

HERALD

The Catholic Weekly

Mission Statement

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

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PP 8460/11/2012 (030939) ISSN: 1394-3294 | Vol: 31 No. 23 | June 30, 2024

www.heraldmalaysia.com

But as you excel in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you — see that you excel in this act of grace also.

2 Cor. 8:7



Celebrating the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

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Reports from the Episcopal Regional Conferences

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St Joseph's School celebrates stellar results in SPM Bible Knowledge

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Stay true to your convictions and faith



(photo/Jonathan D'Oliviero)

VATICAN: Always hold to your convictions.... and even if you are tempted to live a lukewarm faith because others torment you, hold to your identity and stay strong like the Christian martyrs who were persecuted...

This message was at the heart of Pope Francis' remarks during a dialogue with university students from Asia. They were participating in the *Building Bridges Across Asia Pacific* event, on June 20, organised by Loyola University Chicago and the Pontifical Commission for Latin America.

Loyola University Chicago launched the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI), a student-centred and university-organised series of events, having been inspired by Pope Francis' call to synodality. The first encounter took place in February 2022, entitled *Building Bridges North-South*. The second, *Building Bridges Across Africa*, took place in November that same year and involved students from across sub-Saharan Africa. This event followed a similar model but welcomed the Pope's participation.

Among those participating in this most recent synodal encounter were university students, pursuing various fields, from the Ateneo de Manila University (Manila, Philippines); Australian Catholic University (Brisbane, Australia); Fu Jen Catholic University (Taipei, Taiwan); Sogang

University (Seoul, South Korea); Sophia University (Tokyo, Japan); Universitas Sanata Dharma (Yogyakarta, Indonesia). Students also participated from Singapore, Timor Leste, and Papua New Guinea, nations the Holy Father is set to visit during his Apostolic Journey to Asia and Oceania in September.

Pope Francis joined the encounter, warmly greeting those present in Spanish, and apologising for running a little late due to some confusion with his agenda.

The student groups were introduced to the Pope and offered reflections, to which the Holy Father, in return, offered his advice, concerns, and suggestions.

The Holy Father spoke to the first group about feeling a sense of belonging to society, and how our 'belonging' heightens our security in ourselves and our human dignity.

All these factors, he noted, "save us from vulnerability, because today, youth are very vulnerable. We must always defend this sense of belonging in order to ward off vulnerability".

"Look at where you are most vulnerable, and ask someone to help you," he said.

The Pope also discussed mental health, discrimination, stigmas, and identity, and called for bearing witness and carrying on.

"Focus on having your own identity," he said, as he encouraged all those present to always cooperate with one another and stay united.

The Pope decried all stigmas that belit-

tle one's human dignity. He lamented that women at times are considered second class citizens, which, he reminded everyone, is not true.

"The greatness of women must not be forgotten. Women are better than men in terms of their insight and their ability to build communities," he said, as he commended special qualities and competencies unique to women.

The Pope called on students to show closeness and love to others, and to never exclude.

Recalling the words of a student who spoke about gender mentioning also the high HIV rate in the Philippines, the Pope said, "We must make sure that healthcare is prepared to treat and help all people, without exclusion."

The Pope also discussed effective education, which, in his opinion, requires "educating" and "coordinating" our "hearts, minds, and hands."

This is how we should educate youth, he said, noting this dynamic must never be forgotten.

The Pope also acknowledged how challenging it can be for young Christians to participate and "belong" in society.

In light of this reality, he urged them to cling to their faith, and to keep their hearts connected to prayer.

Doing so, the Pope said, will help in this regard and enable you to always, more effectively, engage with others.

The Holy Father then addressed that, on some occasions, young people are mocked

or challenged for their faith.

"Always be firmly convinced of your own convictions," he advised, warning against becoming isolated, which he warned can lead to poor habits and problems.

Given this, the Pope underscored the importance of being educated in the faith, to be authentic and "real" Christians.

"The thing is this: Christians have been persecuted from the beginning," he said, highlighting the reality that this phenomenon is nothing new.

"While it can be tempting to have a diluted, lukewarm Christianity," the Pope said, we cannot give in to it. Rather, he appealed, "we must be solid, and must live a sort of martyrdom, in this sense."

Finally, the Pope called for greater awareness of tragedies of the past, to learn lessons for the future and to work toward peace.

"Ideology is a disease," he said, as he urged all people to build harmony and promote a dialogue with other cultures.

"No to war," he said, calling for peacefulness. "In a desperate, hopeless world, we must appeal to our values," he explained, as he called on the students present to work on this before thanking them for their efforts.

Pope Francis concluded by thanking the students for their reflections, telling them that they helped him to understand them, especially as he prepared for his journey to their region in early September. He concluded by offering his blessing. — **By Deborah Castellano Lubov, Vatican News**

HERALD

ESTABLISHED 1994

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Tel / Whatsapp: 03-20268291

Website : www.heraldmalaysia.com

Facebook : www.facebook.com/heraldmalaysia

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

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OPINION

Vatican revives reflection on Pope's role among other Christians

On June 13, the Vatican published a document on papal primacy, a central concept that designates the pre-eminence of the pope in the Church. This idea has been hotly contested since the fourth century and central to many theological battles, including the Protestant Reformation. However, after reading the 150 pages of a text soberly titled *The Bishop of Rome*, published by the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, these centuries-old battles now seem more distant than ever.

Twenty-five years after St John Paul II published *Ut Unum Sint (That They May Be One)*, the Vatican sought to renew dialogue among all Christian traditions, whether Orthodox, Protestant, or Anglican. To this end, Rome offered an exhaustive analysis of nearly 100 documents published over the past quarter-century by non-Catholic Churches or ecumenical dialogue groups. A form of consensus emerged around the necessity of a papal primacy at the universal level.

Today's world requires Christianity to have a sort of spokesperson

In other words, Christian leaders worldwide now recognise the need for the Pope to play a specific role. This is justified in three points. The first is historical: "Christianity was organised on major apostolic sees occupying a specific order, the see of Rome being the first in the hierarchy," the document stated, summarising the reflections of the past 25 years.

The second justification is ecclesiological: "A number of dialogues have maintained that there is a mutual interdependency of primacy and synodality at each level of the life of the Church: local, regional, but also universal." The third argument is more pragmatic: some Churches,

like those of the Anglican tradition, recognise that today's world demands that Christianity have a sort of spokesperson in a "contemporary context of globalisation" and on "missionary requirements."

Divergent views on the papal primacy

However, despite this consensus, not everyone agrees on the content of this primacy of the Bishop of Rome. For other Christian Churches, it is out of the question that the Pope regains a form of dominion over them. One of the most debated principles in ecumenical terms is the legacy of the First Vatican Council in 1870, during which the Catholic Church proclaimed as dogma "the pope's primacy over the universal Church," establishing for the Bishop of Rome a "primacy of jurisdiction over the entire Church of God." This vision significantly evolved less than a century later when the Second Vatican Council introduced the principle of collegiality, which Rome particularly insists on today.

"The ministry of the Bishop of Rome need not be seen only as a problem but also as an opportunity for a common reflection on the nature of the Church and its mission in the world," the Vatican wrote while urging theologians to revisit Vatican I. Similarly, the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity clarified the dogma of papal infallibility, which was also proclaimed in 1870, explaining that it should be interpreted more as "the infallibility of the Church" and not merely that of a man, even if he is the pope.

An opportunity for a common reflection on the nature of the Church

The role of primacy corresponding to several actions Francis took since the beginning of his pontificate, would thus be considered a "prima-

cy of charity." "Peter's role in strengthening the brethren (Luke 22:32) is a leadership of service grounded in the consciousness of his own weakness and sinfulness," the document stated, adding: "This ministry is inextricably bound up with the self-emptying and self-sacrifice of Christ."

Once the document is published, it remains to be seen how this enthusiastic assessment by Roman theologians will evolve. Although the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity has delivered the fruits of two years of work, it does not intend to stop there. All Christian Churches are now called to respond to this vision. And to answer, fundamentally, this underlying question: Is it acceptable, or is it still too Catholic? It's a way to continue the dialogue and perhaps one day reach a true theological agreement on the role of the Bishop of Rome in Christianity.

New Ecclesiological Perspectives

Excerpt from "The Bishop of Rome, Primacy, and Synodality in Ecumenical Dialogues" (§32)

"Theological reflection on primacy cannot relate only to the dogmatic differences of the past but should also reflect on the present life of our churches – their internal developments, challenges, and relationships. Regarding the internal life of the Catholic Church, the renewed practice of the Synod of Bishops or the emphasis of Pope Francis on the title of "Bishop of Rome," among other aspects of reform, are ecumenically significant. (...) In this regard the "dialogue of love" and the "dialogue of life" should not be understood only as a preparation for the "dialogue of truth", but as a theology in action, capable of opening up new ecclesiological perspectives." — **By Loup Besmond de Senneville, LCI** (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

The "Unclean" Lord

Today's Gospel reading concerning the daughter of Jairus and the unnamed woman with a haemorrhage is a passage that many of us are aware of. This episode shows the power of Jesus to heal even the most severe of illnesses, as well as showing the miraculous power at work in Him to raise even the dead back to life.

However, this passage contains other deeper layers as well, which the discerning reader, prayerfully reading this passage, could reach. For some commentators, the presence of both the haemorrhaging woman and the deceased child could be references to the Jewish regulations concerning ritual purity. Ritual purity, to put it simply, was the state that a person was supposed to be in before he/she could participate in certain holy activities. This is because God is holy, and only those persons or objects that are holy, and therefore "clean" are worthy to be set apart for the Lord. In order to approach God or to be in the Lord's presence in the Temple, one would need to ensure oneself as "clean" in accordance to the rites of the Jewish faith (which can be found in the Books of Leviticus and Numbers). Therefore, if a person would like to participate in worship at the Temple of Jerusalem, such a person would need to abstain from certain activities which would render that person ritually impure.

What causes a person to be "impure" or "unclean"? Several situations are outlined in the Old Testament, such as having a skin disease (for instance leprosy), having a discharge of bodily fluids, or even touching someone or something unclean, such as a dead body. Should a person be defiled due to

having had contact with an unclean person or object, the person must abstain from all religious practices for a determined period, and undergo purifying rituals to restore oneself to the state of ritual purity. The importance of ritual purity in the Jewish faith was a gesture that emphasises the holiness of God and the importance of being in the right disposition to approach the Lord.

It is in such an environment that we find the characters in today's Gospel. Jairus, being an official of the synagogue, would have been well versed in these laws and regulations. Likewise, Jesus, being a Jew Himself and one who frequented both the Temple and the synagogue, would have been taught these laws and their importance. As for the woman with the haemorrhage, it would have been a painful life of suffering, firstly for living with a painful and uncomfortable illness, but also with the constant feeling of being cut off from God, since her discharge of blood would have made her living constantly in the state of impurity, hence being unable to participate in communal worship of God as was the custom at that time.

Being considered unclean, the woman's actions to reach out and touch Jesus, (a man of God and thereby making Him unclean as well) takes on a tone of daring and desperation. We can possibly surmise that in normal circumstances, no person would wilfully want to make another one unclean, but the woman's desperation for a cure led her to take this drastic action. It may also explain why she chose to secretly approach Jesus, since she must have thought a direct approach may lead to a flat refusal. Yet, as we

see in the Gospel, despite her caution, she was eventually found out, and her nervousness to come forward might stem from the fear of being chastised for making Jesus unclean as well. Reassuringly, however, Jesus does not rebuke her, but instead commends her for her faith – "my daughter, your faith has restored you to health; go in peace..."

If in the case of the haemorrhaging woman, Jesus was made "unclean" through no fault of His own, the interaction between Jesus and the little daughter of Jairus turns everything on its head. As Jesus interacts with the woman, He and Jairus are brought news that the little girl has died. In terms of the laws of ritual purity, the touching of a corpse is an action that brings impurity upon a person. Therefore, it is surprising, that after travelling to Jairus' house, Jesus enters the room where the little girl is laid and proceeds to touch her and lift up her hand! "Talitha, kum!", says Jesus, and with those words the girl is brought back to life.

What can these actions of Jesus today tell us, how do they speak to us? Though we as Catholics no longer subscribe to the same purity laws as the Jews do, yet in our psyche, we still possess the same awe and respect for God, who is almighty and altogether holy. We take great pains to show our respect to God, and we painstakingly prepare our inner and outer dispositions before we approach Him. In a sense, there is an inner mechanism within us that strives to be "pure" or "clean" before we approach the Lord.

However, we also know that despite our best efforts, it is not possible to be totally pure or clean in the eyes of God. Close scrutiny of our thoughts, our weaknesses and fragilities,

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Fr Nicholas Hoh, OCD

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Readings: Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24;

2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15;

Gospel: Mark 5:21-43

as well as our negative attitudes and actions, show us that often we have to reckon with our own "uncleanness". For some, this can be a discouraging exercise, and though we have been taught that God is full of loving mercy and compassion, we often do hold ourselves back from approaching the Lord with trust and confidence. We become afraid and guilt-ridden, feeling unworthy to approach the Lord, afraid of being on the receiving end of God's anger because of our impurities.

Yet today's Gospel affirms to us that God is not afraid of "being unclean", unafraid to get His hands dirty in bringing salvation and life to those who are in need. We should reflect, is there something "unclean" in me that I am struggling with? Something that we have been struggling with for a long time, but with no cure or remedy in sight? If that is the case, then, like the haemorrhaging woman, let us seek boldly the Healer. Do we feel that we are struggling with something so painful and wretched, utterly abhorrent to the Lord? Then let the hands of Jesus reach out upon us, those very hands that feared not the dead corpse, and let those very hands lift us out from death into life.

Concern over covert conversion of minors

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Taoism (MCCBCHST) and other concerned parties are urging the government to officially denounce covert conversion practices and take immediate action against Islamic preacher Firdaus Wong. A video on TikTok, allegedly showing Firdaus advising on the covert conversion of minors to Islam, has sparked calls for urgent governmental intervention.

The video, referenced in a *Malaysiakini* article ("NGO urges the authorities to probe alleged conversion of teens into Islam," June 6, 2024), shows Firdaus in a question-and-answer session with another individual, believed to be a religious teacher. In the video, Firdaus discusses what actions to take when a Form 3 or Form 4 student wishes to convert to Islam. He suggests that the student should be informally converted by reciting the "Kalimah Syahadah" and postponing the official conversion registration until they reach 18 years of age. Firdaus further advises against any television recordings or other evidence of the conversion to keep the matter secret, potentially preventing the parents from finding out.

The MCCBCHST has strongly condemned

this approach, labelling it as immoral, unconstitutional, and illegal. They argue that such actions violate fundamental liberties enshrined in the Federal Constitution:

- Article 12(4) stipulates that the religion of a person under 18 years old must be decided by their parents or guardians. The Federal Court's unanimous decision in *Indira Gandhi A/P Mutho vs. Pengarah Jabatan Islam Perak and others* (2018) reinforces that both parents must consent to a minor's conversion. Therefore, any secret conversion plan without parental consent is unconstitutional.

- Article 12(3) asserts that no person shall be required to receive instruction in or take part in a ceremony or act of worship of a religion other than their own. Firdaus' approach, which involves preaching Islam to minors without parental consent, contravenes this constitutional provision. The MCCBCHST underscores the severe consequences of secret conversions on family units, stating that parents would be devastated upon discovering their child's conversion without their knowledge. They stress that schools, intended as places of learning, must not engage in such practices.

Despite raising the issue of minor conversions repeatedly over the past decade, MCCBCHST claims their concerns have been ignored by authorities. In response to this latest incident, they are urgently calling on Members of Parliament and Federal Ministers to address the issue in the cabinet. They demand the immediate cessation of alleged secret conversion practices and appropriate action against Firdaus. The MCCBCHST emphasises the importance of protecting the rights of minors and maintaining family integrity, urging that no child should be secretly converted, thereby denying them their parents' protection.

Meanwhile, two lawyers and an activist have demanded an investigation into Firdaus and are urging police reports to be lodged and for his arrest. Lawyer Rajesh Nagarajan argued that Firdaus had essentially confessed to converting minors and urged affected parents to file police reports.

Lawyer Sachpreetraj Singh Sohanpal criticised the government's silence on the matter, accusing it of double standards. "The Madani government has always warned about touching on topics revolving around the 3Rs," he said, referring to issues related to race, religion, and

royalty. "Yet, it has not made any statement on this matter."

S. Shashi Kumar, president of the Global Human Rights Federation, questioned the government's lack of response. "After the issue was first highlighted, there have been numerous press statements. Yet, to this day, the education ministry, the police, and the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC) have not stepped in," he said.

Malaysia Hindu Sangam spokesman Arun Doraisamy called for the education ministry to ban Firdaus from public schools. "This would provide non-Muslim parents with some comfort in knowing that individuals like Firdaus are not in contact with their children," he said. He also emphasised the need for the police and AGC to take action against the preacher. "The government must issue an official statement denouncing such acts of covertly converting minors, which abuse our students," he added.


Lawyer-activist Siti Kasim said Firdaus had brought shame to the Muslim community and criticised the authorities inaction despite numerous police reports. She encouraged more non-Muslim parents to come forward, accusing Firdaus of causing disharmony among Malaysians.


**KUALA LUMPUR
ARCHDIOCESE**

**Diary of Archbishop
Julian Leow**

July

- 1-5 Catholic Bishops Conference of Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei – Keningau, Sabah**
- 6 Confirmation – Church of St Jude, Rawang**
- 7 Confirmation – Church of St Paul the Hermit**
- 7 KAGAPE – Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras**
- 7 Confirmation – Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Brickfields**
- 13 Confirmation – Church of St Aloysius, Mantin & Church of St Theresa, Nilai**
- 14 Confirmation – Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jalan Peel**
- 14 Confirmation – Church of the Holy Family, Kajang**


**MALACCA JOHORE
DIOCESE**

**Diary of Bishop
Bernard Paul**

July

- 1-4 Catholic Bishops Conference of Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei – Keningau, Sabah**
- 6-10 Deliverance & Healing Programme II – MAJODI Centre**
- 12 MAJODI Centre Reporting Meeting**
- 13-14 CARITAS MJD General Assembly – MAJODI Centre**



**Malacca Johore Diocese
News Update #178**


Greetings dear friends of MJD,
What's exciting? Awe at the rise of two Asian Giants — China and India. Pakistan is experiencing a population explosion. More calls for aid to Gaza and an end to wars. Greater national pride and loyalty were noted among the "minorities". Johor has become the latest data centre hotspot. There is a clamour for autonomy, more share of the economic pie and Malaysian-ness among the Borneo states.

What's disappointing? The deep-seated corruption, inefficiencies, abuse of power and leakages, at all levels of public service. The rising prices, the falling ringgit, the brain drain and the many skilled workers lost to our neighbour. Those who love what they have, stay. For others, the grass is always greener on the other side.

