

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.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.
Tit. 2:11-12



Dioceses launch Jubilee of Hope

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Bringing Christ's light to the shadows

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A biblical and synodal path towards the renewal of faith

■ P10

Hope kindness makes the world more beautiful

VATICAN: Pope Francis made an unexpected appearance on the *BBC's Thought for the Day* segment, where he called on all people to become "pilgrims of hope." Speaking as part of Radio 4's flagship *Today* programme, the pontiff addressed themes of hope, kindness, and the significance of the forthcoming 2025 Jubilee Year.

The *Today* programme, broadcast six days a week, includes the three-minute *Thought for the Day* segment, offering reflections from religious leaders and commentators across various faiths. Pope Francis' participation marked a rare moment, as Catholic voices are infrequent on the platform. The 88-year-old pontiff delivered his message in Italian, with an English translation broadcast to millions of listeners.

"I have been asked to speak to you of hope and kindness, for this I thank you," Pope Francis began. He emphasised the transformative power of these virtues, stating, "Hope and kindness touch the very heart of

the Gospel and show us the path to follow in our behaviour. A world full of hope and kindness is a more beautiful world; a society that looks to the future with confidence and treats people with respect and empathy is more humane."

Pope Francis used the opportunity to reflect on the 2025 Jubilee Year, which began on December 24 with the opening of the Holy Door at St Peter's Basilica. This symbolic act invites the faithful into a year-long journey of grace, renewal, and pilgrimage.

"As you know, the Jubilee year began on December 24; it is a period in which we are all called to become pilgrims of hope," he said. Acknowledging the challenges of today's world, he added, "Even though we do not know what tomorrow may hold for us, we should not look to the future with pessimism and resignation. Wars, social injustices, and the many forms of violence we are exposed to every day should not dishearten us nor draw us to scepticism and discouragement."

The pontiff emphasised that love and kindness remain the antidotes to despair. "We choose love, and love makes our hearts fervent and hopeful. Those who love, even if they find themselves in uncertain situations,

always view the world with a gentle gaze of hope."

In his address, Pope Francis explored the essence of kindness, distinguishing it from superficial or strategic actions. "Kindness is not a diplomatic strategy, neither is it a set of rules to ensure social harmony or to obtain other advantages," he explained. "Kindness is a form of love that opens hearts to acceptance and helps us all to become more humble."

The Holy Father highlighted the role of humility in fostering dialogue and overcoming divisions. "Humility lends itself to dialogue, helps to overcome misunderstandings, and generates gratitude," he said. Drawing inspiration from British writer G.K. Chesterton, whom he described as "held in high esteem" by Argentine poet Jorge Luis Borges, Pope Francis urged listeners to approach life with gratitude. "At the end of his autobiography, Chesterton wisely invites us to take the elements of life with gratitude and not for granted."

Pope Francis concluded his message with a wish for hope, faith, and charity—virtues that underpin the Jubilee Year. "I hope that during this Jubilee, we can practise kindness as a form of love to connect with others.

May the New Year bring us peace, fellowship, and gratitude," he said, ending his address with the Italian word "Grazie" (thank you).

Pope Francis' involvement in *Thought for the Day* was facilitated by Professor Irene Tracey, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford, who served as the guest editor for the Dec 28 edition of the *Today* programme. A practicing Catholic, Professor Tracey has previously spoken about the importance of faith in her life and used her guest editorship to spotlight significant issues, including the debate on assisted suicide.

This was not Pope Francis' first appearance on *Thought for the Day*. He previously contributed in 2021 ahead of the COP26 Climate Summit in Glasgow. His predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, was the first pontiff to feature on the programme, delivering a Christmas Eve message in 2010.

As the Jubilee of Hope unfolds, Pope Francis' words resonate deeply, calling on people of all faiths to embrace hope, practise kindness, and build a more humane world. His message, broadcast to millions, serves as a powerful reminder of the Gospel's enduring relevance in a world seeking peace and renewal. **Agencies**

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What could synodality mean for our ever ancient, ever renewing Church?

Walking into St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican for the first time, I was certainly not expecting to see the main altar and other parts of that grand space dutifully surrounded by scaffolding. Nor was I expecting to see similar scenes throughout the city's streets.

I later learned that it is in preparation for the 2025 Jubilee Year celebrations. The "ever ancient" is in the process of being made "ever new."

This renewal stirs images of what the synod on synodality could mean for our ever ancient and ever renewing church and world — an upholding and reinforcement of all that we are. It is also a specialised project, involving the hearts, hands, voices and experiences of everyone.

During the third week of the second session of the synod of synodality, more than 150 undergraduate and graduate students from more than 15 universities throughout the United States had the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to Rome to engage with synodality. Together, we formed the Catholic Education Network to Encounter Rome and Synodality (CENTERS), having the opportunity to interact with synod delegates and raise our voices in service of the many communities we represent.

It may be tempting to romanticise the potential of "conversations in the Spirit" as a synodal practice. These conversations indeed hold the power to draw us intimately together as the people of God, in service to the universal church. Yet synodality itself is nothing new; what is new is the invitation to stretch our understanding of what it means to be a church that practices synodality.

Stretching those boundaries, while on pilgrimage, was exactly what we did as

CENTERS. Being on pilgrimage taught me that stretching these boundaries belongs to all of us, in friendship with the principal protagonist — the Holy Spirit.

Holding and receiving the stories of fellow pilgrims and people we encountered on the way proved to be an immense privilege, a sacred ground on our journey through that city of countless pilgrims.

Witnessing the exhaustion of some synod delegates reminded us that true listening demands a constant exchange of gifts — the gift of self that is being given and received. Without the Spirit, perseverance in this process of exchange would quickly become unbearable and sloppy.

On the final days of the pilgrimage, a group of us visited the Basilica of St Bartholomew on Rome's Tiber Island, home to hundreds of stories and artefacts of 20th and 21st century martyrs from every part of the world. The display presented a cloud of witnesses that assured me of the value of the universal church in that space.

Their stories convinced me it's worth it, for love of God and one another. They introduced me to what it means to be and embody Church — relentless in their spirit of self-giving and trust. They reminded us of the personal cost we are each called to pay in cultivating authentic communion and mutual bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood.

The stories of these martyrs were reinforced during a tour of the statues of women located in St Peter's Square, led by the group Discerning Deacons. Titled "Women of Courage and Confidence," it invited us to contemplate the lives and key roles in co-responsibility that lay and consecrated women assumed in the life of the church down the centuries.

Each time I walked through St Peter's Square that week, I couldn't help but feel their stories around me. St Clare urges us to embrace this historic moment in our church, embracing a renewed culture of synodality. St Catherine of Siena calls us to "cry out with a thousand tongues," declaring, "I see the world is rotten because of silence."

Together, they call us to be a church that dreams and walks together, carrying the Spirit's very dreams through our lives.

While it is concerning that many Catholics across the world remain largely unaware of the proceedings of the synod on synodality, this gives each of us the opportunity to start conversations and create spaces for the work of synodality in our own communities.

This work feels even more urgent now that the synod on synodality has concluded. Of course, everyone's collaboration is necessary! Becoming a truly synodal church in the Spirit will take time and effort. Though synodality is not an end in itself, the *instrumentum laboris*, or working document of this session, reminds us that synodality ought to be expressed in the ordinary way of life and working of the church, especially if we wish to serve humanity for generations to come.

What might a synodal church look like in your context? Perhaps it's time to start our own renewal and, like St Peter's Basilica, put up some scaffolding. **Teresa Gasparin, NCR**

Teresa Gasparin is a sister of the Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity, an international community founded in Mallorca, Spain. She is currently based in San Francisco, completing the second year of a Master of Divinity at the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University, Berkeley.

Christ's baptism illuminates the path to eternal life

Today, the Church celebrates the significant feast of the Baptism of the Lord, marking a pivotal transition between the Christmas season and Ordinary Time. This feast not only concludes the Christmas season but also ushers in the public ministry of Jesus — a journey into His life and mission.

In his *Summa Theologica*, St Thomas Aquinas emphasises that Christ's baptism signifies the beginning of His ministry, during which He preached repentance and the Kingdom of God. Aquinas further highlights that Baptism is fundamentally a Sacrament of Faith, requiring faith from the recipient for it to be effective.

The Baptism of the Lord is narrated in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, with subtle references in the Gospel of John, underscoring its profound significance for Catholics.

What is the significance of the Baptism of the Lord?

According to St Gregory of Nazianzus, Jesus' immersion in water symbolises the Light of Christ burying humanity's sinful nature. Through the Spirit and water, a new creation is born. As Jesus rises from the waters, He lifts the world with Him. The heavens, once closed by Adam's sin, are now opened, much like Paradise.

This symbolism also applies to us in baptism. By being immersed in the waters of baptism, we, too, become a new creation in

the Light of Christ. This transformation fulfils the promise foretold in the Old Testament: "Prepare in the wilderness a way for the Lord; make a straight highway for our God across the desert." Here, the prophet Isaiah portrays Jesus as the God who comes to save.

The imagery of Jesus' baptism draws a parallel between the new Exodus and the old. Just as the Israelites crossed the Red Sea to escape slavery and enter freedom, Jesus, through His immersion in the Jordan, liberates us from the bondage of sin, guiding us into the freedom of becoming children of the Light. The second reading affirms this, declaring that God's grace is revealed through the cleansing waters of rebirth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit.

Today, we are invited to reflect on the meaning of our own baptism. While many of us were baptised as infants, this does not

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Sr Shanti Mariadass, FdCC

Baptism of the Lord (C)

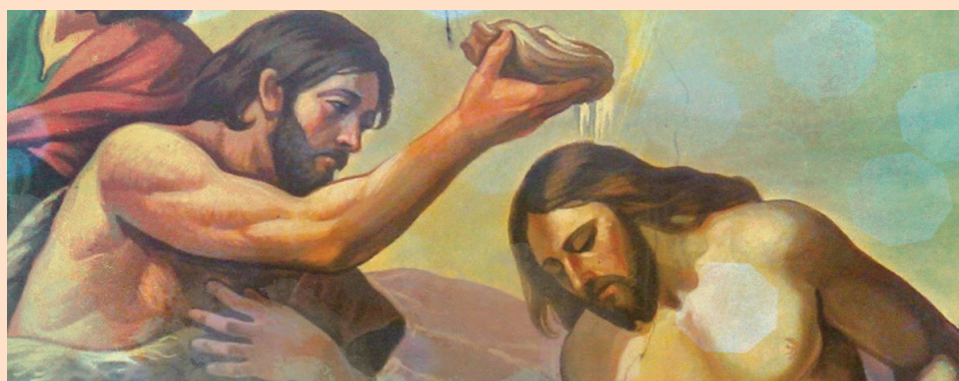
Readings: *Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11;*

Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7;

Gospel: Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

exempt us from reaffirming our faith today. Baptism is a Sacrament of Faith, drawing us into full participation in the life of Jesus. It marks the beginning of our journey as Christians and as members of the Body of Christ. Just as Jesus was launched into His public ministry through baptism, we, too, are called to a life of holiness and to proclaim the Kingdom of God.

I conclude with the words of St Basil the Great: "Our Lord made a covenant with us through baptism in order to give us eternal life." Christ's baptism illuminates the path to eternal life.



IMPORTANT DATES

January 18 - 25:
Christian Unity Week
Theme: *Do you believe this?*
(John 11: 17-27)

January 26:
Sunday of the Word of God

Caritas Malaysia announces new board of directors

Caritas Malaysia is pleased to announce the appointment of its new Board Members, who will serve for a term of two years effective January 1, 2025. This renewal of leadership marks a significant moment in our collective journey to advance the social mission of the Church in Malaysia, rooted in the values of love, compassion, and justice.

On behalf of Caritas Malaysia, I extend heartfelt gratitude to the outgoing Board Members for their dedicated service, wisdom, and contributions during their term. Their efforts have been instrumental in fostering a Church that walks with the poor, uplifts the marginalised, and seeks to transform society in the spirit of the Gospel.

The newly appointed Board Members are:

- Ms Anne Lasimbang
- Dr Francis Loh



- Fr Alvin Ng
- Ms Joyce Wong
- Mr Joachim Xavier
- Ms Sarah Chou

These individuals bring a wealth of experience, insight, and passion for service to their roles. With fresh perspectives and renewed energy, they are committed to deepening collaboration, strengthening programmes, and responding to emerging challenges, including climate change, migration, and the cry of the poor.

As we move forward, Caritas

Malaysia remains steadfast in its mission to embody the Gospel call to love and serve. We invite all faithful and collaborators to join us in prayerful support for the new Board Members and to continue journeying with us in this mission of hope and solidarity.

We take this opportunity to once again thank the outgoing Board Members for their invaluable contributions and to warmly welcome the new Board Members as they embark on this sacred responsibility.

Let us remain united in our commitment to building a Church that truly becomes a sign of hope and a beacon of love for all.

Together Building God's Kingdom

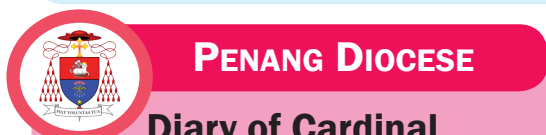
Bishop Bernard Paul
December 31, 2024



Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

January

- 12 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of St Anthony, KL
- 13-15 Clergy Annual Pastoral Assembly
- 19 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of St Thomas, Kuantan
- 23 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2025 – Orthodox Syrian Cathedral of St Mary the Theotokos, Brickfields



Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

January

- 12 Mass & Healing Service - Healing and Deliverance Seminar – MASC, Penang Road at 2.00pm
- 14 Memorial for French Catholic Sailors | Monument – Church of Assumption, Penang at 3.00pm
- 14-15 Council of Priests and Clergy Monthly Recollection
- 17 Diocesan Finance Committee Meeting – Catholic Diocesan Centre, Penang at 5.30pm
- 19 Confirmation – Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, Ipoh at 8.00am
- 19 Meeting with Orang Asli Delegation – Perak at 11.00am
- 20 Dedication Mass – Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang at 8.00pm
- 27-31 Visitation and Chinese New Year Masses – Kota Bharu, Kelantan



Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

January

- 17 Meeting – 1st Caritas Malaysia Diocesan Directors & Ecclesiastical Assistants (CM DEA), via Zoom
- 21-22 Clergy Month Recollection – MAJODI Centre
- 23 Meeting – MJD Seminarians, MAJODI Centre
- 25 Meeting – New Caritas Board, Penang



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #205



Dear Friends, Welcome New Year 2025 with Hope and face the Future with Patience.

New levels of sensitivity! The media terms it as “new levels of hypersensitivity”. In a nation that prides itself as a melting pot of diversity and unity, a Chinese flag on a rocket replica at a carnival caused an uproar. But there was no outcry when Palestinians, Syrians, Indonesians or others were paraded in KL. Foreign flags are treated as threats to national dignity. Is it an overreaction? Orchestrated distraction?

Christmas awakes reactions. Prohibitions on Muslims wearing red clothing, singing carols and wishing each other, even a “Merry Christmas”.

Lately, dog lovers, caring for and treating them as God's creation, have been victims of cyberbullying.

A PM whose popularity rose to 54 per cent, says Merdeka Centre. But reacts to public comments and feedback, on his apparent compromises. Strangely the powerful are hypersensitive, forgetting that the masses are sensitive to betrayal by the elected, poor governance, double standards and the spiralling cost of living.

Be sensitive to the plight of the poor, the suffering, the jobless and homeless, children and their future. Be sensitive to what we teach and practise. Or we will see a culture of ‘monkey see, monkey do’ generation.

Miraculous Times: The Italian PM, Giorgia Meloni, said that it had taken a “little civil miracle” to get projects, sites and artworks finished, restore monuments like the Pieta, Bernini's works, clean up the Trevi Fountain and redesign roads for improved traffic. For the discouraged and broken world, to continue breathing and hold fast,

we do not need ‘little civil miracles’.

The world needs a big life-changing miracle, HOPE. Hope is not wishful thinking. Hope does not disappoint because it is fired up by the God-given Word - His promises and faithfulness; through encounters with encouraging and compassionate Samaritans; and being renewed by the Holy Spirit, who fans into a flame the grace we once received.

It is a miraculous time as it unites the four corners of the world in celebration, in theme, in purpose and mission. It is beyond external preparations: it is a special year for bringing our five loaves and two fish to God to work miracles. Miracles do happen when humans let God in and participate in works of charity, mercy or penance; make sacrifices for the other's good. A pilgrim of hope is the miracle others see.

