

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

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.

Mk 9:2-3



Consecrated men and women, reveal "the glory of the Father"

■ P5



Basic course in Theology for catechists

■ P7



Make Me an Instrument Our Lady of Lourdes' Youth Rally 2024

■ P16

# In a social media era,



**R**OME: Pope Francis opened the Lenten season with a procession and Mass on Ash Wednesday, telling Catholics to carve out a silent space for God amid the buzz of the digital era in which little remains private.

In his homily, the Pope focused on the emphasis the day's Scripture readings places on praying, fasting and giving alms "in secret," saying Jesus's invitation to the disciples to "go to your room" to do these things instead of seeking public recognition for them is at the heart of the Lenten season.

Going to one's room, in this sense, he said, "means journeying from without to within, so that our whole life, including our relationship with God, is not reduced to mere outward show, a frame without a picture, a draping of the soul, but is born from within and reflects the movements of our heart."

"Without realising it, we find ourselves no longer having an 'inner chamber' in

which we can stop and care for ourselves, immersed as we are in a world in which everything, including our emotions and deepest feelings, has to become 'social,'" he said.

In the social media era, "Even the most tragic and painful experiences risk not having a quiet place where they can be kept. Everything has to be exposed, shown off, fed to the gossip-mill of the moment," he said.

However, Francis said, God's invitation for Lent is to "Enter into the secret, return to the centre of yourself."

"Precisely there, where so many fears, feelings of guilt and sin are lurking, precisely there the Lord has descended in order to heal and cleanse you," he said.

Speaking to the clergy and faithful present at the Basilica of Santa Sabina, the Pope said Lent is a time of both purification and "self-spoliation" which helps people to remove "all the cosmetics that we use in order to appear presentable, better than how we really are."

"To return to the heart means to go back

to our true selves and to present them just as they are, naked and defenceless, in the sight of God. It means looking within ourselves and acknowledging our real identity, removing the masks we so often wear, slowing the frantic pace of our lives and embracing the truth of who we are," he said.

The Pope said that the Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving are not merely external actions, but are "paths that lead to the heart, to the core of the Christian life," and which allow God's love to be spread in various situations of daily life, "so that in them hope, trust and joy may be reborn."

Quoting St Anselm of Canterbury, an 11th-century Benedictine monk and doctor of the Church, the Holy Father urged Christians to "escape from your everyday business" and to "hide for a moment from your restless thoughts" during Lent, taking a break from their careers and daily tasks and concerns.

"Shut out everything but God and whatever helps you to seek Him; and when you have shut the door, look for Him," and speak openly, he said.

The invitation to "go to your room," he said, is necessary for a society in which people often live at a superficial level, concerned with being noticed and admired, while losing touch with their inner selves.

"Let us enter into our inner chamber: there the Lord dwells, there our frailty is accepted and we are loved unconditionally," he said, and urged Catholics to spend time in silent adoration of God.

God in Lent sends a message of forgiveness, tenderness and care, the Pope said, telling believers, "Do not judge yourself. Do not condemn yourself. Do not reject yourself," but to let God's love touch "the deepest, most hidden corners of your heart and reveal to you your own beauty."

Pope Francis closed his homily telling the faithful, "Let us not be afraid to strip ourselves of worldly trappings and return to the heart, to what is essential," and to "acknowledge what we are: dust loved by God. And thanks to Him, we will be reborn from the ashes of sin to new life in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit" — **By Elise Ann Allen, *Cruz***



HERALD

ESTABLISHED 1994

Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre  
5, Jalan Robertson, 50150, KL  
Tel / Whatsapp: 03-20268291  
Website : www.heraldmalaysia.com  
Facebook : www.facebook.com/  
heraldmalaysia

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



**EDITOR**  
Patricia Pereira  
editor1@herald.com.my



**ASSISTANT EDITOR**  
*Social Media Coordinator*  
Sandra Ann Inbaraj  
sandra@herald.com.my



**GRAPHIC DESIGNER**  
*Youth Section*  
Amanda Mah  
amanda@herald.com.my



**BAHASA MALAYSIA**  
Melania Liza Magnus  
liza@herald.com.my



**MANDARIN**  
Adelina Wong  
yin4482@gmail.com



**TAMIL**  
RK Samy  
rksamy3@hotmail.com

**Advertisements / Subscription**  
advertisement@herald.com.my

**MEMORIAM**  
memoriam@herald.com.my

**LETTERS**  
letterseditor@herald.com.my

## OPINION

# Interfaith peacemakers cannot remain neutral on Gaza

The ongoing conflict in Gaza is approaching its fifth month, marked by relentless and devastating bombardment. By late January, the toll of this destructive campaign stood at over 25,000 lives lost, with two-thirds of the casualties being women and children. Tens of thousands of homes lay in ruins, forcing over 1.5 million Palestinians into overcrowded conditions in Gaza's southern region. On the Israeli side, the October 7 attack by Hamas claimed 1,139 lives, prompting over 125,000 Israelis to flee their homes, seeking refuge in hotels or temporary shelters.

This conflict has plunged the Israeli-Palestinian relationship back to its 1948 roots, reigniting deep-seated animosities and patterns of displacement, particularly evident in the dehumanisation of Palestinians within Israeli and Western political discourse. Moreover, there has been a troubling rise in antisemitism and Islamophobia globally. Notably, the International Court of Justice, at South Africa's behest, has initiated deliberations on whether Israel's military and government actions constitute genocide against Palestinians, a historic first in this longstanding conflict.

Neither Israelis nor Palestinians stand to achieve a clear victory from this conflict. Instead, it has inflicted profound suffering on all involved, tarnishing the reputations of European and North American governments for their perceived double standards and political hypocrisy. The handling of this conflict has undermined the credibility and efficacy of international and multilateral institutions, such as the United Nations, the European Union, and the Arab League, as defenders of human rights and democratic values.

Moreover, the conflict has fuelled a global polarisation, with some advocating for solidarity with the Palestinian cause and recognition of their dignity and freedom, while others staunchly support Israel's military campaign

against Gazans and West Bank Palestinians.

Religious leaders find themselves entangled in this polarisation, with many criticised for their perceived failure to take a clear moral stance against the war in Gaza. To be effective peacemakers, they must confront the reality that many Muslims view Israel's actions as ethnic cleansing and genocide. Any peacemaking efforts must earnestly address the moral tragedy experienced by Palestinians and the Muslim communities in solidarity with them, unequivocally condemning the deliberate targeting of civilians, the blockade of essential supplies, ethnic cleansing, and the genocidal campaign in Gaza.

Efforts toward interfaith dialogue in the Middle East and beyond have faced scepticism and derision, deemed futile and manipulative in the absence of meaningful action to halt the violence in Gaza.

Across different faith traditions, including Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism, religious leaders and their respective communities can collaborate on various initiatives aimed at promoting peace and justice.

**A Unified Call for Peace:** Religious leaders hold a prophetic role in advocating for peace and justice. They can draw upon the sacredness of human life within their faith traditions to denounce violence and conflict. In the context of Israel-Palestine, they can unite in urging for a ceasefire, including an interfaith plea to halt all attacks on civilians, particularly the tragic loss of life in Gaza. Additionally, they can jointly demand the release of hostages on both sides, grounded in the belief in the sanctity of all lives. Through coordinated campaigns, these leaders can mobilise their communities towards peace.

**Bearing Witness to Truth:** Interreligious delegations can undertake trips to Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel, serving as impartial

witnesses to the realities on the ground. By sharing firsthand experiences and stories from both Palestinian and Israeli perspectives, they can provide a platform for their followers to engage with and respond to these truths.

**Humanitarian Aid and Relief:** The conflict in Gaza has led to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. Interfaith efforts can focus on delivering vital aid and relief to those in need. Religious leaders can leverage their congregations to support Gazan children and women, emphasising the humanitarian imperative above political divisions. By depoliticising humanitarian assistance, they can help bridge divides in communities that have been further polarised by the conflict.

**Facilitating Healing:** Throughout history, religious leaders have served as spiritual healers in times of war-induced trauma. In the wake of the conflict in Gaza, millions of Palestinians and Israelis are in need of healing. Muslim, Jewish, and Christian leaders can collaborate to provide a platform for healing and reconciliation, pooling the resources of their communities to support all victims, especially women and children, in their journey towards recovery.

Through collaborative action grounded in shared values of compassion, justice, and peace, religious leaders and their communities can serve as powerful agents of positive change in promoting dialogue, understanding, and reconciliation amidst conflict and suffering. — **By Mohammed Abu-Nimer, America**

*Mohammed Abu-Nimer is the Abdul Aziz Chair for Peace and Conflict Resolution at American University and president of the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice.*

*Note: This is an abridged version. To read the full article, go to: <https://bit.ly/48aNe7W>*

## Whispers of love to paths of freedom

Maria Conceicao is one of the toughest women in the world. Having no athletic background whatsoever, she achieved, within 12 years, ten Guinness World Records, running marathons, trekking to the North Pole, and reaching the summit of Mount Everest. What motivated her? It was a visit to the slums of Bangladesh that changed her. Seeing abject poverty and misery touched her deeply. She then decided to start a foundation to raise funds to educate 600 poor children there.

As we enter the Second Sunday of Lent, let us ask ourselves, 'Where are we as Catholics?' Have we become sloppy, lukewarm, indifferent, heartless, clueless, and directionless churchgoers without any real motivation or drive to reach out to the needs of others? Have we become distracted or addicted to the 'glitter' of today's culture that keeps us self-absorbed and entertained by the exhilarating simulations of sound, drama and even the titillating pornographic images that appear as normal today in mainstream media such as Netflix, Facebook etc.

Lent is a time of honest soul-searching. Our Master and Founder, Jesus Christ, with utter selfless determination and a sheer spirit of austerity enters the 'Desert' to prepare for a mission for humanity that

will eventually cost Him His life.

The 'Desert' of last Sunday and the 'Mountain' of today's Gospel from Mark 9:2-10 situate us in the Exodus story of the Old Testament. In that story, we see the liberation of the Israelites from slavery under an oppressive Pharaoh, where they were led by Moses through the Red Sea, across the desert to freedom in the Promised Land.

Pope Francis, in his Lenten message, chose the Exodus journey for reflection. He says, 'When our God reveals Himself, His message is always one of freedom: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (Ex 20:22) He also encourages us not to be discouraged by the demands of the journey because it is God who calls and transforms us; 'God shapes His people; He enables us to leave our slavery behind and experience a Passover from death to life. Like a bridegroom, the Lord draws us once more to Himself, whispering words of love to our hearts.'

Yes, this Lent we need to hear the voice of God, especially the whispers of His words of love and freedom. In the first reading from Genesis 22, Abraham clearly hears the voice of love after his conscience is purified when the call to sacrifice his son Isaac was only a test of obedience. His

conscience must have been pricked when he saw the Canaanites offering child sacrifices to Moloch, their god. The conscience is referred to by St John Henry Newman as the 'the aboriginal (primitive) vicar of Christ in the soul'. He also said, 'To live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often.' Thus, in every human heart there is a desire to do something great for the one we love but that desire and our actions need to change when we hear more clearly the voice of love.

The voice of freedom and the whisper of love are also heard in the Gospel today. The story of the transfiguration must be seen in the light of the Exodus. In Luke's version of this Gospel, he describes Moses and Elijah discussing with Christ about His departure from Jerusalem. Jesus' death and resurrection is the great Passover, from death to life eternal, earth to heaven, humiliation to glory and defeat to victory. The Apostles on the mountain, heard the ultimate voice of conscience "This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him." (Mk 9: 7). This voice will sustain the apostles through the awful torture and death of their beloved master. This voice will also sustain us in our trials but also keep challenging us each Lent to draw closer to God and to let go of all the things that enslave us.

Reflecting on our  
**Sunday Readings**  
with Deacon Clement Samuel

**2nd Sunday of Lent (B)**

**Readings: Genesis 22:1-2, 9-13, 15-18;  
Romans 8:31-34;  
Gospel: Mark 9:2-10**

Pope Francis tells us 'The voice of God, who says, "You are my Son, the Beloved" (Mk 1:11), and "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex 20:3) is opposed by the enemy and his lies. Even more to be feared than Pharaoh are the idols that we set up for ourselves; we can consider them as his voice speaking within us. To be all-powerful, to be looked up to by all, to dominate over others: every human being is aware of how deeply seductive that lie can be. It is a road well-travelled. We can become attached to money, to certain projects, ideas or goals, to our position, to a tradition, even to certain individuals. Instead of making us move forward, they paralyse us. Instead of encounter, they create conflict.'

Let us then, this Lent, continue our journey from slavery to freedom by being open to new encounter beginning with the whispers of the voice of love.





Archbishop Julian Leow with Dato Seri Dr Haji Zulkifli Mohamad Al-Bakri

# Fortifying religious harmony in Malaysia

NEGERI SEMBILAN: During World Interfaith Harmony Week (Feb 1 to 7), Archbishop Julian Leow convened a delegation comprising priests and laity for a visit to Dato Seri Dr Haji Zulkifli Mohamad Al-Bakri, the former Mufti of Wilayah Persekutuan and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department. The gathering took place at Dr Zulkifli's research centre, Maktabah Al-Bakri, situated at Kompleks al-Abqari in Nilai.

The Feb 2 meeting primarily focused on discussions aimed at fortifying religious harmony in Malaysia. Dr Zulkifli highlighted Malaysia's status as an exemplary Islamic

country, characterised by diverse races and religions, which has effectively preserved harmony despite occasional challenges and debates.

Quoting Egyptian scholar Prof Dr Ahmed al-Tayeb, Dr Zulkifli stressed the importance of Muslims appreciating religious and ethnic diversity, echoing sentiments shared by Archbishop Julian, whom he referred to as a friend.

Expressing contentment with the meeting, Archbishop Julian voiced hope for the organisation of subsequent programmes for the collective benefit of all Malaysians. He underscored the significance of religious lead-

ers encouraging their followers to collaborate with others in upholding universal values.

Among those present at the meeting were Fr Dr Clarence Devadass, Fr George Harrison, Fr Christopher Soosaipillai, Fr Xavier Andrew, Fr Gregory Chan, and several members of the laity. Symbolic gifts of honey were exchanged during the gathering, symbolising shared significance for both Muslims and Christians, as highlighted by Dr Zulkifli.

The meeting stands as a testament to ongoing efforts by religious leaders to foster unity and understanding among diverse communities in Malaysia.

## CFM extends congratulations to new king and queen

PETALING JAYA: In a statement released on February 7th, the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) extended heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim and Her Majesty Raja Zarith Sofiah on their ascent to the throne of Malaysia as the 17th Yang di-Pertuan Agong and Raja Permaisuri Agong, respectively.

Representing the Christian community in Malaysia, the Federation expressed pro-

found joy and jubilation at the appointment of the new royal couple. Asserting their loyalty as Malaysian citizens, the Federation reiterated its dedication to fervently pray for the country's leaders.

The message, bearing the signatures of CFM chairman Cor Episcopa Philip Thomas and vice chairmen Archbishop Simon Poh, Bishop Danald Jute, and Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng, earnestly appealed to

the divine for the King to be bestowed with wisdom and enduring strength to champion the welfare and prosperity of the Malaysian people.

