

# HERALD

The Catholic Weekly

## Mission Statement

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

TERHAD

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Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.

1 Cor. 12:4-6



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# Hope amid suffering leads to God

**VATICAN: Pope Francis has acknowledged the challenge of embracing the Holy Year 2025 refrain, “Hope does not disappoint,” especially for those suffering from illness. Yet, he emphasises that Christians are called to recognise God’s closeness even in moments of weakness and despair.**

Sickness, the Pope wrote, can become “an occasion for a transformative encounter” with God when one remains open to His presence. This was shared in his message for the 33rd World Day of the Sick, observed on February 11, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes.

Typically, a solemn celebration of the World Day of the Sick takes place every three years at a Marian shrine. However, in light of the Jubilee Year, Pope Francis has decided to delay the solemn celebration that would have taken place this year. Instead, the commemoration will take place in 2026 at the Marian

Sanctuary of the Virgin of Chapi in Arequipa, Peru. The decision was announced in a recent press release from the Dicasteries for the Promotion of Integral Human Development and of Evangelization. The statement clarified that, for this Jubilee Year, the World Day of the Sick will be observed in the usual manner at the diocesan level on February 11. It also highlighted two significant upcoming events: the Jubilee of the Sick and Health Care Workers on April 5-6, and the Jubilee of People with Disabilities on April 28-29.

In his message, Pope Francis addresses the deep and difficult questions faced by those who suffer and those who care for them. “How can we be strong when our bodies are ravaged by severe, debilitating illnesses that demand costly treatments, which we may not be able to afford? How can we show strength when, in addition to our own suffering, we see our loved ones who support us yet feel powerless to help?” While true hope “does not disappoint” and strengthens us in times of trial, the Pope acknowledges that this confidence can often feel distant in the face of real suffering. “In these moments,” he says, “we become aware of our need for a strength greater than our own. We recognise that we need God’s help, His grace, His Providence, and the strength that comes as a gift from His Spirit.”

The Pope continues by reflecting on the deeper meaning of suffering. He writes that suffering “always brings with it a mysterious promise of salvation,” as it allows us to experience the closeness and reality of God’s consoling presence. Despite the frailty

felt on the physical, psychological, and spiritual levels during illness, “we also experience the closeness and compassion of God, who, in Jesus, shared in our human suffering.” Pope Francis reminds us that “God does not abandon us and often amazes us by granting us a strength that we never expected and would never have found on our own.”

The Pope also highlights that Christians can accept suffering as a gift, for it “makes us aware that hope comes from the Lord.” He points out that, ultimately, “only in Christ’s resurrection does our own life and destiny find its place within the infinite horizon of eternity.”

In his message, Pope Francis compares the journey of the ill to the experience of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. By sharing their anxieties and disappointments with Jesus, the disciples came to recognise His presence, which allowed them to “sense that ‘greater reality’ which, by drawing near to us, restores our courage and confidence.” Suffering, the Pope says, helps develop a profound sense of sharing and encounter. Those who care for the sick realise that they are “angels of hope and messengers of God for one another,” whether at home, in a clinic, nursing home, or hospital.

“We need to learn how to appreciate the beauty and significance of these grace-filled encounters,” Pope Francis writes. “We need to

learn how to cherish the gentle smile of a nurse, the gratitude and trust of a patient, the caring face of a doctor or volunteer, or the anxious and expectant look of a spouse, a child, a grandchild, or a dear friend.” Such gestures, he adds, are “rays of light to be treasured” that provide strength and teach us the deeper meaning of life in love and closeness, even amid adversity.

Pope Francis emphasises that those who care for the sick during the Jubilee year “play an especially important part.” Their dedication impacts “far beyond the rooms and beds of health facilities,” promoting charity and “bringing light and warmth wherever they are most needed.” The Pope concludes with a heartfelt message of gratitude: “The whole Church thanks you for this! I do as well, and I remember you always in my prayers.”

## Agencies

To read the full message, go to: <https://shorturl.at/w6Bb0>



**Top: Pope Francis offers comfort to an individual during a meeting with a group of the sick, people with disabilities, and the poor, supported by various charitable organizations, at the Indonesian bishops’ conference headquarters in Jakarta, Indonesia, on September 5, 2024. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)**

**Left: Pope Francis blesses a child as he visits Ukrainian children being treated at the Vatican-owned Bambino Gesù Children’s Hospital in Rome March 19, 2022. CNS photo/Vatican Media**



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**HERALD**

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Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur,  
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#### EDITOR

Patricia Pereira  
editor1@herald.com.my



#### ASSISTANT EDITOR

Sandra Ann Inbaraj  
sandra@herald.com.my



#### GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Amanda Mah  
amanda@herald.com.my



#### SOCIAL MEDIA

Kevin Francis  
kevin@herald.com.my



#### BAHASA MALAYSIA

Melania Liza Magnus  
liza@herald.com.my



#### MANDARIN

Adelina Wong  
yin4482@gmail.com



#### TAMIL

RK Samy  
rksamy3@hotmail.com



#### ADMIN ASSISTANT

Rachael Sharma  
admin@herald.com.my

ADVERTISEMENT/SUBSCRIPTION  
advertisement@herald.com.my

#### MEMORIAM

memoriam@herald.com.my

#### LETTERS

letterseditor@herald.com.my

#### Social Media



www.heraldmalaysia.com



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# AI: A tool that cannot replace the richness of humanity

What is misleading, first and foremost, is the name. So-called "Artificial Intelligence" is one of those cases where the name has counted and still counts for a lot in the common perception of the phenomenon.

The Note *Antiqua et nova*, released on January 28 by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Dicastery for Culture and Education, reminds us first of all that AI is a tool: it performs tasks, but it does not think. It is not capable of thinking. It is therefore misleading to attribute human characteristics to it, because it is a "machine" that remains confined to the logical-mathematical sphere. That is, it does not possess a semantic understanding of reality, nor a genuinely intuitive and creative capacity. It is unable to replicate moral discernment or a disinterested openness to what is true, good, and beautiful, beyond any particular utility. In short, it lacks all that is truly and profoundly human.

Human intelligence is, in fact, individual, while at the same time social, rational, and affective. It lives through continuous relationships mediated by the irreplaceable corporeality of the person. AI should therefore only be used as a tool that complements human intelligence, and not claim to somehow replace the particular richness of the human person.

Despite the progress of research and its possible applications, AI continues to remain a "machine" that has no moral responsibility, which remains instead with those who design and use it.

For this reason, the new document emphasises, it is important that those who make decisions based on AI are held accountable for the choices they make, and that accountability for the use of this tool is possible at every stage of the decision-making process.

Both the ends and the means used in AI applications must be evaluated to ensure that they respect and promote human dignity and the common good. This evaluation constitutes a fundamental ethical criterion for discerning the legitimacy or otherwise of the use of artificial intelligence.

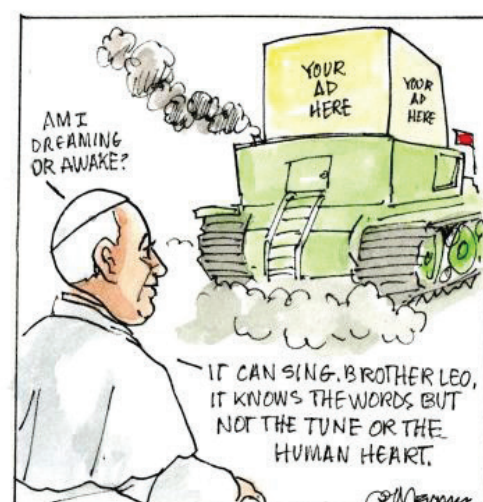
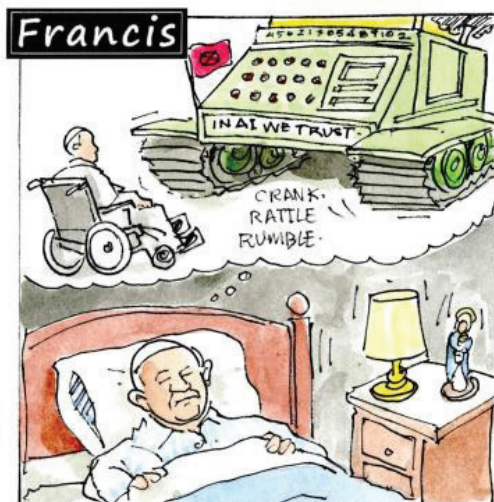
Another criterion for the moral evaluation of AI, the Note suggests, concerns its capacity to implement the positive aspects of the relations of human beings with their surroundings and with the environment to foster a constructive interconnection of individuals and communities, and to enhance a shared responsibility towards the common good.

In order to achieve these goals, it is necessary to go beyond the mere accumulation of data and

knowledge, striving to achieve a true "wisdom of the heart," as Pope Francis suggests, so that the use of artificial intelligence helps human beings to actually become better.

In this sense, the Note warns against any subordination to technology, inviting us not to use technology to progressively replace human labour — which would create new forms of marginalisation and social inequality—but rather as a tool to improve care and enrich services and the quality of human relations. It is also an aid in understanding complex facts and a guide in the search for truth. For this reason, countering AI-fuelled falsifications is not only a job for experts in the field, but requires the efforts of everyone.

We must also prevent artificial intelligence from being used as a form of exploitation or to restrict people's freedom; to benefit the few at the expense of the many; or as a form of social control, reducing people to a set of data. And it is unacceptable that in the field of warfare, a machine should be entrusted with the choice of taking human lives. Unfortunately, we have seen the devastation caused by artificial intelligence-driven weaponry, and how great that devastation is, as tragically demonstrated in so many current conflicts. **Andrea Tornielli, Vatican News**



## Jesus calls us to be courageous and embrace risks

In life, we often encounter situations that involve some level of risk. For instance, when we invest in shares or unit trusts, we are putting our money at risk, as the value of these investments could either increase significantly, decrease or even result in total loss. Similarly, entering into a relationship carries its own risks, as we can never be certain whether it will lead to a lifelong partnership or end in a breakup. Even having a child, particularly at an older age, involves risk, such as the possibility of the child being affected by conditions like autism, Down's syndrome, or other serious health issues. Whether the risk is big or small, most of us will encounter it in some form.

However, some people are particularly fearful of taking risks. It often seems easier to stick with what is familiar rather than venture into the unknown. But why are some individuals so afraid of taking risks? The root cause often lies in the fear of failure. We fear that we won't be able to complete what we've started, that we won't achieve the desired results, or that others will mock us for our perceived incompetence. We might even worry that a single failure in one area will lead to failure in all other aspects.

In today's Gospel, Jesus invites us to take courage and embrace risks. He tells Peter, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." This was a difficult instruction for Peter

to follow, especially since he had already failed to catch any fish despite his efforts through the night. After experiencing failure, many of us hesitate to try again and may become discouraged. We often seek safer paths, trying to avoid repeating mistakes and hoping for better chances of success. However, Peter chose to take the risk again, and as a result, he caught so many fish that both boats were in danger of sinking.

What does this teach us? It shows that being a Christian involves a willingness to take risks. When people are invited to serve as catechists, BEC coordinators, or leaders in various ministries, many decline, offering excuses such as lack of time, overwhelming responsibilities (though often these are not in service to the Church), or feelings of inadequacy. In truth, the underlying reason is often the fear of failure and a reluctance to take risks.

If we avoid taking risks, are we not becoming armchair Christians — those who only comment or criticise, yet shy away from doing our part? Is this really what Christianity is about for some of us?

Today, each and every one of us is called to discipleship. It is not enough to be a Sunday Christian who simply attends Mass and remains uninvolved. It is not enough to pray or to complain, assuming that nothing can be

## Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Andrew Kooi

### 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Readings: **Isaiah 6:1-8;**

**1 Corinthians 15:1-11;**

**Gospel: Luke 5:1-11**

done. All of us are called to be disciples, not just a select few.

Contrary to what some may think, a disciple is not someone who is without mistakes. A disciple doesn't always succeed in everything and faces failures just like anyone else. A disciple is not perfect — far from it — because they have weaknesses and struggles just like everyone else. Rather, a disciple is someone willing to take risks because they have developed a deep relationship with Jesus. A true disciple trusts Jesus enough to place their fate in His hands. They may feel weak, unskilled, or unqualified, but they have confidence that with God's grace and help, all things are possible.

A disciple constantly turns to God for forgiveness and mercy, recognising their own sinfulness. In essence, a disciple is someone willing to give their all, come what may, because they trust in God's help and providence. Today, Jesus is calling us and saying, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." Are we willing to take the risk and follow Him?





**ARCHDIOCESE OF  
KUALA LUMPUR**  
CHAN/CD/01/2025

## Chancery Notice

# New Appointments

Archbishop Julian Leow has made the following appointments, which will take effect on March 3, 2025:

- 1 Reverend Fr Simon Labrooy has been appointed as the new Parish Priest of the Church of St. Jude, Rawang, Selangor.
2. Reverend Fr Jonathan Rao has been appointed as the Assistant Priest of the Church of St Jude, Rawang, Selangor.
3. Reverend Fr William Michael has been appointed as the Administrator of the Chapel of Kristus Aman, Taman Tun Dr Ismail, Kuala Lumpur.

Please be informed that Reverend Father Vincent Thomas will be pursuing further studies in Biblical Theology later this year. To help him prepare for this new academic journey, effective March 3, 2025, he will be relieved of his duties as the Parish Priest of the Church of St Jude in Rawang, Selangor.

