

The Catholic Weekly HERALD

Mission Statement

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

TERHAD

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And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

Hebr 10:11-12



Dedication of new Church of the Holy Name of Mary

■ P5



Risen Christ parish hosts relics exposition

■ P6



My synodality began with the Montfort youth

■ P12



(The Edge Malaysia)

VATICAN: “The prayer of the poor rises up to God” is the theme for this year’s World Day of the Poor, celebrated annually on the third Sunday of November. The 2024 edition will be the eighth of its kind after Pope Francis called for the day in 2017 and it comes just as Rome prepares to welcome pilgrims from around the world for the 2025 Jubilee year. In this regard, Pope Francis writes in his message for the World Day that “this expression of biblical wisdom is most fitting”.

He explains that “Christian hope embraces the certainty that our prayer reaches God’s presence; not just any prayer but rather, the prayer of the poor!” So, as the year of anticipation for the Jubilee draws to a close, the Holy Father urges the faithful to reflect on this word and “read” it on the faces and in the stories of the poor whom we encounter daily, “so that prayer can become a path of communion with them and a sharing in their suffering”.

The expression that gives the 2024 World Day of the Poor its theme is taken from the Book of Sirach, which Pope Francis says is not sufficiently known and deserves to be discovered for the richness of its themes.

One of these themes is prayer. The author, Ben Sira, a teacher and scribe from the 2nd Century BC, gives personal experience to his voice, and he does so successfully, says the Pope, as “no writing on prayer can be effective and fruitful if it does not stem from someone who stands daily in God’s presence and listens to His Word”. In fact, Ben Sira himself declared that he sought wisdom from his prayers.

On this journey, he discovered that the poor hold a privileged place in God’s heart. “God knows the sufferings of His children because He is an attentive and caring father,” said the Pope. “As a father, He takes care of those who are most in need: the poor, the marginalised, the suffering and the forgotten. No one is excluded from His heart, for in His eyes, we are all poor and needy”.

Pope Francis goes on to note that unfortunately, the mentality that governs the world today asks of us that we become somebody and make a name for ourselves “at any cost” but, Pope Francis warns, “Happiness cannot be acquired by trampling on the rights and

dignity of others”.

The violence caused by wars clearly shows the arrogance of those who consider themselves to be powerful before men and women, says the Pope, adding that however, the truth is that “they are poor in the eyes of God”.

“How many more people are impoverished by misguided policies involving weapons! How many innocent victims! Yet we cannot turn our backs to this reality”.

As we think of these horrific realities, in this year dedicated to prayer, we “need to make the prayer of the poor our own and pray together with them”, says the Pope.

Addressing the poor directly, the Pope says not to lose the certainty that “God is attentive to each of you and is close to you”. As the book of Sirach asserts, “the Lord’s judgment will be in favour of the poor” and from poverty, therefore, “the song of the most genuine hope can spring up”.

Pope Francis goes on to express his gratitude for the World Day that has become a fixture for every ecclesial community. “It is a pastoral opportunity not to be underestimated” and an “occasion to implement initiatives that concretely help the poor”. For this, he added, “We must

thank the Lord for the people who make themselves available to listen to and support the poorest among us”.

Let us also remember the countless individuals in our cities who dedicate much of their time to listening to and supporting the poor. These ordinary people, through their actions, “give voice to God’s response to the prayers of those who turn to Him” (n.7). The World Day of the Poor offers us an opportunity to recognise and thank the Lord for each of them.

Pope Francis calls on everyone to offer more profound spiritual attention to the poor, who not only need God but also a human presence — a tangible sign of listening and closeness.

Bringing his message to a close, Pope Francis explains that prayer is verified by authentic charity that manifests itself as encounter and proximity. “If prayer does not translate into concrete action, it is in vain; indeed, “faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead”. However, he concludes, “charity without prayer risks becoming philanthropy that soon exhausts itself”.

Francesca Merlo, Vatican News

To read the full message go to: <https://shorturl.at/FROU7>

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Today, November 17, we mark the 8th World Day of the Poor, a powerful reminder of the Church's sacred responsibility not only to hear the cry of the poor but to respond with active compassion. This year's theme, *The prayer of the poor rises up to God*, invites us to recognise the spiritual depth that often accompanies material poverty. While the world may view the poor as powerless or insignificant, their prayers rise directly to the heart of God. Their vulnerability reveals a profound truth: greatness in the Kingdom of God is not measured by wealth, status, or power, but by humility and trust in divine providence.

Pope Francis established this day in 2017, seeking to deepen our awareness of the structural and personal poverty that surrounds us. He emphasised that the Church's mission is to foster a "preferential option for the poor," rooted in the very Gospel message. This responsibility is not reserved for occasional charity but is a continuous call to action — something that must permeate our individual and communal lives.

The Church's emphasis on synodality — walking together as a people of God — strengthens our understanding of how we should journey with the poor. Synodality calls for listening, dialogue, and accompaniment. In this spirit, we are urged to encounter the poor in our neighbourhoods, communities, and parishes, and recognise our shared responsibility toward them. The poor are not distant or abstract — they are part of our shared journey, and their voices must be heard.

Throughout history, the Church has produced countless examples of individuals who answered the call to serve the poor. St Vincent de Paul, for instance, dedicated his life to the marginalised, and his legacy lives



on through the Society of St Vincent de Paul, which continues to provide food, shelter, and support to those in need around the world.

Another inspiring figure is St Teresa of Calcutta, whose work among the poorest of the poor in Calcutta remains a source of inspiration. Her famous words, "Do small things with great love," remind us that even the smallest acts of kindness can shine light into the darkest corners of human suffering. Today, her Missionaries of Charity continue her legacy, offering love and care to the homeless, the hungry, and the dying.

Today, organisations like Caritas Internationalis and Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) carry on this vital mission. Caritas provides relief to those suffering from poverty, conflict, and natural disasters, while also offering long-term solutions like education and sustainable agriculture. Local Caritas chapters serve the marginalised in our own communities, ensuring no one is left behind. JRS provides essential support to displaced persons, offering shelter, healthcare, and education to millions of refugees.

While these institutional efforts are crucial, we are reminded that each of us is personally responsible for the poor. Pope Francis often speaks about the need for a "culture of encounter," where we truly see the faces of those who suffer and allow our hearts to be moved. It is easy to turn a blind eye to poverty,

especially when it feels overwhelming or distant. Yet, we are called to meet the poor where they are — in the streets, in shelters, even in our parishes — and respond not just with charity but with genuine solidarity.

In the spirit of the Gospel, caring for the poor is not just about material assistance; it is about restoring their dignity, listening to their struggles, and accompanying them in their journey. This is what true discipleship looks like: a readiness to step into the lives of the marginalised, offer them hope, and affirm their worth.

This World Day of the Poor, let us recommit ourselves to a life of service and solidarity. The poor are not just recipients of our charity; they are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Whether through the work of Catholic organisations, parish outreach, or personal acts of kindness, we each have a role to play in building a world where no one is left behind.

Let us open our hearts to their prayer, and in doing so, lift up our own — knowing that as we care for the poor, we are truly caring for Christ Himself (cf. Matthew 25:40). Only when we stand together with the poor, in humility and love, will we fully realise the Gospel's call to be a Church that heals, serves, and brings hope to all.

Patricia Pereira

Living in hope while awaiting Christ's return

Ever since humanity started looking heavenwards and admiring the beauty of the cosmos, our imagination has been seized by the various celestial bodies and events that occur from time to time. Even today, we are still fascinated by what is happening out there in space, as evidenced by the various space probes that have been sent out. These probes allow us to observe what the naked eye cannot see and reveal to us the grandeur of creation and how unfathomable space can be. Therefore, it is not surprising that Jesus Himself used celestial imageries in today's Gospel to portray His second coming.

At the start of the Gospel, Jesus describes what we know today as solar and lunar eclipse and meteor showers. After describing these events, He goes on to say that people will see His coming in power and glory. This is the basis of so many prophecies, predictions and promises of various cults and their leaders. Throughout human history, humanity has been trying to figure out when the end will come. I think all of us will remember the movie 2012, where there was speculation about the end of the Mayan calendar which signified the end of the world. Of course, it was later clarified that the end of the calendar just meant the end of a cycle and the beginning of a new one.

This gives us an indication that many people want to know for certain when the end will come. Scientifically, the world will not end for a long, long time but that is seen from the empirical point of view. Further on in the Gospel, Jesus gives the example of

the fig tree, telling us that when its leaves come out, summer is near. We see all these celestial events taking place and Jesus tells us that He is very near. The statement that convinced people during the time of Jesus that the end was near was that "before this generation has passed away", all these things will have taken place. This was why the early Christians thought that the second coming would happen in their lifetime. But it didn't, and the waiting continued, and it continues even now. Does that mean that Jesus was wrong? Did He give us wrong or misleading information? To answer that question, we need to look further into the text.

Throughout the ages, many people have tried to figure out when exactly the second coming will occur, even to the extent of reading too much into Scripture to find references that are not there, especially from the Apocalyptic literature. The fact is that we didn't need to waste all that time and energy because Jesus tells us very clearly that "as for that day or hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son; no one but the Father." This statement clearly tells us that Jesus did not give us the wrong information or deliberately mislead us. After all, all He said was before this generation passed away, all the celestial events that He described would have taken place and since these are naturally occurring phenomenon, they have taken place for many generations.

This begs the question — is it that important to know when the end will come?

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Philip Tay, OCD

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

**Readings: Daniel 12:1-3;
Hebrews 10:11-14, 18;
Gospel: Mark 13:24-32**

Even if we knew the exact date and hour of the occurrence, will it do us any good? The reality is that there will always be people who believe it or dismiss it as complete nonsense. I think the better question would be "how do I live my life before the end comes?" We cannot control the future but we certainly can control the present. What we do now in the present will definitely affect our future. If we keep on looking at the horizon, we will forget the very things that are in front of us. Whatever happens in the future, the story of our life is written by us and not by anyone else. When we are able to focus on the present, we can see what is more important to us and this will shape the future that we want, bearing in mind the promise of eternal life. We live our lives looking towards the hope that Christ has given to us, the hope of eternal joy.

