

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 decision in the marketplace.

For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food.

1 Cor. 10:1-3



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Pope recites special prayer for Ukraine

ROME: Pope Francis read an impassioned prayer asking God to have mercy and bring peace to the war in Ukraine during his Wednesday general audience on March 16.



<https://www.zee5.com/>

Here is an English translation of the prayer, originally written in Italian by Archbishop Domenico Battaglia of Naples, southern Italy:

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us sinners.
 Lord Jesus, born under the bombs of Kyiv, have mercy on us.
 Lord Jesus, who died in his mother's arms in a bunker in Kharkiv, have mercy on us.
 Lord Jesus, sent at 20 years old to the front, have mercy on us.
 Lord Jesus, who still sees armed hands in the shadow of your Cross, have mercy on us!
 Forgive us, Lord, if, not content with the nails with which we pierced your hands, we continue to drink from the blood of the dead torn apart by weapons.
 Forgive us, Lord, if these hands that you created for care have been transformed into instruments of death.
 Forgive us, Lord, if we continue to kill our brother, if we continue like Cain to remove the stones from our field to kill Abel.
 Forgive us if we continue to justify cruelty with our toil, if with our pain we legitimise the cruelty of our actions.
 Forgive us the war, Lord.
 Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, we implore you: Stop the hand of Cain! Enlighten our consciences, let not our will be done, do not abandon us to our own actions.
 Stop us, Lord, stop us.
 And when you have stopped the hand of Cain, take care of him too. He is our brother.
 O Lord, stop the violence.
 Stop us, Lord.



VATICAN: "In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph!" These were the words of Our Lady to the shepherd children of Fatima over 100 years ago, words that give hope in the midst of the clamour of wars.

On March 25, Pope Francis will consecrate Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

At Wednesday's General Audience, he prayed intensely for peace: "Lord Jesus, who died in a mother's arms in a bunker in Kharkiv, have mercy on us... Stop the hand of Cain!" The meekness of prayer overcomes the arrogance of evil.

But even today there are so many wars in the world, often forgotten: in Syria, Yemen, Ethiopia... In Ukraine, the Russian army continues to bomb; civilians, refugees, simple people queuing to buy bread, houses, hospitals and churches are hit and devastated. In the bombing of the paediatric hospital in Mariupol, a pregnant woman died with her baby. Wars cause suffering and devastation everywhere.

Many are praying for peace. In the midst

of wars, prayer is not useless. We will never know how much good a simple, small and silent prayer can do in the world. It is the force of love, the power of the Spirit that blows everywhere and transforms and converts. Everything is possible with God, all it takes is a chink in the heart that opens wide and changes murderous hands. Prayer does not change God by dint of words, prayer changes hearts and converts them to God so that they may finally welcome His gifts. God's gift is the Spirit who heals the world of hatred with love.

Pope Francis asked: "How do we bring war into prayer?" Prayer allows itself to be transformed into action, charity and practical faith. Prayer, in its weakness, can appear to be a failure. Even God seems to fail in Jesus on the cross: instead, it was there that He conquered hatred, evil, death, and began a new history, a new creation.

The message of Fatima does not intend to satisfy apocalyptic curiosities about the end of the world; it only launches a heartfelt appeal for conversion so that humanity may be saved from the selfishness that destroys. In these difficult times, we are accompanied by Mary's consoling words: "In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph."

In 2000, the then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, explained the meaning of these words as follows:

"My Immaculate Heart will triumph." What does this mean? The Heart open to God, purified by contemplation of God, is stronger than guns and weapons of all kinds. Mary's 'fiat', the word of her heart, changed the history of the world because she introduced the Saviour into this world — because thanks to this "Yes", God could become man in our space and remains so now and forever. The evil one has power in this world, we see it and experience it again and again; he has power because our freedom continually allows itself to be turned away from God. But since God Himself has a human heart and has thus turned man's freedom towards good, towards God, freedom for evil no longer has the last word. Since then, the word has been valid: 'In the world, you will have tribulation but have confidence; I have conquered the world' (Jn 16:33). The message of Fatima invites us to rely on this promise." — **By Sergio Centofanti, Vatican News**

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GUEST EDITORIAL — TONY MAGLIANO



On a rainy evening in Rome, two Lents ago, a solitary elderly man in white, climbed the numerous steps leading to the front of St Peter's Basilica. Upon reaching the top, he turned to face an empty St Peter's Square to preside over a prayer service asking for God's guidance, strength, and protection in the face of the seemingly invincible coronavirus which was marching throughout the world sowing fear and striking death along its path.

With personal protective equipment in extremely short supply, and a vaccine — usually taking years to develop — nowhere in sight, the faith-filled Pope Francis shared his wise, heartfelt, and encouraging words with millions of people in virtual attendance, giving us the inspiring, comforting message that in the midst of this furious squall, our Lord Jesus is here with us to quiet the wind and calm the dashing waves, as He did for His first disciples who were afraid that the storm would sink their boat and they would thus perish (Mk 4:35-41).

And after quieting the storm the Lord asked them, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" (Mk 4:35-41).

Quoting our Lord, Pope Francis raised the same piercing questions to us, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" He attempted to awaken us from our spiritual sleep.

For powerful effect, Pope Francis posed Jesus' questions again, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?"

He said the Lord is asking us if we are truly trusting Him? And just as true this Lent as it was in the Lent of 2020, Pope Francis reminds us of the Lord's urgent call to conversion, the Lord's loving invitation: "Return to me with all your heart" (Joel 2:12).

Again, the Pope quoted Jesus, "Why are you afraid?" Have you no faith? He said that "Faith begins when we realise we are in need of salvation. We are not self-sufficient: by ourselves we flounder; we need the Lord."

The Holy Father went on to say that Jesus is calling us to seize the mo-

ment and choose what matters over what passes away. "It is a time to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and with others."

Now, with the world in such deep trouble, with so many brothers and sisters experiencing such misery, we need to take Lenten's clarion call to heart. We need "to get our lives back on track with regard to you, Lord, and with others."

In the midst of the COVID pandemic, the death toll is still raging among many poor nations — three times higher than in rich countries. According to Oxfam, Pfizer and Moderna have delivered less than one per cent of their total vaccine supplies to poor countries. This is an outrageous injustice.

The death-dealing, heart-breaking suffering caused by President Putin's brutal war against the Ukrainian people reveals yet another deadly pandemic: war!

The disease of dozens of armed conflicts such as in Ukraine, Tigray, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen continue to kill countless innocent children, women, and men.

And let's not dare forget the hunger/malnutrition pandemic occurring in many nations — most especially in Afghanistan — where United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres recently told the UN Security Council that "Daily life has become a frozen hell for the people of Afghanistan".

And it is to our peril, and that of future generations, to continue largely ignoring the global pandemic of climate change.

And the pandemic list goes on and on.

To help give hope in the midst of all the pandemics and in life's storms, let us hold fast to the Holy Father's encouraging words that "We have a rudder: by His cross we have been redeemed." And "Let us once again listen to the proclamation that saves us: He is risen and is living by our side!"

● **Tony Magliano is an internationally syndicated Catholic social justice and peace columnist.**



Responding to the call of Lent

The readings this Sunday begin with the familiar story of the burning bush; the experience of Moses being called by God, the revelation of God's name and that God is aware of the peoples' predicament. The Lord says, "Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land to a land rich and broad, a land where milk and honey flow..."

The psalmist acclaim that the Lord is compassion and love.

St Paul then reminds us today that the people who were with Moses in the desert were guided by God, the source of goodness, and their physical and spiritual nourishment. However, they still faltered due to human weakness.

In the Gospel, Jesus sternly reminds us 'unless you repent you will all perish as they did'. With the parable of the fig tree, Jesus emphasises that God is always willing to give us opportunities to repent.

Today's readings reveal a great deal about the nature of God. From both the Old and New Testaments, we have a plethora of representations of God. However, it is in our human nature to remain curious, to understand who God is, what God does, and how we relate and experience God in our lives. Let us go deeper into today's readings.

In the first reading, Moses has committed a crime and is a refugee at Midian. While

tending to his father-in-law's flock, he notices a burning bush; he is curious because the bush is not being consumed by the burning fire. His curiosity draws him closer, then he hears a voice: "Come no nearer. This is a sacred site. Remove your footwear. I am the God of your Fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob". Moses had no reservations it was God's voice. He had sinned by taking a life and yet God still appeared to him. Similarly, we too sin in our lives one way or another, yet God continues to communicate with us through unusual and tangible ways. As God sent Moses to liberate the Israelites, we too are sent by God by virtue of our Baptism to be heralds of the Good News of salvation to the world.

However, before we go out into the world to proclaim salvation, we ourselves need to turn away from sin and experience the compassion and love that the psalmist exalts the Father for, a Father who understands that we fall into sin due to human weakness. Nevertheless, our human weakness shouldn't be an excuse to be unfaithful, when we sin, we should remember that our human nature may indeed be sinful, but human nature, in its essence and as originally created by God, the source of goodness, is perfect and complete.

St Paul reminds the Corinthians that "our fathers were all guided by a cloud above

them..." Likewise, we are reminded today that we too are guided by the same spirit in our lives. Perhaps we can infer that the cloud above is our conscience, with a fundamental role of judging good or evil — the right or wrong of a person's choices, knowing when we have erred or sinned as we make these choices daily in life.

The Gospel gives us still more information about who God is and how God acts with us. Both events caution us to repent from our wrongdoings. Jesus sternly reminds us: 'unless you repent you will all perish as they did.' In the parable of the fig tree, He emphasises that the opportunity to repent is always present and the consequences we will have to face if we fail to repent. We are now midway in our Lenten observances. It is an opportune time to rethink and re-evaluate how we have responded to the call of Lent. That is what repentance means — a conversion from within the heart, guided by one's conscience and experiencing healing so that we can become agents of healing in the world today.

One way of experiencing healing is through repentance when moved out of the love of God and not because of the fear of punishment which is sufficient for the forgiveness of sin. Hence, the sacrament of Reconciliation or Confession, which is instituted by Christ for the Church, allows each one of us to encounter the mercy of

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Bro George Vaithynathan

3rd Sunday of Lent (C)

Readings: Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15;
1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12;
Gospel: Luke 13:1-9

God in a personal and profound way. It offers each one of us the grace to cure our wounded soul and subsequently restore relationship with God, with the Church and with one another. So, when was the last time you went for confession? Let us not be afraid of confession and not be embarrassed after receiving absolution. Because, after receiving this grace, we are free, forgiven and reconciled with God and man. Thus, let us be courageous to receive this sacrament during this Lenten period of grace.



Bro George Vaithynathan is a fourth year theology seminarian from the Diocese of Penang. He is currently on pastoral attachment at Church of St Anthony, Pudu and the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan Office for Human Development.



**KUALA
LUMPUR
ARCHDIOCESE**

**Diary of Archbishop
Julian Leow**

March

- 20 Legion of Mary
100th Anniversary
Celebration Mass**
**26 Feast Day of the Church
of Annunciation, Raub**



**PENANG
DIOCESE**

**Diary of Bishop
Sebastian Francis**

March

- 23 College General
Bishops' Staff Meeting -
College General**
**26 CHARIS Malaysia
General Meeting -
Zoom**

Chrism Mass celebrated in Sandakan Diocese

SANDAKAN: The celebration of Chrism Mass was held on Wednesday, March 9 at the Cathedral of St Mary. Rt Rev Julius Dusin Gitom, Bishop of Sandakan, celebrated the Mass after the clergy recollection.

Chrism Mass is celebrated annually during the season of Lent, where the priests renew their vows and the oils used for anointing during the Sacrament of Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Order and the Extreme Unction are blessed by the bishop.

In his homily, Bishop Julius shared that the COVID-19 pandemic had changed the lives of the faithful and that society, as a whole, is beginning to adapt to life with the virus. The liturgical celebration of the Church during Sunday Masses and the liturgical rites during this year's Easter Triduum will continue to be celebrated with limited physical participation of the faithful while others would have to follow all the liturgical rites virtually.

Bishop Julius also stated that although the churches have opened, there are still many restrictions and SOPs that have to be observed. He explained that the celebration of the sacraments such as infant baptism, marriages and confession could only be conducted by appointment with the priest, and subject to a COVID-19 test.

He mentioned that the virus had struck at the very heart of the ministry of the priests, curtailing outreach to the peripheral areas of the diocese, visits to the hospitals, the elderly, the sick, and the dying and hindering them from drawing closer to the bereaved families. Bishop Julius urged all the priests to be courageous and continue to be zealous in their ministry, and to draw strength from the inexhaustible grace of



Rt Rev Julius Dusin Gitom with the clergy of Sandakan Diocese during the Chrism Mass on March 9, 2022.

God. He also encouraged them to continue to be servants of the Gospel and to undertake this ministry of love. He stressed that despite the uncertainties, difficulties and frustration, priests need to reaffirm their vocation to the priesthood, renew their promises and commitment and thus find strength from the Lord to move on, and refresh their resolve to serve the Lord's flock.

"The Chrism Mass reminds the priests of their core ministry to be stewards of the mysteries of God and that they are ordained to offer the Holy Eucharist for the redemption of God's faithful and the world. The priests celebrate this holy sacrifice of the Lord daily, to enhance and strengthen their resolve to serve the Lord.

"It is unusual to serve Mass with very few people. Even with very few people in the celebration of the Eucharist, the sacrifice of the Mass continues to be effective in their lives. The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Church's activities and certainly our Christian life, as mentioned in the Sandakan Diocese's Vi-

sion and Mission statement. The Chrism Mass also reminds the priests that they are ordained as shepherds and the Synodal process currently practised in the parishes and diocese. They are a part of the universal Church, delegated by Christ to shepherd His flock. Therefore they also know that they are to be the catalyst of unity, encouraging the people to journey together, to learn and to listen to one another. In this way they strengthen each other in their journey towards God. In a moment of crisis like this, the calling as priest remains strong, said the prelate.

Bishop Julius thanked the priests for all that they have been doing and that, under the most difficult circumstances, they had continued to be faithful and did their best to serve the people of God. He also thanked the faithful for their prayers throughout the years. He asked the faithful to continue to pray for the priests to remain strong, committed and faithful to their calling. He urged everyone to move on together and to ask the Lord to accompany them in their journey. — *By Evelyn Jock*



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #80



Greetings and Peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you, dear People of God.

The Johor Elections are over. Some rejoiced. Others blamed unfair practices. A number decided on post-mortems. And the observers analysed. Where are we heading as a nation? There are governments controlled by the Mafia, the Triad or the Yakuza, but our nation is robbed in broad daylight, by suit and neck-tied law-makers. Strangely, "maruah" and "martabat" (pride and dignity) are no more values highly esteemed.

Time for truth and reconciliation: Can there be healing if there's no truth? It has been quoted that if there is no truth, there is no justice. And if there is no justice, there is no peace.

True reconciliation necessitates truth. Be true to our history, our stories, our policies and our dealings with one another.

No community or nation can be built on false pride and prejudices; lies and distorted propaganda, and divisive politics and policies.

What heals? What reconciles?

Remember the words of Tunku Abdul Rahman: "We are all Malaysians. This is the bond that unites us. Let us always remember that unity is our fundamental strength as a people and as a nation".

Remember we are first, humans. Isaac Asimov said: "There are no nations! There is only humanity. And if we don't come to understand that right soon, there will be no nations, because there will be no humanity".

Remember our wealth is our arts and learning, not the pursuit of cash: Syed Ahmad Khan warned: *When a nation becomes devoid of art and learning, it invites*

poverty. And when poverty comes it brings in its wake thousands of crimes.

A Thought for the Week: Change or Be Changed!

Once there was a man who was against war. He got many people excited about his mission.

He built a large organisation to speak out against war. Eventually people got tired and gave up on him and the mission. He ended up standing outside the capital with an anti-war poster all alone. One day, a passerby, noticing the lone protestor, walked up to him and asked him in a chiding voice: "Do you really think you're going to change the world?"

The man replied: "No, but I hope by showing up, the world will not change me."

Something to think about: Is it always good not to let the world change one or is it perhaps sometimes more courageous and even essential that we be changed by the world?

Reinhold Niebuhr prayed, God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Announcements for this Week:

1. Parish, Vicariate and Diocesan Pre-Synod Feedback Study days are coming up. About 5,000 had participated in the pre-Synod survey and consultations. More responses are still coming in. Positive or negative, the Holy Spirit continues to speak through the people of God.

