

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.

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

Phil. 1:3-5



Caritas Malaysia Assembly focuses on unity, action, and safeguarding

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Coming together to build a stronger community

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This is our time to shape the world

BANGALORE, India: A revolution is unfolding in the world of communication, and Catholic communicators are being called to respond with courage and creativity.

Paolo Ruffini, Prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for Communication, posed this critical challenge at the recent launch of the first national Catholic media conference in Bangalore. He asked, "Are Catholic communicators ready to respond to the challenge of creating a community, a platform, of mutual sharing and collaboration to share truth and build a better world?"

The event, titled *ILLUMINAIRE: Nurturing Digital Stewardship in the Era of Artificial Intelligence*, was organised by the Salesian Communication departments in Rome and India, in collaboration with the Vatican Dicastery for Communication and other national Church communication bodies. It brought together 300 participants, including clergy and religious, to explore the impact of social media and artificial intelligence (AI) on their lives and to promote their responsible and ethical use.

Ruffini underscored the urgency of the moment, describing it as a pivotal time of transformation. "This is our time. (...) We are shaping it through what we do and through what we fail to do," he said, emphasising that Catholic communicators have a responsibility to shape the digital landscape by telling and sharing the truth.



(StockCake)

He highlighted the dual potential of AI and digital communication. While these tools have the power to strengthen relationships and promote equality, they also pose risks of increased loneliness and the creation of "new classes based on informational dominance," where algorithmic control and data exploitation could lead to inequality.

"The basic question is about humans, not machines; the relationship between humans, not algorithms," Ruffini stressed. He encouraged participants to embrace AI's potential without losing sight of humanity. "Artificial intelligence can be enormously useful but also potentially harmful. It must not lead us to lose our humanity. Instead, it should help us become more mature as human beings."

Ruffini emphasised the pivotal role of communication in shaping the future, stating that it could either "build a better world or continue to foment misunderstandings, resentments, and enmity." He underscored

that no investment is too great for spreading truth and "triggering dynamics of good in our stories."

Drawing on Pope Francis' call for unity and collaboration, Ruffini urged a commitment to building a communication culture rooted in relationships and humanity to "combat the virus of division." He warned against constructing modern-day Towers of Babel, saying, "In a time when so many are tempted to build a new tower of Babel, we are called to serve this miracle of unity in diversity. We need to help one another to make it work."

Digital communication, he noted, has connected humanity in unprecedented ways, but he reminded his audience of the irreplaceable warmth of true human interaction. He advocated for a balanced approach to technology, ensuring that it serves human relationships rather than replacing them.

Concluding his address, Ruffini expressed confidence that the conference would inspire "viable pathways to creating a community, a platform, of mutual sharing and collaboration." He urged Catholic communicators to rise to the challenge, using the tools of digital media to share truth, foster unity, and build a better world.

In this era of rapid technological evolution, Ruffini's words resonate as both a call to action and a reminder of the enduring value of authentic human connection in shaping a brighter and more just future. **Agencies**

'Made in Prison' tote bag for Jubilee 2025

VATICAN: Recycled material and a "Made in Prison" tag will identify the "official" Jubilee 2025 tote bags that symbolise the hope, forgiveness and restoration that are at the heart of a Jubilee Year.

The bags, made by women prison inmates in cooperation with a social cooperative, are one of the products resulting from a vocational training course aimed at restoring dignity and helping the women prepare for reintegration into work and society.

The prisoners involved are given the opportunity to acquire technical and professional skills, allowing them to work, earn a regular salary, and, most importantly, rebuild awareness and self-worth, while the bags will be available for purchase at the official Jubilee info point in Rome.

Each tote will feature there the name of the Dicastery for Evangelisation and materials used include fabrics and objects recycled from items created for the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy in 2016.

This initiative is one of the "Signs of Hope" initiatives dedicated to the vulnerable marginalised, as called for by Pope Francis in the Jubilee Bull *Spes non Confundit*.

And signalling his closeness to the incarcerated, the Pope will exceptionally open a Holy Door at the Rebibbia prison in Rome on December 26, so – as he says in that Bull – "It may be for them a symbol that invites them to look to the future with hope and a renewed commitment to life."

Vatican News



Archbishop Fisichella presents the Jubilee tote bags initiative. (Vatican Media)



ESTABLISHED 1994

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

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



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Carlo Acutis: The ecclesial fascination with a fantasised youth

As Pope Francis announces the canonisation of Carlo Acutis next April, Fr Clément Barré reflects on models of holiness for young people. He highlights the risk that, by confining Carlo Acutis to this role, the Church might paradoxically weaken the universal reach of his witness.

Certainly, the biographical elements that fuelled the media success of “God’s influencer” are compelling: a teenager in sneakers and jeans, passionate about video games, who created websites on Eucharistic miracles. But by focusing too much on these anecdotal aspects, are we not missing the spiritual depth of his testimony?

The core of Carlo Acutis’ message is not inherently juvenile: it is his radical love for the Eucharist, which he called the “highway to heaven.” His practice of attending daily Mass as a transformative encounter with Christ, his ability to blend contemplation with action, prayer with engagement in the digital world — all this speaks to every baptised person, regardless of age or era. A saint’s unique characteristic is their ability to speak to all people at all times.

The Church’s tendency to promote “Peter Pan saints” — idealised youthful figures who died before facing the complexities of adulthood — is not new. Before Carlo Acutis, there were St Dominic Savio and St Maria Goretti. These figures reveal an ecclesial fascination with an eternal, fantasised youth.

This promotion of devotion to Blessed Carlo comes more from adults (parents, youth ministers, priests) than from young people themselves. While it claims to resonate with today’s young Christians, what is often highlighted is the fantasy of a perfect youth:

a well-behaved teenager without rebellion or crises. Ultimately, Carlo becomes less the patron saint of teenagers and more the patron of what adults wish their teenagers would be.

Such idealisation can have a discouraging effect on young Catholics. How can they not feel overwhelmed by these models of early perfection? The “freshness” and “spontaneity” of adolescent faith are valuable but cannot be the sole spiritual horizon offered to youth. Christian maturity also involves navigating deserts, persevering over time, and deepening faith through trials. Models of holiness for young people must allow them to envision spiritual growth that extends into adulthood, strengthening their resolve to mature and fulfil their faith. By emphasising mimicry — “someone like you” — we risk neglecting the truly inspirational dimension of sainthood. Saints should reveal what we aspire to be, not merely reflect what we already are.

Moreover, by confining Acutis to the role of “saint for the young,” the Church risks diminishing the universal scope of his testimony. His way of living the Eucharistic mystery can move an adult as much as a teenager, and his approach to evangelisation through digital tools can inspire a senior as much as a young person. While age-based segmentation serves understandable pastoral concerns, it ultimately impoverishes the Gospel message.

This also reflects the Church’s hesitation to

allow a genuinely youthful voice that speaks to everyone. This challenge surfaced in the recent Synod, where many young people felt ignored. Yes, a 16-year-old in sneakers can teach the whole church about love for the Eucharist, missionary zeal, and service to the poor. Yes, young people have a rightful place in the church’s structure and governance, serving everyone.

Blessed Carlo Acutis undoubtedly deserves canonisation. But we must stop reducing him to a teenage icon that obscures his core message: his radical Eucharistic witness, which transcends age categories. And we must have the pastoral courage to present young people with a broader array of models of holiness, including figures who navigated the complexities of adult life while remaining faithful to the Gospel ideal.

The true modernity of Carlo Acutis lies not in his sneakers or gaming console but in his ability to make the heart of the Christian faith accessible and desirable. In this, he is a true saint: one for our time and for all times. *LCI* (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

Fr Clément Barré is a Catholic priest from the Archdiocese of Bordeaux in southwestern France, and a team member of Enfance Adolescence, the diocesan Service for Children and Youth Ministry that aims to foster encounters with Christ, the church, and others among children and adolescents

Penitence; Do it now!

Stay Awake! “Watch and pray constantly; Make ready the way of the Lord; Blameless when Jesus comes; Arise Jerusalem these are some of the words that we hear during the season of Advent.

The word “Advent” stems from the Latin word *adventus*, which literally means “coming” or “arrival.” Primarily this refers to the first coming of Jesus on Christmas day. However, the season of Advent is also focused on two other “comings” of Jesus. We know that the coming of the Lord is threefold... The first coming was in flesh and weakness, the middle coming is in spirit and power, and the final coming will be in glory and majesty.

At the first coming, Christ was our redemption; at the last, He will become manifest as our life; but in this middle way He is our rest and our consolation. Listen to what the Lord has to say what this middle coming really is: “If anyone loves me, He will keep my words, and the Father will love Him, and we shall come to Him. This “middle” coming is Jesus’ arrival into our own lives. The Church often explains this to be through the sacraments, in particular through Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. It not a “physical” coming, but a spiritual one, where Christ comes to dwell within our souls. Each Advent we are challenged to prepare for all three comings of Christ, celebrating his birth, while also preparing our heart to receive him now and at the end of time.

The most relevant question at this juncture is, what and how are we supposed to prepare? Certainly, our hearts, our behaviours and conducts? Yes, but how?

Let’s look at the whole dynamics. If the priest has the duty to preach to you, you also have to that of listening to him and of receiving with good dispositions what he announces to

you on behalf of God. If I as a priest am bound to bring the divine word to you, you are bound to pay attention to it, to learn it well and to practice what you are taught.

A random survey of the spiritual health of many church goers and believers tell us that many of them are wounded, afflicted, confused of the reality of existence, family and marital conflicts, depression, frustration in the work place, and etc. Therefore, we the fallen human, although redeemed, seek instant gratification of pleasure, money, and power. We seldom profit from the Word of God.

There are two reasons why people don’t profit by the word of God. Procrastination is the first reason, they may hear the word and be interiorly moved by it, but they postpone its accomplishment until tomorrow. The Roman consul Cicero called procrastination ‘hateful’ in the conduct of affairs. Procrastination isn’t just hateful, it’s downright harmful, people who procrastinate have higher levels of stress and lower level of well-being. It is the cause of our death and destruction and that our good is found in the present. Our life consists in today, in this present moment in which we are living. Putting off doing what we need to do today is the primary reason why we often do not profit from what is said and taught to us.

The second reason is spiritual avarice, which simply means that we do not put any acquired spiritual knowledge or devotion into practice.

Now let’s go back to the call of Prophet Isaiah: “Prepare the way, make straight the paths.”

How are we to prepare the way? Let’s look at the Gospel again, fill up the valleys, lower the mountains and hills. Our life too contains many hills, valleys and tortuous ways which can be put right only by penitence. Penitence

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr William Pillai

2nd Sunday of Advent (C)

Readings: Baruch 5:1-9;

Philippians 1:3-6, 8-11;

Gospel: Luke 3:1-6

fills up the valley of lukewarmness, fear, discouragement at the sight of our sins and tepidity and, lay low the mountains of pride. Fill up the valley; that is, fill your heart with confidence and hope. Exercise yourself in humility and confide yourself to the goodness of God. Lower the mountains and hills that is your presumptions and pride, which are great obstacles to Our Lord’s coming.

What is your life like? Are you morally congruent with your vocation? Or are you full of arrogance and presumption like the Pharisee in the Gospels, or are you like the humble publican? See the Gospel of Luke 18: 10-14; how God rejects the prideful Pharisee and honours the contrite and humble heart of the publican!

We must make ready the ways, that is, repair those that are tortuous, make them straight and even. We must correct all our perverse and devious intentions and have only one, that of pleasing God by doing penance. Educate and teach yourself how to do a proper penance, get a spiritual director to help you. Take your time to reflect upon the life of Our Blessed Lord and Saviour. Gaze at Him during Adoration and gain the brilliant light of His radiance into your soul, then, you can say, “I have prepared to the best of my ability, Come Lord Jesus!”

Take God and His word seriously. Do It Now.



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

December

- 14 Feast – Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Puchong
- 21 Christmas Hi Tea – Christian Federation of Malaysia



PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

December

- 12 St Joseph's Home Annual Mass – Church of St. Francis Xavier, Penang at 6.30pm
- 13 Lauds, Christmas and Farewell Dinner – College General Major Seminary, Penang at 6.30pm
- 17 Mass and Meeting with Seminarians of Penang Diocese – Bishop's Residence at 10.00am
- 17 Handing Over of the Parish – Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang at 6.00pm
- 19 Meeting with Province Leader of Good Shepherd Sisters (RGS) Malaysia-Singapore – Bishop's Office at 11.00pm



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

December

- 10 Sacrament of Reconciliation – Church of St Joseph, Plentong
- 11 Sacrament of Reconciliation – Church of St Theresa, Masai
- 12 Sacrament of Reconciliation – Church of Divine Mercy, Skudai
- 14 Thanksgiving Mass for Bro Thomas Paul sg & Bro Peter Kolandai Samy sg on their 25th Anniversary as a Religious, Montfort Youth Centre, Ayer Salak
- 16 Sacrament of Reconciliation – Church of the Immaculate Conception, Johor Bahru
- 17 Sacrament of Reconciliation – Church of the Holy Family, Ulu Tiram
- 18 Sacrament of Reconciliation – Church of Christ the King, Kulai

Sandakan diocese welcomes a new deacon

Evelyn Jock

SANDAKAN, Sabah: Thirty-two-year-old seminarian Ricki Boy Hasim was ordained to the Order of Deacons by Right Rev Julius Dusin Gitom, Bishop of Sandakan, on November 24. The ordination, held at the Cathedral of St Mary, took place on the Solemnity of Christ the King.

Faithful from parishes across the diocese, including Tawau, Lahad Datu, Telupid, Beluran, Ulu Dusun, Paitan, and Sandakan, gathered to witness this happy occasion.

Born on October 23, 1992, Deacon Ricki grew up in a Catholic family in Kampung Penimbanan Baru, Jalan Sapi, Nangoh. He has an elder sister and two younger brothers. His faith journey began at the Church of St Peter in Pamol, where he was baptised, and continued with his First Holy Communion and Confirmation at the Church of St Martin in Telupid.

Ricki's educational journey commenced from Tadika Pamol to SMK Telupid, where he completed Form 6 in 2011. Initially not an active churchgoer, Ricki credits his parents' steadfast faith for introducing him to the love of Christ. After completing school, he worked as a training field assistant at Wilmar Plantation, Terusan 1 Estate, for four years.

The seeds of his priestly vocation were sown in 2012 when Ricki was deeply moved by the



Bishop Julius Dusin with Deacon Ricki Boy

dedication of the late Fr Jasery Emmanuel Gabuk. Despite being visibly exhausted, Fr Jasery celebrated Mass at two chapels under St Martin's Parish and heard confessions with unwavering commitment. Reflecting on his calling, Ricki described it as "a weird daydream." When he shared his desire to join the priesthood, his mother was overjoyed, while his father initially met the news with scepticism.

Ricki began his formation in 2016 at the Aspirant Formation House in Kota Kinabalu and completed his theological and pastoral studies at St Peter's College in Kuching, Sarawak, in 2024. His training also included pastoral placements in

various parishes, including Lahad Datu, Tawau, Bau (Sarawak), Beluran, and Sandakan.

Despite facing challenges during his seminary years, including being the only one from his batch to persevere, Ricki remained steadfast. On November 20, 2024, he formally expressed his intention to receive Holy Orders during the Rite of Admission to Candidacy at the Cathedral of St Mary.

Bishop Julius described the ordination day as a moment of grace for the Diocese of Sandakan. "God has given us another servant to serve His Church. Ordination is not a graduation but a confirmation of one's calling to serve," he said, urging the faithful to support Deacon Ricki in his journey toward priesthood.

The bishop also highlighted the significance of the presence of parishioners from across the diocese, calling it a testament to walking together as a synodal church. He expressed gratitude to Ricki's family and those involved in his formation, recognising their vital role in his journey.

Following the ordination, a potluck fellowship at St Mary's Parish Hall brought the community together to celebrate Deacon Ricki's milestone.

Deacon Ricki expressed his hope for the Holy Spirit's guidance as he continues his vocation. To those discerning the priesthood, he offered encouragement: "No matter your life experiences, do not ignore God's invitation or calling."



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #201



Greetings dear friends of MJD.