As we journey towards the season of Advent, let us continue to foster in ourselves a heart of joyful longing and waiting. A heart that longs to hear the choirs of angels bringing the news of great joy to us — the greatest miracle of all time, the birth of the Saviour. In this time of waiting, let us prepare ourselves so that we can be fit to receive our Redeemer and King.



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

November

- 19-20 Clergy Monthly Recollection
- 21 Meeting – Archdiocesan Finance
- 23 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Cathedral of St John, KL
- 23 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of St Ignatius, PJ
- 24 Confirmation – Church of St Paul the Apostle, KKB
- 30 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras
- 30 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Puchong



PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

November

- 17-20 Radio Veritas Asia Annual General Board Meeting – Manila, Philippines
- 22 Meeting – Penang Diocesan New Evangelisation Commission, Bishop's Office
- 24 First Holy Communion and Confirmation – Church of Our Lady of Sorrows, Penang
- 25-29 Meeting – Office of Social Communications, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences in Jakarta, Indonesia
- 30 Confirmation – Church of Christ the King, Sungai Petani at 7.00pm



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

November

- 18 Meeting – Diocesan Finance Council, MAJODI Centre
- 18 Meeting – South Johor Vicariate Cemetery Committee, MAJODI Centre
- 19-21 Annual Clergy Discernment, MAJODI Centre
- 20 Mass – Golden Jubilee for Jubilarians Rev Fr Anthony Ng and Rev Fr Lucas Ho, MAJODI Centre
- 22-23 Malacca Johore Diocese Young People's Day
- 24 Kursus Evangelisasi Peribadi Commissioning Mass – Church of St Louis, Kluang
- 26 Board Meeting – Caritas MJD
- 28 Meeting – Graceville Board of Management, Graceville
- 30 Mass – Confirmation and Feast Day, Church of St Andrew, Muar

New rector for College General

Communique

November 6, 2024

In union with my brother bishops, Archbishop Julian Leow of Kuala Lumpur and Bishop Bernard Paul of Malacca Johore, I, Cardinal Sebastian Francis, the Bishop of Penang and President of College General, Penang would like to announce that by a Decree (Prot. N. 3868/24) issued by the Dicastery for Evangelisation, H.E. Luis Antonio G. Cardinal Tagle, The Pro Prefect for the Section of Evangelisation of the said Dicastery, has named and appointed the Very Rev Fr Ryan Innas MUTHU as Rector of the Regional Major Seminary 'College General' Penang, Malaysia.

The Very Rev Fr Ryan Innas MUTHU will assume the duties of Rector of College General, Penang from January 1, 2025, taking over from the Very Rev Fr James Simon LABROOY, the current Rector of the same Regional Major Seminary.

At this juncture, we wish to extend our gratitude to the outgoing Rector, the Very Rev Fr James Simon LABROOY for his



From left: Archbishop Julian Leow, Bishop Bernard Paul, Cardinal Sebastian Francis, incoming rector Fr Ryan Innas Muthu and outgoing rector Fr James Simon Labrooy.

invaluable service in carrying out the role of Rector of College General, Penang. The Very Rev Fr James Simon LABROOY joined College General in 2017 and served in various capacities — as Director of Initiation Year, Formator and Procurator before assuming the responsibility as Rector at the end of 2021. We recognise the many contributions he has rendered to College General in these years and we wish him well in his future assignments as he returns

to the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

We also wish to congratulate the incoming Rector; the Very Rev Fr Ryan Innas MUTHU and we wish him the best in his new responsibility. We assure him of our prayer, encouragement, and support as he prepares to lead the seminary community in collaboration with us, the Peninsular Malaysia bishops who are custodians of College General Regional Major Seminary, Penang.

Julian Leow
+ His Grace,

Archbishop Julian Leow Beng Kim,
Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur

Sebastian Francis
+ His Eminence,

Cardinal Sebastian Francis,
Bishop of Penang
President of College General, Penang

Bernard Paul
+ His Lordship,

Bishop Bernard Paul
Bishop of Malacca Johore



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #198



Greetings dear friends of MJD

People see. People watch. People note. A loneliness epidemic is spreading worldwide. Violence, displacements and deprivation are on the rise. Elections, internationally or locally, divide people, divide nations.

Trust betrayed. RM47 million was invested in FashionValet, Khazanah and Permodalan Nasional Berhad by the Finance Ministry which resulted in only RM3.1 million from sales... the Finance Minister says that the loss is negligible. Maybe because it is not their money!

The West Coast Expressway will be ready soon, easing the North-South Expressway congestion and elevating local growth, says the transport minister. The expected Gemas-Johor Bahru electrified double tracking project will not meet the deadline.

Pneumonia has overtaken ischemic heart disease as the top killer in 2023, with COVID-19 as the primary cause.

Can negligible loss or bad times or the wrath of God be tolerable excuses from professionals?

Identity Card Times:

On the Solemnity of All Saints, Pope Francis preached that:

1. Jesus proclaims the identity card of Christians in the Gospel, that is the Beatitudes. It is our identity, the way to holiness and the path of love, which He Himself took — becoming a man, becoming a gift and our response.
2. As a gift from God, He sanctifies, makes us holy, heals and frees us to love as He loves. Our heart becomes like His heart.
3. As our response to God, the Father desires our free following and serving after tasting its flavour, seeing its beauty and then, to involve in His plans, in His inspirations and in His openness to all.
4. We recognise so many brothers and

sisters formed by the Beatitudes: poor, meek, merciful, hungry and thirsty for justice, workers for peace, "filled with God", incapable of remaining indifferent to the needs of neighbour. They will remain witnesses of shining paths. They say to us: IT IS POSSIBLE.

The Holy Spirit will inspire us to practise the Beatitudes where we are.

A Thought for The Week: The Outwitted

Moishe the carpenter, returning home with his week's wages, was accosted by an armed robber on a deserted street.

"Take my money," said Moishe, "but do me a favour: shoot a bullet through my hat otherwise my wife won't believe I was robbed."

The robber obliged. He threw Moishe's hat into the air and put a bullet through it. "Let's make it look as if I ran into a gang of robbers," said Moishe, "otherwise my wife will call me a coward! Please shoot a number of holes through my coat". So, the robber shot a number of holes through the carpenter's coat.

"And now..." "Sorry," interrupted the robber. "No more holes. I'm out of bullets." "That's all I wanted to know!" said Moishe. "Now hand me back my money and some more for the hat and coat that you've ruined or I'll beat you black and blue!" The robber threw down the money and ran away.

The lesson from the carpenter: Always use your brains to get out of a difficult situation!! Reminds me of the astute servant in the Parable.

Announcements for the Week:

1. The *Pusat Kasih Caritas*, MJD's Social Mission Hub, opens on December 1.
2. The MJD Counselling Ministry is organising *Reclaiming Joy: Healing Childhood Wounds and Restoring Peace*,

limited to 100 participants, which will take place at Majodi Centre on November 24 from 9.00am to 5.00pm.

3. *The Beloved*, a stay-in camp for single men, aged 18 and above, will be held January 11-12, 2025 at the CDD Formation House, Melaka. Contact Fr Adrian Francis (vocations@mjdioocese.my) for more details.

QnQ? The Q asks: What do we do when people are against us?

YOU CHOOSE HOW YOU STITCH YOUR STORY, says James Clear. "If you look for evidence that people are conspiring to hold you back and the world is working against you, then it will take you no time at all to find precisely that. If you expect to encounter helpful people and experience a world that is working with you, then you will find plenty of evidence to support that view as well. The raw material for a sweet life or a bitter life is always there. The story you emphasise is the one you notice."

Your Perception Determines Your Reality.

See The Holy Spirit @ Work: The work of the Spirit is to impart life, to implant hope, to give liberty, to testify for Christ, to guide us into all truth, to teach us all things, to comfort the believer, and to convict the world of sin. **Dwight L. Moody**

Something To Tickle You:

"Circumstances may appear to wreck our lives and God's plans, but God is not helpless among the ruins. God's love is still working. He comes in and takes the calamity and uses it victoriously, working out His wonderful plan of love." **Eric Liddell**

Bernard Paul

Bishop Bernard Paul

KUALA LUMPUR: On November 3, parishioners from the Church of Jesus Caritas and the Chapel of Kristus Aman came together for the much-anticipated annual Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA). This year's gathering was centred around four key pillars shaping the local Church's journey in preparation for the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026 (MPC2026): *Family, Church, Ecology, and Society*. These themes reflect the Church's commitment to addressing both spiritual and societal challenges in a holistic manner.

The event was graced by Archbishop Julian Leow, who shared his firsthand experiences from the recent Synod on



One of the participants during the larger group sharing.



Jesus Caritas-Kristus Aman hold joint PPA

Synodality in Rome. Archbishop Julian's reflections provided the assembly with profound insights. He shared key takeaways from the Synod's discussions on discernment, communion, and participation, emphasising the importance of unity within the Church as it navigates the global synodal journey. His reflections served to deepen the participants' understanding of the Synodal process, encouraging a spirit of openness and collaborative discernment.

A significant portion of the day was dedi-

cated to small group discussions. In these breakout sessions, participants engaged in deep spiritual conversations, inviting the guidance of the Holy Spirit as they reflected on the four focus areas: *Family, Church, Ecology, and Society*. These discussions fostered an atmosphere of prayerful listening, allowing participants to share personal experiences, insights, and challenges. Together, they explored practical solutions to address the needs and opportunities within their parish communities.

The fruits of these conversations will be compiled into a comprehensive report and disseminated among all parishioners. This will serve as a call to action, encouraging individuals to implement the insights within their respective ministries, Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs), and other areas of parish life. By doing so, the parish hopes to embody the spirit of synodality — walking together and discerning together — as it continues on the path toward MPC2026.

Building community through sports

IPOH: For 2024, the Sports Ministry of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes (LOL) embraced the theme *Healthy Body, Healthy Mind* by organising a series of exciting and competitive activities for parishioners. These events not only strengthened community bonds but also served as a reminder that nurturing our physical health is essential to sustaining a vibrant and resilient spirit.