"Toughen Up" Times: They interviewed the founder of Dubai, Sheikh Rashid, about his country's future. He said: "My grandfather rode a camel, my father rode a camel. I drive a Mercedes, my son drives a Land Rover, and my grandson will drive a Land Rover, but my great-grandson will have to ride a camel again..."

"Why?"

"Hard times create strong men, strong men create easy times. Easy times create weak men, weak men create hard times. Many won't understand, but we need to raise warriors not parasites."

Even the Chinese say that by the third or fourth generation, the amassed wealth will be squandered and businesses will lack bite. The wealth, the good life and plenty weaken the next generation. We are seeing it happen: spoilt brats, parasites, weak characters and a nation of young misfits who are brought up with an entitlement attitude. Many civilisations disappeared because of opulence and decadence. We need dreamers, farmers, builders and fighters.

A Thought For The Week: The Complainant
A pessimist read his horoscope. It said, *"Make new friends and see what happens."* He made three new friends and nothing happened. Now he complains that he is stuck with three new friends.

A lesson from the pessimist: That's the problem with having a negative attitude. No matter how good something is, negative thinkers will always find something to complain about.

Announcements For The Week:

- 1. Pesta Kesyukuran Menuai** at the diocesan level, takes place at MAJODI Centre on June 29, from 9.00am to 5.00pm. Selamat Hari Gawai to the Sarawakians, and Selamat Hari Kaamatan to all Sabahans of the MJD from the Bishop and all Catholics.
- 2. Coming next:** The Regional Pastoral Assembly 2024 or popularly known as PMPC 5. All priests, named religious, ministries's exco, and three reps per parish (one youth rep) will make up the MJD contingent. The RPA2024 begins on Sunday, Aug 25 with an evening Mass. All Sunday evening Masses in the diocese are cancelled.
- 3. The Mangrove Project** with Caritas-CJC MJD on July 28!
- 4. The Seventh Kursus Evangelisasi Peribadi (KEP)** takes off on July 7!
- 5. The session Spiritual Warfare in the Last Days** will take place on August 3 at the Church of St Louis, Kluang.
- 6. Rt Rev Bishop Datuk Cornelius Piong, D.D.** celebrates his 75th birthday on July 1, Monday at Pusat Ziarah Keluarga Kudus Nulu Sosopon with a Thanksgiving Mass at 5.30pm, followed by welcoming of guests for dinner and cultural performances at 6.30pm. Wishing His Excellency a blessed birthday from the Diocese of Malacca Johore.

This Weeks QnQ? Q asks:
Why are there so many misunderstandings, so many reactions and defensiveness in conversations?

True! Communication gets messy. There is:

1. What is meant.
2. What is said.
3. What is heard.
4. What is understood.

If you don't realise communication is passing through all four gates, you'll continue to be mystified why you're misunderstood and as to why you misunderstand others. The Solution: ***Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood.*** (Fifth Habit, Steven Covey)

See the Holy Spirit @ work:
The Holy Spirit Kindles Diversity: "Indeed the Holy Spirit brings forth different charisms in the Church, which at first glance, may seem to create disorder. Under His guidance, however, they constitute an immense richness, because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of unity, which is not the same thing as uniformity. Only the Holy Spirit is able to kindle diversity, and multiplicity and, at the same time, bring about unity. When we try to create diversity, but are closed within our own particular and exclusive ways of seeing things, we create division. When we try to create unity through our own human designs, we end up with uniformity and homogenisation. If we let ourselves be led by the Spirit, however, richness, variety and diversity will never create conflict, because the Spirit spurs us to experience variety in the communion of the Church." (Pope Francis, Homily, 2014)

Something to tickle you: *Without the Way there is no going; without the Truth there is no knowing; without the Life there is no living.* (Thomas A Kempis)


Bishop Bernard Paul



Celebrating the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Bertam Valley

The triduum celebration at the Chapel of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on Friday, June 7, culminated in parishioners and visitors consecrating themselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary. This special act took place at the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Tanah Rata during the Sunday Mass on June 9. A total of 34 people, including seven visitors, performed their consecration before the final blessing was imparted by the parish priest, Fr Augustine Lee.

During the consecration prayer, participants offered their sufferings, sickness, and hurts, while seeking God's Will and expressing grati-



Parishioners and visitors at the Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary held at the Church of Our Lady of Mt Carmel, Cameron Highlands on June 9, 2024

tude for the kindness and blessings received from God. An introduction was provided beforehand on the significance of consecrating oneself to the Twin Hearts, and Fr Augustine translated the Consecration Prayer into Mandarin to accommodate the

Chinese-speaking community.

Parishioners were enlightened about the meaning of Consecration, understanding it as a commitment to belong to the Heart of Mary and to follow a sure path of living, loving, and serving the Heart of Jesus. These

Two Hearts are united in their love for the Father and humanity, with the Heart of Mary serving as the channel through which the saving graces of Christ are bestowed upon us.

Two parishioners had participated in the online formation titled *Divine*

Mercy In The Second Greatest Story Ever Told by Fr Michael Gaitley, MIC. This event was organised by lay leaders from various parishes in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur and the Archdiocese of Kuching. Through the formation, participants learned about God's continuous effort, since the fall of Adam and Eve, to persuade humanity to place all their trust in Him. According to Pope St John Paul II, mercy is the central revelation, and despite great infidelity and sin, God remains merciful, gracious, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

Following the recitation of the consecration prayer, Fr Augustine blessed those who had consecrated themselves with holy water. — *By Cynthia Baring-Gould*

Bentong, Pahang

The 88-year-old semi-rural Church of the Sacred Heart marked its feast with a triduum from June 6 to June 8. Led by parish priest Fr Clement Lim, the triduum was a deeply reflective period for the parish community.

During the first two days, Fr Clement focused on themes of trust and love. He emphasised the importance of placing trust in God rather than in the fragile supports of worldly things. "The word of the Lord urges us to place our trust in God, not in brittle supports of created things on earth," the cleric reminded his parishioners, urging them to trust in God always. He also highlighted the significance of living in love, challenging the congregation with the question, "Are we able to live in love?"

The final day of the triduum, June 8, was preceded by a novena to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In his homily, Fr Clement addressed the theme of discipleship, asking, "Are we united with Christ?" Drawing from the story of Adam and Eve, he ques-

tioned whether the congregation was solving problems or merely assigning blame within the Church. "Jesus gave the commandment that we love one another," Fr Clement said, urging the parishioners to take responsibility and avoid scapegoating in times of trouble.

Reminding the congregation of Jesus' words, "You are the branches, I am the vine. Remain in Me to bear fruit that will last," he encouraged them to cling to Jesus for eternal life and to avoid pride, listen to Jesus, pray for their families, communities, and society, and seek forgiveness humbly when wrong. He called for unity and acceptance, urging the parishioners to follow God's law and to continue praying to be true disciples of Jesus.

After the Mass, Fr Clement invited everyone to a fellowship where parishioners enjoyed a wide variety of food items they had brought. The event was a testament to the close-knit nature of the small Catholic community in Bentong, fostering a sense of unity and togetherness among the parishioners. — *By Bernard Anthony*

Kulim, Kedah

The Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus was recently celebrated with great joy at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, with the theme *Enlarge the Space of Your Tent*.

Preceding the feast, various formations were organised at the Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) level to delve into the significance of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Led by lay people and seminarian Bro Michael Mejoery Simon, these formations were structured into four parts: a brief reflection on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, engaging in creative activities, communal prayer, and fellowship. A considerable number of BEC members actively participated in these enriching sessions.

The celebration commenced with a four-day novena and Eucharistic celebration conducted in Mandarin, Tamil, English, and Bahasa Malaysia respectively. The celebrants were Fr Charles Chin, Fr Raymond Raj, and Fr Bernard Hyacinth, SJ. These services were marked by profound preaching from the cele-



Parishioners carrying the statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the procession.

brants and active involvement from the community, reflecting the unity of the Body of Christ.

Fr Martin Arlando presided over the Mass on the feast day of the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. In his homily, he underscored the openness of Jesus' heart to all parishioners, inviting each one to embrace His abundant love. Fr Martin emphasised that Jesus extends His welcome to all, inviting them into His expansive tent, where His love is shared abundantly among all.

Following the Mass, a procession in honour of the Sacred Heart of Jesus took place within the church compound, culminating in a benediction.

During his address, parish priest Msgr Henry Rajoo expressed his gratitude to all parishioners for their enthusiastic participation in the feast, underscoring the importance of community engagement in fostering the spirit of celebration and unity within the parish. — *By Johnkuppasawary*

Msgr Stanislaus Soosamariam, the parish priest of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, emphasised the significance of the Eucharist as the central theme for the recent parish feast day celebration. He highlighted that the annual feast provides a valuable opportunity for parishioners to deepen their understanding of the Eucharist, which is the cornerstone of Christian life.

Fr Nelson Joseph from the Diocese of Penang was the main preacher for most of the nine-day novena and Mass held from June 1 to 9. The novena sessions were instrumental in guiding the faithful through reflections on the Eucharist, prayer, and fellowship, enhancing their spiritual journey.

Fr Nelson, in his reflections on the Eucharist, highlighted its centrality in the Catholic faith and its transformative power in nourishing and strengthening believers for their earthly journey and eternal destination. He emphasised the importance



Archbishop Julian Leow and Archbishop Emeritus Murphy Pakiam joining the faithful in the procession.

of observing the five precepts of the Catholic Church, underlining the Eucharist's role in fostering love, mercy, and spiritual growth among believers.

Archbishop Julian Leow presided over the Eucharistic celebration on June 9. Concelebrating were Msgr Stanislaus, Fr Nelson, Fr Michael Teng OFM, Cap and Archbishop

Emeritus Murphy Pakiam.

In his homily, Archbishop Julian posed a poignant question: when faced with choices between spending time with family or serving in the Church, or between attending to personal health or reaching out to others, whose needs takes precedence? Reflecting on a late-night sick call after a day filled with Masses and ap-

pointments, the archbishop emphasised the importance of prioritising the needs of others, even when exhausted. He stressed Jesus' example of constant service and urged listeners to take responsibility for their actions, emphasising the sincerity and true intention behind their service to others.

Inviting all to follow the example of Jesus and Mary, Archbishop Julian quoted Mary's humble acceptance of God's will, encouraging everyone to do what is right in the eyes of the Holy Spirit and to reflect Christ in their lives. He prayed for the guidance of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, urging believers to emulate His compassionate and selfless love in all their thoughts and actions.

The feast culminated in a solemn candlelight procession, winding through sections of Jalan Peel, Jalan Shelley, and Jalan Cheras. Approximately 1,400 faithful participated in the procession. This event stood as a testament to the parish's devotion to

the Sacred Heart of Jesus, emphasising adoration and reverence for the Eucharistic Lord.

Msgr Stanislaus, in his address, expressed gratitude to all the celebrants. He commended Fr Nelson for his efforts in bringing parishioners closer to Jesus through the Eucharist and other sacraments. The parish priest also acknowledged the participation of all segments of the parish community, including migrants, in organising the festivities, which were celebrated with solemnity and meaning.

The Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus also saw a prayer for the consecration of families to the Sacred Heart, led by Fr Nelson and Msgr Stanislaus. Parishioners were encouraged to lift up their family members in need of healing and reconciliation, praying for their families to be filled with love, holiness, and mercy under the protection of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. — *By Bernard Anthony*

MJD launches Special Needs awareness campaign in South Johor

By Deacon Dr Leslie Petrus

PLENTONG, Johor Bahru: The Special Needs Children Parents' Support Group, under the umbrella of the Diocesan Commission for Family, Laity and Life in the Diocese of Malacca Johore, launched their awareness campaign at the Church of St Joseph. This initiative marks the beginning of their campaign, which will extend to all parishes in southern Johor. The group made their debut on June 8 after the 5.00pm Mass.

The group's aim and objective are to raise awareness among parents about

bringing their special needs children — physically and mentally challenged — to church. They also encourage parents to join the group to assist their children in achieving some level of independence and skills, especially as the parents themselves are ageing. The group currently comprises English and Bahasa-speaking parents.

During his homily, Fr Sixtus Pitah, OFM, emphasised the importance of inclusivity for individuals with special needs, highlighting that they are made in the image of God. Although they may present challenges, the community should be patient and understanding towards the parents of

these children. Fr Sixtus stressed that these children are equally God's children and have the same rights as anyone else. He referenced Jesus' outreach to the disabled, emphasizing the need for the community to support and befriend these parents, following Jesus' example.

The group's coordinator, Veronica Dass, whose son is non-verbal autistic, invited parents to meet and chat with them and witness their children selling cupcakes — their first project aimed at teaching the children sales and money-handling skills under parental guidance. This project will be a monthly event covering all parishes in

South Johor.

A parent of a special needs child expressed gratitude for the support received, noting that it was the first time people had approached and interacted with them. Previously, many had shied away due to her son's behaviour. She and her husband felt recognised for the first time.

The event was perceived as a blessing from the Lord by the parents, who now feel a sense of purpose in their lives. They see it as a testament to Jesus' presence and God's grace in their lives as they care for their special needs children, despite the challenges they may face.

Penang diocese honours Archbishop Emeritus Murphy

On June 15 and 16, the Diocese of Penang celebrated the diamond jubilee of Archbishop Emeritus Tan Sri Murphy Pakiam's sacerdotal anniversary in two parishes where he had previously served as parish priest — the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (NBVM) in Butterworth and the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes (OLOL) in Ipoh. Archbishop Emeritus Murphy, a native of the Penang diocese, served as the third metropolitan archbishop of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur from 2003 to 2013.

Celebration at NBVM, Butterworth

Parishioners of NBVM, gathered on June 15 to honour Archbishop Murphy on his 60th anniversary of priesthood. The Mass, presided over by Cardinal Sebastian Francis and concelebrated with four priests including NBVM parish priest Fr Dominic Santhiyagu, was attended by the archbishop emeritus' family, friends, and parishioners.

In his homily, Cardinal Sebastian emphasised the significance of thanksgiving in Catholic life, saying, "For us Catholics, thanksgiving is a way of life; it is our daily bread. And the Eucharist, too, simply means thanksgiving." He attributed Archbishop Emeritus Murphy's 60 years of dedicated service to his spirit of gratitude, sustained by the Holy Spirit. Cardinal Sebastian highlighted the missionary spirit of the Penang diocese, which has trained and



Cardinal Sebastian Francis looking on as Archbishop Emeritus Murphy Pakiam thanks the people for their presence at the celebration.

formed five bishops who were then sent to serve in other dioceses, showcasing a true missionary spirit. "We have been a generous diocese, and we will continue to be one," he affirmed.

Quoting St Paul's second letter

to Timothy, Cardinal Sebastian remarked, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful — for He cannot deny himself" (2 Tim 2:13), affirming God's unwavering faithfulness mirrored in Archbishop Emeritus Murphy's journey. The celebration was a testament to this divine faithfulness and the archbishop emeritus' steadfast commitment to his vocation. Cardinal Sebastian concluded his homily with the blessings *Ad multos annos* (to many years) and *Tu es sacerdos in aeternum* (you are a priest forever).

The celebration continued with a heartfelt speech by Agnes Chin, a long-time parishioner, who reminisced about Archbishop Emeritus Murphy's pastoral care, particularly his dedication to the spiritual growth of children and his encouragement of parishioners to engage with the Liturgy of the Hours. A video presentation followed, highlighting his 60 years of service, after which the archbishop emeritus shared his reflections and blessed the congregation. The event concluded with attendees sharing personal moments with him, filled with joy and nostalgia.



The faithful lining up to meet the jubilarian.

Celebration at OLOL, Ipoh



Cardinal Sebastian Francis holding aloft the portrait that was presented to Archbishop Emeritus Pakiam by the parish community of Our Lady of Lourdes, Ipoh.

The following day, June 16, the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, celebrated a dual event — the Sacrament of Confirmation for 44 young parishioners and Archbishop Emeritus Murphy's diamond jubilee to the priesthood.

Present together with Cardinal Sebastian Francis were Frs Robert Daniel and George Vaithynathan, and Deacon Sandnasamy Peter.

In his homily, Cardinal Sebastian highlighted the parable of the mustard seed from the Gospel, drawing a parallel between the smallest seed growing into the largest shrub and Archbishop Emeritus Murphy's spiritual journey. He emphasised that, like the seed, individuals must plant themselves in the fertile soil of God's mercy through faith and surrender to His divine will.

Cardinal Sebastian also acknowledged the parish's long-standing missionary role, particularly in the lives of Archbishop Emeritus Murphy and Bishop Bernard Paul of Malacca Johore diocese, both of whom served as parish priests at OLOL.

Archbishop Emeritus Murphy, ordained at OLOL on May 10, 1964, was the first priest to be

ordained after the church's new building was completed in 1959. He served as parish priest from 1970 to 1972, earning the title "Shepherd of Transformation" for his innovative pastoral initiatives. During the confirmation ceremony, the 44 candidates received blessings from both Cardinal Sebastian and Archbishop Emeritus Murphy.

Before the Mass, a video tribute celebrated Archbishop Emeritus Murphy's priestly journey. Parish Council chairperson Xavier presented him with a portrait capturing his service over the years. The archbishop emeritus expressed his deep gratitude to all present, thanking them for their support throughout his priestly journey. The celebration ended with Archbishop Emeritus Murphy bestowing individual blessings on the congregation, young and old, who eagerly received his special grace.

These celebrations at NBVM and OLOL underscored the profound impact of Archbishop Emeritus Murphy Pakiam's ministry and the deep affection and respect he garnered from the communities he served.

Devotees marvel at miraculous virtues of St Anthony

By Elvina Fernandez

KUALA LUMPUR: The presence of the relic of St Anthony was a highlight of this year's feast day celebration at the Church of St Anthony in Pudu. Believed to be an item used by the saint during his lifetime, the relic drew devotees who patiently waited in line to catch a glimpse and seek blessings. St Anthony, known as a patron saint of miracles, lost items, and various professions, holds a special place in the hearts of devotees, who shared stories of miraculous interventions in their lives.

Twenty-seven-year-old Helena Yashini expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the veneration, attributing St Anthony's assistance to her successful completion of her master's journey in psychology. "I often felt many moments that were very hard to go through personally, but I prayed to St Anthony to help find my lost determination to complete my course. And although it took me an



The relic of St Anthony (pic inset) at the Church of St Anthony in Pudu attracted many devotees who waited in line to see it and seek blessings.

extra year to complete all my 500 hours of counselling with young marginalised children to graduate, he made it possible for me to push through. So here I am to thank him for praying for me!"

Another devotee, Mary Magdalene Mann, recounted the numerous miracles St Anthony has worked in her life and for her three daughters. "Seven years ago, I had eye surgery, and I recall the moment my world was black when they opened the bandage covering my eyes," she said.