Challenges - challenged or unchallenged! Malaysia is ranked as the 22nd friendliest country in the latest US News and World Report rankings, surpassing Singapore, Indonesia and Vietnam, trailing behind only Thailand (ninth) and the Philippines (19th).

Many families face rising costs of childcare. Salary demands and rising competition delay talent search. The coming SPM will be a defining moment in their academic journey for many.

According to the coalition's FT chief, BN must be cured of delusion, amnesia, inertia and arrogance to return to political dominance. The public caning order in a Northern state, the support for continuing Bumiputera privileges by young Malays, the DBKL's blitz on non-compliant signboards and the unending ploys to break the Unity Government disturbs.

The "challenged" reinvent or redesign or the "challenged" become offensive or defensive. *"It takes courage to reinvent joys, to reinvent opportunities, to reinvent dreams, to reinvent connections, to reinvent hopes that you have set aside."* **Mary Anne Radmacher**

"Challenging Yourself" Times: Dr Fami shared these eight lessons which he had learned from the book *Success is a Choice*.

1. A dream becomes a reality as a result of your actions, and your actions are controlled to a large extent, by your habits.
2. There are no shortcuts to any place worth going.
3. To change your life you need to change your priorities.
4. Most people have a desire to look for the exception instead of the desire to become exceptional.
5. Your success stops where your character stops. You can never rise above the limitations

of your character

6. If you do the things you need to do when you need to do them, then someday you can do the things you want to do when you want to do them.

7. Learn to say 'no' to the good; so you can learn to say 'yes' to the best.

8. Most people who decide to grow personally find their first mentor in the pages of books.

A Thought For The Week: Toilets at War

The Chairman of TATA Steel was holding a weekly meeting with his staff. A worker raised a serious issue about the workers' toilets which were unhygienic and in bad shape, when the executives had better toilets.

The Chairman asked his top executive how much time he needed to set it right. The executive said, "A month." The Chairman said, "I want it done in a day. Send me a carpenter."

The next day, when the carpenter came, he ordered the signboards to be swapped. The workers' toilet displayed "Executives" and the Executives' toilet displayed "Workers". Then the Chairman instructed the signs to be changed every fortnight. By the third day, the quality of the two toilets was at par!

The lesson from the Chairman: Leaders listen, give solutions, and do not waste time. Leaders are more adaptable and responsive than executives. They identify problems and solve them with their critical and creative thinking.

Announcements for the Week:

1. On the Second Sunday of Advent, the second collection is the *Malaysian Bishops' call for KASIH INITIATIVE*, a fund for Creation Justice, Migrant-Itinerants and Caritas Malaysia to operate projects, pastoral work and staffing. Give generously.

3. *Johor Weekend Mass Times* change with effect from December 31 with the announced Saturday-Sunday weekend.

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

QnQ? The Q asks: How to overcome nagging thoughts?

1. First, **what are BAD THOUGHTS?** Look at the one that causes unhappiness in our brains; the incessant thinking; rumination; and repeating negative thoughts that become part of your programme... that affect everything you do.

2. **Debug Your Brain** or reprogramme your mind for better output or shut down the one bad thought via the art of questioning

- a) Does the thought serve me? From where does it come? Is it true?
- b) What's the danger level? Is it a life and death matter? How safe?
- c) **Let go of the little thought!** Ask for a new one.

Questioning exercises will also shut down incessant thinking or rumination. **The Little Thought In The Head: Mo Gawdat**

See The Holy Spirit @ Work: Without the Spirit of God, we can do nothing. We are like ships without wind. We are useless. **Charles Spurgeon**

Something To Tickle You: To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you. **C.S. Lewis**

Signature

Bishop Bernard Paul

MJD clergy committed to walking together in faith, hope and mission



Fr Dr Lawrence Ng

JOHOR BAHRU: The clergy of the Diocese of Malacca Johore convened for the Annual Clergy Discernment (ACD) 2024 at the MAJODI Centre November 19 to 21.

Guided by the theme *Walking Together as Pilgrims of Hope*, the ACD focused on discerning the diocesan pastoral thrust for 2025–2026. This vision, articulated by Bishop Bernard Paul, emphasises Fostering Communion, Deepening Participation, and Broadening Mission.

At the outset, Fr Alexuchelvam and Fr Dr Lawrence Ng oriented the clergy to the objectives of the ACD. They emphasised that the goal was not to produce more statements or actions, as the pastoral thrust already outlined these. Fr Alexuchelvam remarked that “discernment is the keyword, and the ACD is an opportunity to broaden and deepen our pastoral thrust while taking ownership of it.”

The pastoral thrust was encapsulated in the slogan:

Together! (Communion)
Together! (Participation)
To Gather! (Mission)

The discernment during the ACD sought to build a diocese that reflects synodality and inclusivity while addressing contemporary challenges.

Guided by the Conversation in the Spirit method, the sessions fostered prayerful dialogue, active listening, and collective reflection. The atmosphere throughout was lively and hopeful, with clergy — priests and deacons alike — engaging meaningfully. Each session, moderated by clergy from the diocese, addressed specific aspects of the pastoral thrust to foster a sense of ownership among the participants.



The clergy in groups during one of the Conversations in the Spirit.

Fr Dr Lawrence opened the discussions with an overview of the 2025–2026 pastoral thrust, emphasising the Church’s call to journey together as a community of faith. The clergy discerned how to embrace this call while addressing challenges that hinder unity and mission.

The second discernment, moderated by Fr Martinian Lee, focused on *Fostering Communion: Walking and Working Together as Companions on the One Journey*. Clergy reflected on their role in nurturing a spirit of fellowship and shared responsibility in parishes and diocesan structures. Ideas were shared on creating spaces where listening and mutual support can flourish.

The third discernment, *Deepening Participation*, was facilitated by Fr Cyril Mannayagam. This session explored how clergy could design structures for a more participative community, ensuring all voices — especially those of the laity — are heard in decision-making. Challenges and opportunities for fostering genuine collaboration in parish life were identified.

Fr Alexuchelvam led the session on *Broadening Mission: Going Forth Together*

as *Missionaries of Good Works and Good News*. Discussions energised participants to lead their parishes as visible witnesses of Christ through acts of mercy, justice, and compassion. Clergy considered their role as missionaries, bringing the Gospel to their communities and society’s margins.

The final session, added at Bishop Bernard Paul’s request, addressed *Inculturation and Evangelisation in the Malaysian Church*. Moderated by Fr Dr Lawrence, this session explored how the universal Church could be authentically expressed in the Malaysian context. Discussions highlighted the importance of celebrating Malaysia’s cultural richness in liturgy and pastoral life while maintaining unity with the universal Church. Practical insights were shared on how inculturation can enhance evangelisation and make the Church’s mission more relevant to local realities.

The ACD concluded with a synthesis of the discernment, encapsulating the clergy’s shared commitment to walking together in faith, hope, and mission. The synthesis presented is as follows: (see box on the right)

Malacca Johore Diocese Annual Clergy Discernment 2024

Walking Together as Pilgrims of Hope

These are our responses from our discernment as clergy of Malacca Johore Diocese Discerning on our 2025–2026 pastoral thrust:

As pilgrims united by the same hope, the priest, as the necessary agent of change, must himself embody the Spirit of Communion, Participation and Mission so that he can create space for diversity, sustain communal discernment and promote shared responsibility.

These are what emerged from our discernment of **Fostering Communion, Deepening Participation, and Broadening Mission:**

Fostering Communion: Walking and Working Together as Companions on the One Journey

The priesthood is both, a calling to be and a sending to do. As a vocation of Christ’s presence amongst His people, the priest is both pastor and pasture who promotes and deepens the sheep’s freedom. As servants of Christ’s mission, he animates the Church and society through his presence and collaborates through his communion and participation with others.

Deepening Participation: Discerning and designing together structures for a participative community

Social activism is not the proper measure of our membership in the Church. Adhering to the core mission of Christ to save souls, we embrace our identity as a servant Church, and we affirm that, a relationship with Christ and faith in Him, is the ground for genuine participation in the life of the Church.

Broadening Mission: Going forth together as missionaries of good works and good news

The Church’s pastoral thrust and missionary spirit springs from a vital affirmation of our vocations as clergy, religious and laity. Authentic identity is central to the credible witnessing of the Gospel of Joy.

Finally, in our conversation of what it means to be a **Catholic Church in Malaysia and of Malaysia**, we reflect that:

Inculturation is the genuine expression, over time, of the lived reality of our diversity. It is a process, without force or pretence, that organically assimilates and celebrates our cultural richness. An authentic appreciation of our cultural roots enriches our Catholic faith.

Penang SSVP Conferences hosts Melaka delegation

PENANG: On November 8, the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP), Conference of the Assumption along with three other City Parish conferences, hosted visiting members of the SSVP from the Church of St Theresa, Melaka.

Established in 1959, SSVP St Theresa Melaka is the second entirely Chinese-speaking society in Malaysia. Led by President Simon Ng and comprising 24 members, the group embarked on this visit to SSVP Assumption Penang, the country’s first conference, founded in 1934.

Upon their arrival at the church, Lucia Lai, President of SSVP Assumption, gave a brief overview of the church’s history. The group was then taken on a tour of



The SSVP members from Melaka and Penang with Fr Desmond Jansen.

the Diocesan Museum and Art Gallery. Joining the visit were members from the Conferences of Our Lady of Sorrows,

St John Britto, and St Francis Xavier, all under City Parish Penang.

After the tour, Fr Desmond Jansen, the

assistant parish priest of City Parish, celebrated a thanksgiving Mass for the visitors.

Following the Mass, there was a tea and fellowship session where members of City Parish, including Fr Desmond, mingled with the visitors from Melaka. The gathering provided an engaging opportunity for both groups to share experiences about their respective conferences.

Simon Ng expressed heartfelt gratitude for the warm hospitality extended by SSVP City Parish, Penang. He thanked Fr Desmond for celebrating the special thanksgiving Mass and appreciated the fellowship, which he hoped would strengthen their friendship and foster continued communication. **Lucia Lai**

Caritas Malaysia Assembly focuses on unity, action, and safeguarding

Patricia Bai

PAPAR, Sabah: The 2024 Caritas Malaysia National Assembly, held from November 12-15 at the Pace Bene Retreat Centre in Papar, continued the spiritual and practical journey started in 2023.

Under the theme “Union of Minds, Hearts, and Deeds,” the assembly transitioned from focusing on deepening spirituality to integrating thought, compassion, and concrete action. This shift is guided by the principles of Subsidiarity, the Common Good, and Co-responsibility, all of which aim to address poverty, inequality, migration, and environmental degradation while promoting human dignity and social justice.

The assembly, drawing inspiration from the scripture “Let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth” (1 John 3:18), emphasised the importance of turning spirituality into tangible deeds. Caritas Malaysia's mission remains rooted in the Gospels and the Catholic social teachings, empowering communities to respond compassionately to the marginalised and protect creation.

This year's assembly also marked a milestone with the participation of 62 delegates, including representatives from the Episcopal Commission for Creation Justice (ECCJ) and the Episcopal Commission for Migrants and Itinerants (ECMI).

Fr Alvin Ng SJ opened the session with a reflection on Pope Francis' latest papal letter, *Dilexit Nos*. He emphasised the three core principles of Caritas — subsidiarity, the common good, and shared responsibility — and encouraged delegates to implement them through the framework of synodality.

The opening Holy Mass was celebrated by Archbishop John Wong with Bishop Bernard Paul, and several priests concelebrating. Archbishop John highlighted the crucial role of Caritas, especially in humanitarian relief and supporting the oppressed, and expressed his hopes for this assembly to enhance the effectiveness of Caritas' outreach efforts.

On the second day, Fr Fabian Dicom, National Director of Caritas Malaysia, Clare Westwood chairperson of ECCJ, and Dionysius Richard Ellai chairman of ECMI outlined the tasks and responsibilities of their respective commissions.

Anna Teresa Amandus from the Diocese of Sandakan shared findings from the regional Integral Ecology Workshop held in Bangkok in July.

A special meeting took place between Caritas Malaysia, ECCJ, and ECMI to explore opportunities for collaboration address interconnected social and environmental issues.

The third day featured presentations from various diocesan representatives. Albert



Presenting diocesan action plans for collaborative projects between Caritas, commissions, and ministries to enhance integral human development.

Tan and Priscilla Telon shared insights from Disaster Management training, while Jennifer James discussed lessons learned from the recent major floods in Sabah.

Eta Ting spoke about a shelter run by Caritas Sibu, and Patricia Bai from Keningau Diocese Caritas presented an initiative to train young people as Caritas volunteers.

Andrew Leo from Caritas MJD talked about the Kindness Bazaar charity event in Johor.

In the afternoon, Dr Mary Barathy led a presentation on the Psychology of Safeguarding, followed by a seminar from Pauline Yeoh of the National Caritas Malaysia

Office, who discussed Caritas Internationalis Safeguarding Standards and Management, along with Christopher Kushi, who presented Malaysia's child protection regulations, emphasising workplace safety standards.

A Solidarity Night on Nov 13 featured traditional dances and a cultural exchange with two local parish in Sabah (Church of the Holy Rosary Limbahau and Church of St Joseph, Papar). During that night, Sr Anita James FSIC, Director of Caritas for the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu, announced the establishment of Caritas Junior in Limbahau and Papar parishes aimed at engaging children aged 12 and below.

On the final day, the assembly concluded with an evaluation of the sessions and activities. Fr Fabian provided an overview of diocesan and national events, encouraging Caritas diocesan members to contribute to the 2025 planning schedule. The fifth Caritas Malaysia Assembly would be hosted by Caritas Diocese of Malacca Johore next year.

The assembly concluded with Mass, during which each participant was blessed and commissioned. The event wrapped up with a meeting of the Diocesan Caritas Directors and Ecclesiastical Assistants, alongside Caritas Malaysia's President, marking the successful conclusion of the fourth Caritas Malaysia Assembly.



The delegates of the Fourth Caritas Malaysia Assembly.

A blessed milestone at Sg Siput parish

SUNGAI SIPUT, Perak: Four children from the Church of St John the Baptist, received the Sacrament of First Holy Communion on the Solemnity of Christ the King, November 24.

The preparation for this significant moment began a week earlier with a camp aimed at deepening the children's understanding of the Eucharist. Guided by the catechists, the children participated in various sessions designed to enrich their knowledge and spiritual readiness.

Sr Mary David, FDCC, introduced the children to the sacred vessels and the altar, explaining their significance and role in the Mass. This hands-on session helped the children connect with the physical elements of the liturgy.

Catechist Catherine led a session on the Sign of the Cross, emphasising its dual importance as both a prayer and a profession of faith. Her teaching encouraged the children to approach this simple yet profound gesture with greater reverence and understanding.

Catechist Monica facilitated a session on confession and the concept of sin, preparing the children for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. To ease their apprehension, a mock pre-

confession exercise was conducted, with Sr Mary stepping into the role of a priest. This activity provided the children with a clear idea of what to expect during their first confession and made the process less intimidating.

Catechist Rufina Marina concluded the preparation by focusing on the Body and Blood of Christ, helping the children grasp the profound meaning of the Eucharist. Her session deepened their appreciation of the sacrament they were about to receive.

Through these carefully designed sessions, the camp not only equipped the children with knowledge but also instilled in them a sense of reverence and anticipation for their special day.

The camp also included fun activities like quizzes and crossword puzzles, making the learning process interactive and enjoyable. These activities not only reinforced the lessons but also added excitement to the children's preparation.

The culmination of their journey took place on the Solemnity of Christ the King, with Mass celebrated by parish priest Fr Mark Michael. During his homily, Fr Mark urged the congregation to make Christ their King



Fr Mark Michael, with the First Holy Communicants at the Church of St John the Baptist, Sg Siput.

and leader, assuring them that embracing His kingship brings peace and contentment. Addressing parents, he emphasised their vital role in nurturing their children's faith, teaching them to honour and respect Jesus as their King and Saviour.

The liturgy was enriched by the active participation of the Holy Communion candidates and their parents, who together offered prayers and thanksgiving for this significant step in the children's faith journey. The atmosphere

in the church was one of joy and reverence as the children received the Body and Blood of Christ for the first time, marking a profound moment in their spiritual lives.