The committee kicked off the year with an

indoor games competition in May, featuring Carrom, Darts, and Checkers, followed by a Futsal competition in October. Both events saw enthusiastic participation, with 100 parishioners competing across various categories. In August, the Sports Ministry also organised a dodgeball game as part of the outdoor activities for the Form 1 to Form 5 catechism students, adding excitement and energy to their programme.



A parishioner playing carrom with Fr Robert Daniel as others look on.

Assistant parish priest, Fr George Vaithynathan, led the opening prayer and officially declared both the May and October competitions open. In a display of camaraderie, both Fr George and parish priest, Fr Robert Daniel, enthusiastically took part in the Carrom and Darts competitions. At the close of the events, they presented certificates of participation to all participants and awarded medals to the winners.

At the end of each competition,

participants were left feeling both tired and joyful, eager for more activities like these. Many expressed their hope that the Sports Ministry would continue organising such events, which not only promote healthy competition but also foster fellowship among parishioners. With the continuous support of Fr Robert and Fr George, the Sports Ministry of LOL is committed to planning many more sports-related activities for the parish community.



The winners with their certificates.

Learning life-saving skills to help others

SHAH ALAM: A two-hour CPR/AED training course was organised by BEC St Bernadette from the Church of the Divine Mercy. Conducted by St John Ambulance Malaysia (SJAM), it was held on October 26 at St Faustina Hall. The course covered cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) skills, including theory, demonstrations, and hands-on practice with manikins.

Initially aimed at all BECs of CDM, the course was expanded to include hospitality ministers, who serve as first responders for any parishioner experiencing breathing difficulties or cardiac arrest during Mass.

The session was well-attended, with 33 participants. Most attendees were from the BECs, with St Bernadette BEC making up approximately 50 per cent of the group.

Post-session feedback was overwhelmingly positive. One parishioner expressed regret that he hadn't learned CPR sooner, which might have helped him save his fa-

ther. However, he now feels prepared to handle an emergency involving a loved one or a stranger. The four SJAM trainers skillfully answered numerous questions from parishioners, making the session both informative and engaging.

A key takeaway from the course was the clarification that mouth-to-mouth resuscitation isn't required for CPR. Chest compressions alone can be an effective and safe method to assist someone in cardiac arrest, which was the primary focus of the training.

Promoting a "first-responder culture," SJAM aims to empower everyday people with CPR and AED skills. Alongside their paid public programmes, SJAM also offers free sessions for groups of 30 or more, making life-saving skills more accessible. CDM was fortunate to benefit from this initiative, and many attendees left with a new sense of readiness and confidence, equipped with a life-saving skill they can carry forward.

Matthew Wong



A St John Ambulance volunteer demonstrating CPR on a manikin.

Dedication of new Church of the Holy Name of Mary

PENANG: The Church of the Holy Name of Mary, Permatang Tinggi in the Diocese of Penang, marked a significant milestone with the dedication of its new church building on October 31. The ceremony, attended by over 2,000 people, was a momentous occasion for the parish community, symbolising faith, unity, and a renewed commitment to serving both God and the local community.

The event commenced at 9.30am with a ribbon-cutting ceremony by political and civil service representatives, alongside clergy members.

Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang, unveiled the commemorative plaque, signifying the official opening of the new church. This was followed by a solemn procession into the sanctuary, led by Cardinal Sebastian, parish priest Fr Louis Loi, and clergy from various parishes, accompanied by the congregation.

The original church, built in 1928, has long served as a spiritual home for the faithful, fostering a deep relationship with God. However, with the parish's growing population, the need for a larger place of worship

became evident. The vision for the new church was initiated by the previous parish priest, Fr Augustine Wong, with the aim of providing a more spacious and sacred space.

The design for the new church draws inspiration from the Old Testament, particularly the "tent" built by Moses for God. The tabernacle echoes the Ark of the Covenant, creating an atmosphere of holiness and reverence.

In his homily, Cardinal Sebastian encouraged the faithful to remain rooted in God's love, support one another, and move forward as a united community of faith. He also announced that the Church of the Holy Name of Mary has been selected as a pilgrim church for the Diocese of Penang in the upcoming Jubilee Year of Hope in 2025.

Fr Louis expressed deep gratitude to all who contributed to the construction of the new church. He described the majestic sanctuary as the culmination of tireless efforts and steadfast faith from the entire community. "We are profoundly thankful to everyone whose dedication and hard work have made this long-held dream a reality," he said.



The new church (on the left) next to the old church (on the right).

The dedication ceremony included the blessing of the new altar and the consecration of the church, signifying the beginning of a new chapter for the parish. With the theme *Enlarge the Space of Your Tent*, the community is encouraged to open their

hearts to God's love and extend mercy and hope to others.

Following the Eucharistic celebration, which concluded around noon, attendees gathered for a luncheon, sharing in the joy of the day.



Cardinal Sebastian Francis with the clergy cutting the ribbon to officially open the church.



The altar



Fr David Lourdasamy anointing the walls of the church.

One hundred and ninety pilgrims make ascent to Marian Mount

SANDAKAN: On October 26, a total of 190 pilgrims from the Church of St Martin in Telupid embarked on a journey to the Marian Rosary Corridor and the Shrine of Our Lady at St Mary's Cathedral parish. The primary purpose of the visit was to recite the Rosary along the Marian Rosary Corridor and to visit the Shrine of Our Lady.

The Marian Mount Volunteers (MMVs) were present to welcome and guide the pilgrims. Given the large group size, the participants were divided into four smaller groups. Before the climb, a safety briefing was conducted to ensure everyone's well-being.

The Church of St Martin, under parish priest Fr Christopher Ireneus, oversees the spiritual

needs of various Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) from which the pilgrims originate. These communities include — St Padre Pio Zone (Telupid Town); St Roderick Zone (Road to Ranau); St Susanna Zone (Sandakan Road); St Thomas Zone (Tongod Road) and St Nicholas Zone (Sapi Nangoh Road).

The pilgrimage was part of the BECs' annual activity plan for 2024, led by Edwin Arbah. He noted that Bishop Julius Dusin Gitom, the bishop of the diocese of Sandakan, had previously designated the Marian Rosary Corridor as a local pilgrimage destination. This pilgrimage was made possible by the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, combined with a five-day Spiritual Novena prior to the trip.



The pilgrims reciting the Rosary along the Marian Rosary Corridor.

The pilgrims shared that their motivation to climb Marian Mount stemmed from the fact that many members of their group had never made the ascent before. They had a wonderful experience during the climb, enjoying the peace and tranquillity, interrupted only by the sounds of birds. The physical effort of the climb also provided a good workout for most of them.

At each station along the way, they were able to recite a decade of the Rosary, and many took the opportunity to lay flowers, light candles, and touch the shrine of Mary at Marian Spring. Additionally, the pilgrims had the privilege of witnessing historical sites from the Second World War, including bun-

kers, tunnels, and foxholes, which added to the significance of their journey.

Most of the pilgrims from the Church of St Martin had never visited the Cathedral of St Mary before. The group included a wide range of ages, with the youngest pilgrim being just four years old and the eldest at 76. Remarkably, one pilgrim had recently undergone heart surgery but was undeterred in his determination to climb Marian Mount.

Following the climb, the pilgrims attended a Mass at the cathedral, celebrated by Fr Raymond Lee. They left feeling blessed to have made the pilgrimage and expressed their intention to return to the Marian Shrine at Marian Mount. **Evelyn Jock**



The 190 pilgrims at the Shrine of Our Lady.

Risen Christ parish hosts relics exposition

Stephanie Cheong

PENANG: For parishioners of Risen Christ Catholic Church, All Saints Day this year took on added significance with a special exposition and veneration of the relics of saints and blessed. Held in Fr Peter Shyu's Hall over two days, November 2 and 3, the event was organised by the Penang Diocesan Catechetical Commission (PDCC) Relics Team, led by Johnson Louisnaden, at the invitation of parish priest, Friar Esmond Chua, OFM.

Risen Christ Catholic Church became the 26th parish in the country to host this relics veneration event, providing parishioners with a unique opportunity to deepen their spiritual connection with the saints.

A total of 82 relics from 75 saints and blessed were displayed, representing all three classes of relics. First-Class relics include physical remains of a saint, such as a piece of bone, flesh, hair, or skull. Second-Class relics are items owned or used by the saint, such as a book, crucifix, rosary, or fragments of a coffin. Third-Class relics are objects that have been touched to a First or Second-Class relic or to the saint themselves. All relics were showcased in intricately designed reliquaries or frames.

Of special significance was the display of Second-Class (tunic) and Third-Class (stone from the tomb) relics of St Francis of Assisi, particularly meaningful as the parish is under



The display of relics of saints and blessed. Inset: Parishioners viewing the relics.

the care of the Franciscan Friars.

The event offered parishioners a rare opportunity to encounter the relics of saints, learn about their lives, and draw inspiration from their path to sainthood. It also provided a chance for them to seek the intercession of these saints in their personal prayers.

On both days of the exposition and veneration, following the Eucharistic celebration, the Litany of the Saints, whose relics were displayed, was chanted as the parish priest in-

censed the relics, adding a solemn and reverent atmosphere to the occasion.

The exposition and veneration attracted not only parishioners from Risen Christ but also attendees from nearby parishes, with about 300 people participating in the event. Among them was Chan Lilian from the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, who reflected on her experience:

"I'm glad I attended because there were so many saints, blessed, and venerables that I

hadn't known about. Venerable Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan's poster, especially, caught my attention — he's someone I can relate to today. Often, saints seem like distant figures from the past. As a faith sharer in the prison ministry, I'm now more determined to share Christ's love with those in prison. Seeing how Venerable Van Thuan celebrated Mass in such difficult circumstances inspires me to be a better faith sharer."

A Risen Christ parishioner expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to venerate the relics of St Teresa of Calcutta and St Padre Pio. She shared how deeply she is moved by St Teresa's missionary work and strives to follow her example in serving the vulnerable, such as the poor, homeless, and refugees. St Padre Pio's powerful healing prayer has also been a source of hope for her amid her health challenges. In moments of anxiety, she finds comfort in St Padre Pio's famous words: "Pray, hope, and do not worry. Worry is useless. God is merciful and will hear your prayer."

