

# HERALD

The Catholic Weekly

## Mission Statement

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

TERHAD

PP 8460/11/2012 (030939) ISSN: 1394-3294 | Vol: 32 No. 07 | February 23, 2025

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Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual.  
*1 Cor. 15:45-46*



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**Young artist brings vibrant vision to life**

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(Unsplash/Tom Wang)

# Love is worth more than intelligence

**VATICAN: Pope Francis, in his message to leaders at the February 10–11 Artificial Intelligence Action Summit in Paris, emphasised the need for technology to serve and defend humanity. Co-hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the summit brought together government officials, business executives, scientists, and artists to discuss the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on global governance and the economy.**

In his message, the Pope reiterated his stance that AI, while offering significant potential, must be guided by human values. He quoted French philosopher Jacques Maritain, saying, "Love is worth more than intelligence," to underscore his belief that human dignity should remain central in any technological advancement. Pope Francis also recalled a distinction he made in his re-

cent encyclical *Dilexit Nos*, where he contrasted the operation of algorithms with the power of the human heart. "Only the human 'heart' can reveal the meaning of our existence," he said, urging summit participants not to forget the fundamental role of human compassion and creativity in shaping the future.

The Holy Father raised concerns about the overemphasis on data and algorithms, warning that it could manipulate the truth and undermine human creativity. He urged global leaders to resist using AI to impose uniform models that reduce reality to mere numbers and predetermined categories. This caution reflects his broader call for AI to be used in ways that promote human flourishing, not diminish it.

AI can indeed be a powerful tool for innovation, particularly in areas such as environmental sustainability. However, Pope Francis also warned of its potential risks, including its impact on human relationships and the further marginalisation of developing nations. He called for a human-centred approach to the use of AI, highlighting the importance of ensuring that technology serves the common good.

Pope Francis also expressed gratitude for the summit's efforts to involve a wide range of stakeholders, ensuring that decisions about AI are made with the input of diverse voices. He highlighted the need for human oversight in AI decision-making processes, stating that without proper control, AI could pose a threat to human dignity. "If AI does not have proper human oversight," he cautioned, "it could show its most 'fearsome' side."

One of the Pope's key messages was the importance of creating a platform of public interest around AI, allowing every nation to use AI for its development and for the fight against poverty, while also protecting local cultures and languages. In this way, AI could reflect the true diversity and richness of humanity, ensuring that all people contribute to its development and benefit from its potential.

In his letter to President Macron, Pope Francis also expressed his appreciation for the summit as a "praiseworthy initiative," aimed at bringing together a broad range of experts to work towards concrete solutions. He welcomed the opportunity for global leaders to engage in a political process that

would defend humanity from AI's potential misuse.

AI, the Pope noted, could promote eco-sustainability if used wisely, but he also raised concerns about the high energy consumption associated with AI infrastructures. As such, the Pope urged summit participants to approach AI with both optimism and caution, ensuring that its development is sustainable and ethical.

In closing, Pope Francis called for the voices of the poor and powerless to be heard in discussions about AI regulation. These groups often lack representation in global decision-making processes, yet their inclusion is vital for a just and inclusive future. "Our ultimate challenge will always remain mankind," the Pope said, reinforcing the need to prioritise human dignity in the face of technological advancement.

Through his message, Pope Francis reiterated that love, not intelligence alone, must guide the development and use of AI. He stressed that the heart, representing human compassion, creativity, and dignity, must remain at the center of the ongoing conversation about artificial intelligence.

**Agencies**

The Catholic Weekly  
**HERALD**

ESTABLISHED 1994

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

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



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# A question of ethics in photography

In today's digital age, taking photos at events has become as common as attending them. With smartphones in hand, it seems easy to snap away indiscriminately, capturing moments that might seem fleeting. However, this practice raises important ethical questions, particularly when it comes to privacy and consent.

First and foremost, not asking for permission before photographing individuals can lead to discomfort and feelings of violation. While some may be open to being photographed, others may not want their image shared publicly, especially on social media platforms.

Respecting people's privacy is a fundamental aspect of interpersonal communication, and photography should be no exception.

Moreover, indiscriminate photography can blur the lines between public and private spaces. Just because an event is open to the public does not mean that attendees consent to be photographed.

Many people attend events to enjoy themselves without the pressure of being in the spotlight. Capturing candid moments can be beautiful, but it's crucial to consider the context and the feelings of those around you.

Lastly, obtaining permission fosters a sense of community and respect. Asking someone if you can take their photo can lead to meaningful interactions, allowing you to connect with people on a deeper level. It can transform a simple snapshot into a shared experience, enhancing the overall joy of the event.

While the impulse to capture every moment is natural, it's essential to remember the importance of consent in photography. By



Unsplash/Leon Seibert

being mindful and respectful, we can create a more positive environment for everyone involved, ensuring that our memories are cherished by all.

So, next time you are at an event, please take a moment to ask before you click — you might just make someone's day!

Which brings us to taking photos without asking for permission, especially in sensitive situations like illness or death. In our digital age, where sharing is instantaneous and viral, the implications of snapping photos indiscriminately can be profound.

When someone is unwell or nearing the end of life, their vulnerability is heightened. Capturing such moments without consent can invade their privacy and dignity, reducing a deeply personal experience to a mere spectacle

for others.

It's essential to consider the feelings of the individuals involved and their families.

Moreover, the potential for these images to go viral can lead to unintended consequences, including public scrutiny, harassment, or the exploitation of someone's suffering for clicks and likes.

Ethically, we must prioritise compassion and respect for others' privacy over the urge to document every moment. Instead of capturing indiscriminately, we should ask for permission, consider the emotional context, and reflect on the potential impact of our actions on those who are already enduring difficult times. In doing so, we honour their humanity and uphold a standard of empathy in our digital interactions.

Marina Emmanuel, *Weekly Echo*

## Embracing love and mercy in our relationships

For many of us, the word "compassion" tends to bring about a feeling of sympathy empathy, pity and feeling sorry for someone. However, if we define compassion just by these feelings, then what we express as compassion is not as deep as what we are called to be. The term "compassion" derives from the Latin roots *com*, meaning "with," and *passio*, meaning "suffering." Thus, compassion literally means "to suffer with." This etymology underscores a profound empathy, a willingness to share in the suffering of others. In Hebrew, the word for compassion is *rakhum*, which is related to *rekhem*, meaning "womb," suggesting a deep, nurturing love akin to that of a mother for her child.

The readings today invite us to reflect deeper on the virtue of compassion, especially as it pertains to our relationships with those closest to us. The Gospel of Luke challenges us to embody a love that transcends natural inclinations, urging us to "love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:27-28). Very often, our compassion is expressed merely in words, but it never extends to our action towards others.

In the First Book of Samuel, we encounter a powerful example of compassion in the relationship between David and Saul. Despite being pursued by Saul, who sought his life, David refrains from harming him when given the opportunity. Instead, he chooses to spare Saul, demonstrating mercy and respect for the Lord's anointed (1 Samuel 26:7-9). This act of compassion highlights the strength required to show kindness to those who may not deserve it, reflecting a

commitment to a higher moral standard. It also takes much wisdom to discern that, ultimately, judgement belongs to God and not mere mortals.

Psalm 103 further illuminates the nature of divine compassion: "The Lord is compassion and love, slow to anger, rich in mercy... He does not treat us according to our sins or repay us according to our faults" (Psalm 103:8,10). This passage reassures us of God's unwavering compassion towards humanity, serving as a model for how we should treat others.

In the context of our daily lives, practising compassion begins within our closest relationships — our family and friends. These are the individuals with whom we share our most intimate moments, and yet, they are often the ones we take for granted or treat with impatience. Scripture guides us to extend the same compassion to them as we would to strangers or even enemies. The Gospel of Luke emphasises this by stating, "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them" (Luke 6:32). True compassion calls us to go beyond reciprocity; it challenges us to love unconditionally, without expecting anything in return. This means listening attentively to a family member's concerns, offering support during difficult times, and forgiving mistakes without holding grudges.

Moreover, the call to "be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36) reminds us that our actions should mirror the divine compassion we receive. In our homes, this can manifest as creating an environment where each person feels valued and understood, fostering open communication, and addressing conflicts with empathy rather

## Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Fr Philip Tay, OCD

### 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Readings: 1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23;

1 Corinthians 15:45-49;

Gospel: Luke 6:27-38

than judgment. Practising compassion also involves recognising humanity in those closest to us. It's easy to become desensitised to the struggles of those we see every day, but Scripture encourages us to remain vigilant in our empathy. As 1 Peter 3:8 advises, "Be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble."

The daily struggle and challenge for us is that we often find ourselves showing compassion to those who are far removed from us. We usually have the tendency to express compassion to the world at large and those oppressed in our society and in our church. We seem to be more willing to listen and empathise with those who are outside of our family and people may even see us as someone who is very compassionate but when we go home to our family, we put on a different personality, becoming the total opposite of who we are to outsiders. When that happens, we become insincere and, to a certain extent, hypocritical.

In essence, the Scriptures call us to embody compassion in all aspects of our lives, starting with those nearest to us. By doing so, we not only strengthen our relationships but also reflect the love and mercy that God continually extends to us. Let the response to the Responsorial Psalm be our daily guide because, as God is compassion and love, so too, as children of God, we are all called to live out this compassion and love in both our words and actions.

# Peninsular Malaysian Bishops renew partnership with Australian Catholic University

KUALA LUMPUR: In 2017, the Peninsular bishops of Malaysia partnered with the Australian Catholic University (ACU) to offer the *Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Catholic Culture* for leaders in ministries. The two-year programme has since graduated two cohorts of students, including clergy, religious, and laity, all of whom have received valuable insights and shared experiences from the course. Feedback from participants has highlighted the knowledge gained and the enriching group discussions.

Building on the success of the previous cohorts, the Peninsular Malaysian bishops are pleased to announce the continuation of this partnership, with the course now open to



participants from any archdiocese or diocese. The course, titled *Mission and Culture*, is designed to offer deeper formation in Catholic mission for individuals at all levels of ministry, including both clergy and laity.

The programme spans two years, consisting of two required units and two elective units. The curriculum will be delivered

through a combination of face-to-face sessions and online learning. Each semester will feature one unit.

The course outline includes:

- Year 1, Semester 1: THMM505 - Mission Imperative: Engaging with Christian Mission
- Year 1, Semester 2: Elective - THCT504 - Catholic Ethos and Care of the Person
- Year 2, Semester 1: Elective - THCP518 - Catholic Social Thought in Practice
- Year 2, Semester 2: THMM506 - Mission in Context

The total cost of the degree is

RM30,000 for the two years. The programme will be coordinated by the director of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Institute, Sr Margaret Sta Maria, who is available for further inquiries or clarification. Interested individuals can reach her via email at [margaretedcc@archkl.org](mailto:margaretedcc@archkl.org) or by phone at 012-2490238.

The commencement of the course will depend on the formation of a group of participants, with further details to be provided once a group is ready. The Peninsular Malaysian bishops express their gratitude for the ongoing collaboration and support, and look forward to the continued success of the programme.

## IMPORTANT DATE

March 5:

**Ash Wednesday**

(Day of Fast & Abstinence)

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Lenten season in the Catholic Church, a time of reflection, repentance, and spiritual renewal. On this day, Catholics receive ashes on their foreheads as a symbol of mortality and a call to repentance. This marks the start of a 40-day journey of fasting, prayer, and penance leading up to Easter.



## Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #211



Dear friends and pilgrims of Jubilee Year 2025, we journeyed with other Malaysians as they celebrated CNY, Thaipusam and Chap Goh Meh last week.

**Growing crises, growing challenges and growing needs.** Malaysia is becoming an ageing society, with increasing numbers living alone, dying alone. What do we need? More protection laws? Flu jabs? Wellness hubs? Controversial move to set guidelines for Muslims attending non-Muslim events was, wisely, revoked. Malaysia wants to be a sporting powerhouse, with athletes who cannot handle pressure. But only demanding situations and crises define who are leaders and champions. Everyone knows pressure and high benchmarks produce excellence. The 20th-century Cold War was defined by nuclear weapons. Today, a new cold war is being waged, with artificial intelligence (AI) as the ultimate weapon. The AI race is a battle for influence and power. AI has the potential to reshape economies, military strategies, and even global narratives. China is a formidable challenger, India the emerging AI powerhouse, EU champions ethical AI and Malaysia, by becoming a digital innovation hub, is the rising star of ASEAN. Quote of the week: "When we compete, we go to win. You can win 1,000 bronze medals, but without enough gold, you won't be in the top 10 of the medal table".

**Self-managing Times:** Seeds of Compassion (Joyce Rupp). The one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. — 2 Corinthians 9:6

A group was asked to consider the seeds as symbols of the four main spiritual qualities necessary for compassion's growth: non-judgment, nonviolence,

forgiveness, and mindfulness.

The more these seeds are nurtured, the greater the harvest of compassion. Enlivening these four aspects requires deliberate practice, interior stamina, and trust in the power of the Holy One to assist in their development...

We plant the seeds of compassion by being aware of our thoughts and feelings, and by the deliberate intention to think and respond in a kind-hearted manner... We can teach our minds to activate compassion, so that we do not react on impulse, or go about our lives unconsciously, missing opportunities to alleviate suffering — and create more suffering.

What do you do with your thoughts and feelings? Do they run rampant all day without being tended to? Do they move your heart toward loving-kindness? The qualities of non-judgment, nonviolence, forgiveness, and mindfulness wait to be nurtured.

### A Thought for the Week: Julie, the Software Engineer

"Yes, but, it wasn't my fault" "Yes, but, I didn't know...." "Yes, but, they said...."

That's what Julie's manager heard whenever he gave Julie (the new junior software engineer) feedback about her low performance. Whenever he would suggest a way she might improve her work, she'd respond with a "yes, but" and some defensive excuse. While this new engineer's technical skills were acceptable, they weren't stellar..... unlikely to improve if she couldn't handle hearing constructive feedback, let alone criticism.

So, when the company president called for staff reductions, her manager remembered Julie's "yes, but" responses. After being told her position was terminated, Julie tweeted to her friends, "I just got fired! They expect too much! It's not fair!"

*Lesson from the manager:* Her "yes,

but" reaction is a sign of defensiveness. Be aware of your habits.

Self-awareness, one of the four key components of emotional intelligence, underlies the other three. Without knowing what we're feeling, we can't take steps to control those emotions. Self-management is the second component. Lacking self-awareness, we can't have the third, social awareness. We don't understand how we impact other people and can't tune in to what others feel. Moving beyond awareness of others to interaction, without self-awareness, the fourth — relationship management — is impossible.

### QnQ! Q asks? Do we have to go through frustrations?

1. Most of us undergo different degrees of frustration. Are you encountering frustration right now? Frustration is "the feeling of being upset or annoyed as a result of being unable to change or achieve something. Frustration is the spark before the breakthrough".
2. Didn't you know that every major shift in your life started with frustration? It doesn't mean you're doing it wrong or failing, it means you realised your strategy (the "what, how and when") needs to be upgraded. It's not necessarily an exit point but a time to adjust, adapt, evolve and innovate.

