

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.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.
Eph. 2:13-14



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A journey
towards
communion

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plogging**

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rosary
business
to spread
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Sin that cries for vengeance to heaven

ROME: The city that was once considered the best protected in Ukraine, thanks to powerful American Patriot air defence systems, was in shock on July 8. Kyiv, spared in recent months by Russian strikes primarily targeting the country's energy infrastructure, was hit by a violent attack.

The Russian attack, a barrage of 40 missiles, according to the Ukrainian air force, targeted several cities across the country — Kyiv, Dnipro, Kryvyi Rih, Sloviansk and Kramatorsk. Launched in the late morning — rather than at dawn, as the Russian military often does — it left at least 43 people dead and roughly 200 wounded.

Moscow denied targeting civilian infrastructure. However, the Russian Ministry of Defence changed its version in the afternoon, claiming that the damage to a children's hospital was caused by "the fall of a Ukrainian anti-aircraft missile."

Several videos clearly show a missile hitting the Okhmatdyt hospital, one of Ukraine's largest paediatric clinic, which is famous for its cancer treatment, and which serves severely ill children and children with rare and complex diseases, as well as children who have been wounded in the ongoing war with Russia.

The attack apparently came when the hospital, which treats around 20,000 children annually, was at its busiest.

The hospital's toxicology ward was destroyed, and shrapnel also tore through the main hospital building, shattering its windows, while one of the surgical rooms, where doctors had been operating on a child, was reduced to a pile of rubble.

Children receiving dialysis for kidney problems, some as young as 18 months, were taken off machines and evacuated through hospital windows, as other children lined up outside still holding their IVs.

Soon after, news emerged that a nearby maternity unit in Kyiv had been partially destroyed by debris, killing four and wounding three people.

In a statement released by the Vatican press

office on July 9, Pope Francis expressed "deep shock at the escalation of violence" both in Ukraine as well as in Gaza, where a school was hit by Israeli air-strikes.

"While expressing sympathy for the victims and the innocent wounded, he hopes and prays that practical pathways can soon be identified to put an end to the ongoing conflicts," the statement read.

In a video message, Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, said he was "horrified" by the bombing of Okhmatdyt hospital, noting that the central hospital in the complex was called the Hospital of the Protection of Motherhood and Children.

Shevchuk said it was "horrifying to see that children who came to save their lives in the artificial kidney centre were ruthlessly killed by Russian criminals. Many of them were on the verge of death — they were under artificial lung ventilation devices."

Noting that many children were undergoing surgery at the time of the attack, he said the power outage "put their lives in danger," and called the attack a "crime against humanity."

"It is not only a crime against human laws

and rules, international rules of warfare. This is a sin that cries for vengeance to heaven, according to Christian morality," he said, saying he is crying for the victims and praying for the dead, "especially the innocent children."

When missiles target "the smallest of the smallest, the weakest of the weak," he added, each one of us asks why. "Why does someone continue to provide explanations for the war as if it could be justified for some reason? I do not know how these consciences can continue to do so."

He urged the Christian community to embrace the wounded and those hurting most "with our Christian love," and offered condolences to the families and friends of the victims, as well as his gratitude to the medical staff "for their dedication and heroism."

In the aftermath of the attack on Okhmatdyt, hospital staff, including some who had been wounded, continued to treat patients, while rescuers combed through the rubble searching for people, living or dead, trapped under the wreckage. They formed a human chain to clear the rubble one brick at a time. — *Agencies*

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COMMENTARY

Listen to women, often overlooked and undervalued

Pope Francis has penned the preface for a newly released book, *Women and Ministries in the Synodal Church*. Authored by three distinguished female theologians and two cardinals, this volume tackles some of the most ecclesiastically sensitive themes: women's roles in ministry, synodality, and the pervasive tragedy of abuse within the Church.

The book is a collaborative effort by Salesian nun Sr Linda Pocher, a professor of Christology and Mariology; Jo B. Wells, a bishop in the Church of England and General Secretary of the Anglican Communion; Giuliva Di Berardino, a consecrated member of the Ordo Virginum from the Diocese of Verona; Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, Archbishop of Luxembourg; and Cardinal Seán Patrick O'Malley, President of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors.

Published on July 9, this book follows an earlier work by Sr Linda Pocher titled *Demasculinising the Church*, a term first coined by Pope Francis during an audience with the International Theological Commission.

The book captures a "literary" dialogue that emerged from a significant February 5 meeting between Pope Francis and the Council of Cardinals. This event marked the first time three female theologians were invited by the Pope to offer their contributions and "provocations" on the theme of women's roles in the Church.

This dialogue is crucial, coming at a time when the Church is grappling with its history and seeking paths for renewal. Pope Francis' reflection in the preface echoes his long-held tenet: "Reality is more important than ideas." He underscores the need to address clericalism, a misuse of power within the Church, which the abuse crisis has starkly illuminated. The Pope also commends Sr Pocher's programme for the Council of Cardinals on women in the Church, especially regarding the critical topic of ministries within the ecclesial community.

"Listening to the joys and sufferings of women is certainly a way to open ourselves to reality," Pope Francis writes. He poignantly observes that many women suffer due to a lack of recognition and opportunity, despite their readiness to serve God and His Kingdom. This recognition of women's experiences and contributions is a step towards addressing historical and systemic inequities within the Church.

The Pope's call to prioritise reality over rigid adherence to ideas challenges the Church to adapt and grow. The merit of *Women and Ministries in the Synodal Church* lies in its foundation on listening to real experiences rather than theoretical ideals. This approach is essential as the Church prepares for the upcoming Synod, where greater recognition of women's gifts and vocations will be an essential topic.

The recently published *Instrumentum*

Laboris for the upcoming October session of the Synod also addresses the issue of women's roles. The document underscores the need for greater recognition of women's gifts and vocations, advocating for a shift towards a more relational, interdependent, and reciprocal view of men and women as siblings in Christ, united in the Church's mission.

Regarding the female diaconate, Cardinal Mario Grech, the Synod's Secretary General, noted that it will not be addressed in the upcoming assembly. This topic is currently the focus of a dedicated study group established by the Pope for deeper theological and pastoral reflection.

Pope Francis has entrusted the issue of the women's diaconate to the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, working in collaboration with the General Secretariat of the Synod. This effort, as outlined in the study groups' document published in March, aims to respond to the Synodal Assembly's desire for "greater recognition and appreciation of the contribution of women and an increase in the pastoral responsibilities entrusted to them in all areas of the life and mission of the Church."

Pope Francis' preface and the book itself are significant steps towards a more inclusive and equitable Church. By embracing the lived realities of women, the Church can better fulfil its mission and reflect the true spirit of Christ's teachings.

— *Vatican News*

Balancing self-care and caring for others

In today's world, many of us struggle with overwhelming busyness, leading to stress and a multitude of related issues. Stress-related illnesses have become widespread, impacting our relationships, homes, and communities. On the other hand, some experience the stress of unemployment, which brings its own set of challenges. This duality of stress, whether from too much work or too little, seems to be a pervasive issue in our society.

I often wonder if Jesus ever felt overwhelmed by the constant demands placed on Him. The endless stream of people seeking His help, the lack of time for Himself, and the pressure to meet the needs of others must have been exhausting. The crowds followed Him everywhere, arriving even before He did, with their problems and needs. The sheer volume of people and their needs would likely have been frustrating and tiring for anyone.

Despite these challenges, Jesus did not appear to be deterred or disheartened. Instead, He responded with deep compassion. He saw the sadness and lost state of the people and was moved to meet their needs. Jesus taught them, healed them, and fed them. His focus was always on others, not Himself. His life was characterised by sacrifice and self-giving long before His ultimate sacrifice on the cross.

This brings us to an important question: How do we approach our own lives? Do we live primarily for ourselves, focusing on our needs and desires, or do we also consider the needs of those around us? Self-care



is crucial, and we should never overlook our own well-being. However, if self-care becomes our sole focus, we risk missing the needs of others and the opportunities God provides for us to serve.

In today's gospel, we see a clear example of the challenge of busyness. The disciples had just returned from their mission, eager to share their experiences with Jesus. They were excited to recount the difference they had made in people's lives. However, their joy was quickly overshadowed by the demands placed on Jesus. They were immediately surrounded by a crowd eager to hear Jesus' teachings or seek His healing. The constant influx of people was relentless, with needs pressing in from every side.

Amidst this relentless busyness, Jesus spoke words of profound significance: "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." Jesus recognised the importance of rest, reflection, and refreshment. He understood that without these moments of respite, neither He nor

His disciples could remain effective in their mission. This principle is evident throughout the Gospels. Jesus frequently withdrew to pray and find peace, especially when facing major tasks. He spent forty days in the wilderness following His baptism and before beginning His ministry. He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of His arrest, preparing Himself spiritually for the ordeal to come.

Jesus' example teaches us a crucial lesson. Just as He needed time away from His ministry to recharge, we too must find our own moments of rest and renewal. If our lives are so packed that we cannot find time for ourselves or for God, we are too busy. We need to heed Jesus' invitation to "rest a while" and develop our own rhythm of renewal. Each of us must find a balance that allows us to be effective in our roles and maintain our relationship with God.

Additionally, it is essential that we extend this principle of rest to others. We must be mindful of those around us who are

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with the Editor

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Readings: *Jeremiah 23: 1-6;*

Ephesians 2: 13-18;

Gospel: Mark 6: 30-34

overburdened and seek to support them in finding their own space for renewal. By sharing the load and alleviating stress for others, we contribute to a more balanced and compassionate community.

Reflecting on Jesus' experiences, we can see that He faced the same dilemma of balancing personal needs with the demands of His mission. The constant need to care for others was a significant challenge, yet He managed to maintain His focus on serving others. This is a powerful example for us. While it is important to take care of our own needs, we must also be attentive to the needs of those around us and responsive to God's call to serve.

Jesus' life teaches us about the importance of finding balance between self-care and service to others. We must take time for ourselves to recharge and be effective in our roles. At the same time, we should be mindful of others' needs and seek to support them in their moments of exhaustion. By doing so, we align ourselves with Jesus' example and contribute to building a compassionate and supportive community.



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

July

- 22 Meeting – AOHD Board
- 27 Annual General Meeting – MCCBCHST
- 27 Confirmation – Church of St Thomas More, Subang Jaya
- 27 Confirmation – Church of the Risen Christ, KL
- 28 Confirmation – Church of St Thomas, Kuantan
- 31 Feast – Church of St Ignatius, Petaling Jaya



PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

July

- 19-28 Novena and Feast of Sts Joachim and Anne – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam
- 31 Meeting with the Kasih House of Mission (KHOM) Catholic lay missionaries from Poland, Slovakia, Latvia, France and Malaysia at 10.00am



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

July

- 23 Third Caritas DEA meeting via Zoom
- 23 Meeting – South Johor Vicariate Pastoral Council, Church of the Immaculate Conception, Johor Bahru
- 24 Meeting – Caritas MJD Exco, Caritas MJD Centre
- 27 Mass – St Anne's Chapel, Pamol Estate, Kluang
- 28 Mangrove Restoration organised by Creation Justice Commission of MJD with support of Caritas MJD in collaboration with Malaysian Nature Society and Department of Forestry, in conjunction with World Nature Conservation Day. (Trip to Pulau Kukup)
- 30 Meeting – North Central Johor Vicariate Clergy via Zoom

Setback for public procession at Kuantan church

KUANTAN: As the Church of St Thomas prepared for its feast day celebrations and the 118th anniversary of its establishment, the Feast Day Committee made significant plans to mark the occasion. A public procession with the Blessed Sacrament was scheduled for Saturday, July 6, coinciding with the sixth day of the feast day novena and Mass. The procession, a tradition, observed on *Corpus Christi* and parish feast days, holds great significance within the Catholic Church, symbolising spiritual intimacy with the Blessed Sacrament.

Preparations began a month prior, with committee member and retired Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Tuan William Fernandez submitting an application for a police permit. On June 28, the committee met with the Special Branch to discuss the details of the procession, including the monstrance with the Blessed Sacrament, the cross, candles, banners from each BEC representative, the number of participants, and other relevant matters. The meeting with the Special Branch officers was productive

and underscored the importance of each item in the solemnity and reverence of the procession.

On July 2, several committee members and parish priest, Fr George Packiasamy, met with Kuantan OCPD Tuan Wan Mohd Zahari bin Wan Busu. The meeting included nine other department heads comprising Special Branch officers, patrol officers, traffic police, crime investigators, and others. During the hour-long discussion, the OCPD expressed concerns about the potential “sensitivity” that could be triggered in certain individuals by the proposed procession through the town, especially the carrying of the Monstrance with the Blessed Sacrament and Cross.

The parish committee emphasised the significance of the Blessed Sacrament during the procession as a symbol of spiritual connection with the Divine. The committee agreed to commence the procession only after the *Maghrib* prayer time, as requested by the authorities. Despite the hesitation to provide immediate approval, the police assured the committee that a decision would be made

within a few days.

Meanwhile, during the novena Masses, Fr George requested the parishioners to pray for the success of their application to hold the procession. However, the police department's response, dated July 4, stated that the procession was not an absolute necessity for religious practice and was not listed as an annual activity in the state calendar. This last-minute rejection of the request was met with disappointment by both the committee and the parishioners.

Fr George expressed his concerns regarding the implications of this decision on the rights to “freedom of religion” and the promotion of religious and racial harmony in the nation. He intends to officially record the church's disappointment with the decision and will seek legal counsel moving forward.

Despite the setback, the parish community of the Church of St Thomas remained steadfast in its mission to celebrate and proclaim Jesus as “Our Lord and Our God.” The feast day celebrations continued as planned, culminating in a thanksgiving Mass on July 7.



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #181



Greetings dear friends of MJD,

The silence is incomprehensible: a preacher's advice on secret conversions of minors; misuse of National Council of Professors' funds; HRD Corp's mismanagement of funds; 94.2 per cent of septic tanks in the country have not been decontaminated for over three years; phone scamming of the elders has escalated; money disbursed but misused.... is silence golden? Is silence condoning? Is silence a compromise?

“Pilgrims On the Move” Times: The Muslims have returned from Mecca. Catholics and others are on the move. Come the tail end of July, St Anne's Bukit Mertajam and Port Klang and the many small outstation chapels with the same name, will be drawing devotees. After the pandemic, public gatherings, processions and celebrations have flourished.

Come August, 550-600 clergy, religious, pastoral workers and church leaders will be converging on MAJODI Centre, Plentong. Come December 29, 2024, the Jubilee Year 2025 will see another wave of pilgrims to churches designated as pilgrim centres. All this travelling is a call to walk with one another and walk with the Lord. May we be pilgrims of prayer, praying for the world, the sinners and the suffering.

A Thought For The Week: The Lost Key Shifting to a new flat, Tom happily took out his luggage, and reached for his key. His key was missing. Nervously he searched through every box, no keys. As the hours passed, his troubles increased. Tired, he sat down. Then he noticed a shiny object on the ground. It was his key, right in front of him. But Tom did not see it.

The lesson from the key: Sometimes when we focus too much on an issue, we miss the solution that is right in front of us. The answer surfaces when we stop worrying

about a particular issue. Finding a solution does not require constant searching, but a brief period of silence.

Announcements For The Week:

1. The diocese congratulates Msgr Peter Ng and Fr Thomas Chong who will be celebrating their *Silver Jubilee* (25 years as priests); and Fr Anthony Ng and Fr Lucas Ho will be *Golden Jubilarians* (50 years) this year. More info next.