*Clarence Devadass*

Rev Fr Dr Clarence Devadass  
Chancellor  
Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur

January 27, 2025



**KUALA LUMPUR  
ARCHDIOCESE**

## Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

### February

- 10-13 Prelate Retreat in Singapore
- 14 Meeting - College of Consultors
- 15 Interfaith Harmony Walk
- 15 Feast - Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang
- 18-19 Clergy Monthly Recollection
- 19 Meeting - FCMSM Exco



**MALACCA JOHORE  
DIOCESE**

## Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

### February

- 14 Meeting with the Sisters of St Joseph of the Apparition – MAJODI Centre
- 18 Anniversary of the Dedication of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Johor Bahru
- 18-19 Clergy Monthly Recollection – MAJODI Centre



**DIOCESE OF PENANG**  
PKK/BDN/2025/02/195



**"The Lord God took the man  
and put him in the Garden of Eden  
to work it and take care of it."  
Genesis 2:15**

### 1. Association of Religious of Penang Diocese (ARPD) for 2025-2026

I am pleased to share the new office bearers for the coming term as below:

Chairperson: Friar Crispus Mosinoh (OFM)  
Asst Chairperson: Sr Angelin (FMDM)  
Secretary : Sr Lucynia (FSIC)  
Treasurer : Sr Amy (IJS)

### 2. Order of Friars Minor Capuchin - Custody of Malaysia Singapore

Congratulations to the team of the OFM, Cap on the recent announcement of the leadership. Go to <https://rb.gy/kah5fi>

### 3. Updates on FMM Mission in Kota Bharu and Canonical Visit of Regional Leadership Team

Sr Angelic de Souza has been transferred from Villa Hermine, PJ in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur to Our Lady of Fatima Convent, Kota Bahru, in the Diocese of Penang. Her priority will be to render services at Assunta Integrated Social Services (ASSISS) in Keningau and Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

The Regional Leadership Team of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary will visit Our Lady of Fatima Convent in Kota Bahru on February 20 and 21. This is the first canonical visit of the Regional Superior, Sr Lucia Ling Hing Pai. This visit includes meeting the parishioners of the Church of Our Lady of Fatima of the Holy Rosary, Kota Bahru,

# Notifications and Updates

Kelantan. The team will have a retreat from February 13 - 19 in Kuantan prior to this visit

### 4. Caritas Assembly 2025 (February 15-16, 2025)

Caritas Penang will be organising a two-day Assembly for Caritas parish representatives, members, volunteers, and all those who are involved in social mission of the parish. For more details, kindly contact Francis at 011-65137507 or Juanita at 012-4011567 or go to <https://rb.gy/aocsww>

### 5. Caritas Penang Lenten Kit 2025

Lenten Campaign 2025 with the theme: *Rediscover, Proclaim, Build Hope* begins with Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2025. For the Lenten Kit resources and relevant materials, go to <https://rb.gy/a9sc1b>

This information can also be obtained from the Caritas Penang website: <https://caritaspenang.com/len-2025/>

*Sebastian Francis*  
**Cardinal Sebastian Francis**



# Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #209



**Dear Friends of MJD,** welcome to the Jubilee Year of Hope. A pilgrim stops, breathes, watchfully observes, filters out the distractions, beholds the emerging lesson and lives out the new call. They see God.

Where are the moral and civics classes that build character, unity and national pride? The PM says the Madani Government's top priorities are governance, leadership and accountability. Universiti Malaya (UM) saw the splashing of red paint at a KK Mart outlet within its campus.

Singapore introduced stricter measures to regulate screen use among children in school and preschool as part of a broader multi-ministry health initiative.

The PM warned of clinging to outmoded laws to face new challenges. Growing cafe culture and increasing demands for speciality coffee are boosting the coffee industry here.

The MAGA Movement (Make America Great Again) attacked the Pope for criticising Trump's deportation plans. Increased incidents of violence directed at the disabled and vulnerable here raise concerns.

The Queen, Raja Zarith Sofiah, commented "Education that imparts knowledge without instilling noble values can produce corrupt and irresponsible individuals." Gandhi observed that "knowledge without character and religion without sacrifice" as the second of the seven social sins.

**Unfit Times:** Did you know Malaysians are among the least active walkers worldwide? Malaysians average only 3,963 steps per day, making them among the least active walkers globally.

With benefits ranging from better mental health to reduced risk of chronic illnesses, increasing your daily step count could be a game-changer. Some recommend 30 minutes of brisk walk or the 10000 steps, for five days a week. Move to keep fit.

### A Thought for the Week: The Falling Cat.

When a cat falls out of a tree, it lets go of itself. The cat becomes completely relaxed, and lands lightly on the ground. But if a cat were about to fall out of a tree and suddenly make up its mind that it didn't want to fall, it would become tense and rigid, and would be just a bag of broken bones upon landing.

**The lesson from the Tao:** We are all falling ...falling off a tree, at every moment of our lives. As a matter of fact, the moment we were born, we were kicked off a precipice, and we are falling, and there is nothing that can stop it. So instead of living in a state of chronic tension, and clinging to all sorts of things that are actually falling with us because the whole world is impermanent. Be like a cat. **Alan Watts**

Going through life in a relaxed fashion is better than being unduly tense.

### QnQ! Q asks? People are excited about Healings. What is healing?

1. Maybe we need to look at the significance of Jesus' healing ministry. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is in action: travelling, preaching and healing. It was not mere words. In the physical healings, He consistently rearranged faulty relationships — status, self-image, courage, relationship to family or community changed with the cure.

2. The healings and exorcisms in

Mark's Gospel highlight power, abuse, relationships, class, addiction, money, exclusion, the state of women and the poor, and the connections between soul and body. The same issues we face today.

3. Jesus' healing was not a reward for good behaviour; not conditional; not founded on prerequisites; not preoccupied with the cured. The healing stories are present-tense concerns for human suffering. God is interested and deeply cares for the suffering in the now. In general, all rewards and punishments are inherent and current. Sin is its own punishment; virtue is its own reward now.

4. The real message here is not a medical cure or whether Jesus could do such a thing, but that

- (1) God cares about human pain,
- (2) God cares about it in this world now,
- (3) God's action actually changes people, and
- (4) the people who have experienced God's grace are equipped to pass on the real message.

We are all initially created in the image of God, and Jesus' public ministry is always recreating and restoring that image.

**The Holy Spirit @work:** There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies. **Martin Luther King Jr**

**Something To Tickle You:** The greatest leaders and people are self-managing; they don't need to be managed.

*Bernard Paul*  
**Bishop Bernard Paul**



# CBCMSB 2025 Plenary: Key insights and future plans

Richard Chia

PLENTONG, Johor: The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei (CBCMSB) recently held its first plenary meeting of 2025 at MAJODI Centre. In addition to the bishops, the gathering also saw the participation of seminary formators, rectors, spiritual directors, and members of the Conference of Religious Major Superiors (CRMS), who held their own respective meetings. The event offered a valuable opportunity for collaboration, fellowship, and meaningful discussions as the different groups within the Catholic Church came together to reflect on recent developments and outline plans for the region.

Several significant moments highlighted the meeting, including reflections on the past year, CBCMSB leaders' participation in major Church events, and discussions about ongoing and future initiatives aimed at strengthening the Church's faith and mission in Southeast Asia.

## Papal Visit to Singapore

One of the most notable events of 2024 discussed at the plenary was the Papal visit to Singapore in September. This marked the first papal visit to the region since Pope John Paul II's visit in 1986, nearly four decades ago. Cardinal William Goh, Archbishop of Singapore, described the visit as a resounding success, noting that it was a unique and unifying event for the local Catholic community. He emphasised the profound impact the visit had on bringing Catholics together across various dioceses in Singapore as well as from the other regions, fostering a sense of shared faith and mission.

## Synod of Bishops in Rome

The plenary also focused on the participation of Most Rev Julian Leow, President of CBCMSB and Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, in the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome. The synod, which took place in October 2024, brought together 450 participants from around the world for a month-long session. It was the culmination of a three-year process of listening and dialogue on the theme of synodality, which began in 2021.

Archbishop Julian spoke at length about the spirit of synodality that defined the gathering, highlighting the emphasis on 'conversation in the spirit', listening to each other and fostering dialogue in a spirit of unity. He described the experience as deeply moving, especially the ecumenical vigil service that brought together representatives of vari-



Arch/Bishops of Malaysia - Singapore - Brunei.

ous Christian denominations and Eastern churches to pray for Christian unity. During the synod, Masses were celebrated in ancient languages, including Aramaic and Arabic, to honour the rich diversity of the global Church.

A particularly poignant moment of the synod was the screening of a documentary about a Korean priest working in South Sudan. Archbishop Julian shared that the powerful images of suffering in Sudan left many participants in tears, underscoring the urgent need for solidarity and support for the world's most vulnerable.

## Jubilee Year Pilgrimages

The bishops also discussed plans for the Jubilee Year, in which the faithful have been declared as "Pilgrims of Hope." Each diocese across Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei has identified special pilgrimage sites for the faithful to visit during the Jubilee Year. These pilgrimage centres are meant to serve as spiritual landmarks for Catholics to reflect on their faith and renew their commitment to the mission of the Church.

## Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

Alwin D Macalalad *pic*, the Regional Coordinator for Pacific Asia & Oceania within the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development (DPIHD) in Rome also spoke at the plenary.

It was an opportunity for him to present the mission and activities of the DPIHD. The Dicastery's focus is on promoting holistic human development in areas such as economics, ecology, health, security, and care for migrants and refugees.

Prior to this meeting, Alwin engaged

with the leaders of several local Catholic organisations, including Fr Fabian Dicom, National Director of Caritas Malaysia; Dionysius Richard Ellai, Chairperson of the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerants (ECMI); and Clare Westwood, Regional Director of the Episcopal Commission for Creation Justice (ECCJ). His discussions focused on the importance of integral human development in serving both the Church and society, with a particular emphasis on addressing the needs of marginalised and vulnerable populations.

Alwin also presented on the dicastery to the CRMS and met with several seminary formators.

## Safeguarding Policies and Elder Care

During the bishops' joint meeting with the Conference of Religious Major Superiors (CRMS), the new executive committee for 2025-2027 was announced. The bishops expressed their gratitude to the outgoing team, led by Franciscan Friar Derrick Yap, and welcomed the incoming president, Fr Francis Lim, SJ. Key discussions at the meeting included safeguarding policies and protocols aimed at protecting minors within the Church. The discussion also centred on eldercare for clergy and religious members who are aging and require nursing care. These discussions were part of ongoing efforts to ensure the well-being of Church personnel and foster a safer, more supportive environment for all members of the Catholic community.

## Malaysian Seminary Charter

At the seminary rectors' session, a draft version of the Malaysian Seminary Charter was presented for discussion. After a healthy exchange of views and minor revisions, the bishops unanimously approved and signed the Charter. The Charter is set to serve as

a guiding document for the formation of seminarians in Malaysia, ensuring that seminary programs align with the broader mission of the Church while fostering spiritual and intellectual growth among future priests.

## Catholic Healthcare Asia Update

The bishops also received updates from Catholic Healthcare Asia (CHCA), which had last met with them in 2020. CHCA, led by its founder Sr Jane Bertelsen, FMDM; Sr Helena McEvilly, FMDM; Wendy Louis, Chairperson of CHCA and Daphne Leong, Mission Formation Director provided an overview of their current structure and efforts to integrate their mission into various healthcare initiatives across the region. The organisation continues to focus on providing comprehensive care that aligns with Catholic values and serves the holistic needs of individuals and communities.

## Institute of New Evangelisation

Members of the Institute of New Evangelisation (INE), Michael Xavier and Alex Choong, presented an update on their work since the institute's founding in 2021 via zoom. Through online training and parish leader transformation initiatives, INE has reached a significant number of Catholics across Malaysia. Moving forward, the institute aims to expand its outreach, particularly in the dioceses of Penang, Kuala Lumpur, and Malacca-Johore, while fostering stronger ties with the dioceses in Sabah and Sarawak.

## MCYPA Youth Event in 2025

The plenary ended on an uplifting note as the bishops participated in a vocal training session in preparation for the *Perjalanan Salib Malaysia*, a nationwide youth event scheduled for April 2025. The event, which will be launched in Kota Kinabalu during the Malaysian Catholic Young Peoples' Assembly (MCYPA), aims to bring together over 1,500 young people from across Malaysia for a week of faith, fellowship, and reflection. The event will also provide an opportunity for young people to engage with the bishops, strengthening the connection between the clergy and the next generation of Catholics in Malaysia.

The plenary meeting marked a significant step forward for the CBCMSB as it continues to strengthen its mission in Southeast Asia, build bridges across communities, and deepen the faith of its members. With the Jubilee Year, ongoing initiatives, and collaborative efforts within the region, the Church in Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei looks ahead to a vibrant and hopeful future.



The arch/bishops with the Major Religious Superiors of Malaysia and Singapore.



# First priestly ordination in 2025 for Archdiocese of KL

Priangkha Elizabeth

CHERAS: The Church of St Francis of Assisi (SFA) was the site of a significant milestone for the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur as it celebrated the ordination of Fr Jonathan Andrew Rao on January 25. This marks the first ordination at SFA in 28 years, since the ordination of Fr Andrew Manickam, OFM, Cap. The ceremony, which took place on the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul, added further significance to the occasion.

The Eucharistic Celebration was presided over by Archbishop Julian Leow, joined by clergy from the Archdiocese of Kuala

Lumpur and other dioceses. The event was attended by religious men and women from various congregations, as well as parishioners from across Malaysia, including guests from Sabah, Sarawak, and staff and children from the Myanmar Learning Community Centre. The gathering provided an opportunity for attendees to come together in prayer, witness the sacred ceremony, and celebrate Fr Jonathan's journey into the priesthood.

In his homily, Archbishop Julian emphasised the immense effort and resources required to form a priest, stressing that it takes the support of many individuals and communities to nurture a vocation. He encouraged

the congregation to pray for more courageous men and women to dedicate their lives to serving the Church. The archbishop expressed his belief that, through the strength and passion within each person, more vocations would arise to serve the Church in Malaysia.

He also urged parents to continue praying for their children, hoping they would feel called to serve the Church in a deeper, more intimate way, particularly through religious life. The archbishop also highlighted the importance of unity, calling on leaders from all faiths — whether Buddhist, Christian, or otherwise — to collaborate for the common good, fostering harmony and spiritual growth within both the Church and society.

Fr Jonathan began his thanksgiving speech with deep joy and gratitude, reflecting on his calling to the priestly ministry. Reflecting on his ordination theme, *Do you love me? Feed my sheep*, he highlighted the importance of self-giving, sacrifice, and service. He emphasised that God's love transcends all, and it is this divine love that gives him hope and strength in his vocation.

He also offered heartfelt thanks to his mother for her unwavering love and courage, which helped him overcome life's challenges and strengthened his faith in serving the Lord. Fr Jonathan also expressed gratitude to SFA's parish priest, Fr Paul Cheong OFM, Cap and the organising committee for making his ordination at SFA possible, as well as to Arch-



Fr Jonathan Andrew Rao

bishop Julian for his ongoing support.

Fr Jonathan also spoke briefly on how his journey to the priesthood was a grace-filled one, marked by challenges and triumphs. Over eight years of formation at the seminary, he found strength in the Word of God and the Eucharist, which kept him grounded in his calling.

He then thanked the Lord for calling him to serve in His vineyard and asked for continued prayers. He pledged to remain a humble and faithful servant, always ready to respond to the needs of the faithful. To the surprise of the congregation, Fr Jonathan ended his speech by greeting and thanking everyone in nine different languages, leaving a lasting impression on all present.

Archbishop Julian announced that Fr Jonathan will serve as the assistant priest at the Church of St Jude, Rawang, where he will continue his ministry. The celebration concluded with a communal lunch, as parishioners and guests gathered to continue the joyous occasion.

On January 26, Fr Jonathan celebrated his first thanksgiving Mass at SFA, further cementing his commitment to his vocation.

*We will be featuring Fr Jonathan Andrew Rao's vocation journey in our upcoming Vocation supplement.*



Archbishop Julian Leow anointing the palms of Fr Jonathan Rao with Oil of Chrism. (SFA media)

## St Thomas parish community reflects on growth and mission

KUANTAN: The Church of St Thomas the Apostle held its Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA) on January 19, with approximately 75 attendees, including members of the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC), Parish Coordinating Council (PCC), Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC), ministry leaders, catechists, and the Franciscan Missionary Sisters (FMM).