A Thought for The Week:

Sacred Apples

There was once a happy monkey wandering the jungle, eating delicious fruits when hungry, and resting when tired. One day he came upon a house, where he saw a bowl of the most beautiful apples. He took one in each hand and ran back into the forest. He sniffed the apples and smelled nothing, tried to eat them, but hurt his teeth. The apples were made of wood, but they were beautiful, and when the other monkeys saw them, he held onto them even tighter. He admired them. He got very attached to them. He failed to even notice his hunger. He wouldn't set it down nor relax, even when he came across the familiar fruit trees. He grew tired, hungry and weak, and the wooden apples became heavier. An unhappy monkey walked the forest trails.

Lesson from the unhappy monkey: If he had only let go of the apples for the

real fruits! Like the monkey, we hold fast to what appears to be valuable, a particular self-image or work as our “sacred apples” that drain us and make us unhappy. If you are hungry for a better life, why cling to your unproductive pursuit?

QnQ. The Q asks? God is here, yet why is it people look for God in the distance?

Authentic Christianity overcame the “God-is-elsewhere” idea in at least two major and foundational ways.

Through the incarnation, God in Jesus became flesh; God visibly moved in with the material world to help us overcome the illusion of separation (John 1:14).

Secondly, God as Holy Spirit is precisely known as an indwelling and vitalizing presence. By itself, intellectual assent to these two truths does little.

The incarnation and Indwelling Spirit are known only through participation and practice, as we actively draw upon such Infinite Sources. **Think of it as a “use it or lose it” situation!**

See The Holy Spirit @ Work: The work of the Spirit is to impart life, to implant hope, to give liberty, to testify of Christ, to guide us into all truth, to teach us all things, to comfort the believer, and to convict the world of sin. **Dwight L Moody**

Something To Tickle You: What if, instead of *doing* something, we were to be something special? Be womb. Be dwelling for God. *Be recollected*, and be surprised. **Loretta Ross-Gotta**

Bishop Bernard Paul

Bishop Bernard Paul



Bishops across the globe marked the opening of the 2025 Jubilee Year on December 29, 2024, with Masses celebrated in their cathedrals. The liturgies centred on the theme of hope, the cornerstone of this Holy Year inaugurated by Pope Francis on Christmas Eve through the solemn opening of the Holy Door at St Peter's Basilica. In this edition, we highlight the celebrations in our local dioceses.

The Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur inaugurated the Jubilee Year of Hope with an Opening Mass at the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist. The celebration, attended by members of the clergy, seminarians, and faithful from across the archdiocese, marked the beginning of a year-long spiritual journey themed *Hope does not disappoint* (Romans 5:5).

The Mass was presided over by Archbishop Julian Leow and concelebrated by Apostolic Nuncio to Malaysia, Archbishop Wojciech Zaluski; Vicars General Msgr Patrick Boudville and Msgr Stanislaus Soosaimariam; and the Cathedral's parish priest, Fr Gerard Theraviam.

The ceremony commenced with the Introductory Rites and the reading of excerpts from the Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee Year at the entrance of the cathedral. This was followed by a solemn procession into the cathedral for the

Opening of the



Archbishop Julian Leow leading the prayers during the Mass.

Eucharistic celebration.

In his homily, Archbishop Julian elaborated on the significance of the Jubilee Year theme. "The Jubilee Year is a time to be anchored in hope and in Christ," he said. "Let us not forget the heart of our faith, which is the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ did not remain in the tomb when He died. Instead, He overcame death and sin, and we, who believe

in Him, will have everlasting life. This is our hope."

Referring to the Jubilee Year logo, the prelate explained that the four figures touching each other's shoulders, leading toward the cross with an anchor at its base, symbolise the call to live in communion with one another. He emphasised the importance of staying anchored in Christ, despite the numerous challenges we face in today's world.

Archbishop Julian also urged the congregation to deepen their understanding of the Jubilee Year by reading Pope Francis' Bull of Indiction, released in May 2024. He emphasised the spiritual importance of pilgrimages during this period, likening them to life's journey.

"A pilgrimage is not merely about walking through church doors," he said. "We must prepare ourselves for the journey, participate in the Eucharist, and seek reconciliation through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. After the pilgrimage, let us become signs of hope for those around us, especially migrants, the sick and elderly, prisoners, and the differently abled."

The Jubilee Year of Hope will feature various activities and pilgrimages aimed at fostering spiritual renewal and communal unity. It will conclude on January 6, 2026, the Feast of the Epiphany. **Julie Lim**

Diocese of Penang

Cardinal Sebastian Francis, the Bishop of Penang, celebrated the Opening Mass for the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025 at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. The celebration commenced with the rite of opening, featuring the resonant trumpeting of the *shofar* and a vibrant procession of banners representing all parishes within the Penang Diocese.

Reflecting the spirit of the Jubilee Year, Cardinal Sebastian urged all to embark on this pilgrimage with hearts prepared for renewal and reconciliation, journeying together as one Body of Christ in a shared faith-filled pilgrimage. "Be prepared for the Holy Spirit to surprise us on this journey!" he exhorted.

The Mass was concelebrated by the clergy of the diocese, including Bishop Emeritus Antony Selvanayagam, Msgr Henry Rajoo, Msgr Jude Miranda, Msgr Stephen Liew, Fr Joachim Robert, Fr Martin Arlando (the overall Coordinator of the Jubilee Year in the Penang Diocese), and Deacon Andrew Loh.

In his homily, Cardinal Sebastian shared an inspiring message of hope, recounting the need to keep hope alive in all circumstances. "As Pilgrims of Hope, we must embrace the thrill of hope and always nurture its flame," he said. He called upon the faithful to be guided by the Archangel Gabriel, the Holy Spirit, and the soon-to-be saint Blessed Carlo Acutis. He emphasised that hope is a divine gift — one that never gives up, never despairs, and is always alive.

Cardinal Sebastian drew parallels between the Feast of the Holy Family and the pilgrimage of hope, highlighting how the Holy Family overcame earthly challenges. He stressed the importance of conversion as the first step in this pilgrimage, referencing the Synod of Bishops held in Rome in October 2024. "Conversion means to repent and believe in the Gospel," he explained, urging the faithful to follow the example of John the Baptist by sharing resources with those in need and embodying the spirit of charity.

The Cardinal also invoked

the parable of the Prodigal Son, encouraging all to "return home to the Father" and rediscover the connection between faith, hope, and charity. "Hope allows us to dream dreams and see visions of God's plan for creation, humanity, and the Church. It fills us with faith and inspires us to embrace the present as Missionary Disciples of Joy, Mercy, and Hope," he said.

He further called for a holistic pilgrimage involving body, soul, and spirit. "Start the journey from the head, receiving messages through the ears and visuals through the eyes, then move to the heart, pondering like Mary. From the heart, continue the pilgrimage to your hands and feet, putting faith into action," he encouraged.

Addressing the youth, the cardinal extended an invitation from Pope Francis, Blessed Carlo Acutis, and himself for young people to become digital missionaries. He encouraged them to use social media courageously to share stories of hope while participating in physical pilgrimages alongside their peers. "Use your smartphones as tools for spreading the Good News!" he urged.

"We send you, young and old, healthy and sick, saints, and sinners alike, apostles and disciples, including children to begin this pilgrimage today, December 29, 2024, until December 28, 2025 with the Trinitarian blessings of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," said Cardinal Sebastian.

The highlight of the event came at the conclusion of the Mass when Cardinal Sebastian unfurled the Jubilee Banner bearing the inscription *Hope Does Not Disappoint* (Romans 5:5) and formally declared the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025 open. The moment was marked by the ceremonial blowing of the *shofar*, symbolising a call to renewal and unity. **Diocese of Penang Soccom**



Cardinal Sebastian Francis with his clergy launching the Year of Hope.

Diocese of Malacca Johore



The servers with one of the three crosses for the three pilgrim centres.

Bishop Bernard Paul, together with members of the clergy, celebrated the opening of the Jubilee Year in the diocese at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The occasion began with the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, which was originally scheduled to start at 9.00am. However, in response to the early arrival of some parishioners, the adoration was moved up to 8.30am.

Over 800 parishioners, predominantly from the Cathedral and South Johor parishes, attended the event. The solemn opening of the Jubilee Year featured a significant pilgrimage of the diocesan Church, and a processional entrance behind the cross into the cathedral.

The congregation gathered in the carpark area outside the church building where the procession began with three crosses tied together leading the way. The three crosses represent the three pilgrim centres in the diocese. Journeying from the carpark to church culminated with the blessing of the people with the three crosses.

Bishop Bernard in his homily proclaimed, "We are called to be a pilgrim person, pilgrim fami-

lies, pilgrim parishes and pilgrim priests of hope." He invited those present to go back to who we are... go back to being pilgrims. Pilgrimage is a way to meet God. It shows us how to go on in the midst of pain and sufferings. Referring to the nativity, he affirms that God is present in the pain, in the dirt, in the stable. Jesus was also a pilgrim — coming from heaven to earth and becoming the way and leading others to God.

Turning to the clergy, Bishop Bernard urged them to be pilgrim priests, ordained for the pilgrim people to lead them to God every day. "God is counting on us to accompany, to mentor and build a People of Hope. We are here to point out the Lord in our midst," he continued.

Representatives from the three pilgrim centres were presented with the Jubilee candle and a cross each. The cross will be placed near the altar in the sanctuary where it remains for the entire Jubilee Year for the veneration of the faithful.

At the end of Mass, the faithful were given a pilgrim's pack which consisted of a Pilgrim Passport for the pilgrim centres in the diocese, a car decal of the Jubilee logo and a candle. **Angila Yong**

Jubilee Year 2025

Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu

The Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu officially launched its Jubilee Year of Hope 2025 with a grand celebration at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. The event drew an impressive turnout of approximately 1,200 Catholics from parishes across the archdiocese.

The celebration began with a Bible Enthronement in the Sacred Heart Hall, where Archbishop John Wong, accompanied by priests of the archdiocese, participated in the proclamation of the Jubilee Bull. The document was read aloud by Fr Rhobby Mojolou, setting the tone for the momentous occasion.

Following the enthronement, a solemn procession made its way from the hall to the cathedral. Leading the procession were 36 clergy members, both junior and senior, symbolising the unity and continuity of the Church's mission. Upon reaching the cathedral, the congregation paused at the closed doors of the church to witness the ceremo-

nial opening of the Jubilee 'Door of Hope' by Archbishop John. This act symbolised the invitation to enter into a year of renewal, faith, and hope.

The Eucharistic celebration commenced at 5.00pm, marking the spiritual highlight of the day. The liturgy brought together Catholics from diverse backgrounds, united in prayer and gratitude for the beginning of this significant year.

Ahead of the launch, Archbishop John shared a special video message with the faithful of the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu. In his address, he reflected on the theme of the Jubilee Year, *Pilgrims of Hope*, stating: "This Jubilee Year, with the theme *Pilgrims of Hope*, calls us to walk together in faith, hope, and charity, reflecting our Archdiocesan vision to be a Christ-centred community, serving one another with love and compassion. Guided by our mission to evangelise, to be formed in the Word of God, and to build a spirit-filled community,



Archbishop John Wong blessing the congregation with holy water.

this Jubilee is more than a celebration — it is a journey of renewal and transformation.

"Through the programmes and initiatives planned for this special year, we are invited to actively participate, deepening our faith

and strengthening our unity. Let us seize this opportunity to grow as disciples of Christ, journeying together in hope and living out our call to bring God's love and mercy to all." **Peter Zeter**

The Diocese of Keningau launched the Jubilee Year 2025 at the Holy Family Pilgrimage Centre, Nulu Sosopon (PZKKNS), with the opening of the Door of the Good Shepherd.

Bishop Cornelius Piong announced that the "Door of the Good Shepherd" at PZKKNS is open to all pilgrims. "The Good Shepherd's Door," said Bishop Cornelius, "symbolises Jesus' compassion, love, and sacrifice. Without the Good Shepherd, the Church risks straying. He will guide us to the right path and protect us from evil."

In his address, the prelate emphasised that the Jubilee Year is a time for spiritual renewal and growth, providing the faithful with an opportunity to overcome life's challenges with a deeper sense of hope and faith. He highlighted that this year-long celebration offers a unique chance for the people of Keningau to deepen their relationship with God through reconciliation and His mercy.

"The Diocese of Keningau invites all local pilgrims and those from other dioceses to embrace this journey of spiritual renewal," Bishop Cornelius said. "Come

Diocese of Keningau



The entrance procession for the Eucharistic Celebration.

closer to Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and be strengthened in faith, hope, and love" (John 10:7-10).

He concluded his homily by urging eve-

ryone to "seize this moment to walk as pilgrims of hope, finding peace and joy through the sacred pilgrimage sites of the Jubilee Year 2025." **Markus Juanis**

Diocese of Sandakan

Bishop Julius Dusin Gitom officially inaugurated the Jubilee Year at St Mary's Cathedral. Following the Rites of the Jubilee Year 2025, the celebration began at the parish hall, leading to a solemn pilgrimage procession to the Cathedral. The prelate led the procession, accompanied

by clergy from the various parishes of the Diocese of Sandakan, seminarians, altar servers, and lectors. The choir chanted, "Jesus Christ, yesterday, today, and always. To Him honour and glory forever."

After venerating the cross as the Cross of Christ, our only Hope, Bishop Julius opened

the main door, guiding the congregation into the Cathedral for the celebration of the Mass.

Bishop Julius expressed his joy in the presence of priests, religious, seminarians, and representatives from all parishes within the Diocese of Sandakan.

The bishop instructed all parish priests throughout the Sandakan diocese to lead catechesis and encourage their parishioners to undertake pilgrimages to the designated pilgrim centres, aiming to renew their commitment, faith, and conviction that the Lord is our Hope, no matter the challenges they face.

He also urged families to follow the example of the Holy Family, fostering courage to sow seeds of hope within their households and beyond. Bishop Julius reminded the congregation of Pope Francis' emphasis that forgiveness is essential for a happy family life, and without it, love and care are unattainable. With God, however, lives are transformed, joy abounds, and hope does not disappoint. Throughout the Jubilee Year, may we embrace the hope of the Gospel, love, and forgiveness. **Evelyn Jock**



Bishop Julius Dusin Gitom incensing the cross.

Diocese of Miri

The launch of the Jubilee Year was held at the Cathedral of St Joseph during the 11.00am Mass.

As Bishop Richard Ng was away, in his stead, the vicar general Msgr Francis Kuleh presided.

Msgr Francis spoke on the papal document *Hope Does Not Disappoint* and also about the Feast of the Holy Family while connecting it with his own anniversary.

After the homily, he unfurled the banner which was earlier sent to all the 14 parishes in the diocese.



Msgr Francis Kuleh with the jubilee banner.



Archdiocese of Kuching

The Archdiocese of Kuching marked the inauguration of the Jubilee Year of Hope with a solemn ceremony at the Cathedral of St Joseph, blending prayer, ritual, and liturgy in a moving celebration of faith.

Archbishop Simon Poh led the event, beginning with praise and prayer, followed by the rites of the Jubilee Year at the cathedral's entrance. The celebration transitioned to the English Mass after the proclamation of the Gospel from St John and an extract from the Bull of Indiction for the Jubilee Year.

A significant moment came when Archbishop Simon carried the Jubilee Cross to the Holy Door and affixed it at its entrance,

symbolically launching the Jubilee Year 2025 for the Archdiocese of Kuching. The procession entered the cathedral to the hymn 'Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,' setting a joyful tone for the Sunday Holy Mass.

Archbishop Simon presided over the Eucharistic celebration, which was concelebrated by Fr Galvin Ngumbang and Fr Davie Entalai. The event reflected unity with Pope Francis and the global Church. "Together, we join the Holy Father to enter this Jubilee Year as pilgrims of hope," Archbishop Simon remarked. He described the Jubilee as "a time of blessing, a time of grace, a time of reconciliation and healing," echoing the Scripture readings of the day.

Highlighting a local milestone, the prelate said that the doors to the new St Peter's Church in Padungan were opened on Christmas Eve, symbolising an invitation to "enter the door to encounter our loving God." He drew upon Pope Francis' description of the Holy Door as "Jesus, the door of salvation that is always open to all... Jesus is the door of peace." Furthermore, Pope Francis calls on us to embrace our journey as "pilgrims of hope."

The ceremony also featured the Jubilee Prayer, culminating in a final blessing from Archbishop Simon, who reminded the faithful that the Jubilee 2025 had officially begun, inviting all to embrace their role as "pilgrims of hope." **Ivy Chai**



Archbishop Simon Poh places the Jubilee Cross at the entrance of the Holy Door, Cathedral of St Joseph. (Today's Catholic/Danison Manium)

Diocese of Sibü

On January 1, 2025, the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God, Bishop Joseph Hii officially launched the Jubilee Year for the diocese at the Sacred Heart Cathedral.