2. Confessions in all three Vicariates will begin from March 29, 2022.

3. Placements of priests with effect from May 1, 2022:

a. **Fr Cyril Mananayagam** as Assistant Parish Priest

to St Louis Church, Kluang, and as Assistant to Fr Lawrence Ng in the Diocesan Formation Team.

b. **Fr Damian Pereira** as Assistant Parish Priest to Church of Immaculate Conception, JB, and Bishop's Delegate to the Professional Standards Office, and assist at the Tribunal.

4. A talk and forum with Dr Joseph J. Panikulam on "Who Cares for Our Special Needs Children After We are Gone," organised by the Diocesan Commission for Family Life will be held on March 27 at 8.00pm via Zoom.

This week's Question and Query:

The Q asked, "Why is it so difficult to achieve communion?"

1. It is said that *"like can know like"*. For communion between individuals to be possible, there has to be likeness. It means having *something substantial in common with another person*. Only then, *can we relate* with the other, and *be one in mind and soul*.

2. *So having something like the Divine within us allows us to know the Divine*. There was a prevalent idea in early thought *"that like can know like"*.

God bless you all. **"Religion is for those who sleep. Spirituality is for those who are awake"**.

The Lord builds with living bricks a Spiritual House.

Bernard Paul
Bishop Bernard Paul
March 18, 2022

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6kMRnHnxVs>

Banns of Ordination

Having consulted the College of Consultors, His Grace Most Reverend Datuk John Wong Soo Kau DD, Archbishop of Kota Kinabalu, has agreed to ordain to the Order of Priesthood these deacons, at the venues, dates and times listed below:

1) Deacon Sylvester Wong Yun Cheong

Venue: Sacred Heart Cathedral, Karamuning
Date: June 24, 2022
Time: 10.00am



2) Deacon Terans Thadeus

Venue: Holy Rosary Church, Limbahau
Date: July 16, 2022
Time: 10.00am



3) Deacon Lasius Gantis

Venue: Sacred Heart Church, Inobong
Date: August 4, 2022
Time: 10.00am



4) Deacon Peter Chung Pit Soon

Venue: St John Church, Tuaran
Date: August 22, 2022
Time: 10.00am



Canon Law obliges Catholics to reveal any impediment or circumstance that would prevent the above candidates from receiving Sacred Orders and should contact the Office of the Archbishop at 088-211722, or the parish priest at the respective parish offices, with such information as soon as possible.

Let us offer our prayerful support for these *ordinandi* as they prepare for presbyteral ministry to serve the People of God in the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu.

Let us pray for more vocations to the priesthood. God bless our Archdiocese.

Released by the:

Office of
Archbishop John Wong
Archdiocese of
Kota Kinabalu

An inside look at the Mass

PENANG: The Mass explained from the inside out: this was the unique experience of some 120 plus parishioners who filled the Church of Divine Mercy for *A Walk-through Mass* recently. A week into the journey of Lent, it was an insightful way to participate in Mass as parish priest, Fr Michael Raymond OFM Cap, took time while celebrating Mass to pause and explain the meaning and significance of all we do during the Eucharistic celebration.

At the start of the two-hour session, Fr Michael gave an overview of some important areas to note before he began the Mass proper. He explained that in the Study of the Eucharist, there were four important areas of consideration. These were the theology of the Eucharist (God present in the Eucharist), Liturgy of the Eucharist (movement through the Mass) Spirituality of the Mass (How we live the Eucharist) and the Sacrament of the Eucharist (Our understanding of the Eucharist in Mass).

Eager to deepen their understanding and love for the Holy Mass, the faithful listened intently

as Fr Michael also noted three crucial aspects of the Eucharist. These included:

- 1) Traditions in the Church,
- 2) The authority of the Church and
- 3) The Scriptures.

The Catholic Church is rich in traditions, respects the authority of the pope and looks to the Scriptures as the foundation for her teachings.

Language and culture too, play an important part in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, noted Fr Michael. We identify ourselves through our culture, for example, during our Ponggal or Chinese New Year celebrations when our cultural expressions come alive through the inculturation of our eastern heritage. Similarly, language is an important tool used in the expression of our faith. Posture and gestures, movements of the body are an inherent expression or the inner disposition of our outer experience. Thus, bowing, kneeling and standing reflect respect and honour. Even while we sit and listen to the Word of God, it reflects our posture of listening and meditating in silence to receive God's message.

Fr Michael reminded all of the



Fr Michael Raymond OFM Cap

dangers of following only the external gestures, without the internal conviction of why we need to perform such acts.

It was enriching to fully engage in Mass with a deepened sensitivity and understanding of all that happens; what we do and how we respond throughout the celebration of Mass. The Eucharist is all about Jesus and it is important to come with a deep love, passion and hunger to experience fully this "source and summit of Christian life", reminded Fr Michael. The first thing we must have is the Fire of the Eucharist in our hearts, the deep thirst for the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Mass. He quoted St Padre Pio as an example of someone who placed the celebration of Mass above all else. The saint once said "... It would be easier for the world to exist without the sun than without the Holy Mass."

Having broken down the segments of the Mass into meaningful sections, from the Introductory rites to the Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist and the Concluding Rites, Fr Michael took appropriate pauses during the Mass to expound on the significance of what was unfolding.



Gaining a deeper understanding of the Mass.

The role of the EMHCs in the parish

PETALING JAYA: Thirty-nine Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHCs) of the Church of the Assumption attended an intensive and comprehensive three-hour formation on March 5, facilitated by both, parish priest, Fr Leonard Lexson, and resident priest, Fr Biju Mathew.



Fr Biju Mathew

Four sessions were covered, with Fr Biju presenting the first on *The Sacrament of the Eucharist*, based on the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) with cross references to *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, *Immense Caritatis* (Jan 29, 1973) and *Lumen Gentium*. Fr Biju explained in detail the four prin-

ciples guiding our celebration of the Eucharist, as well as our role as EMHCs and encouraged us to read the texts on our own.

He explained the origin of the laity and religious being authorised as EMHCs, what "Extraordinary" means, the times EMHCs assist ordained ministers and elaborated on the Christocentric nature of the Eucharistic celebration, while highlighting the active participation of the faithful as a right and duty resulting from our baptism. Emphasising that we are a Eucharistic people, he expressed how the other sacraments, the liturgical rites, and all works of the Christian life, are centred on the Eucharistic celebration and flow from it.

Fr Leonard quoted many Biblical texts and John Paul II's *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* as he followed up on Fr Biju's session. In Session Two, he summarised the four principles and explained in detail how the administering of the Body and Blood of Christ by an EMHC to the Eucharistic assembly is "A Graced Ministry". It was a very enlightening session with numerous aspects covered on the Catholic Theology of the Eucha-



Fr Leonard Lexson

In Session Three, titled "Qualities of an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion", he touched on the principles practised at every Eucharistic celebration to ensure reverent service and what a parish priest looks for in an EMHC, for example, outstanding Christian life, faith and morals, besides leading by example. He explained that sufficient spiritual, theological and practical preparation is vital before EMHCs are commissioned; he expressed the need for bimonthly face-to-face gatherings for reflection on the responsibility for giving Jesus at Mass, as well as to the homebound. This session included the liturgical colours and items in

"I found the formation enlightening and informational, said teenage altar server Gwyneth Tan. I immensely enjoyed it as Fr Michael went in-depth in his explanation on what goes on during Mass and its different sections, along with his personal sharing. It greatly aided me in understanding the gestures during Mass and its symbolism. Overall, it was a phenomenal opportunity to deepen my understanding in the liturgical aspect of my faith."

Questions fielded during the session ran the gamut from; receiving the Holy Eucharist in two species, what to do if one accidentally drops the Host, to teaching children reverence in church and more. Fr Michael stressed the importance for parents to instil the habits and gestures of reverence before and during Mass.

Edmund Lee, a retiree, commented: "I learnt of the importance of the Holy Eucharist where the body and blood of Christ is given freely for us. I learnt that no other prayers, like the Rosary or even devotion to saints, should take precedence over our focus on Christ during Mass. And that singing the hymns add life and meaning to our souls as the lyrics may open the eyes of our minds and the doors of our hearts." Jesinta Simon, who heads the writers' team at the parish, summed it up, "It was insightful and timely during this Lent where we are restoring, renewing and rebuilding."

Parishioners at the Church of Divine Mercy are also engaged in outreach projects during Lent, coming together as ministries and BECs to find creative ways to do works of mercy to reach the least and the lost during this sacred time in the Catholic calendar.

the sanctuary.

In Session Four, "Communion to the homebound", Fr Leonard underscored the importance of Sunday being the principal day for taking Communion to the homebound as an extension of the life of the Church to those who are incapacitated. All EMHCs are expected to be available for Communion to the homebound. He provided detailed explanations on the many related aspects involved.

The EMHCs had the opportunity to ask many questions and have them answered. For Susan Fernando, "the formation was very meaningful and interesting. I now fully understand what is expected of me as an EMHC."

For Dr Diana Raj, "it was meaningful to know the 'why' instead of only the 'how' in this much needed formation after such a long break; I never knew the content of the GIRM before this."

Helen Fernandez welcomed it as a very good refresher session, enabling her to know our priests' expectations related to serving the homebound, the faithful at Mass and in the BEC.

It was certainly a formation that was greatly appreciated. — **By Dorothy Balachandran**

COVID-19 and the structural crises of our time

The response of religious communities

By Julie Lim

PETALING JAYA: The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed major structural flaws in Malaysia's economic-political order, such as an increasing political polarisation, an unstable financial system and environmental degradation. These issues highlight the need for nations to unite in order to build an environmentally caring and economically just world.

To explore how religious communities may contribute to the vision, the Council of Churches of Malaysia (CCM) organised a conversation on March 7 with three distinguished individuals. They were Prof Dr Mohd Tajuddin Mohd Rasdi, a public intellectual speaker who writes on a wide range of issues; Prof Datuk Seri Dr Victor Wee, the Immediate Past President of Buddhist Gem Fellowship and Secretary of the International Buddhist Confederation; and Most Rev Julian Leow, the Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur. The conversation was moderated by **REV DR HERMAN SHASTRI**, General Secretary of CCM. It was based on a book, *COVID-19 and the Structural Crises of Our Time*, authored by Dr Lim Mah Hui, a former academician, banker and city councillor in Penang, and Michael Heng Siam-Heng.



In his opening presentation, **DR LIM MAH HUI** said that according to economist, Karl Polanyi, there were three great transformations. The First Great Transformation began in the late 18th Century and saw the overturning of relationship between Market and Society. The Second Great Transformation began in the 1970s where there was an overturning of relationship between Finance and



Volunteers preparing meals at the Gurdwara Sahib P.J. (The Malaysian Insight photo/Afif Adam)

Real Economy. As a result, Finance became the Master of Real Economy. The Third Great Transformation is currently happening where the human person and caring for the environment have become more important compared to merely making profits. Dr Lim also applied Polanyi's framework to analyse current crises in the environment, healthcare, finance/economy and politics.

PROF DR MOHD TAJUDDIN said that the Malaysian education system is no longer relevant as it is fragmented, e.g. geography is separated from history, science is separated from history and religion is separated from morality. As a result, students are unable to think critically and unable to relate what they have learnt to real life issues. Dr Tajuddin is of the opinion that the education system must be revamped into a more humane based one that takes into account the community, science and the environment. He proposes that the United Nation's Sustainability Development Goals (SDG) be the new mantra for education.



Dr Tajuddin says that Umar Al-Khattab, the second caliph of Islam, is an example of a political leader who understood economic issues as spiritual issues. This is because many people think that spiritual issues are merely related to rituals and pilgrimages. Dr Tajuddin says that 400,000 permits for *umrah* (optional pilgrimage) are issued annually, and each pilgrim spends around RM10,000 to perform the *umrah*. If the total expenses are collectively spent to help those in need, that would be a spiritual lesson for all. However, the narrative given is that pilgrims must perform the *umrah* for themselves and not for others. "I feel unsettled praying in a RM400 million mosque when I know there are so many people in need," he says.

DR VICTOR WEE says that according to the Buddha, greed, hatred and delusion lie at the root of all evil source, speech and action. "When we examine an action, we don't look at the external expression, but we examine the roots that are motivating this action. Sometimes seemingly good deeds like



giving to charity may be based on negative roots," he explains. To give an example, Dr Wee pointed out that certain Western countries had offered COVID-19 vaccines to developing countries under the guise of charity, when the motivation behind the offer was actually to get rid of vaccines that were nearing their expiry date.

Dr Wee also said, "If you want to bring peace and global good, we ourselves must be in a state of balance, peace and happiness. We need to find harmony within ourselves before we can succeed in bringing harmony outside ourselves."

ARCHBISHOP JULIAN LEOW said that in the darkest moments throughout history, there have been many saints and holy people from all religious affiliations who have become beacons of hope. In recent challenging times, people from various backgrounds had worked together to help the needy. A case in point is the Malaysia Solidarity COVID-19 Fund which raised approximately RM32 million within three days for the Malaysian healthcare system.



Archbishop Julian shared that one of the lessons he learnt during the pandemic is the role of 'little' ones in society such as the GRAB drivers, security forces, nurses and cleaners. They are seldom seen in the forefront, but they play a crucial role in keeping the economy going.

"In Malaysia, we are a fraternity where we have this social friendship which Pope Francis had espoused in his encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*. We sometimes forget the dignity of the human person and we take each other for granted. But all faiths remind us to do good. If we are able to practise this, we will have a chance to see humanity triumph over evil and over the many challenges that we face," he says.

Social Workers: No one left behind

World Social Work Day falls on the third Tuesday of March annually. To shed light on social work and the work that social workers do, *Catholics@Home* podcast had a conversation recently with Jolyn Hong, Head of Department for Diploma in Social Work at Methodist College, Kuala Lumpur; and Elsie Lee, past-president of the Malaysian Association of Social Workers, and faculty member at Methodist College.

"Social work is an academic discipline that promotes social change, development, social cohesion and the empowerment of people. Principles such as social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for the diversity is part of social work," says Jolyn.

"The main goal (of social work) is to empower the individual or the community, enabling them to survive in situations that may not be easy for them. Therefore, we work in terms of how we can create policies and create projects which allow communities to survive," she explains.

According to Elsie, social work has long been related with 'good' activities



such as *gotong-royong* and charitable acts. However, she pointed out that doing social work should not be merely a feeling of wanting to do good. Instead, professional social work must be strongly associated with theoretical knowledge, as well as values and activities that strengthens the individual, the family unit and the community to become more resilient and capable of managing challenges in their lives.

Elsie said that in Malaysia, the most prominent group are medical social workers who work in hospitals where they focus on patient care. Social workers also work in welfare departments where they manage aid for women, children, the elderly, the disabled, etc.

Elsie confessed that the role of a social worker is challenging as individuals in this profession must undergo professional



training in order to manage their personal feelings such as bias and prejudice. These inclinations must be overcome in order to work with different groups of people.

"Personal experiences in life can be a deterrent in helping people because we have our own bias. If we start with prejudice, it blocks the way to helping people because we come in with our own stigmas.

"Social work is a demanding profession because it calls for resilience in our character and in our personality in order to manage challenging problems and with individuals with tough personalities," she says. — **By Julie Lim**

To view this podcast, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rj0y6rgNZcY>

Christians and Muslims jointly celebrate Women's Day at SIC

By Gwen Manickam

PETALING JAYA: *Imitating Mary as an Icon for Women of all time* from the perspective of Christianity and Islam, was the theme for a joint forum on March 12.

Held in conjunction with International Women's Day which falls on March 8 annually, it was organised by the Majlis Perwakilan Penduduk (MPP) Zone 22 (which covers SS7 and SS11), MBPJ councillor, Women's Desk of the Church of St Ignatius (SIC) and Hidayah Centre Foundation (HCF).

Some 60 representatives from different organisations and parishioners attended the session at SIC. Present were guest speakers Fr Gerard Theraviam, parish priest of the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, Fr Lawrence Ng, CDD SIC parish priest, and Fr Martin Then CDD, First Assistant parish priest, Rahibah Che Omar, Councillor of Zone 22 R, and Hasmeeth Chaal consultant and guest



From left: Fr Lawrence Ng, CDD, Rahibah Che Omar, Susie Lim, Hasmeeth Chaal and Fr Gerard Theraviam at the recent Women's Day forum at the Church of St Ignatius, Petaling Jaya.

speaker for HCF.

SIC's deputy coordinator for PIHD ministry and coordinator for Women's Desk Susie Lim, in her opening address, said the theme for this year's Women's Day is *Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow*.

"The Women's Desk seeks to educate and empower women, by helping them build courage of heart and strength of mind to cope with the challenges of everyday living. Women have a rightful role to play in the home, in the community and in our society.

