

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.

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.  
*Eph. 4:1-2*



The journey of synodality continues

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Diamond and golden jubilee celebrations at Church of St Henry

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# Do not cast me off in my old age

## Fourth World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly

**V**ATICAN: Catholics around the world are invited to take time to reflect on the great heritage and wisdom passed on by their grandparents and the elderly. This invitation comes as Pope Francis marks the 2024 World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, Sunday, July 28.

The Holy Father has chosen the theme *Do not cast me off in my old age* (cf. Psalm 71:9) for this year's observance. The theme aims "to call attention to the fact that, sadly, loneliness is the bitter lot in life of many elderly persons, so often the victims of the throw-away culture."

In his message for the occasion, Pope Francis reflects on the verse from Psalm 71, depicting the plea of an elderly person who recounts their lifelong friendship with God. He emphasises the importance of cherishing the charisms of grandparents and the elderly, highlighting their significant contributions to the life of the Church. The World Day seeks to support ecclesial communities in forging bonds between generations and combating loneliness, affirming the biblical truth that "It is not good for man to be alone" (Gen 2:18).

Cardinal Kevin Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life, expressed gratitude to the Pope for addressing the loneliness endured by many elderly people. He called on families and the ecclesial community to lead in promoting a culture of encounter, creating spaces for sharing, listening, and offering support and affection. "Faced with this reality," he said, "the love of the Gospel becomes concrete."

The cardinal also acknowledged that loneliness is an unavoidable condition of human life, inviting people to turn to God the Father for comfort. As Christians, he said, the World Day dedicated to grandparents and the elderly calls for rejecting the throwaway culture and showing "tenderness and affectionate attention" to the most fragile members of our communities.

The 2024 celebration marks the fourth edition of World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, and takes place during the Year

of Prayer, which Pope Francis has called to help Catholics prepare for the 2025 Jubilee. Instituted by Pope Francis in 2021, this annual observance falls on the fourth Sunday of July, near the liturgical memorial of Sts. Joachim and Anne, the grandparents of Jesus.

In his message, the Pope reassures the elderly that "God never abandons His children, never." He describes the elderly as "the firm foundation on which new stones can rest, in order to join in erecting a spiritual edifice" (cf. 1 Peter 2:5). He also acknowledges the dual reality of God's closeness and the fear of abandonment, particularly in old age and times of pain.

Pope Francis highlights the frequent loneliness experienced by the elderly, citing reasons such as children emigrating from poorer countries, leaving their parents behind. He also addresses the situation of elderly individuals in war-torn countries, where they remain as "the only signs of life in areas where abandonment and death seem to reign supreme." The Pope condemns cultural beliefs that blame the elderly for misfortunes affecting the young, describing it as a global issue even in advanced societies.

He explains that the abandonment of the elderly is not accidental but the result of political, economic, social, and personal decisions that fail to recognise the infinite dignity of each person. The Pope laments the shift from a communal "us" to an individualistic "me," leading to widespread solitude and abandonment in today's society.

Drawing from the Book of Ruth, the Pope illustrated two responses to ageing and isolation. He praised Ruth's loyalty to Naomi, suggesting that modern society should emulate her example by staying close to the elderly and rejecting the notion that solitude is inevitable. He encouraged gratitude towards those who support the elderly, recognising the blessings that come from such care.

In closing, Pope Francis called for an open-hearted approach towards grandparents and elderly family members, urging people to replace self-centred attitudes with a commitment to say, "I will not abandon you." He imparted his blessing to all grandparents and elderly individuals, and those who care for them.

— Agencies

To read the full text, go to: <https://bit.ly/4d7ROXg>



# HERALD

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

In this week's issue of *HERALD*, we reflect on Pope Francis' message for the fourth World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly. This occasion calls us to examine our responsibilities towards the older generation, reminding us that our treatment of the elderly is a measure of our humanity. We also take a look at the pressing issue of cyberbullying and the urgent need for legal reforms to protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable.

Caring for the elderly is no easy task. It's a responsibility that can often test our patience and endurance. We get frustrated when they are slow, messy, or forgetful. It's a natural response to feel agitated when our lives are already brimming with our own responsibilities and stress. However, we must ask ourselves: Does this justify neglecting our duties towards them?

The increase in the number of elderly being placed in old folks' homes is a troubling trend. While these facilities can offer the necessary care and attention that we may not be able to provide, they should not become a convenient escape from our responsibilities. If work commitments, space constraints, or lack of proper facilities prevent us from caring for

them at home, it is understandable to seek external help. However, this should not translate to



abandoning them.

Our elders are repositories of wisdom and history. They have nurtured us, shaped our values, and contributed significantly to our lives. They deserve our respect and care in their twilight years. Regular visits to these homes, taking them out occasionally, and including them in festivities are simple yet meaningful ways to show that they are not forgotten.

Festivals and family gatherings are particularly significant. These are times when the elderly often feel the pang of loneliness most acutely. Ensuring they are part of these joyous occasions not only brightens their lives but also strengthens familial bonds. It is a reminder to them — and to ourselves — that they remain an integral part of the family.

Building bridges between generations is also essential. It fosters understanding, respect, and compassion. Initiatives that encourage interaction between the young and the elderly can be immensely beneficial. Whether through community/church programmes, schools, or family activities, such interactions enrich both the young and the old, creating a cohesive society that values all its members.

Programmes that facilitate story-sharing, skill exchange, and collaborative activities can help in bridging the generational gap. Young people can learn about resilience, history, and values from the elderly, while the elderly can feel a renewed sense of purpose and connection.

Beyond our immediate family, we must also consider our broader societal responsibilities. The way we treat our elderly reflects our values and compassion as a community. It is incumbent upon us to advocate for policies and initiatives that support the elderly, ensuring they have access to quality healthcare, social services, and a dignified life.

While reflecting on our responsibilities towards the elderly, we must also turn our

attention to another pressing issue: cyberbullying. As our lives become increasingly digital, the dark side of this connectivity has become alarmingly evident. Cyberbullying can have devastating effects on mental health, self-esteem, and overall well-being. Unfortunately, our current Malaysian laws are not robust enough to tackle this menace effectively.

Victims of cyberbullying often suffer in silence, feeling helpless and trapped. The anonymity that the internet provides emboldens bullies, making it difficult to trace and hold them accountable. It is imperative that our legal framework evolves to address these challenges. Laws must be amended to ensure that cyberbullies face just punishment and that victims have adequate protection and recourse.

As individuals and as a community, we have a role to play in combating cyberbullying. Education is key. By raising awareness about the consequences of cyberbullying and teaching digital etiquette from a young age, we can cultivate a culture of respect and empathy online. Parents, educators, and community leaders must work together to instil these values.

Support systems for victims are equally important. Encouraging open communication, providing mental health resources, and fostering a supportive environment can help victims cope and recover. Social media platforms must also take greater responsibility in monitoring and controlling abusive behaviour on their sites.

Our responsibilities towards the elderly and the fight against cyberbullying are critical issues that demand our attention and action. By honouring our elders and ensuring they feel valued and cared for, we uphold the dignity and respect they deserve. Simultaneously, by taking a firm stand against cyberbullying, we protect the vulnerable and promote a safer, more compassionate online community.

*Patricia Pereira*

## Be the sign not the sigh!

Each of the four Gospels narrate the multiplication of the loaves and fish and while the synoptics tell it as a miracle story the Gospel of John wraps it up in greater theological meaning. The Gospel of John is the only Gospel that tells us that this 'sign' (remember that the Gospel of John has signs and not miracles) takes place close to the celebration of the Passover and that Jesus leads the people not into a 'deserted place' as in the synoptics but up a mountain.

St John's Gospel has seven signs, not miracles. A sign always points to a greater reality and so in the feeding of the five thousand we are called to see the greater reality. The focus therefore is not the multiplication in itself but the person of Jesus who is responsible for it and on his divine nature. Thus, Jesus is presented as the new Moses. So, let's see the similarities and comparisons in the text.

1. Moses went up a mountain to receive the ten commandments and he went alone. In John's Gospel Jesus goes up the mountain but takes His disciples and a crowd that followed Him.

2. While Moses parted the Red Sea in a supernatural act, Jesus feeds the five thousand via supernatural grace.

3. Jesus tests the disciples in today's Gospel; we read this in John 6:6, "He said this to test Him (Philip). In Exodus 16:4 God tells Moses that he "will rain bread from heaven for you and each day the people shall go out and gather

enough for that day. In that way I WILL TEST THEM whether they will follow My instructions or not."

4. In the Gospel of John, Jesus asks the disciples to collect the scraps. In Exodus 16:19 referring to the scraps, Moses says to the people, "let no one leave any of it over until morning."

5. In the Gospel of John in Chapter 6:41 the Jews begin to complain about Jesus because He said He was the bread that came down from heaven and we are all familiar with the grumbling of the Israelites in the wilderness against Moses.

6. Finally, Moses was asked to provide for the people in the book of Exodus but now Jesus was the provider for His people.

St John, in highlighting these subtle comparisons and connections, is making just one point, Jesus is the New Moses and if the Jewish authorities really knew their



Scriptures (5:39) and they believed Moses, they would have believed Jesus for Moses wrote about Jesus (5:46)

Yet while the religious leaders could not see the truth, it was the people who saw the sign (6:14). They joined the dots and made the connections and remembered Moses who fed the people in the wilderness just as Jesus did. We are told in Scripture that they began to say, "this indeed is the prophet who is to come into the world". They wanted to take Him by force and make Him king. Sadly, while they stood ahead above in their recognition of who Jesus was, they were enamoured by the bread they ate and failed to see the meaning of the sign; that Jesus was greater than Moses and that He is God. Sadly, perhaps we too see only the signs in our life and fail to see the God behind our blessings.

So, while we have a clear understanding into the deeper theological meaning of what the Gospel of John intended to convey there is also something we can take away

## Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Warner D'Souza

### 17th Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Readings: 2 Kings 4: 42-44;

Ephesians 4: 1-6;

Gospel: John 6: 1-15

pastorally and practically. I want to focus on just one take away.

When faced with a challenge, Phillip and Andrew both threw their hands up in despair. They both saw a PROBLEM. Philip does a mathematical calculation to arrive at the fact that even the six months of financial reserve tucked under their belt would barely buy each one a small piece of bread let alone where they would get it from. Andrew, while identifying a little boy with five barley loaves and two fish throw his hands up in despair. Philip and Andrew see a problem while Jesus sees a hungry crowd that needs to be fed.

Sadly, the Church too has come to respond to the poverty and hunger around us the same way as Philip and Andrew did; as a problem. Yet make no mistake, while we cannot eradicate world poverty, we can make a difference to one person's life and that begins when we stop throwing our hand up while we sigh and rather lend our hands to bring about a smile. — *pottypadre.com*





# Discerning together with Conversation in the Spirit

The heart of the upcoming Peninsular Malaysia Regional Pastoral Assembly 2024 (RPA2024) process is the “Conversation in the Spirit”. It is a process that emerged when Pope Francis called for the Synod on Synodality in 2021.

The question is, what exactly is “Conversation in the Spirit” (CS) and why was it an essential process for the Synod on Synodality and now form the process for our journey to the Malaysian Pastoral Convention 2026 (MPC2026)?

Much of the details are offered on the Synod’s website. Initially named “spiritual conversation”, CS “focuses on the quality of one’s capacity to listen as well as the quality of the words spoken. This means paying attention to the spiritual movements in oneself and in the other person during the conversation, which requires being attentive to more than simply the words expressed”.

What is presumed in this process is that

one has consciously responded to God’s love in faith and formed a relationship with God through a life rooted in prayer and scripture. Ideally, a sense of inner awareness and discernment accompanies their spiritual life that is dependent on what the Holy Spirit might be showing, leading, or teaching them.

In CS, they come as they are and now discern together within a specific community’s need or pastoral concern. They now will give the same attentiveness by their attention, respect, and openness to others. It is an approach that takes seriously what happens in the hearts of those conversing. In this process, the group and community try to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying.

“Active Listening” and “Speaking from the heart” or “Intentional Speaking” are the key to the CS discernment process. It is how one disposes oneself to be sensitive to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

By active listening, one seeks to understand others deeply by paying attention to both their words and underlying meanings. It requires an open and receptive heart, focusing on the speaker rather than planning a response. It is to listen without judgment and recognise that each person better understands their own life. The person listening tries to see the goodness in the person sharing and what was shared. It is to have faith that the Holy Spirit is acting and can speak through others just as the Spirit speaks to them. One sees the other as a gift without prejudice. Active listening involves humility, openness, patience, and involvement, allowing us to be influenced and learn from others, taking them seriously.

Speaking from the heart involves sincerely expressing one’s experiences, thoughts, and feelings and taking responsibility for them without blaming others. This is an important process because

sometimes the “blame-game” may be unconsciously present in a discernment process. Here, one shares the truth as they know and experience it without imposing it on others, offering a generous gift in return for active listening.

Interestingly, the Synod website writes, “This process is greatly enriched by a regular personal practice of prayerful self-examen. Without a habit of discernment and knowledge of oneself and how God is present in one’s life, one cannot actively listen or speak from the heart.”

It is within these contexts that the Animating core team, Msgr Jude Miranda, Fr Simon Labrooy, and Fr Lawrence Ng, speaks of “counsel” as emerging from this process that can be applied pastorally at a diocese, parish, and ministries. They can be seen as promptings of the Holy Spirit that can help the Church move pastorally forward and contribute to a wider conversation during the MPC2026.



## KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

### Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

#### July / August

- 31/7 Feast – Church of St Ignatius, Petaling Jaya
- 3/8 Confirmation – Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Puchong
- 4/8 Confirmation – Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Mentakab



## PENANG DIOCESE

### Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

#### July

- 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 / August

- 30/7 Meeting – North Central Johor Vicariate Clergy via Zoom
- 4/8 Confirmation – Church of St Peter, Melaka
- 4/8 Confirmation – Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Krubong



## Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #182

F12  
MJD NEWS  
UPDATES

### Greetings dear friends of MJD,

**Simmering anger:** Quotas, uneven playing field, 10 As with no matriculation offers, 20 per cent of leasehold lands of non-Bumis to be surrendered to a Corporation when renewing or extending leases. The by-election loss and the “Lawan Anwar” stirrings are indicative. “Favours”, “favouring” and “some being more favoured” — a culture that continues.

**“No Resolve” Times:** Migrations to other countries for better job opportunities, better education for their children and to avoid the disadvantages of being non-Bumi, grappling with an ageing population, growing senior living centres, a trend among younger people for a child-free lifestyle, wastefulness and leakages drains the country. Misplaced priorities, misguided policies, mismatched misfits at the helm delay progress and drain the nation of essential resources. The “gostans” reflect a lack of resolve or guts. Gutless leadership is a pain and bane.

### A Thought for the Week: The Rope

A man was passing some elephants. When he suddenly stopped, confused by the fact that these huge creatures were being held by only a small rope tied to their front leg. No chains, no cages. The elephants could break away from their bonds but for some reason, they did not.

He saw a trainer nearby and asked why these animals just stood there and made no attempt to get away. The trainer said, “when they are very young and much smaller we use the same size rope to tie them and, at that age, it’s enough to hold them. As they grow up, they are conditioned to believe they cannot break away. They believe the rope can still hold them, so they never try to

break free.”