We praise and thank God for the Relics Team who, despite the lengthy and tedious process of obtaining relics — including coordinating with the General Postulator handling Causes of Canonisation at the Holy See and with saints' shrines worldwide — continue to persevere in their mission. Their dedication allows the faithful to encounter these relics and learn more about the saints, keeping their legacy alive.

CDM installs new statues of beloved saints

SHAH ALAM: The Church of the Divine Mercy (CDM) joyously celebrated the blessing of two new life-sized statues of St John Paul II and St Teresa of Calcutta on the Solemnity of All Saints. These statues, now available for public veneration, honour two modern saints whose lives were marked by compassion, selfless service, and steadfast faith.

Parish priest, Fr George Harrison, blessed and incensed the new statues, as well as all

the other statues within the church during all three Sunday Masses.

The installation of these statues serves as a profound reminder of the extraordinary legacies of St John Paul II and St Teresa of Calcutta. St John Paul II, a relentless advocate for peace and unity, and St Teresa, a beacon of love and service to the poorest, now hold a special place in the heart of CDM, where they will continue to inspire the faithful for generations to come.

Reflecting on his deep connection with the two saints, Fr George shared how profoundly they have impacted his life. "I had my first encounter with Pope John Paul II at World Youth Day in Manila in 1995. He touched the hearts of countless young people, many of whom were moved to tears as he blessed them.

"He had a special bond with the youth and travelled extensively during his papacy, initiating World Youth Day to inspire them in countless ways. It was at this encounter that I felt the call to say 'yes' to the priesthood. Since then, I've stayed close to him, learning from his life of holiness and reading about his journey.

"In his speeches, he often encouraged us with the words, 'Do not be fearful, have courage.' One quote in particular that I hold close to my heart and that has guided me on my vocation journey is: 'Never ever give up on hope, never doubt, never tire, and never become discouraged,'" said Fr George.

"Mother Teresa transcended boundaries of creed, colour, and culture. To me, she embodies the 'culture of encounter,' a value the world desperately needs today.

"After reading books about her life and service, I felt even more motivated to 'turun padang' — to go to the ground and reach out to the poor and needy. Her powerful actions, along with her daily prayers before the tabernacle, continue to inspire me.

"She once said, 'Every time you smile at someone, it is an act of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing.' It's true that we often strive to do things in grand and successful ways, but she reminds us: 'Don't do big things, but do every small thing with great love.' May we all draw inspiration from her holiness and love in service," added Fr George. **Rachael Philip**

New relics in ArchKL



Relics of St Louis and Marie-Zelie Martin (parents of St Thérèse of Lisieux) at the Church of the Holy Family, Kajang.



Relic of St Maria Goretti at the Church of Jesus Caritas, Kepong.



Fr George Harrison incensing the statue of St Teresa of Calcutta and the statue of St John Paul II.

SIGNIS members pause to recharge

PORT DICKSON: Amid the unrelenting demands of modern life — constant connectivity, buzzing phones, and daily deadlines — taking a pause can feel like a luxury. Yet, it's an essential reprieve.

Recognising this need, SIGNIS Malaysia recently organised a weekend seaside retreat for its members, focused on recharging and reconnecting with purpose. Centred on the theme, *Who am I, and how can I make a difference?*, the retreat drew together journalists, multimedia professionals, writers, content creators, and academics, all seeking to redefine their roles as communicators in today's complex society.

Sessions were facilitated by Amalraj Antony from India's Initiative for Alternatives and featured guest speaker

Charles Bertille from the Porticus Foundation, both of whom provided participants with fresh insights and perspectives on social communications. A highlight of the retreat was a panel discussion titled *Beyond Headlines: Issues that Matter*. Featuring three senior journalists from East and West Malaysia, the session explored pressing issues and the evolving challenges journalists faced in today's media landscape. Moderated by Jasmine Ju Ju of Young Lives, the conversation fostered a rich exchange of ideas, especially regarding the struggles and resilience of Malaysia's vulnerable communities. The retreat also served as an open platform for members to brainstorm and propose ideas



SIGNIS Malaysia members with the presenters at the retreat.

for future SIGNIS Malaysia initiatives. SIGNIS Malaysia President Karen Arukesamy underscored the importance of actionable ideas: "Every idea is purposeful and actionable,

especially when we can empower communities and drive positive impact through communication and media." In the end, the retreat offered more than just a break from routine.

It was a time to reconnect with personal and collective missions, renew dedication to purposeful communication, and reflect deeply on the social impact each participant can make.

Understanding constitutional safeguards

CHERAS: The Parish Ministry of Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs (PMEIA) of the Church of St Francis of Assisi (SFA) recently organised a talk on Constitutional Safeguards, addressing key legal issues related to religious freedom. The event was conducted by the Catholic Lawyers Society (CLS), led by lawyer Annou Xavier, along with a team of six legal professionals.

To ensure accessibility for a diverse audience, the PMEIA arranged the talk in four languages — Bahasa Malaysia, English, Mandarin, and Tamil — conducted simultaneously in separate rooms within the SFA premises.

The sessions covered a variety of relevant topics, including the legal



The participants in the English session.

implications of conversion from and into Catholicism. Participants engaged actively with the material, gaining valuable insights into the constitutional safeguards that protect religious freedom in Malaysia.

Following the individual lan-

guage sessions, attendees gathered for a combined Q&A session in the St Pio Room, where the lawyers addressed a range of questions, offering clear and informed responses to the audience's queries.

The talk attracted not only SFA parishioners but also participants from other parishes within the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese, reflecting widespread interest in the subject.

This marks the third time SFA's PMEIA has organised a talk on constitutional safeguards, with previous sessions held in 2009 and 2016, led by former CLS heads Francis Pereira and Joy Appukuttan, respectively. **Francis Kok**



Annou Xavier, seated, helping with the projection as his colleague presents.

Kuching to host international training on Prophetic Intercession

KUCHING: Catholic faithful in Kuching and beyond, including outside of Malaysia, will have an opportunity of participating in an international-level training on prophetic intercession, to be conducted by a renowned international speaker from India, Chevalier Cyril John.

The training, organised by the Archdiocesan Charismatic Renewal Team (ACRT) of Kuching Archdiocese, will be held in the Grand Hall of the Archdiocesan Curia and Cathedral Pastoral Centre (ACPC), St Joseph Cathedral, Kuching, Sarawak from 21–25 November 2024. Sessions will be in English and live translations into Bahasa Malaysia will be available for all sessions.

According to Chevalier Cyril John, there is a great need for



Catholics to realise the important role of intercession, especially prophetic intercession, and to raise up more prophetic intercessors as God's watchmen, sentries and prayer warriors.

Due to this great and urgent need, a Commission for Intercession has been established in CHARIS International, with Chevalier Cyril John as the coordinator.

The training will provide very

solid teaching and inputs on understanding intercession, particularly understanding the differences between traditional intercession and prophetic intercession.

In traditional intercession, we pray for peoples' needs and petitions, but in prophetic intercession, we learn to listen to the Holy Spirit on God's will with regards to peoples' petitions, before we pray. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we can also listen to God's burdens and petitions and intercede for Him according to His prayer strategy. In order to know how to pray effectively through prophetic intercession, a person needs to receive proper training.

Pope Francis has bestowed on Cyril John the title of Chevalier (Knight of the Order of St Gregory the Great) in 2021, the fourth highest

Papal order in the Equestrian Order of St Gregory the Great. The title has been given for his distinguished service to the Church at the diocesan, national, continental, and international level, especially through the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

Chevalier Cyril John has been travelling all around the world to train Catholics to be prophetic intercessors.

The training is open to all and is not exclusive for certain people with certain 'spiritual gifts' but for all Catholics who have a call to intercession.

For more information on the training, kindly WhatsApp, Lainus Lichok +60198190996, or John Wong +60198590386 or Thomas Ngu +60198883811.



Some of the artefacts on display.

Mini museum at Church of St Philip

SEGAMAT: The Church of St Philip, which recently celebrated its 100th anniversary, has opened a mini museum showcasing historical artefacts from the 1960s. The museum is the result of the dedicated efforts of assistant parish priest Fr Adrian Francis, who meticulously collected various artefacts over a period of time. His hard work has finally brought this long-envisioned project to fruition.

The mini museum offers visitors, particularly the younger generation, a glimpse into the church's rich history, which dates

back to its founding in 1924 by Fr Jules Francois of the Paris Foreign Missions Society (MEP). While some older artefacts are not on display, the museum features a collection of photographs that highlight key moments in the church's past. Additionally, copies of the church's past magazines are available for viewing.

As a special tribute to the centenary, a display of signatures from those who attended the 100-year celebration is prominently featured in the museum as well.

Richard Joseph

Indonesia establishes its 38th Catholic diocese

FLORES: The Catholic Church in Indonesia celebrated the creation of its newest diocese and the ordination of its first bishop, Maksimus Regus, in Labuan Bajo on November 1.

Located on the “Catholic Island” of Flores in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) Province, the Diocese of Labuan Bajo is the 38th Catholic diocese in Indonesia.

Cardinal Ignatius Suharyo of Jakarta led the ceremony, joined by Bishops Siprianus Hormat of Ruteng and Budi Kleden of Ende, who officiated the ordination at the Church of St Peter, Sernaru.

The move to form the new diocese began in 2021 when the Ruteng Diocese proposed dividing the territory to better address the region’s unique pastoral needs.

With a Catholic population of 966,385; 296 diocesan priests, and 85 parishes spread across three regions, Ruteng Diocese was one of Indonesia’s largest.

In response to these numbers, Ruteng held its third synodal meeting in 2021, which recommended establishing a new diocese to improve service to the faithful.

Bishop Regus explained that before becoming a diocese, Labuan Bajo operated as Ruteng’s Regional Vicariate, comprising 25 parishes and serving approximately 350,000 Catholics.

“As briefed by [Archbishop] Pioppo last June, it is strongly expected that our faith



Bishop Maksimus Regus kneels for the laying on of hands by Cardinal Ignatius Suharyo during his episcopal ordination at St Peter’s Sernaru Church in Labuan Bajo, Flores, Indonesia, on Nov 1, 2024. (LiCas News/Diocese of Labuan Bajo)

should go into depth and become fruitful,” the prelate said.