"Doctors said I have to go through another surgery to try to recover my vision. We came to St Anthony to pray. I told him my fears and cried out to him. On the way home, I could see the signs on the road. My vision was restored!"

Modestus Noodin, 45, from Nigeria, expressed his devotion to St Anthony, sharing that it was his fourth time commemorating the feast in Kuala Lumpur since relocating to Malaysia. He expressed his intention to continue visiting annually,

emphasising St Anthony's role as an intercessor in his prayers. "I firmly believe that whatever I pray for will be resolved with St Anthony's intervention. He holds a special place in my heart, and I've experienced numerous miracles in my life because of him," he affirmed. Modestus also revealed that he frequently drives to the church whenever he feels the need to communicate with the saint, finding solace in St Anthony's presence in his daily life.

Anna Pratadaja, 58, from Indonesia, shared her heartfelt connection to St Anthony and the church, despite it being her first time participating in the feast day celebration. She attended the final day novena with her husband, Steven Tan, emphasising the significance of the saint in her life. "Even a few days ago, I asked St Anthony to intercede for me, and a miracle took place. Today I am here to ask St Anthony to pray for my brother's health," she said, reminiscing about her first visit to the church 11 years ago during a programme known as 'Kebangkitan

Rohani'.

Ashwin, a member of the Bahai community of Malaysia, described his experience during a faith-understanding visit to the church. He noted an indescribable sense of spirituality upon entering the church for the first time, considering it a blessing to visit during the feast day. "This is my initial encounter with a church, and it's been truly enriching," he reflected. Nurwin, his companion, echoed Ashwin's sentiments, expressing gratitude for the warm reception they received from everyone they encountered. "The community welcomed us warmly, offering hospitality and inviting us to partake in the festivities with open hearts," he remarked.

Throughout the June 7 to 15 celebration, there was a strong sense of community. Devotees, both young and old, participated with high reverence in the daily novena and Mass. From the choir's uplifting hymns to the volunteers' tireless efforts in organising the event, everyone played a part in making the celebration a spiritual success.

A call for ecological conversion

TELUK INTAN, Perak: The 130th annual Feast of St Anthony of Padua was celebrated with a strong message of ecological responsibility at the Teluk Intan church, founded in 1894. Hundreds of parishioners gathered for the triduum from June 13 to 15, led by Msgr Henry Rajoo, who served as both the preacher and the main celebrant.

The triduum's theme, *Salt of the Earth, Light of the World: Communion, Participation & Mission*, guided the reflections and activities. Each day focused on a specific sub-theme: *A Shared Mission Towards a Synodal Church* on Day 1; *Living The Paschal Mystery Through Senses* on Day 2, and *Listening to The Cry of the Earth* on Day 3.

Msgr Henry, parish priest of

the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Kulim, Kedah, addressed the pressing issues of climate change and global warming during his sermons. He highlighted the alarming rise in sea levels, extreme weather, and landslides, all attributed to the increase in Earth's average temperature.

"Life is changing, and climate is changing," he said, urging the congregation to reflect on their environmental impact. He reminded them of the biblical narrative of the Garden of Eden, where God entrusted humans with the responsibility of caring for creation. He emphasised that humanity has failed in this duty, causing harm to the Earth.

"Creation is crying. Are we listening?" he asked. Msgr Henry stressed the need for lifestyle

changes to combat climate change and global warming. He pointed out that increased vehicle emissions, improper waste disposal, and deforestation contribute significantly to environmental degradation.

Calling for an ecological conversion, as advocated by Pope Francis, he urged the faithful to repent for their environmental sins and seek forgiveness. However, he cautioned that nature will take its course if humanity continues to exploit it irresponsibly.

"We must change our lifestyles as the Earth gets hotter and sea levels rise," he said. "Be ready to face the laws of nature." He specifically warned the residents of Teluk Intan, a low-lying area, to be aware of the reality of rising sea levels and to heed the cry of the Earth.



Msgr Henry Rajoo walking in procession with the faithful.

Msgr Henry concluded by encouraging everyone to ask for God's help and to commit to slowing down climate change. "We must change our lives and preserve Mother Earth with resilience and determination," he urged.

The triduum included daily novena prayers in honour of St Anthony before Mass, celebrated by parish priest Fr

David Lourdes. The candlelight procession, a highlight of the celebration, featured two floats — one with a large Crucifix and the other with a statue of St Anthony of Padua. As the procession moved through parts of Teluk Intan, participants prayed the Rosary, and the event concluded with Benediction upon returning to the church. — **By Bernard Anthony**

KUALA LUMPUR: Forty faithful from across the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur embarked on an inaugural pilgrimage of thanks to deepen their gratitude to God for all His blessings. The pilgrimage, organised by the Thanksgiving Ministry of the Church of the Holy Rosary in Brickfields, aimed to inspire a deep sense of thanksgiving among the participants.

The journey began with a thanksgiving prayer, "Father We Thank Thee," and a reflection on Luke 17:15-19. The pilgrims also reflected on six thanksgiving verses from the Bible, including 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: "Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God."

Janet Ang, coordinator of the Thanksgiving Ministry, explained that their former parish priest, the late Fr Joachim Tan initiated the



A pilgrimage of thanksgiving

ministry to inspire gratitude as an expression of God's greatness. The ministry organises a triennial Thanksgiving Mass and dinner, with the next celebration scheduled for May 26, 2026.

At the Church of Visitation in Seremban, the pilgrims prayed the Scriptural Rosary, dedicating each decade of the Luminous Mysteries to thanking God for His love and

mercy. Parish priest Fr Xavier Andrew, and assistant parish priest Fr Philip Tay, OCD, and Fr Nicholas Hoh, OCD, administered the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The pilgrims then participated in silent adoration of the Holy Eucharist, reflecting on God's love and mercy, followed by Benediction.

During the thanksgiving Mass, Fr Xavier spoke about the

incorrupt tongue of St Anthony of Padua, whose feast is June 13. He highlighted St Anthony's virtues: controlling the tongue to praise rather than condemn, practicing humility to forgive, and forgiving without delay. Fr Xavier encouraged the faithful to view the pilgrimage as a step towards God and a message for personal conversion.

Clara Bong from the Church of St Thomas More, Subang, described Fr Xavier's message as "certainly a conscience agitator and food for the soul." Matilda from the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, Kuala Lumpur, saw it as a reminder to avoid gossip and love thy neighbour with forgiveness.

Shirley Benedict from the Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam, appreciated the "very fruitful journey of thanksgiving because every moment was so beautiful." Janet Foo from the Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya, was thankful for the fellowship and friendship formed during the pilgrimage.

Veteran pilgrimage leader George Yeow from the Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras, felt blessed to have helped make the journey a success. — **Thanksgiving Ministry, Holy Rosary Church**

Retreat fosters unity among Malaysian and Thai deaf communities

By Pamela Ngeau Seau Wei and Melina Fair

PENANG: The Catholic Ministry for the Deaf (CMfD), under the auspices of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, recently organised a community retreat at the Stella Maris Retreat Centre.

This event, held in collaboration with the Deaf Catholic Association of Thailand (DCAT) from the Archdiocese of Bangkok; the Pastoral Ministry for the Deaf (PMD) under the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand; and the Ministry of Persons with Disabilities of the Chantaburi Diocese (MPDC), brought together 35 retreatants, including 25 Malaysians, one Vietnamese, and nine Thais.

Under the theme *Journey of Hope*, the retreat commenced with a short introduction from each participant, hailing from Thailand, Vietnam, Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, and Penang. The delegation from DCAT, PMD, and MPDC, led by their spiritual director, Fr Peter Bhuravaj Searaariyah, was warmly welcomed. The opening session included a prayer and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, setting a reflective tone for the retreat.

The second day began with a personal prayer session, followed by the Divine Mercy Chaplet, led by members of CMfD using the Malaysian Sign Language (Bahasa Isyarat Malaysia or "BIM"). Participants, including



Fr Peter Bhuravaj Searaariyah celebrating the Eucharist in Thai and Sign language, assisted by interpreters Hugo Narong Thanomlek (Thai Sign Language), Mark Hiew (BIM), and Yuwadee (Thai-English).

Thai Catholic brothers and sisters, joined in the prayers.

Fr Peter, who celebrated the Eucharist in Thai and Thai Sign Language, was assisted by interpreters Hugo Narong Thanomlek (Thai Sign Language), Mark Hiew (BIM), and Yuwadee (Thai-English). Mass hymns were signed in BIM by Raymond Raj. The Mass was followed by the exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, in conjunction with the Solemnity of *Corpus Christi*.

The congregation received a very special blessing as Fr Peter, holding the Blessed Sacrament in a monstrance, gently placed

it on each participant's head. This created a deeply personal and intimate moment with Jesus for everyone present.

A talk themed *Year of Hope* by Fr Peter elaborated on the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope, explaining the concept of "Jubilee," the history, the opening of the Holy Door, and the symbolism behind the official logo.

After the insightful talk, the retreatants visited the nearby College General seminary for a tour. Led by Bro Jayson Wang and two other seminarians, the participants learned about the seminary's rich history dating back to 1665. They gained insights into the founda-

tion of the seminary, the lives of the seminarians, and the saints and martyrs who studied there. The tour's highlight was the visit to the Chapel of the Sacred Heart, which houses relics of saints and martyrs, each with its unique story.

The final programme of the day was Bibliodrama, featuring a passage from the Gospel of Mark 2:23-28. The passage was initially signed to the participants, who then engaged in "sculpting" the characters or items mentioned in the passage on each other. Following this activity, participants shared their experiences. This session aimed to demonstrate alternative methods of Bible study, recognising that reading the Bible independently can be challenging. By presenting Bible stories through action, it provided a visual aid that facilitated better understanding for the deaf community.

On the third and final day, Thai participants led the Rosary recitation, with personal intentions shared by all. The prayers were beautifully signed in Thai sign language, fostering a sense of unity.

As the retreat concluded, Fr Peter offered closing remarks and a final blessing. The retreat fostered strong relationships between the Malaysian and Thai Deaf Communities, drawing participants closer to Christ. It was a powerful opportunity to strengthen faith, experience God's grace, and share hope with the world as "Pilgrims of Hope."

Embracing spiritual growth through Christian meditation

MELAKA: The Church of St Theresa warmly welcomed Fr Paul Cheong OFM Cap, parish priest of the Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras, for their annual formation sessions. The sessions, conducted in English on June 11 and in Mandarin on June 12, saw approximately 60 and 104 parishioners in attendance, respectively.

The theme for this year's formation was *Lord teach us to pray – an introduction to Christian Meditation*, continuing the parish's focus on spirituality and prayer for the third consecutive year.

Fr Paul initiated our formation by encouraging us to stand still for a few moments, promoting relaxation in our bodies and focusing on our breath. Following this, he led a prayer invoking the fruits of Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Gentleness, Faithfulness, Generosity, and Self-control. Drawing from Ephesians 1:17ff, he emphasised the potential for experiencing the fullness of God's glory.

He highlighted the multifaceted nature of the Church, referring to it as a Mystery, a Communion, and a Mission. He illustrated the importance of personal experience with God,

using the analogy of a dog chasing a rabbit, emphasising the necessity of sustaining our spiritual journey through personal encounters with God. Stressing the significance of experiencing the triune God — Father, Son, and Spirit — he underscored the need for a balanced spirituality encompassing holiness, communion, and mission.

Quoting Luke 11:1 - 4, Fr Paul encouraged us to ask Jesus to teach us meditation, urging us to be still before God. He acknowledged the prevalence of unawareness or unfamiliarity with contemplative prayer, emphasising the importance of learning to meditate in order to deepen our spiritual practice.

The friar further emphasised the importance of stillness in meditation, drawing from Psalm 46:10, and described meditation as a journey to the inner core of being, where rest is found in the stillness of the Spirit (Matthew 11:28). He discussed the interconnectedness of body, mind, and spirit, stressing the importance of maintaining a healthy body and mind to allow the spirit to flourish.

Delving into forms of prayer, Fr Paul explained mental prayer, including discursive

and affective prayer, and contemplative prayer. He introduced St. Theresa of Avila's seven Mansions of prayer from her book, "The Interior Castle," and the practice of *Lectio Divina*.

Fr Paul then introduced Christian Meditation by Fr John Main, highlighting simplicity, stillness, and silence with God. He shared the mantra Ma-Ra-Na-Tha and provided guidance on meditation techniques, including posture and frequency. The session included an informative video on the "Pilgrimage" of Christian Meditation, featuring personal testimonies from practitioners of John Main's Tradition.

Throughout the two-hour formation, Fr Paul reminded participants of their Christian calling to holiness, communion, and mission, situating Christian Meditation within the context of contemplative prayer. He urged attendees to transition from merely reciting prayers to engaging in contemplative prayer, emphasising the significance of this shift. The participants expressed their gratitude to Fr Paul for his enlightening guidance. — *By Christine Ong*



The participants listening intently about the different forms of prayer.

Langkawi chapel celebrates First Holy Communion

LANGKAWI, Kedah: Eight young members of the Ave Stella Maris Chapel community in Langkawi received the Sacrament of First Holy Communion on June 16. The Eucharist was celebrated by Fr Michael Cheah, the parish priest of the Church of St Michael in Alor Setar.

During his homily, Fr Michael stressed on the importance of maintaining faith in God and encouraged the children to participate in regular Confession to prepare

for receiving the Sacrament of Holy Communion. He also expressed gratitude to the children's Catechism teacher for preparing them for the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion.

The parents of these young communicants represent diverse professional backgrounds, serving in both governmental and private sectors across Langkawi Island. — *By Johnkuppasawary*



Fr Michael Cheah with the First Holy Communicants and their catechist at the Chapel of Ave Stella Maris Chapel in Langkawi.

Commemorating the gift of parenthood

ALOR SETAR, Kedah: With the encouragement and support of parish priest Fr Michael Cheah, the Church of St Michael joyfully celebrated Parents' Day on the weekend of June 7 during the Tamil Mass and June 8 during the English Mass.

The celebration was marked by heartfelt moments and expressions of gratitude. During each Mass, children dedicated songs to their parents, filling the church with mel-

odies of love and appreciation. The sight of young voices singing in harmony, paying tribute to the guiding hands that nurture them, was truly moving.

Following the musical performances, parents were presented with gifts, a complimentary gesture from the parish. The gifts, though simple, symbolised the deep respect and gratitude the church holds for the parents who tirelessly work to uphold the values of faith, love, and

community in their families.

Fr Michael emphasised the importance of honouring parents, noting that their sacrifices and dedication lay the foundation for a strong and vibrant Catholic community. He expressed his joy in seeing the church come together to celebrate the parents, highlighting the event as a testament to the unity and love that define the parish.

The celebration was not just an event but a reminder of the virtues



Parents with their gifts.

of family life. It underscored the vital role parents play in nurturing the faith and values of the next generation. The songs, gifts, and communal spirit all reflected the essence of the Catholic faith —

love, respect, and gratitude.

As the event concluded, smiles and heartfelt conversations filled the air, with parents feeling appreciated and children learning the importance of honouring their elders.

Witnessing the real presence of Jesus

RAWANG: The Church of St Jude celebrated the Feast of *Corpus Christi* with a procession around Rawang town after the sunset Mass on June 1. The celebration was attended by over 800 parishioners and pilgrims from nearby parishes, who received both the Body and Blood of Jesus during Communion.

"It is not often we get the privilege and honour to receive our Lord in both species, the body and blood," said Lavanyah Ann. She expressed her joy, believing that both she and her unborn child were blessed.

After the post-Communion prayer, the parish presented its annual long-serving awards to two parishioners, Antony Francis Fernandez and Theresa Madona Gomez.

Parish priest Fr Vincent Thomas then introduced Bro Jonathan Andrew Rao to the congregation,

announcing his upcoming ordination to the diaconate at the Church of St Jude on July 20, 2024.

During the procession, Fr Vincent carried the Holy Eucharist, displayed in a monstrance, on a beautifully decorated truck. He was followed by an entourage of servers, flower girls, communion ministers, and parishioners carrying lighted candles. As they moved through town, the group recited the Rosary in three languages.

Onlookers were in awe as Fr Vincent exposed the Blessed Sacrament at three different spots in town. The procession was managed by police and members of the Rela team to ensure orderliness.

The procession concluded back at the church, where the faithful received a final blessing before enjoying a simple fellowship. — *By Mercy Almeida Stellus*



Fr Vincent carrying the monstrance.

SSVP conferences collaborate to make coffee morning a success



The four SSVP conferences uniting to raise funds through a coffee morning on June 9 at the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows.

PENANG: Located in the bustling centre of Georgetown, City Parish is surrounded by many buildings, houses, and activities. Alongside this vibrant environment, there are also many homeless and poor people. Catholics in the area, through the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP), have the opportunity to reach out to the less fortunate residing around Georgetown.

City Parish encompasses four churches, each with its own SSVP Conference: Our Lady of Sorrows (OLS), Assumption (AC), St Francis Xavier (SFX), and St John Britto (SHB). Although these conferences work independently to assist the poor in their respective areas,

they collaborate on activities and fundraising efforts.

Collectively, the four SSVP conferences support 31 Friends In Need (FIN), with combined monthly expenses of around RM5000. To fund these efforts, SSVP relies on the church's second collection once a month and organises fund-raising activities. The latest event was a 'Coffee Morning' on June 9 at the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows.

With the blessing and support of parish priest Fr Edmund Woon, members of all four conferences came together to plan the coffee morning. On the day of the sale, both members and non-members volunteered to help. Over ten different

types of food were available, including *nasi lemak*, fried *bihun*, chapati, *roti jala*, sandwiches, egg tarts, butter cake, and beverages like coffee, tea, and bottled water. The ample food supply catered to parishioners from both Masses and visitors.

It was heartening to note that all the food was fully sponsored by members and their friends. As a result, all proceeds from the sale, totalling nearly RM3000, went directly to support SSVP's efforts without any deductions for costs.

SSVP City Parish extends their gratitude to Fr Edmund and the parishioners for their tremendous support in making the coffee morning a success. — *By Lucia Lai*

SMC bids *arrivederci* to Fr Anthony Liew

IPOH: The weekend of June 1 and 2 saw a large gathering of Catholics at the Church of St Michael (SMC), as parishioners came together to celebrate the final official Masses of Fr Anthony Liew San Choy. Fr Anthony, who has served as the parish priest since 2018, is set to depart for Rome to pursue a Licentiate in Spiritual Studies at the Angelicum University for the next two years.

At the conclusion of the Masses, the parish paid tribute to Fr Anthony with a heartfelt video presentation that highlighted his contributions and memories at SMC. Parishioners expressed their deep gratitude for his guidance during the challenging lockdown period. Under his leadership, a dedicated team of volunteers helped ensure the safety and spiritual welfare of the church community. The parish priest's energetic and inspiring presence motivated many, from the youth to the elderly, to engage actively in parish life.