In his keynote address Fr George Packiasamy, reflected on the parish's journey over the past three years, since he assumed the post of parish priest, highlighting the growth in faith and the increased involvement of parishioners in spiritual celebrations, formation programmes, and parish activities. Fr George expressed gratitude to parish leaders for their unwavering commitment, especially during challenging times, and acknowledged the remarkable dedication of those who have considered stepping down but chose to continue serving the community.

He also shared his appreciation for the collaborative spirit and strong sense of community within the parish, emphasising the importance of working together in faith. "It has truly

been a joy to walk this journey of faith with all of you," he said.

The PPA focused on reviewing the parish's progress and identifying areas to strengthen efforts in four key areas: **Family, Church, Society, and Ecology**. It was also an opportunity to consider how these pillars align with the parish's vision and mission for 2025 and beyond. Fr George noted that this Jubilee Year of Hope offers a unique chance for reconciliation, forgiveness, transformation, and renewal. He encouraged the parish community to embrace these graces as they move forward.

Fr George also highlighted that the church's designation as a Pilgrim Centre for the East Coast is both a privilege and a responsibility. He urged parishioners to offer a warm welcome to all pilgrims visiting the area.

The assembly continued with small group discussions centred on three main topics: Family, Church, and Ecology. Each group delved into how these themes can be further integrated into the parish's activities and mission. The day concluded with a closing address by Archbishop Julian Leow, who of-



Parishioners of St Thomas with Archbishop Julian Leow and Fr George Packiasamy.

ferred his reflections on the parish's findings and progress, followed by an apostolic blessing.

Looking ahead, Fr George emphasised that the parish's vision and mission Statements will guide its direction in the coming year. The vision is "to be a community that inspires faith throughout the Jubilee Year of Hope and beyond," while the mission is "to welcome everyone, actively share Gospel values,

and foster hope through prayer, service, and compassionate outreach."

As the parish moves forward, Fr George encouraged all parishioners to live out these values, collaborating in faith to bring the vision and mission to life. "Let us spread faith and hope throughout our parish," he said, "and may God bless all — our parishioners and pilgrims — as we journey together during this Jubilee Year and beyond."

## Bringing hope and assistance to underprivileged families

ASSAM JAWA: Ten underprivileged families received much-needed support during an outreach programme held on January 18, at the Chapel of Our Lady of Good Health, located about 23 km from Bestari Jaya. The initiative, which benefited both Catholic and non-Catholic families from the surrounding Assam Jawa and Bukit Rotan areas, was organised by the chapel's committee, led by chairperson Veiangkanni Masilamani, in collaboration with a Catholic group from Kuala Lumpur. The programme received blessings from Fr James Gabriel, the chapel's administrator.

The event began with a prayer session and reflection on Christian hope, where the Catholic attendees were reminded of their



Families having a joyful time during the balloon competition.

role in becoming beacons of hope to society's marginalised, offering both material support

and genuine care. The aim was to instill hope in the hearts of the guests, reminding them of

God's love and provision.

Following the reflection, a tea fellowship was held, offering an opportunity for meaningful interactions between the guests and organisers. The highlight of the day was the distribution of nearly 400kg of essential food items, including pillows and 21 litres of shower cream, which were equally distributed among the ten families.

To add some joy and fun to the day, a balloon competition was organised, with many guests winning small gifts.

The success of the outreach programme was made possible by the dedication, support, and cooperation of all involved. The event concluded with closing prayers. **Bernard Anthony**



## Muhibbah dinner celebrates unity across religions and cultures

PLENTONG, Johor: Approximately 200 people gathered at the MAJODI Centre for the Bishop's Christmas and New Year *Muhibbah* Dinner on January 21, celebrating unity among diverse religious and cultural communities.

Attendees included representatives from the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Taoism (MCCBCHST) Johor, the Council of Churches Johor, the Erth Al Mustafa Foundation, the Hidayah Centre Johor, as well as clergy, religious communities, diocesan ministry representatives, staff and families of MAJODI Centre, and performers from the Church of St Theresa, Masai, and the Church of St Joseph, Plentong. The theme for the evening was *Journeying Together as Bridge-Builders*.

Although the Christmas season had passed and the new year was already into its fourth week, Bishop Bernard Paul selected this date — coinciding with the diocese's first Clergy Monthly Recollection for 2025 — to invite interfaith and Muslim friends. This gathering offered all the clergy of the diocese a chance to mingle and connect with the guests, an opportunity that wasn't possible during Christmas due to their busy schedules.

The event began with a vibrant performance of the *Windows of Malaysia* dance by the DeBorneo Group, celebrating the cultural diversity of Malaysia. Bishop Bernard delivered a welcome speech, emphasising the



One of the performances during the night. (MJD Soccom)

importance of unity in diversity. "God intended unity in diversity, but man divides. People of goodwill must show the way to real peace and harmony," he said. He urged everyone to be "bridge-menders, healers, and restorers of peace, justice, and friendship" and to come together in fellowship and build lasting friendships.

Vicar General, Msgr Peter Ng, led the prayer

of grace before the meal. The dinner, carefully planned to meet various religious dietary requirements, was served buffet style as guests enjoyed musical entertainment. The SJC Bahasa Malaysia Carollers sang three carols, followed by a beautiful Sumazau dance performed by the DeBorneo Group of children under 12. The Mandarin Carollers then presented two songs, "The Gift" and *New Year, New Mission*, before

the DeBorneo Group closed the performances with an energetic Borneo dance, culminating in an exciting bamboo pole dance that captivated the audience.

Chancellor, Fr Dr Lawrence Ng, gave the appreciation speech, expressing his gratitude to all who attended the event. He highlighted the spirit of unity, goodwill, and respect for one another's traditions. "Harmony is achieved when we put aside our differences and build relationships with mutual respect and understanding," he said. Fr Lawrence also encouraged everyone to focus on the shared values of compassion, kindness, and justice, which transcend all religions and cultures.

The evening concluded with a thank-you gift for each attendee, followed by a lively rendition of the finale song, *Sejahtera Malaysia*, as the crowd sang together in celebration of the bonds forged through unity and friendship.

**Bernard Wong**



Bishop Bernard Paul with some of the interfaith members and clergy. (MJD Soccom)

## Strength of unity shines as Christians join in prayer

Elvina Fernandez

KUALA LUMPUR: The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, observed annually from January 18 to 25, is a significant ecumenical initiative in uniting Christians of different traditions in prayer and reflection, fostering a spirit of togetherness and shared faith.

For the first time, the Orthodox Syrian Cathedral of St Mary the Theotokos in Brickfields hosted the celebration on Jan 23. Its rich history and stunning architecture provided a sacred and reverent setting, bringing together over 100 participants from diverse Christian denominations.

This year's event marked the 1,700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed of the 'First Council of Nicaea in 325 AD' where the Nicene Creed was formulated, a foundational declaration of faith for Christians worldwide. This historic council aimed to unify the Christian Church amidst theological debates, establishing a shared declaration of faith that has endured across centuries.

During the service, the recitation of the Nicene Creed by Christians present was a powerful moment. Voices from different traditions joined in unison, affirming their shared belief in the core tenets of Christianity.

The gathering also saw the participation of the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM), representing approximately 95 per cent of Christians in the country, including the Catholic Church, mainline Protestant denominations, and evangelical congregations.

Among the representatives from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur were Archbishop Julian Leow, Fr Xavier Andrew, Fr Andrew Manickam OFM Cap, Fr Dr Clarence Devadass, and Fr Gerard Steve Theraviam, whose presence highlighted the inclusive and unifying spirit of the occasion.



Archbishop Julian Leow seated next to the Very Rev Philip Thomas Cor Episcopa.

Archbishop Julian reflected on the Creed's enduring relevance, emphasising its role as a symbol of unity and a call to Christians to work towards reconciliation and understanding. "Today is historical for the Christians in Kuala Lumpur. I hope this will be the beginning of more collaborations and bring forth the prayer of Jesus that we may all be one."

Fr Clarence said, "As we come together, we show the unity of our faith, that we share common roots; it is quite significant that we celebrate this together so that we can walk together as one community, truly proclaiming Jesus is Lord."

Fr Gerard said it was a happy moment to see believers from many different churches and nationalities coming together. "It is truly part of the hope that we may be one," he said, adding that the theme 'Do you believe this?' received a response in the form of the participation in the event.

Also seen at the event was Seputeh member of parliament Teresa Kok, who shared that she had been attending the event yearly and said it was a beautiful service held at a historic church. "I hope to be part of the

Christian Unity celebration in the future to witness the beautiful unity of the churches in Malaysia."

Hymns that filled the cathedral during the service with echoes of hope and harmony encapsulated the event's theme of unity in diversity. Participants shared stories of faith, reconciliation, and the pursuit of greater understanding among Christian communities.

The Orthodox Syrian Cathedral of St Mary the Theotokos, a cornerstone of Orthodox Christianity in Malaysia, provided a fitting venue. Its historical significance and spiritual atmosphere mirrored the themes of the gathering, serving as a reminder of the shared heritage of Christian faith.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity continues to inspire hope and action, calling Christians to live out the principles of faith, love, and unity that the Nicene Creed represents. The participation of Christians of various denominations at the event was a testament to the strength of Christian unity. It serves as a distinctive reminder of the power of shared prayer and reflection in bridging divides and building stronger connections within the global Christian community.

## Kuantan parish hosts ecumenical gathering

KUANTAN: Sixteen pastors and leaders from Christian churches in and around Kuantan gathered at the Church of St Thomas the Apostle on January 25, 2025, to mark the conclusion of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

The theme for this year's Week of Prayer was *Do you believe this?* (John 11:26), chosen by the community of Bose, an ecumenical monastery in northern Italy.

Representatives from various local churches participated, including the Wesley Methodist Church, led by Pastor Christopher Rao; the Grace Charismatic Centre, represented by Bro Mundee Chan; and the Adonai Centre, led by Pastor Michael Yu. The gathering began with a Scripture reading from John 11:17-27, highlighting Martha's declaration of faith in response to Jesus' question.

In his opening remarks, parish priest Fr George Packiasamy welcomed the participants, emphasising the importance of affirming a shared faith and the need to be agents of unity, reconciliation, and hope in the world. He also reflected on the 1700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed, a foundational statement of Christian faith, encouraging all present to continue striving for unity as agents of Christ's love.

Rev Christopher Rao built on the theme by focusing on Martha's unwavering faith, suggesting that Christians, by centering on the Lord and His word, can rise above differences and unite in shared belief. Bro Mundee Chan also shared reflections from John 17:20-21 and Ephesians 4:3-6, reinforcing the call to unity and harmony among believers.

The event concluded with a time of fellowship and refreshments at the Parish Community Centre, providing a meaningful opportunity for participants to connect informally. **Francis Leong**



# Sixty years of faith: a blessed journey for Bestari Jaya Catholics

**Bernard Anthony**

**BESTARI JAYA:** The Catholic Community of Bestari Jaya, along with surrounding chapel communities, marked a major milestone this year as they celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Church of St Paul the Hermit, from January 15-19. The celebrations coincided with the parish's annual feast day, honouring St Paul the Hermit.

The five-day event began on Jan 15 with a prayer & worship service, followed by a series of Masses and homilies throughout the week. On Jan 16, Fr Gnana Selvam Berentis from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang, delivered a homily on the theme *Be Cured*. The following day, Fr Vincent Thomas from the Church of St Joseph, Rawang, spoke on *Entering the Place of Rest*. The final two days of the feast, Jan 18 and 19, saw Fr James Gabriel,

parish priest of the Church of St Paul the Hermit, leading the celebrations and preaching on the theme *Do Whatever He Tells You*.

In addition to the daily Masses, the community also participated in the Rosary and Novena to St Paul the Hermit. The highlight of the week occurred on Jan 18, when the church was filled to capacity for the 60th anniversary Mass. Fr James cut a commemorative cake later that evening during a gala night that followed the Mass.

Fr James reflected on the parish's journey, emphasising the significance of the 60 years of growth and faith. "It is a meaningful and great celebration, a milestone and a turning point for us," he said. "The Lord comes to visit us again, pouring His life into us and considering us His beloved." He also drew parallels between the anniversary and the biblical story of the miracle at the wedding in Cana, underscoring



*Fr James Gabriel with the monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament.*

the relationship between Christ and the Church.

In his bilingual homily, Fr James spoke of God's grace, stating that the Catholic community in Bestari Jaya had been chosen by God, not because of their greatness, but through His pure grace. "You did not choose Me, I chose you," he quoted from the Gospel, encourag-

ing the congregation to renew their covenant with the Lord and continue their faithful journey.

The celebration culminated with Benediction. Following the Mass, the organising chairman welcomed all attendees, including pilgrims from other areas, and thanked sponsors for their support. Fr James also expressed gratitude to those who

had helped organise the event, before inviting all present to a fellowship dinner on the parish grounds.

The evening continued with a lively gala night featuring drama, songs, and dances. Prayer cards commemorating the 60th anniversary were distributed to all attendees.

The Church of St Paul the Hermit has come a long way since its humble beginnings. The original building was replaced with a modern structure, which was officially opened in November 2010. The Catholic community in Bestari Jaya has flourished in recent years, and the 60th anniversary celebrations served as a testament to the parish's enduring faith and growth.

As the celebrations concluded, Fr James reminded the community to continue to trust in God's presence and to honour the legacy of St Paul the Hermit through prayer and intercession.

## Good Shepherd parish celebrates inaugural Children's Day



*Fr Mitchel Anthony Joseph speaking to the children.*

**SETAPAK:** The first Children's Day at the Church of the Good Shepherd was celebrated on January 20, offering parishioners aged 6 to 12 a day full of fun, entertainment, and enjoyment. This event aimed to raise awareness about the importance of childcare and child protection.

In his address to the children present, parish priest Fr Mitchel Anthony Joseph emphasised that the day was specially created for them, as they are cherished in God's eyes, as the Bible teaches and as Jesus demonstrated. The celebration began with Mass, where Fr Mitchel shared

a meaningful reflection. He spoke of the "white wolf" and the "black wolf" within each of us, representing our good and bad natures. He encouraged the children to consciously choose to nourish their "white wolf" through participation in Mass, prayer, the rosary, Bible reading, and acts of mercy.

After Mass, a delicious breakfast was served, followed by a day filled with games, fellowship, and fun. The inflatable castle and giant bubbles were particularly popular, along with a clown who handed out balloons. Station games also kept

the children entertained until lunch. The event brought together kids from all language groups, fostering a spirit of camaraderie and unity. Fr Mitchel, the catechists, and the teenagers manning the booths also got a taste of their own childhood memories by trying out the various fun activities, including football goal kicks, golf putts, mini race cars, frog hops, tin can alley, shoot the shark, and Plinko.

