

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

TERHAD

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For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

Rom. 8:14-15



Indispensable role of the Holy Spirit in catechesis

■ P5



A journey of global insight and local action

■ P10 & 11



YOU M.A.D You Make A Difference

■ P16



Consigning the Bull of Indiction. (Vatican Media)

VATICAN: Pope Francis has officially proclaimed the Holy Year 2025, inviting the faithful to experience a deep renewal of God's love and hope in Christ. "The time has come for a new Jubilee when once more the Holy Door will be flung open to invite everyone to an intense experience of the love of God that awakens in hearts the sure hope of salvation in Christ," the Pope announced.

In a document titled *Spes Non Confundit* (*Hope Does Not Disappoint*), the Pope emphasised that Christians must "abound in hope" to be credible witnesses of God's love. He outlined various ways to demonstrate this hope, including welcoming migrants, visiting prisoners, advocating for peace, opposing the death penalty, and supporting the young and disadvantaged.

The document, called a "bull of indiction," specifies that the Holy Year will open at the Vatican on December 24, 2024, and conclude on January 6, 2026, the Feast of Epiphany.

Pope Francis also urged bishops worldwide to inaugurate the Holy Year in their dioceses on December 29, 2024, and to celebrate its conclusion on December 28, 2025.

During a ceremony on May 9 in front of the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica, the Pope handed the document to key church officials, symbolising the opening of a new chapter of faith and hope. Msgr Leonardo Sapienza read excerpts from the document, which calls for the faithful to recognise and foster signs of hope amid global challenges like war, environmental destruction, and economic difficulties.

"Hope is born of love and based on the love springing from the pierced heart of Jesus upon the cross," Pope Francis wrote in the document. In a world seemingly marked by war, divisions, environmental destruction, and economic challenges, hope can seem hard to come by, he said. But "Christian hope does not deceive or disappoint because it is grounded in the certainty that nothing and no one may ever separate us from God's love."

He urged people to seek signs of hope in their surroundings. "We need to recognise the immense goodness present in our world, lest we be tempted to think ourselves overwhelmed by evil and violence." People's

yearning for peace, their desire for a relationship with Jesus, and growing concern for the environment are all signs that hope still exists, the Pope wrote.

The theme for the Holy Year is "Pilgrims of Hope," and in the document, Pope Francis called on Catholics not only to strengthen their own sense of hope but also to "be tangible signs of hope for those of our brothers and sisters who experience hardships of any kind."

Listing prisoners as the first category of people in need of hope, the Pope expressed his desire to open a Holy Door in a prison, although he provided no further details. He asked governments worldwide to consider jubilee amnesty and pardon programmes and urged greater efforts to assist those who have completed their sentences in returning to society.

He called on all Catholics, especially bishops, to "be one in demanding dignified conditions for those in prison, respect for their human rights, and above all the abolition of the death penalty, a provision at odds with Christian faith and one that eliminates all hope of forgiveness and rehabilitation."

Pope Francis also called on the Church to take special care of young people, who are supposed to be "the embodiment of hope,"

but often seem overwhelmed by "an uncertain and unpromising future." Migrants, who leave their homelands in search of a better life for themselves and their families, also need support to keep their hope alive, he said, adding that "their expectations must not be frustrated by prejudice and rejection."

Pilgrims of hope should also help the souls in purgatory, the Pope wrote as he introduced a discussion on a key feature of jubilee celebrations: indulgences, which the Church describes as a remission of the temporal punishment a person is due for their sins.

"The evil we have done cannot remain hidden; it needs to be purified to enable this definitive encounter with God's love," the Pope said. "Here we begin to see the need for our prayers for all those who have ended their earthly pilgrimage, our solidarity in an intercession that is effective by virtue of the communion of the saints, and the shared bond that makes us one in Christ, the first-born of all creation."

"The Jubilee indulgence, thanks to the power of prayer, is intended in a particular way for those who have gone before us, so that they may obtain full mercy," Pope Francis wrote. — *Agencies*

● See also page 14

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COMMENTARY

Unity in what?

Among the many urgent questions raised by the Synods on the Family in 2014 and 2015 and the current Synod on Synodality — questions that will inevitably bear on the next papal conclave — is that of unity: in what, precisely, does the unity of the Church consist? What is the content of the “one” in the Creed’s affirmation of “one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church?”

The Synods on the Family grappled with this in their debates on worthiness to receive Holy Communion: Could those in canonically irregular marriages, who were not living in unity with the settled teaching and pastoral practice of the Church, participate fully in the sacrament of unity, the Eucharist? Or ought they refrain from receiving Holy Communion while still joining the community in offering true worship to the Father?

The ambiguities in *Amoris Laetitia*, the post-synodal apostolic exhortation that followed those Synods, did not resolve that question. Rather, it deepened the concern that fault lines were opening in the Church, with some local Church interpreting *Amoris Laetitia* according to the line they had taken at the Synods (i.e., those in irregular marriages could receive Holy Communion) and other local churches interpreting the apostolic exhortation differently (those in irregular marriages should refrain from receiving Holy Communion).

This, by the way, was a concern the group of 13 cardinals (now infamous in some circles) considered raising in their letter to the Pope at the outset of Synod-2015. In that letter, the cardinals politely requested a revision of the Synod procedures so that there

would be a more robust synodal debate, and a voting process in which the Synod fathers rendered their judgments on specific propositions.

An early draft of that letter warned against the possibility of the Catholic Church coming to resemble the local-option Anglican Communion, in which some constituent national churches believed and practiced in one way, and other constituent churches believed and practiced the opposite: That, it was suggested, was the path to true schism. At the end, the cardinals decided to focus on synodal procedures only and this yellow caution flag was not included in the letter’s final text.

Yet the concern remained. And it has been intensified since, not least because of diverse reactions to the December 2023 declaration of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith on the possibility of blessing those in same-sex unions and relationships. The Churches of Belgium and Germany applauded (and continued to do what they had already been doing) and the churches of Africa registered a firm “No, thank you.” These fault lines, and others, will help define the debate — and let us pray that it will be a real debate, not some ersatz and manipulated “Conversation in the Spirit” — at the Synod in October 2024.

The question of the content of the Church’s unity was clarified by Pope John Paul II during his first pastoral pilgrimage to the United States in October 1979.

Prior to the Pope’s visit, US-based ecumenical dialogues had focused on core doctrinal issues, “bracketing” moral questions on which there was deep disagreement between Catholics and their Protestant dialogue partners. John Paul had a different view.

After greeting the ecumenical congregation gathered in the chapel of Washington’s Trinity College as “beloved Christian brethren and fellow disciples of the Lord Jesus,” the Pope celebrated their common proclamation that “there is one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2.5) and noted with satisfaction their common love for “Sacred Scripture, which we recognise as the inspired word of God.”

The Pope also cited with regret “the deep division” between Christian communities “which still exists over moral and ethical matters.” And then, in one sentence, he shut down the ecumenical cafeteria: “The moral life and the life of faith are so deeply united that it is impossible to divide them.” Message: There can be no bracketing of moral issues in a genuine dialogue about recomposing Christian unity.

If that is true for ecumenism, it is certainly true for the unity of the Catholic Church. The content of the “one” in the Nicene affirmation of “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church” is a unity in faith: a unity in the truths we know from revelation and reason. Local-option Catholicism is not Catholicism. National Catholicism is not Catholicism. The truths of faith — which include the moral truths that facilitate human flourishing and beatitude — are universal.

Which is to say, catholic and Catholic. —
By George Weigel, Register

● *George Weigel is the distinguished senior fellow and William E. Simon Chair in Catholic Studies at the Ethics and Public Policy Centre in Washington.*

Make an effort to know the Persons of the Trinity

About 15 years ago, seated silently in Maranatha, I was enjoying the serene peace and quiet next to a small pool with a lotus flower and the sounds of running water, insects, and birds. This setting seemed perfect for deeper prayer and meditation. It was around this moment, while meditating on the love of God with a deep desire to know Him more, that the sounds of birds, insects, running water, and wind started to become harmonious and seemed to converge and move synchronously to an escalating higher pitch, as if leading my spirit to a higher spiritual plane. It was beautiful, and I thought, “Wow, what was that?” But at the same time, I was aware that it was very much the presence of God moving me deeply through nature and my surroundings in the silence.

If I thought that was it, I was in for a greater surprise. Suddenly, I found myself drawn deeper in my imagination towards something more mysterious. In pitch darkness, a great immense door opened with brilliant bright light behind it, and two mysterious but strangely very familiar figures seemed to be moving towards me. I could not see their faces, and yet deep in my heart, I was quite comfortable with them. In a flash, as if shrinking into a child and the two persons being taller than me, I felt I was moving

upwards towards the slightly older person and brought closer to his face (although I still couldn’t really see their faces). I was being held very close to the first person while I was busy complaining in anxious frustration, like a child to a father for abandoning me and leaving me all alone in the dark. At the same time, though, I could sense intuitively that while I was complaining like a pouting child, the person like a father was looking at me with great delight and love. He was very pleased to see me and held me close to him, and I felt truly loved. The other person was smiling while looking at me too.

Before I knew it, I was back on the ground, and the two persons went back towards the door, which closed behind them, and the place was pitch black again. Then, another hand held mine, and I could sense a new person suddenly next to me. He was full of light, and both of us were like two children, soulmates, running freely, fearlessly, and joyfully, lighting up the darkness wherever we went. Strangely enough, I could not see any of their faces. I was in tears of joy even as this whole experience played like a movie in my mind, filling my heart with immense love and peace. I was convinced that the first two persons were the Father and the Son, and the third person who

stayed with me so that I would not be alone was the Holy Spirit.

To this day, I go back to that memory whenever I need to remind myself of the consolation that God gave me out of His great mercy through a revelation of Himself as three persons who loved me, especially whenever I am feeling alone, fearful, down, depressed, or anxious. It was a grace given to me to know the one God much more intimately than what my intellect could ever hope to figure out just from reading and memorising the catechism’s teaching on the Holy Trinity. It was personal, intimate, intense, and never earned or merited by anything I could do myself, but a grace that God, I believe, thought I needed to experience. If you remember the scene of the Transfiguration, in which Jesus brought the three apostles, Peter, James, and John, up the mountain to pray, they had a very powerful experience of the Holy Trinity which prepared them for the scandal of the cross, of the temporary absence of Jesus from their life in the near future. It was no different for me.

Now, are these experiences only limited to certain people, saints, or special individuals? Certainly not, as the Gospel reading tells us, the apostles baptised in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. All of us who have been

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Alexuchelvam Mariasoosai

The Most Holy Trinity (B)

Readings: Deuteronomy 4:32-34; 39-40;

Romans 8:14-17

Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

baptised have access to all three persons. But do we really believe that? Do we really believe when Jesus said that no one can come to the Father except through Me? Do we really believe Jesus when He said that He will send another Paraclete to be with us and He will lead us into all truth? Unless we take the words of Jesus at their claims, we have not fully accessed and explored our faith to the full. If we have not experienced what Jesus claims, how are we going to go to the ends of the earth to proclaim Jesus and know deep in our hearts and minds that what we believe is true because it IS true? The Father looks at each one of us with great delight and love. As we celebrate Holy Trinity, let’s make an effort to know the Persons a bit more than yesterday, and as we seek, we will find that the Holy Trinity has always wanted to reveal themselves more intimately to each one of us and is waiting for us to take our faith and relationship with them more seriously.

Faith, fellowship, celebration as Keningau diocese marks 31 years

SIPITANG, Keningau: Over 3000 people attended the much-anticipated 3-in-1 annual celebration of the Diocese of Keningau on May 1, hosted this year by the Church of St John the Baptist in Sipitang.

The diocese celebrated its 31st anniversary, the 31st episcopal ordination anniversary of Bishop Cornelius Piong, and the Diocesan Kaamatan Festival. The Eucharist was presided over by Bishop Cornelius Piong and concelebrated with the prelate of Sandakan, Bishop Julius Dusin Gitom, and the diocesan clergy.

In his homily, Bishop Cornelius recalled his reflection on the future during the diocese's silver jubilee in 2018, wondering what more could be done to make the faith journey of God's people more meaningful. He found inspiration in Jesus' prayer to the Father for His disciples (John 17:11-19), which emphasises three key points:

- Jesus prays for us to be protected from evil.



Bishop Cornelius Piong cutting the anniversary cake flanked by priests and elders.

- Jesus prays for all of us because we belong to Christ.
- Jesus prays for us to live in holiness.
- "Jesus' final prayer offers instructions for the continued proclamation of the good

news while imploring the disciples to be confident that Jesus has assured their care. As we continue to spread the Gospel today, regardless of who we are — priests, religious, or laity — we can be assured of God's love

and protection when faced with challenges and animosity," Bishop Cornelius said.

He also reminded the faithful of the diocesan vision of "a committed and effective community serving God's Kingdom," which remains their focus and path of faith.

Fr Ronnie Luni, parish priest of the Church of St John the Baptist, expressed gratitude, saying, "We are grateful to God for being able to celebrate the 31st episcopal ordination anniversary of our bishop and the 31 years of the diocese's existence." He reiterated the bishop's call for the people to take the diocesan vision and mission seriously.

Bishop Cornelius thanked the organising team for their efforts in planning and preparing the three-in-one celebration. He announced that the next host will be the Church of St Theresa, Tambunan. After Mass, the crowd enjoyed lunch and were entertained by various performances from the communities of the different outstations.



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

May

- 30 MCCBCHST Exco Meeting
- 31 2024 Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei-Taiwan (Chinese Language) Legion of Mary Annual Fellowship Gathering Opening Mass



PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

May

- 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
- 28 Meeting at 6.00pm – Penang Diocesan Finance Committee (PDFC)
- 29 Meeting at 11.00am – Penang Diocese Seminarians of St Peter's College, Kuching | Bishop's Residence
- 31 Handing Over from Parish Priest Fr Anthony Liew to Parish Administrator Fr Anthony Heng, CDD at 11.30am – Church of St Michael, Ipoh



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

May

- 29 Meeting – Diocesan Finance at MAJODI Centre, Plentong



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #174

F12
MJD NEWS
UPDATES

Greetings dear friends of MJD,

Harapan gains ground in Kuala Kubu Bharu. Agents of division are rejected. *Malaysiakini* carries "Our Muhibbah Story". Acid attacks on sportsmen. Scheduled football match is cancelled. Pro-Israel and pro-Palestine sentiments are getting louder. Religious conservatism is creeping in, shelving Vatican 2 reforms in the US. We are a long way from a heart change. Another Pentecost is here. Will we let the Spirit put within us a new heart?

Coming Home Time: Diana Ross sang: "When I think of home, I think of a place where there's love overflowing." What rises in your body when you think of home? Is home synonymous with love and affection? Is home a place you long to return to? For some, home is terror, a place to flee with no desire to return or revisit. And too many are aimlessly wandering, feeling insignificant — unseen, unknown. When home is not a place of comfort, and there is no sense of knowing or nurture, it leaves the body in flight-or-fight mode. Whether self-protecting or hiding, one thing is true: Neither posture offers the soul any type of rest. Neither is home. Often, when we think of home, we think only of an external place, out there, a fixed place — the place where we live and grow, create fond memories, establish familial bonds; the place we leave when we come of age and where we return when things are hard. But some have learnt that one must look inside one's heart to find a world full of love ... like home."