This celebration was a true moment of grace for our parish, a reminder of the beauty and transformative power of the sacraments. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Aaron, Melanie Jasiel, Renwick Royce, and Roman Ray, praying that they continue to grow in faith and love for Jesus, the King of Kings.

Coming together to build a stronger community

Y.K. Ng

JOHOR: On November 17, the Church of Divine Mercy (CDM) in Skudai held its Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA), bringing together approximately 80 parishioners. The assembly served as a platform for reflecting on their spiritual journey, addressing challenges, and charting a course for the future.

Fr Ryan Innas Muthu, serving as the moderator, encouraged participants to engage in the assembly with a spirit of constructive contribution. He stated, "We learn from the past, but let us not dwell on it. We look at the past to help us move forward." His words set a tone of unity and optimism, inspiring attendees to focus on strengthening the community rather than critiquing faults and dwelling on shortcomings.

Parish priest Fr Dr Lawrence Ng presented the parish's future directions, highlighting the critical role of active participation. He stated, "We have wonderful ideas and visions, but they cannot become reality without everyone's involvement. When we talk about ecology and recycling, it cannot be left to the parish priest or his assistant to take materials to recycling centres. When we talk about planting trees, it cannot be only the parish priest and his assistant who buy, plant, and water them." He encouraged parishioners to offer their time and talents as an expression of their love for God and the CDM community.

The assembly was structured around four key areas of parish life: **Family, Church, Ecology, and Society**. Discussions were guided by the results of a comprehensive parish-wide survey, presented in four languages. The survey findings highlighted the following areas:

Family: Parishioners highlighted the importance of family-oriented initiatives, including workshops, counselling sessions, prayer gatherings, and catechism classes to foster family values and deepen faith. Suggestions also included organising activities



Above: PFC Chairperson reporting CDM's accounts for 2024.

Right: Deacon Office Joseph offering his thoughts on the survey responses on family.

such as Family Day and youth programmes to strengthen relationships within the parish community.

Church: A vision of a merciful Church emerged, where parishioners are encouraged to see the face of Jesus in one another. Suggestions included enhancing outreach to the elderly and vulnerable, promoting inclusive hospitality, and cultivating a culture of forgiveness and compassion.

Ecology: Participants explored practical steps to protect the environment, such as implementing recycling programmes, avoiding single-use plastics, and planting trees. They also proposed workshops on eco-friendly practices to actively involve the community in sustainability efforts.

Society: Parishioners advocated for interfaith activities, community service projects, and initiatives to promote harmony and Gospel values. The importance of engaging youth in fostering social responsibility was also emphasised.

The assembly concluded with a call for unity and shared responsibility. Parish Pastoral Council Chairperson Mark Anthony reflected on the recurring themes discussed across the



areas of Vision and Mission, Family, Church, Ecology, and Society. He identified six key patterns that emerged from all four areas, which are as follows:

Community Building and Unity: Parishioners consistently expressed a strong desire for activities and events that promote unity and mutual support, such as family-focused gatherings, interfaith initiatives, and outreach programmes.

Outreach and Support for Those in Need: A strong commitment was expressed to serving the poor, elderly, vulnerable, and those facing various challenges, with a focus on both social and environmental support.

Faith Formation and Education: Parishioners emphasised the need for faith-based education, including Bible studies, catechism, workshops, and other formation programmes, to deepen understanding and strengthen faith among all age groups.

Youth Engagement and Empowerment: The need to involve and empower youth through church activities, music ministry, and roles in social and ecological programmes was frequently emphasised.

Environmental and Social Responsibility: Parishioners linked environmental stewardship and social responsibility to Gospel values, calling for sustainable practices and community service as essential expressions of faith.

Inclusivity and Respect: Inclusivity and mutual respect were recognised as vital in creating a welcoming church where everyone feels accepted, respected, and valued.

Mark Anthony concluded by summarising these insights, reminding parishioners, "The Church is not built by one or two individuals, but by the collective efforts of all of us. Together, we can turn our ideas into action."

Parish Finance chairperson Alvin Lau presented a transparent overview of CDM's finances, detailing both income and expenses. He highlighted key areas, including the steady but insufficient Sunday collections and donations, which need to increase to meet rising costs. Operational expenses, such as clergy salaries, staff wages, and maintenance, were also addressed. Additionally, the aging parish facilities require ongoing upkeep, further stretching resources. Alvin also pointed out that over RM40,000 had been spent on formation programmes for all four language communities. Looking ahead, he emphasised the need for financial planning to support future parish projects, including ecological initiatives and community programmes. He encouraged parishioners to continue contributing for the growth and well-being of the community.

Fr Lawrence Ng closed the session by expressing his gratitude to all participants and encouraging everyone to move forward together. He said, "Let us unite in faith, love, and service to build a vibrant, inclusive community."



Wedding renewal ceremony at Sacred Heart Kulim

KULIM, Kedah: The Church of the Sacred Heart organised its second annual wedding renewal ceremony for married couples on November 23.

Couples celebrating anniversaries ranging from five to forty years took part in the occasion. A special Thanksgiving Eucharistic Mass, celebrated in Tamil, Mandarin, English, and Bahasa Malaysia, allowed the couples to reaffirm their wedding vows in the presence of the main celebrant, Msgr Henry Rajoo.

The Gospel reading of the day (John 15:9-12) emphasised, "Remain in my love, and love one another as I have loved you," serving as a reminder to be grateful daily for God's unwavering love.

Approximately 20 couples participated in the celebration, rejoicing in this special occa-

sion. Msgr. Henry extended his blessings and presented commemorative tokens to each couple, recognising their steadfast commitment.

John and Jacinta, along with Joseph and Glory, who play significant roles in the parish community, were celebrating 35 years of marriage in November. The event also honoured Joseph Khur Poh Liang (86) and Lucy Tang Lin Siew (81), a senior couple who marked 59 years of marriage — a beautiful testament to enduring love and commitment.

Following the ceremony, the parish organising team hosted a luncheon, and a live music band entertained the guests with several songs, further adding to the joy of the occasion. All the couples expressed their gratitude to the organising team for making this celebration truly memorable.

Six children joyfully embrace Jesus in their lives

KUALA KUBU BHARU: Six children received the Sacrament of First Holy Communion at the Church of St Paul the Apostle on November 16.

The young communicants, eager and reverent, received the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in both species, embodying the psalmist's call to "taste and see that the Lord is good."

In preparation for this significant spiritual milestone, the children participated in a Holy Communion Day Camp held at the parish. The camp, organised by catechists

under the leadership of Patrick Sta. Maria, provided the candidates with a deeper understanding of the sacrament.

The occasion was made even more special as it marked the first major event since the parish completed renovations to its church, hall, and activity rooms, creating a more welcoming space for parish activities.

Following the Mass, parish priest Fr V.A. Michael, presented certificates to the radiant communicants, recognising their meaningful step in the journey of faith. **Bernard Anthony**



The children proudly displaying their certificates.

Do you know what I know? — An Advent story

Cilia Rasasegram

PETALING JAYA: Advent — a season of profound waiting, conversion, and hope — is a time of great significance for the faithful. Together with Lent and Easter, it takes precedence over all the Sundays of the liturgical year, underscoring its importance in the Church's calendar.

The Church of the Assumption held an Advent Recollection on November 25, led by parish priest, Fr Leonard Lexson. The session aimed to refocus hearts and minds on the true meaning of Advent, steering away from the distractions of the secular world and the commercialised version of Christmas that often misguides the faithful.

Titled *Do You Know What I Know* — a line from the Christmas song *Do You Hear What I Hear* — Fr Leonard invited participants to reflect deeply on the central figures in the Nativity: the prophets, angels, shepherds, Wise Men, Mary, and Joseph and then asked the group this question, “Do you know what I know?”

Drawing from the song's progression, where the message moves from a little lamb to a shepherd boy and finally to a mighty king, Fr Leonard highlighted a powerful lesson: recognising significance where the world often sees insignificance and embracing the profound in the humble and simple. This recollection served as a timely reminder to embrace the essence of Advent with faith and humility.

Fr Leonard began with the prophets, highlighting their Old Testament prophecies about Jesus. From Genesis, Isaiah, and Hosea, these prophecies pointed to the coming of the Messiah — a truth beautifully fulfilled in the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and Mark.

The angels also knew. They announced His conception and birth, proclaiming Him as the Son of God, born in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. The shepherds, too, recognised Jesus as the Saviour. They believed the words of the prophets and the angels, understanding that He was born for all humanity.



The participants listening attentively to Fr Leonard Lexson (pix inset).

In Fr Leonard's words: “The prophets prophesied, the angels announced, and the shepherds verified.”

The Wise Men knew as well. Scholars of their time, they likely understood Daniel's and Balaam's prophecies, including the promise of “a star coming out of Jacob.”

Mary knew. Raised in the Scriptures, she understood that the Saviour would inherit the throne and reign forever. And Joseph knew. He was even given the name of the Child — Jesus — the one who would save the world from sin.

Fr Leonard shared beautiful stories and

truths of our faith, tracing the journey from 2000 years before Christ to the birth of our Saviour in Bethlehem, and continuing through the last 2000 years as we await His second coming.

He also explored key elements of Advent, including the significance of the Advent wreath, the Novena of the Immaculate Conception, the Christmas Novena, the ‘O’ Antiphons, the crib, and the Jesse Tree. By the end of the recollection, participants left with a renewed desire to make this Advent more meaningful, focusing their minds and hearts on preparing for the coming of Jesus.



The communicants with Fr Christopher Soosaipillai.

A joyful celebration of faith

MANTIN, Negeri Sembilan: The Church of St Aloysius was filled with joy and spiritual fervour as the parish marked the Solemnity of Christ the King, a day made even more memorable by the First Holy Communion of 12 young students.

Among the communicants were four secondary school students, including 14-year-old Ryan and the Wilson brothers, aged 14 to 17. Their commitment to their faith journey was evident, as they diligently prepared under the loving guidance of their catechist, Iggy. The students faithfully attended lessons and embraced the spiritual preparation leading to this milestone.

One of the youngest communicants, Elena Mei Zhen Dorneles Francis, radiated excitement as she eagerly awaited her turn to receive the Eucharist. Her joy was shared by her peers, who collectively described their emotions as “excited and happy to receive Christ.”

When asked about their feelings, the children expressed a simple yet heartfelt sentiment: excitement and joy at receiving Christ. This pure expression of faith and love served as a moving reminder of the beauty and significance of the Eucharist. **Selva Manogary and Marie Ashley Andrew**



DIOCESE OF MALACCA JOHORE
CHAN/LN/2024/006

Chancery Notice

His Lordship, Bishop Bernard Paul DD., Bishop of Malacca Johore Diocese (MJD), has made the following appointments:

1. Parish Appointments

With effect from January 1, 2025:

- 1.1. Rev Fr Matthew Bun Chang Yong has been appointed parish priest of the Church of St Joseph, Plentong.
- 1.2. Rev Fr James Rajendran has been appointed parish priest of the Church of Christ the King, Kulai.
- 1.3. Rev Fr Laurence Motoyou, OFM, has been appointed parish priest of the Church of Immaculate Conception, Johor Bahru.
- 1.4. Rev Friar Sixtus Pitah Amit, OFM, has been appointed assistant parish priest of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Johor Bahru.
- 1.5. Rev Fr Leo Elias, as priest-in-residence at the Church of Immaculate Conception, Johor Bahru.

With effect from February 1, 2025:

- 1.6. Rev Fr Paul Sia Chau Kiang has been appointed parish priest of the Church of St Theresa, Masai.

With effect from April 24, 2025:

- 1.7. Rev Fr Neville Sinnappah has been

appointed acting parish priest at Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Krubong, for an indeterminate period.

2. Appointment to the Seminary

- 2.1. The Very Rev Fr Ryan Innas Muthu has been appointed Rector of the Regional Major Seminary, College General, Penang with effect from January 1, 2025. Fr Ryan's appointment has been made by decree (Prot. N. 3868/24) issued by the Dicastery for Evangelization, under the authority of H.E. Luis Antonio G. Cardinal Tagle, Pro-Prefect for the Section of Evangelisation.
- 2.2. His Eminence, Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang and President of College General, in agreement with His Grace, Archbishop Julian Leow of Kuala Lumpur, and His Lordship, Bishop Bernard Paul of Malacca Johore Diocese, have appointed Rev Fr Cyril Mannayagam as Spiritual Father and Spirituality Lecturer of College General Seminary, Penang, with effect from February 14, 2025.

3. Ministry Appointments

With effect from January 1, 2025

- 3.1. Rev Fr Devadasan Madala Muthu has

been appointed as the Bishop's Delegate to MJD CHARIS-CCR and Spiritual Director of the English-Speaking CHARIS-CCR. The following people appointed to the MJD CHARIS-CCR team are as follows:

- 3.1.1. Deacon Joseph Gratian: Tamil-Speaking CHARIS-CCR.
- 3.1.2. Rev Fr John Yoew Kah Chok: Chinese-Speaking CHARIS-CCR.
- 3.1.3. Sr Maria Magdalena Kopong, FSIC: Bahasa Malaysia speaking CHARIS-CCR.
- 3.2. Rev Fr Aaron Alammalay has been appointed as the MJD Head of Migrant Ministry.
- 3.3. Rev Fr James Rajendran has been appointed as the Bishop's Delegate to the Malacca Johore Diocesan Ministry for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue (EIRD).

With effect from February 1, 2025

- 3.4. Rev Fr John Anandan, OFM Cap has been appointed as the Head of the Tamil Language Cultural Council.

4. Clergy on Sabbatical or Completing/Completed Their Services

- 4.1. Rev Fr Edward Rayappan has been

granted a six-month sabbatical for rest and renewal after fourteen years of service, effective January 1, 2025.

4.2. Rev Fr Joseph Heng has been granted an accumulated sabbatical of four months, effective May 1, 2025.

4.3. Rev Fr Sebastian Koh, SJ, has completed his service as the Diocesan Financial Administrator of MJD and is now serving as the Jesuit Regional Procurator.

4.4. Rev Fr Moses Yap, OFM, will complete his contract with MJD on December 31, 2024.

4.5. Rev Fr John Pereira has been granted permission to serve in the Diocese of Melbourne for three years, beginning August 2023.

4.6. Rev Fr Damien Pereira is currently on study leave and is expected to return in 2026.

Rev Fr Dr Lawrence Ng
Chancellor
Diocese of Malacca Johore

November 21, 2024

Selayang Baru chapel celebrates feast day after seven years

SELAYANG BARU: After seven long years, the faithful of Selayang Baru finally celebrated the Feast of Christ the King in their own chapel. This occasion marked a historic moment for the community, eagerly anticipated since the rededication of the Chapel of Christ the King on March 24 this year.

This year's celebration, themed *Christ Our King: Model of Missionary Disciple*, blended spirituality, community, and festivity, uniting parishioners in faith and purpose.

The Triduum began on Thursday evening with a packed congregation. The Mass, celebrated by Fr Aaron Alammalay with parish administrator Fr Peter Anthony, concelebrating reflected on Christ's role as the Good Shepherd. The strong turnout on a weekday evening demonstrated the community's deep faith and devotion.

Friday's theme inspired reflections on living a life of integrity, modelled after Christ. A surprise visit from Fr Anthony Pillai added a special touch to the day, while the joyful celebration of Fr Aaron's first sacerdotal anniversary further enriched the occasion.



Some of the parishioners after the celebration.

The Mass served as a moment of thanksgiving and inspiration for all present.

On Saturday morning, the elderly and those seeking both spiritual and physical healing were welcomed at Mass. Many found solace and hope in the Eucharistic celebration. The sight of so many stepping forward in faith was a powerful testament to Christ's boundless compassion and love.

The feast day celebration on Saturday evening began with the novena to Christ the King, followed by Mass celebrated by Fr Michel Dass with Fr Aaron, Fr Anthony, and Fr Peter concelebrating. The vibrant homilies delivered by Fr Michel and Fr Peter emphasised missionary discipleship, inspiring parishioners to live out Christ's teachings in their daily lives.