**Lesson from the elephant:** The elephants believed that they couldn’t break free. Like the elephants, many of us go through life hanging onto a belief that we cannot do something, because we failed at it once or we were told repeatedly that we cannot.

### Announcements for the Week:

1. *His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim was installed as the 17th King of Malaysia, on July 20. Daulat Tuanku!*
2. The *World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly* falls on July 28, with the theme *Do not cast me off in my old age* Ps 71. Remember our storytellers.
4. The Pamol Estate Catholics, Kluang celebrate the *Feast of St Anne and St Joachim* on Saturday, July 27 at 6.30pm.

### QnQ? The Q ask: What is at the heart of any fellowship? Community? ‘Listening’, says Dietrich Bonhoeffer

1. The first service that one owes to others in the *fellowship* consists in *listening to them*. Just as love to God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them. It is God’s love for us that He not only gives us His Word but also lends us His ear.

2. So it is *His work that we do for our brother when we learn to listen to His Christians*, especially ministers, so often think they must always contribute something when they are in the company of others, that this is the one service they have to render. They forget that listening can be a greater service than speaking.

3. Many people are looking for an ear that will listen. They do not find it among Christians, because these

Christians are talking where they should be listening. But *he who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer listening to God either*; he will be doing nothing but prattle in the presence of God too.

4. This is the beginning of the death of the spiritual life, and in the end there is nothing left but spiritual chatter and clerical condescension arrayed in pious words. One who cannot listen long and patiently will presently be talking beside the point and be never really speaking to others, albeit he be not conscious of it. *Anyone who thinks that his time is too valuable to spend keeping quiet will eventually have no time for God and his brother, but only for himself and for his own follies.*”

### See the Holy Spirit @ work:

“When we pray, it is because the Holy Spirit inspires prayer in our heart. When we break the cycle of our self-centredness, and move beyond ourselves and go out to encounter others, to listen to them and help them, it is the Spirit of God who impels us to do so. When we find within a hitherto unknown ability to forgive, to love someone who doesn’t love us in return, it is the Spirit who has taken hold of us. When we move beyond mere self-serving words and turn to our brothers and sisters with that tenderness which warms the heart, we have indeed been touched by the Holy Spirit.” — Pope Francis, *Homily, 2014*

**Something to tickle you:** Faith does not eliminate questions, but faith knows where to take them. — Elisabeth Elliot

*Bernard Paul*

Bishop Bernard Paul





ARCHDIOCESE OF  
KOTA KINABALU  
CHYKK/WA/04/2024

## Minor reshuffle and new appointment of priests

His Grace Archbishop John Wong, after consulting with the Bishop's College of Consultors, hereby announces a minor reshuffle and new appointment of priests:

1. Fr Russell Lawrine from Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Kota Kinabalu has been sent to Rome, Italy since June 25, 2024 to take up a three year course of Licenciate in Catechetics.
2. Fr Gilbert Marcus from the Church of St Michael, Penampang will be leaving for Manila, Philippines in August, 2024 to study Licenciate in Dogmatic Theology.
3. Fr Jeffri Gumu from the Church of Stella Maris, Tanjung Aru and Church of St Thomas More, Kepyayan will move to Catholic Archdiocesan Centre, Kota Kinabalu to work full-time in the Marriage Ecclesiastical Tribunal Office with immediate effect.
4. Fr Rhobby Mojolou from the Church of St Simon, Likas will take on the new responsibility as parish priest of the Church of Stella Maris, Tanjung Aru and Church of St Thomas More, Kepyayan with immediate effect.
5. Fr Jerry Joseph Muhamat has been assigned as assistant parish priest of the Church of St Michael, Penampang and Church of St Augustine, Kinarut effective July 1, 2024.
6. Fr Peter Chung has been appointed the new Spiritual Advisor for the Archdiocesan Creation and Justice Commission with immediate effect.
7. Fr Joshua Liew has been appointed the new Spiritual Advisor for the Pontifical Mission Society, Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu with immediate effect.
8. Fr Lasius Gantis has been appointed the new Spiritual Advisor for the Legion of Mary (BM and English) in the Archdiocese with immediate effect.

Let us remember to keep these priests in our prayers!

Yours Sincerely,

Fr Wilfred Atin  
Chancellor,  
Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu.

July 15, 2024

# The journey of synodality continues



KENINGAU, Sabah: This year's 114th Plenary Assembly of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei (CBCMSB) was held at Pusat Ziarah Keluarga Kudus (Holy Family Pilgrimage Centre) Nulu Sosopon, Keningau. This venue was selected to coincide with the 75th birthday celebration of Bishop Cornelius Piong, the first bishop of the Diocese of Keningau.

In his speech to the conference members, His Excellency, the Apostolic Nuncio to Malaysia, Archbishop Wojciech Zaluski, highlighted two recent announcements from the Vatican. The release of the norms for the proceeding in the discernment of alleged supernatural phenomena, and the announcement of the Jubilee Year 2025. He reminded the conference of the Opening of the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica on Dec 24, 2024, and the Pope's opening of the Cathedral doors of the Basilica of St John Lateran on Dec 29 2024. He pointed out that the liturgical texts for the Mass for the Holy Year and the decree on the granting of the Jubilee Indulgence, prepared by the Dicastery for Evangelisation, are also available.

Each bishop then took turns to update His Excellency on the state of their dioceses. The bishops shared the joys, challenges, hopes and dreams for their respective dioceses. It was very edifying to listen to their sharings and to be in solidarity with each bishop.

Fr David Garaman, from the Diocese of Sandakan, who was the nominated representative from the CBCMSB to

attend the meeting entitled *Parish Priests for the Synod: An International Meeting* held in Rome on April 28 until May 2, 2024, gave a heart-warming sharing of his experience there. He expressed his gratitude to the conference for giving him the opportunity to be among the 200 parish priests throughout the world. He said, "There is a deep sense of gratitude to all the priests for their unwavering dedication, boundless commitment, loyalty, and passion in advancing the sacred mission entrusted by Our Lord". The bishops then suggested he share his testimony among all parish priests in the conference.

For the Malaysian Church, the regional pastoral assemblies (RPA) scheduled for Aug 25-27, 2024 in Johor Bahru, Sept 17-20, 2024 in Sibu and May 11-12, 2025 in Kota Kinabalu, are the next steps towards being a Synodal Church for the nine dioceses in Malaysia. Every diocese had their respective arch/diocesan pastoral assemblies over the last two years, and thousands of parishioners have participated. After the RPAs, the Church in Malaysia will be looking forward to the Malaysian Pastoral Convention scheduled for 9-13 Sept 2026.

Another event discussed at length was the much talked about papal visit to Singapore on Sept 11-13, 2024. Cardinal William Goh, the Archbishop of Singapore, informed the conference of the papal visit's official theme and logo: Unity and Hope. He reiterated that security and restrictions are tight. The papal Mass is expected to bring together more than 50,000 attendees

comprising cardinals, archbishops and bishops from Rome, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences and CBCMSB, religious congregations, international and regional media, Singapore government officials, diplomats, ecumenical groups, and lay faithful, including attendees from the elderly, wheelchair bound, migrants and special groups. Archbishop Julian Leow, as president of CBCMSB, will be in the papal delegation with Cardinal William Goh and His Excellency Archbishop Marek Zalewski, the Apostolic Nuncio to the Republic of Singapore.

The various Episcopal Commissions of the CBCMSB updated their progress, with some reporting changes to their core team as their term of office ends. Some reporting were done by the bishops, while the following were done via online and in-person:

- 1) Episcopal Regional Liturgy Commission (ERLC)
- 2) Regional Office for the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS)
- 3) Caritas Malaysia
- 4) Episcopal Commission for Creation Justice (ECCJ)
- 5) Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerants (ECMI)

Besides the meeting proper, there were also opportunities to visit "Kekitaan.FM" the online radio station (FB page: Kekitaanfm, with 33,000 followers) and Parish of Tatal to meet and greet the community and experience the colourful and varied culture of Keningau. — **By Richard Chia, Executive Secretary CBCMSB**

## Setapak parish hosts health talk and screening for seniors

KUALA LUMPUR: The Church of the Good Shepherd (GSC), Setapak, hosted a health talk and screening for its senior members recently. The event was organised by the GSC Evergreens, with the blessings and support of Parish Priest Fr Mitchel Anthony Joseph, and in collaboration with GEM (Grandparents and Elderly Ministry of KL Archdiocese).

The session was conducted by Prof Tan Maw Ping and her team from Universiti Malaya, with assistance from GSC Youth

and Evergreens.

Approximately 70 seniors, known as Evergreens, participated in the event, which featured a series of non-intrusive and non-invasive tests, including grip strength, memory, balance & mobility, standing BP, and bioimpedance analysis, followed by consultations.

The feedback from the participants was overwhelmingly positive, and a follow-up session is planned in about six to eight months' time. — **By Manuel Vergara**





# Caritas MJD Assembly 2024

## *Serving with Love*

By Eugene Wong

PLENTONG, Johor: In the spirit of *caritas* (Latin for charity and love), over a hundred participants from 11 organisations within the Malacca Johore Diocese gathered for the Caritas MJD Assembly 2024 at MAJODI Centre, July 13 to 14.

The two-day event featured real-life experience sharing, formative talks, and organisational report updates, complemented by fun activities to foster togetherness among Caritas members and the participants. The assembly embraced the theme *Serving with Love*, which was the central focus of all sharings and reports.

The first day began with the enthronement of the Word of God where the Bible was placed at the centre and a Paschal candle

lit to symbolise God's presence. This was followed by a praise and worship session led by the youth from the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Johor Bahru, providing a vibrant and youthful start in the spirit of worship.

Bishop Bernard Paul graced the gathering with his presence and delivered the opening speech, highlighting the importance and necessity of Caritas' work, which reaches far and wide to those in need. He emphasised that in our current times, the poor and vulnerable should not only receive help but also be taught how to fend for themselves. This, he noted, will enable them to live freely and prosper with minimal or no assistance.

The participants were blessed with two sessions from Fr Paulino



Caritas members at the commissioning Mass presided over by Bishop Bernard Paul

Miranda, who serves full-time with the Orang Asli. In these sessions, he passionately shared his life experiences and personal reflections on ministering and living with them.

Fr Paulino's first session, titled *Caritas in Veritate (Love in Truth)*, explored how this concept is personified in Jesus, Who was deeply moved and filled with compassion for the poor and the vulnerable. He cited Jesus reading from the book of Isaiah in the synagogue: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me; He has sent Me to bring good news to the poor." Fr Paulino emphasised that this same Spirit guided Jesus in His mission and continues to lead us towards truth, urging us all to break the cycle of poverty.

In his second session, Fr Paulino highlighted how Catholic Social Teachings, inspired by the servanthood of Jesus, must

remain relevant as reflected by the Asian bishops. Referencing the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* and its call for urgent global action to address poverty through holistic development, Fr Paulino noted that the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences has resolved to be a more authentic "Church of the Poor." This commitment ensures that everyone can approach the Church and find love and care, including advocating for the rights of the disadvantaged and the powerless.

Deacon Anthony Chua presented on the topic of *Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults*, highlighting the responsibilities and obligations of members and volunteers. The session detailed legislative measures and guidelines designed to protect the rights, safety, and welfare of minors and vulnerable adults. Participants engaged actively,

asking numerous questions about protection methods and channels.

The session concluded with an invitation for everyone to sign the Caritas Malaysia's Children and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy, which Caritas MJD has adopted as a key management standard under Caritas Internationalis Management Standards.

The second day of the assembly began with a vibrant praise and worship session led by a passionate group of young adults from Melaka. Fr Martinian Lee then delivered a presentation on *Conversations in the Spirit – Being a Light of Hope*, emphasising the importance of 'synodality' in both personal and ministerial life. As the assembly drew to a close, Bishop Bernard celebrated a commissioning Mass, encouraging Caritas members and all participating organisations to spread light and hope through their ministries.



The participants during the group discussions.

## Ecumenical event unites Christian churches

PETALING JAYA: The Archdiocesan Ministry of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (AMEIA) hosted an ecumenical gathering and fellowship themed *You are the Light of the World*, at the Church of St Francis Xavier recently.

The event, organised in collaboration with the Council of Churches Malaysia and the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship, saw participation from various parishes within the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur and other Christian churches.

A total of 180 attendees, including Archbishop Julian Leow,

bishops, pastors, clerics, elders, and members of the Parish Ministry of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (PMEIA), along with invited speakers and guests, were present. Representatives from the Methodist Church, Full Gospel Assembly, Lutheran Church, Baptist Church, and Mar Thoma Syrian Church, were also in attendance.

The gathering commenced with a vibrant welcoming ceremony featuring shofars from CrossOver Alliance Shofarists and flag-waving worship dancers from Shekinah Glory Praise and Worship Ministry, reminiscent of Biblical

stories. Sarawakian dancers from the youth group of the Church of the Holy Redeemer, Klang added a local cultural element to the event. Praise and Worship was led by members from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes Klang, creating an intimate spiritual atmosphere.

Sharing the Word of God, Archbishop Julian encouraged attendees to "Go and be the Light" by shining for others, sharing generously, and eliminating anger, wickedness, and oppression.

Fr Xavier Andrew, Ecclesiastical Assistant for AMEIA, provided an overview of AMEIA's activities and initiatives.



Archbishop Julian Leow lighting his candle from a young participant.

Josephine Tey, from the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development – Ministry of Migrant and Itinerant Affairs, highlighted efforts to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate migrants and itinerants of all religions and races within the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. Richard Chong from Barnabas Aid presented initiatives for supporting Christian migrants locally and abroad.

The event concluded with a

play by SKIT from the Church of Jesus Caritas, which resonated with the theme and showcased new and young talents within the archdiocese.

The fruitful gathering fostered understanding, unity, and cooperation among different churches, recognising and respecting each other's doctrines, and paving the way for future collaborations to strengthen the unity within the Christian community. — **By Jenny Sororajah**



Ecumenical leaders at the Church of St Francis Xavier.



# Philippines archbishop leads St Pio devotional mission to SMC

IPOH: Archbishop Gilbert Garcera of Lipa, Philippines, led a delegation to the Church of St Michael (SMC) recently, accompanied by six clergy members and 32 laypersons. Their mission included promoting devotion to Padre Pio and showcasing a first-class relic of St Padre Pio — a fragment of his beard — from the National Shrine of St Padre Pio in the Philippines.

Jennifer Duarte, chairperson of the Parish Pastoral Council, provided a brief overview of the SMC parish, followed by Gwen Ng, leader of the Padre Pio group at SMC, who shared insights on the group's activities. Gwen highlighted that SMC might be the only parish in Malaysia offering Novena prayers to St Padre Pio in Mandarin.

The Filipino delegation was treated to local delicacies during

a tea (*merienda*) sponsored by the SMC Filipino community. To commence the *merienda*, Cecilia Lukban-Wong, leader of the SMC Filipino community, shared details about the Filipino Catholic community's activities in Ipoh. Nora Labrooy then led everyone in the *Our Father* prayer in Tagalog.

After the *merienda*, Fr Oscar Andal, rector of the National Shrine of St Padre Pio Philippines, presented a statue of St Padre Pio to SMC. Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang, and Archbishop Gilbert Garcera joined the congregation in church before Mass to recite the St Padre Pio Novena prayers. The Mass was followed by a healing liturgy where attendees were invited to receive anointing with blessed oil. Many participants came forward to venerate the holy relic and seek healing, both spiritual



Gwen Ng receiving the gift on behalf of the Church of St Michael.

and physical.