Is your heart, your circle, your neighbourhood, your parish, your community or even your country, a home....a place you long to come back?

Paolo Coelho calls it the path with the heart. Others have named it the hearth, the fireplace where you are warmed, where you are made to feel secure and safe. (adapted from Fr Richard Rohr)

A Thought For The Week: The dwarf and the blind

The photo of a dwarf on the back of a blind man was taken in Damascus in 1899, The dwarf, Samir, was a Christian and could not walk. The one carrying the dwarf was Muhammad, a Muslim and he was blind.

Mohamed relied on Samir to tell him where to go, and Samir rode on his friend's back to navigate the city streets. They were both orphans and lived in the same room.

Samir was a *hakawati*. He had the gift of narration and told stories of a thousand and one nights to the customers of a cafe in Damascus. Mohamed sold bolbolas in front of the same cafe and liked to listen to his friend's stories.

One day, when he retired to his room, Muhammad found his companion dead. He wept and mourned his friend for seven days straight. When asked how they got along so well, being of different religions, he said only this: "Here we were the same," pointing with his hand to his heart.

Lesson from the blindman: The heart only recognises kindness and charity. It goes beyond race, religion and riches.

Announcements For The Week:

1. The Family Life Ministry has initiated the *Special Children's Parents Support Group* for children and their parents. For more info, contact Veronica Dass Tel: 016-2095001.

2. Coming up NEXT? *Mangrove Project with Caritas-CJC MJD* in June.

3. The *Seventh Kursus Evangelisasi Peribadi* takes off on July 7.

4. The peninsular prepares for its *August Regional Pastoral Assembly* or known as PMPC5.

QnQ? Q asks: Another Jubilee? What is this about the Jubilee 2025?

The Pope has declared JUBILEE 2025, a year of hope from a world suffering the impacts of war, the on-going effects of COVID-19 and the climate crisis, with the theme *Pilgrims of Hope*.

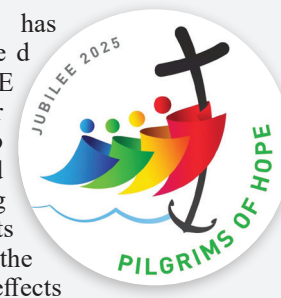
The four figures indicate all humanity from the four corners of the world, in solidarity and brotherhood, clinging to the cross, facing choppy waters. The cross has turned into an anchor, an anchor of hope. (<https://jubilaum2025.va>)

The Lord offers opportunities of grace. Walking together lets us listen to what the Spirit is saying. "He pours light into our minds, arouses our desire and gives us strength... As the soul is the life of the body, so the Holy Spirit is the life of our souls." — St Peter Damian

Something to tickle you: Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows; it empties today of its strength. — Corrie Ten Boom

Signature

Bishop Bernard Paul



AB Emeritus Murphy's 60 years of faithful service

By Bernard Anthony

KG PANDAN, Kuala Lumpur: The Chapel of Our Lady of Good Health (OLGH) on commemorated Archbishop Emeritus Murphy Pakiam's diamond jubilee as a priest, May 12.

The 85-year-old archbishop emeritus presided over the evening Mass with Archbishop Julian Leow and the chapel's administrator, Msgr Stanislaus Soosaimariam, concelebrating. Approximately 200 parishioners gathered to pray and express gratitude for the retired prelate's 60 years of dedicated service as a priest.

Born in Tapah, Perak, Archbishop Emeritus Murphy made significant contributions to the Malaysian Church. He was ordained as one of its youngest local priests at the age of 25 on May 10, 1964, marking the beginning of his impactful journey in service to God and the community.

During his tenure, Archbishop Emeritus Murphy served in various parishes within the Diocese of Penang and as the rector of College General Major Seminary. His



During the Eucharistic Celebration on May 12, 2024.

dedication and leadership led to his appointment as the auxiliary bishop of Kuala Lumpur by Pope John Paul II in 1995. In 2003, he was further honoured by being elevated to the position of the third metropolitan Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur. He retired on December 13, 2013, and subsequently chose to take up residence at the Chapel of Our Lady of Good Health in February 2016, where he continues to serve as a priest in residence.

During the Mass, Msgr Stanislaus, who is also the parish priest of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (SHC) in Jalan Peel,

delivered a sermon in Tamil, reflecting on Archbishop Emeritus Murphy's legacy and touching upon World Communications Sunday. Archbishop Julian addressed the congregation in English, emphasising the reality of God's existence and Pope Francis' warnings regarding the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on society.

Archbishop Julian cautioned against excessive reliance on AI, advocating instead for genuine human connections and face-to-face communication. He praised his predecessor for his commitment to building authentic relationships throughout



Archbishop Emeritus Murphy Pakiam surrounded by well-wishers.

his life and encouraged the congregation to follow his example.

Archbishop Julian later led the assembly in prayers for Archbishop Emeritus Murphy's 60th anniversary of priesthood, expressing hope for continued community support and growth in Jesus Christ. Msgr Stanislaus conveyed wishes for a blessed anniversary on behalf of the Parish Council of both SHC and OLGH, recounting personal experiences of the prelate's kindness and leadership.

Archbishop Emeritus Murphy expressed gratitude to all present before cutting an anniversary cake

at the chapel's entrance, followed by a joyful rendition of "Happy Anniversary" led by Archbishop Julian and Msgr Stanislaus. The celebration continued with the sharing of the cake and a fellowship meal, with anniversary bookmarks distributed to all attendees.

Earlier on May 10, a Thanksgiving Mass was held at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre, participated by clergy, Archbishop Emeritus Murphy's family, and guests. This was followed by the launch of Archbishop Emeritus Murphy's biography, detailing the retiree's remarkable life and contributions.

SIC leaders keep faith alive

PETALING JAYA: Leaders of the Church of St Ignatius (SIC) kept their faith burning bright in a weekend retreat moving as one family in service for the greater glory of God.

Themed *Our Faith is Alive*, the weekend attracted about 100 leaders from various ministries helping each other to re-discover and to re-align themselves toward a common goal for the church.

During the event, leaders developed positive relationships with one another through their sharing forging a stronger bond of friendship with people who were once strangers.

"The three days were magical... some kind of magic happening. It was the relationship that I cherish most with the people there" said Lionel Wong, Coordinator of Tropicana Mother Theresa BEC.

Coordinator of St Alphonsus Ligouri BEC, Raymond Choo, added that "searching our hearts together let us see things clearer, removing barriers".

Specially designed by Christie Associates for a myriad of peo-

ple, the weekend was a discovery of self, learning to work as 'We' instead of 'Me', cultivating better perception of others through collaboration and better communication, giving feedback in a constructive manner and having a mindset of 'Win-Win' among others.

Chinese Youth Ministry Leader, Joachim Wong Chi Lik concurred that "the duration of each activity was arranged very well, none of them was too long or too short".

Elizabeth Jasmin Kaur, coordinator of St Monica SS4/4A BEC agreed that "...the impact of each activity was evident — thought provoking and made us evaluate our own leadership skills".

Although the session was more secular and corporate like, Rita Krishnan of BECAT opined that it "brought out the spirituality" through the common faith that they shared in Christ.

The activities and sharing also brought about an epiphany to some. For Reneboy of SS25 St Emmanuel who thought about quitting the post of Coordinator, came to realisation

that he is not alone in his BEC problems and that all the other leaders were also facing the same predicament. This brought about a better conviction for him to strive and work toward the betterment of his BEC.

At the evening Mass on Friday, parish priest Fr Lawrence Ng, CDD, asked leaders to look within themselves. "If we search our hearts sincerely, we will surely find Jesus has kept his promises, that he will eventually bring us to the light ... to move together in the same direction as one family."

Fr Lawrence thanked global leadership consultants Melvin Christie and Elizabeth Low, both SIC parishioners, for volunteering their team to conduct the aligning process.

The retreat, also attended by assistant parish priests Fr Martin Then, CDD, and Fr Thomas Koo, CDD, concluded with a Sunday Mass, sending everyone out on a mission to bring to life the SIC pastoral plan. — **SIC Formation Team**



Empowering women with skills

KUALA LUMPUR: The Women's Ministry of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, organised a basic sewing skill and hand bouquet making session on May 11, attracting 20 participants.

The aim of this event was to cultivate among the women of the parish the need to equip themselves with some basic skills which can be used to generate some income especially for single mothers who need the extra income to support the family. A plan is also in the pipeline to build a database pool of women who can share their skills and knowledge with other women of the parish as well as to promote and support those who are running small businesses in their respective fields.

The day started with Bernie Pathinathan imparting her knowledge on making hand bouquets and corsages with fresh flowers followed by Yesotha Mary, who shared her knowledge on basic

sewing skills. Participants learnt how to sew a handbag from cloth remnants. Both sessions took about two hours.

The feedback from participants who attended the sessions was overwhelmingly positive.

One participant remarked, "The session was excellent — interesting, fun, and very useful. I enjoyed it immensely. It would be great to have a sewing machine at home to continue practicing."

Another attendee expressed enthusiasm for further learning and community support, saying, "I am eager to acquire new skills and am also willing to support other women in need. I look forward to participating in future sessions."

Since the event coincided with Mother's Day weekend, several daughters took the opportunity to join their mothers, spending quality time together and expressing their love and support.





Indispensable role of the Holy Spirit in catechesis

TAIPING: The Penang Diocesan Catechetical Commission (PDCC) organised its Annual Gathering of Evangelising Catechists (EC) on May 1 at the Taiping Catholic Church. This event attracted 358 participants, including ECs involved in Catechism and the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA), along with discerning Catholics interested in the Catechetical Ministry.

The theme for this year's gathering was *Catechesis and the Holy Spirit*. The event featured three talks presented simultaneously in four languages — English by Fr Gerard Theraviam, Bahasa Malaysia by Sr Dariah Ajab FSIC, Tamil by Fr John Anandan OFM Cap, and Mandarin by Anthony Ng. A 45-minute prayer session focusing on the Holy Spirit was also included in the programme.

The day began with a light breakfast, after which all participants gathered at the Church of St Louis for a praise and worship session. Deacon Clement Samuel, the head of PDCC (pic), officially welcomed the participants. He explained that the theme Catechesis and the Holy Spirit was chosen because the ultimate goal of catechesis is to live the life of the Spirit — the New Life promised by Jesus, received at Baptism, and strengthened in the Sacrament of Confirmation.



Deacon Samuel emphasised that catechists should not only impart Church doctrines but also foster a personal experience of God that strengthens their conviction and motivates them toward service and mission. He urged everyone to open their hearts to learning about the Holy Spirit and to embrace the peace, love, and joy that the Holy Spirit brings into their lives.

The participants then moved into their respective language groups for the sessions.

The Teachings on the Holy Spirit in the Catholic Church

In the first talk, all speakers drew heavily from Chapter 3 of Pillar 1, Article 8 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "I Believe in the Holy Spirit" (#683 - #747). They emphasised the various ways to know the Holy Spirit, including through the Scriptures — particularly the names and symbols of the Spirit — the tradition of the Church Fathers, the Church's Magisterium, sacramental liturgy, prayer, charisms and ministries, signs of apostolic and missionary life, and the witness of saints.

They also highlighted that the Holy Spirit's role and mission can only be fully understood in the context of the Blessed Trinity and salvation history. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are consubstantial,

indivisible, and united in mission and purpose. This illustrates the close connection between Evangelisation and Catechesis. Evangelisation aims to proclaim and witness the Good News, leading a person to initial faith in Christ and conversion. Catechesis is the ongoing teaching stage, helping baptised individuals to grow and mature in their faith through a deeper, more systematic knowledge of Jesus Christ. The goal is to develop this initial faith to daily nourish the Christian life of the faithful, both young and old.

The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Life of an Evangelising Catechist

This session clarified the terms "Holy" and "Spirit." The role of an EC is dynamic and goes beyond completing a syllabus. It involves both informing the mind and forming the heart, ultimately impacting both the ECs and those they evangelise. The speakers reminded participants of the EC's Mission Statement: to deepen a personal encounter with Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, proclaim the core message of the Gospel (the *kerygma*), accompany people to faith and conversion, provide a systematic exposition of God's revelation within the Catholic Church, and send out missionary disciples as witnesses to the Good News. Referencing Scriptures, the speakers noted that the Holy Spirit guides and sanctifies (Galatians 5:16), sets us free (2 Corinthians 3:17), empowers

us in trials (Ephesians 3:16), emboldens us (Acts 4:31), and is the master of prayer, purifying our prayers to align with God's plan.

How to Open One's Life More to the Holy Spirit

In the third talk, participants learned various ways to call on the Holy Spirit. They were encouraged to welcome the Holy Spirit with an open mind, be prayerful, aware of God, and ask with expectant faith, trusting that God will answer in His time. Combining prayer with penance and praying for needs rather than greed were emphasised. The speakers reminded participants that the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sins, making repentance an ongoing process. Sometimes a change in attitude — a U-turn — is necessary to achieve closer communion with God. Opening one's life to the Holy Spirit involves making service a part of life, seeking discernment by testing our motives, practicing silence, meditating, reflecting on actions, and constantly communicating with the Holy Spirit throughout the day.

After each of the first two talks, participants gathered in groups to share their experiences of when the Holy Spirit touched their lives. For many, this was a meaningful and uplifting part of the event. In the third session, prayer sessions were organised in the respective language groups to allow for the infilling of the Holy Spirit among all participants.

Evangelising catechists are called, chosen and sent on a mission



The Bahasa catechists taking a selfie with Cardinal Sebastian Francis.

The culmination of the annual catechetical gathering was the Eucharistic Celebration, celebrated by Cardinal Sebastian Francis. The cardinal expressed encouragement by the large number of ECs attending the gathering. In his homily, he emphasised the importance of including the Holy Spirit and the Word of God in our lives, living with truth and love. He highlighted that the Holy Spirit equips us to do God's work regardless of our abilities or talents. He described ECs as wounded healers, not merely volunteers, but called, chosen, and sent on a mission. He stressed the necessity of telling the never-ending story of Jesus with truth and love, quoting St Edith Stein, who said that love and truth must go together, as love without truth or truth without love are destructive lies. Cardinal Francis also reminded everyone of St Catherine of Genoa's words that renewal without repentance leads to the corruption of the Church.

In conclusion, he presented the participants with two early Pentecost gifts, wrapped in humility. The first was Grace, with its five flavours: beauty, freedom, sacrifice, truth,



Group discussion during the session.

and love. The second was Providence, providing strength and will-power to persevere in evangelising work.