This special day will undoubtedly remain a cherished memory for the children for years to come.

**Charmaine Amanda**

## Understanding the key elements of Catholic life

**IPOH:** Two sessions were held at the Church of St Michael (SMC) on January 17 and 18 by Fr Dr Clarence Devadass, director of the Catholic Research Centre of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. The sessions focused on the themes of the Synodal Church and the Jubilee Year, aiming to deepen the understanding of these essential aspects of Catholic life.

The first session, *Journeying Together as an Inspiring Synodal Church*, took place on Jan 17, while the second, *Celebrating the Jubilee Year – Reawakening Hope through Christian Living*, followed on Jan 18.

The opening session was dedicated to the Synodal Church, a concept that has grown in importance under the leadership of Pope Francis. Fr Clarence provided a comprehensive overview of the Synod on Synodality, established after Pope Francis' election in 2013. He explained that this Synod is about collective responsibility within the Church, calling all Catholics to work together in addressing spiritual stagnation and a shift towards a more communal and mission-driven faith.

Fr Clarence stressed that to become an inspiring synodal Church, Catholics must move beyond per-

sonal struggles and inconveniences, instead focusing on the mission Christ has entrusted them with. He observed that many Catholics today have lost the joy of their faith, often hesitant to express it openly. He shared a personal story of being inspired to make the sign of the cross publicly after witnessing Muslims pray openly in public spaces. Despite Malaysia's freedom of religious practice, he noted that Catholics face increasing challenges such as secularism, consumerism, corruption, and the overwhelming influence of social media, all of which undermine their spiritual growth.

"Catholics today must move beyond a focus on individual problems to become a people united in mission," Fr Clarence said. He encouraged Catholics to adopt a mindset focused on "we" rather than "me," emphasising that each individual has a unique role in the Church's mission.

The second session focused on the Jubilee Year, an important time for spiritual renewal within the Church. Fr Clarence explained that the Jubilee Year, a tradition rooted in Jewish law, is a time of liberation, forgiveness of debts, and restoring community. For

Catholics, it's a period to reconcile with God and others, a time to reset and renew relationships within the Church.

Fr Clarence provided a historical overview, stating that Jubilee Years have been celebrated in the Catholic Church since the 1300s, typically every 25 or 50 years. The Jubilee Year symbolises not only spiritual renewal but also offers Catholics the opportunity to gain indulgences, reducing the temporal punishment for sins.

He elaborated on the concept of Holy Doors, which are designated pilgrimage sites symbolising gateways to salvation. For the upcoming 2025 Jubilee Year, five Holy Doors in Rome, including those at St Peter's Basilica and St John Lateran, will serve as sites for pilgrims to reaffirm their commitment to Christ.

Fr Clarence also discussed the four essential conditions for receiving indulgences during the Jubilee Year: detachment from sin, engaging in works of mercy, praying for the intentions of the Holy Father, and receiving the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion.



*Groups during the spiritual conversation.*

The theme of the 2025 Jubilee Year is Hope, inspired by the papal bull *Spes Non Confundit (Hope Does Not Disappoint)*, based on Romans 5:5. Fr Clarence shared about his visit to women on death row, where he was struck by their unwavering hope despite their bleak circumstances. This led to a group exercise where participants reflected on how they could be agents of hope for others in 2025.

"Hope is the core of the Gospel message," Fr Clarence said. "Through the Jubilee Year, we are called to reconnect with God, reignite our hope, and become ambassadors of Christ's hope to the world around us."

In concluding the sessions, Fr Clarence offered practical ways for parishes to become inspiring synodal

communities. He encouraged ongoing faith renewal through prayer, community outreach, reconciliation programmes, and local pilgrimages. He highlighted four essential Christian pillars: Truth, Forgiveness, Freedom, and Justice, and outlined eight key characteristics that each Catholic should develop to embody Christ's hope: Faith-filled, Compassionate, Joyful, Generous, Courageous, Prayerful, Humble, and Servant-hearted.

The sessions ended with a prayer and blessing from both Fr Clarence and Fr Aloysius. The participants left with a renewed sense of purpose, a deeper understanding of the Synodal Church, and a commitment to living out the hope of the upcoming Jubilee Year. **Helen Yeap**



# Bridging generational gaps in seminary formation

Fr Ryan Innas Muthu

PLENTONG, Johor: The Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei Seminary Conference hosted a Seminary Formators Workshop at the MAJODI Centre from January 6 to 10. The workshop brought together 21 seminary formators and spiritual directors from the region, aimed at bridging the generational divide and better understanding of the needs of the new generation in seminary formation.

The workshop's theme, *Assessment and Sexual Orientation*, aimed to explore these critical aspects within the context of seminary formation. The key resource person was Fr Jaime Noel Deslate, a prominent figure in the field of priestly formation from the Philippines. Currently serving as Vice-rector of the Minor Seminary in the Archdiocese of Capiz, Philippines,



*Seminary Formators of College General, Penang St Peter's College, Kuching Initiation Year and Aspirants' Formation House, Kota Kinabalu St Francis Xavier Major Seminary, Singapore.*

and possesses extensive experience in accompanying priests facing challenges. He previously directed the Galilee Centre in Tagaytay, a centre dedicated to ongoing priestly formation, and is now the founder and key resource person for the Tagbadbad Foundation, a group providing intervention programmes for seminarians and clergy.

This workshop served as a plat-

form for dialogue and learning, addressing the evolving needs of the new generation of seminarians. By focusing on assessment and sexual orientation, the workshop aimed to equip formators with the necessary tools and perspectives to guide and support future priests in a meaningful and relevant way. The workshop's focus on understanding the needs of the new generation signifies a proactive

approach to ensuring the continued relevance and effectiveness of seminary formation in this time.

Over a span of nine sessions, Fr Deslate covered topics such as Generational Spectrum where he brought to realisation that seminarians are coming into priestly formation from entirely different backgrounds of developmental growth as compared to those of the formators

themselves and understanding this crucial position enables formators and spiritual directors to better recognise the behavioural patterns of seminarians. He also spoke extensively on the LGBTQ orientations and sexual addictions that could be present in persons desiring priestly formation and how to help address these issues. Role-play sketches in which Fr Deslate played the role of counsellor helped bring to surface how formators and spiritual directors could, with compassion and hospitality, accompany seminarians in dealing with such issues.

Over all, these days of formation gave seminary formators and spiritual directors the insight that was needed, some tools and the awareness of the compassion and hospitality that is needed for addressing and accompanying seminarians in priestly formation in our region.

## One thousand attend opening of Jubilee year in Limbahau

LIMBAHAU: One thousand Catholics stood under the scorching sun, waiting for Msgr Nicholas Stephen to officially open the Jubilee Year for the Church of the Holy Rosary on January 18. The opening took place at the football field, below the hilltop parish.

Some of the pilgrims arrived early including those from neighbouring parishes in Papar, Kinarut, Penampang, Kota Kinabalu and Membakut.

Upon arrival, they were warmly greeted and directed to the reception table where they purchased 'pilgrim cards,' which were stamped as a token of participation. Along with the pilgrim cards, many bought Jubilee Year merchandise such as car stickers and keychains to commemorate the occasion.

Msgr Nicholas then began the Pilgrim Walk with a brief catechesis on the Jubilee Year stone and the Jubilee Year. He explained that the stone, initially abandoned and rejected, was now transformed into a symbol of hope. "Before us stands a man-made stone, carved with the Jubilee Year logo, and hidden within it are the faces of Mary and Jesus. This stone was once rejected, but now it serves

a meaningful purpose. Likewise, in our lives, we may sometimes feel abandoned or rejected, but God never gives up on us. He has great hopes for us. Let us enter this Jubilee Year with hope and faith in God," he said.

Following this reflection, Msgr Nicholas blessed the Jubilee Year stone, and the pilgrims began their walk along the designated path. Accompanying him were Fr Lasius Gantis, altar servers, and banner bearers. Among the crowd were also Fr Aloysius Fidelis, chaplain of the Holy Family Old Folks Home, and the FSIC sisters.

The walk was conducted at a slow, contemplative pace, allowing pilgrims to pause and reflect at seven stations along the route. Each

station featured Bible verses from the Book of Genesis, focusing on the theme of creation. This year, the Limbahau parish will emphasize ecology as a central theme in its catechesis for all pilgrims.

The walk concluded at Fr Amandus Hall, where a Bible enthronement ceremony took place, followed by the reading of the Gospel and a short reflection by Msgr Nicholas. Pilgrims then watched video presentations on the history of the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu and the parish of the Holy Rosary.

A day earlier, the Church of St Michael in Penampang parish, another pilgrimage site, had a dry run to familiarise their committee with the processes for receiving pil-



*Msgr Nicholas Stephen blessing the Jubilee Year stone.*

grims, who will begin visiting the parish starting in February.



*The servers leading the congregation in the pilgrim walk.*

## St Anne's dialysis centre hosts dinner to honour contributors and celebrate hope

BUKIT MERTAJAM: The Persatuan Kebajikan Haemodialisis St Anne (PKHSA), a Catholic-run dialysis centre, hosted an appreciation and thanksgiving dinner on January 11 to honour those who have contributed to the success of the centre. Held at a local hotel, it was attended by Cardinal Sebastian Francis the patron of PKHSA.

Cardinal Sebastian expressed his gratitude to Spiritual Advisor Msgr Henry Rajoo; Chairman Paul Liew; Board Members of PKHSA, Deacon Lazarus Jonathan from the

Minor Basilica of St Anne; Dr Siew Goh Chung; Dr Lim Wei Han; doctors and nurses; Administrator James Tan and staff; Sr Mercie Lai of the Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood (FMDM); Thoo Kun Fatt, Chairman of PWRM Dialysis Centre, as well as benefactors, donors, and contractors for their unwavering support and dedication in bringing hope to the sick.

Cardinal Sebastian noted that this year is especially significant as the Catholic Church celebrates the Jubilee Year of Hope, with

all of us journeying as Pilgrims of Hope. He emphasised that PKHSA embodies this spirit, offering comfort, support, and hope to patients every day. As a Catholic-run dialysis centre, PKHSA reflects the spirit of St Anne by proclaiming the social dimension of the Gospel, which calls for works of charity and the healing of the sick.

Msgr Henry shared that PKHSA was founded on August 9, 2002 with just six dialysis machines and one patient. Today, the centre operates 18 machines and serves 35

patients, with plans to expand and serve up to 54 patients. He also highlighted the centre's ongoing efforts to provide free and subsidised treatments for low-income renal patients, with monthly operating costs of around RM100,000, covered by donations, fundraising activities, and contributions from the Catholic Diocese of Penang.

Chairman Paul Liew introduced the new Patient Adoption Scheme, which allows donor parishes, organisations, or individuals to sponsor a patient's treatment with a monthly contribution of RM1,500,

covering the yearly treatment cost of RM18,000 per patient.

As the evening concluded, the attendees reflected on the theme of the Jubilee Year of Hope, with Cardinal Sebastian reminding everyone that "Hope does not disappoint" (Romans 5:5), calling PKHSA to continue being a beacon of God's mercy and healing for those in need.

For more information, please visit the website or contact James Tan at 04-5370225 or email [pkhstanne@yahoo.com](mailto:pkhstanne@yahoo.com). **Christopher Kushi**



# Jubilee of the World of Communications

## Disarming information, sharing hope

VATICAN: The Jubilee of the World of Communications opened with the celebration of Mass marking the liturgical memory of St Francis de Sales, patron of journalists, at the Basilica of St John Lateran.

The opening of the Jubilee highlighted two essential tools for every journalist: heart and hope. These values resonated in the two inaugural moments of the celebration: the penitential liturgy, led by Fr Giulio Albanese, Director of the Office for Social Communications of the Vicariate of Rome, and the international Mass presided over by Cardinal Reina. The heart of the celebration was symbolised by a relic of St Francis de Sales, which had been brought to Rome from the northern Italian city of Treviso, where it has been safeguarded since 1913.

Pope Francis' message for the 59th World Communications Day, quoted extensively during the event, underscored the call to share hope with gentleness — a virtue central to the



Pope Francis speaks to the presidents of bishops' communications committees and the directors of communications for bishops' conferences during a meeting at the Vatican January 27, 2025. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Jubilee's mission.

In his homily, Cardinal Reina said that the Jubilee is a time of mercy, where the focus shifts from sins committed to the transformative power of God's forgiveness. He drew attention to Pope Francis' invitation to be "communicators of hope" and to "disarm communication."

Cardinal Reina reflected on the Gospel account of the woman caught in adultery as a model for this approach. Jesus, confronted with a scandalous situation, chose a path

of gentle communication, avoiding aggression and collaborating with truth. By asking, "Who among you is without sin, cast the first stone," he explained that Christ disarmed pride and invited reflection.

"To disarm communication, we must first disarm our pride," said Cardinal Reina. "Scripture reminds us that only God is judge." He noted that Jesus did not define the woman by her mistake but recognised her inherent dignity, offering hope for renewal.

The cardinal concluded his homily by reflecting on Jesus' words to the woman: "Go and sin no more." These words, he said, encapsulate hope and point to a future of transformation. This act of mercy, he noted, was the woman's personal Jubilee.

"If we wish to celebrate our Jubilee as the world of communication," Cardinal Reina urged, "we must adopt this paradigm, embracing a style of communication that recognises the dignity of every human being and fosters care for our common home."

The penitential liturgy that preceded the Mass began with readings from *Spes non confundit*, Pope Francis' Bull of Indiction for the 2025 Jubilee. The liturgy invited participants to reflect on the hope that resides in every heart and to embrace the path of conversion symbolised by passing through the Holy Door, which represents Christ Himself.

Fr Albanese encouraged communicators to view their profession as a mission field, where conversion cannot be separated from professional life. He cautioned against becoming "mercenaries of others' words" and urged participants to ensure their communication reflects God's love and charity.

Fr Albanese concluded by challenging communicators to examine whether their work expresses the charity of God or is driven by worldly motives. Echoing Pope Francis, he called for communication that fosters hope and contributes to building a more fraternal world. **Tiziana Campisi, Vatican News**

## Catholic communication must engage with world

VATICAN: Church communications cannot exist in an "enclosure" in which Catholics merely talk among themselves and do not engage with the outside world, Pope Francis said.

"Catholic communication is the open space of a witness that knows how to listen and intercept the signs of the kingdom," the Pope said January 27 during a meeting with the presidents of bishops' communications committees and the directors of communications for bishops' conferences.

The true power of communications, he said, lies in building connections and crafting "narratives of our hope," rather than focusing on "self-promotion" or "the celebration of our own initiatives."

"Our network is the voice of a Church that only by coming out of itself finds itself and the reasons for its hope," Pope Francis said. "The church must come out of itself."

The gathering followed a weekend of events for the Jubilee of the World of Communications, which included an audience with Pope Francis and a papal Mass on the Sunday of the Word of God.

