

## Archbishop Emeritus Tan Sri Murphy Pakiam

# Agent of Change



Archbishop Emeritus Murphy Pakiam with the three writers. From left: Theresa Manavalan, Marina Emmanuel and Jacqueline Toyad.



Pics courtesy of ArchKL Social Communications Ministry



By Patricia Pereira

**KUALA LUMPUR:** In the shadow of a global pandemic, a dedicated team embarked on a three-year project to document the life of the third metropolitan archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, Archbishop Emeritus Murphy Pakiam. Their efforts culminated in the release of his biography on May 10, coinciding with the diamond jubilee of his sacerdotal anniversary.

Initiated by Archbishop Julian Leow, the successor to Archbishop Emeritus Murphy, and driven by Fr Dr Clarence Devadass, Director of the Catholic Research Centre, the biography was penned by three seasoned female writers, all former journalists with extensive experience.

The biography, titled *Agent of Change: Essays on the life and times of Archbishop Emeritus Tan Sri Murphy Pakiam*, details the life and legacy of Archbishop Emeritus Murphy. Its launch at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre was attended by family members of the archbishop emeritus, clergy, religious, and laity. Among the 150 guests were individuals who had collaborated with or encountered the prelate, along with childhood friends whose contributions were integral to the book's completion.

In the biography, Archbishop Emeritus Murphy's life is not depicted as a linear timeline but rather the book is filled with anecdotes, reflections, and personal encounters that reveal the depths of Archbishop Emeritus

Murphy's character. It highlights his steadfast commitment to social justice, interfaith dialogue, and compassion, emphasising his transformative impact on the community and the Church.

The event commenced with speeches delivered by Archbishop Julian and the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Wojciech Zaluski. A captivating visual narrative of Archbishop Emeritus Murphy's life ensued, presenting a mosaic of moments frozen in time, each laden with significance and depth. These visuals served as a touching reminder of the milestones and challenges that defined his journey, offering a glimpse into the triumphs he celebrated and the adversities he overcame.

Interwoven with these visuals were segments featuring individuals who shared personal encounters with the archbishop emeritus. Among them were Bishop Bernard Paul of the Malacca Johore Diocese, along with several clergy members from the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese and the Penang Diocese. Their testimonies added layers of insight and emotion to the celebration of Archbishop Emeritus Murphy's impactful legacy.

The pinnacle of the event — the book launch — took place as the archbishop emeritus placed his palm on an iPad, unveiling the book on the screen. This symbolic gesture symbolised the digital age merging with the timeless wisdom and teachings of Archbishop Emeritus Murphy, bridging the past with the present and the physical with the digital realm. Guests had the opportunity to glimpse the contents of the biography as the pages turned, marking the beginning of its journey into the hand and hearts of the readers.

The apostolic nuncio then honoured Archbishop Emeritus Murphy with the

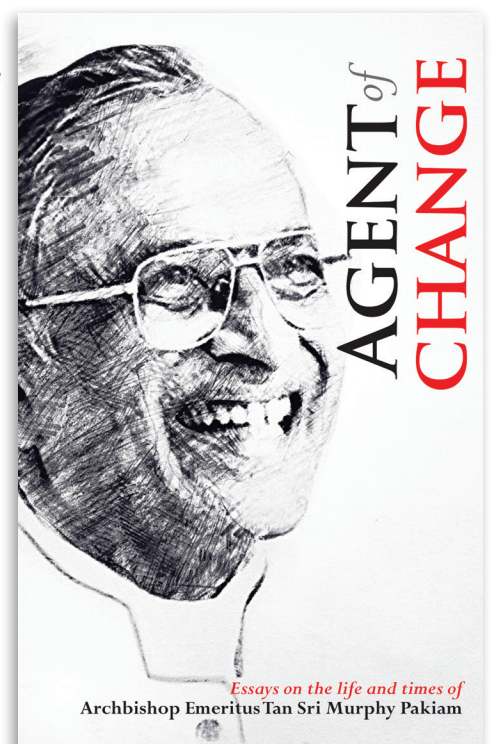
papal blessing for his 60 years of priesthood, while Archbishop Julian presented him with a framed cover of the book. Subsequently, a second video showcased congratulatory messages from family, clergy, and members of the interfaith council.

A notable feature of the event was the coffee talk session with the authors — Theresa Manavalan, Marina Emmanuel and Jacqueline Toyad — providing a rare opportunity for guests to glean insights into the creative process behind the biography. The writers shared anecdotes and reflections, offering a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the journey of bringing Archbishop Emeritus Murphy's story to life. Their insights into the creative process, the challenges they faced, and the moments of inspiration they encountered added a layer of depth to the narrative, enriching the reader's understanding of the man behind the biography.

Despite the formidable challenges posed by the pandemic, the authors traversed the length and breadth of Archbishop Emeritus Murphy's life through extensive research and heartfelt personal interviews. Their odyssey was guided by the light of generosity and kindness, as individuals from all walks of life opened their hearts and homes to share their memories and insights.

As described by the authors, the book aims to provide readers with a glimpse into the remarkable life and profound personal commitment of a man revered by many for his spiritual guidance and humanitarian endeavours. It is a testament to Archbishop Emeritus Murphy's enduring legacy, serving as an inspiration for generations to come.

For the authors, the biography was not merely a literary endeavour, but a personal journey of understanding and empathy,



**'Agent of Change: Essays on the life and times of Archbishop Emeritus Tan Sri Murphy Pakiam'**

is priced at RM20.00 and available at the Catholic Research Centre. Call 03-20266472 or WhatsApp 016-6386879 to order.

bridging the chasm between the distant figure and the deeply human soul.

The celebration continued with a cake cutting session followed by lunch. As the book was made available for sale, many took the opportunity to get their copy signed by the prelate. With care and dedication, he signed each copy brought to him, making the moment special for every recipient. This personal touch reflected Archbishop Emeritus Murphy's humility and warmth, endearing him to all who had the privilege of meeting him.

# HERALD

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# Holy Year 2025 holds ecumenical promise

Pope Francis' document proclaiming the Holy Year 2025 draws special attention to the ecumenical possibilities of the celebration, especially since the jubilee coincides with celebrations of the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.

The council, which began meeting in May 325, gave birth to the Nicene Creed, affirmed the full divinity of Christ and set a formula for determining the date of Easter.

"The Council Fathers chose to begin that Creed by using for the first time the expression 'We believe,' as a sign that all the Christians were in communion and that all Christians professed the same faith," the Pope wrote in *Spes Non Confundit*, (*Hope Does Not Disappoint*), his document formally calling for the jubilee celebration.

The document was published by the Vatican on May 9 and excerpts of it were read in front of the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica.

While the document focuses on the Catholic celebration of the holy year and what Catholics can do to celebrate it, Pope Francis also expressed hope for the participation of other Christian churches and communities in the celebration and highlighted the coincidence of the Nicaea commemorations.

Throughout Pope Francis' pontificate, he has spoken about the "ecumenism of martyrs" or the "ecumenism of blood" — a reference to the killing of Christians without regard for the denomination to which they belong.

Last July, he set up the "Commission of the New Martyrs — Witnesses of the Faith" in the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints to draw up a list of Christians killed for their faith since the year 2000.

"The martyrs, coming as they do from different Christian traditions, are also seeds of unity, expressions of the ecumenism of blood," the Pope wrote in his proclamation of the holy year. "I greatly hope that the Jubilee will also include ecumenical celebrations as a way of highlighting the richness of the testimony of these martyrs."

A common baptism and a shared belief in the faith statements in the Creed are at the foundation of efforts to restore Christian unity.

The Council of Nicaea, the Pope said, sought to preserve that unity when it was "seriously threatened by the denial of the full divinity of Jesus Christ and hence his consubstantiality with the Father."

"The Council of Nicaea was a milestone in the Church's history," Pope Francis wrote. "The celebration of its anniversary invites Christians to join in a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Blessed Trinity and in particular to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, 'consubstantial with the Father,' who revealed to us that mystery of love."

"At the same time," the Pope said, the anniversary is a "summons to all Churches and Ecclesial Communities to persevere on the path to visible unity and in the quest of fitting ways to respond fully to the prayer of Jesus 'that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.'"

Different Christian communities celebrated Easter on different days until the Council of Nicaea decided that for the unity of the Christian community and its witness, Easter would be celebrated on the first Sunday after



the first full moon after the spring equinox.

But the Julian calendar, which is what Christians used in the fourth century and many Orthodox churches still use, was out of sync with the actual solar year, so March 21 — generally assumed to be the date of the northern hemisphere's spring equinox — gradually "drifted" away from the actual equinox.

In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII, relying on the work of astronomers, reformed the calendar, dropping 10 days and making the equinox fall on March 21 again. Today Catholics and most Christians in the West follow the Gregorian calendar.

But, in another coincidence, Easter will fall on the same day on the Julian and Gregorian calendars in 2025.

Pope Francis prayed that the coincidence would "serve as an appeal to all Christians, East and West, to take a decisive step forward toward unity around a common date for Easter. We do well to remind ourselves that many people, unaware of the controversies of the past, fail to understand how divisions in this regard can continue to exist." — **By Cindy Wooden, CNS**

## Our lives should reflect the Spirit

I am quite certain that most, if not all, of us know about the celebration of Pentecost. The image that comes to mind is always that of the Holy Spirit raining down gifts on the Apostles. However, how many of us know the actual origin of this celebration? Pentecost is a Jewish feast that has been celebrated since the Old Testament, being called the Feast of Harvest or the Feast of Weeks in Jewish tradition. It is mentioned in five places in the first five books — in Exodus 23, Exodus 24, Leviticus 16, Numbers 28, and Deuteronomy 16. It was the celebration of the beginning of the early weeks of harvest. In Palestine, there were two harvests each year. The early harvest came during the months of May and June; the final harvest came in the Fall. Pentecost was the celebration of the beginning of the early wheat harvest, which meant that Pentecost always fell sometime during the middle of the month of May or sometimes in early June.

There were several festivals that took place before Pentecost. There was Passover, there was Unleavened Bread, and there was the Feast of Firstfruits. The Feast of Firstfruits was the celebration of the beginning of the barley harvest. According to the Old Testament, you would go to the day of the celebration of Firstfruits, and beginning with that day, you would count off 50 days. The fiftieth day would be the Day of Pentecost. So Firstfruits is the beginning of the barley harvest and Pentecost is the celebration of the beginning of the wheat harvest. Since it was always 50 days after Firstfruits, and since 50 days equals seven weeks, it always came a



"week of weeks" later. Therefore, they either called it the Feast of Harvest or the Feast of Weeks.

The early Christians kept the feast because they were mostly Jewish people and they retained the festival as part of their new tradition. What began as a feast celebrating the harvest of the land evolved into a "spiritual" harvest of the land. We can see this in the reading from the Acts of the Apostles where the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and they began to speak in foreign languages. Devout men from various regions who spoke different languages found that they were able to understand what was being spoken because each heard it in their own language. This is also why when we think of Pentecost, we only think of this gift of tongues. But Pentecost is so much more than that. The descent of the Holy Spirit brings us

more precious gifts than just tongues. Even St. Paul tells us that the gift of tongues is the least of the gifts. Our focus should be on the "spiritual" harvest that the Holy Spirit brings for us. What is this "spiritual" harvest then?

Our second reading today from St Paul's letter to the Galatians gives us the answer. The opening line tells us that if we are guided by the Spirit, we will be in no danger of yielding to self-indulgence, since self-indulgence is the opposite of the Spirit. There will be times when we need to discern and ask ourselves whether what we are doing is really guided by the Spirit or simply a way of making ourselves feel good? What comes from the Spirit is always good but sometimes we can go overboard and give too much importance to the gift of tongues. Let us look at what St Paul says about self-indulgence. When self-indulgence is at work, some of the things that

## Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Philip Tay, OCD

### Pentecost Sunday (B)

**Readings: Acts of the Apostle 2:1-11;**

**Galatian 5:16-25**

**Gospel: John 15:26-27, 16:12-15**

can happen is feud and wrangling, jealousy, bad temper and quarrels, disagreements, factions, envy and other similar things. Sounds familiar? St Paul also warns us that those who behave like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. If a person is truly gifted and guided by the Spirit, their behaviour will be the opposite of self-indulgence.

This is why St Paul teaches that there are more precious gifts that the Spirit can offer. He lists them as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control. If our lives are truly a manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit, then our lives should be a reflection of what the Spirit can bring. This is why it is more profitable for our souls and the souls of others if we desire these gifts instead of just the gift of tongues. We do not have to be sad or envious just because others can pray in tongues and we are not able to. What is more important is the way we live our lives as disciples of Christ, who go out to sow seeds and reap an abundant harvest. We can only belong to Christ if we crucify all our self-indulgent desires.



ARCHDIOCESE OF  
KUALA LUMPUR  
CHAN/CD/06/2024

## Chancery Notice

### Archdiocesan Mission of New Evangelisation for Christ

The ministry previously known as the Archdiocesan New Evangelisation Committee (ANEC) in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur has now been renamed as the Archdiocesan Mission of New Evangelisation for Christ (AMNEC).

Archbishop Julian Leow has appointed Revd Fr Edwin Peter as its Ecclesiastical Assistant with immediate effect.

*Clarence Devadass*

Rev Fr Dr Clarence Devadass  
Chancellor  
Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur

May 7, 2024



KUALA LUMPUR  
ARCHDIOCESE

### Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

May

- 25 ICPE Covenant Celebration – Church of Jesus Caritas



PENANG DIOCESE

### Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

May

- 21-23 Clergy Outing
- 25 Keynote Address – Symposium “Intersectionalities between Health, Spirituality and Sociology” organised by NCSM & Caritas Penang Diocese at 9.00am – Simee Home, Ipoh
- 27 Mass & Meeting at 10.00am – Penang Diocese Seminarians of St Peter’s College, Kuching | Bishop’s Residence
- 27 Meeting – Head of Penang Diocesan New Evangelisation Commission at 3.00pm



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

### Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

May

- 21-22 Clergy Monthly Recollection – Good Shepherd Catholic Seminary, Melaka
- 25 Unity Walk – Church of St Francis Xavier, Melaka,
- 25 Montfort Charity Dinner – Montfort Youth Centre, Ayer Salak, Melaka

# Ulu Tiram parishioners to have a new church

By Dr Jacinta Johnny

ULU TIRAM, Johor: The community of the Church of the Holy Family was filled with jubilation as they embarked on a memorable journey towards the realisation of a long-held dream – the construction of their new church building. After nearly three decades of meticulous planning and unwavering dedication, their perseverance has finally borne fruit. The approval to build the new Church of the Holy Family marked a significant milestone, leading up to the ground breaking ceremony held May 1.

The ceremony, which was attended by about 500 people, including six priests and two deacons, was officiated by Bishop Bernard Paul. It was coordinated by the Church Building chairperson, Fr Ryan Innas Muthu, and parish priest, Fr Martinian Lee. The atmosphere was a mix of excitement and reverence. It was a celebration of cultural diversity, beginning with the lion dance, followed by the *Ngajat*, *Sumazau* and *Kolattam* cultural dances performed to welcome this joyous occasion, representing the rich diversity of Holy Family parishioners. The procession and symbolic launch of the new church building were held at the precise locations where the church aisle and sanctuary will stand, symbolising the commencement of this transformative journey.