Labuan Bajo, situated on the western tip of Flores Island, has rapidly emerged as a tourism hub in recent years.

Known for its breathtaking landscapes and proximity to the famous Komodo National Park, the city attracts thousands of tourists who come to experience its mountains, crystal-clear waters, and opportunities to observe the Komodo dragon in its natural habitat.

The rapid growth of the tourism industry has contributed to Labuan Bajo’s economic prominence, influencing the decision to establish the new diocese.

On June 21, the Vatican officially declared Labuan Bajo a separate diocese from Ruteng and appointed Regus as its bishop.

Bishop Regus, a sociologist with a doctoral degree from the Netherlands and former dean of St Paul’s Catholic University in Ruteng, brings both academic insight and pastoral ex-

perience to his new role.

The prelate, who has served as the chair of the Ruteng Diocese’s diocesan priests’ association, noted the unique challenges posed by Labuan Bajo’s economic development and the impact of tourism on the local population.

“I had the opportunity to learn a lot about Labuan Bajo due [to] my position of the chairperson of local diocesan priests’ association (Unio of Ruteng Diocese),” he said, emphasising that “cooperative dialogue with Ruteng’s bishop, Msgr Hormat, is strategically important to divide ‘mutual’ assets.”

On Oct 31, representatives from Ruteng and Labuan Bajo formally reached an agreement regarding the division of resources, witnessed by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Indonesia (KWI) and the Archdiocese of Ende.

Bishop Regus highlighted the importance of strong organisational foundations in this new chapter. “Strong fundamental basis on the new church’s organisation structure and its pastoral works will be very essential to complete first, and later on, mode of evangelisation,” he said.

He added that this would support the community in navigating the “huge influx of tourism industry that has ‘created’ a new way of life among local people – mostly the Catholic congregation.” **Mathias Hariyadi, LiCAS News**

Seoul launches measures to combat increasing loneliness

SOUTH KOREA: In bustling Seoul, where life is driven by the pursuit of individual success, loneliness has become a pressing issue, particularly among the elderly and an increasing number of adolescents and young adults. The South Korean capital is now addressing this growing concern with a major new initiative aimed at fostering social connection and reducing isolation.

“Loneliness is poverty, and poverty is exclusion. It’s not just about economic poverty, but also the poverty of human relationships, social, psychological, and spiritual poverty,” said Jesuit priest, Fr Sang-Hoon Park, Director of the Research Centre for Social Solidarity and Human Rights in Seoul. He emphasised the far-reaching impact of loneliness, describing it as a root cause of anxiety, sadness, and a range of societal problems, including fear, violence, depression, and even political polarisation.

A 2019 study by the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs estimated that around three per cent of South Koreans aged 19 to 34 experience isolation, characterised by a lack of meaningful interactions and weak family ties. The trend has sparked concern about the well-being of young people in a society known for its intense competition and high expectations regarding professional success.

In response to this, the Seoul Metropolitan Government has introduced a five-year, 451.3 billion won (RM1.42 billion) plan to combat loneliness and “lonely deaths” — a phenomenon where individuals pass away

unnoticed due to isolation. Announcing the initiative, Mayor Oh Se Hoon said the city aims to become a “loneliness-free” space by investing in mental health services, community events, and social engagement opportunities.

One key component of the plan is the creation of the “Smart 24 Platform,” an online service offering psychological support and advice to both Korean and foreign residents, available via a 24-hour hotline. Additionally, the city will promote communal dining spaces offering affordable meals, as well as encouraging participation in public events, festivals, and cultural activities. These efforts aim to ensure that “no one feels lonely” in the city, according to the mayor.

The Catholic community in Seoul has expressed strong support for the initiative, stressing the importance of fostering a sense of fraternity and community. “When someone listens to us and shows genuine interest in our difficulties, something very profound happens. Slowly, fear and anxiety disappear, and we realize our value,” said Fr Sang-Hoon Park.

Salesian nun Sr Georgia Kim Yong-eun echoed these sentiments, reminding individuals that they are never truly alone. “The Lord is always with us, walking beside us. Prayer, love, and service to others are the remedies for loneliness,” she said.

Seoul’s new measures, rooted in both social policy and community spirit, represent a comprehensive effort to address a rising social disorder and provide hope for a more connected and compassionate city. **Fides**



Syro-Malabar liturgy dispute sparks tensions at priestly ordinations



The ordination of new priests in the Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly. (AsiaNews photo)

KOCHI: In the clash over the liturgy that has continued to tear the Syro-Malabar Church apart since 2021, the ordinations of new priests in the archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly have also become the occasion for new divisions. After a long postponement, eight deacons were ordained priests during a celebration held on November 4 at the Sacred Heart Minor Seminary in Thrikkakara.

Apostolic administrator, Mgr Bosco Puthur, agreed to proceed only after the deacons submitted an affidavit in which they agreed to perform their priestly functions according to the laws of the Church, with particular reference to the “uniform” manner of celebrating the Holy Qurbana, the Eucharistic liturgy of the Malabar communities, which has been a source of tension in the Church of Ernakulam-Angamaly for years. In a circular dated October 30, Bishop Puthur also asked priests and lay people not to associate with “organisations that criticise the official position of the Church or belittle its leadership on social media.” In the circular, the prelate also announced police surveillance outside the Curia offices, prohibiting “any gathering without the permission of the apostolic administrator.”

The reactions were not long in coming. “Almost 200 priests participated in the ordination ceremony,” said Fr Kuriakose Mundayan, secretary of the archdiocesan presbyteral council.

“Usually in this type of celebration the first part is the ordination and then the first Mass is celebrated. Many priests of the archdiocese participated in the ordination ceremony, but boycotted the first Mass of the new priests with Mar Bosco Puthur to express their dissatisfaction with the recent appointments and for not allowing them to celebrate Mass in front of the people as happens in almost all the parishes of the archdiocese. The priests also met to approve a resolution asking the apostolic administrator to immediately restore the canonical bodies in the archdiocese.”

Representatives of the Almaya Munnetam forum also waited until the end of the celebration to express to Bishop Puthur their protest against the circular of Oct 30, which some groups of faithful had also burned at the end of the Sunday liturgies of Nov 3. The group also declared its intention to boycott the apostolic administrator in all public places, not approving the appointment of new members of the curia. **Nirmala Carvalho, AsiaNews**

Day of prayer and reflection for clergy in Lahore archdiocese

LAHORE, Pakistan: On November 4, the Archdiocese of Lahore held a day of prayer and reflection for its priests, led by Archbishop Benny Mario Trivas, Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese, at the Archbishop's House.

The gathering, focused on fostering "communion among priests," featured Jesuit priest Fr Robbie D'Lima as the keynote speaker, who explored the profound nature of communion rooted in the Holy Trinity.

Highlighting that *Our God is Communion*, Fr D'Lima emphasised the self-giving love embodied by the Trinity, as revealed in Jesus' Incarnation and sacrifice on the Cross.

This divine communion, he explained, extends beyond unity for a shared cause, drawing participants into the life of the Church.

Fr D'Lima illustrated how communion unfolds throughout salvation history, from God's unification of His people in the Old Testament to three "Pentecosts" in the New Testament.

He referenced St Paul's emphasis on the Spirit's gifts (1 Cor. 12), the Johannine call to truth, and St Luke's Acts 2 description of believers being "of one heart and mind." Communion, he underscored, is a continuous thread woven through God's relation-



ship with His people.

A key theme of the day was spiritual conversation, which Fr D'Lima described as essential for building priestly communion. He encouraged priests to foster an environment of non-judgmental, attentive listening, where individuals feel safe to share their stories.

This "culture of conversation," he noted, is especially vital in South Asian contexts, where openness can sometimes be hindered by cultural norms.

Archbishop Trivas expressed gratitude to Fr D'Lima, affirming the importance of

spiritual conversation as a pathway to deeper communion.

Quoting Pope Francis, he stressed the need for dialogue guided by the Holy Spirit and urged priests to nurture "soul language" in their communities — a form of communication that transcends superficial exchanges and touches on the core joys and challenges of ministry.

Reflecting on Henri Nouwen's insights, the prelate emphasised the importance of metanoia, a transformation of heart and mind, as opposed to paranoia, which can obstruct true communion.

The day concluded with a celebration honouring priests marking birthdays and ordination anniversaries in November, symbolising the shared joy of their priestly vocation.

This day of prayer and reflection reminded the priests of their shared calling and deepened their commitment to serve with compassion.

Through the Spirit and the principles of self-giving love, the Archdiocese of Lahore's priests continue to foster communion, strengthening their ministry and dedication to serving the faithful. **RVAsia**

Egypt approves legalisation of 293 churches

CAIRO: In a landmark decision underscoring Egypt's commitment to religious tolerance, the Egyptian Cabinet has approved the legal status of 293 churches and affiliated service buildings. This recent move, approved in a Cabinet session in October 21 led by Prime Minister Dr Mostafa Madbouly, advances Egypt's vision for religious inclusivity under its 'New Republic' framework.

With these new additions, the total number of churches and religious buildings that have achieved legalised status under Law No. 80 of 2016 now stands at 3,453, reflecting substantial progress since the establishment of the main committee overseeing the law's implementation. Article 8 of the law, which governs church construction and renovation across Egypt, outlines rigorous safety and legal standards, ensuring that places of worship meet national regulations.

The government's dedication to legalising religious establishments marks a broader push for stability and cohesion. By adapting these institutions to meet specific standards, Egypt is fostering an environ-

ment of respect and inclusion. The ongoing effort illustrates an intention not just to regularise religious buildings, but to integrate diverse religious practices within a secure and legally supported framework. "This initiative aligns closely with Egypt's commitment to fostering a peaceful coexistence between various religious communities," reported *Egypt Today*. Regularised places of worship reflect Egypt's determination to ensure that people of all faiths can worship freely and safely, a principle central to the ethos of the "New Republic."

In recent years, Egypt has made strides in reinforcing religious freedom, receiving and addressing petitions from multiple denominations seeking the legal status needed to operate openly and securely. Each approval, including this latest wave of 293 churches, highlights a transparent and inclusive approach to religious governance that benefits diverse communities.