Meeting the officials of the bishops' conferences, the Pope said that Christian communication "conveys harmony" and should offer an alternative to the disorder of modern communication, which he likened to "new towers of Babel" where "everyone is talking, and they don't understand each other."

Pope Francis urged Christians to develop "a different model of communication, different in spirit, different in creativity, in the poetic power that comes from the Gospel and which is inexhaustible."



Pope Francis shaking hands with Filipino journalist and Nobel Prize winner Maria Ressa, in the Paul VI Hall on the occasion of the Jubilee of the World of Communications (Vatican Media)

"Every Christian is called to see and tell the stories of good that bad journalism claims to erase by giving space only to evil," he said, urging communicators not to hide or deny evil but involve all people and forms of communication to ensure problems spark dialogue and a search for solutions.

The Holy Year, he said, is a good time for Church communicators to make an "examination of conscience."

"Let us ask ourselves then: How do we sow hope in the midst of so much despair that touches and challenges us? How do we cure the virus of division, which also threatens our communities? Is our communication accompanied by prayer? Or do we end up communicating the Church by adopting only the rules of corporate marketing? We need to ask ourselves all these questions," he said.

"Communicating, for us, is not a tactic, not a technique. It is not repeating catchphrases or slogans, nor is it merely writing press releases,"

he said. "Communicating is an act of love," which involves engaging all people and sowing hope among them.

Drawing on the biblical image of fishing nets, Pope Francis highlighted the need for communicators to create networks of solidarity, likening their work to that of fishermen who cast their nets for the good of all.

To create a net is to "network skills, knowledge and contributions so that we can inform properly and thus all be rescued from the sea of despair and misinformation," the Pope said.

That objective can be advanced through new digital tools, such as artificial intelligence, "if instead of turning technology into an idol we were to put more effort into creating networks."

"Only together can we communicate the beauty we have encountered: not because we are encouraged, not because we have more resources, but because we love one another," he said. **Justin McLellan, CNS**

## Young championing messages of hope in Africa

ROME: Around 130 Catholic media professionals from 70 countries gathered in Rome for a special event organised by the Dicastery for Communication. Held alongside the Jubilee for the World of Communications, the gathering inspired young African communicators to amplify messages of hope.

Bénit Moke, 27, a member of the Episcopal Commission for Social Communications in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, arrived in Rome eager to strengthen his skills in ethical and effective communication. After three days of training and prayer, he left with a renewed sense of purpose.

"Africa is not just about war and poverty," Moke said. "We have values, cultural diversity, and young talents — so much to highlight in our storytelling."

The event aimed to provide communicators with a space to connect across cultural divides and reflect on the challenges of the digital age. According to Silvia Grechi, a member of the organising committee, this Jubilee for the World of Communications aligned with the Holy Year 2025, inaugurated by Pope Francis in December.

To achieve this, the dicastery invited Catholic journalists, videographers, and influencers from over 70 countries for three days of networking and experience-sharing.

Clerck Randimbison, 31, a producer of educational and catechetical videos for *Radio Don Bosco* in Madagascar, found exactly what he was looking for: a global community of young communicators passionate about evangelisation

through media. Inspired by the event, he is returning home with a concrete project: "I plan to create ten videos about environmental degradation in Madagascar, focusing on practical solutions."

Mariane Gbossémédé, a journalist for *Lumen Christi TV* in Benin, felt more prepared than ever to embody the event's theme — being a "pilgrim of hope." "Over these three days, I've learned so much from others' experiences," said the 28-year-old. She now aims to spotlight the unsung heroes of the Church in Africa: "I want to tell the stories of those making a difference, yet whose efforts go unnoticed."

The event culminated in a meeting with Pope Francis on January 25 — one day after World Communications Day and the feast of St Francis de Sales, patron saint of journalists. The following day, the Pope presided over a Mass at St Peter's Basilica.

For Bishop Eugène Houndékon of Abomey, head of Benin's communications commission and leader of the Beninese delegation in Rome, the true significance of this Jubilee lied in its potential impact. He hoped the event would equip Catholic communicators to be witnesses of truth in a world plagued by misinformation. "Communication will only have credibility if it serves as a bridge between truth and trust," he said.

Bishop Dominique Tinoudji of Pala in Chad, echoed this sentiment, highlighting the Vatican's prioritisation of communication in the Jubilee Year. **Juste Hlan-non, LCI (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)**



# Pope addresses the need to overcome clericalism and chauvinism

In a significant address to the Hilton Foundation on January 22, Pope Francis highlighted the importance of overcoming deeply ingrained clerical and chauvinistic attitudes within the Church — attitudes that have too often relegated women, particularly women religious, to secondary roles. His message was clear: these mindsets, which have persisted for centuries, need to be dismantled if the Church is to fulfil its true mission of service and compassion.

The Pope's words were not just a call for recognition, but for action. Historically, women religious — those Sisters who devote their lives to serving the poor, the sick, and the marginalised — have received far less investment in terms of formation and professional development than their male counterparts in the clergy. This inequality has been reinforced by a chauvinistic mindset that has regarded them as “second-class citizens” within the Church. Yet Pope Francis made it clear that this must change. He pointed out that since the Garden of Eden, women have held a position of strength and leadership. The time has come to restore women this rightful place, especially when it comes to leadership within the Church.

The Holy Father acknowledged the tremendous work that the Hilton Foundation is doing to support women religious — particularly in the areas of education, training, and health care. He commended the Foundation's commitment to addressing the unique challenges that women in religious life face, including the need for ongoing formation to serve the poor and marginalised effectively. This work, he emphasised, is essential not just for the women themselves, but for the whole Church, which benefits greatly from the leadership and compassionate service these women provide.

In his address, Pope Francis made a powerful plea to move beyond the false notion



Religious brothers and sisters sharing their reflections during the 2024 Malaysia Religious Assembly.

that women's roles in the Church should be confined to traditional or subordinate positions. He pointed out the urgent need for sisters to be more involved in decision-making roles at all levels — from diocesan offices to the Roman Curia. It was a critique of the Church's longstanding practices, where women religious, despite their wealth of knowledge, experience, and dedication, have been underrepresented in key positions of authority.

Yet there is hope. Francis noted that in recent years, women have begun to make strides in leadership roles, citing examples such as a woman Prefect of the Dicastery for Religious and a woman Vice-Governor of the Vatican State. He also mentioned that women religious are now part of the group that selects bishops, and he praised their work in financial and administrative positions. These are promising signs, and Pope Francis encouraged the Church to continue

embracing this progress.

He also urged the Superiors of religious orders to be more generous in releasing Sisters to take on roles outside of their Institutes, whether in diocesan offices or the Vatican, recognising the immense potential that women have to contribute at every level of the Church. The Pope's words to the Superiors were direct: “Release them.” For too long, these women have been confined by institutional boundaries that underestimate their abilities.

Pope Francis' message is not just about equity for women religious; it's about the Church becoming more authentic in its mission to serve others. By overcoming the outdated and oppressive clerical and chauvinistic mentalities, the Church will be better positioned to truly embody the compassion, closeness, and tenderness that God calls us to show toward all people, particularly the poor and the excluded.

As he concluded, Pope Francis reminded everyone of the importance of these values — compassion, closeness, and tenderness — by emphasising that these are the very attributes of God. He envisioned a world where the discarded and marginalised are not only cared for but empowered to bring about much-needed change. This vision is one where women, particularly women religious, are recognised not as helpers or subordinates, but as leaders in the mission of the Church, fulfilling their calling with dignity and strength.

The Pope's words are a powerful call to action for the Church to leave behind its past mistakes and embrace a future where women's leadership is fully recognised and supported. Overcoming clericalism and misogyny is not just an issue of fairness; it's a matter of justice, and it's integral to the Church's ability to fulfil its mission in the world. **Exaudi**

## Being ‘Pilgrims of Hope’ in the digital landscape

The Jubilee Year 2025 is upon us, and Pope Francis has asked that we all attempt to be “pilgrims of hope” to witness to the love and power of Jesus Christ in the world today. What does that mean in practical terms? How am I to be a pilgrim of hope to the world?

The Oxford dictionary defines a pilgrim as one who journeys to a sacred place for religious reasons. Pilgrim can also mean one who journeys through life. This is the aspect of “pilgrim” that's captured in “pilgrims of hope.” We are all pilgrims on the journey of life, looking forward to being with God forever in heaven once our earthly life is over.

There are many complexities to the journey of life. We may sometimes be tempted to fall into nostalgia about “simpler times” or “the way things used to be.” One aspect of 21st-century life that can complicate the journey is the digital landscape. How can we be pilgrims of hope when it comes to the digital media culture? How do we cultivate an attitude of hope when so much

media, especially social media, seems self-centred, introspective and anything but hopeful?

Even more importantly, how do we encourage the young, who are so immersed in digital everything, to buck the selfish trend and be a hopeful and faithful presence in their online interactions? The answer lies in fostering an attitude of media mindfulness and putting some practices in place to help us out of the digital rabbit hole when we find ourselves falling in.

With some determination and effort, these suggested practices can bring us a sense of hope as we journey every single day through the digital landscape. If we, as adults, learn these practices, they can offer us hope as we endeavour to teach the young how to navigate our media world as followers of Jesus.

Bring your faith and values to bear within the digital landscape. It takes practice but asking ourselves if what we're doing online is helping us grow in our relationship with God and with others can give us pause,

we need to look at the way we use media. Stopping every once in a while, and doing an examination of conscience about our online activities can be spiritually healthy and hopeful.

Practise discernment. Pope Francis, in many of his writings, has emphasised how crucial discernment is to our spiritual lives. Asking the Holy Spirit to help us understand what it is God wants of us is desirable in all areas of life, but especially in our digital lives. Is what I'm watching, reading, listening to, and interacting with, in line with God's holiness?

Be critical thinkers. Applying critical thinking skills to our digital lives and the messages that we get from the media we experience means that the negative aspects of media can have less influence on our ways of thinking. When we bring media messages into conversation with the values we hold as Christians, recognising what is good and worth keeping and what we want to discard becomes easier. This is especially hopeful for parents trying to instil

responsibility in their kids for the way they use media.

Hope implies a trust that God has things in hand, that He is in charge and is with us on the pilgrimage of life. Hopefully, we've had experiences that have shown us just how much God holds us in love. Other experiences, however, may have had us wondering where God is. Using these tips gives us hope that even in our media and digital interactions, God is present and leading our life's pilgrimage.

If our online lives are out of balance, other parts of our lives will be, too, especially our relationships, and that includes our relationship with God. Being a “pilgrim of hope” encompasses all aspects of our life journey. As we set off on this jubilee year, let's take up the challenge to incorporate the virtue of hope into our own digital landscape. **Sr Hosea Rupprecht, OSV**

**Sr Hosea Rupprecht, a Daughter of St Paul, is the associate director of the Pauline Centre for Media Studies.**



## Pope's prayer intention for February

# Welcoming vocations: An ecclesial community that embraces desire and doubt

Pope Francis' prayer intention for February calls on the Church — not just bishops, priests, and religious, but the entire ecclesial community — to actively welcome both the desires and doubts of young people discerning a vocation. But what does this really mean? How does a parish, a diocese, or a faith community concretely “welcome” these desires and doubts?

When a young person feels a call to serve Christ in the priesthood or religious life, it is rarely a straightforward journey. Alongside the desire to serve, there are often deep questions: *Am I truly called? Will I be happy? Is this the right path for me?* Pope Francis reminds us that doubt is not the enemy of faith; it is often a vital part of the journey. He once said, “If one has the answers to all the questions — that is the proof that God is not with him... The great leaders of the people of God, like Moses, have always left room for doubt.” (*America* magazine, September 30, 2013.)

This means that an ecclesial community that truly welcomes vocations must also welcome uncertainty. Young people need spaces where they can express their doubts and wrestle with their questions without fear of being judged or pressured. Discernment is rarely a straightforward path, and while well-intended, simplistic answers like “*If God calls, He provides*” may not always address the deep struggles of discernment. Instead, the ecclesial community must accompany them with patience, acknowledging that doubt is a natural part of any major life decision. Sharing personal experiences of discernment, offering guidance without coercion, and reassuring them that no vocation is without its challenges can help them navigate their journey with greater clarity. If the community does not provide this space for honest reflection, young people may feel forced into a decision before they are truly ready or turn away altogether, never having the opportunity to fully understand God's call in their lives.



## PRAYER PRISM

Fr Fabian Dicom

### Fostering Authentic Desire: A Journey, Not Just a Decision

Desire is at the heart of every vocation. But it is not enough to simply have a calling. That desire must be nurtured, deepened, and purified over time. Young people must see that a vocation is not just about obligation or sacrifice — it is about a life of love, purpose, and joy.

I recall a conversation I had 40 years ago with my uncle, Fr Antoni Ponnudurai, SJ. When I first spoke to him about becoming a priest, I gave him all sorts of reasons for wanting to enter the seminary. And I thought they were reasonably good and valid. But with his characteristic simplicity and deep conviction, he interrupted me, saying: “*You see... Fabian, the only reason we need, the only reason to want to become a priest is because you love Jesus completely and wholeheartedly, because you adore Him fully, because you want to do everything for Him. That is the only criterion; the one and only.*”

He then shared how this love had sustained him throughout his journey. It was not only what he said but how he said it that left an impact on me. At that moment, I felt overwhelmed — perhaps even inadequate — because I had not framed my desire for priesthood in such absolute terms. But as I journeyed through discernment, I realised that what he was describing was not certainty, but love. True vocation is not about having every doubt erased before taking the first step; it is about allowing love for Christ to grow deeper, even in the presence of questions. That conversation became a guiding light in my journey as a priest.

A welcoming Church, a welcoming ecclesial community nurtures authentic



desire by creating opportunities for young people to encounter God in meaningful ways. Retreats, prayer communities, silent adoration, community engagement, and mission work provide sacred spaces where they can deepen their relationship with Christ. Encouraging active participation in ministry allows them to experience the joys and challenges of service before making lifelong commitments. Just as importantly, the witness of priests and religious who radiate genuine joy in their vocation inspires others to see that a call to serve is not merely about duty or sacrifice, but about a life filled with purpose, love, and deep fulfilment.

### A ‘Yes’ Given in Freedom, Not Fear

Pope Francis warns against vocations that emerge out of fear or external pressure. Some young people enter seminaries or religious life because of family expectations or because they don't see other options. Others stay in formation not because they feel truly called, but because they are afraid of disappointing others. An ecclesial community that welcomes vocations must also ensure that every “yes” is given freely. Young people must have the freedom to explore their call without immediate commitment, the freedom to say no and still be fully part of the community, and the freedom to leave formation if they discern it is not their true calling. No one should enter religious life with reluctance, nor remain in it out of guilt. The ecclesial community does not just need more priests and religious — it needs authentic vocations.