At the end of the Eucharistic celebration, the cardinal encouraged all ECs to deepen their understanding of their faith systematically and to stay current. He recommended enrolling in the GROW (God Redeeming Our World) programme, available in English and

Bahasa Malaysia with subtitles in Chinese and Tamil. Registering with the PDCC as a parish catechetical ministry entitles one to a discounted rate. The cardinal then launched the PDCC website and Newsletter. The website address is www.pdcc.com.my, where the PDCC Newsletter, Penang Diocesan Catechetical News, can be accessed. — **The PDCC Editorial Team**



Feast of St Joseph Plentong parish

PLENTONG, Johor: The Church of St Joseph celebrated the feast of its patron saint on May 1. The statue of St Joseph was beautifully decorated, with parishioners offering flowers and candles for his intercession.

The celebration began with the recitation of the Rosary at 8.00am, followed by a multilingual Mass and Benediction at 9.00am. In his homily, parish priest, Fr Moses Yap, OFM, focused on the book of Genesis. He reminded them that being made in the image and likeness of God gives our lives value and dignity, reflecting the glory of our Creator.

Fr Moses also spoke about St Paul's letter to the Colossians, emphasising the importance of having the peace of Christ reign in our hearts. He noted that prayer is a crucial way to receive Christ's peace and graces.

In conjunction with May being dedicated to Our Lady, Fr Moses encouraged the faithful to pray the rosary daily, echoing the message of Fatima about the power of the rosary in seeking God's protection and graces. He highlighted that the rosary is a powerful weapon against evil and brings us closer to God through Our Lady.

Fr Moses also reflected on the Gospel of Matthew, discussing St Joseph's obedience to God's will by naming the child Jesus. By doing so, St Joseph became Jesus' legal father and fulfilled his role of fatherhood, representing the Heavenly Father in raising the Son and preparing Him for His mission on earth. This, he noted, should remind all fathers of their responsibility to nurture their children and strengthen their faith in God.

After Mass, there was a fellowship attended by parishioners of all ages, including some from other parishes. This was the first time the parish hosted a fellowship after Mass as previously, they only distributed food packets. The fellowship aimed to foster a closer bond among the faithful. — *By Christine H Lee*

Kuala Pilah chapel

KUALA PILAH, Negeri Sembilan: The faithful gathered in the Chapel of St Joseph, one of the chapels under the purview of the Church of St John Marie Vianney to commemorate the feast of St Joseph the Worker May 1.

Fr Michel Dass presided over the Eucharistic Celebration with the theme *A Call to Holiness by Working out God's Will*. The celebration this year was particularly memorable since there was a procession.

The multilingual celebration was followed by lunch and fellowship organised by the chapel.

The celebration embraced the theme and was the result of prayers and numerous hands from diverse ministries working together.



Procession around the streets of Kuala Pilah.

Fostering a spirit of mission among ministry coordinators

By Dwayne Sadris

KUALA LUMPUR: In an endeavour to ignite and empower our ministry coordinators, the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD) embarked on a transformative Exposure Immersion Programme in Battambang Prefecture, Cambodia. This initiative aimed not just to glean insights from ongoing projects but also to furnish participants with the necessary tools and motivation to spearhead comparable impactful initiatives within their respective communities.

Throughout the programme, the AOHD team engaged deeply with local social enterprises and community initiatives, gaining firsthand insights into successful projects driving positive change. A notable highlight was the interaction with the 'A Child's Journey' Programme led by Prison Fellowship Cambodia, which has been nurturing relationships between children and incarcerated parents for over 14 years. This experience served as a model of compassion and resilience, inspiring participants to envision and implement similar programmes here within the archdiocese.

Additionally, the visit to the Arrupe Welcome Centre provided invaluable lessons in inclusivity and empowerment. By witnessing the centre's efforts to integrate 'People with Disabilities' (PWD's) into mainstream society through job creation and support systems, participants gained practical knowledge to replicate such initiatives in their own contexts.

Under the guidance of Bishop Enrique Figaredo, or lovingly known by the locals as 'Kike', is the Apostolic Prefect of Battambang, Cambodia. This trip to Battambang had not only showcased impactful projects but also encouraged reflection and strategic thinking among the participants. Bishop Kike's leadership was instrumental in fostering meaningful connections and guiding participants



The AOHD team building two wheelchairs for underprivileged children affected by landmines.

towards actionable steps for community development. The participants even had to use their hands to build wheelchairs for those who were affected by the landmines, many of whom are children. This instilled a real sense of mission and service to our communities.

The ultimate aim of the trip was to inspire and equip our local leaders to initiate their own initiatives upon returning home. By witnessing the tangible impact of grassroots efforts in Battambang, participants were empowered to translate their learnings into practical strategies within their respective communities.

Our programme concluded with a gathering in the village of Kdol Taken, where participants participated in the Eucharistic celebration and cultural exchange with the local community. This immersive experience reinforced the importance of collaboration, empathy, mission and cultural sensitivity in driving sustainable change.

The participants' experiences in Cambodia deeply enriched their understanding and commitment to their ministries. Gnadass, the coordinator for the Prison Ministry was touched by the resilience of a grandmother caring for her granddaughter despite her own hardships, found beauty in their bond amidst suffering. Gunavathi felt a profound connection to her work with special needs individuals, drawing inspiration from the Arrupe Welcome Centre's inclusive practices.

These personal encounters underscored the transformative potential of community-led initiatives. The immersion programme not only provided valuable insights but also ignited a spark in participants to effect change in their own communities. As they returned home, armed with new ideas and perspectives, these leaders are poised to initiate impactful projects that mirror the compassion and empowerment witnessed in Cambodia.

An Easter open house with heart

JOHOR BARU: On May 4, the parishioners of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, hosted an Easter Open House. This special day was dedicated to the homeless, orphans, and senior citizens of all races and religions within JB city.

Flyers about the event, themed *God Loves All*, were distributed during the weekly Street Feeding for the homeless, and it was heartening to see many of them attend despite the rain.

Parish priest, Fr Edward Rayappan, and assistant parish priest, Fr Laurence Motoyou, OFM, warmly welcomed guests, including residents from the Cheshire Home and Villa Paulos children's home. Both priests wished everyone an enjoyable day filled with performances, food, and fellowship. Parish Pastoral Council chairperson Iris Leong expressed her hope that the event

would inspire the needy to never give up hope and to recognise that hope can always be found in the church.

Under the capable direction of John Yong, the 'variety show' commenced, delighting guests with a range of performances. The opening act featured a lively interactive drum circle session and laughter exercise by Teacher Maggie and her team from the Sacred Heart Cathedral Goldies, inviting audience participation. Celebrating cultural diversity, the Bahasa Group performed the Tarian Bidayuh Rejang Beuh, and the Tamil Group showcased their hip hop moves. The English Language (EL) Young Adults engaged the audience with fun games like Musical Chairs and Clap to the Rhythm. The entertainment continued with a variety of songs to suit all tastes.

A special appearance by Marcus Ho

the Magician captivated everyone with his quick face-changing act, mingling with the audience for a close-up 'sleight of fan.'

Guests enjoyed a variety of Indian and Chinese dishes and desserts, with vegetarian options available. The use of proper plates, cups, and metal cutlery, along with composting food waste, helped reduce plastic usage and landfill waste. The Creation Justice Ministry (CJM) implemented the three-basin method of 'soap-rinse-rinse' to ensure water efficiency.

James Govindasamy, Parish English Language and Culture Council chairperson, shared that the Easter Open House is intended to become an annual event, with plans to learn from this inaugural event and improve each year. The efforts of everyone involved, both seen and unseen, were greatly appreciated. — *By Karen-Ann Theseira*

Prayerful reflections mark Feast of Our Lady of Fatima

By Susai Anthony Muthu

KUALA LUMPUR: The parish feast of Our Lady of Fatima, Brickfields was celebrated from May 9 to 13. Embracing the overarching theme *Mary and We on the Synodal Journey: Communion, Participation and Mission* the celebration was imbued with profound spirituality and fellowship.

The Feast of Our Lady of Fatima holds special significance in the hearts of Catholics worldwide, commemorating the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary to three shepherd children in Fatima, Portugal, in 1917. In Brickfields, this annual celebration serves as a cornerstone of faith and unity, drawing together parishioners from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

The celebrations commenced with solemnity and reverence as parishioners gathered for Holy Hour preceding the Mass on both May 9 and 10. These moments of prayerful reflection set the tone for the days ahead, inviting all of us to centre ourselves in the presence of God and to prepare our hearts for the feast.

Unfortunately, the plans for a candlelight procession after Mass on Saturday, May 11 were disrupted by inclement weather. Despite this setback, the spirit of the community remained undaunted, as parishioners adapted with grace and understanding.

The following day, the celebration took on a poignant note with Holy Hour for the Sick and Anointing of the Sick. This sa-



The statue of Our Lady of Fatima being carried in procession. (photo/Jeffrey Chee)

cred sacrament, administered with care and compassion, offered solace and strength to those in need, reminding them of the healing presence of Christ in their lives. It was a profound expression of the parish's commitment in general and parish administrator Fr Andrew Manickam OFM Cap's in particular to accompanying one another in times of illness and adversity, embodying the spirit of communion and solidarity.

The faithful were encouraged to spend time in prayer at Our Lady's grotto from dusk until after midnight to be with Our Lady on her feast day, inviting us to draw

closer to Our Lady as we continued our journey of faith.

On May 13, silent adoration of the Blessed Sacrament began in the morning until evening when the Rosary was prayed. This was followed by the Eucharistic celebration presided over by Archbishop Julian Leow, Msgr Stanislaus Soosaimariam, and Fr Andrew. In his homily, Archbishop Julian reminded the congregation of Our Lady of Fatima's call to repentance, to pray for world peace, and to always do what her Son tells us. At the same time, the prelate emphasised the importance of relying on the right authority in

the Church to interpret 'private revelations' which we read about or hear to ensure we are in harmony with the teachings of the Church.

Following the Mass, the archbishop and clergy led the faithful in a procession through Brickfields, with Our Lady's statue carried by lay leaders and parishioners as a symbol of our devotion and commitment to spreading her message of love and reconciliation. The celebration culminated with a dinner for the faithful, further fostering a sense of camaraderie and fellowship among the parishioners.

It is worth noting that this feast day celebration marked Fr Andrew's first since his appointment as parish administrator in December 2023. His meticulous attention to detail and unwavering dedication ensured that every aspect of the festivities was meticulously planned and executed, from the liturgy to the logistics, culminating with his obtaining an almost instantaneous approval from PDRM for Saturday's cancelled procession to be moved to Monday, May 13 – the actual feast day of Our Lady of Fatima.

Almost 4,000 petitions were received during the feast day programme and all of them were offered up on May 15 for the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima.

The theme of *Mary and We on the Synodal Journey* continues to resonate, reminding us that we are not alone but are part of a larger community of faith, guided by the example of Mary and united in our commitment to communion, participation, and mission.

Ascension Chapel community commemorates Jesus' ascent

KUALA LUMPUR: Every year, the Chapel of the Ascension of the Lord in Ampang eagerly anticipates the commemoration of its feast day, a time when the community unites to honour the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord. This sacred occasion, marking Jesus' ascent into heaven 40 days after His resurrection, serves as a period for spiritual contemplation and the strengthening of family bonds among the parish community.

The celebration began with three days of activities from May 6 to 8 at BEC level, including praise and worship, novena prayers, and word sharing by invited external speakers who delved into various themes on the Synodal Church in Mission.

The three-day novena and Mass at the chapel commenced on May 10, led by three different priests. On the first day, Fr Gnana Selvam Berentis highlighted the importance of family being a synodal church, while on the second day, Fr Xavier Andrew reminded us to always be united in God's love.

The feast day Mass on May 12, which saw some 300 faithful gather at the chapel, was celebrated by Fr Peter Anthony. He urged us to contemplate how we, as Church members, can fully embrace our mission. He emphasised our purpose: to bear witness to God's love and mercy, spreading the Good News to all corners of the world. This calling transcends the confines of our church buildings, reaching out to the marginalised, forgotten, and oppressed. It is a mission characterised by compassion, unity, and offering hope to those in despair.

The Mass continued with the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, beautifully conducted with the chanting of hymns, creating a divine and spiritual atmosphere. Families from each BEC and other parishioners were invited to step forward and experience the presence of Jesus during the adoration. We personally felt immense gratitude and awe for the opportunity to come near and touch the monstrance.

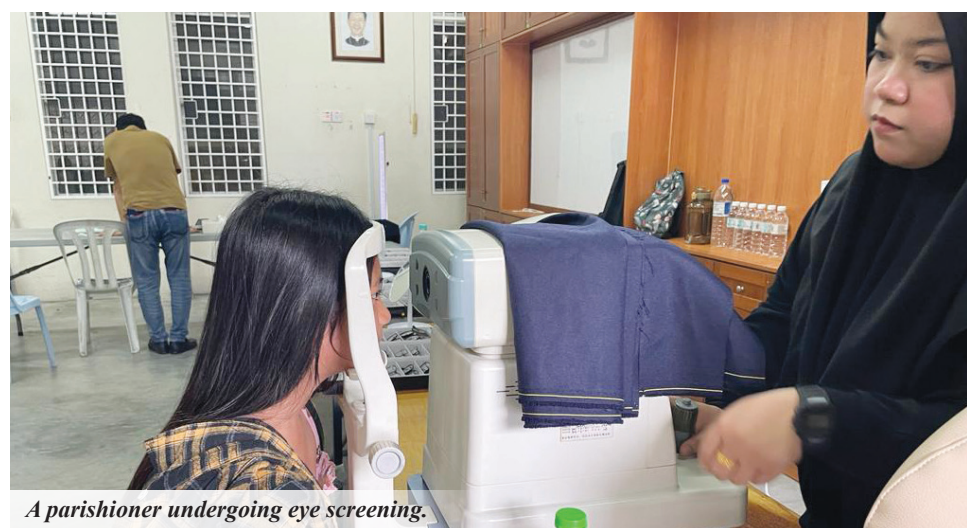
The feast celebration in our chapel was filled with the spirit of God, and His presence was truly felt during the Mass. We felt an even deeper connection to Jesus during the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. This experience enriched our personal spirituality and strengthened our trust in God as we drew nearer and touched the monstrance.

The celebration concluded with a cake-cutting ceremony after the blessing for all the mothers in conjunction with Mother's Day, followed by a fellowship dinner. Despite the heavy rain, it did not dampen the spirit of the attendees who turned out nightly to celebrate the feast day with the community.

We believe everyone felt the presence of the Lord and received blessings throughout the entire seven days. Our heartfelt thanks go to every member of the Feast Day committee for contributing to the joy and success of this year's celebration. — SAC, Kuala Lumpur



Parishioners coming forward to touch the monstrance held up by Fr Peter Anthony.



A parishioner undergoing eye screening.

Wellness event benefits Sacred Heart parishioners

KUALA LUMPUR: The Parish Integral Human Development Ministry (PIHDM) of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, KL, organised an HPV vaccination, health, and eye screening event on April 28.

Held in the church hall, the event facilitated all three programmes simultaneously. Approximately 70 parishioners participated in the eye screening, 55 took part in the health screening, and 25 female teenagers received the HPV vaccine.