Amidst prayers, hymns, and heartfelt speeches, Fr Ryan expressed his profound gratitude for the tireless efforts of the past and present church building committee members, parishioners, and priests, as well as the steadfast support of the past and present bishops. He emphasised that this ground-breaking ceremony marks only the beginning of a multi-phase project. Therefore, the successful completion of the new church will depend on the continued support and generous contributions of benefactors, as marked by the launch of the fundraising campaign with a booth set up during the event.

Meanwhile, Bishop Bernard reminded



Bishop Bernard Paul with the clergy and deacon during the ground-breaking ceremony.



From left: Fr Ryan Innas Muthu, Bishop Bernard Paul and Fr Martinian Lee symbolically breaking the soil.

everyone present that this new church is more than just a physical structure; it should be firmly rooted in Christ. Just as stated in the Gospel to “build on the rock, not on the sand,” he emphasised that the only foundation of the Church is Jesus Christ Himself. He encapsulated this concept of building on the R-O-C-K with the acronym ‘Rely on Christ’s Kingship’, signifying the necessity to trust in Christ’s sovereignty for the

enduring strength and stability of the Church.

The symbolic breaking of the soil by Bishop Bernard Paul and the priests each using a *cangkul* marked the establishment of a new phase in the spiritual journey of the parishioners. As they break ground on this new chapter, the Ulu Tiram Catholic community embraces the promise of hope and renewal bestowed upon them by the Lord.

## Renewed purpose and radiant light

MELAKA: The Couples for Christ (CFC) Malaysia gathered for their annual retreat in the Good Shepherd Seminary from April 19 to 21, embarking on a journey of spiritual renewal and fellowship.

Under the theme *Be A Servant, Be A*

*Light*, participants delved into discussions, shared experiences, and engaged in uplifting activities that strengthened their bond as individuals, as couples, and as a community committed to serving God and their ministries.

Led by the CFC Spiritual Director Deacon Sherman Kuek, the three-day retreat offered a programme that encompassed talks, team-building activities, a praise fest, and the Eucharist. Each segment was crafted to resonate with the central theme, guiding attendees towards a deeper understanding of their role as servants and bearers of light.

The retreat sessions, anchored on pivotal themes such as *The Fall*, *The Choosing*, *The Chosenness*, and *The Summons*, provided insightful learning and practical takeaways for the participants. Through reflections and sharing of their personal experiences, attendees were challenged to discern their purpose, embrace service with courage, and recognise their inherent calling to be instruments of service and love to others.

The CFC Malaysia Annual Retreat not only rejuvenated spirits but also ignited a commitment to embody the principles of love, service, and faith in their daily lives. — By Sarah Gil-Unas



Some of the couples with their children.

## Congregation urged to embody Christ's teachings

BIDOR, Perak: The Chapel of St Joseph celebrated its parish feast day with a triduum from May 1 to 4. Deacon Richard Wilson, from the Church of St Joseph in Batu Gajah, delivered sermons throughout the four-day celebration, while Fr James Pitchay, the chapel's administrator and parish priest of the Church of St Mary in Tapah, presided over the Eucharistic celebration.

Under the theme *Journeying Together: Communion, Participation, and Mission*, each day emphasised a different aspect of community faith. Deacon Richard stressed unity in communion on Day 1, active participation in parish events on Day 2, and the missionary call of all baptised Christians on Day 3. On the feast day, he highlighted St Joseph's role as a faithful servant and pro-

teCTOR of the Holy Family, drawing parallels to our own spiritual journeys.

Fr James encouraged the congregation to embody Christ's teachings through their actions and to join in the candlelight procession behind the Blessed Sacrament through the streets of Bidor town. The procession, lasting 50 minutes, proceeded smoothly, attracting bystanders who admired the rare public display of reverence for the Blessed Sacrament and the statue of St Joseph in this small town.

The celebration concluded with Benediction and a fellowship dinner on the chapel grounds, where Fr James expressed gratitude to Deacon Richard and the faithful for making the feast day memorable and meaningful. — **By Bernard Anthony**



*Bidor parishioners accompanying the Blessed Sacrament with lighted candles.*

# A journey of manifestation, evangelisation and unity

**By John Bosco Morais**

KUALA LUMPUR: At the Church of St Joseph, Sentul, the nine-day novena and feast day celebration honouring St Joseph the Worker began with the solemn raising of the patron saint's flag, led by Fr Albert Arockiasamy. This ten-day event drew the community together under the spiritual guidance of St Joseph and supported by parish priest Fr Frederick Joseph, Msgr James Gnanapiragasam, and Fr Yesu Anthony.

With a central theme of *Rebuild My Church*, each day's activities focused on a different virtue of St Joseph, inspiring deep reflection and prayer among the faithful. The celebration commenced with Rosary devotions to Mother Mary, followed by novena prayers to St Joseph. Mass was celebrated daily by a rotating roster of visiting priests, including Frs Albert, Mitchel Anthony, Peter Anthony, Michel Dass, Vincent Thomas, Yesu Anthony, William Michael, and George Harrison, whose homilies emphasised humility,



*The clergy during the feast day celebration.*

faithfulness, and devotion.

A significant moment occurred on the morning of the fifth day, when seven priests administered the Anointing of the Sick, attended by approximately 250 faithful seeking solace and healing.

Various church groups including the BECCOT, Women's community, RCIA, Chinese Apostolate, Tamil Apostolate, Eagles Wing, Youth, Catechetical, Prayer Group, and Migrants played important roles in coordinating the Eucharistic celebrations.

Daily fellowship meals organised by the BECs and the Tamil Apostolate highlighted the communal spirit, enhancing the celebratory atmosphere with shared meals and camaraderie.

The feast day culminated in a grand celebration with a multilingual Mass celebrated by several clergy. The revered statue of St Joseph was blessed, petitions were ceremonially burnt, and a candlelight procession featuring the altar ministers, flower girls, candle boys, and BEC representatives made its way through Jalan Sentul. The Rosary was recited in English, Tamil, and the Myanmar language, illuminating the procession with a spirit of unity and devotion.

As the procession returned, the St Joseph flag was reverently lowered, and the hymn "Holy Patron" marked the close of the festivities. Approximately 1,500 attendees, including parishioners from nearby churches and members of the Myanmar and Sri Lankan communities, joined in the celebration, reinforcing the strong bonds of fellowship within this diverse community.

## A day of faith and community in Tanjung Kling Chapel

MELAKA: The quaint Chapel of St Joseph in Tanjung Kling celebrated its patronal feast on May 1, drawing over 400 faithful for a spiritually enriching afternoon. The festivities began at 2.15pm with the recitation of St Joseph's prayers and the Rosary, setting a devout tone for the day.

Fr John Yoew, the chapel administrator and parish priest of the nearby Church of St Mary in Ayer Salak, celebrated the feast day Mass at 3.00pm.

In his bilingual homily delivered in English and Mandarin, Fr John highlighted the limited yet insightful mentions of St

Joseph in the Gospel. He recounted how the Angel Gabriel, appearing in a dream, directed Joseph on his divine role. As chosen by God, Joseph was to lead his family, safeguarding Mary and Jesus — the Holy Family.

Fr John described Joseph as a humble man who embraced his responsibilities as husband and father, exemplifying the protector and provider for the Holy Family. He also emphasised that St Joseph, as the patron of all labourers, shows us that our endeavours should honour God, benefit our families and countries, and contribute to a better world.

Furthermore, Fr John addressed the vital contributions of housewives, accentuating their role in shaping a nurturing home environment, preparing meals, and particularly in the education of children — emphasising faith education. He asserted that both spouses play crucial roles in family life, not just the husband as the breadwinner.

Fr John pointed to the perfect example of familial love and care provided by both Joseph and Mary. He noted, "Jesus had an ideal foster father in Joseph and a loving

mother in Mary, who together nurtured His earthly life. Their dedication and love were instrumental in forming Jesus, enabling Him to preach the Gospel flawlessly." This, Fr John suggested, is the model of perfection that every Christian family should aspire to emulate.

The Mass was followed by a procession around the chapel's grounds, with a statue of St Joseph being carried in his honour, accompanied by the congregation and the priest.

Valerie, a representative from the chapel's committee, expressed gratitude for the favourable weather and the community's efforts in organising the feast. Special thanks were given to Fr John, the committee members, the food sponsors, and a donor who contributed four wall-mounted air conditioners to the chapel.

The celebration concluded with Fr John wishing all a blessed feast day and leading grace before the congregation gathered in the adjacent hall for a tea fellowship, marking a day of faith, community, and gratitude. — **By Bernard Anthony**



*Parishioners in procession around the chapel grounds with the statue of St Joseph.*

# Churches should improve accessibility for the differently-abled

KUALA LUMPUR: A Mass for individuals with special needs was celebrated at the Church of the Sacred Heart on April 27 by Archbishop Julian Leow, with parish priest Msgr Stanislaus Soosaimariam concelebrating.

The Mass was well attended by members of the blind, deaf, physically challenged and neurodivergent communities.

The animating team of the Catechesis for Learners with Special Needs (CLSN), a sub-ministry of the KL Archdiocese Catechetical Ministry, ensured accommodations were made for the Mass, including a smooth process of parking cars, adequate wheelchair access, availability of sign language interpreters and they even turned the confessionals into calm areas with sensory items for those who required them.

After Mass, a dialogue session on *Catechesis through Inclusion* was held at the parish hall, with a keynote address by Dr Steven Selvaraju, Director of the KL Archdiocesan Catechetical Centre. Archbishop Julian was on the panel, alongside Constance Yuen who is serving in the Special Needs catechism classes at the Church of the Holy Family, Kajang. Later, there were many sharings from parents and



*The differently-abled during the offertory procession.*

self-advocates on how they built their communities for the sake of their children and how some are still advocating for better accessibility to and within churches.

Prudent points highlighted included wheelchair access, availability of toilets for the disabled and transportation to churches with sign language interpreters. There was also a suggestion for parishes to consider having a helpdesk at all Masses, with volunteers to assist the differently abled who required help to get around — to the pews, toilets and

for communion. These points were acknowledged by the archbishop as he called out to parishes to consider these suggestions.

Another key question was the appropriate time for neurodivergents understanding of the Holy Communion and their readiness to receive it. Dr Steven quoted Church documents to say there is no standard evaluation on when one should receive Holy Communion and he went on to explain that each child is different and one standard cannot apply to every child. Constance also encouraged parents to have conversations with their parish priests on this matter.

In closing, Archbishop Julian reminded the attendees that the Holy Father, Pope Francis has called for all to extend their tent to include all the differently abled because they belong to our community. "One shepherd and one flock. Include and do not exclude others. Love is the answer to everything," said the archbishop. — *KL Archdiocesan Catechesis for Learners with Special Needs Team*



*Archbishop Julian Leow speaking to the attendees at the end of the session.*

## I just want to go for Mass as a family

Going to church with my family is something I have been longing for. It's not easy. My son is autistic and when I think about trying to get him to sit still or not make any noise, it leaves me feeling quite helpless. My only other option was to go to church alone on Christmas and Easter. This made me sad, so eventually, I stopped going. I can't remember the last time I attended Mass physically on Christmas or Easter.

I asked myself, how do I teach my son that God loves all of His creation and that God forgives all sinners but my son could only go to church if he could "behave" a certain way? With a heavy heart, I approached my parish several times regarding catechism and attending Mass. Finally, I thought it should be highlighted to the KL Archdiocese — not as a complaint, but perhaps to help people who did not know how to handle neurodivergent children at church, and I was in a position to offer myself up to help with this.

In 2022, I managed to get in touch with the KL Archdiocese Catechetical Ministry to express what was in my heart as a mother — how do I catechise my son? And when will we ever be able to attend Mass without restrictions on my son? Dr Steven Selvaraju took heed of my plea and formed a small committee of parents and catechists to take action and help children like my son. Since then, the Catechetical Ministry has taken meaningful

steps to better understand the needs of the disabled community and conducted activities.

On April 27, 2024, for the first time, my family and I went to church for Mass, without worry or anxiety of what my son would do. It was a Mass celebrated by His Grace Archbishop Julian Leow for individuals with special needs. I nearly broke into tears during Mass, because my prayers had finally been answered. My son could go to church without fear of judgment or being told he cannot be himself.

Following this Mass, a dialogue was held with members of the disabled community and caregivers who shared their challenges. To my surprise, many have built their own little communities and support system. While I had been in search of answers from my own church parish, I did not realise there were others from various parishes who were ever ready to provide the much-needed support. So, I learned that I need to look beyond just one parish but look towards any kind of support I can get from anywhere.

To me, this is just the beginning of our archdiocese heeding the plea of the community towards more inclusion at churches. Change cannot happen overnight. However, meaningful steps like this special Mass and an open dialogue are a step towards change. I am hopeful that, someday, my son can attend Mass at any church without fear of judgment. — *By Desiree Kaur*



*Desiree Kaur, her husband and son with Archbishop Julian Leow.*

## Easter outreach brings joy to Orang Asli families

TEMOH, Perak: Thirty-one members of the Orang Asli community in Batu Empoh were the joyful recipients of 459kgs of essential food items recently. These provisions were distributed during an Easter Outreach programme held at their village chapel. The beneficiaries were 10 underprivileged families, selected by Mujor, the village leader of the Catholic Orang Asli community.

The outreach was initiated by a group of Catholics from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur who not only delivered the food supplies but also gifted school bags, bath towels, toothbrushes, and rosaries to the families.

The day began with a prayer session in Bahasa Malaysia,

followed by a reflection aimed at motivating the Orang Asli Catholics to embody Christ's light in their village and to share the message of Jesus, the Risen Christ, through their actions and lifestyle inspired by Gospel values. As rosaries were handed out to the families, they were also encouraged to make daily recitation of the Rosary a habit.

A particularly joyful moment was the balloon game which brought immense delight to the younger participants, with many winning small prizes and enjoying shared chocolates. The event was marked by a spirit of friendship and Christian love during the exchange of the peace of Christ, where everyone extended hands in fellowship.

By the end of the day, all the food



*The pilgrims joining in prayer with the Orang Asli community.*

items had been distributed, leaving the Orang Asli families content and thankful for the blessings received. The programme concluded with a prayer for the community's continual closeness to Jesus and God's everlasting blessings.

Earlier, at the Church of St Mary in Tapah, Fr James Pitchay, the parish priest and also administrator of the Orang Asli Chapel in Batu Empoh, celebrated a Mass for the visiting Catholics from Kuala

Lumpur. He emphasised the Christian calling to care for the impoverished and marginalised, affirming that such genuine efforts are seen and rewarded by God. — *By Bernard Anthony*

# A journey of 'doing' theology

KUALA LUMPUR: A journey that began on February 22, 2020 and went through the COVID-19 pandemic period, ended on May 4, 2024, when 49 students who had completed the Distance Education Programme in Theology, also known as DEPTH, received their certificates from Most Rev Julian Leow Beng Kim, Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur.