Throughout His Majesty's reign, CFM voiced its aspirations for Malaysia to thrive, with its populace basking in the blessings of unity, peace, and prosperity under his inspirational leadership and compassionate guidance.

The Federation's message further extended wishes for Malaysia's continued prosperity and unity under His Majesty's reign, emphasising the pivotal role of inspirational leadership and compassion in nurturing a flourishing society.

Concluding its statement, the CFM offered prayers for the perpetual blessings of unity, peace, and prosperity for the Malaysian populace under the reign of their Majesties.

### KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

#### Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

##### March

- 2 Meeting — KLAPT
- 5 Australian Catholic University Graduation

### PENANG DIOCESE

#### Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

##### February

- 27 Curia Meeting at 10.00am – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam
- 27 Opening Address at Healing in Evangelisation Formation by Healing and Deliverance Ministry in collaboration with New Evangelisation Commission at 8.00pm – Zoom

### MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

#### Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

##### February / March

- 27/2 Meeting – Catholic Cemetery Committee at Bishop's House
- 1/3 Meeting – MAJODI Centre Reporting at Bishop's Office
- 1/3 Outdoor Meditative Way of the Cross followed by Mass at St James Chapel at 3.00pm at MAJODI Centre



## Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #165

F12  
NEWS  
MJD  
UPDATES

#### Greetings to you, dear friends of MJD.

Tensions rise in Malaysia's ruling coalition after reduced jail sentence for Najib. Corruption and politics blamed for ringgit woes. Teacher threatened with dismissal for highlighting problematic syllabus retires. Chief Justice Tengku Maimun ruled on February 8 that Kelantan's legislature exceeded its state-making power, stating that the power of Parliament and state legislatures are limited by the Federal Constitution, and they cannot make any laws they like. Nominating Chinese New Villages as UNESCO World Heritage Site is turned into a racial issue. Can there be reform or change or renaissance without a paradigm shift?

**Reforming Times:** Renewal without reform or conversion is corruption of the Church (St Catherine of Genoa). The Pope called for liturgical reform, saying: "A Church that does not feel the passion for spiritual growth, that does not try to speak understandably to the men and women of her time, that does not feel pain for the division between Christians, who does not tremble with the anxiety of announcing Christ to the people, is a sick Church, and these are the symptoms."

He added that the liturgical reform underscored the Church's spiritual, pastoral, ecumenical and missionary renewal; that formation must be more accessible to all God's people and their interior disposition, not to a specialised few. He summed up by saying: Without liturgical reform there is no reform of the Church.

#### Thought For The Week:

FREE TICKET! Greg Laurie tried to give away an extra ticket on his way into Disneyland's Magic Kingdom. As his family went into the park, he told his family, "Hold on while I find someone

to take this free ticket. This shouldn't take long!" But time after time he would approach people at the front gate only to be turned down. He was astounded! No one would take his free ticket. It was hard to believe. People just turned down free tickets to the Magic Kingdom?

**Lesson from the free ticket:** Most often, people can't accept anything good that comes easy or is easy to get or is being given free. There's unbelief in grace, and the graciousness of strangers. If the Lord is giving a free ticket to you to "His Magic Kingdom," how will you respond?

#### Announcements for this Week

1. **Getting ready for Lent.** Ash Wednesday is already here. The theme focuses on the Year of Prayer: Let's fast! Let's pray! Let's give alms! Let our prayer lead us to hear the cry of the poor and creation.
2. The **World Day for the Sick** fell on February 11 with the theme *It is not good that man should be alone*. The Pope reminded that "healing relationships heal the sick". A network of relationships, friendships and love uplifts the abandoned, the vulnerable, the uncertain and the insecure.
3. The MJD Catechetical Office is organising the **Rite of Election Retreat and Mass** on February 17-18 at MAJODI Centre for over 400 catechumens, sponsors and facilitators.
5. The **English Marriage Preparation Weekend**, planned for March 15-17 is closed. You can register for the next one, scheduled for June 21-23 at MAJODI Centre.
6. **Being A Man - The St Joseph Way** a **one day Lenten Reflection** for men of all ages. will happen at St Joseph Church, Plentong on March 17 at 9.30am to 5.30pm.

#### This Weeks QnQ: Q asks: Can Chaos Be From God?

**Chaos is unavoidable.** Some ride through it. Many are crushed by it. Others get sucked into it.

**When struggling with** confusion, uncertainty, and violence, we become spiritually worn down. It's too hard to keep believing. We are drained. We are tired.

**We think:** *My road is too hard. The powerful will never treat people right. I've tried everything, there's nothing to be done. It's no use.*

**But Dr Otis Moss III believes faith can sustain us in chaos:** In the storm of chaos, lost in confusion and disorder, ... the question is whether there might be some way to use the harsh, unpredictable winds and the relentless currents of our lives to get us moving to where we actually want to go. Do we have the spiritual audacity and the practical means to turn chaotic energy to our own purposes? **What can we do?** Take on the confusion and the violence. Refine them. Purify them into something new. Consecrate your chaos. To consecrate is to make holy, to put it into service for good. In consecrating chaos, you engage it, tame it, name it, take what seemed out of control and charge it with a duty. The Genesis story reminds us that the void is not as empty as we think. Chaos is never as chaotic as we fear.

Listen! Listening begins in prayer. Listen there, to your mind, your heart, your spirit and to your body. Listen to the Lord who meets you there, in the silence.

Just to tickle you: **Forbidden fruit creates many jams.**

*Bernard Paul*

Bishop Bernard Paul



## OLOL welcomes son of parish as new priest

IPOH: The Church of Our Lady of Lourdes (OLOL) celebrated the ordination of her 22nd priest, marking the end of an 18-year gap. Deacon George Vaithynathan was ordained to the priesthood by Cardinal Sebastian Francis February 2.

It was an emotional milestone for the Ipoh-born priest, having received all his sacraments at OLOL parish, and now culminating in the sacrament of priesthood within the same sacred grounds.

Concelebrating at the Mass with Cardinal Sebastian was Most Rev Julian Leow, Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, together with clergy from all over Malaysia.

The church overflowed with those

who had journeyed from near and far, joining in the celebration, along with members of the religious community commemorating the World Day for Consecrated Life.

Born the younger of two sons to Vaithynathan and Veronica Antoine, Fr George, an alumnus of St Michael's Institution in Ipoh, holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from University Tun Abdul Razak, a Master's in Business Administration from INTI Penang, and a Master's in Management Studies from the University of Hertfordshire in the UK.

Prior to answering his calling, he served for five years at a multinational company in Penang, before

commencing his initiation year at College General Seminary, Penang in 2016, where he completed his philosophy studies. From 2019 to 2023, he pursued his vocation at St Peter's College, Major Seminary, Kuching, and was ordained a deacon on Aug 17, 2023, at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Kampar.

In his closing remarks during the ordination ceremony, Fr George reflected on the profound significance of the verse he had chosen as the cornerstone of his ordination journey: "My Grace is sufficient for you."

"Grace, in its divine essence, is a precious gift bestowed upon us — a wellspring of fortitude flowing from a higher power. It serves as a com-

forting presence amidst despair, a beacon of hope in times of obscurity, and a guiding light through the darkest of hours. Its depth transcends human comprehension, yet it remains steadfast, offering solace when we need it most," expressed Fr George.

"This grace is all-encompassing; it builds bridges, embracing each individual without discrimination. It does not judge based on our faults, failures, or past transgressions. Instead, it enfolds us with unconditional acceptance, forgiveness, and the promise of transformation," he elaborated.

Cardinal Sebastian, in his announcement of Fr George's appointment as assistant parish priest at



OLOL, emphasised the importance of fostering vocations to the priesthood within the congregation. He called upon the parish to uphold its tradition of nurturing vocations, ensuring a vibrant legacy for the future.

● See Page 12 for Fr George's vocation journey

## St Mary's Cathedral embraces Laudato Si'

By Evelyn Jock

SANDAKAN: The Cathedral of St Mary held its fourth parish pastoral assembly recently. Under the over-arching theme of *Laudato Si'* (Be Praised), parishioners gathered to address pressing environmental concerns and chart a course towards responsible stewardship of God's creation.

Parish priest, Fr Simon Kontou, emphasised the parish's steadfast commitment to the upcoming Malaysia Pastoral Convention in 2026, highlighting the series of pivotal discussions addressing key encyclicals. Following the successful engagement with *Evangelii Gaudium* (Church) in 2023, and *Laudato Si'* (Ecology) in 2024, the parish eagerly anticipates forthcoming dialogues on *Fratelli Tutti* (Social) in 2025 and *Amoris Laetitia* (Family) in 2026.

The assembly served as a platform to galvanize pastoral plans, with particular focus on the encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*. This seminal document, intended for individuals of all faiths, underscores the urgent need for collective action in safeguarding the environment and nurturing ethical principles rooted in Christian teachings.

Pope Francis' impassioned plea for global cooperation in combating climate change resonated deeply, urging parishioners to embrace a shared responsibility in protecting the planet. As custodians of God's creation, the faithful were implored not to delay in initiating the healing process for our imperilled earth.

In a spirit of inclusivity, leaders from various ministries, BECs and parish youth, alongside the parish community of all ages, convened to deliberate on shaping the parish's



future trajectory. Through guided discussions illuminated by the light of flickering candles, participants engaged in soulful dialogue, transcending barriers of age, race, and culture.

The spiritual conversations delved into profound reflections on the joys and blessings bestowed by Mother Nature, as well as the anxieties and struggles encountered in preserving ecological integrity. Participants articulated their aspirations for nurturing and protecting the environment, fostering a sense of unity and pur-

*The parish community of the Cathedral of St Mary charting a course towards responsible stewardship for God's creation.*

pose within the parish community.

While the assembly marked a pivotal moment of communion and reflection, Fr Simon underscored the imperative of sustained action beyond its conclusion. Tasked with implementing actionable insights gleaned from the assembly, the Parish Creation Justice Ministry, in collaboration with the Parish Pastoral Council and other ministries, will spearhead initiatives to uphold

*Laudato Si'* as an enduring focal point in parish discourse.

As the parish embarks on this collective journey towards environmental stewardship, the reverberating message of *Laudato Si'* echoes through homilies, presentations, bulletins, and social media platforms, empowering each individual to effect tangible change and safeguard our shared home for future generations.

## JB cathedral transforming into an ecological parish

JOHOR BARU: The Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (SHC) is operating a unique initiative known as 'Resource Recovery', which deviates from this standard model. Firstly, the programme's primary goal is not merely recycling but resource conservation, aiming to minimise the consumption of raw materials and prevent the wastage of resources with potential utilitarian value.

This objective is in deep contrast to the alarming trend of how wasteful we Malaysians are becoming. A lifestyle of buying what we don't need and throwing out what we don't use is telling of our consumer habits.

Dr Maria Lee, head of the Creation Justice Commission of the Diocese of Malacca Johore, a parishioner at SHC, and member of the parish Creation Justice Ministry (CJM), expressed that the ease of online shopping and the allure of bulk discounts often lead people to buy without much consideration. When asked about the desired outcomes from the Resource Recovery programme regarding attitudes towards creation and lifestyle,



A member of the Maintenance Department repairing a table fan.

Dr Maria emphasised, "I hope that witnessing the volume of items being dropped off by households will encourage parishioners to pause and reflect before making purchases."

Mary Lim, chairperson of the CJM at SHC, shared the progress of the programme since its inception in December 2019. With 22 collections completed, a total of RM17,000 has been raised, averaging RM770 per collection. These funds are directed to the cathedral's Renovation Fund, ensuring full transparency as all proceeds are promptly deposited

into the parish's bank account. CJM operates without retaining any cash, providing receipts and bank slips to all stakeholders for accountability. The next Resource Recovery collection is scheduled for March 2024.

The programme accepts various items including fabrics, electronics, used cooking oil, and pre-loved goods, with a clear guideline on acceptable items. Glass items, soiled or damaged footwear and bags are declined, while only HD-N, PETE/PET, HDPE, and PP plastics are welcomed. CJM members, stationed

at the collection area, offer assessment and repair services for small appliances and can even fix items like wheelchairs or suitcases.

Mary emphasises the significance of adhering to a shopping list and opting for minimally packaged items to combat waste. She advocates for a shift from materialism to spiritual fulfilment, highlighting the value of repairing and replacing parts of items to minimise unnecessary consumption.

Through the Resource Recovery initiative, parishioners have an avenue to donate unwanted but usable items, allowing others to benefit from "new" finds through a love offering in the donation box. Items in excellent condition or non-recyclable goods like clothes, books, handbags, and toys are redirected to the Caritas MJD Kindness Bazaar, aligning with the mission to maximise resource utilisation.

To further minimise waste, SHC discourages disposable usage at church functions, implementing a RM2,000 deposit requirement for wedding hall bookings. This deposit is reimbursed upon avoiding single-use plastics, a policy upheld

by caterers engaged by the parish. Utilising proper plates and cutlery, alongside washing and reusing them, has become standard practice at SHC, as outlined in the Guidelines for Food Catering in the Parish endorsed by Bishop Bernard Paul and launched on September 16, 2022. This sustainable approach should be embraced by all parishes to promote responsible resource management.

Dr Maria acknowledges that effective implementation of regulations or recommendations requires robust enforcement strategies and cooperation at grassroots level. In Pope Francis' encyclical letter on caring for our common home, *Laudato Si'* Mi Signore, we are reminded that 'every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in lifestyle, models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies.'

The transformation towards becoming an ecological parish begins with each one of us. For further details on the Resource Recovery programme, please contact Mary Lim at [sklim61@hotmail.com](mailto:sklim61@hotmail.com). — By Karen Theseira



# Consecrated men and women, reveal “the glory of the Father”

By Stella Eming

KUALA PENYU: Bishop Cornelius Piong celebrated Mass on Friday, February 2 at the Church of St Peter Bundu to celebrate the great witness of those who have been consecrated to go out and share the Gospel.

Bishop Cornelius encouraged religious men and women, especially in the Diocese of Keningau, to go forward in their “prophetic mission” with the richness of their charisms.

He thanked God for calling men and women to serve and establish His Kingdom as sisters, brothers, religious priests, as well as members of secular institutes. He urged them to renew their knowledge and remain united with Him



The different religious congregations at the Church of St Peter Bundu.

so that they may respond generously and courageously to do His will and spread the light

and love of Jesus Christ through their unique witness of selfless service, such as caring for

the poor, the contemplative work of prayer, or through their professional careers.

As part of the celebrations for the World Day of Consecrated Life, Sr Liza Pileh FSIC shared her joyful life as a Catholic nun. She had just professed her final vow, and she explained that the decision to join a religious order is not one that is taken lightly. It is a commitment to a life of service, dedication, and devotion to God, as well as the community of believers. She expressed that she will never regret her decision to become a member of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Since joining the local congregation in Sabah, she always feels ready to face the uncertainties of life because Jesus is with her!