The SMC Parish Pastoral Council hosted the delegation for a simple Malaysian Chinese buffet

dinner before bidding farewell to the visitors, who were seen as chosen instruments of God, bringing blessings to all.



The relic of St Padre Pio.

## Group undertakes pilgrimage to mark Year of Prayer

PERAK: In a dedicated observance of the Year of Prayer, 40 individuals, from various parishes within the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, embarked on a pilgrimage across three churches in Perak. The day-long journey was centred on fervent prayer for personal needs, family, parish communities, the nation, and global peace.

The pilgrimage began at the Chapel of St Jude in Gopeng, where Fr Michael Dass, accompanied by 15 parishioners, celebrated Mass for the pilgrims. Fr Michael, who is also the parish priest of the Church of St Joseph in Batu Gajah, encouraged the pilgrims to trust in the Lord, who understands and fulfils their needs. The Mass, coordinated in collaboration with the chapel's lay leaders, was followed by the Anointing of the Sick for those in need of spiritual and physical healing.

After Mass, the pilgrims enjoyed lunch on the chapel grounds, engaging in fellowship with Fr Michael and the local parishioners.

The second stop was the Chapel of St Anthony in Chemor, where the pilgrims participated in an hour-long prayer session, including the Chaplet of the Divine



The pilgrims participating in a prayer session at the Church of St Anthony, Chemor.

Mercy. The session focused on the significance of continuous prayer and its role as a form of communication with God. The reflection emphasised that prayer, rooted in faith and trust, invites divine response and mission calls to share Christ with others.

The pilgrimage concluded at the Church of St John the Baptist in Sg Siput, where parish priest, Fr Mark Michael, welcomed the group. Fr Mark received 350kgs of essential food items from the pilgrims, which he will distribute to ten impoverished families as part of ongoing mission efforts to aid the marginalised.

Fr Mark provided insights into his parish and its affiliated cha-

pels, reflecting on the life of St John the Baptist as a model of truth. He highlighted the role of priests in preaching the Gospel and urged the faithful to live authentically, avoiding superficiality in their faith. He also stressed the importance of educating future generations about faith and truth.

The pilgrimage included a communal rosary and a Sunset Mass, fostering spiritual growth and fellowship among the participants. The group departed Sg Siput at 8.30pm and returned safely to Kuala Lumpur before midnight, concluding a day enriched with prayer and worship aimed at deepening their faith and devotion. —

By Bernard Anthony



The pilgrims at the Chapel of St Jude, Gopeng.

## New columbarium at Western Road Christian cemetery

PENANG: A simple yet significant ceremony marked the official launch and opening of the new columbarium at the Western Road Christian Cemetery on July 13. The event saw attendance from members of various Christian and Roman Catholic Churches. The Chief Minister of Penang, YAB Chow Kon Yeow, officiated at the ceremony in front of a crowd of about 60 people.

The new columbarium is a collaborative effort between the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches on the Island of Penang. The project was initially proposed by the Penang Christian Cemeteries Association (PCCA) to then Bishop Antony Selvanayagam, who consented to using half of the burial land, granted by the City Council, for this purpose. A Building Committee (BC) was established and proceeded with the plans after receiving approval from the City Council in 2019 and consent from the new Bishop, Cardinal

Sebastian Francis. Completed in December 2020, the columbarium features 8,695 niches, with 4,260 allocated to Roman Catholics and 4,435 to the PCCA.

During his speech, YAB Chow Kon Yeow remarked, "As we gather today, let us remember that we are not just inaugurating a new facility; we are continuing a legacy of respect, remembrance, and reverence for those who have passed on while providing a place of comfort, peace, and solace for future generations. It is a place where memories will be cherished and the lives of our loved ones will be celebrated and remembered."

Fr Michael Cheah, representing the Roman Catholics and a member of the Building Committee, highlighted the significance of this joint project. He noted that this marks the first major collaboration between Catholics and Protestants in Penang in recent memory and expressed hope that it would pave the way for future joint projects.



The new columbarium which has 8,695 niches.



# Diamond and golden jubilee celebrations at Church of St Henry

By Bernard Anthony

BATU PAHAT: The Church of St Henry marked its 60th anniversary and feast day thanksgiving celebration on July 13. The event also commemorated the golden jubilee of the parish's Society of St Vincent De Paul (SSVP), Conference of St Henry.

Msgr Peter Ng, the main celebrant and preacher, was joined for the festivities by parish priest, Fr Patrick Tyoh. The church was filled with parishioners and faithful from near and far, reflecting the importance of the occasion.

Msgr Peter, who is also the parish priest of the Church of St Louis in Kluang, expressed his joy at returning to his hometown after 25 years (since his ordination at the church in 1999), to preside over the parish feast. In his homily, he drew inspiration from St Henry's life, urging the congregation to follow Jesus and act as missionaries, spreading the Good News.

Msgr Peter highlighted the rarity of saintly kings, referencing St Henry II of Germany and St Louis

of France. He praised St Henry for his dedication to his people, his defence of the Holy Roman Empire, and his substantial contributions to churches and monasteries.

Reflecting on the Gospel reading for the day, Msgr Peter said Jesus instructed the Apostles to travel light, taking nothing extra but trusting in God's providence. He contrasted this with modern tendencies to carry heavy burdens and seek comfort, suggesting that putting God last leads to a materialistic and inhumane world. He emphasised that Christians, like St Henry, are called to defend Gospel values and act as apostles through their baptism and confirmation, caring for others in need.

He highlighted Jesus' challenge to live simply, share God's love, proclaim the Good News, and remain dedicated to the mission. Msgr Peter urged the faithful to proclaim the Good News to their children and others, to let go of material things, focus on serving God, and rely on His grace and strength, rather than personal effort.

In conclusion, the cleric called



From left: SSVP President, Johnson Gomez, Msgr Peter Ng, Fr Patrick Tyoh and PPC chairman, John Chong.

on everyone to follow St Henry's example in spreading the Gospel.

After the Eucharistic celebration, Fr Patrick congratulated the SSVP on their 50th anniversary. Msgr Peter presented a framed Papal Blessing parchment to John Chong, the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) chairman, to mark the church's anniversary.

The celebration included the cutting of two cakes by the celebrants and the PPC and SSVP chairpersons. Msgr Peter thanked attendees

for their participation and invited them to the Church of St Louis, Kluang for the Jubilee Year 2025 celebrations (Dec 24, 2024 to Dec 14, 2025) and for his 25th sacerdotal anniversary on Dec 27.

Fr Patrick, in his speech, thanked Msgr Peter for presiding at this year's parish feast day and also thanked all who had come to support this small parish. He also acknowledged Fr Cyril Mannayagam from Masai who was the preacher from July 9 to 11.

Reflecting on the church's 60 years and its founding in 1926 by the missionary priests, he previewed the upcoming centenary celebrations in 2026. The theme for the year leading up to the 100th anniversary will be *In God: To Love, To Obey & To Serve*.

He noted that the parish had produced five priests and a religious sister, and he asked everyone to pray for more vocations to the priesthood and religious life, as well as for the future of the parish.

Fr Patrick also announced that, three parishes in the Diocese of Malacca Johore have been designated as Holy Door sites during the Jubilee of 2025 — the Church of St Louis in Kluang, Johor, the Church of St Theresa in Masai, Johor, and the Church of St Mary in Ayer Salak, Melaka.

The celebration concluded with a fireworks display, followed by a dinner fellowship at the adjacent Dewan St Henry. Guests also viewed an exhibition showcasing the parish's history and the activities of the SSVP Conference of St Henry, Batu Pahat.

PETALING JAYA: The Women Ministry, under the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD), hosted a one-day retreat for women at the PJ LaSalle Café on July 13. The event was attended by 21 women from various parishes across the Klang Valley.

The retreat, titled *God in the Wilderness*, focused on prayer and support for those grieving the loss of loved ones. The term "wilderness" struck a chord with many attendees, including myself, though its significance wasn't immediately clear. The registration form highlighted the retreat's emphasis on prayer, particularly for those who have lost loved ones. This was especially poignant for me, as I have been mourning my beloved mother, who passed away just over a year ago.

The retreat was animated by Sr Angelin Gnanapiragasam, FMDM, a dynamic and compassionate speaker. Despite her petite

## Healing retreat for grieving hearts



The retreatants with Sr Angelin and the AOHD team.

stature, Sr Angelin was a pillar of strength, guiding us through the session with remarkable empathy.

We all came with our own grief — varying in intensity and reasons — but we shared a common desire: to find the strength to let go, trust in God, and ultimately find peace. The retreat provided

a safe, sacred space to share our experiences and confront our sorrow. As I reflected on my loss, I understood why "wilderness" had such an impact on me. A slide showed a path through the wilderness, symbolising our search for a way out of the overwhelming

feelings of sadness, fear, and regret. I realised I needed to surrender to God to find that path.

The hands-on activity was profoundly meaningful. We took time to remember and revisit the moments spent with our departed loved ones. This intimate exercise

stirred deep emotions — tears, heartache — but also brought a sense of calm only found through our Lord.

A key takeaway from Sr Angelin was the importance of emptying ourselves completely so that God's love can fill us, healing our hearts and granting us peace. She also emphasised not just *talking* to God but *listening* to Him, as He speaks to us in the quiet moments of prayer.

The retreat was a deeply enriching experience for me and, I believe, for every participant. Despite our diverse forms of grief, we left with a shared sense of comfort, peace, and love through Sr Angelin's guidance.

Our heartfelt thanks to the AOHD team for their exceptional hospitality and for bringing Sr Angelin, whose insight, empathy, and support were truly comforting. God bless. — **By Jenny Sta Maria**

## Bible Awareness Sunday at Mantin parish



The children working together to illustrate the seven days of creation.



MANTIN: The Church of St Aloysius was filled with vibrant energy and enthusiastic chatter as catechists guided their pupils through a variety of activities for Bible Awareness Sunday.

Held on July 14, the event featured engaging songs, slide presentations, games, and colouring activities designed to deepen the students' understanding of the Bible.

Secondary class students participated in mnemonic exercises to enhance their Bible knowledge. They were given passages to look up and played games that involved

guessing books from the Old and New Testaments, encouraging them to think critically and collaborate.

The primary class enjoyed colouring activities themed around the creation story. Students worked together to illustrate the seven days of creation and made handprints to represent the creation of man, bringing their talents to life on paper.

These activities emphasised the importance of the Holy Bible as the centre of faith and its integration into the everyday lives of the children. — **By Selva Manogary**



# Guatemala Church celebrates 500 years of evangelisation

GUATEMALA CITY: The Catholic bishops of Guatemala marked the 500th anniversary of evangelisation in the country with gratitude for the Church's growth and the spreading of the Gospel. However, they also acknowledged the ongoing journey toward peace, justice, and reconciliation.

"Over 500 years, the Church, in all its communities, has grown and expanded, the good news of Jesus has been welcomed by numerous peoples and has made us grow in dignity, aware of that divine life that He transmits to us, and that does not end with death," said the bishops in their message for the National Eucharistic Congress, celebrating 500 years of the country's evangelisation.

Held in Quetzaltenango, 206 kilometres northwest of Guatemala City, where the first evangelisation centre was founded, the meeting's theme was from the Gospel of John: *I am the bread of life*.

"The Eucharistic presence of Jesus Christ and His Gospel has illuminated our lives in the midst of the development of the history of the Church in Guatemala, which has known moments of growth and



Church in San Andrés Xecul, Guatemala (LCI Photo/Christopher William Adach/CC BY-SA 2.0)

splendour, as well as moments of oppression and persecution," said the bishops in their message signed by Bishop Rodolfo Valenzuela Núñez of Verapaz, President of the Episcopal Conference of Guatemala, and Bishop Antonio Calderón Cruz of Jutiapa, Secretary General of the conference. "This occasion gives us the opportunity to be grateful for the arrival of the announcement of Christ dead and risen, the beginning of evangelization in our territory that has given meaning to the lives

of thousands of believers."

However, the bishops also noted, "There is still a long way to go to achieve the peace, justice, and reconciliation to which the Gospel of Jesus invites us... to continue working so that the life that the Lord gives us grows and flourishes among us."

According to a Human Rights Watch report for 2021, Guatemala faces formidable challenges, including weak governance, endemic corruption, pervasive poverty, food

insecurity, severe violence, and a lack of respect for human rights.

Before Spanish colonisation in the 1500s, the Guatemalan people practised the traditional Mayan religion. Spanish colonisation introduced Roman Catholicism and became the country's official religion. Despite conversion, many Guatemalans blended Catholicism with traditional Mayan practices.

The bishops acknowledged the Spanish conquest's high cost in death and suffering, seeing the anniversary as "an opportunity to continue advancing in the rehabilitation of the wounds and disagreements that occurred and still occur today. From the first evangelisers to the present, we must honestly recognise that the Church is at the same time holy and sinful and that Christ continues to suffer in the pain of our people."

They also honoured the martyrs who shed their blood, recalling St Pedro de San José Betancur, the first saint of Guatemala and Central America, canonised by St Pope John Paul II in 2002.

A diocese was established in Guatemala in 1534 and raised to an archdiocese in 1743. The last bishop

and first archbishop, Peruvian Pedro Pardo de Figueroa, patronised the arts and built the Santo Cristo de Esquipulas church, a significant pilgrimage site for Central America and southern Mexico. Guatemala gained independence from Spain in 1821 and declared itself an independent republic in 1839.

The 1853 concordat with the Holy See was repudiated during the 1870 liberal revolution, leading to the suppression of religious orders and secularisation. The Church regained independence in 1951, and diplomatic relations with the Holy See were eventually restored.

Guatemala's religious landscape has dramatically shifted over the past few decades. In 2000, 60 per cent of the population was Catholic and 40 per cent Protestant. Today, only 46 per cent of Guatemala's 17.1 million people identify as Catholic. Protestantism has slightly increased to 42 per cent, making Guatemala the most Protestant country in Latin America. Additionally, two per cent practise other religions, and 11 per cent of the population now claims no religious affiliation. — LCI (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

## US bishops award RM48.3 million in grants from special collection money

WASHINGTON, D.C.: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on National Collections announced the distribution of \$10.5 million (RM48.3 million) in grants, funded by contributions from Mass-goers during special collections.

The bishops, serving on subcommittees overseeing national collections, allocated 453 grants supporting pastoral care, evangelisation efforts, and social ministry, both in the United States and globally.

These grants were supported by five national special collections: The Bishops' Emergency Disaster Fund, The Catholic Home Missions Appeal, The Solidarity Fund for the

Church in Africa, The Collection for the Church in Latin America, and The Collection for the Church in Central and Eastern Europe.

"These collections are a powerful way of following Jesus' commands to seek the lost sheep and to care for 'the least of these,'" said Bishop James S. Wall of Gallup, New Mexico, chairman of the USCCB Committee on National Collections. "They enable Catholics across the United States to show solidarity and provide tangible love and assistance to our neighbours in need, both nationally and internationally."

The Bishops' Emergency Disaster Fund supports disaster relief efforts domestically and internationally

through Catholic Relief Services and Catholic Charities USA, providing aid to those affected by disasters like tornadoes and hurricanes and helping repair damaged Church properties.