The celebration continued with a 2.5-kilometre procession through the neighbourhood. Two beautifully adorned trucks carried the Blessed Sacrament and the statue of Christ the King, accompanied by nearly 700 faithful, who recited the rosary and offered prayers. The procession concluded with adoration.

The event ended with a fellowship gathering, where parishioners reflected on the day's blessings and celebrated their unity.

On Sunday, the Feast of Christ the King concluded with Mass, marked by a profound and joyful moment: three young children received the Body and Blood of Christ for the first time. This sacred milestone brought a deep sense of grace and reverence to the celebration, as the new communicants were warmly welcomed into a closer union with Christ and His Church.

Special gratitude was extended to Fr Peter, whose vision and leadership have been instrumental in uniting the parish. His guidance continues to inspire the community to aim higher and grow stronger in faith. **Jennifer Deravasoo**

Church of St Louis a pilgrimage site for Jubilee Year 2025

Bernard Anthony

KLUANG, Johor: The Church of St Louis, one of the three designated pilgrimage parishes in the Malacca Johore diocese for the Jubilee Year 2025, is already making preparations to welcome pilgrims. According to parish priest Msgr Peter Ng, the parish is working diligently to ensure it is ready for the upcoming Jubilee celebrations.

Construction work is currently underway to enhance the grotto dedicated to Our Lady, providing pilgrims with a shaded area where they can pray the Rosary and seek solace from the sun. Additionally, a new parlour, adjacent to the church, has been built to offer refreshments and a space for fellowship during visits.

Msgr Peter invites pilgrims from near and far to visit the Church of St Louis during the Jubilee Year. Jubilee prayer cards will be distributed, and several spiritual programmes

and events will be organised to enrich the pilgrims' experience, bringing them closer to the hope and love of God.

The Jubilee Year is a special event that occurs every 25 years, with the 2025 Jubilee being announced by Pope Francis in his papal bull, *Spes Non Confundit (Hope Does Not Disappoint)*. The theme of the Jubilee is *Pilgrims of Hope*, with the Pope urging everyone to "fan the flame of hope" and approach the future with an open spirit.

The Jubilee Year will officially begin on December 24, 2024, with a Mass celebrated by Pope Francis at St Peter's Square, which will include the Opening of the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica. For diocesan communities, bishops will celebrate Mass to solemnly open the Jubilee Year on Sunday, December 29, 2024, and the Church of St Louis will hold its opening Mass on this date. The Jubilee Year will conclude on January 6, 2026, with the Feast Day of the Epiphany.



Improvement works presently carried out at the grotto.

Charity bazaar to support young adults with autism

KUALA LUMPUR: The Supported Employment for Autism Club (SEA Club) was abuzz with activity on November 17, as members, staff, committee members, volunteers, and supporters gathered for the club's second Charity Bazaar. The event aimed to raise funds to support programmes and activities designed to uplift the lives of young adults on the Autism Spectrum.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), a neu-

rodevelopmental condition, affects how individuals interact, communicate, learn, and behave. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), about one in 100 children globally are affected by autism.

SEA Club, established to fill a critical gap for young adults with autism who have graduated from vocational training, operates as a non-profit organisation licensed by the Welfare Department Malaysia. It focuses

on creating work opportunities for persons with autism (PWA), especially those in the mid to lower end of the spectrum and from B40 families. The club engages its members in various activities, including baking, small-scale catering, packaging, crafting, and gardening, with members receiving a small monthly allowance for their contributions.

Under the guidance of a job manager and two job coaches, all work is carried out with Good Autism Practices, tailored to the preferences and strengths of each individual while respecting their unique differences. SEA Club also prioritises continuous upskilling, recently providing members and coaches with a Basic Digital Art Design course at Montfort Boys Town, resulting in the creation of digital artwork used for gift bags and money packets.

The charity bazaar featured an array of food and craft items, many produced by the PWA members themselves. Highlights included five varieties of cookies, cakes, and pastries baked under the supervision of a baking instructor, alongside gift bags and

money packets showcasing the digital artwork created by members. Additional offerings included pre-loved items, books, potted plants, and a variety of home-cooked food and drinks.

The event was graced by Archbishop Julian Leow, who visited the booths and offered his blessings, and Fr Leonard Lexson, parish priest of the Church of the Assumption, who showed strong support for the PWA members.

Despite a brief afternoon downpour that temporarily slowed foot traffic, the charity bazaar was declared a success. Proceeds from the event will be used to enhance the quality of life for individuals with autism, enabling them to live with dignity and a sense of purpose while fostering their integration into the local community.

SEA Club's ongoing commitment to creating structured, supportive, and meaningful work environments continues to offer hope and opportunities for its members, with fundraisers like the charity bazaar ensuring the sustainability of these vital programmes.



Some of our Persons with Autism and volunteers, taking a break at the bazaar

Pope presides over WYD symbol handover ceremony

VATICAN: A 60-member Korean delegation received the Cross, the WYD symbol, from the Portuguese youth after the Mass on 39th World Youth Day, on November 24.

Pope Francis announced the South Korean capital Seoul as the host of the triennial global Catholic youth event at the end of the last WYD held in the Portuguese capital Lisbon on Aug 1-6, 2023.

The Korean delegation was led by Archbishop Peter Chung Soon-taick of Seoul.

In his homily, Pope Francis emphasized that the WYD symbol is an invitation and a sign for Christians to live the Gospel without being discouraged or losing hope.

"Young people must draw courage from Jesus' fidelity to God, even in the midst of trials and humiliation," he said. "Christians must cultivate devotion with the certainty of Christ's eternal kingdom."



The World Youth Day Cross handed over from the Portuguese to the South Korean youth. (Vatican Media)

Fr Justinino Choi In-Bee, secretary general of the Korean bishops' Youth Commission said the WYD symbol holds special significance.

"Pope John Paul II gave the WYD cross to the youth in 1984, and the World Youth Day began when the WYD cross was handed over to the youth," he said. "Therefore, the Church recognizes

the WYD cross handover ceremony as the start of the World Youth Day."

The handover ceremony was held after Pope Francis greeted the young people from Portugal and Korea who celebrated Mass together.

"This symbol of WYD was entrusted to us by Pope John Paul II

to be carried around the world," Francis said and urged the young people of Korea to "not be afraid and have courage."

"We need the courage to bear witness to the hope that is needed today more than ever," and "I hope that wherever these symbols pass, God's love and brotherhood will grow," he said.

During the Angelus prayer following Mass, the Pope invited two Korean youths to his office and asked the pilgrims gathered in St Peter's Square to applaud the young people from Korea and Portugal.

"Carrying the cross with the youth of various dioceses, I reflected on how the youth of Korea are joining forces to carry this cross and walk the path of faith together," said Agatha Kim Ha-yan, a Korean Catholic youth from Jeju Diocese.

"I hope that Seoul WYD will be an opportunity for struggling youth to not give up on their faith and to walk joyfully in their faith," Kim added.

"I hope that today's passionate enthusiasm will continue until 2027 and beyond and be conveyed to young people around the world to bear fruit of love," said former Seoul Archbishop Cardinal Andrew Yeom Soo-jung. ucanews.com

Jews, Muslims and Christians unite on Mitzvah Day

LONDON: More than 35,000 people of diverse faiths and backgrounds came together across the UK on November 24 for Mitzvah Day, Britain's largest interfaith social action event. This year's theme, *Stronger Together*, inspired over 2,500 community-driven projects, reinforcing solidarity amidst societal divisions.

Participants included prominent leaders such as Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, Liberal Democrat leader Sir Ed Davey, London Mayor Sadiq Khan, Bishop of Edmonton Revd Canon Dr Anderson Jeremiah, Rabbi Charley Baginsky, and Imam Asim Hafiz. Alongside tens of thousands of volunteers from various faiths and none, they engaged in activities like care home visits, park clean-ups, food bank drives, and winter clothing collections.

Mitzvah Day Founder Laura Marks CBE praised the event's unifying spirit, "Our faith communities came together to give back, showcasing acts of citizenship, community-building, and care for those in need."

Prime Minister Keir Starmer personally wrote a thank-you card for the staff of Spring Grove Care Home, delivered during a musical event hosted by MP Tulip Siddiq. He emphasised the importance of service and unity, "No matter our differences, we are always stronger together."

Sir Ed Davey joined intergenerational ballet dancing at Nightingale House Care Home, bringing joy to residents and children. He reflected, "The theme *Stronger Together* reminds us we have more in com-



Imam Asim Hafiz, Rabbi Charley Baginsky and Bishop of Edmonton Revd Canon Dr Anderson Jeremiah came together in a show of solidarity at care home Hammerson House (Mitzvah Day facebook/Yakir Zur)

mon than divides us."

London Mayor Sadiq Khan participated in packing vegetable boxes for the Mayor's Fund for London with volunteers from Jewish and Muslim networks.

In a powerful interfaith display, Imam Asim Hafiz, Rabbi Charley Baginsky, and Bishop Anderson Jeremiah united at Hammerson House, collaborating with volunteers from Caritas Westminster and local Jewish communities. Rabbi Baginsky called the day "a heart-warming opportunity to make the world better," while Imam Hafiz highlighted shared values of charity across faiths.

Across the UK, communities organised refugee support activities, cooking sessions, litter collections, and warm meal preparations. In Cumbria, refugees benefited from a day of dedicated events, while Leeds saw interfaith support for a warm food café. Internationally, Mitzvah Day was celebrated in 40 countries, including Germany, South Africa,

Ukraine, and Australia.

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis hailed the initiative as "one of the greatest achievements of the British Jewish community." Scotland's First Minister John Swinney added, "This day of social action recognises the centrality of community, compassion, and solidarity."

Culminating a month-long series of events, Mitzvah Day CEO Stuart Diamond celebrated its enduring impact, "Mitzvah Day inspires people to give back, proving that small acts of kindness can make a big difference."

Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster, Bishop John Sherrington and Catholic Women's League President Siobhan Garibaldi echoed support, highlighting interfaith collaboration as a model for unity and service.

Mitzvah Day 2024 reinforced its vision: bringing people together to serve, support, and strengthen communities, proving that kindness and cooperation are powerful tools for building a better world. ICN

Chinese added as ninth official language at papal general audiences

VATICAN: Chinese has been added as the ninth official language at papal general audiences, Pope Francis announced on November 27 during his general audience in St Peter's Square.

"Next week, with Advent, the Chinese translation will also begin here publicly," the Pope said at the time.

The addition marked a significant expansion of the languages used at the weekly papal events. Key portions of these gatherings — including Scripture readings, summaries of the Pope's address, and greetings — have traditionally been delivered in eight languages: Italian, English, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, and Arabic.

The translations make papal teachings accessible to pilgrims from around the world. They are typically delivered by staff members of the Vatican Secretariat of

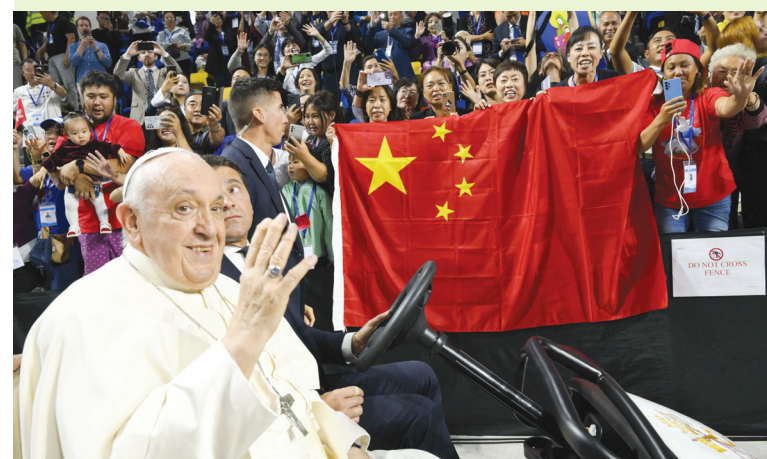
State or Vatican News.

Mandarin Chinese, considered the world's most spoken language with nearly one billion speakers, joined this list. Varieties of Chinese — including Mandarin, Wu, Hakka, and others — are collectively used by more than 1.3 billion people worldwide.

The papal move to embrace Mandarin Chinese came at a complex moment in Vatican-China relations.

The Holy See had recently renewed its controversial agreement with Beijing on the appointment of bishops for another four years.

This renewal followed growing concerns about religious freedom in China, corroborated by recent reports. Some studies also indicated that the Christian population in China had stopped growing after decades of expansion in the 1980s and 1990s. CNA



Pope Francis gave a special message to Chinese Catholics at the end of his Mass in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia on September 3, 2023. (Vatican Media)

Final synod document is magisterial, must be accepted

Pope Francis has declared that the final document of the Synod on Synodality “participates in the ordinary Magisterium of the Successor of Peter,” and “as such I ask that it be accepted.” He said he now gives this text to the whole Church “as an authoritative orientation for her life and mission.”

In “a note of accompaniment” to the final document, the Pope made clear that Catholic bishops throughout the world, guided by this final document, are to lead their churches and communities in building a synodal and missionary church in the 21st century.

He signed the note, written in Italian, on the feast of Christ the King, November 24.

In the note, Pope Francis recalled the history of the synodal process, which he launched in October 2021, and how, “at the various moments of the journey...we have listened to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Churches in this time.”

He said the final document “reaps the fruits of a journey marked by listening to the People of God and the discernment of the Pastors. Allowing herself to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit, the whole Church has been called to read her own experience and to identify the steps to be taken to live communion, to achieve participation and to promote the mission that Jesus Christ has entrusted to her.”

The Pope said the synodal journey did not end with the second and final plenary assembly in Rome in October 2024 but rather,

“continues in the local Churches and their groups, treasuring the Final Document.”

The final document was voted on and approved by the synod assembly on Oct 26. Instead of writing the customary post-synodal apostolic exhortation, Pope Francis said he approved and signed the synod’s final document, “joining the ‘we’ of the Assembly which, through the Final Document, addresses the holy faithful People of God.”

The final document now “participates in the ordinary Magisterium of the Successor of Peter” in accordance with article 18, subsection 1 of *Episcopalis Communio*, the apostolic constitution of the synod that he promulgated in 2018, and Canon 892 of the Code of Canon Law.

He said this “represents a form of exercising the authentic teaching of the Bishop of Rome that has some new features but which corresponds to what I had the opportunity to specify on October 17, 2015, when I affirmed that synodality is the adequate interpretative framework for understanding the hierarchical ministry.”

At the closing session of the synod on Oct 26, the Pope said the final document “is not strictly normative” and that “its application will need various mediations.” But, he said in the note, “this does not mean that it does not commit the Churches from now on to making choices consistent with what is indicated in it.” On the contrary, he said, “[t]he local Churches and groupings of Churches are now called upon to implement, in the

various contexts, the authoritative indications contained in the Document, through the discernment and decision-making processes provided for by law and by the Document itself.”

At the same, he acknowledged that “it takes time to arrive at choices that involve the whole Church,” and “this is particularly true for the themes entrusted to the ten study groups.” He said other study groups may be added to those 10 “because of the necessary decisions” that may need to be taken. (The final document, for example, proposed adding an additional study group on the liturgy.)

Addressing the bishops, Pope Francis said they are to prepare reports ahead of their five-yearly *ad limina* visits to the Vatican that indicate “what choices have been made in the local Church entrusted to him in relation to what is indicated in the Final Document, what difficulties have been encountered, what have been the fruits.” In other words, each bishop will have to report on how they are implementing this synod. The final document provides several checklists for the work of implementation.

The Pope also repeated “with conviction” what he had written in *Amoris Laetitia*:

“Not all doctrinal, moral or pastoral discussions must be resolved with interventions of the magisterium. Naturally, a unity of doctrine and practice is necessary in the Church, but this does not prevent the existence of different ways of interpreting some aspects of doctrine or some of the

consequences that derive from it. This will happen until the Spirit brings us to the complete truth (cf. Jn 16:13), that is, when He introduces us perfectly into the mystery of Christ and we will be able to see everything with His gaze. Moreover, in each country or region, more inculturated solutions can be sought, attentive to local traditions and challenges (No. 3).”