## A ‘casting’ of treasures both new and old

PETALING JAYA: Various religious congregations within the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur gathered together for a talk led by Fr Alvin Ng, SJ, at Loyola Hall, Church of St Francis Xavier, February 2.

Fr Alvin briefly narrated the synthesis distilled from the Malaysia Religious Assembly 2023 and outlined the synodal journey by the pastoral community towards Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026.

He reiterated the importance of reclaiming each founder’s and foundress’ original charism and vision that empowered them to go beyond boundaries to spread the Gospel message of unconditional love, peace and harmony. In reaching out to the poor and the marginalised, religious communities are called to work for the common good, respecting human dignity and transforming the conditions that causes suffering.

Against this backdrop, Fr Alvin also highlighted the major issues and challenges which are facing the world today, including the effects of the global pandemic, secularisation, youth apathy, economic suffering, wars and civil unrest, and political uncertainty.

“Life is getting more complex in today’s ever-changing world. We need to discern where

the Holy Spirit is leading us. God’s spirit does not falter. We are called to move with the wind. Let’s not get stuck in the past. God will drive our journey in moving forward.

“Instead of complaining about today’s situation, let us accept the challenge presented with confidence in the Lord and be open to the future,” said Fr Alvin.

Fr Alvin further posed the following questions: “How are we, religious women and men, still relevant in the Church today? Are we merely surviving or existing? Can we begin once again to live and share the joy of our calling?”

He called upon the religious to reflect on their traditions, charisms, spiritual testimonies, and experiences to find an impetus to remain relevant in the Church.

“Let us search for new frontiers, look for meaningful opportunities or other needs that are not met. As religious, we are still called to mission, that is to bring the Gospel to all and to remain faithful to the charism and vision of our founders. It is imperative that we start charting new frontiers and embrace today’s world with its technology, new ways of thinking, and new experiences from constant encounter with others,” said Fr Alvin.

He then prepared them for the spiritual conversations, which focused on three main thrusts:

**Participation** – How can we participate anew in building the Malaysian church today?

**Communion** – Can we identify the “old” and “new” treasures in our charisms, our works, our communities?

**Mission** – Based on the charisms identified, what are the concrete, collaborative actions that can be undertaken as religious of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur?

Fr Alvin underscored the importance of recognising religious orders as gifts to each other. Each should exercise communal *cura personalis*, which means accepting people for who they are, and ministering to their needs. By looking deeply into the person to see his or her gifts, weaknesses, challenges, needs, and desires, one can help the person grow in his or her relationship with God.

“The challenges of community life and living calls us to re-examine our call to see community as a mission in itself. In the spirit of fraternal love and social relationships, we accept and complement each other, recognise their dignity and God’s unconditional love for each person, inclusivity, and unity in diversity,” he explained.

Fr Alvin urged everyone to persevere in prayer for humility and gratitude. Concurrently, he called upon religious individuals to rediscover their apostolic zeal in the world, recognising that each vocation is anchored in unique charisms bestowed by God for the service of His mission.

“Let us come together to build up the Kingdom of God through the different charisms that we have,” he added. — **By Cordelia Lee**



Members of the different religious orders in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur came together to celebrate the 28th World Day for Consecrated Life at the Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya.

## Renewing their vows to serve the faithful

LIMBAHAU, Kota Kinabalu: On February 2, the religious of the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu held a small gathering at the Church of the Holy Rosary.

Among the attendees were the Gabrielite Brothers, the Marist Brothers, the Korean priests, the Franciscan Friars, the Daughters of St Paul, the Good Shepherd Sisters, the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, the Secular Carmelites, the Secular Franciscans, the Montfort Associates and some parishioners.

During his homily, the Archbishop John Wong talked about the three groups of people present at the presentation of the child Jesus in the temple. These were Joseph and Mary, who were simple and law-abiding parents; Simeon and Anna, who represented the faithful remnant of the Jewish people; and the indifferent

crowd who were unmindful of what was happening around them. He then asked the congregation which of the three groups of people they belonged to.

After the homily, the religious renewed their consecration while holding lighted candles. Fr Andrew Kim, from South Korea, the

Council of Religious chairperson, delivered a speech after the Mass. He expressed joy in the coming together of the faithful and faithful witnesses, and celebrated their diversity of charisms and missions, as well as their unity in serving the people of God in the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu. — **Christina George**



The Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception during the Eucharistic Celebration.

## The ‘crazy’ love of religious



Bishop Joseph Hii lights the candle being held by Fr Raphael Samosir, OFM, Cap. (photo/Michael Tiong)

SIBU: Bishop Joseph Hii presided over the Mass at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, February 2.

In attendance were 22 consecrated religious from various orders including the Marist Brothers, Order of Friars Minor, Claretian Missionaries, Sisters of St Francis of Sarawak, and the Monastery of St Theresa of the Child Jesus. Together, they renewed their commitment to lives of poverty, obedience, and chastity.

In his homily, Bishop Joseph emphasised the importance of baptism, echoing the message of Pope Francis. He highlighted baptism as the sacrament that unites believers in synodality as they journey together in communion, participating in Christ’s mission.

The bishop encouraged parishioners to celebrate their baptismal anniversaries, urging them to commemorate their “Happy Baptism-day.”

Following in the footsteps of the Father of Religious life, St Anthony, all religious brothers and sisters live a life that manifests an intense and radical love for Jesus Christ. This love is characterised by its extraordinary depth and commitment, often described as “crazy” because it involves giving oneself completely to Jesus. They stand as prime examples of true followers of Jesus Christ, embodying His teachings through their dedicated service and devotion.

The bishop expressed gratitude to the religious for their sacrifices and selfless service, which bless the Church, the world, and all of humanity.

He also encouraged those discerning a vocation to the consecrated life to courageously answer the call, becoming witnesses of Jesus and the Gospel values.

Before the Mass, the religious sisters engaged in reflection, followed by fellowship and agape. — **By Siby SocComm**

More in the next issue



# Called to be bearers of hope through St John Britto

By Aaron Lim

PENANG: The message of hope was evident throughout the feast day celebrations of the Church of St John Britto (City Parish) as parishioners pledged to carry them through their actions and deeds.

A five-day celebration was held from January 31 to February 4, which brought together different preachers and parishioners from all walks to life to commemorate the life of a martyr who gave his life for the Church.

On the first day of the Triduum, the focus was on healing, with Mass celebrated by Fr Nelson Joseph and the anointing of the sick being administered to those present.

Parishioners were then invited to reflect on the mission of the Church on the second day, with Fr Simon Anand presiding over the Eucharistic celebration.

A special prayer and screening on the life of St John Britto was held on the third day, in reflection of the theme of love and the sacrifices which was made by the saint in propagating the Good News.



The clergy leading the procession around the church grounds with the statue of St John Britto.

The fourth day of the celebration incorporated the Blessing of Candles in conjunction with the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, with Fr James Pitchay preaching on the area of faith.

On the actual feast, Feb 4, the church was well adorned with lights and decorations as it celebrated the feast day of its patron with a multi lingual Eucharistic celebration.

Fr Victor Louis was the main preacher of

the feast day celebration, with con-celebrants parish priest Fr Edmund Woon and assistant parish priest Fr Desmond Jansen, assisted by Deacon Paul Kang.

Fr Victor urged the congregation to focus on three individuals who brought hope to those surrounding them — Jesus, St Paul and St John Britto.

He shared that in the Gospel reading, Jesus

was seen to be going all out without exhaustion to bring healing to all, whilst St Paul in the Book of Corinthians had the sense of responsibility to preach the Good News and bring it to as many as he could.

“As St Paul shared that he should be made slave of everyone to win as many hearts to Christ, St John Britto did the same too when he sacrificed everything that he had in travelling to India so that people would come to know the Lord,” he said.

Fr Victor then praised the example of St John Britto as a sign of inculturation within the Church, where he learned to sacrifice his background and heritage in order to assimilate with the people better and to allow the faith to be propagated more effectively.

“Let us centre our hope in Christ despite all the difficulties and challenges that we face, and to take pride and joy in living the life of a faithful disciple in Him,” he said.

After Mass, the statue of St John Britto was brought around the grounds of the church in a short procession that concluded with solemn Benediction.

## Thousands gather at ‘Gereja Kanak-Kanak’

KUALA SELANGOR: Thousands of Catholics, including hundreds of children, congregated at the Chapel of the Holy Infant Jesus, affectionately known as *Gereja Kanak-Kanak*, to commemorate the Feast of the Holy Infant Jesus. The celebration was held from January 31 to February 4.

The festivities commenced with Fr Vincent Thomas leading the celebrations on the first day, delivering a sermon centred on the theme *Forgive Lord the guilt of my sin*. On day two, Fr Xavier Andrew expounded on the theme *That you may be successful in all you do and undertake*.

Day three coincided with the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, with chapel administrator Fr James Gabriel delivering a powerful message titled *My eyes have seen your salvation*. Fr Gabriel emphasised the divine enlightenment bestowed upon believers in the presence of the Lord.

The pinnacle of the feast arrived on day four, drawing approximately 2,000 faithful who participated in the rosary, novena, adoration, Mass, and a procession with the Blessed Sacrament and the statue of the Holy Infant Jesus. Fr James was the main presider for the day, with Fr Andrew Manickam, OFM Cap concelebrating.

The day's theme, *Praise the Lord who heals*

*the broken hearted*, underscored the enduring spiritual healing offered by Jesus Christ. Fr James reiterated the timeless nature of Jesus' love and healing power, affirming the continuous presence of God's grace among believers. He emphasised the role of faith in fostering a deeper connection with the divine, urging attendees to trust in God's promises and embrace their spiritual destiny.

The feast culminated on day five with two Masses — one in Tamil and the other in English, each echoing the themes of the preceding days. Archbishop Julian Leow who celebrated the 10.00am English Mass, welcomed everyone to the sacred feast of the chapel, emphasising the significance of gathering to honour and praise God while offering prayers for the vulnerable children among us who reflect the divine presence with their innocence and trust in God's love.

In his homily, the archbishop posed some poignant questions: “Why do we attend church? Why do we pray?” He acknowledged the multifaceted needs drawing us to seek God's blessings and elucidated on the complexities of faith, noting how some may falter in their devotion when prayers seemingly go unanswered. He contemplated the existential void in lives devoid of God's presence, emphasising the profound purpose and hope that



Some of the children at the feast day celebration.

faith instills.

Drawing from the Gospel, the prelate underscored Jesus' compassionate ministry of healing and care for the afflicted, urging followers to emulate His example. He challenged baptised Christians to embody Christ's love and empathy, extending solace and encouragement to those in need. Each believer, he emphasised, is commissioned to spread the light of Jesus in a world marred by discord

and spiritual deprivation.

In commemorating the Feast of the Holy Infant Jesus, the prelate implored attendees to safeguard the vulnerable, championing the cause of the young and weak. He exhorted them to be agents of protection, healing, and reconciliation, prioritising God's call to serve and respond to the needs of their communities with compassion and dedication. — **By Bernard Anthony**

## Segamat parish gearing up for centennial celebrations

SEGAMAT: The Church of St Philip is set to mark a significant milestone as it prepares for its centennial celebration on May 4. Commencing with a 100-day countdown, the community launched into a series of activities and programmes aimed at commemorating this historic occasion.

During a Mass concelebrated by Frs Paul Wong and Adrian Francis on January 26, a simple launch was held, the community initiated the countdown on January 26. Addressing the congregation, Fr Paul emphasised the importance of zealously proclaiming the Word of God, drawing parallels from the companionship of Timothy and Titus with the Apostle Paul.

The parish community was united in ensuring that each day leading up to the centennial celebration would be filled with meaningful activities. Some of the ideas adopted included hosting the Diocesan Chrism Mass,

organising a blood donation drive, contributing food packets to a hundred needy families in the district, conducting multi-lingual recitations of the rosary and devotions to the Divine Mercy, Holy Hour, praise & worship services, and celebrating BEC home Masses.

The celebration will also embrace both inter-religious and intra-religious activities, inviting eminent speakers to address the community. Notably, every priest who has served in the parish will be invited to celebrate the Eucharist every Wednesday during the countdown, subject to their availability.

The parish community would also like to extend an ‘open invitation’ to all past parishioners, wherever they may be, to make a concerted effort to join the local community in the memorable celebration.

Evening triduum Masses will precede the culmination of the grand celebration on May 4 at 6.00pm. — **By Philip Packium**

### Casket Paradise & Funeral Care Sdn. Bhd. (311899-W)

PERSONAL ATTENTION AT ALL TIMES

- \* Specialised In Christian Funerals
- \* Exclusive Handmade And Polished Wooden Casket
- \* Restoration And Cosmetology
- \* British Trained & Qualified MBIE Embalming Service (Only One In Malaysia)
- \* Member Of The European Association Of Embalmers
- \* Private Chapel Of Rest And Coldroom Facilities
- \* Economical, Budget Planned & 24 hrs Service

TEL: 03-2148 5776 / 2148 4855  
FAX: 03-2143 1442

19B, Jalan Jalan Dewan Bahasa, Bukit Seputeh,  
50460 Kuala Lumpur.  
H/P: 012-333 4899 / 012-333 4646 / 019-777 5537



# Basic course in Theology for catechists

KUALA LUMPUR: A basic course in Theology, entitled, *Journey Through the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (JCCC), was launched in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur February 3 at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre. Eight-five participants were present for the opening session. Although aimed at catechists, registrations from non-catechists were also admitted.

The presenter for the day, Dr Steven Selvaraju, Director of the Archdiocesan Catechetical Centre, who holds a Doctorate in Theology with Specialisation in Catechetics and Youth Ministry, spoke on three topics relating to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC), namely “Background to the CCC”, “The Structure of the CCC” and “How to Use the CCC Effectively”.

Dr Steven explained the rationale behind the Church’s decision to publish the CCC, a comprehensive universal catechism. He highlighted the emergence of new social, cultural, and religious dynamics in a globalised world, leading to the proliferation of subjectivism, individualism, relativism, and materialism. Moreover, the prevalence of religious sects and cults masquerading as “Christian” has become increasingly apparent. Additionally, a significant portion of Catholics lack a deep understanding of their faith, hindering their ability to transmit it effectively to younger generations.

Modern subjectivism and relativism reject the idea of God as the ultimate source and destiny of human existence, instead emphasising the individual as the ultimate criteria for decision-making. This leads to the belief that all assertions are merely opinions based on personal views or feelings. Even within Catholicism, some individuals, including catechists, adopt a “pick and choose” approach to belief and teaching. This trend poses a danger to the development of a clear Catholic identity rooted in ecclesial and doctrinal foundations, potentially leading to a more loosely defined socio-cultural Catholic identity.

Dr Steven emphasised the vital importance for Catholics, particularly catechists, to recognise the CCC as a crucial resource for understanding and embracing the Faith. He echoed Pope St John Paul II’s words from the apostolic exhortation, *Fidei Depositum*, accompanying the catechism’s publication in 1992. The pope articulated the CCC’s purpose as offering “a full, complete exposition of Catholic doctrine enabling everyone to know what the Church professes, celebrates, lives, and prays in her daily life.”