In his opening remarks, Bishop Joseph echoed Pope Francis' message for the World Day of Peace: "Forgive us our trespasses: grant us your peace." He reminded the congregation that we are "forgiven debtors," called to be pilgrims of hope, rediscovering the path of hope and peace in Jesus Christ.

During his homily, the bishop emphasised that all grace is given through Jesus Christ. The Jubilee Year serves as a reminder for pilgrims to rediscover the treasures that God has bestowed upon humanity through His Church. "Do not be obstacles to others in receiving this grace," he challenged. "Be a channel so that others may receive the mercy of God through you."

Concelebrating with the bishop at the Mass were the clergy from the diocese. Additionally, as the President of the Regional Episcopal Commissions for Creation Justice,

Bishop Joseph also launched the ninth year of a decade dedicated to Creation Justice, under the theme *Year of Sister Mother Earth and Holy Orders: Stewardship of All Creation (Culture of Care)*.

In his pastoral letter, Bishop Joseph stressed that we cannot remain indifferent to the negative impact of selfish lifestyles and wastefulness, especially towards the poor and marginalised. He cited Exodus 3:7 and 22:20-26, noting that "God shows Himself to be the one who hears the cry of the poor, sees the misery of His people, and cares for those who are least and for the oppressed."

"Only by contributing to the restoration of God's justice on earth and not closing our ears to the cry of the poor can we advance towards peace and the dawn of a new, better world." He further emphasised that, "We cannot exist without the rest of Creation, for we are all interconnected and interdependent — from the very air we breathe, water, and all living beings, to the smallest star in the galaxy and the smallest microorganism in the soil."



Parish representatives receiving the banners from Bishop Joseph Hii.

Representatives from various parishes of the Diocese of Sibü were present to receive promotional banners and books for the diocese-wide campaign to raise awareness about the Jubilee Year of Hope and the *Year of Sister Mother Earth and Holy Orders: Stewardship of All Creation (Culture of Care)*.

Bishop Joseph extended his gratitude to all the priests in the presbyterium for their continued humble service to the people of God. He emphasised that "True greatness is

found in humbly serving others," as Scripture teaches, "To be great is to be servant of all" (Mk 10:43-44, Mt 20:26).

"We must learn to put the needs of others before our own, becoming loving neighbours to everyone, including all of Creation. Every word and gesture of mercy reflects God's love for them."

The event concluded with Fr Philip Hu leading Sacred Heart Cathedral's leaders in a pledge to make Sacred Heart Cathedral an ecological parish. **James Lau**

The community is constantly praying for you

PENANG: Throughout the month of December 2024, faith sharers from the Penang Diocesan Prison Ministry (PDPM) and several priests have brought hope to nine prisons in Perlis, Kedah, Perak and Penang.

By God's Grace, 480 prisoners celebrated the Advent season and Christmas. Catholic prisoners also had their Sacrament of Reconciliation and received Holy Communion during the Masses held in the prison. Thanks to the Prison Department, the prisoners were also treated to a fellowship lunch sponsored by generous donors through a Share-A-Meal campaign by the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit.

The priests preached messages of hope

echoing Pope Francis' invitation to prisoners to "welcome Jesus who is born and fills our hearts with trust and hope." The priests who celebrated Masses in the nine prisons in the diocese were Fr Joachim Robert; Fr Victor Louis; Fr Michael Raymond, OFM, Cap and Fr James Pitchay. Hymns like *O Come Divine Messiah, Amazing Grace* and others were sung by the prisoners with zeal and thanksgiving.

In one of the prisons in Penang, a few prisoners expressed their joy as their death sentence had been abolished and they are now in regular prison cells. They hope to complete their sentence and be released in a few years' time. Many of the prisoners went for

confession and received the Body and Blood of Christ with reverence.

The faith sharers reminded the prisoners that they are never alone as the community was constantly praying for them, making herbal bath soaps and also sponsoring their special lunches of *nasi tomato*, *kambing kurma*, *ayam masak merah* and a variety of *kueh*.

Speaking to PDPM faith sharers a week after the Advent mass, a female prisoner from Vietnam shared that she has remained strong and will continue to keep her faith. "I am able to face each day as I had received the Body and Blood of Christ in the Mass. I am also able to go for confession. My gift

for Jesus will be to keep praying," she said as she held on to her Vietnamese Bible and prayer card.

PDPM celebrated its 10th anniversary in June 2024. The faith sharers who have prison permits go into prisons weekly, share the Gospel and provide counselling and motivational talks to juvenile prisoners and other prisoners. Many of the faith sharers have built a close relationship with the prisoners who are serving long sentences. PDPM members fulfil the Gospel of Matthew 25:36 - 'I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' **Penang Diocesan Prison Ministry**



Fr Victor Louis at Arau Prison for the Christmas service.



Fr James Pitchay giving the soaps to an official from Tapah Prison.



Fr Michael Raymond OFM Cap and volunteers at the Penang Prison.



Fr Joachim Robert with volunteers and officials at Jawi Prison.



Fr Michael Dass with volunteers at the Batu Gajah Prison.

Bringing Christ's light to the shadows

KUALA LUMPUR: Seventeen members of the clergy from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, accompanied by 40 dedicated volunteers from the Archdiocesan Catholic Prison Ministry, recently embarked on a heartfelt mission. They spent five days visiting seven prisons in Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, and Terengganu.

During these visits, the team celebrated the Sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist, shared the Word of God, and extended a message of hope to Catholic and Christian inmates. This profound act of love and compassion beautifully echoed Christ's invitation in Matthew 25:36 to "visit those in prison."

Life behind bars can often be isolating and despairing, but the ministry's presence offered a spark of hope. Through singing, praying, and attentively listening, the group celebrated God's abiding presence. After the spiritual services, the visitors shared a meal with the

inmates, fostering a sense of community and connection that transcended prison walls.

The team was deeply touched by the warm hospitality of prison authorities, who facilitated an environment conducive to meaningful spiritual encounters. Their generosity mirrored the abundant love of Christ, enabling the ministry to bring emotional and spiritual support to all attendees.

In this sacred outreach, the team witnessed how Christ's light can penetrate even the darkest places, transforming lives and rekindling hope. Just as Jesus ministered to those on society's margins, this initiative reminded everyone of the power of compassion and connection.

Ministering to prisoners is an essential expression of faith, fostering spiritual growth and offering heartfelt emotional support. These encounters inspire us to extend Christ's love to others who feel isolated — whether they are in prisons, hospitals, or within our neighbourhoods.



Bentong Prison



Kajang Prison



Jebleu Prison



Klang Prison



Puncak Alam Prison



Seremban Prison



Women's Prison, Kajang



DIOCESE OF PENANG
PKK/BDN/2023/08/165

Notifications and Updates

"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged... forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Lk 6: 36-38

1. Fr Edmund Woon is the Bishop's Delegate for the Vocation of Hermits in the Diocese of Penang

Fr Edmund Woon has been appointed as Bishop's Delegate for all matters pertaining to the Vocation of Hermits in the Diocese of Penang effective December 1, 2024. I wish him God's blessings and thank him for his generous availability in ministering to the needs of this vocation in our diocese.

2. Fr Aloysius Tan is the Spiritual Director for Sahabat Orang Asli

Fr Aloysius Tan has been appointed Spiritual Advisor to the Perak Deanery Orang Asli Apostolate which is under the leadership of Bernard Lee, Chairman of Perak Deanery Orang Asli Apostolate. This appointment is effective from December 1, 2024 and in view of his appointment as parish priest of the Church of St Michael, Ipoh where this ministry originated and continues to flourish with the support of parishioners and neighbouring parishes. I wish him God's blessings in carrying out this ministry, especially for the good of the Orang Asli community, *for the greater glory of God.*

3. Congratulations to our Orang Asli community of the Diocese of Penang

We congratulate Wasa a/p Bah Ngah, the first Orang Asli graduate, through the support of Sahabat Orang Asli, for having

completed her Diploma in Early Childhood Education with Open University Malaysia (OUM). Syabas and Berkat to Wasa and family and our gratitude to the Sahabat Orang Asli team (<https://bit.ly/3PjpNm0>).

4. Lunar New Year 2025: The Year of the Snake

Sharing the explanation for the Lunar New Year 2025 in Mandarin and English prepared by Fr Stephen Chin from the Archdiocese of Kuching, Sarawak. Wishing all a blessed and HOPE filled Lunar New Year 2025 in the Lord! (<https://bit.ly/40dHQAE>)

5. Seminarians of the Diocese of Penang for 2025

i) Ashley Stephen Chau
 Theology Year 4, St Peter's College Major Seminary, Kuching
 Pastoral at Church of the Holy Name of Mary, Permatang Tinggi from January 10 to May 9

ii) Patrick Hilary Sandnasamy
 Theology Year 4, St Peter's College Major Seminary, Kuching
 Pastoral at Church of Sacred Heart of Jesus, Kulim from January 16 Jan to May 15

iii) Ron Fernandez Sandanasamy
 Theology Year 3, St Peter's College Major Seminary, Kuching
 Pastoral at Church of the Holy Rosary, Kuala Lumpur from January 2 to May 2

iv) Melvin Dawson Michael Dass
 Theology Year 3, St Peter's College Major Seminary, Kuching
 Pastoral at Church of the Sacred Heart, Kampar from January 2 to May 2

v) Leon James Gautier
 Theology Year 2, St Peter's College Major

Seminary, Kuching
 Pastoral at Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Kangar from January 3 to February 3

vi) Mark Edward Calady
 Theology Year 2, St Peter's College Major Seminary, Kuching
 Pastoral at Church of Christ the King, Sungai Petani from January 2 to February 2

vii) Dennis Raj Rasu
 Theology Year 1, St Peter's College Major Seminary, Kuching

viii) Vincent Yip Kar Chun
 Philosophy Year 1, College General Major Seminary, Penang
 Pastoral at Church of St Michael, Ipoh from January 3 to February 3

ix) Daniel Anthony Isak
 Philosophy Year 1, College General Major Seminary, Penang
 Pastoral at Church of St Mary, Tapah from January 1 to February 1

6. Caritas Malaysia Announces New Board Members

Caritas Malaysia is pleased to announce its new Board Members, effective January 1, 2025, for a two-year term: Ms Anne Lasimbang, Dr Francis Loh, Fr Alvin Ng, Ms Joyce Wong, Mr Joachim Xavier and Ms Sarah Chou. This renewal of leadership marks a significant moment in our collective journey to advance the social mission of the Church in Malaysia, rooted in the values of love, compassion, and justice. My blessings to the new team and heartfelt thanks to the outgoing members for their service.

7. Penang Diocesan Lenten Campaign 2025 Formation

Caritas Penang Lenten team will be

organising a briefing for the Love Squad / Parish Lenten Campaign Coordinators on the following dates and venue. (<https://bit.ly/49ZqnyG>)

8. Participation in the Jubilee of the World of Communication and Conference

I am pleased to share that Daniel Roy, Chairman of the Episcopal Commission for Social Communication of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei and Head of Social Communication of the Diocese, will represent us at two significant events in the Vatican:

a) The Jubilee of the World of Communication (January 24 - 26, 2025), part of the larger Jubilee celebrations.

b) The International Conference of Presidents of Episcopal Communication Commissions and Directors of National Communication Offices (January 27-29, 2025).

On another note, Alvinus Bryan has been selected by the Dicastery for Communication to participate in initiatives for young professional communicators during this Jubilee.

Let us pray for their fruitful participation.

9. Logo Design Contest for Asian Mission Congress 2025

I invite you to participate in the Asian Mission Congress 2025 Logo Design Contest. Submit your design by February 15. For more details, please refer to the poster. (<https://bit.ly/4h0vLDR>)

Sebastian Francis
Cardinal Sebastian Francis

Celebrating Christmas with the Kelantan Catholic community

Serena Jonius

KOTA BHARU, Kelantan: The bishop of Penang, Cardinal Sebastian Francis, celebrated a meaningful and joyous Christmas at the Church of Our Lady of Fatima of the Holy Rosary. The celebration included Mass, the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism and Confirmation, and the rectification of marriage, marking a spiritually enriching occasion for the Catholic community in Kelantan.

Joining the Cardinal were Sr Florence Nemesis, FSIC, from the Diocesan BM Apostolate, Bro Francis Xavier Gasper of Montfort Boys Town, Shah Alam, and Serena Jonius from the Penang Diocesan Youth Network (PDYN). Also present were Sr Angela Wong, Sr Mary Anne Fletcher, and Sr Regina Ho of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM), whose convent in Kota Bharu has been a cornerstone of Catholic mission work for 62 years.



The Catholic community in Kota Bharu.

The FMM Sisters are deeply involved in local community services, including pre-school education, parish work, home visits, outreach to university students, counselling, spiritual direction, and catechism for the Bahasa Malaysia-speaking faithful. Sr Angela shared that approximately 400 faithful attended the Christmas celebrations, which featured fellowship meals, gift exchanges, singing, and dancing. She expressed heartfelt gratitude to the parishioners for their unwavering support during the festive season.

Sr Florence highlighted the

vibrant spirit of the community, noting how the parishioners' prayers, worship, and songs brought the true meaning of Christmas to life. "The 'Newborn Baby, the Emmanuel' was born in everyone's hearts," she remarked, encapsulating the essence of the celebrations.

Bro Gasper, a Gabrielite Brother and co-founder of Montfort Sabah, shared his joy at reconnecting with former Montfort students now residing in Kota Bharu. He also cherished the opportunity to bond with the East Malaysian community,

which holds a special place in his heart.

Youth members from East Malaysia, Aan Natalie Handry and Edvern Mobik Risel, shared their festive experiences. Aan expressed gratitude for the welcoming community that made Christmas full of warmth and good vibes. She especially enjoyed singing Borneo songs during karaoke sessions, which reminded her of home.

Edvern, celebrating his second Christmas away from home, expressed his delight in attending the midnight and Christmas day

Masses. He appreciated the vibrant performances by children and adults, as well as the recognition of their youth activities on *Bernama TV*. "It's a wonderful way to end a challenging year with joy and celebration," he said.

Joseph Wang, Chairperson of the Parish Pastoral Council, expressed his appreciation to Cardinal Sebastian for the pastoral visit and for celebrating Christmas with the Kelantan Catholic community. The parish serves Catholics across Kota Bharu, Jeli, Tanah Merah, Kuala Krai, and university campuses such as University Malaysia Kelantan and University Sains Malaysia (USM) Health Campus, along with police and army personnel, many of whom hail from Sabah and Sarawak.

The Christmas celebration served as a testament to the strength and unity of the Catholic community in Kelantan, fostering joy and spiritual renewal during this sacred season.

Filipino community uphold Simbang Gabi tradition

KUALA LUMPUR: About 300 Filipino migrants in Malaysia braved the early hours to faithfully uphold their cherished Christmas tradition of *Simbang Gabi* — a novena of nine pre-dawn Masses — from December 16, 2024.

Despite the challenges of waking up as early as 2.00am, navigating empty streets, adjusting work schedules, and sacrificing sleep, the Filipino community gathered at the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist with steadfast devotion. Many also prepared traditional Filipino delicacies such as *biko* (sticky rice), *arroz caldo* (porridge), and *puto* (steamed rice cakes), to share with fellow attendees after Mass, before hurrying off to work.

Parish priest Fr Gerard Theraviam, who presided over the weekday 6.30am Masses, expressed his joy at the migrants' unwavering faith, noting their strong attendance. On weekends, attendance doubled, with over 600 Filipinos joining the 8.00am Masses.

Lyne Nacino, coordinator of Tahanang Pilipino, the Filipino ministry at the parish, reflected on the spiritual and communal significance of the tradition. "*Simbang Gabi* became an opportunity for Filipinos far from family and loved ones to walk together as one family of Christ — loving God and one another," she said. Tahanang Pilipino organised the devotions in collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines and various Filipino community groups.

Ambassador Maria Angela A. Ponce led the embassy staff and their families at the inaugural Mass, which was assigned to the embassy.



The Filipino community having their meal after Mass.

Each subsequent day saw different Filipino groups taking responsibility for Scripture readings, offertory, and light breakfast preparation. Participating groups included the Fire and Rescue Association Philippines; Kinship Humanity Aid and Rescue Team; Filipino Malaysian Cultural Sports and Welfare Society; The Filipino Helping Hands Malaysia; BIBAK Kuala Lumpur Malaysia; Fruittigies Helping Hands; El Shaddai KL Chapter, and Tahanang Pilipino.