The parish was a constant hub of activity during Fr Anthony's tenure, hosting numerous meetings and formation sessions for both English and Mandarin-speaking members. His efforts extended beyond SMC, as he also assisted in the pastoral affairs of other parishes. Additionally, Fr Anthony oversaw significant improvements to the church's infrastructure, including repairing the roof, resurfacing the parking lot, and upgrading the sound system.

On June 3, more than 1,000 parishioners attended a farewell luncheon for Fr Anthony at Ex-

quisite Seafood Restaurant. The event featured songs of appreciation in both English and Mandarin, along with a farewell dance by the Filipina community. The Parish Pastoral Council presented Fr Liew with a scroll containing a large group photo from the 2023 Parents Day celebration at SMC, depicting the community's collective efforts symbolised by colourful handprints on a 10-foot-long white cloth. A video montage showcased individual messages of thanks for Fr Anthony's dedication and service.

The luncheon also commemorated Fr Anthony's tenth anniversary of his ordination (June 6). During the cake-cutting ceremony, the Parish Pastoral Council joined him on stage to lead the guests in singing an anniversary song. Fr Anthony expressed his gratitude by performing *The Road of Grace* and a touching rendition of *My Heart Will Go On* in both English and Mandarin. He made a point to visit each of the 103 tables to take photos with guests, ensuring the luncheon would be a memorable occasion for everyone.

The parish community extends their heartfelt thanks to Fr Anthony for his dedicated service and wishes him God's blessings as he embarks on his studies in Rome. They pray for his continued faithfulness to his vocation and the mission of the Church.

Fr Anthony Heng CDD will serve as the administrator of SMC for the next four months until a new parish priest is appointed. — *By Jennifer Duarte*



Fr Anthony Liew receiving the scroll from the parishioners.



Family Life Commissions

By Deacon Dr Leslie Petrus

SINGAPORE: The 10th annual conference of Family Life Commissions from the arch/dioceses of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei was held from June 9-12 at St Francis Xavier's Seminary. Approximately 33 delegates attended together with the president of the commission, Archbishop John Wong.

The conference began with an opening Mass on the first day, officially welcoming all the delegates. In his homily, Archbishop John discussed the connection between the feast of *Corpus Christi* and the Sacred Heart, emphasising that both feasts celebrate love. He highlighted that God is love, and the heart of God is forgiveness, a virtue essential in every family. He also emphasised the

importance of the synodal journey the delegates would undertake, encouraging them to listen to one another and, in turn, to the Holy Spirit.

The conference business meeting began with representatives from all the arch/dioceses presenting their annual reports on activities and programmes conducted from June 2023 to May 2024. Delegates listened intently, asking questions and seeking clarifications. It was a valuable moment of learning and idea-sharing. Through listening to one another, various important issues were raised and discussed.

I. Decline in Catholic birth rates and marriages

There is a potential decline in birth rates and marriages among Catholics in Peninsular Malay-

sia and Singapore, although this trend is not observed in Sabah and Sarawak. Young married couples are delaying or opting out of having children due to the high costs of child care and living expenses. Some even decide to have no children. Therefore, parishes need to offer pastoral care for couples married for one to five years, as this period can be challenging when the reality of sacrificial and committed love sets in.

II. Formation of essential support groups

There is a significant need for the formation of various support groups, such as those for parents of special needs children and individuals who are divorced or single again. These groups provide essential pastoral care, friendship, and support.



Shirley Lee explaining the work of Catholic Family Life Limited.

III. Islamisation awareness

The issue of Islamisation was also addressed, emphasising the need to educate people from Sabah and Sarawak who come to Peninsular Malaysia for work. It is crucial to raise awareness about how their school-going children might be approached in this context.

IV. Youth mental health

Mental health, especially among the youth, was raised as a serious concern. Many teenagers are experiencing high levels of stress, significantly influenced by social media. Providing spiritual formation alone is insufficient when their emotions are in turmoil. Excessive use of gadgets is contributing to mental health deterioration

as they are overwhelmed by information. Parents and authorities often struggle to manage this issue effectively.

V. Challenges and trends in Catholic marriage preparation

A major topic discussed was Catholic marriage preparation. There is a rise in interfaith and disparity of cult marriages, with about 60 per cent of such cases in Singapore and Malaysia, a figure expected to increase. Issues such as the presence of two altars in homes were discussed, with instances where statues from both faiths were placed on one altar. Additionally, some couples opt not to baptise their children yet still wish to marry in the church.

Charting the course for Catholic family life

Professor Kenneth Poon Ph.D., vice-chairman of Catholic Family Life Limited and a professor at Nanyang Technology University, Singapore, led an enlightening session where he shared insights gleaned from a recent survey conducted to gauge the true needs of Catholics. Understanding these needs is crucial for refining and adapting our ministry approaches effectively.

The survey highlighted significant trends, revealing that AI and social media consumption are increasingly occupying our time. Moreover, there's a noticeable decline in traditional nuclear families, with many individuals marrying later in life. Notably, younger generations often lack exposure to the values of sacrifice and commitment within familial settings, potentially impacting their approach to marriage and faith.

Interestingly, while faith may not be a primary consideration when entering marriage, its significance often deepens in marriages lasting twenty years or more. At this stage, faith and spirituality assume greater importance. Unfortunately, the foundational Christian values essential for nurturing faith in children are often overlooked or insufficiently instilled by this point.

The prevalence of interfaith



Archbishop John Wong presenting an appreciation plaque to Professor Kenneth Poon.

marriages is increasingly evident, accompanied by a growing belief in shared spirituality as a unifying force. This prompts a proposal for the Catholic Bishops Conference to deliberate on and offer their perspectives regarding the possibility of allowing couples from different faith backgrounds to embrace shared spirituality. The premise is that such shared spirituality may contribute to the preservation of marriages, with children given the freedom to choose their faith later in life.

Many interfaith couples who have participated in marriage preparation courses report feeling disconnected from the content presented by Catholic

couples, as their experiences differ significantly. This raises the question of whether marriage preparation should not only focus on Catholic marriage practices but also explore the potential of 'shared spirituality' as an alternative approach.

Professor Poon concluded by drawing attention to a sobering statistic: despite the multitude of Catholic programmes focusing on marriage enrichment and spiritual formation, Catholics, after Muslims, have the second-highest divorce rate according to a recent government study. This underscores the urgent need to reorient our focus towards fundamental principles and values

Conclusion

Fr Ambrose Vaz, the Spiritual Advisor for Catholic Family Life Limited, offered a thought-provoking reflection, drawing attention to an unacknowledged challenge akin to an 'elephant' in the room within the Church's consciousness. While the *Nostra Aetate* document from Vatican II clarifies the Church's stance, Fr Vaz emphasised the need for careful consideration of the message conveyed to young Catholics in interfaith marriages, emphasising the incomparable significance of Jesus.

The chairman of Catholic Family Life (CFL) is earnestly examining Pope Francis' latest document on catechumenal pathways for married life. Pastoral Guidelines for local Churches. CFL plans to review and arrange a meeting with the Catechetical Commission, as this document arrives at a crucial juncture, offering hope. It underscores the necessity of instilling values of sacrificial love,

sharing, commitment, forgiveness, and understanding of Jesus from a young age, integrating discussions on marriage and family values into primary, secondary, and young adult education.

To optimise their effectiveness in supporting parish family ministries, bishops should prioritise investing in dedicated full-time staff. Securing paid personnel is essential for overcoming volunteer shortages and ensuring smooth succession, a challenge prevalent across all dioceses in Malaysia. As the complexities of family ministry evolve, the need for qualified professionals and field experts becomes increasingly pressing. Recognising the paramount importance of liturgy and catechetics within each parish, it's high time to introduce a compulsory focus on family life as a third pillar of ministry.

Delegates left the conference enriched and grateful for the Divine Presence that blessed the gathering.



Dinner at Crossings, a restaurant which engages young special needs people to serve and work in the kitchen.

Malaysian Catechetical Commission

By Stephanie Chia

KOTA KINABALU: The Malaysian Catechetical Commission (MCC), which is a consultative body to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, recently held their annual meeting from June 9 to 13. The MCC is a pastoral assembly consisting of one clerical and one lay representative from each of the nine dioceses across Malaysia, meeting to promote cooperation and common action in the catechetical ministry at a national level.

The meeting this year was presided over by Bishop Joseph Hii Teck Kwong of Sibü, as the newly appointed episcopal president, and Dr Steven Selvaraju from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur as the chairman of the commission. In addition to the representatives of the nine dioceses: Kota Kinabalu, Kuching, Kuala Lumpur, Keningau, Malacca Johore, Miri, Penang, Sandakan and Sibü, several observers from the Archdiocese of Singapore and the Apostolic Vicariate of Brunei also joined



The members of the Malaysian Catechetical Commission together with observers from the Archdiocese of Singapore and the Apostolic Vicariate of Brunei.

the meeting to listen and to share.

In his keynote address, Bishop Joseph expressed his gratitude for the work of the catechetical commission so far, comparing catechesis and formation to the education of the people, both formal and informal. He stated that we stand on the foundation of our predecessors, who believed in educating the people and now continue to strive

for the betterment of the people of God. He urged those present to deeply consider the current practices of catechesis in order to better help people encounter God and deepen their connection with the Church. Drawing from the comparison between education and catechesis, he added that it would be good if the process of learning about our faith would become a joyful, life-

long journey for everyone in the Christian community.

Key Outcomes

Following the opening address, participants of the meeting discussed several matters including: Catechetical Sunday, national-level projects related to catechesis and concluding with a sharing of diocesan activities.

National matters regarding catechesis

Catechetical Sunday

The celebration of Catechetical Sunday began with a Church document, *Provido Sane Consilio* (38) that was published in 1935 with the recommendation that parishes set aside a day to 'direct the mind of Christian people toward religious education' so that the entire Church community: bishop, priests, religious and all the lay faithful are reminded of their responsibility to pass on the faith. In view of this purpose, the discussion centred on the effectiveness of the current celebrations and how it can be enhanced in the future in order to increase the awareness of the community's role in catechesis and its importance to the mission of the Church.

Finally, the discussion on Catechetical Sunday concluded with the selection of the theme for the coming year. The theme is chosen based on the strategic focus leading to the Malaysia Pastoral Convention in 2026: Ecology and Social Realities. Reflecting on the current state of affairs, the delegates selected the theme: 'We can make the world a better place' with the Bible verse: "Do not seek your own interest, but rather, that of others" (Phil 2:4). It is hoped that this theme would remind the Christian community of their responsibility and make them reflect on their role in making Christ known and loved wherever they are.

Projects Related to Catechesis

The MCC is a consultative body that proposes projects for the betterment of the catechetical ministry at the national level; these projects are then implemented by the National Catechetical Office (NCO). At the meeting this year, the NCO reported on the progress of two major projects currently ongoing: supplementary topics to the MCC and the parents' guide to

catechesis.

Several years ago, the MCC proposed for additional materials to be prepared as supplements to the Malaysian Catechetical Series (MCS). The reason for this was that Confirmation was happening later than when the series was created, and there was not enough material in the MCS to cover in their classes. This led to the preparation of lesson guidelines for 15 supplementary topics that catechists could use after completing the MCS. The lesson guidelines are currently under review and MCC members are gathering feedback on their usage before producing a final version for use in all the dioceses.

The second ongoing project for the MCC is a parents' guide to catechesis that was proposed during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time, catechism classes could not be held on-site and a proposal was made to create a catechetical resource for parents to guide them in their role as primary catechists. This project has resulted in the publication of the book 'As for Me and My House', which is a comprehensive resource on the vocation and responsibility of parents in catechesis. The book has been translated into four languages and is currently available through the NCO and diocesan bookshops.

In addition to these projects, the MCC also discussed the availability of reference texts to be used in the catechumenal process of the RCIA. A new text has been drafted by Dr Steven Selvaraju of Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese and is in the process of being reviewed before publication. Most other dioceses are satisfied with using the currently available texts while some have also been developing their own for use in their respective dioceses.

At the close of this session, Bishop Joseph invited those present to consider how the



Bishop Joseph Hii (right) presenting a token of appreciation to Msgr Nicholas Stephen (left).

resources being used and developed by the catechetical ministry can benefit those in other Church movements and ministries. He emphasised that the catechumenal process is the responsibility of the entire Church community and it was important to bridge the gap with other ministries so that the resources we have can be shared with others and encourage life-long catechesis beyond the classroom setting.

Sharing Joys and Challenges

The diocesan delegates continued their meeting with a sharing of catechetical activities held in their respective dioceses. After initial efforts to visit parishes and meet with catechists at the grassroots, many dioceses have begun formations for catechists, both online and physically. The dioceses of Sabah had organised a Catechetical Convention in September 2023 that was attended by more than 800 catechists, while dioceses in Sarawak continued with training of full-time catechists in addition to organising parish level formations for volunteer catechists that teach classes on Sunday. Dioceses in Peninsular Malaysia are continuing their efforts in catechetical formation, especially in theology and catechetical skills with the aim of working towards the certification of catechists.

Finally, delegates from the Archdiocese of Singapore and the Apostolic Vicariate of Brunei also shared their various efforts in the formation of catechists and development of new catechetical programmes and resources.

Conclusion of the Meeting

In conclusion, Bishop Joseph reiterated the importance of the Catechetical Ministry in the mission of the Church, echoing his predecessors and stated his hope that there would be more resources to encourage and

support all the baptised in their life-long journey of catechesis.

The meeting then concludes with a resolution for further discussion on developing the catechesis and catechists for the future.

Other Activities

Besides being a platform for discussion on catechesis, this annual meeting is also an opportunity for participants to experience the diversity of cultures in the different dioceses. As visitors from afar, the delegates were warmly welcomed at the Church of the Holy Rosary, Limbahau. The parish priest, Msgr Nicholas Stephen, led us on a tour of the church, Marian grotto and even an exhibition where visitors are invited to reflect on the Sacrament of Confirmation. This parish is one of a few with such exhibitions, inviting parishioners and visitors to reflect more deeply on the seven Sacraments. After the tour, participants were invited to experience local food and hospitality at a dinner and fellowship with the parishioners.

In addition to the church visit, delegates also experienced local culture and tourist attractions through the generosity of the Sabah Tourism Board. Through this short encounter, we truly sensed that the similarities we have are greater than our differences, and journeying together as a Malaysian Church is very much possible through the willingness to listen and share.

We'd like to express heartfelt appreciation to our host, the Catechetical Commission of the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu, for organising the entire programme; Archbishop John Wong for his support, the priests and parishioners of the Church of the Holy Rosary for their hospitality and all who extended their hand to welcome us on our visit.

The Archdiocese of Kuching will host the next MCC meeting in 2025.



MCC members performing a traditional dance.



Liturgical Commission

By Sandra Ann

MIRI: The Diocese of Miri hosted the Episcopal Regional Liturgy Commission (ERLC) meeting from June 10-13. Fr Vincent Chin, the executive secretary, chaired the meeting in place of the new president, Cardinal William Goh, who was unable to attend due to pressing matters at the Archdiocese of Singapore.

Besides, the respective diocesan reports, members spent time discussing liturgical matters which affect the region. Among them were:

RCIA Rites

There was a discussion on how RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) rites are practised across the region in different languages. It was emphasised that these rites fall under the jurisdiction of the liturgy commission, not the catechetical commission. Cooperation between these commissions is encouraged to ensure alignment between rites and catechesis.

The ERLC will study how the RCIA rites are practised (in the four major languages) before proposing their recommendations to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei (CBCMSB).

Post-COVID Mass attendance

In Malaysia, about 70 per cent of the Catholic population have returned to the parishes for the Eucharistic Celebrations. The commission debated whether online Masses should continue now that the dispensation from physical attendance has been lifted. The consensus was that while online Masses served a purpose during the pandemic, they should not replace physical attendance, as communal worship is essential for encountering Christ.

The Sunday assembly is the Body of Christ coming together to encounter and worship the Lord. Watching on a screen is never an alternative to attendance at Mass.

Translations

Translation also emerged as a significant topic of discussion, with members emphasising the need for linguistic and liturgical expertise when translating hymns or texts. The commission proposed to form panels comprising individuals with such expertise for the major languages of the region.

Ordo

HERALD was given the mandate by the CBCMSB to produce the Ordo for the celebration of Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours for the region 20 years ago. For the past two years, they have been working with Fr Leonard Lexson and David Chan in ensuring that there are minimal errors.

Volunteers from the ERLC have offered to assist with this ongoing project (Fr Vincent Chin and Eileen Ng).

SYPG and the Accompaniment

The old *Sing Your Praise to God*



Fr Vincent Chin, the executive secretary chairing the meeting.

(SYPG) has been phased out and the CBCMSB is no longer responsible for any infringement of copyright license from that hymnal.

It has been four years since the new SYPG hymnal (people's edition) was printed and distributed throughout the region. The accompaniment to the hymnal was printed last year and distributed. Fr Vincent reminded everyone that only the printed version of the SYPG has all the relevant copyrights.

Fr Leonard Lexson, the Liturgical Music Committee (LMC) chairman, reminded all present that this project was given to the ERLC by the CBCMSB more than 10 years ago. The main reason was due to fear of copyright infringements.

For parishes using projection, only public domain hymns in the

SYPG hymnal can be projected. The projection must have the copyright information displayed.

The delegates were reminded that extracting text or hymns and printing them for their own use, for a group and a particular celebration is an infringement of copyright. Prior permission must be sought from the relevant copyright owners.

One of the constraints on using the new hymnal is that not all the musicians or choir members know how to read music. There is a request to have recordings made to help these groups. The ERLC-LMC will work with the relevant dioceses on this.

Copyright Infringement

Delegates were informed to be careful in using copyrighted music

and images in movie nights and projections for parish or diocesan events. As these will be shared on social media and they may be liable for copyright infringement.

Local Compositions

The Liturgical Music Committee is looking at collecting and compiling all locally composed English hymns (prophets and Ordinaries). This compilation will be available for free. Composers who submit their work(s) must agree to this policy. However, if they want to produce an album with their compositions, they are free to do so. The LMC will prepare a guideline for this.

English Lectionary

The CBCMSB has decided to continue using the New Jerusalem Bible version for now, despite the United Kingdom's adoption of the New Revised Standard Version – Catholic Edition (NRSV-CE). Efforts will be made to procure the rights to print locally.

Zoom with ERLC President

Despite his absence, Cardinal William Goh engaged in an online meeting with delegates, discussing challenges related to Pope Francis' upcoming visit to the island. He expressed encouragement at the commission's representation and vowed to be present for the next meeting.



ERLC members joining in the Tarian Sumazua at the longhouse.

Understanding Sacred Music and Religious Music



This year, Fr Leonard Lexson gave an input session on the distinctions between Sacred Music and Religious Music. He underscored the significance of Gregorian chant in the evolution of music within the Roman liturgy since 1903.