The Catholic Home Missions Appeal supports domestic and international dioceses and eparchies lacking funds for ministry without external assistance. This included a special \$146,000 (RM671,370) grant for dioceses and Eastern Catholic eparchies to host stops for the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage in the United States.

The Solidarity Fund for the Church in Africa allocated \$1.4 million (RM6.4 million) to bishops'



conferences for pastoral activities and \$21,100 (RM96,870) to the Daughters of Mary Immaculate for a re-evangelisation campaign.

The Collection for the Church in Latin America funded 163 grants, primarily supporting pastoral projects and evangelisation. It also provided disaster relief to two Latin American dioceses and supported a Catholic radio station in the Dominican Republic.

In Eastern and Central Europe, grants assisted children and teen-

agers affected by the ongoing war in Ukraine, including funding for a Catholic day camp and weeklong summer camp in the Diocese of Lutsk, Western Ukraine.

"The value of all these grants is far more than financial," Bishop Wall emphasised. "Each represents the love that followers of Jesus have for one another — especially for those who are poor or marginalised. Lives and hearts are transformed as the Holy Spirit works through the ministry these grants support." — CNA

## Syro-Malabar Church resolves liturgical feud with compromise plan



Mass at the Church of St Dominic at Aluva in the Ernakulam Archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar Church on July 14, 2024. (CNA photo/Anto Akkara)

KOCHI, India: The Syro-Malabar Church has resolved its long-standing liturgical feud in the Ernakulam Archdiocese. The conflict, centred around the implementation of the synodal Mass, nearly resulted in excommunications before a compromise was reached on July 3, the feast of St Thomas the Apostle.

The feud began in Aug 2021 when the Syro-Malabar Synod mandated the synodal Mass, requiring priests to face the altar rather than the congregation. Most of the archdiocese's 450 priests opposed this change, leading to widespread protests and defiance.

Pope Francis intervened in December 2023, setting a deadline for the synodal Mass' implementation. Despite compliance, resistance persisted, culminating in threats of excommunication in a pastoral letter issued on June 14 by Major Archbishop Raphael Thattil.

With tensions escalating, Archbishop Thattil and Bishop Bosco Puthur brokered a compromise: each parish would celebrate at least one synodal Mass while retaining the existing liturgy. The compromise has seen increasing compliance, with over 50 per cent of parishes participating

by July 3 and 75 per cent by July 7.

Despite some parishes scheduling the synodal Mass at less convenient times, the overall reception has been positive, with hopes that the conflict is nearing its end. However, some parishes remain non-compliant, and legal battles continue over the synodal Mass' implementation.

The feud has significantly impacted the archdiocese, which includes over 600,000 Catholics and 330 parishes, leaving its leadership in disarray and delaying priestly ordinations. The recent compromise offers hope for unity and a new beginning for the Syro-Malabar Church. — CNA



# Workers (again, and again) beg the Vatican to face its personnel problem

ROME: Some years back, a couple of enterprising figures on the Roman scene, devoted Catholics with backgrounds in business, had the bright idea of trying to help the Vatican build a genuine professional development system for its workforce of roughly 5,000, divided between the Roman Curia and the Vatican City State.

Fuelling the effort was the experience of getting to know lots of people who work in the Vatican, in different departments, at different levels, and from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Despite that variety, the pair realised most of these folks had something in common.

To put it bluntly, they're often not a terribly happy bunch.

Many Vatican employees, when they're off the record and being honest, will tell you that their work environment is a largely joyless place, where initiative is discouraged, collaboration unwelcome, and superior performance unrecognised. As a result, most just hunker down and try to get through the day, knowing all too well that whether they go the extra mile or simply phone it in, the rewards will be more or less the same.

That these are not merely anecdotal impressions is confirmed by a 2022 survey of employees conducted by the *Associazione Dipendenti Laici Vaticani*, or "Association of Lay Vatican Employees," the closest thing the Vatican has to a union. Sixty-five per cent of the 250 respondents had worked in the Vatican for at least ten years.

Despite the fact that more than two-thirds of workers said they actually like their jobs, the generally depressing results otherwise were summarised as follows:

- A majority of employees reported a worsening work environment in recent years.
- 64 per cent said they were not adequately compensated, creating feelings of "stress, injustice and dissatisfaction."
- Most said they received their last promotion in pay level at least ten years ago, and some had never received one.
- Most said they did not work in a "constructive atmosphere" and that their opinions and contributions didn't matter to their superiors.
- Employees reported few opportunities for professional growth and formation.
- Employees complained of favouritism and disparities in treatment, along with "mobbing, abuses of power, and a repressive atmosphere."
- They also reported little regard for personal and family needs.
- Employees said there are no internal mechanisms for reporting abuses without facing potential retribution.

Trying to break through all that, our two ecclesiastical entrepreneurs developed a cutting-edge professional development programme and offered it, for free, to Vatican departments. By the way, they weren't inspired solely by the 10 Minute Manager ... they were also convinced that helping people flourish and reach their full potential is, well, the Catholic thing to do.

The initiative hosted training sessions at a location outside of Rome for mid-level employees, which began with an evening reception. Some personnel had worked in the



The Pope sits with Vatican workers in the staff canteen. (Vatican Media/OSSERVATORE ROMANO)

Vatican for 30 years and said this was the first time, ever, that anyone had bothered to do something nice for them.

The sadly predictable result? Workers gave the project rave reviews, but the system was unmoved and allowed it to die on the vine.

That was five years ago, but if you need proof that not much has changed, consider the latest July 8 appeal from the association, triggered by a visit of Pope Francis to Trieste the day before for the annual Social Week of the Italian Catholic Church, in which he praised democracy and dialogue.

The association claimed those ideals are honoured more in the breach than the observance inside the Vatican itself, asserting that its efforts to raise concerns "have not been received, and even ignored ... for a real dialogue, it takes at least two parties willing to talk."

"We note that some [in leadership] consider employee representation and employees voices as a disturbance," the statement said, while vowing to press on even if their efforts "are not seen positively by this or that superior."

"What we're trying to do is to start processes so that all workers feel valued, and that we really start from the bottom up in considering various needs," the group said, asking, among other things that the Labour Office of the Holy See, which theoretically exists to respond to worker concerns, become "more active and capable."

The statement conceded that such efforts aren't easy.

"We risk being overcome by discouragement, by the feeling that it pays more to mind 'your own business,'" it said. "Instead, we continue on our path, convinced that a stimulated employee is more motivated."

"We do not give up when we ask that regulations, periodically revised, govern working relationships in the Vatican," the group said. "We don't give up when we ask for provisions for families to be modified, which today essentially affect single-income earners almost exclusively."

"We don't give up when we ask for greater protection for families who have a disabled person in their household. Let's not give up when we ask that salaries and pensions be protected from erosion [caused by increases] in the cost of living."

"We don't give up when we ask that a meritocracy, based on curricula and know-how, prevail. We therefore continue to do our job, undaunted, which is to mediate, to create a bridge between employees and superiors so they are always listened to and valued," the

statement said.

To be clear, none of this is a hobbyhorse simply of this one association. Similar laments, for instance, are behind a recent appeal filed by 49 employees of the Vatican Museums regarding allegedly unfair and poor working conditions, which could trigger an unprecedented labour lawsuit before a Vatican court.

Instead of responding in any meaningful way to these concerns, the Vatican has spent much of the past few days pushing the story of two women being hired, for the first time in 500 years, to join the *sampietrini*, meaning the maintenance and restoration staff of St Peter's Basilica. While that's a nice human interest feature, it hardly counts as the sort of structural reform many personnel are seeking.

## Why does all this matter?

Everyone knows that the Vatican is under tremendous financial pressure, especially due to unfunded pension obligations, and that in the future it's going to have to make do with a reduced workforce. Employees who remain will have to be highly motivated, capable of multitasking, creativity and collaboration across departmental lines.

At the moment, it's not just that those aptitudes aren't rewarded; in reality, veteran employees say, they're often actively discouraged.

In order to cope with the changing landscape, the Vatican will have to overhaul its personnel policies root and branch, a challenge for which it currently seems woefully underprepared. Yet the essentials are there, expressed in Catholic social teaching and the principles of dialogue and synodality sketched by Pope Francis, if only the system can summon the imagination to translate all that into practice.

An old joke about the statue of St Peter outside the basilica that bears his name notes that in one hand, he's holding a scroll with a finger pointing down to the ground, while in his other hand he's holding the keys of office and pointing outward. The unspoken message, wags over the centuries have claimed, is that Peter is saying, "This is where laws are made, but out there is where they're enforced."

That double standard, alas, no longer seems sustainable.

If the upcoming Synod of Bishops wants something truly meaningful to talk about, maybe it can bracket off for a moment the headline-grabbing matters of women's ordination and LGBTQ+ outreach, and focus on how the Vatican's own workforce can benefit from the same empowerment and inclusion the synod seems to be offering everybody else. —

By John L. Allen Jr, *Crux*

## Archbishop Gänswein ready for 'the Front'

Archbishop Georg Gänswein (*pic*), once the closest aide to Pope Benedict XVI, embarks on a new journey as the apostolic nuncio to Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. In a candid interview with *EWTN News* at the "Benedict XVI Forum"



in Bavaria, he expressed his readiness and optimism for this unexpected appointment.

The archbishop, who turns 68 on July 30, sees this role as a fresh opportunity to serve the Church in a region he had never anticipated working in. Despite lacking direct experience in diplomatic service, Gänswein draws confidence from his extensive interactions with the diplomatic community during his tenure as private secretary and prefect of the Papal Household.

"The appointment is a new opportunity," Gänswein shared with *EWTN*, radiating a sense of mission. "I gladly accept it, even if the dear God now wants me to be there, which I hadn't thought of at all."

The Baltic nations, with their rich Catholic heritage and current geopolitical significance, present both opportunities and challenges. Lithuania, in particular, stands out for its strong Catholic identity amidst a landscape marked by the pressures of Russia's ongoing aggression in Ukraine. Gänswein acknowledges the strategic importance of his new post, though he admits that he has yet to define his specific priorities.

"The Baltic countries are very important geopolitically, also for Europe," he noted. "I don't have any concrete ideas yet where my priorities will be. That will emerge, and I'm looking forward to it."

Emphasising a spiritual approach to his new duties, the archbishop spoke of immersing his mission in prayer and educating himself about the region. "I take it all into prayer and I'm already trying to read a little about the countries, to inquire. Everything else, I think, will become apparent."

Gänswein's appointment comes at a critical juncture, with NATO reinforcing its presence in the Baltics in response to Russia's threats. Despite his lack of direct experience with the current geopolitical tensions, the archbishop approaches his new role with faith and resolve. "If you say that's where the front is, and our loving God wants me there, then I'll gladly go there. If it's the front, it's the front. In any case, it's a place where Our Lord will also be active," he declared.

This new chapter follows a period of uncertainty for Gänswein, who found himself without an assignment after Pope Benedict XVI's passing. His recent appointment marks a return to active service, a call he embraces with gratitude and a deep sense of duty. Reflecting on his years with Benedict XVI, Gänswein highlighted the importance of preserving and promoting the late pope's legacy.

"It is a matter of conscience to pass on the late pope's legacy," he stated. "Because that is a great gift for Catholics, the Church, and people. And to cultivate this gift is one of my great inner tasks, which I am happy to continue to do — and I hope — for a long time to come."

Archbishop Gänswein's journey to the Baltics symbolises a blend of faith, duty, and a commitment to fostering the Church's mission in a region poised at the crossroads of history and spirituality. As he steps into this new role, the archbishop's words and spirit resonate with a profound trust in divine providence and a readiness to serve where he is needed most. —

*Register*



# Thai youth bring synodality to life with three-day social 'hackathon'

The Catholic Education Council of Thailand (CECT) and LiCAS gathered students from 12 schools across Thailand in a groundbreaking three-day Youth Social Hackathon at Mater Dei School in Bangkok.

The event code named *Mission Possible* was held from July 12 to 14, 2024, and aimed to engage young minds in addressing pressing societal challenges through the lens of the Synod on Synodality.

Peter Monthienvichienchai, Executive Director of LiCAS, said the goal of the event is to raise "awareness of and engagement with the Synod among youths."

"Most importantly, it is an opportunity for all of us to practise synodality, especially the adults, to show that we are really listening to these youths," he said.

Participants, aged 13 and older, were invited to tackle one of nine major issues identified during the continental stage of the Synod in Asia.

They worked to develop actionable solutions to these problems and presented their projects by making a four-minute pitch, in hopes of securing a portion of a funding pool worth more than 10,000 Euros.

Sr Nina Krapic from the Vatican's Dicastery for Communication, said she was thrilled to see the young people not only discuss but also implement synodality.

"I hope that from the hackathon, you understand the importance of truly listening," said Sr Nina in her address to the children on the final pitching day.

"And that listening may not be just part of the process, but also part of the solution too. You all have a special mission, a service in this world, and your mission is possible," she added.

The hackathon began with a series of workshops where mentors from various sectors, including a leadership coach and an Indigenous community leader, shared their knowledge and experiences.



Students from across Thailand pose for a group photo during the Youth Social Hackathon at Mater Dei School in Bangkok from July 12-14, 2024. The event allowed students to brainstorm solutions to societal challenges through the principles of synodality. (LiCAS News Photo/MISSION POSSIBLE)

Dr Santi Lapbenjakul, a mentor at the event, noted the potential of the participants. "I am so impressed with the questions from the children... I told them, come to me again in five to six years when you are a minister, we will talk again for sure."

The first day focused on inspiring the students and equipping them with the necessary tools to turn their ideas into reality.

Fr Paul Ekarat Homprathum, CECT Secretary General, guided the participants, contrasting ethical hacking with harmful hacking.

He said people know about hackers who steal from them, "the black hat hackers, but there are also white hat hackers who help to make things better."

"Today we are wearing the white hat for a better society by practising synodality and listening to those in need," he said.

The intense "hacking" phase took place on the second day, with students dedicat-

ing eight hours to refine their solutions, aided by coaches who helped them prepare their pitches.

The hackathon saw students dive into their projects. Teams worked with pitching coaches on hand to refine their pitches.

The Saint Emilie School team, Ubon Rachathani, whose team consisted of children from as young as 13 years old, during their pitch on the final day of the hackathon addressed teenage pregnancies.

"We see the problems around us, around our friends and the problem we want to tackle is teenage pregnancies," the team said.

Songkhla, the team from Saengthong Vittahaya School proposed turning corn husks into air filters to help those who cannot afford expensive air filters and hospital bills amid worsening air pollution.

"Instead of being the cause of air pollution, the corn husks can become the solution," the team said.

The event concluded with the final pitching session, where four pitches received funding to realise their projects.

The organisers emphasised that this funding represents both a burden and a responsibility that has now been entrusted to the recipients, acknowledging that their voices have been heard.

Organisers said the hackathon not only provided a platform for students to demonstrate their potential to contribute meaningfully to societal issues but also apply synodality in practical ways.

Among the distinguished guests on the final day were Most Rev Anthony Weradet Chaiseri of the Archdiocese of Tharab-Nongsaeng, Sr Pensri Horae, Provincial Prioress of the Ursulines Provincialate of Thailand, and Sumitra Phongsothorn, the former principal of Mater Dei School.