"As much as men do, women must deal with uncertainties, with the anxiety and stress of making ends meet, of providing for the needs of the family and of living with the ups and downs of life. We do not seek to empower women to become superheroes; instead, we seek to create awareness of issues relating to women and to accord them the dignity and respect that they deserve."

Rahibah said, as Malaysia is unique with so many cultures and races, one of her objectives is to bring closer interracial and interreligious ties among its people. "We

should look at our diversification as a strength."

"Our first joint event was in 2019, to celebrate Labour Day. This year, our focus is on women and both Christians and Muslims have one common lady we respect and honour and that's Mariam or Mother Mary.

"I know it's challenging to arrange a forum in the middle of this pandemic, but everyone has been very supportive to get it going. They have gone out of their way to welcome us today and be SOP compliant to ensure everyone's safety. By hosting the event here, I hope it helps break the barriers of Malays having a phobia of entering a church – everyone should be accepting and look at it with respect, and everything will be fine."

Fr Gerard shared how Mary, despite her delicate and sensitive situation during her pregnancy, was others centred. She didn't stay at home but instead chose to reach out and visit her elderly cousin Elizabeth.

Not only did Elizabeth rejoice at seeing Mary, but the infant in her womb leapt for joy, sensing the presence of Jesus in Mary's womb.

"We also see how tolerant and tough she was in giving birth in a stable, being amidst the overwhelming stench of animal dung, among other adversities. Luke 2:19 says, 'Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart', she was a reflective woman who used her head and her heart. Likewise, we need to stop and listen to God and His will for us. Besides being people of action, we need to be people who reflect and contemplate the way Mary did."

Fr Lawrence said the function was aimed at helping Muslims and Catholics understand each other better, especially with regards to Mother Mary. "It's not so much about making women powerful, but about empowering them to help everyone learn to respect women, and know that they represent images of God too."

International Women's Day at the Cathedral of St John

KUALA LUMPUR: Seventeen members of the Parish Integral Human Development Ministry (PIHDM) of the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist gathered to celebrate International Women's Day (IWD), with their adoptees and families on March 12.

Breakfast was served as they arrived and each of them had a purple ribbon pinned on their attire. Purple being the official colour of IWD which signifies dignity and justice for women. Hence, the Community Hall was decked with everything purple — balloons, ribbons, signages

and other decorations.

This year's theme *#BreakTheBias* highlighted the fact that women often find it tough to move ahead in life due to biased attitudes against them. It calls for action against the biases that women have to face on a daily basis. Global Shepherds, our partner in this celebration, gave a well prepared and insightful presentation, generating robust and interesting conversations from the many small group discussions.

When parish priest Fr Gerard Theraviam arrived, all the ladies were invited to cut the IWD cake

donated by the 'All Malaysia Malayalee Association Ladies Council'. To commemorate the occasion, our ladies were each presented with a gift pack of selected self-care items like face towels, body and hand cream, face masks, hand sanitisers, just to give them a treat for their hard work, being the pillar of strength for the family in good and bad times. Fr Gerard then proceeded to commission the excited members of the PIHDM who were all clad in their new green coloured T-shirts.

Lunch followed; our adoptees were given the opportunity on this



Participants in small groups discussing this year's theme *#breakthebias*, at the Cathedral's International Women's Day celebration.

special occasion to show off their culinary skills. This they did - the table was filled with varieties of bread, biryani rice with chicken, fried noodles, vegetables and an assortment of gravies. Global Shepherd's contribution of chicken *rendang* was a hit too!

Since it coincided with the monthly provision distribution day, the adoptees went home with their hands full with a vast variety of provisions which included their special requests of diapers and baby formula. — **By Mary Teoh, coordinator of PIHDM**

Letters to Editor

Nicol David: in praise of the Lord with humility

Dear Editor,

The story and testimonies of Nicol David (Squash queen gives back) published in the March 6 issue of the *HERALD* and subsequently in *Today's Catholic* deserves a re-visit.

Indeed this Penang-born Catholic, Nicol, who was "recently crowned the World's Games Greatest Athlete of All Time" re-ignites our faith and living as Catholics. Whether we are unbelieving, repentant or faithful followers of the Faith, we can draw some salient and worthy inspirations from this Malaysian girl.

The first lesson is her grace in submitting with humility before the Lord despite all the glamour and successes that crowned her in her sporting career. Nicol's credo "I do what I need to do" reminds me of the everlasting words of my Spiritual Director in the Seminary who kept reminding us the same in

Latin, *Age quod agis*.

To be constantly reminded and guided by this sense of humility is a grace and it helps keep us mortal beings in the Lord's presence. As Nicol says, "the world does not revolve around me" is the ultimate truth that beckons us to the greatness of humility.

The second lesson is that of strength of the grace of fidelity. In her successes and especially her failures, she found her anchor in the Lord. We may not be a celebrity in the likes of Nicol, but remaining faithful to the Lord remains a daily challenge and opportunity in our respective lives.

Despite the many failures we encounter, it is this pulsating fidelity to the Lord that re-ignites the flame inside us to keep moving closer to the Lord despite the challenges. We are rewarded instantly with a deeper sense of peace and appreciation for that grace of fidelity.

The third lesson we can draw from the testimony of Nicol is the power of prayer. Nicol says she "kept a regular daily prayer time and always kept her faith at the forefront in her decision-making process".

Indeed, all things are because the Lord wills it. Prayer reconnects us with God and our benefit is the grace that flows back to us through this conduit. All the sciences can explain many things. All the maths can add up. Our abilities as we often think seem like the only reason for our successes. But the *ultimum verum* is everything rests with the Will of our Creator. As our faith teaches us, the Lord is the alpha and omega in our lives on earth and in our journey in the hereafter.

The fourth lesson, leading on

from the third lesson is about our human frailty. According to her, "trusting God's timing and decisions (is) one of the hardest things to do as a disciple of Christ, (given) her fair share of doubtful and fearful days".

This is very true for all of us, irrespective of our age and stations in life. Recognising that all things are as per the all-knowing, ever present God Almighty and trusting in His timing and the unfolding events in our life is more than submission. It heals. It inspires. It strengthens. It guides us.

The fifth lesson is the beauty of returning all glory to Him. As Nicol attests "God has allowed me to reach my full potential in squash", it is this sense of giving back the glory of all great things in our own lives

to our Lord the Master that defines and benchmarks our capabilities and successes.

All things are because He alone wills it.

Indeed Nicol David (and her parents who were instrumental in her formative years) is a blessing for all of us — unbelievers, the repentant and faithful Catholics. In showering her with accolades, we return praises to the Lord for the lessons we can all learn from the World's Games Greatest Athlete of All Time.

And in this regard, perhaps inviting individuals like Nicol to even share during homilies will go a distance in igniting faith levels. Psalm 69:13

J. D. Lovrenciar
Via Email



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Please include your name and address. Letters without name and address will not be entertained.

Cambodia recognises Catholic bishop's 'contribution to society'

PHNOM-PENH: The Cambodian government recognised the "contribution to society" of Bishop Olivier Michel Marie Schmitthaeusler, vicar apostolic of Phnom-Penh, during a ceremony recently.

The Catholic prelate received the "Grand Order of National Merit" from His Excellency Sam Al Say, Ministry of Environment, at the St Paul Institute in Takeo province.

The government recognised Bishop Schmitthaeusler's contribution to development in Takeo province, especially in education, arts and culture, social work, healthcare, and community service.

King Norodom Sihanouk founded the Grand Order of National Merit on October 5, 1995. It is awarded to foreign heads of state and to Cambodian nationals who have performed exceptional services to the nation.

"The Grand Order of National Merit is given for all the works of the Catholic Church from 2010 to 2022 in Takeo



Bishop Olivier Michel Marie Schmitthaeusler, vicar apostolic of Phnom-Penh, receives the "Grand Order of National Merit" on March 8, 2022.

province," *RVA Khmer News* quoted the prelate.

Bishop Schmitthaeusler thanked the Royal Government of Cambodia for recognising the Church's contribution to society.

"The Church exists to help people who are hopeless to be hopeful," said the prelate, a member of the Paris Foreign Mission Society congregation.

"These are not my works alone, but these are the works of the Catholic community, especially in Takeo province," he said.

"I would like to thank all my colleagues for our activities, especially in the field of education, social development, art, and culture," added Bishop Schmitthaeusler, who had earlier been granted Cambodian citizenship by the government.

The bishop arrived in Cambodia as a young priest in 1998 and was sent to Takeo province in 2002 where he set up the St Francois Professional High School.

He also established the St Paul Institute and the St Francis Technical High School, and the Peace Centre for Handicraft Children, Peace Village for Inclusion, Handicrafts Centre Cocoa, Social Enterprise, and Cocoa. — *LiCAS, news (from an RVA Khmer News report)*

Vatican backs Eastern Church decision on Indian liturgical dispute

NEW DELHI: The Vatican has endorsed the decision of India's Syro-Malabar Church to follow uniformity in liturgical celebration in its latest attempt to put an end to the five-decade-long dispute in the Eastern-rite church.

Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Oriental Churches, backed last August's decision by the Church's synod of bishops to adopt uniformity in liturgy and end all differences over the issue.

"It is basically a directive to go along with the decisions of the synod," Cardinal George Alencherry, the major archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church, said in a March 11 letter releasing Cardinal Sandri's communiqué to bishops, priests and laity.

Cardinal Sandri, in his Feb 28 letter, disagreed with the decision of Archbishop Antony Kariyil, the metropolitan vicar of Ernakulam-Angamaly, to grant dispensation to the entire diocese from complying with the synod decision after



Catholics kneel in prayer during a Good Friday procession at a beach in Chowara, a fishing village in Kerala state, on April 2, 2021. (UCA news photo/Laurence Thomann)

the majority of archdiocesan priests and laity opposed it.

The Vatican also ordered Archbishop Kariyil to revoke the dispensation given to the archdiocese, asserting the authority of the synod over any individual bishop when it comes to a policy decision.

The synod last August wanted all its 35 dioceses in India and abroad to follow uniformity in liturgical celebration, ending the situation of some priests celebrating Mass facing the congregation and most others facing the altar. — *ucanews.com*

China starts processing licenses for online religious activities

BEIJING: Authorities in China have started issuing licenses for online religious services in compliance with the "Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Service" that was adopted jointly by the Ministry of State Security and other agencies last year.

The ban on unauthorised online religious activities took effect on March 1, cutting off many house churches from a "crucial resource in their ability to preach the gospel," according to the group International Christian Concern (ICC).

Religious groups seeking to hold online activities, such as streaming or

publishing sermons, should first get an Internet Religious Information Service Permit.

Several provinces have announced that they are already implementing the ban and requiring permits to hold religious services. The notice said the committee will make a decision whether to approve or deny the application within 20 days.

"Formalities shall be handled in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services within six months from the effective date," said notices issued in several provinces in the past week.

It said that an "internet religious information examiner training course" will soon be conducted to facilitate the applicants' work and "effectively improve the examination ability of religious information examiners."

The ICC earlier said the measures "represent a direct assault on so much of China's informal and unregulated religious activity."

"This is extremely concerning given the already strict guidance for religious clergy to follow, including the promotion of national unity, love of country, and love of party from the pulpit," said the ICC. — *LiCASnews*

NEWS IN BRIEF

Timor-Leste sends humanitarian aid to Ukraine

JAKARTA: Catholic-majority Timor-Leste is to provide humanitarian assistance "in a show of solidarity with Ukrainians", following the Russian invasion of the Eastern European country.

The government announced on March 9 that US\$1.5 million (RM6.3 million) in aid would be provided through the UN's World Food Programme.

Council of Ministers chairman, Fidelis Manuel Leite Magalhaes, said the aid was to show the Timorese people's solidarity with Ukrainians.

Meanwhile, Lao Hamutuk, a Dili-based NGO, called for the UN and powerful nations "to help the Ukrainian people without increasing the intensity of the war."

"We demand that Russia immediately withdraw from the territory of Ukraine to end the serious suffering of the civilian population who have done nothing wrong. We also ask neighbouring countries to receive refugees from Ukraine to reduce their heavy suffering from this military violence," it said in a statement on March 9. — *ucanews.com*

Bangladesh diocese trains teachers for child protection

DHAKA: The Diocesan Commission for Justice and Peace in Bangladesh's Rajshahi Diocese held a seminar last week to train teachers on how to make children feel safer in schools.

Fr Sagor Corraya, convener of the Peace and Justice Commission of the diocese said, "child abuse and protection" are "hot topics in today's world."

"It is the moral responsibility of every teacher and school staff to ensure that children are not subjected to physical, mental, emotional or sexual harassment in the family, in school, and even in other places," said the priest.

He said everyone needs to keep an eye on the "dos and don'ts of children in school."

The "child protection seminar" held on March 11 was attended by teachers from St Francis Xavier's Primary School and Miriam Shishu Biddyaloy at Natore. — *LiCASnews*

Missionaries of Charity elects new superior general

KOLKATA: The Missionaries of Charity congregation has elected Sr Mary Joseph (*pic*) as its new superior general.



The election took place on March 12 at the congregation's Mother House in Kolkata, eastern India.

Sr Joseph replaces Sr Mary Prema (Pierick), a German who led the congregation founded by St Mother Teresa of Kolkata, for the past 13 years.

Sr Joseph is currently the superior of the congregation's Kerala region, according to sources in the Mother House. — *mattersindia.com*

Catholic church, convent, damaged in airstrike by Myanmar military

KAYAH, Myanmar: A Catholic church and a convent in conflict-torn Kayah state have sustained major damage in an airstrike by Myanmar's military.

The ceiling and windows of the Our Lady of Fatima Church in Saun Du La village in Demoso township were severely damaged while the roof, windows and ceiling of the convent of the Sisters of Reparation, used as a retirement home and hospital for elderly nuns in Doungankha village in Demoso township, were severely damaged, according to Church sources.

Myanmar's military junta has continued targeting churches and civilians in Christian strongholds like Kayah state, ignoring calls by Church leaders to protect their places of worship. — *ucanews.com*

Women commissioned to confer baptisms in German Catholic diocese

ESSEN, Germany: A German Catholic diocese has commissioned 17 women to administer baptisms, citing a shortfall in the number of priests.

The Diocese of Essen, in Germany's industrial Ruhr area, is the first diocese in the country to commission a group of women to administer the sacrament, reported *CNA Deutsch*, CNA's German-language news partner.

Theresa Kohlmeyer, head of the department of faith, liturgy, and culture in the diocese, said that the step was necessary because there were "fewer priests than in the past."

She added that there was "a great need on the part of baptismal families for the most individual accompaniment and worship

service possible."

Bishop Franz-Josef Overbeck of Essen explained that the decision to commission lay people — 17 women and one man — for a period of three years, was a response to "a pastorally difficult situation."

More than 2.5 million people live in the Essen diocese, 724,047 of whom are Catholic. It is the smallest diocese in Germany in terms of area.

Canon 861 of the *Code of Canon Law* says that "the ordinary minister of baptism is a bishop, a presbyter, or a deacon."

It adds that "when an ordinary minister is absent or impeded, a catechist or another person designated for this function by the local ordinary, or in a case of necessity



Bishop Franz-Josef Overbeck of Essen, Germany

any person with the right intention, confers baptism licitly."

Bishop Gebhard Fürst of Rotenburg-Stuttgart announced in March 2021 that he would look into the possibility of baptism by lay pastoral workers, establishing a working group. — *CNA*



(Unsplash/Josh Applegate)

South Sudan starts preparing for historic papal visit in July

NAIROBI, Kenya: South Sudan's Archbishop of Juba, Stephen Ameyu Martin Mulla, said preparations towards the Pope's visit have started. "As a Conference, we have appointed a four-man committee to begin the work of preparations, and this committee will also work with a government committee," he said.

Archbishop Ameyu disclosed that the Bishops' Conference and the entire nation were delighted with the forthcoming visit. They hope that Pope Francis' presence in their country will promote peace among them.

"As a nation and Church, we feel honoured and exulted by the visit of His Holiness Pope Francis to South Sudan," said Archbishop Ameyu. He continued, "It will be a great moment for all South Sudanese to rally around peace and reconciliation, and we hope the Holy Father will encourage all of us to move the path of dialogue, peace and justice for the consolidation of peace in the country."

Archbishop Ameyu said the

Church in South Sudan also appreciates the recent appointment of Bishops as most dioceses in the country had been vacant.

The Archbishop of Juba acknowledged the ecumenical aspect of the Pope's visit.