The simple but meaningful graduation ceremony was held at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre, with family members and friends of the graduates also present. This is the second batch of students who successfully completed their studies. The first batch had undergone studies from 2016-2019, graduating in February, 2020.

The ceremony opened with a welcoming address from Dr Steven Selvaraju, Acting Director of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Institute (API), followed by an opening prayer from one of the graduates, Deacon Sandanasamy Peter. Subsequently, attendees watched two video-recorded messages. The first message,

from Fr Dr Rajakumar Joseph, SJ, Principal of Vidyajyoti College of Theology, emphasised that theology is not merely academic but involves personal transformation, growing closer to Christ, and serving the community. In the second video, Fr Anil D'Almeida, SJ, Director of DEPTH, praised the graduates for their dedication and hard work in completing their studies, noting that theology must be compassionate and connected to real life to retain its essence. He encouraged the graduates to share their journey and become beacons of hope in the world.

After the speeches, a video displaying the faces and names of the 49 graduates was projected. It was indeed a touching moment as it reminded us that each person in the video had dedicated the last three years of their life to deepening their knowledge and understanding of the faith. The highlight of the day came when we were called one by one to the stage to receive the much-awaited certificate from Archbishop Julian.

After the certificate presentation, Angeline Chivapathy delivered a speech on behalf of her fellow graduates. She encouraged everyone to reflect on the most challenging moment they encountered during the course. Highlighting the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic as a significant hurdle, she reminded the audience that, despite being physically, emotionally, and spiritually tested, they persevered because of their faith in God. Angeline emphasised the importance of lay formation and urged her fellow graduates not to hide their light under a bushel but to discern their paths forward and continue the mission of Christ.

Archbishop Julian, in his speech, reminded the graduates that "doing theology" is not just about acquiring "head knowledge" or obtaining a diploma. It is about growing in one's relationship with Jesus Christ and in loving the Church more. He reminded us that we have to continue to deepen the understanding of our faith and to be the beacons of hope in promoting peace and

unity. "Be an ambassador to share what you believe and why you believe, sharing the story of Jesus Christ by the way you live your life."

Cecilia Pappu, *pic*, a graduate and practising pharmacist in a healthcare business unit, shared her challenging journey of balancing work, personal life, and studies. "But through DEPTH, I have grown in greater depth in my relationship with God," she said. "I must say that I am a totally different person today, having deepened my faith in Him. Truly, God works in mysterious ways." For Cecilia, earning a Diploma in Theology is not the culmination of her theological journey. "In fact," she explained, "as a witness of Christ, empowered by His Holy Spirit, I am inspired all the more to continue Christ's mission to go and make disciples of all nations (Matt 28: 19-20) and to build His kingdom here on earth."



## About DEPTH

The Distance Education Programme in Theology (DEPTH) which is offered by Vidyajyoti College of Theology, Delhi, in collaboration with Archdiocesan Pastoral Institute (API), Kuala Lumpur, is an enriching three-year course for the lay faithful who wish know and further explore the Catholic faith. Consisting of 30 compulsory and four optional modules, a student is required to submit a monthly assignment and undergo two written exams. Since it is a distance learning programme, it allows the student the flexibility of setting his or her own pace for studying, while at same time, demands of him or her a sense of discipline in order to complete the course on time.

Among the modules covered in DEPTH are Scriptures (Old Testament and New Testament), Vatican Council II documents, the Sacraments, Mariology, Christology, History of the Church, Biblical Prophets, Marriage and Sexual Ethics, Triune God, Theology of Lay Faithful, Theology of Religion, Interreligious Dialogue, Moral Theology, Introduction to Canon Law and Theology of Grace. The optional modules offered are Oriental Churches and Theology, Understanding Popular Religiosity, Sociology of Religion and specifically on Book of Psalms and Sermon on the Mount.

The Archdiocesan Pastoral Institute is initiating discussions with Vidyajyoti College of Theology to start a new intake of students for the next DEPTH course. Information on this will be made available as soon as the arrangements have been finalised.



## Tapah church gets a facelift

TAPAH: The Church of St Mary has recently completed substantial renovations after severe soil erosion last year damaged the property's aged wall fence. The erosion nearly led to the collapse of the structure, prompting urgent repairs and enhancements to the church's perimeter and facilities.

Under the guidance of Fr James Pitchay, who has been assigned to the parish for over two years, the church has seen continuous improvements, both physically and spiritually. The renovation project, which began in February 2024 and concluded three months later in April, included the construction of a new walled fence along the main road, complete with new drainage systems, a stainless-steel main gate, a back gate, and enhanced security features like grenade sign boards and extensive lighting with 32 wall lights.

Additional enhancements included a flagpole platform and new concrete pavements at the expanded main entrance, amounting to a total cost of RM104,669.85. The project not only secures the church grounds but also significantly boosts the aesthetic appeal and functionality of the church's exterior.



The newly renovated Church of St Mary.

Last year, the church building itself underwent significant upgrades, including a new paint job, the installation of air conditioning, and new flooring tiles, all aimed at improving the comfort and experience for parishioners.

Beyond physical improvements, Fr James has focused on the spiritual well-being of his community,

ensuring that parish activities and services meet the needs of his parishioners. His efforts were recognised and supported by a visit from a group of Catholics from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur on May 4. The group toured the new facilities and contributed financially towards the renovation costs. — **By Bernard Anthony**

## First BEC pot-luck after pandemic

KUALA LUMPUR: The BEC of St Jerome, Pandan Indah, gathered for their Easter celebration on April 13, despite a heavy downpour just before the event. Despite the weather, 35 members of the BEC under the Church of the Sacred Heart, came together, demonstrating their strong sense of community and togetherness.

The evening commenced with a prayer of thanksgiving, marking their first potluck gathering after a hiatus due to the Movement Control Order (MCO). A special moment ensued as the oldest and youngest members of the BEC — 85 years old and four years old, respectively —

jointly officiated a ceremonial cake-cutting event. This symbolic gesture emphasised the inclusivity of the BEC, transcending age, language, and ethnicity, and highlighted their unity in fostering a close-knit community.

The pot-luck gathering was an enjoyable evening as BEC members shared an array of sumptuous and delicious food and played games together, fostering fun and team building.

The end of the evening was marked by everyone receiving a small gift with a tag inscribed with an Easter acclamation. — **By Rani Jackson**



BEC St Jerome from the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

# Sustainable giving with pre-loved clothes drive

KUALA LUMPUR: In a world increasingly burdened by waste and environmental degradation, the Parish Integral Human Development Ministry (PIHDM) Ecology and Environment team at the Church of St Anthony took a commendable step towards sustainability and compassion.

The team recently organised a preloved clothes collection drive, a simple yet impactful initiative that not only promotes the principles of Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle (3R) but also embodies the spirit of sharing and caring for the less fortunate, benefiting over 500 needy persons around Kuala Lumpur and Selangor.

This activity is part of the parish's broader commitment to promoting sustainable living and reducing landfill waste. By encouraging parishioners to donate clothes they no longer need, the initiative helps to extend the lifespan of these items, serving as a practical demonstration of reaching out to those in need.

The activity saw parishioners donating a variety of clothes, including children's,

women's, and men's attire in all sizes. The clothes were received in good condition, reflecting the donors' respect and empathy for the recipients. Each item was meticulously washed, folded, labelled, and packed, ready to begin a new chapter with its new owner.

The preloved clothes collection drive is a shining example of how faith communities can play a pivotal role in promoting sustainable living and social solidarity, as donors are not only able to contribute to environmental conservation, but also cultivate a culture of sharing and empathy, making the world a better place, one garment at a time.

The collected clothes found new homes in a number of establishments, including orphanages, halfway shelters, old folks' homes and were also distributed periodically to the homeless in Kuala Lumpur by the team. The initiative not only provided these institutions with much-needed resources, but also conveyed a message of love and solidarity to those who felt that they had no one looking after their basic needs.

"The impact of this initiative extends



A parishioner placing preloved clothes in the designated boxes.

beyond environmental conservation. At its heart, it is about sharing what one no longer needs with someone who needs it more. It is about recognising our shared humanity and extending a helping hand to those in need.

In doing so, it fosters a sense of community and mutual support among parishioners and recipients alike," said parish priest Fr Dr Clarence Devadass. — **By Elvina Fernandez**

# Mental health and stress on teenagers today

By Deacon Dr Leslie Petrus

JOHOR BARU: Teenagers today are growing up in a different environment compared to just a decade ago, presenting unique challenges for parents who may feel uncertain about how to cope. This pressing issue was highlighted at the Malacca Johore Diocesan Pastoral Assembly in October 2023 and in response, the Diocesan Commission on Family, Laity and Life organised a zoom session titled *A Conversation on Mental Health and Stress in Today's Teenagers*, which featured daily practitioners in adolescent health and wellness.

Dr Fabian Sunil Dass, Consultant Psychiatrist at Regency Hospital, Seri Alam, Johor Bahru shared insights from his clinical experience managing treatment for teenagers suffering from chronic depression, severe anxiety, or addictions. He highlighted the distinction between mental health and mental illness, likening mental health to physical health. Just as physical health is maintained through exercise and a nutritious diet, mental health requires good sleep, careful attention to the inputs we allow into our minds, and a reduction in negativity. However, in cases where an individual's condition does not improve despite counselling or psychological therapy, they are referred to a psychiatrist. At this stage, treatment typically includes medication that helps manage symptoms,

allowing the individual to function normally at home and work.

Dr Fabian, who is also a senior lecturer at the School of Medicine, Monash University, Johor Bahru, also noted that teenagers today are overwhelmed by a tremendous amount of information, which can lead to confusion. He strongly reiterated the importance of confidentiality in handling patients' medical records.

Christine Maryanna Gabriel, a licensed Marriage and Family therapist and lecturer in Psychology at Taylor's University, Petaling Jaya, explained how rapidly the world is evolving for today's teenagers, highlighting the challenges they face. The teenage brain, still maturing and not fully equipped to make major decisions, often relies on emotional responses. Brain development continues into the late twenties or early thirties. When interacting with teenagers, it's crucial to understand the unique context in which they navigate life. We should avoid comparing their experiences with our own teenage years.

Today's teens are heavily influenced by social media, which bombards them with messages about what they should or shouldn't be. Family systems, historical backgrounds, and values also play significant roles in shaping their mental health. The relationships teens have with their parents, along with the parenting styles they are exposed to, form a blueprint for how they

handle stress and challenges.

When parents seek counselling for their teenagers, they often prefer not to participate in the sessions themselves, expecting the counsellor to 'fix' the problem alone. However, Christine stressed the importance of parents respecting the boundaries and privacy that teenagers require. Respecting these boundaries is essential.

Trust is another critical factor; a breach of trust by a friend can have devastating effects. It is important to fully grasp the context of a teenager's experiences and to reflect on these insights, which ultimately sends a meaningful 'message' to them.

Justin Victor, president of Befrienders (KL) shared his insights on handling calls from teenagers, some of whom express suicidal thoughts. The Befrienders' approach emphasises unconditional and empathetic listening. He pointed out that teenagers often feel disregarded by adults, especially when their remarks about life's struggles are treated lightly. Whenever a teenager mentions feelings of hopelessness, an inability to face failure, wrongful accusations, or loneliness, it's crucial to take immediate note.

Justin, who is a lecturer in Mass Communications at Taylor's University, Petaling Jaya, stressed the importance for parents to be vigilant and recognise even subtle changes in their child's behaviour, such as weight fluctuations, withdrawal,

sleep disturbances, or declining academic performance. The impact of losing a close, trusted relationship can be profound and traumatic for teenagers.

He emphasised the importance of empathetic support and validation of their feelings. It's essential for parents and caregivers to aid in building resilience among teenagers. Justin also reminded the audience that suicide is no longer criminalised, highlighting that some individuals see it as a way to alleviate unbearable pain, rather than a desire to end their life.

It's evident that many parents face circumstances beyond their control. Socio-economic challenges often consume their time and attention, making it difficult to strike a balance. However, amidst these trials, it's crucial not to lose hope and to perceive them as moments of grace.

Parents are encouraged to deepen their prayer life and cultivate a stronger relationship with God. Only by maintaining a prayerful outlook and focusing on Jesus can they navigate through these challenging times. Additionally, teenagers are urged to foster friendships, engage with church youth groups, and nurture a relationship with Jesus. Community support is vital, and the church offers assistance through various means, including counselling services. For those who cannot afford private healthcare, government hospitals provide necessary services.

# Kulim parishioners learn homemade candle crafting



KEDAH: A group of parishioners from the Church of the Sacred Heart in Kulim came together recently for a special activity – crafting their own homemade candles.

Parish priest, Msgr Henry Rajoo, extended

a warm welcome to all present, initiating the session with opening prayers and blessings.

Seminarian Brother Joseph adeptly led the candle-making process, guiding participants at every step. With precision, they utilised

materials such as cooking oil, stearic acid, crayon colours, and fragrance oils.

The parishioners displayed their remarkable talents as they crafted vibrant and high-quality candles, exchanging

experiences and insights along the way. Ultimately, they completed the candle-making project, finding joy and fulfilment in the creative process. — **By John Kuppasawary**

# Powered by faith, family and teamwork

WASHINGTON: Katie Ledecky, the most decorated woman in swimming history, added another distinguished medal to her collection on May 3. She was honoured with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in a White House ceremony, recognising her exemplary contributions to the prosperity, values, and security of the United States, along with 18 other Americans.

A native of the Washington area and a parishioner at the Church of the Little Flower in Bethesda, Maryland, Ledecky, 27, is a three-time US Olympic swimmer, a seven-time Olympic gold medalist, a 21-time world champion, and a 16-time world-record breaker in her sport.

Ledecky was among 19 recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom this year, which included Jesuit Fr Gregory Boyle, founder of Homeboy Industries, an intervention and rehabilitation programme for gang members in Los Angeles.

"Powered by faith, family, and teamwork, Katie Ledecky is a symbol of perseverance and strength, with a heart of

gold that shines for the nation and for the world," President Joe Biden said before presenting the honour to the swimmer.

A graduate of Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Washington, Ledecky plans to compete in her fourth summer Olympic Games in Paris.

During the summer of 2012, Ledecky was a rising 15-year-old sophomore at Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart in Bethesda when she was the youngest athlete on the US Olympic swim team and won her first gold medal in the women's 800-metre freestyle race during the London Olympics.

Before she headed off to her inaugural Summer Games, Ledecky told the *Catholic Standard*, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Washington, that to calm her nerves she always prays right before a race.

"The prayer I say is the 'Hail Mary,'" said Ledecky, adding that her faith and the sacraments give her a welcome opportunity to pause in her busy routine. "I also love going to Mass every week. It's a great



US President Joe Biden presents the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Olympic champion swimmer Katie Ledecky, a Catholic, during a ceremony at the White House in Washington May 3, 2024. (OSV News photo/Evelyn Hockstein, Reuters)

chance to reflect and connect with God. (My faith) has been a big part of my life since I was born."

Although the medals, records, accolades, and commercial endorsements have mounted up in the ensuing years, Ledecky is very much the same humble, hometown athletic phenomenon she was 12 years ago.