The projects will be showcased on the Mission Possible website. — **By Nattha Nuchsuwan, LiCAS News**

## Synod will seek 'rightful place' for women in the Church

One of Asia's most senior Catholic leaders, and a key ally of Pope Francis, has insisted that there will be a keen focus on women at the upcoming Synod of Bishops on synodality despite the fact that ordination to the diaconate has been taken off the table in the assembly's working document.

"We will be discussing a lot about women in this synod," said Cardinal Oswald Gracias of Mumbai, India (pic).

"It is very clear that we have to give the rightful place to women," the 79-year old Gracias said. "There is no doubt about that."

Gracias, who has led the Church in Mumbai (formerly Bombay) since 2006, also served as the elected president of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences from 2013 to 2019. Gracias is also one of just two prelates, along with Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston, who have been part of Pope Francis' Council of Cardinal Advisors from the beginning in 2013.

When the Vatican released the working



document for the upcoming October 2-27 synod recently, technically known as the *Instrumentum Laboris*, there was concern in some quarters that it avoids any mention of the possibility of ordaining women as deacons.

That omission comes after Pope Francis used an interview with the American network CBS in May to say that such a move is not in the cards. Synod organisers, however, told a July 9 Vatican news conference that the issue will be taken up by the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith as part of a broader slate of study groups devoted to various topics.

In any event, Gracias said, the fact that deacons will not be on the docket for the synod doesn't mean the women's issue will be ignored.

"We will discuss ways on how women can have a greater role in the Church, particularly in decision making," said Gracias.

The Indian prelate said that part of the challenge with the synodal process, which has been underway since 2021, is finding solutions which do justice to the global complexity of the Catholic Church.

"We need to keep in mind that with a document like this, the Church is universal," he said. "Our Indian situation, the African

situation and the European situation are diverse."

"We have got to keep the sensitivities of all in mind and also the pastoral needs of all in mind," said Gracias, who will turn 80 on Christmas eve.

In a similar spirit, Gracias insisted that pastoral outreach to the LGBTQ+ community will not be ignored, despite the fact that the working document appears to downplay the issue, omitting any references to "homosexual," "orientation," or "gay."

"We have spoken of an inclusive Church, which means everybody," Gracias said. "The Pope has been particularly caring about those with disabilities, the marginalised and even people with different sexual orientation."

Nonetheless, Gracias also warned against expectations of doctrinal changes.

"We don't reject them as persons," he said of the LGBTQ+ community. "The danger is that if we make any statement, it might be interpreted by some, as the Church is changing in her moral stance just to be again accepted."

"Not true," the Indian prelate said. "The Church is very consistent. The Gospel is very clear of what our Lord wants, the Pope is a man of deep prayer and faith and is

leading the Church in the direction of where the Lord and the Holy Spirit want."

"The document which has been released is not a teaching [text], but a provocation to think," Gracias said. "There will be a discussion for four weeks on these different topics in September/October. We will present the conclusions of everybody to the Holy Father – the bishops, the laity, religious, parish priests, etc."

"Then the Holy Father, with his advisors and consultants, will give his own conclusions," he said.

Overall, Gracias insisted the synodal process is unfolding according to plan, and said it enjoys a logical connection with the Jubilee Year slated for 2025.

"The synod is going very well," he said. "I have just returned from Rome about a week back. I had a meeting with the synod council [and] the Pope and discussed the programme with them," he said.

"I think we will give hope and will tie up the synod with the Jubilee year. The Jubilee year is meant to give hope to people, to give thanks to God and to plan for the future. The Synod will also give hope to the people and will be planning for the future and thanking God for all the good," Gracias said. — **By Nirmala Carvalho, Crux**





**DANCING WITH  
DEMENTIA**  
Dr Cecilia Chan

# Why *Dancing* with *Dementia*

I am pretty sure many of you reading this column will be wondering about the name of this column — *Dancing with Dementia*.

The word dementia evokes powerful emotions. Hit Google, and we are immediately flooded with the persistent stories we tell, and are told, about this condition. The term “silent tsunami” of dementia has been a dominant watery image in many news stories. Many stories project the “slow-moving tsunami” (an oxymoron: tsunamis are not slow-moving) and the “wave” of dementia. In both cases, it indicates the sense of an unstoppable force of nature, coupled with quiet stealth. The stories we read about dementia in newspapers, books, and magazines, and that we hear about in films and on television and radio, ring the alarm, pointing to the catastrophe that may strike us.

As I reflect on my journey with dementia, both personally and professionally, I am reminded how stigma pervades casual conversation and language — and just how damaging this stigma can be. For as long as I can remember, I have heard people use debilitating words to describe those living with dementia. These casual mentions of “demented oldies” are not just momentarily offensive; they have wide-reaching consequences that deeply impact the lived experience of people with dementia, as well as their family members.

Navigating a world riddled with labels, judgment, and shaming, can be extremely exhausting, painful, and disheartening, for anyone. For people with dementia and their

care partners, this compounds an already challenging circumstance: acknowledging, getting a diagnosis, and seeking treatment.

Shame is the word that surfaces again and again when it comes to dementia. Most of my friends living with dementia lock themselves in the house because of shame. A friend of mine, a retired matron, was hiding the fact that her husband has dementia. She refused to inform anyone about it because it was a secret, a shameful secret. She is not alone. Nearly everyone that contacted me has shared some elements of shame. It comes in many guises, and many forms. So, we hide it, so that it will not be seen by strangers as well as friends, because we are trying to protect ourselves from the judging world. It is so sad that we live in a society with stereotypes; where judging has become a norm, which can be detrimental to the community.

Yes, dementia can be a frightening experience, but it can also be much more. Having been in the world of dementia for 20 years, I certainly have seen people with dementia, and people who love them, both nearly drowning in fear, grief, anxiety, and frustrations. And yet, I’ve also seen much more. I’ve seen both people with dementia, as well as those who care for them, transform through their fears and come to feel powerful pride and overwhelming joy, to show compassion selflessness, and kindness. I have seen how lives were transformed when one embraced life’s impermanence and embarked on a new journey with new loved ones. Some told me about their experiences of unconditional love.



Getting old isn’t easy for a lot of us, let alone living with dementia. Neither is living, neither is dying. Often, we struggle against the inevitable and we all suffer because of the struggle. Perhaps we could find another way to look at the whole process of being born, growing old, changing (including dementia), and dying, some kind of perspective that might allow us to deal with what we perceive as big obstacles, without having to be dragged through the painful drama.

The late Fr Henri Nouwen reminded us:

“As long as we continue to live as if we are what we do, what we have, and what other people think about us, we will remain filled with judgments, opinions, evaluations, and condemnations. We will remain addicted to putting people and things in their “right”

place.”

I will not deny that dementia presents us with challenges and we struggle to handle them. Ever watched ballroom dancing? I have always been captivated by the elegance, grace, and enchantment of ballroom dancing. I am amazed by its ebb and flow. The give and take. The pause and the bursts of energy. The eloquent harmony. When we struggle there is tension, we push and pull. When we dance there is a harmonious flow, blending, and cooperation. So, I have decided to learn to dance with Dementia.

So, shall we dance?

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

## Bridging generations

“Do not cast me off in my old age.” This heartfelt plea from Psalms 71:9 serves as the theme for the Fourth World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly (WDGE), celebrated this year on July 28. Pope Francis chose this theme to highlight the loneliness that afflicts many elderly individuals who are, too often, neglected and marginalised by our throw-away culture.

As of 2020, there were an estimated 727 million people aged 65 and older, worldwide. By 2050, this number is projected to double to 1.5 billion, making up 16 per cent of the global population. An ageing society will place a burden on the socio-economic system by increasing healthcare and pension costs while reducing the labour force. This strain on public resources can slow economic growth and increase financial insecurity for both older individuals and the working population that supports them.

According to the World Health Organisation,

‘ageism’ refers to stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel), and discrimination (how we act) towards others or oneself, based on age. Ageism is prevalent in various sectors of our society, from employment to health care. In the workplace, older employees may be overlooked for promotions or preferentially retrenched.

In health care, ageism can manifest as inadequate medical care, with older patients sometimes receiving less attention or being treated based on stereotypes, such as, “You are old now; we can’t do much for you.” Discrimination against older people is widespread, yet most people are unaware of it.

The media often portray older people in a stereotypical manner, emphasising their frailty by showing them walking with a stick or coughing. We should showcase more positive representations of older individuals actively engaging in social activities.

In Malaysia, while there is traditional respect for elders, modern societal trends sometimes lean towards valuing youth over experience, which can contribute to ageist attitudes. A common form of ageism is evident in homes when an elderly person, such as a grandmother, asks a grandchild or young person how to use Facebook or Zoom. Sadly, these requests are often denied because the young ones think the elders are “slow” or “wasting time”.

Respecting older persons in our society is crucial for maintaining a harmonious and compassionate community. Older people possess wisdom that can provide valuable insights and guidance to younger genera-

tions (cf. Job 12:12, Prov. 16:31). Recognising their contributions and showing them respect is not only our moral obligation but also brings blessings to our lives (cf. Lev. 19:32).

St Paul admonishes young Timothy (and us as well): “Do not rebuke an older man but exhort him as you would a father; treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity” (1 Tim. 5:1-2). We need to respect our elders, as well as those younger than us.

One of the social teachings of the Church is intergenerational justice. By fostering intergenerational fellowship (*koinonia*), we not only enhance the lives of older persons but also enrich our communities with their rich and diverse experiences.

One time-tested way to respect older people is by attentive or active listening. Their stories and experiences offer lessons that can help us on our life journeys. By engaging in meaningful conversations with them, we show that we value their wisdom and experiences.

Helping them with daily activities is another important aspect of respect. Whether it’s assisting with groceries, offering a ride, or simply being there for companionship, these small acts of kindness go a long way. However, in offering our kindness, we should always be sensitive to their dignity, independence, and self-worth so that they do not feel like lesser persons.

We could promote activities that



encourage young and older people to collaborate and share experiences, breaking down stereotypes and upholding mutual respect. Youth rallies and other ‘youthful’ programmes could be great opportunities to invite older parishioners to attend.

Overcoming ageism requires a multidimensional approach. By addressing ageism through education, awareness, and intergenerational fellowship, we can create a society that respects, honours, and cares for individuals of all ages, leveraging the diverse strengths each generation offers.

We should launch public awareness campaigns to educate people about the value of older adults in our community and the negative impacts of ageism. Importantly, we should also highlight positive stories and contributions of older persons.

Let us always remember: “Do not cast me off in my old age.” — By Prof Christopher Ng





# The Church has long used sports to evangelise

As the sporting world and fans await the 2024 Paris Olympics (July 26 – Aug 11) and the Paralympic Games (Aug 28 – Sept 8), eight Catholic dioceses in Greater Paris have already ignited their own Olympic flame by organising the *Holy Games*. The project is a collaboration between the Archdiocese of Paris and the French Bishops Conference.

The Holy Games consists of three programmes, each lasting a week — two during the Olympics and the third during the Paralympics. The Holy Games will bring missionaries, Catholics and other spectators together to watch the Olympics and Paralympics, celebrate Mass and engage in fellowship through various cultural activities.

French church leaders view this initiative as an opportunity to engage young Catholics and others in faith-based activities. According to *La Croix International*, a French Catholic newspaper, the Catholic Church in France sees the Olympics as an opportunity to harness the power of sports to evangelise.

Using sports as an evangelical tool, however, is not a new phenomenon for the global Catholic Church. In fact, several Catholic popes have contributed to the development of Catholicism and sport.

## Early contributions

The rich history between the Catholic Church and sports has been the research focus for several religious studies scholars. Dries Vansacker stated that the Catholic Church has always demonstrated a concern for sporting activity.

An early yet indirect contribution came from Pope Leo XIII. In a letter to clergy in 1891, he advocated for labour rights, indicating that labourers “ought to have leisure and rest.” In response to that call, Catholic sports organisations began to form in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Pope Pius X made a significant contribution by engaging with several sports organisations. In 1905, he welcomed athletes to the Holy See for the first international gymnastics competition held at the Vatican. In a speech to the participants, Pius X said, “The

material exercises of the body will admirably influence the exercises of the spirit.”

Pope Pius XII also emphasised the spiritual benefits of sports. He saw sport as an opportunity to teach Christian values and aid in the development of spiritual life, in particular for youth. In a message to Italian sports people in 1945, Pius XII said, “Sports is a school of loyalty, courage, endurance, resolve, universal brotherhood, all the natural virtues.”

## Vehicle for body and soul development

Known as the “athlete pope,” Pope John Paul II solidified the Catholic Church’s interest in sport as he viewed sports as a vehicle for the development of body and soul. He created the Office of Church and Sport within the Pontifical Council of the Laity. The goal of this office was to be a reference point between the Church and international sports organisations to foster a sports culture and to promote the study of certain issues and sports.

John Paul II also used sports as an important tool to evangelise. He held two international sport gather-



*Pope Francis gestures as he participates alongside thousands of young soccer athletes in a project to promote the values of sport and soccer May 24, 2019, at the Vatican. (CNS/RNS/Remo Casilli)*

ings in which he spoke to numerous athletes, sports associations and other organisational leaders about the power of sport. He addressed athletes in 1991 and said that sports “fosters the orderly and harmonious development of the body at the service of the spirit.”

## Sports for peace

Currently, Pope Francis sees sports as a means toward peace-building. In a video address prior to the opening of the 2014 World Cup, Francis said that “sports is a school of peace; it teaches us to build peace.”

In 2016, Francis founded the Sports at the Service of Humanity movement, which seeks to use sports as a catalyst for peace and social change. The main effort of

the organisation is to bring leaders across sports, business, academia, media and other religious backgrounds together for an annual conference. The 2024 conference, held at Creighton University in June, focused on the theme of care for the athlete.

As the French capital prepares to play host to the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games, the secular world will be focused on the sporting competitions, athletic feats and medals tracking. The French Catholic Church, meanwhile, will maintain its focus on its evangelical efforts as over 70 parishes near Olympic venues welcome visitors and offer celebrations in multiple languages. — **By A. Jaime Morales JR, NCR**

## Cheering on the bravest: the 2024 Refugee Paralympic Team

The International Paralympic Committee has announced the names of the eight athletes and one guide runner who will participate in the Paris Paralympics from August 28 to September 8, as part of the Refugee Team. Nyasha Mharakurwa, who represented Zimbabwe in wheelchair tennis at the 2012 London Paralympic Games, will lead the team as head of mission.

The Refugee Paralympic Team represents more than 100 million forcibly displaced people and all people with disabilities. The athletes originally hail from Afghanistan, Syria, Iran, Colombia and Cameroon and were given asylum in Germany, Austria, France, Great Britain, Greece and Italy. They will compete in six paralympic sports: athletics, weight-lifting, table tennis, taekwondo, triathlon and fencing.

The following are the athletes who will be competing in the Paris Paralympics:

- Salman Abbariki, originally from Iran, currently living in Germany. He participated in the 2012 London Games in shot put and the 2010 Asian Paralympic Games, where he won a gold medal and broke the Asian record.
- Ibrahim Al Hussein, originally from Syria, currently living in Greece, who will be participating in his third successive Paralympics as a member of the Refugee Team. After competing in para swimming, this year he will compete in para triathlon.
- Guillaume Junior Atangana,



originally from Cameroon, currently living in the United Kingdom, will compete as a sprinter in the 100 meter and 400 meter T11 events. He participated in the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games where he came fourth in the 400m T11.