“In many cases,” Francis said about the final document, “it is a matter of effectively implementing what is already provided for by current law in the Latin and Eastern [rite churches].” In other cases, he said, “it will be possible to proceed, through synodal discernment and within the framework of the possibilities indicated in the Final Document, to the creative activation of new forms of ministry and missionary action, experimenting and verifying experiences.”

He said he was entrusting “the task of accompanying ‘the implementation phase’ of the synodal journey, based on the guidelines offered by the Final Document”, to the General Secretariat of the Synod together with the dicasteries of the Roman Curia.

The Pope reminded people that the synodal process also had an important ecumenical objective, or, as he put it, “the synodal journey of the Catholic Church” was “also animated by the desire to continue on the path towards the full and visible unity of Christians.” For this reason, too, he said, “[it] needs shared words to be accompanied by deeds.” **Gerard O’Connell, America**

Hymnody and synodality in Missouri

Bishop W. Shawn McKnight of Jefferson City, Missouri, stirred up the proverbial hornet’s nest in October when he announced that certain hymns would no longer be played in the diocese, citing directives from the US bishops’ conference Committee on Doctrine. To his credit, McKnight reversed his decision within a week, saying, “It is now clear that an authentically synodal process of greater consultation did not occur prior to its promulgation.”

First things first. Hats off to McKnight for being willing to admit he made a mistake and correcting it. In my years covering bishops, I find that among the most common flaws the episcopal culture breeds are thin skins and a fear of admitting mistakes. You can count on one hand the number of times you have heard a bishop admit he made a mistake in the past year.

On the merits of the original decision, it is not clear McKnight even made a mistake. Whether or not *All are Welcome* passed doctrinal muster with the US bishops’ conference committee charged with making that assessment, there is another problem: It is cringy. The tune is relentlessly sing-songy and the text is more than a little Pelagian. Each verse begins with the words “Let us build ...” but it is the Spirit of Christ that builds the Church.

Rescinding the original decision and starting a genuine synodal process is also correct. This is one of the first instances of a bishop publicly proposing a synodal process as a solution to a local, ecclesial problem. That is progress, a real fruit of the synod.

Some, perhaps many, bishops think synodality is a fad, and doubt whether it will outlive Pope Francis. During the discussion of synodality at the US bishops’ conference

NCR’s Michael Sean Winters praises Bishop W. Shawn McKnight for reversing his decision to ban certain hymns from his diocese, publicly proposing a synodal process as a solution to a local, ecclesial problem.



meeting, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, Texas, voiced the concern that “discernment becomes so enticing, perhaps almost like tentacles, that you start discerning about discerning about discerning.”

This is an old canard, reworked in different dress, about the synod on synodality being a “meeting about meetings.” Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville, Texas, explained that the paradigm for understanding the relationship between discernment and mission is found within their own diocesan leadership. Bishops consult the relevant advisory bodies, but they know the consultation leads to a decision which, in turn, prompts a new round of consultations and more decisions.

Back to the hymnal. The discussion about which hymns are appropriate is greatly needed. If I have one complaint about the post-conciliar liturgical reforms it is that the General Instruction of the Roman Missal follows the Roman preference for chant at the expense of hymnody. One of the great gifts of the Protestant and Anglican traditions is to recognise the catechetical value of hymnody, and it is a gift that could serve the Catholic Church well, at least here in the US.

Augustine said, “He who sings prays twice.” We know this to be true. I cannot make it through the hymn *I Am the Bread of Life* without getting choked up: We sang

it at both of my parents’ funerals. The last verse: “Yes, Lord, I believe, that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who has come into the world” has special power when the body of your beloved parent is resting in front of the altar. In the face of death, the church offers the grieving not only sympathy in the absolute loss that has occurred but a doctrinal statement of hope, real hope. Setting it to music doubles the whammy.

Here is an easy test of the musicality of a hymn: Can a congregation sing it a cappella if the organist is sick that day? I find that a fair amount of modern music is impossible to sing without accompaniment, whereas a hymn like *Come, Holy Ghost* is a fine way to teach a young music student about intervals. This distinction between old and new is not true in every case. The 1906 hymn tune *Down Ampney* to which we usually set the 15th-century words of *Come, down O Love divine*, has some modulations that would be difficult to manage if you didn’t know the tune or if there was no accompaniment. The C natural “within” would be hard to pick out of the blue.

Think of the hymn *Amazing Grace*. It is our de facto national hymn, even though the technical national hymn is the militaristic *God of Our Fathers*. Every time *Amazing Grace* is sung, it is moving. Everyone knows the words and the melody, so it is

Calling all song composers

The Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur is inviting creative composers to contribute to the sacred music repertoire for the Malaysian Catholic Church. This initiative seeks hymns and songs that glorify God and uplift the faithful, suitable for both liturgical and non-liturgical settings. For more details and guidelines to assist composers in creating hymns for Mass, please click on this link: <https://www.archkl.org/guidelines-composition-sacred-music>

also participatory. It puts the emphasis of Christian prayer on God, not on us, avoiding the Pelagianistic influences of modernity. Why is there not a dozen such hymns in our cultural repertoire?

The conversation McKnight began is an important one. Let’s hope the synodal process of consultation not only brings much needed attention to this issue, but that it yields a renewed commitment to hymn singing. Great music and great homilies are what fill a church. **NCR**

On the synod and the end of ‘professional Christians’

Gerard O’Connell: *The Synod on Synodality has been a significant moment in the history of the Church, and you were involved right from the beginning. What is your takeaway?*

Archbishop Costelloe: It is an extraordinary event, a historic event, in the life of the Church. It’s a synod that, perhaps more than any other since Vatican II, has the potential to shape the Church into the future. Many other synods dealt with particular issues, but this focused on the question: What is the Church really, and what is its role in today’s world?

Pope Francis has set something in [motion] from which there should not be any turning back. So much of what the synod is trying to promote is already beginning to happen. There’s a momentum that’s been generated which will continue.

What key points in the final document stand out for you?

I imagine many people will be looking at the document and hunting through it to find something that responds to their concerns, their hopes, their dreams for the Church. That’s understandable. I think some will be disappointed that they don’t find precisely what they were hoping for; others will be disappointed to find things that they were hoping wouldn’t be there. But it’s important to remember that the synod is not just the two synod assemblies; it’s a process that started three years ago. It’s been unfolding. If we believe the Holy Spirit’s been at work, then we should have confidence that what has been produced at this stage represents, to some degree, and I would say to a large degree, the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the Church at this moment in history.

In Part I of the final document, the synod makes a determined effort to explain what synodality means.

The thing we’ve come to understand more deeply through the synod is that we are not a Church that has a professional class to whom the mission is entrusted, and then everybody else who are the recipients of that mission. In the past, the priests and the bishops, the religious, and some lay people, were regarded as the professionals, and they were the ones who carried out the mission, and all the rest of us were the recipients.

But that’s changed completely thanks to the synod. Now we’re realising that, by virtue of our baptism, every Christian is called to take an active part in the mission of the Church, to be the light of Jesus in today’s world. That’s quite a significant change, and the way this plays out in the local Church will be crucial for the implementation of the synod.

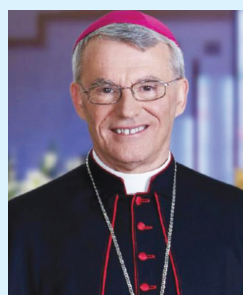
One thing that stood out in all the inputs from the different countries was a tidal wave requesting the affirmation of women in the church.

A major theme that emerged during the synod — and probably the one that sparked the most debate — was the role of women in the Church, particularly in relation to ordination, including the diaconate and, more broadly, the question of women’s ordination to the priesthood.

Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández made it clear when he said that the core issue isn’t about ordination itself, but about recognising the fundamental role that women play in helping the Church become what the Lord

“Synodality is already taking root at the local level in many parts of the Church worldwide,” observed Archbishop Timothy Costelloe, 70 (pic) president of the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference and one of the Synod’s president delegates. Speaking in an exclusive interview with America magazine’s Vatican correspondent, Gerard O’Connell after the Synod concluded, he added, “This isn’t surprising, because it is the work of the Spirit.”

Archbishop Costelloe highlighted Pope Francis’ vision for the Church, describing it as “a sign of contradiction in the world today.” He explained that such a Church would send a profound message to the world: “There is a better way of being together, living together, relating to each other, and walking together in all of our diversity, challenges, and disagreements. It’s about finding a way to build a community of people who, despite difficulties, recognise that we belong to each other, need each other, and are mutually dependent on one another. At its core, that is what synodality represents — a counterbalance to the way many in the world operate today.”



Patriarchs of the Eastern Catholic Churches at the Synod on Synodality’s closing Mass in St Peter’s Basilica. (CNA/Daniel Ibanez)

envisions it to be. This is something the Church will continue to wrestle with as we move forward.

While much of the discussion centred on the question of women’s admission to the diaconate and, briefly, to the priesthood, the real underlying question was about recognising that women, just like men, are called to fully participate in the life and mission of the Church — and how we can make that a reality.

In places like Australia, there has already been significant progress in this area. Women lead major Catholic education offices, health and welfare agencies, and safeguarding efforts, with a high degree of autonomy and decision-making power. In certain parts of the Church around the world, the role of women is much more recognised than in others. But that doesn’t mean there isn’t still much more work to be done.

The synod acknowledged there’s not a universal model for being church. It recognised that we have different cultures, and we need to accept the diversity and that we will move forward at different speeds. Is this what we’re likely to see?

That was a very interesting development in the synod, the idea that, as we move forward, different local Churches, according to their own situations, will move at a different pace. When you stop and think about that, it seems obvious because every local Church exists within the context of its own cultural realities, and it has to live in those. You can’t impose things on a culture just because, theoretically, you might agree with them, it needs time.

There’s an important distinction to be made between things that are essential and things that, depending on the local cultural situation, may or may not be possible at any given time. There is a quote in the document relating to Vatican II, where it talks about the

need to ensure that diversity not only does not harm unity but contributes to unity. And that is the synod’s big challenge, to work out how we maintain unity while recognising the validity of diverse ways of understanding the faith and living the faith, depending on the culture and the social reality where we live.

At the synod’s first session there was a recognition of convergences, divergences, and proposals for further reflection. That seems to have been built into the synodal way of proceeding.

It’s built into what I would call the growing understanding of a synodal spirituality. In the synod documents there is the insistence that we’re a Church, we’re not a multicultural, a multinational corporation, or anything like that. We’re a Church that is the community of disciples of Jesus, and so, at the basis of anything we do — whether it’s about the role of women, whether it’s how we govern the Church, or how we make decisions, we have to do all of these things within the context of a spirituality.

There was a lot of talk in the synod about changing canon law, changing structures, making some things compulsory that are presently optional. They’re all important, but if all we do is make structural changes, I suspect nothing much will really change.

I don’t think it’s any accident that on the eve of the conclusion of the synod, the Holy Father should publish his encyclical on the Sacred Heart to remind us that we’re not just another organisation. We’re a different kind of organisation. We’re the Church, and we have the heart of Christ at the heart of everything that we’re doing. So, I’d like to encourage people while they rush to see the things that they’ve been interested in, to also go to those parts of the document that remind us of who we really are as the people of God, as a community of disciples of Jesus.

The final document has an important section on accountability, transparency and decision making. How do you read it?

I’m very encouraged by it. We must be held to account for how we live our lives as Christian disciples. I think all this probably has risen to the surface because of the abuse crisis, but the synod has broadened it and it’s now focusing also on financial accountability, and accountability on how we’re implementing the synod, accountability on how we’re opening spaces for women, accountability as to how we develop and implement our pastoral plans in the local parish or diocese.

It’s a recognition of our mutual responsibility for each other, that if we’re thinking about the governance of the Church and leadership of the Church, particularly of the ordained ministry, we need to be accountable to God’s people. We need to be able to explain to people what we’re doing to try and help the whole community be faithful to what the Lord is asking of us, to hear from our people what they think about what we’re doing.

Many people have asked me whether this synodal process will end when Francis is no longer Pope.

The answer, at least in my mind at this stage, is a very clear No. I think it’s too deeply embedded already, certainly in the minds of those who have been part of the synod — bishops and lay people from all around the world, but also in the minds of all those that have contributed to the various stages of the consultation process. Since my main experience is in Australia, I’d also say that most of the dioceses in Australia have already had a diocesan synod or a diocesan assembly or various kinds of gatherings in order to begin to implement a spirituality of synodality. I think it’s just taking root at the local level, in a way that means that we can’t go back. I’m feeling quite confident about that.

Since you were one of the president delegates of the synod and are president of the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference, I’d like to ask: If you were to look down the road seven years from now, what would you like to see?

I would like to see, and I’m fairly confident that we will see, that how the Church at the local level operates takes on a much more synodal style, by which I mean it engages everybody who wants to be engaged, and who can be engaged, in active participation in the life of the Church, in whatever way they can do it.

What I’d like to see is the breaking down of this notion that there are the professional Christians — who are the priests, the bishops, the religious and many lay people — and the recognition that we’re all part of this together. We all engage in the best ways we can in our own concrete life situations. We support each other in what we’re doing, we encourage each other in what we’re doing, and we do our best to be a community of faith, rather than a whole group of individuals who individually have our relationship with God. I’d like to see that we’re a community of people of faith, who walk together, who support each other, who recognise our dependence on each other. That’s the vision. I think we’re heading in the right direction. **America**

Celebrating 50 years of priestly ministry

JOHOR BAHRU: The Malacca Johore Diocese joyfully celebrated the sacerdotal golden jubilee of Fr Anthony Ng and Fr Lucas Ho recently, honouring their 50 years of faithful service to the Church.

The celebration commenced with a Thanksgiving Mass at the Domus Shalom Hall in the MAJODI Centre, drawing around 45 attendees, including clergy, friends, family, and staff of the Malacca Johore Diocese. The Eucharistic celebration featured uplifting hymns, prayers of gratitude, and a poignant homily by Fr Anthony Ng.

Reflecting on his seminary days, Fr

Anthony shared memories of studying during the transformative Vatican II era, a period of profound change in the Church. He highlighted the importance of priests becoming strong leaders and underscored the value of engaging with parishioners from diverse walks of life—lawyers, insurance agents, contractors, engineers, and others. He emphasised that spending time with parishioners is never wasted, as these interactions offer priests a wealth of insights and foster meaningful connections. Such relationships, he noted, not only enrich ministry but also provide a network of

support and resources for various aspects of parish life.

The evening continued with a jubilee dinner at the dining hall, where a spirit of camaraderie and joy prevailed. One of the highlights was the cutting of a traditional nasi tumpeng, a symbolic rice dish representing gratitude and unity. This was followed by lively singing performances by clergy and guests, filling the room with laughter and cheer. Touching speeches, tokens of appreciation, and the sharing of fond memories added to the festive atmosphere.

The golden jubilee celebration shone a light on the remarkable impact of Frs Anthony and Lucas on the faith community, inspiring everyone present to appreciate the profound beauty of a life dedicated to God.

Fr Anthony Ng was ordained by the late Bishop James Chan on November 30, 1974, at the Church of St Mary in Ayer Salak, Melaka. After ministering in two parishes, he pursued further studies in Canon Law at the Pontifical Urban University in Rome in 1981. Upon returning, he continued his parish ministry while serving as a canon lawyer for the Malacca Johore Diocese. In 1998, he was appointed Chancellor of



The jubilarians at Mass.

the diocese. Before his retirement, Fr Anthony served as the parish priest of the Church of St Joseph in Plentong.

Fr Lucas Ho was incardinated into the Diocese of Malacca Johore on November 8, 2004. He initially served as the parish priest of the Church of Christ the King, Kulai, and as administrator at both the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Pontian, and the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Pekan Nanas. He later took on the role of parish priest at the Church of St. Andrew, Muar.

In late 2013, Fr Lucas suffered a stroke and began his recuperation in Petaling Jaya, where his siblings cared for him. In February 2014, he moved to Graceville, where he continues to reside today.

May the Lord bless them abundantly with good health, peace, and joy as they faithfully continue their service in His vineyard.



Fr Anthony Ng and Fr Lucas Ho cutting the nasi tumpeng as Bishop Emeritus Paul Tan looks on.

Fr Robin Andrews celebrates 60 years of priesthood



Fr Robin Andrews cutting his anniversary cake.