Local parishioners also joined in, especially for breakfast, fostering a sense of community. Deacon Jonathan Rao, who assisted at all *Simbang Gabi* Masses, was moved by the palpable unity and fellowship among the participants.

The final day of the novena, Christmas Eve, was marked by a celebratory Mass presided over by assistant parish priest, Fr Ferdinand Magimay, with Fr Gerard as concelebrant. Ambassador Maria expressed her gratitude to Fr Gerard, the parish, and the Filipino community for their

efforts in making the celebration a success. A medley of Tagalog Christmas hymns filled the cathedral, uniting the congregation in joyful song.

Beyond the novena, Filipino participants extended their efforts to help with the parish *gotong royong* (communal work), cleaning and decorating the cathedral for Christmas. They also completed a large parol (star-shaped lantern) to symbolise the Star of Bethlehem, which was placed at the cathedral's main entrance as a welcoming sign for all.

When asked about their commitment, three Filipino friends shared, "We, like everyone else, wanted to complete the Christmas Novena." For many, their devotion to *Simbang Gabi* is not just a spiritual practice but a meaningful expression of the sacrifices they bear for their families back home.

Fr Gerard encouraged the Filipino community to continue attending weekday morning Masses, acknowledging the joy and unity they brought to the parish during the Christmas season. **Bob Ho**



Legion of Mary annual general reunion celebrates Unity and Love

PETALING JAYA: The rooftop hall of the Church of St Ignatius (SIC) became a gathering place for 460 Legionaries from various churches on December 29, 2024, for their Annual General Reunion under the theme *Unity and Love*.

The event was graced by Fr Thomas Koo, CDD, parish priest of SIC, and Fr Paul Cheong, OFM Cap, spiritual director of the Kuala Lumpur Regia. A special highlight of the day was the celebration of Fr Thomas' birthday, adding a personal touch to the gathering.

The Legion of Mary, known for its hierarchical structure with headquarters in Dublin, Ireland, sees its highest level in Malaysia as the Regia. In his opening address, Regia President Ignatius Wang lauded the Legion's growth and improvement, citing St John Paul II's reminder that all baptised Christians have a vocation to be apostles, and holy. "This calling can be fulfilled through various organisations, and the Legion

of Mary remains one of the most effective ways," he said. Ignatius also emphasised the importance of the Legion Handbook, penned by founder Frank Duff, as a guide for members' activities.

Fr Paul, in his keynote address, highlighted a booklet titled *8 Habits of Effective Christian Living*, published by the Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras. He urged the Legionaries to adopt and promote these habits in their evangelisation efforts. "Be passionate and on fire for the Lord in all that you do," he exhorted.

A special segment of the event honoured 11 long-serving members who have contributed more than 40 years of service to the Legion. The members were presented with spiritual bouquets.

The gathering showcased the unity, dedication, and faithfulness of the Legionaries, affirming their commitment to living out their apostolic calling in service to the Church. **Peter Pereira**

Jubilee year begins in Beijing with call to faith, hope, and joy

CHINA: The Diocese of Beijing officially launched its Jubilee Year on the evening of December 28, 2024, with an opening ceremony at the Cathedral of Saint Saviour.

Presided over by Ordinary Bishop Joseph Li Shan and Coadjutor Bishop Matthew Zhen Xuebin, the event drew priests, nuns, and numerous lay faithful who gathered to mark this significant occasion in the capital of the People's Republic of China.

The ceremony featured the public reading of *Spes non confundit*, the papal bull proclaiming the Jubilee, followed by a procession through the Holy Door while singing the Prayer of the Saints.

The Jubilee Year is dedicated to the theological virtue of hope and coincides with a special Year of the Family, underscoring the diocese's dual focus on spiritual renewal and familial strength.

Guidelines for observing the Jubilee are outlined in the document *Pilgrims of Hope and Builders of Peace*, which draws from the papal bull and Pope Francis' letter on commemorating saints in local churches.

Key initiatives include the establishment of a "Day of Saints," beginning Nov. 9, 2025, which will honour saints, blessed, venerables,

and servants of God with ties to Beijing.

Among those remembered are Blessed Odorico da Pordenone, Blessed James Zhou Wenmo, and Venerable Matteo Ricci.

The diocese has also designated nine churches and shrines as destinations for Jubilee pilgrimages, emphasising the spirit of missionary conversion.

Reflecting on the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, the diocese envisions a Church "open to all and for all," where parishes welcome and serve with fervour and joy.

Other Chinese dioceses joined in Jubilee celebrations on Sunday, Dec 29, the Feast of the Holy Family. In Hangzhou, Bishop Joseph Yang Yongqiang urged the faithful to "treasure this Jubilee" and to grow in faith, hope, and charity.

He expressed his prayerful hope that the Jubilee would lead those who have lost their way to find it again, saying, "Light, peace and joy will accompany us on this Jubilee journey."

In Taiyuan, Bishop Paul Meng Ningyou reminded the faithful that "our greatest hope is in God," while Bishop Peter Ding Lingbin of Lu'an Diocese encouraged a "pilgrimage of hope, guided by the glorious Cross of Christ."



Mass at the Cathedral of Saint Saviour, Beijing. (Fides photo)

The Jubilee message resonated deeply among ethnic minority groups in Yunnan and Guizhou provinces, where traditional costumes and native music highlighted the celebrations.

In Guiyang, Bishop Paul Xiao Zejiang led a procession to the cathedral, which featured life-size cardboard cutouts of Pope Francis.

The bishop called on participants to "actively participate in the Jubilee with faith, al-

lowing hope to shine in their hearts and in the world."

In Handan, Hebei Province, Bishop Joseph Sun Jigen presided over a solemn Jubilee celebration.

The diocesan Vicar Xu Shuwen elaborated on the spirit of the Jubilee, encouraging the faithful to embrace the special conditions for obtaining the plenary indulgence offered during this time of grace. **LiCAS News**

Church's role in Bangladesh's year of turmoil and hope for renewal

DHAKA: Bangladesh experienced a tumultuous 2024, marked by a mass uprising that ended a 15-year autocratic regime. Amid the violence and subsequent political transition, the Catholic Church played a significant role in advocating for justice, peace, and reforms.

The student-led protests that overthrew Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on August 5, 2024, highlighted deep societal discontent. The unrest, fueled by grievances over government job quotas and democratic suppression, claimed 858 lives and left over 11,500 injured. In the aftermath, lawlessness erupted, with minorities, including Christians, facing targeted attacks. Catholic schools and educators were also pressured amid accusations of political affiliations.

The interim government, headed by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, has since initiated institutional reforms. Christian leaders seized this moment to advocate for greater



People holding national flags march along the street to celebrate the 53rd Victory Day, which marks the end of a bitter nine-month war of independence from Pakistan in Dhaka on December 16, 2024. ([ucanews.com/Munir Uz Zaman](https://ucanews.com/Munir_Uz_Zaman))

inclusion and protection of minority rights. Archbishop Bejoy N. D'Cruze of Dhaka led delegations urging the government to include Christian representatives in reform commis-

sions and highlighted the Catholic Church's contributions to education, healthcare, and social services.

The Church, which runs over 1,000

schools, 75 hospitals, and numerous orphanages and training institutes, also faces internal calls for reform. Christian financial organisations, accused of mismanagement, have prompted discussions about creating a more participatory and transparent Church. These efforts align with the broader Synodal vision of unity, accountability, and service.

Archbishop Kevin S. Randall, the Apostolic Nuncio, engaged with Islamic scholars to foster interfaith dialogue, underscoring the Church's commitment to peacebuilding. Meanwhile, the rise of political Islam poses challenges to the secular fabric of the nation, though Yunus has reassured citizens of his commitment to democracy and inclusivity.

As Bangladesh rebuilds from a year of upheaval, the Catholic Church's advocacy for justice, education, and unity reflects its enduring role in shaping a hopeful and inclusive future for the nation. **ucanews.com**

Indonesian clergy face challenges of relevance

JAKARTA: Pope Francis' historic visit to Jakarta from September 3 to 6, 2024, marked a pivotal moment for Indonesia's Catholic Church. With Catholics constituting just three per cent of the country's 275 million population, the visit — over three decades after St John Paul II's in 1989 — was a rare and cherished occasion. Under the theme *Faith, Brotherhood, and Mercy*, the visit highlighted solidarity with the marginalised

in the predominantly Muslim nation.

The Indonesian Bishops' Conference emphasised the papal visit's call for respect for human dignity, dialogue, and peaceful problem-solving. However, post-visit, the Church faced challenges in translating this vision into action.

Before Pope Francis' visit, Catholic leaders were criticised for their silence on socio-ecological issues affecting remote communities.



Indonesian bishops with Pope Francis at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption in Jakarta, Indonesia. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Discontent grew among marginalised groups and younger Catholics who felt neglected. Scandals, such as a June incident involving a priest from Flores caught in a moral failing, further eroded trust. Calls for reform were loud, but changes in hierarchical attitudes remained elusive.

Government policies promoting rapid investment in natural resource sectors under President Joko Widodo and successor Prabowo Subianto heightened tensions. National strategic projects often bypassed regulations, causing land disputes and ecological damage. The Catholic hierarchy was criticised for its muted or supportive stance toward such policies, perceived as neglecting the plight of the poor.

For example, in Flores, a geothermal project faced resistance due to adverse impacts on local communities. Protests in Poco Leok escalated into violence, yet the Ruteng Diocese remained silent, prompting questions about the Church's allegiance. Similar resistance arose in Papua, where Archbishop Petrus Canisius Mandagi supported a contentious

rice field project, drawing backlash from his congregation.

In response, grassroots movements, including indigenous priests and laity, rallied against perceived clerical indifference. Prayer events, such as the Rosary Marathon and Way of the Cross, became symbolic acts of resistance. Catholics increasingly criticized clergy, empowered by digital platforms that facilitated open dialogue and accountability.

An incident involving Bishop Paskalis Bruno Syukur of Bogor declining a cardinal's red hat exemplified the shifting dynamics. Social media speculation underscored growing demands for transparency and relevance from Church leaders.

The events of 2024 reveal a shifting paradigm within Indonesia's Catholic Church. Once seen as a compliant community, Catholics now openly demand accountability from their leaders. If the Church fails to address the concerns of marginalised communities with compassion and action, it risks losing its relevance, even as grassroots faith remains its cornerstone. **ucanews.com**

In an emotional ceremony on Christmas Eve, Pope Francis opened the Holy Door, thus marking the Grand Opening of the Jubilee of Hope, an event that evokes both the biblical tradition and the present of the Church in the context of the Synod on Synodality. This article seeks to explore the meaning of the Jubilee in Scripture and how this rich tradition connects with the synodal dynamics of the Church today, offering spiritual and pastoral guidance for rediscovering hope as the driving force of Christian life.

The Jubilee in the Bible: Freedom and Restoration

In the Bible, the concept of the Jubilee Year or Year of Rejoicing is specifically mentioned in three main passages of the Old Testament. These are:

Leviticus 25:8-17

This describes in detail how the Jubilee Year should be celebrated: every 50 years, with the proclamation of freedom, the restitution of property and the resting of the land. It is the central passage on this practice.

Leviticus 27:16-24

This text regulates how lands dedicated to the Lord during the Jubilee Year could be redeemed or returned to the original owners, reflecting the importance of equity and justice.

Numbers 36:4

The Jubilee is referred to as the time when inherited properties are redistributed, ensuring that lands remain within the original families and tribes.

Symbolic or indirect references

The Jubilee Year is also related to the concept of the “year of grace” or liberation, which is mentioned symbolically in other texts, such as:

Isaiah 61:1-2: “Proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” This passage, while not directly mentioning the Jubilee, reflects its themes of freedom and restoration.

Luke 4:16-21: Jesus quotes Isaiah 61 and presents himself as the fulfillment of the “year of grace,” linking the concept of Jubilee with his saving mission.

Although the most specific passages are in the Mosaic Law, the theme of Jubilee permeates all of Scripture as an expression of God’s love, justice, and mercy.



A biblical and synodal path towards the renewal of faith



As we said earlier, the concept of jubilee has deep roots in the Bible. In the book of Leviticus (25:8-55), the jubilee year is established as a time of freedom and restoration, marked by the remission of debts, the liberation of slaves, and the return of lands to their original owners. This holy year, celebrated every fifty years, was not only a religious mandate, but also a social instrument to restore justice and equity in the community of Israel.

Jesus takes up this tradition in His public ministry. In the Gospel of Luke (4:16-21), while reading from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, Jesus proclaims: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.” This “year of favour” represents not only a liturgical event, but a permanent invitation to the

spiritual and social transformation that Christ brings to the world.

The Jubilee of Hope in the Framework of the Synod on Synodality

The celebration of the Jubilee of Hope in 2025 takes on special significance in the context of the Synod on Synodality, a process that seeks to renew communion, participation and mission in the Church. Pope Francis has insisted that this synod is not a simple event, but a journey of discernment and mutual listening inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The connection between the jubilee and synodality lies in their common essence: both are called to renewal. Just as the biblical jubilee invites us to liberate, reconcile and restore, the synodal process seeks to heal divisions, open new spaces for dialogue and reorient the mission of the Church towards a fuller communion with God and among the faithful.

Hope becomes the central axis that unites

both realities. In a world marked by uncertainty, individualism and global crises, the Jubilee of Hope reminds us that the Christian faith is profoundly eschatological: we walk together towards the Kingdom of God, where justice, peace and joy will be complete.

A Spiritual and Pastoral Itinerary

The Jubilee of Hope invites all the faithful to live an authentic conversion of heart. Inspired by the Scriptures and guided by the magisterium of Pope Francis, we can identify three key aspects for this time of grace:

• **Listening and community discernment:** In the spirit of the synod, we are called to be a Church that listens, especially to the most vulnerable. This requires spaces open to dialogue and shared prayer, where community discernment is the main method for making decisions.

• **Restoration and social justice:** Following the example of the biblical jubilee, this holy year challenges us to work for social justice, reconciliation and solidarity. This includes concrete actions in favour of the marginalised, such as debt forgiveness or sustainable development projects.

• **Renewal of hope in Christian life:** Christian hope is not a passive expectation, but a transforming force that impels us to build a more humane and more holy world. The Jubilee calls us to proclaim the Gospel with joy, even in the midst of difficulties.

Conclusion

The Jubilee of Hope, celebrated in the context of the Synod on Synodality, is not just a commemorative event, but an opportunity for the Church to deepen her identity and mission. By looking to the biblical roots of the Jubilee and by embracing the synodal dynamic, we are called to renew our commitment to be a Church on the move, marked by hope, communion and conversion.

In the words of Pope Francis: “Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts” (Rom 5:5). May this Jubilee be a true year of grace, a time of freedom and reconciliation, and a celebration of the hope that never dies. **Ricardo Grzona, Exaudi**

Examination of Conscience for the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025

The Jubilee Year 2025, centred on hope, invites us to reflect on our relationship with God, with others and with creation. This examination of conscience, illuminated by the Synod’s call to walk together as a synodal Church, seeks to help us deepen our faith, our communion with others and our mission in the world.

I. Reflection on my relationship with God

Hope in God

- Do I fully trust in God’s promise of salvation, even in times of difficulty?
- Do I seek to strengthen my faith and hope through prayer and the sacraments?

- Have I neglected my participation in the Sunday Eucharist and in times of personal prayer?

Listening to the Word

- Do I strive to listen to the Word of God and put it into practice in my daily life?
- Do I allow the Word of God to illuminate my decisions and guide my path?

Gratitude and praise

- Do I thank God for daily blessings, acknowledging His presence in my life?
- Have I been indifferent or ungrateful to the gifts I receive?

II. Reflection on my relationship with others

Walking together as a community

- Do I value and actively participate in my parish or church community?
- Have I been welcoming and understanding to those who have different opinions or experiences than mine?

Synodality: Listening and Dialogue

- Have I listened carefully and without prejudice to the people around me?
- Have I promoted dialogue and reconciliation in my family, community or work?

Love and service

- Have I shown compassion and solidarity with the poor, the marginalised and the needy?
- Have I acted fairly, avoiding all forms of discrimination or exclusion?

III. Reflection on my relationship with creation

Guardians of Creation

- Am I aware of my responsibility to care for the environment as an expression of my faith?
- Have I adopted habits that promote sustainability and reduce my ecological impact?

Hope for future generations

- Have I worked to leave a better world for future generations?
- Have I promoted a culture of care, respect and hope in my environment?