● Hadi Darvish, originally from Iran, currently living in Germany, will compete in para power lifting.

● Amelio Castro Grueso, originally from Cameroon, currently living in Italy, will compete in wheelchair fencing.

● Hadi Hassanzada, originally from Afghanistan, currently living in Austria, will compete in para taekwondo.

● Zakia Khudadadi, originally from Afghanistan, and currently living in France, will compete in para taekwondo.

● Sayed Amir Hossein Hosseini Pour, originally from Iran, currently living in Germany, will compete in table tennis.

Speaking about the Paris Paralympic Refugee Team, Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, highlighted the Team’s motivation. “For a third consecutive Paralympics, a team of determined, inspirational refugee athletes will show the world just what they can achieve if given the chance. Refugees thrive when given the opportunity to use, develop and showcase their skills and talents, in

sport and in many other walks of life”.

In his preface to the book, titled, *Games of Peace. The Soul of the Olympics and the Paralympics*, Pope Francis highlighted the importance of inclusivity in sports. “I think of athletes with disabilities. I am always amazed watching their performances and listening to their words. The goal of the Paralympic Movement is, not only to celebrate a great event, but to demonstrate what people — despite being severely wounded in life — can achieve when given the opportunity. If it applies to sports, it must apply even more to life”.

The Paralympic Games have their origins in the 1948 London Olympic

Games when Dr Ludwig Guttman organised the first competition for wheelchair athletes at Stoke Mandeville Stadium in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire. Dr Guttman had fled Nazi Germany with his family and had settled in the UK. In 1943, anticipating an influx of paralysed soldiers, the British government asked Dr Guttman to be Director of a new national spinal injury centre at the Emergency Medical Services Hospital in Stoke Mandeville. At the time, treatment for paraplegics consisted largely in palliative care, mostly for complications that were not life threatening such as pressure sores and infections, and could have been avoided through regular movement. Dr Guttman completely transformed the way patients were treated, introducing rehabilitation, physiotherapy, and sports as integral methods of therapy both for physical strength and for self-respect.

On July 29, the day of the opening of the 1948 Olympic Games, 16 injured servicemen and women competed in an archery contest, in what Dr Guttman called the Stoke Mandeville Games, a milestone that gave rise to the Paralympic Movement.

In 1952, Dutch ex-servicemen and women joined the Movement. Both the national and international Stoke Mandeville Games continued to be played at Stokes Mandeville Stadium until 1960, when they were played in Rome at the same time as the Olympic Games, and became the first Paralympic Games. — **L’Osservatore Romano**





**SUNDAY  
OBSERVER**

Anil Netto

# Why we cannot leave the world to the politicians to manage

As the political landscape in Europe undergoes a seismic shift, recent elections have laid bare a growing discontent.

In many nations, centrist or mainstream political parties have failed to deliver on the “people’s agenda”: affordable and quality health care, adequately funded schools and universities, as well as genuinely affordable housing, energy and nutritious food. Instead, they seem to have plenty of money for military spending and adventures abroad.

These parties also pay lip service to the major environmental challenges of our time.

The failure by mainstream parties to improve the lives of the working place has contributed to a public distrust of politics among many people. Given this “trust deficit”, many people sadly withdraw from participation in electoral politics, contributing to low voter turnouts. We even saw this in recent by-elections in Malaysia.

Others who are disillusioned lurch to nationalist, populist parties on the right, even those with fascist tendencies. These parties tend to favour wealthy interests and lower taxes for the rich. They are unfriendly to immigrants who are often scapegoated for the economic problems of their host nations. They care little for climate change.

Disillusioned voters might even vote for those pushing a conservative, narrow religious agenda (no matter what the

religion). This parties may appeal to those who have lost hope that the other mainstream parties could provide them a better life in this world.

Amidst this gloom, we have seen the encouraging emergence of green candidates, smaller parties and independent candidates who put issues that matter to the people at the forefront. They also take a more independent perspective of foreign policy in an increasingly multi-polar world. They do not subscribe to neocolonial interests, whether in politics or the economy. They want an end to the wars in Ukraine, Syria, Yemen and Myanmar and the genocide taking place in Gaza. Still, they are in a minority – hopefully that will change with time.

For now, in many parts of the world, policies are formulated to benefit Big Capital and Big Business, propped up by establishment interests. Public opinion is moulded in their favour by public relations firms, powerful global media organisations and Big Tech, through its algorithms.

These days, we see the emergence of “stakeholder capitalism”. A few gigantic investment companies hold sizeable stakes in multiple companies around the world. These large global investment firms control trillions of dollars worth of assets. They may even have the ability to influence the politics and economies of a string of nations.

So, we cannot leave matters of the world to just the politicians and electoral politics. Ruling politicians invariably come under tremendous pressure or influence from big business, the establishment, superpower strategic interests, large multinational companies and international financial institutions.

In the process, party manifestos and the people’s agenda fall by the wayside.

Ordinary people have to step up and be counted. We have a role in making a difference in the world. We need to protect the ecological balance and to work for the people’s interest and the common good.

Christians and people of other faiths are called to build the kingdom of God, a world of compassion and concern for the poor.

This kingdom has values that are diametrically opposed to the values of the rulers of the world.

We are called to empower the poor and to free captives unjustly imprisoned. We are called to care for the sick, the homeless and the infirm. Like St Francis, we need to see the world as interconnected.

Jesus challenged the corrupt or compromised religious leaders of His time and repeatedly exposed their hypocrisy. These leaders were in league with powerful imperial occupiers and wealthy local landowners. Together, they were accumulating fabulous wealth.

In contrast, the ordinary people suffered

from poverty, hunger, disease and heavy taxes. Jesus spent a lot of His time with them and spoke to them of a Father who was deeply concerned about their suffering and oppression. If God could care for the sparrows and the lilies in the field, how much more would He care for people who are overburdened with suffering, sickness and oppression!

The Church today continues this legacy through its “preferential option for the poor”. This is at the heart of the Gospels and Catholic Social Teaching and deserves to be expounded with greater clarity.

May we all do our part in working for a more just and sustainable world, no matter where we are. We could get involved in community and other civil society groups. Why not volunteer free services or provide them at discounted rates for those from lower-income households. Make our voices heard when forests, hills and biodiversity are threatened.

We are not powerless! God has given us the Spirit to build a new creation.

Let’s pay heed to those who are suffering among us. Let’s listen to the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth and respond to it. May Thy kingdom come.

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

## BE OUR GUEST

# Broken Screens ... Shattered Souls

By Nevina Johnson



Esha, a Malaysian social media influencer, endured venomous threats and abusive comments on her TikTok account. Now, she exists only in the memories of her family. Across the globe, in another country, 15-year-old Nate Bronstein took his own life after relentless cyberbullying. These individuals were someone’s friend, son or daughter. Can anyone truly imagine the pain their families are enduring?

In Esha’s case, one perpetrator received a mere RM100 fine after pleading guilty to engaging in insulting behaviour with the intention of inciting anger and disrupting peace, under Section 14 of the Minor Offences Act 1955. Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil expressed his disappointment at this outcome, announcing a review of how the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission handles offensive comments on social media, particularly on platforms like TikTok.

The minister emphasised the importance of clearly defining what constitutes cyberbullying and identifying effective preventive measures. He noted that while ministers, members of parliament, and politicians are frequently targeted by cyberbullying, they often refrain from lodging complaints. Some perceive cyberbullying as a trivial issue, but the Communications Minister stressed the need to establish clear legal boundaries and interpretations. A proposal will be presented at the upcoming Cabinet meeting to enact a new act or amend existing laws to tackle cyberbullying.

With social media becoming increasingly prevalent, cyberbullying has emerged as a detrimental poison in our society. A 2024 BBC report by the World Health Organisation

found that one in six teens experienced cyberbullying. In 2020, Malaysia was ranked second in Asia for cyberbullying among youth, according to UNICEF. This data alone screams the danger of this issue.

Unlike the traditional physical bullying many are familiar with, cyberbullying has not received much public awareness or attention. With this online bully, the victim has nowhere to run, as it continues throughout the day no matter where they are. The beeping notification sounds that once brought joy and excitement now become a ticking bomb, crushing the souls of many. This detrimental crime affects an individual by pushing them into a pit of darkness. Over time, it causes extreme anxiety, unexplained fear, and the potential to completely change an individual’s personality. It leaves a scarring impact of loneliness and a severely damaged sense of self. In adverse cases, this could lead to self-harming acts.

Cyberbullying, like all forms of bullying, is a cycle where people project their insecurity and powerlessness onto others. Dysfunctional family backgrounds lacking love and empathy can seed this crime. A recent study with Turkish adolescents found that teenagers from less empathetic, secure, and loving family backgrounds were more at risk for engaging in cyberbullying acts. This shows that a lack of empathy and humanity can cloud one’s mind and cause one to partake in these crimes.

Despite its horrific impact, it is not too late to make a difference as a society. We must abandon the mentality of “this is not my problem” or “as long as it doesn’t happen to me.” Do we really want to wait for something bad to happen to someone we love before we

act? Haven’t we already lost too much time? Parents and teachers should engage in deep emotional conversations with their children, providing a safe space for them to talk and express themselves. Educate them that if they are cyberbullied, they don’t have to be embarrassed; it is not their fault. Provide a safe environment for them to depend on and do not dismiss their feelings.

Demonstrate kindness beyond your close family members, even to people you don’t know. Tell them it is not okay to hurt others and not “cool.” It doesn’t make you powerful or respected, but kindness will. Humanity, kindness, and empathy are powerful. Let’s revamp the trend towards kindness and empathy — isn’t this the core nature of being human?

Schools should include monthly programmes on cyberbullying awareness and establish a safe complaint protocol for students to report incidents without fear. This is crucial, as many victims tend to not report due to fear and embarrassment. Providing a safe space for victims to report this crime is essential.

The Church can play a pivotal role by including workshops and seminars, especially focusing on youth, to educate about cyberbullying, its effects, and how to approach it. Parish media ministries can utilise social media platforms to advocate for this issue. Real-life cyberbullying victims and survivors can be interviewed to spread awareness, and their stories shared as documentaries.

Pope Francis has emphasised the importance of kindness, empathy, and

respect in the digital world. In his message for the 2021 World Communications Day, he urged the faithful to “communicate by encountering people, where they are and as they are.” He called for a “courageous and responsible use of communication” that promotes a culture of encounter, rather than exclusion or division. The Pope’s teachings remind us that as Christians, we are called to be beacons of light and love, even in the virtual spaces we inhabit.

Esha and Nate are but two victims whose stories we know. Countless others suffer in silence, their pain unseen and unheard. The person sitting next to you in class or in the office could be a silent victim. We must not lose anyone else to this scourge. How many more precious lives should be forced into this abyss of darkness?

Together, let’s rewrite the narrative, becoming the friends who listen and the allies who uplift. Let’s no longer dismiss the gravity of this issue, for we can’t afford to lose any more lives to this atrocity. Behind every screen lies a fragile beating heart, someone else’s entire world, their life hanging by a thread.

So, let’s be the change. Extend your compassion, empathy, and action beyond the screen. Because if you and I won’t, then who will?

● **Nevina Johnson**, a 23-year-old student at UKM, is in her final year pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies. She is currently interning at the Catholic Research Centre in Kuala Lumpur.





Fr Ron Rolheiser

# Keeping the Sabbath

The Sufi mystic, Rumi, once lamented: I have lived too long where I can be reached! That was twelve hundred years ago, long before cell phones, the internet, computers, and social media. Today, most of us live where we can be reached all the time. While this has some huge upsides, it also has a nasty underside we have been slow to recognise. Never being able to step away from our preoccupations and involvements is weighing on our mental health. Many of us now find it difficult to step away, to stop activities, to rest, to refresh, to re-energise. To put this in biblical language, we are finding it more and more difficult to have “Sabbath” in our lives.

We have a commandment from God: Remember to keep the Sabbath day holy. I think we can all agree that this commandment has fallen on hard times today. It is not just that fewer and fewer people are going to their churches on Sunday, or that more and more shops and businesses are open on Sunday, or that sporting events now take up much of the Sabbath space once reserved for religion. The deeper issue is that more and more of us can no longer slow down our lives, shut down the communication machines, get away from the stress and preoccupations in our lives, and simply stop and rest.

We are living where we can always be reached and have, for the most part, lost the notion of Sabbath in our lives. We are

now treating a commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy as an idealised lifestyle suggestion: Helpful, if you can find the time to do it.

With this in mind, I offer Ten Councils for practising Sabbath today.

1. *Practice Sabbath with the discipline demanded of a commandment, even as you practise the discipline of life and duty.*

2. *Have at least one “Sabbath” moment every day.* Give yourself something to look forward to every day. Sabbath doesn’t have to be a day; it can be special hour, a special moment, where you step off the treadmill and treat yourself to something you enjoy.

3. *Go somewhere every week where you can’t be reached and have a “cyber-Sabbath”.* Once a week, turn off all your electronic communication for six hours or, better yet, for twelve hours. Go to a place where, save for an emergency, you are unavailable. You might find this the hardest discipline of all – and perhaps the most important one.

4. *Honour the “wisdom of dormancy”.* Do something regularly that is non-pragmatic. Farmers know that you can’t seed a field continuously and still get a good yield. Fields require regular seasons where they lie fallow so that they can (in that seeming condition of

dormancy) soak in the nutrients and other elements they need to produce. The human body and psyche are the same. We need, regularly, periods of dormancy where our energies lie fallow to the pragmatic world.

5. *Pray and meditate regularly in some way.* There is only one rule and counsel for this: Do it! Show up regularly, and whatever happens, happens. This is a major way that we step off the treadmill and have some Sabbath in our lives.

6. *Be attentive to little children, old people, and the weather.* Sabbath is meant to restore wonder to our lives, but today, wonder has left the building. So, as the poet John Shea says, borrow wonder from the children. It is one of the few places we can still find it. As well, time spent with elderly people can help give us a healthier perspective on life. Also, when have we last noticed the weather as a source of wonder?

7. *Live by axiom: “If not now, when? If not here, where? If not with these people, with whom? If not for God, why?”* We spend 98 per cent of our lives waiting for something else to happen to us. Have some moments where you realise that what you are waiting for is already here.

8. *Let your body also know that it is*

*Sabbath.* Sabbath is meant not just for the soul but also for the body. Give your body a Sabbath treat, at least once a week.

9. *Make family and relationships the priority.* At the end of the day, life is about family, friendships, and relationships, a truth easily eclipsed and lost in the pressures of our fast-paced lives. Sabbath is meant to reground us in that truth at least once a week.

10. *Don’t nurse grudges and obsessions.* Our deepest tiredness isn’t the result of overwork, but of the wounds, grudges, and obsessions we nurse. The invitation to rest for a day includes, especially, the invitation to let go of our hurts. Indeed, the notion of the statute of limitations is based on Judeo-Christian concept of the Sabbath. For every grudge we are nursing, there is a statute of limitations.

God gave us Sabbath, for our health and our enjoyment.