Prime Minister Madbouly's Cabinet approvals signify not just administrative progress but a vision of a society where religious institutions are viewed as pillars of community harmony. By weaving religious



Prime Minister Dr Mostafa Madbouly with Christian religious leaders. (Photo/Jpost)

freedom into the country's broader narrative of reform, Egypt is making strides toward a society rooted in mutual respect and legal clarity, where religious diversity is not merely accepted but actively supported.

This development sets a precedent for other nations in the region, showcasing Egypt's commitment to both the rule of law and to fostering a balanced, inclusive society. **ZENIT News**

Britain to get its first Catholic medical school in 2026

LONDON: St Mary's University in Twickenham, London, has announced plans to open Britain's first Catholic medical school in September 2026.

"We are proud to be London's Catholic university and to launch the first school of medicine at a Catholic university in the UK" a spokesperson for the university said in a statement provided to *CNA*. "This is an exciting initiative and a strategic priority for the university."

"Our Catholic mission is integral to our values, and we will ensure that our students can flourish with the best possible support, as befits a Catholic university,"

the spokesperson said.

"We will also help our graduates to become ethically discerning in their practice."

News of the university's plans come as euthanasia and abortion in the United Kingdom continue to grow and as the UK faces a critical demand for more doctors and medical professionals.

"The need for medical professionals in the UK is enormous," the spokesperson acknowledged.

The university "look[s] forward to contributing toward the future of health care in Britain by helping to provide the next

generations of compassionate, complete doctors who prioritise patient well-being and utilise the latest medical technology, underpinned by a comprehensive understanding of the bioethical debates impacting the medical community."

In a press release regarding the new medical school, the university said it had received assurance that it is "on track and making good progress toward required standards for medical education."

The university is currently ranked in the country's top 10 for student experience and top five for teaching quality, according to the release.

"The school will not only contribute to the workforce development demands in the UK for more doctors and medical professionals, but it will also train global professionals able to work anywhere in the world," St Mary's vice chancellor, Professor Anthony McClaran, said in the announcement.

"Our approach to developing the whole person during students' time at SMU will mean medics of the future will leave this university with the technical and personal skills they need to deliver truly holistic, compassionate, patient-centred care," McLaran said. **Madalaine Elhabbal, CNA**

Luce and her friends, and our own pilgrimage

The Vatican recently unveiled the 2025 Jubilee mascot, Luce, together with her friends, Fe, Xin, and Sky, and her dog, Santino, and a guardian angel.

According to Archbishop Rino Fisichella, the chief organiser of the Jubilee Year, they are designed to engage “the pop culture so beloved by our young people.”

Significantly, the Vatican, as I write this, is participating for the first time in the Lucca Comics and Games, the largest comic-con in Europe, where there is a space for Luca and her friends.

Fisichella hopes that the Vatican’s participation in it “will allow us to speak to younger generations about the theme of hope, which is more central than ever in the evangelical message.”

The figure of Luce, which means light, is rich in symbolism. She is designed as a pilgrim, with a raincoat that has the colour of the Vatican flag, muddy boots and a walking staff.

Do remember that Pope Francis calls on Christians to be “pilgrims of hope” who will experience the Jubilee as “a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus.”

Not surprisingly, the logo of the Jubilee Year is on her coat. She also wears a rosary around her neck, a symbol of prayer which of course is integral to one’s Christian journey. In addition, she appears to have the reflection of scallop shells in her eyes, a symbol of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage.

Luce apparently received mixed reactions from people. For instance, one posted on X, “Once the Church inspired the young with noble models like St Dominic Savio and his motto ‘Death rather than sin.’ Now we



Luce, Fe, Xin, and Sky, the anime pilgrim mascot unveiled by the Vatican for Jubilee 2025 to engage pop-culture youth. (Photo/catholicherald.co.uk)

have... whatever the hell this ‘Luce’ thing is. Infantilising the young with a dumbed-down version of Catholicism does them a disservice.”

On a positive note, another wrote on X, “What is with everyone hating on the little anime mascot? It’s cute and fun. Not everything is geared towards Catholic adults, y’all know that right?”

Another one claims, “I am not even Catholic but I love Luce.” When I first saw Luce, my initial reaction was to ask why she was Caucasian looking. I was afraid that it was a form of cultural imperialism, this time [unwittingly?] promoted by the Vatican. However, when I read that it was created by tokidoki, a Japanese-inspired lifestyle brand in Italy,

then, everything about her appearance made sense since anime and manga figures are similar to her appearance. One only needs to look at the characters of ONE PIECE, Dragon Ball and Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba.”

Without really saying what it was, I asked my teenage son to look at the picture of Luce. I had the intention of testing her appeal to someone whom I think has the sensibilities of an ordinary teenager.

After taking a look at it, he smiled and gave a thumbs up. That wasn’t surprising since my son likes both anime and manga. Luce appeals to his taste and I think, by extension, to those of other teenagers.

I read a commentary that

criticised Luce’s head size, but my son who is familiar with the genre knew better. That is also why, I think, Luce and her friends would appeal to the youth, many of whom are familiar with the Japanese style of rendering their characters.

I know that one reaction to Luce is her being white. But knowing that manga and anime ordinarily represent their characters as Caucasian-looking, perhaps we can be more understanding of why she looks that way. The disproportionality of her body parts is also explained by that.

The use of a cultural form other than those found in the West is a positive development.

The move by the Vatican recognises the popularity of anime and

manga, and more importantly, is an acknowledgment that cultures other than those in the West can represent the Christian faith.

It does not surprise me that Catholics who are not exposed to and ignorant of the richness of other cultures, and ethnocentric in mindset decry the choice to design the Jubilee’s mascot in that manner.

One needs to remember that for Vatican II, the Church “is bound to no particular form of human culture” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 42). Hence, an Asian art form can be used to design the mascot.

In order to better affirm the catholicity of the Church, instead of focusing simply on Luce, we can also highlight her companions.

To avoid the wrong impression that the mascot privileges whiteness and that we are alone in our journey, a focus on her other companions is equally important. After all, in our Christian journey, we travel with our fellow pilgrims. One pilgrim is not more important than the other.

While all of us embark on our unique journey, struggling and coping with the vicissitudes of life, we cannot, and ought not, do it alone. Unlike Cain who refused to be responsible for his brother, we are actually our sisters’ and brothers’ keepers. We need one another to grow in our faith life.

The Vatican ought to undertake more creative initiatives in making the Christian faith more meaningful to the world, especially to the youth of today. The design of Luce, Fe, Xin, and Sky is a step in the right direction. Their group of friends will, hopefully, be instruments in bringing the light of the Gospel to all the peoples of the world in all their particularities. **Ruben C. Mendoza, ucanews.com**

USCCB gives guidance to musicians for Jubilee 2025

Ahead of the 2025 Year of Jubilee, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has released a resource for music ministers. Titled *Pilgrims on the Way of Hope: A Resource for the Jubilee of Musical Bands* – the main title is the theme of Jubilee 2025 – the packet contains advice for planning a musical pilgrimage, theological musings on the place of music in the Church, and general resources for holding musical events throughout the year.

Spiritual Reflection

In the first several pages, the bishops reflect on the spiritual nature of music and its ability to accompany and unify the faithful. Quoting Pope Francis at his 2018 audience with international choirs, they noted music as “the true

instrument of evangelisation,” which can make “one sense the beauty of paradise” by touching their hearts.

The bishops consider music to be a craft of creation and those who practise the craft do so in emulation of God the creator. Humanity was committed to the “craftsman’s task” when called into existence and through the practice of “artistic creativity,” humans appear more than ever “in the image of God.”

They note, however, that the creative spark that initiates the human artist was first conceived of, and lovingly passed down from, the Divine Artist.

Relationship to beauty

Next, posing music as a symbol of beauty, the bishops write:

“It is in living and acting that

man establishes his relationship with being, with the truth and with the good. The artist has a special relationship to beauty. In a very true sense, it can be said that beauty is the vocation bestowed on him by the Creator in the gift of ‘artistic talent’. And, certainly, this too is a talent which ought to be made to bear fruit, in keeping with the sense of the Gospel parable of the talents.”

They go on to note that all those who follow the artistic vocation – be they musicians, writers, or visual artists – have an obligation to develop their talents to put them at the service of the community. In this idea of art as service, the bishops implore artists to produce art for its own sake, rather than as a means of gaining fame or fortune.

Just as architecture designs places for worship, music designs

atmospheres in which the vast mysteries of faith may be contemplated. The beauty of sacred music – and all sacred art for that matter – can elevate the soul, inspire the faithful, bridge cultures, and nourish the faith of others:

“Every genuine inspiration, however, contains some tremor of that ‘breath’ with which the Creator Spirit suffused the work of creation from the very beginning. He touches [human genius] with a kind of inner illumination which brings together the sense of the good and the beautiful, and He awakens energies of mind and heart which enable it to conceive an idea and give it form in a work of art.”

Pilgrimage advice

The USCCB encourages all music ministers to plan a pilgrimage

during Jubilee 2025, be it in your home diocese or to Rome. Part of this pilgrimage should include scheduling a concert at a church. While performances of sacred music are welcome throughout the year, it is most appropriate on May 10 and 11, the celebration of the Jubilee of Marching Bands. It should be noted that the term “Marching Bands,” refers to all sacred music groups.

Music ministers may benefit from the list of resources in the latter half of the document, which include suggested writings from the Catholic Church on music, notable musical saints and blessed, and a spiritual reading to inspire their musicians. **J.P. Mauro, Aletheia**

To read the full packet, go to: <https://11nq.com/eSkL8>

The role of priests in catechesis

As with all the baptised, priests share in the common vocation to the ministry of catechesis. However, by virtue of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, they have a more specific role to play. The role of priests, and in particular parish priests in catechesis, is clearly stated in the Church's Magisterium and Canon Law. By sharing in the threefold office of Jesus Christ as priest, prophet and king, the priest is essentially an educator of the Faith and catechetical leader in the parish.