"The visit of his Holiness has an ecumenical dimension. Concurrently, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland will also be present during the apostolic visit in South Sudan," he said.

Pope Francis and the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, in 2019, announced their intention to travel together to South Sudan.

Speaking on behalf of the regional Bishops' Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA), the association's chairperson, Bishop Charles Sampa Kasonde, expressed the region's joy in hosting Pope Francis again after he visited Kenya and Uganda in 2015. — *By Sr Jecinter Antoinette Okoth, FSSA, Vatican News*



In front of St Mary's Cathedral in Wau, South Sudan, February 12, 2020. (LCI Photo/Alex Mcbride)

Franciscan custos hopes Holy Sepulchre cooperation can serve as example

JERUSALEM: As restoration and conservation work began on the pavement stones of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Franciscan Father Francesco Patton, custos of the Holy Land, said he hoped the cooperation among the three custodial churches in the project would serve as an example for all Christian churches and communities.

"There is always great signifi-

cance beyond the material (aspect)," Fr Patton said on March 14 at a joint inaugural stone-lifting ceremony at the church. "We are looking at something worse than the pandemic now, with a war between two Christian countries, so our cooperation here acquires greater significance, and I hope we can show how important cooperation is."

The start of this second phase of restoration work in the church is very important, he said, following the restoration of the Edicule, revered as the tomb of Jesus, in 2016-2017. That project was directed by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and conducted by an interdisciplinary team from the National Technical University of Athens.

An October agreement between the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and the Armenian Orthodox Patriarchate entrusted the Custody of the Holy Land with undertaking the current pavement restoration project. The three churches are the historical custodians of the church according to the 1852 *Status Quo* agreement that regulates the ownership of spaces in various holy sites.

"We hope the whole world will be able to see and understand that this has been done in understanding and mutual cooperation and love," said Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem. — *By Judith Sudilovsky, CNS*



Church of the Holy Sepulchre. (CNA photo/catholicchurch.org.uk)

Vatican Radio increases shortwave broadcasts to Ukraine and Russia

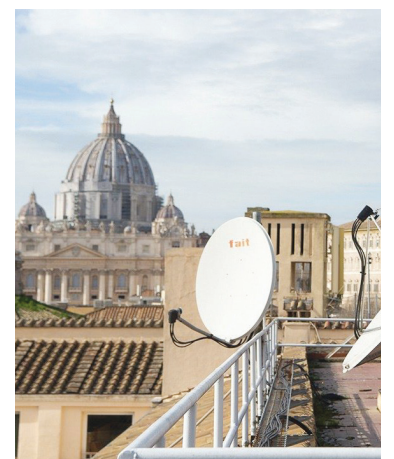
VATICAN: From March 21, *Vatican Radio* will increase its shortwave broadcasts to Ukraine and Russia. In addition to the two daily broadcasts (afternoon and evening) in the two languages, the morning programmes to Moscow and Kyiv will last 20 minutes longer.

"The decision," Massimiliano Menichetti, head of *Vatican Radio Vatican News* explains, "was taken with the agreement of the entire management team of the Dicastery for Communication, at this time when war is raging, in order to better respond to our

mission: to bring hope, the Pope's words and the reading of facts through the light of the Gospel to the whole world."

"In these past weeks," he added, "thanks to a network of direct contacts that support the work of our reporters, we are trying to give comfort to those who are suffering and to ensure timely information."

The frequencies of *Vatican Radio*, the pages and posts of *Vatican News* in 51 languages (including English and Italian in sign language) aim to not leave anyone alone, even in the awareness of the power of prayer." — *Vatican News*



Vatican Radio headquarters in Rome.

Pope to consecrate Russia, Ukraine to Mary

VATICAN: Pope Francis will consecrate Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on March 25, during the Celebration of Penance that he will preside over at 5.00pm in St Peter's Basilica.

The Director of the Holy See Press Office, Matteo Bruni, said in a statement: "The same act, on the same day, will be performed in Fatima by Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, papal almoner," who is being sent there by the Pope.

The day of the Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord was chosen for the consecration.

In the apparition of July 13, 1917, in Fatima, Our Lady had asked for the consecration of Russia to Her Immaculate Heart, stating that if this request were not granted, Russia would spread "its errors throughout the world, promoting wars and persecution of

the Church".

"The good," she added, "will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be destroyed".

After the Fatima apparitions, there were various acts of consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Pope Pius XII, on Oct 31, 1942, consecrated the whole world, and on July 7, 1952 he consecrated the peoples of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the Apostolic Letter *Sacro vergente anno*:

"Just as a few years ago we consecrated the whole world to the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin Mother of God, so now, in a most special way, we consecrate all the peoples of Russia to the same Immaculate Heart. — Pope Pius XII"

On Nov 21, 1964, Pope St Paul VI re-

newed the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart in the presence of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council.

Pope St John Paul II composed a prayer for what he called an 'Act of Entrustment' to be celebrated in the Basilica of St Mary Major on June 7, 1981, the Solemnity of Pentecost.

In June 2000, the Holy See revealed the third part of the secret of Fatima.

At the time, the then-Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, pointed out that Sr Lucia, in a letter of 1989, had personally confirmed that this solemn and universal act of consecration corresponded to what Our Lady wanted: "Yes, it was done," wrote the visionary, "just as Our Lady had asked, on March 25, 1984". — *Vatican News*



The Vatican said Pope Francis will consecrate Russia and Ukraine to the Immaculate Heart of Mary March 25, 2022. (CNS file photo/Paul Haring)

Ukrainian archbishop calls for worldwide novena ahead of consecration

WASHINGTON: Ukrainian Catholic leaders have been urging Pope Francis to take the dramatic step to consecrate both Ukraine and Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and will lead a nine-day novena to prepare for the March 25 event, a top prelate in the war-ravaged country said.

"We are very happy by the fact that the Holy Father responded positively to the request of the Bishops of the Latin Catholic Church, all its priests, and all its people," said Archbishop Mieczysław Mokrzycki of Lviv, Ukraine.

"For this ceremony, we want to prepare our people with a novena that will start on March 17," he added. "We are calling all Christians in Ukraine to join this novena, and we would be very grateful if the whole Church around the world would join us in prayer for this intention."

"During this painful and difficult situation of war, we continue to pray, to celebrate the Holy Mass, to adore the Holy Sacrament, to fast and to offer our sufferings requesting God's mercy. We were joined by the whole world in this, but we see that the war contin-



Papal envoy Cardinal Konrad Krajewski meets with Archbishop Mieczysław Mokrzycki and Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk in Ukraine on March 8, 2022. (CNA photo)

ues," Mokrzycki said in a telephone interview, speaking in Italian.

"So we recalled Our Lady of Fatima, who in 1917 said that the end of the war would come if the Holy Father and the bishops con-

secrate Russia to her Immaculate Heart, offer the first Saturdays of every month and pray the Holy Rosary. So we requested the Holy Father to fulfil that request once again," he explained.

"This was our desire, this was the voice of all the Ukrainian people," Mokrzycki said in his interview with *St Rita Radio*. "We as Latin rite bishops, in our bishops' conference, we went to the Holy Father, we addressed a letter to him with this cry because we still have hope that this war may end soon."

"Thanks to the visit of Cardinal (Konrad) Krajewski, the Pope's almoner, we were able to repeat to him, when he was visiting us, this appeal. We insisted to him to bring back (to the Holy Father) this request," the archbishop continued. "So we rejoiced when we heard this good news after he returned to Italy."

"We believe that this act will be heard by Our Lady and she will intercede before God for peace in Ukraine," Mokrzycki said.

"All the Catholic bishops in Ukraine, both from the Latin rite and Greek Catholics, will join the Holy Father in this act of consecration, celebrating it at the same time in our cathedrals and churches. And we are hopeful that we will be joined by many of our brother bishops around the world," the archbishop said. — **By Shannon Mullen, Alejandro Bermudez, CNA**

What you need to know about the consecration

"Consecration" means being set aside for a holy purpose.

You may or may not have heard of the concept of consecration before. A person — or nation — that is consecrated is set aside for a holy purpose. The word "entrustment" is often used synonymously with the word consecration.

The Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship defines consecration to Mary as an overt recognition of the "singular role of Mary in the Mystery of Christ and of the Church, of the universal and exemplary importance of her witness to the Gospel, of trust in her intercession, and of the efficacy of her patronage".

Pope St John Paul II — who consecrated the entire Church and world to Mary three times during his pontificate — taught that by consecrating oneself to Mary, we accept her help in offering ourselves fully to Christ.

Mary specifically asked that Russia be consecrated to her Immaculate Heart.

The 1917 apparitions at Fatima are some of the world's most famous Marian apparitions.

In the course of her appearances, Mary revealed three secrets, the second of which was

a statement that World War I would end, as well as a prediction of another war that would start during the reign of Pius XI if people continued to offend God, and Russia was not consecrated to Mary's Immaculate Heart.

Sr Lucia, one of the three Fatima visionaries, said that Mary told her: "If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace; if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church. The good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer; various nations will be annihilated."

"In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world."

In the years following the revelation of the secret, there was some controversy as to whether various consecrations of Russia performed by subsequent popes fulfilled the requirements set forth by Mary.

But in a letter written in 1989, Sr Lucia confirmed that Pope St John Paul II satisfied Mary's request for Russia's consecration in 1984. At the time, Ukraine and Russia were both part of the Soviet Union.

What is the Immaculate Heart of Mary?

The Immaculate Heart of Mary is an object of devotion, as it symbolises her perfect will as expressed in her 'fiat'. Mary's heart is generally depicted with seven wounds and pierced by a sword. Early devotion to the heart of Mary was exemplified by St Bernard of Clairvaux, but the modern devotion was founded by Saint John Eudes, a French priest of the 17th century.

The feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary was first observed by Eudes, and it began receiving papal approbation at the opening of the 19th century. The feast was placed on the General Roman Calendar in 1944, to be observed Aug 22, the Octave Day of the Assumption.

Ukraine's Latin Rite Catholic bishops requested that Pope Francis do the consecration, amid the invasion of their country.

Ukraine's Latin Rite Catholic bishops — meaning the bishops who lead the country's Roman Catholics — sent a letter to Pope Francis on March 2 asking him to "publicly perform the act of consecration of Ukraine and Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary,

as requested by the Blessed Virgin in Fatima."

Why on March 25?

The feast of the Annunciation is a prominent Marian feast, and, Donovan noted, the day especially recommended by St Louis de Montfort for personal consecration to Our Lady.

"All of Our Lady's prerogatives come from the fact that from all eternity, God chose her to be the mother of the Word made flesh; that is the central Marian dogma of the Church," Donovan said, "so that is, I think that's the perfect day. And John Paul chose to do it on that day, and I think that's a good day for anyone to make their personal consecration, or for Pope Francis to do this one."

Russia has been consecrated before. So has the whole world, actually.

In the past, several popes have consecrated the entire Church and world to Mary.

Pope Pius XII consecrated the entire world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on Oct 31, 1942, and Pope St John Paul II renewed that consecration on May 13, 1982, again on March 25, 1984, and once more on Oct 8, 2000. — **By Jonah McKeown, Carl Bunderson, Kevin J. Jones, CNA**

The Pope's voice, crying out in the desert



People under a bridge as they try to cross the Irpin River, in Irpin, outside Kyiv. (Vatican News photo)

At the *Angelus* on Sunday, March 13, the ninth anniversary of his election as Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis unequivocally spoke about the “barbarity of the killing of children, of innocents” that is taking place, urging a halt to the “massacre” and an end to what he called the “unacceptable armed aggression” against Ukraine. The Pope also noted that those who support violence by justifying it with religious motives, “profane the name” of God who is “the God only of peace”.

Even before the invasion by the Russian army began, Pope Francis had said at the *Angelus* on Sunday, Feb 20, “how sad it is when people, and peoples who are proud

The Successor of Peter, who in recent years has prophetically warned of the Third World War already in the offing, follows in the footsteps of his predecessors and stands with the innocent, fighting evil with good.

to be Christians, see others as enemies and think of waging war against each other! It is very sad”. He also asked that Ash Wednesday, when the Lenten journey began, be dedicated to fasting and prayer for peace. More so, the day after the outbreak of the conflict, after the first bombings of Ukraine, the Pope personally went to the Embassy of the Russian Federation to the Holy See to present all his concerns about the war to the representative of the Krem-

lin, urging for the pursuit of the path of negotiation and for civilians to be spared.

At the *Angelus* on Sunday, March 6, Pope Francis also highlighted the reality of the hypocrisy of the Russian government, which insists on calling the ongoing war a “special military operation”, masking its true and raw reality behind word games: that of a war of aggression.

To make concrete his personal closeness to the victims and to the millions

of displaced persons fleeing the war, the Bishop of Rome has sent two cardinals to bring help and support to the refugees and to those who generously welcome them. Meanwhile, on several occasions, Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, has expressed the Holy See’s willingness to assist, in any way possible, in any form of mediation, and has asked Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to cease attacks and to guarantee genuine humanitarian corridors. Vatican diplomacy keeps repeating that it’s never too late to initiate real negotiations, and it’s never too late for a ceasefire in a war of incalculable and unrelenting consequences that risks leading to a terrifying escalation of war.

Criticism and accusations

In recent weeks, Pope Francis has been the subject of some criticism from those who hoped that, in his public statements, he would explicitly mention the name of Vladimir Putin and Russia, as if the words of the pastor of the universal Church were supposed to reflect the dictates of a television news set list. Since this did not happen, the voice of the Pope was not given much attention, as his appeals did not correspond to the desired cliché of the Pontiff “chaplain” of the West, ready to enlist God and bless war in his name.

There are those who have accused the Pope of “silence” for not having explicitly named Putin, forgetting that when the war began, the pontiffs never called the aggressor by name and surname, not out of cowardice or an excess of diplomatic prudence, but in order not to close the door, in order to always leave a crack open to the possibility of stopping evil and saving human lives. Even St John Paul II, born in a martyred nation like Poland, victim of Nazism and Communism, during the war in Kosovo in 1999, never named the perpetrators of ethnic cleansing, always keeping a channel of contact open with Serbia.

The Holy See believed that efforts should be made to put an end to the massacres against the Albanian population, even if it deplored the grief and wounds caused by the massive recourse to NATO bombing.

Pope St John Paul II did not even name the Western Heads of State who, in 2003, wanted to wage war against Iraq on the basis of false information about weapons of mass destruction. He tried, in some cases, to stop the attacks, the ethnic cleansing and the wars, he tried to encourage the opening of humanitarian corridors and to ensure that no stone was left unturned to avoid the use of arms. This does not mean, and has never meant, putting the aggressors and the attacked on the same level.

It is paradoxical, then, that we forget these pages of our recent history, wanting to explain to the Bishop of Rome what “right” words to use, after years of disregarding the words that he actually uttered countless times, warning against the race for nuclear rearmament, against arms trafficking, against war and terrorism, against an economy that discards and kills, against the destruction of Creation.



A Ukrainian woman in front of the Volnovakha hospital destroyed from the bombardments. (Vatican News photo)

The Pope’s is a voice crying out in the desert. In the nine years of his pontificate, Pope Francis has spoken many times about the Third World War that is already underway, even if “in fragments”. So many times he spoke strongly against arms dealers, against the arms race and against war. Recently, journalist Michele Serra remarked that “50 atomic bombs are enough to destroy humanity. But in the world, atomic bombs are not 50. They are 15,000”. War “destroys,” Pope Francis had said in September 2014 at the military shrine of Redipuglia on the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, “It also ruins the most beautiful work of His hands: human beings. War ruins everything, even the bonds between brothers. War is irrational; its only plan is to bring destruction: it seeks to grow by destroying.” In this prophecy, often unheard by the great, but welcomed by many people around the world, Pope Francis follows in the footsteps of his predecessors of the last century who, like him, had to deal with world wars, with wars in different areas of the planet, with violence and terrorism.

So, what can the Pope do, now that people

are being shot and killed? “Perhaps nothing more than praying to the Lord,” the journalist Gianni Valente recently wrote, “begging for the miracle of shortening the pain of the poor, of ending the slaughter. But if he will be able to do something on the political diplomatic level, it will only be possible because the Russian leaders know that he is not a biased mediator, a camouflaged agent of the West, with which they have entered into an apocalyptic collision course”.