● **Oblate Fr Ron Rolheiser, theologian, teacher, and award-winning author, is President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX. He writes a weekly column that is carried in over 90 newspapers around the world. He can be contacted through his website [www.ronrolheiser.com](http://www.ronrolheiser.com)**

## Ignatius of Loyola – A patron for the Jubilee Year?

The official theme for the coming 2025 Jubilee Year of the Redemption is “Pilgrims of Hope.” So, a good patron saint for the Jubilee Year could well be Ignatius of Loyola. This is because, though not many non-Jesuits may know it, Ignatius himself, in his autobiography, always wrote in the third person, referring to himself as “The Pilgrim.” And a “pilgrim of hope” he surely was, as

his attitude during the many ups and downs of his life show. Even when, at the beginning of his apostolic ministry (after his conversion from the service of worldly lords and ideals), he was calumniated as being an “illuminist,” and later often throughout his life was fiercely opposed as a spiritual director, his virtue of “hope” remained outstanding, together with trust in the Lord’s comforting presence.

July 31 next year will mark the 525th birth anniversary of Ignatius. For over five centuries, his influence on both world and Church has been truly phenomenal, through his writings, especially the book *The Spiritual Exercises*, and through the immense activity of (thus far about) 200,000 priests and brothers who have belonged to his religious family, the Society of Jesus. (Current worldwide membership: 14,000 men).

Ignatius was second to none in his personal love for Jesus of Nazareth. He became tremendously attached to Christ, his newfound and eternal Lord, in whose service he wished to distinguish himself “like a noble knight” (*como noble caballero de Cristo*). The name of Jesus meant so much to him that he labelled his religious family by that name alone; and in his Diary can be found this revealing entry: “I recalled to mind that moment when the Heavenly Father associated me with His Divine Son, and I felt a burning longing that He might engrave

deeply within my heart the name of JESUS” (23-2-1544).

Today’s Church, led by a Jesuit pope, is in need of Ignatius’ example and Spirit-filled teachings. The youth of today must become similarly consumed with zeal for the spread of Christ’s Kingdom in the modern world, like Francis Xavier and Mateo Ricci; Peter Canisius and Robert Bellarmine; Isaac Jogues and John de Brebeauf; Teilhard de Chardin and Karl Rahner; Gerard Manley Hopkins and Pedro Arrupe; Stan Lourduamy and so many other disciples of Ignatius (not forgetting several women saints, founders of various religious congregations, like Mary Ward and Mother Teresa), who have served the Church and humanity in every century and continent, filling roles as humble pastors or great educationists, grass-roots social activists or skilled scientists, doing their best for “the greater glory of God” — even unto martyrdom, for some of them.

Ignatius’ world-view is of a vast spiritual battlefield, where the forces of Good are engaged ceaselessly in a fierce war with the forces of Evil. Hence, his insistence not only on the need for courage and generosity, but also for wise discernment! His guidelines on discernment of spirits, and on thinking with the Church, have been of priceless value to many popes, saints, and other Christian leaders, and today, they continue to be of special importance for members of the Spiritual Movements in the Church.

Ignatius explains the devil’s strategy in great detail in a famous meditation on *The Two Standards*. Satan summons innumerable demons and “scatters them, some to one city and some to another, throughout the whole world, so that no province, no city, no place, no state of life, no individual, is overlooked.

He goads them on to lay snares for human beings and bind them with chains. First, they are to tempt them to covet riches, that they may the more easily attain the empty honours of this world, and then come to overweening pride. From these three steps, the Evil One leads to all other vices.”

On the other hand, Christ’s way is to invite humanity to “the highest spiritual, and even actual, poverty (as opposed to riches); then, to insults or contempt (as opposed to the honour of this world); and from these to let spring humility (as opposed to pride). From these three steps, to lead human persons to all other virtues” (nn. 142, 146).

Ignatius recommends that we ask Mother Mary to obtain for us, from her Son, the grace to receive “an intimate knowledge of our Lord, who has become man for me, that I may love Him more, and follow Him more closely.” This prayer-colloquy is then to be directed to Jesus, asking Him to obtain these same graces from the Father. Finally, the conversation is to be made directly and confidently with the Father Himself. The Ignatian vision demands that Jesus’ disciples become “pilgrim contemplatives in action,” striving and toiling as though the success of everything depended on their own human initiative and efforts, and yet praying to God and relying on the Holy Spirit as though everything depended only on Him. And for sure, the Church and humanity today, still need the restless spiritual energy and the Jubilee “gift of hope” shown by Ignatius of Loyola in his own life. — **By Fr Fio Mascarenhas, SJ**

● **Fr Fio is a retired (but not tired) author and preacher of Ignatian and biblical spirituality, who lives in The Retreat House, Bandra, India.**

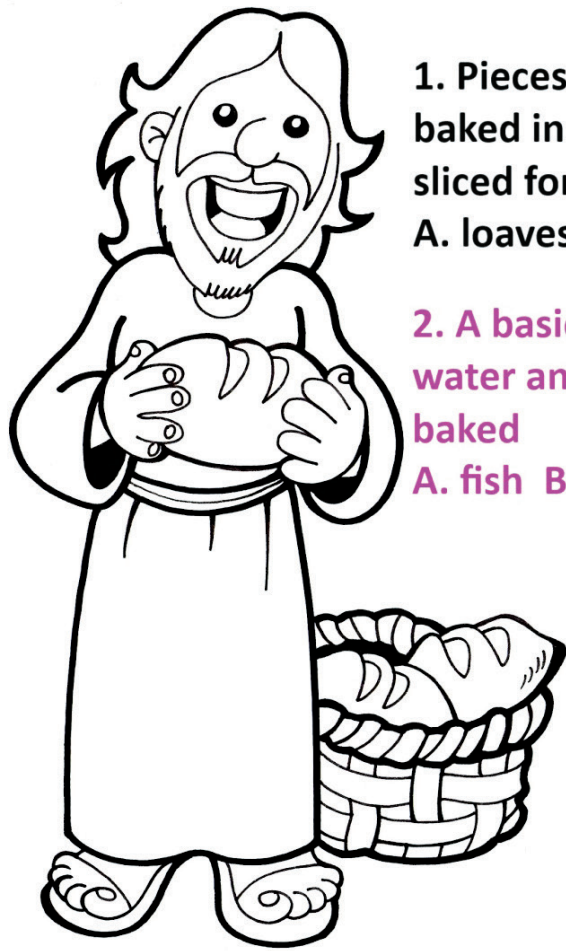


Wikimedia Commons



# Little Catholics' Corner

## CHOOSE THE BEST ANSWER!



1. Pieces of bread shaped and baked in a single piece and sliced for eating

A. loaves B. food C. fish D. five

2. A basic food made from flour, water and yeast mixed together and baked

A. fish B. two C. noodle D. bread

3. An animal without legs that lives in water

A. turtle B. fish c. dinosaur d. dragon

4. To cure someone of illness or disease; to make someone well again

A. x-ray B. feed c. sleep d. heal

Answer: 1.A 2.D 3.B 4.D

Dear children,

When Jesus saw that a huge crowd of people had come to Him, He knew that they needed food.

However, all they had was a few loaves of bread and a couple fish that a boy had brought along.

Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish and blessed it, and started giving it to the crowd.

Soon there was enough to feed 5,000 people, plus there were twelve baskets left over!

Jesus still multiplies what we give

Him today.

At Mass, we offer to God some bread and wine and He turns it into the Body and Blood of Jesus!

We have something to offer to Jesus too.

If you offer your work, or your talents, or even your whole life to God,

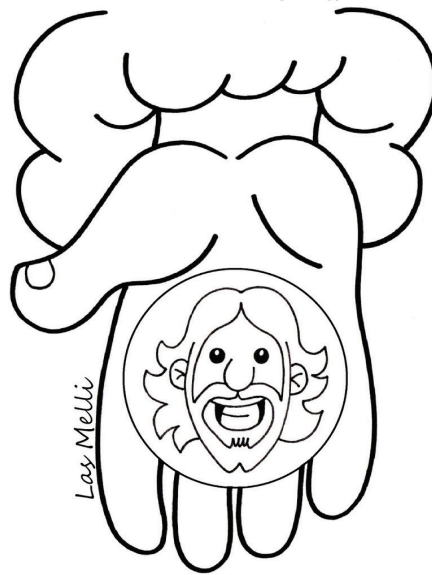
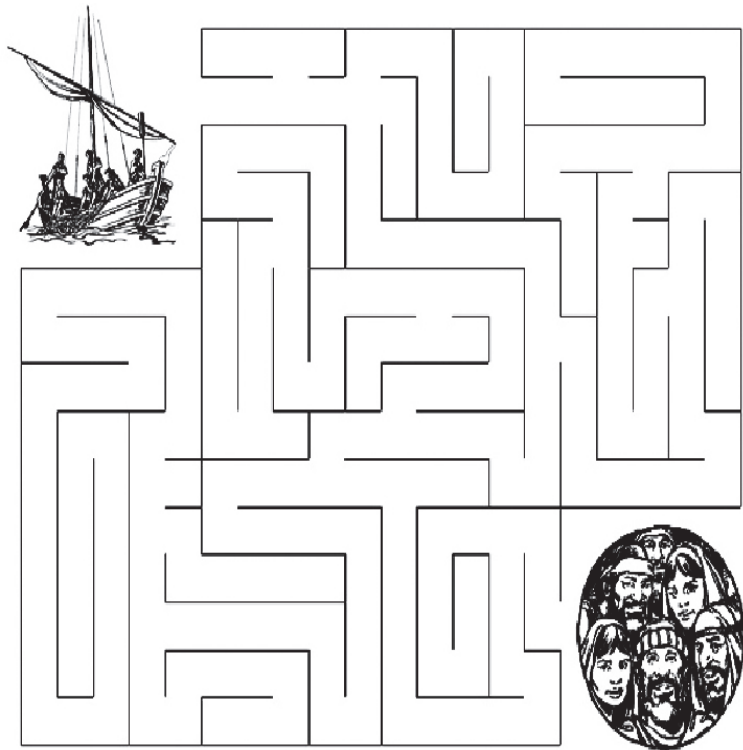
He will use your gifts to bring His blessings to the world.








Till we meet again next week. Be good, okay?

Aunty Eliz

Who is the one to come into the world? Use the secret code to find out

Jesus saw the crowds waiting for Him. Can you help Jesus to find the way to His people?



After the people saw the sign Jesus performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the        who is to come into the world.

(John 6:14)

 = E

P = 

 = O

 = T

 = H

 = R

The picture below shows two identical images. Which are the most similar, do you think?



Answer: B and D



# YOUTH

July 28, 2024

## Rejoicing in Hope

### Brunei youth celebrate second Vicariate Youth Day

By Francis Mae

**B**ANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: Passionate Catholic youth from across Brunei Darussalam gathered to celebrate the second annual Vicariate Youth Day (VYD 2) at the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption (COLA) on July 7-8. The theme of the two-day celebration, *Rejoicing in Hope*, was inspired by Pope Francis' message for the 38th World Youth Day.

COLA hosted this year's event, accepting the VYD cross from St John's Church (SJC), which held the inaugural VYD in July 2023. COLA welcomed youth from the Church of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception (COOL) in Seria, SJC in Kuala Belait, and St Peter's Chapel (SPC) in Temburong, accommodating them with local foster families. The event saw an overwhelming response, with over 130 participants aged 11 to 24, including 88 from COLA, 14 from COOL, 28 from SJC, and 12 from SPC.

Fr Paul Shie, parish priest of SJC and head of the Youth Ministry, fully participated in the event and celebrated Mass on both days. The VYD 2 celebration featured diverse activities such as talks, Bible enthronement,



parade of banners, dance, drama, musical performances, team-building exercises, Eucharistic adoration, and prayer stations, all emphasising the theme *Rejoicing in Hope* (Rom 12:12).

Speakers from COLA and COOL led talk sessions, encouraging youth to engage in discussions. Jackie Liew from COLA presented the first talk, *Christ, Our Hope*, for all participants. The second session, *Virtue of Hope*, was divided into age-specific groups

and conducted in both Malay and English. Speakers included Eya Dollente and Alister Dousip from COLA and Jennifer Eliza Nyanggau from COOL.

One of the highlights was the "Amazing Grace" prayer stations, where participants wrote their prayer intentions and thanksgiving to Mother Mary. These intentions will be offered every Wednesday during the novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help at COLA.

The celebration concluded with a Mass ce-

lebrated by Fr Paul. Following the Mass, the VYD cross was handed over from the youth representatives of COLA to the youth leaders of COOL, symbolising the turnover for the next Vicariate Youth Day in 2025, which will be hosted by COOL in Seria.

In his closing remarks, Fr Paul congratulated all participants and encouraged them to spread their positive experiences from VYD 2, with hopes of increasing participation in future VYD celebrations.



PARAGUAY: "Let Christ transform your natural optimism into authentic love; a love that knows how to sacrifice, that is sincere, real and genuine, so that your youth will be a gift for Jesus and for the world and you will be able to spend your life in a worthy and fruitful way."

This was the encouragement Pope Francis sent to the XXI Latam Meeting of Caribbean and Latin American national youth ministry leaders, gathered in Asunción, Paraguay, July 15-20.

Expressing his joy to greet the participants, the Pope emphasised the value of youth ministry for the Church, as he called on young people to let Christ use their energy to do

## Let your youth be a gift for Jesus

great things.

"The command of Jesus to 'arise,'" he acknowledged, "means both a task and a responsibility."

### Do not be afraid of the Lord

"Do not be afraid of the Lord who passes by us and whispers in our ear, bends down to us and offers us his hand to lift us up every time we fall," he said, noting Jesus wants us "on our feet," "resurrected," and therefore, we shouldn't "be afraid to let Him into your life."

"Open wide the doors of your heart to Him," he continued, saying to do so "for the new life that comes from Him," one that is "without comparison" and "deserves to be lived."

"Do not be afraid of the Lord who passes by us and whispers in our ear, bends down to us and offers us his hand to lift us up every time we fall."

### Mary accompanies with a mother's love

The Holy Father went on to entrust those gathered to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

"May she accompany your steps and intercede for you with a mother's love," he said, "so that, together with children, adults and the elderly, in intergenerational communion, you may be protagonists in a Church that is ever more synodal, disciple and missionary."

In a particular way, he said, "I thank the young Paraguayans who have worked with dedication to make this meeting possible."

As the Holy Father encouraged them to live these days together in grateful faith, Pope Francis likewise invited them to continue to prepare themselves during this Year of Prayer to celebrate the next Jubilee 2025 with joyful hope. — **By Deborah Castellano Lubov, Vatican News**





# INSPIRE — OF NEW BEGINNINGS

By Roeshan Gomez

PETALING JAYA: As part of its parish feast day celebrations, the Church of St Ignatius, supported by parish priests and the parish pastoral council, organised a three-day, two-night young adults camp aptly named *Inspire*. Held from July 6 to 8 at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre, the event united youth from various ministries, spanning different languages and age groups, fostering a sense of unity and community.

The camp was facilitated by Domus Cordis of the Rumah Hati Community. Established in Indonesia around 2007, Domus Cordis is dedicated to supporting parishes through discipleship and community building. Their members, include, amongst others, Riko Ariefano, Lia Brasali Ariefano, and Ledis Kokoy.

Domus Cordis expertly managed the *Inspire* weekend, which featured engaging games, insightful faith input sessions, and meaningful sessions of prayer. Aligning with the parish feast day theme related to God's creation (Care for Ecology) and honouring our fellow beings (Care for the Elderly), participants were grouped and challenged to scavenge for reusable materials to create presentations. These presentations showcased a blend of innovation, humour, and enthusiasm, highlighting the participants' creativity and teamwork.