Thirty volunteers from the National

Cancer Society Malaysia (NCSM) and the World Vision Optics came together to make this event a success.

Abbhi (NCSM) and Chan (World Vision Optics) expressed their gratitude to the parish of Sacred Heart of Jesus's PIHDM team for their support and great assistance throughout the event too.

The event concluded with a lunch fellowship sponsored by the parish PIHDM ministry. It was a fruitful occasion that benefited many parishioners, from the young to the elderly. — By Cecilia Grace

Forging a path from climate crisis to climate resilience

VATICAN: Experts and leaders from around the world met at the Vatican for a Summit looking at the climate crisis affecting the planet with a special focus on how to effectively manage and deal with it. The Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences hosted the three-day Summit entitled, *From Climate Crisis to Climate Resilience*.

The meeting from May 15 to 17, brought together experts in the field of climate change together with city mayors and regional government leaders who are dealing with its effects. They came from the Americas, Asia, and Africa. Researchers from universities around the world also participated and contributed their own presentations in the meeting sessions which took place inside Vatican City.

The Summit participants acknowledged the seriousness of the climate crisis the world is facing and how it will deepen over the next few decades as global warming rises past the 1.5° Celsius danger threshold by the early 2030s. While the increase is expected to peak by the latter half of the century in response to global efforts to lessen the use of heat-trapping pollutants, other areas must be urgently addressed for 'climate resilience.' This concept looks at how humanity can manage, adapt, and survive the extreme effects of cli-

mate change for a safer, healthier, more equitable, and sustainable world.

The Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Sciences, the only supranational academy of its kind in the world, has as its mission "to honour pure science wherever it may be found, ensure its freedom and encourage research for the progress of science." In 2022 it started a new initiative on Climate Resilience bringing together researchers, policymakers, and faith leaders to better understand the scientific and societal challenges of climate change and recommend solutions for resilient people and ecosystems. The climate resilience concept was at the core of the three-day summit's discussions that aimed to implement a three-point strategy: mitigation efforts to diminish climate risks; adaptation strategies to cope with inevitable risks; and societal transformation that fosters ongoing mitigation and adaptation measures.

The Summit participants focused on related environmental challenges such as, climate change, biodiversity loss, and global inequality, while discussing and proposing solutions and approaches to manage and mitigate the effects of these realities. The Summit's organisers were aware that this requires a multi-disciplinary approach and partnerships involving researchers, engineers, entrepreneurs, scientific experts,



Pope Francis greets participants in the climate summit (Vatican Media)

community and faith leaders, NGOs, and the wider public.

These efforts culminated at the Summit's conclusion with a Planetary Climate Resilience protocol signed by all the participants. Like the Montreal Protocol, the document will provide guidelines and actions for climate resilience. The protocol will then be submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to be shared with nations worldwide.

In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Laudate Deum*, Pope Francis, underscored the dan-

gers the world faces due to the impact of climate change, affecting the most vulnerable people especially, as well as the urgent need to work together to address the crisis.

"This is a global social issue and one intimately related to the dignity of human life. The Bishops of the United States have expressed very well this social meaning of our concern about climate change, which goes beyond a merely ecological approach, because 'our care for one another and our care for the earth are intimately bound together.'"

— By Thaddeus Jones, *Vatican News*

Vatican Museums under fire from workers, local residents

VATICAN: Nearly 50 employees of the Vatican Museums have initiated a labour dispute with the Holy See over allegations of poor, unfair, and unsafe working conditions, potentially leading to a class action lawsuit against Pope Francis' administration.

First reported by Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, the complaint involves 49 of the roughly 700 Vatican Museums employees — 47 custodians, an art restorer, and a bookshop employee — represented by Italian lawyer Laura Sgrò, known for her work on other high-profile cases involving the Holy See.

In a petition to Cardinal Fernando Vergez Alzaga, president of the Government of the Vatican City State, Sgrò claimed that current regulations create "labour conditions undermining each worker's health and dignity." She criticised the management, suggesting that its poor oversight might be driven by profit motives.

Sgrò's letter initiates a mandatory conciliation process under Vatican law. If unsuccessful, this could lead to the first-ever class action suit in a Vatican court. The Vatican has 30 days to respond with proposed measures before judicial proceedings commence.

Employees' complaints include being "sequestered in case of illness and forced to return unpaid hours due to COVID." They allege that during sick leave, they are required to stay home all day to be verified by employer-appointed medical personnel, unlike Italian law which specifies limited verification hours. Some employees reported being sanctioned for being away at the doctor's office when a representative arrived.

Overtime issues are also highlighted, with employees alleging they are sometimes required to work extra hours for lower pay. Sgrò's letter states, "the employer abuses this



Vatican Museums Spiral Staircase. (Wikimedia Commons)

tool." Further grievances include lack of recognition for seniority, arbitrary management practices, and penalties for taking time off to care for sick family members.

Unemployment support is another concern. Vatican employees, not covered by the Italian state's unemployment program, face a lack of financial relief if they lose their jobs. This has left many workers without income support during employment gaps.

A significant issue raised is the dispute over compensation for hours during the COVID-19 pandemic when many employees were required to stay home. Additionally, a 2021 directive by Pope Francis freezing seniority-related pay increases from 2021-2023 has been contested.

Employees also cite inadequate safety measures at work, lacking "health, biological, and physical risk compensation" despite exposure to tens of thousands of visitors daily. They report safety concerns with only two emergency exits and many unair-conditioned

rooms, posing health risks during hot summers. Rising temperatures also threaten the conservation of artworks, and a lack of gendarmes has sometimes led to custodians being attacked by visitors. There are also complaints about the inconsistent enforcement of metal detector protocols for visitors.

Barbara Jatta, director of the Vatican Museums, has not publicly commented on the petition or the conciliation process.

Simultaneously, another dispute involves residents living near the Vatican Museums, who have issued noise complaints against groups of pilgrims and tourists. Residents, disturbed by early morning noise, have lodged complaints with Italian police and Vatican authorities, with little effect. Ingrid, a resident, blamed South Korean groups for the disturbance and expressed frustration at the lack of official action. Michele, another resident, resorted to using a water gun on unruly tourists, fearing the situation will worsen in the hot summer months. — *Crux*

When the death of the poor does not appear in the news

OUAGADOUGOU: On May 6, a tragic betrayal of trust resulted in the deaths of innocent civilians in Burkina Faso. Believing in the protection their ID cards should have afforded them, 21 individuals in the courtyard of Moulalougou village and 130 residents of Tambi Bounima village — including pregnant women, men, children, and bystanders — were mercilessly killed by a military convoy accompanied by the "Volunteers of the Fatherland."

Most of these victims were impoverished farmers and Christians, a demographic seemingly disregarded by the ruling military regime, which denies any acknowledgment of their deaths. Their existence was cruelly erased, victims of a cycle of violence that meets opposition with brutality.

Earlier instances of violence confirm this pattern. Reports from February and March detailed the roadside killings of several individuals from Bibigou and Soualamou in the Gourmanché region, with mobile phone footage corroborating witness accounts.

The local farmers, trapped by demands for per capita "taxes," forced conversions by jihadist groups, or compelled to flee with nothing, now seek refuge in the bush or across national borders. According to a local catechist, human rights are blatantly ignored, and censorship is rampant.

Since the previous November, the European Union has been pressuring military leaders in Burkina Faso to investigate civilian killings reported across the country. Human Rights Watch has also stepped in, accusing the authorities of executing 223 civilians, including 56 children, in just two village attacks in February 2024. — *Fides*

Fraternity is every child's mother tongue



Participants in the "Children's Table". (Vatican Media)

VATICAN: The "Children's Table" was a joyful and spontaneous moment at the World Meeting on Human Fraternity. Children responded enthusiastically to the Pope on the definition of happiness, peace, and friendship, before he signed the "Children's Declaration on Fraternity."

After the moderator of the "Future Generation" roundtable announced the entry of the "scientists" to the Holy Father, dozens of children crowned with laurels flooded the synod hall.

Each of them glued a green leaf to the branches of an old dry tree in the middle of the room to give it life again and thus revive hope.

All this happened under the smiling gaze of the Pope, who found himself quickly surrounded by all these children. A bit of patience was required before they were seated.

Once silence had been restored, Francis engaged in a game of question and answer, asking, "What does happiness mean?"

The bravest attempted to answer: "For me, it's being all united, one family, God's family," said one; "peace," said another.

"I love you, Pope Francis," two children

ventured.

The pontiff, increasingly amused, continued, "Where can happiness be bought?" "Happiness cannot be bought," confidently exclaimed a young girl. "We can be happy if we are in contact with God," replied another.

Seizing the opportunity, the Pope asked, "How can we get in touch with God?" "By praying," the children chorused, "and by praying, we can find peace," another young girl added.

The female voices dominated over the boys', but all provided pertinent answers to the Successor of Peter's questions.

Against war, they proposed unity, friendship, and sharing. At this point, it is useful to specify that they had worked on the subject by drafting, on behalf of the "children of the whole world," the "Children's Declaration on Fraternity" which Pope Francis signed in front of them after they read it aloud.

The "Children's Table" was part of the preparation for the World Children's Day on May 25 and 26 in Rome. According to organisers, around 72,000 participants are expected.

— By Jean-Charles Putzolu, *Vatican News*

Table of Peace brings together Nobel prize winners



Nobel Prize winners at the 2023 edition of the World Meeting on Human Fraternity. (Vatican Media)

VATICAN: Under the banner 'Be Human', scientists, economists, businessmen, athletes, and others hailing from various parts of the world gathered in Rome for two days of discussions to seek alternatives to war and poverty, inspired by the principle of fraternity. The meeting kicked off on May 10 with a 'Peace roundtable,' gathering 30 Peace Nobel laureates, which was opened by the Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin.

Cardinal Parolin said: "War is always a failure of humanity as a whole and not just of the individual parties involved." He added that all wars are in contradiction with human dignity and "are not destined by their nature to solve problems, but rather to exacerbate them."

With him were Nobel Peace Prize laureates

including Rigoberta Menchú Tum from Guatemala, Dmitrij Muratov from Russia, Tawakkol Karman from Yemen, as well as figures like Graça Machel Mandela, widow of Nelson Mandela, and NASA administrator Bill Nelson. The event was organised by the Fratelli Tutti Foundation.

On the second day, 12 thematic tables opened to the public and some streamed live — with the participation of scientists, economists, doctors, managers, athletes, and ordinary citizens — all came together to seek alternatives to war and poverty.

In his greeting address, the cardinal referred to the Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee promulgated the previous week by Pope Francis, and emphasised how without dialogue, not only

is peace not built, but war is triggered, replacing the voice of diplomacy with that of arms. The Cardinal then mentioned the three areas of commitment identified by the Pope: addressing the causes of injustices, rectifying inequitable and insurmountable debts, and satisfying the hungry.

Addressing some 350 participants on May 11, Pope Francis encouraged them to persevere in their efforts to promote human fraternity in a broken world, reiterating that war is a defeat and also a deception.

Pope Francis warmly thanked participants for gathering in Rome to say their 'no' to war and 'yes' to peace. He encouraged them to move forward in their work of silent sowing. "I invite you not to be discouraged, because

perseverant and courageous dialogue does not make the news like clashes and conflicts, yet it discreetly helps the world live better, much more than we can realise."

The Pope particularly acknowledged the Nobel Prize laureates, thanking them for their contribution to the Declaration on Human Fraternity released on the occasion of their first Meeting in Rome in June 2023, and paid tribute to the new 'Charter of Humanity' they have drafted.

Pope Francis concluded by inviting the attendees to learn from children: "Let us look at them, let us learn from them, as the Gospel teaches us." A roundtable on 'Children: Future Generation,' took place that evening, followed by a concert in St Peter's Square. — *ICN*

Poland honours papal biographer with republic's Order of Merit

WARSAW: St John Paul II's American biographer, George Weigel (*pic*), was awarded the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland by President Andrzej Duda at the Presidential Palace in Warsaw May 13.

Distinguished senior fellow at Washington's Ethics and Public Policy Centre, Weigel received the Polish state honour for "outstanding contributions for creating a positive image of Poland in the world," the Chancellery of the President of Poland said.

The author of *The New York Times* best-selling biography of Pope John Paul, *Witness to Hope*, published in 1999 and its sequel, *The End and the Beginning*, "demonstrated the key role of the Polish Pope in the overthrow of communism," the office of the Polish president said.

Thanking the Polish head of state, Weigel said that through him, he thanked the people of Poland for "this great honour."

"Poland and its people have been a significant part of my life for over 30 years, and whatever I have managed to give Poland has been modest compensation for what Poland has given me," he said at the ceremony.

He said that Poles, inspired by Pope John Paul were "determined to 'live in the truth'" and managed to inspire a "new birth of freedom" in Europe. "All of us in the West remain in your debt for that," he added.

The West, he said, "needs aroused consciences, living in the truth, especially the truth about the dignity of the human person, about which John Paul II taught us so much, and of which he gave such a magnificent example."

Weigel came to Poland to promote a new

Polish edition of *Witness to Hope*, first published in Poland in 2000. He kicked off meeting readers with a gathering in Warsaw May 13, in Poznań May 15 and Kraków May 17.

Weigel recalled during the press conference that at the beginning of his work on the biography, he asked one of the Polish historians he was interviewing: Isn't it strange that it is an American researcher who is writing the Pope's biography? He said the historian told him "no, because Poles have too emotional a bond with John Paul II and what he accomplished."

When asked if Pope John Paul's teaching will be relevant in 50 years, the American theologian expressed his belief that it will be relevant in a few hundred years as well, giving hope to millions. — By Paulina Guzik, *OSV*



Polish President Andrzej Duda (left) poses with St. John Paul II's American biographer, George Weigel. (UCA News Photo/Chancellery of the President of Poland/@prezydentpl)

A journey of global insight and local action

Fr David Garaman, from the Diocese of Sandakan, served as the delegate for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei (CBCMSB) at the World Meeting of Parish Priests held at the Vatican from April 28 to May 2, 2024. Presently, he fulfils the role of Rector at the Church of the Holy Trinity in Tawau while also overseeing responsibilities as head of the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Diocesan Liturgical Commission. He shares his insights and experiences from this global gathering.

HERALD: Describe your feeling on being selected as the sole representative from this region to attend this meeting.

I extend my gratitude to the CBCMSB and organisers of this international gathering of parish priests. I felt honoured and excited as this is a great privilege for me to contribute and experience the synodal work at a universal level.

What is your take away from the few days in Rome among clergy from around the world?

Fr David: The few days being in the Synod for Parish Priests have been enlightening for me. Apart from being able to make new priest friends, the most enriching experience is the listening and sharing of pastoral experiences from all the priests from different countries. Using the methodology of Conversation in the Spirit has been very inspiring where the sharing of experiences is done without prejudice or judgement. This experience fosters a deep sense of understanding and appreciation for one's varied and unique pastoral undertakings and backgrounds. There is a sense of deep gratitude to all the priests for their unwavering dedication, boundless commitment, loyalty, and passion in advancing the sacred mission entrusted by Our Lord. Therefore, this significant event served as a powerful encouragement in strengthening the process of synodality in the church, highlighting the unity in the diverse location and cultural setting.