The Successor of Peter does not have the problem of making known “which side he is on”, because the Vicar of Christ, like his Lord, is always with the innocent who suffer as Jesus suffered on the cross. Every word he says, every attempt he makes, is aimed at saving human lives, at not yielding to the logic of evil, at fighting evil with good. In the heart of Europe, in this dirty war that we feel is so close to us, as well as in the peripheries of the world, where in these years forgotten wars have been fought and are being fought, with their daily grim count of dead, wounded, displaced people similar to what is now being recorded in Ukraine. — By Andrea Tornielli, *Vatican News*



Pope for Ukraine project banner displayed in the Caritas Ukraine headquarters. (Vatican News photo)

Francis' dynamic pontificate: what remains on the agenda

History's first-ever Jesuit and New World Pope begins his tenth year as Bishop of Rome

VATICAN: While many imagined that his pontificate would be rather short, Pope Francis has now begun the 10th year of his pontificate. The former archbishop of Buenos Aires, marked the milestone on Sunday, March 13. Nine years after he became the first Jesuit ever to be elected to the papacy; many in Rome say Jorge Mario Bergoglio's pontificate is clearly well into its second half. And they insist that his favourite issues, well known to all, are the top priorities of this stage of his pontificate. Attention to migrants and refugees, for instance, continue to occupy a central place in the Pope's speeches. As do issues such as "integral ecology", the "peripheries" of the world — whether they be geographical or existential — and the "throw-away culture".

Pope Francis' closest aides say that, despite his 85 years of age, the Pope has maintained a very high pace of work, disabusing those who would like to see his pontificate slowly fade away. The issues he addressed in *Evangelii Gaudium* (the *Joy of the Gospel*), the programmatic text he published in September 2013, also give a fairly precise idea of Francis' current priorities. In this apostolic exhortation, the newly elected Pope described, among other things, the need to move the Church away from "excessive centralisation" and to focus the proclamation of the Gospel on "the poor and the sick".

The programme for the ongoing synod

"This exhortation is in fact the programme for the ongoing synod," said one Roman source. The synodal process was launched in Octo-



Pope Francis in Mosul, Iraq on March 7, 2021. (Vatican News photo)

ber 2021 and is to last two years. It aims to rethink the way the Catholic Church announces its message in a world that has changed considerably, through a vast consultation of all the world's faithful. The Pope hopes that this method will profoundly change the way Catholics perceive the world, and, as a result, more effectively and joyfully bring the Gospel to it. It is a method that he hopes will continue well beyond the next assembly of the Synod of Bishops, slated for October 2023 in Rome. At least that's the hope he put forth in *Evangelii Gaudium*. "Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: 'We have always done it this way,'" the Pope said in that remarkable text (EG, 33).

Another work in progress — which is not unrelated to a new way of working in the Church — is the reform of the Roman Curia. This is a

necessity demanded by the cardinals themselves in 2013 during general congregations, the meetings preceding the conclave in which cardinals from all over the world discuss the state of the Church and draw up a profile of the future Pope. On this point, Francis has been reforming the workings of his services for years, notably by issuing numerous decrees *motu proprio* (i.e. on his own initiative). The most recent of these laid out new organisational rules for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. But beyond these numerous normative texts, the Pope still has to publish the apostolic constitution, *Praedicate Evangelium*, which should set in stone the new organisation of the Roman Curia, the Church's central bureaucracy. The publication of the constitution has been announced several times as imminent and is still eagerly awaited in the Vatican.

Travel plans

But it is outside of Rome that Francis intends to remain most active, as evidenced by the recent announcement of an apostolic visit in early July to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan. South Sudan is torn by civil war. The Pope has followed the situation closely and promised long ago that he would visit the country if there was progress in negotiations between the two sides. But there's been no significant progress since the implementation in 2020 of a peace agreement, which has been marred by several incidents. "He feels that the end of his pontificate is approaching and he has decided to make the trips that seem to him to be priorities," said a Vatican source. Francis is expected to travel to Canada in the autumn and the Secretariat of State is currently working on making a trip to Lebanon possible. "He doesn't want to stop," said of the Pope's aides. "He doesn't want to be stuck in Rome."

"The outbreak of war in Ukraine on Feb 28 has also reminded us of another of Francis' priorities, whose implementation is now in trouble: ecumenism, in particular with the Orthodox world. Six years after the historic meeting in Cuba with Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, the Pope had great hopes of meeting the head of the Russian Orthodox Church again this summer. A date was set for June and, until a few days ago, Rome and Moscow were looking for a place to hold the encounter. But that is a prospect that now seems further away than ever. — By Loup Besmond de Senneville, LCI (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)



For a synodal Church

communion, participation, mission

A window into synodal thinking

NEW ZEALAND: Online Mass, walk-up communion and drive-in Eucharist during the liturgical lockdown have shown us the dominant culture of the Church. Where these practices became the default of bishops, the potential failure of the synodal process is high because these practices were made possible by sidelining the laity. What is the potential for bishops to listen to the laity when they have excluded them from their liturgical participation? Some will argue that liturgy is not the centre of the Church's life or that bishops used online formats out of compassion and care in a pandemic. Nevertheless, if the Church leaders can exclude the laity liturgically, what's the point of including them in another ecclesial conversation? My point is this: where the liturgical practice is not seen as ecclesial, it is not seen. The Church is the *kyriakon* (belonging to the Lord) *ekklesia* (assembly) of Christ. The liturgy celebrates and makes this manifest. Liturgy, worship, thanksgiving — whatever word you wish to use — stands at the centre of the Church's being and purpose. Without the liturgy, the Church is just another club or social welfare system.

Not just about differences in liturgical style

Often, liturgical divisions are treated as differences in style when one person prefers Bach to Led Zeppelin. At this shallow level, arguments of style and preference dominate, but these are only a starting point. Liturgy, at its deepest level, articulates humanity's primary and perennial quest: "Who is God; who am I, and is my life eternal?" This quest is taken up sacramentally and expressed liturgically.

How individuals and groups perform liturgical rituals is instructive of much more than just a style preference. Liturgical rituals articulate an individual's or a group's understanding and beliefs of the relationships between God and the Church, the priesthood, sacramental living and ecclesial authority. Ritual enactment illustrates a much deeper, formative religious culture of belief. This culture is formed, informed and reformed through ecclesial life, sacramental mediation and theological thinking.

During the liturgical lockdown of 2020-2021, the increased use of online Masses was made possible for four main reasons. First, the performative nature of the Mass's ritual structure; second, the functional nature of priesthood; third, the presumption that the function of the Mass is essentially clerical; and fourth, that the presence of the laity at liturgy is not constitutive. While many lay recipients of online Mass reported that they found the experience "comforting", many also reported that it was too priest-centric and ultimately dissatisfying. By contrast, many priests saw the increased online numbers as validation of their ministry. The critical problem of the absence of the laity was never fully addressed. The success of online Masses can only be praised by avoiding questions of authentic liturgical presence as a physical presence. Why would any layperson entertain a dialogue about Church life after being systematically excluded by their God-given leaders from their rightful participation in their own liturgical life?

Synodal, liturgical practice

An authentic approach to the synodal process requires that we review the liturgical respons-

es during the lockdown. One's liturgical practice is essentially ecclesiological. Where the liturgy (Mass) is considered a ritualised, institutional form that functions independently of all other Church business — we go to Mass, we don't live Mass — synodality has already failed because the essential link between the Church's mission and action has been discounted. The institutional structures and doctrines (God, priesthood, baptism, ministry and ecclesial authority) that Johann Adam Moehler (1796-1838) in *Die Einheit in der Kirche* called *Gemeinschaft* and Romano Guardini in *Vom Sinn der Kirche* described as essential to spiritual or mystical communion in Christ, find their authentic expression in liturgical practice. Liturgical practice is ecclesiology in action.

Liturgical ecclesiology

A robust liturgical ecclesiology contributes to the development of synodal ecclesiology through the examination of actual liturgical practice and culture. It offers a window into the strong, often submerged cultures of belief, dogma and identity that drive individual and group practice because it requires participants to consider their practice first. For example, when a person agrees that authentic liturgical practice belongs primarily to the priest/bishop by ordination, and not to the laity by baptism, there is little need to discuss inclusive governance. The liturgical default setting has already defined the ecclesial outlook. Equally, a person who approaches liturgical practice as transformative will look for transformation through the synodal process. They will probably say that worship is predicated on baptism

and not see liturgy as essentially performative or functional. If the synodal process is not transformative, this person will turn away, disappointed.

Lockdown and Synod

Covid's liturgical lockdown practices are not incidental to the synodal process and vision; neither were they the product of Covid. The lockdown practices already existed deep in the psyche of the Church because they are the default setting of a much deeper ecclesial culture. The online Mass, with its passive, observer layperson and its performative, functional priest, is the clearest example of the synodal process's challenge. If we cannot hear one another at worship, what is the point of engaging with each other at the level of governance? Will a change in governance change our approach to liturgy, or must our liturgy change first? Suppose your participation in a process is not a constitutive element of your organisation's practice. Would you participate based on this presumption? Liturgical practice reveals the ecclesial culture that synodality needs to address but probably will not. — By J.P. Grayland, LCI (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

● J.P. Grayland has been a priest of the Diocese of Palmerston North (New Zealand) for some thirty years. His latest book — "Liturgical Lockdown: COVID and the Absence of the Laity. A New Zealand Perspective (Te Heparā Pai, 2021)" — explores the liturgical reform brought by COVID-19 and social and physical distancing as a narrative of pastoral and liturgical change.

UM honours Catholic scientist with Emeritus status

By Gwen Manickam

KUALA LUMPUR: Renowned, award-winning medical scientist, Prof Dr Christopher Ng Kwan Hoong, adds another feather to his already illustrious cap with the conferred Emeritus Professor status by Universiti Malaya (UM).

Hailing from Kuala Lumpur, the multidisciplinary expert told the *HERALD*, “I could not have accomplished any of this but for the grace of God. It’s not easy to uphold Christian values in the secular world, there are a lot of challenges and temptations.”

“The Emeritus status is prestigious and a lifelong recognition of my years of service at the university, which is now ranked eighth in the Quacquarelli-Symonds (QS) World University Rankings: Asia 2022 and 59th in the World. This honour allows me to continue in academic work, I am still teaching and supervising PhD students. I am allowed to continue using the university’s facilities, and it helps open doors on a global platform for my research work.

“In my 35-years at the university, I have not been involved in any form of politicking. I have never applied, aspired, or lobbied for any of the accolades bestowed upon me. I believe if you practise virtuous living, God will bless us – in Bahasa Malaysia, we call it ‘rezeki’,” said the jovial, 67-year-old Emeritus Professor.

Winner of the Marie Sklodowska-Curie Award in 2018, Dr Ng is currently the first and only Asian, and one of eight persons worldwide, to be conferred this highly coveted accolade since 2000, as recognised by the UK-based International Organisation for Medical Physics (IOMP) which represents 25,000 of the world’s leading medical physicists.



Professor Emeritus Dr Christopher Ng with wife Leng Suan, flanked by twin 12-year-old granddaughters Emma (left) and Eva at the recent Universiti Malaya convocation ceremony, where he was conferred Emeritus Professor status.

Dr Ng has always tried to live a balanced life. In addition to all his achievements, he is involved in several issues of social concern.

In recognition of his unparalleled work as a medical physics pioneer whose research in radiation medicine has contributed significantly to the fight against breast cancer globally, Dr Ng was awarded the prestigious Merdeka Award for Outstanding Scholastic Achievement in 2020.

“My tag line is a quote from St Augustine, ‘Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues’ and I have dared to include it in my profile, in the Merdeka Award souvenir book and UM’s Convocation booklet this year, to give witness and evangelise my faith.”

The father of two and grandfather of three was also conferred the Outstanding Scholastic Achievement Award for his educational and pioneering work towards advancing the fields of medical physics and radiation medicine in Malaysia.

In further testimony to his significant work, Dr Ng was elevated as a fellow of The World Academy of Science – where he will uphold TWAS’ shared belief that developing nations can collectively address challenges such as hunger, disease, and poverty by building strength in science and engineers while supporting sustainable prosperity through research, education, policy, and diplomacy.

Dr Ng was a Jehovah’s Witness from a teenager, for over 30 years. Nine years ago, he and his wife, Sia Leng Suan, embraced the Catholic faith. He said the switch was amazing and fulfilling.

“Our Catholic neighbour had been calling us to come to the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist several times, but we never went. Finally, he said he was the lector for that day, so we went – all set to find fault but we couldn’t find any. We didn’t like it right away but were impressed that every-

thing was scriptural and centred on Christ. After attending Masses at a few churches, our conversion journey began.

“We were attracted to the fullness of the Mother Church, its teachings, and traditions – it is complete. We liked how Mother Mary leads us to the Church. We had a lot of beautiful, unbelievable experiences and it was certainly divine providence; it was not a coincidence.

“We immersed ourselves in the Catholic teaching and prepared well to embrace the faith. Before our Baptism, we went for a retreat at the Maranatha House of Prayer in Bentong, while my wife had the privilege to visit the Divine Retreat Centre in Potta, India.”

In addition to his extensive contribution to the field of medicine and science, Dr Ng is an ardent steward of planet earth and the Pope Francis *Laudato Si* programme.

“From a young age, through school and family, we were very conscious about conservation and recycling – to respect the earth’s resources. We practised buying in bulk and sharing with others. We also used to practise handing down schoolbooks and uniforms to the junior students, but I don’t see that as much anymore.

“We should work together to make this earth pleasant and peaceful, and the only way to do that is to respect each other’s ideology and background, as the earth is our common home. We should not exploit the earth until the next generation has nothing left for them. I always incorporate this in my speeches or presentations.

“It is a struggle to persevere when there is little support but lots of indifference and resistance. However, I am patient and long-suffering in my pursuit to save the planet for the next generation.”

Tween DJ enters Malaysia Book of Records

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysia Book of Records awarded Lawrence Anthony Paramanathan aka DJ Lollipop, the Youngest Disc Jockey (DJ) title at the Hangover, PJ on March 12, 2022.

At 12-years-old, the seventh grade Cambridge IGCSE student is the first in Malaysia to attempt this feat and win. He spun for 90-minutes straight, incorporating three different mixing techniques using vinyl, digital vinyl, and Midi controller for 30 minutes each, respectively. Today, not many DJs, young or old are well-versed in all three skills.

Lawrence told the *HERALD* that he learned to appreciate music from a young age as his father used to play music from

the 70s, 80s and 90s all the time. “My dad thought I may like DJing, so he asked me to try out the Beginner’s class with the option to stop if I didn’t enjoy it.” After two years at Dave Ramana’s SoundControls DJ Academy, Lawrence has completed six courses – Beginners, Intermediate, Advanced, Live Mixing, Remix Production, and Turntablism and Scratching.

“I try and practise for at least an hour a day. My favourite genre to mix is soul music. I also incorporate other genres but it’s harder to mix genres because the songs may not sync well. Besides Electro Dance, House, the 80s and 90s Hip-hop, and disco, I mix Bollywood and Tollywood music.

Lawrence hopes to start mixing Canto-pop

soon. Currently, he has 26 mixtapes on Mixcloud. (To listen, visit www.mixcloud.com/DJ_Lollipop/dj-lollipop-80s-soul-mix/)

Parents Kenneth Ravi and Alicia Maria Pereira said Lawrence had always been a fidgety, restless kid who couldn’t sit still for long, but when he discovered mixing music, he became very focused.

“At a young age he liked dancing, so we signed him up for Capoeira, a Brazilian martial art form, which he does till today. It helped but it’s mixing that’s centred him,” said Alicia. Lawrence plays the berimbau and agogo during his Capoeira sessions.

A pilot by profession, when Kenneth isn’t flying, he scouts the Internet for new music and unique mixes and compiles them for Lawrence to listen to in his free time.

From the age of four, Lawrence, together with his elder brother Alexander Augustine, and father, have been Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu practitioners, and regular participants at competitions.

One of Lawrence’s dreams is to compete in the International Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Federation in the United States, and the other is to become a music producer.

Active parishioners at the Church of the Assumption Petaling Jaya, the family recites the Rosary every morning on their way to school. “If Kenneth and I are caught in a conversation and delay, Lawrence will interrupt with an “In the name of the father ...”, are you all ready?”

“The rascal that he is, how he loves Jesus



Lawrence Anthony Pramanathan proudly shows his award.

is unbelievable. Most nights, when we retire, I hear him reciting the Rosary aloud, alone in his room,” shared his elated mother.

“I pray because He saved everyone from sin and got eternal life for us. I also pray so he can guide me throughout my life. I feel better when I pray and I find I don’t have to worry so much in school,” said the DJ who enjoys working on Math equations, adding, “I do forget to say my Rosary at times, but I always pray on the way to school and before I eat.”