**The Holy Spirit @work:** Virtues are formed by prayer. Prayer preserves temperance. Prayer suppresses anger. Prayer prevents emotions of pride and envy. Prayer draws into the soul the Holy Spirit, and raises man to Heaven." *St Ephrem*

**Something To Tickle You:** True faith is not a leap into the dark; it's a leap into the light. *Eric Metaxas*

*Bishop Bernard Paul*

**Bishop Bernard Paul**

## PENANG DIOCESE

### Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

#### February

- 25 Meeting – Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) – Penang Branch, Catholic Diocesan Centre

## MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

### Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

#### February

- 25 Meeting – Deliverance and Exorcism Office Team 1st Quarterly at MPI
- 25 Meeting – South Johor Vicariate Cemetery Committee with all South Johor parish priests at MAJODI Centre
- 26 Meeting – Melaka Vicariate Pastoral Council, Church of St Mary, Ayer Salak, Melaka
- 27 Meeting – North-Central Johor Vicariate Pastoral Council
- 28 Meeting – South Johor Vicariate Pastoral Council

# Segamat parishioners embark on a day of exploration and reflection

Richard Joseph

SEGAMAT: On February 11, a lively group of 80 parishioners from the Church of St Philip embarked on a pilgrimage to the Chapel of St Joseph in Genuang, Segamat Estate. This chapel, built in 1948 by the faithful under the guidance of Michael Pillai and the estate management, originally served as a wooden structure for catechism classes for children and the elderly. Monthly visits from priests from Muar and Kluang allowed the celebration of Mass in Tamil. In 1992, Fr Phillip Kolandaismy (d. 2012), oversaw

the chapel's reconstruction, which was blessed by Bishop James Chan on June 23, 1993.

In 2018, parishioners celebrated both the 70th anniversary of the original chapel and the 25th anniversary of the new chapel, which is currently under the jurisdiction of the Church of St Philip, Segamat.

After visiting the Chapel of St Joseph, the group continued their journey to the Chapel of St Anthony in Yong Peng, where they were given a brief history of the chapel, which was constructed in 2002. The pilgrimage continued to Miriam Home in Kluang, where they spent about 30 minutes



Fr William Pillai anointing the pilgrims.



The pilgrims walking up to the chapel.

chatting with the sisters and the elderly residents.

Miriam Home for the Aged, established in 1982, is located along the Kluang-Air Hitam Road. It is operated by the Canossian Sisters, assisted by workers and volunteers. The home provides much-needed shelter for the poor and elderly of all races and religions, particularly those who are alone or abandoned by family. The residents, all senior citizens in their twilight years, often lack the means to support themselves. Miriam Home offers them a better living environment — emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Here, they can spend their twilight years in comfort, interact with others of

their age, and receive visitors from non-governmental organisations who come to uplift their spirits.

The next stop was to the jubilee pilgrimage centre of the Church of St Louis Church in Kluang, where Fr William Michael welcomed the group. They attended a Mass celebrated by Fr William and Fr Paul Wong. Later, they were anointed with oil by Fr William and received pilgrimage passports before having lunch there.

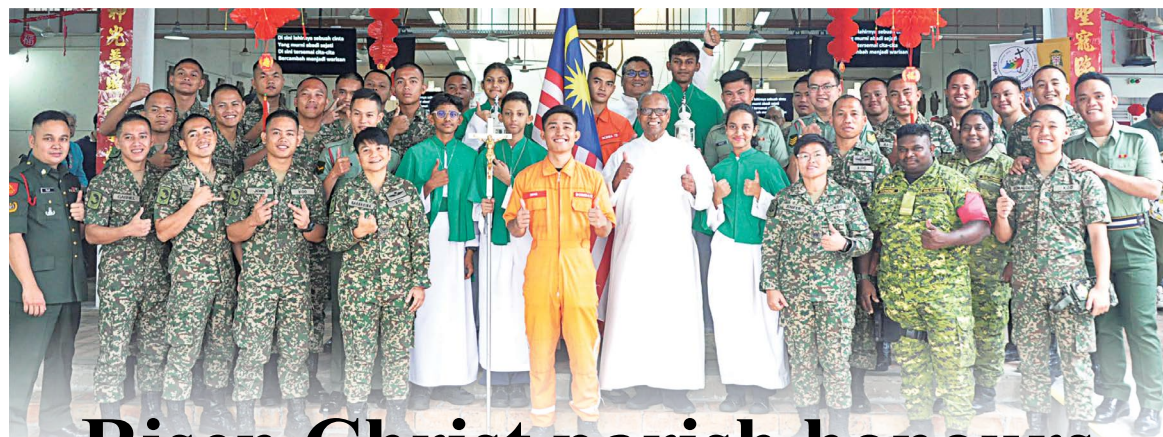
The group then headed to the Annai Velankanni chapel in Temiang Renchong, Pagoh, Muar, where they were greeted by committee members who shared information about the chapel and its history. The feast day for this

chapel typically falls on September 8, attracting a crowd of around 400 to 500 people. Fr Paul Wong provided explanations in Chinese for the parishioners about the chapel.

After visiting the chapel, the group proceeded to the Chapel of St Joseph in Sagil, where they learned about its history and structure. They spent about half an hour there before moving on to Segamat for dinner.

The journey was interesting, and all who participated took the time to pray for their intentions.

Special thanks are extended to the Post Centennial Committee of the Church of St Philip, Segamat and its chairman, Benedict Pang.



## Risen Christ parish honours law enforcement personnel

KUALA LUMPUR: In line with the themes of the Jubilee Year, a special celebration was held on February 9 during the Sunday Mass at the Church of the Risen Christ to honour the dedication and contributions of armed forces, police, and security personnel.

The uniformed personnel actively participated in the Mass, waling in the Entrance procession, serving as hospitality ministers, and carrying the folded National Flag during the offertory. During the homily, Msgr James Gnanapiragasam reflected on the virtue of service, highlighting the sacrifices made by these service members.

He acknowledged their dedication and contributions, fostering a sense of pride within the law enforcement officers as well as within the community. He also commended their willingness to serve and their participation in



Msgr James Gnanapiragasam blessing the uniformed personnel with holy water.

the Mass.

Msgr James and seminarian Brother Jayson Wang offered special blessings for the personnel, while traditional patriotic hymns were sung in honour of the service members at the conclusion of the Mass.

Following the service, the uni-

formed personnel were invited to join parishioners for a time of fellowship and photo sessions.

Overall, the Mass played a meaningful role in uplifting morale, offering spiritual support, and strengthening social bonds between the security forces and the community. **Dianne Kuseela**

## Malaysian Mill Hill Missionary ordained in the Philippines

ANTIQUE, Philippines: In a joyful and vibrant ceremony, Cristiano Sumbat, a Malaysian Mill Hill Missionary, was ordained a priest on Febraury 8 at St Teresa of Avila parish in Casay, Anini-y. The ordination was officiated by Bishop Marvyn Abrea Maceda of the Diocese of San Jose de Antique, who delivered a powerful message of hope and service to the newly ordained priest.

During his address, Bishop Marvyn reminded Fr Cristiano of his role as a servant of Christ, emphasising that his mission is to glorify Christ through his service to the people. "Mission is in Christ and about Christ," the bishop said, urging Fr Cristiano to always remember that it is Christ who must be honoured through his work.

Fr Cristiano, who hails from St John's parish in Tuaran, Sabah, Malaysia, marks a significant milestone in the Mill Hill Missionaries' presence in the region. The Mill

Hill Missionaries have been serving in Borneo since their arrival in 1881, and with the ordination of Fr Cristiano, Malaysia now has three Mill Hill priests. This marks a notable shift, as Malaysia is not only a recipient of missionaries but is also now sending priests to serve the global Church.

The Mill Hill family in Malaysia expressed deep gratitude to God for His continued blessings, especially the gift of priestly ordination. In addition, the community extended heartfelt thanks to Fr Cristiano's family, the ordaining bishop, Most Rev Marvyn, the Mill Hill Missionaries in the Philippines, the parish priest, Fr Niki Abba, and all the parishioners of St Teresa of Avila for their support and generosity in making the ordination celebration a success.

As Fr Cristiano prepares to embark on his mission in Cambodia, prayers continue for his success and the fulfillment of his calling.



Clergy laying hands on Fr Cristiano Sumbat. Inset: Fr Cristiano Sumbat

# Jubilee of the Sick and Elderly draws large crowd to KL cathedral

Bob Ho

KUALA LUMPUR: The Cathedral of St John the Evangelist marked the World Day of the Sick with its first Jubilee, bringing the faithful closer to Christ through the Sacrament of Anointing.

Parish priest, Fr Gerard Theraviam, entrusted the Golden Eagles with organising the Jubilee of the Sick & Elderly. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the seniors worked alongside parish leaders to offer their talents in creating a celebration that reflected God's love and mercy.

The event highlighted the love and unity within the parish, with servant leaders from various ministries — Liturgy, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Hospitality, Choir, Parish Medical Response Team, and Youth — coming together to support the sick and elderly. Members of the BECs also went out of their way to bring those in need of care to the cathedral, sacrificing their time on a public holiday to spread hope and healing.

Christine Suan, the Golden Eagles coordinator, expressed gratitude for the way the event united the servant



Fr Ferdinand Magimay anointing the people.

leaders, saying, "We are striving to build a community of Christ that is God-centred, living the Way, the Truth, and the Life, as Jesus taught us."

In his homily, main celebrant, Fr Jonathan Rao, emphasised the importance of the sick's presence in the community, reminding all that "the sick give us a reason to build a society where care is mutual." He added, "The sick, even those with little chance of recovery, have every right to a future and to hope, just as anyone else does."

The anointing itself was a joyful

and uplifting experience, echoing Pope Francis' words from 2014: "The greatest comfort comes from the fact that it is the Lord Jesus who makes Himself present in the Sacrament, who takes us by the hand, who caresses us as He did with the sick, and who reminds us that we already belong to Him and that nothing — not even evil and death — can ever separate us from Him."

Fr Jonathan, assistant parish priest Fr Ferdinand Magimay, and Church of St Anthony's parish priest, Fr Dr Clarence Devadas, led the anoint-

ing, beginning with those who were most infirmed and those with limited mobility, before moving on to the rest of the congregation.

The Jubilee attracted elderly pilgrims from other parishes, many seeking spiritual healing and finding hope in the cathedral, one of five Jubilee pilgrimage centres in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. Tourists, too, were delighted to join the celebration.

After Mass and the anointing, attendees gathered for lunch served by a team of 20 volunteers. The meal, served under three canopies

set up in the car park, was a hit with attendees. As one person remarked, "Even the food was so good that we had second helpings, and the fellowship was wonderful."

The elderly, including those with limited mobility, expressed their gratitude for the care they received. "We could feel the love that went into organizing the Jubilee," said one pilgrim. Another, walking with a stick, shared, "I'm so happy to be seated in the front. It's such a blessing to know we are not forgotten." Matilda, a parishioner, felt particularly blessed to receive the sacrament before her PET scan, sharing how the previous anointing before her angiogram had brought healing.

In his World Day of the Sick message, Pope Francis praised the role of both the sick and their caregivers in the Jubilee. "Your journey together is a sign for everyone: a hymn to human dignity, a song of hope... in a harmony so comforting and powerful, capable of bringing light and warmth wherever they are most needed."

For photos of the event, visit the cathedral's Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/15F3aXuSQv/>

## Pilgrims at Chapel of Annai Vellaganny for World Day of the Sick

IPOH: On February 11, the Catholic Church marked the World Day of the Sick. Parishioners of the Church of St Michael (SMC) organised a special pilgrimage to the Chapel of Annai Vellaganny in Jelapang, one of Penang Diocese's designated pilgrimage centres. Over 400 pilgrims, including attendees from SMC and neighbouring parishes, as well as faithful from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, gathered for this meaningful occasion.

The pilgrimage featured a special concelebrated Mass, with the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, led by Fr Aloysius Tan, the parish priest of SMC. He was joined by Fr Eugene Fernandez, CSsR from the Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help and Fr George Vaithynathan from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes.

In his homily, Fr Aloysius shared a personal reflection on the challenges of adversity, recalling how, despite his prayers during diffi-

cult times, he once felt as though he were walking to the slaughterhouse. He reminded the congregation that in every situation, like the miracle at Cana, we must trust in God's power and grace to carry us through. "Hope strengthens us in times of trial," he said, encouraging the pilgrims to trust that God answers prayers, even if the answers are not always as expected.

Fr Aloysius also spoke about the pilgrimage as a symbol of the faithful's inward spiritual journey toward God. He encouraged the pilgrims to fulfil the criteria for indulgences during the pilgrimage, which includes going to Confession, receiving the Eucharist, praying for the Pope's intentions, reciting the Our Father and the Profession of Faith, and detaching from sin. In doing so, pilgrims could experience the unconditional love of God.

Following the homily, nearly 200 pilgrims — many of whom were homebound — received the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, with special arrangements made for the Communion Ministers of St Michael's Ipoh to invite those unable to attend Mass regularly.

The event concluded with a simple lunch, after which the pilgrims returned home spiritually refreshed and filled with renewed hope for better times ahead.

Jennifer Duarte

## Talk on marriage, relationships, and church etiquette



Sr Mary David during a session with the youth and parents.

RAWANG: On February 11, the Family Life Ministry and the Youth Ministry of St Jude's Church, jointly organised a talk addressing key issues concerning mixed marriages, choosing a life partner, and appropriate church attire.

The event drew over 60 participants, including parishioners from nearby parishes, with attendees from as far as St Joseph's Church, Sentul, and Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Klang.

The speaker, Sr Mary David, a Canossian nun with 43 years of service, currently based in Jinjang, returned to Rawang to share her expertise. Sr Mary emphasised the importance of communication, understanding, obedience, and tolerance within families. She challenged both parents and children to prioritise quality time for dialogue, stressing the need for parents to be present and available for their children.

Addressing couples contemplating marriage, Sr Mary underscored

the significance of understanding the vows exchanged during the ceremony. She cautioned young people against taking marriage lightly, reminding them that it is a sacrament and a lifelong commitment.

Family Life Ministry chairman Simon Saveriayah expressed his satisfaction with the event, noting that many parents had thanked him for addressing these crucial topics.

Youth Ministry chairman Jason Nair highlighted the relevance of the discussions, particularly for young people grappling with issues like mixed marriages. He was especially pleased with Sr Mary's insights on the potential negative impact of unchecked social media use.

The collaborative effort between the Family Life and Youth ministries proved successful in providing valuable guidance and support to individuals and families within the community. **Mercy Almeida Stellus**



Fr Aloysius Tan anointing the elderly.

# The Sower and The Seed: An essential formation for catechists

KUALA LUMPUR: The KL Archdiocesan Catechetical Ministry (KLACM) recently hosted the third annual *The Sower and The Seed* formation course for catechists. This foundational certification course, developed in collaboration with HELP University, was initially designed for new catechists but is now also open to experienced catechists.

The course serves three key objectives: to inspire participants to embrace the vocation and mission of catechesis, to equip them with essential skills for planning effective catechetical lessons, and to foster a sense of community by providing opportunities to connect with catechists from various parishes.

A notable highlight of this year's course was the active involvement of lay formators and facilitators. All sessions were led by these lay formators, who have been mentored over the years by Dr Steven Selvaraju, Director of the Archdiocesan Catechetical Centre.