Dr Steven also spoke on the structure of the CCC. The CCC presents the essential teachings of the Church in a unified and organic way. It is divided into four parts known as the “four pillars” of the Faith. These are: Part I: “The Profession of Faith” (Creed), Part



The participants during the opening session at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre.

II: “The Celebration of the Christian Mystery” (Sacraments), Part III: “Life in Christ” (Commandments) and Part IV: “Christian Prayer” (Our Father). This arrangement reflects the core elements of what the Church believes, celebrates, lives, and expresses in its faith. The session concluded with a discussion on the proper utilisation of the CCC as a resource for understanding and deepening one’s faith.

The JCCC course, organised by the Archdiocesan Catechetical Ministry (KLACM), comprises ten sessions in total. These sessions take place once a month on Saturdays, spanning from February to November. While two sessions are held onsite, eight are conducted online. Additionally, the

archdiocese introduced the Basic Theology Course in Tamil (BTCT) on February 17. Similar to JCCC, BTCT consists of ten onsite sessions, occurring monthly from February to November. Currently, 65 participants have registered for this course.

Upon successful completion of either course, participants meeting attendance and assignment submission requirements will receive a Certificate of Completion. This certificate renders them eligible for enrolment in the Basic Certification Course in Catechetics, slated for organisation by KLACM in 2025. “We’ve long discussed certifying our catechists. The JCCC and the BTCT are a step towards achieving this goal,” said Dr Steven.

## Christ the Light chapel elevated to Church status

KUALA LUMPUR: This year’s feast day celebration at the Church of Christ the Light was significant for the parish community, as it commemorated the elevation of the chapel to a church.

The festivities, with the overall theme, *Be The Light of the World and Salt of the Earth*, commenced on February 1. Frs Peter Anthony and Gerard Theraviam led the triduum, with Fr Gerard’s message *A Call to Live the Light* inspiring the congregation. He urged them to embrace the light, trust in God, and let His light guide their path.

The second day focused on *Becoming the Light in the Midst of Darkness*. As candles at the grotto were blessed, Fr Peter emphasised the enduring victory of light over darkness. Prayers were offered for past priests, and their contributions were shown in beautiful and touching presentation by the media team. A special mention was made of Sr Regina Bertha Antoni, II, who was celebrating her diamond jubilee, a testament to unwavering faith. Fr Peter then reminded the congregation of their inherent role as Christ’s light, urging them to resist shadows of fear and negativity, citing Matthew 5:13-16.

The eagerly awaited feast day was celebrated on Feb 3. Over 600 parishioners witnessed history – the official elevation ceremony led by Archbishop Julian Leow, Fr Peter Anthony, and Fr Lawrence Andrew, SJ.



Archbishop Julian Leow signing the plaque.

The decree was read by the PPC chairperson, Angeline James, establishing the Christ the Light Parish Kuala Lumpur within the Archdiocese. A brand-new territorial parish, the Church of Christ the Light, Desa Jaya, Kuala Lumpur will oversee the Chapel of Christ the King, Selayang Baru, and the Chapel of Our Lady of Lourdes, Sungai Buloh.

Following the elevation, Archbishop Julian entrusted the newly christened church to its parish priest, Fr Peter. The prelate spoke of its significance as a sacred space for prayer, worship, and experiencing God’s presence. The appointment of Fr Peter as parish priest was read by the PPC chairperson, according to

universal and canon law. The symbolic transfer of the keys of authority to Fr Peter marked his appointment as parish priest, effective from February 1, 2024, for six years.

Renewing his vows and signing the official documents, Fr Peter received a warm ovation. He encouraged families to consider the priesthood for their children, expressing gratitude to God and Archbishop Julian. He shared the church’s transformation and exciting news about the upcoming Chrism Mass which will be held in the parish. Notably, he shared the progress of Christ the King Chapel, closed for years, now nearing completion. — **By Moses Sinnappan and Lydia Loshini**

## Sg Pelek chapel resumes feastday celebration after four years

SEPANG: The Chapel of the Holy Infant Jesus in Sungai Pelek marked the Feast of the Infant Jesus on February 3, its first in four years.

The occasion aimed to strengthen the faith of the local community and extend a warm welcome to Infant Jesus pilgrims from other areas.

The festivities commenced with a novena to the Infant Jesus, accompanied by the blessing of candles. Fr Edwin Peter, the newly appointed parish priest of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Port Dickson and the administrator of the Chapel of the Holy Infant Jesus, Sungai Pelek, presided over a multilingual Mass. Assisting him was final year seminarian Jonathan Rao.

Following the Mass, a period of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament ensued, accompanied by prayers for the sick children in the community, culminating in benediction.

Archbishop Emeritus Murphy Pakiam took time to bless both children and adults, distributing religious gifts to many of the children present. Parishioners were thrilled by his attendance, eagerly taking photos with him to commemorate the occasion.

“About 180 parishioners attended the celebration. A communal dinner was arranged by the Sungai Pelek chapel community for all attendees, with children receiving a small token of appreciation,” said Reagan Savarimuthu, the community chairman.

Looking ahead, Fr Edwin proposed the continuation of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament at specific intervals, emphasising the importance of continued prayer for sick children. The community eagerly awaits a grander celebration next year.

## Nurturing leadership through learning and dialogue

KUALA LUMPUR: True leaders have a vision of something better, something more; and they care enough about people to help them see that vision too.

Leaders from the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD) attended a two-day Global Leadership Summit at the Petaling Jaya Evangelical Free Church (PJEFC) last month. At the core of the summit lies commitment to nurturing leadership excellence grounded in Christian principles. Through keynote addresses, workshops, and interactive sessions led by speakers and thought leaders i.e. Craig Groeschel, Condoleezza Rice, Liz Bohannon, Dallas

Jenkins and many more, the participants were equipped with practical insights and actionable strategies to navigate the complexities of leadership with integrity and courage. Beyond the enriching content, the summit provided a unique opportunity to forge meaningful connections and cultivate collaborative networks amongst different Christian organisations.

Many leaders from various churches were present. Archbishop Julian Leow and several members from Caritas MJD (Malacca Johore Diocese) who were making a courtesy visit to AOHD were also in attendance.

On January 27, members of Caritas MJD, together with their Ecclesiastical Assistant,

Fr Martinian Lee, met the AOHD team and some of their ministry coordinators. After breakfast, the group went on a guided tour of the AOHD offices, gaining insights into the inner workings and organisational structure of this Commission for Human Development.

The MJD team also dropped in during the Bereavement Support Group meeting organised by the Women’s Ministry under AOHD. This was their first session for the year which was running concurrent with their visit. The presentation ended with a tour of the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist and the exchange of gifts. — **By Dwayne Sadris**



# Indian dioceses to educate members on AI

NEW DELHI: The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, the first episcopal body in the world to study Artificial Intelligence (AI) seriously, has asked the country's 174 dioceses to educate their more than 20 million members to responsibly use digital tools.

"AI holds out the promise of tremendous benefits in the fields of healthcare, agriculture, education, research, engineering, recreation, business and finance. However, AI systems can be misused," says the final statement of the conference's 36th biennial meeting that ended February 7 in Bengaluru, southern India.

More than 170 bishops representing the dioceses attended the January 31 - February 7 plenary that addressed the theme, *The Church's Response to the Current Socio-Political Situation of the Country and the Benefits and Challenges of Artificial Intelligence (AI)*.

Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life who presented the keynote address on the challenges of AI at the CBCI meeting, noted that India's is the first bishops' conference in the world to specifically explore the challenges and concerns of the technological age.

The Vatican official compared the his-



Illustration shows Google, Microsoft and Alphabet logos. (Vatican News)

toric transformation brought about by the advent of AI to the introduction of electricity in the mid-19th century.

He asked the Indian bishops not to get frightened by the "great transformations" taking place because of the digital revolution. "They are, rather, a call to the responsibility that the Gospel demands of us towards the human life inhabiting this planet," he added.

The Indian bishops, recognising digital technologies, including AI, as gifts of God, warn that "in the wrong hands," they could become tools to spread hatred, violence, manipulation and social bigotry.

The bishops foresee the danger of misusing the human data collected by digital platforms and AI to undermine the privacy of individuals and families. Therefore, they urge the Indian government to regulate the

development and use of AI so as to encourage the best practices and prevent abuses.

On their part, the bishops have resolved to organise media programmes through diocesan communication offices to educate the community about the responsible use of digital and AI tools and teach them ways to safeguard against manipulation and abuse. "We want to promote ethical use of AI to be responsible citizens of the digital world," the statement says.

The bishops also plan to harness available AI tools through their diocesan and regional communication offices and youth associations for effective faith formation and "creative sharing of the Good News."

They have urged dioceses, religious congregations and lay associations to equip the youth to benefit from the opportunities offered by the AI revolution.

"The Catholic Church in India firmly reiterates that the path to integral human development lies in promoting justice, equality, truth and freedom as a communitarian effort for the common good," the statement says.

For this, the bishops view AI as "a useful instrument" provided it respects and promotes human complexity, dignity and sanctity. — **By Jose Kavi, Matters India**

## Cardinal calls for day of prayer for peace in Holy Land

WESTMINSTER: Cardinal Vincent Nichols has written to priests in the diocese to ask for a special focus of prayer on March 8 for peace in the Holy Land.

In his message, he writes: "As we are all aware, the situation in the Holy Land has not improved, with failed negotiations, increasing humanitarian distress and a rising death toll. As Lent begins, I would like to urge that we continue our efforts, not least in prayer."

"And so, I ask that, on Friday March 8, there is a special focus of prayer for the Holy Land across the diocese. This could take the form of a dedicated time of prayer, perhaps before the Blessed Sacrament, for peace in the Holy Land. It could be as simple as making any regular Lenten devotions you may be having on that day for this intention."

He asks priests to make their "parishioners aware, and encourage them to make a special effort to take part."



Marcin Mazur

The Cardinal invites all the faithful in the diocese to take part in these prayers and devotions in their parishes. — **ICN**

## Chapel being built in Cambodian nature reserve

PHNOM PENH: A Catholic chapel is being built in the Keo Seima nature reserve in eastern Cambodia, for the indigenous Bunong people who live there. The Bunong are traditionally animists. They practise subsistence farming in small forest villages. They believe that nature is populated by good and evil spirits and also practise ancestor worship. Several families have now become Catholic.

Msgr Pierre Hangly Suon, Apostolic Prefect of Kampong Cham, presided over the Mass and ceremony laying the foundation stone in Keo Seima recently, in front of an assembly of priests and nuns, as well as about 150 Catholic believers from various communities in the Mondulakiri region. He explained that the construction of a church in this 'natural paradise' was a response to the growing number of believers in the area, and that it could now continue

to grow according to God's plan.

This chapel will be "a centre for the proclamation of the Gospel, a point of light and evangelisation to proclaim the love of God to all the people in the area. This small church, but above all the church made up of people, should be a light of God's grace to those around us, so that they may know Christ and be saved by him," said the bishop.

Bishop Suon laid two stones in the ceremony: the first came from the village of Gati, where the proclamation of faith began in Mondulakiri; the second was from the parish of Nak Loeng in Banam, in Kampong Cham Prefecture, one of the oldest parishes in the country, founded 160 years ago.

The building is expected to take almost a year to complete and locals have agreed to work on it. — **Fides**



Bishop Pierre Suon Hangly sprinkles holy water to mark the beginning of a new church for tribal Catholics in Keo Seima natural reserve in eastern Cambodia on Feb 1, 2024. (UCA News Photo/Catholic Cambodia)

• PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY & CONSULTATION ON BEREAVEMENT MATTERS •

**诺曼殯儀服務**

**NORMAN FUNERAL SERVICES**

Honouring Lives Since 1966

**24 HOURS**

**012 212 0677 / 012 333 5753 / 019 333 5753**

Norman Christian Funeral Services (002882028-X)  
No. 112, Jalan Gasing, 46000 Petaling Jaya  
Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia  
603 7931 6639  
✉ normanfuneralservice@gmail.com  
f Norman Funeral Services  
www.normanfuneralservices.com

COMPLETE FUNERAL ARRANGEMENT FOR ALL FAITHS

• BUILDING OF MONUMENTS • SUPPLY OF CONDOLENCE WREATHS •



# Pope Francis pays tribute to cardinal imprisoned for three decades

VATICAN: At the end of his weekly General Audience on February 14, Pope Francis laid aside his prepared remarks and offered a long, unscripted greeting to one of his visitors.

After discussing the history of Christian martyrdom in ancient Rome, the Pope noted that today, too, there are many martyrs all across the world, and offered a special greeting to Cardinal Ernest Simoni, who he described as a “living martyr.”

Born in the village of Troshani, northern Albania, in 1928, Ernest Simoni began his studies for the priesthood within the Franciscan order when he was just ten years old.

In 1948, the Franciscan convent where he was staying was looted by agents of the Communist regime. The friars were shot and the novices expelled.

Despite this, Simoni continued his theological studies in secret, and was clandestinely ordained a priest in 1956.

In 1963, after Christmas Mass, Simoni was arrested and imprisoned. He remained behind bars for twenty-eight years, facing both solitary confinement and many years of hard labour.

Pope Francis met Fr Simoni during his visit to Albania in September 2014, and was brought to tears when listening to him discussing his sufferings. After returning to Rome, the Pope decided to make the elderly priest a cardinal.

Pope Francis began his tribute to Cardinal Simoni with a reference to the many Christian martyrs buried all around them in the Vatican.

“All of us have read, have heard, the stories of the early martyrs of the Church,” he said. “Even here, where the Vatican is now, there is a cemetery, and many were executed here.”

“But, even today,” the Pope stressed, “there are many martyrs all over the world: many, perhaps more than at the beginning.



Pope Francis with Cardinal Simoni after the General Audience. (Vatican Media)

There are many persecuted for their faith.”

He then introduced Cardinal Simoni, noting that he “lived 28 years in prison” as a result of the Communist persecution of the Church in Albania which, he said, was “perhaps the cruellest” of its kind.

Cardinal Simoni “continues to bear witness,” the Pope stressed. “He is now 95 years old, and he continues to work for the

Church without becoming discouraged.”

After his release from prison in the 1990s, Cardinal Simoni forgave his jailers, and resumed his service as a priest, with a special focus on promoting reconciliation in post-Communist Albania.

“Dear brother,” Pope Francis concluded, “I thank you for your witness.” — **By Joseph Tulloch, Vatican News**

## A mission to care for the clergy

ROME: Around one thousand priests, representing over 60 countries came together for a conference on ongoing priestly formation.

The conference on ongoing priest formation was held on February 6-10 with the theme *Fan into a flame the gift of God that you possess* (2 Tim 1:6). The beauty of being disciples today: a singular, integral, communitarian, and missionary formation”. The conference was organised by the Vatican’s Dicastery for the Clergy, Evangelisation, and Eastern Churches.

Cardinal Lazarus You Heung-sik, Prefect of the Dicastery for the clergy, opened the conference by recalling the moment Pope Francis appointed him to his current role.

“On that day,” he said, “a bishop friend of mine told me: ‘Now you are responsible for ensuring that all the priests in the world are happy.’”