Kenneth confessed, “Sometimes I stray from my connection with God, but when I see his faith (Lawrence), it pulls me back.”

— By Gwen Manickam

For a glimpse of Lawrence in action, go to <https://fb.watch/bNdzNeyvf/>



DJ Lollipop in his element, spinning tunes at a DJ console his parents set up in their home.

Mental health in children and young people

Here is a sombre yet revealing statistic: Mental health problems affect around one in every six children. The breadth of mental health problems is undoubtedly extensive – they include depression, anxiety, addiction and eating disorders, and are often a direct response to their prevailing circumstances.

Mental health related issues are now ranked as the second biggest health problem affecting Malaysians, after heart related diseases. A national survey conducted by the Ministry of Health in 2020 revealed that approximately one in every three Malaysians aged 16 years and above have a mental health condition; nearly triple the rate of 11 per cent in 2006. The states of WP Kuala Lumpur, Kelantan, Sabah and Sarawak have the highest prevalence of mental health related issues. Amongst Malaysian youth aged 13 to 17, one in five suffers from depression, two in five have anxiety and one in 10 has stress related concerns. What is particularly disturbing is that 10 per cent of youths have also attempted to take their lives, and a staggering 75 per cent of children and youth who experience a mental health related concern are not getting the help they desperately need. Suffice to say, the proliferation of mental health issues, which is now exacerbated by the pandemic and the increasingly complex world that we live in, demands urgent attention.

As a social institution, the family unit plays a critical role in cultivating a nurturing environment for children to grow up and thrive in. A fundamental yet crucial component in building this foundation is the recognition that a child's emotional wellbeing is just as important as his or her physical health. A strong mental health builds resilience to cope with whatever challenges that life throws at them, moulding them



Heart, Mind and Soul
Fr Philip Chua

into well-rounded, healthy and wholesome adults. There is a wide range of things that we can do to keep children and youth mentally well. They include:

- being in good physical health, eating a balanced diet and getting regular exercise.
- engaging in time to play, both indoors and outdoors.
- being part of a family that has a strong bond.
- taking part in local activities.

Other factors are equally important, including feeling loved, trusted, understood and safe. Children who are optimistic are resilient, have some control over their lives and have a sense of belonging. They will, as a result, have a greater propensity to have good mental well-being. Most children grow up mentally healthy, but surveys suggest that more children and young people have problems with their mental health today than 30 years ago.

Traumatic events can trigger mental health problems for children and young people who are already vulnerable. Drastic changes often act as triggers. Such triggers include home relocation, change of school and even the birth of a new sibling. Teenagers often experience emotional turmoil as their minds and bodies develop. A critical part of growing up is identifying and accepting who they are. This transition to adulthood may prove challenging and

so, they may experiment with alcohol, drugs or other substances which may, in turn, impact mental health. There are risk factors which can make some children and young people more likely to experience mental health problems than others. These factors include:

- having a long-term physical illness.
- a parent who has had mental health issues, problems with alcohol or has been in trouble with the law.
- death of someone close to them.
- parents who are separated or divorced.
- experiencing severe bullying or physical or sexual abuse.
- poverty or homelessness.
- experiencing discrimination.
- caring for a relative, taking on adult responsibilities.
- having long-lasting difficulties at school.

Mental health problems which commonly occur in children include:

- Depression
- Self-harm
- Generalised anxiety disorder
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- Eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa

There are a myriad of options available to young people who wish to seek help in the mental health space. Such options include:

- Talking to someone about how you feel, such as a parent, friend or adult you trust.
- Visiting a medical doctor.
- Getting in touch with the Archdiocesan Mental Health Ministry or any authorised/registered counselling centre.

Often times we overlook the impact of what are seemingly simple gestures, like active listening to children and youth. Parents and guardians can play a pivotal role in providing a re-assuring environment simply by listening and taking their feelings seriously rather than being dismissive. If a child is experiencing problems at school, a teacher, school nurse, school counsellor or educational psychologist may be able to help. Treatment for children and young people often involves talking through the problem in order to work out the best way to address the matter at hand. For young children, this may be done through play. They may be referred to a specialist such as a counsellor who is professionally trained to help them explore their feelings and behaviours.

There is ample evidence showing that play therapy and sand tray therapy can be effective for children and young people, but medication may also help in some cases. The need of every child is unique and therefore, has to be assessed by a specialist before any medication is prescribed. The professionals supporting a child will preserve the confidentiality of information shared. Young people, as do the adults, have a right to privacy if they do not wish to confide in their family members about their conversations with professionals

• **Fr Philip Chua** is a registered and licensed Counsellor and Clinical Supervisor under Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia. He is also the Ecclesiastical Assistant for the Archdiocesan Mental Health Ministry. If you have any queries or would like to seek counselling, write in to: lifjourney@archkl.org or mentalhealth@archkl.org

The globe half-full

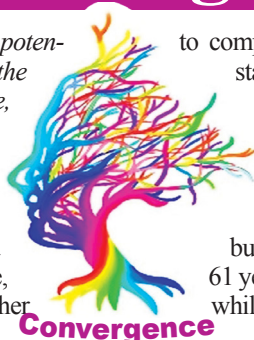
(Every woman is born with the full potential of motherly instincts, and with the ability to fill our world with grace, gentleness and a nurturing presence.)

Since the beginning of time, the planet that we live on is called Mother Earth, the fauna and flora we fondly refer to as Mother Nature, the country we reside in is our Mother Land, and the language/dialect we speak is our Mother Tongue. Throughout History, women have owned the right to produce offspring and yet, to date, the silent majority of women are still marginalised. However, a gentle reminder to women is that you have held, and still hold, the potential to preserve our families, communities, and, our God given planet, from the beginning of creation.

A woman's role (and this is not for the faint hearted) is multi-tasking. And she wonders why they are always aiming for the only pound of flesh that keeps her and them alive... her dear dear heart. The act of sacrifice, giving, caring, nurturing, loving unconditionally, are truly some of the many attributes of a woman. They are not attributes of weakness but of strength, dedication, endurance and sacrifice. The first to be blamed, but the last to claim glory.

How many times has she sat in her little corner wringing her hands, tears rolling down silently on her gentle cheeks, her heart breaking inside and her mind wondering where her voice is, how come she does not hear it, what did she do wrong and when did she fail to be a daughter, wife, mother, sister, friend or colleague, all in the same breath. And more often than not, the prioritisation (of work and family) is mind boggling, as everyone around her claims their little pound of flesh.

Dear sisters in Christ, welcome to the world of multiple roles that a woman plays 24/7..... 365 days a year. For many years, I have tried



Convergence

to complete the jigsaw puzzle to understand our role. I have faltered, fallen, picked myself up and marched on into more foggy than sunny days.

How many hats do we wear, roles we play until we bruise, buckle, or break? It took me a whole 61 years to figure this out. One morning while attending Mass, a visiting priest presented simple yet well-dissected homily on our Holy Mother's role.

I found it simplistic yet profound when the priest clearly stated the four simple components to a woman's role throughout her lifetime. Let us now reflect on the life of our dearest Mother Mary, Queen of Heaven and Earth, to self-actualise these multi-faceted roles.

The Core Family: Mama Mary (her first role was home-maker, mother, and wife) started off as a young mother caring for our Lord Jesus. She took care of all His earthly needs. A silent yet formative guiding force in His human development. The courage to bear her first born on that cold, cold night in Bethlehem, fleeing to Egypt with the innocent babe, losing Him at the presentation when He was 12 years old, not to mention His crucifixion. These were only some of the many challenges she faced.

The Extended Family: At the wedding in Cana (the extended role to family) when she asked our Lord to help with the problem of the wine. Again, her role in the extended family is portrayed. It was His first miracle, but it was at the request by Mama Mary, her concern for the host of the wedding feast.

The Community: At the crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus, before He breathed His last, He said, "Woman this is your son", then He said to His disciple, "This is your Mother". From that moment onwards, Mother Mary became the mother to all His disciples. It only shows that we should extend ourselves in a motherly man-

ner to all who need our wisdom and counsel. We are not limited to our immediate families. This is also how we grow community spirit.

The World: Our Holy Mother was assumed into heaven, and she was awarded the special place as Mother to the world. Mama Mary has never left and the evidence is through her apparitions in Lourdes, Fatima, Mejugore, Guadalupe, and the list goes on. She always asks us to pray and work for peace in our hearts and for the whole world. The novena devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Succour is practised all over the world as proof that she is with us. As women and homemakers, saving water, watching our family's carbon footprint, recycling and reusing are good habits to embrace, one that we should teach our children, to preserve Mother Nature and all that God has given us. Our children will inherit this Earth, teach them well. Give your children a fish and they will eat for a day, teach your children to fish and he/she will have food every day.

As Catholic women in this day and age, we need to remember the multiple roles we are required to play based on our multi-cultural way of life. As we become more urbanised and borders disappear, as we leave the old and embrace the new, leave the kitchens and master laptops. I gently remind you my sisters, that the four dominant roles you play must stay. Your role has morphed into the emotional intelligence required to manage households while you contribute to the household income. Hold on to the role of nutritionist, therapist, teacher, nurturer, peacemaker, and comforter, and never forget the hugs and kisses your tired body provides 24/7 to the little ones. Your good counsel to teens and wisdom to young women will prepare them with the much required motivation to carry and own this special role.

Our roles are intertwined and linked to provide the foundation for a balanced emotional psyche with all whom we come into contact



Near and far
I travel wide
To see the world so glorious,
Thereof, when deep inside
Stirred the care I dreamed of.

Maria Leandra Cura

with. However, be vigilant, you are still human like Mama Mary, and she had to do the work before she received her reward.

So, when the light gets dim and you seem to be running out of fuel, remember, "the hand that rocks the cradle... may not rule the world but it definitely nurtures the world". We have been given this incredibly wonderful role. We have no better role model than our very own Mama Mary. Align your vision and mission for your family/community/the world with hers. Take the lesson of her incredible strength, courage and sacrifice, for she had nothing but she gave everything and she now rules the world..... and remains a Mother to All. — **By Noreen Cura**

Lenten ashes

We enter the season of Lent by putting ashes on our foreheads. What's symbolised here? Perhaps the heart understands better than the head because more people go to church on Ash Wednesday than on any other day of the year, including Christmas. The queues to receive the ashes in many churches are endless. Why? Why are the ashes so popular?

Their popularity, I suspect, comes from the fact that, as a symbol, ashes are blunt, primal, archetypal, and speak the language of the soul.

Something inside of us knows exactly why we take the ashes. No doctor of any kind needs to explain this. Ashes are dust, soil, humus; humanity and humility come from these. Ashes have always been a major symbol inside all religions. To put on ashes, to sit in ashes, is to say publicly and to yourself that you are in a penitential mode, that this is not "ordinary time" for you. Smudging oneself with ashes says that this is not a season of celebration for you, that some important work is going on inside you, and that you are, metaphorically and really, in the cinders of a dead fire, waiting for something fuller in your life.

All of this has deep roots. There's something innate in the human soul that understands, understands that every so often, one must descend, be smudged, lose one's lustre, and wait for ashes to do their silent



Fr Ron Rolheiser

work. All ancient traditions, be they religious or mythical, abound with stories of having to sit in the ashes. For example, we all know the story of Cinderella. This is a centuries-old, wisdom-tale that speaks about the value of ashes in life. The name Cinderella itself speaks to this. Literally, the name Cinderella means, "the young girl who sits in the cinders, the ashes." Moreover, as the tale makes plain, before the glass slipper is placed on her foot, before wearing the beautiful gown, before going to the ball, before dancing with the prince, and before marrying him, there must first be a period of sitting in the cinders, of being humbled, of waiting patiently, while you are being readied for a sublime joy and consummation. In the story of Cinderella, we can see the spirituality of Lent.

Native American traditions too have always had an important place for ashes. In some Indigenous communities, there was the concept that occasionally someone would have to spend time in the ashes. No-

body knew why a specific person was called at a particular moment to sit in the ashes, but everyone knew that this was a natural thing, that ashes do an important work in the soul, and that eventually, that person would return to his or her regular life and be better for having spent time in the ashes.

To offer one example: Certain native communities used to live in what they called longhouses. A longhouse was the communal building, in effect, the house for the whole community. A longhouse was long, rectangular, with large sloping sides, with the centre of the roof open so that this could function as a natural chimney. Fires were kept burning, both for cooking and for warmth, along the entire centre of the longhouse. People gathered there, near the fires, to cook, eat, and socialise, but they slept away from the fires, under the roofs that sloped down either side of the open centre. Every so often, a man or a woman, for reasons they didn't have to explain, would cease adhering to the normal routine. Instead, he or she, would become silent, sit just off the fire in the ashes, eat very sparingly, not socialise, not go outside, not wash, and not go to bed with the others, but simply sit in the cinders.

Today we would probably diagnose this as clinical depression and rush that person off for professional help. For their part, they didn't panic. They saw this as perfectly nor-

mal, something most everyone was called upon to do at one time or another. They simply let the person sit there in the ashes until, one day, he or she got up, washed the ashes off, and began again to live a regular life. The belief was that the ashes, that period of silent sitting, had done some important, unseen work inside of the person. You sit in the ashes for healing.

The Church taps into these deep wells of wisdom when it puts ashes on our foreheads at the beginning of Lent. Lent is a season for each of us to sit in the ashes, to spend our time, like Cinderella, working and sitting among the ashes, grieving some of the things we've done wrong, refraining from the dance, refraining from the banquet, refusing to do business as usual but, rather, waiting in patience as some silent growth takes place within us. Lent is a time to be still so that the ashes can do their work.

And we need not understand exactly what the ashes are doing. They have a long history of being very patient with us.

● **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.

Really praying in Lent

If there is a universal concern among people of faith, it comes with phrases like, "I wish I could pray better" or "I don't know how to really pray." Across the spectrum of church membership people desire a fuller experience of prayer.

Lurking behind that desire is the discovery that people often don't know what prayer truly is. The starting point, therefore, is to clarify what prayer is all about.

Benedictine Fr Harry Hagan, a monk of St Meinrad Archabbey, Indiana, starts his essay on prayer in the Old Testament with the profound sentence, "Prayer is the way we carry on our relationship with God" (see "The Tradition of Catholic Prayer").

As Fr Harry states so succinctly, prayer is all about a relationship with the Lord.

Striving to work on a relationship with God is an ideal goal for Lent. Just as praying well can strengthen a relationship with God, so, too, a developed relationship allows people to move beyond themselves when they enter prayer.

Like many parishes, our parish has a prayer pipeline. People can add their requests for prayer through the website, generating emails to hundreds of parishioners who have signed up to pray for people's needs.

Bill, who reviews all prayers before they are posted, often sends questionable ones to me before publication. I'm amazed how some people think of prayer as a way of controlling God and other people.

For example, they pray that ex-boyfriends or ex-girlfriends will see the error of their decisions and come back to them. Certainly, people are hurting, but these prayer requests seem very manipulative.

Others ask for prayers that they will find the necessary money to buy what they've been wanting. One wonders what this kind of prayer request has to do with a God relationship. Is God merely a rich uncle?

True prayer has to focus on God and not simply on what the petitioner wants. Ulti-



Parishioners at the Church of the Holy Redeemer, Klang soaking in that true prayer has to focus on God and not simply on what the petitioner wants.

mately, every prayer has to include, at least implicitly, the phrase found in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy will be done."

Once again, prayer is about working on the relationship with God, which means going beyond oneself.

Many equate praying with saying prayers. There certainly is nothing wrong with knowing memorised prayers or reading prayers that various saints wrote to reflect their relationship with God.

In fact, those prayers may be of great help. In my ongoing correspondence with a prisoner whom I know, I often share the words of prayers from saints like Francis, Ignatius, Charles de Foucauld, Teresa of Avila, Margaret Mary Alacoque or others.

These words may call someone toward a fuller experience of that powerful relationship that Jesus offers all his disciples.

Prayer, however, goes well beyond saying prayers. Like any two people who are connecting at a more personal and vulnerable level, prayer needs to come from the heart and be filled with a sharing of who a person

is and what may be taking place in his or her life.

For that reason, real prayer requires time and effort. It cannot take place simply on the fly. Reciting a Rosary while driving or listening to sacred music while cooking may be a good habit, but there has to be time carved out of one's schedule just to be with the Lord.

Some years ago I discovered that having a prayer chair or a prayer corner helps tremendously. When I am sitting at that place, I can almost immediately place myself in God's presence. Not to jeopardise the space, I try not to sit in the same chair to read the newspaper or to go online to answer emails.

Once space and time are established, then the next step for praying is to immerse oneself in the presence of God. This is the hard part, but it can be done in a number of ways.