She is grateful for her lifelong Catholic faith — something she especially relied on

during the COVID-19 pandemic, and how it remained very important in her life, especially during the difficult challenges of the global shutdown — which led to a year's postponement of the 2020 Summer Games. She recalled attending Mass virtually every week with her family whom she hadn't seen in person since December 2019.

"My faith is strong, and I realised more how important that is," she said. — OSV

## Norms for the designation of national shrines

BANGALORE: The Commission for Canon Law in the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) has established a clear path for recognising significant diocesan shrines as national shrines. The newly drafted "Norms for the Designation of National Shrines" was officially released as a book (pic) during the 94th Executive Committee meeting held at St John's Medical College in Bangalore on May 8.

These comprehensive Norms address the desire expressed by several bishops to elevate cherished diocesan shrines to national status, fostering greater recognition and pilgrimage opportunities. The document represents the culmination of a meticulous process spearheaded by Most Rev Dr Antonysamy Savarimuthu, the chairman of the Commission for Canon Law and Rev Dr Merlin Rengith Ambrose, Executive Secretary of the Commission and Professor of Canon Law at St Peter's Pontifical Seminary, Bangalore. It was released



by His Eminence Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrão, the President of the CCBI.

The document is structured into five distinct sections. After a brief introduction on the significance of the Shrines, the first section lays out the overarching guiding principles governing national shrines. The second section delves into detailed guidelines concerning liturgy, sacraments, sacramentals, pilgrimages, sacramentals, pilgrimages, charitable endeavours, ecumenical celebrations and

popular devotions. The third section addresses a range of additional guidelines. The fourth section outlines the procedure for obtaining the designation of "National Shrine" from the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India. The fifth section elaborates on the required documentation and application process.

This book is intended to serve as a *vademecum* for bishops seeking to elevate their diocesan shrines to the status of National Shrines.

## Interfaith concert supports Taiwan's earthquake victims



Taiwanese Bishop Philip Huang Chao-ming of Hualien leads a prayer at the interfaith concert for victims of the earthquake on May 5, 2024. (UCA News Photo/Archdiocese of Taipei)

TAIWAN: Buddhists and Catholics in Taiwan came together to organise a special concert to support the victims of a devastating earthquake that hit the island last month.

Titled *Religious Prayer Concert for the 0403 Earthquake: Musical Blessings from the Pacific Shore*, the charity event in the capital, Taipei, on May 5, was a collaboration between Hualien Catholic Diocese and the United Association of Humanistic Buddhism, Chunghua.

The 7.2 magnitude earthquake, the most powerful in 25 years, caused significant damage to buildings and infrastructure in the eastern region of Taiwan. The quake reportedly killed 9 and injured dozens of people.

During the concert the Catholic team was led by Bishop Philip Huang Chao-ming of Hualien that included priests, nuns and representatives from various performing groups who sang hymns and recited prayers to show solidarity with the community in Hualien, one of the worst-hit regions.

"There are many indigenous members in Hualien Church, and through the concert they can directly feel everyone's care and encouragement because they too like to

express their happiness and difficulties by singing," Bishop Huang was quoted as saying.

Featuring a diverse and fusion programme, the performances that covered Buddhist sacred music, Catholic hymns, indigenous music, and dance, attracted a global audience, with nearly ten thousand people watching online and in person.

Despite the diverse religious beliefs, all are part of the same human family, Monsignor Paul Fitzmaurice, acting Apostolic Nuncio to Taiwan, said after the concert.

Highlighting the importance to support Hualien during its long road to recovery, Venerable Tzu Jung, secretary-general of the United Association of Humanistic Buddhism, said he hoped the concert will help boost the spirits and confidence of Hualien's residents to overcome adversity in this difficult time.

At the concert, the Buddhist association passed donations collected for the earthquake victims to the Hualien County government and to Hualien diocese for the restoration of the scenic beauty of the affected areas. — [ucanews.com](http://ucanews.com)

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## Young Chinese Catholics look to Mary to serve Church, society

SUZHOU, China: Young Catholics in one of China's smallest dioceses are marking the Marian month of May with meaningful gatherings. Energised by faith discussions and community-building activities, they are inspired to actively serve both the Church and society.

*Young people of Christ, come and serve the Church!* was the motto of one of the gatherings at Changshugang Parish in the

Diocese of Suzhou, celebrated in honour of the Blessed Mother in May.

Many young people from the port city of Changshu in Jiangsu province attended the May 5 event. Alongside priests and nuns, they shared personal stories about their faith and life experiences.

"Take advantage of the opportunity to be closer to the Lord, accept God's love and dedicate yourselves to the service of the Church,"

Fr Dai Xuefeng, the parish priest, told the young Catholics.

Youth leader Wang Zhihong spoke to his peers about the important role of young people in contemporary society and the mission that challenges young Catholics today.

The priests at the gathering highlighted that in China, the most straightforward way to witness for Jesus is by sharing personal experiences. This approach not only integrates the

church community into broader society but also promotes services that benefit everyone.

The Changshu Catholic Community is just one of many across China that has initiated a programme in May. Such programs aim to deepen the engagement of baptised Catholics through communal veneration of the Virgin Mary and pilgrimages to Marian churches and shrines, serving as a public witness to faith. — *LCI* (<https://international.la-croix.com>)

## Addressing the dangers of AI and child pornography

ROME: *What dangers does artificial intelligence (AI) present for the safety of children in digital environments?* was the topic addressed by a conference organised by the S.O.S Il Telefono Azzurro Foundation and the Italian Embassy at the Holy See as part of the National Day against Paedophilia and Child Pornography, which is observed in Italy every May 5.

According to its website, *Il Telefono Azzurro* ("The Blue Telephone") "offers a hotline service, managed by 114 Children's Emergency, through which it is possible to report illicit or potentially harmful content for children and adolescents."

Disturbing statistics were reported at the event: In 2023 there were more than 275,000 child pornography websites on the internet with approximately 11,000 photos generated by AI in just one month. However, these figures could be even higher, *Vatican News* noted, given that this new phenomenon "is difficult to quantify concretely."

The conference, titled *The Dignity of Children in the Digital World*, was held at the Borromeo Palace in Rome. Ernesto Caffo, president of Telefono Azzurro, noted that children and adolescents are increasingly exposed to platforms that contain tools "that can lead to risky behaviour."

For Caffo, this represents a new and im-

portant challenge, because it impacts all the control mechanisms that have been implemented in recent years. Although new technologies can be wonderful tools, any weak points can also "be a source of increasing risks for new generations," he said.

This serious situation, said the president of the Italian foundation — whose mission is to protect children and adolescents from any abuse and violence — must be addressed at the highest international level, such as at the next G7 summit, in order to present proposals on the issue.

Caffo also highlighted the important role of Pope Francis, who can contribute to the effort by addressing the issue of "the dignity of the person as a key element to which we all must be committed."

Cardinal Seán O'Malley, archbishop of Boston and president of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, pointed out during his talk that technological advances require and demand "a balance between technological progress and human values."

O'Malley emphasised that Pope Francis has stated on several occasions that "technology must serve to improve human life, and not the other way around."

"The Church's commitment to new technologies, particularly AI, is rooted in its



*In 2023 there were more than 275,000 child pornography websites on the internet, with approximately 11,000 photos generated by AI in just one month. (Unsplash/Kelly Sikkema)*

mission to protect people, in line with the Gospel," the cardinal said.

He further added that the Catholic Church is "actively contributing to the global conversation on the responsible use of AI, in line with human values and ethical standards."

Carla Garlatti, who heads an Italian government agency for the protection of children and adolescents, said it is possible to promote initiatives and tools to control the access of children and adolescents to platforms with inappropriate content.

However, jurist Guido Scorza stated that

controls are "difficult to apply at this time" because young people tend to use content designed for older persons.

Lastly, Fr Hans Zollner, dean of the Pontifical Gregorian University's Institute of Anthropology, warned of the risk of smartphones, which "make us [believe] we have everything under control, but that's not the case."

Zollner also reiterated Pope Francis' call for "creating and adopting an international treaty on AI," a crucial issue for the future of humanity. — *CNA*

## India gets its first speech-impaired priest

MUMBAI, India: A deaf and speech-impaired man was ordained a priest in India, and says he hopes to offer more support for deaf Catholics in the South Asian country.

Fr Joseph Thermadom of the Holy Cross Congregation was ordained at Our Lady of Dolours Basilica in Thrissur, in the state of Kerala, by Archbishop Mar Andrews Thazhath on May 3.

According to Church sources, Thermadom is the first deaf person to be ordained as a priest in the Catholic Church in the country. He is believed to be the second such priest in Asia and the 26th in the world.

A native of Thrissur, Thermadom was ordained by the city's metropolitan archbishop, Mar Andrews Thazhath.

Born deaf and speech impaired, Thermadom, who is 38, did his theology studies at the Dominican Missionaries for the Deaf Apostolate in the United States. He then served as deacon and made the first religious profession in 2020 at the Holy Cross Novitiate at Yercaud in Tamil Nadu. He made his final profession last August. He conducts his prayers in sign language.

"The 'final profession' of Thermadom made history in the Congregation and possibly in India, as he became the first deaf person to make the 'final profession' in



*Fr Joseph Thermadom of the Holy Cross Congregation is ordained on May 3, 2024. (Crux/Courtesy of Father Joseph Thermadom)*

the Congregation of Holy Cross. He is also probably the first finally professed religious who was born deaf in India," according to a statement from the congregation.

Along with his brother who is also hearing impaired, Joseph went to school in Mumbai. He felt his calling to become a priest rather early, but could not proceed due to various circumstances. He began receiving

a religious formation under Dominican Missionaries for the Deaf Apostolate in the United States. Having completed his studies, he returned to India. He had originally met the Holy Cross Fathers through their Ministry for the Deaf.

"Having expressed his desire to join their ministry, he was received at Aymanam Holy Cross community in 2017 as a come-and-

see member. After completing a year of Novitiate at Yercaud, Joseph made his first religious vows on 25th May 2020," the Holy Cross community said.

In an interview with *Crux*, Thermadom said his mission as a priest "is to provide all sacraments in Indian Sign Language to all Catholic deaf people in India."

"I also support God's calling the deaf people to priesthood and religious life. I also support the sacramental needs of hearing Catholics through interpreters, writing notes, etc. I would be happy to help the education of all the deaf people, irrespective of religion. I would be happy to help all the people through prayers and presence," he said.

Asked about his motto *Do Not Curse the Deaf* Thermadom said, "Leviticus 19:14 is the only positive view of the verse in the whole of the Bible on deaf people."

"My mother, Rosy Thomas, worked hard for me and my elder deaf brother, Stalin, in many ways such as feeding, teaching, travelling, accompanying, et cetera," he said.

"My father, T.L. Thomas, provides the strong foundation of my family. My brother protects me in many ways like avoiding falling into traps, guiding, helping, et cetera," he explained. — **By Nirmala Carvalho, Crux**

# Shaping a more inclusive Church

The recent meeting of parish priests in Sacrofano, Italy, from April 28 to May 1, exemplifies the Vatican's commitment to addressing calls for greater inclusivity and listening to the voices of parish priests. This initiative was a direct response to concerns about inadequate representation of parish priests raised during the 2023 synod assembly. Overall, the meeting underscored the critical need for ongoing formation in synodality at all levels of the Church to ensure a fruitful transition from maintenance to mission-oriented parish life. We feature some snippets from the three-day meeting.

## Day 1: Exploring Synodality in Parishes

The first day of the assembly on Sunday, April 28, served primarily as a travel day, with the participating priests gathering in Sacrofano in the evening to celebrate a communal Mass. The real discussions kicked off on Monday, following a format similar to the previous October general assembly: The day began with theologians and experts presenting insights on the day's topic, followed by discussions in 18 language-specific small groups (three Spanish, three French, seven English, and five Italian). The setup mirrored the October event, with participants seated at round tables engaging in the "Conversation in the Spirit" method, focusing on active listening and dialogue.

The primary topic, "The Face of the Synodal Church," centred on the priests' personal experiences with synodality in their

ministries, encompassing both the successes and challenges, and reflecting on how their understanding of synodality had evolved. Reports from the groups, published on the synod's website, indicated a generally positive experience with synodality, despite some obstacles encountered during the 2021-24 synodal process. For instance, one French-speaking group noted, "Synodality has been a joyful experience for our group, overcoming various difficulties and considerable resistance at all levels (from the laity to bishops)."

Challenges in conveying the concept of synodality were also highlighted. An English-speaking group mentioned, "In many of our countries, the term 'synodality' meets with blank stares or is seen merely as a new programme to implement. We've found it more effective to discuss the concept of 'journeying' together, which is more relatable for parishioners." The discussions further emphasised the ongoing transformation towards a more synodal church, a process requiring more engagement and time with parishioners — an aspiration made challenging by resource constraints, as noted by several groups discussing priestly burnout and workload.

The necessity of educating all church levels about synodality — from bishops and priests to religious and lay parishioners — was a recurrent theme, highlighting the need for enabling priests to focus less on administrative duties and more on evangelisation and fostering relationships within their parishes.



Parish priests who are part of an international gathering to provide input to the Synod of Bishops on synodality meet in small groups April 29, 2024, at a retreat centre in Sacrofano, outside of Rome. (CNS photo/Courtesy of the Synod of Bishops)

## Day 2: Envisioning a Synodal Parish

The conversation on the second day delved deeper into the roles within a synodal parish under the theme "All Disciples All Missionaries." Participants reflected on the diverse charisms, vocations, and ministries within their parishes and dioceses and their contributions to the broader diocesan mission. In the afternoon, the focus shifted to defining the role of a "synodal priest."

The discussions painted a picture of a synodal parish as a vibrant hub for evangelisation, where both laypeople and priests discern and employ their charisms in missionary efforts. "Recognising and trusting the charisms within our community relieves us from the pressure of having to do everything ourselves," one English-speaking group observed. The necessity of forming and catechising the faithful so they can assume leadership and evangelising roles within their communities was a prominent theme.

Questions about practical implementation arose, such as how to effectively facilitate the discernment of personal charisms and whether new structures are needed to support synodality in parishes beyond the existing parish councils. The role of women and their involvement in non-traditional capacities within the church was also discussed, alongside the need for fostering decision-making processes that include the entire parish community.

## Day 3: Towards Communal Discernment

The final day focused on "the dynamics of ecclesial discernment" — how group discernment occurs within existing synodal structures like pastoral councils. The challenge of shifting from maintenance-focused activities to mission-centric discernment was noted, with a call to imbue existing structures with a new, spirit-led dynamism to prevent them from becoming routine and stagnant.

The need for additional synodal structures that can sustain a parish's mission across pastoral transitions and generations was emphasised, as was the necessity of teaching pastors and parishioners the principles of communal discernment. The importance of distinguishing between the movements of the Holy Spirit and mere human ideas was discussed, with groups suggesting joy and ease as indicators of positive spiritual discernment.