Apart from that, in the recently concluded synod for parish priests, Pope Francis has given all the parish priests the mandate to become missionaries of synodality. The Holy Father is well informed about the challenges and struggles of priests. They are the



ones who are often faced with the groans and complaints of communities struggling in the currents of the world, which often lead to questions about the reality of life. They are the ones who continue this process of synodality, and without them, it is very difficult to pursue this process without the active involvement of the priests. He wants to hear more from the priests and has great hopes for them because they are the ones who are very close to the reality of the lives of the people in the community and society in general. Therefore, the Holy Father, in his letter of mandate, called on parish priests who have attended the synod for parish priests to become synodal missionaries to other priests. He clearly said that the synod is very important but still not enough because we need to do more if we want to involve a larger number of priests in the synodal dynamism. This is a timely encouragement for all the priests: wherever we are the Holy Mother Church is listening.

What do you understand from the Pope's objective of promoting a synodal local Church in mission?

Synodality is meant to foster a better understanding of what it means to be a church. Indeed, as a Church that is missionary in nature, we strive to journey together in communion with Christ along with everyone, regardless of their background. This is a call for better listening, dialogue, cooperation, and collaboration, uniting us more and more as the People of God, who commissions us to pursue our mission as a prophetic witness that embraces the entire human family. To do this, we need to listen to the Holy Spirit to enable us to engage in communal discernment to bring about the transformation that the Lord desires.

How has your understanding of synodality deepened through this experience?

Journeying together has always been practiced in the life of the Church. As a priest, I always encourage participation from the



Fr David Garaman (right) with two of the participants.

laity, especially in the administration and pastoral life of the Church. However, I often hear the cry from many about how the Church is often self-serving rather than out-serving. In reality, there are many who still feel left out and not heard by the leaders of the Church. There is also the notion that the leadership and mission of the Church belong to the ordained. All these realities and misconceptions somehow become discouragement and a stumbling block preventing active participation from the people.

So, the call of synodality has been a great wake-up call to go deeper into the administration and pastoral method, approach, and understanding of being Church. In other words, synodality calls for greater participation from every member of the church. Their voices, charisms, and contributions are important, especially in discerning the way forward for the Church. So, synodality is not about focusing only on my personal abilities and capabilities but also on being able to engage others to take ownership of the mission of the church, recognising that they too, by virtue of their baptism, shared equally the life and mission of the church in one common priesthood. I truly believed that the more the parish embraces the synodal way, involving parishioners in discussions about the details of parish life, including the formulation and communication of the parish's mission, the more likely it is that the parishioners will see themselves as partners with the priests and will embrace rather than criticise the synodal process.

You are a member of the national synodal team, could you share some of your experiences and challenges here.

In the beginning of the call of the synod on synodality, it is notable that many of the structures necessary for the parish and the diocese to implement synodality already exist in many dioceses, such as the Diocesan Pastoral Council, the Parish Pastoral

Council, the Parish Finance Committee, and many other groups, for example, the Basic Christian Communities and Basic Ecclesial Communities. These structures are necessary and very important bodies in organising the synod consultation and process. But it is also necessary to well organise these structures and bodies to bring meaning to synodality rather than focusing on orienting people based on control and power. The process of synodality is all about community building and transforming people, whereby we develop the culture of encounter and give opportunity to time and space, allowing the Holy Spirit to transform our body, mind, and spirit to conform to the will of God for humanity.

The synodal process can become an enriching experience if we put ourselves in another person's shoes and go beyond our familiar territory. A good synodal process will often take time and patience, and it may even result in being surprised by the Spirit. We have experienced how the Spirit invites us to be bold and courageous and truly calls for trust in each other and courage. We experience the challenge of being honest and transparent and creating authentic relationships where the lay faithful feel confident speaking honestly in the presence of the pastor. We experience the cry of those marginalised and vulnerable, where their voices for justice and help are often unheard. Nevertheless, the challenge is and has always been: the how can we be more open, inclusive, and discern together without prejudice to one's status or background? The synodal process requires a kind of listening to the Holy Spirit and discernment in wisdom, which can help everyone in the parish and the diocese become active agents in the synodal process so that people may not feel condemned, rejected, overlooked, sidestepped, or unjustly treated.



With parishioners

● Continued on Page 11

A hope for the future mission of the Church

• Continued from page 10

Have your views changed or enhanced now that you have experienced a global view?

Listening, reflecting, and praying about all the experiences, I cannot deny the uncertainty of what the future of the church will be like. At the same time, a sense of encouragement and happiness came up, as synodality is, for me, a hope for the future mission of the Church, and it begins here and now.

As Christians, we are all disciples, and all disciples are missionaries. We have been called to the same mission entrusted by God to His disciples, and He has also given us the same Holy Spirit to encourage and move our lives, actions, and dealings with one another. We need to draw all of our disciples into the role of disciplinarians and assist other disciples to adopt that identity. Learning how to do this in our particular community is a synodal process because each community has their own experiences, history, culture, leadership, and, most importantly, their own need to adopt that identity. This is our common calling and mission as Christians: to be the witnesses of Our Lord's truth and to proclaim His love to all. This is not just the work of missionaries or the responsibility of priests, bishops, or other lay ministers of the church. In the spirit of synodality, we share in this same mission to evangelize to the peoples as part of our common baptism, which we have received at the moment when we become members of the Church, be it as infants or as adults. We all have a part to play, and that is why we live to become role models and inspirations to one another in how we carry ourselves out in life and in how we interact with each other.

What notable contributions has your parish community made to the life and mission of the local Church in the context of synodality?

The call of synodality has indeed created awareness of the importance of the spirit of journeying together in communion, participation, and mission. Many parish communities, ministries, and groups have now realised that the call to serve is not simply to themselves and within the Church only but also to go out of their comfort zone. This means service is a gift for the good of all people, regardless of whether they are old or young, poor or rich, and so on. In other words, all the baptised are called to be co-responsible for missions. All are called to contribute according to one's vocation, gifts, and talents.



Mass with the students.

Pope Francis meets elderly priests in a Roman parish

VATICAN: Pope Francis' visit to the Roman parish of San Giuseppe al Trionfale, not far from Saint Peter's Basilica, on May 14, began with a kiss on the head of little Rebecca, 2 years old, daughter of one of the parish catechists, when he hadn't even got out the car. Then, as he left his white Fiat 500L, he was greeted by the applause of the hundreds of people gathered in the churchyard of the basilica (or even looking out from windows and balconies) and hailing "Francesco! Francesco!"

The church founded by Don Luigi Guanella at the beginning of the 20th century and still run by the Guanellians (also known as Servants of Charity), was the setting of Pope Francis' private meeting with some 70 priests who have been ordained 40 years ago or more.

The gathering is part of a round of visits the Bishop of Rome started in September last year in the five sectors of his diocese to meet parish priests, deputy parish priests, chaplains and prefects.

The last meeting was held on May 3 in the Basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme.

As announced by the Vicariate of Rome, May 14, the next visit is set for May 29 when the Pope will meet priests who have been ordained between 2014 and 2024.

Pope Francis arrived at the San Giuseppe al Trionfale Parish just a minute before 4.00pm, leaving about ten minutes earlier from Casa Santa Marta in the Vatican.



Pope Francis meets with elderly priests in the San Giuseppe al Trionfale parish in Rome. (Vatican News)

Upon his arrival, he greeted the vicegerent of the Diocese of Rome, Msgr Baldo Reina, Bishop Michele Di Tolve, the Diocese's delegate for the care of the diaconate, clergy and religious life, and the parish priest Fr Tommaso Gigliola.

Then, turning to a group of journalists present he addressed them with his customary request for prayers for him.

"Why do you always ask for that?", asked a reporter. "Because I need it!", the Pope replied. He also blessed a journalist who is pregnant with her second child: "How many months? Be strong!" he said.

Upon entering the parish, the Pope was welcomed by three nuns, parish collabora-

tors, who greeted him with a kiss on the cheek: "Thank you, Holy Father... How exciting!". Waiting for Pope Francis in a hall of the rectory was a group of elderly priests: three rows of grey heads who all stood up to applaud him. Among them, Don Antonio Ciamei, 94 years old, 70 years of priestly ministry. "Let's pray to Our Lady and then let's talk!", said the Pope.

After a prayer, the invocation to the Spirit and a brief presentation by Bishop Di Tolve of the San Giuseppe al Trionfale Parish, the closed-doors question-and-answer dialogue with the priests began.

— By Salvatore Cernuzio, *Vatican News*

Chiara Corbella's beatification cause to take a step forward in June

ROME: Servant of God Chiara Corbella Petrillo (*pic*), the joyful young mother who died of cancer in 2012, will be one step closer next month to being declared a saint.

The Diocese of Rome announced May 15 that it will hold the closing session of the diocesan phase of her cause for beatification on Friday, June 21, at noon in the Archbasilica of St John Lateran.

Since her death at the age of 28, Corbella has inspired many by her witness to faith and joy amid suffering and loss.

Corbella met her husband, Enrico Petrillo, at the age of 18 while on a pilgrimage to Medjugorje. They married six years later in Assisi on Sept. 21, 2008.

Within the first two years of their marriage, Chiara and Enrico suffered the death of two children, both of whom died less than an hour after birth.

Their first child, Maria Grazia Letizia, was diagnosed in utero with anencephaly, a serious birth defect in which a baby is born without parts of the brain or skull. Chiara chose to carry the baby to term and her daughter lived just long enough to be baptised in the hospital, dying within a half hour of her birth in June 2009.

During her second pregnancy, ultrasounds revealed that her son had no legs or kidneys. Baby Davide Giovanni died in June 2010 after living for 38 minutes.

The couple chose to share their testimony about the few minutes that they were able to spend with their children at pro-life events in Italy. They also underwent genetic testing that revealed no pathological risk to their future children.

"The Lord gave us two special children: Maria Grazia Letizia and Davide Giovanni,



but he asked us to accompany them only until their birth. He gave us the opportunity to embrace them, have them baptised, and then entrust them into the hands of the Father, all with a peace and joy that we had never experienced before," Chiara recounted.

Corbella became pregnant for a third time with their son Francesco in 2010 and ultrasounds showed that he was in perfect health. The joyful news was short-lived as Chiara was diagnosed with cancer. Doctors removed a tumour on her tongue that turned out to be cancerous.

Chiara rejected any form of treatment that posed a risk to her unborn son, prioritising his life over her own. Her healthy baby boy was born on May 30, 2011.

As the cancer metastasized, it became difficult for Chiara to speak and see clearly. A photo of her wearing an eye patch with a big smile was taken in April 2012, less than two weeks after she learned that her condi-

tion was terminal. She prepared for death by receiving the Blessed Sacrament daily.

In a letter that Chiara wrote to their son Francesco, she recalled the line from the Gospel: "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Her husband, Enrico, has recounted how he asked Chiara about this not long before she died. He shared her response in a speech in St. Peter's Square in 2016.

"I asked her: 'Chiara, is this cross really sweet like the Lord says?' She smiled at me, and with a frail voice replied: 'Yes, Enrico. It is very sweet.'"

Chiara died on June 13, 2012, at home in her wedding gown, surrounded by her family and friends, one year after her son was born.

Corbella's cause for canonisation was announced on June 13, 2017, the fifth anniversary of her death.

Her parents were invited to tell her story at the 2023 World Youth Day in Lisbon, where they shared that Corbella's son Francesco is 11 years old and inspired by his mother's witness.

With the closing of the diocesan investigation into Corbella's life, virtues, and sanctity, the documented testimonies and other materials for her cause for beatification will be sealed and sent to the Vatican's Dicastery for the Causes of Saints for further scrutiny.

The next step in the process will be for the pope to recognize her as someone who lived a life of heroic virtue and declare her venerable.

Corbella will need two miracles attributed to her intercession to be declared a saint.

— By Courtney Mares, *CNA*

She faced each trial with grace and strength

A tribute to my daughter

By Stella Doris Fernandez

Our beloved daughter, Christine Subashini Chandrasekaran, returned to the Lord on February 22, 2023, after a long and arduous 16-year battle with Cushing's Disease. This rare form of cancer brought with it no less than 15 symptoms, including severe acne, dandruff, and hirsutism (abnormal hair growth on her upper body), which transformed her face into what they call "moon face syndrome." Her body swelled with bloating, while her limbs grew thin. Purple stretch marks, like rivers, adorned her body, a testament to the struggle within. Her readings were erratic — high sugar levels, raised cortisol, high blood pressure, low potassium — each a challenge she faced with unwavering courage. Throughout her short life, she underwent seven surgeries to remove ACTH-secreting tumours from her body.

Our 'Angel Shine', as she is fondly known, faced each trial with grace and a strength that few possess. In 2013, she underwent her first open-heart surgery, a moment that revealed the full extent of how her body had been ravaged by illness. On the morning of the surgery, we rose at five, feeling a mix of emotions. Amidst the confusion, I turned to a familiar habit — I opened my Bible at random and sought a message from the Lord. The verse that spoke to me was from the Book of Isaiah: "I have heard you from my holy mountain." It was the assurance I needed, a sign that God had heard my cry. With that reassurance, Christine entered the operating room, smiling and waving at us, a true testament to her strength and resilience.

Around 7.00pm that day, her doctor entered the room and delivered the heartbreaking news: the lab results confirmed the tumour was malignant and aggressive. In that moment, the world seemed to dim despite the room's lights. My husband Chandra and I stood by, speechless, while Christine sat in the chair, looking at us. Later, she confided, "I saw Acha's face, and I knew then that I had to be strong for all of you."

And strong she was — for the next 13 years. Through three open-heart surgeries, a hysterectomy, a bilateral adrenalectomy converted to open surgery, aggressive rounds of chemotherapy, brain radiation, restless leg syndrome, dehydration, water retention, mineral deficiencies, and a murmuring heart, she never once cried, moaned, groaned, or complained. At one point, she managed an astonishing regimen of 33 tablets a day to suppress her adrenal glands' excessive steroid production, wreaking havoc on her body. Yet, she persisted, smiling through it all. Even as she set

alarms for her medications, no one could guess the extent of her trials.

Upon her diagnosis, the first thing Christine did was to change her Facebook wall to display the Serenity Prayer:

"God grant me the serenity

*to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference."*

What serenity, what courage, what wisdom!

After that initial surgery, it seemed as if God sent us another sign. The day she was discharged, a vision of Mother Mary appeared in the window of the Subang Jaya Medical Centre (SJMC). I saw it as a reassuring sign that Mother Mary was watching over her. At night, I would quietly weep into my pillow, singing *God of Mercy and Compassion*. Determined not to break down in front of her or weaken her resolve, I resolved to never let her see my tears. Instead, I found solace in the shower until I realised I couldn't keep it up. So, I made a promise to myself never to cry in the shower again. Understanding that "aggressive" meant uncertain months ahead, I made a pact with God — I would thank Him for every single day He added to her life. And He granted us 13 remarkable years and Christine ensured they were filled with joy and vibrancy.