Educator of the Faith

The first and fundamental duty of the priest, as a collaborator with the bishop, is to instruct the faithful in the things of God. As the one charged with overseeing the spiritual growth and development of his flock, especially in the parish, the priest is responsible for their education by teaching them the Faith. As witnessed in the ordination ceremony, the bishop in addressing the candidate for the priesthood says:

"Let your teaching be a spiritual remedy for God's people; may they be worthy fellow-workers of our order; and thus, meditating day and night on His law, they may believe what they read, and teach what they shall believe."

The Council of (1545–1563) Trent in examining the duties of priests, decreed that their first and most important work is the instruction of the faithful. In the encyclical, *Acerbo Nimis*, promulgated in 1905, St Pius X emphasised that for the priest there is no greater duty or obligation than to teach the Faith to the people. According to the pope, "For the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge. The Church demands this knowledge of those who are to be ordained to the priesthood" (AN, 9). The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) states that the Sacrament of Holy Orders constitutes priests as "educators of the faith"

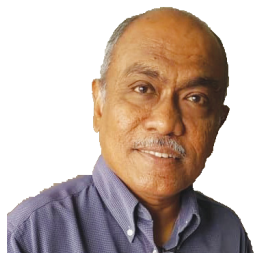
(*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 6).

In catechesis, according to the General Directory for Catechesis (1997), priests are to see that the faithful are properly formed and reach true Christian maturity (GDC, 224) and Can. 773 states that priests have "... the serious duty of attending to the catechesis of the Christian people...". In his apostolic letter, *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979), St John Paul II in addressing the priests stated, "The Council has called you 'instructors of the faith'; there is no better way for you to be such instructors than by devoting your best efforts to the growth of your communities in the faith" (CT, 64).

Catechetical leader

The priest is also the first and primary catechist in the parish. He has the mandate of bringing to life, coordinating and directing the catechetical activity of the community that has been entrusted to him. Infact, in most instances, states the GDC, the quality of catechesis in a community depends very largely on the presence and activity of the parish priest (n. 225). According to the same directory, the following are the catechetical tasks of the parish priest:

- To foster a sense of common responsibility for catechesis in the Christian community since catechesis is a task which involves all. Under the direction and guidance of the parish priest, all the Christian faithful are to show true concern for catechesis according to their respective roles. "Catechesis is the work of the whole Church because it is the duty of the whole Church. Just as all the faithful have the right to catechesis, so all pastors have the duty to provide it" (CT, 64), said St



Echoing the Faith

DR STEVEN SELVARAJU

John Paul II.

- To care for the *basic orientation of catechesis* and its planning in the parish. A parish priest achieves this by giving emphasis to active participation of the community in catechesis and by insisting that catechesis is well-structured and oriented. He is responsible for ensuring that the catechetical needs, goals, and priorities of the parish are identified, articulated and met according to the norms established by the Church.

- To promote and to discern *vocations to the service of catechesis* and by giving his greatest attention to the formation of catechists. He has to give recognition and show appreciation for catechists and their mission. He also has to foster the vocation and ministry of the catechists and assist them in carrying out a function that is exercised in virtue of a mission entrusted to them by the Church.

- To integrate catechetical activity into the process of evangelization and to foster the link between catechesis, the sacraments and liturgy, and mission.

- To ensure the connection between the catechesis of the parish community and the diocesan programme by helping catechists become active co-operators in diocesan initiatives and events.

Linking Liturgy and Catechesis

The ministry of the parish priest as educator and catechetical leader is also related to his liturgical and sacramental ministry. While the celebration of the

liturgy and sacraments are primarily acts of prayer, worship and sanctification, they are also catechetical in nature. Therefore, liturgy and catechesis are very closely linked. Infact, the Catechism of the Catholic Church says that the liturgy is "the privileged place for catechizing the people (CCC, 1074).

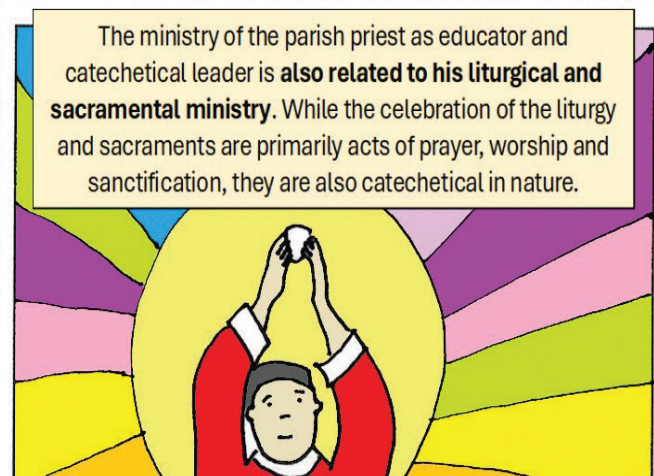
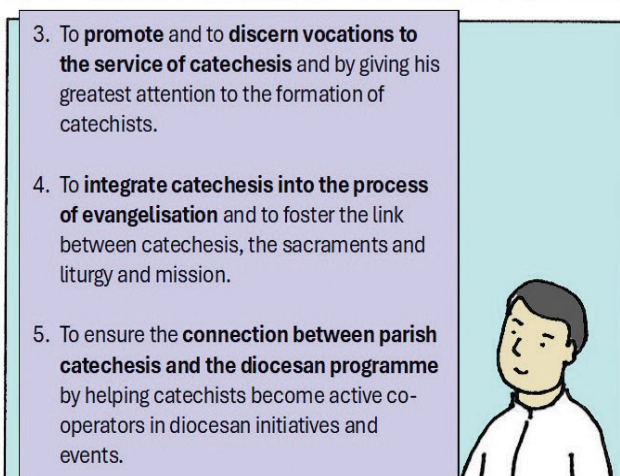
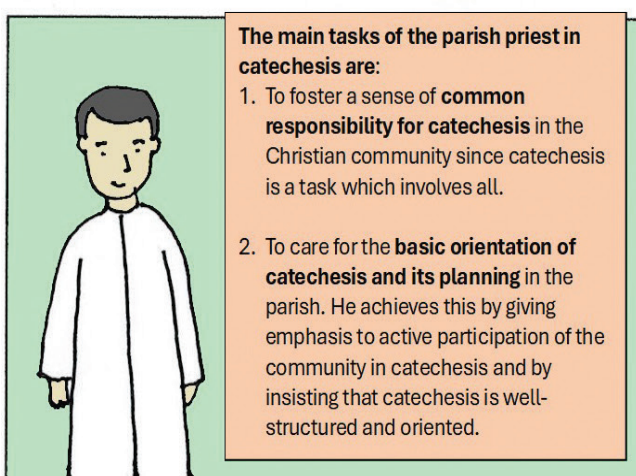
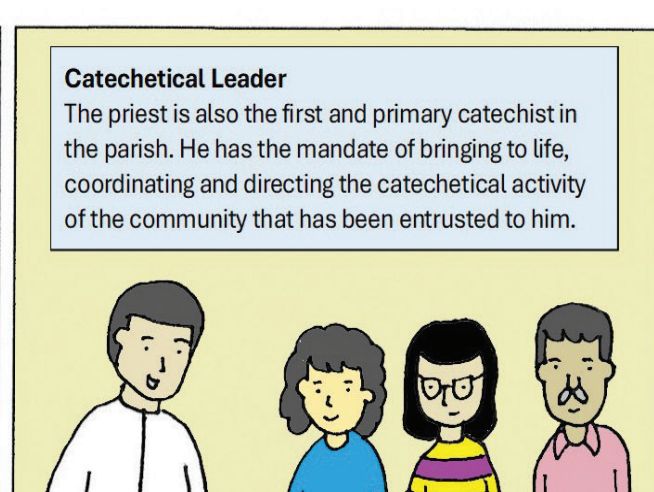
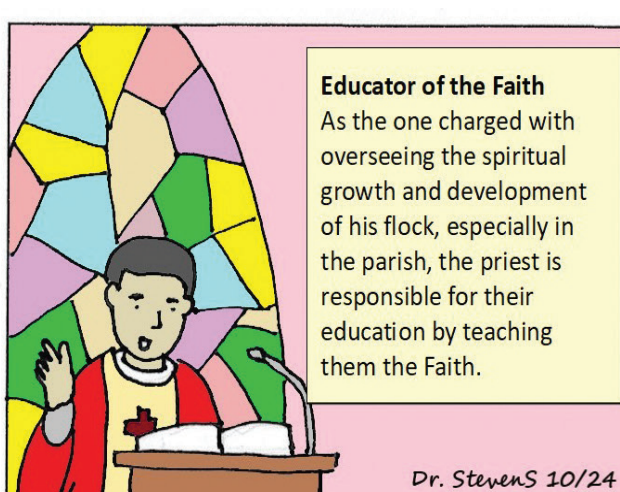
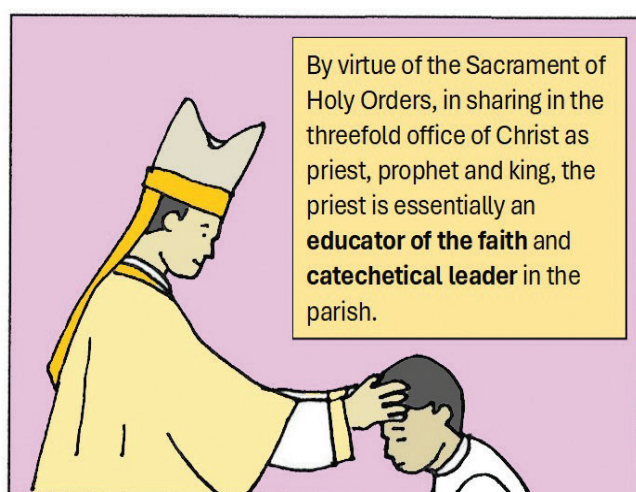
The Directory for Catechesis (2020) speaks of the liturgy as an essential and indispensable source for the Church's catechesis since catechesis is able to "draw its contents, vocabulary, actions and words of faith from the liturgy" (n, 96). This is because both liturgy and catechesis have the same objective, namely to lead the faithful closer to God. In this regard, the celebration of the liturgy, especially the Mass, serves as the priest's primary catechetical resource, and he must utilise such "sacred moments" fully and effectively as the teacher of his flock.