These, Cardinal Heung-sik said, are “words that I have never been able to forget, and that constantly accompany me in this service of mine.”

It was this remark, the Korean-born prelate said, that had led him to organise the conference.

Many priests today, he noted, are “tired and discouraged, caught off guard by the challenges of today’s society and the burdens they carry.” Thus, he said, “the importance of providing priests with the necessary support and accompaniment, and thus the need for ongoing formation, has increasingly come to the forefront.”

“We said from the beginning of the preparations,” Cardinal Heung-sik told participants, “that you are not coming here simply to learn, but as builders and protagonists. Each and every one of you is an expert and brings experience.”

The Cardinal quoted the Italian priest and activist Fr. Oreste Benzi, who once said, “There is no one so rich that they do not need to receive, no one so poor that they have nothing to give.”

For this reason, Cardinal Heung-sik said, the conference would follow, “as much as possible, a workshop-style, participatory, and synodal approach.”



Priests at Mass on World Day of Consecrated Life, February 2, 2024. (Vatican Media)

### Formation for cultural intelligence

Cardinal Tagle, Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelisation, which co-sponsored the conference, also offered a few words before proceedings got underway.

He stressed, firstly, that priests must not think that their formation ends once they have been ordained. Rather, he said, it is precisely “because we are ordained to the service of God and the Church, that we need to be continuously formed.”

Secondly, Cardinal Tagle said, priests need ongoing education to overcome the “tendency to absolutise and glorify one’s culture.”

Ordained ministers, he said, must learn “the cultural intelligence to appreciate one’s culture” but also to “admit the brokenness of one’s culture” and “affirm the good elements in other cultures.”

Finally, noting that many priests are

close to people who suffer, or are indeed greatly suffering themselves, Cardinal Tagle called for clerical formation that addresses “wounds and pains that could easily lead to vindictiveness, cynicism, and hatred.”

### We need our priests and they need ongoing formation

Regina Lynch, executive president of the Pontifical Foundation *Aid to the Church in Need*, which sponsored the event noted that “today priestly service to the faithful is even more demanding.”

Speaking to *Vatican News* after the conference, Lynch said, “Service to the faithful has always been a challenge for priests. In today’s secularised Western world, it has become even more demanding. They have to face extreme conditions, huge distances, sometimes living in war situations, living in inner cities where there is so much de-

mand on their time. I think it is easy for priests to end up having a burnout if they do not have the proper support.”

“We need our priests, and they need to be in good shape, not just physically, but also mentally and spiritually. And this is where the ongoing formation of priests is extremely important,” she added.

The president of *Aid to the Church in Need* shared her opinion that the five-day conference gave the priests a chance to talk with other priests from all over the world about best practices. “The positive aspects of this is that they can learn what works from one another, but also share the challenges of being a priest today,” she said.

Lynch underlined that there was “a great atmosphere” and added, “Now the priests will go back to their countries to be formators of ongoing formation for their fellow priests.” — **By Joseph Tulloch and Fr Pawel Rytel-Andrianik, Vatican News**



# Christians cannot turn a blind eye to Holy Land violence

**Those who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ are one in three people on earth. We must raise our voices against the violence ravaging the land where He was born.**

Faced with tragedies like the surge of violence in the Holy Land, a number of contemporary onlookers seem to be stricken with blindness.

Thus, there are those who take sides subjectively, whether for one side or the other, and they only see what they want to see, which confirms their view of a world where one is entirely good, the other entirely bad. Their blindness is reinforced by the political manoeuvring of those who also manipulate information in certain media outlets.

Then there are those, paralysed by dread of the consequences of speaking out, politicians unwilling to displease anyone, who contribute to the “muddling” of information through the vagueness of their words.

There are also those who fear what others will say, afraid of being labelled as anti-semitics, left-wing Islamists, fascists, Zionists, radicals... In this logic, their perception of the situation is selective, distorted by avoiding anything that could compel them to take a stand.

Finally, there are all those who are indifferent, all those who are at a certain “geographical” distance from the drama, and for whom this distance quickly becomes “psychological”, leading to blindness towards anything that could disturb their tranquillity.

## Christians must react differently

But how can Christians, who constitute one of every three inhabitants on Planet Earth, turn a blind eye to this violence when they claim to follow Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace? Why do we not raise our voices when the land God chose to be incarnated suffers so much violence, such a surge of hatred, such a great lack of respect for life, such an explosion of the desire for vengeance and calls for vengeance... Why is the voice of Christians, our voice, not raised more urgently?

Christians should recall the biblical words marking the Covenant that the Lord made with His people: “In those days, they shall no longer say: ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ But each will die for his own guilt; everyone who eats sour grapes will have his own teeth set on edge” (Jeremiah 31:29-30).

Can we not see that there is no justification for collective punishment, which blurs the lines between military and civilians, combatants, women, and children? Moreover, we Christians should repeat the words of the Psalmist: “I will hear what the Lord God has to say, a voice that speaks of peace, peace for God’s people and friends, and those who turn to God in their hearts” (Psalm 85:9).



And what greater folly than war, which has already disfigured the last century? We Christians should take to heart the words of St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, the Jewish woman (Edith Stein) who converted to Catholicism and became a Discalced Carmelite nun. Before she died at

Auschwitz in 1942 at the age of 50, she said she desired to “offer” herself “to the heart of Jesus as a sacrifice of expiation for true peace, that the reign of the Antichrist may perish, if possible, without a new world war”. — **By Maryse Quashie, LCI** (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

## In Gaza, the trauma of an entire generation

Crammed inside a leaking blue tarp in the middle of the courtyard of a UNRWA primary school in Rafah are a family of eight — Amal Abu Hajar, a teacher at the Catholic School of the Rosary Sisters in Gaza, her husband, and their six children. They have been there since December 5, even during the winter rains, until Lama, the youngest, found a solution.

“She became friends with a little pizza seller who lives across from the school,” her mother recounts. “Her family agreed to shelter us when it rains.” Lama is 15, with large, sad, brown almond eyes. “She does her best to help me and her siblings. She’s the calmest,” says Amal, who also sees her eldest son, Ahmad, 14, becoming “stronger and more responsible” in managing a difficult everyday life: “He’s the one who recharges our cell phones, and buys us water and bread.”

These responsibilities weigh heavily on the shoulders of this tall soccer player with a contagious smile. “He doesn’t sleep anymore. He tells me he needs to be able to save his brothers and sisters if there’s bombing. He lost 10 kilos. It’s been three months since we’ve had meat ... even chicken,” Amal whispers. Because her family is taking refuge in a school run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, they receive a bit of humanitarian aid: three cans and three bottles of water per week. Barely enough for a day. Amal has to supplement, but in Rafah, prices have quintupled due to the scarcity of certain products. “Ahmad tells me every day: ‘I hate canned food, and I hate Rafah.’”



**Faced with death and precarious living conditions, the children of Gaza have lost their innocence.**

*Two Palestinian children stand near the rubble of a destroyed residential building in Rafah refugee camp, southern Gaza Strip, February 4, 2024, following Israeli air strikes. (LCI Photo by HAITHAM IMAD/EPA/MaxPPP)*

Israeli bombings forced this teacher, who taught French, and her family to leave their beautiful house in the Al-Katiba neighbourhood of Khan Younis on October 8 for their old apartment in Al-Qarara. On December 1, a bomb destroyed the house across from them. “It was terrible, the screams, the noise of ambulances, death, fear... All that in front of our eyes, in front

of the children...” Amal relates, powerless in the face of the trauma she sees growing in her children.

Her third daughter, Rama, lost many friends in the bombings. “She thinks all the time about death, injuries, bombs. She screams a lot. She wishes she could see her friends again and remembers those who are gone,” Amal whispers. Photos of Lama be-

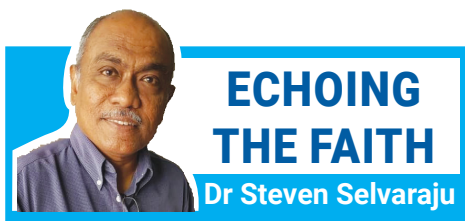
fore and after the war show two different little girls. In her clear eyes, the sweetness of innocence has vanished.

The eldest of the siblings, Jana, 18, a brilliant high school student who wants to become a surgeon, has developed knee pains. “It comes from fear,” her mother says. “The war has made her very nervous. She fears these pains will prevent her from escaping if we’re bombed.” Nightfall is particularly difficult for the children. “Jana cries every night. Ibrahim, my eight-year-old boy, can only fall asleep against me. He’s afraid of the sounds of bombings, the lights that precede them. He hits his sisters.”

In Gaza, children no longer go to school. Ilaf, Amal’s bubbly youngest, had just started elementary school. “She was learning to read and write. Now, she’s forgetting everything,” Amal regrets. As a teacher herself, she knows how much of a strength education is. She tried to homeschool them during the first two months of the war, but since arriving in Rafah, it’s been “impossible”. “There are too many people, too many distractions. You can’t imagine what it’s like to share your life with thousands of strangers. We live through the sickness and problems of others without having asked for it.”

Amal is already thinking about the future. “My children can no longer speak, they scream... They’ve lived through the worst four months of their life. I try to face the difficulties with them, but I can’t do it anymore, I have no more energy. They’re going to need a psychologist.” — **By Cécile Lemoine, LCI** (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)





## ECHOING THE FAITH

Dr Steven Selvaraju

# Do catechisms help our children grow in the faith?

At the end of 2003, I completed my doctoral studies in Rome and returned home to Malaysia. In February 2004, I started work at the National Catechetical Office as Project Director. My main responsibility was to oversee the preparation of the Malaysian Catechetical Series (MCS), a local graded catechism series, for learners between the ages 7-16 years. The project was initiated by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, and it was the first time that a local catechetical series was being produced for the entire country.

I was ably assisted in the task by Sr Maria Chan, FMM. She also wrote the text for the books for learners between ages seven – eleven years. A team of priests helped to review the theological content and some lay people assisted as proof readers, translators and illustrators. It was a huge project. But by the end of six years, we had produced a total of 80 books — 40 books for learners and 40 catechist's guides. The MCS books were published in English, Tamil, Chinese and Bahasa Malaysia. Today, most parishes in Malaysia are using this catechetical series.

Although my commitment to the project ended almost about twenty-two years ago, many people still ask me about the MCS books. One common question I am asked is, "Do the MCS books help our children become mature and dedicated Christians?"

### It takes more than catechisms and parish catechists

No catechism, however well prepared, is in itself adequate to help young Catholics grow in their faith. The catechism is only a resource that presents an organic and holistic synthesis of the essential contents of Catholic doctrine with regards to mor-

als and faith, in the light of Scripture and Sacred Tradition. A catechism presents the basic contents of the faith to the learners in accordance with their age.

The main role of the parish catechists is to transmit the essential contents of the faith to the learners. However, they can do this only within the time they have each week-end when they meet the learners. Therefore, other factors have to be considered. These factors play an important role in influencing the faith growth of a child or young person. In this article, I will examine briefly four such factors. These are: the involvement of parents in catechesis; the involvement of the parish community in the ministry of catechesis; the training of catechists; and whether the catechesis in the Church is sacrament-centred or Christ-centred.

### Are parents involved?

It has been said time and time again that parents are the first formators in the faith. I believe that many parents are aware of this. However, being aware and being involved are two different things. Studies in human development sciences clearly speak about the crucial role that parents play in affecting the physical, emotional, social, intellectual and moral, as well as, the faith growth of the child. Children start to learn about their faith from the moment when they are born. Parents become involved in the faith formation of their children by setting the proper environment in the home for the present and future religious development of the child. A loving and healthy relationship between the parent and child during the early years of the child's life can either powerfully strengthen or weaken the foundations on which the child will develop in his or her faith in the later years. In fact, by the time children at-

tend their first catechism class in the parish, they have already formed certain images or ideas about God, Jesus, Mary, the saints and other aspects of the Church, based mainly from observations of their parent's words and actions.

### Is the whole parish community taking responsibility?

While parish catechists and parents have their specific roles in the ministry of catechesis, the responsibility for the faith formation does not lie with them alone. The Church states that the responsibility for catechesis belongs to the whole Christian community which, in the context of the Catholic Church, also includes the parish community. Therefore, members of the parish, most especially adult members, are responsible in forming the younger members of the community in the faith. Are we aware of this responsibility and are we involved?

### Are the parish catechists attending formation?

The Church is blessed with lay people who respond to the call of God and volunteer themselves as catechists in the parish. Many of them take their ministry seriously. The unfortunate fact is that most are not adequately trained to perform their responsibilities effectively. Quite a number of catechists have expressed to me that they feel unprepared to help the children entrusted to them to be formed in the faith because they themselves are unsure of their own faith. The key question here is: "Are the catechists attending the formation programs which are offered at the level of the parish and or dioceses?"

### Is catechesis Christ-centred?

For some time now, catechesis has been

overly sacrament-centred. It means that emphasis is placed heavily on the child's reception of the sacraments, especially Holy Communion and Confirmation. Often, this leads to parents, learners, catechists, and even some parish priests to think that the goal of catechesis is the reception of the sacraments. Since Vatican II, the Church has called for a shift in the way catechesis is understood. The Church states that catechesis is to be Christ-centred. The goal of catechesis is "to put people not only in touch but also in communion and intimacy with the Person of Christ" (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 5). Therefore, our catechetical efforts must help children and young people enter into a personal relationship with Jesus. However, we have to ask ourselves, "Do I have a personal relationship with Jesus?"