The course took place on February 8 and 9 at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre and was offered in English, Bahasa Malaysia, Tamil, and Mandarin. Seventy-two participants from across the archdiocese attended. The topics covered included the *Vocation and Mission of the Catechist*, *Catechetical Process*, *Understanding Learners and Learning*, *Lesson Planning*, *Spirituality of a Catechist*, and *Assessment and Reflection*.

The event began with a welcoming speech by Dr Steven, who highlighted the importance of the formation in helping catechists fulfill their central role as teachers of the Catholic faith. He also expressed his gratitude to the participants for their commitment to the formation.

## The Why and How of Being a Catechist

Then the participants moved to their designated rooms for the different language presentations. The opening session on *Vocation and Mission of the Catechist* first touched on the challenges of passing on our faith in a chang-



Group work

ing world, and the various difficulties that modern Catholics face; before helping participants to recall how God had called them and set them apart as witnesses, accompaniers and teachers of the faith. By teaching the knowledge of the faith, introducing prayer and the liturgy, as well guiding the moral formation of learners through life in the community, catechists are called to help learners grow in relationship with Christ and fruitfully live their faith.

The second session on the *Catechetical Process* was an introduction on the 'how' of being a catechist, rooted in the principles of Divine Pedagogy, or how God teaches His people. Based on the *Directory for Catechesis*, a document produced by the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelisation in 2020, this session covered the basic principles of catechetical methodology (methods of teaching the faith) that make catechesis more effective in any setting. Participants were also introduced to the Malaysian Catechetical Series and how each topic in the books were based on the same principles of catechesis as well as their role in bringing each lesson to life with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and with Jesus as their role model.

The formation continued with two more sessions on the technical aspects of catechesis: *Understanding Learners and Learning*, as well as *Lesson Planning*. Based not only on the principles of catechesis, but also incorporating modern theories such as concepts of multiple intelligences, hierarchy of needs, cognitivism and constructivism, these sessions aim to help participants understand their learners and how learning happens before guiding them to prepare their own lesson plans in a step-by-step process. Participants were strongly encouraged to properly reflect on the aims of each topic in preparation for their lesson and to plan how they would achieve those aims through various approaches and activities.

## A Night of Prayer

The final session for the day was designed to give each participant an opportunity to experience different types of prayer. Participants were divided into smaller groups and rotated through several facilitated prayer stations, such as *Lectio Divina*, Intercessory Prayer and the *Examen*. Many participants expressed how the prayer experiences moved and encouraged them in their vocation and mission for the coming year.

These experiences would be the base of their reflections the following morning as the next session on the *Spirituality of the Catechist* began and participants learned about the importance of taking spirituality seriously on their journey as catechists.

## Putting It All Together

The formation concluded with a group activity where participants were tasked with preparing and delivering a lesson to their peers. This exercise allowed them to showcase what they had learned over the weekend, as well as draw on their prior experiences. For many, stepping into the shoes of learners provided valuable insight into their own teaching styles. It was a dynamic and enriching session, where the exchange of ideas and feedback encouraged and supported each participant.

The final session focused on *Assessment and Reflection*, highlighting the importance of assessment in every catechetical lesson. Dr Steven emphasised how assessment helps catechists better understand their learners and adjust their approaches to meet their needs. Self-reflection, in turn, enables catechists to identify areas for improvement and enhance their skills, leading to more effective learning experiences.

The two-day formation culminated in a certification ceremony, where participants were delighted to receive their certificates from Archbishop Julian Leow. The ceremony marked a joyful moment, with new friendships formed and promises to reconnect in the future.

As the formation concluded, we extend our heartfelt wishes to all participants, hoping that the weekend's experience has given them the inspiration and support needed to continue their important work in catechesis. We trust they will carry the lessons learned into their ministries, facing another year of challenges with renewed dedication and fulfillment. **KL Archdiocesan Catechetical Ministry**

## Celebrating love, commitment, and family

KUALA LUMPUR: World Marriage Day is an annual celebration that highlights the importance of marriage and its role in strengthening families and communities. Observed worldwide on the second Sunday of February, it offers couples a chance to reflect on their relationships, celebrate their commitment, and renew their vows. This year, World Marriage Day was celebrated on February 9 with the theme *Love One Another*. The day also underscores the enduring values of love, mutual respect, and support that are essential to a thriving marriage.

At the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist (CSJE), the Family Life Ministry, in partnership with Worldwide Marriage Encounter (WWME) Selangor and Wilayah, marked the occasion with a special Mass at 6.30pm. The Eucharist, presided over by Archbishop Julian Leow, brought together 36 couples from various stages of marriage, including a couple who celebrated 56 years of marriage, highlighting the enduring strength of love and commitment.

In his homily, Archbishop Julian shared a powerful message with the couples. He emphasised that marriage should not be seen as an escape route from religious life. He encouraged those considering marriage to first reflect on their religious vocation and to approach marriage with full understanding and commitment. Marriage is a call to sacrifice, commitment and self-giving that must be founded on love — a love that shares in the faithfulness of Jesus' own life for the Church.

The archbishop also spoke on the challenges couples often face in their relationships. He pointed out that the very qualities that initially brought couples together can sometimes become sources of tension and jealousy in the marriage. He encouraged couples to constantly call upon the strength of God to forgive, reconcile, and strengthen their bonds. By doing so, couples can overcome challenges and build lasting relationships founded on love and mutual respect.

After Mass a fellowship took place at the parish house, where couples and their families celebrated the joy of marriage in a simple yet meaningful way. On this World Marriage Day, the focus was not only on celebrating flourishing marriages but also on nurturing hope for those yet to bloom, reinforcing the timeless message that every marriage can be a testament to the enduring power of love, commitment, and unwavering hope. **Patrick Anthony**



Married couples renewing their vows during Mass at the Cathedral of St John.



## Ecumenical prayer service in JB

JOHOR BAHRU: The Malacca Johore Diocesan Ministry for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue hosted an Ecumenical Prayer Service on January 23 at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, in observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Fifty participants attended the service, including Bishop Bernard Paul, priests and laity from the South Johore Vicariate, and Christian brothers and sisters from various denominations.

The service began with a reflection on God's Word, followed by a collective celebration of shared faith. Participants lit candles as a symbol of their unity, recited a confession of faith into which all were baptised, and offered prayers of intercession for the world and the Church.

The service concluded with the symbolic placing of the lighted candles, serving as a reminder of the ongoing call for Christian unity among all those present.



## Why a Jubilee of Hope?

Pope Francis called for a *Jubilee of Hope* as part of the broader vision of the Catholic Church's ongoing efforts to bring spiritual renewal and healing to the world. A Jubilee is a special year in the Catholic tradition, marked by an emphasis on forgiveness, reconciliation, and prayer, offering a chance for people to reflect on their faith and seek renewal.

The *Jubilee of Hope* was announced in the context of the ongoing challenges facing the global community, such as poverty, conflict, and the struggles faced by marginalised groups. Pope Francis aimed to inspire a renewed sense of hope, emphasizing the importance of compassion, solidarity, and healing in a world that often seems divided and troubled. This call encourages Catholics and people of goodwill to work together toward a more inclusive, compassionate, and hopeful world, grounded in the love and mercy of God.

By focusing on hope, Pope Francis encourages everyone — especially during difficult times — to place their trust in God's promises and the potential for transformation, both within individuals and in society as a whole.

## How can we be Pilgrims of Hope?

Being Pilgrims of Hope means journeying through life with faith, trust, and purpose, even in times of uncertainty. Pope Francis encourages us to embody and inspire hope in our lives. Here's how we can be Pilgrims of Hope:

**Trust in God's Promise:** Even in struggles, trust that God's love and plan provide strength and hope.

**Act with Compassion and Solidarity:** Walk alongside others, offering support and sharing resources to bring healing.

**Embrace Prayer and Reflection:** Take time to pray, reflect, and seek guidance from God to renew our hope.

**Live with an Open Heart:** Be open to new experiences, people, and ideas, seeing God's presence in unexpected places.

**Be Witnesses of Hope:** Live with hope, inspiring others to trust in God's goodness, even in challenges.

**Pursue Justice and Peace:** Actively work for justice and peace, standing up for the marginalised and promoting God's Kingdom on Earth.

**Live in Expectation of God's Kingdom:** Live with the expectation that God's reign of love, peace, and justice will come to life.

Being a pilgrim of hope means living a life of faith, prayer, love, and action, transforming ourselves and the world around us.

# Religious celebrate World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life



Representatives from the various congregations and orders with Archbishop Simon Poh.

KUCHING: The Religious and Lay Carmelites of the Archdiocese of Kuching gathered at the Carmelite Chapel on February 1 to celebrate the 29th World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life.

The theme for this year's celebration was, *Pilgrims of Hope on the Way of Peace*. Fr Andre Delimarta, SDB coordinated the sharing session by members from the different congregations. He posted three guiding questions for the participants to reflect on. Representatives from the various congregations/orders then shared their responses to the questions provided.

Br Engel Java, FMS shared on how their respective congregations/orders carried

out their mission in the light of Pilgrims of Hope according to their charism.

Sr Catherine Uming, SSFS, Fr Andre Delimarta, SDB and Fr Pratap Baskey, CMF highlighted how their congregations/orders walked alongside the people and experienced poverty in the light of Pilgrims of Hope, collectively or individually.

Finally, Fr Joseph Lee, OFM shared how his local community carried out various actions in protecting the earth. The participants had a silent moment to reflect on all the insightful sharing that they had just heard.

The celebration continued with adoration before Holy Mass, presided over by Archbishop Simon Poh.

In his homily, Archbishop Simon reminded the participants that it is important to put their faith and trust in God, citing the example of Abraham. He encouraged the consecrated people to be real Pilgrims of Hope during this Jubilee year.

After the Mass, participants were treated to a potluck lunch prepared by the OCDS and the SSFS. It was a meaningful celebration for all consecrated persons in the Archdiocese of Kuching. *Today's Catholic*

## PIHDM empowers 60 Rawang children with *Back-to-School* assistance

RAWANG: On February 8, the Parish Integral Human Development Ministry (PIHDM) of the Church of St Jude made a significant contribution to the education of 60 children from the B40 families in Rawang. PIHDM members accompanied the children to a shopping centre to purchase essential school supplies, including uniforms, sports attire, shoes and socks.

The day began with a heartwarming presentation by the SP Care Group, led by its founder Dr Sathia Prakash and his family. Each child received a cash voucher, writing materials, and a new schoolbag.

Dr Sathia, in his address to the students, encouraged them to value these gifts and to focus on their studies, emphasising that poverty should not be a barrier to academic success.

Further support came from Anthony Raja, Operations Manager of Aspen Pumps Group from Sungai Buloh, who presented the PIHDM with a cheque for RM2,000 for the *Back to School* programme. Raja echoed Dr Sathia's sentiments, urging the children and their parents to prioritise education.

The PIHDM's *Back to School* programme extended beyond Rawang, with similar aid provided to two other homes in Kajang, demonstrating its commitment to supporting underprivileged children across the region.

This initiative showcases the power of community collaboration in empowering students and ensuring they have the resources they need to succeed in the upcoming academic year. **Mercy Almeida Stellus**



Dr Sathia Prakash of SP Care Group together with the children and their families.

### ROME & ITALY PILGRIMAGE

25 AUG - 4 SEP 2025

- Vatican Museum, Sistine Chapel & Papal Audience
- Holy Door at the Archbasilica of St. John Lateran
- Holy Doors at St. Peter's Basilica
- Holy Door at Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls
- Holy Doors at the Basilica of St. Mary Major
- Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem & the Holy Stairs
- Church of St. Ignazio di Loyola & Church of the Gesù
- Basilica of St. Francis & Basilica of St. Clare
- Shrine of St Carlo Acutis & Padre Pio
- Home of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Loreto

TWN RM 14,600 RM-15,400

SGL RM 17,100 RM-17,900

Early bird price (limited to the first 10 pax)

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### SOUTH KOREA PILGRIMAGE

2-7 NOV 2025

- > Gyeongbokgung Palace > Myeongdong Cathedral
- > Seosomun Historic Park > Catholic Martyrs' Shrine
- > Jeoldusan Martyrs' Shrine > Shrine of Solmoe
- > Cheonjinam Holy Site > Mirinae Shrine
- > Bukchon Hanok Village
- > Gahoe-dong Catholic Church
- > Haemi International Catholic Martyr's Shrine

TWN RM 7,800 RM-8,100

SGL RM 9,200 RM-9,500

Early bird price (limited to the first 10 pax)



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# 2025 Lenten Campaigns in Peninsular Malaysia

## Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur

The theme for the 2025 Lenten Campaign in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur is *Pilgrims of Hope*, following the theme of the Jubilee Year 2025 announced by our Holy Father, Pope Francis.

We are invited to journey in this season of Lent “with deep faith, lively hope and active charity”.

We are called to rediscover a spirituality of God’s creation in which we understand ourselves as “pilgrims on earth”.

We are called to devote ourselves to prayer as the road to holiness, which creates the hunger within us for God, and love for our neighbour in turn impels us to reach out to those in need.

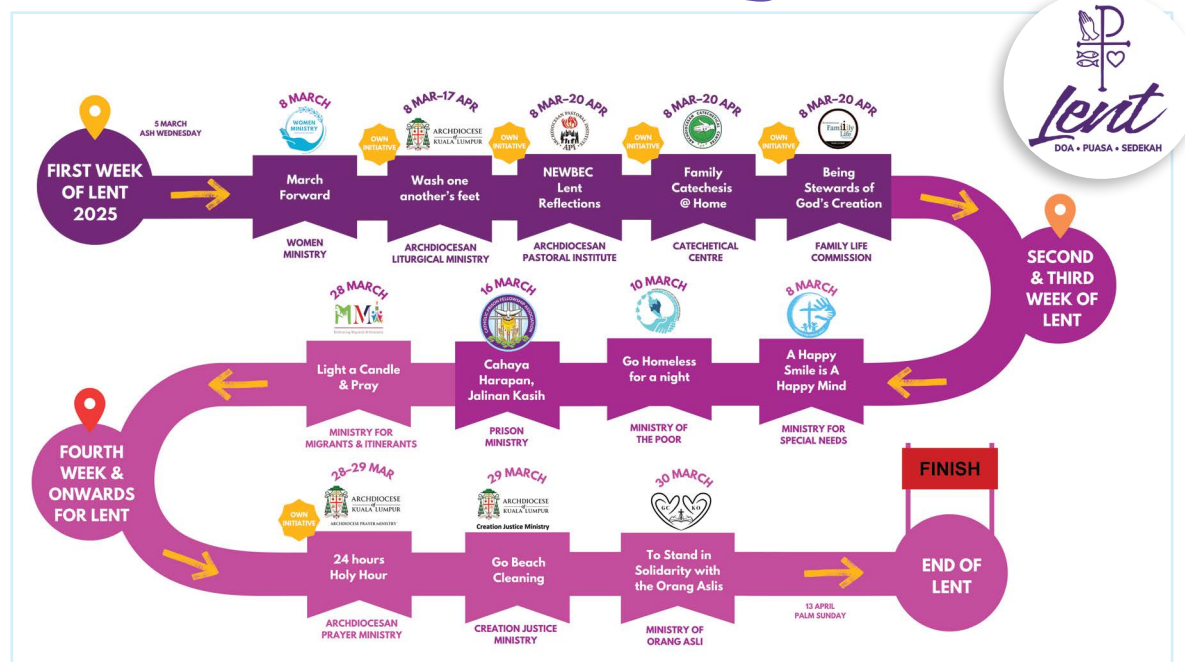
This season is an opportunity to be renewed in a hope that does not

fade, our hope in God. May it help us to recover the confident trust that we require, in the Church and in society, in our interpersonal relationships, in international relations, and in our task of promoting the dignity of all persons and respect for God’s gift of creation. (SNC #25)

The recurring logo for the Lenten campaign is presented in the colours of the season of Lent.