2. The *Regional Pastoral Assembly 2024*, popularly known as PMPC 5, draws near. Delegates from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, Diocese of Penang, and the Diocese of Malacca Johore numbering 500 are expected at MAJODI Centre, Plentong from August 25- 27, 2024. It will be a time to listen, learn and be led by the Holy Spirit.

3. The *Mangrove Planting Project* initiated by Caritas-CJC MJD with the Nature Society, will see 49 participants sponsoring and planting 450 saplings at Kukup.

QnQ? Q asks: I am wondering if robots are taking over our jobs?

This article by Antoni Shkraba attempts to show where AI fails and why human intelligence will remain essential in the workforce.

1. **Well-defined cannot juggle:** AI excels at handling a wide range of well-defined tasks (e.g. analyse data, compose music), but it can't switch seamlessly between these activities or manage them simultaneously, where humans can juggle, can create and have emotional depth.

2. **Interpret cannot intuit.** AI can produce human-like writing, handle and interpret unstructured data from sources like emails, reports, and social media. Unlike AI, humans can draw on intuition, experience, and creativity to navigate dynamic situations and make spontaneous decisions.

3. **Intelligent output not true human creativity.** AI is able to analyse large

data sets, identify patterns, and combine concepts in ways that resemble creativity, provide new ideas which results in intelligent outputs such as poetry, music, and philosophical reflections. But lacks the emotional depth, consciousness, and experiential background that drive true human creativity drawn from personal experiences, emotions, and unique perspectives to craft art, music, or literature.

4. **Processes data not comprehend beyond:** AI can mimic understanding of context and meaning based on patterns in training data, often producing appropriate responses and can detect subtleties in language, such as sarcasm and tone. AI is capable of processing data and identifying patterns. However, it lacks true consciousness, comprehension, or the capacity to understand beyond the data that it has been taught.

5. **Works on patterns not ethics:** AI that operates on algorithms and data patterns cannot comprehend the complex and subjective nature of ethics (e.g. understand an action's impact on society as a whole). In contrast, humans can weigh ethical considerations based on empathy, societal values, and context, allowing us to make ethical decisions in many real-world scenarios!

See the Holy Spirit @ work: We can study the whole history of salvation, we can study the whole of Theology, but without the Spirit we cannot understand. It is the Spirit that makes us realise the truth or – in the words of Our Lord – it is the Spirit that makes us know the voice of Jesus. — Pope Francis

Something to tickle you: We are all faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as impossible situations. — Chuck Swindoll

Bishop Bernard Paul

RPA2024: A journey towards communion

By Fr Dr Lawrence Ng

Preparations are underway for the Peninsular Malaysia Regional Pastoral Assembly 2024 (RPA2024), to be held at MAJODI Centre in Plentong, Johor, from 25 to 27 August. About 550 participants from the dioceses of Penang and Malacca Johore, as well as the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, will attend this event.

The RPA2024 is best understood within the context of the journey towards the Malaysian Pastoral Convention 2026 (MPC2026). The MPC2026 represents a decisive step by the Malaysian Bishops towards a vision of communion among the Catholic dioceses of Sabah, Sarawak, and Semenanjung.

A Journey Weaved by the Synodal Process

Several threads shaped the early stages of the MPC2026 initiative, which began in 2020. First, Pope Francis steered the Catholic Church towards the path of synodality in 2022. The call to synodality is a call for the Catholic Church to “journey together,” affirming the journey

of the Peninsular Church that started with *Aggiornamento* 1976. The 1976 process can be accurately described as the Catholic Church of Malaysia working out how to better “journey together” through its five diocesan and then regional assemblies, held every decade to review the 1976 process.

In light of this, the RPA2024 is an essential part of the journey towards MPC2026. MPC2026 is not the final destination but a platform for the Peninsular Malaysia Church (PMC) to begin transitioning towards being one Church in communion with Sabah and Sarawak.

The Bishops of Malaysia identified four common areas of concern that each diocese will discern upon leading up to 2026: Church, Family, Society, and Ecology. Since 2022, all dioceses have adopted the synodal process.

The heart of the RPA, as it was for all earlier processes, is the synodal process. The method of “Conversation in the Spirit” will be employed, ensuring that all participants prayerfully engage and discern the ideas or questions presented through a prepared booklet or e-booklet provided weeks before the RPA.

Fruits of the RPA2024

It is hoped that the discernment process will achieve three things: First, offer counsels for pastoral direction to continue building our local Church in the four areas of concern. Second, address common areas of concern that Sabah and Sarawak are also discerning, which will be brought to MPC2026. Finally, initiate a journey and conversation towards a sense of ownership, identity, love, and appreciation for what it means to be a local or Malaysian Church.

The term “counsels” describes the thoughtful and spiritually guided advice emerging from the collective discernment at the RPA. These counsels are not prescriptive commands but guiding insights that help shape our ongoing conversation and pastoral directions within our local Church. By embracing these counsels, we commit to continuous discernment and adaptation, ensuring our journey towards deeper communion and synodality is inclusive and responsive to the movement of the Holy Spirit among us.



Celebrating, Listening, and Walking Together

The RPA theme *Celebrating, Listening, and Walking Together in a Spirit of Communion, Participation, and Mission* captures the main threads sparked in 1976 and the spirit of synodality. The RPA will emphasise the importance of celebrating faith together, listening to diverse voices within the Church and society, and walking together as pilgrims on a journey of faith while listening to the Holy Spirit.

All the dioceses of Malaysia have been praying for our journey towards MPC2026 and what will emerge from it. The participants at the RPA will contribute to this pivotal time in the history of the Catholic Church of Malaysia.



Arch/diocesan Pastoral Assemblies in Kuala Lumpur, Malacca Johore and Penang back in 2023.

Marking a decade of dedicated Prison Ministry

PENANG: The Penang Diocesan Prison Ministry (PDPM) marked a significant milestone as it celebrated its 10th anniversary. Approximately 150 faith sharers from Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Perak, Kelantan, and the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur gathered at the Minor Basilica of St Anne in Bukit Mertajam, June 29, to commemorate the occasion.

The day commenced with a formation session led by lay minister Benedict Savarimuthu, centred on the theme *In the Potter's Hands*. Attendees reflected on PDPM's decade-long journey, discussing the changes and improvements needed to enhance their roles as faith sharers. They explored how they view God and others as ‘potters’ shaping the ministry's growth and laying a solid foundation for expanding PDPM's services.

Highlighting the power of teamwork, Benedict emphasised that with God as the Potter and faith sharers as the Clay, the ministry has achieved what once seemed impossible. He noted that faith sharers carry within them a Mystery, a Mission, and a Message from the Creator, which come to fruition in their prison visits. He drew a parallel to the biblical transformation of “Sauls” into “Pauls,” achievable only through the dedication of passionate faith sharers



working with the Holy Trinity.

Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang, celebrated the Thanksgiving Mass, referring to the faith sharers as “evangelising ministers” and praising them as “an army of disciples who bring the Good News to prisoners throughout the Diocese of Penang.” He urged the ministers to emulate Jesus (Mk 5:21-43), who raised Jairus’ daughter with the words “Talitha, kumi!” Cardinal Sebastian encouraged them to remember this phrase, meaning “Arise, I tell you, little girl (boy),” in their mission to give new life to those behind bars.

In conjunction with the celebration, PDPM presented a video detailing its journey and accomplishments over the past 10 years.

Commemorative bookmarks were distributed to the congregation.

In acknowledging that PDPM's success is due to the dedication and commitment of its faith sharers, both clergy and laity, six individuals who have served since 2014 were honoured with 10th anniversary service awards by Cardinal Sebastian. The recipients included Fr Victor Louis, parish priest of the Church of Christ the King, Sungai Petani, Kedah; Anthony Andrews, Head of PDPM; Poulin Raphael, Margaret Ng Poh Bit, and Thomas Deva from the Church of Divine Mercy, Sungai Ara, Penang, and Lee Lye Imm from the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Penang.

Fr Michael Raymond, OFM Cap, spiritual

advisor for PDPM, presented a plaque of appreciation to Cardinal Sebastian, thanking him for his guidance and leadership in sharing the Good News with captives. The ministry expressed hope that the Cardinal would continue to lead them for many more years.

After the Eucharistic celebration, the faith sharers gathered for a fellowship dinner with an address by the chairman of PDPM, Steeven Phillips and the cutting of the anniversary cake. The evening was filled with joy and entertainment as faith sharers showcased their talents in dance and song.

The event was a meaningful celebration of thanksgiving to God, with prayers for continued growth and success for PDPM in the coming years. — **By Stephanie Cheong**

GEORGETOWN: The Fellowship of Malaysian Covenant Communities held its annual gathering from July 6 to 8, themed *Called and Chosen and Faithful*. This year's event emphasised the importance of pastoral and fraternal care for all members, regardless of age or marital status.

The gathering saw participation from nine covenant communities: Holy Trinity; Emmaus Catholic; The Light of Jesus Christ; Star of Yahweh; Bread of Life; Marvellous Light of Yahweh; Servants of the Lord; Servants of Yahweh; and Covenanted for Christ. A total of 180 members from Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak came together for a weekend of fellowship, unity, and shared faith.

Activities included discussions on what the Lord is doing within each community, formations oriented towards a Christian way of life and mission, and seeking divine guidance for future directions. The event also featured praise and worship sessions. The Covenanted for Christ Community (CFCC) Malaysia served as the host for this significant event.

Cardinal Sebastian Francis celebrated Mass at the Church of St Francis Xavier for the participants. In his homily, Cardinal Sebastian highlighted the significance of the Pentecost experience, focusing on the themes of prayer, revelation, and invitation. He emphasised how the community of disciples was sent forth as the Church of Christ on mission, tasked with proclaiming the message to all corners of the world.

Referring to Acts 10, Cardinal Sebastian underscored the inclusive nature of God's kingdom, where divine love and salvation are extended to all people. He noted that Pope Francis, in the cardinal's letter of appointment, emphasised the importance

Malaysian covenant communities united in faith



of universality revealed on Pentecost morning. Cardinal Sebastian explained that the Church's universality, reflected in its diversity of languages and cultures, is distinct from uniformity.

The cardinal also spoke about the Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Assembly (PMPC) IV in 2016, which, guided by the Holy Spirit, advocates for a Church that is inclusive, creative, and a bridge-builder. He highlighted the vision of the Holy Spirit, who is Trinitarian, steering the Synodal Church towards the values of communion, participation, and mission.

The Covenant Communities also visited the Minor Basilica of St Anne (MBSA),

Bukit Mertajam, where Sr Mercie Lai, FMDM, warmly welcomed the pilgrims. The group began their visit by reciting the Pilgrim's Prayer, which starts with the words, "Lord, guide us on our earthly journey's pilgrimage towards your heart."

Christopher Kushi from the Diocese of Penang Heritage Committee then presented a video detailing the history and celebrations of the St Anne Sanctuary. Following the presentation, MBSA Pilgrim Guide volunteers led the group on a guided tour of St Anne's Shrine, St Anne's Hill, the Minor Basilica, and other sanctuary buildings.

Cardinal Sebastian also attended a fellowship dinner with the presiding

elders, guests, and members. During the dinner, Bro Francis Xavier Gasper, a Gabrielite Brother and one of the founders of Montfort Sabah, reflected on the origins of their mission in Sabah. He recounted that in 1986, responding to an invitation from the Light of Jesus Christ Covenant Community, the Montfort Brothers visited Kota Kinabalu and established the mission of Montfort Sabah.

Vincent Lim, the presiding elder for CFCC, encapsulated the evening's message with a call to introspection: "Have you been faithful to that call? We are reminded that we are disciples on mission, loving Christ all our lives, and for the rest of our lives."

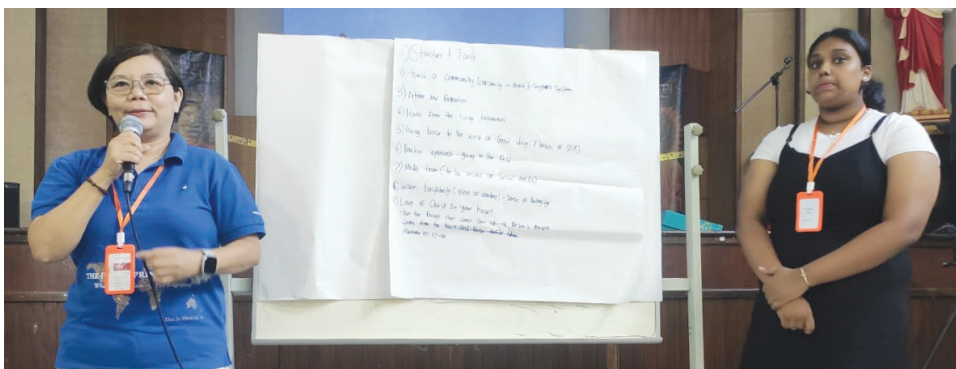
Igniting the spark for evangelisation

KUALA LUMPUR: Evangelisation is central to the Christian faith, a mandate given by Jesus to "go and make disciples." Embracing this call, 80 attendees from various parishes in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur participated in a conference June 23 to 24, on *Transforming Parishes*, organised by Alpha, in partnership with the FABC Office of Evangelisation.

Attendees left the conference with a renewed understanding of the importance of intentional evangelisation and discipleship, recognising it as a fundamental duty for all Catholics in fulfilling the Great Commission.

To continue this momentum, the Archdiocesan Mission of New Evangelisation for Christ (AMNEC), which facilitated their participation at the conference, organised a follow-up session titled *Igniting the Spark* at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on July 8. This session aimed to further equip attendees with knowledge and strategies for evangelisation.

During the gathering, Archbishop Julian Leow shared the vision of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. He emphasised the need for inclusiveness across various groups, breaking barriers of ethnicity, language, and age, and reaching out to the masses to live



out the vocation of service to the Kingdom of God. Archbishop Julian highlighted the importance of journeying together towards "a new way of being Church."

Cynthia Varghese, from the Church of St Anne, Port Klang, shared a personal testimony. She and her husband, who had left the Catholic Church and served as pastors in another Christian church for 20 years, returned to the Catholic faith after being invited by a priest. "We have lots of work to do for the Kingdom of God, and I'm ready to serve the Lord with my 16-year-old daughter Joanna," she said.

Maria Chriselda, from the Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras, reflected on Bishop

A participant presenting feedback from her group.

Pablo Virgilio David's *Coffee with Jesus* session during the Transforming Parishes conference. She realised the importance of setting aside personal time for prayer with Jesus and learned various ways to create a vibrant youth community.

Lucas Yong and Wendy Mah presented survey results from AMNEC, revealing that many attendees felt the need to step out of their comfort zones to evangelise. They emphasised empowering youth as the "now" generation and ensuring leadership succession for the continuity of the mission.

Vincent Nathan discussed the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19) and the need for evangelisation through the Word of God, acts of charity, love, service, and living as witnesses. He stressed the importance of daily prayer, Scripture reading, and invoking the Holy Spirit before taking action.

Fr Paul Cheong, OFM Cap highlighted the various tools available for evangelisation, echoing Pope John Paul II's sentiment that "the Church exists to evangelise."

Andrew Lim, the coordinator of AMNEC, closed the session by reiterating the importance of spreading the Good News of Jesus. He called on everyone to work together to be "fishers of men," bringing hope and life to the lost, suffering, and enslaved.