Reading holy Scripture while employing imagery helps. It is important, of course, that the passage not simply be analysed in terms of Scripture exegesis, but that it be allowed to speak in a personal way.

As a priest who is constantly preparing

homilies, I find that Scripture-based prayer requires that I go beyond the little preaching gems I find in passages. It's not that I ignore them, but I try not to think about how I would explain them to others. Instead, I just want to sit with the goodness of the moment.

Then comes perhaps the most peace-filled part of prayer. Knowing that one is in a holy space and with time reserved for God, what is left is for one to listen to God.

In many ways, this kind of prayer can be compared with the Apostles' experience on the mountaintop during the Transfiguration. The experience is often beyond explanation, for it is an immersion into the presence of the Divine.

In such prayer, the relationship with God is allowed to grow deeper with the realisation that God is an active part of one's life. The prayer link is established and the relationship with the Lord is strengthened. — **By Fr Herb Weber, CNS**

● **Fr Herb Weber** is founding pastor of St. John XXIII Catholic Church in Perrysburg, Ohio

Little Catholics' Corner

Dear Children

In today's Gospel reading, we hear the parable about a fig tree. The owner waited three years for it to grow some figs, but it still wasn't producing any.

He told the gardener to cut it down. But the gardener pleaded with his master to let him try for one more year to get it to bear fruit. If it still didn't produce any fruit, then he would cut it down.

The fig tree is like a person who can do good things but doesn't. The owner is like God—he gives the tree many chances and then it's time is up. But the gardener shows God's mercy. He wants to give the tree one more chance. And he's going to give it extra fertiliser to try to help it. Lent is a good time to look at our life and see if we are doing all the good things we can.

Maybe there's something nice that we know we could do for someone but we just never bother to. Or maybe we aren't praying quite as much as we know we should. God is giving us a chance to become better people this Lent, and it's your job to make it happen!

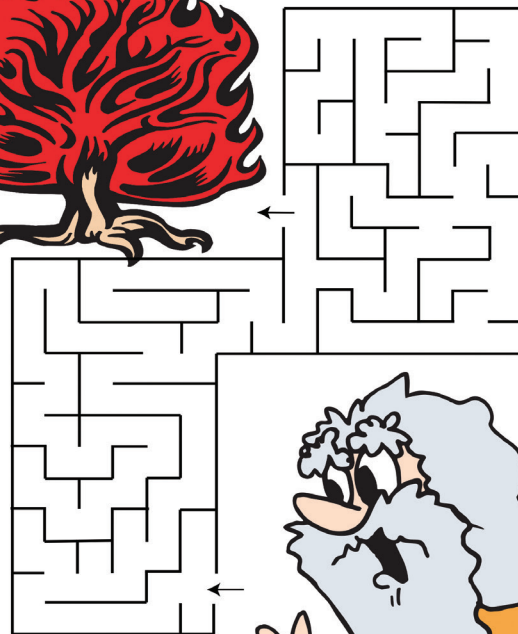
Aunty Gwen
gwen@herald.com.my

The Parable of the Fig Tree

"'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, than cut it down.'" \ Luke 13:8-9 (NIV)

Choose the word that best matches the definition.

1. A simple story teaching a moral or religious lesson.
A. fig B. parable C. tree D. fertilize
2. The sweet, pear-shaped, fruit of a plant found in Bible lands.
A. vineyard B. parable C. fig D. fruit
3. A large plant with a trunk, limbs, branches, and leaves.
A. parable B. fruit C. tree D. soil
4. The usually sweet-tasting part of a tree which can be eaten.
A. fruit B. soil C. tree D. fig
5. An area of ground planted with vines and fruit trees.
A. vineyard B. dig C. fruit D. tree
6. The top layer of the earth's surface favourable to plant growth.
A. dig B. soil C. fig D. vineyard
7. To spread something on land or plants to help plants grow.
A. fruit B. fertilise C. soil D. fig
8. To break up and move dirt using a shovel.
A. tree B. parable C. dig D. vineyard



Help Moses find the burning bush



Let's Colour

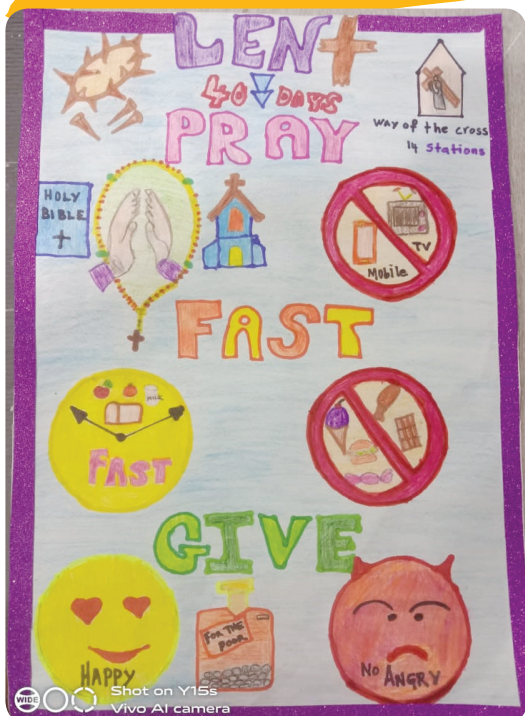
An angel visited Mary and told her she was going to have a baby.

Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord
March 25



We asked some little ones what Lent means to them, and what are some activities they are doing during Lent ... We will be featuring some of the arts and crafts done by children from several parishes. This week, we take a look at contributions from the Church of St Thomas, Kuantan; the Church of the Visitation, Seremban and the Church of St Mary, Tapah.

Joycelyn Anne Raymond, 9
Church of the Visitation, Seremban

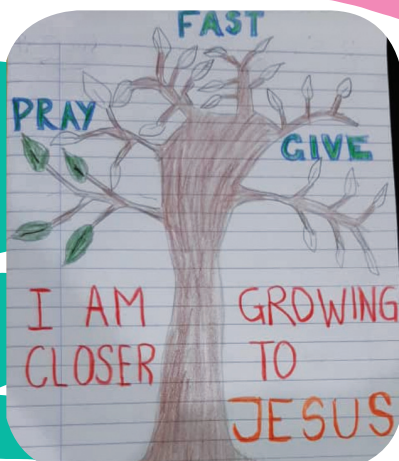


Imelda Selvarani d/o
Iruthayaraj, 7
Church of St Mary,
Tapah

Add a leaf for any sacrifice made during Lent.



Joshua Nathan, 11
Church of St Thomas,
Kuantan



A paper plate signifying the transfiguration.



Caroline Harshini, 11
Church of St Thomas,
Kuantan

YOUTH

MARCH 20, 2022

Forty Days of Grace in Lent

KOTA KINABALU: On March 2, the KK Archdiocesan Youth Pastoral Team (AYPT) started an online programme, *Youth 40 Days of Grace*, which invites young Catholics to listen to the Word of God and share their experience in encountering Christ with others.

"Youth 40 days of Lenten Grace is marked chiefly with the spirit of repentance through fasting and abstinence from meat on Ash Wednesday.

"Conversion of the heart is demanded of us as we come back to God by turning away from our sinful and selfish ways of life," said Fr Isidore Gilbert, spiritual advisor for KK Archdiocesan Youth Commission, in his daily reflection for the programme.

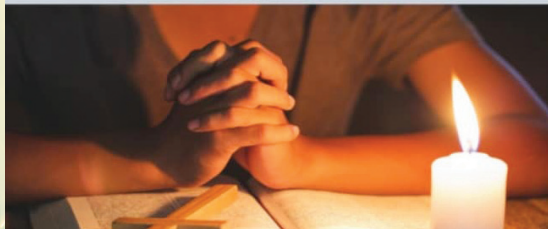
With the theme "Come back to Me with all your heart" (Joel 2:12), participants started the programme with prayer and fasting for Ukraine.

Every Wednesday, beginning March 9, they meet online via Zoom to pray and share for an hour. Facilitated by the AYPT, the session starts with an opening prayer, followed by listening

Join us in
Virtual Prayer & Sharing

YOUTH 40 Days of Grace

"Come back to Me with all your heart"
(Joel 2:12)



to the Word of God and then, sharing.

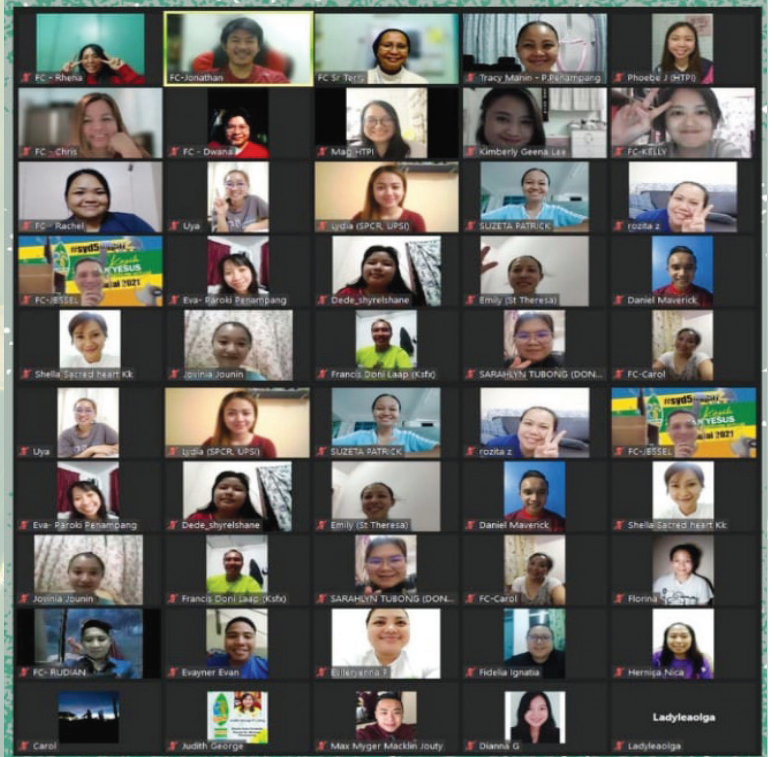
Through these sessions, hopefully the youth will have fun and be able to share their thoughts and experience, while strengthening their faith.

During these 40 days, they are also encouraged to read the daily reflections written by Fr Isidore via Facebook: Archdiocesan Youth Pastoral Team (AYPT) / Tim Pelayanan Belia Diosis (TPBD)

Virtual Prayer & Sharing

MARCH 9, 2022

"Come back to Me with all your heart" – Joel 2:12



Twenty-two attend Sandakan Diocese's vocation seminar

KOTA KINABALU: The Priesthood Vocation Seminar was recently held at St John of the Cross Retreat Centre, Ulu Dusun.

There was overwhelming response from the youth of Sandakan with 22 participants coming from the parish of St Mary's, two from Sandakan, five from St Dominic parish, Lahad Datu, three from Holy Trinity parish, Tawau, four from the parish of St Martin, Telupid, and eight from the parish of Our Lady of Fatima in Beluran.

This vocation seminar was held for three reasons; to foster the calling to the priesthood among young men, to galvanise them to courageously answer the vocation to the priesthood, and to attract more aspirants to enter the Formation House for the Aspirancy Year 2022.

This two-day seminar commenced with a Eucharistic Celebration presided by Fr Christopher Ireneus, and concelebrated



Sandakan youth with Frs Christopher Ireneus and Stephen Esguerra.

with Fr Stephen Esguerra. Deacon Arthur and Deacon Raymond Wong were present to assist at the Mass.

"What is a vocation"? And how do I know that God is calling me? were the topics presented by Fr Christopher during

the seminar.

Deacon Arthur shared his thoughts on "What is a Diocesan Priest?" Joining in was seminarian Ricky Boy who shared his vocation story and his invaluable experience in pastoral exposure, as a summary for several

of the talks.

To get a better engagement, there was a brief period of reflection for the participants to ponder the essence of the talks.

A Question and Answer session gave participants an avenue to voice their concerns. Their inquiries were addressed and hopefully, they were enlightened by the answers.

The seminar concluded with a Eucharistic Celebration. Immediately after Mass, Fr Christopher proudly announced the candidates chosen to enter the Formation House for the year 2022.

A young man named Athanasyleus Aginasius, who hails from the parish of St Dominic, Lahad Datu was chosen to enter the Formation House (Catholic Archdiocesan Centre) in Kota Kinabalu. All glory to God for the smooth and orderly seminar. —
By Seminarian Jescie Petrus Petu,
Catholic Sabah

Reach out in faith!

Join the SICYM outreach team

PETALING JAYA: The Catholic Church has overcome the challenges of serving on-line during this pandemic: churches live-stream Masses, ministries record their praise and worship sessions, and BECs conduct Bible studies via Zoom. However, we can't help but notice that the number of people serving in the church has been dwindling.

The Church has always struggled to find disciples (Matthew 9:37), but it's undeniable that the nature of online platforms, though a blessing, has also proved to be an obstacle.

In March 2021, the Church of St Ignatius (SIC) Youth Ministry welcomed 14 new members.

Under their Outreach Team (OT) Programme, these new members received the Lord every Friday and Sunday. They received the Word of God through Bible studies, group discussions and sessions. The new members also deepened their spiritual relationship with God through adoration, prayers, reflections and Monday Rosary sessions.

As John 15:12 commands us, these teenagers aged 13-18 are called to serve the Lord by learning new skills and leading in ministry events. Under the guidance of experienced members, they learnt how to lead praise and worship, dance, emcee, lead discussions, lead icebreaking games and more.

The new members also learnt how to outreach themselves by following the example of the youth ministry members.



A screen grab of SIC Youth Ministry's Outreach Team during a weekly, online cell meeting.

Through their weekly cells, both new and old members get to know each other personally while sharing about God, allowing them to form genuine and open friendships.

When the SIC Youth Rally held in December came about, they helped others experience God in an online setting. They also showcased two video skits that they planned, recorded, and edited by themselves within five months.

Regardless of the circumstances, the SIC Youth Ministry has run the Outreach Programme every year. Even in 2020, when the ministry's activities were halted for a few months, the youth group launched a Pre-Outreach Team (POT) programme on September 17, 2020. Many who joined the POT programme later joined the 2021 OTs.

"We needed to keep the ministry going,

even when the pandemic stopped us from meeting physically. Having this programme gives teens a long-term form of outreaching, and teaches them to pass on the love of God," says Jane, the previous head of SICYM, "(launching the OT programme online) was the best decision we made, at that time. At the end of the day, we leave it to God to handle the rest, while we do our part to be ministers of Christ."

Ayden, one of the 2021 OTs, never expected to find God in the era of social distancing and isolation.

"Originally, I never planned to join this ministry, but it felt like a calling because of how much the opportunity was presented to me. I didn't want to miss out on my chance," says Ayden, "Joining the ministry was a huge step outside my comfort zone. The memories and experiences

I gained from joining the OT programme are truly priceless. I've learned that good things take hard work, good people are all around you, and God's love surrounds you if you allow yourself to be loved by Him."

Serving online is a challenge, but that should never stop us from spreading the Word of God.

The Teen Heads who will guide this year's Outreach Team invites all teens to this programme: "The fun awaits you! Come join us on this exciting faith journey!"

Are you called to join the SIC Outreach Team?

If you are, sign up through the registration form on our Instagram page [@sic_y] or contact Isabel (0162810019) or Javan (01110552109) for more information. — *By Kristen Phang*

New Youth Director in SDYA

SANDAKAN: The Diocese of Sandakan recently welcomed Sr Noemi Mejia, FSIC from the Franciscan Sisters of Immaculate Conception (FSIC) Congregation to the Sandakan Diocesan Pastoral Centre as the new Director of the Sandakan Diocese Youth Apostolate.

Sr Noemi, FSIC, replaces Sr Rusiah Garuk, FSIC, who served the role for three years before moving to the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu.

The handover ceremony was held at the Pastoral Centre in the presence of Bishop Julius Dusin Gitom and the centre's staff. Also present were Sr Lilian Unsoh, FSIC, Fr Stephen Esguerra and Fr Thomas Makajil.

Sr Noemi, FSIC, is blessed to carry out



this mission to serve the young people in the diocese.

The Sandakan Diocese would like to thank Sr Rusiah, FSIC, for her dedication in serving the young people, and may she continue to be blessed with God's love in her ministry. — *By Anna Teresa*

Akash Bashir's parents grateful as his beatification process begins

LAHORE: The Catholic Church of Pakistan officially opened the process of beatification and canonisation of Akash Bashir at Lahore's Sacred Heart Cathedral on March 15.