Reinforcing cooperation among priests and bishops, with suggestions for more active and relational episcopal engagements in parishes, wrapped up the discussions. The priests reiterated a desire for ongoing support and formation among clergy to strengthen their ability to lead in a synodally evolving Church. — *America*



Pope Francis meets with parish priests from around the world at the Vatican Synod Hall on May 2, 2024. The meeting took place at the end of the four-day international gathering called "Parish Priests for the Synod" in Sacrofano, outside Rome. (Vatican Media)

## Pope Francis' mandate to parish priests

Pope Francis has issued a significant directive aimed at parish priests who participated in the "Parish Priests for the Synod" international meeting in Rome. The mandate, released through the Holy See Press Office, underscores the Pope's call for a more widespread embrace of synodality among clergy.

The document begins with Pope Francis acknowledging the importance of the recent meeting but stresses that further action is necessary. He highlights the need for increased involvement of priests in the synodal process, urging them to actively engage their peers in fostering a culture of synodality within their respective parishes.

The Pope outlines practical steps for priests to promote synodality, including facilitating discussions on parish ministry renewal in a synodal and missionary manner, organising dialogue sessions among fellow priests, and utilising existing meetings or arranging new ones for this purpose. He emphasises the importance of reporting the outcomes of these efforts to the Synod Secretariat, underlining the accountability and continuity of the synodal process.

One notable aspect of the directive is Pope

Francis' call for priests to communicate this initiative to their bishops, framing it as a task bestowed upon them by the Pope himself. This highlights the hierarchical structure within the Church and emphasises the collective responsibility of clergy in advancing the synodal agenda.

Furthermore, Pope Francis informs the priests that he has written to all parish priests worldwide, introducing them as missionaries of synodality and inviting them to join this collaborative endeavour. This gesture not only amplifies the scope of the initiative but also underscores the Pope's commitment to inclusivity and grassroots participation in decision-making processes.

The mandate concludes with Pope Francis expressing gratitude for the collaboration of the priests and soliciting their prayers, demonstrating a spirit of solidarity and mutual support within the clergy. Overall, this directive signifies a concerted effort by the Vatican to promote synodality as a guiding principle for the Church's mission and governance, inviting active engagement from clergy at all levels. —

*Vatican News*



Pope Francis poses with priests for a selfie during his weekly audience at the Paul VI Hall on May 1, 2024 in Vatican. (Vatican Pool/Getty)



**ECHOING  
THE FAITH**  
Dr Steven Selvaraju

# Welcoming 'special' persons in our midst

It began with a phone call that I received in early 2022. It was from the mother of an autistic child. She wanted my advice on how she could effectively catechise her son at home. As the conversation progressed, she began to share the difficulties she faced in bringing her son to church for Mass. She often sensed that she and her family were not 'welcomed' because people would stare at them or showed their displeasure when her son unintentionally made 'strange noises' or displayed what is perceived as 'odd' behaviour.

As a result, as much as she wanted to, she became more and more reluctant to bring her son to church. She took the initiative to catechise him at home by preparing her own lessons and doing her best to give him the faith formation he needed. Deep down, she wanted for her son to know Christ and to be part of the Church. Desiree, the mother of the child who called me, also volunteered to help me set up a ministry that will look into supporting learners with Special Needs (see Page 5 for more).

## Setting up the Catechesis for Special Needs Learners Ministry

In June 2022, the 'Catechesis for Learners with Special Needs Ministry' (CLSN) was established. It is a sub-ministry of the KL Archdiocesan Catechetical Ministry. The CLSN's key objectives are:

- 1) to provide a platform for catechists supporting learners with Special Needs (children and teenagers) to meet and exchange experiences and resources;
- 2) organise formation programmes for catechists; and
- 3) assist parents and caregivers prepare learners with Special Needs to receive

the sacraments, especially First Holy Communion. This also includes helping the children understand the meaning of the Holy Mass and the importance of participating in the celebration.

Since then, God has sent some wonderful and dedicated people who volunteer their time and talents to collaborate with the Archdiocesan Catechetical Centre in this task. They include parish catechists and parents with Special Needs children and others. So far, we have held a number of formation programmes, organised a forum to create more awareness about learners with Special Needs and prepared relevant catechetical materials and resources. However, there is only so much that we can do. There is a need for the community to get involved.

## The community has to be involved

Why is the community's involvement so important? It is because our faith is not a personal or individualistic faith. It is a communal faith. No one can be a Christian alone. The moment we are baptised, we immediately become part of the community. We become a member of the Body of Christ. Since our faith is communal in nature, any form of catechesis, including catechesis for learners with Special Needs, cannot happen apart from the community. It has to be done with and by the community.

While faith is initially learnt at home, it is also within the parish community that catechesis takes place. In the parish, the Catholic faith is learnt not so much from the textbook or in the classroom but by the way the members of the community, especially adults, worship and pray, interact and relate with one another, share the faith and serve

others. In the same way, the significance of the Holy Mass is learnt and appreciated by our children and teenagers by the way we participate in the celebration as community.

Since children learn mostly from what they sense and observe around them, they learn about the faith mainly by 'absorbing' the words and actions of the older members of the community. Whether we know it or not, every member of the community is like a 'living' textbook to a child. And the manner in which the members of the community exercise their faith life and mission serves as the 'living' syllabus or curriculum of faith formation to our children and teenagers.

## They rightfully belong to the community

Therefore, how can we expect our children, more especially those with Special Needs, to be truly formed in the faith of the Church, learn about what it means to belong to the Christian community and learn to serve others in the community if they are not made to feel part of that same community? After all, it is a community to which they rightfully belong by virtue of their baptism. Baptism, the door to all other sacraments, makes everyone an equal member of the Church. How can they truly experience the Mass if they do not feel welcomed or included in the celebration by the community?

This is why the plea to be made more welcomed and included in the Church, especially at Mass, by parents like Desiree, and caregivers of individuals with Special Needs, has to be heard and responded to. Awareness has to be raised among Catholics and efforts be made to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment where

differently-abled persons can have a sense of belonging in the parish. As the *Directory for Catechesis* (2020) states: The Directory also points out that, "Communities have to be open to receive and welcome presence of persons with disabilities, including in the area of catechesis. We have to work "towards a culture of inclusion..." (DC, 270).

## Conclusion

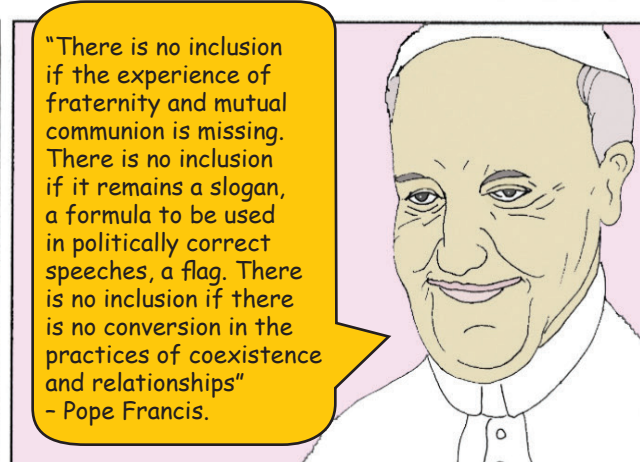
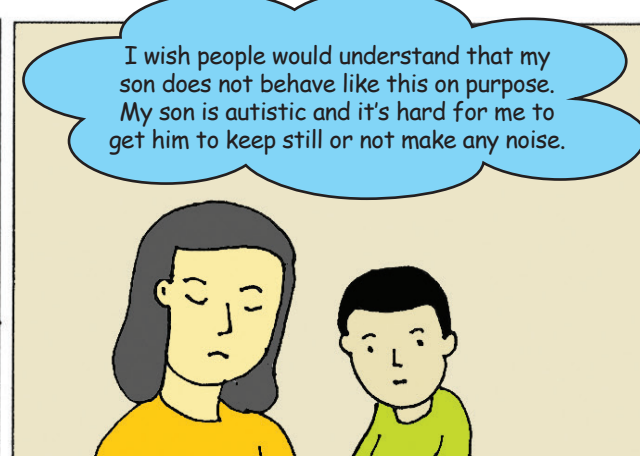
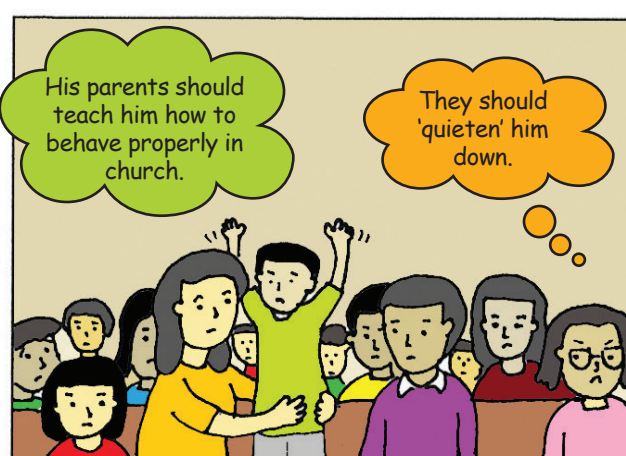
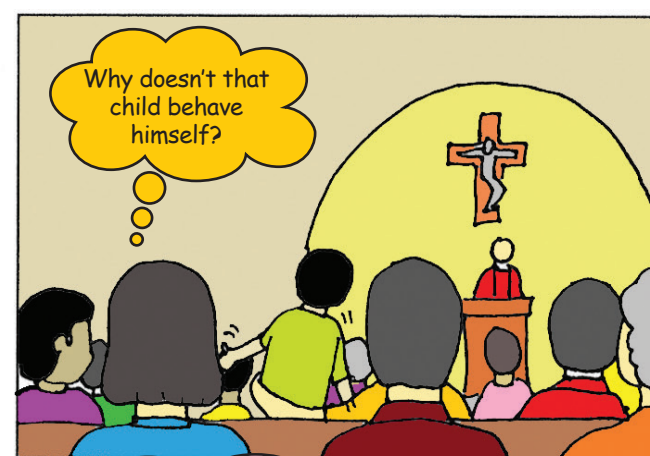
In the past, I would be unhappy or displeased if a child misbehaved during Mass. I would glance at the parents and think, "Why can't they control their child?" Thanks to my CLSN team members, I have learnt not to judge so quickly these days. I am beginning to believe that God sends persons with Special Needs into our midst to help us become more patient, understanding and caring. In a way, I am taking "small steps" in my journey to becoming further aware of differently-abled persons around me, and to do my part to make them feel welcomed. Perhaps, you too may wish to make this journey!

If you have queries about Catechesis for children or teenagers with Special Needs, write to me at: [catechetical@archkl.org](mailto:catechetical@archkl.org)

The key ideas in the article are presented in a simple illustrated format below. The illustrations are my own.

● Dr Steven Selvaraju, STD, STL, holds a Doctorate in Theology with Specialisation in Catechetics and Youth Ministry from Pontifical Salesian University, Rome. He serves as Director of the Archdiocesan Catechetical Centre, Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

## WELCOMING THE SPECIAL PERSONS IN OUR MIDST



Stevens 5/24

# Centennial celebration of the Church of St Philip

By Philip Packium

Without downplaying the struggles and phenomenal efforts of the long line of priests who served at the Church of St Philip, the community undoubtedly owes a debt to Fr Jules Francois MEP, who had the incredible foresight to plant the seed of faith in Segamat in 1924.

Fr Jules, the parish priest of the Church of St Francis Xavier, Malacca, found people in the quaint town willing to receive the Gospel, and with the first 300 converts, in 1924, he bought a house and set up the Church of St Philip, named for one of the 12 Apostles. He appointed a resident catechist to teach the new catechumens and to train the converts in the practice of Christian life.

What began as a ramshackle wooden structure has now transformed into a magnificent house of God. Fr Louis Wee was St Philip's first resident parish priest and served from September 1950-1956. It was during his tenure that the present church was built in 1955.

Over the century, aided by the serving priests, bountiful fruits of the Holy Spirit have passed under the spiritual bridge of St Philip's parish. The multi-lingual community is not only beholden to all the clergy who diligently carried out their pastoral duties, but equally indebted to the several members of the religious community and laity who selflessly served to underscore the missionary spirit. They so readily gave their time and talent, without counting the cost.

Thankfully, the spirit and culture of bygone years resonates today for, as far back as May 3, 2023, when Fr James Rajendran declared the official launch of the centennial year celebrations, committees and sub-committees were formed to spruce up the parish in different areas of concern. It is no exaggeration to say that these motley committees worked tirelessly to realise their eventual outcome.

Meanwhile, driven by a sheer sense of ownership, a multi-talented group of technicians and artisans embarked on a trouble shooting agenda and addressed a myriad of common issues. But the brunt of the brief was borne by a tiny

group of gritty individuals who assumed supervision of renovations to the St Joseph's Hall. These people relentlessly pursued their goal, confidently effecting some changes along the way and ensuring the completion of work in good time.

When the big day finally dawned, it was all systems go.

Turning into the compound of the church, one could feel the pulsating air of festivity. The fringe of the portico was festooned with decorative lanterns and the compound bore traits of an impending celebration. The church too was tastefully adorned and the feeling of God's presence was tangible.

As early as 3.30pm the faithful began trickling in and though extra seating and tents had been employed to accommodate the anticipated crowd, by the time the Mass began at 6.00pm, the crowd brimmed over to the newly renovated adjacent hall. But thanks to modern technology, no one was denied full participation of the centennial sunset Mass.

The Mass was concelebrated by eight clergy and the main presider was Bishop Bernard Paul.

In his greeting, the bishop exhorted the community to remember with gratitude, the mission of the church and those who strenuously moulded the community in the past century.

He referred to John's Gospel 15:1-8, and urged his listeners to remain rooted in the Lord, for cut off from Him they would wither and be cast into oblivion. Being rooted also entailed making the right choices.

The bishop also drew an analogy. In particular, to a new born babe and in general, the human race, whose holistic growth depended on the therapeutic touch and embrace of others. He added that when we reach out to God, we become imbued with His love and He then allows the Holy Spirit to touch and sustain us.

St Philip was connected to Jesus and in turn swayed others to the Lord. The bishop urged the community to emulate the Patron, to be connected, converted and communicative. He reiterated that as Christians, we ought to draw others to Christ. In short, to inspire and



be a spiritual bridge and a beacon of hope and salvation to those around us.

After Mass, parish priest Fr Paul Wong thanked all those who were involved in some manner in the proceedings of the day and all other days leading to the celebration. He further declared that the celebration would be an on-going feature till the feast day in 2025. He accentuated the need to continue with events that would enrich and empower the community. Concluding his address in a visible departure from the norm but much to the delight of the congregation, he began reciting a catchy 'pantun' which he had conceived himself.

Fr Adrian Francis then briefed the faithful on the concept of the 100 gift packets for the poor and invited Rupa Packium of the SSVP to come forward to receive a gift pack on behalf of the poor.

He then nudged the community to reflect on St Philip's church and on the grace of Christ, the infinite love of God and continuous communion of the Holy Spirit that was dispensed these hundred years.

A slide show then ensued, depicting all the clergy who had served in the parish, both deceased and those currently serving in other parishes. The show also included events leading to the celebration.

He concluded with appreciation for those who had journeyed from afar to be a part of the centennial jubilee.

In his closing address, Bishop Bernard remarked that there was rejoicing when a community was united and working in tandem. He invoked the Holy

Spirit to help the community walk the extra mile and keep the spirit of mission robustly alive and burning.