The recognisable symbols of Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving are a reminder of the desired outcome of these triple Lenten practices of conversion, renewal and transformation of the individual, family and community.

For more, go to <https://aohd.org/LENT/>



## Lent 2025

Rediscover, Proclaim, Build



(Penang Caritas facebook)

## Diocese of Penang

*Rediscover, Proclaim, Build Hope* is the theme for this year's Lenten Campaign in the Diocese of Penang.

**Rediscover: Unearthing the past**  
Rediscovering involves looking back to uncover forgotten or overlooked truths, stories, and values. Rediscovering allows us to reflect on what truly matters and align our lives with those principles. Rediscovery can provide a foundation of knowledge and wisdom that is essential for progress.

In the path of rediscovering hope, we can reconnect and embrace the values that enrich our lives in Christ.

### Proclaim: The power of voice

To proclaim is to announce or declare with conviction. It uses our voices to express our values, beliefs, and desires for the future. Proclaiming is not just about speaking up but about doing so with purpose and clarity.

Through proclaiming we advocate for causes that matter and work towards social justice, we share personal experiences that resonate with others and foster understanding, and through educating we inform and enlighten others about important issues and topics.

By proclaiming, we can inspire others, spark movements, and initiate change.

### Build Hope: Creating foundations for growth

Building is the act of constructing or developing something new. It is about laying down the bricks of progress. Building hope fosters a mindset and environment where possibilities are recognised and nurtured, helping individuals and groups to see beyond current challenges and toward a better tomorrow. It also gives way to investing in self-improvement and lifelong learning. Through building, we create tangible and intangible infrastructures

that support a sustainable and prosperous future.

### What can you do?

Engage with the inspiring stories and videos in the Lenten kit thoughtfully prepared for you. May these resources rekindle hope within you and motivate you to extend care and support to others. Through your faith and actions, may you be a visible and radiant sign of God's love and a beacon of hope to all you encounter.

### How to take part?

Volunteer with a social mission group, enlist in an outreach program, care for creation by promoting the 3(R) principles of reducing, recycling and reusing.

Become a pilgrim of hope by compassionately reaching out to the homeless, the poor, the elderly, the sick, the migrants and the refugees.

For more, go to <https://bit.ly/4hyimno>

## Diocese of Malacca Johore

The Lenten journey is structured into three distinct phases, each focusing on *Servanthood* in the model of Jesus, incorporating Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic Works of Mercy.

### Phase 1: Preparation

This Lenten Journey invites you into the theme of *Servanthood*. How is Jesus calling me to serve during this season of Lent?

### Phase 2: Doing → Being

Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty? The king replies, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for Me.' Matthew 25:35-40

This period is a call to action/service. It may be feeding the hungry, visiting the lonely, caring for the sick and aged or as simple as

listening to someone.

### Phase 3: Reflection

During the Holy Week, we see Jesus offering Himself as the highest role of service in His passion. What is Jesus saying to me from my experiences of serving? My feelings, my encounters, my struggles?

### Lenten Bag of Love Project

Caritas Bag of Love project is a proposed Lenten project to assist struggling families with needed perishable groceries, household items, children and school supplies etc. A woven bag will be given to each parish family during the Lenten season, which they can fill up with items they wish to bless the needy community with. The filled bags are to be collected back within a set period, items sorted and distributed to beneficiaries during or after the



Lenten season.

This project also aims to engage parishioners to exercise their faith in action, not only almsgiving but making the effort to discern, purchase, and even help distribute the donated items to the needy, particularly B40 families, homes and institutions identified by Caritas member organisations and parishioners.



(Caritas MJD facebook)

### List of Lenten activities in the diocese

To complement the theme on works of mercy, each parish is urged to list out proposed Lenten activities they plan to carry out which will be compiled by Caritas MJD and made available online at [caritasmjd.org](http://caritasmjd.org).

my. These will help to create awareness, mobilise action, and provide accessible information for those who wish to participate, ensuring parishioners are actively engaged in charitable activities throughout the Lenten season in their parish and beyond.

# Pope Francis openly opposes Trump's immigration policy

VATICAN: Breaking from his usual reserve regarding political leaders, Pope Francis decided to take up his pen in this "delicate moment" in US history by addressing a letter to American bishops, which was made public February 11. In this letter, the Pope strongly opposes the Trump administration — without directly naming the president — and its plan to deport undocumented migrants. He denounces an ideology that "imposes the will of the strongest as a criterion of truth."

In this two-page letter, the head of the Catholic Church states that he is "closely following the great crisis unfolding in the United States with the launch of a mass deportation programme." Not long after his inauguration, President Donald Trump initiated his plan to arrest and expel undocumented migrants — estimated at 11 million — just as he had promised during his campaign. According to *CNN*, the White House planned to prosecute state and local officials who resisted the federal crackdown on immigration.

In response to these measures, Pope Francis called for "critical judgment," asserting that a "well-formed" conscience can only "express its disagreement with any measure that tacitly or explicitly

identifies the illegal status of some migrants with criminality." The Pope distinguishes between a nation's right to defend its security and the "act of deporting people who in many cases, have left their own land for reasons of extreme poverty, insecurity, exploitation, persecution or serious deterioration of the environment, damages the dignity of many men and women, and of entire families, and places them in a state of particular vulnerability and defencelessness."

Strongly opposed to identity-based politics, Pope Francis noted that the presidential programme follows "an ideological criterion that distorts social life." The development of "an orderly and legal migration" cannot be achieved "through the privilege of some and the sacrifice of others," he emphasises. He warns: "What is built on the basis of force, and not on the truth about the equal dignity of every human being, begins badly and will end badly."

In his letter, the Pope defended "the infinite and transcendent dignity" of every human being "without exception." He insisted that this dignity must take precedence over "any other legal consideration," urging policymakers to "consider the legitimacy of norms and public policies in the light of the dignity of



An "illegal" migrant is deported by a US Immigration and Customs enforcement official (Public Domain)

the person and his or her fundamental rights, not vice versa."

Throughout the text, the Pope articulates an anthropology in which the human person "is not a mere individual, relatively expansive, with some philanthropic feelings" but rather, "a subject with dignity who, through the constitutive relationship with all, especially with the poorest, can gradually mature in his identity and vocation."

Addressing the US bishops, the Pope exhorted them to continue defending "those who are considered

less valuable, less important, or less human." He encouraged the Catholic faithful "not to give in to narratives that discriminate against and cause unnecessary suffering to our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters."

The Pope's letter comes amid growing tensions between American bishops and the government. Just two days after Trump's inauguration, January 22, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops declared in a statement that his immigration-related executive orders were

"deeply troubling" and "would have negative consequences."

Beyond repressive measures, the White House has also made budget cuts to funds allocated for immigrant and refugee assistance, severely impacting the services of the bishops' conference, which has already been forced to lay off around 50 employees. Cardinal Robert McElroy, the newly appointed Archbishop of Washington, described these policies as a "war of fear and terror."

Vice President J.D. Vance accused the bishops of supporting illegal migrants to secure federal funding, to which Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York responded by calling these remarks "slandrous" and "malicious."

This is not the first time Pope Francis has broken from his usual restraint to criticise Trump's policies. During Trump's inauguration, the Pope urged him to "build a society (...) where there is no room for hatred, discrimination, or exclusion." The day before, on Jan 19, during an Italian television programme, the pontiff publicly called Trump's immigration policy "a disgrace." "This will force the poorest, most unfortunate people who have nothing to pay the price for this imbalance," he lamented. *I.Media*

## Myanmar cathedral bombed days after its establishment

MYANMAR: A newly-designated Catholic cathedral in Myanmar was bombed by the military regime recently amid an ongoing conflict in the region.

The Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Mindat was severely damaged by airstrikes by the Myanmar military regime in Chin, Myanmar's only Christian-majority state.

Though the damage took place on February 6, news of the bombing has only recently come to light. The church's roof and stained-glass windows were destroyed, rendering the church unusable, according to *Fides*, the information service of the Pontifical Mission Societies. No injuries were reported and the area had recently been evacuated.

Less than two weeks before the bombing, on Jan 25, Pope Francis designated the church a cathedral for the newly-formed Diocese of Mindat. In the days leading up to the attack, local Catholics were planning upcoming liturgical celebrations, including the consecration of the newly-appointed bishop, Fr Augustine Thang Zawm Hung.

The newly-formed Diocese of Mindat has a total population of almost 360,000, with more than 14,000 Catholics and 23 parishes,



The Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Mindat was severely damaged by airstrikes by the Myanmar military regime in Chin. (LiCas News/Stand for Christians)

according to the Holy See.

A local priest, identified as Fr Paulinus, said that the faithful are determined to rebuild.

"We are very sad that our church has been hit by the bombs. It is a wound in our hearts. But we will not let ourselves be defeated. We will rebuild it," the local priest said. "We are certain that the Lord will 'bombard' us with His grace and blessing: This will bring peace

and prosperity to our people."

Soon after the destruction of the Mindat church, Cardinal Charles Maung Bo of Yangon urged Catholics to pray for those who were displaced by the violence of the conflict in Myanmar.

"Let us envision a Myanmar where the divisions of war give way to the unity of peace," the cardinal said. Kate Quinones, *CNA*

## BEC animators undergo media training

BANDEL, India: Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) animators from eastern India attended a media training recently to strengthen their groups in parishes.

As many as 24 representatives from 13 eastern India dioceses attended the five-day programme held at Bandel Basilica Retreat Centre, about 40 km from north of Kolkata.

Media has a central place in the lives of all Christians presently, said Sr Christin Joseph from Kolkata. So, we want to train our BEC animators how best they can use the social media to proclaim the Gospel, added the Holy Cross nun who has been involved in BEC promotion for the past three decades in eastern India.

Jesuit Fr Sebastian Kanekattil, one of the facilitators and a media expert from Patna, said the training will enable the participants to understand the great influence of

social media among youth.

Mahendra Gurung, a participant from Sikkim, said he wanted to learn how to effectively use social media to teach Christians to understand the importance of BECs in the parishes. Presentation through media will attract children and youth who are addicted to mobiles, added the social activist.

Sr Christin, the main organiser, said the sessions will cover how to make effective power point presentations, make posters, different means of communication, script writing for videos and video editing. Various facilitators on social media came to Bandel to train the participants.

Besides the training, the participants had a chance to make a pilgrimage to the Bandel Basilica during this Jubilee year, said Fr Sameer Kerketta from Hazaribag diocese in Jharkhand. *IP Sarto, Matters India*



(Matters India)

# Pilgrims of enduring hope

## Embracing the wisdom and faith of the elderly

The Jubilee Year 2025, a sacred time of mercy, renewal, and reconciliation in the Catholic tradition, invites the faithful to rediscover the transformative power of hope. Among those uniquely positioned to embody this hope are senior citizens, whose lives often mirror the steadfast faith of Simeon and Anna — two biblical figures who waited decades to encounter the Messiah.

In an era marked by rapid change and uncertainty, the elderly stand as living testaments to perseverance, wisdom, and trust in God's promises. This reflection explores how senior citizens, like Simeon and Anna, are called to be "pilgrims of hope" during the Jubilee, illuminating the path for future generations through their witness of faith, prayer, and prophetic courage.

The Gospel of Luke introduces us to Simeon and Anna, whose advanced age did not diminish their spiritual vitality. Simeon, "righteous and devout," had been assured by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before seeing the Messiah (Luke 2:25–26). Anna, an 84-year-old widow, spent her days in the Temple, fasting and praying "night and day" (Luke 2:36–38). Both recognised the infant Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promise, responding with joy and proclamation. Their stories teach us that aging is not a decline into irrelevance but a sacred pilgrimage toward divine encounter.

In a world obsessed with productivity and speed, seniors often feel sidelined. Yet Simeon and Anna remind us that waiting — rooted in faith — is an active, hopeful posture. Their lives challenge the myth that value diminishes with age; instead, they exemplify how longevity refines vision, allowing one to discern God's presence in unexpected ways.

The Jubilee Year, derived from the Hebrew tradition of Yovel, calls for the forgiveness of debts, liberation of captives, and restoration of relationships (Leviticus 25). For seniors, this echoes Simeon and Anna's liberation: they waited not in vain but in anticipation of a promise fulfilled. Today, many elderly face societal "debts" — loneliness, neglect, or erasure — yet their faithful endurance offers a countercultural witness.

Simeon's canticle, "Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace" (Luke 2:29), reveals a life completed in communion with God. Seniors today are invited to view their later years not as a twilight of loss but as a season of spiritual fruitfulness. Whether through intercessory prayer, mentoring, or sharing stories of God's faithfulness, they embody hope by testifying to divine providence across decades.

Anna's constant prayer in the Temple was an act of resistance against despair. In a culture that often reduces aging to decline, the perseverance of seniors in prayer and worship becomes a radical affirmation of life's sacredness. Their faithfulness, even amid frailty, challenges societies to revere the old as much as the new.

Both Simeon and Anna did not keep their encounter with Christ to themselves. Simeon prophesied over the child, while Anna "spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38). Their example calls seniors to a prophetic role — using their voices to guide, correct, and inspire.

Pope Francis has frequently praised the elderly as a "chorus of permanent praise" and a "treasury of wisdom." In an age of polarisation, seniors bridge divides by sharing hard-earned insights on forgiveness, re-



(Iubilaeum25 facebook)

silience, and love. Their stories of surviving violence, poverty, or personal loss carry a moral authority that can heal divisions.

The Jubilee tradition emphasises justice for the marginalised. Seniors, often marginalised themselves, are uniquely equipped to advocate for societal renewal. From defending the unborn to demanding care for the vulnerable, their prophetic witness can amplify Gospel values in public discourse.

The 2025 Jubilee invites the Church to confront structures that alienate seniors. Simeon and Anna were central figures in the Temple; likewise, parishes must create spaces where the elderly are not merely recipients of care but active participants in mission.

Pope Francis warns against a "throwaway culture" that discards the unproductive. The Jubilee calls parishes to repentance, urging communities to honour seniors through inclusive liturgies, home visits, and intergenerational programmes.

Simeon and Anna's advanced age underscores the holiness of dependency. As physical and cognitive abilities wane, seniors reveal the beauty of relying on God and others. The Church, by accompanying the elderly in their vulnerability, practices the mercy central to the Jubilee.

Simeon and Anna did not live to see Jesus' ministry, crucifixion, or resurrection — yet their brief encounter sufficed to sustain a lifetime of hope. Similarly, seniors today may not see the full fruit of their prayers or teachings, but their fidelity sows seeds for future harvests.