Emphasising the distinct roles

of sacred and religious music, Fr Leonard highlighted the supportive and elevating function of sacred music within the liturgy, contrasting it with the role of religious music in private devotions and non-liturgical religious activities.

Fr Leonard also stressed the necessity of striking a balance

between tradition, exemplified by Gregorian chant, and the use of vernacular languages to facilitate comprehension.

Additionally, he spoke on the differing levels of importance in singing at Mass, in accordance with the directives outlined in *Musicam Sacram*.

Traditional hospitality

This time, the ERLC meeting was held towards the tail end of the Gawai festival. The delegates were invited to join the closing ceremony at the Church of St Dominic. They were feted with performances from the different tribes in Miri and to the delicious traditional food and drink.

The following afternoon, the delegates experienced the hospitality of the natives when they visited a modern longhouse —

a first for a majority of them.

The meeting served as a platform for valuable discussions on various liturgical matters, paving the way for continued collaboration within the region.

Special thanks to Bishop Richard Ng for his presence with the delegates and to Fr Kevin Chundi and his team for organising the meeting.

The next meeting will be hosted by the Diocese of Malacca Johore from May 12-15, 2025.



Social Communication

By Patricia Pereira

SIBU: It was truly encouraging to see a relatively young crowd at the recent annual meeting of the Episcopal Regional Conference for Social Communication (ERCSC) of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei. This youthful presence highlights the Church's commitment to adapting to advancements in social media and communication technology, ensuring a vibrant future in these areas.

Gathered at the Laudato Si' Centre from June 11 to 13 for the ERCSC Annual Meeting and Formation, the young participants from the nine arch/dioceses, and the Apostolic Vicariate of Brunei, engaged enthusiastically with senior members. They showcased a remarkable willingness to contribute, discussing strategies to elevate and strengthen the Social Communications (SocComm) commissions and ministries



in their respective areas. Their spirited participation reflected a deep dedication to serving as impactful communicators and evangelisers within their communities.

This enthusiasm was further ignited by Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Chairman of the ERCSC, who reminded the 35 delegates that their role goes beyond written

words. "You are not only reporters; you are teachers and prophets who share the stories of Jesus," he emphasised.

The cardinal also expressed his appreciation for the growth of SocComm in the different dioceses, which was evident in the vibrant community gathered at this year's conference. He emphasised the im-

portance of collaborative resource utilisation among them, noting that the Holy Spirit is guiding the efforts of social communicators and the Church of Malaysia. He highlighted the significance of engaging young people, saying it is "interesting to see how we are bringing more of our resources, especially from the young people."

Event Calendar for SocComm to aid in creating media awareness at arch/diocesan level:

- Opening of the Jubilee Year of Hope on December 29, 2024, coinciding with the Feast of the Holy Family.
- Jubilee of World Communication 'Pilgrims of Hope' at the Vatican from January 24 to 26, 2025.
- Malaysia Catholic Young People Assembly (MCYPA) in Kota Kinabalu from March 31 to April 6, 2025.
- Sabah Pastoral Assembly on May 11 and 12, 2025, in Kota Kinabalu.
- Closing of the Jubilee Year of Hope on January 6, 2026.
- Events leading up to the Malaysia Pastoral Convention (MPC) 2026.

Progress, Plans and Challenges

Representatives presented reports on the implementation of plans, programmes, and activities in their arch/dioceses, vicariate, publications, and groups over the past year. They highlighted both progress and challenges in their social communications ministries.

A key issue identified is the difficulty in finding committed and qualified laypeople interested in participating in the ministry. This challenge is compounded by a general lack of manpower and volunteers, which hampers the ability to effectively manage and disseminate information about parish activities. Despite numerous parish events warranting coverage, there is a notable deficit in writing skills among available volunteers. This gap has resulted in many events going undocumented, depriving the community of valuable narratives and historical records.

Moreover, there is a persistent struggle with audience reach. Many events and activities conducted within the community fail to attract the desired attention, indicating a need for more effective communication strategies and platforms. Some arch/dioceses are facing significant challenges in their social communications ministries, underscoring the need for improved strategies and resources to enhance community outreach and engagement.

Some SocComm ministries are also striving to find common ground for collaboration within their dioceses and parishes. This effort is crucial for fostering a unified approach to social communications and ensuring that all segments of the community are adequately informed and engaged. The groups continue to seek solutions to these challenges, emphasising the importance of dedicated personnel, improved skills training, and cohesive collaboration across the diocese.

Some representatives reported their progress as well as difficulties in establishing SocCom offices and the need to have full-time staff instead of just relying on volunteers.

The issue of copyright and infringement regarding the use of images, photos, and songs on our social media platforms was briefly discussed. It was determined that a session would be arranged shortly to raise awareness and offer sufficient knowledge for all individuals engaged in SocComms, whether at the diocesan or parish level.

The delegates also discussed assuming different roles and duties, including translation tasks and the coordination of resources such as reflection papers and various promotional materials.

The next ERCSC will be held in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei from June 23 to 27, 2025.

Formation

The conference, recognising the inevitability of grappling with new and emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), dedicated a session to discussing its ramifications. Arokiam Raj from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur who presented the session, emphasised that AI serves as a supplement to human communication, underscoring the irreplaceable role of human engagement and personal connection. Delegates were encouraged not to shy away from AI, algorithms, or technology, but rather to stay informed and current. They were invited to embrace the utilisation of these evolving technologies and to use them to saturate the world, humanity, and the Church with algorithms guided by the Holy Spirit.

After the discussion on AI, the delegates moved on to a session centred on connecting with nature as a form of communication. This session, held after the evening tea-break, provided a welcome opportunity for relaxation and unwinding towards the end of the day.

Led by freelance artist and graphic designer Anna Faustina Ding, the delegates, including Cardinal Sebastian and the clergy, were encouraged to disconnect from technology and engage in an offline reflection on their lives. This prompted them to contemplate the challenges they faced and the motivations driving them. Subse-

quently, they were asked to express their reflections through artwork created from leaves, flowers, and other natural materials. This activity served as a means for participants to rejuvenate their minds and rediscover the beauty of nature.

On the second day, Fr George Plathottam (pic), the Executive Secretary at the Office of Social Communications (OSC) of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), led a session on visual communications and their role in advancing the mission. Dis-



cussing *Inter Mirifica*, the Vatican document outlining the Catholic Church's perspective on media and social communication, Fr George

emphasised the importance of upholding moral principles in media usage. He reiterated the Church's mission to "go out and proclaim the Good News," stressing that SocComm commissions must collaborate with other Church ministries to accomplish this mission.



Pope makes history at the G7 summit

By Gerard O'Connell

VATICAN: Pope Francis' participation at the G7 summit in Apulia, Italy, was not only historic but revealed the high moral standing that the first Latin American Pope has on the global stage and among some of the world's leading heads of state and government.

Francis was the first Pope invited to participate in this high-level intergovernmental forum, founded in 1975, which brings together Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. The European Union also participates in the G7, which, the group says, "is united by common values and plays an important role on the international arena in upholding freedom, democracy and human rights."

Italy holds the rotating presidency of the G7 this year, and the country's first woman prime minister, Giorgia



Pope Francis addresses the G7 summit in Italy. (Vatican Media)

Meloni, invited Pope Francis to take part in the meeting. She also invited the heads of state of several non-member countries as well as the presidents of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

After arriving on the afternoon of June 14, Francis began the first

of two series of scheduled bilateral meetings. The heads of state of eight countries — Algeria, Brazil, India, Kenya, France, Turkey, Ukraine and the United States — had requested private meetings with the Pope as had the head of the I.M.F. No pope has ever had so many high-level

bilateral meetings, each lasting about 20 minutes, in one day. In addition to the bilateral meetings, the Pope participated in the working session of the G7, where he gave the keynote address on artificial intelligence.

Francis was welcomed with warm

applause by the heads of state when he entered the Arena Hall, where the working session was held, in a wheelchair. He greeted each of the leaders present with broad smiles and sometimes brief remarks before taking his seat at the table.

Pope Francis knew many of the heads of state from private meetings at the Vatican or visits to their home countries. The body language revealed a warmth of relations between the leaders and great affection for the first pope from the Global South; encounters ranged from embraces and kisses with Argentina's President Javier Milei, Brazil's President Lula da Silva, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Jordan's King Abdullah and Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, to the forehead-to-forehead greeting of President Joe Biden and a warm handshake of Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND PEACE



(photo/Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development)

The Pope began his address on artificial intelligence in a humorous tone, announcing that he had two texts, a longer and shorter version, which he held up for all to see, and with a big smile he said he would read the shorter one and deposit the longer for the record. He then spoke for 19 minutes with great passion about the fundamental need for ethics in this emerging field.

"Artificial intelligence is an exciting and fearsome tool," he told these world leaders. Its advent "represents a true cognitive-industrial revolution, which will contribute to the creation of a new social system characterised by complex epochal transformations," he said.

He emphasised the vital importance of human beings controlling this tool and said: "We would condemn humanity to a future without hope if we took away people's ability to make decisions about themselves and their lives, by dooming them to depend on the choices of machines. We need to ensure and safeguard a space for proper human control over the choices made by artificial intelligence programmes: human dignity itself depends on it."

"In order for [artificial intelligence programmes] to be instruments for building up the good and a better tomorrow, they must always be aimed at the good of every human being," the Pope said. "They must have an ethical 'inspiration.'"

He concluded by emphasising the importance of "healthy politics" to oversee the development of artificial intelligence, "so that we can look to our future with hope and confidence."

The leaders warmly applauded Francis when he concluded his talk. He then remained to listen as the other world leaders contributed to a two-hour session behind closed doors. The G7's concluding document supported the need for a code of conduct in the field of artificial intelligence.

Ahead of the summit, Francis told reporters he wanted to talk with world leaders about artificial intelligence but also about peace. He is deeply concerned about the wars in Ukraine and Gaza and is determined to use the full power of his papal office to try to get world leaders to bring an end to these and other conflicts that have caused so much suffering worldwide.

Pontiff holds bilateral meetings with several heads of states

One of Pope Francis' first bilateral meetings was with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, whom he has received twice at the Vatican. Mr Zelenskyy reported on X that he had briefed the Pope "on the consequences of Russian aggression, its air terror, and the difficult energy situation" and spoke about "the Holy See's role in establishing a just and lasting peace."

He said he thanked Francis for "his spiritual closeness to our people" and "the humanitarian aid" that he sent and for the Holy See's efforts "aimed at bringing peace closer" and working for the return of "Ukrainian children abducted by Russia." He also thanked Francis for the Holy See's participation in the peace summit in Switzerland. The Pope sent Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Secretary of State, to the recent summit, and he reaffirmed the Holy See's position in favour of the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Francis' final bilateral meeting was with President Biden, and the wars in Ukraine and the Holy Land were at the centre of the conversation. Francis first met then-Vice President Biden during his visit to the United States in 2015, and they met again at the Vatican in October 2021. Francis

was keen to speak face-to-face with President Biden because of the role the United States, under its second Catholic president, is playing in Ukraine and Gaza.

While the Vatican has not revealed what the Pope said during their private conversation, a statement from the White House said:

The leaders emphasised the urgent need for an immediate ceasefire and a hostage deal to get the hostages home and address the critical humanitarian crisis in Gaza. President Biden thanked Pope Francis for the Vatican's work to address the humanitarian impacts of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, including his efforts to help return kidnapped Ukrainian children to their families. President Biden also reaffirmed his deep appreciation for the Pope's tireless advocacy for the poor and those suffering from persecution, the effects of climate change, and conflict around the world.

Before his meeting with the US president, Pope Francis spoke with King Abdullah of Jordan, who recently held a conference on delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza. The Pope also conversed with the president of Algeria, Abdelmadjid Tebboune, whose country has pushed for a ceasefire in Gaza at the United Nations. He

had an in-depth conversation with Turkey's President Erdogan, who is playing an important role in both the war in Gaza and the war in Ukraine, and who has reached out to Francis by phone in recent months.

Francis also met with India's Prime Minister Modi, who again invited him to visit the country, and with Brazil's President Lula da Silva, with whom Francis has a very close relationship. India and Brazil, together with Russia, China and South Africa, make up the "BRICS" coalition of developing nations and could play an important role in brokering peace in Ukraine since both enjoy good relations with President Vladimir Putin. Russia had been a member of the G7 (then G8) since 1997 but was suspended from the forum after its annexation of Crimea in 2014.

After his meeting with Mr Biden, Pope Francis boarded the helicopter back to the Vatican. In a post on X on June 17, the US president paid tribute to the Pope, saying: "His Holiness has devoted his life to tireless advocacy for the poor and those suffering from persecution, the effects of climate change, and conflict around the world. It was an honour to spend time with him this past week." —

America



Pope Francis with world leaders at the G7 summit in Italy (Vatican Media)

A Church alive and on the move

The seeds of a synodal Church are already sprouting

VATICAN: Over a period of one and a half weeks, a group of 20 theologians from around the world convened in Rome to analyse the responses from the People of God to the Synthesis Report produced by the First Session of the General Assembly of the Synod on Synodality. Among these theologians was Fr Dr Clarence Devadass, Director of the Catholic Research Centre in Kuala Lumpur. From June 4 to 14, the group worked on the reports submitted to the General Secretariat of the Synod, in preparation for the Second Session of the XVI Assembly, scheduled for October 2-27, 2024.

A global response

The group of theologians, comprising women and men, bishops, priests, consecrated individuals, and laypeople from different continents, analysed 107 reports from the Bishops' Conferences and the Eastern Catholic Churches. They also reviewed contributions from the USG-UISG (the International Union of Major Superiors and the International Union of Superiors General), and more than 175 submissions from international organisations, university faculties, associations of the faithful, and individual communities and persons. Additionally, they considered reports presented by parish priests during the three-day Parish Priests for the Synod meeting held from April 28 to May 2 this year. All this work aimed at producing the *Instrumentum laboris* (working document) that will guide the Second Session of the General Assembly.

The joy of the journey

These reports are the fruit of the work local churches have done since the Synthesis Report of the First Session of the 16th Assembly. They depict a Church that is alive and dynamic. Among the most frequently mentioned themes are: formation for synodality, the functioning of participatory bodies, the role of women,



Fr Dr Clarence Devadass (seventh from right) and the theologians who met in Rome from June 4 to 14, 2024 to analyse the responses from the People of God to the Synthesis Report produced by the First Session of the General Assembly of the Synod on Synodality.

young people, attention to the poor, inculturation, transparency, a culture of accountability among Church leaders, catechesis, Christian initiation, collaboration among churches, and the role of the bishop. These reports are also rich in personal testimonies.

"The reports often recount the experiences of people who have undergone a real personal conversion. However, others express confusion, worry, or anxiety, particularly fearing that their contributions may not be taken seriously or that ideologies and lobbies might exploit the synodal path to impose their own agendas," says Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary General of the General Secretariat of the Synod.

"It is important to remember that the October Assembly is not about specific issues but about synodality — how to be a missionary Church on the way. All theological discussions and pastoral proposals aim to serve this purpose. The

Assembly will primarily be a time for each participant, starting from the journey that began in 2021 and bringing the 'voice' of the People of God from their communities, to seek the help of the Holy Spirit and their brothers and sisters to discern God's will for His Church, rather than imposing personal visions of the Church."

A different look

The work of the theologians was guided by two Special Secretaries of the XVI General Assembly, Italian theologians Msgr Riccardo Battocchio and Fr Giacomo Costa, SJ.

"The *Instrumentum laboris* for the Second Session of the XVI Assembly will look different from the previous one," Msgr Battocchio said. He explained that, while the first session looked at the "wide-ranging themes" to be discussed by the Assembly, the second will focus on the question, "How to be a synodal Church in mission."

The forthcoming working document, then, will review the work of the synod up to this point, while offering theological reflections

and concrete proposals "to help the discernment entrusted to the members of the assembly."

An international perspective

The theological experts taking part in the work of analysis included eight theologians from Europe (including five Italians); three from Africa; two from North America and three from South America; two from Oceania (both Australian), and two from Asia.

In addition to the two Special Secretaries, the General Secretariat for the Synod was represented by the Secretary General, Cardinal Mario Grech; the General Rapporteur, Cardinal Hollerich; and Undersecretaries Bishop Luis Marín de San Martín and Sister Nathalie Becquart.

The next steps

With the work of the theologians complete, the Synod's General Secretariat will proceed to the next stage of the drafting process for the *Instrumentum laboris*.

After a "wide-ranging verification" of the contents, the Ordinary Council of the General Secretariat — composed mostly of Diocesan Bishops chosen by the Fathers and Mothers of the Synod — will approve the draft and present it to Pope Francis, who will approve the definitive text. — *Vatican News*

Synodal Church: 'Hotel for saints, hospital for sinners'

Ahead of the second session of the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod set for October 2024, several hundred parish priests from around the globe gathered near Rome in early May.

Fr Cletus Mwiila, a Zambian priest who took part in the event, spoke to Vatican News about how the Church can become a "hotel for saints and a hospital for sinners."

Following the Second Vatican Council, the Church pledged to embrace the Holy Spirit's guidance and embark on a renewed missionary path, he noted, pointing out that years

later, challenges remain.

Pope Francis launched the Synod on Synodality, a multi-year global initiative aimed at fostering a more participatory Church in 2021.

Fr Cletus, who has embraced the Church's desire for Synodality, is dedicated to sharing his experiences and promoting this collaborative approach.

Embracing listening and inclusivity

Fr Cletus described the current movement towards Synodality as a "wind of change"

that is calling the Church to embrace listening, humility, and inclusivity. He underlined the need to revisit priestly and religious formation to ensure it fosters these values.

For Fr Cletus, as the media plays a crucial role in modern-day evangelisation, there is a need to integrate media training into the formation of priests and religious personnel to ensure they remain relevant in the contemporary world.

He further emphasised that the Church can no longer afford to ignore the power of media in reaching a wider audience. "In today's digital age, media is no longer a luxury but a vital tool for spreading the Gospel," asserted Fr Cletus.

A 'Hotel for Saints and a Hospital for Sinners'

Fr Cletus also highlighted the need to challenge the practice of requiring a donation for Church services—such as sacraments or votive Masses—saying they can exclude people who are unable to afford them, thus obscuring the essence of compassion.

The Zambian priest envisions a welcoming Church that embraces all, especially those who have drifted away, regardless of their past, so that they can feel accepted and return to the faith.

"I would like to see St Mary's, the church

I'm in charge of, become a hotel for saints and a hospital for sinners," said Fr Cletus.

Walking together and leaving no one behind

The concept of a synodal Church signifies "walking together," said Fr Cletus, emphasising the importance of including everyone — those on the peripheries, the sick, the poor, the young, the elderly, and women.

"The goal of the Synod on synodality," he added, "is to achieve a process called 'ecclesial discernment,' in which every voice will be heard and hence, it will inform the Church's decision-making."

A shared responsibility

In conclusion, Fr Cletus expressed his hope that the Synod might help realise Pope Francis' vision for a synodal Church that serves as a "field hospital for the soul."