### A Vocation That Walks with the Poor

A true vocation to the priesthood or religious life is not about status, title, or privilege. It is a call to be with Christ, who is found among the poor, the sick, and the forgotten. Pope Francis constantly reminds us that a priest must have the “smell of the sheep.” An ecclesial community that fosters true vocations must also nurture

in young people a love for the least, the suffering, and the outcast.

A vocation rooted in love for Jesus must necessarily be a vocation of love for others. Those who discern must ask themselves: *Do I feel drawn to serve the suffering? Do I see Christ in the face of the poor? Am I ready to give myself, not just to an idea, but to real people in need?*

### More Than Just Praying for Vocations: Creating an Ecclesial Community That Truly Welcomes

To welcome desires and doubts is not just about praying for vocations — it is about becoming a Church, an ecclesial community, where young people feel safe to truly discern. When that happens, their yes to God will be a joyful and lasting one.

An ecclesial community that truly fosters vocations is one that listens with patience, creating an environment where young people feel heard and understood rather than rushed into decisions. It allows space for doubt, recognising that questioning is not a sign of weak faith but an essential part of authentic discernment. Genuine desire is nurtured rather than imposed, ensuring that those who feel called to serve do so out of love rather than obligation. Supporting families is also crucial, as they play a significant role in a young person's journey of faith and discernment. Most importantly, the community must respect true freedom, making it clear that a vocation is never about pressure or fear but a response to God's invitation made in peace and trust.

If we want more young people to respond to Christ's call, we must ensure that they are responding not out of fear, pressure, or duty, but out of a deep and authentic love. Because in the end, as Fr Ponnudurai reminded me, that is the only true criterion: *Do you love Jesus completely and wholeheartedly?*

Fr Fabian Dicom is the National Director of Caritas Malaysia







# Msgr Daniel Lim: *Embracing the gift of priesthood*

**Msgr Daniel Lim celebrated his 60th Sacerdotal Ordination on February 2.**

**Elvina Fernandez**

In the quiet corners of his memory, Msgr Daniel Lim, who interestingly does not use a handphone, recalls the pivotal moment that set his life on the sacred path of the priesthood. Now 87 years old, Msgr Daniel reflects on his calling to devote himself to Jesus which began in his teenage years — an inexplicable yet profound impulse that shaped his entire life.

At just 18, he entered the seminary, marking the start of a journey filled with grace, challenges, and deep fulfilment. He spent three years in Singapore and six years in Penang, which he fondly recalls as “the happiest time of my life.”

## A Calling Fuelled by Family and Faith

When asked about the origin of his vocation, Msgr Daniel explains that it was not the result of a single defining moment but rather, a gradual awakening nurtured by his family's devout prayer life. His father, who lovingly bought him religious books, and his mother, ever concerned with their spiritual well-being, laid the foundation for his faith.

“Back then, before the age of the internet and social media, receiving religious books from your parents was a significant gift,” Msgr Daniel shared. “One of the most impactful books I received was about the lives of saints. I was mesmerised by their devotion and desired to live a life like theirs.”

His studies at St John's school, combined with the parish priest's weekly visits and the practice of monthly confessions, further nurtured his vocation, leading him closer to God.

## The Retreat That Sparked a Dream

In 1956, during a retreat in Port Dickson, Msgr Daniel met seminarians Paul Chong and Steven Mudiapo — names that remain etched in his memory. At the time, he was in his final year of secondary school. He recalls vividly, “I remember sitting under a tree, listening intently as they shared their routines, prayer lives, and the importance of a priestly vocation.”

The seminarians' stories offered a tangible glimpse into the life of a priest, igniting in him an excitement and inspiration to follow in their footsteps. “It was the first time I had a personal conversation with two seminarians. It felt very casual, yet very special. I had the chance to ask them everything I wanted to know about becoming a priest, and they were more than happy to share their experiences with me,” he said.

Despite the excitement, discerning his vocation wasn't without its doubts. The uncertainty of what lay ahead was daunting for such a young man. However, his unwavering faith, bolstered by spiritual mentors like Fr Christopher Danker and Bro James Chang, helped him navigate those early uncertainties.

“They were instrumental in guiding me through retreats and offering the spiritual mentorship I needed to make this journey,” Msgr Daniel recalled.

## The Courage to Take the Next Step

When asked how he made the move toward the seminary, Msgr Daniel shared a poignant memory. As a young man fresh out of Form 5, he realised that his schooling was over, and the time had come to make a decision. “I thought to myself, ‘There will be no school next year. I am done with studies, and it's time to take the step I've been dreaming about since Port Dickson.’”

With courage and clarity, he approached his parish priest to express his desire to join the priesthood. It was time to formalise his decision. He wrote a letter stating his intentions and hopped on his bicycle, pedalling from his home at Imbi Road to the Cathedral of St John in Kuala Lumpur. Arriving around 5.30pm at the bishop's house, he rang the bell — only to be met with silence. Nervously, he left his letter in the bishop's letterbox and pedalled back home, caught between the thrill of his dream and the fear of the unknown.

A few days later, to his surprise, the bishop himself knocked on his door. “You came and ran away,” the bishop said, with a hint of amusement in his voice. “Okay, I will write a letter to the Singapore seminary.”

This exchange marked the beginning of Msgr Daniel's first journey beyond Malaysia. “I had never even been to Cameron Highlands, let alone another country,” he said with a chuckle. He took the night train to Singapore, where a French priest, the rector of the seminary, greeted him at the railway station and escorted him to St Francis Xavier Minor Seminary, now a retreat centre.

## A Journey of Faith and Formation

At the seminary, Msgr Daniel found himself among fellow aspirants from Malaysia, Thailand, and other neighbouring countries, all united by the same calling. His time at the seminary, though filled with challenges and uncertainty, was one of profound spiritual growth and a deepening sense of purpose. He fondly refers to this period as “the happiest time of my life,” marked by a deepening commitment to his faith and a growing conviction that he was on the right path.

“Initially, I saw my vocation as a way of sacrificing myself for Jesus. But over time, I came to realise that Jesus gave me the gift of the priesthood,” he shared. “The Catholic priesthood is a meaningful life. I can proudly say that I did not live my life for myself, but as a priest, I live it through the Church, through the sacraments, and for the service of God's people.”

## A Life of Service

Msgr Daniel's ministry took him to many parishes, including the Church of the Sacred Heart; Church of the Assumption; Church of the Holy Rosary; Church of Our Lady of Fatima and Cathedral of St John the Evangelist. In each assignment, he found great joy in being a channel of God's grace, offering spiritual counsel, leading others closer to God, and dedicating his life to serving his community.

“As priests, we become instruments of God, reaching out to believers through counselling, prayer, and the sacraments. The more I listened to Jesus, the more I felt used by Him, shaped by Him, and guided by His divine purpose,” Msgr Daniel said.

## A Witness to Vatican II

Msgr Daniel also witnessed the transformative period of Vatican II, an era marked by confusion and questions about the role of priests in the Church. Despite the tumult and change, his faith remained unwavering. “I belonged to a generation of priests who lived through Vatican II. It was a time of transformation, and it left many questions about the role and identity of priests. But through it all, I remained rooted in my relationship with God,” he said.

“Annual retreats provided an opportunity to reflect, clarify our mission, and deepen our

devotion. Mother Mary, the mother of all priests, must always remain a guiding figure in every priest's spiritual journey.”

## Wisdom for the Next Generation

As Msgr Daniel reminisces on his 60 years of priesthood, he looks to the future of the Church with hope. He encourages young people, unsure of their vocation, to turn to prayer and ask Jesus, “What do you want me to do with my life?” He is firm in his belief that when we pray sincerely, God answers.

Addressing the vocation crisis among young priests, he emphasised the importance of prioritising one's spiritual life over the pursuit of popularity, laziness, or self-serving behaviour. “For priests, faithfulness to prayer life, regular retreats, fellowship with fellow priests, and observing liturgy hours are essential,” he advised.

Msgr Daniel also highlighted the significance of family prayer life in today's world. “We must remember who made us and why,” he said. “God made us to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and be happy with Him forever.”

## A Legacy of Faith and Service

As Msgr Daniel celebrates the 60th anniversary of his ordination, he remains deeply committed to the spiritual growth of the Church. In his retirement, he continues to find joy in conducting weekday Masses, leading seminars, and participating in parish activities. His life and ministry stand as a testament to the fulfilment that comes from dedicating one's life to the service of God and His people.

Msgr Daniel's story is one of faith, dedication, and unwavering commitment — a journey that began with the dreams of a young man and led to a life of purpose and grace. It is a testament to the power of answering God's call and finding one's true vocation in His service.





# Red-flagged story wins award, thanks to my buddy Jamil

In the first week of 2025, I lost a dear friend, Jamil Sidik *pic*. We had been friends since Standard Four. And that was way back in 1967.

We became friends because of our common admiration for boxer Muhammad Ali who was the rave of the day back then.

Decades later Jamil and I touched base again, via our school WhatsApp Group called “Tarsian”. Tarsian is the acronym for Tuanku Abdul Rahman School, our alma mater in Gemas.

However, it was now a different Jamil standing before me. He looked like a true blue Mohammedan and was wearing a white kopiah. Jamil told me he had three wives. In his demeanour he emanated certitude and conviction about his Muslim faith – just like Muhammad Ali, who exhibited Islamic values in his daily life.

Jamil ran an Islamic-based early child education centre. He also doubled as a part-time *ustad* – while I was a reporter for an English daily.

Jamil told me, he had spent some time in New Zealand, hired by a local beef importer. His job was to slaughter cattle according to Islamic rites. Jamil’s passion for competitive sports was legendary. He told me he had the opportunity to play rugby with New Zealanders, Fijians, Australians, and Samoans.

From time to time, when Jamil and I talked

on the phone or met casually, we would exchange notes on world religions. We spoke so much on Islam, Christianity, and other faiths, not realising, we were actually delving into the study of “comparative religion”.

## The *azan*

Jamil once played an anonymous role in helping me write one of my stories. He transcribed for me the Arabic words of the Muslim call to prayer or the *azan*, as we know it. I had planned to use the words of the *azan* as the opening lines, for my special *Merdeka* feature story which I was assigned to write in 2007.

It was the year when Malaysia celebrated 50 years of Independence, and my newspaper embarked on publishing a series of feature articles as a “run-up” to the big day.

The subject matter given to me was “the demographic face” of the country. Malaysia, as we know is a cacophony of diverse races with each race professing its own faith – everything from Islam to Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Sikhism, the Bahai faith, Jainism, and Atheism.

Atheism? Yes! Even an atheist will scream “OMG” when he or she sees a white figure around the window at night ... no?

In my story-telling, apart from the *azan*, I included the liturgical chorales from the other vibrant congregations of Asia’s living faiths; the sedate drone-like chanting of



## Joe's Jottings

JOSEPH MASILAMANY

Buddhist monks, the resonant ringing of *pooja* bells in Hindu temples, the oceanic echoes from conch shells, and of course – the organ’s microtonal strains lending fervour to the quaint and upbeat *Ave Maria*.

I attempted to tell my story as lived and celebrated daily by the people of Malaysia, through the chanting of their sacred anthems and canticles: the beating of Indian drums and Oriental gongs and the sight of spiralling plumes of incense and camphor rising heavenwards.

And amid all these renditions and redolence – the *azan*’s rallying cantor from the minaret, rising to a crescendo and symphonising a combined potpourri of invocations from a multi-religious and spirited citizenry.

Satisfied with what I had written, I dispatched my story to the editor’s desk. Of course, there was this gnawing sense that any foreign word or paragraph in the story would beep red on the editor’s radar.

It did!

*Editor: What is the azan doing in your story?*

*Me: Why, is anything wrong with that?*

*Editor: Precisely, that is the point. I do not read Arabic and I will not know if everything is right with it.*

I then took out Jamil’s photo in which he was dressed in his *ustad* attire and donning a white skull cap.

Showing it to him, I said: “This guy wrote it. He is a part-time *ustad* and a certified slaughterer with a beef-exporting company in New Zealand.

No further questions were asked. And the story went to print.

It was published under the heading “Enduring Expressions of Faith”. I liked the headline.

However, the long odyssey of my “*azan* story” did not end there. It continued to endure, creating a little ripple by winning an award offered by the Europe-based International Union of the Press. My story earned the laureate position under the “Interfaith Category”, beating all other entries that were submitted by the rest of the world.

Of course, I am grateful to Jamil for this little “award-winning triumph”.

Just as I was concluding this eulogy, the call to the day’s *Zohor* prayers rolled out from the TV. That gave me an opportune moment to raise a fitting salute to Jamil. In the hushed stillness, I hailed: “May God look with favour upon your soul. May it be placed among His favoured saints in Jannah. Rest in peace my friend, Jamil”.

**Joseph Masilamany** is a veteran journalist residing in Borneo. He is very much an interfaith person at heart. His favourite Gospel story is the encounter between Jesus and the chucklesome, self-confessing Samaritan woman. He finds their debate at Jacob’s well deeply engaging. But when real-life debates get too hot, Masilamany retreats to writing compelling poems on socialist persuasions.

## End of life treatment, who decides?

“God heals, we help.” This tagline of a hospital in Penang will forever stay with me, as it was the place where my late husband passed away in 1994. I can still vividly recall the physician asking me what I wanted for him during his final days, after he had been battling cancer for two months.

As his immediate family member, I was presented with three choices: to take him home to be surrounded by family, to keep him comfortable at the hospital, or to prolong his life for a few more days or weeks in the intensive care unit.

He was in no condition to make that decision, so I made it for him. I couldn’t bear to have my young children witness his passing at home. And I knew that the last thing he would have wanted was to be kept alive by machines for a few extra days.

So, I chose to keep him comfortable at the hospital, staying by his side until he took his last breath.

Recently, a close family friend in the US, who is also battling a terminal illness, was told by the medical team at a world-renowned cancer hospital that there was nothing more they could do for him. He was offered end-of-life care.

Although he is not bedridden and is still able to walk, talk, and make decisions about his healthcare, all he and his family requested was nutritional support, as he was unable to consume food orally.

However, they were informed that providing nutrition to prolong the life of someone who has exhausted various treatments was considered “unethical.”



## From the Other Side

REGINA WILLIAM

When a terminally ill patient expresses a desire for nutrition, but doctors refuse to provide it, what is the solution? The situation quickly becomes both ethically and legally complex. The question of whether terminally ill patients should be denied nutrition is a deeply nuanced one, dependent on various factors, including the patient’s condition, their potential to benefit from nutrition, and the wishes of the patient or their family.

A fundamental ethical principle in health care, which I believe is universally important, is patient autonomy — the right of patients to make informed decisions about their own care. If a terminally ill patient expresses a desire for nutrition, especially in cases where they are conscious and able to make decisions, their wishes should be respected, unless there are compelling reasons not to do so.