As the Church journeys toward Jubilee 2025, let us honour the elderly as guides who teach us to wait with purpose, pray without ceasing, and hope against hope. Their pilgrimage, marked by wrinkles and wisdom, invites us all to walk toward the Messiah — trusting that every step, even in twilight, leads closer to the dawn. **Fr Dr John Singarayar, SVD**

## Welcome Home: Answering the call to bring Catholics back to Church

By now, we are all aware that the Catholic Church is celebrating its Jubilee Year 2025 with the theme *Pilgrims of Hope* — a time of renewal, forgiveness, and grace. As part of this sacred season, Most Rev Julian Leow, Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur has gracefully extended a heartfelt invitation to all Catholics who have drifted away from the Church to come home (*HERALD*, Jan 5, 2025).

### No judgment. No conditions. Just come as you are

What do I think of this? I think it's brilliant — done in the most Christ-like way!

This call is powerful. It reminds us that the Church is not just a place of worship but a family — a home. Yet, for many who have left, the idea of returning can be daunting. Some carry wounds from past experiences, some fear judgment, and others question where they fit in. But here's the truth: if we want people to come back, we must first look at how we welcome those who are already here.

### Less Judgment, More Compassion

It's easy to say we welcome everyone, but do our actions reflect that? How often do

we cast a side-eye at someone struggling to keep their child quiet during Mass? Or silently judge someone for what they're wearing, without knowing their circumstances?

What if they were coming from work, a hospital visit, or an unexpected delay — but instead of skipping Mass, they still chose to come to church? Isn't that something to be grateful for? What about the ones who are exhausted, barely keeping their eyes open, yet still made the effort to be in God's presence? Or the sick and elderly, who fought through pain just to be here?

The Church is a home for all of us. If we truly believe that, then we must stop making people feel like they don't belong. When judgment stops, those who left might just find their way back.

### Creating a supportive ecosystem

Welcoming our brothers and sisters back is more than just about opening the church doors — it's about opening our hearts. Here's how we can actively foster a more inclusive and supportive Catholic community:

**Listen Before You Preach:** Many who return carry questions, doubts, or past pain. Instead of correcting or lecturing,

listen. Empathy builds bridges.

**Be the First to Welcome:** A warm smile, a kind greeting, or an invitation to sit together can make someone feel at home.

**Invite, Don't Push:** Let returning Catholics ease back in at their own pace. A gentle invitation to community events, prayer groups, or even a casual coffee chat can go a long way.

**Celebrate Small Steps:** Whether it's someone attending Mass for the first time in years or simply reaching out in curiosity, every step back is worth celebrating.

**Pray for Open Hearts:** Not just for those returning, but for ourselves — that we may be true reflections of God's grace and love.

### A Church that truly feels like home

This Jubilee Year is an extraordinary time of renewal. If we truly want to embody the spirit of *Pilgrims of Hope*, we must actively create a Church that feels like home — for everyone. Not just for those who have left, but those who struggle, those who are tired, and those who are uncertain.



The Church isn't just a sanctuary for the devout and steadfast — it is a refuge for the doubting, the struggling, the weary, and the lost. Jesus didn't walk among the righteous alone; He sought out the forgotten, the broken, and the outcast, drawing them back with love and compassion. So shouldn't we also do the same?

To those who are thinking of returning, remember — You are wanted here. You are loved here. This is also your home.

And to those who are already here — let's make sure we live out our roles as *Pilgrims of Hope* — not just in words, but in action.

Until next time, let's be the light that guides someone back home.

**#WelcomeHome #JubileeYear2025**

**#PilgrimsOfHope**

Trust Him, He Knows Best. **Mag Gomez**

# A journey of connection for those with dementia

It finally happened! After a year of planning, fundraising, gathering supporters and volunteers, and braving ourselves against naysayers and mood crashers, January 4, 2025, marked a memorable and historical date for all of us. We — those living with dementia (at diverse stages), family members, and buddies got together for the first-ever dementia retreat in Malaysia. We called it the *Dancing with Dementia Retreat* which took place in a beach resort in Penang.



## Dancing with Dementia

DR CECILIA CHAN

growing more connected. We started to fall in love with our shared humanity as we allowed ourselves to be vulnerable. By the end, it became clear that what moved us the most were the parts of ourselves we usually hide to protect against perceived weaknesses. Ironically, it was only when we let down our defences — embracing our silliness, reconnecting with our inner child, dancing freely, and singing our hearts out without self-consciousness — that we truly began to connect with one

another.

If we look up the word “retreat,” the dictionary defines it as “an act or process of withdrawing...” And in many ways, that’s exactly what we did. We withdrew from a world of comparisons and judgments. We stepped away from the world of labelling and “othering.” We shifted our focus away from disabilities and differences, and instead, we withdrew toward our hearts. It was through our hearts that we healed old wounds and built bridges across the gaps that had once divided us. In that space, we were fully present, alive, and tuned in for each other.

As we retreated to our centre — our hearts — the world seemed to shift. The morning sun felt warmer on our skin, and the sea breeze caressed us more gently, as if teaching us how to truly connect with one another. The walls that had once divided us began to crumble, and we sensed that our hearts had always known what this moment held: this is what real connection feels like. This is what love feels like. We celebrated the gift of life, even when it sometimes hurts, aching in places where pain had long taken root — along with the heartaches and losses we’ve carried. We embraced it all, knowing it’s an inevitable part of being human. Yet, beyond the pain, there was also joy, pleasure, and growth. The retreat became a retreat toward love — the most



powerful antidote to dementia.

One of the most poignant moments for us came when we spent time with a couple, both living with dementia, while their daughter attended her company’s annual dinner and wouldn’t return to the hotel room until after midnight. We were in their room, chatting and playing, when they kindly offered that we sleep on their beds with them, since their large bed could easily fit all of us. The sincerity and warmth in their expressions touched us deeply. There was no trace of anxiety in their demeanour, and we understood why — they felt safe and secure. In that moment, we were truly in it together.

When I asked participants about their experiences, the overwhelming theme was the sense of connection we shared. There was no distinction between those living with dementia and those without. Some family members mentioned that, for the first time in a long while, they didn’t have to think about the word “dementia.” Everyone shared that this experience had strengthened our bond, uniting us as one community of human beings, each with our vulnerabilities and fears. It felt like we were truly at home with one another.

The only constant in life is change, and that can often feel overwhelmingly scary. But

imagine a life without change. How could we appreciate the sunrise if the sun never set, or cherish the light if there were no darkness?

As we hugged each other at the end of the retreat, those embraces felt like a balm, offering deep healing and sealing our heart connections. This gift was both precious and liberating, guiding us to a place of pure acceptance.

I often found myself imagining the late Dr Thomas Kitwood, the father of dementia culture change, present during our retreat, reminding us that those living with dementia do not simply disappear. I pictured him telling us that their absence from society isn’t just due to the malfunctioning of their brains, but a reflection of our own societal failure. I even imagined him congratulating us for having the courage to challenge this dysfunction and change it.

We believe this retreat is a small but significant step toward transforming dementia care into a more genuinely humanistic approach. We hope you will join us in being part of this change.

**Dr Cecilia Chan** is a Gerontologist and Dementia Advocate and Activist. She can be contacted via WhatsApp (013-4384388).

## Embracing humanistic AI for the common good of humanity

With the release of the free Deepseek chatbot in January 2025, another key player has jumped into the artificial intelligence (AI) arena. And this is just the beginning of the AI era. The world is thrilled!

**Major Concern:** While AI is pervasive and incredibly powerful, a major concern is how to make AI behave as we want it to. For example, a powerful AI system to cure cancer might not only kill cancer cells but also kill the patient. AI might theorise that the simplest way of eliminating cancer is to kill the host! So, we are likely to face significant threats from misaligned AI.

**Ethical Principles:** In view of the potential risks and abuses, and based on the four principles of ethics (autonomy, justice, beneficence and non-maleficence), the European Union (EU) has set up guidelines for the ethical development of AI. Three of those guidelines state that AI should not trample on human autonomy; services provided by AI should be available to all, regardless of age, gender, race or other characteristics; and AI systems should be sustainable; i.e. they should be ecologically responsible and enhance positive social change.

**Being Human:** Commenting on the vital aspect of humanness, Fyodor Dostoevsky, one of the greatest novelists of world literature, stated, “The mystery of human existence lies not in just staying alive but in finding something to live for.” Such a ‘mission’ very much defines what it is like to

be human — a characteristic that AI will never be able to become or take on.

One day, a humanoid robot would ask this question: “What is it to be a human?” And genius scientist Albert Einstein said that humans have values that guide our beliefs, attitudes and judgements. I think this answers the question pretty well.

**Human Attributes:** To assess the commonness between humans and AI, Benoit Monin and Erik Santoro of Stanford University (USA) drew up a list of 20 human attributes, 10 of which we currently share with AI: doing computations, using language, implementing rules, forecasting the future, using logic, communicating, recognizing faces, remembering things, sensing temperatures and detecting sounds.

The other 10, they thought, were traits distinctive to humans: having culture, holding beliefs, having a sense of humour, being moral, being spiritual, having desires, feeling happy, feeling love, having a personality and having relationships.

**Human Concerns:** As AI becomes increasingly pervasive, a survey on AI and the future of humans conducted by the Pew Research Centre noted these concerns from respondents: experience of loss of control over their lives; that AI takeover of jobs would widen economic divides, leading to social upheaval; reduction of individuals’ cognitive, social and survival skills; and that AI should be directed at ‘humanness’ and common good.

**Purpose of AI:** Why are AI specialists building and advancing AI technology? AI is about making machines that would do intelligent tasks. There are two basic philosophies on the purpose of AI. One is to create machine intelligence that automates what humans do, and therefore, competes with humans. The other is to augment human intelligence directly or in collaboration with AI.

**Collaborating and Augmenting:** Touching on the ‘augment’ component, Tom Gruber, co-creator of Siri, said that humanistic AI is AI designed to meet human needs by collaborating with, and augmenting, people. (Siri is the voice-controlled personal assistant available on various Apple devices.)

**Wisdom of the Heart:** On the vital aspect of serving humanity, Pope Francis, in his message for the 2024 World Day of Social Communications, says that wisdom of the heart could help us “to put systems of artificial intelligence at the service of a fully human communication.”

**Human Dignity & Common Good:** With the growing influence of AI in every sector, the Vatican issued in January 2025 a document titled ‘*Note on the Relationship Between Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence*’ (Latin title: *Antiqua et Nova*). This document gives a comprehensive framework for the ethical development and use of AI. *Antiqua et Nova* highlights that AI applications must respect human dignity, promote the common good, and ensure that AI remains a tool to complement human intelligence.

**Broader Responsibility:** In *Antiqua et Nova*, Pope Francis emphasises the need for growth in human responsibility, values, and conscience proportionate to the growth in the potential that AI technology brings — recognizing that with an increase in human power comes a broadening of responsibility on individuals and communities.

**Enhanced Humanistic AI:** Considering the incredibly high stakes involved, I would like to value-enrich Gruber’s description: “Humanistic AI is AI designed to meet human needs by collaborating and augmenting people, and imbued with values for the common good of humanity”. I believe this values-based ‘definition’ is the essence of humanistic AI.

**Our Response:** As Christian consumers of AI, we could start looking at four key aspects: (1) Understand the basics of humanistic AI; (2) Appreciate the crucial role — and potential threats — of humanistic AI in our society; (3) Promote humanistic AI to all; and (4) incorporate the common good of humanity in undertaking research and development in the medical and other vital sectors that we are engaged in. **Professor Christopher Ng Kwan Hoong**

*Note: This article was not generated by AI.*

**Emeritus Prof Christopher Ng** is a regular contributor to the HERALD. In 2020, he received the Malaysian Merdeka Award for his outstanding scholastic achievement.

## Jubilee of Artists and the World of Culture

# Young artist brings vibrant vision to life

Elvina Fernandez

Harold Klemp Antony, 25, an art lecturer at a private college in Kuala Lumpur and dedicated parishioner of the Cathedral of St John in Kuala Lumpur, has created two stunning murals inspired by the Jubilee Year of Hope.

These murals, now displayed at the cathedral, are more than just beautiful pieces of art; they are a testament to the power of creativity in uniting a community.

Harold's journey as an artist is deeply rooted in his childhood. "I am a full-time lecturer, and art is not something new to me. Creating art professionally now is a childhood dream. The passion for art never left my sight," he shares.

Growing up, Harold's love for art was undeniable, but it was his father's encouragement and guidance that truly shaped his path. "Back in preschool, for all my art homework, my dad would sit with me to help me give my best," he recalls.

He added that the support of his dad, family, and teachers played a pivotal role in nurturing his art journey. "I very clearly remember my dad used to spend time sitting with me during my school days to help me with my art homework; those are moments I would cherish very much and are what brought me to creating the jubilee artwork today."

This early influence not only sparked Harold's interest in art but also ignited a desire to impress his father with his own creations. "I would always be excited to show my dad the art that I have created to get his comments and approval. This would highly motivate me to be more creative and think of doing better in my artwork over time."

Despite excelling in his studies and entering the science stream in

secondary school, Harold's art skills shone brighter.

"My science stream teachers would tell me that I would do great in the art stream. They said I naturally have it, a gift and calling for a reason, and I should think about it," Harold explains.

Answering his true calling, he embarked on a journey that combined his love for art and his dedication to his faith. "While my expertise is in digital art, I always had a dream deep down to use my talent to create Christian artwork."

So, when the opportunity to create the Jubilee artwork at his parish came by, it was a true dream come true for Harold. "It was our parish priest, Fr Gerard Theraviam's idea, which came as a pleasant surprise to me and a reminder that God has gifted me my talent for a purpose," he says.

Harold added that the request came in February last year, and from there the idea conceptualisation and planning took place.

Fr Gerard's vision and Harold's artistic talent culminated in two breath-taking pieces of artwork that took a total of two months to be brought to life, telling a story to each person who looks at it differently, displayed above the doors of the cathedral.

Speaking about the process, Harold said, "I embarked on a personal mission to paint every day. I only brought my students for two days; the rest of the time it was me on my own. I went after work from about 5.30pm to 11.00pm."

He added that this endeavour became a journey of discernment. "Miraculously, things never went wrong, no traffic issues, no shortage of funds. There was always this blissful peace."

"People would ask if I was sure I could finish, but I trusted the process, knowing that everything would work out with the Holy Spirit's guidance. Despite going through personal challenges, this mission taught me



Harold Klemp with his artwork. (Fr Gerard Theraviam facebook)

to trust God. I learned to let go and let God, to seek Him and find Him."

Through this journey, Harold said, he saw that God is always waiting for us. "Every evening, the church would be open, the altar lit up, during Advent, a time of waiting for something good. It made me realise that God is waiting for us throughout the year. I saw that every evening He is ready for us, which put things into perspective—a great message for us to go home and seek Him."

When asked about the idea of the artwork, Harold said, "My inspiration was listed out, relating it to the Year of Jubilee, and then I narrowed it down to the Holy Spirit, the Tree of Life, reconciliation, and looking to Jesus."

Harold said all of these elements played a role. "Fr Gerard liked all four themes and asked me to fit them into two, layering the meanings visually. I really liked the idea, even though it wasn't easy, but I knew it could be done."