Three months after that fateful day, SJMC arranged for a high-tech Dotatoc scan at Putrajaya Hospital. When we returned to SJMC for the review, the results brought relief — no traces of cancer, nothing further to do. I was overjoyed and embraced her in celebration, but she gently reminded me, "Ma, please, no outward displays of emotion. Think of all the other patients here who are struggling." That was Christine, always considerate of others. Even during her last admission in February 2023, she remained vigilant for the well-being of fellow patients, displaying unwavering compassion. Her faith in God remained unshakeable, and she prayed for others diligently. After her passing, I discovered this post on her Facebook page:

"Dear God, dispel my fear, end my anxiety, wipe worry from my mind. May I know the power of Your love and the wisdom of Your word. Grant me peaceful sleep tonight and bring me back tomorrow to a place of safety, security, and right-minded thinking. This I pray for all Your people. Amen."

She concluded with Psalm 4:8:

"I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety."

Christine was a person of profound compassion, always thinking of others and going above and beyond to make every family celebration a grand affair. She had a knack for



Despite numerous hospital stays, Christine accepted her condition with grace and maintained a cheerful spirit throughout.

decorating, turning our Christmases into pure magic with her elaborate decorations, ensuring there was a gift under the tree for every guest and an abundance of cookies and delicious food spread out for all to enjoy.

Despite her affection for her belongings, Christine was remarkably selfless. Even as her health declined, she remained focused on others. Last month, as her sister Christiana and I assisted her to her room, supporting her weakened steps, it was evident how much she valued her independence. Her battle with water retention, following brain radiotherapy, caused her weight to fluctuate drastically, yet she never once complained. We did our utmost to help her navigate these challenges, and she faced them head-on, her resilience shining through.

After chemotherapy and radiotherapy caused her hair to fall out, she bravely shaved off her locks. As she transitioned to a hospital bed downstairs, she gracefully relinquished her earthly possessions, finding contentment in simplicity. Her Facebook wall, adorned with a quote from Yoda, reflected her acceptance of letting go: "Train yourself to let go of everything you fear to lose." And she embodied this sentiment wholeheartedly, maintaining her cheerful demeanour and spreading joy to all who visited, regardless of her own suffering.

Christine's spirit and determination were admired by all her doctors, who marvelled at her swift recoveries from surgeries. She approached every challenge with unwavering faith, trusting in the power of prayer. Each time she faced surgery, I reached out to my network, and the response was overwhelming. People from all corners of the globe prayed for her, held masses, and lit candles in her name. And the impact of those prayers was undeniable — every hospital visit was marked by a remarkable recovery that astonished her doctors.

In January, as her suffering intensified, I prayed for a swift end if healing was not to be granted. And God answered that prayer in the most merciful way possible. On the day she passed, Christine was her usual self, chatting, joking, and enjoying her breakfast. In a fleeting moment, she peacefully departed, leaving behind a profound sense of loss but also a profound sense of peace. As I witnessed her passing, I saw a tiny white light leave her body — a moment of transcendence that affirmed God's grace and mercy.

How can I not proclaim that God is good? I thank Him for the 13 additional years He granted her. It feels imperative to share her incredible story; if it improves even one life, her suffering will have had purpose. Her influence was palpable — everyone who knew her remains inspired and continues to mourn her loss. The vast turnout at her wake and funeral spoke volumes. Crowds lined the road to our house as her casket was brought home. The church overflowed with mourners. Words fail to capture the depth of grief expressed. In her brief time with us, she touched the lives of everyone she met. Truly, she was an angel walking among us.

Rest in sweet peace, our beloved Angel Shine. You were every parent's dream child.



Christine and her parents were together when the doctor delivered the news that her tumour was malignant and aggressive. Observing the despair on her father's face, she remarked later, "I knew then that I had to be strong for all of you."





SUNDAY OBSERVER

Anil Netto

A recent Unicef survey in Kuala Lumpur showed that 95 per cent of children polled were living in relative poverty, with 40 per cent living in households below the poverty line.

Eight out of 10 households were struggling with insufficient incomes to cover basic expenses. Many children in such households, “already facing health challenges, are also eating less, with one of two eating less than three meals a day”.

Yet, we see so many ultra-luxury cars on the roads in Malaysian cities. Poverty amid plenty. What gives?

We live in a world where hidden forces lurk behind the scenes, pursuing vested interests to expand their wealth, power and influence.

You don't have to be a “conspiracy theorist” who believes that the Illuminati or the Rockefellers rule the world to know that there are powerful global forces at work.

These forces are creating a world where wealth and power are concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.

Just look at the annual reports produced by the Christian aid group Oxfam to see how the billionaire class around the world have accumulated more and more wealth in their hands. “Since 2020, the richest five men in the world have doubled their fortunes. During the same period, almost five billion people globally have become poorer,” Oxfam researchers noted.

In his book *Who Rules the World?*, Noam Chomsky talks about the masters of the universe, or as Adam Smith referred to them, “the masters of mankind”.

These masters, Chomsky says, refer to “the leading state capitalist powers (the G7 countries) along with the institutions they control in the ‘new imperial age’, such as the International Monetary Fund and the global

trade organisations”.

The identities of these masters of the universe evolve over time. In the past, they were the successive territorial empires, such as the Roman Empire of Jesus' time, the aristocrats and the high priestly class in Jerusalem.

Later, it was the merchants and manufacturers, and more recently, the multinational companies and the superpowers.

For instance, when the billionaires gather at the World Economic Forum in Davos, do you think they are genuinely concerned about wiping out global poverty or slashing carbon emissions?

Or are they more interested in hobnobbing with other billionaires and national leaders to pursue big corporate interests?

When political parties capture national power, they may lose touch with the aspirations of the masses and gravitate towards big business interests.

Take the US, for instance. Researchers (Gilens and Page, Cambridge University Press, 2014) have produced compelling evidence that “economic elites and organised groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on US government policy, while average citizens and mass-based interest groups have little or no independent influence”.

This is repeated in many other nations that are nominally democratic but in reality, have succumbed to vested interests.

Democracy suffers in the process. No wonder, many people in countries like the UK and the US feel that mainstream political parties no longer represent their interests.

The uprising of university students in the US and Europe against the genocide in Gaza should be seen against this backdrop. The university students want nothing to do with the US government's complicity in the genocide. Many Jews have joined in the protests as well. Not in their name.

In the 1960s, the students had protested against the US war in Vietnam. In the 1990s, many protested against unfair world trade

policies and agreements. They also organised and protested against apartheid in South Africa. Later in 2003, we saw massive protests against the illegal invasion of Iraq.

These student protests have always been on the right side of history.

Today, many ordinary people around the world are disenchanted with mainstream political parties. They sense that these parties are not representing their interests.

Many in Malaysia may feel the same way, as the turnouts in recent by-elections have fallen. For instance, only 53 per cent of those aged 18-24 reportedly turned out to vote in the recent Kuala Kubu Bharu by-election.

The crisis of confidence may be due to the impact of neoliberal policies across the world since the 1980s. These policies have led to privatisation, deregulation of big business and finance, and the lowering of taxes for the wealthy. Lower tax revenue means less money available for social spending for the poor.

“Through squeezing workers, dodging tax, privatising the state and spurring climate breakdown, corporations are driving inequality and acting in the service of delivering ever-greater wealth to their rich owners,” Oxfam researchers noted.

“To end extreme inequality, governments must radically redistribute the power of billionaires and corporations back to ordinary people,” the researchers said.

But is this happening? During Jesus' time, ordinary people suffered under the yoke of oppression and a sharp hike in taxes on the masses.

Jesus identified with the victims of injustice and oppression — the fisherfolk, the farmers and the outcasts. They were increasingly feeling the pinch of “Roman Mediterranean globalisation” (as New Testament scholar John Dominic Crossan puts it).

As Christians, we are called to be in solidarity with the victims of economic oppression and even genocide.

“You can't claim to be a person of faith or

a follower of Jesus and not be compassionate about victims of injustice and not be compassionate about the least of these [people], as Jesus described them,” says Rev Munther Isaac, a Palestinian Christian pastor.

“God — the way I understand the Bible — always sides with the oppressed, with the marginalised, with the poor.”

Indeed, God sent Jesus to be in solidarity with the poor (“I have come to bring the good news to the poor”).

As Munther observes, with the genocide in Gaza in mind: “If God is in solidarity with the oppressed, God's solidarity must become our solidarity. Neutrality is not an option. Neutrality is siding with the oppressor.” Neither is despair and apathy an option for us.

Apart from the question of “Who rules the world?”, Chomsky says it might be useful to raise another question: “What principles and values rule the world?”

Jesus provides the answer in his “charter” outlined in the Beatitudes. Luke has Jesus saying, “Blessed are the poor” which may be closer to what Jesus said.

But Matthew puts it as, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.”

So, which is it?

Matthew is probably not trying to soften the Beatitudes to make them more palatable. Perhaps he is aiming at a different target audience — exhorting those who are better off to become “poor in spirit”. This is not a cop-out, but a call for them to express solidarity with the materially poor — in the same way that several of the wealthier followers of Jesus expressed solidarity with the poor and Jesus' kingdom project.

Only with this sense of solidarity with the poor and the victims of injustice can we, with the Spirit's help, build a new, more just Creation — from the bottom up and from the periphery.

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



A BLESSED LIFE

Tianne Ramona Pereira

Mummy!! Yes, baby? Mummy!! Yes? Mummy!! What?? Mummy!!

This is one of the most recurrent conversations that take place at home between my two-year-old and I. And I do admit there are times I wish I could just press pause. Once an independent, out and about woman, I have come to realise now that nothing is really about me anymore, and I mean nothing! Hold your horses, I am not complaining, but I must admit I needed a reminder — and I got just that during the recent Mother's Day celebrations, as messages were flying across. I was reminded of how for years I was on my knees begging God to let me be a mother. We struggled with pregnancy for a while. In fact, I call my son the community baby because I truly believe he is a result of the magnitude of prayers and petitions by our family, friends, our church family, priests, religious and just everyone we are so blessed to have in our lives.

You see, when my husband Philip and I got married, we were not a young couple. While we knew we wanted kids we were not really in a hurry. But as every newly-wed couple would have it, we were bombarded with the “when are you going to have a baby?” question which I must admit brought about the baby itch. We finally started trying to conceive but little did we know what lay ahead.

I remember the first time I got pregnant. I was over the moon. It was so hard to contain my joy. I immediately wrapped the test in a little brown box, filled it with little riddles to surprise my husband and recorded the whole emotional reveal. We were ecstatic and shared the good news with everyone near and dear to us. A few weeks in, we went for our monthly scan only for the doctor to inform us that our baby had not grown, but he assured us these things happen and asked us to come back again in a month. Every day I would talk to baby, I would sing songs and record in my baby journal prayers and feelings I had — I had fallen in love with this little being in me that I had not even seen. A month later, I remember the excitement I felt as I got ready for our check-up. Gloom made its first appearance when we were told we had a missed miscarriage — meaning the baby was no longer alive but my body did not recognise the pregnancy loss. Not too long after I got pregnant again, and lost my baby again, and again.

The fourth time I got pregnant, I was too nervous to get excited. And just as before, a few weeks into the pregnancy I bled yet again. I was just dazed and decided that was it, it was time to give up on this idea of motherhood. I was too emotionally drained to deal with my losses, so I carried on with life. I fell back into my exercise routine in no time, went on my runs and started

doing high intensity workouts allowing the adrenalin to block the numbing pain of yet another defeat. I had to make an unplanned doctor's visit because I felt physically sick, and to our utter surprise I was still pregnant and my baby had a strong heartbeat. I was immediately put on bed rest and fast forward to today,

I have my beautiful two year old little miracle — Josiah Ezrael, who never fails to ensure everything in my house is out of place, is always on the quest for my undivided attention, gives me angst by refusing to eat anything I prepare, and swells my heart with a whole other level of love, joy and pride.

In Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, we see a poetic depiction of the ebb and flow, the rise and fall, the planting and uprooting that outlines our earthly existence. In these verses, God reveals that time is not a random sequence of events but a meticulously crafted framework designed by Him. Trusting in God's timing is a crucial part of our faith journey. Often, His timing may not align perfectly with our expectations or the timelines we have set for ourselves, but it is in these times that we are called to surrender our yearnings and trust the One who sees the bigger picture. In my case, while I had given up, I had a battalion in my family and Church community keeping my desire alive with their unwavering faith and prayers.

If you are a parent, there might be times you feel like you are the only person in the world

struggling, and the “perfect” world of social media helps to rub it in our faces. But guess what? Everyone is struggling in one way or another — no one really has it figured out, and it is alright. This is when we must learn to trust and depend on God.

Like me, we all get stuck in the routine of life. Our day starts with the alarm clock, prepare meals, off to work, come home to more work, off to bed, repeat. The specifics may be different for each of us, but the result is usually the same — we tend to be so focused on where we are headed, we forget to stop and look back at how far we have come. We miss all the little miracles along the way. We take for granted all the prayers that have actually been answered. Occasionally, something has to happen before we snap out of the routine and are reminded of our blessings.

I write this simple and personal little story to remind myself and anyone who needs to hear it, be patient with God and with yourself. We are often in a hurry when God isn't. He will use our entire lifetime to prepare us for what He has in store. You may not be where you want to be, but neither are you where you used to be — never forget that!

● **Tianne Ramona Pereira** identifies first as a Catholic daughter, sister, wife and mother. From years in the media industry, she eventually started and continues to run her own businesses while teaching part-time. She has been actively serving in church for as far back as she can remember and is involved in various charities.

Don't be in a hurry, God isn't



Unsplash/Phil Heering



Fr Ron Rolheiser

The dark night as impasse

What happens to us when we experience a dark night of the soul? What's happening and what's to be our response?

There are libraries of literature on this, each book or article making its own point, but here I want to share a rather unique and highly insightful take on this by Constance FitzGerald, a Carmelite nun and someone well versed in the various classical spiritual writers who speak about the dark night of the soul.

She uses the word "impasse" to render what is commonly called a dark night of the soul. For her, in effect, what happens in a dark night of the soul is that you come to an "impasse" in your life in terms of your emotions, your intellect, and your imagination. All the former ways you understood, imagined, and felt about things, especially as this relates to God, faith, and prayer, no longer work for you. You are, so to speak, paralysed, unable to go back to the way things were and unable to move forward. And part of the paralysis is that you cannot think, imagine, or feel your way out of this. You are at an impasse — no way back and no way forward. So, what do you do? How do you move beyond the impasse?

There's no simple or quick path out of this. You cannot imagine, think, or feel your way

out of this because the vision, symbols, answers, and feelings you need, in effect, don't exist yet, at least they don't exist for you. That's the exact reason why you are at an impasse and so emotionally and intellectually paralysed. The new vision and feelings that can reset your vision, thoughts, and feelings first have to be gestated and given birth to through your own pain and confusion.