IV. Reflection on my mission in the world

Christian testimony

- Have I witnessed Christian hope in my surroundings, especially in times of crisis?
- Am I ashamed of my faith or do I live it with courage and joy?

Commitment to justice and peace

- Have I contributed to building a more just and peaceful world?
- Have I been indifferent to injustices or have I passively tolerated them?

Evangelism

- Do I share the hope of the Gospel with those around me?
- Do I strive to be an instrument of unity in the Church and in the world?

Final Prayer

Lord, source of our hope, help me to walk with you and with my brothers and sisters in a spirit of communion, sharing and mission. Forgive my sins and strengthen my faith, so that I may be a faithful witness of your love in the world. May this Jubilee Year renew my heart and inspire me to live with joy and hope, always trusting in your mercy. Amen.

Ricardo Grzona, Exaudi



(file photo)

25 years ago, John Paul II led us across the Threshold of Hope

Twenty-five years ago, the Great Jubilee opened with two historic moments at St Peter's — the opening of the Holy Door on Christmas Eve and the appearance of the Holy Father at his window above the square on New Year's Eve. Both moments are etched in my memory — the former for its silence, the second for its sound.

When the clock struck midnight on New Year's Eve 1999, I was in St Peter's Square with cherished mentors and friends from the Tertio Millennio Seminar, which I had attended in 1994 in Krakow, Poland. Among them were Michael Novak, Fr Richard John Neuhaus and George Weigel, who had just published his monumental biography of *Pope John Paul II: Witness to Hope*.

We had had a festive dinner at a local restaurant — Armando's, a simple enough place that occasionally earned the custom of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (who, as Benedict XVI, would later pass away on New Year's Eve 2022). My brother had come from Canada to be on hand for the new millennium in Rome.

In St Peter's Square, the Holy Father customarily appears at his window at noon on Sundays for the Angelus. This time, he came at midnight for an extraordinary *urbi et orbi* ("to the city of Rome and to the world") address and blessing. The crowded square was electric with excitement. When John Paul appeared, less than six months' shy of his 80th birthday — the old man having completed his mission of leading the Church into the third millennium — there was jubilation.

What would he say?

"The clock of history strikes an important hour," the Holy Father began, expressing good wishes and speaking for only a minute

or two.

He chose words from the lighting of the Paschal candle at the Easter vigil. Jesus Christ is the true Light that dispels the darkness of the night — and of this night of "Passover" from the second millennium to the third.

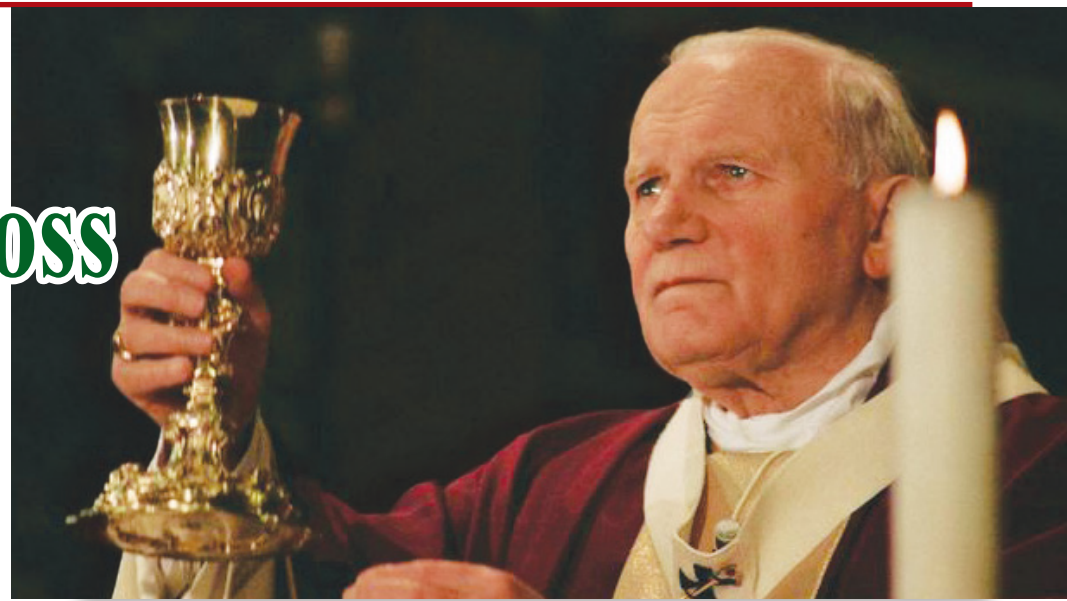
"Christ, yesterday, today and forever," he said. "To him belong time and the ages. To him be glory and dominion forever. Amen!"

The first papal words of the third millennium were, in effect, "Christ is Risen." Jesus is the Lord of history! It was a solemn, biblical and liturgical blessing in the first moments of the year 2000.

And then it got very loud, very quickly. As per local custom, pious revelry included firecrackers being set off, in the midst of a packed St Peter's Square. The noise of the excited crowd, the noise of the fireworks, the noise of those shouting to each other to get away from the explosives — it was quite a din as we fled out of the square. We repaired to higher ground on the Janiculum Hill to watch the impressive and festive official fireworks of the city of Rome over its millennial skyline.

A few nights earlier, there had been a great silence — loud in its own way. John Paul came to the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica at 11.00pm on Christmas Eve. The Great Jubilee 2000 would begin with his opening the door before midnight Mass. The 2,000th anniversary of the Nativity had arrived. I was with a few journalists inside the darkened basilica, in a direct line on the other side of the door. When it opened, we would be the first to see the Holy Father on the other side.

About a half hour before John Paul arrived, the immense crowd inside went completely silent. The usual murmur that accompanies



a congregation of thousands ceased entirely. I knew then the expression "deafening silence." This was the first time I had ever heard silence as being loud. I have heard it only one other time since, at Westminster Hall in London, when Britain's great and good gathered to hear Pope Benedict XVI speak at the place where St Thomas More was condemned to death.

Those in St Peter's knew that a great moment in history was at hand. Not only the Great Jubilee, but a Jubilee inaugurated by this great Pope — the Pope who had changed history himself and survived gunshots and growing infirmity to lead the Church to the year 2000. John Paul the Great was meeting the Great Jubilee.

He had spoken of it in his first encyclical in 1979. In 1994, he had called it the "key" to understanding his whole pontificate. And now, here it was. Here he was.

"All are waiting to see the Pope who began his papacy with the cry, 'Open wide the doors to Christ,' personally open the Holy Door," wrote the papal master of ceremonies at the time, Bishop Piero Marini. "All are waiting to see the author of *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* himself cross the threshold of the Great Jubilee."

At the moment of the opening, no one wondered what John Paul would say. Words were not necessary. The door opened. The aged Pope was helped to kneel and, wrapped around his pastoral staff for support, he prayed in silence. The prolonged silence was eloquence enough.

Rising, he walked — slowly — the entire length of the basilica to the altar. It would be the last time he would do so. He had run the race; he had kept the faith. After that night, he would use a wheeled platform and, in time, a special wheelchair that enabled him to celebrate Holy Mass at the altar.

Between the silence of Christmas Eve and the noise of New Year's Eve, the Holy Father went to his cathedral church, the Basilica of St John Lateran, on Christmas evening. The massive doors of the Lateran Basilica are taken from the ancient Roman Forum. The Lateran Holy Door is a different one, but those imperial doors, now part of a Catholic basilica, tell a history of their own.

After that jubilant ceremony, my brother and I and a few friends found ourselves on the other side of Rome on Christmas night. No public transit. Impossible to get a taxi. So we walked across the Eternal City 2,000 years after eternity entered time.

It was a long walk through quiet streets. We found a restaurant open, one of the few. *L'eau Vive* ("Living Water," from John 4:10), run by Missionary Workers of the Immaculate, a French Carmelite community. We had a festive Christmas dinner, interrupted only by the reading of Christmas Gospels and the carrying from table to table of the Baby Jesus for veneration. That was not optional.

Twenty-five years later, in a millennium that is still in its first years, those memories remain vivid — silence and sound at the beginning of the Great Jubilee. **Fr Raymond J. de Souza, Register**

Leadership tips for the New Year: How to live a life of service

The heroes of great epics are often celebrated for their leadership and remarkable transformations. These characters resonate in our hearts, embodying the universal desire for greatness, impact and change.

This desire is inscribed on the human heart, and as a leader who has mentored thousands of young Catholic leaders over the years, I have witnessed many individuals discover their calling and strive for greatness. St Catherine of Siena once said, "If you become who you are meant to be, you will set the world on fire." Regardless of age or circumstances, anyone can uncover their potential. When this self-discovery occurs, people become passionate, igniting those around them with God's love.

But how does self-knowledge relate to self-gift, and how can understanding ourselves lead to a life of service?

The Call to Self-Knowledge

God has endowed us with unique gifts, strengths, experiences and desires, all part of his divine plan. To become who we are meant to be, we must embark on a journey of self-discovery, looking inward through prayer and reflection.

Archbishop Luis Martinez expressed this beautifully in his book, *The Sanctifier*, "The idea of reproducing Jesus is so sublime that no one can fulfill it adequately ... but God has willed that each soul should reproduce him in its way." Each soul reflects a different image of Jesus, showcasing divine perfection and unity.

This journey of self-reflection leads to the discovery of strengths, allowing a magnanimous vision for life to develop. Self-knowledge is a lifelong process and a crucial step towards self-gift. It helps identify strengths while also revealing areas for growth. The challenge is to leverage strengths and cultivate these areas of development.

The Joy of Self-Mastery

Proverbs states, "Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings" (Proverbs 22:29). This call to excellence is accompanied by self-mastery. Self-mastery

involves the intentional use of our gifts and finding ways to strengthen our weaknesses. For instance, a leader I know recognised his talent for coaching but sought further improvement by enrolling in a coaching program and dedicating time to developing his skills.

Improving weaker areas can be challenging, but with a growth mindset, skill development is attainable through deliberate practice. It's also beneficial to consider the Body of Christ; we can think of "who, not how." Who in your community possesses the gifts that complement your weaknesses? The more one understands one's strengths and weaknesses, the better-equipped one is to help others flourish.

Magnanimous Vision

We aren't called to remain solely in personal development mode; Christ-like leadership is rooted in relationships. As

beings created by God, who is Relationship, we desire bonds and connections with others. St John Paul II stated, "Being a person means striving towards self-realisation ... which can only be achieved through a sincere gift of self" (*Mulieris Dignitatem*). Self-gift is the ultimate form of love, as leading others requires us to pour ourselves out for them.

St Paul noted that Jesus did not "count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:6-7). By imitating Jesus, we become who we are meant to be, and in doing so, we awaken the particular magnanimous vision God has placed within our hearts.

Embracing this journey allows us to fulfill our potential and inspire those around us, ultimately becoming a light in the world that reflects Christ's love and grace. This transformative process invites us to live out our unique visions and contribute to transforming the world and spreading God's kingdom in every part of society. **Nathan Stanley, Register**

Nathan Stanley is the senior director of talent and leadership development with FOCUS.



In Memory of Archbishop Emeritus Nicholas Chia

Promoter of interfaith harmony

The Catholic community of Singapore bid farewell to Archbishop Emeritus Nicholas Chia, who passed away on December 17, 2024, at the age of 86.

As the first Singapore-born clergyman to lead the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore, Archbishop Nicholas' life was a testament to faith, humility, and a steadfast commitment to serving others. A humble servant leader and a tireless advocate for interfaith harmony, his legacy of faith, compassion, and inclusion continues to inspire the Catholic community and beyond.

Several prominent Singaporean leaders and community members paid tribute to Archbishop Emeritus Nicholas Chia, highlighting his legacy as a humble servant leader, advocate for interfaith harmony, and champion of humanitarian causes.

President Tharman Shanmugaratnam described him as a "humble servant leader" and "people's priest," who prioritised the vulnerable and advanced humanitarian efforts through Caritas.

Prime Minister Lawrence Wong lauded his unwavering faith, humility, and compassion, which enriched many lives, while Senior Minister Lee Hsien Loong praised his clear and steady leadership during sensitive matters of racial and religious harmony.

Minister Edwin Tong remembered Archbishop Nicholas as a cornerstone of interfaith harmony and an advocate of inclusion, emphasising his efforts to weave

understanding between Singapore's diverse communities.

Social service professional Solomon Tan highlighted the archbishop's pioneering role in fostering unity across races and religions, aspiring to emulate his call for inclusion.

Born on April 8, 1938, Archbishop Nicholas grew up in a Catholic family in a simple kampong setting. His early years were shaped by religious mentors, including the late Fr Francis Chan and Brother Noel, who inspired his vocation. Educated at Holy Innocents' English School (later Montfort School), he entered the Minor Seminary in Ponggol, embarking on a journey of rigorous spiritual and academic formation.

Ordained as a priest on January 26, 1964, at the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd, Archbishop Nicholas began his ministry as an assistant parish priest at the Church of Saints Peter and Paul. Over the years, he served at several parishes, including the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour and the Church of the Holy Cross, where he remained for 21 years, building lasting relationships with parishioners and fostering a spirit of mutual trust and faith.

Archbishop Nicholas' dedication to his parishioners earned him the affectionate title of "the people's priest." He was known for his unwavering focus on the vulnerable and his advocacy for humanitarian causes through organisations like Caritas Humanitarian Aid and Relief. He often reflected, "A priest

must be a man totally for others, like the Good Shepherd," underscoring his mission to connect personally with the people he served.

A hallmark of Archbishop Nicholas' ministry was his obedience and willingness to embrace the Church's needs. His leadership extended beyond parish ministry. He founded the Singapore Pastoral Institute in 1978, serving as its director until 1990. In 1995, he was appointed chancellor and procurator of the archdiocese, overseeing clergy affairs and financial matters. His humility and willingness to obey the needs of the Church were defining traits of his ministry, reflecting the Blessed Virgin Mary's disposition: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to Your Word."

In 2001, he succeeded Archbishop Gregory Yong to become the Archbishop of Singapore. His leadership was marked by his vision of interfaith harmony and inclusion, recognising Singapore as a vibrant tapestry of cultures and beliefs. "He worked tirelessly to weave threads of understanding and love between communities," noted one tribute, emphasising his role as a cornerstone of interfaith unity.

His emphasis on simplicity and detachment from materialism extended even to his leadership style, always approachable and collaborative.

After stepping down as Archbishop in

2013, Archbishop Emeritus Nicholas resided at the Catholic Spirituality Centre before moving to St Theresa's Home following a fall in 2014, where he remained until his demise.

Reflecting on his life, Archbishop Nicholas often expressed gratitude for the journey that shaped him—from his formative years in the kampong to his pastoral and academic pursuits. He often emphasised simplicity, humility, and obedience as hallmarks of the priesthood. He cautioned against materialism and the trappings of luxury, advocating instead for a life rooted in service and spiritual detachment.

Archbishop Emeritus Nicholas Chia's contributions to interfaith dialogue, humanitarian causes, and fostering harmony have left an indelible mark on Singapore. His legacy of compassion, simplicity, and unity serves as a lasting inspiration, reminding the faithful of the profound impact of a life devoted to God and the service of others.

Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore/Agencies



The life of Sr Jane Koh, a shining beacon of faith and unwavering dedication, came to a close on December 25, 2024. Passing on Christmas Day, she left a profound reminder of her life's mission to reflect the love and light of the Lord. Sr Jane, a Franciscan Missionary of Mary (FMM), celebrated her diamond jubilee in 2017, marking 60 years of selfless devotion, tireless service, and boundless love that continues to inspire countless souls.

Born on September 10, 1937, and baptised as Marguerite Kim Gaik (Golden Jade), Sr Jane Koh was the youngest of nine children of Peter and Maria Koh. From a young age, she felt the gentle yet persistent call of the Lord, leading her to dedicate her life to His vineyard.

At just six years old, a moment of divine inspiration struck when she saw two Infant Jesus sisters visiting the sick. The simple act of showing God's love to those in need ignited a flame within her heart. She declared, "I want to be a nun just like them when I grow up!" This was the first touch of God's calling, a calling she would revisit throughout her life.

Her teenage years were filled with church and school activities. Despite a deep, internal struggle, she often whispered, "Not yet Lord, not yet," as if pleading for more time. But God's plan was steadfast. Encouraged by Fr Leon Diffon, a family friend, she embraced her calling with courage and grace.