Parish provides free Bahasa classes for migrants

KUALA LUMPUR: The Migrant Ministry of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (SHJ), in collaboration with the parish's Bahasa Apostolate, provided free Bahasa Malaysia classes for migrant students aged 16 and above. This initiative aimed to help the students prepare for further studies at Montfort Boys Town.

The classes, which began on May 20 and concluded on June 30, were held weekly at SHJ. The programme focused on enhancing students' skills in writing, reading, and conversing in Bahasa Malaysia. Teachers Mary Caroline and Cathrine Mak, from the Bahasa Apostolate, instructed a total of four students.

The Migrant Ministry extends its gratitude to the Bahasa Apostolate for their support and contribution to this educational effort. — *By Lydia Pinto*



A teacher assisting the students.



Group discussion

Community service, environmental stewardship through plogging

By Dr Maria Lee

JOHOR BAHRU: The Creation Justice Ministry of the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus organised a three-hour community outreach event, "Plogging," June 29.

Plogging, which combines picking up garbage while walking or jogging, was conducted with several key objectives. Firstly, the event aimed to serve the neighbourhood community, reflecting Jesus' spirit of service. Secondly, it sought to care for our common home, aligning with the principles outlined in Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* encyclical. Lastly, the initiative advocated for waste separation at the source, in support of the government's waste management policy.

A total of 80 participants, including members from both Mandarin and English-speaking congregations, young and old, took

part in the event. The youngest participant was seven-year-old Ephraem Tan, while the oldest was 80-year-old Auntie Maria Soh. The event was further supported by four priests and religious, including Fr Simon Yong, SJ (parish priest), Fr Paul Sia, Sr M Pacis Heng, and Fr Michael Goh, a visiting priest.

Participants gathered at St Peter's Hall at 8.00am where Fr Simon launched the event with a prayer, the sprinkling of Holy Water, and the striking of a gong. Seventeen teams, each consisting of four to six members, were equipped with bags for sorting recyclables and non-recyclables. They set out to collect garbage around the cathedral in their designated areas.

By 9.40am, the teams began to return, having collected a total of 290kgs of garbage. Of this, 186kgs were non-recyclable and were disposed off in the RORO (Roll-off)



Participants plogging at Taman Sri Tebrau.

Roll-Off) bin provided by MPJB (the city council), while a recycling vendor collected 104kgs of recyclable materials. The event revealed a larger quantity of recyclable materials that could not be processed due to contamination. The cleanup also uncovered garbage-clogged drains, which posed risks of stagnant water and mosquito breeding. The event underscored

the importance of waste segregation at the source, the detrimental effects of littering, and the urgent need to protect the environment.

Some local residents expressed their appreciation during the event with thumbs-up signs and verbal thanks. A Malay resident praised the cleanup effort, while a Chinese resident offered to drive two participants back to the cathedral,

though they declined due to their dirty appearance. His heartfelt response, "Your heart is clean, not dirty at all," touched everyone.

The event served as a reminder of small acts of kindness and the vital role of environmental stewardship, reinforcing the community's commitment to living out Christian values as "the walking Bible."



A group intently discussing the answers to the clues.

Green Hunt promotes environmental awareness

KUALA LUMPUR: Seventy-three participants of all ages and diverse faiths explored Brickfields on foot for the first-ever *Laudato Si'* Green Hunt, organised by the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur Creation Justice Ministry.

The event, held on July 8, spanned over three kilometres, involving teams solving 48 clues and questions related to environmental topics such as organic composting, recycling, proper disposal of used cooking oil, and the environmental benefits of vegetarianism.

In keeping with the environmental theme, the top three teams were awarded potted plants and reusable stainless steel water containers. The Chapel of Christ the King in Selayang emerged as the winning team.

Dr Mel, from the Church of the Holy Rosary, who participated with her BEC members, praised the event for its engaging format and *Laudato Si'* theme. Leona, from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes in Klang, enjoyed quality bonding time with her daughter and meeting new friends.

Participants appreciated the opportunity to spend a public holiday morning walking with loved ones and engaging in thoughtful environmental activities. The positive feedback has led many to suggest making the Green Hunt an annual event.

Fr Andrew Manickam OFM Cap, ecclesiastical assistant for the Creation Justice ministry, emphasised the ministry's ongoing commitment to promoting environmental awareness and fostering community engagement. — **By Melina Yeoh**

Family day fun at Kulim parish

KULIM, Kedah: The Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus recently celebrated its annual Family Day, drawing joyful participation from parishioners. Parish priest, Msgr Henry Rajoo, welcomed attendees with an opening prayer and blessing, fostering a spirit of unity and seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit.

Coordinated by Vimala Thomas, the Parish Pastoral Council chairperson, the event was supported by the English, Mandarin, and Tamil-speaking BECs, along with other parish ministries. The celebrations, held at the parish hall, commenced with a lively line dance performance by the Senior Citizens Sacred Heart of Jesus team.

There were a variety of games

and activities. The youth engaged in making rosaries using beads and creating name keychains. Children participated in crafting sand art, while families designed portrait frames in various patterns. An inflatable play gym was set up for the kids, adding to the excitement.

Food stalls provided an array of free treats, including *pani puri*, ice cream, and popcorn. Gabriel Tan and Joana Wong from the Liturgy team presented prizes for the creative activities. The organising team ensured that breakfast and lunch were available for all participants.

The event concluded with final blessings from Msgr Henry, marking a memorable for all involved. — **By John Kuppasawary.**



Fundraising Food and Fun Fair bolsters church renovation efforts

PARIT BUNTAR, Perak: The Church of Our Lady of Good Health organised a Food and Fun Fair on July 7 as part of its fundraising efforts for a significant church renovation project. The event saw an excellent turnout from the Parit Buntar townsfolk, generous donors, and vibrant participation from all BECs that set up various stalls.

The parish also expressed gratitude to patrons from Penang, Butterworth, and parishioners from other parishes who came to support by setting up stalls. The event fostered a strong sense of family spirit and camaraderie among all attendees.

Parish priest, Fr Martin Arlando, highlighted the urgency of the renovation, noting that the church building, which has been in existence for about 60 years, has only undergone routine maintenance. "To date, we have major defects in the roof and recurring flooding issues that are a constant worry for us," Fr Martin stated. "We aim to improve the environment to make it more prayer-friendly and enhance the spirit of worship as we enter and commune with God."



One of the emcees encouraging patrons towards the stalls.

Fr Martin emphasised the church's role beyond religious services, serving the educational, recreational, and social needs of various groups. He recounted incidents where rainwater poured in during services, flooding the interior and rising water levels, making it difficult for parishioners to access the church from the car park without wading through ankle-deep water. Concerns have also been raised about the safety of electrical wiring and plumbing.

Despite ongoing efforts by parish groups to raise funds for the renovation, the projected cost of no less than RM3 million remains a signifi-

cant challenge. Fr Martin stressed the need to expedite fundraising programmes to realise the expansion plans.

"We envision creating a space for deeper encounters with God and fostering His presence in our lives and families," said Fr Martin. "It is also to translate our worship and God's Word into actions that touch the lives of one another within the parish and beyond."

Those interested in donating towards the building fund can contact the parish office at 05-7102220 or via email at olgh.parit.buntar@gmail.com for further details.

Learning to emulate Sts Peter and Paul

By Bernard Anthony

KUALA KUBU BAHRU: The Church of St Paul the Apostle celebrated its parish feast day triduum from June 28 to 30 with the theme *Becoming a Missionary Disciple*. Parish priest, Fr VA Michael, led the celebrations and preached during the solemnity of Sts Peter & Paul.

Over the first two days, Fr Michael focused on St Peter and St Paul, two foundational pillars of the Church, discussing their mission for Christ and how parishioners can emulate them to become missionary disciples. He quoted the Scripture where Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love Me? Feed My lambs," highlighting that saints, including the Blessed Virgin Mary, point to Jesus, our Saviour, rather than to themselves.

On the final day, June 30, Fr Michael expressed great joy in concluding the



The congregation during the feast day celebration.

triduum and emphasised focusing on Jesus. He touched on the Gospel of Mark 5:21-43, recounting the stories of Jairus, a powerful man who sought Jesus' help for his dying daughter, and a woman suffering from

haemorrhage for 12 years who believed touching Jesus' cloak would heal her. Fr Michael explained that Jesus' mission was not only to preach the Kingdom of God but also to heal, referring to Him as

our 'Wounded Healer.'

Fr Michael highlighted the importance of reaching out to Jesus for healing and having faith. He noted that the woman's faith in Jesus' healing power was momentous and encouraged parishioners to testify about their healings as a testament to Jesus' miracles and power. He urged believers not to seek other gods or solutions but to remain patient and faithful, trusting in Jesus' timing for healing.

Each day of the triduum included the Litany of St Paul the Apostle before Mass, followed by fellowship on the parish grounds. Fr Michael thanked everyone for their participation, commending the liturgical team, cleaners, feast preparation volunteers, and food donors for their contributions. He expressed gratitude for the community's efforts in making the triduum meaningful and smooth and thanked God for the blessings upon the parish.

Celebrating St Thomas, 'the greatest gift of our times'



Fr Gregory Chan anointing an elderly man.

KUANTAN: This year, the Church of St Thomas the Apostle marked its 118th anniversary with a vibrant seven-day celebration honouring the feast of its patron. From July 1 to July 7, the parish hosted multilingual novena prayers and daily Masses, each preceded by a 30-minute recitation of the Rosary and novena prayers dedicated to St Thomas.

The celebrants included Fr Matthew Bun from the Church of Christ the King, Kulai, Johor; Fr Terrance Thomas from the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Mentakab, Pahang; and Fr Gregory Chan from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang, Selangor. These preachers guided the faithful through the week with homilies centred around the theme, *St Thomas, the Greatest Gift of Our Times*.

St Thomas, often remembered for his doubt, ultimately reaffirmed his faith by proclaiming Jesus as "My Lord and My God!" The celebrants used this narrative to inspire parishioners to embrace courage, live out their faith, and demonstrate their vibrant witness to Christ. Their messages were a passionate call to spiritual growth and a deeper connection with faith, encouraging the community to live as vibrant witnesses to Christ the Lord and God.

On Saturday, July 6, a special morning

Mass was held for the elderly and the sick, attended by approximately 100 people. Family members and BEC members brought their loved ones for the Anointing of the Sick and Eucharistic celebration, led by Frs Gregory Chan and Danny Matthews. The evening included Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction in the church after Mass.

The feast day celebrations were a testament to the unity and love within the parish community, featuring fellowship and interaction. To further enrich the celebration, the parish provided transportation for

the Orang Asli from Kuala Rompin and Indonesian migrants, enabling their participation in the festivities.

Parish priest, Fr George Packiasamy, congratulated the feast day organising committee for their dedication, hard work, and sacrifice, as well as all those who contributed to the success of the celebration. He expressed hope that commemorating the Feast of St Thomas together would strengthen the community's love and faith, helping them encounter the Risen Lord and become a resilient apostolic community. — **By Francis Leong**



The parish community of St Thomas coming together in prayer.

Fun walk to raise funds for community centre

KUALA LUMPUR: Approximately 300 individuals gathered at the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist for the "Magnificat Fundraising Fun Walk" July 8.

This walk served as one of the fundraising initiatives organised by the church to support the construction of the Magnificat Community Centre, a four-story facility

adjacent to the church.

This centre is intended to accommodate various spaces, including a chapel, meeting rooms, offices, and children's catechism classrooms.

Parish priest, Fr Gerard Theraviam, expressed the broader community-oriented vision of the centre, emphasising the potential

inclusion of educational facilities for underprivileged individuals and refugees.

The cost of constructing the building, including furnishing, is estimated at approximately RM16 million, revealing a current shortfall of approximately RM3 million in fund-raising efforts.

The event's non-competitive nature

aimed to foster a sense of enjoyment and community fellowship among participants, including non-parishioners. Commencing at 7.40am, the event launched with a prayer by Archbishop Julian Leow.

The walk spanned 3.5km, featuring landmarks such as St John's Institution, the Kuala Lumpur Forest Eco Park, the AIA Financial Centre, and Renaissance Hotel, before concluding back to the church at around 9.15am.

Besides the leisurely pace and favourable weather conditions, the walk also featured a fancy dress contest, adding an element of fun and creativity to the event. Testimonials from participants highlighted the unique experiences and affirmed the event's success in fostering a sense of community engagement.

Overall, the "Magnificat Fund-raising Fun Walk" demonstrated the positive impact and potential for future similar community activities, reflecting the value of such events in strengthening community ties and advancing charitable initiatives.



The participants at the Fun Walk on July 8, 2024.

Singapore papal visit ignites dialogue on societal change

SINGAPORE: In a conversation with *Catholic News*, the official newspaper of the Archdiocese of Singapore, Catholic parliamentarian Alex Yam shared insights on how the Holy Father's teachings guide his approach to pressing societal issues in Singapore.

As the nation prepares for its first papal visit in nearly four decades, the dialogue about the interplay between faith and public policy is intensifying.

The visit by Pope Francis is eagerly anticipated, not only by the local Catholic community but also by the broader society, given its potential to influence discussions on a range of pressing issues including social justice, family values, and education.

Yam, known for integrating religious values into his political work, emphasised the importance of upholding the dignity of every individual.

"As Catholics, we are called to uphold the dignity of every person, no matter their circumstances in life, outlook, or sexual orientation, since we are all created in the image and likeness of God," he said.

This message resonates as Singapore grapples with societal shifts such as rising divorce rates and declining birth rates, challenging traditional family structures.

Yam referenced the church's position as articulated by Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortations, *Evangelii Gaudium* and



Alex Yam, Member of Parliament, Singapore. (Photo/Alex Yam's official Facebook account)

Amoris Laetitia.

"The sanctity of marriage and human sexuality is an area where the Holy Father has upheld traditional Catholic teaching," he remarked.

Yam stressed the need for policies that strengthen families, promote healthy relationships, and provide support for those in difficulty.

He highlighted the Pope's endorsement of an educational approach that emphasises

human values, solidarity, and respect for diversity, advocating for a holistic system that nurtures intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development.

"This allows for more diversity and creativity in our society and economy, which, in turn, builds a more resilient workforce," he said.

On economic disparities, Yam emphasised the Church's commitment to the preferential 'Option for the Poor', a principle underpinning policies aimed at fostering a more equitable society.

"While extreme poverty in Singapore is less common than elsewhere, the widening gap between rich and poor remains an issue," he noted, reaffirming the Pope's vision of love, justice, and solidarity.

"His pastoral approach challenges us, the faithful, to address societal injustices, advocate for the marginalised, and promote dialogue and reconciliation by putting Christ at the centre of our lives, our community, and our nation," Yam said.

As a Catholic Member of Parliament, Yam said he lives out his faith through daily collaboration with leaders across various sectors to tackle social challenges.

"My hope is that, together, we will be guided by faith in God as we journey as a vibrant, evangelising, and missionary Church in building a more just and compassionate world for all," he said. — *LiCAS.news*

Vatican approves sainthood process of first Korean cardinal



SEOUL: The Vatican has allowed the launch of the sainthood process for Cardinal Stephen Kim Sou-hwan, the first Korean cardinal known for his initiatives in interfaith dialogue and lay participation.