Seven years ago, the young man courageously lost his life stopping a suicide bomber, thus saving hundreds of people.

Fr Amajd Yousuf, episcopal delegate, Fr Refan Fiaz, promoter of justice, and Fr Patrick Samuel, notary, attended the opening session and were sworn in.

His father, Emmanuel Bashir said he is grateful to God for all the blessings he has

given to his family, especially for this son of his.

"To save others he did not renounce his faith, but renounced the world. He makes me proud to be Pakistani," the father said, a thought shared by the young man's mother.

She is grateful to "Pope Francis, His Grace Archbishop Sebastian Shaw of Lahore, and all the bishops of Pakistan for their efforts for our son and celebrating the joy of this day."

"We are celebrating Akash's faith, hope and trust in God," Archbishop Shaw said at the end of the celebration. — *AsiaNews*



Hey everyone,
Previously, I have shared on the use of **NATURAL LIGHT**, the **RULE OF THIRDS**, the **SUBJECT** and the **NEGATIVE space** for **smartphone photography**.

Next, try to take photos from a **DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE**. This tends to create an illusion of depth or height of the subjects. It also makes the image stand out, since most mobile photos are taken either straight on or from a bird's eye view.

So go ahead, snap photos and praise His name!

Amanda
amanda@herald.com.my



First Vietnamese Benedictine abbot dies at 82

CHIANG MAI: Vietnamese Catholics fondly remembered a recently departed Benedictine abbot for rebuilding church facilities after wars and establishing new communities abroad.

Abbot Stephanus Huynh Quang Sanh died on March 4 at the Benedictine Monastery of Thien An in Thua Thien Hue province. He was 82.

Archbishop Joseph Nguyen Chi Linh of Hue presided at his funeral at the monastery chapel on March 7.

The Mass, joined by 60 priests and attended by Benedictines, nuns and relatives, was aired on Hue Archdiocese's website for local people due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Archbishop Linh said the late abbot experienced wars, revenge killings, poverty and social unrest but stayed faithful to his Benedictine vocation.

The abbot, who headed Thien An Monastery from 1984 to 2013, built the chapel and bell tower along with other facilities that were ruined during the Vietnam War that killed some Benedictines, while forcing others to leave their vocation.

Abbot Sanh, who used to serve as superior of the Benedictine province of Vietnam, also founded two new monasteries in the northern province of Hoa Binh and in Chiang Mai in Thailand.

"The monastery would not have been what it is today without Abbot Sanh," Archbishop Linh said, adding that what he sowed had sprouted.

Paul Nguyen Van Bau, who lives near the monastery, said Fr Sanh had main-



Abbot Stephanus Huynh Quang Sanh's coffin at the chapel of the Benedictine Monastery of Thien An in Thua Thien Hue province in Vietnam on March 7, 2022. (Photo from a video clip)

tained good relations with local people. "He visited and gave gifts to us on Christmas, Easter and the Tet festival. He also provided rice and money for people in need and rebuilt their houses after natural disasters," Bau, 67, said, adding that many people were moved by his kind heart and converted to Catholicism.

"He also provided rice and money for people in need and rebuilt their houses after natural disasters"

Benedictine Bro Stanislas Tran Minh Vong, 85, said the first abbot of the 82-year-old monastery built good relationships with local Buddhist monks. "He paid visits to local pagodas in the annual Wesak and came to pay his last

respects to deceased monks."

Bro Vong said Abbot Sanh and Vietnam's leading Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, who died in January, were close friends. Thich Nhat Hanh and his monks paid two visits to Thien An Benedictines in 2005 and 2007.

Born in 1940 in Quang Nam province, Sanh had eight siblings. He entered Thien An Monastery in 1956 and took his first vow in 1965. He was ordained a priest in 1972 and became head of the monastery in 1984.

Fr Sanh was elected as superior of the Benedictine province of Vietnam in 1993 and installed as abbot of the monastery five years later.

He stayed at the Benedictine monastery in Chiang Mai from 2014 and returned to Vietnam last November due to poor health. — ucanews.com

MEMORIAM

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3rd Anniversary
In Ever Loving Memory of



Yvonne Yeoh Siew Lay
Departed: 22-03-2019

You will forever remain alive in the hearts and memories of
Joseph, Michael and Marie Ong.

*In Loving Memory
Forever in our Hearts*

"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25)

From God
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To God
20 03 2020

Anthony Gnanapiragasam

Papa,
You are forever in our Hearts
Patricia Michelle Michael Melissa Morrin

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Lenten campaigns by the dioceses

Below is the information on Week Three of the Lenten Campaign kits prepared by the three Arch/Dioceses in Peninsular Malaysia. Links are also provided to help you in your journey to Easter and beyond.



Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur

Based on the Lenten Campaign theme, weekly sub-themes and reflections, focus action and activities have been prepared by the Ministry/Commission/Parish in the Archdiocese leading each week's campaign during the Lenten season.

For this week's Gospel according to Luke 13:1-9, the focus is Family to Family – Almsgiving for families in need. The proposed action plan for the faithful is the Giving Tree Project – Families in need write down items they require for through the Giving Tree. Other good families send them the items.

Salt of the earth and light of the World

Week Three: Living out the Beatitudes – being fruitful through the Lord's mercy

The intention of the *Giving Tree* is to reflect on the theme of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12), in which families in need are blessed by merciful families through almsgiving. This activity requires a man-made or natural tree.

Families in need write down a few items on their wish list, and also include their addresses. These lists are then written on tags, which are hung on the *Giving Tree*. Parishes, PIHDM Teams and BECs could identify such families

in need.

The *Giving Tree* is placed in the church grounds in an area which is not exposed to rain. Families who wish to participate in this 'Beatiful' activity would pick a tag from the *Giving Tree*, and obtain/buy the items on that family's list. The donor family could use a delivery service or personally deliver the items.

Tune in on Sunday, March 20 at 8.00pm on <https://Tv.ArchKL.org>

Lenten Sessions available



February 28 to April 12:

Topic: SJCF Weekly Prayer Meeting

Time: 7:45pm

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/94924119204>

Meeting ID: 949 2411 9204

Passcode: SJCF2022

LENTEN COMPANION

by Fr Mark Toups

The BECs/Zones of the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit is inviting you to a personal encounter with the Gospel on Thursdays at 8.30pm.

March 24 - Nothing else will satisfy

March 31 - God still wants more of you

April 7 - This is the way back to God

April 11 - Praying at the foot of the cross

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://bit.ly/CHSlent2022>

Meeting ID: 86875647886

Passcode: CHSLENT

LENTEN RETREAT

by Fr Joseph Stephen CSSR

at the Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, Ipoh on Wednesdays at 7.00pm.

March 23 - Prayer

March 30 - Almsgiving



Diocese of Malacca Johore

Message of Laudato Si'

For Christians, all the creatures of the material universe find their true meaning in the incarnate Word, for the Son of God has incorporated in his person part of the material world, planting in it a seed of definitive transformation.

"Christianity does not reject matter. Rather, bodiliness is considered in all its value in the liturgical act, whereby the human body is disclosed in its inner nature as a temple of the Holy Spirit and is united with the Lord Jesus, who himself took a body for the world's salvation".

Laudato Si' #235

"Make a stand! Be heard as a Catholic community and as concerned citizens"

Week Three: The fruits of repentance

GOSPEL — LUKE 13:1-9
'Leave the fig tree one more year'

REFLECTION

Some people arrived and told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices. At this He said to them, 'Do you suppose these Galileans who suffered like that were greater sinners than any other Galileans? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those 18 on whom the tower at Siloam fell and killed them? Do you suppose that they were more guilty than all the other people-

living in Jerusalem? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did.'

He told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it but found none. He said to the man who looked after the vineyard, "Look here, for three years now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and finding none. Cut it down: why should it be taking up the ground?"' "Sir," the man replied, "leave it one more year and give me time to dig round it and manure it: it may bear fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down'."



Diocese of Penang

Prayer for our Earth

A prayer for our earth was published in Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si*.

All powerful God, you are present in the universe and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with your peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one. O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it,

that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognise that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle, for justice, love, and peace.

Restore

Week Three: Care for creation awareness

Focus on awareness, encourage to pray and, if possible, do something for the following groups of people:

- Let's take care of our common home - Mother Earth. Our wasteful and littering habits have made her sick and unable to sustain our lifestyle.

- Take the first steps to RESTORE God's creation and prevent further poverty among our global community caused by natural disasters, a consequence of global warming.

- Create simple awareness for restoration of Mother Earth. Please refer to the material and links provided by Creation Justice Commission.



12 MAR
REPENTANCE AND ACCEPTANCE
BY JUDE ANTOINE

26 MAR
SALVATION FOR THE PEOPLE
BY JUDE ANTOINE

9 APR
SACRIFICE AND GLORIFICATION
BY FR MICHAEL RAYMOND

ZOOM ID : 228 195 7133 PASSCODE : bapd

LENTEN RETREAT

by Church of the Visitation, Seremban

Fr Xavier Andrew (English)

March 26 (Sat): 9.00 am – 4.30 pm

March 27 (Sun): 11.00 am – 6.30 pm

Fr Xavier Andrew (Tamil)

April 2 (Sat): 9.00 am – 4.30 pm

April 3 (Sun): 9.00 am – 4.30 pm

Venue : Visitation Hall

Price : RM20.00

Age : 15 & above

Assumption Charismatic Movements

LENT SEMINAR

Date: 26th March 2022 [Saturday]
Time: 8:30AM - 5:30PM
Venue: Griffon Hall - [Family House]
RM 20.00 per person

RSVP: Steven James +6012-757 3015

Elderly must be prophets, warning of world's 'self-destruction'

ROME: In a world still reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic and now starting to feel the threat of nuclear war between Russia and Western nations, Pope Francis said that the symbol of Noah and the great flood that wiped out humanity "is gaining ground in our subconscious."

The allure of technological progress to eradicate illness and prolong life is often mingled with the focus on the "final catastrophe that will extinguish us, such as would happen with an eventual atomic war," he said on March 16 at his weekly general audience.

"The 'day after' this — if we are still here, days and human beings — we will have to start from scratch. Destroy everything to start again from scratch," the Pope said.

"Now, more than ever," he said, "the wisdom of the elderly is needed to prevent the path of self-destruction by denouncing corruption and a relativistic lifestyle."

Pope Francis was continuing his series of talks dedicated to the meaning and value of old age and reflected on the theme, "Seniority, a resource for a carefree youth."

Elderly people, the Pope said, can easily "grasp the deception" that often ensnares young people into obsessing over ephemeral pleasures that lead to a "life without thought, without sacrifice, without interiority, without beauty, without truth, without justice, without love; this is all corruption."



"The elderly can easily grasp the deception that often ensnares young people," says Pope Francis. (Vatican Media)

Reflecting on the biblical account of the great flood and God's decision to wipe out humanity after seeing "how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth," the Pope noted that, in his wisdom, God entrusted saving life on the earth to Noah, "the oldest of us all."

Using symbolic language, he said, the Bible presents God's actions as a "paradoxical twist of mercy," since eliminating humanity would spare future victims from "corruption, violence and injustice."

Recalling Jesus' warning that the coming of the Son of Man would catch people unaware, just as they were before the flood, the Pope explained that when people focus solely on enjoying life, they tend to

not perceive corruption or simply ignore it.

With their life experience, older people are more adept at spotting corruption and at being "prophets against corruption, as Noah was in his time." However, he also warned of those elderly people who "have not matured and become old with the same corrupt habits of the young."

"We, women and men of a certain age — not to say old, because some are offended — must not forget that we have the wisdom to say to others, 'Look, this path of corruption leads nowhere,'" Pope Francis said.

"We must be like good wine that in the end, when aged, can give a good message and not a bad one," he said. — CNS

No communion for Catholic politicians who voted to legalise abortion

DENVER: After the legislature of the Mexican state of Sinaloa voted to legalise abortion up to 13 weeks, the Diocese of Culiacán announced that Catholic politicians who voted in favour of the law will not be able to receive the Eucharist or be godparents.

In a statement, Fr Miguel Ángel Soto Gaxiola, director of the Culiacán Commission for Life, Family, Youth and Laity, officially announced to Catholic lawmakers who voted in favour of abortion that the decision to deny them Communion is "the recognition of the objectively unworthy state of a person to receive the Body of Christ".

The Culiacán Diocese is in the state of Sinaloa and includes the capital city of Culiacán. Sinaloa became the seventh Mexican state to decriminalise abortion.

In the letter addressed to Catholic politicians, Fr Soto Gaxiola pointed out that "today we have many people scandalised by the public betrayal of the Church's teaching on faith and morals by those legislators who call themselves 'Catholic'".

He continued: "Indeed, the questioning of the faithful makes sense: How can a Catholic who openly promotes and is in favour of policies contrary to Life come to Mass and approach to take communion?"

"In the Magisterium of the Church, the value of life has always, and at all times, been defended from its conception until its natural death," the statement said.

The document rejects the justification of those who say they "personally believe in the immorality of abortion" but favour "public policies"

that include its legalisation.

Citing the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* of St Pope John Paul II, the statement said that "this is an erroneous theory, since 'no circumstance, no purpose, no law can make an act lawful that is intrinsically illicit, since it is contradictory to the Law of God, which is written in every human heart, known by reason itself and proclaimed by the Church'".

The letter concludes: "Answering the question: Can a deputy or any person who professes to be a Catholic, while openly cooperating or legislating against life, receive Holy Communion? No. You cannot approach Sacramental Communion. Nor can that person be a godparent or companion of other people who want to receive other sacraments such as Baptism." — CNA

CARITAS MALAYSIA

Humanitarian appeal for Ukraine

Dear Catholics and Malaysians of all walks of life,

The world is deeply concerned by the war that is being waged in Ukraine. We are told that to-date more than two million people have fled their homes as refugees, not counting those displaced, wounded, killed and missing, including children.

Caritas Internationalis as the global Catholic confederation of charities has launched an emergency appeal to support the humanitarian work of Caritas Ukraine. It aims to support conflict-affected people with food, drinking water, safe accommodation and hygiene kits. Caritas is also working to ensure safe transportation for vulnerable

people to reach their loved ones and safe areas.

You may view the appeal at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=AMe9-cTw-fg>

Caritas Malaysia joins the Caritas Confederation to appeal to all Malaysians and people of goodwill to support this humanitarian work.

Together, we stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and pray for peace in the region.

Together Building His Kingdom

+ Bishop Bernard Paul D.D.
President of Caritas Malaysia

March 18, 2022

DONATE NOW

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- MEDICAL CONTRIBUTION:** Mr Andrii Mygas, First Secretary of the Embassy, andrii.mygas@mfa.gov.ua +60102688463
Medical supply list – www.caritasmalaysia.net/ukraine-appeal

Cardinal Zenari laments 'forgotten catastrophe' of Syria's war

DAMASCUS: As much of the world's attention is turned toward the pandemic and the crisis in Ukraine, the conflict that has engulfed Syria for over a decade has been largely forgotten, said the Apostolic Nuncio to Syria.

Cardinal Mario Zenari (*pic*) also said it was "sad to see, repeated in Ukraine, the same harrowing images of pain seen in Syria: homes destroyed, deaths, millions of refugees, the use of unconventional weapons such as cluster bombs, the bombing of hospitals and schools. Seeing the exact same descent into hell as seen in Syria".

In an interview with *Vatican News* published March 16, Cardinal Zenari said the 11th anniversary of the war was "a sad anniversary, first of all, because the war is not over yet and also because, for a couple of years now, Syria seems to have disappeared from the media radar. First the Lebanese crisis, then COVID-19, and now the war in Ukraine have taken its place".

According to a March 15 report by the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an estimated 610,000 people have died in the conflict, which began in 2011. More than 2.1 million people have been injured and an estimated 13 million have either fled or have been displaced within the country.

Cardinal Zenari said hope was



"gone from the hearts of so many people", especially young people, "who see no future in their country".

"A nation without young people, and without qualified ones at that, is a nation without a future," he said. "The Syrian catastrophe is still the most serious man-made humanitarian disaster since the end of the Second World War."

The Italian cardinal said the protracted nature of the conflict, coupled with current events in other parts of the world, have not only "turned the attention of the international community elsewhere", but also the attention of the media.

"Until a couple of years ago, I used to receive phone calls from various parts of the world for interviews and information on the Syrian conflict," he said. "Now the phone is no longer ringing. This is another great misfortune that has happened to Syria: falling into obscurity. This obscurity is hurting people a lot." — **By Junno Arocho Esteves, CNS**