In 1956, Sr Jane entered the Franciscan Missionary of Mary as a postulant, a decision that would shape her future. A year later, she took the religious habit as a novice in Singapore, receiving the name Sr M Jane Christina, fondly known as Sr Jane. By September 1962, she made her final profession at Assumption Church, PJ, solidifying her lifelong commitment to God.

Sr Jane's dedication to education was unparalleled. As a young missionary, she spent a few years in the East Coast of Malaysia, especially in Assunta Primary School, Kuantan. Appointed headmistress at

Remembering the work of a true missionary



Archbishop Julian Leow celebrating the funeral Mass of Sr Jane Koh FMM.

Assunta Primary School PJ after a two-year course at St Joseph's Teacher Training College in Sydney, she touched countless young lives. Her passion for learning and teaching extended to international stages, attending the FMM chapter in Rome in 1972 and studying at the East Asian Pastoral Institute (EAPI) in Manila in 1974.

Upon her return, she revitalised the pastoral institute, organising formation programmes for the laity and love and life seminars for school leavers. In 1975, she was part of the team that organised the first *Aggiornamento* of the Malaysian Church, bringing renewed vigour and vision to the community.

Her journey continued at St Francis Convent Petaling Jaya in 1979, where she



played a significant role in the Assumption parish. She was instrumental in catechetical formation, RCIA retreats, Confirmation camps, and the Liturgy of the Word for children. Her leadership in the Archdiocese Catechetical Commission and BEC formation further showcased her commitment to faith education.

As an educationist, Sr Jane continued to serve in the school boards, namely, Assunta Primary Schools 1 & 2 in Kuantan and also in Assunta Secondary School. Sr Jane's mission encompassed launching the FMM Lay Associates at Assunta Convent PJ in 2015. Her other contribution includes serving on the board of Assunta Hospital and Assunta

Children Society. Her work left an indelible mark on the community, embodying the love and compassion of Christ.

Charmaine Song, Sr Jane's grandniece, treasures a simple yet transformative teaching from her grand-aunt: "Jesus, I am here; my heart is open." This heartfelt practice, shared over 30 years ago, became a cornerstone of Charmaine's spiritual journey.

Charmaine also recalls her RCIA experience with her husband. "We initially joined another church, but Assumption truly touched us. Sr Jane taught from the heart, not textbooks, which made all the difference."

Debbie Nonis, former president of the Assunta Alumni, highlights Sr Jane's artistic and tech-savvy nature. Whether painting on bottles and canvases or mastering decoupage through online videos, her creativity knew no bounds.

Marianne Rozario of the Assunta Board of Managers admired Sr Jane's relentless dedication. Even days before her passing, she remained actively involved in board affairs, exemplifying her commitment to service.

Fong Chee Peng, current coordinator of the FMM Lay Associates in Kuala Lumpur, credits Sr Jane for her pivotal role in founding the chapter in 2015. Today, the group of 35 members continues to nurture their spirituality under her lasting influence. Fong notes that Sr Jane's love and presence have left an indelible mark, touching hearts even from afar.

As we reflect on Sr Jane's life, we are reminded of the profound impact one dedicated soul can have. Her legacy of faith, education, and unwavering love for the community will continue to inspire future generations. Sr Jane's life was a testament to the enduring call of God and the unwavering response of a true missionary. May she rest in peace, and may her legacy live on through those she touched. **Elvina Fernandez**

Hope, by way of gratitude in the Spirit

St Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, begins with a “song of thanksgiving.” He states, “I give thanks to my God at every remembrance of you, praying always with joy in every prayer for all of you, because of your partnership for the Gospel from the first day until now.” And then he adds, “I am confident, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:3-6)

On Christmas Eve, our Holy Father Pope Francis opened the Jubilee Year which will end at the feast of the Epiphany in 2026. More than 12 months set aside for this pilgrimage of hope. All Christians are identified as Pilgrims of Hope, whether we go to Rome and walk through any of the four main Holy Doors found in Rome (Basilica of St Peter, Cathedral of John Lateran, Papal Basilica of St Mary Major, and the Papal Basilica of St Paul outside the Walls).

The opening of the Jubilee Year of Hope on Christmas Eve ties in well with the mystery of the Incarnation. Through this mystery, God becomes a man through Jesus Christ. He, who is our Hope, dwells among us. Our own hope, too, must be made incarnate. It must be given flesh and allowed to dwell



Canvas

FR RICHARD ANTHONYSAMY SJ

among others. It is not merely a state of mind and a theological buzz-word for the Jubilee Year to be called Pilgrims of Hope. It is a journey of hope in the real world.

St Paul’s “song of thanksgiving” provides a useful framework and perspective for each pilgrim of hope. St Paul begins with gratitude and thanksgiving. He gives thanks to God as he remembers his fellow Christians. He sees them in God and God in them. He remembers them with thanksgiving because of their partnership with the Gospel.

In other words, St Paul remembers them as pilgrims of faith, striving to live the hope their faith brings. It is more than friendship or fellowship. It is “friendship-in-the-Lord.” St. Paul feels hopeful when he remembers them.

The question to all of us pilgrims of hope then is: am I beginning the journey with gratitude and thanksgiving? What are the things I am grateful for, that I am thankful for, even as I hope for the future? Our past and present serve as experiential truths to where we are, even as we hope. Given a chance to speak in the depths of our hearts, our past and present experiences will reveal useful guides for the journey we embark on this Jubilee Year.

Pope Francis, in the Bull of Indiction entitled *Spes Non Confundit* (*Hope does not disappoint*) writes, “Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as a desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring.” Here we see the inner tension. On the one hand, the joy or excitement of hope motivates and encourages us to look up and forward to good things. On the other hand, embracing the uncertainty of the future even as we look forward in hope. The words of the Holy Father situate hope as an experiential hope. Thus, through our lives and actions, we enfold the hope we feel within us. We allow that hope to flow out to others. It is tangible and is felt by ourselves and those around us. This participation in life of hope is what St Paul would see as God bringing to completion the good works He has already started in us. By so doing, we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. Pope Francis states, “*By his perennial presence in the life of the pilgrim Church, the Holy Spirit illumines all believers with the light of hope. He keeps that light burning, like an ever-burning lamp, to sustain and invigorate our lives.*” The good news is that the light of hope we seek as pilgrims of hope is already in us thanks to the Holy Spirit. We are not alone, or without hope. The challenge is to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us so that the light of hope may not only transform us but help others.

The pilgrimage of hope could be said to entail three movements from us pilgrims of hope. The first is to begin with gratitude and thanksgiving for where we are now, embracing our joys and sorrows. In this first step, we actively choose to embrace the mystery of the Incarnation in our own life. Christ too was born in hope, amidst the uncertainties.

The second would be to see the pilgrimage as one already begun in us by God through the Holy Spirit. It is the Lord who beckons us towards completion. We are pilgrims of hope towards Him. Thus each “station” of the pilgrimage, each pilgrimage church visited or spiritual exercise undertaken (prayer, fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimage, etc.) is done in Him, through Him and with Him. In other words, we make the pilgrimage with Jesus, who Pope Francis states is the “door” of our salvation.

Finally, this is a journey that leads to personal and communal transformation. It is, as the Bull of Indiction explains, one that makes people who bring signs of hope to others. It is a hope that we ourselves feel and practise.

The title of the Bull of Indiction is *Spes Non Confundit*, meaning **Hope does not disappoint**. Let us not disappoint, Hope.

● **Fr Richard Anthonymsamy SJ** is involved in parish ministry, spiritual direction, and faith formation work.

Honouring God through our finances

We have now entered into the second week of January 2025.

Many of us have returned to our routines. Those with children may already be planning for the upcoming holidays, as the month-long public school break begins next Friday (January 17).

Our bodies and minds might feel misaligned as we’ve just adjusted to the work and school momentum after the New Year celebrations — and now the holidays are starting again!

For those celebrating Chinese New Year, it’s another period of intense preparation: the exodus back to hometowns, gifts for loved ones, and *angpows* for children, singles, and elders.

In my household, this year is especially significant as our daughter will be sitting for her IGCSE examinations. This means exam fees to pay, in addition to school fees and other start-of-year expenses.

It’s undeniably an overwhelming season. Even writing about it feels stressful!

Many of you, especially parents, might resonate with these scenarios. For those without children, other important demands likely compete for your attention and resources.

So, what happens to the list of important goals and dreams we so eagerly set at the end of 2024 and the start of 2025? Have they faded in the face of daily demands? And, most importantly, is God anywhere in the mix?

As we re-evaluate our goals and priorities, financial stability often takes centre stage, especially with rising living costs. However, as Catholics, our approach to personal finance is unique — we aim to balance material needs with spiritual well-being, generosity, and trust in God’s providence.

My own experience has taught me that no matter how challenging things become financially, when we place our trust in God, He provides. The Lord always comes through when He is at the heart of our lives — including our financial planning.

In addition to being a Licensed Financial Planner, I had the privilege of participating in a Catholic programme on personal finance called

Navigating Your Finances God’s Way (NYFGW) in 2019. It was a revelation to learn that the Bible contains over 2,500 verses about money and possessions. This programme proved invaluable in preparing my family and I when navigating the financial challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Allow me to share some practical steps to manage your finances while remaining faithful to your beliefs.

1. Begin with Gratitude and Stewardship

Catholic teaching reminds us that all we have is a gift from God. Our wealth, talents, and resources are entrusted to us, not for selfish accumulation but for stewardship.

Take a moment to reflect on your financial decisions. Are you prioritising God’s will in the way you manage your resources? Begin your financial planning with a prayer of gratitude, seeking guidance to be a faithful steward of God’s blessings.

2. Set Clear, God-Aligned Goals

Financial goals are vital for stability and growth. However, as Catholics, our goals should align with our faith. Ask yourself:

Do my financial goals support my family’s well-being?

Am I allocating resources for acts of charity?

Are my spending habits consistent with simplicity and humility?

Consider creating a financial vision statement that integrates these values. For example: “To provide for my family, serve the needy, and live free of financial anxiety through responsible stewardship.”

3. Budget with Purpose

A budget is a powerful tool for staying on track. List your income and fixed expenses (e.g., housing, utilities, giving/donations), then allocate funds for variable costs like groceries, transport, and leisure.

Include specific categories such as:

Tithing and Donations: Commit to supporting



Faith and Finance

HAZEL ONG-ARCHIBALD

your parish or charitable causes. If finances are tight, consider giving your time to serve your community. During the pandemic, my BEC reached out to nearby communities with food supplies and donations. These acts of charity not only uplift others but deepen our faith.

Emergency Savings: Set aside funds for unforeseen circumstances. This act of prudence equips you to face challenges without financial despair.

4. Avoid Debt as a Burden

“The borrower is the slave of the lender” (Proverbs 22:7). While some forms of debt, such as mortgages or student loans, may be necessary, excessive borrowing can lead to stress and hinder generosity.

If you’re in debt, create a repayment plan. Focus on clearing high-interest debts first and work steadily towards financial freedom. Organisations like Compass Catholic Ministries in Malaysia, which facilitate the NYFGW programme, can provide valuable guidance.

5. Invest with a Conscience

Investing is a prudent way to grow wealth, but as Catholics, our investments should reflect our values. Avoid supporting industries that contradict Church teachings, such as those involved in abortion, pornography, or exploitative labour practices. Faith-based investment funds can help align your portfolio with your principles.

6. Practise Generosity and Almsgiving

Generosity is at the heart of our faith. Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Giving — whether through tithing, charity, or helping a neighbour — reflects God’s love for the world.

Remember, generosity isn’t limited to financial gifts. Share your time, talents, and prayers. This holistic approach enriches both the giver and the recipient.

7. Teach Your Children About Finances

Teaching children about money helps

them develop gratitude, responsibility, and generosity. Practical steps include:

Dividing their allowance into “spend, save, and give” categories.

Involving them in family discussions about budgeting or charitable giving.

Leading by example with your own financial habits.

8. Trust in Divine Providence

Even the best financial plans can be disrupted by life’s uncertainties. In these moments, lean on your faith. Scripture reassures us: “Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own” (Matthew 6:34). Trust that God will provide for your needs and guide you through challenges.

9. Seek Guidance and Community

Managing finances can feel overwhelming. Seek advice from financial advisors who respect your Catholic values, or join workshops or parish groups focused on stewardship.

In the end, personal finance is more than numbers. It’s about living a life of purpose, generosity, and trust in God. As we embrace 2025, let us commit to managing our finances with wisdom and faith, remembering the words of St Francis of Assisi: “It is in giving that we receive.”

If you’re unable to implement all these steps immediately, that’s okay. Personal finance is a journey, and each step forward is progress. My family and I are on this journey too.

Many times, it might feel like one step forward and two steps back, but keep at it and pray for God’s strength to stay on track. Let us pray for and support one another as we strive to honour God through our finances.

Hazel Ong-Archibald is a Licensed Financial Planner with over two decades of experience in investment, insurance, and estate planning. Since year 2000, she has been guiding individuals and families towards financial stability. Hazel is passionate about integrating Catholic values into personal finance, helping others achieve their financial goals while living a life of generosity and trust in God’s providence.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

My top ten books for 2024

Full disclosure, I don't read enough. A busy, pressured life affords me only small windows of time to read anything not directly related to my ministry. Nonetheless, I try to be faithful to a discipline I set for myself years ago, namely, to read eight to ten pages every day from a book (magazines and newspapers don't count). In a year, that adds up to several thousand pages.

Among those pages this year, which ten books would I recommend? Here's my list.

Among books on **SPIRITUALITY**, I found each of these meaningful:

Richard Gaillardetz, *While I breathe I hope – A Mystagogy of dying*, edited by Grace Mariette Agolia. This is the book that affected me most this past year. Richard Gaillardetz, as you probably know, was a renowned theologian at Boston College who died of cancer in November 2023. These are his reflections during the last months of his life. They show a remarkable faith and an equally remarkable love. He didn't miss the hour of his death, but gave it away as a gift. This book is part of that gift.

Mark Joseph Williams, *Torrent of Grace, A Catholic Survivor's Healing Journey After Clergy Abuse*. A survivor of clerical sexual abuse, Mark Williams comes to grips with this in a way that leads to forgiveness and reconciliation, but only after many years of trauma. He tells his story in a way that doesn't gratuitously spray guilt around but

leaves everyone, not least the institutional Church, with a needed challenge. Everyone should read this story of healing.

John Mark Comer, *Practising the Way: Be with Jesus, Become like Him, Do as He Did*. John Mark Comer is an Evangelical Christian with wide ecumenical leanings and solid theological insight. This is an excellent book, a practical guide to deepen anyone's Christian discipleship, irrespective of denomination.

Mirabai Starr, *Ordinary Mysticism, Your Life As Sacred Ground*. Mirabai Starr is a believer and a mystic, even though she does not formally profess faith in any religion. She gives the phrase *I am spiritual but not religious* more depth than is ordinarily found there. And because she is not speaking out of any one religion or denomination, her words offer something for anyone of any religion or denomination.

Peter Halldorf, *To Love Your Neighbour's Church As Your Own – A Manifest for Christian Unity*. Peter Halldorf is a Lutheran, Evangelical, Eastern Orthodox Christian. This book (which was handed to me by an Eastern Rite bishop at an ecumenical celebration this past summer) outlines a vision for ecumenism and Christian unity which are more insightful and far-reaching than most anything I have read. This little book is a treasure.

Brian Swimme & Monica DeRaspe-Bolles, *The Story of the Noosphere*. Perhaps more scientific than spiritual, this very readable book will help you understand both the origins of our universe and how those origins fit seamlessly into a Christian vision.

Raymond E. Brown – Each year during those respective seasons, I reread Raymond Brown's books on Advent, Christmas, Holy Week, Easter, and Pentecost. Each of these (five books in all) is a small (under 90 pages) volume which is a major Scripture course all by itself.

Donna Freitas, *Wishful Thinking, How I Lost My Faith and Why I Want to Find It*. Known for her books in the area of sexuality, Freitas writes a memoir of her own struggles with faith and how that struggle was compounded by her personal experience of being sexually abused by a priest. What sets this book apart from other memoirs of this sort is the second phrase in her title, *Why I Want to Find it*.

Among **ACADEMIC** books, I recommend this one:

William T. Cavanaugh, *The Uses of Idolatry*. Charles Taylor in his classic, *A Secular Age*, speaks of how we now live in an age of disenchantment, wherein we no longer see anything behind empirical reality. For us, he submits, there are no angels, no spirits, no demons, and no gods, only

empirical reality. We live with what he calls "buffered personalities," that is, the world of spirits and demons no longer affects us. The consequence of this is that agnosticism and atheism now become easy options. Cavanaugh disputes that and argues that we are not disenchanted. Rather, we are simply re-encharmed with different (empirical) spirits, demons, and gods. Our problem, he believes, is not atheism but idolatry. We simply are worshipping new gods and fearing new demons. This is an interesting read, though not an easy one.