At the portico after Mass, the bishop was invited to cut the centennial cake. This was followed by a lion dance which meandered all the way to the parish hall, which the bishop was then invited to bless.

The MP of Segamat, YB Yuneswaran Ramaraj, presented the parish priest with a mock cheque of RM20K.

In his address, he thanked the parish priest for the invite and pledged to serve all and sundry with sincerity and steadfast dedication.

Meanwhile the diners were feted and entertained with a potpourri of performances by some feisty young and elderly parishioners and friends.

An added attraction of the celebration was located at the MEP Hall, where visitors were treated to a memorable walk down memory lane.

Clearly, many long hours of precise planning had been expended to chronicle a cogent narrative of St Philip's past. Lining the length and breadth of the hall were artefacts, old news articles and antiquated photos that portrayed the history of the early church in Segamat.

Visitors were seen fondly recalling past events and reminiscing about the glorious 'good old days', the crowd began dispersing by 10.00pm.





CANVAS

Fr Richard  
Anthony Samy, SJ

Ninety thousand hours or one-third of a person's life is spent on work. Some would argue it is much more. In many countries, it is not unusual for people to hold two jobs. The COVID-19 pandemic has further altered the nature of how and where "work" is done. Some work entirely from home now, while others, partially so. Work is, and will continue to be, an essential aspect of human life, and Christian reflection.

On May 1, we celebrated the feast of St Joseph the Worker, the patron saint of workers. The same date also commemorates all workers. Despite accepting the number of hours we work in our entire life, the word "work" tends to draw a sigh of anguish among many. It seems to be something that deprives one of personal pleasure and happiness. Some even say that work and toil came after the fall of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:17-19), and thus is a punishment.

However, while it is true that "work" is mentioned in the early chapters of the book of Genesis, it was not deemed something negative, let alone a punishment. In Genesis 2:1-3, we read: "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that He had done. So, God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it, God rested from all the work that He had done in creation." God rested from the work of creating life in all its richness and diversity. It was not a toil or labour done in vain or meaninglessness. It was a labour of love and fruitfulness. Yes, it was labour done

# Work through it



thoughtfully, purposefully, and intentionally. It was systematic and interrelated. It was creative work characterised by mutual interdependency and nurturing.

St Paul states, "Whatever your work is, put your heart into it as if it were for the Lord and not for men, knowing that the Lord will repay you by making you His heirs. It is the Lord that you are serving" (Colossians 3:23-24). He says this in a chapter dedicated to living in and with the resurrected Christ. The chapter actually begins by stating, "Since you have been raised up to be with Christ, you must look for the things that are above, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand" (Colossians 3:1). Every baptised Christian is hence called to see work from a heavenly perspective. Seeing work purely as evil works against our baptismal identity and calling.

Pope Francis states that "Jesus worked

with His hands, in daily contact with the matter created by God, to which He gave form by His craftsmanship. It is striking that most of His life was dedicated to this task in a simple life which awakened no admiration at all: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?" (Mk 6:3). In this way He sanctified human labour and endowed it with a special significance for our development." (*Laudato Si'* #98).

So, as a necessary step to restoring the meaning of work from a Christian perspective, it is necessary to envision it as given to us in Scripture and Christian teachings. It is a participation in the creative act of God. It is, as per our vocation and talents, a response to God's invitation and command. It is a way to praise God while nurturing ourselves. Flowing from that, the sweat and toil, stress and challenge, and joys and sorrows of work must be contextualised within the Christian

understanding and vision of work. This is not in any way meant to underplay the "pain" and "frustration" found at the workplace. This is not to discount the possible discriminatory workplace environments, just wage and compensation disputes, etc. The pain is real. But so too is the participation in the divinity. Put simply, through work, we are called to participate in God's creative action and thus contribute to the common good. The sweat of our brow is not in vain. Work can and should connect us with God. It gives us an opportunity to see God in all things, and be co-creators with Him. As the risen Lord permeates through walls, space and time, may our work and workplaces be places of encountering the divine.

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

INFORMED  
OPINION

Prof Xavier V. Pereira

Pentecost, as per the narrative in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2: 1- 12) was an event that occurred about 2000 years ago. It was on this day of Pentecost that the Apostles and some disciples of Jesus were filled with the Holy Spirit.

More recently, Christians, including Catholics, have experienced a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit through the Neo-Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. Interestingly, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal emerged in the 1960s soon after Vatican Council II. For many this was a Born-Again experience (John 3:3). This outpouring of the Holy Spirit also brought renewal to the Catholic Church in many parts of the world.

In this article I will share my experience and the shared experience of others, of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Many of these experiences are similar to that of the early Christians as revealed in the Acts of the Apostles.

## Being filled with the Holy Spirit

### Being predisposed to the infilling of the Holy Spirit

Before being filled with the Holy Spirit we are instilled with an awareness of God's great love for us, with the insight that we need to repent for our sins and with the desire to receive forgiveness from God and to forgive others. This predisposition, that is created by preaching and teaching of the Word of God, creates in us a hunger or desire for God (Acts 2: 14 - 41).

I was predisposed to the infilling of the Holy Spirit as a second-year medical student, at a charismatic retreat in Bangalore, India, preached by the lay evangelist Fritz Mascarenhas and his team, during the first week of November, 1982. On the sixth day of the retreat a priest prayed over me and I received the Holy Spirit in a new way and broke into tongues. Other than a charismatic retreat, a common strategy to predispose a person to this experience is a Life in the Spirit seminar.

### Positive Transformative Change

The most striking immediate change that occurs with the infilling of the Holy Spirit is spiritual – that is becoming theocentric (God centred). There is an encounter with and an experience of God. God suddenly becomes real and the outcome is a relationship with God.

There are also psychological and behavioural changes, social changes, and other spiritual changes, that ensue being filled with the

Holy Spirit.

One becomes passionately in love with God. There are constant thoughts about God and feelings of love for God. Energy and passion to share God with others also emerges.

My personal experience was that prayer became easy for me, and I spent an hour or two in prayer daily. I was drawn to read the Bible daily too, spending several hours reading and reflecting on the words from the Bible that had become alive to me. The Eucharist also became alive to me, and as I lived on the St John's Medical College campus, I was able to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist almost every day.

Other than personal prayer, group prayer too became a norm. I, like many others all over the world, attended weekly prayer meetings. In St John's Medical College, some of us were able to form a prayer group with the support of our chaplain, Fr Harry Byvoet, a dedicated and caring Mill Hill missionary. The St John's Medical College Prayer Group also became a community of medical students and young doctors. This is a natural outcome of being filled with the Holy Spirit – forming close knit communities (Acts 3: 42 - 47). Some of the relationships that developed within the Charismatic Renewal in India, and in the St John's Medical College prayer group remain to this day. These people are like brothers and sisters to me.

### Empowered to reach out to others

In the Acts of the Apostles, those who were filled with the Holy Spirit reached out to others in love. The Greek word *Caritas*, which is often used to describe acts of love in the Bible, can be translated into English as love in action.

This love in action is also visible in current-day churches. Many who have received the Holy Spirit through the Sacrament of Confirmation and the infilling of the Holy Spirit reach out to help others.

I have witnessed people, including my friends who are from other religious and non-religious backgrounds, give of themselves generously to others and manifest the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5: 22, 23). Could they too be empowered by the same spirit?

### The fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit

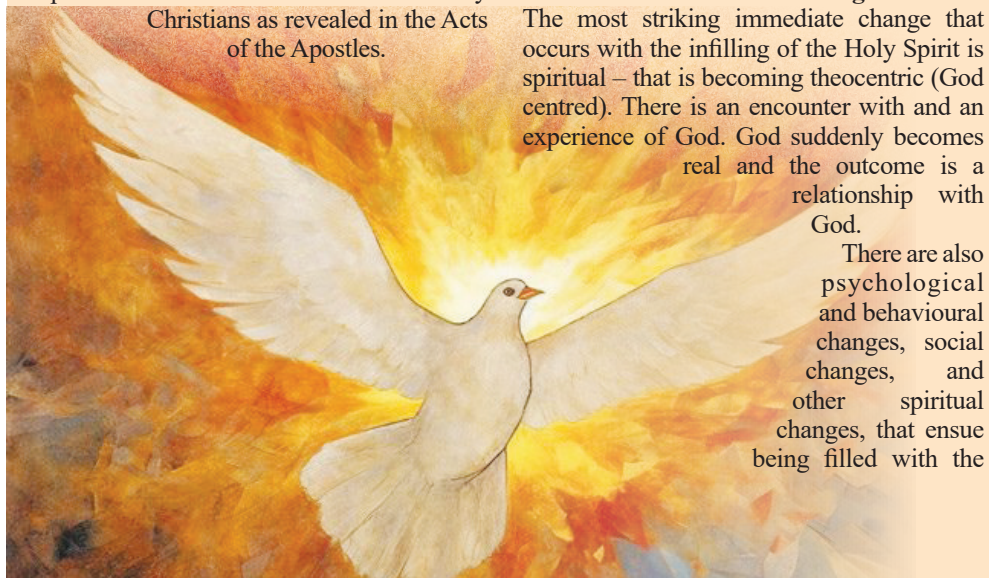
We are familiar with the Fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5: 22, 23).

We are also able to identify the manifestation of these fruits in our lives. I believe that this list of the fruits of the spirit is non exhaustive. Everything good can be attributed to the working of the Holy Spirit.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit though were consigned to the Bible as historical facts for a long period of time until the emergence of the Neo-Pentecostal and Charismatic movements. The gifts of healing, prophecy, knowledge and speaking in tongues are the most witnessed at prayer gatherings. The gifts of the Spirit play an important role in the continuous encounter and experience of God.

One can discuss, debate, and dismiss the intellectual characteristics of religious beliefs but we cannot deny encounters and experiences of God. Experiential knowledge of God triumphs over intellectual faith.

● Xavier V. Pereira is a medical doctor, psychiatrist and psychotherapist, and an adjunct professor at Taylor's University School of Medicine. In the Catholic Church, he serves as the chair of the Catholic Counsellors and Therapists of Malaysia.





Fr Ron Rolheiser

# An invitation to a Liturgical Prayer

**W**e are all priests from our baptism, and with that comes an invitation, namely, to pray for the world as a priest through the prayer of Christ and the Church. What does that mean exactly?

Everyone who is baptised as a Christian is baptised into the priesthood of Jesus Christ. The priesthood is given to all baptised Christians and is not just the prerogative and responsibility of those who are officially ordained for ministry, and with this comes an invitation to all adult Christians.

This invitation is something very concrete. We don't have to think about what we are meant to do or invent something. Rather, we are invited to join in a practice that began in the early apostolic community and has come down to us today, that is, the practice of daily praying two sets of prayers out of a ritual set of prayers that are variously called: *The Divine Office of the Church*, *The Liturgy of the Hours*, *The Canonical Hours*, or *The Breviary*. Since the time of the earliest Christian monastics, these prayers have been a key element in the prayer of the Church, Catholic and non-Catholic alike.

There are eight such sets of prayers, each meant to be said at a different time of day and linked to the mood and light of the hour. The eight sets of these prayers are: *Lauds* (prayed as morning prayer); *Prime* and *Terce* (prayed at various times during the morning); *Sext* (prayed at noon); *None* (prayed mid-afternoon); *Vespers* (prayed as the workday ends); *Compline* (prayed as a night prayer); and *Vigils* (prayed sometime during the night). Note the appropriateness of the name, The Liturgy of the Hours.



(Aleteia/Jeffrey Bruno)

While there are eight sets of these prayers, only monks and nuns inside contemplative orders pray all eight of these. Priests, deacons, men and women in religious orders that are fully engaged in ministry, Protestant and Evangelical ministers, and laity who pray these "hours", normally pray only two of them, *Lauds* (Morning Prayer) and *Vespers* (Evening Prayer).

And these prayers need to be distinguished from our private prayers. These are not private meditations, but are what is called public prayer, liturgical prayer, the Church's prayer, the prayer of Christ for the world. Ideally, they are meant to be prayed, indeed celebrated communally, but they are still the public prayer of the Church even when they are prayed alone. The intent in praying them is to join the official prayer of the Church and pray a prayer that is being prayed at that same hour by thousands (perhaps millions) of Christians around the world who, as the Body of Christ, are praying Christ's priestly prayer for the world.

Moreover, since these are the prayers of

the Church, and not our own prayer, we are not free to change them or substitute other prayers for them according to our temperament, piety, or theological taste. These prayers don't have to be personally meaningful to us each day. We are praying as priests, offering prayer for the world, and that is deeply meaningful in itself, independent of whether it is affectively meaningful to us on a given day or even during a whole period of our lives. Fulfilling a responsibility isn't always affectively meaningful. In praying these prayers, we are assuming one of our responsibilities as adult Christians, that is, to pray with the Church, through Christ, for the world.

The two hours (*Lauds* and *Vespers*) that we are invited to pray each day follow a simple structure: three psalms, a short Scriptural reading, an ancient Christian hymn (the *Benedictus* or the *Magnificat*), a short series of petitions, the Lord's Prayer, and a concluding prayer.

So, this is the invitation: as an adult Christian, as a priest from your baptism, as a

woman or man concerned for the world and the Church, I invite you to join thousands and thousands of Christians around the world and each day pray the Church's morning prayer (*Lauds*) and the Church's evening prayer (*Vespers*). Then, like Christ, as a priest, you will be offering sacrifice for the world. Subsequently, when you watch the world news and feel discouraged and helpless in the face of all that isn't right in the world and ask yourself, what can I do? Well, you will be doing something that's very real, praying with Christ and the Church for the world.

Where do you find these prayers, *Lauds* and *Vespers*? Books containing them can be purchased from almost any religious publishing house, Catholic or Protestant. Indeed, they need not even be purchased. Today they are available (free) online. Simply engage your search engine and type in *The Liturgy of the Hours* or *ibreviary* and you will find them.

In praying these prayers each day, whether alone or (ideally) with others, you will be assuming a special power and a responsibility given to you in your baptism and will be giving an important gift to the world. And you will never again have to struggle with the question, how should I pray today?

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

## Celebrating the spirit and mission of Pentecost

**"L**et the Word go forth" — today, on this Pentecost Sunday, these five words could also sum up the meaning of today's great feast: Let the Word go forth. In the dramatic events of that first Pentecost, when the bewildered and excited disciples poured into the streets of Jerusalem, they had one purpose in mind: to let the Word go forth. And it did. The Word went forth from Jerusalem to Judea, and on to Corinth and Ephesus and Rome and Africa and Spain and eventually, in succeeding centuries, to many parts of the world.

What began with a few frightened people in a darkened room in Jerusalem has spilled out and touched every corner of the earth. The Word has gone forth in every language and is felt and understood in the hearts of billions upon billions of people. And it all began on this day we celebrate, Pentecost, often called the birthday of the Church.