By embracing synodality, he said, the Church can move forward as a community united in its mission, so that no one is left behind.

"The winds in favour of synodality are blowing already," he said. "It is time for us to rise and join the Church, working together, listening to one another and bandaging one another." — **By Sr Roselyne Wambani Wafula, FSP, Vatican News**



Parish priests from around the world met in Rome in early May to discuss synodality. (Vatican Media)



DANCING WITH DEMENTIA

Dr Cecilia Chan

We are pleased to introduce a new column dedicated to understanding and supporting those affected by dementia. As our population ages, dementia has become an increasingly significant issue, impacting not only individuals but also their families and communities. Through this monthly column, we aim to provide valuable insights, practical advice, and heartfelt stories to guide and support those navigating the challenges of dementia. Join us as we embark on this journey of education and empathy.

We had our second pop-up “Forgotten Mutiara Café” recently. Our pop-up café is run by our friends living with dementia, volunteers, and staff (we call ourselves the “crew”).

This time round the group was even more diverse. We had people living with dementia — the Mutiara [pearls] that is often forgotten — teenagers, artists, retirees, family members, those from the medical community and even exchange students from China. Our theme this round is to celebrate the gifts that we all share in common, that is the gift of our parents. Besides the homemade delicacies and beverages, we had fun with playful yet meaningful activities that allowed us to connect as human beings.

At the Forgotten Mutiara Café, there was no segregation between those living with dementia and those who are not; that was when the magic happened.

It was when we met everyone with acceptance. When we listen from our hearts, withholding judgments about one’s mannerisms or confusion. When we could enjoy being with each other and connecting without worrying about logic and correct interpretation, we could create a whole new world of inclusion. This was evident during our pop-up café. We witnessed those who are living in a non-verbal world connecting on a very deep level. We witnessed someone

usually confined in a wheelchair suddenly rise to lead us in tai-chi as she has always been a tai-chi devotee. We witnessed a couple (one of them living with dementia) dancing together like they used to before dementia entered their lives, with tears rolling down their cheeks. We witnessed another beaming as she brewed coffee and tea as we delivered orders to her (as this was her work before dementia). Another was busy ordering the crew how to prepare the delicacies and how to serve them and one transformed into a PR officer ensuring that our guests were comfortable and got their orders.

Not a single person present was untouched by the miracles that they witnessed. Our interconnectedness through joy and love and the delight of shared engagement proved that we have the potential to demonstrate solidarity. It gave us a glimpse of what a society is like when vulnerability is a legitimate, well-supported life experience, and care is valued as central to all life.

We learned to be open to the present instead of insisting that the situation must conform to our preferences. We learned that we are not merely our roles or our conditions. We may have dementia, but we are not our disease. We are human beings with all the complexities, fragility, and wonder that life encompasses.

When we look through a specific lens, we narrow our vision because we don’t see things and people as they are, but rather, project our story into them. Unfortunately, this causes us to attribute a particular significance to an experience and miss its true meaning.

Dementia is a concept that relates directly to the social constructions that surround it. Think about it. The real impacts of dementia are felt in relationships. Dementia is experienced in interpersonal relationships, which is experienced both by the person living with it and by all those around them. If we are honest with ourselves, we will real-

ise that it is not simply the disease, but how people with dementia are treated, that is the real fear factor.



ise that it is not simply the disease, but how people with dementia are treated, that is the real fear factor.

Since there is currently no cure, we need to enhance our capacity to live with dementia. We need to understand the importance of acquiring the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will improve and enhance this experience we all share as a community. Instead of our usual remark of ‘how tragic’, perhaps we need to shift to ‘how can I support this person and her carers?’

We need better ways of thinking and speaking about dementia beyond deficit-based framing. We need a more positive model that will honour the dignity, experience, and well-being of the person diagnosed and, that will have profound effects on carers and others impacted by dementia. We need the knowledge and the tools to equip our societies to live with dementia, to support better those with the dementia diagnosis and those who support them.

Einstein once said, “The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.” Maybe we should apply that to our thinking about dementia because how we think about it determines how we react to it and ultimately what we do about it.

Dementia is not our tragedy. The real tragedy is our historical legacy: how we, as a society, have come to conceptualise humanness as an individualised entity to which differential statuses are attributed. We are social beings; therefore, we should be able to live in a society that will uphold us regardless of our circumstances. To imagine a liveable life with dementia is, by implication, to imagine a more liveable society, a more caring society for all citizens.

Let us continue to reclaim our “mutiaras”.

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

SOCIAL JUSTICE



Making a Difference

Tony Magliano

The world is in the midst of a global hunger crisis — the largest in recent history. According to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP):

- More than 780 million people worldwide suffer chronic ongoing hunger,
- Over 300 million persons are experiencing the most extreme forms of hunger,
- 42 million people in 45 countries are on the brink of starvation, and
- More than 1 million fellow human beings are already experiencing, or are expected to suffer starvation this year.

According to the Christian anti-hunger organisation Bread for the World (Bread), “Poverty is the greatest cause of hunger around the world” in both rich and poor countries. “Most people who are hungry live in extreme poverty, defined as income of \$2.15 (RM10.13) per day or less. More than 650 million people in developing countries live in extreme poverty, and one

out of five children globally.”

“Climate change,” according to Bread, “is the greatest environmental challenge the world has ever faced, and it is damaging food and water security in significant ways, like drought and flooding. If countries cannot work together to find and implement solutions, ending hunger in our lifetime will be out of reach.”

Other causes of hunger according to Bread are poor infrastructures, unstable markets, job instability, race and gender inequality, and war and armed conflicts.

The World Food Programme lists armed conflicts as the greatest cause of hunger, saying, “Conflict is the number one driver of hunger in the world, and it’s entirely preventable. It uproots families, destroys economies, ruins infrastructure and halts agricultural production”.

In his 1979 homily at New York’s Yankee Stadium, St Pope John Paul II famously declared: “The poor of the United States and the world are your brothers and sisters in Christ. You must never be content to leave them just the crumbs from the feast. You must take of your substance, and not just of your abundance, to help them. And you must treat them like guests at your family table.

So many people are hungry



A little girl receives WFP food in Deir Albalah, in central Gaza. Famine is imminent in parts of the enclave, however, as humanitarian aid piles up on its borders due to access constraints. (WFP/Ali Jadallah)

“But this is not enough. Within the framework of your national institutions and in cooperation with all your compatriots, you

will also want to seek out the structural reasons which foster or cause the different forms of poverty in the world and in your own country, so that you can apply the proper remedies.”

In Malaysia, we have Caritas Malaysia. It is the official arm of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Malaysia (CBCM), engaging in works of integral human development, charity, relief, care for creation and social services. For more information, please email info@caritas.org.my.

So, we need to both ongoingly give generously to the hungry, and to tirelessly advocate for legislative and corporate measures which will address the root causes of hunger — like poverty, climate change and war.

If we persevere in reaching out to our hungry brothers and sisters, we can be confident that on the day of judgement we will hear the Lord Jesus say to us, “For I was hungry and you gave Me food” (see: Matt 25: 31-46).

● **Tony Magliano** is an internationally syndicated Catholic social justice and peace columnist. He is available to speak at diocesan or parish gatherings. Tony can be reached at tmag6@comcast.net.

Influencers Malaysia shines spotlight on KL archbishop

By Tianne Ramona Pereira

“We all love Malaysia, but if we Christians are not involved in nation-building, who knows where we will be headed?” remarked David Yap, the founder of Influencers Malaysia, in an exclusive interview with *HERALD*. David shared how, during his personal challenges, he was fortunate to have knowledgeable seniors guide him, helping him realise that the Church extends beyond its four walls. This insight inspired him to create a safe space where people from all generations and walks of life could come together and support each other.

In 2017, David started Influencers Malaysia with just a few youngsters and the contacts on his phone. His vision was for young people to find God and meaning in life through the influence of those touched by God. He hoped this Christian-based, non-denominational platform would bring together believers

and non-believers to learn from each other, network, seek God, and experience the fullness of Christ.

David emphasised that there are seven domains of influence shaping society: Family, Religion, Business, Education, Media, Government, and Arts & Entertainment. Influential figures from these areas are invited to share their insights, reinforcing that Christ is present in many facets of life. By involving prominent individuals from various sectors, Influencers Malaysia strives to highlight the pervasive presence of Christ and inspire collective efforts toward nation-building.

This commitment to diverse perspectives was exemplified by the recent engagement with Most Reverend Julian Leow Beng Kim, Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, who was described as a visionary leader who has admirably guided the archdiocese for the past decade with steadfast resolve and exceptional discernment.



Archbishop Julian Leow sharing a light moment with moderator Koh Tat Seng.

Living out our vocation at the service of God's Kingdom

The *Up Close & Personal* session with Archbishop Julian Leow was held on June 11 at the Victory Centre in Centre Point, Bandar Utama. The theme for the evening's discussion was *Living Out Our Vocation at the Service of God's Kingdom*. The event began with Archbishop Julian giving a brief introduction of himself, sharing his thoughts on the theme, and answering questions from the audience. Here is a summary of the enriching and enlightening evening.

Archbishop Julian Leow, the second child of Daniel and Audrey Leow, was born and raised in Seremban. He received his education at St Paul's Institution before furthering his studies at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, where he completed a degree in Building. Some of his notable projects include Plaza Pelangi and Sogo.

Despite his success in the corporate world, he felt something was missing and, in 1994, answered the call to join College General Major Seminary in Penang. After eight years of study, he was ordained a priest in 2002. Later, he was sent to Rome to complete his licentiate in Church History, after which he returned to College General Major Seminary as a formator and Dean of Studies. Four years later, he received a call within a call and was appointed Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur.

Archbishop Julian explained that, regardless of our stage in life, we are called to live fully. He emphasised that what we study may not always align with what we do, but that's okay because God has a plan. He said, “If you question what God's will is for your life, it is to be holy, to be the best version of yourself, and to share God with others.” He added that his

decision to become a priest was not a one-time choice made 22 years ago but a daily commitment he continues to make.

He emphasised the essential role Christians need to play in Malaysia: to be peacemakers, to speak up for the voiceless, and to love God and our neighbours as we love ourselves. He challenged the audience to consider how they use their success and resources: Do we serve the greater public? We are called to be the salt of the earth, adding flavour to the lives of others. Am I living a lukewarm life, or am I making a difference where God has planted me?

Archbishop Julian also highlighted his close collaboration with the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Taoism (MCCBCHST). Using nasi lemak as a local analogy, he explained how the dish's diverse colours and flavours — the brown nuts, red sambal, white rice, green cucumbers, and yellow egg — brings together the sweet, spicy and salty flavours to create a unique and iconic taste. If one ingredient is missing, it's no longer *nasi lemak*. This, he said, is what being Malaysian is all about. “We are all in an orchestra; if we play in harmony, it makes a beautiful symphony. We are in Malaysia for a purpose,” he added. The archbishop said that despite being offered a place in a seminary in Sydney, he chose to return and serve his country, Malaysia. Stressing the need for unity, he said, “We are all a work in progress; we need each other and God's grace for this journey.”

Archbishop Julian spoke on the importance of quality and diversity in relationships, calling it a great investment to deepen and broaden

our life journey. As a bishop, many doors have opened for him, allowing him to meet politicians, religious leaders, and laypeople, all of whom have taught him valuable lessons.

Addressing the topic of non-believers, the archbishop emphasised the need to respect all individuals. “I have the faith, but how do I treat those who do not believe the same as I do?” he asked. With one billion Catholics in the world, three-quarters of the world may not know Jesus. “Am I called to convert everyone? No, I am called to share who Jesus is to me with my friends and companions. I am called to share my story. Conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit,” he explained. “I propose my faith; I never impose my faith on others. When meeting people, let us be transparent, ethical people of the Gospel with no ulterior motives, genuinely wanting to build friendships. Don't see a person as a soul to be saved, but as a friend to be made. Just do ordinary things in extraordinary ways. They will know we are Christians by our love.”

The archbishop also addressed one of the most pressing challenges faced by the Church: unity. Despite the many denominations within Christianity, he asked, “How do we unite?” He pointed out that Malaysia is a nation of diverse religions and doctrines, but there may be greater threats that bind us together. He explained that the Christian Federation of Malaysia, of which he is a member, represents 95 per cent of Christians in the country, while the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Taoism (MCCBCHST) represents 90 per cent of all religions in Malaysia. The Buddhist group and the Church have collaborated on

many occasions. He urged everyone present to seize opportunities for unity and collaboration.

In response to a question about working with spiritual people and those who serve the Church, Archbishop Julian acknowledged the challenge. While the Church is called to be compassionate, understanding, and considerate, he noted that it can be more difficult in a working environment. He tries to reiterate to his staff that working for the Church and for Christ is a significant responsibility, and that they are part of something bigger. “It is about winning hearts and minds,” he said, admitting that while he has faced many failures, he continues to strive for improvement.

Recalling the day he was appointed archbishop, he vividly remembered being at a petrol station fuelling up when he received a call from the nuncio, asking him to come immediately. A few hours later, he met the Nuncio who informed him that Pope Francis had appointed him Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur. When he asked for time to consider, he was told he could take as much time as he needed, as long as he gave his answer before leaving the Nuncio's office. He asked for permission to use the chapel, after which he accepted the role, knowing he would shepherd over 120,000 parishioners and more than 70 priests.

Archbishop Julian shared that his mother had always supported his decision to join the priesthood, while his father not so much. His father had even prayed for him to leave the seminary but became his biggest supporter after his ordination, proudly telling everyone, including random nurses during hospital visits, that his son was a priest.

In response to another question, he explained the symbolism in his coat of arms, which includes the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, and the Tree of Religion. While some people misunderstood the Tree of Religion as symbolising that all religions are the same, he clarified that he chose it to represent the Divine presence in all creation. Every person, regardless of race or religion, bears the image of God.

The evening concluded on a high note of gratitude and admiration. As an attendee, I can confidently say that Archbishop Julian left the audience in awe with his wit, knowledge, and gentle nature.



The audience listening attentively to Archbishop Julian Leow's sharing.



MUSTARD SEED JOURNEYS

Joanne Wong

"Without the Spirit of God, we can do nothing. We are as ships without wind. We are useless." — C.H. Spurgeon

After several years of avoiding any Catholic Church seminars or conferences, I had a strong prompting to attend the 50th Golden Jubilee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in August last year.

I had questioned myself if I should be attending it since I didn't really know anyone and had just started dipping my toes into being active in church, baby steps and all. But these promptings persisted and so I paid for the conference and decided I would go.

My first time: The fire was lit

Prior to this Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference, the last time I attended anything "Holy Spirit" related was at the Life in the Spirit Seminar (LSS) that I needed to attend as part of my Confirmation programme — so this was some time ago. I remember standing at the back of Loyola Hall in SFX and seeing some of my classmates being slain in the Spirit as the leaders laid their hands on them.

And gosh I prayed so hard: "Please Holy Spirit don't come on me and make me get slayed like that. I am scared. Just don't need to bless me with anything, ok? I don't need anything. I will be good. I just don't want any of this." In my youthful arrogance, I thought I could bargain with the Holy Spirit and that I didn't need Him. But I did need Him, and He told me so in His own way.

Now as the leaders finally reached me and laid their hands on me (I was still praying to the Holy Spirit to just not do anything to me), I felt a warmth permeate through my body. Like a fire was inside me. And I started

to cry — I could not stop. And my hands that were clasped in prayer were forced open and pushed apart. I wanted to stop it — I tried many times, but I could not. So, in the end, there I stood, with my arms stretched wide opened on a transparent cross, as tears streamed down my face.

I stood there for some time, unable to control my tears nor my hands that were still outstretched — seeing my state, I obviously had more prayers come my way and more leaders attending to this strange sight (and gosh my friends were freaked out), but my hands could not be lowered until sometime later after having told the Holy Spirit I was sorry for saying those things. Sorry for being arrogant and afraid. Sorry for telling Him what to do.

It was only then that my tears stopped as suddenly as it had begun, and my hands were able to fall to my sides. It was a very real, very spiritual moment for me even though I had not wanted it. But I felt like I breathed differently, that things were clearer, fresher somehow.

I am two times blessed

"Joanne! Really ah — you never went for any other LSS after so many years' ah? How can?" Embarrassed as I am to say it, but yes, it can happen. It has happened because post Confirmation and attending some youth ministry session, cell groups and CHOICE, I decided to put the Holy Spirit on pause mode, I had let that fire slowly fizzle out — only seeking counsel from the Spirit when I needed to discern something. I had allowed family obligations, work, and the many wants and allures of "life" to get in the way.

But if you have read my articles previously, you would know that I had a wake-up call and am on a journey to let go and let God. I am still learning about God, His goodness, His mercy,

His Word, and His purpose for me.

Now let me continue to share what happened at the Catholic Charismatic Renewal — in one of the sessions, as Fr Michael Payyapilly was calling on the Holy Spirit to bless us, I felt it again, that resistance for me to be open... and just as if it was yesterday at the LSS, the tears started falling, fast and furiously. And my hands, that were once more clasped in prayer started opening on their own accord, being stretched apart. This time though, as I knelt in that awkward invisible cross like stance, I allowed myself to surrender and experience the beauty of what was happening to me, I welcomed the Holy Spirit in me, to awaken me, to unfurl within me. And it was such a beautiful experience — I marvelled that this could be happening to me again after so many years.

The third sign — He is with me

During the conference, there was also an intercessory session where you could write your petitions and Fr Michael would lift these petitions up. As he stood at the altar, receiving promptings from the Holy Spirit to pray for certain petitions that were offered up, I decided to negotiate with the Holy Spirit.

I said, "Holy Spirit, thank you for awakening me and giving me new eyes to see and for having renewed my spirit. But I just need a sign from you please so that I can truly believe this is all real. Please get Fr Michael to say the name of the person I have placed my petition for while He is at the altar. I just need a sign to know you hear me and that you are with me."

And well it happened! The name of the person I had placed my petition for, was one of several names that Fr Michael mentioned, and he ended by saying, "He hears you — your prayers will be answered."

I, of course, had to ask several people if they had heard that name thinking it could have been my own wishful thinking, just wanting to believe something that wasn't true. But it was confirmed that the name had indeed been mentioned.

And yes, that will be the last time I bargain or ask the Spirit to stop gifting me with His gifts. I am beyond blessed that He sent me a sign almost immediately and I am forever grateful to have experienced these three beautiful moments.

Stop pausing, hit play

Now, what was key for me to realise after the "high" of the conference, was that I needed to let go of my inadequacies and weaknesses. I needed to make peace with my past, let go of my self-doubt and really let the Spirit of God lead me. I needed to embrace and rebuild my life in accordance with His will and be open to the renewal of the Holy Spirit in me.