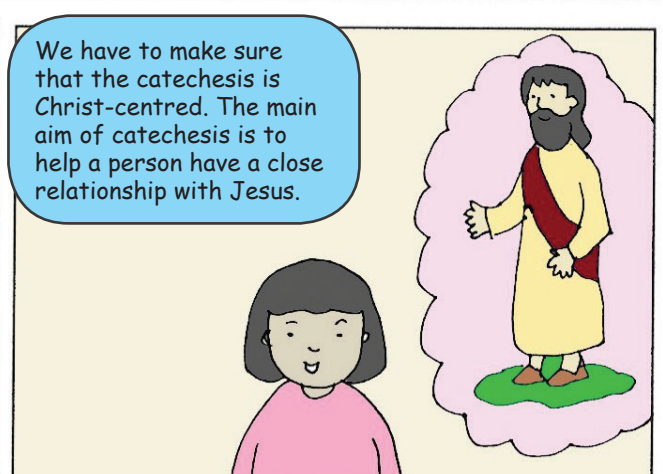
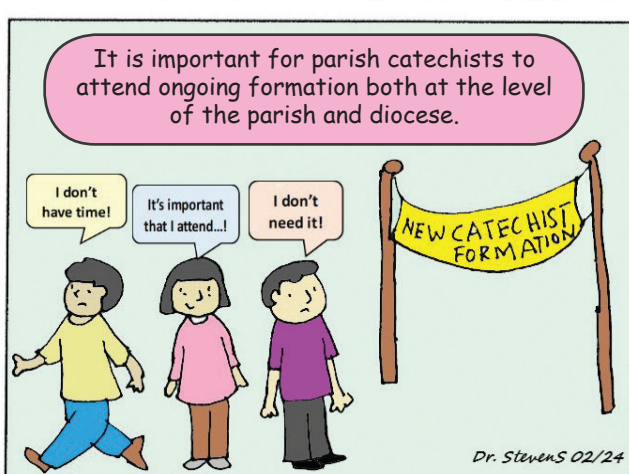
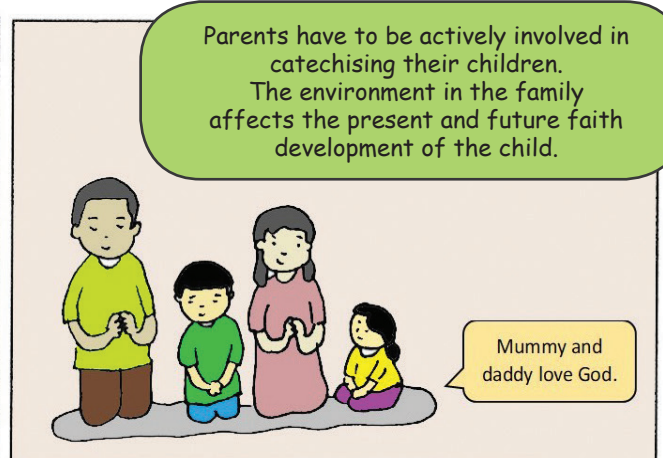
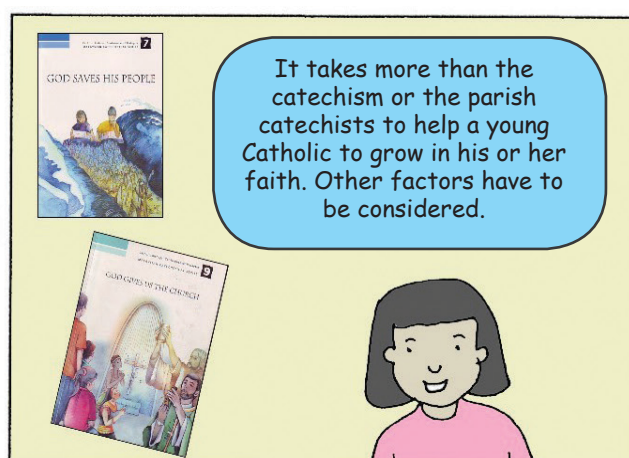
### Conclusion

"Will the catechism books help our children grow in their faith?" I would say 'yes', provided we pay careful and serious attention to the factors mentioned above. In the next series of articles, I will elaborate on these factors, as well as on other aspects in catechesis that are essential in helping our children and young people to grow in their faith.

The key ideas of the article are presented in a simple illustrated format as below. The illustrations are my own. The images are from the MCS books.

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

## DO CATECHISMS HELP OUR CHILDREN GROW IN THE FAITH?



Dr. StevenS 02/24



# Hello God ... Is it me you're looking for?

By Fr George Vaithynathan

People often joke that they have to give me several missed calls before they can actually reach me on the phone. But let me tell you, even God Himself had to give me several missed calls before I finally answered and responded to His call.

There were two beloved members of the clergy, both of whom have sadly passed on, who were instrumental in putting together the cables for the phone line connecting me to the Man Upstairs. The first was my parish priest, Fr Alexander Edwin. As a nine-year old altar server, it was a thrill for me to be able to observe up close and personal how he celebrated Mass reverently and, his unbridled love and passion for the Eucharist. This fascination continued on to my teenage years where I attended many youth and vocation camps.

Then there was Fr Clement Pereira, my subsequent parish priest who spent significant time with my friends and me in the parish. His pastoral care gently nudged me toward the vocation journey without me even realising it.

This inspired me in wanting to know more about the priesthood and so I got in touch with the then Vocation Director of the Penang diocese, Msgr Henry Rajoo. What stood out to me was Msgr Henry's gentle guidance, never pressuring me to join the seminary but, instead, offering continuous support and occasional visits to check on my wellbeing. He helped me clarify my intentions in responding to the call towards ministerial priesthood.

After completing my tertiary studies, I stepped out of my comfort zone in Ipoh and began working in Penang. It was during this time that Msgr Henry informed me of my upcoming journey to the seminary within six months. As preparation, he gave me a book on discernment, signalling that I was

being readied for a significant commitment. Now I truly felt like the calf that had been fattened and was deemed ready for the sacrifice.

Don't get me wrong, I was not scared or being a coward, but I was more attracted to the secular world. I had just started working and was enjoying my freedom away from the watchful eyes of my parents. I had money to spend, I had friends to hang out with. Life was great. So, I took the book from Msgr Henry and I ran away just like Jonah. Luckily, I did not end up inside a whale, or worse. Nevertheless, I was swallowed up in building my career and having a promising stable job. I also had the opportunity to further my studies.

But despite all the attractions of the secular world and enjoying my newfound freedom, there was still something missing in my life. Deep inside I knew that God was not done with me ... He was not giving up on me. He had me on speed-dial, but I continued to ignore His call and continued running away.

I continued to ignore this emptiness but soon after I completed my post graduate studies, I did ponder on what I should do next in my life. Coming from a Marian parish, it was only natural for me to head straight to Our Lady's grotto in which-ever church that I attended. One particular day I happened to be at the Church of the Divine Mercy in Sg Ara and I sat at the grotto weighing my options between the seminary and secular world ... the risks ... the sacrifices ... pondering on what if I joined the seminary and then did not make it as a priest?

There were so many insecurities going on inside me and as I sat at the grotto, I did not realise that the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy was being recited in church at that time and right there and then as I was speaking to Mother Mary of all my insecurities ... the



Fr George Vaithynathan with his proud parents, brother, and parish priest, Fr Robert Daniel, after his ordination ceremony on February 2, 2024, at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes in Ipoh.

answer came from within the church ... 'Jesus, I trust in you'.

Here was a sign from above as bright as the glaring sun but I needed more assurance and so walked into the church. Out of the blue, the then parish priest, Fr Martin Arlando, walked up to me and asked, "When are you joining the seminary?" This was a very intense moment for me because the good Lord had just sent me two thunderbolts – one while I was at the grotto and now one in church, but I was still uncertain and hesitant to say 'Yes' to God.

They say that things always happen in threes and yes, I did receive my third and final thunderbolt or missed call from God during Holy Week of 2015.

I normally attend Mass at one of the churches near to my work place or residence. But on Maundy Thursday, I took a further drive and ended up at the Church of the Assumption. I walked in about 15 minutes before Mass was about to start.

I sat down and closed my eyes – with the same repeated insecurities going through my mind. Suddenly I felt a tap on my shoulder. Looking up I saw Fr Gerard Theraviam looking intensely at me and saying ... "I'm washing your feet today."

This was it – this was the final call. This was Jesus telling me "You do not realise now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Needless to say, I made my decision on that day to enter the seminary and once I put my hand on the plough, there was

no looking back.

And so I began my seminary application process which wasn't a smooth process because I preferred to enter from my home parish than my domicile parish. After having to sort all these out, the final interview with the bishop took about an hour of conversation and the bishop gave his answer in a prayer to me. Since it was the year of mission, I remember him saying "Your mission now is in the seminary, to study."

After navigating the bureaucratic hurdles and interviews and with the bishop's prayerful affirmation, I embarked on a seven-and-a-half-year journey of rigorous studies, graduating from St Peter's College Major Seminary, Kuching in April 2023. Alongside two of my classmates, we were ordained deacons the same year, in our respective dioceses.

Ministering as a deacon provided a glimpse into the priesthood, with the emotional roller coaster of sometimes administering the different sacraments in a single day ... baptism ... funeral ... wedding. Yet amidst the struggles, Christ remained the focal point, His presence in every celebration.

To those considering the call to ministerial priesthood, I urge you not to fear taking the leap of faith. Know that God will guide you, whether it leads to the seminary or elsewhere. If you feel the Lord's calling, don't ignore it. Seek guidance from your parish priest or a trusted member of the clergy as you discern your path forward.

## Argentina has its first woman saint

Pope Francis canonised Argentina's first female saint, María Antonia of St Joseph (pic) — known affectionately in the Pope's home country as "Mama Antula" — in a Mass in St Peter's Basilica on February 11.

Mama Antula (1730–1799) was a consecrated laywoman who promoted Ignatian spirituality, founding Buenos Aires' House for Spiritual Exercises at a time of widespread hostility to the Jesuit order.

Pope Francis praised the Argentine saint as "a model of apostolic fervour and boldness" for traveling "thousands of miles on foot through deserts and dangerous roads" to bring people to God.

The Jesuit Pope from Argentina highlighted how Mama Antula persevered in safeguarding Ignatian spirituality after the Society of Jesus was suppressed and its priests expelled from South America.

"When the Jesuits were expelled, the Holy Spirit ignited in her a missionary flame based on trust in providence and perseverance," he said.

During the canonisation Mass, Pope Francis spoke about the importance of not

ostracising the poor or the weak but of drawing close to them as Jesus did with the lepers he met.

"How many suffering men and women do we meet on the sidewalks of our cities?" Pope Francis said.

"And how many fears, prejudices, and inconsistencies, even among those who are believers and call themselves Christians, contribute to wounding them all the more!"

Pope Francis has praised Mama Antula as an example of charity for her care for "those whom society discards."

María Antonia was born into a wealthy family in 1730 in Silipica, Santiago del Estero, in northern Argentina. She expressed a fervent desire to serve God at a young age. She spent the early part of her ministry helping parents with the instruction of their children and administering care to the sick and poor.

Following the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Spanish Empire by King Charles III, she travelled around northern Argentina by foot to safeguard and promote Ignatian spirituality, organising retreats despite the widespread

hostility to the Jesuits.

After the success of these early retreats, she expanded her reach into other regions of Argentina and relocated to Buenos Aires in 1779. While denied permission by imperial authorities to restore the Ignatian tradition, her perseverance paid off, when a year later, she earned the trust of the local bishop, culminating in the establishment of the House for Spiritual Exercises in Buenos Aires.

She died on March 7, 1799, in Buenos Aires and was buried in the cemetery of the Church of the Pietà there. Her body was later moved inside the church and has become a popular pilgrimage destination.

In his homily, Pope Francis expressed gratitude to Mama Antula for promoting devotion to St Cajetan, also known as St Gaetano of Thiene, who is now one of the most popular saints in Argentina.

"Thanks to Mama Antula, this saint, intercessor of divine providence, made his way into homes, neighbourhoods, transportation, stores, factories, and hearts, to offer a life of dignity through work, justice, and daily bread on the table of the poor," the Pope said.



"Let us pray today to María Antonia, St María Antonia de Paz de San José, that she will help us greatly."

Mama Antula's feast day will be celebrated on March 7. — **By Courtney Mares, CNA**



# 'A voice is heard in Ramah' weeping for the children of Rafah



**SUNDAY  
OBSERVER**

**Anil Netto**

The desolation is thick in the air. In Jeremiah 13:15, *Yahweh says this: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamenting and weeping bitterly: it is Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children, because they are no more."*

Rachel, who lived 17 centuries before Jesus, is the wife of Jacob, and she had died on the road from Bethel to Bethlehem. She was believed to be buried near Ramah, believed to be modern day al-Ram, about 25km north of Bethlehem.

Jeremiah, "the weeping prophet" who lived from 650-570 BC, was aware of the captives being held in Ramah before they were sent to exile in Babylon from 597 to 538 BC, following the destruction of Jerusalem in 587BC.

Jeremiah has Rachel 'weeping' in desolation, possibly as she 'watches' her descendants being taken into exile.

In Matthew, Rachel 'weeps' once again over the fate of her descendants, this time victims of Herod's Massacre of the Innocents.

The sound of the 'wailing' was

apparently so loud it could be heard from a distance.

Ramah could also mean 'on high' — the sound of weeping is also heard on high, in the highest heaven.

Today, Israel's genocide in Gaza has reached the southernmost city, Rafah, about 112km southwest from where the voice of Rachel was heard weeping for her children. The UN's top official has warned that an Israeli assault on Rafah could lead to a "slaughter".

One analyst has described the devastation in Gaza as not just a genocide but also a domicide — the systematic destruction of infrastructure and housing to render an entire place uninhabitable. Entire apartment blocks, even universities and hospitals, have been blown to bits.

The irony is that Israel had earlier warned Gazans to move from the north to the south to escape the bombs. But not content with its destruction in the north, the blood-thirsty Israeli leaders, who stood condemned in the eyes of the world when the International Court of Justice ruled in South Africa's favour, have moved their military south.

Of course, much blood has been spilt in other parts of the world, in places like Yemen and Myanmar as well.

But what is happening in Palestine/Israel is sacrilegious. This is a land sacred to three Abrahamic religions. This is the land where Jesus lived and proclaimed a kingdom of love and compassion. Yet it is also the land where settler colonialism has

grabbed land from its existing inhabitants, resulting in the Nakba (Catastrophe) in 1948.

That was when 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced to make way for Jews arriving from Europe and elsewhere. Some 15,000 Palestinians lost their lives in 70 massacres, which destroyed 500 Palestinian towns and villages.

The death toll today in Gaza is almost double that of the Nakba.

While we place ashes on our foreheads to remind us of our own mortality, the people of Gaza need no such reminder. The scent of death from dead bodies is all around them. Herod's Massacre of the Innocents pales by comparison. About half of the 30,000 dead in Gaza are children.

Herod's massacre towards the tail end of his rule is closely associated with the holy family fleeing into Egypt as refugees.

But in Gaza, the refugees of the destruction have nowhere to go, trapped in the "world's largest concentration camp". Even if they run, they are sitting ducks for Israeli snipers.

How far Israel has strayed from the path of righteousness and compassion! Who can stop this destruction, this madness? Even the International Court of Justice seems helpless in stopping the carnage despite deciding against Israel recently.

Armed to the teeth with weapons from the US and its European allies, Israel continues its settler colonialism project as it rampages through Gaza, driving the 2.3 million people of Gaza further south — to

where? The border with Egypt remains closed.

If that's not enough, 16 mostly Western nations, including the US and the UK, announced they would stop funding the UN refugee agency in Gaza, UNRWA.

One thing is for sure: the voice of the weeping mothers of Gaza, lamenting their dead children, are sure to be heard "on high". Rachel is desolate, weeping, even today. The wails of her lamentations sweep not across several kilometres but across the world.

What can we, as Christians, do? It's time to make our voices heard, along with others, and call for an end to the carnage.

Above all, this Lent, let us pray to the Lord unceasingly to move the hearts of the callous, to stop killing people for land, money, profits and strategic interests.

Take heart, Jeremiah (13:16-17) has a happy ending: *16 Yahweh says this: Stop your lamenting dry your eyes, for your labour will have a reward, Yahweh declares, and they will return from the enemy's country.*

*17 There is hope for your future after all, Yahweh declares, your children will return to their homeland."*

Let us pray that 'Rachel's descendants' in Gaza too will be able to return to their homes before long.

● **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.