When a patient insists on receiving nutrition, an ethical tension arises between respecting the patient’s autonomy and ensuring their well-being, which might involve withholding treatment if it’s considered futile or harmful. In some cases, doctors may feel that honouring a patient’s wishes in this scenario could lead to unnecessary suffering or prolong life without quality, which may be viewed as ethically problematic.

However, if a patient fully understands the risks and benefits and still chooses to pursue nutrition, the principle of informed consent suggests that their decision should be respected.

In terminally ill patients, the focus often shifts to palliative care, which prioritises comfort and quality of life rather than

attempting to cure the illness. If a patient insists on nutrition, but medical professionals believe it will cause harm, palliative care specialists may step in to manage pain, provide psychological support, and offer alternatives for comfort.

In the US, the issue of withholding nutrition from terminally ill individuals is primarily governed by a combination of medical ethics, state laws, and court rulings. It is a complex issue that often intersects with patient autonomy, family wishes, and the role of healthcare providers.

While there is no federal law that directly addresses the withholding of nutrition in terminally ill patients, the legal aspects vary from state to state. Some states have specific laws or court cases that address end-of-life care, and these laws often align with the principles of patient autonomy, informed consent, and the right to refuse treatment.

From an ethical standpoint, many argue that withholding nutrition and hydration is a form of allowing a natural death, rather than actively causing death. This is a highly debated issue, and the decision is typically made by the patient, their family, and the healthcare team, often in a palliative care or hospice setting.

If a terminally ill patient has made it clear, either through an advance directive or direct communication, that they do not wish to receive life-sustaining treatments, withholding nutrition is generally considered ethically appropriate. In situations where the patient cannot communicate (such as in a coma or with advanced dementia), family members or a healthcare proxy may make decisions on their behalf, ideally in line with the patient’s known wishes.

Different cultures and religions have varying perspectives on end-of-life decisions. For example, some religious traditions may

advocate for the continuation of nutrition and hydration as long as possible, viewing the withholding of such care as ethically unacceptable. Others may allow for the cessation of life-sustaining treatments if it aligns with the patient’s wishes or the belief that suffering should not be prolonged.

The Catholic Church teaches that life is sacred and that every person has intrinsic dignity, regardless of their health condition. This includes the responsibility to care for the sick and suffering.

Catholic teaching emphasises the importance of intent and proportionality in health care decisions. The key principle is that the goal is not to hasten death but to alleviate suffering and respect the natural process of dying.

The Church encourages family members to make decisions with compassion and in consultation with health care providers, ensuring that the patient’s dignity and well-being are respected. In cases where a patient is unable to communicate their wishes, the decision may be made by family members or a designated health care proxy, ideally based on the patient’s known values and preferences.

Left with no options here in the US and unwilling to give up, the family friend is currently seeking treatment in another country in Asia, where the doctors are providing him with the nutrition he needs and also treating him with an alternative plan to fight the disease.

**Regina William** is an ex journalist turned head of communications, now full-time grandmother to three children aged between six and two, crisscrossing the globe to play the role. She can be reached at [regina.william1223@gmail.com](mailto:regina.william1223@gmail.com)

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





Fr Ron Rolheiser

# An invitation to something higher

**W**hat is a sin? Is it a sin to not go to church on Sunday? Is it a sin to cheat on your taxes? Is it a sin to get drunk? Is holding a grudge a sin? Is masturbation a sin? Is infidelity in marriage a sin?

For too long, preachers, catechists, Church hierarchy, and moral theologians have been too focused on sin. Well, indeed there is sin around, but that should hardly be our focus in terms of understanding what it means to live a moral Christian life. Here we should take our cue from Jesus.

In His *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew 5-7) Jesus says, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law and the prophets; I have come to fulfil them." What He is saying here is basically this: *I have not come to do away with the Ten Commandments; I have come to invite you to something higher.*

Unfortunately, we tend to think of living a moral life mostly in terms of keeping the Commandments and avoiding sin. What we call "moral theology" has classically been focused on ethical issues, what's right and what's wrong? But that's not what we hear from Jesus as a moral teacher. His *Sermon on the Mount* (perhaps the greatest moral code ever written) focuses instead on an invitation to do what's higher. It assumes

we are already living the elementary essentials of morality, the Ten Commandments, and instead invites us to something beyond those essentials, namely, to be the adult in the room who helps the world carry its tension.

Jesus doesn't offer us moral theology in its classical or popular form. Rather He invites us into an ever-deepening discipleship (which is what moral theology and proper catechesis are meant to do).

Here's an example of an invitation that lies at the very heart of the *Sermon on the Mount*. At one point, Jesus invites us to a "virtue that goes deeper than that of the scribes and the Pharisees." It's easy to miss the point here because, almost without exception, we tend to think that Jesus is referring to the hypocrisy of some of the scribes and Pharisees. He isn't. Most scribes and Pharisees were good, honest, sincere people who practised a high virtue. For them, living a good moral and religious life meant keeping the Ten Commandments (all of them!) and being a man or woman who was scrupulously fair to everyone. It meant being a just person.

So, what's lacking here? If I am a person who keeps all the Commandments and am fair and just in all my dealings with others, what is lacking in me morally? Why isn't

that enough?

Jesus' answer to that takes us further than the Ten Commandments and the demands of justice. He invites us to something beyond.

He points out that the demands of justice still permit us to hate our enemies, to curse those who curse us, and to execute murderers (*an eye for an eye*). He invites us to something beyond that, namely, to love those who hate us, to bless those who curse us, and to forgive those who kill us. That is the essence of moral theology. And note that it comes to us as an invitation, inviting us always to something higher. It's not concerned about what's a sin and what isn't (*thou shalt not*). Rather, it's a positive invitation beckoning us to reach higher, to transcend our natural impulses, to be more than someone who just keeps the commandments and avoids sin.

I remember once hearing a lecture from the late Michael Hines in which he offered this image of God as forever inviting us to something higher: Imagine a mother coaxing a toddler to walk. Squatting on the floor in front of the child, an arm's length away, her fingertips just inches away from the fingertips of the child, she gently coaxes the child to risk taking a step forward; then when the child takes that step, she moves

her fingertips back a few inches, and again gently tries to coax the child into risking another step. And so, all the way across the floor.

That's the image we need for Christian discipleship and moral theology. Our first concern should not be, is this a sin or not? Is it a sin to not go to church on Sunday? Is it a sin to entertain lustful thoughts? Is it sin to hold a grudge?

The question with which we need to challenge ourselves is rather, what am I being invited into? Where do I need to stretch myself towards something higher? Am I loving beyond my natural impulses? And more specifically: Am I loving those who hate me? Am I blessing those who curse me? Am I forgiving murderers?

*I have not come to do away with the Ten Commandments; I have come to invite you to something higher – all the way across the floor.*

**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)

## Consecrated Life: Transforming faith, challenging modernity

**C**onsecrated life represents a profound expression of Catholic faith, rooted in the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. This unique vocational path encompasses diverse forms of religious commitment, including religious orders, secular institutes, hermit life, and new charismatic communities. While historically significant in nurturing spirituality, education, healthcare, and social justice, consecrated life currently faces substantial challenges in the modern world.

The most pressing issue is the dramatic decline in vocations, particularly in Western countries. Once-thriving religious communities now struggle with aging memberships and fewer new entrants. Societal shifts — including changing attitudes toward lifelong commitments, growing individualism, and increased scepticism about institutional religion — have significantly narrowed the pool of potential candidates. This demographic transformation raises critical questions about the sustainability of traditional religious charisms.

In response, the Church has emphasised vocational discernment and pastoral outreach. Pope Francis has consistently urged communities to create supportive environments for young people to explore their faith and potential calling. Initiatives like World Youth Day and local vocational retreats aim to inspire deeper spiritual reflection. However, these efforts must adapt to engage a generation shaped by digital media, global challenges, and existential uncertainties.

The relevance of consecrated life is particularly evident in its prophetic dimension. Communities committed to simplicity, shared resources, and solidarity with marginalised populations serve as powerful countercultures witnesses. In regions marked by poverty, conflict, and systemic injustice, consecrated persons



*Holy Mass on the World Day for Consecrated Life. (Vatican News)*

often stand at the forefront of advocacy and humanitarian efforts. Their presence in challenging contexts — such as war zones and refugee camps — embodies a living Gospel, offering hope to those on society's peripheries.

This prophetic witness is not without significant challenges. In some regions, consecrated individuals face persecution, violence, and hostility due to their advocacy for justice and peace. Missionaries working in conflict zones risk their lives to provide essential services, drawing strength from their faith and the global Church's support.

The changing landscape also challenges traditional community life. In a world increasingly valuing personal autonomy, shared religious community living can seem counterintuitive. Navigating differences in cultural backgrounds, generational perspectives, and theological interpretations requires ongoing dialogue, mutual respect, and commitment to a common mission.

The evolving role of women in society has prompted reflection on women religious' contributions. While historically groundbreaking in education, healthcare, and social services, women religious remain

under-utilised in ecclesial leadership structures. The Synod on Synodality, initiated by Pope Francis, highlights the importance of amplifying women religious' voices in shaping the Church's future.

Financial sustainability presents another significant concern. As traditional income sources like schools and hospitals face economic pressures, religious communities are exploring alternative support mechanisms. Investments in sustainable agriculture and ethical enterprises demonstrate the resourcefulness of consecrated persons, though these efforts demand careful planning and alignment with moral teachings.

The spiritual dimension remains a crucial aspect of consecrated life's relevance. In an era characterised by constant noise and distraction, contemplative communities offer vital spaces for spiritual refuge and renewal. Monasteries and retreat centres serve as bridges between the sacred and secular, inviting individuals from diverse backgrounds to explore transcendence.

The Church's commitment to consecrated life remains steadfast. The Second Vatican Council's *Perfectae Caritatis* emphasised the need for renewal and adaptation,

encouraging communities to respond to contemporary needs while maintaining their founding charisms. Pope Francis continues to advocate for creativity and boldness in reimagining consecrated life.

Collaboration emerges as a key strategy for sustainability. Increasing involvement of lay associates and volunteers in religious communities' missions demonstrates the potential for shared ministry. This approach reflects an ecclesial vision of the Church as a communion of vocations, where consecrated life is interconnected with the broader faithful's mission.

Ultimately, consecrated life remains a profound gift to the Church and world, offering a living testimony to the Gospel's transformative power. Its enduring relevance lies in its ability to adapt to changing circumstances while maintaining spiritual and prophetic roots. Though challenges are significant, the witness of consecrated persons continues to inspire faith, hope, and love.

The path forward requires courage, discernment, and renewed commitment to the Gospel call. By embracing innovation while remaining true to their core spiritual identity, consecrated communities can continue to provide a vital and dynamic witness in an ever-changing world. **Fr Dr John Singarayar, SVD**

**Fr Dr John Singarayar, SVD**, is a scholar with a PhD in Anthropology and degrees in Philosophy, Theology, and Computer Applications. He specialises in cultural anthropology, sociology of religion, and tribal studies, with extensive experience in parish ministry, social work, and research. He currently works at the Tribal Mission's Community and Human Resource Development Centre in Maharashtra, India, focusing on empowering indigenous communities through mission work and leadership development.



# Little Catholics' corner



Dear Children,

One day Jesus was standing by the sea of Galilee. A large crowd of people started to gather around Him.

He saw some fishermen nearby who were cleaning and mending their nets, so He climbed into one of their boats.

He asked one of the men, whose name was Peter, to put the boat out a little way from the shore. Jesus sat in the boat teaching the people.

When He had finished teaching, Jesus said to Peter, "Put the boat further out into the deep water and let down your nets to catch some fish."

"We've been fishing all night long and haven't caught a thing, but if You say so, we will let down the nets one more time," Peter answered.

An amazing thing happened! When they started pulling the nets up, there were so many fish that the nets began to break.

As they pulled the fish into the boat, there were so many fish that the boat began to sink.

When Peter and his fellow fishermen saw this, they were astonished and even a bit frightened.

Jesus said, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." (Luke 5:10-11)

The Bible tells us that they pulled their boats up onto the shore, left everything, and followed Jesus.

From that day on, Peter and his friends fished for people and brought many into God's kingdom.

Jesus wants you and me to fish for people too. If we are faithful in telling people about Jesus and His love, we can trust Jesus to bring in the catch!

Love Aunty Eliz

## Picture Puzzle: An Amazing Catch!

The pictures for this story are all mixed up!  
Sort them out by putting the right numbers in the corners.

So Jesus preached from Peter's boat.	The nets were completely filled!
They called James and John to help with the fish.	Jesus was preaching and a large crowd came.
They left their nets and followed Jesus.	Then Jesus told Peter to let down the nets.

### WORD SEARCH

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

- |           |        |         |         |
|-----------|--------|---------|---------|
| PREACHING | DEEP   | WASHING | PETER   |
| JESUS     | SHORE  | GALILEE | FISHING |
| FISHERMEN | BOATS  | SEA     | SINKING |
| AFRAID    | PEOPLE | NETS    |         |





# Vocation seminar in Sabah draws 124 participants

Benedict Lim

**KENINGAU:** A total of 124 participants from the three dioceses in Sabah attended the annual vocation seminar, January 17 to 19, at the Bundu Tuhan Retreat Centre. Of these, nine were selected – eight will begin their formation as aspirants at the Formation House for Aspirants (CDC), while the remaining participant will start his formation journey as a seminarian at St Peter's College Initiation Year Formation House.

The seminar was coordinated by the Archdiocese Vocation director, Fr Isidore Gilbert, with the assistance of Fr Mattheus A. Luta, director of St Peter's College Formation House in Kota Kinabalu. Also present were diocesan vocation directors Fr Roney Mailap



Selected to CDC; from left: Samson Iver Josephone, Edmond Joney, Anthony Gentineo, Arddy Joseph, Ashley Colin Peter, Emmvinley Oswald Ejue, Freodolin Komunis, Junior Rofinus (not present in photo) | Selected to IY: Alfred Owen Jois Petrus

(Keningau); Fr Christopher Ireneus (Sandakan), and Fr Abel Madisang, Spiritual Father of St Peter's College Major Seminary in Kuching. Additionally, 29 aspirants and seminarians were on hand to offer their support.

The objective of this vocation seminar is to

encourage priestly vocations among young Catholic men in Sabah by providing exposure through a series of talks from priests, sharing and reflecting on the lives of aspirants, seminarians, and clergy, and identifying new aspirants and seminarians for formation.

Fr Mattheus presided over the opening Mass for the seminar which coincided with the memorial of St Anthony of Egypt, the originator of the monastic life. In his homily, Fr Mattheus thanked all participants for making time to attend the seminar, especially those who had travelled from afar. He advised the participants that they should open their hearts to listen to God's call for each one of them, just like St Anthony who responded to God's call by giving up all that he had and following Jesus.