Among **NOVELS**, it hasn't been a banner year for me, both because I didn't find time to read many novels and because I was disappointed with many I did read. But this one stands out:

Anne Michaels, *Held*. Nominated this year for the Booker Prize, this is Anne Michaels at her literary best, though with a storyline that is not always easy to follow. But Anne Michaels is always worth reading.

And all of this is offered under St Augustine's famous dictum: *Concerning taste there should be no disputes*.

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

Why the Mass isn't meant to entertain

"Is the Mass boring?" It's a question many people think but hesitate to voice. Some even say it out loud, comparing the Mass to modern worship services or entertainment events. In their hearts, they might wonder, "Why can't Mass be more exciting?" This perception isn't uncommon, but it's also worth asking: what if the Mass isn't supposed to entertain us at all? What if its purpose goes far deeper than we realise?

The Purpose of the Mass

The Mass isn't a show, a concert, or a motivational seminar. It's something far more profound: an act of worship. At its heart, the Mass is a representation of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. It's about giving glory to God, not entertaining people.

Modern culture often conditions us to expect stimulation and spectacle — fast-paced events, catchy music, and inspiring speeches. Sometimes, we might even think worship is about how much we "feel" God's presence. We sing, we engage, and at the end, we might say, "I felt God today." But notice the subtle shift — this statement becomes about us and how we feel, not about God. Worship is ultimately not about what we get from it; it's about what we give to God.

The Mass calls us to a different rhythm. It invites us to step away from the distractions of daily life and enter into a sacred mystery. Think of the Mass as a family meal. It might not be flashy, but it nourishes your soul. You don't attend Mass to consume entertainment — you attend to be part of something bigger than yourself.

The Beauty and Silence of the Mass

Many people miss the quiet beauty of the Mass because they're expecting something loud and dramatic. But the Mass isn't about spectacle; it's about presence. Silence is a key feature of the liturgy, offering sacred pauses before the readings, after Communion, or during the consecration. These moments of

stillness are not empty — they are invitations to reflect, pray, and encounter God in a deeply personal way.

The readings, prayers, and hymns, though simple on the surface, are rich with meaning for those who listen. The Gospel is a direct message from Christ to us today, and the consecration is the most sacred moment when bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. It's in the quiet, reflective spaces of the Mass that we hear the "still, small voice" of God. The beauty of the Mass lies in this balance: the words and silence together create a profound spiritual symphony. If we're only looking for the loud, exciting parts, we might miss the delicate grace of the softer notes.

Why Structure Matters

One common critique is that the Mass feels repetitive or overly structured. But that very structure connects us to centuries of tradition and billions of Catholics worldwide. It's a ritual shared across time and space, uniting us as one Body of Christ.

The predictability of the Mass isn't about dullness, it's about grounding us. It's a chance to participate in something timeless, something that doesn't change with trends or fads. While the world around us constantly demands novelty, the Mass offers stability.

Imagine revisiting your favourite food stall in a neighbourhood you grew up in. The menu hasn't changed, the taste is just as comforting, and the atmosphere is familiar. Isn't it that sense of consistency that makes you keep going back? The Mass is like that — it anchors us in something eternal and unchanging.

The Priest and the Eucharist: A Sacred Encounter

At the heart of the Mass is the Eucharist, the "source and summit" of Christian life. During the consecration, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ,

making the Eucharist a direct encounter with God. This sacred moment is made possible through the priest, who stands *in persona Christi* — in the person of Christ.

The priest isn't just a facilitator or organiser of the Mass; he represents Christ Himself, especially during the consecration. Acting as a spiritual bridge, the priest brings the community's prayers, hopes, and needs to God while making Christ's presence tangible through the Eucharist. This profound reality reminds us that the Mass is not merely a human gathering — it is where heaven and earth meet.

It's easy to overlook the significance of the Eucharist and the priest's role in the routine of attending Mass. But together, they reveal the depth of God's love and the invitation to participate in this divine mystery. What could be more meaningful than encountering Christ Himself in the Eucharist, made present by the priest's sacred role?

The Call to Active Participation

Sometimes Mass feels "boring" because we attend passively. The Church calls us to be active participants, not spectators. Singing the hymns, reciting the prayers, and engaging with the readings can transform our experience.

Yet, many feel shy about participating. Some might think, "Others are singing, so there's no need for me to join." But participation isn't about how good our voice is or whether others are already involved. It's about offering our unique presence to God.

As St Thérèse of Lisieux beautifully said, "Do small things with great love." Even the smallest gestures — responding with the congregation, quietly offering your intentions, or simply focusing your heart during the prayers — become acts of love and worship when offered to God. Every voice, every prayer, and every gesture matters because they reflect the unity of the congregation coming together as one

Body of Christ. Your participation, however small it may seem, is an act of worship and a personal encounter with God.

Mass as a Reflection of Life's Reality

Life isn't always exciting, and neither is faith. The Mass mirrors this reality. It's not meant to distract us from life's challenges but to prepare us for them. Its steadiness teaches us patience, perseverance, and gratitude for the ordinary moments that shape our journey. In a world that craves excitement, the Mass reminds us that some of the most profound experiences come through quiet reflection and consistency.

A Challenge to See the Mass Differently

If you've ever felt bored at Mass, it might not be the Mass that needs to change — it might be your perspective. The next time you attend, try to pay attention to the "why" behind each part of the liturgy. Focus on the readings and how they apply to your life. Take a moment during the consecration to truly reflect on what's happening: God is coming to us in the Eucharist.

The Mass isn't about us being entertained; it's about us offering ourselves to God. It's a two-way encounter, where we bring our hearts and lives to Him, and He gives us His very presence in return.

A Timeless Encounter with the Divine

Yes, the Catholic Mass may not look or feel like a blockbuster event, but maybe that's because it's not meant to be. It's something far deeper — an encounter with the divine. The beauty of the Mass is in its timelessness, its reverence, and its ability to connect us to God in ways we might not fully understand.

The next time you find yourself thinking, "Why isn't this more exciting?" ask yourself instead, "Am I open to seeing the beauty beneath the surface?" You might be surprised at what you find.

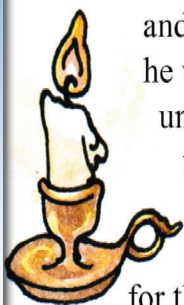
Thomson Emmanuel Wong is a parishioner of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang

Little Catholics' corner

Isaiah 42 Word Puzzle

Use the words at the bottom to fill in the blanks!

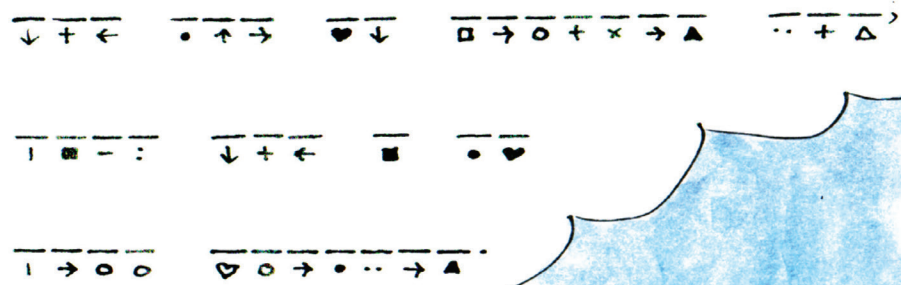
Here is my _____ whom I uphold,
my chosen one with whom I am pleased,
upon whom I have put my _____;
he shall bring forth justice to the nations,
not crying out, not _____,
not making his _____ heard in the street.
A bruised reed he shall not _____,
and a _____ wick
he will not quench,
until he establishes justice on the earth;
the coastlands will wait for his teaching.



I, the Lord, have called you
for the victory of justice,
I have grasped you by the hand;
I formed you, and set you
as a covenant of the people,
a _____ for the nations,
to open the _____ of the blind,
to bring out _____
from confinement,
and from the dungeon,
those who live in darkness.



PRISONERS	VOICE	EYES
SMOLDERING	SERVANT	LIGHT
SHOUTING	SPIRIT	BREAK



Luke 3.15-16, 21-22

After Jesus was baptized, a voice came from the clouds and said something to Jesus. What did it say? Use the code to find out!

• □ ▲ ➔ : ■ ○ ♥ △ + ♥ ↑ .. - ← × | ↓
A B D E H I L M N O P R S T U V W Y

Answer: You are my beloved Son, with You I am well pleased.

As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on Him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."
(Matthew 3:13-17)



Word search

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

Dear children,

In the Bible, many wondered if John the Baptist was God's Son. John was quick to correct people, saying that there was One who would come who was more powerful than him, and whose sandal straps he wasn't worthy to untie.

John the Baptist later baptized Jesus, and the Holy Spirit came to Jesus in the form of a dove. A loud voice said, "You are My Son, whom I love; with You I am well pleased."

Jesus is God's one-and-only Son, so we must put our faith in Him alone and watch out for fake teachers.

Children, today is the baptism

of Jesus. We celebrate this day because it was time for Jesus to start His special work.

What was Jesus' special work? It was showing people the way to God and taking away their sins.

When you were baptised, God was getting you ready for a special job too.

He was giving you grace so that you could grow closer to Him and bring other people closer to Him too. How can you help bring others closer to God? Perhaps you could start by sharing your joyful encounter with Jesus or simply by being kind to others!

Aunty Eliz

PEOPLE	BAPTIZE	DOVE	PRAYING	FIRE
POWERFUL	JOHN	OPENED	SPIRIT	VOICE
CHRIST	WATER	HOLY	HEAVEN	JESUS



Hope in the Lord, He will renew their strength

TELUPID: “Those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not be weary, they will walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31) was the theme chosen for the Telupid Parish youth Day. It was based on Pope Francis’ message who urged young people to view life as a journey, seeking happiness despite its challenges. He emphasised that fatigue in life’s struggles is natural and encouraged them not to give up but to become “Pilgrims of Hope.”

Last month, the Telupid Parish Youth hosted the 39th World Youth Day celebration at the Church of St Martin. This event aimed to inspire young people to embrace and live the hope-filled message of Pope Francis while deepening their connection with God. The planned activities encouraged Catholic youth to approach life with the spirit of faith, love, and purpose, reflecting their role as pilgrims.

Eighty-eight participants aged between 13-45 attended the event. They began with registration, followed by the Enthronement of the Bible, an opening prayer, and praise and worship “Time of Life” session.

The first session, *Running to Hope* led by Elsa, encouraged participants to recognise



Telupid youths.

life’s challenges and find hope rooted in faith in God. The activities included group discussions about challenges in their faith journey and the creation of vision cards that expressed their aspirations.

In the subsequent session, *Hope of a Pilgrim of Life*, Beller guided the youth in exploring how life’s difficulties can foster spiritual growth and hope. Participants carried weights through several stations, symbolising life’s obstacles, while reflecting on this question, “Where do I find God in difficult times?”

The “RM1.50” activity helped

participants adapt to new experiences, foster teamwork, and share joy. Each participant was assigned a value (RM1 for males and RM0.50 for females) and formed groups based on a specific total value. This activity highlighted the importance of collaboration and empathy in navigating life’s challenges.

The final session, *Mission of Hope*, delivered by Sr Vyelynda, emphasised the importance of sharing hope with others. Participants composed prayers or messages for their group members and took time to reflect on the prayers they received in re-

turn, fostering a sense of community and mutual support.

All the activities were inspired by Pope Francis’ message to the youth, exploring themes like *Pilgrimage of Life and its Challenges*, *Pilgrim in the Desert*, *From Tourist to Pilgrim*, and *Pilgrimage of Hope for Mission*. The programme concluded with a group photo, clean-up, and dinner, leaving participants with cherished memories. This celebration not only strengthened the faith of the youth but also inspired them to live their journey of life with hope, faith, and love. **Cilly Gulimit**

VATICAN: Pope Francis has sent his greetings to young people gathering, under the auspices of the Taizé community, “to pray and share the life of the local people and Church communities” in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

The 46th Taizé European Meeting, an ecumenical gathering of youth from various countries and denominations, is taking place from December 28 to January 1 and will focus on the theme “Journeying Together.”

Dare to build a different world

In the message conveyed by Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, the Holy Father highlights the opportunity for participants to live “the beautiful experience of friendship with God and with others” as a Church and a community.

As the “Body of the Risen Lord present in the world,” young people are invited to rediscover the art of listening, an act of love that lies at the heart of trust. In a world where conflicts and wars continually arise due to lack of listening, the Pope urges the young “to dare to build a different world, a world of listening, dialogue, and openness.”

Working for ‘qualitative transformation’

The challenge, he says, is “to work towards the qualitative transformation of our life in societies,” especially by avoiding all forms of “marginalization, closure, exclusion, and rejection” of various categories of people.

In this way, the Pope says, young people can become builders of “cultures, and religions, for a stable and open world.”

Live like Jesus

He encourages them to commit themselves to living like Jesus, who excluded no one but instead recognized God’s presence in those on the margins of society.

Cardinal Parolin concludes his letter with the assurance that Pope Francis “is counting on you and trusts you, and the Church trusts you.” The Pope, he said, is calling on them, by their words and actions, to “give a powerful message to our world, which rejects the vulnerable. Make your dreams of love, justice, and peace a concrete reality... Don’t let your dreams be stolen, and contribute to ‘building a society worthy of the name.’” **Christopher Wells, Vatican News**



A prayer meeting organised by the Taizé community. (Wikimedia/Christian Pulfrich)

THAI YOUTH GO THE “EKTRA” MILE FOR RELIGIOUS HARMONY

THAILAND: Over 200 students from more than 40 schools came together recently, at the Sarasas Suvarnabhumi Institute of Technology to present creative solutions for fostering interreligious harmony.

The event, titled *Extra Peace: Project Presentation Competition*, showcased the ideas of 10 finalists from more than 40 schools, tackling some of the country's most pressing issues related to religious understanding and coexistence.

The competition was inspired by the success of “Extra Peace”, a student team from Sarasas Ektra School, which received 100,000 THB (RM13,087.90) in funding during the MISSION POSSIBLE: Youth Social Hackathon held in July 2024.

The team used the funding to implement a project aimed at promoting dialogue among different religious groups, serving as a blueprint for the competition.

Finalists proposed diverse strategies to address challenges such as religious discrimination and fostering interfaith understanding among youth.

Ideas ranged from creating immersive educational games and producing films to using rap music and augmented reality maps to highlight paths to interreligious harmony and causes of religious conflict.

Chulabhat Tantichaiboriboon, leader of the



The student team from Sarasas Ektra School.

Extra Peace team, said Catholic schools “are guided by values of love, compassion, and respect,” adding, “Yet, our community is beautifully diverse, with students from many religious backgrounds. This shows that despite our differences, we can learn, connect, and grow together.”

Chulabhat noted that while their school fosters a diverse and inclusive environment, the broader reality outside its walls remains challenging, with ongoing religious conflicts causing divisions.

He highlighted that many people shy away from discussing religious differences, which hampers efforts to build mutual under-



Thai students present innovative outcomes for interfaith harmony

standing.

“If all religions teach peace, why can’t all religions achieve peace? This question became the heart of the Extra Peace Project,” he added.

The competition underscored the critical role of youth in shaping a more harmonious future. Pisut Yongkamol, Director of Sarasas Ektra School, emphasised the importance of authenticity in addressing social challenges.

“Today, each of you has shown us that change begins here and now. Through your presentations and ideas, you have planted seeds of peace and hope that will continue to

grow beyond this event,” he said.

Yongkamol urged participants to remember that “authenticity is your most powerful asset,” adding, “Stay true to yourselves and let that guide your journey as changemakers.”

The event also highlighted the power of dialogue and collaboration. Peter Monthienvichienchai, Executive Director of LiCAS News, commended the students for their bravery in addressing sensitive issues.

“What you [the children] have done here today has exceeded all expectations, especially in having the courage to tackle such a difficult and sensitive topic. Today’s event and the solutions that have been presented give all of us hope and demonstrate the power of the synodal approach by truly listening to each other,” he said.

The competition builds on the mission of Sarasas Ektra School, a Catholic bilingual institution known for fostering inclusivity and respect in its multicultural community. The school’s ongoing commitment to interfaith understanding reflects its broader vision of unity and peace.