The Archdiocese of Seoul said in a statement on July 5 that it has received the "no objection" letter from the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints to start the process.

Archbishop Peter Chung Soon-taick of Seoul received the letter on June 18, allowing the archdiocese to venerate Cardinal Kim (1922-2009) as a "Servant of God."

Auxiliary Bishop Job Koo Yobi of Seoul was named to chair the archdiocesan committee to investigate Cardinal Kim's life, heroic deeds, and reputation for sainthood.

Cardinal Kim "was respected and loved by many for his example of personal virtue, [and] his dedication to the growth of the Korean Church," the statement noted.

The archdiocese also recalled Kim's "contributions to democracy and the promotion of human rights" as the 11th archbishop of Seoul.

Cardinal Kim was called the "friend of the poor and marginalised".

"He practiced his love of giving until the end by donating his corneas," the archdiocese said.

Catholics in the nation have repeatedly voiced their desire to canonise Cardinal Kim, who played a key role in South Korea's civic and religious spheres.

He was born in 1922 and ordained a priest in 1951. He studied philosophy at the Catholic University of Jochi Daigaku in Tokyo and sociology at Munster University in Germany. He was ordained as the bishop of Masan diocese in 1966 and the archbishop of Seoul in 1968. In 1969, Pope Paul VI made him a cardinal.

In Seoul, he worked wholeheartedly toward implementing the spirit of Vatican II and intensified evangelisation efforts with lay participation. He also prioritised interfaith dialogue and humanitarian and charitable endeavours.

He was president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea from 1973 to 1977 and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC) from 1974 to 1977.

Church leaders say Cardinal Kim strengthened the Korean Church amid various trials and tribulations, including political turmoil under a series of military regimes. He reportedly reprimanded President Chun Doo-hwan, who captured power in a military coup in 1979, by comparing his illegal power grab to "an outlaw gunfight in a Western movie." — *ucanews.com*

Denpasar bishop against Catholic weddings on Bali beaches

JAKARTA: A Catholic wedding is considered valid only if it is celebrated in a consecrated place of worship, according to a pastoral letter issued by Msgr Sylvester San, *pic*, bishop of the diocese of Denpasar. Bishop San's intervention aims to curb the growing trend of beach weddings, which have become increasingly popular among both foreign visitors and local residents over the past few decades.

This preference for beach weddings is driven by Bali's stunning natural landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and the renowned hospitality of its people. However,

Bishop San emphasised that such ceremonies contradict the Church's guidelines for administering the sacrament of marriage.

The bishop's letter serves as a reminder to the faithful that the sanctity and validity of the sacrament must be upheld by adhering to the Church's requirement for weddings to be held in a consecrated place of worship.

The Diocese of Denpasar, which spans the popular tourist destinations of Bali, Lombok, and Sumbawa, has reiterated that Catholic weddings are valid only if conducted in a consecrated church. The prelate's letter, reaffirms an "exhortation"



issued by the bishops in April 2015, underscoring a well-known directive. Despite this, the announcement has sparked discontent, particularly among those in the tourism industry who have capitalised on beach weddings as a significant source of income.

The tourism sector, which benefits from various services surrounding beach weddings such as flights, hospitality, restaurants, and accommodations, faces potential financial impacts due to this directive. Bishop San emphasised the sacredness of the marriage rite and noted that over a year had passed before the directive was enforced. His communication was made during the national conference of the Catholic Guidance General Directorate, part of the Ministry for Religious Affairs (Bimas Katolik Kemenag RI).

Suparman, head of Bimas Katolik Kemenag, stressed the essential role of education in fostering a "good family life" aligned with Catholic teachings. The conference also addressed other critical issues, including the annulment of marriage and divorce, on which the Catholic Church maintains a firm stance against compromise or negotiation. — *AsiaNews*

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Philippines' Maasin Cathedral gets national shrine status

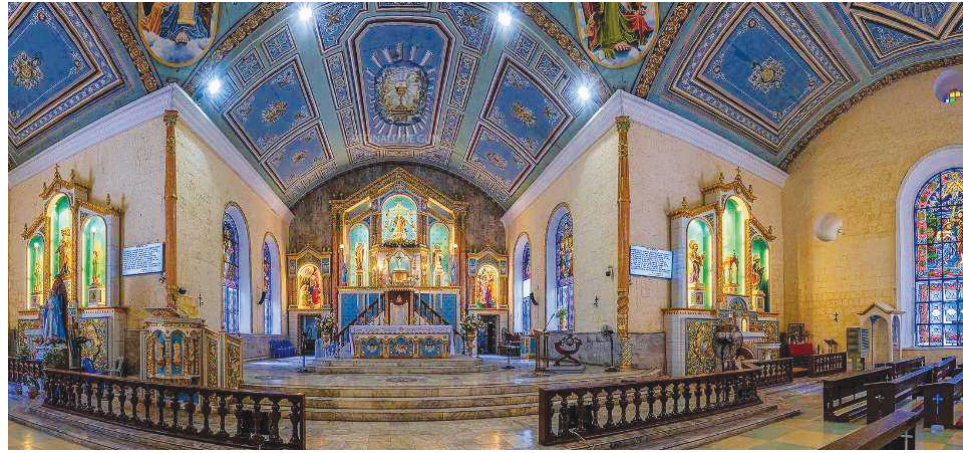
MANILA: Catholics in the Philippines are elated after a 17th century cathedral was conferred with national shrine status.

The declaration of Maasin Cathedral as a national shrine symbolises the “outpouring of graces to all of us devotees to the Mahal nga Patrona [Beloved Our Lady of Assumption],” said Monsignor Oscar Cadayona, vicar-general of Maasin diocese in Southern Leyte province in the central Philippines.

With its new title, the shrine will come under the rule of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), said Cadayona.

Known as the Diocesan Shrine of Our Lady of the Assumption, it will be the first national shrine in the Eastern Visayas region, comprising six provinces and housing four million people, most of them Catholics.

The announcement was made during the CBCP's 128th plenary session in Cagayan De Oro City on the southern Island of



The interior of Maasin Cathedral, built in the 17th century. (UCA News Photo/Reginald de Guia)

Mindanao on July 6.

As a national shrine, the CBCP has recognised the significance of Maasin Cathedral as a “centre of devotion and pilgrimage.”

“We expect pilgrims from all over the archipelago,” Cadayona added.

Mayor Nacional Mercado said the declaration has turned Maasin City, the capital of Southern Leyte, into the Eastern Visayas region's “pilgrim capital.”

“We are honoured and blessed that our cathedral has been awarded national shrine

status,” Mercado said on July 7.

Aside from the Maasin Cathedral, the Diocesan Shrine of Our Lady of Mercy in Novaliches in Quezon City was also recognised as a national shrine by more than 70 bishops who attended the meeting.

Maasin diocese is planning a formal celebration soon.

Maasin, with over 85,000 residents, became a parish under the Jesuits in 1771. With the Franciscans taking over, the parish was dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption in 1843.

When the church was declared a cathedral in 1968, the new Maasin diocese took Our Lady of the Assumption as its patroness.

The image received its episcopal coronation at a ceremony led by former archbishop of Manila Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle on Aug 15, 2018, and Nuncio Archbishop Charles Brown officiated at its pontifical coronation on Aug 13, 2022. — ucanews.com

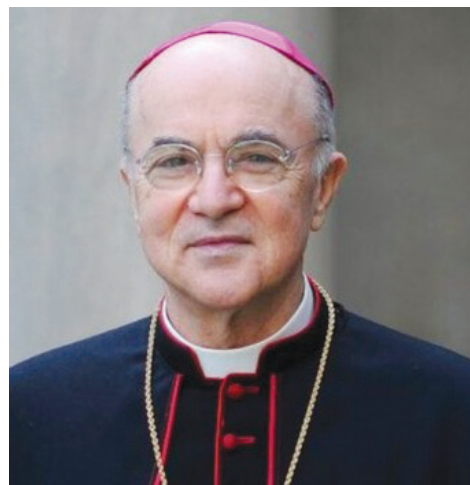
Archbishop Viganò found guilty of schism, excommunicated by Vatican

VATICAN: Italian Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò (pic), the disgraced former papal nuncio to the United States who questioned the legitimacy of Pope Francis and the authority of the Second Vatican Council, has been found guilty of schism and excommunicated, the Vatican announced on July 5.

“His public statements manifesting his refusal to recognise and submit to the Supreme Pontiff, his rejection of communion with the members of the Church subject to him, and of the legitimacy and magisterial authority of the Second Vatican Council are well known,” stated a Vatican bulletin that announced the ruling.

The decision of Viganò's excommunication was widely expected following the archbishop's June 20 announcement that he had been charged with schism by the Dicastery for the Doctrine for the Faith and that he would not be cooperating with the Vatican penal process.

At the time, Viganò said he would not comply with the request to present himself



in person to formally receive the accusation and evidence against him and said he considered the charges brought against him to be an “honour.”

The June 11 Vatican decree stated that if Viganò remained unresponsive through June 28, he would be sentenced in absentia. The July 5

Vatican statement announcing the excommunication noted that the Congress of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith met on July 4 to conclude the penal process against Viganò.

The statement also noted that the archbishop was notified with news of his excommunication on July 5 and that the reversal of such a decision is reserved to the Apostolic See.

The weighty decision by the Vatican to excommunicate Viganò comes six years after he published an unprecedented 11-page letter in 2018 alleging a widespread Vatican cover-up of allegations against ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick and called on Francis to resign.

Although many of his initial claims he alleged have been discredited, the Italian archbishop was lionised by some right-wing Catholics for his support of former US President Donald Trump, opposition to the COVID-19 vaccines and spreading of Q-Anon conspiracy theories.

While many mainstream Catholics have

dismissed the former Vatican diplomat, he has continued to use his website and social media to promote his radicalised views, with his posts being shared by high-profile individuals such as Trump and being widely promoted within certain pockets of the US Catholic Church.

The rare excommunication of one of the Church's own prelates is likely to put a number of US bishops in an awkward position given that following his initial 2018 allegations against the Pope, more than two dozen issued statements attesting to his credibility, including some of the current leadership of the US bishops' conference.

At the time of publication, Viganò had yet to issue a statement in response to his excommunication. His last public posting on social media, published on the same date of the Vatican's statement on his excommunication, was a request for donations for his foundation in support of the “traditional training” of young seminarians. — **By Christopher White, NCR**

Neocatechumenal Way in the US marks 50th anniversary



The Mass was celebrated at the Barclays Centre in Brooklyn, New York. (CNA photo/Gregory A. Shemitz, courtesy DeSales Media Group)

BROOKLYN: More than 20,000 people gathered at the Barclays Centre on July 7, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Neocatechumenal Way in the United States. The Eucharistic celebration was led by Cardinal Christophe Pierre, the apostolic nuncio to the US.

The Mass commemorated the 1974 visit of the Neocatechumenal Way's founders, Kiko Argüello and Carmen Hernández, to New York. Thousands of young pilgrims from across the country attended after several days of pilgrimage to various holy sites.

A significant moment during the Mass saw around 1,000 young men express their intention to enter the seminary and begin their priesthood training, while 1,500 young women stood to announce their commitment to join convents or serve as missionaries.

Although Argüello could not attend in person, he participated via a video call from Madrid, Spain, reminiscing about his initial efforts to establish the Neocatechumenal Way in New York. “On this significant anniversary, I greet you on behalf of Pope Francis and reaffirm his support and appreciation for the work that the

Way does in the service of evangelisation,” he stated.

In his homily, Cardinal Pierre echoed the Pope's sentiments, emphasising the importance of outreach and welcoming back those who have strayed. “Pope Francis often speaks of opening the doors to people who live in all the situations of moral poverty... This is the mission of the Church: to open the door for sinners to return,” he said.

Cardinal Pierre was joined by several other high-ranking clergy, including Cardinal Joseph Tobin of Newark, New Jersey, Bishop Robert Brennan of Brooklyn, and various auxiliary bishops and priests.

The Neocatechumenal Way, approved by the Holy See in 2008, functions as a post-baptismal catechumenate aiding in parish and diocesan evangelisation efforts. In the US it boasts 1,100 communities and nine Redemptoris Mater diocesan seminaries, housing 300 seminarians and having already ordained 270 priests. Globally, the Neocatechumenal Way is present in 135 countries, with around 25,000 communities and over one million members. — **CNA**

Emphasis on women and accountability in document for second Synod session

The Holy See Press Office released the 'Instrumentum Laboris', the text that will guide the work of the second session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod in October. The focus of the document will be on, among others, the need for transparency and accountability, and the role of women in the Church.

How to be a missionary synodal Church? That's the question at the heart of the *Instrumentum laboris* (IL) for the upcoming session of the Synod of Bishops, which will take place from October 2 to 27.

It will be the second session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly, following the one in 2023. The IL – published July 9, and presented at the Holy See Press Office – does not offer any “pre-packaged answers” but rather “indications and proposals”.

These regard how the Church, as a whole, can respond “to the need to be ‘synodal in mission’”. That is, to be a Church closer to people, less bureaucratic, where all the baptised are – within their different ministries and roles – co-responsible and participants in its life.

The five parts of the document

The document is structured in five sections: introduction, foundations, and three central parts.

The introduction recalls the journey

travelled so far and highlights the milestones already reached, such as the widespread use of the synodal methodology of the Spiritual Conversation.

The foundations (nn. 1-18) then dwell on the understanding of synodality, seen as a path of conversion and reform. In a world marked by divisions and conflicts, it is emphasised, the Church is called to be a sign of unity, an instrument of reconciliation and listening for all, especially for the poor, the marginalised, and the minorities excluded from power.

Valuing women in the Church

The foundations also give ample space (nn. 13-18) to reflection on the role of women in all areas of the Church's life, highlighting “the need to give fuller recognition” to their charisms and vocation.

“God chose women as the first witnesses and heralds of the Resurrection,” recalls the IL; therefore, “by virtue of baptism, they enjoy full equality, receive the same outpouring of gifts from the Spirit, and are



Pope Francis shares a laugh with some of the women members of the assembly of the Synod of Synodality, including Spanish theologian Cristina Inogés Sanz. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

called to the service of Christ's mission.”

Participation and responsibility

In some cultures, the IL notes, “the presence of machismo remains strong”; therefore, the second synodal session calls for “a wider participation of women in the processes of ecclesial discernment and all stages of decision-making processes” along with “wider access to positions of

responsibility in dioceses and ecclesiastical institutions,” as well as in seminaries, institutes, theological faculties, and “an increase in the number of women judges in all canonical processes.”

The suggestions also concern consecrated women. It stressed the need for “greater recognition and support” for their life and charisms, along with “their employment in positions of responsibility”.

Theological reflection on female diaconate continues

As for the admission of women to the diaconal ministry, the IL reports that it is requested by “some local Churches,” while others “reiterate their opposition” (n. 17).

The theme, it is noted, “will not be the subject of the work” next October, and therefore it is right that “the theological reflection should continue.” In any case, the IL's reflection on the role of women “highlights the desire to strengthen all the ministries exercised by the laity (men and women)”, and it also notes the request for “adequately trained lay men and women to contribute to preaching the Word of God, including during the celebration of the Eucharist.” (n. 18).

Part I - Relationships with God, among brothers and sisters, and among the Churches

After the introduction and the foundations, the IL focuses on relationships (nn. 22-50) that allow the Church to be synodal in mission: that is, relationships with God the Father, among brothers and sisters, and among the Churches.