I was my own prisoner, but by encountering the Holy Spirit, I was set free and made new. I have gained a fresh perspective on things. My priorities have changed as well, and I will share more about that soon. I am by no means perfect, but I am at least on the right path, discerning and being open to opportunities and experiences that He gifts me.

So, as I end this article, I would like to encourage those who have, like me, paused the Holy Spirit, to instead invite Him back into your life. If you were looking for a sign, this is the sign. Stop pausing, hit play.

● **Joanne Wong** is on a journey towards having faith the size of a mustard seed. She welcomes thoughts and suggestions on how to have a closer walk with God. Email her at joanne.wpm@gmail.com

BE OUR GUEST

Prayer, Community, Netflix and sorts

Here I am — 59 years, Catholic wife, mother of three grown up girls, podcaster, working at a Catholic school (enjoying the benefits of daily Mass whenever I am able), covenanted with the ICPE Covenant Community ... and still facing that sporadic, sometimes regular yet probing question — am I really doing God's will? What if, I constantly ask myself, when I face the Lord, He tells me — I don't know you...?

I shall let this question remain and echo in my mind, serving as that signpost to keep me on track whenever I let myself be lost.

The Awakening...

My born-again journey, which began at my baptism, was renewed when I attended a retreat way back in the 1970s, in a small, quaint French town called Pondicherry. So yes — *Je parle Français mais un peu seulement*. (I speak French but just a little!) I still stay in touch with my then-and-to-this-day spiritual mentor, Sr Marie Stella, who helped nurture that spiritual flame.

Today, I can honestly admit that my relationship with the Lord, though rocky and bumpy, has led me to experience profound moments in prayer through the years. I am grateful!

What I share here about my journey with the Lord is unique to me and while I do not intend to favour one prayer style over another, I am convinced that each expression, with its own flavour, enriches and leads us to God.

Charismatic Experiences

Having joined the Charismatic Renewal

in my mid-teens, I enjoyed the spiritual consolations through worship and mind-blowing teachings while operating in the gifts of the Spirit. Frankly, I needed this wake-up call, that spiritual, shattering shake, to take prayer seriously, fall in love with Jesus, over and then over again.

For those struggling to pray and read the Bible, renewal groups help nurture this insatiable, innate craving for God.

Mission and Evangelisation

Then came another breakthrough — one that impacted my life and spiritual trajectory — an invitation to attend a School of Mission in New Zealand. Both my husband, Alex and myself, did not hesitate to respond and flew to the luscious, aesthetic and mountainous landscapes of New Zealand with our two young girls, Sacha and Sonia. Was it frightening? Of course it was, but we had the Lord with us and He had our backs!

As part of the training we knocked on doors of lapsed Catholics, visited prisons, did outreaches on streets/ schools, spreading the Gospel. The outreach techniques learnt then, I still use today — praying with individuals — a necessary yet compelling task of evangelisation.

Apologetics and Defending the Teachings of the Church

It was in this season of my life that I was first introduced to Apologetics and took an avid interest in Catholic teachings and Bible typology. This was the pivotal moment where my conviction about Church teachings was established.

Community and Covenant

After nearly three decades with the Mission, I decided, recently, that it was time to make a two-year commitment.

While I believe that serving in ministries is essential, there is the perennial danger of falling into the doing and not living out the call to live authentic and holier lives. In community, I am constantly being invited to live out the being — sustained by fellowship, sharing of life and expressing spirituality through creativity, reflection and prayer.

Today, so many leaders get so busy and entwined with the planning and executing of the many tasks in Church that many forget that it is the Lord we serve and only what He wills is what we should do — nothing more, nothing else!

If only all our Church meetings would start with that regular check in of our spiritual health — where members are given the space to freely share their challenges, we can receive help, support and consolation from them.

Ignatian Spirituality

The mission introduced me to the Ignatian Spirituality and I have since fallen in love with it, especially the silent retreats.

Last December I attended a refreshing seven-day silent retreat in Bangalore. (I strongly recommend these silent retreats for anyone who has the desire to get away from the noise and bustle of city life and be re-charged in God's Presence.)

These scenic spiritual escapades are the perfect health tonic for our soul and one can be guaranteed a revitalising honeymoon with Jesus and self!

By Joyce Stellus

Daily Prayer Rituals

So back to the beginning of my inner turmoil — while I battle my spiritual tardiness — being blasted with the tempting limited series and crime shows on Netflix ... I console myself with these thoughts — that I deserve this relaxation and rightfully so...!

However, taming these frivolous inclinations are easier envisioned than accomplished. When I surrender to these baser impulses, I am left a sorry figure and then inadvertently make decisions for the next day's course of action.

And so, this cycle goes on — quite viciously in fact.

However, one thing is certain — I shall, and will not, give up. And, if all I have to offer is one broken life of failures and stumbles, falls and foibles — then this is what I will present on Judgement Day. The Lord can either take it or leave it! (I live with the hope that He will....)

And, in the meantime, each day, I try my best to reflect, to write in my journal, to paint, to draw, to make notes in my Bible, to review what I have done and then write a review of that review ...

In conclusion, I urge us, each day, to strive and become the persons we were designed to be. May the Lord direct us thus!

● **Our guest columnist, Joyce Stellus**, brings 25 years of teaching experience to her current position at Stella Maris International School. A devoted wife and mother of three grown daughters, she is also a covenanted member of the Institute for World Evangelisation.





Fr Ron Rolheiser

Giving one's death away

According to the renowned mystic John of the Cross, we have three essential struggles in life: to get our lives together, to give our lives away, and to give our deaths away. What is asked of us in the first two struggles is more obvious. But what does it mean to give our deaths away?

In essence, it means this: How we die leaves behind a legacy, a particular spirit, which either nurtures or haunts those left behind. If we die in bitterness and anger, not at peace with our loved ones, ourselves, and our God, we will leave behind a spirit which is more toxic than nurturing. Conversely, if we die reconciled and at peace with our loved ones, the world, and with God, then like Jesus, we will leave behind a spirit which nourishes, warms, consoles, and gives our loved ones sacred permission to be at peace. How we die colours our legacy, and that legacy is either a gift or a burden to those we leave behind.

On November 23, 2023, Richard (Rick) Gaillardetz, a renowned theologian, died of pancreatic cancer while still in the prime of his life. He was a loving husband, father, grandfather, gifted lecturer, friend and mentor to many, a sports enthusiast, with a robust sense of humour. He also had a solid Christian faith that would be put to the test during the months of his terminal illness.

When he was diagnosed with cancer more

than a year before he died, his doctors told him it was terminal, there was to be no cure; he needed to face the brutal fact he was going to die within the next two years. He did face that. Moreover, in doing so, he tried (not without some agonising struggles) to make his death a conscious gift to his family and to the world. During the months leading up to his death, he kept a blog which shared what it is like to know you are dying and to accept that in love and faith, even within the agony of having to let go of life and wrestle with the powerful instinctual resistances within us.

Those blogs have been brought together in a book, *While I Breathe I Hope – A Mystagogy of Dying*, edited by Grace Agolia.

Here are some of Rick's feelings and thoughts:

- Unlike many saints in our tradition, I did not choose this diminishment; it has been thrust, unbidden and unwanted, upon me. But I do see in it an invitation to a graced vulnerability, a call to abandon a misplaced confidence in my own vigour and bodily autonomy.
- I am praying for both the grace for diminishment and the grace of diminishment.
- One of the demons I confront daily is an overweening ego that endlessly clamours for attention like a whining

toddler, drowning out the needs and concerns of others. One of the unexpected graces of diminishment appears as I am drawn kicking and screaming out of my natural egotism to discover within a much-neglected reservoir of compassion for the suffering of others.

- I must confess to an occasional pre-occupation with the final dying process. What will it be like? How will I handle it when my bodily organs begin to break down and the real dying begins? Will the peace I now feel sustain me through that quite 'different' time? ... What I hold most firmly in my heart through all this is the conviction that God has so profoundly encompassed me in love over these past several months since my diagnosis that, surely, God will not abandon me in those final days and hours.

- I now belong to the ragged band of the elderly and infirm. These are now my people, my last tribe.

- Giving my death away is not just a matter of accepting my inevitable physical demise; giving my death away bids me to embrace experiences of passive waiting, diminishment, and marginality as a liberation from the slavery of personal achievement and self-importance.

If I give these experiences due space, they beckon me beyond my egoistical self and enlarge my soul. They draw me to a greater compassion for the pain and suffering of others and encourage me to pray for others in the midst of their own suffering and impending death. Herein lies the gentle pedagogy of dying and rising.

- "My final task is to return to God the life graciously given to me."

In His farewell speech to His disciples, Jesus promised that after He had been taken from us, He would leave behind His spirit, the spirit of peace. When we go away we all leave behind us an unspoken spirit which affects those we have left behind. If we die at peace with God, others, and ourselves, then like Jesus, our loved ones, while grieving our loss, will in the deeper part of themselves, feel nourished, warmed, and consoled by their every memory of us.

Rick Gaillardetz RIP, you have left us (family, friends, the world) the gift of peace.

- **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**

The spiritual and relational act of laughter

Thirteen years ago, I arrived at Old Mission Santa Barbara where I would stay for a month praying, reflecting, sharing and dialoguing with the other friars who, like me at the time, were preparing to profess our solemn vows later that summer. Over the course of a weekend, about half a dozen friars from around the country arrived at the retreat centre. We began getting to know each other over meals and sharing stories, recognising that what we shared in common was greater than whatever our differences may have been in terms of age, ethnic background, place of origin or respective home province (the Franciscans have restructured into one US province since then).

The last friar to arrive experienced some terrible travel delays and showed up late on the first full day together. He settled in fairly quickly but after dinner, when we as a group began a nightly custom of sitting together and talking or playing board games, this friar looked right at me and said: "You are not what I expected!"

I was a little taken aback and confused. He went on to explain that he had read several of the academic articles on medieval Franciscan theology I had written with appreciation, and envisioned the author being someone whose demeanour was more staid, maybe even sombre or uptight, or some stereotype of a "serious person."

What he encountered was nothing like that at all. I often describe myself as a goofball, as someone who likes to laugh and make others laugh, who tells jokes and delights in bad puns. I enjoy comedy in a variety of forms, especially the more absurd kind. And this particular friar liked that about me, but it took him a moment to adjust what he had assumed about me in the abstract to align more with the light-hearted and funny person he now knew.

To be clear, I am in many ways a serious person. I take my work seriously, my faith

seriously, issues of justice and peace seriously, but I try not to take myself too seriously.

All these years later, that encounter has stayed with me for a couple of reasons. For one, it offered a little insight into how quick we can be to presume we know someone based on the limited information we have from afar. We can be so quick at times to assume we know what a person is like just because we read their work or follow their social media or see them on television without ever meeting them in real life. It is tempting to want to assess, categorise and judge people without taking the effort to get to know them.

The other reason this exchange stayed with me was that it illustrates something about how some people think about the relationship between humour and spirituality. Comedy and laughter are, from this vantage point, inherently unserious and maybe even diametrically opposed to the practice of one's faith.

I think this perspective is wrong and often leads well-meaning people of faith to look down at things like comedic movies and television shows, stand-up comedy performances and perhaps even the telling of jokes.

There is something inherently spiritual and relational in the act of laughing. Laughing, maybe second only to eating, requires a distinct kind of vulnerability. One must let their guard down, feel comfortable enough in the presence of others — including strangers in a movie theatre, stand-up comedy club or in the office break room — to allow oneself to be swept up into a shared moment of levity, which results in an instinctive physical, emotional, mental and — I would argue — spiritual response.

Perhaps it will not surprise regular readers of my column that I am inclined to invoke the great 20th century Jesuit theologian Fr Karl Rahner, who wrote a short essay on laughter. He, like me after reflecting on that encounter with my brother friar, considered whether or not laughter and humour were opposed to authentic



A young adult shares a laugh with a priest in Panama City January 23, 2019, at FIAT, the largest English-language World Youth Day event. Musical performances and testimonials were mixed with frank discussion about the clergy sexual abuse scandal. (CNS/Chaz Muth)

spirituality. He was thinking about what he called "real laughter, resounding laughter, the kind that makes a person double over and slap his thighs, the kind that brings tears to the eyes; the laughter that accompanies spicy jokes, the laughter that reflects the fact that a human being is no doubt somewhat childlike and childish."

With this uproarious sense of laughter in mind, he wrote:

The question is only this: whether or not the spiritual person must rightly call this laughter into question, whether or not he has to attack it as incompatible with the dignity of a spiritual person. No! Not at all! Let us explain and justify this laughter. When we do so, laughter shall smilingly tell us very serious things.

Rahner goes on to share that laughter is, first and foremost, an affirmation of our humanity. He notes that Scripture proclaims that "there is a time to weep and a time to laugh" (Ecclesiastes 3:4) and that each of these actions is a legitimate expression of our full humanity and a form of praise of God because "it lets a human being be human."

He also says that laughter is a sign of love, because to laugh requires a form of sympathy. We must relate to those telling the jokes, sharing the story, acting in a comedic or entertaining way — and our response through laughter is an expression of solidarity and love.

God laughs, too, Rahner asserts. God "laughs

the laughter of the carefree, the confident, the unthreatened." This makes sense, of course, because God delights in the world and has given us a share in that divine joy that we can see reflected in the truly humorous and joyful experiences of laughter. Rahner says that laughter is also spiritual in this sense, because our laughter is a "gentle echo of God's laughter."

Laughter is a gift from God and a reminder that we are meant to be witnesses of God's joy in the world, not merely echo chambers of misery, division and gloom. This is something we need not only in broader society, but also in our church. Seriousness and faithfulness do not preclude humour and laughter. Pope Francis has modelled this so often in his public addresses and spontaneous interactions, especially with children (who definitely do not take themselves too seriously) and with other joyful people.

As we continue to face many difficulties, divisions and challenges in our world and within our faith community today, I believe it's a good idea to take some time to laugh, especially with other people.

Whatever you do, remember that laughter is a deeply spiritual act and is also a form of praising God, which is something we should do as often as we are able. — **By Fr Daniel P. Horan, NCR**

Little Catholics' Corner

Dear children,

In today's Gospel reading, we hear about Jesus curing the sick. Jesus wants us to follow His example and care for the sick and dying.

But we can't do miracles like Jesus did! What can we do? Here are some

ideas:

If someone in your family is sick, maybe you can help them out! Ask if you could read them a story, or help them by bringing them anything they need. A 'Get Well' card would be nice too.

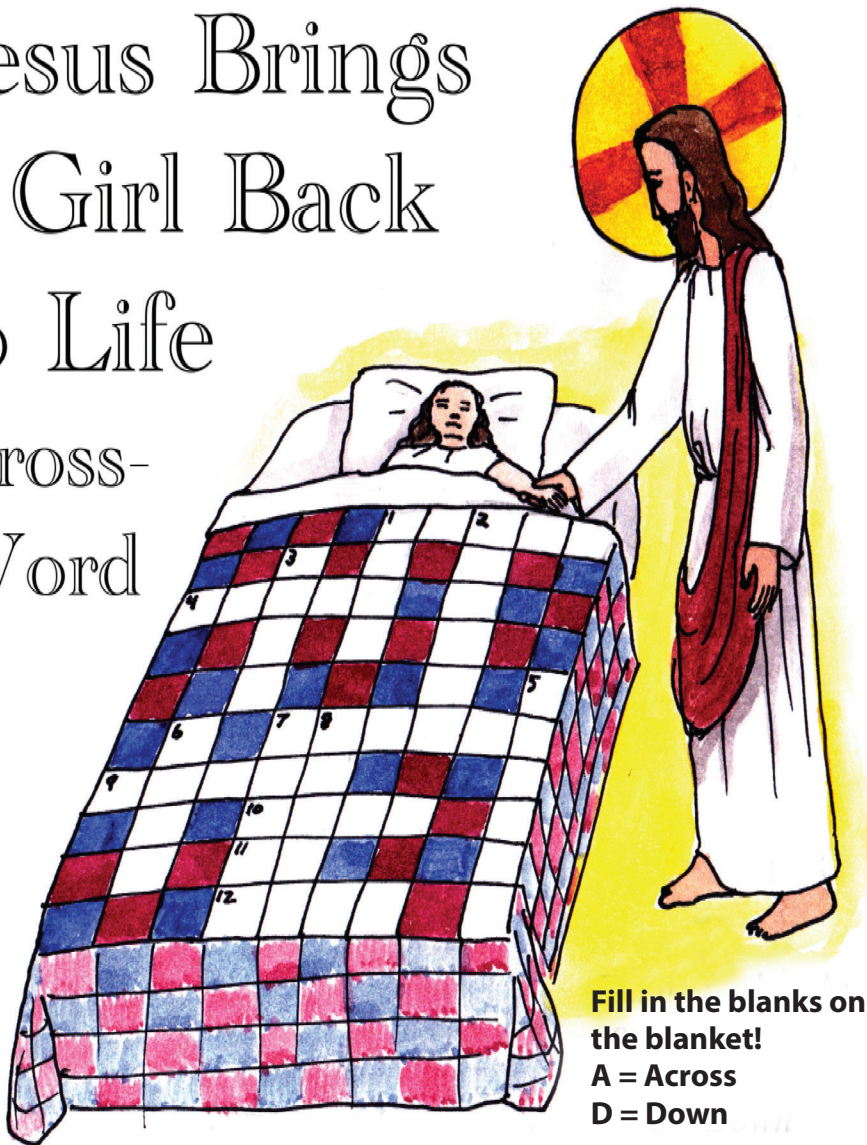
Always pray for people who are sick. Your prayers can help them get better, or they might help your sick friend to understand why God is letting them suffer.

What about when you are sick? When you are sick or hurt, think about Jesus

suffering on the cross. Like soon to be saint, Carlo Acutis who offered his suffering for the Lord, for the Pope and for the Church! Be thankful for people who help you when you are sick. Remember, they take Jesus' place!

Aunty Eliz

Jesus Brings a Girl Back to Life Cross- Word



Fill in the blanks on
the blanket!
A = Across
D = Down

Jesus took the little girl by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (Mark 5:41-42).

Let's
colour



A man called _____ (7A) came and begged
_____ (7D) to heal his daughter who was very
_____ (10A). So Jesus went, but on the way
some people came from Jairus' house and said that the girl
was _____ (6D). But Jesus went anyway, and
said that the _____ (3D) wasn't dead, but only
_____ (5D). He only took three of His apostles
when He went in to see the girl: _____ (9A),
_____ (1A), and _____ (1D). He
_____ (12A) everyone else out of the room,
except the girl's father and _____ (2D). Then
Jesus took the girl's hand and said, " _____ (8D)."
She got up and started walking around! God let this happen to
show _____ (11A) what He can do when we have
_____ (4A) in Him.

