reads, "the context of the Synod of the Church invites us to act differently in Haiti. Listen to each other, engage in sincere dialogue, walk together, and live together to better discern according to the Holy Spirit and to build our nation together."

The bishops invite the faithful to "undertake a real spiritual and civil awakening," starting from personal and collective conversion, to fight against defeatism and evil that have marked all aspects of social, political, economic, and cultural life.

"This awakening will require the commitment of everyone for Haiti's recovery," they admit.

Finally, the bishops say the joy of Christmas will be even greater "if concrete measures are taken for a resolution of the crisis."

They name these measures as "broad and reasonable consensus among the various protagonists, a commitment by the authorities to restore a climate of peace and put an end to the illegal trafficking of weapons and ammunition, and the unequivocal support of the international community for disarmament and the recovery of the country." —

By Benedetta Capelli, Vatican News



Thanksgiving Solemn Mass



MONDAY
8 JAN 2024
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MINOR BASILICA OF ST. ANNE, BUKIT MERTAJAM, PENANG, MALAYSIA

LET US JOIN TOGETHER AS ONE UNIVERSAL CHURCH TO GIVE THANKS AND CELEBRATE THE APPOINTMENT OF H. EM. CARDINAL SEBASTIAN FRANCIS TO THE COLLEGE OF CARDINALS

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