Charisms, ministries, and ordained ministries are therefore essential in a world and for a world that, amid many contradictions, seeks justice, peace, and hope.

From local Churches, the voice of young people also emerges, who request a Church not of structures, nor of bureaucracy, but founded on relationships that are lived and animated by dynamics and paths.

From this point of view, the October Assembly will be able to analyse the proposal to create new ministries, such as that of “listening



(CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

and accompaniment.”

Part II – Formative paths and community discernment

These relationships should then be developed in a Christian manner along paths (nn. 51-79) of formation and “community discernment,” which allows the Churches to make appropriate decisions, articulating responsibility and participation of all.

The IL affirms that there is a “school of synodality” in the intertwining of generations. All, “the weak and the strong, children, young and old” have “much to receive and much to give.” (n. 55).

The importance of accountability

“A synodal Church requires both a

culture and practice of transparency and accountability,” reads the IL, “which are essential to fostering the mutual trust necessary for walking together and exercising co-responsibility for the sake of the common mission” (n. 73).

The working document emphasises that today “the demand for transparency and accountability in and by the Church has come about as a result of the loss of credibility due to financial scandals and, even more so, sexual abuse and other abuses of minors and vulnerable persons. The lack of transparency and accountability fuels clericalism”. (n. 75).

Evaluation structures needed

Accountability and transparency,

insists the IL, also affect “pastoral plans, methods of evangelisation, and how the Church respects the dignity of the human person, for example, regarding the working conditions within its institutions.” (n. 76).

Hence, “structures and forms of regular evaluation of how ministerial responsibilities of all kinds are exercised emerge as necessary” (n. 77).

The Church should guarantee, explains the IL, the publication of an annual report both on the management of assets and resources, and on the execution of missions, including “an illustration of the initiatives undertaken in the area of safeguarding (protection of minors and vulnerable persons)” (n. 79).

Part III – Places of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue

The IL then analyses (nn. 80-108) the places where relationships and paths take shape.

Inviting us to overcome a static vision of ecclesial experiences, the working document recognises their plurality. It is in this context that the great themes of ecumenical, interreligious, and cultural dialogue are placed.

In this context, too, we find the search for forms of exercise of the Petrine ministry open to the “new situation” of the ecumenical journey (nn. 102 and 107).

Pilgrims of hope

The *Instrumentum laboris* concludes with an invitation to continue the journey as “pilgrims of hope” in view of the Jubilee of 2025 (n. 112). — **By Isabella Piro, Vatican News**

The role of the bishop in catechesis

According to the *Directory for Catechesis* (2020), everyone in the community has a role in catechesis, “but each one according to his [or her] particular condition in the Church: ordained ministers, consecrated persons, lay faithful. Through them all, and their differing functions, the catechetical ministry hands on the Word of God in a complete way and witnesses to the reality of the Church”. In this article, I will examine the role of the bishop in catechesis.

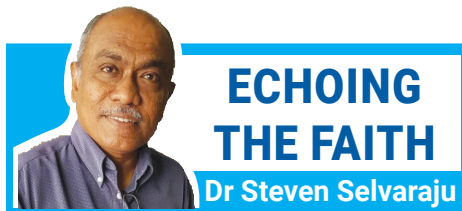
The Early Centuries

From the 2nd – 4th centuries, the word ‘catechesis’ was identified with the preparation of adults for initiation into the Christian community within the catechumenate process, as well as, with the post-baptismal instruction of the newly baptised (neophytes) in the mysteries of the faith (*mystagogia*). The goal of catechesis was to lead a person to conversion and growth in faith.

During this period, many bishops played an essential role in catechesis. Among them were great and saintly bishops, such as Cyril of Jerusalem (313AD - 386AD), Ambrose of Milan (339AD-397AD) and Augustine of Hippo (354AD - 430AD). Their writings and homilies, many of which still extant today, indicate that catechesis was an essential part of the bishop’s ministry.

Cyril was the archbishop of Jerusalem from 350AD until his death. He is famous for what is known as the “Catechetical Lectures”. These are a series of eighteen lectures that he gave to candidates preparing for baptism and five lectures delivered to neophytes. In the final five lectures, also called the “Mystagogical Lectures”, Cyril deals with each of the three sacraments the neophytes received at Easter: Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist.

Ambrose, who became the bishop of



**ECHOING
THE FAITH**

Dr Steven Selvaraju

Milan in 374AD, was one of the most important and influential bishops in the history of the Church. He was an inspiring preacher and catechist who delivered mystagogical homilies to neophytes. He wrote both theological works and hymns, some of which are still sung today. He also defended the Christian faith against Arianism, a heresy in the Church. Ambrose is honoured as one of the Doctors of the Latin Church.

Augustine, who was bishop of Hippo for thirty-four years, wrote one of the earliest formal and systematic handbooks on catechesis called *De catechizandis rudibus* (*On Catechising Beginners in Faith*) in 403AD. It outlines the nature and principles of catechesis and provides a practical catechetical methodology. Augustine delivered numerous homilies, both to prepare catechumens for baptism and to instruct neophytes. The primary focus of his homilies was on Baptism and the Eucharist. He also defended the Church against Donatism and Pelagianism, two heresies that plagued the Church in the fourth century.

Teachers of the Faith

In the Middle Ages, the catechetical situation began to change. With the decline of the catechumenate around the fifth century, the focus shifted from adult initiation to the baptism of infants and from pre-baptismal to post-baptismal catechesis. In addition, there was also a shift from a biblical and liturgical-based catechesis to

instructions primarily focused on Christian doctrine. Catechesis at this time meant the basic religious instruction given by parents or guardians to their child at home. For adults, the main form of catechesis was the Sunday homily preached by the priest.

During this period, the role of the bishop in relation to catechesis also began to change, to some extent. The bishops took on other roles such as theologians, statesmen, builders, spiritual guides, feudal lords and other types of functions. However, three functions of the bishop became progressively more prominent and these persisted throughout the centuries, namely, to teach, to govern and to sanctify.

With regards to the teaching ministry, the bishop had two key functions. Firstly, he was responsible for preaching the Good News and for teaching the faith to the people entrusted to his care. Secondly, he was to safeguard the Deposit of Faith of the Church. Therefore, besides being a teacher of the faith, a bishop also had a role in ensuring that such teaching was consistent with the Gospel and with the teaching of the Church. He was responsible to see that all the teaching imparted was integral and complete. In this respect, it was also the role of the bishop to sanction whoever was not imparting sound teaching of the Church.

Defenders of the Faith

The bishops’ role as teachers and guardians of the Deposit of Faith is, perhaps, best seen in their participation in the great ecumenical councils of the Church. These include the Council of Nicaea (325AD), Constantinople (381AD), Ephesus (431AD) and others, where the bishops spoke up for, and defended the faith against various heresies. Through these councils, the bishops composed the Creed and also laid the much of the foundations of the faith that we profess, celebrate, and live out today.

In later centuries, bishops also came to the fore in order to teach and safeguard the faith. During the period of the Protestant Reformation, Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621), a Jesuit, who became the Archbishop of Capua in 1602, wrote a catechism, *Dottrina Breve da Impararsi a Mente*, as a response to the catechisms written by Martin Luther. Bellarmine’s work became one of the models of which other Catholic catechisms would later be written.

Charles Borromeo, who served as the Archbishop of Milan and a cardinal of the Catholic Church, was a leading figure of the Counter-Reformation efforts against the Protestant Reformation. He had a major role in the preparation of the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* (*Catechismus Romanus*) in 1566. Popularly called the Roman Catechism, it was the first universal catechism of the Catholic Church.

Conclusion

The role of the bishop in catechesis from the time of the early Church to the Middle Ages is evident. They were teachers and defenders of the Church’s faith. In the years ahead, the bishops would continue to play this role. In the next article, I will examine further the role of the bishop in catechesis in the light of the Church documents in modern times.

The key ideas of the article are presented in a simple illustrated format as below. The illustrations and text are by Dr Steven Selvaraju.

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THE ROLE OF THE BISHOP IN CATECHESIS



Teen builds rosary business to spread devotion

There are many Catholic parishes, institutions, shrines and companies around the world that make rosaries.

But are any of them run by a 16-year-old?

Rings of the Lord — which crafts quality, handmade rosaries designed to last — was founded nearly four years ago by Will Henry, the oldest of Brad and Ashley Henry's five children. A young, developing entrepreneur, Will is also an active member of his local parish, Immaculate Conception Church in Hendersonville, North Carolina, assisting as an altar server.

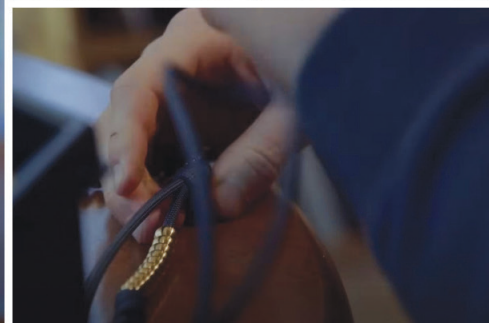
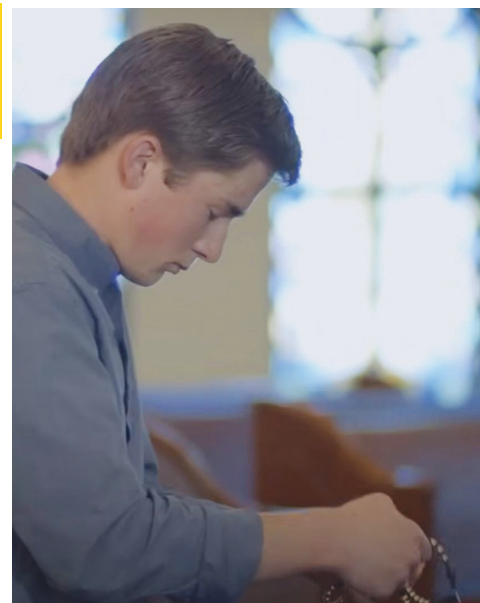
There, he met Steven Rademacher, a general manager of a high-end sporting goods store, who also oversaw the parish's altar server programme. The Henrys and Rademacher quickly developed a friendship when the former moved into the area from Florida nearly five years ago. A craftsman from an early age, Rademacher (now in his 30s) often constructed little items, including an "Irish Penal Rosary" — a 10-bead rosary used by Irish Catholics to covertly pray while persecuted by the English

government in the 17th and 18th centuries. Brad noticed Rademacher's rosary and asked for one, which the latter obliged.

One Sunday morning in 2021, when Rademacher delivered the rosary to the Henry house, Will saw it and immediately gravitated to the design and what it represented about Irish Catholics' determination to keep the faith alive.

"I hand it to [Will] and he says, 'Oh, this is so cool. You could have a business selling these,'" Rademacher said. When Rademacher informed the then-12-year-old that he had no time to create a new business, he recounted, Will "paused, looked up at me and said, 'Well, then I'll do it.'"

For Will, the opportunity was too good to pass up. He already aspired to create his own business and had an affinity for developing websites. As he states on the *Rings of the Lord* page: "It was the enthusiasm I had about the rosary combined with my entrepreneurial spirit that led to starting a business, making these rosaries, and spreading the rosary's



Will Henry prays the Rosary; Walker (l) and Will work on making rosaries; a close-up view of the process. (Register Photo/Association of Marian Helpers, *Rings of the Lord* and EWTN)

devotion to the Blessed Mother."

With assistance from Rademacher and his parents (both attorneys), he connected with wholesalers for supplies and filed the necessary paperwork to establish *Rings of the Lord*. To help build the rosaries, he enlisted

his other siblings, particularly his younger brother Walker, 13, who has assisted him since the business' launch, creating well-made devotional aids: the rosaries consist of silver beads, plated metals and stainless steel to prevent them from breaking.

"The rosary quality is important to me because I believe that we should make those things we use to reach to God with great care," the teenage businessman said. "We don't want to have to buy rosaries again and again. I think quality is so important because it shows respect to our Creator."

Business, however, was slow going at first. For most teens, hitting such an obstacle would have deterred them from continuing the venture. But not Will. For him, *Rings of the Lord* was not simply a passing childlike fad — it was an opportunity to bolster his business acumen and faith.

"The *Rings of the Lord* has stayed around because, for me, it's not been as much about if it's successful or not," he said. "I'm learning about business in a certain way and business just interests me so much."

Still, Will wanted to spread awareness about the Irish Penal Rosary and devotion to the Blessed Mother. At first, he marketed them on Instagram, but then expanded his horizons by reaching out to the *Abiding Together* podcast, hosted by Sr Miriam Heidland, Michelle Benzinger and Heather Khym. The show gave *Rings of the Lord* a shout-out, which helped increase orders. Since then, the business has been featured on other outlets, including

Quality prayer aids



Rings of the Lord rosaries include the 'Irish Penal Rosary,' shown bottom right. The young entrepreneur Will Henry, shown at the computer at upper right, works alongside his siblings. (Register Photo/Courtesy of *Rings of the Lord*)

EWTN. Depending on the season, Will and Walker are building and shipping hundreds of Irish Penal and five-decade rosaries per week.

Mom Ashley couldn't be prouder.

"He's gotten a little taste of all of it," Ashley said. "This is his thing, and he keeps pushing it and driving it."

She has had her own growth in developing

a relationship with the Virgin Mary and the Rosary. Born into a Protestant household, Ashley converted to Catholicism when she married Brad. Admittedly, she "wasn't drawn to Mary initially," but has since consecrated herself to the Blessed Mother. To her, the Rosary is now a crucial aspect of their family life — even so far as hosting parishioners for a monthly prayer and potluck dinner.

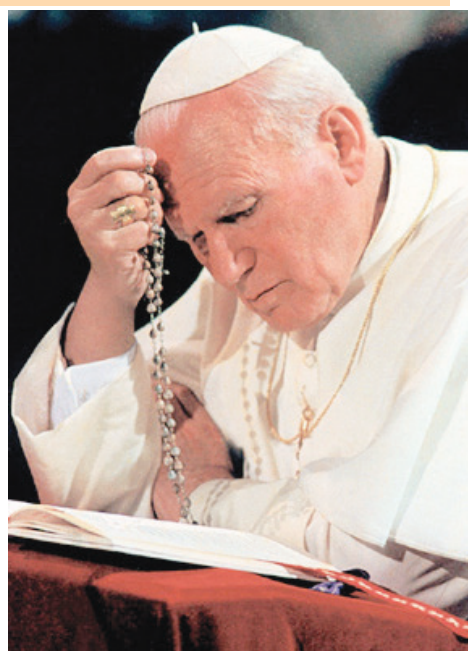
"I've just continued praying the Rosary with our children," she said. "What I'm focusing on now is learning how our lives so much align with the mysteries of the Rosary. We have our sorrowful times, our joyful times, our glorious times — our lives go through the same kinds of cycles and mysteries just as Christ's did."

Rings of the Lord's customers have also shared their increased devotion to the Rosary — as well as the product's quality. One review by "AnneMarie S." says she feels "such a gravity when I pray with this finger rosary," adding, "The presence of our Blessed Mother is right at hand when I use it to pray for the unborn in prayer groups." Another customer named "Joseph L." remarked on the rosary's "durability," saying it allows his children to "become familiar with a rosary and explore" the prayer's mysteries.