Answers. Across: 1. James 4. Faith 7. Jairus 9. Peter 10. Sick 11. us 12. sent. Down: 1. John 2. mother 3. girl 4. asleep 6. dead 7. Jesus 8. arise

YOUR + HAS



YOU. GO IN



AND BE

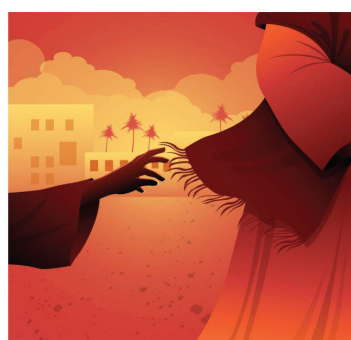


FROM YOUR



Mark 10: 52

Can you solve the secret code below? Fill in the words from the clues provided!



Faith



Healed



Peace



Free



Suffering



YOUTH

June 30, 2024

St Joseph's School celebrates stellar results in SPM Bible Knowledge



KUCHING, Sarawak: St Joseph's Private Secondary School proudly announced the exceptional performance of its students in the recent Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) Bible Knowledge (BK) examination. Demonstrating remarkable academic excellence, 76 students undertook the SPM BK paper, with 55 per cent (42 students) securing an A grade or higher. Additionally, an impressive 81.58 per cent of the students scored As' and Bs'.

The BK syllabus, encompassing the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, has

significantly contributed to the intellectual and spiritual development of the students. These outstanding examination results underscore not only the students' dedication but also the unwavering support and expert guidance from their teachers, particularly Benedict Lo (Mr Ben).

Several students who scored As' shared their enriching experiences studying Bible Knowledge at St Joseph's:

- **Chiong Zhao En (A-)** described the experience as both fun and challenging. Despite initial struggles, Zhao En improved through hard work, peer support, and passionate teaching. "I encourage juniors to take up BK — it helps develop a reading habit and moulds us into better versions of ourselves," Zhao En shared.

- **Jung Ning (A-)** recounted initial uncertainties about taking BK. With

guidance from Mr Ben and the school's strong tradition in the National Bible Knowledge Oral Quiz, Jung Ning realised the subject's value. "It's not about ability but availability. Commit fully, stay disciplined, and your future self will thank you," advised Jung Ning.

- **Joycelyn Hon (A+)** emphasised how BK lessons prepared her for the real world by challenging limiting ideas and teaching attention to detail. "Practical tips include doing homework and practising active recall. Find what works best for you and walk this journey with curiosity and joy," Joycelyn suggested.

- **Adelia Chan (A)** expressed no regrets about taking BK, recalling memorable moments from competitions and studying. "Although challenging, your hard work will pay off. Listen to Mr

Ben, complete your assignments, and support each other. Do your best and let God do the rest," Adelia advised.

- **Kellie Yap (A+)** recounted her initial scepticism due to her Buddhist background but credited Mr Ben's dedication for her success. "BK is more than just a subject; it fosters emotional and spiritual growth. Thank you, Mr Ben, for instilling vital values in us and guiding us to success," Kellie expressed.

The remarkable performance of these students underscores the importance of Bible Knowledge as a subject that goes beyond academics, fostering emotional and spiritual growth. The school's commitment to nurturing well-rounded individuals continues to shine through these achievements. Congratulations to all the students and teachers for their exceptional dedication and hard work.

Cardinals set to Vote to Canonise Carlo ACutis, 14 others

VATICAN: On the night of 9-10 July 1860, eight Franciscan friars and three lay Christians of the Maronite rite were martyred in the Franciscan convent in Syria during a Druze uprising against local Christians.

Now, almost 100 years after Pope Pius XI beatified them, Emanuele Ruiz and his companions, including the brothers Francesco, Abdel-Mooti, and Raffaele Massabki, are one step away from sainthood.

On July 1, Pope Francis will preside at an Ordinary Public Consistory where Cardinals present in Rome are expected to give formal approval to proceed with their canonization.

The first millennial saint

During the ceremony, which will begin with the celebration of the liturgical hour of Terce, the Cardinals will also consider the causes of three founders of religious orders, as well as that of Bd Carlo Acutis, the 15-

year old web designer who is set to become the first "millennial" saint.

Born in 1991, Carlo Acutis was noted for his devotion to Eucharistic miracles and Marian apparitions, cataloguing both on a website he designed prior to his death in 2006 due to leukemia. His relics can be visited in Assisi, famous as the home of St Francis, to whom Blessed Carlo had a deep devotion. — **By Christopher Wells, Vatican News**



Faith Alive youth camp revival

PORT DICKSON, Seremban: Twenty-six youth from the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, Kuala Lumpur, participated in their first post-pandemic youth camp, “Faith Alive,” held at the Infant Jesus Convent in Port Dickson recently. Themed *On this rock I shall build My church* (Matthew 16:18), this camp marks a rejuvenation of youth activities within the parish.

Previously known as the “HE ROCKS” camp, “Faith Alive” has emerged as a dynamic and essential event for the youth of St John’s. The camp focused on deepening the participants’ understanding of the Holy Mass, with parish priest Fr Gerard Steve Theraviam playing a pivotal role. Fr Gerard’s three-day presence provided inspiration and invaluable insights, guiding the youth through the significance of the Mass and its rituals.

The camp kicked off with ice-breaking games, allowing participants to bond and enjoy a break from the hectic city life. On the first evening, Fr Gerard introduced an

innovative activity involving his collection of postcards from around the world. Each participant selected a postcard that resonated with their beliefs about the Holy Mass, using it as a reflection tool throughout the camp.

Day two began with an in-depth explanation of the Mass, culminating in a celebrated Mass where Fr Gerard offered detailed insights into its different parts. This unique experience included the rare opportunity for the youth to partake in both the body and blood of Christ, deepening their Eucharistic understanding.

The afternoon was dedicated to games and beach activities, fostering camaraderie among the youth. The day concluded with a solemn adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament in the chapel, accompanied by soft chants led by Fr Gerard, providing a serene moment for personal reflection.

The evening featured performances by the youths, who enacted parables from the Bible, showcasing their teamwork and creativity. These activities highlighted the



The youth choosing a postcard that resonated with their beliefs.

camp’s emphasis on collaboration and spiritual growth.

The camp’s success owes much to Fr Gerard’s presence and guidance, which not only enhanced the youth’s understanding of the Mass but also fostered lasting friendships and community bonds. The smiles and enthusiasm of the participants underscore

the camp’s positive impact.

A heartfelt thank you goes to the parents for their support, and to Fr Gerard for his unwavering dedication, from planning to execution. “Faith Alive” 2024 has set a high benchmark for future youth camps at the cathedral, promising continued spiritual and community growth.



Fr Gerard Theraviam leading a session.

The participants’ testimonials reflect the camp’s profound impact:

“The camp experience, surrounded by new people and engaging activities, helped me grow in faith and form precious memories. I feel closer to everyone and look forward to the next ‘Faith Alive Camp!’” — *Tasha*

“Faith Alive 2024 taught me about the Mass and helped me make new friends. The camp was fun and educational, deepening my bond with God and others. I highly recommend it!” — *Sean Chen*

“Faith Alive changed my perspective on church and community, allowing me to make new friends and unforgettable memories. I eagerly anticipate next year’s camp.” — *Charmaine*

“As my first church camp, Faith Alive provided a chance to make friends and learn about the Mass. The beach day with Fr Gerard, who blessed us with the Holy Trinity, was unforgettable. I can’t wait for the 2025 camp!” — *Rayyale Grasson*

Montfort’s graduation and Open House Charity Carnival 2024

SHAH ALAM: Montfort Boys Town (MBT) recently celebrated two significant events, marking a milestone in its commitment to vocational education and community engagement. The Graduation Ceremony 2024, held on May 31, saw 111 trainees — 86 young men and 25 young women — graduate from various departments including Hospitality, Automotive, Graphic Design and Multimedia, Facilities Maintenance, Bakery and Pastry, Mechanical Engineering, and Electrical.

The highlight of the ceremony was the announcement of Jovine Lau Jie Ying (Hospitality) and Sri Tharan Balayagam (Electrical) as the Best Female and Male Scholars of the Year. They received their awards from Yang Berhormat Tuan Azli Yusof, Member of Parliament for the Shah Alam constituency.

Since its inception, over 7,500 trainees have graduated from MBT. The institution has garnered praise from employers for producing highly disciplined and talented youth who are well-prepared for today’s competitive workforce. “This goes well for industries looking to hire talents who are ready to contribute and grow,” said Montfort Director, Bro Robin Devasagayam.

The institution also celebrated its alumni who have taken religious vows, with three joining the Brothers of St Gabriel, one entering the seminary in Penang this year and one female alumna joining the Canossian Sisters. “As we nurture young men and women, we pray that they listen to the prompt calling of God to be of service to others as well as to choose a way of religious life,” added Bro Robin.



Jovine Lau and Sri Tharan receives awards for best scholars.



On June 9, MBT hosted its highly anticipated Open House Charity Carnival. The sunny weather contributed to the event’s success, which saw overwhelming support from parish priests, parishioners from various churches in Klang Valley, and the general public.

The carnival was a collaborative effort, with donors, benefactors, well-wishers, and the dedicated Montfort staff and trainees working tirelessly since 2019 to bring it to fruition. As a non-governmental organisation, Montfort relies on public

donations to sustain its mission of providing vocational and technical training to underprivileged youth. The residential care and TVET training programmes require approximately RM7 million annually to operate.

MBT welcomes donations in cash and other forms, with all cash donations being tax-exempt under Government Gazette No 106 of 1960. For more information on supporting MBT and its vision to enhance its TVET capabilities, visit Montfort Boys Town or contact 03-55191735.

Pope advances canonisation causes for six

VATICAN: Pope Francis on June 20 advanced the causes for canonisation of two martyred Albanian priests, as well as that of three religious — a priest and two nuns — and a Spanish laywoman.

At an audience granted to the Prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, the Holy Father approved the decree of martyrdom for **Fr Luigi Palio**, a Franciscan priest who was arrested, tortured, and murdered by Montenegrin soldiers in 1913 for opposing the persecution of the local population and attempts at forced conversions to orthodoxy.

Fr Gjon Gazulli was killed “in hatred of the faith” in 1927 on the basis of false accusations. He was falsely accused and hanged because his activities were considered an obstacle to the government’s attempts at forceable religious unity among the population.

The Pope also recognised the “heroic virtues” of four others.

Known as the “friar of hospitality” **Isaia Columbro**, born Nicola Antonio Maria in 1908, distinguished himself by the welcome he extended to those seeking spiritual and material consolation. He was particularly close to the people of Irpinia following a devastating earthquake in 1980. He died in 2004.

Maria Costanza Zauli was born in Faenza, Italy, in 1886; at the age of 19, she entered the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart in Bologna. During a long period of illnesses that left her bedridden for many years, she resolved to found a new contemplative order dedicated to continuous Adoration, the Congregation of the Adorers Handmaids of the Blessed Sacrament. She died in 1954.

Ascensión Sacramento Sánchez Sánchez, the seventh of ten children, was born in Spain in 1911. After reading the life of St Therese of the Child Jesus, she dedicated herself to the work of evangelisation, becoming involved in Catholic Action. She later became associated with Fr Doroteo Hernández Vera, the founder of the Cruzada Evangélica Secular Institute. After taking perpetual vows, she died of typhoid fever in 1946 at the age of 35. The heroic nature of her virtue was recognised in her “apostolate of forgiveness” undertaken especially in the generous welcome and service she offered to women and need, in the prudent leadership of the work entrusted to her, and in her Christian patience during the illness that led to her death.

Finally, **Vincenza Guilarte Alonso** was educated in the convent of the Daughters of Jesus of Burgos, a congregation devoted especially to the education of youth. In 1909, at the age of 30, she was sent along with five sisters to establish a community in Brazil. She devoted herself with love to the local people, teaching in the public school. She served as porter and sacristan for the religious community, roles she accepted with humility and fulfilled until her premature death in 1960. — **By Christopher Wells, Vatican News**

MEMORIAM

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

In Loving Memory of
KENETH K. SIVAPRASAD
(26 November 1972 - 3 July 2012)



“We know that time heals all, yet the pain still lingers in our hearts. We begin to remember not just that you died, but that you lived. Your life gave us memories too beautiful to forget. And left a place no one can fill. We miss you dearly and forever will.”

Deeply missed and fondly remembered by,
Loving Wife, Daughter, Mother,
Brother & Sister-in-law, Uncles, Aunties, Cousins,
Nephews, Nieces, and a host of relatives and friends.

Third Anniversary
Forever Missed
“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want” Ps 23:1



George Quake Bock Chin
Called home to the Lord
on 3 July 2021

May the Lord grant you eternal rest and His perpetual light shine on you.

You are so dearly missed:
Chuan Soon, Sock Kheng,
Siew Hua, Chuan Lee,
Jennifer, Beatrix, Joshua,
Christopher, Danelle.

7th Year Anniversary
In Ever Loving Memory of



Xavier Franklin Gomez

From the Lord:
20.11.1941

To the Lord:
24.6.2017

“The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want. He makes me lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.” – Ps 23
Eternal rest grant unto him O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul rest in peace.

Deeply missed and remembered by:
Brothers, sisters and their families.

Remembering



N. AUGUSTINE GOMEZ
AMN., PPN., PJK.

11th August 1929 - 22nd June 2014

10 years have passed us by so quickly. Many wonderful things have come our way and we feel your presence through it all.

We still talk & have a good laugh remembering our time with you. So much love, joy and laughter you showered on all those who came your way.

You left a gap that no one can ever fill but in all this we are ever grateful to God for the Gift of YOU in our lives.

There will never be another you, in our home and in our hearts for **You were One of a Kind.**

The memory of the day still so fresh... but this loss we now comprehend.

The one who endures to the end will be saved.
Matthew 10:22

Forever Remembered by
Thresiamma, Children,
Grandchildren & Loved Ones.

40th Day Memorial

In Loving Memory of
Sebastian Anthony

9th March 1944 – 25th May 2024

*Death leaves a heartache no one can heal,
love leaves a memory no one can steal.*

Please join our family in celebrating the
40th Day Memorial Mass on Sunday 7th July 2024,
at Chapel of Our Lady of Good Health,
Kampung Pandan, 55100 Kuala Lumpur,
at 5.30pm followed by fellowship at the chapel grounds.



1st Anniversary
In Loving Memory of
our Beloved Father



GNANAMANI DORAISAMY

23rd July 1940 – 2nd July 2023

It's been a year since you left us Appa with Precious Memories, Enchanting Smile & your Love. Losing you has been the hardest part of our journey.

We Miss You Appa
Rest in peace

NOTICE

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In Loving Memory



Hazel Renee Dass (14.02.2014)

&

Pathiadass Ganaratnam (Robert) (03.07.2023)

Mass will be celebrated on **Saturday, 6 July 2024**
at the Church of the Assumption, Petaling Jaya at 6:00pm
followed by dinner fellowship at Griffon Hall.

*“Those we love don't go away,
They walk beside us every day
Unseen, unheard, but always near
still loved, still missed
and forever dear.”*

Deeply missed and forever loved by Daughter, Son,
Daughter-in-Law, and a host of relatives and friends.



In Loving Memory of
Isaac Santhana Das

16 February 1956 – 4 July 2022

Two years have gone by, yet it feels like only yesterday. Your kind words, care and compassion continue to be a source of strength and comfort. The legacy of love, kindness, and generosity you have taught continues to inspire us.

We miss you profoundly and cherish your memory every single day.

Rest in peace Appa.

Always missed very much by your loving family and loved ones.

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REST IN PEACE

Daughters of St Paul celebrate 109 years with a digital twist

ROME: The Daughters of St Paul, a congregation well-known for spreading the Gospel message through media, marked their 109th anniversary with a celebration that echoed a powerful message — The Church must embrace, not fear, the digital age.

The highlight of the event was the introduction of “scrollytelling,” a new interactive format that promises to transform how audiences engage with stories. This innovative approach seamlessly blends text, images, videos, and audio, creating a dynamic and immersive experience perfectly suited for the modern audience with its short attention span.

The keynote address by Dr Paolo Ruffini, Prefect for the Dicastery for Communication, set the tone for the celebration. He stressed the crucial role of the Church in actively shaping the digital landscape, moving beyond simply being users of technology. “The digital age presents a unique opportunity, not just to ‘use’ communication tools, but to truly live the Gospel in a digital culture,” he emphasised, echoing Pope Francis’ own call. He reminisced fondly about his childhood visits to the Daughters’ bookshop in Palermo, underlining the critical role they played in fostering his love for reading, learning and faith formation.

The Prefect’s words echoed deeply with



The cover image used for the presentation of scrollytelling.

the Daughters, whose story itself began with oral tradition the memory of their foundress, Mother Tecla Merlo, passed down through generations. This powerful image of “mothers who hold things together” served as a reminder of the importance of building bridges and fostering unity. The Prefect acknowledged the Daughters’ invaluable contribution in bridging the gap between the timeless message of the Gospel and the ever-evolving world of communication.

The Prefect urged the Church to move beyond simply “using” technology and

instead, actively shape it for the common good. He highlighted the crucial role of collaboration and community among communication teams worldwide. “Look for a different way of communicating,” he invited. “The digital age calls for a different way of doing formation, of offering ourselves as instruments of communication.” Their Superior General, Sr Anna Caiazza, witnessed the ‘scrollytelling’ presentation along with other esteemed guests.

Dr Ruffini’s message resounded with a call to action. He urged the Daughters, and

by extension the entire Church, to embrace a more dynamic and collaborative approach to communication. He emphasised humility and collaboration, advising them to utilise their strengths while acknowledging their limitations and God’s ultimate power.

The celebration of the Daughters’ 109th anniversary testifies to this very spirit. Revisiting the story of their foundress, Mother Tecla, in a modern format like “scrollytelling” highlighted the importance of preserving traditions while adapting to the present. The emphasis on Tecla’s role as a “mother” underscored the values of unity, listening, and healing that all should embrace.

The Daughters of St Paul’s story is one that continues to unfold, fuelled by innovation, guided by faith, and propelled by their stable spirit. With a renewed focus on digital storytelling and a commitment to collaboration, the Church is disposed to bridge the gap between tradition and technology, ensuring the Gospel message continues to spread for generations to come. The event concluded with a performance by the St Peter’s Choir, celebrating their own 40th anniversary. It was a beautiful witness to the lasting power of both tradition and innovation in keeping the spirit alive. — By Sr Roselyne Wambani Wafula, Vatican News

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Thursday | 19 September | 8PM
Theme: Prayer is Forgiveness

Friday | 20 September | 8PM
Theme: Prayer is Relationship

Saturday | 21 September | 6PM
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FEAST DAY: At St. Pio's Spirituality Center, Ulu Tiram, Johor.

Sunday | 22 September | 10.30AM
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For directions to the Center, please use Waze come first to Sanctuary Memorial Park, Ulu Tiram, followed by St Pio's Friary & Spirituality Centre.

For more information please contact: 012-2900547, 016-8508002