At this stage, there is no answer, at least not for you. You may have read accounts of others who have undergone the same impasse and who now offer counsel as to how to undergo the dark night. That can be useful, but it's still your heart, your imagination, and your intellect that are in the crucible of fire. Knowing that others have gone through the same fire can help give you vision and consolation in your paralysis, but the fire must still be gone through in your own life to reset your own imagination, thoughts, and feelings.

For FitzGerald, being in this state is the ultimate liminal space within which we can find ourselves. This is a crucible within which we are being purified. And, for her, *the way out is the way through*. The way out of a dark night of this kind is through "contemplation", namely, staying with the impasse, waiting patiently inside it, and waiting for God to break the impasse by transforming

our imagination, intellect, and heart.

So ultimately, this impasse is a challenge for us to become mystics, not that we begin to search for extraordinary religious experience, but that we let our disillusion, broken symbols, and failed meanings become the space wherein God can reset our faith, feelings, imagination, and intellect inside of a new horizon wherein everything is radically reinterpreted.

How do we do this concretely? How do we contemplate? We do it by sitting in the tension, helpless, patient, open, waiting, and staying there however long it takes for us to receive in the depth of our souls a new way of imagining, thinking, and feeling about God, faith, and prayer — beyond the impasse.

Moreover, the broken symbols, the disillusion, and our helplessness to think or feel our way out of the impasse is precisely what assures us that the new vision which is given to us comes from God and is not the product of own imagination or projection or self-interest.

One of the most penetrating criticisms of religious experience ever given was made by Friedrich Nietzsche who claimed that all religious experience, all of it, is ultimately human projection. He argued that we create God in our self-image and likeness for our

own self-interest, and that is why a lot of sincere faith and religion can be hypocritical and false. Reacting to this, Michael Buckley, the renowned Jesuit philosopher, and theologian, made this counterclaim: Nietzsche is 95 per cent correct. Ninety-five per cent of what claims to be religious experience is in fact human projection. But, Buckley adds, Nietzsche is five per cent wrong and that five per cent makes all the difference — *because in that five per cent God's revelation flows untainted in our lives*.

Now, and this is the essential point here, that 5% happens precisely when we are in a dark night of the soul, when our symbols are broken, our intellect is impotent, our imagination is empty, and our hearts are at loss. It is precisely then, when we are helpless to help ourselves that we are also helpless to fudge and taint the way God is entering us.

God can flow into our lives pure and untainted when we are at an impasse and unable to substitute our vision for God's vision.

● **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**

'A Jubilee grace': Vatican announces Holy Year Indulgence

In the wake of the Second Vatican Council, Pope St Paul VI taught, "An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints." Indulgences are plenary (full) or partial depending on whether they remove all or part of the temporal punishment due to sin.

Becoming pilgrims of hope

Recalling Pope Francis' invitation to all Christians to become "pilgrims" of hope, the Apostolic Penitentiary's Decree is intended "to encourage the souls of the faithful and nourish the pious desire to obtain the [Jubilee] Indulgence seen as a gift of grace specific to the Holy Year."

Hope, the Decree says, "is a virtue that must be sourced above all in the grace of God and in the fullness of His mercy." Recalling the Pope's declaration that the Jubilee Indulgence "is a way of discovering the unlimited nature of God's mercy," the Penitentiary says, "The [Holy Year] Indulgence, therefore, is a Jubilee grace."

"The Indulgence, therefore, is a Jubilee grace."

After confirming that all other indulgences remain in force, the Penitentiary establishes three main ways to gain the Jubilee Indulgence: Pilgrimages to any sacred Jubilee site; pious visits to sacred places, and works of mercy and penance.

Pilgrimages

The first category of Jubilee places includes the four Major Papal Basilicas in Rome (St Peter's, St John Lateran, St Mary Major, and St Paul's Outside the Walls); and the Holy Land Basilicas of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the Nativity in Bethlehem, and the Annunciation in Nazareth; as well as Cathedrals and other

The Catholic faithful will have multiple ways to gain the Jubilee Indulgence for the 2025 Holy Year, according to a new decree promulgated by the Apostolic Penitentiary – the Vatican Office with overall responsibility for the granting and use of indulgences.



Pilgrimage destination: Saint Peter's Basilica. (Vatican News)

churches or sacred places designated by Bishops in the particular Churches.

The Indulgence can be gained by "devoutly" participating in Holy Mass at the site, or by taking part in a Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Hours (Office of Readings, Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer), the *Via Crucis*, the Rosary, the Akathist Hymn, or a penitential service that includes individual confessions.

Visits to sacred places

The "sacred places" described in the second category include the Roman Basilicas of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, San Lorenzo al Verano, and San Sebastiano; as well as the Sanctuary of Divine Love (Divino Amore), the Church of St Paul in Tre Fontane, and the Catacombs. Special mention is made of the churches of the Jubilee Pathways linked to member countries of the European Union and to female Patron Saints and Doctors of the Church.

Other sacred places throughout the world include two Basilicas in Assisi, Marian sanctuaries in Italy, and "any minor basilica,

cathedral church, co-cathedral church, Marian sanctuary, or any distinguished churches designated by local bishops.

The faithful are required to spend a "suitable" amount of time during their visit in Eucharistic adoration and meditation, concluding with the recitation of the Our Father, any legitimate form of the Creed, and invocations to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Those who cannot go on pilgrimage or make a visit to a sacred place for serious reasons will be able to gain the Indulgence wherever they are by uniting themselves spiritually with those who do so, and reciting the Our Father, the Creed, and other prayers connected with the Holy Year while offering up their sufferings or hardships.

Works of mercy and penance

Finally, the Decree provides for the ability to obtain the Indulgence by performing works of mercy and penance.

They can do so by taking part in popular missions, spiritual exercises, or formation

activities on the documents of Vatican II and the Catechism, according to the mind of the Holy Father; or by visiting those in need ("in a sense, making a pilgrimage to Christ present in them").

Similarly, they can offer acts of penance (such as fasting and abstinence), donate to the poor, support religious and charitable works ("especially in defence of life in all its phases"), or engage in other volunteer activities.

Duties of bishops and priests

The Apostolic Penitentiary also grants Bishops the possibility of imparting the Papal Blessing "on the occasion of the main Jubilee celebration in the cathedral and in individual Jubilee Churches, with the Indulgence for all those who receive the Blessing, with the usual conditions.

The Decree strongly urges "all priests" to be generous in offering occasions for sacramental Reconciliation, notably recalling the possibility of hearing Confessions while Mass is being celebrated. Priests accompanying pilgrimage groups outside of their diocese are granted faculties to make use of the same faculties granted them in their own dioceses, while confessors in Papal Basilicas and elsewhere will be granted special faculties as well.

Priests are invited to give penances that will be conducive to "stable repentance," and to encourage penitents "to repair any scandal and damages" they have caused by their sins.

Concluding the Decree, the Apostolic Penitentiary, reminding bishops of their office of teaching, guiding, and sanctifying, "warmly" invites them "to explain clearly the provisions and principles proposed here for the sanctification of the faithful, taking account of local circumstances, cultures and traditions."

— **By Christopher Wells, Vatican News**

● *The full text of the Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary, with all the details of the Jubilee Indulgence, can be found on the Holy See website (<https://bit.ly/4bDbEZX>)*

Little Catholics' Corner

Dear children,

Jesus taught us that God is not just one Person, but three Persons in one God. The three Persons in God are God the Father, God the Son Who is Jesus and God the Holy Spirit.

The three Persons in God know each other perfectly and all want the exact same thing. The Blessed Trinity is a mystery that we can't really understand.

It is the three Persons of God loving each other so much we could never even measure or understand

it!

And God, the Blessed Trinity, decided to create us so that we could adore them and join in their love! That's what Heaven is — being with the Blessed Trinity in total happiness forever!

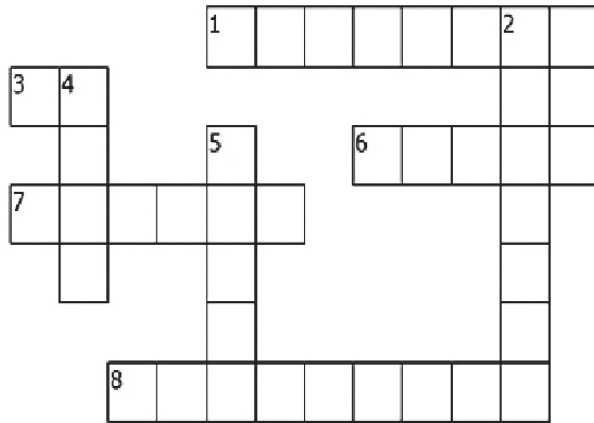
We pray that the Blessed Trinity

will be glorified by all creatures when we say this prayer: Glory Be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

Love
Aunty Eliz



Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19)



FOR THOSE WHO ARE LED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD (ROMANS 8:14)

Colour the picture



ACROSS

1. Giving instruction to a group of students
3. The opposite of stop
6. The planet on which we live
7. The place where God lives
8. Followers of Jesus

DOWN

2. Groups of people living in certain area; countries
4. To follow the commands, rules or guidance
5. The Son of God

EARTH
JESUS

TEACHING
DISCIPLES

GO
OBEY

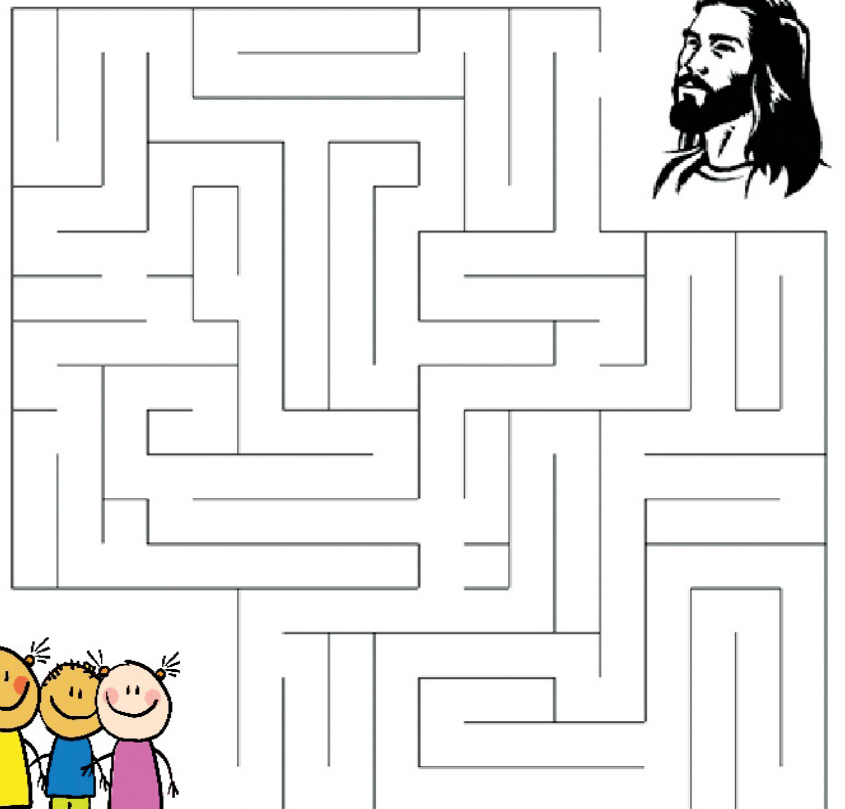
HEAVEN
NATIONS

OBEY
JESUS
BAPTIZING
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DISCIPLES
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HEAVEN
MAKE
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COMMANDED
WORSHIPED
AUTHORITY
TEACHING
ELEVEN
GIVEN

M X H H S W K T E A C H I N G
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A J B A T M K A K G P I T X X
O E O A Z C A A Y I C R P Y F
N S N T K R M N C S A U I E Z
J U Q A I J W S D E E R Z D D
H S Z N J C I F B E G D D L Z
G I V E N D K B T H D I B R S

(Mt. 28,18-20)

I can help my friends find the way to Jesus!



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YOUTH

May 26, 2024

YOU M.A.D

YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE

KAMPAR, Perak: Caritas Penang held its inaugural Youth Camp, titled YOU M.A.D (You Make A Difference), at the Church of the Sacred Heart Church. This event brought together 40 young people from the diocese to experience the Catholic Church's social mission.

The camp aimed to instil in the youth the belief that they matter and can make a difference in the world. The title was inspired by Caritas President Bishop Bernard Paul's message to the youth (ref. *HERALD*, December 1, 2023).

The camp's objectives included fostering community among the young people of the diocese and engaging them in meaningful activities and social mission initiatives. Participants were guided to understand their purpose as individuals and young followers of Christ, culminating in a community exposure visit.

Joshua Jerome Robert, a World Youth Day 2023 pilgrim, led a session titled *Youth With A Mission*. He spoke about finding one's purpose, listening to God's voice, and the importance of obedience at a young age. Joshua introduced the IKIGAI

model to help participants understand their reason for being and encouraged them to reflect on the challenges and sins that might hinder their purpose.

Pauline Yeo from Caritas Malaysia conducted a session on the *Union of Hearts and Minds*, involving activities that prompted self-reflection and understanding. She emphasised the balance between being and doing in social missions and discussed five key areas: Advocacy, Awareness, Empowerment, Reaching Out, and Working Together. Participants shared their insights and learned practical applications of these areas.

Fr Simon Anand, head of Penang Diocesan Youth Network (PDYN) and parish priest of the Church of the Sacred Heart spoke about serving the marginalised community. The highlight of the camp was a visit to three different marginalised communities around Kampar. Participants, divided into groups, brought gifts and were warmly welcomed with joy, songs, and home-cooked food. The visits began with prayer, praise, and worship,



followed by learning traditional dances and fellowship. These experiences were eye-opening, showing the participants the happiness and love within these communities despite their challenging circumstances.

The camp aimed to break the stereotype that charity is only about money and that

volunteering is for the elderly. Through talks, sharing sessions, and visits, participants experienced firsthand how they can make a difference by being and doing the Jesus' way.

Dear young people of Christ, indeed YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE! Let's unleash the Caritas within us!

INSIGHTS FROM THE PARTICIPANTS

"I enjoyed and felt connected to Jesus during the Spiritual Conversations. The visit to the outreach village made me realise how the marginalised are happy with what they have and make the most of it."

"I thought we were going to show love to them, but I felt so much love from them. It felt like they were my long-lost family. I learned that being and doing is how to sustain a relationship with Jesus."

"I've come to realise that charity isn't solely about material aid. It's about being present, embodying love, and standing in truth. My time at the migrants' village was profoundly humbling; their warm welcome still resonates with me. I'm dedicated to continuing my missionary work in every small gesture I can offer. Thank you, Caritas, for showing me the true essence of giving."

"No one is too young or too old to make a difference in someone's life; it's never too late to start God's work. I thank the You M.A.D team for the opportunity to visit the marginalised community as it was a great way to bring Christ to others."

"I believe I am already a youth with a mission after reflecting during the camp. One of the leaders said purpose never ends; so, I will serve however I can because, for every phase in my life, God has a purpose for me."