Saintly inspiration

Selling rosaries, however, is only one aspect of *Rings of the Lord*'s mission. Convinced by his mom and inspired by soon-to-be canonised Carlo Acutis, who developed a website chronicling Eucharistic miracles, Will has begun compiling and marking on a map stories of saints — from St Dominic, founder of the Rosary, to Pope Leo XIII — who have been intrinsic in spreading devotion to the Rosary. Still a work in progress, he hopes to add more biographies to the map, including St John Paul II, whom he admires. As he told the *Register*, "If Pope St John Paul II (pic) is praying the Rosary, that probably means I should be praying the Rosary as well, because he obviously knows something I don't about our Lord and Saviour."

Much like the saints Will admires, his mother's faith has served as a model for him; likewise, Will's endeavour has strengthened Ashley and her children's devotion to the Rosary.



"Overall, this whole journey has been a blessing for our whole family, and Will is the driver behind it," Ashley said. "He's pulled his siblings in, and it's part of our household discussions on what needs to happen this week. The business has been great in what Will has learned, but also our faith, our relationship with the Blessed Mother has grown through this, too."

She added, "I just love seeing him grow spiritually and want to share the fruits and the power that can come from praying the Rosary, especially as a family."

For Rademacher, *Rings of the Lord* has made the Rosary more "in front of my mind than it would have been otherwise" and built a friendship he never anticipated. He also admires Will's willingness to "take calculated risks" over the past several years, with an attitude of not being "bound by common inhibitions or common fears."

"I consider him a peer, even though he is nearly half my age," said Rademacher. "It's made a real friendship that, regardless of where he and I end up in the future, that

friendship is always going to be there. And, quite frankly, I cannot wait to see what he does when he is out of college and out in the world. It's going to be super interesting to watch."

Will has remained humble throughout the journey, often crediting his parents, Rademacher and his brother Walker for their support, without which, he says *Rings of the Lord* would not have grown to what it is today. He also is grateful to the Blessed Mother, that "a lot of this business is just the blessing of the Lord."

In the end, no matter what his future holds, Will hopes to "remain close" to the Rosary, following Mary's fiat (her "Yes" to bear Christ), as well as spreading the Gospel message to those in his generation.

"Today, what you see a lot in the world is that the emptiness of sin is just so draining of people's joy and happiness because they're 'not living the joy that the Lord has given,'" he said. "It's very important to stay close to Mary in today's day and age. She's the Mother of God." — Andrew Fowler, *Register*

Godparents: strengthening the family tent



CANVAS

Fr Richard
Anthony Samy, SJ

“Are you ready to help the parents of this child in their duty as Christian parents?” In the Rite of Baptism, one of the first questions asked is directed to the godparents. Infant baptisms take place monthly in most parishes. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) will begin in the coming weeks. Some may have already begun. Baptisms are occasions of joy and blessing for the Church. The Lord continues to add to our number. It is a comforting and hopeful sign of the Lord’s continual trust and faith in His Church on earth despite its shortcomings. An important person in the baptism of a child or adult is the godparent. The title “god-parent” is a directional one.

Readiness

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC #1253-1255) speaks about the godparents representing the community of believers who help in the faith development of the newly baptised. Readiness is seen first in the person of the godparent. Paragraph 1255 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) states, “For the grace of baptism to unfold, the parents’ help is important. So too is the role of the godfather and godmother, who must be firm believers, able and ready to help the newly baptised — child or adult — on the road of Christian life. Their task is a truly ecclesial

function (*officium*).”

The one who wants to accept the responsibilities of a godparent must “be a Catholic who has been confirmed (Sacrament of Confirmation) and has received the blessed Eucharist, and who lives a life of faith which befits the role to be undertaken” (Canon Law 874 subsection 1.3). In summary, godparents are to be those who truly believe in the Christian faith and strive to live a life of faithfulness to Christ. They are those who abide by the precepts of the Church. As the *Catechism* states, “Their task is a truly ecclesial function (*officium*).” At this juncture, it may help those who are currently godparents and those considering this path of sharing the faith, to pause and reflect because all the baptised are called to grow in faith. The CCC (#1254) states, “For all the baptised, children and adults, faith must grow after baptism.” Baptism is not the endpoint, but a beginning of a life of faith and faithfulness in Christ for all. Hence, readiness is not only pre-existing suitability as per the catechism and precepts above, but the attitude of ongoing learning and growth.

Christian parenting

One wonders how many of us godparents see our godparenting responsibility beyond helping to hold the towel or baptismal candle at the Rite of Baptism. A random informal survey of several Christian faithful at various churches, BECs, church gatherings, etc., about the role and purpose of the godparent revealed interesting responses.

It was a joy to hear some make every effort to stay in touch with the parents and their godchild. A few remarked, “...the day I became a godparent, I too felt ‘baptised’ into

a new role as a Christian. I also became an extended parent. Part of me felt moved to take my response to God more seriously.” Others added, “now that I may have to answer my godchild’s questions, I better start reading up, as well as pay attention in church!” Another remarked, “Why did God chose me for this task? There must a reason... there’s something I have to fulfil...” and, “I am in the church choir, so I am going to sing hymns to my godchild whenever possible.” Truly, being chosen to become a godparent is like a “second baptism.” One elderly couple remarked, “Being a godparent even before we become parents ourselves gave us a chance to prepare. We found time to meet our godchild. We took the initiative. And when we finally had our own children, we made sure our children and godchild met each other regularly. They have a friendship now.”

The other side of the coin reveals some worrisome responses. Some said, “I live too far away from my godchild to help in any way. I live overseas.” Another remarked, “I don’t know why they asked me. I don’t really go to church regularly. Maybe because I am family.” One said, “I don’t know what is expected of me, really. I was called for a short training on godparenting that didn’t last even an hour. So, I guess it’s not that big a deal for the Church.” Yet another said, “It’s only for the ritual, the family said, so I said okay.”

When asked about what help the parents are hoping for from their children’s godparents, some remarked, “Not much as they have their own lives, and we have ours.” Another said, “I hope they help me, especially with Church stuff as I am not knowledgeable on those things. I am a convert.” One couple said, “It would be

nice if once in a month or two, they dropped by for a meal and developed a friendship with their godchild.” Two persons said, “My child’s godparents live overseas. They just came back for the baptism, and then they left. So, we don’t expect anything.”

Listening to the above comments, both positives and negatives, one wonders how we, as Church, should re-think being and becoming godparents. We know what the expectations of the Church are. We know the purpose of godparents in the life of the newly baptised. My professor of theology used to say, “There are some things we get to correct and change, if we pause, take a step back, and make some prayerful decisions.” Maybe we should do this with, and for, godparents. Perhaps we need a ministry for godparents, or preparing them.

Some years ago, someone sent me this prayer. The source was not provided. But to the person(s) who composed it, we give full credit.

God of light and love, thank you for the joy of being a godparent,

And the opportunities it gives us to journey with our godchildren as they grow in faith.

Keep us faithful to the promises we have made to pray for them,

and to encourage them to deepen their relationship with You.

Help us to be a prayerful, supportive and loving presence in the lives of our godchildren,

And to model to them a life rooted in You, the way, the truth and the life.

Amen.

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

GETTING
SIDETRACKED

Agnes Ong

Last year, during the tail-end of my career break, I returned to Spain for the second time. My main goal was to trace the influence of the Iberian Moors, a significant period in history, ending at the Al-Hambra in Granada, a UNESCO World Heritage site and a testament to the rich history of the Iberian Peninsula.

My fascination with History was ignited in my teenage years, particularly by the Form 4 History syllabus. At 16, the chapter that truly captured my imagination was the one on Islamic Civilisation in the Iberian Peninsula. The concept of religious tolerance, particularly of the Iberian Moor’s acceptance of Jews and Christians, left a profound impression on me. Oh, and don’t get me started on their feats of engineering, particularly in water management! The Arabs, with their advanced knowledge of hydraulics and irrigation, gifted the cities they made their home with “water” ingeniously captured through intricate systems of canals and cisterns. This enabled agriculture to be cultivated in a land that could be barren in spots and had temperatures that soared during its high, dry season.

Valencia

My month-long Moorish Iberian adventure began in Valencia, the birthplace of the paella. My girlfriend Lorraine, who had spent a few years working in Barcelona, had raved about this rice dish for years. Over the years, we visited some upscale restaurants in the Kiang Valley to enjoy the best paella. Sadly, I had never taken to it.

The Arabs arrived in Valencia in the 8th century on the heels of the Goths. By then, they had been trading for several centuries through

the sea and silk route and were well versed with rice as a staple food.

So, they decided to tame a wetland area about 10km from Valencia city called the Al-Bufera (lagoon in Arabic) into paddy fields and the famed paella dish was born. This ingenious transformation was a testament to the historical influence of the Arabs. The traditional dish was a poor man’s fare. Any available protein was thrown into the rice meal – rabbit, snail and chicken feature most prominently. It is then liberally complemented with beans, onions and garlic. The “secret sauce” to the paella was saffron. The Arabs traded in saffron along the trading routes and this is where their chefs flexed their knowledge. The nearby Mediterranean Sea contributed its seafood bounty to this much-beloved Valencian rice dish.

The paella dish is available everywhere in Valencia, be it in the *mercado* (market) or fine-dining restaurants. I was lucky enough to snag a table at one of the fancier places to try the traditional paella.

Alas, I still prefer our Jasmine rice.

Granada

Nothing else fires up my imagination more than the medieval city of Granada, where the Moors made their last stand. At the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains, the Al-Hambra stands in all its grandeur, a testament to the power and opulence of the Moorish monarchs.

It is hard to find words that can truly capture the beauty of the graceful Andalusian arches that adorn the different wings of the Al-Hambra, and the nearby palace of the Generalife and the Durro River at its foot. Nearby, the Albaycín, a lively medieval neighbourhood with cave restaurants and the gypsy strains of the flamenco guitar weeping through the evenings, adds to the charm of this place.

Strolling through the Al-Hambra and the Generalife, one can imagine the luxury of the emirs, their harem and court. Birds sang and

Tracing the Spanish Moors

darted amidst tall cypress trees. Butterflies flirted with flowers in the gardens. Trickling water fountains that mimic the sounds of gentle brooks on temperate nights. Today, the Al-Hambra stands as a testament to this luxurious past, a stark contrast to its current state as a popular tourist destination.

The last waning days of the Moors in Spain saw the exit of Abu Abdallah Muhammad XII (Boabdil), the last Nasrid ruler of the Emirate of Granada. His kingdom was torn asunder by internal and external factions and the rise of the Catholic Monarchs, Queen Isabella I of Castile and King Ferdinand II of Aragon. As Boabdil left the Al-Hambra with his courtly retinue to a nearby estate, it is said that his mother, who had up to then been his staunch supporter, reproached him saying, “You do well to weep as a woman over what you could not defend as a man”.

Ouch.

Cordoba

Cordoba, the seat of the illustrious Umayyad emirate and jewel of Andalusia, was a unique hub where commerce, religion and culture thrived. At its peak, the city was a bustling metropolis, home to over 100,000 people, a diverse mix of Muslims, Jews, and Christians, living in harmony.

Here in this city, you can find evidence of the only Islamic caliphate in Western Europe, the Caliphate of Cordoba, where progressive thinkers, scientific studies and religious tolerance were encouraged and supported.

The Mezquita of Cordoba, or Mosque-Cathedral of Cordoba, a true architectural marvel, is the city’s crown jewel. Nestled in the heart of the medieval city, this grand structure was first commissioned in 785 by the emir Abdul al-Rahman, on the foundations of the Visigoth Basilica of San Vicente, and is a living testament to the city’s rich history and cultural evolution. As time passed, it expanded, and its

grandeur only grew, leaving visitors in awe of its magnificence.

Constructed in a unique blend of neo-Moorish style with Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine touches, the Mezquita is a true architectural wonder. It has the largest surface area outside Mecca and features 1,300 columns linked by architecturally splendid double arches. The examples of Damascus mosques and Jerusalem’s al-Aqsa mosque heavily influenced the design of the original mosque. At its peak, the Mezquita of Cordoba could host over 10,000 Muslim worshippers.

Sadly, the Caliphate of Cordoba ended in 1031. In 1146 and in 1236, the mosque was consecrated as the Cathedral of Santa Maria, marking a significant shift in the city’s religious landscape. This transition to being a Catholic church began with the construction of a main chapel and later on, a proper transept, symbolising the city’s evolving cultural and religious identity.

Echoes of the Moorish architecture are still evident everywhere on the grounds of the Mezquita of Cordoba. There is an orange grove where the Muslims performed their ablutions before prayers. The original Muslim minaret, where the *iman* would call the faithful to worship, is now a church bell tower.

The Mezquita left a profound impression on me. While I had seen countless photos of it, experiencing its grandeur in person was a truly awe-inspiring moment.

More on my experience in Seville and Toledo in the next instalment. Stay tuned while I get momentarily sidetracked.

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



Fr Ron Rolheiser

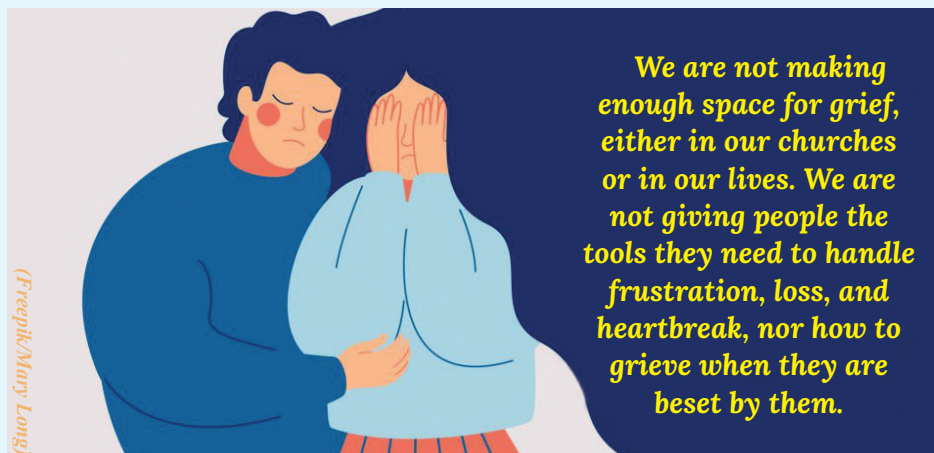
Sacred permission to be in agony

We live this life “mourning and weeping in a valley of tears.” This was part of a prayer my parents prayed every day of their adult lives, as did many others in their generation. Considering contemporary sensitivities (and one-sided spiritualities) this might sound morbid. Are we to understand our lives as a time of grieving in a world that cannot deliver happiness? Is this really what God wants of us?

Taken without nuance, this can indeed be morbid. God didn’t put us into this world to suffer in order to go to heaven. No. God is a good parent. Good parents bring children into this world with the intent that they should flourish and find happiness. So why might our Christian faith ask us to understand ourselves as mourning and weeping in a valley of tears?

For my parents, that phrase brought a certain consolation, namely, that their lives didn’t have to deliver the full symphony of heaven right now. It gave them sacred permission to accept that in life there would be disappointments, suffering, poverty, sickness, loss, frustrated dreams, heartbreak, misunderstanding, and death. They never over-expected and understood that it was normal to experience pain and disappointment. Paradoxically, by accepting this limitation, they were able to permit themselves to thoroughly enjoy life’s good moments without guilt.