He shared that the first piece, characterised by circular shapes, evokes the parting of the Red Sea, as seen through the eyes of children.

"Under the tree in the first book of the Bible was where it all began with Adam and Eve. This is where the circular shapes are used, like the fruit."

He added that children shared with him that the artwork told them the story of Moses leading people, the parting of the Red Sea. "I find it interesting that the children see it this way and that it would mean more to others," Harold describes.

While the second piece, reminiscent of the Last Supper to parishioners, features Jesus at the centre with 14 people around him, symbolising unity and reconciliation with God.

"When you take a closer look, there are seven people on each side; the additional two are Adam and Eve standing with the disciples. To be reconciled and go back to God is the message to share here," he explains.

The vibrant colours of the murals resemble stained glass, complementing the church's aesthetic.

Having this artwork displayed at the

cathedral, he said, is the proudest moment of his life, a pinnacle in his art journey, and a dream come true. "It makes me feel that I see my presence in the church. I see a sense of belonging in the community," Harold says.

The collaborative effort with his students, who contributed their brush strokes, adds to the artwork's significance. Harold expresses gratitude for his students' dedication and their participation in this extracurricular activity.

"The students who helped me on it, their efforts and brush strokes are there, and everyone is looking at it. I am truly grateful to God for the opportunity, and I also thank Fr Gerard and my students for doing extracurricular activities outside of school time," he shares.

Through his artwork, Harold hopes to inspire the church community to come together as one family.

"I think this is an opportunity for others to get to know me and a message for all of us to get to know each other. Very often, most of us are in the same parish, but we do not know who sits beside us. I feel that as a community, we must be connected to those who we celebrate mass together with," he reflects.

Harold's murals not only beautify the cathedral but also serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of unity and community.

"We may all be different, but we are united in Christ, just like the artwork showing many different colours but everyone looking to Christ," he emphasises.

His tribute art to the Jubilee Year of Hope is a testament to the power of creativity in uniting a community and a reminder that we are all part of a larger, interconnected family.

The Cathedral of St John, one of the pilgrimage sites for the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, now proudly displays Harold's murals.

The two artworks stand as symbols of hope, faith, and the incredible potential of bringing people together through art. Harold Klemp Antony's work is a gift to the parish and a legacy that will inspire generations to come.



**M**ore worrying news from Oxfam, the global aid group which works to fight inequality and poverty.

Last year alone, billionaire wealth grew by \$2tn (RM8.94 tn). This means billionaires grew \$5.7bn (RM25.48 bn) richer every day. That's three times faster than the growth rate in 2023.

In 2024, the world had 2,769 billionaires – up from 2,565 from the year before.

Incredibly, their combined wealth swelled from \$13tn to \$15tn (RM58.11 tn to RM67.05 tn) last year.

And guess what? Most of their wealth is not earned: 60 per cent of it comes from inheritance.

In a decade from now, Oxfam predicts, the world will have five trillionaires. It is hard to imagine such stupendous wealth. The world's richest person now has around \$400bn (RM1.7 tn) in wealth. It won't be long before that trillion-dollar wealth threshold is reached.

At the other end of the scale, the number of people living in poverty has hardly changed.

What this tells us is that the wealth disparity is growing in many parts of the world.

Billionaires can be found at the helm of major transnational companies (including Big Tech and Big Pharma companies) and global investment fund management companies. Then there are the companies dominating the military-industrial-media complex.

Every year, many of them gather in Davos for the World Economic Forum to discuss their plans to accumulate more wealth and power.

During the recent US presidential inauguration, a few of the wealthiest people on the planet could be seen facing the cameras behind the new president. It tells you who are the real movers and shakers in the world.

A big part of the problem in today's world is greed. Profits and shareholder wealth are never enough.



## Sunday Observer

ANIL NETTO

It is hard to reconcile the demands of the kingdom of God with the obscene wealth and greed on display.

This is why the wealthy man walked away sadly when Jesus told him what he lacked. It is not just about the wealth but how it is acquired and what their owners overlook that matter.

Imagine if the billionaires gave up even a fraction of their wealth – through higher taxes, for instance – many of the world's problems could be solved.

Imagine a world with less hunger, poverty, disease and illiteracy. Imagine if everyone had access to nutritious food and quality education.

This was also the crux of the problem when Jesus walked the Earth.

When religious leaders collaborate with powerful political leaders, ordinary people invariably face a hard time.

When religious leaders are silent on corruption and policies that favour the wealthy, it implies they see no wrong with the status quo.

When they emphasise rituals that burden ordinary people while remaining silent on social injustice, they stray far away from Gospel exhortations.

When, in quiet back rooms, they collaborate with world powers oppressing ordinary people, Jesus bellowed: "Den of thieves!" He toppled the desks of the money changers. They were the 'frontliners' facilitating a lucrative business of selling animals for sacrifice in the Temple.

Not only that, the Temple even functioned as a financial hub, a central bank of sorts. It facilitated the extraction of wealth from the countryside – through banking, taxes, loans and debt collection – to the centres of power.

# God or money?

The Roman occupiers had a huge say in the appointments of the high priests. In this way, they exercised strategic control over the Temple's economic activity.

The influx of pilgrims to Jerusalem during festive occasions indirectly benefited the Romans as they profited handsomely from taxes imposed on the movement and sale of goods.

This sometimes uneasy political-religious collaboration led to heavy burdens on ordinary people. Independent farmers and fisherfolk found it increasingly hard to keep their head above water. Some even lost their land when poor harvests made it impossible for them to service their loans.

It is still happening. Notice how the land of Gaza is now being coveted – for property development and perhaps access to offshore oil and gas reserves. All this while ordinary people are killed in a genocide, dying of hunger and displaced from their homes.

When Jesus arrived on the scene, He peppered His parables and sermons with words like daily bread, hunger, debt, wages, landlords and servants, the rich and the poor. These were the pressing issues of the day.

In today's world, the divide in society has grown much larger. Many live on the edge, their livelihoods precarious, sometimes unable to put enough food on the table.

Many governments around the world often work closely with vested interests while the poor and the working class receive the short end of the stick.

When combined with neoliberal policies that favour big business – tax cuts for the rich, cuts in education and health care, low wages and suppression of the workers' movements – the wealth inequalities grow wider.

Even the middle class finds themselves

squeezed. This leaves many ordinary people restless and more ready to blame others for their socioeconomic woes.

Unscrupulous politicians then tap into this latent discontent. They find easy scapegoats – people of other ethnic or religious backgrounds, migrants and refugees or LGBTQ communities. Classic divide and rule.

During the time of Jesus, the division was most pronounced between clean (ritually observant) and unclean (lepers, sex workers - usually people at the bottom of the social ladder).

No surprise that Jesus gravitated to the latter group. In His eyes, what counted more in this kingdom was love, compassion and mercy.

Moreover, those who prided themselves as clean and followed all the religious obligations lacked these essential kingdom values.

Not only that, Jesus constantly talked about wealth and possessions. By one estimate, about a third of His parables touched on this subject.

"It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for someone rich to enter the kingdom of God." - Mark 10:25

Why is that so? The sheer injustice of a world where some have obscene amounts of wealth while others go without basic necessities cries out to the heavens.

It is crystal clear: "No one can be the slave of two masters: he will either hate the first and love the second, or be attached to the first and despise the second. You cannot be the slave both of God and of money." – Matthew 6:24

*Anil Netto is a freelance writer and activist based in Penang. He believes we are all called to build the kingdom of God in this world.*

❖ *The views expressed are entirely the writer's own.*

## Good people, bad marriages

**I**s marriage all it is hyped up to be? I have people close to me who long to find their soul mate who will sweep them off their feet and fulfil that idyllic state of bliss, and at the very same time, I have people in my circle, whose once fairytale marriages have broken down irretrievably. And these are good people. So why?

I recently stumbled upon a deeply unsettling article that revealed an astonishing statistic – nearly 140 divorces are filed daily in Malaysia. Alarming, don't you think? I would imagine every couple, standing hand in hand at the altar, gazing into each other's eyes as they say "I do", dreams of a love that will endure the test of time, a life filled with laughter, love and joy. Yet, every year thousands of people go bankrupt, are forced to move out, fight for custody of their children (and some even their pets) and need to restart their lives as a result of a divorce.

So how does a fairy-tale, once built on affection and shared dreams, unravel into a mere coexistence of "putting up with each other," or dissolve into the painful reality of a failed marriage? Were there invisible cracks in this once-thriving union or did life just get out of control?

I am married. My marriage is still at that young toddler stage. While I would categorize myself as happily married, I won't deny there are days I feel like I am "going through hell" - and I am pretty sure my husband feels the same way.

But this was not always the case. I remember, as if it was yesterday, how I would get butterflies in my stomach when I saw him from afar, how we used to stay up all night talking on the phone, the non-stop messages going back and forth throughout the day, spending every chance we got together, talking about anything and everything under the sun. I remember feeling like I could not possibly be closer to or more comfortable with any other human being, and then booom, in the blink of an eye, six years have passed and there are days we act like roommates barely exchanging words or even

glances and annoyed by the presence of the other in the same room.

We had a great foundation - we are both Catholics, both raised in loving Catholic homes and both of us have parents who had good marriages and set good examples. We went for our marriage preparation course, prepared ourselves spiritually, no one could have been as prepared as we were for marriage, or at least that's what I thought. But especially as a woman, what I failed to realize is that marriage does not always live up to the romanticized expectations portrayed on our TV screens and romantic novels, it is not always what we see on social media – marriage requires work.

It can be hard work to constantly be attentive, it can be hard work to always be disciplined, it can be hard to always have to forgive, it can be hard to always compromise. Like I said, marriage is hard work. Firstly, being in a relationship and being married are two completely different things. I think it's easy for most of us to make our spouse the primary focus when the relationship is still young or before major distractions, such as career, commitments, children, infertility and others. However, the first year of marriage was the toughest, for me at least – this was because I was now in a position where every decision I made was now made based on two people. Even with this joining of two into one, we are still the individuals we were before we married. We still have our individual interests, circle of friends and goals that may or may not be in sync with those of our spouse. I am still me, and even more distressing (hehehe), is that my husband is still his own person as well. And while in the beginning it seemed exciting, after a while I felt like I was giving up so much, moving out of my comfort zone into new territory, leaving family behind, prioritising not one but two families, giving up on my unaccompanied independence, just to name a few. I also think because of feminism and the worldly view of equality, I never realised that men needed respect the way women need love. I thought my husband felt

and thought the same way I did. I thought that if he was unhappy in our marriage, he would just open up to me, like I would to him. I thought our needs were identical – but I have come to realise they really are not.

I do know not everyone's marriage is the same, but I am pretty sure everyone's marriage becomes something that is not exactly as they would have had it planned. In life, we are required to deal with things we don't really plan for, and from a Christian perspective, sin complicates what would otherwise be a simple solution.

I read somewhere that "most of the troubles we face in marriage are not intentional or personal. In most marriage situations, you do not face difficulty because your spouse intentionally did something to make your life difficult. Yes, in moments of anger that may happen. But most often, what is really happening is that your life is being affected by the sin, weakness, and failure of the person you are living with. At some point you will be selfish. In some situation you will speak unkindly. There will be moments of jealousy, bitterness, and conflict. You will not avoid this, because you are a sinner and you are married to a sinner."

This reminds me that the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches us that husband and wife cannot achieve the oneness that God intended without His help. Understanding how to live a married life that will thrive is possible for every couple who participates with God in living the fullness of their sacramental marriage. One of my greatest blessings is that my husband and I share the same faith. I always remind myself that God is committed to our marriage.



## A Blessed Life

TIANNE PEREIRA

Sometimes we just need that wake-up call to invite Him to be a part of it.

I love the analogy of marriage being a long-term exercise in gardening. If you have done any gardening, you know there are no shortcuts. When you see that house garlanded with gorgeous flowers blooming, healthy and in a variety of hues, you can remind yourself that what you are looking at is hard work. Gardens begin with hard work. Clearing up the land is not fun, but it is crucial. Digging holes for the seeds may not be the most enjoyable, but it too is an obligatory step. The work of regular watering, weeding and pruning is also a necessity. Marriage is like a flower, it is either growing or it is dying. On a daily basis we have to do something to feed our marriage. If we don't, it will not grow.

I write this to tell the person who needs to hear it, marriage is not easy and that is absolutely normal. Some days, it feels like the best decision ever – filled with love, laughter and partnership and on other days it can be tough, frustrating, and requires work. It's a mix of highs and lows, comfort and challenges, growth and compromise. But at its core, if you're with the right person, it's about choosing each other every single day, no matter what comes our way.

And to my husband, through all the ups and downs, the twists and turns, we are still finding our way through this journey of marriage. It's not always the easiest, but there's no one else I'd rather do this with. If I have to walk through storms or through "hell" itself – I'm just grateful it is with you.

*Tianne Ramona Pereira identifies first as a Catholic daughter, sister, wife and mother. From years in the media industry, she eventually started and continues to run her own businesses while teaching part-time. She has been actively serving in church for as far back as she can remember and is involved in various charities.*

❖ *The views expressed are entirely the writer's own.*



Fr Ron Rolheiser

# Our restless selves

**D**uring the last years of his life, Thomas Merton lived in a hermitage outside a monastery, hoping to find more solitude. But solitude is illusive, and he found it was forever escaping him.

Then one morning, he sensed that, for a moment, he had found it. However, what he experienced was a surprise to him. Solitude, it turns out, is not some altered state of consciousness or some heightened sense of God and the transcendent in our lives. Solitude, as he experienced it, was simply being peacefully inside your own skin, gratefully aware of and peacefully breathing in the immense richness inside your own life. Solitude consists in sleeping in intimacy with your own experience, at peace there, aware of its riches and wonder.

But that's not easy. It's rare. Rarely do we find ourselves at peace with the present moment inside us. Why? Because that's the way we are built. We are overcharged for this world. When God put us into this world, as the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes tells us, God put "timelessness" into our hearts and, because of that, we don't make easy peace with our lives.

We read this, for example, in the famous passage about the rhythm of the seasons in the Book of Ecclesiastes. There

is a time and a season for everything, we are told: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to gather in what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal ... and so the text goes on. Then, after listing this natural rhythm of time and the seasons, the author ends with these words: *God has made everything suitable for its own time but has put timelessness into the human heart so that human beings are out of sync with the rhythms of the seasons from beginning to end.*

The Hebrew word used here to express "timelessness" is *Olam*, a word suggesting "eternity" and "transcendence". Some English translations put it this way: God has put a sense of past and future into our hearts. Perhaps that captures it best in terms of how we generally experience this in our lives. We know from experience how difficult it is to be at peace inside the present moment because the past and the future won't leave us alone. They are forever colouring the present.

The past haunts us with half-forgotten lullabies and melodies that trigger memories about love found and lost, about wounds that have never healed, and with inchoate feelings of nostalgia, regret, and wanting to cling to something that once was. The past is forever sowing restless-

ness into the present moment.

And the future? It impales itself into the present as well, looming as promise and threat, forever demanding our attention, forever sowing anxiety into our lives, and forever stripping us of the capacity to simply rest inside the present.

The present is forever coloured by obsessions, heartaches, headaches, and anxieties that have little to do with people we are actually sitting with at table.