PENANG: Fr Robin Andrews celebrated his 60th sacerdotal anniversary at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, November 13 marking six decades of unwavering dedication to the priesthood. During the Mass, Fr Robin expressed profound gratitude to God for the gift of his vocation, which far exceeded the ten years he had initially hoped for. Reflecting on his ordination, he shared that when he first became a priest, he prayed to serve for at least ten years. Yet, in God's generosity, he was blessed with sixty years of ministry, for which he remains deeply thankful. He humbly acknowledged that while he didn't know how many more years he would have in his priesthood, he was grateful for every moment of service.

Cardinal Sebastian Francis, in his address, captured the essence of the priesthood, saying, "It's not about 10 years, or even 60 years — it's forever. That's the beauty and challenge of this vocation." He praised Fr Robin for embodying the spirit of "growing old gracefully," noting that Fr Robin's vibrant energy, crisp voice, and infectious smile were a living testament to the primacy

of God's grace in his life. The Cardinal acknowledged the challenges Fr Robin had faced but emphasised how he had remained a joyful, happy priest, providing an inspiring example of grace and contentment to all.

Fr Robin attributed his priestly vocation to daily family prayer and the recitation of the rosary. He shared that, initially, it was difficult to reveal his decision to join the seminary to his parents, as they had already given two children to religious life. Nevertheless, he received their blessings and support. In 1955, he entered the seminary, and on April 12, 1964, he was ordained a priest.

Fr Robin's journey in the priesthood has been marked by decades of service across several parishes. He served twice at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Pulau Tikus, and spent the

longest time at the Church of St. Joseph in Batu Gajah. Reflecting on his time in Batu Gajah, Fr Robin spoke with great joy about witnessing the transformation of people's lives. He fondly remarked that if he had been a dentist, his work would have been limited to looking into people's mouths, but as a priest, he had the privilege of making a real difference in people's lives. His ministry in Batu Gajah was a source of deep fulfilment, and he continued to touch the hearts of many with his selfless service.

Fr Robin is known for his habit of writing down the blessings he received throughout his life, a powerful testimony of God's faithfulness. He shared his gratitude with the congregation, encouraging all to live with thankful hearts. "A grateful heart is a happy heart," he said, urging the faithful to be

thankful for the small and big blessings in their lives.

Seven years after his ordination, Fr Robin's was appointed parish priest of the Church of St Louis in Taiping in 1971. In 1973, he was appointed parish priest of the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Pulau Tikus, where he served for several years. In 1975, he undertook post-graduate studies in Moral Theology in Manila for two years, deepening his theological understanding.

By 1989, Fr Robin began teaching Fundamental Moral Theology at College General. In 1991, he became the Diocesan Coordinator for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal's Divine Mercy Team (DST) and was also appointed Animator of the Penang Covenant Community.

On June 28, 1992, Fr Robin returned to the Church of the Immaculate Conception as its parish priest and also assumed responsibility for overseeing Fatima Kindergarten. In 1996, he was appointed parish priest of the Church of St Patrick in Kuala Kangsar and Administrator of the Church of St John the Baptist.

In 2001, Fr Robin was appointed a member of the College of Consultors, and a year later, in 2002, he became parish priest of the Church of St Joseph in Batu Gajah. During this time, he also served as a member of the Council of Priests. His commitment to the people of Batu Gajah remained steadfast until 2014, when he retired from active ministry and was priest in residence at the Church of St Michael.

On January 30, 2020, Fr Robin moved to the Little Sisters of the Poor in Penang.

Fr Robin's 60 years of priesthood have been marked by faithfulness, humility, and a deep love for his vocation. His journey has touched countless lives and continues to inspire the faithful to live lives of gratitude, service, and grace.

No children, no church

Everyone knows the best thing about monthly BEC gatherings are the *makan* sessions following the reflection sheets. Despite parish priests making known that the provision of food at these gatherings was not mandatory, the collective Malaysian sense of hospitality is appalled by the thought of simply serving guests a drink and sending them on their way.

Thus the latest gathering at my home segued into fellowship around my dining table. Present were mothers of school-going children, retirees who cared for their toddler grandkids, and parishioners who also served as extraordinary ministers of holy communion. All were taken aback upon hearing of an unpleasant experience a young mother faced when at Mass with her differently-abled child. Being as children are, the child was squirming in her seat, and then proceeded to stand and wiggle in the pew.

Parishioners in the pew gave the mother the stink eye but said nothing, but another church goer from the next row beckoned to a hospitality minister and complained that the child's moving was a disturbance. When the mother apologised and explained that her child was autistic and thus 'stimmed' (coping behaviour by autistic persons meant to self-soothe), the warden was abrasive and cuttingly suggested the parent and child sit in the babies' room in order to not disturb other church-goers.



Word in Progress

KAREN-MICHAELA TAN

This begs the question as to how we see church. A church as a building is built for community. It is not a one-person structure. By its very design – wide doors to encourage entrance, large spaces to allow a multitude of faithful – churches are meant to mirror the invitation of Jesus to come to the king's high feast. Jesus is not picky about who comes. The One who dined with tax collectors and sinners is well aware of the state of each attendee's heart: the seeker, the penitent, the zealot, we are all welcome.

The people who serve at Mass should also, appropriately, serve from a place of love. The cantor and choir do not sing at Mass because they could not make it on *The Voice*. Their service is the oblation they pour out for love of the saviour. In the same way, hospitality ministers should also channel Christ in their loving kindness. Jesus did not step over the prone body of paralytics and order them taken away so as not to block access to Him. Jesus did not hurry away from the lacerated, matted, filthy Gerasene demoniac in Luke 8:26-39, nor turn away from blind beggars pleading for sight. Most tellingly, Jesus chastened the people who were shooing children away from him in Matthew 19: 13-15, and instead drew them near and blessed them saying, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

I have not always been a proponent of children at Mass. It was only after noticing

a tired-looking mother with three children under eight in the front pew at Mass each Sunday without fail did I really see love and boldness in action. This harried mother, in ensuring her children were taught early the obligation of Sunday Mass, changed my views on kids in church. As I sat at the pew behind theirs, week after week, I'd observe how the mother would make little signs to her children to stand or be quiet. As I watched the good-natured husband sometimes carry a too-boisterous young 'un out of church, sometimes missing communion, I soon became invested in the family of five. I began packing little toys, note pads, coloured pens in my bag to 'bribe' the kids when they fussed. Over the course of the year the youngest would learn to keep still all through Mass, and then turn to me with a big smile and announce that she had been listening and talking to Jesus, and could she please have a toy? It made Mass even more special for me, to have this little tot look out for me and share her little success at being a good little participant with me.

As I was formulating their article, I chanced upon a short video which emphasised things that every Catholic should know. The final point was about orthodoxy, and stated that the Church was full of orthodox, practicing Catholics. However, while good practices are important, with adherence to the teachings of the Church (for instance, the laity's correct posture for the Our Father which means hands clasped in prayer or folded, not spread in the *orans* posture to mimic the presider, or the avoidance of meat on Fridays), it is as important or even more crucial not to forget holiness and joyfulness. And these

things do not come out of grim, puckered-mouth religiosity, but rather a heart that has come to know firsthand the abundant love and generosity of God. The experience of that loving God puts a twinkle into the most cloudy of old eyes, and the spirit of generosity into hard hearts.

Knowing that the Lord Himself drew children to Him to bless, how can anyone begrudge the presence of a squirming kid in the pews or the involuntary, unchecked voice of a neurodivergent child or teen? Consider this before you judge: if you, who fall into the 'neurologically normal' category of the church-going, have ever struggled to keep awake, or indulged in silent coping behaviours like hand-clasping, finger twirling or sleeve tugging to stay focused at Mass, think how much harder it is for a differently-abled person.

And then think of Jesus welcoming that person more warmly than He welcomes you. Just as Jesus commended the old widow on her meagre donation of two little coins, our Saviour sees the sacrifice in pride it takes a parent of a neurologically different kid to continually bring their child to mass to learn to praise, worship and adore the king of kings. This Advent as we look forward to the baby in the manger – a baby who for sure squalled and fretted at times – let us also make a point to welcome all the sometimes noisy little ones in our midst without censure.

Karen-Michaela Tan is a poet, writer and editor who seeks out God's presence in the human condition and looks for ways to put the Word of God into real action.

Mindfulness, Ignatian Spirituality and the Search for Balance

Once, before the pandemic, thinking that I was on the cusp of burnout at work due to my constant whining about work, a friend suggested that I attend a one-day mindfulness workshop conducted by a friend.

Mindfulness is the practice of awareness and presence that helps people manage stress, emotions, and mental health.

Though I wasn't experiencing a burnout, I signed up for the workshop, mostly out of curiosity. At the time, terms like "mindfulness," "emotional health," and "work-life balance" were not commonly discussed in Malaysian workplaces.

That rainy Saturday afternoon at the workshop, I discovered the root causes of my unhappiness at work and learned techniques to release that tension through breathing exercises, meditation, and even selecting pictures from cards. The weekend left me feeling uplifted and full of positive emotions.

However, come Monday, I found myself slipping back into old patterns. While mindfulness had helped many corporate professionals manage stress, I realised I needed something more substantial to maintain my balance over the long term.

That's when I decided to return to Ignatian spirituality retreats.

Ignatian Spirituality

Ignatian spirituality, rooted in the teachings of St. Ignatius of Loyola, focuses on discerning God's will through reflection, prayer, and spiritual exercises. It emphasises serving others and living in alignment with God's guidance.

Before my exploration of mindfulness, I had attended several Ignatian retreats at the Maranatha House of Prayer in Janda Baik, Selangor. The first time was alone; the



GETTING SIDETRACKED

Agnes Ong

second, with a close friend. Each time, I left feeling renewed and strengthened, with my burdens lifted and my confidence restored.

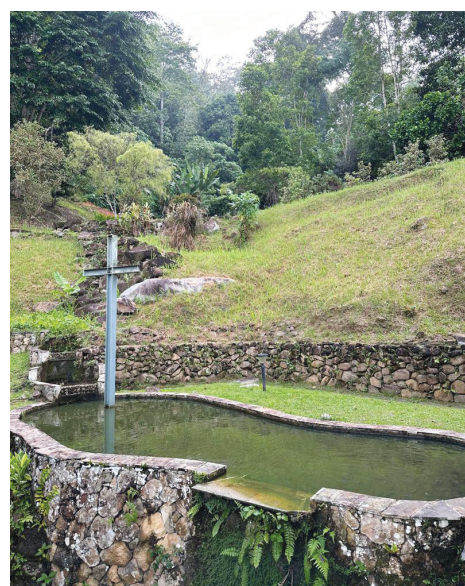
While mindfulness and Ignatian spirituality share similarities in their emphasis on self-awareness, contemplation, and inner peace, Ignatian spirituality offers a deeper, faith-centred approach. The exercises I engaged in not only helped me to reflect but also guided me to discern and follow God's will. In doing so, it felt as though I had a powerful ally in my corner – a source of strength and guidance that only faith can provide.

Both emphasise being present in the moment, self-reflection, cultivating a sense of inner peace and calm, and then detaching from worries, desires, or worldly distractions.

However, in Ignatian spirituality, I also found the faith-based exercises soothing as it helps me to explore ways to find and follow God's will. In doing so, it feels as if I have someone truly powerful in my corner, a sort of secret gift that only I have and can use.

Ignatian spirituality calls us to discern and transform. Transformation, as anyone who has experienced it knows, is not always a comfortable process. But it challenges me to take control of my life and make decisions that were align with the faith I was born with, whether through prayer, service, or discernment.

Over the past two and a half decades, I've attended several Ignatian spirituality



The Jordan Springs at Maranatha House of Prayer in Janda Baik.

retreats, including those at Maranatha House of Prayer and once at Seven Fountains in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

I love the uninterrupted silence, the intimate conversations I have with God, and the time spent reading and reflecting on Scripture. These retreats, with their simple, wholesome and delicious meals, offer an opportunity to reset, re-align my priorities, and acknowledge what is within my control.

Most importantly, they teach me to trust God with what I cannot change.

A Spiritual Retreat in May

This past May, during a retreat at Maranatha House of Prayer, my first thought was, "I just want to sleep." After completing three major work projects in two months, I was physically and mentally exhausted. Yet, as the retreat unfolded, it became clear that God had other plans for me. Not only did I rest, but

I was gently urged to reflect on parts of my life I had neglected in the rush to meet work demands.

The retreat helped me sharpen my thinking, refocus my priorities, and renew my energy. It was like a long, rejuvenating soak at a spiritual spa, and I left feeling ready to tackle life's challenges with renewed clarity and purpose.

Embracing Transformation

While mindfulness helps us stay present and manage daily stress, Ignatian spirituality goes a step further by inviting us to transform our hearts and lives in alignment with God's purpose. Both paths lead to inner peace, but Ignatian spirituality challenges us to discern God's will, trust in His guidance, and navigate life's challenges with a deeper sense of purpose.

As you reflect on your own New Year resolutions, why not consider embracing your own spiritual transformation? One meaningful way to do so is by exploring the Ignatian retreats offered at the Maranatha House of Prayer in Janda Baik (<https://www.maranathahop.com/>) or Seven Fountains in Chiang Mai, Thailand (<https://www.thesevenfountains.org/>). These retreats offer a wonderful opportunity to deepen your relationship with God, discern His will for your life, and experience spiritual renewal.

Who knows how God might touch your heart and lead you on a journey of growth and transformation in the year ahead?

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



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Heaven isn't the same for everyone

Daniel Berrigan once said: *Before you get serious about Jesus, think carefully about how good you are going to look on wood!*

That's a needed caution because Jesus warned us that if we follow Him, pain will flow into our lives and we will join Him on the cross.

What exactly does that mean? Is pain laid on a disciple as some kind of test? Does Jesus need His followers to feel the pains He experienced? Does God want the followers of Jesus to undergo pain to help pay the price of sin? Why does accepting to carry the cross with Jesus bring pain into our lives?

Interestingly, the great mystic, John of the Cross, uses this, the inflow of pain into our lives, as a major criterion for discerning whether or not we are authentically following Jesus. For John, you know you are following Jesus when pain begins to flow into your life. Why? Does God lay special pain on those who take Christ seriously?

No. God doesn't apportion special pain on those who take Christ seriously. The pain that flows into our lives if we take Christ seriously doesn't come from God. It flows into us because of a deeper openness, a deeper sensitivity, and a new depth on our part. The algebra works this

way: By authentically opening ourselves up to Christ, we cease being overly self-protective, become more vulnerable and more sensitive, so that life, all of it, can flow into us more freely and more deeply.

And part of what now flows into us is pain: the pain of others, the pain of mother earth, the pain of our own inadequacy and lack of altruism, and the pain caused by the effect of sin everywhere. This pain will now enter us more deeply and we will feel it in a way we never did before because, previously, we protected ourselves against it through insensitivity and self-focus.

Happily, this has a flip side: Just as pain will now flow into our lives more freely and more deeply, so too will meaning and happiness. Once we stop protecting ourselves through self-absorption, both pain and happiness can now flow more freely and more deeply into our hearts and we can begin to breathe out of a deeper part of ourselves.

Freud once commented that sometimes things can be best understood by examining their opposites. That's partially the case here. The opposite of someone who opens herself to pain, who opens herself to the pain of the cross, is a person who is callous and insensitive (in slang, someone "who is thick as a plank!"). Such a person won't feel a lot of pain – but won't feel

much of anything else either.

A number of implications flow from this. First, God doesn't lay pain on us when we become followers of Jesus and immerse ourselves more deeply in the mystery of Christ and the cross. The pain that ensues is intrinsic to the cross and is felt simply because we have now ceased protecting ourselves and are letting life, all of it, flow into us more freely and more deeply. Happily, the pain is more than offset by the new meaning and happiness that are now also felt.

Second, experiencing the pain that flows intrinsically from discipleship and the cross is, as John of the Cross wisely puts it, one of the major criteria that separates the real Gospel from the Prosperity Gospel. When the pain of the cross flows into our lives, we know that we are not feather-bedding our own self-interest in the name of the Gospel.