Birthday is an appropriate image for Pentecost — especially when we look at it in the bigger Scriptural picture. The word "Pentecost" means 50th and was for the Jewish people a celebration that took place 50 days after the Passover. For them, this was a day to celebrate the giving of the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai. There different tribes of Israel entered into a covenant with God and with one another and became

the People of God. Pentecost for the Jews celebrated the birth of this new people. We know that the Holy Spirit gives birth to God's presence in amazing ways. It is through a different kind of Pentecost — when the Holy Spirit descended on Mary — that Jesus was born into our world. And it is through this Pentecost — the Holy Spirit descending upon Mary and the disciples — that the Body of Christ is once again born into the world; as the Church. And we, too, are part of that miracle, called to continue to bring forth the same Body of Christ into our world today.

It is said that the Church doesn't have a mission, but that the Mission has a Church. Jesus didn't come to give us an institution or an organisation. Instead, Jesus gave us a task to accomplish. The institution of the Church came about not to serve itself, but to serve that mission; to help organise that work of God.

So, what is that work? Jesus tells us Himself, "As the Father has sent Me, so I send you;" or in the words "let the Word go forth." The mission that the Father gave to the Son is the very same mission that the Son gives to all of us who follow Him. So just as the Son came as the full Revelation of God to us, His people, we, are to continue that Revelation, we are to continue to spread the

Good News of God's love and care for us.

Just as Jesus came to show us how to live, we are called to be the example of Christian love to our brothers and sisters.

Just as Jesus was rooted in Scripture and its life-giving Words for us, we are called to do the same.

Just as Jesus reached out to the hungry, the thirsty, the homeless, the naked, the sick and the imprisoned — we

are called to reach out to those in most need in our world today. In short,

we are called to be that presence of Christ, the Body of Christ, in the world today. The Holy Spirit descended upon Mary and God was born in our world; the Holy Spirit descended upon the gathered disciples and the Church was born. Today, the Holy Spirit descends upon the bread and wine on our altar, and the Presence of Christ will be born in them; and, today, the Holy Spirit will come upon each of us in this Holy Eucharist and will be born within us; that we might give birth to that Presence in our



world. The gift of the Holy Spirit is a strong reminder to us that God is still right here, in our midst; that God is still truly present to us. We have not been abandoned by our God. Rather, He still dwells among us; He dwells in us. "Know that I am with you always until the end of the world." "Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful. Enkindle in us the fire of Your love." And let the Word go forth. — **By Fr Steny Mascarenhas, OCD, Catholic Vancouver**

# Little Catholics' Corner

Dear children,

Did you know that Pentecost Sunday is the Church's birthday? Not the church building but the people who are the Church.

Why is Pentecost the Church's

birthday?

Because on that day, the Holy Spirit first came to the Apostles and sent them out to become the Church and to teach the good news about Jesus everywhere in the world.



The Holy Spirit works through the Church in many ways. He inspired the men who wrote the Bible. He teaches us through priests, missionaries and teachers.

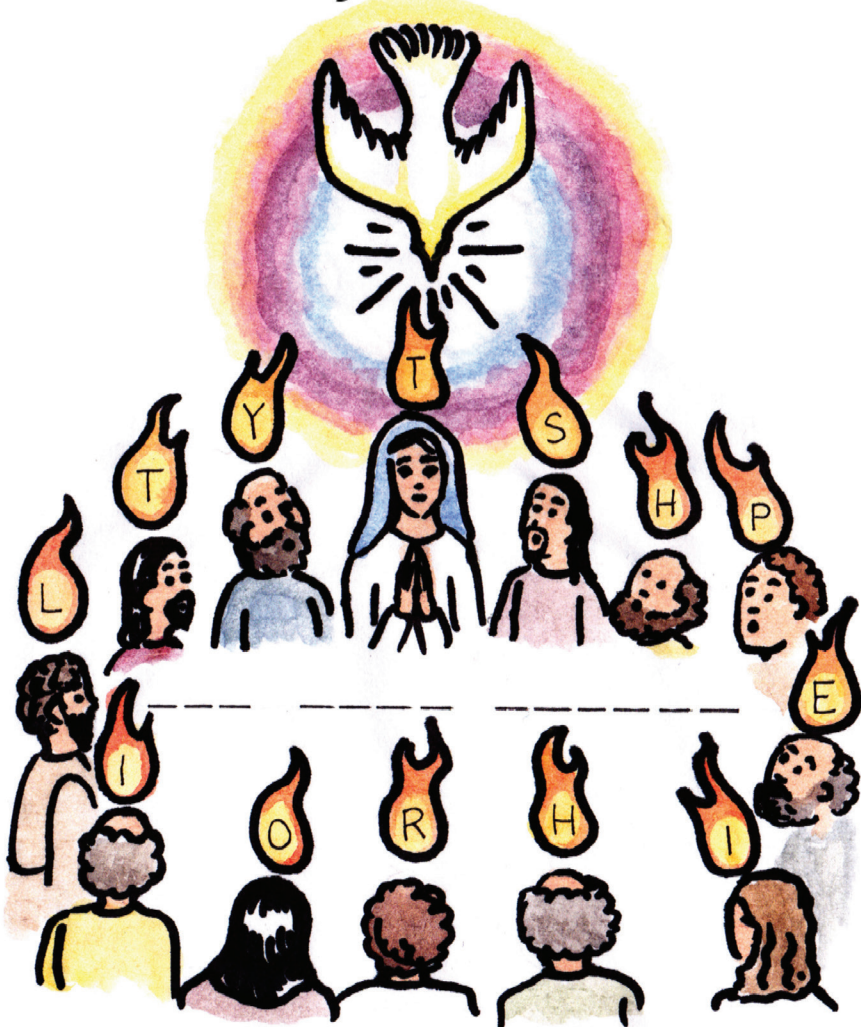
Did you know that He even inspires us to pray?

You can pray that God will send you the Holy Spirit every day.

Jesus tells us in the Gospel that God will give the Holy Spirit to whoever asks.

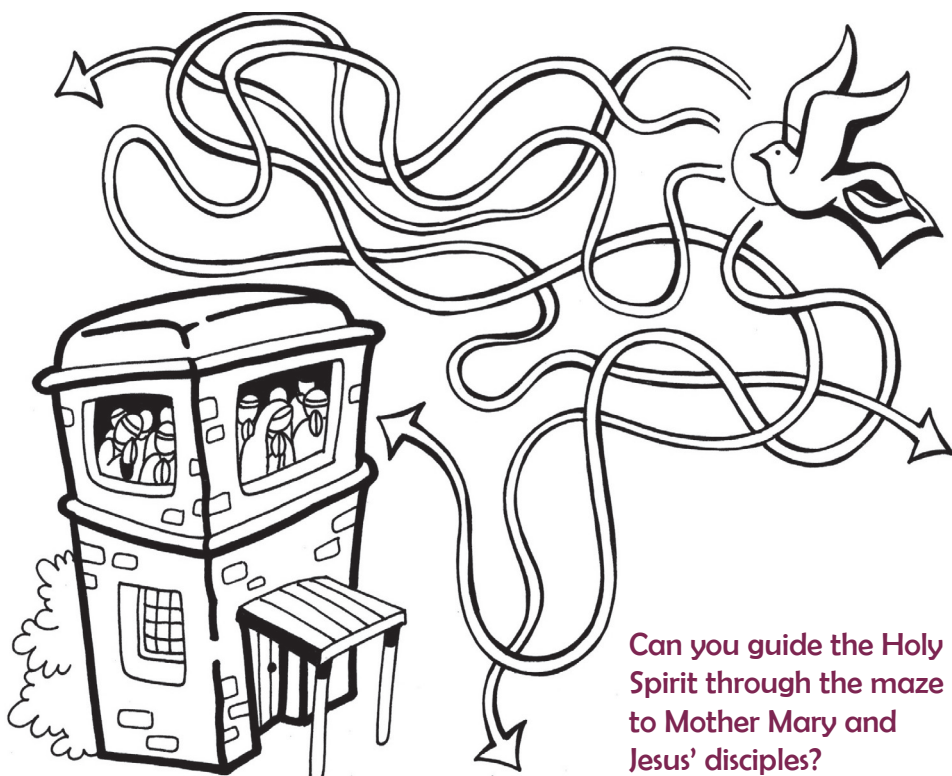
Love  
Aunty Eliz

 Pentecost Sunday   
May 19, 2024



Who came to the Apostles on Pentecost Sunday?  
Fill in the blanks with the letters in the flames:  
go around the Apostles clockwise,  
skipping every other letter. Start at Mary

Answer: The Holy Spirit



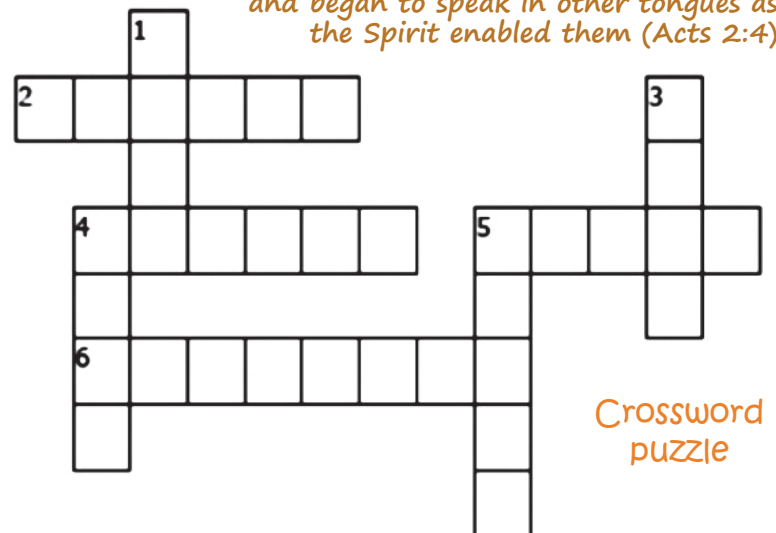
Can you guide the Holy Spirit through the maze to Mother Mary and Jesus' disciples?

## The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost



COLOUR  
THE  
PICTURE

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them (Acts 2:4)



Crossword  
puzzle

### ACROSS:

2. A being that cannot be seen, like a ghost.
4. The place where God lives.
5. Something that can be heard.
6. Means of communication used by the people of a particular country.

### DOWN

1. A destructive burning.
3. Blowing air especially that which would move the leaves on a tree.
4. Something pure and good such as God's Word.
5. To say words, to use the voice.

LANGUAGE  
SPIRIT

FIRE  
HEAVEN

HOLY  
SOUND

WIND  
SPEAK

# YOUTH

May 19, 2024



## A weekend of discovery & self-enrichment

By Annavisha Alfred  
and Fiona Nunis

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Relationships in today's society often prioritise appearances, status, and social affiliations over deep personal connections. As we navigate a world dominated by image, money, influence, and recognition, the essence of truly knowing someone is frequently overlooked. This shift toward superficial interactions might be preventing us from forming meaningful relationships.

The growing sense of isolation many people experience, despite unprecedented connectivity through technology and social networks, underscores this issue. Recent studies in America reveal a stark contrast in loneliness across generations: about 79 per cent of young adults aged 18 to 24 report feeling lonely, compared to 41 per cent of seniors aged 66 and older.

This is where the CHOICE weekend comes into play — a transformative experience unlike any other. It is not only a

*The CHOICE ENGLISH KL 106th weekend was conducted from April 19 to 21, 2024. A total of 38 registered participants were housed at the Archdiocesan Retreat House – Villa Dominic, Genting Highlands, Pahang for the entire weekend.*

journey of personal discovery but also an opportunity to understand the profound impact our relationships have on our well-being. The programme encourages participants to reassess their priorities, forge more authentic connections, and cherish the relationships they have, offering a path out of the loneliness epidemic.

The CHOICE programme began touching and transforming lives in the 1970s with a very simple, down to earth, personal, intimate yet powerful way of approach, with the guidance and fundamentals of the Catholic faith. The core of the programme is to emphasise on the importance of relationships with family, friends, church, community, and God, through a personal commitment in acts of love and service to others, encapsulating its motto: To Know, To Love & To Serve, while elevating participants' perception on their general outlook of life.

The weekend allows us to cut away from the hustle and bustle of the city life, allowing us to submerge ourselves deeply into the experience of the weekend. Sharing from individuals and presentations from others help us open our mind and reflect on our own relationships with others. Group interactions to exchange experiences and

solo exercises help participants to express, talk and think about the hard things that usually are brushed away under carpets especially common in our modern society.

The most recent CHOICE weekend, held from April 19 to 21, brought together 38 individuals for an unforgettable experience. Participants left with renewed perspectives, having deepened their self-awareness and formed meaningful connections. Here are some reflections shared by those who attended:

Nicholas Kuan recounted his transformative journey: "A weekend disconnected from reality. It was nothing short but an enriching experience. I discovered more about myself, recalled core memories, and made new friendships. I went in with zero expectations and not thinking about what was to happen next. It was definitely worth it."

Hannah Grace shared her enthusiasm: "In the beginning, I went in completely blind, with no expectations and no clue what we were going to do. A few of my friends who were previous CHOICE participants urged me to go. I'm so glad I did! I'm so blessed to be part of this family now. It was truly an experience of a lifetime, deeply fulfilling and touching. I went

to CHOICE with no friends and came out with 50 of them. Thank you for giving me the chance and opportunity to know, to love, and to serve."

Lorrenzos David Emmanuel expressed his gratitude: "I had no idea about the programme initially. 'JUST GO!' was the response I got from previous participants. I will never regret joining the CHOICE programme. It gave me a chance to self-reflect. If you are curious about what CHOICE is all about, just go and see!"

The CHOICE programme is usually held once or twice a year, catering to a limited group of no more than 40 participants per weekend. This is to maintain the effectiveness and intimate nature of the experience. It is designed specifically for young single adults aged 24 to 40, from various backgrounds and ethnicities, ensuring a rich diversity of experiences and perspectives.

The team is heartened by the strong interest shown by potential applicants and warmly invites them to join us for our next session in August 2024. Currently, CHOICE is active within the Arch/dioceses of Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Malacca Johore, Kuching, Miri, and Sibul. We look forward to welcoming new participants from these communities and beyond.

# SAC's Young Earth Rangers champion recycling



By Elvina Fernandez

KUALA LUMPUR: In conjunction with Earth Day 2024, the young students of the Church of St Anthony took a significant step towards environmental stewardship. The students, ranging from kindergarten to secondary students, participated in a recycling campaign jointly organised by the Parish Integral Human Development Ministry (PIHDM) Ecology and Environment team and catechists.

The recycling campaign was aimed at inspiring the students to carry forward these lessons on environmental responsibility throughout their lives, influencing peers, family members, and the broader community. It also served as a reminder that everyone, regardless of age, can contribute to environmental conservation.



The children with their recycle paper.

The initiative began with an enlightening session about the importance of 3R: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle, and how these practices can help conserve natural resources, save energy, reduce landfill waste, and bring less harm to sea creatures. The students' participation in this

activity is a testament to their taking on the call to be responsible stewards of God's creation.

Following the educational session, students were taught to segregate and place the recyclable items into labelled boxes to be brought to a recycling centre. The



response was overwhelming, as students arrived with bags full of plastic bottles, old newspapers, cartons and aluminium cans, which they collected at home over the week.

The activity taught them valuable lessons on identifying recyclable items, waste segregation, recycling, and transforming their understanding of their role in preserving Mother Earth.