## BE OUR GUEST

# Revisiting the Sacrament of Reconciliation

Lent is here again and among the Lenten practices like fasting, alms giving, works of mercy, Stations of the Cross and daily Mass, Catholics are encouraged to go for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The priests have come together to plan for penitential services in different parishes. This ministry will take up many nights. We run from one parish to another inviting people for the Sacrament. Some come, some don't. It raises a question — why aren't people coming for this Sacrament? Is there something wrong with the way it is taught or presented? Is there a Protestant influence whereby people say they can confess directly to God? Why go through a priest?

As I look back, I notice a certain trend among people. Firstly, we can hardly see youth coming for confession. This is my personal experience. There will just be a sprinkling of them. Do they have a special time in their parish for confession? I am not sure, although in our parish, we are trying to do that. Secondly, we can hardly see children who have received Holy Communion coming for confession. In many parishes, children who went for confession before holy communion, will only come again just before Confirmation.

The sad reality is that there are many people who do not go for confession. In many churches, it is difficult to find priests in the confession box before Mass because they are busy, with many Masses to cover or there is only one priest in the parish —

tough going these days.

Is the Church doing enough to teach people about the need for reconciliation? Do we preach about it often enough? Do we give talks? Do we create special time for children and youth to come for confession? Maybe they are waiting for different priests to come to the parish so that they can go and celebrate this Sacrament of Reconciliation.

And there is a problem. Sometimes there is a struggle with the question of venial sin and mortal sin (mortal is deadly sin). People feel they have committed venial sin (often understood as small sin). So, there is mortal sin, deadly, that breaks our relationship with God, community and self. Then we have venial sin (*venia*), which denotes an act of a less serious matter, which wounds our relationship with God.

I am not going to list down all the mortal sins. It is sufficient to know there is mortal sin and venial sin.

The Church teaches that all sins are wrong. Some action of ours have affected our relationship with God, with our community. There are sins that are not mortal (1 Jn 5:16-17) and there are sins that are mortal that lead to spiritual death.

There are sins that do not lead us to spiritual death and there are sins that leads us to spiritual death. For these reasons, theologians, the spiritual masters, have divided them into mortal and venial sins.

There is a thinking among many of us that I have committed venial sin, a sin that does not break my communion with God

**By – Fr Joseph Stephen CSsR**

or community so I do not need to go for confession.

The new rite of Sacrament of Penance promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 2, 1973 among other things says this - "frequent and careful celebration of this sacrament is also useful as a remedy for venial sins."

We know from experience that small mistakes cool down friendship. How many times have we not spoken to a fellow priest because of a small misunderstanding or due to some hurting remark made? How many times have couples given the cold treatment to their spouse over some misunderstanding? In some religious communities, though we stay in the same house, we do not greet each other or talk to each other because of some difference in opinions or some small mistakes.

Theologians will also tell or teach us that any number of venial sins do not make one mortal sin. However venial sin can dispose us to mortal sin in the following ways:

- By weakening our disposition of the will to obey God. One who is not faithful in small things will not be faithful in big things.
- When we live in venial sin, we forfeit the deep relationship with God by making our will more inclined towards evil.
- We need to pay attention that venial sin will hamper our growth to holiness.



- Finally, sins are great obstacles to virtue. Sin inflicts the following wounds — ignorance which hampers use of reason, malice which makes the will less disposed to good, weakness which makes it more difficult to do good. Venial sin can make holiness and growth to holiness very difficult.

Lent is a great time for us to reflect and ponder about our relationship with God and neighbours. Through our time dedicated to prayer and silence, we have the time to think about our life's journey, our wrong-doing, big and small, and we can prepare ourselves for this sacrament of mercy.

Parents can bring their children along for the sacrament of reconciliation although they may not have committed any mortal sin or deadly sin, they may have committed some wrong that will hamper their growth in virtues.

The Church celebrates the mercy of God. It is not about judging each other but welcoming the Sacrament — Go in peace and sin no more.

*Our guest columnist this week is Fr Joseph Stephen, CSsR, parish priest of the Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, Ipoh.*





Fr Ron Rolheiser

# Praying the Psalms

*God behaves in the psalms in ways that He is not allowed to behave in theology.*

That quip comes from Sebastian Moore and should be highlighted at a time when fewer people want to use the psalms in prayer because they feel offended by what they sometimes find there. More and more, we see people resisting the psalms as a way to pray (or desire to sanitise them) because the psalms speak of murder, revenge, anger, violence, war-making, and patriarchy.

Some ask, how can I pray with words that are full of hatred, anger, violence, speak of the glories of war, and of crushing one's enemies in the name of God? For others, the objection is to a patriarchal colouring in the psalms — where the divine is masculine and the masculine is too-much deified. For yet others, the offence is aesthetic. Their objection: "They're bad poetry!"

Perhaps the psalms aren't great poetry and undeniably do smack of violence, war, hatred of one's enemies, and the desire for vengeance, all in the name of God. Admittedly, they're also patriarchal in character. But does that make them a bad language for prayer? Let me suggest something to the contrary.

One of the classical definitions of prayer says "prayer is lifting mind and heart to God." Simple, clear, accurate. I suggest that the actual problem is that we seldom actually do this when we pray. Rather than lifting up to God what is actually on our minds and in our hearts, we tend to treat God as someone from whom we need to hide the real truth of our thoughts and feelings. Instead of pouring out mind and heart, we tell God what we think God wants to hear — not murderous thoughts, desire for vengeance, or our disappoint-



(Unsplash/Emmanuel Phaeton)

ment with God.

But expressing those feelings is the whole point. What makes the psalms particularly apt for prayer is that they do not hide the truth from God but express the whole gamut of our actual feelings. They give an honest voice to what's actually going on in our minds and hearts.

Sometimes we feel good and our spontaneous impulse is to speak words of praise and gratitude, and the psalms give us that voice. They speak of God's goodness in everything — love, friends, faith, health, food, wine, enjoyment. But we don't always feel that way. Our lives also have their cold, lonely seasons when disappointment and bitterness simmer or rage under the surface. The psalms give us honest voice where we can open up all those simmering feelings to God. Also, there are times when we are filled with the sense of our own inadequacy, with the fact that we cannot measure up to the trust and love that's given us. Again, the psalms give us voice for this, asking God to be merciful and to soften our hearts, wash us clean, and give us a new start.

As well, there are times when we feel

bitterly disappointed with God and need some way to express this. The psalms give us voice for this ("Why are you so silent?" "Why are you so far from me?") even as they make us aware that God is not afraid of our anger and bitterness; but, like a loving parent, only wants us to come and talk about it. The psalms are a privileged vehicle for prayer because they lift the full range of our thoughts and feelings to God.

However, there are several reasons why we struggle with that. First, because our age tends to eschew metaphor and, taken literally, some of the images in the psalms are offensive. Second, we tend to be in denial about our actual feelings. It's hard to admit that we feel some of the things we sometimes feel — grandiosity, sexual obsessions, jealousies, bitterness, paranoia, murderous thoughts, disappointment with God, doubts in our faith. Too often our prayer belies our actual thoughts and feelings. It tells God what we think He wants to hear. The psalms are more honest.

To pray with full honesty is a challenge. Kathleen Norris puts it this way: If you pray regularly "there is no way you can do it right. You are not always going to sit

up straight, let alone think holy thoughts. You're not going to wear your best clothes but whatever isn't in the dirty clothes basket. You come to the Bible's great 'book of praise' through all the moods and conditions of life, and while you feel like hell, you sing anyway. To your surprise, you find that the Psalms do not deny your true feelings but allow you to reflect them, right in front of God and everyone." Feel-good aphorisms that express how we think we ought to feel are no substitute for the earthy realism of the psalms which express how sometimes we actually do feel. Anyone who would lift mind and heart to God without ever mentioning feelings of bitterness, jealousy, vengeance, hatred, and war, should write slogans for greeting cards and not be anyone's spiritual advisor.

● **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)

## SOCIAL JUSTICE



**Making a Difference**  
Tony Magliano

## The fast that pleases God

Are you wondering what to fast from this Lent — sweets, alcohol, or just simply eating less? This kind of fasting has its place, but if you truly want to discover what fasting is especially meant to achieve, that is, to fast in the way that will bring about a holy change for the better for you and others, a fast that will make a difference in helping build a better world, a fast that will help advance the Kingdom of God, then here are the directions from the Almighty as spoken through His prophet Isaiah:

"Is this not, rather, the fast that I choose: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the throngs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking off every yoke?"

"Is it not sharing your bread with the hungry, bringing the afflicted and the homeless into your house; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own flesh?"

This passage from Isaiah insists that we fast from what Pope Francis continually calls the "culture of indifference." A culture that doesn't care that there are fellow human beings among us who, in one way or

another, are bound unjustly.

Countless people struggle every day to find sufficient food, clean water, decent shelter, adequate clothing and medical care.

So many people are locked up in prisons for practising their faith in God, or for political, racial, ethnic reasons. Others are unfairly imprisoned for minor offences or for protesting injustices.

Others are bound up by human trafficking — modern slavery.

Still others are carrying the heavy yoke of running from their native countries because of gang violence, wars, desperate poverty and inhabitable climate change situations —



often caused by corrupt regimes, and the greed, selfishness, and indifference of wealthier nations and corporations — seeking safety and decent work somewhere, anywhere, in order to support themselves and their families, only to find steel walls and barbed wire screaming at them: "You are unwanted! Go back to where you came from! We don't care about you!"

Then there are the children. Too little to fend for themselves. Too weak to survive when times are tough. They are often the first to die from hunger, poverty, disease, child labour, and that endless scourge: war!

And let us not forget the invisible little unborn ones who are unwanted, brutally dismembered, and murdered by abortion — 73 million every year!

So, if you and I are ready for the big fast, the fast that will often be uncomfortable, and even painful at times — the fast that most pleases God — then we need look no further than to the poor and vulnerable, near and far — our needy brothers and sisters.

There are many wonderful Catholic organisations dedicated to building peace, serving the poor, ending abortion, and protecting our common earth home. Link up with them and generously give of your time, talent and treasure this Lent — and beyond!

"If you lavish your food on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; then your light shall rise in the darkness, and your gloom shall become like midday!" (Isaiah 58: 6-10).

● **Tony Magliano** is an internationally syndicated Catholic social justice and peace columnist. He can be reached at [tmag6@comcast.net](mailto:tmag6@comcast.net).







# YOUTH

February 25, 2024

## Make Me an Instrument

### OUR LADY OF LOURDES' YOUTH RALLY 2024



By Clarissa Maria Fernandez

**K**LANG: The essence of faith and camaraderie radiated through the halls of the Lourdes Community Hall and Lourdes Auditorium on February 3 and 4 as the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes (OLL) hosted a youth rally. Through a diverse array of sessions, worship, and healing experiences, this two-day gathering exemplified the profound impact of community and spiritual rejuvenation.

Laughter and fellowship filled the air as the youth engaged in a series of lively games. From icebreakers to team challenges, the games fostered bonds of friendship and unity among participants. Energising and uplifting, these moments of fun added an extra dimension of joy to the spiritual gathering, creating memories that will last a lifetime.

Fr Ganaselvam Berentis (Fr Selva), assistant parish priest of OLL, set the tone of the afternoon with his insightful sessions, delving into topics of faith and purity. His words resonated deeply with the young hearts present, sparking reflections and conversations that echoed long after the session concluded.



Pilgrims walking in procession.

The energy surged on Day 2 as the rally moved to the grandeur of the Lourdes Auditorium, echoing with praise and worship. Attendees lifted their voices in unison, filling the space with songs of devotion and gratitude. The atmosphere was electric with the presence of community and the palpable sense of divine grace.

As the day unfolded, Fr Paul Sia took the stage, captivating the audience with his wisdom and warmth. His session offered guidance on what love is in the Catholic faith. Attendees found solace and inspiration in

his words, feeling empowered to embrace their faith with renewed vigour.

Fr Simon Ifeanyi Agbo captivated participants with an engaging Q&A session. Attendees had the opportunity to pose their burning questions, sparking insightful discussions and deepening their connection to faith. Fr Simon's wisdom and approachability left a lasting impression, fostering an environment of learning and spiritual growth.

Fr Cyril Mannayagam then took centre stage, leading the congregation in a powerful session of healing and renewal in accord-

ance to one of our sub-themes *make me an instrument in spirit*. Through his words and prayers, hearts were opened, burdens were lifted, and spirits were uplifted. Attendees experienced moments of profound connection and transformation, reaffirming their faith and leaving behind what no longer served them.

Throughout both days, the rally served as a beacon of hope and inspiration for the youth of OLL parish and beyond. It was a reminder that in times of uncertainty and turmoil, the bonds of faith and fellowship can sustain us, guiding us towards light and love.

Following the youth rally, participants gathered to celebrate the Eucharist, where the energy of the event seamlessly transitioned into moments of prayer and communion. Fr Selva, accompanied by Bro Robertson led the congregation in a heartfelt celebration, uniting hearts and souls in the light of faith.

As the final echoes of the rally faded away, attendees departed with hearts full and spirits lifted, carrying with them the memories and blessings of an unforgettable gathering. The OLL youth rally had not only rejuvenated their faith but also strengthened the bonds of community, paving the way for a future filled with hope, purpose, and love. The Mass served as a poignant conclusion to the rally, carrying forward its spirit of community and devotion into the sacred act of worship.



# Identity-Identified, YOU are mine!

KUALA LUMPUR: The much talked about Identity-Identified, Navigating the Challenges of Life, a New Testament read specifically targeted for the use of young people, was introduced at the Church of St Joseph, Sentul recently.

Nineteen students, two teachers and two Catechetical Resource Team (CRT) members had a foretaste of the wonders of this bible tool by Msgr James Gnanapiragasam and the KL Archdiocesan Bible team on February 4.

Msgr James began the session by giving us an indication that in every culture, there is a young male or female coming of age and will have to undergo a solemn rite of passage. The Jewish coming-of-age ritual performed for a young boy at 13 years of age is called Bar Mitzvah (Son of the Law). In our Catholic tradition, we have the rite of passage to adulthood in the Sacrament of Confirmation. You are becoming an adult simply means 'You are going to face the world alone'. And because you will be sent out into the unknown charters of your life, you will need to promptly and continuously rely on the Holy Spirit to navigate the challenges in life. The overall contents of the book were then summarised before a short video was shown on the theme of 'Rejection'.

The group sharing on a prepared story fol-



Msgr James Gnanapiragasam explaining about the Identity-Identified book.

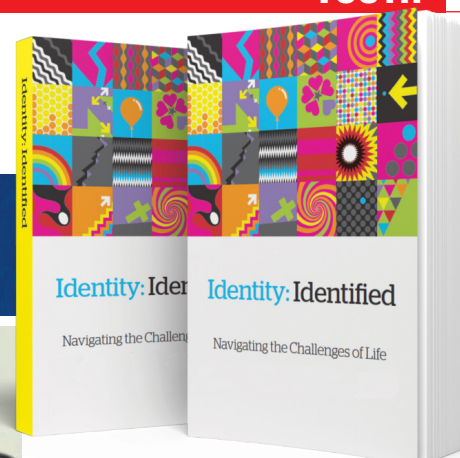
lowed using the "See, Judge, Act" method taking the storyline of rejection. The young people were open to see in their sharing, ready to pour out their thoughts and contributed actively in the discussions. A passage from Mathew 9:9-13 was taken to judge our lives in the light of Scripture.