Third, it's worth it to be sensitive! Freud once said that neurosis (unhealthy anxiety) is the disease of the normal person. What he didn't say, but might have, is that the antithesis of anxiety (healthy and unhealthy) is brute insensitivity, to be thick as a plank and thus protected from pain – but also protected from deeper meaning, love, intimacy, and community.

If you are a sensitive person (perhaps

even an over-sensitive one, prone to depression and anxiety of all sorts) take consolation in that your very struggle indicates that you are not a calloused insensitive person, not a moral boor.

Finally, one of the implications of this is that heaven isn't the same for everyone. Just as pain can be shallow or deep, so too can meaning and happiness. To the degree that we open our hearts to depth, to that same degree deep meaning and happiness can flow into us. A closed heart makes for shallow meaning. A heart partially open makes for some deep meaning, but not full meaning. Whereas the heart that is fully open makes for the deepest meaning.

There are different depths to meaning and happiness here on earth and, I suspect, that will be true too in the next life. So, the invitation from Jesus is to accept the pain that comes from the wood of the cross rather than being thick as a plank!

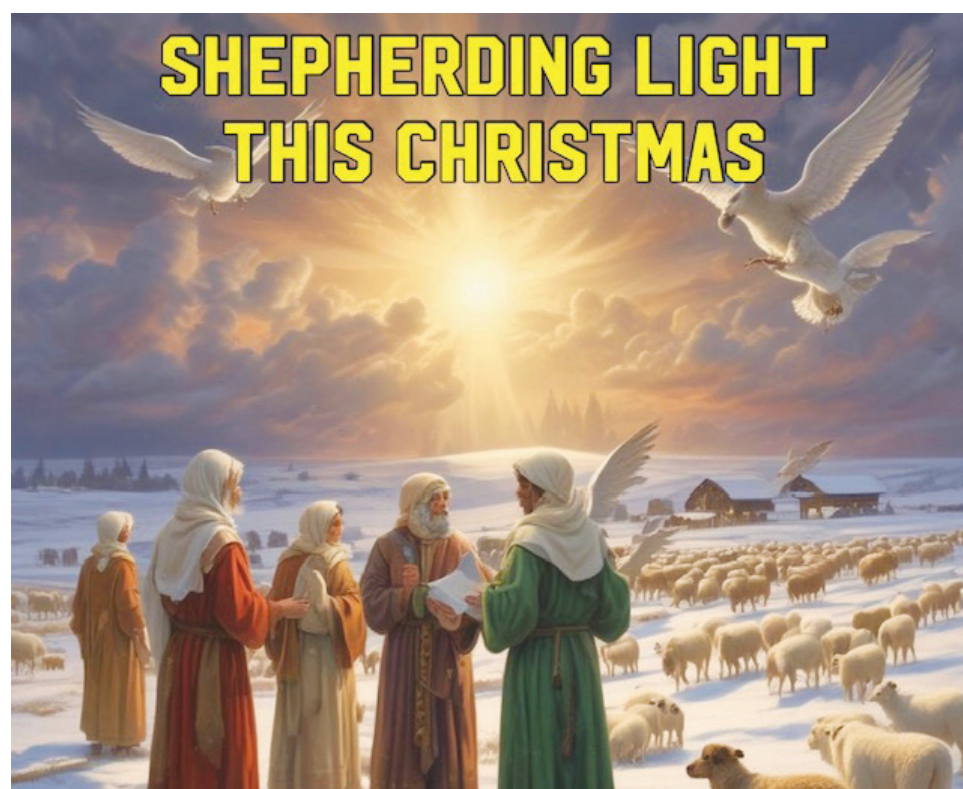
Oblate Fr Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX. He writes a weekly column that is carried in over 90 newspapers around the world. He can be contacted through his website www.ronrolheiser.com

Wonder why shepherds, the so-called ordinary social class of biblical times, nowhere close to royalty or religious leaders' status, received news of Jesus' birth first? We know from Scripture that they received the news from the angel, hastily went to see the child in the manger, and "spread the word concerning what had been told to them about this child, and that all who heard it were amazed" (Luke 2:8-20).

In contrast, the birth of Jesus was largely dealt with indifferently by the religious leaders, as evidenced in Matthew 2:1-6. When King Herod inquired about the newborn "King of the Jews," the chief priests and scribes cited Micah's prophecy stating that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Yet, despite their profound knowledge of the "Messiah," unlike the shepherds, they showed indifference and did not seek Jesus themselves. Was there no urgency or need to find the Saviour? Were their hearts not open or touched like those of the shepherds? Did they even recognize their need for a Saviour?

We also run the risk of becoming like these religious leaders - missing the significance of Jesus' birth and presence, becoming overly distracted, developing cold or lukewarm feelings, or losing our enthusiasm for Christmas if we are not vigilant.

This leads us to a fascinating insight: How were the shepherds different from the religious leaders of that time? Were shepherds truly ordinary, or did they belong to a special group? In biblical times, shepherds were known for their care, protection, and guidance of their flocks. Key attributes of shepherds mentioned in the Scriptures included unwavering dedication (Psalm 23:1-3), staying with their sheep day and night, and shielding them from predators (Ezekiel 34:11-12). In 1 Samuel 17:34-37, David



recounts how he pursued the lion that took a lamb and rescued the lamb from its mouth. Shepherds often exhibited great compassion toward their animals and sacrificed their own safety for the well-being of the flock (John 10:11), demonstrating a profound sense of responsibility. Therefore, one could argue that the good news of Jesus' birth was shared with a group that truly embodied the heart, values, and mantle of our Lord after all.

This further requires us to consider, like the shepherds, whether we wholeheartedly embrace the Christmas spirit (the birth of Christ) with enthusiasm, a sense of responsibility, compassion, and love. Lately, we often hear people say, "I just don't feel the Christmas spirit

yet. I'm having a quiet Christmas because I'm too busy with work," or even dismiss Christmas as something only for children. In an attempt to compensate, they might put up a tree and some lights here and there. As author Roy L. Smith wisely noted, "He who has not Christmas in his heart will never find it under a tree."

While decorations can be wonderful expressions of joy, true joy must begin in the heart and be shared, much like the shepherds did. Are our hearts in the right place this Christmas?

Will you let your heart remain warm and receptive to commemorating our Saviour's birth this Christmas? Open your heart to the greatest message of all time. Just as the shepherds did, seek Him in every way possible — more intentionally and with

true passion — in Masses, meaningful prayers, conversations with Him, and enjoyable festive additions like carols and spirit-filled gatherings.

Be an influencer in your family and community, just like the shepherds who spread the good news and inspire awe in others. True encounters with Christ inspire worship and a desire to tell others about Him. Have we included anyone in our Christmas plan this year that needs the joy of Christmas but is alone or neglected? or is our Christmas celebration only for those who can reciprocate our favours? Will anyone new hear the good news through us this Christmas? Can people see and feel the joy of Christ in Christmas through our presence and kindness? Have we reconciled with those God requires us to forgive and ask forgiveness from them in the true spirit of Christmas?

Our love for Jesus comes from our belief in Him and favour is bestowed upon those who recognise their need for a Saviour. Ephesians 2:8-9 emphasises that salvation is a gift of grace received through faith, not earned by works, showing God's favour towards believers. The shepherds did indeed "recognise" the Messiah that guided their actions. So, let us, too, celebrate Jesus' birth as the most significant news ever shared, that He was born for our salvation. Consequently, embracing Christmas with great enthusiasm, hope, love and immense joy.

Thus friends, jump-start your hearts, rekindle your love, and truly seek Him. Don't keep His light inside of you, but shine it on others so that they too may experience the true meaning of Christmas. Finally, as you approach this season ask yourself, "will YOU be Shepherding the light this Christmas?"

Linda Lopez is the Catechist coordinator at the Church of Jesus Caritas, Kepong.

Little Catholics' corner

St John the Baptist Word Puzzle

Here is a prophesy about Saint John the Baptist.
Use the words from the list below to fill in the
blanks. The letters that are in circles fit into the
matching spots at the bottom.

A voice of one ³ out
in the desert:
" ⁵ the way of the Lord,
make straight his ² .
Every valley shall be ⁷
and every ⁸ and hill
shall be made low.
The winding roads
shall be made ¹ ,
and the ⁶ ways made smooth,
and all flesh shall see
the salvation of ⁴ ."

GOD **MOUNTAIN**
PATHS **STRAIGHT**
ROUGH **PREPARE**
FILLED **CRYING**



THIS YEAR WE CELEBRATE THE SOLEMNITY OF THE
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
ON DECEMBER 9, 2024. LET US COLOUR THE PICTURE
BELOW TO HONOUR OUR MOTHER.

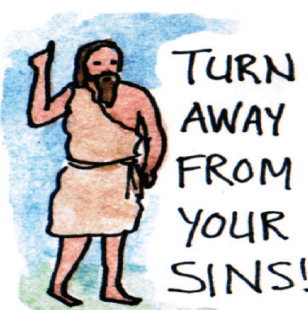


What was St. John the Baptist?

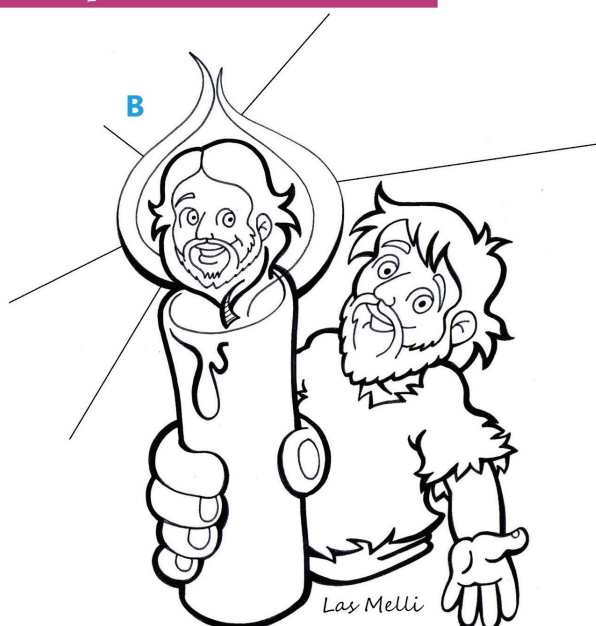
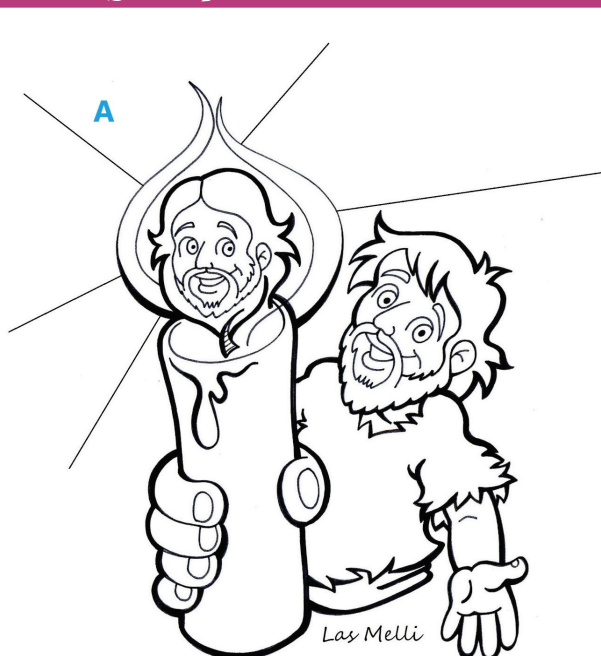
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Isaiah 40:3-5

What was St John the Baptist? Answer: A prophet.
Answers: crying, prepare, paths, filled, mountain, straight, rough, God.



Can you spot SEVEN differences in the picture below?



Dear children,
Advent is a time of
joy when we happily
look forward to the
coming of Jesus.

Today's Gospel
reading tells about
how Saint John the
Baptist went around
telling everyone to
repent and prepare
for the coming of the
Messiah.

An Advent wreath is
a symbol of the coming
of Jesus, our Light,
into the world. It has
three purple candles
and one pink candle.

One candle is lit
on the first week

of Advent, and one
more is added every
week until Christmas.
Every week it gets a
bit brighter because
we are getting closer
to Jesus' coming at
Christmas.

The purple candles
stand for repentance -
being sorry and making
up for our sins. The
pink candle represents
joy. It is lit on the
third week of Advent
because we rejoice
that the waiting is
half over.

Love
Auntie Eliz



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE YOUNG PEOPLE DAY 2024

Daryl Tan

PLENTONG, Johor: On November 23, the Malacca Johore Diocese held its first-ever Diocesan-level Young People's Day at MAJODI Centre. The event brought together 680 enthusiastic participants, including youth, campus students, and young adults, representing the diocese's four main language groups: English, Bahasa Malaysia, Tamil, and Mandarin. The joyful gathering centred around this year's World Youth Day theme: *Those who hope in the Lord will run and not grow weary*.

The one-day event began with Mass celebrated by Bishop Bernard Paul, who urged the young participants to embrace the role of pilgrims of hope rather than mere tourists. He encouraged them to journey with the Lord

and recognise the potential and goodness they hold within. The Mass concluded with the commissioning of the Malacca Johore Diocese Young People's Council (MJDYPC), a team of young leaders representing parishes across the diocese. These council members played a pivotal role in organising, planning, and executing the event, showcasing their dedication and tireless efforts.

After the commissioning, participants were divided into separate session areas, where they attended input sessions on the WYD theme, delivered in the four languages. These sessions built upon the homily from Mass, exploring the question, "How can I be a sign of hope to others?" After the input, participants engaged in group sharing using the 'Conversation in the Spirit' method, where they reflected on and discussed the question together.

The event continued with a booth exhibition showcasing various diocesan ministries, including the Family Life Ministry, Counselling Ministry, Caritas Malaysia, Vocation Ministry, Montfort Youth Centre, and the Creation Justice Ministry. These booths provided a

valuable opportunity for the young people to learn more about the different ministries and explore ways to get involved. Meanwhile, praise and worship sessions in various languages took place in the main hall, and station games were held in other areas of MAJODI Centre.

All 680 participants reconvened in the main hall to celebrate the occasion with the MJDYPD concert, where they united in praise and worship as one vibrant Catholic community. The event concluded with an energetic action song, a rousing cheer of "MJDYPD!", and a final blessing by Fr Alexuchelvam, co-head of the Malacca Johore Diocese Young People Network (MJDYPN).

Overall, the MJDYPD was a joyful and hopeful event, serving as a powerful sign to the broader Catholic community that young people are ready and eager to journey with the Lord, united as one family in the love of Jesus Christ.

Let us continue to pray for all the young people in this country, remembering that "Those who hope in the Lord will run and not be weary."

It was a very fruitful and uplifting event. I met so many bright and friendly peers who share the same faith. I felt very at home during the event and it was filled with good vibes all around.

Jayne Carey Wong,
campus student from the MMU
Malacca Catholic Student
Society (CSS)

Guiding the young participants at the MJDYPD was truly rewarding; witnessing their enthusiasm during workshops, exhibition booths and praise and worship sessions. The highlight for me was seeing their energy and joy come alive throughout the entire programme.

Ann Gratian,
youth advisor from the Church
of St Louis, Kluang



TaiPing Catholic Church marks WYD with 24-hour celebration

TAIPING, Perak: The Parish Youth Council (PYC) of the Taiping Catholic Church celebrated the 39th World Youth Day 2024 with a 24-hour programme themed *Rejoicing in Hope* on November 23 and 24. Inspired by Isaiah 40:31, the theme declared by Pope Francis, the event brought together approximately 60 participants, including organisers, for a joyful celebration of faith, fun, and fellowship.

The programme kicked off on Saturday morning with registration and an opening address by the event coordinator, Alvinus. In his sharing, he encouraged the youth to embrace the celebration, emphasizing a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere. The day began with uplifting worship led by Alvinus and Elaine Lim, followed by engaging icebreaker activities fa-

cilitated by Arissa, Rita Pauline and Rachel from the games team.

One of the highlights was the HOPE Backpack workshop conducted by Joshua Joel, PYC chairman, who introduced practical and spiritual tools for living in hope. This was followed by the *Amazing Race: Church Edition*. Participants enthusiastically competed in this thrilling challenge, solving Bible verse clues and completing creative tasks that fostered teamwork and excitement.