The activity also included a creative show-and-tell segment where students were shown bags and drinking bottle holders made of recyclable materials. This segment, by the Ecology and Environment team, aimed to instil the concept of reuse and demonstrated that what is considered waste can be transformed into something useful in our daily lives. The activity concluded with a photography session to document their initiative as eco rangers of the church.

## CELEBRATING THE FEAST OF ST LOUIS MARIE DE MONTFORT

SHAH ALAM: The Montfort Brothers of St Gabriel celebrated the feast of their founder, St Louis Marie de Montfort, on April 28 with Mass and fellowship. Archbishop Julian Leow presided over the Mass, joined by several priests in concelebration.

After the Mass, the Montfort community came together with its guests for fellowship. Enthusiastic performances by both staff and students of Montfort infused the occasion with much enjoyment.

In extending their heartfelt appreciation, Montfort also extends sincere thanks to the parish priests and parishioners of the churches for their unwavering support in spreading the mission of Montfort. The

collaboration in organising coupon sales for the forthcoming Open House Charity Carnival 2024 is a testament to the collective dedication towards serving our deserving youth, especially after a prolonged interval of four years due to the pandemic.

Montfort extends a warm invitation to all to join in the festivities of the Open House Charity Carnival 2024, scheduled for Sunday, June 9 from 9.00am to 4.00pm at Montfort Boys Town. It promises to be a day filled with fun, laughter and entertainment as the Montfort family welcomes one and all to participate in this event.

Together we can give our youth at Montfort the opportunity to live with dignity!



Montfort students receiving communion during Mass.



Archbishop Julian Leow with the clergy and Montfort brothers.



Performance by the students.

# Botswana diocese mourns loss of bishop who collapsed during Mass

**B**ishop Anthony Pascal Rebello of the Diocese of Francistown (*pic*) in Botswana has died after he “collapsed during Mass” on May 4.

The Kenyan-born member of Society of the Divine Word of Indian origin turned 74 on March 18.

Bishop Rebello was appointed local ordinary of the Francistown Diocese in July 2021. He was ordained a priest of the Society of the Divine Word in May 1977, and was among the three pioneer Society of the Divine Word members in Kenya in 1984. They opened their first mission in Kayole in Kenya’s Archdiocese of Nairobi and later the Galba Tulla mission in the country’s Diocese of Meru.

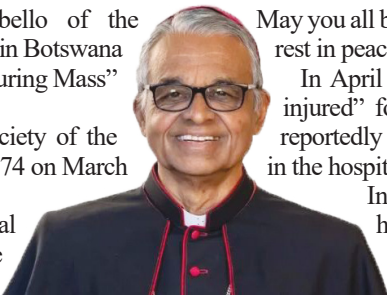
An alumnus of the Rome-based Pontifical Gregorian University, Bishop Rebello previously served as the provincial superior of the Society of the Divine Word in Kenya and parish vicar in Angola.

Prior to his appointment as bishop, he served as the parish priest of Holy Cross Mogoditshane Parish of the Diocese of Gaborone in Botswana.

In a May 4 statement, members of the Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference (SACBC) shared their “heartfelt condolences.”

“The news of the unexpected passing away of bishop Anthony Rebello reached us. We are shocked and sad about this news,” said SACBC president Bishop Sithembele Sipuka. “On behalf of the SACBC, I extend heartfelt condolences to the Diocese of Francistown, the Society of Divine Word, and his biological family.”

“May all be consoled by the fact that Bishop Rebello was a humble man of strong and exemplary faith who we believe is now in the company of his risen Lord.



May you all be consoled and may Bishop Rebello rest in peace,” Sipuka said.

In April 2022, Bishop Rebello was “badly injured” following an attack by robbers. He reportedly recovered from the attack after days in the hospital.

In Botswana, Rebello was known for his ministry to migrants and refugees. In an interview with ACI Africa, the bishop spoke about the refugees his episcopal see was hosting, who he said were natives of “Burundi, Angola, Zimbabwe, and Uganda.”

“This diocese is a welcoming diocese; the sisters and the priests are welcoming, and they have been visiting the detention centre and the refugee centre,” he said. “I personally have visited both the centres and they are in my heart.”

In the interview, the prelate highlighted the kind of apostolate at the detention and refugee centres, including undocumented people on the move detained at Dukwi Refugee Camp.

“The Church is doing a lot of work in assisting the migrants and refugees,” he said. “We see to their spiritual, emotional, and physical needs. We are also working toward offering spiritual help.”

Bishop Rebello lamented that the human rights of migrants and refugees in the Southern African nation were “being violated, because all children have the right to go to school.”

He went on to caution against “discrimination and xenophobic sentiments toward migrants and refugees,” saying: “We should pay attention to our language; we should not call others with bad names that can exclude them.” — *CNA*

## MEMORIAM

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### 60th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



**Anto Robert Fernandez**

14th July 1908 –  
25th May 1964

Always remembered  
and loved by  
his children and  
grandchildren.  
May his soul  
rest in peace.

### 20th Anniversary In Loving Memory of

**JEANNE BOSCO  
MARIE d/o JOACHIM  
& PUSHAM**

From the Lord:  
28.04.1955

To the Lord:  
24.05.2004

*JOHN 11:25 – Jesus said to her,  
“I am the Resurrection and the life.  
Those who believe in me will live,  
Even though they die; and those who  
live and believe in me will never die.”  
Do you believe this?*

Deeply missed by beloved husband Noel Theophilus,  
Children, Sons-in-Law, Daughter-in-law, Grandchildren,  
Relatives and Friends.

### FIRST YEAR ANNIVERSARY In loving memory of

**MADAM LOURTHAMMA THOMAS**

From the Lord: 6 March 1925

To the Lord: 20 May 2023

*“Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of  
my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
forever.” Psalm 23:6*

Today, marks 1 year since you left us, yet your love,  
wisdom and laughter linger in our hearts. Your presence  
is felt in every cherished memory.

**Forever in our thoughts, loved and cherished by:**

Sons: Amerthanathan & Rev. Fr. Anthony Pillai.

IPOH - Nephews/Nieces:

Benigna, Aloysius, Thomas, Mary Euchrista.

CANADA - Antonipillai (brother) & family,

Sumathy (niece) & family.

SWITZERLAND - Dorine Buby (niece) & daughters.

SRI LANKA - Lucia (sister) & family.

ALL RELATIVES & FRIENDS (all over the world).

**MEMORIAL MASSES:**

Monday, 20th May 2024 at 6.30am (E) &

Tuesday, 21st May 2024 at 6.30pm (T)

in Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Silibin, Ipoh.



## Honouring a Pakistani bishop’s ultimate sacrifice

**T**wenty-six years ago, a Catholic bishop in Pakistan took his own life outside a courthouse to protest the severe injustices and discrimination faced by Christians in this predominantly Muslim country.

On May 6, 1998, Bishop John Joseph (*pic*) made a profound statement with his lifeblood in front of the sessions court in Sahiwal. His sacrifice remains a poignant symbol against the country’s draconian blasphemy laws, which not only socially ostracize but also economically exploit the Christian minority.

This act of despair resonated globally, especially within Christian communities, high-



lighting the relentless challenges faced by minorities in Pakistan — from recurrent arson attacks and orchestrated riots to entrenched discrimination.

Bishop Joseph, born in Faisalabad and serving as its auxiliary bishop before his tenure as bishop, witnessed firsthand the damaging impact of blasphemy accusations against his community. Instead of succumbing to intimidation, he

chose to advocate vigorously through peaceful protests and political dialogue.

The tipping point for Bishop Joseph came with the blasphemy conviction of Ayub Masih, a young man sentenced to death ostensibly for endorsing Salman Rushdie’s controversial

novel, *The Satanic Verses*, and for asserting the supremacy of Christianity. Despite Ayub Masih’s eventual acquittal by the Supreme Court in 2002, the perilous blasphemy law remains intact — its ostensibly benign wording belies a deadly threat in a nation where illiteracy is widespread and religious decrees hold significant sway.

From 1947 to 2021, nearly 89 individuals were lynched over blasphemy allegations, with scores more languishing on death row or serving life sentences. Such laws have not only been misused for settling personal scores but have also facilitated the dispossession and displacement of Christians under the guise of religious transgression.

The bishop’s death, while controversial within Catholic teachings that condemn sui-

cide, was not borne of despair but of a hope for change and a better future for his people.

“It is time for Pakistan’s Christian leaders to embrace Bishop John Joseph’s legacy with bravery and advocacy,” the bishop wrote. “We must learn from his steadfastness and the sacrifice he made for his people.”

As the injustices persist, both the local and international communities must intensify their efforts to address these severe rights violations continuing under the cover of religious and caste-based discrimination.

Letting Bishop John Joseph’s legacy fade would be an injustice to his memory and the principles of faith, hope, and charity he stood for. His life and death urge us to remember and act, ensuring that his sacrifice was not in vain.

— *ucanews.com*

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# Christians and Buddhists: Working together for Peace through Reconciliation and Resilience

Dear Buddhist Friends,

The celebration of Wesak, this hallowed time for you that commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and passing of the Buddha, provides us with a fitting occasion to offer you our warmest greetings and reflect with you about our shared responsibility, as Christians and Buddhists, to promote peace, reconciliation, and resilience, values deeply rooted in our respective religious traditions.

"Never again war, never again war! It is peace, peace, which has to guide the destiny of the nations of all mankind!" That resounding plea, voiced by Pope

Paul VI in his Address to the United Nations on October 4, 1965, has been repeated by numerous interreligious gatherings in recent years in order to condemn the destruction caused by wars around the world. We have addressed this issue on several occasions, but the continuing escalation of conflicts worldwide calls for renewed attention to the critical issue of peace and deeper reflection on our own role in overcoming the obstacles standing in the way of its

growth. In addition to our constant prayers and hopes, the current situation demands of us vigorous efforts. To do our part in bringing an end to the hatred and the desire for vengeance that lead to war, and in healing the wounds that warfare has inflicted on humanity and the earth, our common home, we need to strengthen our commitment to work for reconciliation and resilience.

Unless the deeper causes of conflicts and violence are properly addressed, the dawn of lasting peace is an illusion, for there can be no peace and reconciliation without equity and justice in political, economic and cultural life. "Forgiving and being reconciled are not about pretending that things are other than what they are. It is not patting one another on the back and turning a blind eye to the wrong. True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the pain, the degradation, the truth" (Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 218).

The noble teachings of our respective traditions, and the exemplary lives lived by those whom we revere, bear witness to the abundant benefits of reconciliation and resilience. When forgiveness is sought, and broken relationships healed, those who were estranged are reconciled and harmony is restored. Resilience empowers individuals and communities to recover from adversity and trauma. It fosters courage and hope for a brighter future, since it transforms both victims and the perpetrators and leads to a new life. Reconciliation and resilience unite to form a potent synergy that heals past wounds, forges strong bonds, and makes it possible to meet life's challenges with fortitude and optimism.

As taught in the rituals and worship proper to our respective religious traditions, reconciliation and resilience are thus the remedies needed for a culture of violence that is often justified as a regrettable but necessary response to aggressive military or terrorist actions. Reconciliation and resilience empower us to forgive and seek forgiveness, to love, and to be at peace with ourselves and

others, even those who have wronged us.

Buddha imparted the timeless wisdom that "hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world. It is appeased only by loving-kindness" (Dhammapada, v. 5), while St Paul, echoing Jesus' call for boundless forgiveness (Gospel of Matthew 6:14), exhorts Christians to embrace the ministry of reconciliation initiated by God in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:11-21).

As we extend our cordial greetings on the occasion of Wesak, allow us to invoke the timeless wisdom of Venerable Maha Ghosanda, a witness to the horrors of the Cambodian genocide and the inspiration for the Dhamma Yatra Peace Pilgrimage, who urges us "to remove the landmines of hatred from our hearts" (cf. Prayer for Peace). Pope Francis likewise assures us that "reparation and reconciliation will give us new life and set us all free from fear" (*Fratelli Tutti*, 78). He counsels those who were fierce enemies "to learn how to cultivate a penitential memory, one that can accept the past in order not to cloud the future with their own regrets, problems and plans" (*Fratelli Tutti*, 226). All of us are called to rediscover and treasure these values found within our respective traditions, to make better known the spiritual figures who embodied them, and to walk together for the sake of peace.

With these prayerful thoughts, we wish you a fruitful celebration of Wesak!

From the Vatican, May 6, 2024.

*Miguel Ángel Card. Ayuso Guixot*  
**Miguel Ángel Card. Ayuso Guixot, MCCJ**  
Prefect

*Msgr. Indunil J. Kodithuwakku K.*  
**Msgr. Indunil J. Kodithuwakku K.**  
Secretary

## Logos and mottos for Pope's visit to Asia released

VATICAN: The Holy See Press Office has released the official logos and mottos for the Pope's upcoming visit to Asia.

The Pope's journey to the continent – which will include stops in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste, and Singapore – is scheduled to take place on September 2-13, 2024.

Pope Francis will land in **JAKARTA, INDONESIA**, on September 3, remaining until the 6th.



The logo for this visit features the Pope with his hand raised in blessing, standing in front of a golden "Garuda", a sacred eagle, which has been depicted in a manner

reminiscent of traditional Indonesian "batik" fabric.

Inlaid is a map of Indonesia, an archipelago characterised by a great variety of ethnic and social groups, languages, cultures and religious beliefs.

The Apostolic Journey has been given the motto 'Faith - Fraternity - Compassion'.

Next, the Pope will travel to **PAPUA NEW GUINEA**, where he will remain until September 9.

The centrepiece of the logo for this visit is a cross, depicted in colours meant to evoke Papua New Guinea's sunrises and sunsets.

On the cross, a



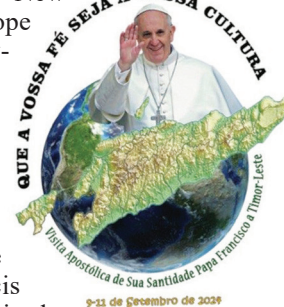
Bird of Paradise, symbolising Papua New Guinea, can be seen.

The motto for this Apostolic Journey is *Pray*, inspired by the disciples' request to Jesus: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk 11:1).

From Papua New Guinea, Pope Francis will travel to **TIMOR LESTE**, remaining until September 11.

In the centre of the logo for this journey, we see Pope Francis with his hand raised in blessing. Behind him is the globe, from which a map of Timor Leste emerges.

Above, written in an arc, is the motto of the papal visit, *May your faith be your culture*, an exhortation to the Timorese people to live out their faith according to their culture and traditions.



**UNITY HOPE**  
POPE FRANCIS SINGAPORE 2024

The Pope's final stop will be the island nation of **SINGAPORE**, which he will visit on September 11-13.

The logo for this Apostolic Journey depicts a stylised cross, inspired by the star that guided the Magi, by the Eucharist and by the five stars of the flag of Singapore.

On either side of the Cross is the motto of the Apostolic Journey: *Unity—Hope*.

"Unity" expresses communion and harmony among believers, both within the Church and in the context of society and family relations.

"Hope," meanwhile, suggests that the Apostolic Journey will be a beacon of hope for Christians in the region, especially for those who experience discrimination and persecution. — **By Joseph Tulloch, Vatican News**