Core themes of *Inspire* included reflecting on the multifaceted spiritual journey of a Disciple, the call to minister, and embracing discomfort and challenges in service (James 1:22-25). Participants were invited to contemplate our Lord's ministry, emphasising preaching to the masses, providing encour-

ters, and intentionally discipling and nurturing the spiritual lives of His followers.

The journey of discipleship was portrayed as encompassing various stages: spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1-3), spiritual infancy (John 3:3-8), spiritual childhood (Galatians 4:19), spiritual young adulthood (1 John 2:14), spiritual parenthood (1 Corinthians 4:15), and spiritual grandparenthood (2 Timothy 2:2). This comprehensive approach allowed participants to identify and reflect on their personal spiritual paths.

Throughout the week, it became evident that everyone, regardless of their spiritual stage, is continuously called to seek God. Whether new to the faith, a fresh eyed pastoral worker, a seasoned leader in the Church, a member of the religious, or even clergy, everyone has to continuously re-encounter His love, receive His healing,

and re-present His goodness. The journey of relying on God is the means by which we are brought closer to Him. This is a life-long process; it does not end (1 Corinthians 10:13).

The *Inspire* committee members extend their heartfelt gratitude to the clergy of the Church of St Ignatius for their blessings. Special thanks are also due to the priests of the Church of St Anthony, Fr Clarence Devadass, and Fr Michel Dass, for graciously hosting the participants and facilitating the Benediction, praying over, and administering the sacrament of Confession. Deep appreciation goes to Domus Cordis for their exceptional facilitation, and finally, to the participants of *Inspire* for their openness and enthusiasm. May the Lord bless you and keep you close in your respective missions and ministries.

## Sacrament of Confirmation

KULIM, Kedah: The Sacrament of Confirmation was celebrated at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on July 6. Eighteen young parishioners, who had diligently prepared for this significant moment, received the sacrament from Cardinal Sebastian Francis.

Cardinal Sebastian delivered a deeply spiritual homily that left a lasting impression on the confirmands. He congratulated them and welcomed them as "full-fledged" responsible young adults of the Catholic Church. In his closing remarks, the Cardinal emphasised that these rites mark, not a departure from Church life,

but the beginning of their journey in serving the Lord as committed Catholic adults.

The cardinal thanked the catechists for their dedicated preparation of the candidates, as well as the confirmands' parents and other parishioners in this semi-rural parish community, for their collaboration, love, and encouragement.

At the end of Mass, certificates were presented to the candidates, symbolising their readiness to live up to the life of Christ and serve the ministries using the talents they have received from God. —

By John Kuppasawary

## Community outreach and spiritual preparation for St Jude confirmands



Street feeding at Central Market with Dr Gary Liew and Aaron Koh of AOHD.

RAWANG: On July 6, the Church of St Jude, Rawang was abuzz with the presence of Archbishop Julian Leow, who administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to 19 candidates. Parish priest, Fr Vincent Thomas presented the candidates, noting that they were ready to contribute through mission work in everyday situations.

The candidates not only attended classes but also learned to animate the Holy Hour, care for orphans, and feed the homeless on the streets. They also wrote letters to juvenile inmates at the Pusat Koreksional in Puncak Alam through the Prison Ministry.

Their catechist, Dr Grace Gnana Piragasam, collaborated with Dr Gary Liew and Aaron Koh from the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development, particularly with the street feeding programme at Central Market in Kuala Lumpur on May 24.

Candidate Clarence Abishegam shared that street feeding was quite challenging as he had to engage with strangers. He recalled how Dr Gary and Aaron emphasised that it was not just about distributing food, but also about establishing eye contact and having conversations with the recipients.

Dr Grace explained that these activities are designed to help the confirmands develop responsibility, dialogue, listening, and discernment in their active participation within the parish and community.

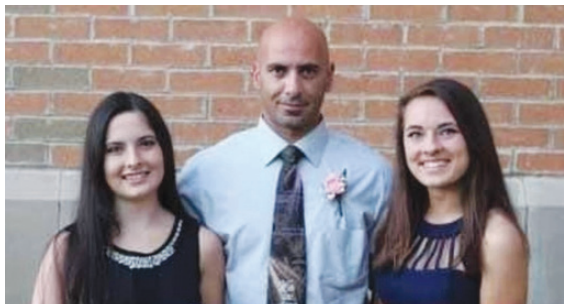
To prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation, the candidates attended a retreat camp. Confirmand Elcella Anne Rita King noted that the camp taught her how to work on relationships, especially focusing on how young people mature, identify their sexual identities, and understand the importance of chastity.



Cardinal Sebastian Francis and Msgr Henry Rajoo with the confirmands and catechists at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Kulim, Kedah.



# He died a real-life superhero



Former firefighter Corey Comperatore stands with his two daughters in a picture. He lost his life July 13, 2024 during the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump during a campaign rally. (photo: Screenshot / NRO Twitter account last visited on July 14, 2024)

BOSTON: The 50-year-old husband and father who was fatally shot July 13 at former president Donald Trump's campaign rally outside of Pittsburgh was a devoted Christian and "the very best of us," according to his family and the state's governor.

Corey Comperatore "went to church every Sunday. Corey loved his community. Most especially, Corey loved his family," Pennsylvania Gov Josh Shapiro said in a press conference, July 14.

Speaking to reporters north of Pittsburgh, the Democratic governor said that he spoke to Comperatore's wife and two daughters.

Comperatore was a "girl dad" who worked as a firefighter, Shapiro said.

"I asked Corey's wife if it would be okay for me to share that we spoke. And she said yes," Shapiro said.

"She also asked that I share with all of you that Corey died a hero. That Corey dove on his family to protect them last night at this rally. Corey was the very best of us. May his memory be a blessing."

Comperatore was "an avid supporter of the former president and was so excited to be there last night with him in the community," the governor added.

Comperatore was a chief at the Buffalo Township Volunteer Fire Department. That township is about a 30-minute drive northeast of Pittsburgh. His LinkedIn and Facebook profiles say that he was a project and tooling engineer at JSP, a manufacturing company.

A Facebook post from Comperatore's wife, Helen — posted prior to the shooting — said that the family wasn't originally sitting in the bleachers behind the former president. It wasn't until a campaign official approached the family and asked if they wanted to be seated in the bleachers behind Trump that they were moved, she wrote.

Dawn Comperatore Schafer, who identified herself as Corey's sister, said on Facebook that the firefighter "was a hero that shielded his daughters. His wife and girls just lived through the unthinkable and unimaginable. My baby brother just turned 50 and had so much life left to experience."

"The hatred for one man took the life of the one man we loved the most," she said. "Hatred has no limits and love has no bounds. Pray for my sister-in-law, nieces, my mother, sister, me, and his nieces and nephews as this feels like a terrible nightmare but we know it is our painful reality."

A Facebook post by Comperatore's daughter Allyson was circulating the internet July 14. In it she called the event "a real-life nightmare."

"What was supposed to be an exciting day that we had all looked forward to (ESPECIALLY my dad), turned into the most traumatising experiences someone could imagine," she wrote.

Allyson called her father "the best dad a girl could ever ask for," adding that he "was a man of God, loved Jesus fiercely, and also looked after our church and our members as family."

"The media will not tell you that he died a real-life superhero. They are not going to tell you how quickly he threw my mom and I to the ground," she said.

"They are not going to tell you that he shielded my body from the bullet that came at us. He loved his family. He truly loved us enough to take a real bullet for us. And I want nothing more than to cry on him and tell him thank you. I want nothing more than to wake up and for this to not be reality for me and my family," she said. — By Joe Bukuras/ Matt McDonald, CNA

## MEMORIAM

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



**3rd Anniversary**  
**In Loving Memory of**  
**Mr Michael Joseph**  
**07.06.1934 – 25.07.2021**

Dearest Pa,  
It has been 3 years since you answered the Lord's calling to return home. Not a day goes by without us feeling the void of your presence, but we find comfort in knowing that you are resting peacefully in Heaven, watching over us. Despite the emptiness that still feels fresh, you never cease to put a smile on our faces as we remember the sweet memories we were blessed to share. You were a man full of light & joy and your good vibes still stick within our hearts. Thank you Pa, for being the light in our lives and we will do our best to walk in your light in everything we do, to honour you.  
We love you Pa!

Dearly missed and cherished by  
wife, children, sons-in-law,  
grandchildren & relatives.

**15th Anniversary**  
**In Loving Memory of**  
**Gurunathan Selbadurai**  
**7th March 1944 – 29th July 2009**

"For we are well aware that when the tent that houses us on earth is folded up, there is a house for us from God, not made by human hands but everlasting, in the heavens"  
**2 Cor 5: 1**

May you rest in the arms of the Lord who formed you from the dust of the earth.

Deeply missed by  
wife, children,  
grandchildren, all family  
members and friends.





✝

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*  
Psalm 23:1

Please join us for  
**40th DAY MEMORIAL MASS**

**CHRISTINA KOCHAPPAN**  
8 November 1934 – 22 June 2024

Mass will be at **6pm** at **St Ignatius Church, 2 Jalan SS 25/23**  
**Taman Plaza 47301 Petaling Jaya** on **Saturday, 3rd August 2024**  
followed by dinner at the church cafeteria.

*Deeply missed and forever remembered by her*  
Children: Austin, Gerald, Violet, Francis & Cyril  
Daughters/Son-in-law: Sheila, Darek, Anne, & Lili  
Grandchildren: Joel, Joanne, Marianne, Anderson & Mia.

Kindly confirm your attendance for logistic purpose.  
Please contact Gerald, Hp No: 016-6023032.

**10th Memorial Anniversary**  
**In Loving Memory of**



**JAYAMARY ERUTHAYASAMY**

Born: 17 May 1952  
Departed: 29 July 2014

"I have fought the good fight,  
I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."  
- 2 Tim 4:7

Forever cherished by  
Husband, Children, Grandchildren, Siblings & Loved Ones.

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*Peace I leave  
with you; my  
peace I give to  
you. Not as the  
world gives do  
I give to you.  
Let not your  
hearts be  
troubled,  
neither let them  
be afraid.  
You heard me  
say to you,  
'I am going  
away, and I will  
come to you.'*  
*If you loved me,  
you would have  
rejoiced,  
because I am  
going to the  
Father, for the  
Father is  
greater than I.  
And now I have  
told you before  
it takes place,  
so that when it  
does take place  
you may  
believe.*

John 14:27-29

## Rest in Peace

**Edith Dicom nee  
Basnayake**  
**25.9.1944 – 4.7.2024**

"God is love, and he who abides in love  
abides in God, and God abides in him"  
1 John 4:16

Beloved wife of John Dicom (deceased)  
and mother to Lionel, mother-in-law  
to Tina and grandmother to Kiera,  
Caitlin and Willow.

Fondly remembered by  
family and friends.

Masses will be offered for her soul  
on **Saturday 3rd August** at 5.45pm and  
on **Sunday 4th August 2024** at 8am at  
the Church of Our Mother of Perpetual  
Help, Ipoh Garden, Ipoh.



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**REST IN PEACE**



# Spanish bishops praise Euro champions, Catholic coach

MADRID: Spanish bishops celebrated the success of the country's soccer team July 14 as the iconic players won their record fourth European Championship title by handing England an agonising loss.

The bishops also praised the coach, Luis de la Fuente, for his testimony as a practising Catholic — he did not shy away from his faith throughout the tournament.

The Spanish national soccer team beat England 2-1 in a final game organised in Berlin, the German capital, on a historical Sunday only hours before Spanish tennis player Carlos Alcaraz won the Wimbledon tournament.

After the final whistle of the soccer game, jubilation spread throughout Spain and the bishops clearly wanted to participate in the fiesta.

Archbishop José Ángel Saiz Meneses of Seville spoke out first and immediately after the match. "Congratulations! Thank you, champions! Congratulations to everyone," he said in a post on X, formerly Twitter, on July 14.

Addressing the champions' coach, the archbishop said de la Fuente is "a deeply religious man" who is not self-conscious about "publicly expressing his faith," and adding that the Spanish coach-turned- hero has a special devotion to Holy Christ of



Spain's Alvaro Morata lifts the trophy as the national soccer team celebrates its 2-1 victory over England in the European Championships July 14, 2024 in Berlin. (OSV News photo/Annegret Hilse, Reuters)

the Expiration, located in the 17th-century Minor Basilica in Seville. Archbishop Saiz illustrated the post with the picture of de la Fuente praying in front of the famous cross.

"He has been able to transmit faith, humility, the value of the team above individualities, the spirit of sacrifice, effort, confidence ... THANK YOU!" stressed the archbishop of Seville.

Bishop José Ignacio Munilla Aguirre of Orihuela-Alicante also congratulated the team on X, especially highlighting "the

testimony of faith of the coach."

Bishop Munilla compared the coach's faith to that of Argentine soccer star Lionel Messi, who acknowledged in an interview that his great performance on the field is a gift that God gave him and that he has only had to put this gift to fruition.

"Everyone who acknowledges Me before others I will acknowledge before My heavenly Father," Bishop Munilla said on X, citing the Gospel according to Matthew.

In a July 8 interview with Spanish Catholic

radio COPE, De la Fuente, when asked whether he has any habits before matches said: "No. I make the sign of the cross before matches, but that is faith. I have faith," he said, although he added "it is true that I really like the number 13. But I am not superstitious. There are days when I fall asleep even on the bus on the way to the stadium. I have no habits, no rituals."

Spain's beloved coach is a husband and father of three. His son followed in his footsteps as a soccer player — a career de la Fuente chose first and one that made him famous before he became a coach.

"During my life I have had many doubts and I have been far from religion, but at one point in my life, I decided to get closer to and rely on God for everything I do," de la Fuente recently said in an interview with *El Mundo*.

Spain's sports stars can be a signpost for the young generation, Bishop Juan Carlos Elizalde Espinal of Vitoria said. Congratulating tennis Wimbledon champion Alcaraz and the national soccer team, the bishop said: "May many young people follow your example of leisure time linked to sport, teamwork, healthy competition and effort and overcoming to be better every day. You have given us an unforgettable afternoon!" — By José Calderero de Aldecoa, OSV News

## EUROPE PILGRIMAGE 2024

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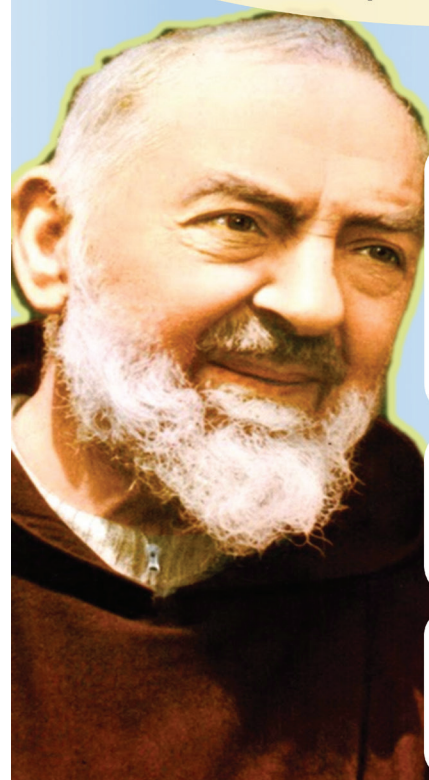
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