In the evening, participants and parishioners joined together for an outdoor Way of the Cross at Dataran St Louis. This unique element, inspired by World Youth Day in Portugal, created a shared spiritual experience that deepened the sense of community. It was followed by the



Commissioning Mass

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction led by Deacon Charles Lazaroo, which further enriched the night with prayer and reverence.

The evening culminated in the Concert of Hope, featuring performances by various ministries, apostolates, catechism classes, and young adults. The concert showcased a range of talents, uniting diverse groups through music, dance, and cultural expressions. The PYC band's closing performance had everyone on their feet, with action songs like "Fewah Fewah" and "Chada" bringing infectious energy to the celebration.

As midnight approached, participants gathered around a campfire for late-night fun, including games and activities prepared by the entertainment team, Sharmin, Akith, and Joanne. The night ended with a heartfelt closing worship session at 3.00am.

On Sunday morning, the celebration concluded with a commissioning Mass at 9.00am animated by the PYC. During the Mass, Msgr Stephen Liew commended the PYC for their efforts, highlighting the spirit of inclusiveness and synodality championed by Pope Francis. At the



Campfire

end of the Mass, young people were formally commissioned, and the programme wrapped up with action songs, games, and lunch.

The success of the event was made possible by the dedicated PYC committee members, including Mark, Edel, Jennifer, Casilda, Mary Sylvia, Cris, Justin, Trisha, and Linda. Their tireless work ensured that World Youth Day 2024 was a joyful and memorable experience, reflecting the universal call to "Rejoice in Hope."

This 24-hour celebration reaffirmed the spirit of youth in the Church and left participants inspired to carry the message of hope into their daily lives.



The participants

WORLD YOUTH DAY CELEBRATION IN THE PARISHES



Church of Our Lady Good Health, Parit Buntar



Church of Christ the Light, Kepong



Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Butterworth

Deborah's court: Empowering women for mission

PENANG: Recognising that some women feel uncomfortable sharing personal matters in group discussions, the Penang Diocese Vocation Team (PDVT) introduced a bold and innovative vocation programme designed specifically for women, creating a safe space for open discussion and fellowship.

The theme of the weekend was 'Deborah's Court: Empowered for Mission', inspired by the story of Deborah from the Book of Judges, Chapters 4 and 5. Deborah's threefold calling as a Prophet, Judge, and Warrior served as the foundation for exploring women's roles in mission, both in Scripture and in today's world.

With a spark of creativity, the PDVT organised an exclusive programme for young women, focusing on the charisms of Deborah and other women in the Bible. The weekend explored the calls to Marriage, Singlehood, and Religious Life, offering participants a deeper understanding of their vocations. Meanwhile, the male lay team members were assigned to kitchen duties, allowing their wives, along with the Rev Sisters and other women, to engage in meaningful group discussions.

This unique programme empowered the women of the parish to reflect on their own calling and mission, fostering a supportive and enriching environment for spiritual growth.

The programme was held from October 4 to 6 at the Little Sisters of the Poor, Lorong Batu Lancang in Air Itam, Penang. The participants were blessed to be the first, after many years,



Young women with Fr Desmond Jensen and religious sisters.

to use the large bungalow where the first congregation of Little Sisters lived. The bungalow, donated by the late Mr Aw Boon Par and Mdm. Teh Ah Lan of the then famous "Tiger Balm" family, was named Villa Maria. The Mother Superior of the Little Sisters of the Poor said that since everyone was involved in Synodality, they needed to open their space and place to be available for mission.

The programme saw the participation of six women, aged 21 to 34, from various locations, including Penang Island and Sungai Siput. The team facilitating the programme was a diverse group, comprising members from the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary; Sisters of the Infant Jesus; Kongregasi Puteri Karmel; Canossian Daughters of Charity; Little Sisters of the Poor; Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception; Auxiliary of the Apostolate; married women, and the Project Coordinator for Caritas. The team was led by Fr Desmond Jensen, Assistant Vocation

Director of the PDVT.

The programme began with a warm welcome address by chairman Emmanuel Dorai, followed by an engaging icebreaker session led by Rachel Maria. This session allowed participants and team members to mingle, setting the stage for deeper, personal sharing during group discussions and informal one-on-one conversations over meals and breaks.

On the first evening, Carmelita Xavier-Arokiadass opened the session by sharing her personal journey of discovering her mission and ministry. She spoke about how women are equally loved and empowered by God, blessed with the gifts and talents needed for their mission. She encouraged the participants to take the first step and respond to God's call.

The following morning, Fr Desmond offered insights into the concept of vocation. He reminded the participants of their Baptismal promises, emphasising their responsibility to become priests, kings, and prophets. He high-

lighted the importance of prayer, listening to one's inner voice, reading the Bible, and discerning God's Will through Scripture (1 Samuel 3:1-3, Luke 10:38-42).

Leoreen Heah Rodrigues then spoke about the gifts mentioned in Scripture and shared examples of women in the Bible who used their talents to glorify God through their actions and lives.

Bernadette Teh highlighted the importance of ongoing formation, focusing on the essentials: prayer, the Word of God, service, community, and the sacraments. She also shared her calling to the Auxiliary of the Apostolate, describing how they serve the needs of the Church through their gifts.

Amelia Beatrice reintroduced the Holy Spirit to the group, sharing the acronym POWER, which stands for Prayer, Obedience, Worship, Eucharist, and Repentance. She led a prayer session where women ministered to women, offering support from a woman's perspective, which added a deeper meaning to the experience.

On the final day, a forum was held where Sisters from various orders shared the unique calls they had received. It was a heartwarming session as Rev Sisters and lay apostolates recounted their struggles and challenges in answering God's call. For some, it was heart-breaking to leave their families, but once they had decided to follow Jesus, they surrendered their lives to God's Will, finding peace and joy in their path.

Pioneer of interreligious dialogue passes away at 72

Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, who served as prefect of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue since 2019, passed away November 25, after a long illness. He was 72. A former missionary in Egypt and Sudan, he was one of the Vatican's prominent figures in fostering interreligious dialogue, particularly with Islam. This dialogue became a priority for the Holy See after Pope Francis' election in 2013, especially in regions where Catholics are a minority.

Ayuso Guixot began leading the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 2016, the year of his episcopal ordination, as his predecessor, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, faced declining health. He officially assumed the role after Cardinal Tauran's death in 2018. Just a year later, on February 4, 2019, Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, signed the landmark Document on Human Fraternity in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. This historic event was followed by several similar symbolic and diplomatic gestures, most recently in Jakarta, Indonesia, where Pope Francis met with the Imam of Asia's largest mosque in September.

"The world needs fraternity! Coming together to walk together is a way of overcoming this violence," Cardinal Ayuso Guixot said in an interview with *La Croix* in February 2020.

Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot was born in Seville, southern Spain, on June 17, 1952. At 21, while studying law, he was inspired by a magazine published by the Comboni Missionaries. Their spirituality centred on the Sacred Heart of Jesus — the theme of Pope Francis' recent encyclical *Dilexit nos* — and their intercultural dialogue and presence in East Africa drew the young Sevillian to join the Italian-founded congregation in September 1973. He took perpetual vows and was ordained a priest in 1980. Soon after, he left Spain to study at the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI).

After earning his degree in 1982, he moved to Cairo, Egypt, where he became the parish priest for the Latin-rite community at Sacred Heart Church in Abbasiyya. Located near the Coptic Orthodox Cathedral and Al-Azhar

University — both of which would later play significant roles in his Vatican career — the young priest focused on welcoming migrants and political refugees from neighbouring Sudan. He was soon sent to Sudan to continue his mission.

At the time, Sudan was embroiled in a civil war following the imposition of *Syariah* law by Gaafar Mohammed Nimeiry's government and the division of the country's south. From the late 1980s until 2002, Ayuso Guixot directed the catechetical centre in the Diocese of El-Obeid, which included Darfur. He also taught Islamic studies in Khartoum, Sudan's capital, beginning in 1989.

In 2000, Ayuso Guixot earned a doctorate in dogmatic theology from the University of Granada, Spain. He continued teaching in Cairo and later at PISAI in Rome, becoming its rector in 2006. In 2007, he was appointed as a consultant to the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, led by Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran at the time.

In 2012, Pope Benedict XVI promoted Ayuso Guixot to secretary of the council. Relations between the Holy See and Al-Azhar had significantly deteriorated following deadly attacks on Copts in Egypt, and the Vatican relied on the former missionary's interpersonal connections to rebuild ties with Cairo. Ayuso Guixot fulfilled this task and engaged in worldwide dialogue with Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Shintoists, and Confucianists. Was this dialogue naive, potentially exposing the Vatican to exploitation? This was among the questions raised in *La Croix*'s 2020 interview with Cardinal Ayuso Guixot. "I work with many dialogue partners, and that does not mean that I am 'playing their game,'" he explained. "The important thing is the will to dialogue. We do not sin by ingenuity. It is a question of gradually bringing dialogue into people's minds in order to establish relationships."

A strong advocate for fraternal dialogue, Ayuso Guixot rejected any notion of relativism or efforts to create a "universal religion," but instead, "to open ourselves to the reality of others, while being rooted in our identity, to work for a better world." Mikael Corre, LCI (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)



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14th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



**Gracy @ Grasy
Marshal Fernandez**
19/9/1940 – 12/12/2010

*The sorrow we feel,
we cannot explain.
The ache in our hearts will
long remain. Thus we ask,
Our dear Lord, tell her,
We love her so, so much and
will be thinking of her on
this day and everyday...*

Deeply missed and
cherished by Loved ones.

In Loving Memory of Our Parents 26th Anniversary 9th Anniversary



Betzy John
Departed:
4.1.1999

A memorial mass will be celebrated at the
Church of the Assumption, Petaling Jaya on
January 4, 2025 at 6.00pm.

Dearly missed by
Children, Grandchildren and all loved ones.



E. K. John
Departed:
11.12.2015

43rd Anniversary In Loving Memory



Stephen P. Pereira
Departed:
7th December 1981

*Those we love don't go away
They walk beside us
every day
Unseen, unheard but
always near,
Still loved, still missed
And very dear.*

Dearly missed and forever
remembered by loved ones.

8th Anniversary In Loving Memory of Stanley Gomez

1 Corinthians 2:9

*What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined, what God
has prepared for those who love him.*



**Arrived from the Lord:
13th August 1942
Returned to the Lord:
9th December 2016**

*He never looked for praises.
He was never one to boast.
He just went on quietly working
For the ones he loved the most.
His dreams were seldom spoken.
His wants were very few,
And most of the time his worries
Went unspoken, too.*

*He was there...a firm foundation
Through all our storms of life,
A sturdy hand we held on to
In times of stress and strife,
A true friend we could turn to
When times were good or bad.
One of our greatest blessings,
The man that we called Acha.*

Dearly missed by Kenneth, Pauline, Felicia,
Samantha and loved ones.

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Eternal City prepares to welcome millions for 2025 Jubilee Year

VATICAN: As the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope draws near, Vatican City is poised to host an estimated 35 million pilgrims. Beginning on Christmas Eve, the Jubilee will open with the symbolic unsealing of the Holy Door at Saint Peter's Basilica, offering the faithful an opportunity to visit sacred sites, perform acts of devotion, and receive plenary indulgences granted by the Pope.

Held every 25 years, the Catholic Holy Year follows the 2024 Year of Prayer, designated by Pope Francis as a time for personal reflection on faith and vocation. The 2025 Jubilee, themed *Pilgrims of Hope*, centres on fostering peace in a world challenged by climate change and global conflicts.

For young Catholics, the Jubilee offers a unique spiritual journey. Steve Kerekes, founder of *WorldYouthDay.com* and JMJ Pilgrimages, has been organising youth pilgrimages across several countries, guiding participants to landmarks such as the Basilica of St John Lateran and the Appian Way catacombs, with the experience culminating in an audience with Pope Francis at Tor Vergata.

"Leaving their country behind is vital," Kerekes said, emphasising the need to step away from daily distractions. "Pilgrimage is an act of love — a way for the faithful to replenish their spiritual wells and return home



Saint Peter's Basilica

as forces for grace and mercy in today's world."

In Rome, St Patrick's American Parish is preparing to welcome thousands of Anglophone pilgrims from across the globe, including Australia, Kenya, Ghana, and Singapore. The parish plans to extend its opening hours and publish an updated version of its pilgrim guide, last released for the 2000 Jubilee. The guide will provide practical advice and spiritual reflections for those embarking on the holy journey.

Fr Matt Berrios, the parish rector and a Paulist priest from the United States, highlighted the significance of sensory and historical experiences during pilgrimages.

"Rome's pilgrimage spaces are extraordinary examples of art and spirituality," Fr Berrios remarked. "Sometimes, art, poetry, and music express the core of our faith better than words ever can."

Reflecting on the Jubilee theme, Fr Berrios described hope as integral to Christian spirituality.

"Hope reaches beyond ourselves. It's about lighting the way not only for our own journey but for others who seek healing and faith," he said.

Rooted in the biblical tradition of the *jobel* — a ram's horn heralding a year of rest and renewal — the Jubilee is a centuries-old symbol of spiritual and communal rejuvenation.

For theologian Filomeno Lopez of Guinea-Bissau, the act of pilgrimage is a collective endeavour that fosters solidarity and empathy.

"Pilgrimage reinforces the idea of coming together, so when we return home, we carry something transformative," he explained. "For us Africans, life's essence is togetherness."

Lopez also underscored the parallels between pilgrimage and the migrant experience.

"Christ was a migrant from heaven, and as humans, we are all temporary guests on Earth," he said. "The Jubilee is a time to pause and reflect on what truly matters. Before I leave this world, what legacy can I leave for others?"

At its heart, the Jubilee of 2025 calls the global Church to renew its mission as a beacon of hope and healing in a fractured world.

Through prayer, acts of charity, and reflection, pilgrims are invited to embrace a vision of faith that prioritises peace, care for creation, and community.

As millions prepare to embark on their journey to Rome, the Jubilee promises to be a moment of profound spiritual renewal, uniting the faithful in shared hope for a brighter, more compassionate future. **Vatican News**

Plant a Tree this Christmas: A Gift of Love to Creation

KUALA LUMPUR: This Christmas, why not give a gift that keeps on giving — for yourself, for others, and for the planet? As part of *HERALD's* 30th-anniversary celebrations, we launched an inspiring CSR initiative: the 'HERALD Tree Planting Campaign'. This campaign is more than a response to Pope Francis' call in *Laudato Si'* to care for our common home — it's an opportunity to leave a lasting legacy of love for creation.

Through a partnership with APE Malaysia under their ROAR (Restore Our Amazing Rainforest) initiative, *HERALD* has already planted 100 trees in the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary, Sabah. These trees are transforming a once-barren patch of land into a vibrant rainforest teeming with life. In just five years, these saplings will stand tall, forming part of the forest canopy. Over the next decade, they'll create a thriving habitat for gibbons, orangutans, birds, and countless other species.

While print media remains at the heart of *HERALD's* mission, we recognise the environmental impact of production. This tree-planting initiative ensures we offset that footprint while contributing to the global fight against deforestation, climate change, and biodiversity loss.

For just RM35 per sapling, you can sponsor a tree through the ROAR initiative. Your sponsorship includes four years of nurturing and care to ensure the sapling thrives.



So this Christmas, give a gift that truly lasts. By sponsoring a tree, you'll help restore degraded forests, rebuild vital wildlife corridors, and support the local communities who depend on these ecosystems. It's a gift of hope, healing, and harmony with nature — one that embodies the spirit of renewal and the joy of giving back. Unlike material presents, this is a legacy of love that will grow and endure for generations. Celebrate meaningfully by making this Christmas a symbol of lasting impact for yourself, your loved ones, and the Earth itself.

For more details, go to: <https://www.heraldmalaysia.com/CSR-reforestation>

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Published by The Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur on behalf of the Bishops of Peninsular Malaysia, HERALD, APC, 5 Jalan Robertson, 50150 Kuala Lumpur and printed by Vivar Printing Sdn. Bhd., Lot 25, Rawang Integrated Ind. Park, Mukim Rawang, Jalan Batu Arang, 48000 Rawang, Selangor.