By channelling their creativity and determination, Thailand’s youth are not only addressing complex social issues but also planting seeds of hope for a more peaceful and inclusive society. **Peter Monthienvichienchai, LiCAS News**

Record numbers of young adults flock to Salt Lake City for SEEK25

UTAH: More than 21,000 people began the new year seeking Jesus at the biggest Catholic young adult conference of the year in the US held in two locations. SEEK25, organised by Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS), January 1–5 in Salt Lake City and January 2–5 in Washington, D.C.

The four-day programme brought together Catholics from across North America.

A large chunk of attendees came from FOCUS campuses, where FOCUS missionaries help build Catholic communities on campus.

The event also brought 46 bishops, up from the record-setting number of 44 last year.

While SEEK is geared to college students, adults on the “Making Missionary Disciples” track also attended the event as well as families with young children.

At the conference centre, Salt Palace, SEEK attendees were full of life, lining the walls, filling the hallways, cheering and waving flags representing their various universities.

The crowd of mostly young adults grew quiet when the Mass

began, which took place on the Feast of Mary, Mother of God.

During the homily, Salt Lake City’s Bishop Oscar Solis focused on the new year as well as the 2025 Jubilee of Hope.

The first keynote of the conference was Arthur Brooks, a Harvard professor and author, who spoke about happiness. Brooks highlighted how satisfaction isn’t permanent, and happiness comes from having meaning in life.

“Having meaning is key,” he told SEEK attendees. “The why of your life is paramount.”

Brooks noted that many in our culture have encountered a loss of meaning, which he connected with the mental health crisis. It’s hard to find happiness when you don’t know the “why” of your life, he said.

Sr Mary Grace, SV, an Australian Sister of Life and another keynote speaker, focused on meaning, Christ, and God’s rest. She noted that all of us are “seeking true rest” and that “God can insert glory into every single story, to the exception and the exclusion of no one.

“Resting in peace was never just reserved

for the faithful departed, or the retired, or those able to afford it,” Sr

Mary Grace told the attendees.

“Genesis itself reveals that God spent six days creating, but the culmination does not come to the seventh, when God rests and we take rest in him. God’s rest is the only remedy for heavy hearts.”

The conference continued with rosary followed by

Mass. Incense still hung in the air as participants went for the breakout sessions.

The rest of the day was filled with breakout sessions from speakers including Tammy Peterson, podcaster and wife of psychologist and author Jordan Peterson, who spoke on gratitude and her recent conversion to Catholicism, and Trent Horn, Catholic Answers apologist and author, who shared his conversion story in a talk called *Why We Are Catholic*.

In between sessions, attendees wandered around the “Mission Way,” a large section of booths manned by representatives of Catholic apostolates, colleges, and religious orders.

Taking the stage in the evening was Fr Mike Schmitz followed by opportunities for prayer and community, including swing dancing and line dancing. **Kate Quiñones, CNA**



Attendees at SEEK25 in Salt Lake City wander around the “Mission Way,” a large section of booths manned by representatives of Catholic apostolates, colleges, and religious orders. (CNA/Kate Quinones)

University students join armed forces for celebration

KUANTAN: On the Feast of the Holy Family, 40 University Malaysia Pahang Al-Sultan Abdul Samad (UMPSAS) students joined the Armed Forces families, a total of 20, for a meaningful Christmas fellowship.

The celebration began with a Mass at St. Theresa Chapel in Gambang, Kuantan, at 12.30 pm, bringing together a strong sense of community and commitment to the occasion.



The students sharing their talents for Mass.



Jimmy Carter, first to host a pope at the White House, dies at 100

WASHINGTON: Former President Jimmy Carter died December 29, 2024 at his home in Plains, Georgia, his presidential library announced. At 100, Carter, who had been in hospice care since February 2023, was the longest-living US president.

Carter, who served from 1977-1981 as the 39th US president, was a devout Baptist, and faith played a large role in his life. He even taught catechism in his retirement. Carter was also the first US president to host a pope at the White House.

“My father was a hero, not only to me but to everyone who believes in peace, human rights, and unselfish love,” Chip Carter, the former president’s son, said in a statement issued through the Carter Centre. “My brothers, sister, and I shared him with the rest of the world through these common beliefs. The world is our family because of the way he brought people together, and we thank you for honoring his memory by continuing to live these shared beliefs.”

‘Carter exemplified the Christian faith’

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, president of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, said in a statement Dec 30 the US bishops also mourned Carter’s passing.

“His lifelong work on behalf of peace among nations will continue to serve as an inspiration for a world in need of peacemakers,” said Archbishop Broglio, who oversees the US Archdiocese for Military Services. “I pray for the repose of his soul and the comfort of his family.”

Archbishop Gregory J. Hartmayer of Atlanta said, in a message of condolence to the Carter family, that “President and Mrs Carter exemplified the Christian faith.”

“Whether it was travelling the globe to advance democracy and champion human rights or building houses with Habitat for Humanity and teaching Sunday school in Plains, Georgia, they made the world a better place,” Archbishop Hartmayer said. “Among the many honours that President Carter received were the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1999, and the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002. With Rosalynn at his side, he always used these opportunities to teach by example what (it) means to be a servant-leader. Through the work of The Carter Centre, they will continue to inspire generations to come.”

“While the world mourns the passing of a tireless advocate for peace and justice and the nation, a much-respected leader, the Carter family grieves the death of a father, grandfather and great-grandfather,” he added. “On behalf of the clergy, consecrated religious and lay faithful of the Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta, I wish to express my sincere sympathy and deepest condolences to President Carter’s children, Jack, Chip, Jeff and Amy, and to their families. Rest assured of my prayers. May the Lord grant you his peace.”

Archbishop Hartmayer added that during his previous role as bishop of Savannah, Georgia, “I met the Carters at Maranatha Baptist Church in October 2019.”

“President Carter invited me to his Bible class, and that particular morning the lesson was on love,” he said. “He asked the question: ‘What must we do to receive God’s love?’ There was much enthusiasm among the young people in responding to the question. In the end, the President said: ‘Nothing, because God loves us first.’ I remained on for the church service and felt so very welcome. Later on that day, the President and First Lady attended a Mass that I celebrated in the local Catholic parish.”

A Vatican telegram released Dec 30 expressed Pope Francis’ condolences. It said the Pope recalled Carter’s “firm commitment, motivated by deep Christian faith, to the cause of reconciliation and peace between peoples, the defence of human rights and the welfare of the poor and those in need.”

Respected Catholic faith leaders

Carter also had notable exchanges with Catholic leaders during his presidency. In a congratulatory telegram to Carter upon his election in November 1976, Pope Paul VI offered him “cordial felicitations.” The Pope said he would pray Carter would lead the American people “in the way of authentic progress, true peace and fraternal concern, with liberty and justice for all.”

Carter’s inauguration featured faith leaders from multiple traditions, including a benediction given by then-Archbishop John R. Roach of St Paul and Minneapolis.

During his administration, Carter hosted Pope John Paul II at the White House on Oct 6, 1979, while the latter was on his first papal trip to the United States, making him the first pope to ever visit the White House.

During remarks thanking the Pope for his visit, Carter said, “As human beings each acting for justice in the present — and striving together for a common future of peace and love — let us not wait so long for ourselves and for you to meet again. Welcome to our country, our new friend.” The Pope responded by embracing the president.

Remarking on the White House meeting between the then-president and pontiff, Archbishop Hartmayer said, “Their mutual respect and affection for each other continued throughout the years as they both championed peace and human rights.”

Carter later visited Pope John Paul at the Vatican on June 24, 1980. During his visit to Italy, Carter also paid a visit to a Venetian monastery for prayers and breakfast.

“He wanted to know everything,” Fr Gilies Zaramella, the abbot, later told a news service. “He asked about all the paintings, the buildings, and talked to each of us individually and asked what we do.” **Kate Scanlon, OSV News**

MEMORIAM

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

Seventeenth Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



Seventeen years have passed since you left us, leaving behind your sweet thoughts and memories. You may no longer be here but your memory will always be with us to love and cherish each and every day.

CHARLES DE SILVA
called home to be with the Lord on 11 January 2008

Dearly missed by loving wife, children, spouse, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

2nd Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



Josephine Antony D'cruz
Departed 11th January 2023

Life may have taken you from us, but love keeps your memory alive. When someone you love becomes a memory, the memory becomes a treasure.

Dearly missed by Daughters, Son-in-law, Grandchildren, Great grandchildren and loved ones.

4th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



Gary Reginald Gomez
April 16, 1972 – January 11, 2021

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Psalm 23:6)

Always remembered and loved by your wife, son, relatives and friends.

In Loving Memory



MDM. S. SUSY NATHAN
Born: 10-08-1930
Departed: 14-01-14

Fondly missed by children, grandchildren and loved ones.

Your presence we miss, Your memories we treasure, Loving you always, Forgetting you never.

"The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want."

Prayer to the Blessed Virgin
(never known to fail)

Oh! Most beautiful flower of mount Carmel, fruitful and fine splendour of heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin assist me in this necessity, (make your request)

Oh! Star of the Sea, help me and show me herein, that you are my mother.

Oh! Holy Mother of God, Queen of heaven and earth, I humbly beseech you, from the bottom of my heart to succour me in this my necessity (make your request)

There is none Dear Mother that can withstand thy Power.

Oh! Mary conceived without sin pray for us who have recourse to thee (thrice Hail Mary)

Thank you Dear Mother, for your mercy towards us.... to me and mine.

2nd Year Memorial



Joel Joseph

From God: 3rd July 1995
Return to God : 16th January 2023

Mass will be offered on Thursday, 16th January 2025 at 7pm at the Church St Anne, Port Klang.

*Matthew 5:8
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

2 years have passed but your soul still walks within us and we are grateful for the company.

This isn't goodbye handsome and cheerful young man for you are the greatest gift that God has granted us with. You deserve more than this world hence He's taken you up into His arms. The world changes from year to year, our lives from day to day, but the love and memory of you shall never pass away.

Take care beautiful soul ♥

Deeply missed by parents, brother, relatives and friends.

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Cycle of violence must cease

Cardinal Bo's New Year plea for Myanmar

MYANMAR: Cardinal Charles Maung Bo of Yangon has called on the people of Myanmar to take bold steps toward peace, reconciliation, and renewal as the country enters 2025.

In his New Year message, the prelate urged citizens and leaders alike to end violence, invest in youth, and commit to healing and reconciliation.

"The cycle of violence must cease," Cardinal Bo emphasised. "We must unite to shield civilians — especially innocent children — from harm. Broken families must be made whole, and the voiceless must be heard. Let us dream of a Myanmar where no life is diminished, no community marginalised, and where peace is not an abstract ideal but a shared reality."

The cardinal framed his call to action within the context of the Jubilee Year of Hope, proclaimed by Pope Francis, describing it as a sacred time for "restoration, reconciliation, and renewal."

Drawing from Biblical tradition, he explained that the Jubilee year represents a "pilgrimage of hope," where justice is restored, wounds are healed, and dignity reclaimed. For Myanmar, he said, this message "resonates like a lifeline."

Cardinal Bo acknowledged the immense suffering gripping Myanmar, highlighting



Thai soldiers stand guard at a checkpoint near the Thailand-Myanmar border in Mae Sot District, Tak Province. Rights group Fortify Rights has called for an investigation into allegations of torture and killing of a Myanmar national by Thai military personnel in the area. (LiCas News)

the toll of ongoing violence, displacement, and poverty on its people.

He lamented the plight of the nation's youth, who he described as "stripped of opportunity and their rightful dreams."

"Our beloved Myanmar groans under the weight of immense suffering," the cardinal said. "No one wins in this relentless churn of violence."

Despite the hardships, he called on Myanmar's people to rise above despair and become "hope generators," working

of providing education, safe spaces, and opportunities for the younger generation, saying, "By providing education, safe spaces, and opportunities, we empower them to rebuild not only their lives but the soul of our nation."

He also highlighted the necessity of justice for healing and trust for reconciliation, stating, "Reconciliation is not just a process; it is a choice — a choice to love beyond the pain, to build beyond the destruction."

Cardinal Bo called for a broader understanding of peace, saying, "True peace transcends the absence of war; it embodies the presence of justice, security, and dignity for all. Peace is built on the foundation of trust, nourished by compassion, and sustained by hope."

"May 2025 be the year when peace blossoms in every heart and every corner of Myanmar. May the displaced find shelter, the marginalised be uplifted, and the youth rise with unshakable hope to claim the future they deserve," the prelate said.

He appealed to his compatriots to forgive, heal, and rebuild, urging them to answer the cries of the suffering "with compassion that transforms, with action that restores, and with love that unites."

LiCAS News

Jubilee pilgrimage centres in Malaysia



Chapel of Annai Velangkanni, Jelapang

Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur

- Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, KL
- Church of the Immaculate Conception, PD
- Church of Jesus Caritas, Kepong
- Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras
- Church of St Thomas, Kuantan

Diocese of Penang

- Chapel of Annai Velangkanni, Ipoh
- Church of the Assumption, Penang
- Church of the Holy Name of Mary, Permatang Tinggi

Diocese of Malacca Johore

- Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, JB
- Church of St Louis, Kluang
- Church of St Mary, Ayer Salak

Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu

- Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, KK
- Church of St Michael, Penampang
- Church of St Peter, Kudat
- Church of St Peter Claver, Ranau
- Church of the Holy Rosary, Limbahau

Diocese of Sandakan

- Cathedral of St Mary, Sandakan

Archdiocese of Kuching

- Cathedral of St Joseph, Kuching
- Catholic Memorial and Pilgrimage Centre, Mt Singai, Bau
- Church of St Peter, Padungan
- Gethsemane Pilgrimage Centre, Bunan
- Mt Hosanna Pilgrimage Centre, Sri Aman

Diocese of Miri

- Cathedral of St Joseph, Miri
- Church of St Anthony, Bintulu
- Church of St Edmund, Limbang

Diocese of Sibiu

- St. Anthony's Heritage Centre, Sarikei
- Sacred Heart Chapel, Sg. Bawan Kanowit
- St Teresa Oratory, Sungei Merah

Diocese of Keningau

- Cathedral of St Francis Xavier, Keningau
- Church of St Anthony, Tenom
- Church of St Peter Bundu, Kuala Penyu
- Church of St Theresa, Tambunan
- Church of the Holy Spirit, Sook
- Holy Family Retreat Centre, Nulu Sosopon
- Keningau Retreat Centre, Tatal

EX KUL

2025 PILGRIMAGES

Emirates

13D HOLYLAND Highlights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PYRAMIDS OF GIZA ● NILE RIVER CRUISE ● MOUNT SINAI ● VIA DOLOROSA (14 STATIONS) ● BIRTHPLACE AND BAPTISMAL SITE OF JESUS ● TOMB OF JESUS 	<div>30 APR</div> <div>24 MAY* *SCHOOL HOLIDAY</div> <div>04 SEP</div> <div>05 OCT</div> <div>17 DEC*</div>	<div>from RM 13,900 p/p</div>
15D EASTERN EUROPE + MEDJUGORJE Highlights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● JASNA GORA MONASTERY ● WIELICZKA SALTINE (UNESCO) ● HOUSE OF POPE ST JOHN PAUL II ● ST MARY'S BASILICA ● DIVINE MERCY ● DANUBE RIVER CRUISE ● APPARITION HILL, MEDJUGORJE 	<div>06 MAY</div> <div>Fr Frederick Joseph</div> <div>04 OCT</div> <div>Fr V A Michael</div> <div>17 OCT</div> <div>Fr Valentine Gompok</div>	<div>RM 16,900 p/p</div>
11D HOLYDOOR JUBILEE ~ ITALY + VATICAN Highlights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● WALK THROUGH THE 4 HOLYDOORS ● LEANING TOWER OF PISA ● ST MARY OF ANGELS BASILICA (UNESCO) ● EUCHARISTIC MIRACLE IN LANCIANO ● HOLY HOUSE OF LORETO ● ST PADRE PIO SANCTUARY 	<div>14 MAY</div> <div>16 SEP</div> <div>31 OCT</div> <div>18 NOV</div> <div>09 DEC</div>	<div>RM 13,900 p/p</div>
10D RUSSIA ~ ST PETERSBURG + MOSCOW Highlights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TOWN OF PETERHOF ● CHURCH OF THE SAVIOUR ON SPILLED BLOOD ● PUSHKIN + PAVLOVSK ● PETER AND PAUL'S FORTRESS ● SAPSAN HIGH SPEED TRAIN ● SERGIEV POSSAD 	<div>28 AUG</div> <div>Fr Mark Michael</div>	<div>RM 14,500 p/p</div>

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