Philosophers and poets have given various names to this. Plato called it "*a madness that comes from the gods*"; Hindu poets have called it "*a nostalgia for the infinite*"; Shakespeare speaks of "*immortal longings*", and Augustine, in perhaps the most famous naming of them all, called it an incurable restlessness that God has put into the human heart to keep it from finding a home in something less than the infinite and eternal – "*You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.*"

And so, it's rare to be peacefully present to our own lives, restful inside of our own skins. But this "*torture*", as T.S. Eliot, once named it, has a God-given intentionality, a divine purpose.

Henri Nouwen, in a remarkable passage, both names the struggle and its purpose: "Our life is a short time in expectation, a

time in which sadness and joy kiss each other at every moment. There is a quality of sadness that pervades all the moments of our life. It seems that there is no such thing as a clear-cut pure joy, but that even in the most happy moments of our existence we sense a tinge of sadness. In every satisfaction, there is an awareness of limitations. In every success, there is the fear of jealousy. Behind every smile, there is a tear. In every embrace, there is loneliness. In every friendship, distance. And in all forms of light, there is the knowledge of surrounding darkness. But this intimate experience in which every bit of life is touched by a bit of death can point us beyond the limits of our existence. It can do so by making us look forward in expectation to that day when our hearts will be filled with perfect joy, a joy that no one shall take away from us."

Our restless hearts keep us from falling asleep to the divine fire inside us.

**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](http://www.ronrolheiser.com)

## You can't pray away mental illness

**I** am an anxious person. If there is something to worry about, you can bet I have worried about it. If there is something too silly and too nonsensical to worry about, you can bet I have worried about that too. Anxiety is a part of me. It's in my DNA. It's in my personal history. It is as real to me as my right arm or the freckles on my face.

When I was in my mid-20s, life had become unbearable to me. When my husband was at work, I would find myself lying in a dark living room with the television on. I would try not to move. I would keep the sun out. I would do everything possible to keep my brain from thinking and to avoid stimulation because to think meant that I could trigger a bout of anxiety so bad it would leave me unable to function.

So, finally, I made the decision to take a new step. I knew that there was more to life than hiding from fear and anxiety. I knew God had created a whole big world out there, and I was barely experiencing any of it hiding away in my living room. Therefore, with guidance from a medical professional, I decided that I was going to start taking Lexapro.

I told a friend at the time. Her response was, "Huh. I've heard people say that Catholics don't need anxiety medications as much as other people because we have God to trust in." I like to give people the benefit of the doubt and assume that things are said out of the best of intentions, but it was nearly impossible not to hear in her comments doubt about the authenticity of my faith and my ability to trust in God.

But my desire for a helpful medication is not due to a lack of belief in the power of God. I am a person who believes in miracles, including miraculous healing. A

Rwandan Catholic priest, Fr Ubald, came to my parish a few years ago, and I believe his prayers brought healing to the chronic pain my husband was experiencing. I pray to God every day for myself and for those I love. I pray when I am anxious. I pray for peace. I pray for an easing of suffering and depression. I believe that there is no greater gift that God has given to us than prayer.

In addition to all of that, however, I also take seriously the advice of the Rev Jacques Philippe, author of *Searching for and Maintaining Peace: A Small Treatise on Peace of Heart*, who writes that we have a responsibility to keep our minds at peace because it is only when our minds are at peace that we can most faithfully follow God with a free and open heart.

Most, but not all, of my mental health struggles were at their worst before I had children. But for someone like me, who has struggled a lifetime with these issues, it is naïve to think that I would never experience an uptick again. Over the years, I have. Now I know that if I am suffering mentally, I have to take concrete steps to get back on track. I have to do this not only for myself but also for my husband, my children and my God, who asks much of me. I have to go back to therapy; I have to make sure I'm eating right. I have to make my bed and create a structure. And I have to continue taking my medications that help me feel stable. If I fail to do these things, I am not able to function at my best, either as a mother, a wife, a writer or as a child of God. A healthy diet and adequate sleep and exercise are ideal for anyone, but when someone is in the throes of anxiety or depression, one of the very symptoms of the disease is an inability to do those very things that help the most. Sometimes medication is needed to allow

a person to take care of themselves properly. There is no shame in that.

As a culture, we have gotten better at acknowledging that mental health issues are real. We have done a fairly decent job of destigmatising therapy. People are not so afraid to share these struggles. What I still see, however, particularly in Catholic circles, is the idea that medication denotes a lack of trust in God and priorities that are out of line with those of a Christian life. To follow this line of thinking is to deny the suffering of countless saints who likely struggled with mental health issues before efficacious therapies and medications were available. If even the saints struggled with issues like scrupulosity, anxiety, depression and eating disorders, then we need not feel alone in our struggles. And we should feel empowered to address them with resources that were unavailable to previous generations.

To live a life is to suffer, but to suffer well is to learn to accept help when and where it is offered. It is to allow oneself the humility to admit when help is needed. It is to realise that we are all broken, and if our brokenness manifests itself in psychological ways, that it is most prudent to treat it with whichever means is most appropriate for our situation.

The Catholic community needs to embrace the idea that medications, while not a cure-all and not necessarily always a prudent first line of defence, are a valid treatment for what are legitimate medical ailments. Our lives on this side of the veil will always include suffering. We cannot escape that. Antidepressants and similar



medications do not make people artificially happy. They do not take away suffering. They do not mask grief or help people hide from their problems. What they do is give a suffering person a more stable baseline, so that they can make choices for their lives from a place of wholeness and health. They can give people the ability to bring healing to their brain so that they can become more truly themselves.

People can judge those decisions. People will judge those decisions. As a Catholic community, however, we need to learn that while suffering is a necessary part of life, it is not one we should prolong simply out of a desire to avoid pharmaceuticals. We are a people called to follow prudence, and prudence requires us to keep our bodies and our minds in their most optimal shape. We are also called to be people of mercy, and this mercy should extend to all of those who are suffering in invisible ways.

**Amanda Knapp, America**

# Little Catholics' corner

Dear children,

If you were ruler, what would your number one rule be, and why?

Perhaps you would want to set rules that urge people to be kind or respect each other to prevent war or disharmony.

Or maybe you would want to set up rules to protect the environment?

I believe you would all come up with some interesting rules.

Today we're reading in the Bible about something Jesus, our King, said was important to do.



Many people call this "The Golden Rule."

Jesus taught that loving one another, even people we don't get along with, is really important.

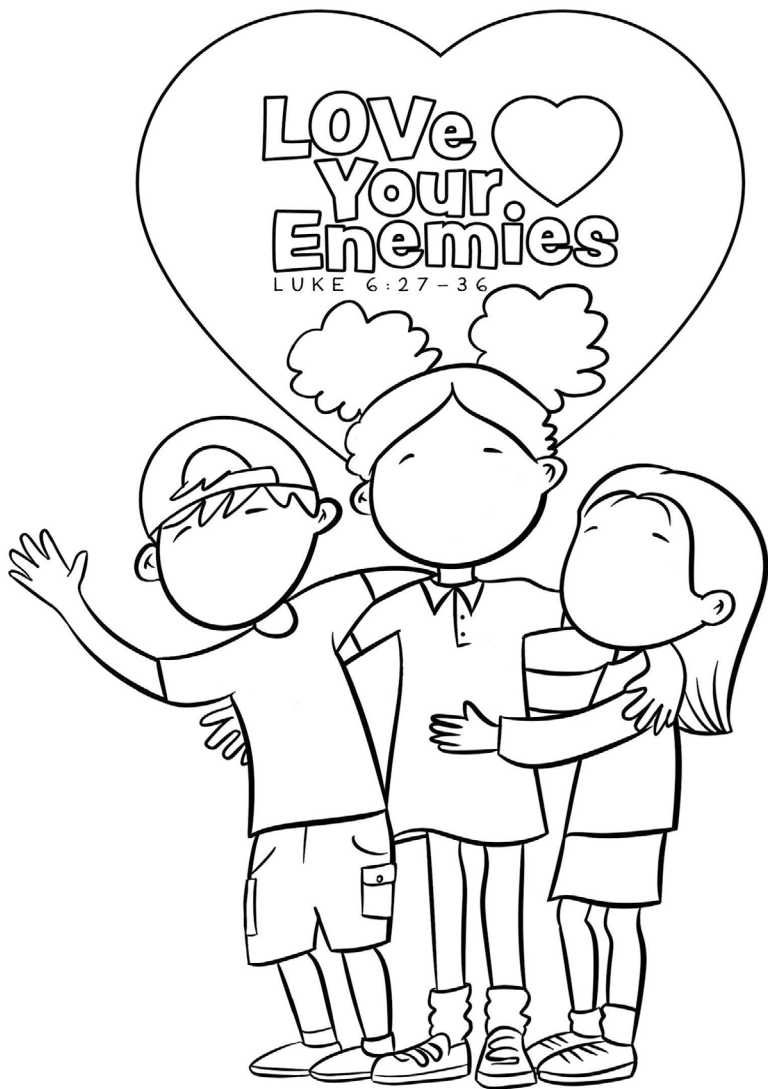
And one way we do that is by treating others how we want to be treated.

So, if we want others to welcome us when we're new to their school, then we do that for others. Or if we want others to be kind to us, we are kind to others.

Children, let us treat others with love as Jesus taught us to do.

Aunty Eliz

The children's faces are incomplete. Can you finish it and remember to colour the picture.



7 I 10 L 8 F

3 M 1 B

4 E 6 C 5 R

9 U 2 E



What was Jesus telling us to do in today's Gospel reading?  
Use the numbers to help unscramble the letters!

## WORD SEARCH



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

FATHER  
ENEMIES  
REWARD  
BLESS  
SINNERS  
CURSE  
WICKED  
HATE  
MISTREAT

GREAT

LOVE

MERCIFUL



# IFFAsia holds regional dialogue on strengthening youth formation

(LiCas News/Mark Saludes)

**T**AGAYTAY CITY, Philippines: “Today we come together, not as individuals, but as a community deeply committed to the formation of young people in Asia, walking alongside them as they navigate life, faith, and purpose,” said IFFAsia Director Florence Alexius during the opening programme.

Some 57 representatives from various Church institutions and civil society groups across 10 Asian countries are participating in the dialogue, which runs from February 9 to 11 in Tagaytay City.

Alexius said the dialogue hopes to explore ways “to be a Synodal Church to the young people in their ordinary part of life” and how institutions and organizations “be helpful in enabling and engaging the present generation for the local Church and communities in Asia.”

“This was our guiding objective when designing this program. We truly hope that everyone here sees themselves as



*Florence Alexius, Director of IFFAsia, speaks during the dialogue. (LiCas News/Mark Saludes)*

collaborators in this journey,” she added.

The dialogue process is guided by the principles of Synodality — the Christian way of ‘walking together’ — which emphasises listening, discernment, and par-

ticipation.

IFFAsia is a discipleship and mission school for young adults and laypeople in Asia. Founded by laity from Malaysia and the Philippines within the Catholic lay association Fondacio, it addresses the need for formation programmes equipping young laypersons for social and pastoral work.

Archbishop Rex Andrew Alarcon of Caceres, chairperson of IFFAsia, said the dialogue “is one of the very first steps — maybe not officially, but the very first steps — to implement the Synodal intent.”

“We are here from ten different countries, all working for the young people, taking this little step forward as we are urged by the Holy Father to take that step towards synodality. And isn’t that beautiful and amazing?” the prelate said.

During a discussion on the situation of youth in conflict-stricken countries, Archbishop Alarcon said the prevailing culture of fear must be countered with “hope, courage, and love”.

Participants in the dialogue are expected to identify responses to the challenges of youth formation and draft a final



*Archbishop Rex Andrew Alarcon of Caceres encouraged participants to embrace Synodality and collaboration in their mission to support youth formation across Asia. (LiCAS News/Mark Saludes)*

statement outlining concrete actions for cooperation and collaboration in shaping young people in Asia. **Mark Saludes, LiCAS News**



(Bee Le facebook)



(Suman Ghale facebook)

# Discovering self and God at Persons Are Gifts programme

MELAKA: Thirty-nine youth, mainly from the Church of St Theresa, and other parishes in Melaka, attended the *Persons Are Gifts* (PAG) programme held in the church grounds. Originally put together by the late Fr Ignatius Huan while he was based in the parish in the late 80s, the PAG programme has continued to touch hundreds of lives ever since.

The PAG typically caters for 12 to 15-year-olds. The three-day, two-night live-in programme is an opportunity for young people to discover themselves and others as gifts. Using the analogy of the gift, participants learn that the person is more important than appearances and that people come in different shapes and sizes, with their own unique characteristics and gifts.

The whole PAG weekend was packed with sessions facilitated by Jason Joseph, Annabel Loh, Madeline Melkis, Eugene Wong and Chloe De Costa and involved learning from small group sharing, Scripture reflections, community-centred activities, fun games, worship music, prayer, and lots of affirmation and love. Through the sessions, participants recognised their gifts, talents, and the people in their lives who are gifts.



## Feedback from the Participants:

"During this camp, I've learnt and realised God's love for me, even if I have sinned, He still loves me. I've learnt about unity and to have more joy. Not only that, my faith for serving the Lord has also increased." **Josiah Aeden**

"I learned that God loves me unconditionally, regardless of my actions. God has a plan for my life." **Shanellia Klazeena**

"Through this camp, I've learned how to pray more; how to talk to people with confidence and love the people around me." **Micheal Patrick**

"I learned more about myself as a person and how I view others. I enjoyed Talent Night the most. I also enjoyed the games as it was fun. I made lots of new friends too. Overall, it was an enjoyable camp." **Donald Lee**

"During camp, I enjoyed the fun and meaningful sessions and activities. I also made many friends and got closer to God. I even got to open up with my group and it felt safe to share with them." **Emma Emmanuella**

"Throughout this camp I've learned many things from the sessions which taught me

that each and every one of us, including family members and close friends, are gifts given by God and that these gifts should be shared with each other. I met many new friends and shared new memories with them while having fun at the same time." **Hayley Pauline Ong**

"I've learned many things about myself and how I am with others around me. I've also discovered my talents and my personality. Most importantly, it has deepened my faith and showed me that I can have fun while praying and expressing my faith." **Luke Maalan**

## Synodality and youth: Malaysian lay leader calls for unity and inclusion in Church

TAGAYTAY CITY, Philippines: The Catholic Church must do more to engage young people in its mission, lay leader Anna Amandus told a gathering of collaborators during a dialogue conducted by the Institute of Formation Fondacio Asia (IFFAsia).

Speaking on February 9, the Malaysian delegate to the Synod on Synodality underscored the challenges youth face in the Church and society, calling for greater inclusion, mentorship, and spiritual formation to help them find their place in the faith community.

"If you ask me, 'Where are the youth?' They are everywhere. They are in the family, workforce, doctors, nurses, and teachers. They are also migrants. They are also refugees. They are also indigenous people," she said.

Citing statistics from the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), she underscored the major challenges confronting youth, including economic struggles, digital distractions, and social exclusion.

"Yes, young people experience setbacks, disappointments, and painful memories. They often feel the hurt of past failures,

memories, frustrated desires, and experiences of discrimination and injustice. The feeling of being unloved and unsettled," she quoted from *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation to young people.