After discussions ended, it was time to reflect as one body on 'What the Church says'. An extract from Pope Francis' *Christus Vivit* (Christ is Alive!) helped to open new ways of commitment. The students gave examples of how their Church shows compassion to the poor, sick, sinners and outcasts through discussions, events and activities. All agreed that no one should be excluded, but voiced out that it was challenging and time consuming. Yet, they tried to participate and contribute in some way. The session ended on

how they would put into practice the teachings and act as a group. They shared that they had actively supported and participated with other youths for their recent Family Day.

Msgr James in his book review said, "Identity-Identified seems to be right on target for the young people of this age and beyond. It is a bullseye masterpiece providentially prepared for the youth who are contemplating going beyond the routine drudgery of a weekly catechism class. It is prepared using the Good News Translation which is easy enough to understand. Though it has been prepared by the New Zealand Bible Society, it has received the praise of the Holy Father and accolades from our own Archbishops Julian Leow and Simon Poh.

"In my opinion it has revived a modern way of the see-judge-act method which was intro-



duced by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn (1882 – 1967), beginning with the challenges in life, then moving on to reflect on the Word of God and Church teaching before responding in action. We reiterate the need for such an approach for our students who are considered to become mature Catholics at Confirmation, going out into a world of doubts and uncertainties," said Msgr James.

Msgr James proposes this New Testament as a resource tailored for Form V students preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation, filling the gap left by catechetical textbooks that typically end at Form IV. Moreover, it serves as a valuable tool for their future spiritual growth. While Form IV textbooks already cover the Sacrament of Confirmation extensively, the varied approaches taken by different churches, such as using resources like YouCat or crafting engaging topics, indicate a lack of standardised guidance for volunteer teachers. This sharing of knowledge among peers may, hopefully, sustain them throughout their college years.

Parishes keen to launch Identity-Identified, may contact [bible@archkl.org](mailto:bible@archkl.org).

## Teens share experience on Theology of the Body

PORT KLANG: On February 3 and 4, catechism students had the opportunity to attend a two-day session on the *Theology of the Body* at the Church of St Anne.

Below are the sharings of two teens who participated in the sessions.



"It was absolutely an amazing experience to attend the *Theology of the Body* course where we learnt and understood more about our faith and love that we have. We truly enjoyed attending it together where we got to laugh and learn at the same time. All the facilitators were very open with their sharing and we felt really comfortable asking questions to clear our doubts on certain things which was truly an eye opener to us. It was very informative too. We will now carry and share the knowledge we have with others. Last but not least, we will definitely share our love that God has created us for and lead others to heaven." — **Augulus Ethan Dass**



"It was truly eye opening and certainly was a wake-up call to all of us to know the importance of our bodies and to differentiate between what love is and isn't.

"The facilitators gave us answers to the many questions we couldn't ask our parents, even answering the questions that we didn't think could be asked. The metaphors that they used to describe scenarios were also really interesting and easy to understand. It was a really fun experience too as the facilitators were all very friendly and spoke in a manner where they could make us teens absorb the information that's being shared. The facilitators also gave us a safe space to ask questions and I came out of this talk with a clearer view of my faith and what love really is. I have no regrets attending this talk as I learned so many things and had a really good time learning about God and love with my friends! I want to practise all of the good things that were shared in this TOB session. I really hope that there will be more TOB sessions in the future!" — **Andrea Ashlyn Ronald**

## Ponggal celebration in Risen Christ Church

KUALA LUMPUR: Church of the Risen Christ (RCC) collaborated with ASAYO to organise a *Ponggal* celebration on January 28 at RCC. Parish priest, Fr Edwin Peter, gave an opening speech welcoming all.

ASAYO and RCC Youth came together to conduct many interesting activities during this celebration. This allowed the RCC youth to take part in activities such as the preparation of the traditional *Ponggal* dish in an earthen pot and *Ponggal* blind fold game. We also witnessed some of the traditional dances such as the *Bharatanatyam*.

The celebration ended at 3.00pm with a lunch gathering. The ASAYO team also participated in the evening Mass by doing the second reading and being hospitality ministers.

All of us couldn't agree more that it was indeed an amazing experience to be able to witness different cultures.

We would like to express our gratitude to the ASAYO team and RCC youth leaders for organising a wonderful celebration at Risen Christ Church. — **By Joel Francis Baashkaran Pillai**





For enquiries, please contact:  
Email: [memoriam@herald.com.my](mailto:memoriam@herald.com.my)  
Tel: 03-2026 8291

## MEMORIAM

1st Anniversary  
In Loving Memory of



**RANI IRUTHAYAMARY  
A/P V. ARULSAMY  
PILLAY**

Born : 21.05.1946  
Departed : 20.02.2023

*'...and i will dwell in the  
house of the Lord forever'*

Deeply missed by  
your children,  
grandchildren, siblings,  
relatives and friends.

11th 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.

In Ever Loving Memory of  
**Two Wonderful Ladies**  
16th Anniversary 13th Anniversary



**Nora Hendroff**

**Departed:  
21 Feb 2008**

Dearly missed by  
their respective children, grandchildren and  
a host of relatives and dear friends.



**Winifreda Seneviratne**

**Departed:  
28 Feb 2011**

23rd 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.

In Loving Memory of



**MARY CLARA PEREIRA**

Called to the Lord: 1 March 2016

*We hold you close within our hearts  
and there you will remain  
until we meet again in the Lord.*

Miss and love you dearly  
Sampson, Clifton & Ewan, Sharon & Ben.



**Arthur Robert  
Fernandez**

March 31, 1949 – February 11, 2024

Passed away peacefully  
in Los Angeles, USA.

*"You are gone  
but never forgotten."*

Rest in Peace, dear brother.

Mourned by  
relatives and friends.



IN LOVING MEMORY OF

**Kathy Revi**

10 June 1965 - 24 Feb 2012

*'Eternal rest grant unto her soul, O Lord,  
and let Your perpetual light shine upon her.  
May her soul Rest in peace. Amen.'*

\* \* \*

**But I have hope that those sleeping will rise.  
The Bible says that God will open their eyes,  
No suffering, sickness, yes, not even pain.  
Those who did good, eternal life they'll gain.**

\* \* \*

Missing you more than you'll ever know,  
Mom, Leslie, Tabitha and loved ones.



**7th Anniversary  
In Loving Memory of  
Lawerance Balachandran**  
13.02.1959 – 26.02.2017

*Dear Papa,  
Our hearts still ache for the memories  
we have yet to make.  
No one can replace you.  
We long for one more chance to hear  
you laugh and dance with you.  
Your cooking was delicious and rare.  
Your wisdom was unmatched.  
Your love touched everyone you met.  
You showed us how to care  
for those around us.  
Though you're gone, we know we'll  
meet again where we belong.  
Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and  
let perpetual light shine upon him.  
May his souls and the souls of all the  
faithful departed, through the mercy of  
God, rest in peace.  
Deeply missed and cherished by  
the LB family and loved ones*

## BE FORMED AND INFORMED

SUBSCRIBE TO

**HERALD**

We provide news, commentaries and teachings on the Catholic Church.

Get the physical copy of **HERALD** delivered to your doorstep.

You can also subscribe for your loved ones.

Subscription Rates:

COUNTRY	YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION (49 issues)
Malaysia	RM195
Singapore	RM1,306

For enquiries, please contact:

**HERALD**

5, Jalan Robertson, 50150 Kuala Lumpur

Tel/WhatsApp: 03-2026 8291; E-mail: [advertisement@herald.com.my](mailto:advertisement@herald.com.my);

Website: [www.heraldmalaysia.com](http://www.heraldmalaysia.com)

30th 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*

1st Anniversary  
In Loving Memory of



**FERRY BURTHIS  
FERNANDEZ**

16TH March 1950 –  
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 always loved by son Fabian,  
daughters Sharren, Shirley Anne, sons-in-laws,  
daughter-in-law, grandchildren, relatives & friends.

Mass will be offered on the 21st of February and  
24th of February at 6pm at the  
Church of the Assumption Petaling Jaya.

**TRINITY FUNERAL SERVICES** 24 HOURS  
SDN BHD 1027544-D

FOR FREE AND NO OBLIGATION  
CONSULTATION, PLEASE CALL

**Jude Anthony**  
**019-241 5215 or**  
**016-275 5215**

No 17, Jln Anggerik Doritis BB, 31/BB, Kota Kemuning,  
Section 31, 40460, Shah Alam, Selangor  
☎ +603-5131 5459 +603-5131 0330  
☎ Trinity Funeral Services  
☎ [trinityfuneralservices3@gmail.com](mailto:trinityfuneralservices3@gmail.com)

**REST IN PEACE**

003502760-A

**福泉盛殡葬礼仪服务**  
**HOCK CHUAN SENG FUNERAL SERVICES**

Areas that will be covered :  
-Penang Island & Mainland ( Butterworth,  
Bukit Mertajam until  
Nibong Tebal)

NO.262, SUNGAI PUYU,  
13020 BUTTERWORTH,  
PENANG, MALAYSIA.

Sabrina : 012-2026494  
: 014-2647 355  
Tel : 04-332 6182





## Pope Francis thanks Worldwide Prayer Network

ROME: Pope Francis welcomed members of the international team and the Board of Directors of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, along with collaborators from the foundation "Pro Rete Mondiale di Preghiera del Papa," in a special audience at the Vatican recently.

Fr Alberto I David, SJ, the regional coordinator of 'The Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei' attended the five-day gathering which served as an opportunity for the international team to assess the progress of their mission. Fr Alberto is the recently appointed editor for *SHALOM*, the monthly prayer booklet, taking over from Fr Lawrence Andrew, SJ.

Discussions centred around updates on key projects such as *The Pope's Video* and *Click To Pray*, as well as the spiritual framework known as 'The Way of the Heart'. These initiatives aim to engage individuals in compassionate prayer for global challenges and the Church's mission, as expressed through the Pope's prayer intentions.

Addressing the audience in the Sala dei Papi of the Palazzo Apostolico, Pope Francis expressed gratitude for their dedication, emphasising the vital role of



Fr Alberto I David, SJ (extreme right), with the delegation from the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network during the meeting with Pope Francis on January 26, 2024. (PWPN pic)

prayer in ecclesial endeavours. He underscored that prayer is not merely an accessory to action, but rather, its foundational element, essential for imbuing apostolic work with meaning.

Reflecting on the biblical admonition regarding the importance of prayer for bishops, Pope Francis emphasised that

prayer is the primary duty of all Christians. He cautioned against the risk of secularisation or politicisation when prayer is neglected in the life of the Church.

In his closing remarks, Pope Francis thanked the attendees for their contributions to nurturing a culture of prayer among both laity and clergy, acknowledg-

ing the crucial role they play in sustaining the spiritual dimension of the Church's mission.

The audience concluded with a renewed commitment to advancing the mission of the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, inspired by the Holy Father's words of encouragement and guidance.

## Paulines embrace innovation

ROME: On the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the passing of co-founder Sr Thecla Merlo and the 30th anniversary of the Pauline trademark, the Nova Opera Agency embarked on the creation of a new institutional logo and the restyling of the Pauline Publishing trademark in 2024.



The new Pauline trademark

A modernised visual identity has been introduced for both, the Daughters of St Paul and Pauline Publishing, aligning with our renewed commitment to proclaim the Gospel as "innovators by vocation."

The latest iteration of the publishing trademark is a revitalisation of the Pauline trademark launched in 1994. It aims to continue fulfilling the mission of Pauline Publishing: speaking to the men and women of today in a language that is current, simple, immediate, and essential.

The stylised ellipse symbolises the world in which Paulines are called to proclaim the Gospel. While retaining the essence of the 1994 design, it now features an open and inclusive line. The blue colour, along with the elliptical movement, alludes to the digital realm and electromagnetic waves, symbolising our aspiration to be apostles of the 21st century.

The letter P, adorned with the distinctive red colour from 1994, represents the pastoral zeal of St Paul — our model in living

a life in Christ and the inspiration for our mission. Additionally, in certain languages, it represents the P of Word, *Palabra*, *Palavra* ... to spread globally.

Lastly, the inscription "Pauline," positioned beneath the P, signifies the foundation and steadfastness, akin to the roots of a towering tree. This secure base enables the P of Paul and the Word of God to ascend, reaching out to the entire world.



The updated institutional logo

The institutional logo, bearing the name 'Daughters of St Paul,' encapsulates the profound connection that binds us to the Apostle of the Gentiles, earning us the nickname 'Paulines' in many parts of the world. However, across diverse regions and languages, the name resonates in various forms. This inspired us to depict the congregation through a logo inspired by its emblem. The ellipse, shared with the Pauline trademark, represents the Congregation and the mission of evangelisation. Deliberately open and inclusive, it embraces the Cross-Book, evoking the emblem of the Daughters of St Paul, St Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles, and the Word to be proclaimed. — *FSP, Italy*

- All Inclusive
- No Hidden Cost
- Hassle Free

# 2024

## Departures

EX KL

### RUSSIA

*Moscow + St Petersburg*

**11D PILGRIMAGE**

30 Aug

Fr. Mitchel Joseph

**RM 13,900 p/p**

**10D LEISURE**

24 Oct

**RM 12,900 p/p**

**Highlights:**

- Cosmonautics Museum
- Kremlin
- Sapsan High Speed Train
- Canal Boat Trip
- St Isaac's Cathedral
- Peter & Paul Fortress
- Folklore Show
- Peterhof Summer Palace

14D	15D	13D
MARIAN SHRINES	MEDJUGORJE + EASTERN EUROPE	FRANCISCAN SHRINES
<p>26 May <b>FULL</b></p> <p>Fr. Peter Anthony</p> <p>22 Sep</p> <p>Fr. Mark Michael</p> <p>13 Oct <b>FULL</b></p> <p>Fr. Edwin Peter</p> <p>14 Oct</p> <p>Fr. Xavier Andrew</p> <p><b>RM 15,900 p/p</b></p>	<p>26 Apr</p> <p>Fr. Paul Sia</p> <p>14 Oct</p> <p>Fr. Albet Arockiasamy</p> <p><b>RM 16,900 p/p</b></p>	<p>6 May</p> <p>Fr. Kevin Chundi</p> <p>8 Sep</p> <p>Friar Sixtus Peter</p> <p>27 Oct</p> <p>TBA</p> <p>17 Nov</p> <p>TBA</p> <p><b>RM 13,900 p/p</b></p>

**TRAVEL & TOURS SDN BHD**  
(237364 - TIKKKP8377)  
No. 10 (1st Floor) Jalan 17/54,  
Seksyen 17, 46400 Petaling Jaya, Selangor  
Email: tours@topaztravels.com

**For more info:**

+6 019 - 6688471

[www.topaztravels.com](http://www.topaztravels.com)