My fear is that we are not equipping ourselves, nor the next generation, with the tools needed to undergo frustration, disappointment, and heartbreak without breaking down in faith (and sometimes too in psyche and body). Today, for the most part, our normal expectation is that we shouldn’t



be finding ourselves mourning and weeping but rather, that life should be delivering a full symphony. We no longer feel that we have sacred permission to be weeping.

The spirituality we breathe in today from our churches, theologians, and spiritual writers has many strong points (just as the one my parents breathed in had its weaknesses). However, to my mind, for the most part, spiritualities today do not leave sufficient space for grieving, a lacuna shared by most of the secular world.

We are not making enough space for grief, either in our churches or in our lives. We are not giving people the tools they need to handle frustration, loss, and heartbreak, nor how to grieve when they are beset by them. Outside of our funeral rituals, we make very little room for grief. Worse still, we tend to give the impression that there is something wrong in our lives if there are tears. What’s the place and value of grieving?

First, as Karl Rahner poetically explains,

it is a way of accepting that, in the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable, we ultimately learn that here in this life there is no finished symphony. Grieving is also, as Rachel Naomi Remen writes, a critical way of self-care. Not to grieve, she submits, is a denial of our wholeness. People burn out because they don’t grieve. British novelist Anita Brookner repeats a particular refrain in several of her books. Commenting on marriage, she suggests that the first task in a marriage is for the couple to console each other for the fact that they cannot disappoint each other.”

My parents had not read Karl Rahner, Rachel Naomi Remen, or Anita Brookner, but in their daily prayer, they reminded themselves that in this life there is no finished symphony, that grieving is healthy self-care, and that it’s consoling to accept that neither of them could ever be quite enough for the other, since only God can provide that.

What do we need to grieve? Our human

condition and all that comes with it, namely, impermanence, the loss of our youth, the loss of a youthful body, wounds, betrayals, frustrated dreams, heartbreaks, the loss of loved ones, the death of our honeymoons, the perennial flow through our lives of people, places, and institutions and then disappearing, our incapacity to not be disappointing to others, the loss of our health, and our eventual deaths, that’s what we need to grieve.

And how do we grieve? Jesus left us a template for this when He grieved in the garden of Gethsemane. What did He do when, as the Gospels say, He was reduced to “sweating blood” as He faced His own imminent death? He prayed, prayed a prayer that openly and honestly expressed His agony, that recognised His distance from others inside this suffering, which acknowledged His own helplessness to do anything to change the situation, that repeatedly begged God to alter things, but that expressed a trust in God despite the present darkness. That’s the way Jesus wept.

If Jesus wept, so must we. The disciple is never superior to the master. Moreover, we can learn from Jesus that mourning and weeping in our lives do not necessarily mean that there is something wrong. It might well mean that this is where we are meant to be.

We have sacred permission to sometimes be in agony.

● **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

Four tips for happy holiness with St Philip Neri

Saints are characterised by their bringing the love and joy of Christ to those around them... and one very joyful saint was St Philip Neri. Let’s learn from him!

St Philip Neri is known as the patron saint of joy. He always had a cheerful and positive attitude, even in adversity. He brought that holy happiness to the hearts of the people he encountered every day.

This pious and holy priest was joyful, even in sickness. When he was dying, his doctor said to him, “I’ve never seen you so happy.” He replied, quoting Scripture: “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord!’”

So, we present you with these wonderful tools that will help you live each day with joy, and to share it with others as St. Philip did.

1. God is Everything

St Philip’s joy and happiness were born of a strong love for Christ, for He is the source of inexhaustible life, and therefore also of joy. Many people ask themselves why the saints were joyful, even in adversity. And the answer was given by St Philip: “Joy is the sign of a heart that sincerely loves God.”

He delighted daily in God’s eternal love, and constantly praised Him and thanked Him for every situation and person He put in his path.

If you want to begin to see things with enthusiasm, and above all to live with true Christian joy, entrust every situation and every day to God.

2. Friendships

St Philip was always surrounded by people. He recommended having good friendships because they lead you to heaven. In this way, he was able to establish good relationships and make the most of them, sharing with them and transmitting to them the faith and love of Christ.

3. Service and Charity

It’s true that there’s more happiness in giving than in possessing. St Philip never forgot this. He carried out works of charity and also organised other people to visit the sick or the needy. He dedicated his time to each person who needed it, and didn’t think twice about it, because he found joy in helping others.

4. The Power of Laughter and Humour

According to medical science, when we laugh our body releases endorphins, dopamine and adrenaline, so laughter helps to combat stress and anxiety; in other words, laughter is your best ally in maintaining a positive attitude.

St Philip Neri was the life of the party;



wherever he went he was surrounded by people who appreciated his wonderful sense of humour. Being around him was pleasant and made people happy.

In short, St Philip Neri teaches us that holiness and joy can go hand in hand, and

that a Christian life lived with love and good humour can be a powerful force that attracts other people to the faith. His example and advice remain relevant and can inspire us to live with more joy and gratitude in our daily lives. — **By Karen Hutch, Aleteia**

Little Catholics' Corner

Psalm 23 Word Puzzle, Who is this Psalm about?
Unscramble the letters in blanks and use the ones in circles to fill in the answer at the bottom!

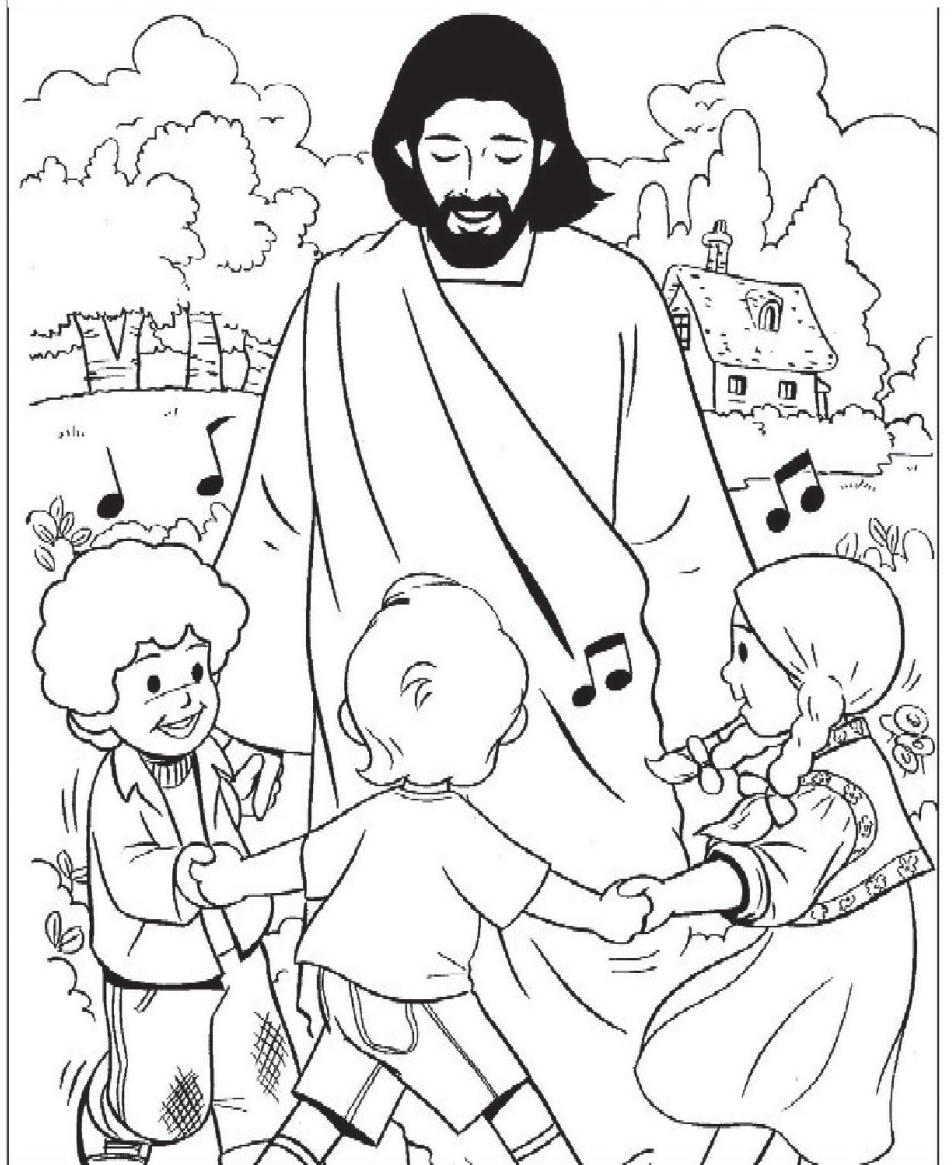
In ○ _____ (EGRNE) pastures
he gives me repose;
beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my ○ _____. (LOSU)
He guides me in right paths
○ ____ (FRO) his name's sake.
Even though I walk
in the ○ _____ (AKRD) valley
I fear no evil, for you are at my ○ _____
(IEDS)
with your rod and your staff
○ _____ (HATT) give ○ _____ (EM) courage.
You ○ _____ (EADSRP) the table
before me
in the ○ _____ (HGTSI) of my foes;
you anoint my ○ _____ (EAHD) with oil;
my cup ○ _____ (FOWLVOESR)
Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell
in the house of the ○ _____ (DOLR)
for years to come.



This Psalm tells us about the

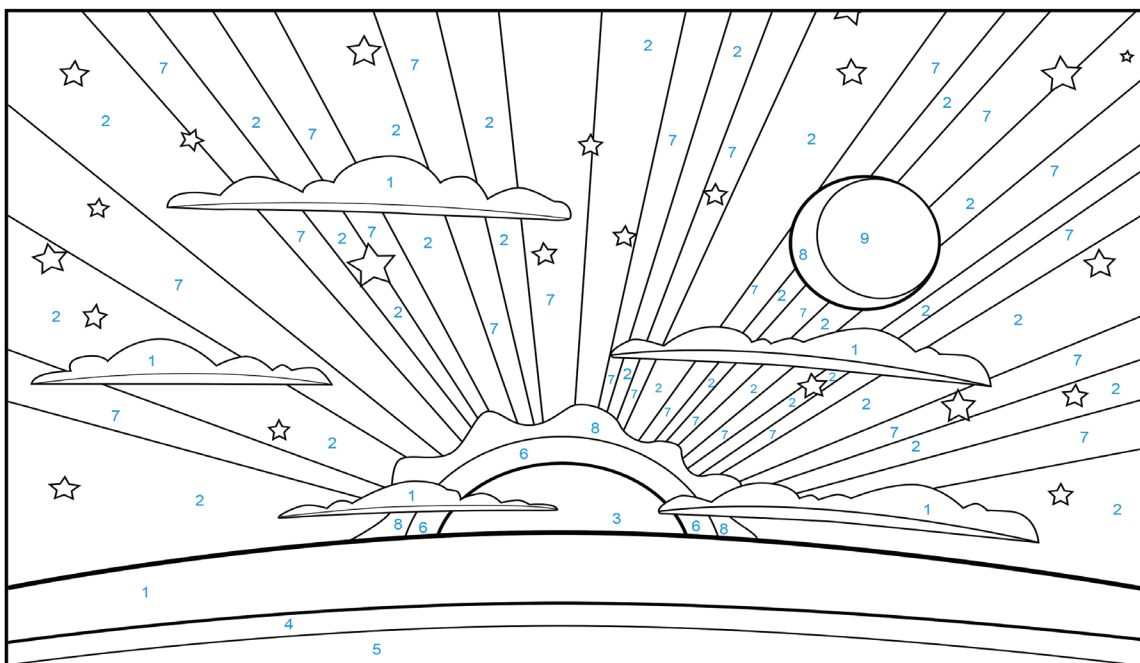
Answer: green, soul, for, side, that, me, spread, sight, head, overflows, Lord, GOOD SHEPHERD

Let's Colour



Colour by Number for
God Made the World

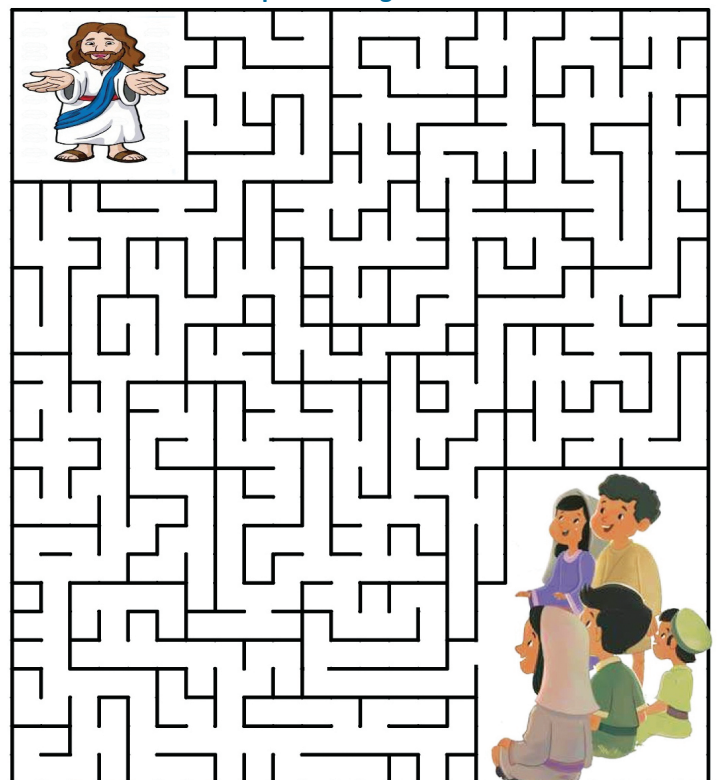
COLOUR EACH SECTION BY THE COLOURS SHOWN IN THE LIST AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PICTURE, IF YOU DON'T HAVE ALL OF THE COLOURS LISTED MAKE YOUR BEST COLOUR CHOICE.



1. Light blue 2. Light purple 3. Bright yellow 4. Medium blue
5. Dark blue 6. Orange 7. Dark purple 8. Light yellow 9. Gray

Stars and cloud bottom can be yellow or white, your choice.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus wanted to take the tired apostles across the lake to rest in a quiet place. But the people saw where Jesus was going and ran ahead. See if you can find their path through the maze.



Hello children,

In our Bible reading today, we see that Jesus and His disciples had been working very hard.

The Bible tells us that they were so busy that they didn't even have time to eat. So Jesus suggested that they go to a quiet place and

get some rest. So, they got into a boat and went away by themselves to a quiet place. But guess what? When they got there, they looked out and saw a great crowd of people waiting for them.

It would have been an easy thing for Jesus to say to the crowd, "We are tired and need some rest. Come

back some other time."

But Jesus didn't do that. He looked at the crowd and "He was moved with compassion because they were like sheep without a shepherd."

What does "He was moved with compassion" mean? It means that when Jesus saw that they were like

sheep without a shepherd, He was moved to action.

Remember what Jesus said about Himself? "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep!"

Till we meet again, take care and be good, okay?

Aunty Eliz

YOUTH

July 21, 2024

Be bearers of hope, use social media wisely

VATICAN: In an open letter addressed to the young people of the Diocese of Iasi, Romania, Pope Francis writes: "Be bearers of hope and builders of bridges, using every tool at your disposal to sow goodness and love in the world."

The Pope's words came in response to a letter delivered to him in mid-May by the Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, who participated in the diocesan youth meeting in Iasi on May 18-19.