The three-day seminar concluded with a closing Mass presided over by Fr Roney, who emphasised that to be a priest, one must serve as a bridge between God and humanity. He further reminded everyone that, whether called to the priesthood or not, it is our shared responsibility to live out the common priesthood we receive through the Sacrament of Baptism. Many participants expressed gratitude and awe for the experiences gained during the seminar, with some expressing a strong desire to attend again in the future to further discern their calling.



Talk and reflection sessions



Closing Mass celebrated by Fr Roney Mailap.





# REMAIN WATCHFUL AND HOPEFUL AS PILGRIMS

Ashley Edward

IPOH: The Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help (OMPH) was filled with joy as 24 young individuals received the sacrament of Confirmation. The solemn occasion was presided over by Cardinal Sebastian Francis, with parish priest, Fr Patrick Massang CSsR, concelebrating. The young candidates, who had diligently prepared for this significant moment, were affirmed as “pilgrims of hope for the world” during this Jubilee year, through the transformative power of the

Holy Spirit. In his homily, Cardinal Sebastian emphasised the essential role of the Holy Spirit in completing the grace received at baptism. He explained how the Holy Spirit empowers the newly confirmed to be authentic witnesses of Christ. Quoting from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1285), he reminded the candidates of their increased responsibility to proclaim and defend the faith through both their words and actions.

Directly addressing the confirmands, Cardinal Sebastian exhorted them to carry the message of hope and good news to the world. He stressed that they are not only the future of the Church but also an integral part of it in the present moment. He encouraged the congregation to continue supporting and nurturing these young people in their faith journey, affirming the shared responsibility



Cardinal Sebastian Francis lays his hand on a confirmand.



The Confirmands participating during Mass.

of the entire Church community. Reflecting on the day’s readings, Cardinal Sebastian invoked the anticipation of Christ’s return, using the word *Maranatha* — a prayerful longing for the ultimate union with God. He reminded all present of the importance of remaining watchful and hopeful as pilgrims on a spiritual journey, concluding his homily with a powerful affirmation: *Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus*. Cardinal Sebastian expressed his gratitude to the catechists and all those involved in preparing the candidates. A poignant moment followed when Elanor, a parishioner, shared a heartfelt note of thanks that moved many to tears. Her words underscored the deep commitment of the OMPH community in nurturing and supporting the faith of its youth, highlighting the collaborative effort that ensures the Church’s continued growth.

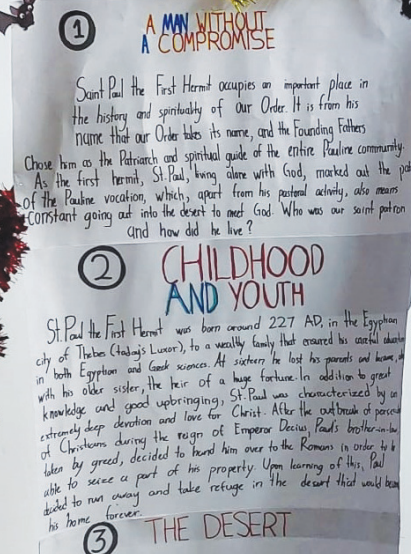
## THE YOUNG SHOWCASE THEIR TALENTS in parish anniversary celebration

BESTARI JAYA: To celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Church of St Paul the Hermit, a special exhibition dedicated to the life of the patron saint was held. Open to parishioners and pilgrims on January 18 and 19, the exhibition provided a unique opportunity to explore the life and legacy of St Paul the Hermit, whose story holds particular significance for Catholics in the rural areas of the Kuala Selangor district. The exhibition featured a handwritten history of St Paul’s life, meticulously crafted over several days by catechism students as a heartfelt tribute to their patron saint. The entrance to the exhibition was designed to resemble a cave, reflecting the saint’s life as the first hermit of the Church. St Paul,

who lived from 227 AD to 341 AD, spent his days in a cave near a spring and palm tree in the desert of Thebes, Roman Egypt, dedicating his life to prayer and solitude. His example of deep devotion and commitment to God resonated strongly with the community, particularly with those living in outlying areas. Visitors were deeply moved by the creativity and dedication of the catechism students, especially those from St Anthony, Coalfields, whose efforts were evident in the hand-made exhibits. The exhibition offered not only a detailed look into the life of St. Paul but also an inspiring display of faith in action. In addition to the exhibition, the event

featured spiritual games for children aged 4 to 17, providing a fun and interactive way for younger parishioners to engage with the celebrations while learning more about their faith. The anniversary festivities continued on the evening of January 18 with a lively “Gala Night,” organised by the youth of the parish from both the main church and its chapels. The youth showcased their talents through traditional dances, musical performances, and a dramatic presentation, creating a vibrant atmosphere of joy and community. The evening concluded with a fellowship dinner, during which Fr. James cut the anniversary cake, sharing a moment of gratitude with parishioners and youth.

On Jan 19, the celebrations wrapped up with a Vintage Games event for children, held after the Sunday Mass, marking the end of the anniversary weekend. The 60th anniversary of the Church of St Paul the Hermit was a powerful testament to the enduring faith and community spirit of the parish. Through the creative exhibition, engaging activities, and the collaborative efforts of the parish youth, the event not only honoured the legacy of St Paul the Hermit but also strengthened the bonds of unity and faith within the Church. It was a time of reflection, celebration, and gratitude for the many blessings received over the past six decades. **Bernard Anthony**



St Paul the Hermit’s life story and exhibition by the youth.



Youth Concert night.



# Holocaust survivor honours Polish priest's heroism

POLAND: Because of the quiet and heroic intervention of a Polish priest, Andrew Jampoler's life was saved just as it began. Jampoler, 83, feels a strong debt of gratitude to Fr Jozef Czapan, who protected him as an infant in Eastern Poland by providing lifesaving papers for him and his family.

He recently spoke with *OSV News* about his story of survival after he was born into a Jewish family January 15, 1942, in the city of Lwow, Poland, which is now Lviv, Ukraine.

When Soviet control of Lwow gave way to Nazi control in 1941, Jampoler's parents, Hanka and Karol, went into hiding to avoid being forced into a ghetto. They were hiding along with his paternal grandmother, Lucy, who was a neighbour of Father Czapan at St Anthony's Catholic Church.

Fr Czapan counterfeited birth certificates and other documents for Jampoler, his parents and his grandmother as well as his grandmother's niece, his cousin Irena Wilder (later Christine Winecki), whom he calls Irka.

"It is those documents, I believe, that permitted my mother and grandmother to survive in very open hiding in southern Germany during the later years of the war," he said.

Another Catholic parish in Poland played a significant role in Jampoler's survival when his family fled to Warsaw. His father was recognised by an old classmate and forced to go into hiding elsewhere and the family never saw him again. His mother and grandmother were also attempting to hide, but little Andrew had fallen ill and would not stop crying.

When he finally fell asleep, they decided it would be safest to leave him on the steps of a Catholic church and watched until someone found him. He was adopted for the remainder of the war by a childless Polish Catholic couple, Julianna (Julie) and Stanislaw (Stach) Matysiak.

His mother and grandmother were able to use their false documents to work on a pig farm in Immenstadt, Germany, for the remainder of the war. While his mother was sick in the hospital after the war, his grandmother tracked him down and persuaded the couple to return him, explaining that they had papers now to take him to America where he would have a better life.

Much later in life, Jampoler reconnected with his cousin Irka after coming across a book she had written about her survival story, *The Girl in the Check Coat*.

"We determined some years ago to nominate Fr Czapan to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial

in Israel, as one of the 'Righteous Among the Nations'," he said. "The family has a great debt to his memory."

The title of 'Righteous Among Nations' is an honorific used by Israel to describe non-Jews who risked their lives during the Holocaust to save Jews.

Irka, now 98 and living in Melbourne, Australia, wrote of Fr Czapan's critical aid in her book, which includes a period of time in which she was in hiding with her Aunt Lucy — Jampoler's grandmother — alongside him and his parents.

"The Jews of Lwow were prepared for the worst. They knew their days were numbered and that those who could still save themselves had no time to lose," she said, writing that her Aunt Lucy took her to "St Anthony's Church in the suburb of Lyczakow, where the local vicar, Fr Czapan, issued me with a birth certificate from the parish registry of births, marriages and deaths for the year 1930."

In her testimony nominating Fr Czapan for Yad Vashem's 'Righteous Among the Nations' title, Irka wrote of how she sat in the priest's office with her aunt when she was 11 years old and he "called in a nun, Sr Benedykta, and gave her a task to teach me prayers, songs and some Catholic customs I needed to know to survive the war."

In her book, she recalled how "every morning now, I would go to church, where the good Sr Benedykta taught me the words of the Catholic prayers. In the quiet, semi-dark atmosphere of the church permeated with the smell of incense, I felt safe and I could cry uninterrupted."

The instruction she received in Catholic prayers came in handy when she was later taken in for questioning by police in Warsaw. "I faced a barrage of questions from two policemen," she wrote, "What's your name?", "Can you pray?", "Say Hail Mary", "What is your mother's maiden name?", "Say Our Father", "Cross yourself." I was petrified but I knew I would make Sr Benedykta proud with the way I remembered all her teachings."

When Fr Czapan was recognised as one of the 'Righteous Among Nations' on July 3, 2022, three generations of the Jampoler family went to Yad Vashem "to honour him and his memory and the contribution he had made to our lives."

Jampoler said Fr Czapan was ordained in 1917 in Lwow and served as a parish priest at St Anthony's Church there from 1941 to 1946, during the war. He was a priest and pastor at a cathedral in the Zielona Gora-Gorzow Diocese after the war and died in 1972. **Lauretta Brown, OSV**



## MEMORIAM

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5th Anniversary  
In Loving Memory of



Alicia Lai Keow Moy  
(07.09.1941 – 03.02.2020)

*Dearly missed and remembered by family members.*

EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY



Joseph Nathan  
Came from the Lord on  
26th February 1931  
Called by the Lord on  
11th February 2017

And God will raise us from the dead by his power, just as he raised our Lord from the dead: (1 Corinthians 6:14)

*You were called to the Lord though we want you here But we are rejoiced when you returned to the Lord's House in peace and love.*

*You are always in our prayers and forever in our hearts and minds. Your comforting songs and your strength will live in us all*

*For we were truly blessed when the Lord gave you as our beloved Dad and Grand dad We love you and miss you always our beloved father, our beloved Grand dad.*

Missed dearly by children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, in laws, relatives and friends.

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Sadly missed, lovingly remembered by wife Dora Gomes, son, daughters, grandchildren and all loved ones.

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# Let hope lead your lives, Pope tells seminarians

VATICAN: During the Holy Year 2025, which is centred on proclaiming a message of hope, Pope Francis told future priests to let hope be the guiding principle of their lives.

"In the journey of life, we could identify hope as the signpost that marks our itinerary," he said during a meeting with seminarians from Córdoba, Spain, January 17.

Hope provides a "direction" in the lives of Christians, leading them "toward heaven, to the definitive encounter with Jesus," the Pope said. "Not to the top positions, not to the most comfortable places; those are dead ends that if we have the misfortune of getting into, we must leave by walking backward with effort and shame."

Referencing the theme of the Jubilee, Francis encouraged the seminarians to be "pilgrims of hope," and to draw inspiration from St Pelagius, a 10th-century Christian martyr who was killed in Córdoba at the age of 13 and is celebrated there today.

He was taken hostage by Moors in southern Spain and held captive for three years. When the emir of Córdoba offered him freedom on the condition he convert to Islam, Pelagius refused, and he was tortured and killed.

"You can bear witness to hope as that holy boy did then, in the midst of the pain of war,



Pope Francis greets seminarians from Córdoba, Spain, during a meeting at the Vatican Jan 17, 2025. (CNS/Vatican Media)

of the cruelty most unworthy of human beings, armed with the helmet of hope," the Pope told the seminarians. "You can persevere in the way of the Lord, convinced that Jesus will always sustain you and will give us the strength to be sowers of hope."

Sowing hope, however, is not "saying nice words or an overly sweet goodness," he said. Rather the path of hope is "the path of Jesus, which leads to the heavenly Jerusalem, passing through the earthly one, embracing the cross and supported by countless Cyrenians."

Just as Jesus was helped to carry His cross on the way to the Crucifixion, Christians are called to take "a road on which one cannot advance alone," Pope Francis said, "but in community, guiding, defending, assisting and blessing those whom the Lord has left for us as our undertaking."

The Pope also urged the seminarians to be "sustained" by Jesus on the path of life, a journey which led them to Rome to cross the threshold of the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica, and "to feel the presence of the one who is our only hope."

Jesus, he said, "presents Himself to us as master, as Lord, He gives Himself to us as food in His word and in the Eucharist, He repairs us when we have a flat tire in the middle of the road, and he welcomes us when we are overcome by fatigue and must stop for a break."

Underscoring the centrality of hope, the Pope explained that "without such hope, setting out on the road would be madness, but trusting in Him we have no doubt that we will arrive at the desired gate." **Justin McLellan, CNS**

## Priests should be 'shaped' by people's pain

VATICAN: In late October 2024, torrential rains flooded the Spanish city of Valencia, killing around 230 people and causing massive property damage.

Thousands of volunteers and nonprofit organisations mobilised to assist those affected by one of Spain's deadliest natural disasters.

Three months later, Pope Francis met with the seminarians, formators, and bishops of the Archdiocese of Valencia, along with several other Spanish dioceses, for an audience in the Vatican.

"The storm was not just an atypical phenomenon that we merely hope will not happen again," he told them. "It is the extrapolation of what every human being experiences when faced with loss, feeling alone, displaced, and in need of support to move forward."

The Pope said the role of priests is to "bind up the brokenhearted" and provide spiritual support for people amid the large and small disasters of daily life.

He admitted that he found it difficult to express his feelings when thinking about the pain Valencia residents experienced as they celebrated Christmas in the wake of the floods.

"Yours is a pain and mourning that, despite its harshness, opens us to hope, for



in forcing us to reach rock bottom and leave behind everything that seemed to sustain us, it allows us to go beyond," he said.

People cannot be left alone to face the darkness, urged the Pope. Rather, he said, the work of so many volunteers and the Catholic Church after the storm were expressions of God's tenderness.

Pope Francis pointed out that "hope is not optimism," which is merely a superficial

attitude, while hope calls us to move beyond empty phrases to search for deeper meaning.

"Our hope has a name — Jesus — God who was not disgusted by our clay and who, instead of saving us from the clay, became clay for us."

Each priest, he added, is called to become an *alter Christus*, another Christ by becoming "clay in the weeping of the people."

"When you see broken people — because in Valencia there are broken people who have lost their lives in pieces — give them pieces, fragments, of yourselves, just as Christ does in the Eucharist," he said.

In conclusion, Pope Francis invited the future priests of Valencia to give of themselves freely, just as they have received everything freely. **Devin Watkins, Vatican News**

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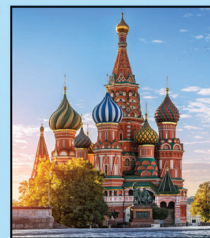
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