Anna pointed out that young people are often misunderstood and misjudged. "Young people easily get jealous if they don't understand who they are. They will compare themselves," she said.

She emphasised the importance of forming young people with a sense of purpose and identity.

Anna spoke about the necessity of engaging young people in Church life and decision-making. She referenced Pope Benedict XVI's message to young people: "You have special place in my heart and in the whole church because the church is always young."

She then challenged Church leaders, saying, "Are we really trusting the young people?"

She lamented the generational gap between Church leadership and young Catholics, adding that the young people want to do something for the church yet the church keeps on condemning them."



Anna Amandus, speaks on unity and inclusion in the Church. (LiCAS News/Mark Saludes)

"Not only the Church," she said, stressing that the Church needs to provide youth with opportunities to lead.

Anna also warned about the effects of technology and social media, saying that young people are increasingly drawn to the digital world.

"Young people say, 'I want to be an influencer. I want to be a content maker, YouTuber, everything.' Yes, it's good. Easy money making. It's good. If it's good. If they're sharing the good things," she cautioned, acknowledging both the opportunities and pitfalls of online influence.

Anna emphasised the crucial role of spiritual formation in guiding young people's future. Drawing from her own experience, she highlighted how it provides stability during difficult times and offers a strong support system when needed.

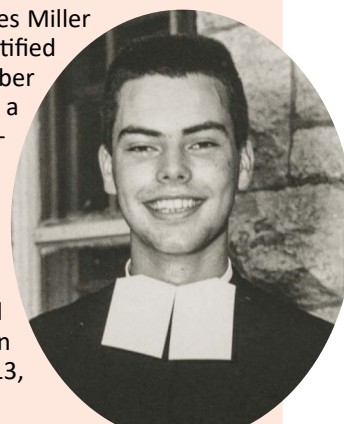
"Young people cannot walk alone. We need adults to journey with them, giving advice, listen to them, teach them, and train them," she said.

Using the story of Samuel as an example, she pointed out how young people seek wisdom from their elders, but need to be heard and trusted.

Anna urged Church leaders to embrace young people as partners in mission. "Synodality is about reconciliation and healing. If there is no reconciliation and healing, we cannot walk together also," she said. **Mark Saludes, LiCAS News**

## Bl. James Miller's childlike faith prepared him for martyrdom

Blessed James Miller was beatified on December 7, 2019, in a large ceremony held in Huehuetenango, Guatemala, near the location where he was killed by gunmen on February 13, 1982.



*I place my life in his providence;  
I place my trust in him.*

After being assigned to a mission in Guatemala, Miller recognised the escalating violence in the country and wrote in a letter, "I pray to God for the grace and strength to serve him faithfully by my presence among the poor and oppressed of Guatemala. I place my life in his providence; I place my trust in him."

He was killed by three masked gunmen, who were not happy with Miller's work with the local population. At the time of his death, Miller was helping the native population with agricultural skills he'd learned at home.

This faith and courage to do what is right, even under the threat of death, did not come out of nowhere. Miller was prepared for this day since his childhood. **Philip Kosloski, Aleteia**



Group discussion during the Regional Dialogue formation. (Bee Le facebook)

# New film on Carlo Acutis to be released on his canonisation date



VATICAN: *Carlo Acutis: Roadmap to Reality*, the highly anticipated documentary on the life of the soon-to-be saint, will be released in theaters nationwide for a limited time from April 27–29. The release date coincides with Pope Francis' canonisation of Carlo Acutis, the Catholic Church's first millennial saint, on April 27.

Castletown Media, in association with Catholic filmmaker Jim Wahlberg, made the announcement on Feb 12.

Castletown Media is producing the film and Fathom Events will distribute it. The two media companies recently experienced success with another joint film project, *Jesus Thirsts: The Miracle of the Eucharist*, which became Fathom Events' highest-grossing documentary of 2024.

*Roadmap to Reality* explores the life of Acutis and the lessons he offers young people regarding the challenges of the digital world. The documentary blends live action, animation, and documentary-style interviews with Acutis' family, friends, tech experts, and scholars to tackle urgent questions about artificial intelligence and the technological world we live in.

The film also follows the journey of a group of high school students who embark on a two-week pilgrimage from North Dakota to Italy to visit Acutis' tomb. One of the requirements for the pilgrimage was for the young people to disengage from technology and leave their phones at home.

Additionally, the documentary features Acutis' family and friends sharing their firsthand experiences of Acutis and his impact on their lives, in addition to well-known voices in the Catholic Church and technology experts who offer a model for young people to engage in the digital world.

"One of the themes in the film is that he [Acutis] was online to lead people offline. He was online to lead people back to the Eucharist, back to real encounters," said Tim Moriarty, director of the new Acutis film and founder of Castletown Media.

Moriarty believes that a film about this young soon-to-be saint is needed because "Carlo's life provides a road map away from the distractions of the virtual world to the real world, especially through his devotion to the Eucharist — his 'highway to heaven.'"

Moriarty called the release of the documentary "providential."

On Nov 20, 2024, Pope Francis announced the canonisation date of Blessed Carlo Acutis, which will take place during the Church's Jubilee of Teenagers. Acutis' canonisation Mass is expected to take place on Sunday, Apr 27, at 10.30am local time in St Peter's Square, according to the Diocese of Assisi.

"Fathom Entertainment is very pleased to join forces once again with Tim, Jim, and the passionate team at Castletown Media to bring this heartfelt and uplifting documentary film to the big screen," said Ray Nutt, chief executive officer at Fathom Entertainment, in a press release. "This captivating real-life, modern-day story is sure to resonate with audiences of all faiths and backgrounds, leaving a lasting impact and inspiring countless hearts."

Acutis, an Italian computer-coding teenager who died of cancer in 2006, is known for his great devotion to the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Born in 1991, he was the first millennial to be beatified by the Catholic Church and will now be the first millennial to be canonised. **Francesca Pollio Fenton, CNA**

## MEMORIAM

For enquiries, please contact:  
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Tel: 03-2026 8291

### 2nd Anniversary In Loving Memory of



**Ferry Burthis Fernandez**  
Departed: 21st February 2023

*I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me will live, even though he dies.*  
— John 11:25

Deeply missed and forever remembered by:  
Wife: Stella (deceased)  
Son: Fabian  
Daughters: Sharren & Shirley Anne, Sons-in-law, Daughter-in-law, grandchildren and loved ones.

### 24th Anniversary In Loving Memory of our beloved Dad Michael Bong Su Hee 25-09-1943 ~ 25-02-2001



Deeply missed, always remembered and cherished by Loving wife, sons, daughters and spouses, grandchildren, relatives, friends and all loved ones.

### 12th Anniversary In Ever Loving Memory of



**RONNIE ANTHONY ROZARIO**

From the Lord: 6th February 1933  
With the Lord: 23rd February 2013

### FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Deeply loved and forever cherished by his beloved Wife, Lalitha Rozario, children, grandchildren & loved ones.

*Even though  
I walk  
through the  
darkest valley,  
I will fear no  
evil,  
for you are  
with me;  
your rod and  
your staff,  
they comfort  
me.*

Psalm 23:4

### 2nd Anniversary

### Sherril Louisa Netto-Vijayan

April 4, 1985 –  
Feb 22, 2023



Two years have passed since we said goodbye, yet your spirit remains with us, filling our hearts with love. Your kindness, laughter, and the light you brought into our lives are memories we cherish every day. Though you're deeply missed, we find comfort knowing you live on in those who knew you.

Rest peacefully dear Sherril.  
You will never be forgotten.

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### 31st Anniversary In Loving Memory of

### Augustin Pathrose Lopez

Departed on  
24th February 1994

*Eternal Rest grant upon him,  
O Lord, And Let Perpetual  
Light shine upon him  
May his soul Rest in peace.*  
AMEN



Dearly missed and fondly remembered by

Wife: Eleyamma

Children: Judit, Jude, Ida, Freeda, Linda, Justin

Son in law: Robert, Daughters in law: Jasmine, Samantha

Grandchildren: Raymond, Rhianna, Joel, Julianne, Juliette, John

*"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"* — Anonymous

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# Pope Francis adds feast of Mother Teresa to universal calendar

VATICAN: Pope Francis has added the feast day of St. Teresa of Kolkata, a "beacon of hope" and an example of loving service to the poorest of the poor, to the General Roman Calendar so that her "Optional Memorial shall be celebrated by all on September 5 every year."

Cardinal Arthur Roche and Archbishop Vittorio Francesco Viola, respectively prefect and secretary of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, announced the pope's deci-

sion in a decree published by the Vatican February 11.

Previously the feast day of St Teresa of Calcutta, as the Vatican refers to the city in India where she began her work with the abandoned poor, was inscribed only in the proper calendar of the Missionaries of Charity and the proper calendar of India. Now her memorial is included in the calendar of the universal Church.

"Canonised in 2016 by Pope Francis, the name of Teresa of Calcutta continues to

shine out as a source of hope for many men and women who seek consolation amidst tribulations of body and spirit," said the decree, dated Dec 24.

Pope Francis, responding to the requests of bishops, religious and laypeople "and considering the influence exercised by the spirituality of Saint Teresa in different parts of the world," decided to add her to the universal calendar, the decree said.

In a separate note, Cardinal Roche described Mother Teresa as "a beacon of hope, small in stature yet great in love, a witness to the dignity and privilege of humble service in the defence of all human life and of all those who have been abandoned, discarded and despised even in the hiddenness of the womb."

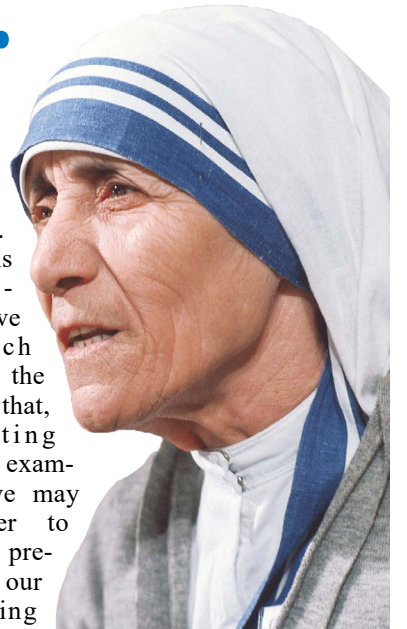
Bishops' conferences around the world will need to translate from Latin the prayers issued by the dicastery for Mass on her feast day as well as those used in the Liturgy of the Hours and have the translations confirmed by the dicastery.

Cardinal Roche said the Collect or opening prayer for Mass on her feast day "opens for us the heart of her spirituality: the call to satisfy the thirst of Jesus Christ on the Cross by answering with love the needs

of the most

needy. For this reason, we beseech God the Father that, imitating her example, we may minister to Christ present in our suffering brothers and sisters."

The Gospel reading for her feast is from the 25th chapter of St. Matthew, the cardinal said, which lists "the works of mercy" — feeding the hungry, visiting prisoners, welcoming strangers — and it "contains the following words brought wonderfully to life in Mother Teresa: 'Whatever you have done to the very least of my brothers and sisters you have done also to Me.'" Cindy Wooden, CNS



## Jubilee for the Armed Forces: A call for peace and justice



Members of the Italian army's Bersaglieri play their brass instruments during the welcome ceremony for the Jubilee of the Armed Services, Police and Security Personnel in Rome's Piazza del Popolo Feb 8, 2025. (CNS photo/Chris Warde-Jones)

VATICAN: On February 8 and 9, 30,000 soldiers, police officers, veterans, and security personnel from over 100 countries gathered in Rome to participate in the Jubilee of the Armed Forces, a key event during the Holy Year. The two-day celebration included a pilgrimage to the Holy Door at St Peter's Basilica, a concert at Piazza del Popolo, and a Mass celebrated by Pope Francis in St Peter's Square.

The event, which was in conjunction with Pope Francis' call for a Jubilee of Hope, focused on the vital role of military and security forces in promoting peace, justice, and hope across the globe. Despite battling bronchitis, Pope Francis appeared fatigued but delivered a powerful homily urging military personnel to be vigilant against the illusion of power and to never be seduced by "the myth of strength." He emphasised the importance of saving lives, respecting international conventions, and upholding a "sacred respect for life and creation."

"Your presence in our cities and neighbourhoods to uphold law and order, and your taking the part of the defenceless, can serve as a lesson for all of us," Pope Francis said. He called on the military to be peacemakers and reminded them that "goodness can prevail over everything." The Pope also invoked prayers for peace in regions of conflict, such as Ukraine, Palestine, Israel, and Sudan, stressing that the cry for peace must be heard around the world.

The event also highlighted the internal struggles faced by many soldiers as they balance their Catholic faith with military duty. Several soldiers, including those from

the French Armed Forces, shared their reflections on the tension between the ethical foundations of their faith and the demands of their profession. Bishop Antoine de Romanet of the French Armed Forces explained that soldiers become "soldiers to win peace" but often face challenges as they navigate the complexities of their duties in conflict zones.

One notable story came from a female officer in the Lithuanian armed forces who had previously served in Ukraine during the 2022 Russian invasion. She explained that participating in the Jubilee was a way to seek hope and reconnect with her faith after her deployment in a difficult post.

The event was not limited to Rome. Military chapels around the world, including those in remote conflict zones, became pilgrimage sites for those unable to attend. The Jubilee underscored the global nature of the military's role in peacekeeping efforts, such as the European Union's Operation Irini, which works to support the peace process in Libya. Lieutenant Colonel Ozren Lukenda of the Croatian Navy, involved in the operation, emphasised the importance of military personnel providing hope to those in conflict zones, stating, "Without hope, in any form, we would have nothing."

The Jubilee of the Armed Forces served as a powerful reminder of the essential role that military personnel, police officers, and veterans play in maintaining global peace and justice. By participating in the pilgrimage and the Mass, they were invited to reflect on their mission to serve the common good and to promote peace in a turbulent world, all while receiving the Church's recognition for their service. **Agencies**

EX KL

2025 PILGRIMAGES

Emirates

<b>11D HOLYDOOR JUBILEE</b> Italy + Vatican	<b>14D MARIAN SHRINES</b> Vatican + France + Spain + Portugal	<b>15D E.EUROPE &amp; MEDJUGORJE</b> Croatia + Bosnia + Hungary + Poland + Czech Republic
<b>Highlights :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walk through the 4 HOLYDOORS</li> <li>Papal Blessings</li> <li>Leaning Tower of Pisa</li> <li>St Mary of Angels Basilica (UNESCO)</li> <li>Eucharistic Miracle in Lanciano</li> <li>Holy House of Loreto</li> <li>St Padre Pio Sanctuary</li> </ul>	<b>Highlights :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Papal Blessings</li> <li>St. Peter's Basilica</li> <li>Shrine of Lourdes</li> <li>St. Ignatius Sanctuary</li> <li>Santiago de Compostela Cathedral</li> <li>Lucia's Memorial</li> <li>Shrine of Fatima</li> <li>Fly from Rome to Lourdes!</li> </ul>	<b>Highlights :</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jasna Gora Monastery</li> <li>Wieliczka Saltmine (UNESCO)</li> <li>House of Pope St John Paul II</li> <li>St Mary's Basilica</li> <li>Divine Mercy</li> <li>Danube River Cruise</li> <li>Apparition Hill, Medjugorje</li> </ul>
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