Use social media wisely

In his letter published by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Iasi, the Holy Father also encourages the youth to use social networks "with courage and creativity, conveying values that build up: friendship, peace, dialogue between ethnicities and cultures, family, and Christian values."

He warns them against becoming slaves to their smartphones and ending up trapped in virtual life at the expense of real life: "Go out into the world, meet people, listen to their stories, look into the eyes of your brothers and sisters. True wealth lies in the human relationships lived daily, in direct and sincere contact."

National Youth Meeting

Finally, the Pope invites the young Catholics to participate in the national youth meeting, which will be held in September in the Brasov district.

"It will be a valuable opportunity to grow together in faith, to share experiences, and to strengthen your Christian journey," he writes, before concluding with a request to pray for him: "Your spiritual support is an invaluable gift that helps me serve the Church and humanity." — *Vatican News*



(Freepik)



FRANCE: On the occasion of the seventh edition of the Christian-Muslim friendship meetings, roughly 100 young people gathered in Taizé (Saône-et-Loire) from July 7-12 to share their faith. This encounter is not always easy, especially in a year marked by tumultuous national and international conflicts.

Every year since 2017, the ecumenical monastic community of Taizé has organised Christian-Muslim friendship meetings. For a week, around a hundred young people from France and around the world are invited to attend each other's prayers and engage in discussions on themes such as fraternity or mercy. This allows young people to start an unburdened dialogue, especially in the tense context of the war in Gaza since Oct 7, 2023, and the legislative elections. Taizé takes on the appearance of a refuge.

"I had never entered a church, and before today, I had never talked this way with a Christian," said Rayan, 19, who came with a group from the Massy mosque (Essonne). "On social media, there are many selfish

debates between religions without any desire to understand the other. At Taizé, there is a real desire to learn. For example, today I wore a *qamis* all day and didn't feel any stares. In Paris, people would have stared at me," the young student said, adding that he was "pleasantly surprised" by this interfaith experience.

"In Taizé, you are not Christian, Muslim, or Jewish; you are yourself first, you are a worshiper of God," added his friend Younès, 20. "In the media, it seems like they talk a lot about us Muslims but never talk with us. Here, it's the first time I can explain what being a Muslim means to me."

Bro Jean-Jacques, the organiser of the Christian-Muslim friendship days, noted that "here, they are surprised to be themselves without having to defend themselves." "Our goal is for each to recognise the depth of the other's faith and to mutually respect each other," he continued, hoping that the events will create "real friendships."

Marion, 25, and Ilyas, 24, met last year at Taizé during the interfaith week. She, a Catholic, and he, a Muslim, created a WhatsApp group with other young people to organise interfaith events and maintain the dynamic in Lille, where they both come from.

"We realised during these meetings that we understood each other mutually, contrary to what one might think. It wasn't possible to experience this for a week and then act as if nothing had happened when we returned home," Ilyas, a law student, ex-

plained.

"Like a group of friends," the informal WhatsApp conversation has some rules: "No proselytism; the goal is not to convince others. We are here to share our experience as believers," explained Marion. Given the situation in Gaza and the political tensions in France, the group has avoided these divisive topics and focused on the essential: "the importance of strengthening our bonds. Our meetings are already political in themselves," Marion emphasised.

Moreover, the young woman who works in communication knows well that this dialogue is not always unanimously accepted. "Some Catholics have already reproached me for engaging in interfaith activities. I've even been asked, 'Do you prefer Muslims or Jesus?'" I was moved to tears," she confided.

Sherin, a 24-year-old Muslim co-founder of the German branch of *Coexister*, an "interfaith" association, admits she also faces difficulties. After the attack on Oct 7 and in the context of rising far-right sentiment in her country, some members of the association were afraid to organise meetings. "We thought about it and ultimately decided that it was absolutely essential to continue this year. It's by meeting other people that we dismantle prejudices." — **By Fanny Uski-Billieux, LCI** (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

At Taizé, a countercurrent dialogue between young Christians and Muslims



(LCI Photo/Michèle Joly)

Meet the young Polish woman who could be another millennial saint

In April this year, Krakow Archbishop Marek Jędraszewski initiated the beatification process for Helena Kmieć, a 25-year-old Polish lay missionary killed in Bolivia in 2017. Helena, who was passionate about music and travel, drew her strength to serve from her deep relationship with Jesus. If canonised, she could join Blessed Carlo Acutis as another millennial saint.

Helena Agnieszka Kmieć was born on February 9, 1991, in Libiąż, near Krakow. Raised in a devout Catholic family, she was

deeply influenced by her faith. Her mother died shortly after her birth, and her father remarried Barbara Zając, whom Helena considered a second mother alongside the Blessed Mother. Helena's great-uncle is Jan Zając, the emeritus auxiliary bishop of Krakow.

Helena's daily participation in Mass and her conviction to share her faith with others were highlighted by the cause's postulator, Fr Pawel Wróbel. He emphasised focusing on her "beautiful life" rather than on her tragic

death. Fr Pawel Król, a priest at Helena's home parish, described the strong presence of faith in her family home, evident in both daily life and home decor.

A brilliant student, Helena skipped a grade and won a scholarship to a prestigious high school in England. Although she was not admitted to study medicine at Oxford, she returned to Poland to study chemical engineering at the Silesian University of Technology. After graduation, she became a flight attendant.

Helena was deeply involved in volunteering. During World Youth Day in Krakow in 2016, she led her parish's efforts despite short notice, using her language and interpersonal skills effectively. Fr Król believes Helena could be a patron saint of volunteers if canonised.

Helena joined the Salvatorian Missionary Volunteers, where she spent a year in spiritual formation before going on missions abroad. She organised day camps for children in Hungary and Romania and taught in Zambia, despite safety warnings. Her dedication to service led her to Bolivia, where she planned to help at a preschool.

In Bolivia, Helena was tragically killed by an intruder. Her killer was identified

and imprisoned, but the motive remains unclear. Her beatification cause focuses on her heroic virtue, rather than her martyrdom.

Helena's sister, Teresa Kmieć, noted the centrality of the Eucharist in Helena's life, similar to Blessed Carlo Acutis. Helena regularly received Communion and went to Confession, striving to live in a state of sanctifying grace. Fr Król noted the family's mixed emotions of sadness and joy, knowing Helena had received Communion shortly before her death.

Helena's modern, relatable persona was evident on her social media, where she shared her life and faith openly. Her last Facebook post, titled *Bolivia: Mission Possible*, shows her smiling upon arrival in Bolivia, a poignant reminder of her dedication.

The Church will review Helena's digital correspondence as part of her beatification process. Teresa Kmieć believes Helena's life shows that one can be deeply in love with God while fully engaged in the world. Helena's story exemplifies living a joyful, faith-filled life, demonstrating that a close relationship with God brings happiness, both on earth and in heaven. — **By Filip Mazurczak, Register**



L to R: Sisters Teresa and Helena Kmieć were close. (Register Photo/Courtesy of Teresa Kmieć)

PORT DICKSON: The Church of the Immaculate Conception hosted a one-day camp for its altar servers on July 6, *A Spark Within*, aimed at building friendships and strengthening bonds among the participants.

The day began at 9.00am with registration and breakfast, allowing participants to settle in and start the day with a nutritious meal. Following this, Adelyn Phun, head of the servers, delivered the opening speech and invited camp organiser, Joshua Arvind, to lead the opening prayer. After the prayer, a brief introduction set the tone for the camp, and an ice-breaking game helped participants get to know each other in a light-hearted and engaging manner.

The first session of the camp focused on the theme *A Spark Within*, giving the altar servers more time to bond and establish a foundation for the day's activities. The afternoon featured a special session led by Fr Desmond Jansen, who offered valuable spiritual insights and guidance to the young altar servers, drawing from his experience as a former head server at the then Church of St Anne's in Bukit Mertajam. He facilitated an activity allowing the altar

"A spark within" altar servers camp



servers to express affirmations towards each other, followed by a brief introduction to the patron saint of altar servers, St John Berchmans.

After a tea break, participants received a briefing for the evening station games and began preparing for these exciting activities. The games were designed to

promote teamwork, problem-solving, and enjoyment among the participants. Following the games, the altar servers were given time to wash and freshen up before the evening's festivities.

The next session, led by Msgr Jude Miranda, offered words of encouragement and wisdom. A photo session followed,

capturing memories of this special day. Certificates of Participation and Appreciation were given to each participant and volunteer. The participants then gathered for dinner, which included KFC, BBQ chicken, sausages, and more. The night concluded with everyone tidying up the venue.



India's "engineer bishop" dies

NEW DELHI: Bishop George Mamalassery (pic), who had helped transform a remote and hazardous northeastern Indian region into a modern place, died July 5 due to severe respiratory issues. He was 92.



The first bishop of Tura in Meghalaya state died at 2.20am at Tura's Holy Cross Hospital that he had established 31 years ago. He had been undergoing treatment for fluid accumulation in his lungs for the past few months.

He served the diocese of Tura for 28 years from 1979.

The government of Meghalaya had honoured Bishop Mamalassery with the Pa Togan Sangma award that was set up in honour of a Garo tribe leader who had fought the British in the late 19th century.

The University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya, conferred him an honorary doctorate in 2019 for his contributions to education, healthcare, and socio-economic development.

Mourning the death, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India hailed Bishop Mamalassery as a prelate with "unparalleled commitment", a man of visionary leadership" who helped transform the northeastern Indian region's socioeconomic and educational landscape.

The conference's July 5 statement noted that Bishop Mamalassery expanded parishes, set up educational institutions and enhanced health care facilities.

"His compassionate efforts during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War and the founding of Holy Cross Hospital are testament to his enduring legacy," the statement added.

Bishop Mamalassery was born on April 23, 1932, at Kalathoor in the southern Indian state of Kerala, the youngest of three children, to Kurian and Elizabeth Mamalassery. Orphaned at 12, he joined Sacred Heart Seminary in Poonamallee for the diocese of Madras-Mylapore, completing his studies from 1950

to 1960. "Driven by missionary zeal, he volunteered to serve in the northeast.

Archbishop Louis Mathias of Madras-Mylapore ordained him on April 24, 1960.

The newly ordained priest was sent to the Garo Hills in the Archdiocese of Shillong-Guwahati, a remote, hazardous region plagued by malaria and wildlife.

After serving as an assistant parish priest in Tura and Baghmara for a decade, he became parish priest of Dalu in 1970. During the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, he provided shelter, food, and support to displaced people in his parish.

On February 8, 1979, the Pope appointed him the first bishop of Tura. He was 46 then. As bishop, he expanded 14 existing centres and established 23 new parishes, complete with churches, presbyteries, convents, dispensaries, hostels, and schools.

Recognising the region's poor economic and educational standards, he developed a network of educational institutions, even in remote areas, says a statement from the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India.

Bishop Mamalassery invited the Salesians and Jesuits to establish colleges in Tura and Williamnagar. He set up 34 dispensaries across Garo Hills' five districts and founded the 150-bed Holy Cross Hospital in Tura in 1993. His construction initiatives earned him the nickname "Engineer Bishop."

He also prioritised healthcare education, establishing the Rino Simonetti School of Nursing in Tura. For differently-abled individuals, he invited the Montfort Brothers to set up the Montfort Centre for the Physically Challenged. Bishop George was instrumental in setting up Bakdil, the diocesan social service centre, now one of the top-performing NGOs in northeastern India.

After his retirement in 2007, Bishop George continued to serve the diocese from the priest's home. — **By Jose Kavi, Matters India**

MEMORIAM

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10th Anniversary
In loving memory of
Xavier Sekaran @ Murugappa Chettiar

1st June 1941 -
22nd July 2014

If tears could build a stairway and memories a lane, we would walk right up to heaven and bring you home again.

Gone yet never forgotten as your memories live within us forever in our hearts.

Dearly missed by wife, daughters, son in-law, grandchildren & relatives.

In Loving Memory of
30th Anniversary 20th Anniversary



Philip Tung Kwan Kun @ Tang Kwan Kun
Departed: 04-12-1994



Margaret Mary Foo Pei Fong
Departed: 23-07-2004

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."

— Jn. 11:25-26

Fondly remembered by children and loved ones.

29th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



Mejar (Rtd) Christopher Ratnasingam KAT, psc
Departed: 22-07-1995

In thoughts, dad, you are always near; still loved, still missed, still very dear. But happy memories we keep forever Of days when we were all together. In heaven you rest, no worries, no pain but in our hearts you will always remain.

Always loved and missed by Wife, children, daughters-in-law, son-in-law, grandchildren and loved ones.

46th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



Sauriamah De Cruze
Departed: 24-07-1978

Though the years have passed by, Mum, you are always remembered in our hearts and, most of all, in our prayers.

Always remembered and missed by your loved ones.

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11th ANNIVERSARY



KOLANDASAMY GNANAMUTHU
Born: 26.12.1944 Departed: 16.07.2013

Always in our Thoughts, Forever in our Hearts...

Always loved and remembered by beloved wife, son, daughters, sons-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandchildren, relatives and friends.

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Minor Basilica of St. Anne, Bukit Mertajam, Penang

Feast of St. Anne 2024

Theme: Enlarge The Space of Your Tent

NOVENA & MASSES SCHEDULE

E - English, BM - Bahasa Malaysia, M - Mandarin, T - Tamil, K - Kadazan



Date	Time			Sub-Theme
Day 1 19 July 2024 Friday	10.00am (E)*	3.00pm (BM) 5.00pm (T)	7.00pm (E) 9.00pm (M)	Gift of Diversity and Harmony
	12:00pm <u>Inter- Christian Denominational Prayer Service</u>			
Day 2 20 July 2024 Saturday	10.00am (E)*	3.00pm (BM) 5.00pm (T)	7.00pm (E) 9.00pm (M)	Celebrating Human Fraternity
Day 3 21 July 2024 Sunday	10.00am (E)	3.00pm (BM) 5.00pm (T)	7.00pm (E) 9.00pm (M)	Celebrating The Dignity and Value of Woman
Day 4 22 July 2024 Monday	10.00am (E)*	3.00pm (BM) 5.00pm (T)	7.00pm (E) 9.00pm (M)	Empowering Family Life
Day 5 23 July 2024 Tuesday	10.00am (E)*	3.00pm (BM) 5.00pm (T)	7.00pm (E) 9.00pm (M)	Let Our Children Grow
Day 6 24 July 2024 Wednesday	10.00am (E)*	3.00pm (BM) 5.00pm (T)	7.00pm (E) 9.00pm (M)	Shared Mission Towards A Synodal Church
Day 7 25 July 2024 Thursday	10.00am (E)*	3.00pm (BM) 5.00pm (T)	7.00pm (E) 9.00pm (M)	Listening to the Cry of the Earth
Day 8 26 July 2024 Friday	10.00am (E)* 12.00pm (K)	3.00pm (BM) 5.00pm (T)	7.00pm (E) 9.00pm (M)	Pastoral Care of The Elderly and The Sick
Day 9 27 July 2024 Saturday	7:00am (E)* 9:00am (M) 11:00am (T) 1:00pm (BM)	7.00pm Multilingual (Open Air)	8.30pm Procession	Enlarge The Space of Your Tent
Day 10 28 July 2024 Sunday	7:00am (T)* 9:00am (E) 11:00am (M)	1:00pm (BM) 3:00pm (T) 5:00pm (E)*		Pilgrims of Hope

*This Mass will not be live-streamed



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