Empowering Gen Z

Nurturing Christian Vocations and Influencers

By Dominic G. Joeph

KOTA KINABALU, Sabah: Each Vocations Sunday, a resounding call echoes forth, summoning passionate, dedicated, and capable young individuals from Generation Z (Gen Z) to contemplate a life dedicated to the priesthood or religious vocation.

However, vocation surpasses mere entrance into the priesthood or embracing a consecrated life. In a religious context, vocation signifies God's call to serve Him in the world. This divine summons unfolds through the sacraments of 'Baptism' and 'Confirmation,' guiding individuals toward a particular life path. Whether as a single person, married individual, ordained priest, or vowed religious, one can heed God's call in various ways.

Pope Francis summarised the essence of our 'Christian Vocation' in his message for the 61st World Day of Prayer for Vocations, observed by the Church on April 21. He stated, "Our life finds fulfilment when we discover who we are, our gifts, where they can bear fruit, and what path we can follow to become signs and instruments of love, generous acceptance, beauty, and peace, wherever we are."

Emphasising the theme *Called to sow seeds of hope and to build peace*, the Pope's message underscores the holistic nature of vocation. Therefore, by embracing this comprehensive understanding, Church leaders can engage positively with Gen Z.

In his book, *The Happiest People On Earth* Demos Shakarian, founder of the 'Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International' (FGBMFI), shares a profound insight: "The Lord tells each one of us to go with whatever gift He has given — knowing that when we find that gift and use it, no matter what the condition of the world around us, we will be the happiest people on earth."



This sentiment echoes Pope Francis' summary of our 'Christian Vocation.' In October 1974, Demos Shakarian was honoured with an invitation to the Vatican, acknowledging the pivotal role of the 'Fellowship' in reaching out to a vast number of Catholic laymen.

Recognising the importance of building rapport and empowering Generation Z as Christian influencers, initiatives like the recent talk organised by the FGB Sabah Chapter titled *Enlivening and Empowering the Gen Z for Kingdom Work* are crucial in sustaining the concept of 'vocation' in the 21st century.

The speaker, Dr John Ng from Singapore, serves as the Chief Passionary Officer of Meta Consulting, spearheading transformative projects with leading corporations. Additionally, he holds the position of Honorary Chair at the Eagles Leadership Institute, dedicated to nurturing



value-based leaders, and has authored several influential books.

During his presentation, Dr John skillfully amalgamated a wealth of credible data and personal experiences, explaining key insights on bridging the gap between Church leaders and the Gen Z Christian community.

He initiated the dialogue with a poignant inquiry: "What do you believe are the foremost challenges confronting young people today?" He emphasised the necessity of confronting these contemporary challenges head-on.

One attendee astutely remarked, cautioning against assumptions that high attendance at Church events necessarily indicates commitment to Christian vocation among Gen Z. They might simply seek leisure, stress relief, socialisation, or entertainment.

Other feedback underscored the Gen Z's quest for genuine, competent, and unassuming spiritual mentors, cautioning against the superficiality of titles within the Church hierarchy. Another voice cautioned against underestimating the discernment of Gen Z.

The pervasive influence of the digital era

has left many Gen Z individuals disillusioned and disengaged, inundated by a deluge of misinformation and trapped in self-reinforcing echo chambers. Consequently, they grapple with a sense of hopelessness and apathy.

However, amidst this complex landscape, a counselor urged discernment, noting that while many Gen Z members outwardly conform to societal norms, their subconscious mindset diverges significantly, ensconced within their echo chambers.

Dr John proposed a comprehensive strategy for Church leaders to engage and empower Gen Z as Christian influencers, advocating for the creation of safe spaces for substantive discussions and the formation of peer groups like PACT (Peer Accountability for Creative Thriving).

Furthermore, he emphasised the imperative for Church leaders to embody values of authenticity, humility, and openness, fostering an environment conducive to breaking the echo chamber mentality. Creative learning approaches, community impact projects, and proactive talent scouting were also highlighted as essential tactics.

As he concluded the session, Dr John emphasised the importance of nurturing young people within the Church not only to groom future leaders but also to harness their potential contributions. Drawing parallels with biblical narratives, he highlighted instances where God utilised young individuals like Timothy (cf Acts 20:1) to accomplish remarkable feats, underscoring the significance of investing in the youth for the Church's vitality and continuity.

It's important to note that the challenges of engaging Gen Z in matters of vocation and faith are not exclusive to Christian denominations alone but extend to the Catholic Church as well. The issues of disillusionment, disengagement, and the echo chamber effect are prevalent across various religious communities, necessitating a concerted effort to address them holistically.

JOHOR: The annual Malacca Johore Catholics on Campus (MJCC) Appreciation Dinner was held May 3 at the Goodhope Hotel, bringing together guests from other Catholic Students' Societies (CSS) and Christian Fellowships (CF) throughout the diocese.

Celebrating diversity and inclusivity, the MJCC Dinner welcomed guests from diverse backgrounds, mainly from Sabah and Sarawak, reflecting the diocese's ethos of unity and collaboration. Through dialogue and mutual respect, attendees reaffirmed their commitment to building a more equitable and inclusive society.

The evening commenced with a speech by Bishop Bernard Paul, who reflected on two journeys as a student — the academic journey and the journey of faith as a Catholic youth. Then, the event proceeded with a speech by the MJD representative, Daryl Tan and the graduating senior's representative, Ignatius (CSS BASIC), both of who shared about how grateful they are to be in a Catholic community.

Beyond commemorating achievements, the dinner provided a platform for networking and fostering new connections. Attendees mingled over delectable cuisine and engaging conversations, seizing the opportunity to exchange ideas and forge partnerships aimed at furthering shared



Annual MJCC Dinner brings student community together

goals. Not only that, we also played a game where all the participants have to walk around and get to know with each other. Some of the CSS and CF gave incredible performances to entertain all the attendees while enjoying their wonderful dinner.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of certificates, honouring all

the graduating seniors and committees for their outstanding contributions from each CSS and CF throughout Melaka and Johor. From leadership excellence to innovation and community service, Catholics on Campus has shown great contribution towards fostering a culture of faith and community where students can grow spiritually, intellectually and emotionally.

As the evening reached to an end, anticipation filled the air for the year ahead. Attendees enjoyed a fun evening (with an open floor) dancing and singing together. With the energised spirit of unity and shared purpose, attendees departed with renewed determination to continue making a positive impact in their communities and beyond. — **By Carl Chester Conrad**

Legacy of the Tibhirine martyrs



On May 8, the Catholic Church observed the feast of the Seven Martyrs of Tibhirine, commemorating the lives and ultimate sacrifice of some monks, who were killed during the Algerian Civil War.

The seven members of the Trappist Order of the Abbey of Our Lady of Atlas in Tibhirine were taken from their monastery March 26-27, 1996. They were subjected to captivity for two months, and their mortal remains were discovered at the end of May.

Their narrative is deeply ingrained with the essence of martyrdom, their lives an embodiment of unwavering faith, and their actions a testament to their dedication to the teachings of Christ in the face of formidable adversity.

The Tibhirine monks give hope and spiritual encouragement. Their steadfast dedication to a vocation of servitude, delineated by humility and compassion, presents a stark antithesis to the divisive oratory maneuvers of extremist sects.

The tragic abduction and subsequent martyrdom of the monks is enshrouded in mystery and contention. Initially, responsibility was claimed by the Armed Islamic Group (Groupe Islamique Armé, GIA), yet further inquiry doubted that assertion, suggesting the possible complicity of other forces, including elements of the Algerian army.

Amid these uncertainties, the profound devotion of those monks to their divine calling shines forth, illuminated by their actions and sacrifices in the days preceding their capture.

The militant group recurrently threatened their existence, and the government warned them to retreat to their ancestral homeland of France. Yet, they stood resolute in their mission's continuation. The distinctiveness of the Martyrs of Tibhirine lies in their unwavering determination to avoid alignment with any combative entities.

Electing instead to immerse themselves within the Muslim community, they dedicated their lives to the collective betterment, serving as luminaries of Christ's teachings. Amid looming peril and intimidation, their devotion remained unshaken, epitomising

their commitment to Christ and the welfare of the community they tried to uplift.

Their existence and martyrdom manifest the profound capacity of faith to enact transformation and encapsulate the divine imperative towards universal love and solidarity. Their actions were motivated by an abiding love for the people they served, transcending self-preservation.

The legacy of the Tibhirine Martyrs' sacrificial witness compels us as Christians to prioritise dialogue and mutual understanding among diverse religious communities. This message resonates profoundly within the context of our Asian churches, some of whom are confronting internal struggles with religious extremism and sectarianism.

In this critical juncture, religious leaders across all faith traditions must unite in denouncing extremist factions that sow seeds of division and hatred. Whether within Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, or even among atheists, the challenge of confronting radical ideologies transcends religious boundaries.

By collectively advocating for tolerance, respect, and dialogue, religious leaders can effectively combat the spread of extremism and cultivate a culture of coexistence and understanding. Through concerted efforts to promote unity and mutual respect, the Church and religious leaders worldwide can embody the transformative power of faith in fostering lasting peace and harmony.

The commemoration of the Seven Martyrs of Tibhirine presents an occasion for adherents across diverse spiritual traditions to reaffirm their dedication to peace, love, and unity. In an era marred by conflict and discord, the lives of the monks of Tibhirine stand as a beacon of faith's capacity for transformation and the critical role of interfaith dialogue in forging a society characterised by justice and harmony.

The martyrs encourage Christians to strive for a global community where individuals, irrespective of their faith traditions, coexist in tranquillity and reciprocal esteem. — **By Midhun J Francis, Matters India**

MEMORIAM

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Tel: 03-2026 8291

In Loving Memory of



Born:
8 October 1955

Departed:
10 April 2024

Benaventer Basillas

Son of Late Joseph Basillas & Late Daisy Cornelia Anthony Basillas

Late brothers: Mathews Basillas, James Xaviour Basillas &
Late sister-in-law: Shamala Fernandez Basillas.

Leaving behind & sadly mourned by:

Beloved wife: Margaret Sarathee Basillas,

Beloved daughter: Melvina Basillas Nair,

Beloved son-in-law: Ugenthiran Krishnan Nair & beloved grandchildren:
Churvineesch Nair, Narvineesch Nair & Wvroomvineesch Nair,

Beloved son: Roysten Basillas,

Beloved nephews: Merwyn Jonathan Basillas & family
and Kenneth Basillas.

Beloved sister: Telmah Basillas Lopez &

Beloved brother-in-law: Joseph Nicholas Lopez.

Remembering his life journey with the beloved families of Joosa, Lopez, Sarathee, Krishnan Nair, Vincent, Moses, Stanislaus, Fernandez, Ross, Brigetts, Bosco, Benjamin, Pereira, his dearest friend Dr. Sebastian Joseph & all relatives & friends in Malaysia, Singapore & India.

Our heartfelt thanks to Rev. Father Augustine & Congregation of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Cameron Highlands, and to dear Helena & Francis and friends of Roysten.

"With agonising & sobbing heart, I, your Chaychee, flip the last page of your life and lay down your anguished cry, shattered hopes and broken heart at the feet of Our Lord Jesus Christ. And I say Thank You Jesus."

"Just let it be Lord, just let it be."

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Girly Pereira-Grogan
10.2.1949 – 25.5.2023

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Your love and memories
still live on,
in our hearts forever.*

Deeply missed and loved
by Husband:
Patrick James Grogan,
Siblings, family
and relatives.

11th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



LARRY GEORGE
7th November 1955
28th May 2013

*In our hearts there's a
place called Memory
Lane. In it dear brother,
you will always remain.
Deeply missed and love
you dearly.*

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REST IN PEACE

Cardinal Sebastian assumes canonical possession of titular church in Rome

By Patricia Pereira

KUALA LUMPUR: Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang, officially assumed canonical possession of his titular church, Parrocchia Santa Maria Causa Nostrae Laetitiae (Church of Holy Mary, Cause of Our Joy), in Rome on the Feast of the Ascension, May 12.

A titular church is a church within the Diocese of Rome assigned to a Cardinal, signifying his honorary membership in the Roman clergy under the authority of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope. This designation reflects the cardinal's connection to the Roman clergy and symbolises the bond of communion between the Malaysian Church and the Universal Church.

Concelebrating with the cardinal at the Mass was the parish priest of the Church of Holy Mary, Cause of Our Joy, Fr Marco Santarelli, Fr Andrew Khoo (Institute of the Incarnate Word), and Fr Joachim Robert from the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang (currently in Rome for studies), along with other clergy. The ceremony was attended by members from the religious congregations and the local parish community.

In his homily, Cardinal Sebastian spoke to the congregation about the enduring mission of Jesus Christ, carried forward by His Apostles and now entrusted to all believers. Reflecting on the events following Christ's death and resurrection, he emphasised the apostles' obedience to their missionary mandate, highlighting the continuity of this mission which reaches across the globe, including Asia.



Parrocchia Santa Maria Causa Nostrae Laetitiae (Church of Holy Mary, Cause of Our Joy)



Mass at Torre Gaia, one of the three sectors of the Cardinal's Titular parish of Holy Mary, Cause of Our Joy.

The prelate stressed the important role of the Holy Spirit, sent by God the Father and the Son, as the driving force behind the Church's mission and its unity. "The Holy Spirit is the prime mover of Mission and Communion," he proclaimed, urging the faithful to align themselves with "Team Holy Spirit."

He reminded the congregation that although Jesus Christ is no longer physically present, He transcends time and space, interceding for humanity from His place at the right hand of the Father. Cardinal Francis recounted Christ's promise to return as judge, king, and bridegroom, uniting with the Church in a shared cry of "Maranatha."

The cardinal also paid tribute to the Virgin Mary, whom he referred to as "the Cause of our Joy," highlighting her intercessory role and spiritual presence alongside her Son in Heaven.

Cardinal Sebastian acknowledged the governance structure of the Church, noting that each diocese is under the care of a bishop, with all churches unified under the Pope, the

Bishop of Rome. He expressed gratitude for his own appointment as a cardinal by Pope Francis, reflecting on the unity this membership symbolises within the global Church.

He called on the congregation to embrace their mutual responsibility of prayer and to engage in the synodal journey of the Church, emphasising communal spiritual conversations, celebrations, and shared responsibilities with their parish priest.

In anticipation of Pentecost, the cardinal offered an early gift to the congregation. He described it as wrapped in humility and containing the essence of "Life in the Holy

Spirit: Grace and Providence." He explained that grace comes in five "flavours" — beauty, freedom, sacrifice, truth, and love — supported by "muscles and willpower."

Cardinal Sebastian then extended his blessings to the parish community as they prepare for Pentecost, promising to remember them while celebrating back home at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Penang.

During his trip to Rome from May 7 to 16, the cardinal also made visitations to the Dicastery for Integral Human Development, Dicastery for Social Communications, and Dicastery for the Evangelisation of Peoples.



Meeting with Paolo Ruffini (left), prefect of the Dicastery for Communication



Briefing before the Mass.



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