Conclusion

Catechesis, as a process of transmitting the faith, is essential to the Church. It is, therefore, important that priests understand the importance of catechesis as central to his ministry and to the life of the Church. In the next article, I will continue the discussion on the role of the priest in catechesis by examining further his responsibility as catechetical leader of the parish community.

The key ideas in the article are presented in a simple illustrated format below. The illustrations and text are by Dr Steven Selvaraju.

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



My synodality began with the Montfort youth

Elvina Fernandez

Growing up in the small town of Tampin, Negeri Sembilan, a young Michel Dass was deeply influenced by two remarkable figures — the late Fr Mari Arokiam and the late Fr Phillips Muthu. Their reverent and heartfelt way of celebrating Mass left a lasting impression on him, sparking a desire to serve and lead within the Church.

“I was in awe of how Fr Mari led, especially during the six years I assisted him. Being a youth leader and an altar server from a young age brought me closer to the Church and gave me the opportunity to witness his leadership first-hand.”

This inspiration, along with his family’s support and his passion for helping young people, set him on the path to the priesthood — a calling he felt at just 17 years old.

Fr Michel’s journey began with daily rides on a motorbike, a gift from his father after he completed his SPM in 2003. He used it to travel to church and to the Montfort Youth Centre in Melaka, where he worked and later taught young boys. That motorbike eventually became his faithful companion when he was in the seminary in Penang.

“I used to travel 45 kilometres daily by motorbike to Montfort, so I was thrilled when I received my first car from the diocese after my ordination,” he shared.

During his time at Montfort, his days were dedicated to working with young people, focusing on student welfare and their language proficiency.

“Young people need help, and we must start now. I realised early on that they needed someone to spend time and truly listen to them, for hours, and offer them hope to emerge from the darkness. That’s when my journey of synodality began.”

This experience paved the way for him to make a deeper impact — connecting with students on a personal level, being their friend, and spending time talking and listening to them.

“There was a time in my teenage years when I felt hopeless, like I couldn’t amount to anything. I didn’t want the youths there to feel the same sense of being lost. I reminded them that it’s crucial not to give up during your lowest moments, because if I had, I wouldn’t be able to enjoy my priesthood today,” he shared, hoping this message would be an eye-opener for other struggling youths.

On February 14, 2014, Michel entered the seminary, further deepening his commitment to understanding and supporting

young people. He understood the significance of being a supportive listener and a source of strength, particularly for those frequently neglected or unheard in the Church. His mission became clear: to reach out to these young individuals, help them discern their calling, and offer them hope.

After his ordination, Fr Michel began his ministry at the Church of the Divine Mercy in Shah Alam, serving alongside Fr Alan Pereira, the parish priest at the time. “I learned what it means to be a synodal Church — being present in the parish, spending time with the community, and listening,” he shared, recalling Fr Alan’s guidance. Fr Michel continued his ministry with the same dedication, always making himself available to the people in the parish.

At the Church of St Anthony in Kuala Lumpur, where he currently serves as assistant parish priest, Fr Michel’s primary goal is to reach out to young people. “We’ve established a discernment group with 12 candidates exploring vocations. Fr Clarence Devadass and I will be meeting with them for a second time, sitting down together and helping them discern God’s calling in their lives,” he shared.

Fr Michel also recalled a pivotal incident during his time at Montfort that shaped his path as a priest. It involved a boy who had been very active but suddenly became silent after a teacher’s harsh, abusive words. “That moment taught me the power of words — how they can either inspire or wound deeply, leaving lasting scars,” he said. From then on, he vowed to use his words to uplift and encourage, rather than tear someone down.

“Montfort taught me to combine wisdom with intellect. I learnt how to integrate the two, and that helped me immensely during my seminary days.”

During his time in the seminary, Fr Michel learnt to integrate wisdom with intellect, balancing his responsibilities while ensuring that young people felt seen

and heard. His journey, however,

was not without challenges. He faced moments of doubt and hopelessness, but

the support of spiritual directors, classmates, and his own determination helped him persevere.

“As a priest, I’ve made it a point to focus on the simple things, like asking people if they’re okay, noticing when someone hasn’t been around for a while, or even if they haven’t combed their hair or worn their makeup. These small acts of attentiveness can make a big difference in bringing them closer to the Church.”



Fr Michel Dass with his parents during his ordination on December 29, 2021.

He acknowledged that the priesthood is not an easy journey and that there will be times when one encounters discouragement. “I’ve been told that I wasn’t a suitable candidate or that I shouldn’t be ordained if certain people had their way. But there were also those who believed in me and encouraged me to pursue this path because they saw something in me.”

Fr Michel added that his spiritual directors gave him the strength to remain focused on God’s calling. “It’s not an easy path, but it’s not about what I want — it’s about what God wants from me.”

Today, as one of the ecclesiastical assistants for the Archdiocesan Single Adults and Youth Office (ASAYO), Fr Michel works tirelessly to ensure that young people have someone to listen to them and guide them on their journey.

As a priest, he understands that his mission isn’t about fulfilling his own desires, but about responding to what God wants for him. In embracing this divine plan, he has found joy in his priesthood and a purpose that continues to inspire and uplift the community.

“God chose me,” he said, and in his service, Fr Michel Dass exemplifies true dedication, compassion, and unwavering faith.



Fr Michel Dass with the youth from the Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam (left), and the media team from the Church of St Anthony (right).

The Church and pop culture

This All Saints' Day, the trend of kids dressing up as their favourite saint seemed to have picked up even more. It is probably not an exaggeration to say that this is in part, at least, a response to the uptick in Halloween celebrations that we see in malls, restaurants, clubs and even some places of learning.

One can even say Halloween has come full circle – from essentially a celebration of the eve of All-Saints, to the Irish American settler's celebration of it spreading to popular culture, to the New Age attempt to associate it with the occult and shamanistic, to what we have today – a celebration of saints – a big part of the Catholic identity and culture.

The talking points created by these welcome innovations by our churches, rare opportunities hampered by our busy work schedules to have meaningful conversations within our families, BECs and the parish, with the nuggets of information shared by the parish priest during his sermon, perhaps about his favourite saint, or by an unfamiliar name sung during the litany of saints – emphasise the unique role they play in our faith life.

Too often, we find it hard to broach with colleagues and friends of different faiths our form of liturgy and worship (like the Blessed Virgin Mary) but who can relate to the idea of Halloween or other Catholic beliefs and



Making Sense

EMMANUEL JOSEPH

practises that have seeped into popular culture, sometimes generating entire genres of their own. Exorcism anyone? Crying Madonna statues? Latin or Byzantine prayers to inundate heavy metal songs?

All over the world, where Catholic churches were planted, we mingled, contributed to and were influenced by, local cultures and traditions. In Mexico, *Día De Los Muertos* or Day of the Dead is intertwined in the Catholic celebrations of Hallowtide. This has taken

a whole cultural life of its own, with even cartoons made about it!

There are Catholics who try to express their faith in a secular way, or rather, bring in elements of the secular world into the Church perhaps as a means to better relate to God.

For example, in 2017, students from a Jesuit university in Puebla, Mexico, with the help of a priest organised a Mass featuring Coldplay songs. While it was largely rebuked by the local church authorities, fans of Coldplay (like this writer) would understand songs like *Viva La Vida*, *Higher Power* or more recently, *We Pray*, are moving and uplifting, making you want to close your eyes and lift your hand, much like worship songs.

The lines between religious and contemporary music too are being blurred – with church songs no longer being merely solemn hymns and chants and with several

genres like rap and metal now embracing traditional forms like folk and religious music.

Indeed, the Church constantly reaches out – especially to the youth. Luce and Friends seems to be its latest attempt – by introducing a Japanese-inspired anime character, hoping to make its presence felt in the secular world.

Again, the Church has left its impression even in the anime world already.

Manga like Trigun (featuring a gun-slinging Catholic priest), Chrono Crusade (a Vatican-run secret order of exorcists), Black Lagoon (a band of mercenary nuns) already feature Christian motifs and ideas as a central theme.

Others, like Haibane Renmei, allude to it, in this case, of angels, even with an underlying eschatological theme.

Particularly interesting is the embrace of Christian and Catholic themes and philosophical discussions from the cultural powerhouse, Japan, where Catholics account for only 20 per cent of the 1.5 per cent Christian population, making them a super minority.

Compare this, to say, the US, where nearly 25 per cent of the population are Catholic, which rarely features faith, less so Christian or Catholic themes, perhaps other than Daredevil and Huntress.

While Luce and Friends seems more innocent and has a far less serious, “in-your-face” type of discussion on religion, it seems targeted at a younger and more universal audience.

It is inevitable that as the Church influences pop culture, that it be influenced by it, too.

Instead of a hawkish monitoring of what is acceptable and what is anathema, these should be viewed positively, as an attempt by people, Christians or otherwise, to relate to Christianity and Catholicism.

Granted, a few just want to sell conspiracy theories or use the Church as a plot, but discovering the Church or Jesus in an online game, or in an inspiring song, or in an anime character you can relate to perhaps is a much more immediately relatable invitation than, “Have you heard of RCIA?”

Perhaps it is not only about “going out” into the world with our brand of what is acceptable and what isn’t, but seeing what is already in the world, and negotiating it as we do with Biblical discussions.

Perhaps it is as much as putting ourselves out there in the world, as it is censoring what we feel is acceptable into a Church-centred life, open for examination, scrutiny, discussion and who knows, conversion?

Perhaps, someday, kids dressed as saints could even make it to a ‘secular’ Halloween party, even be a fashionable, mainstream ‘norm’. Wouldn’t it be interesting if a Lucifer met a St Michael while trick or treating?

Emmanuel Joseph oversees IT as his 9-5 job and from 5-9, he serves a few NGOs, think tanks and volunteer groups. He serves as an advisor for Projek Dialog and is a Fellow with the Institute of Research and Development of Policy.

Want to be a saint? Start by loving God, humanity and His creation

We stepped into November remembering saints (Church Triumphant), all of who are on the way to heaven (Church Suffering) and all of us who are still here on earth (Church Militant), called to be saints. Aside from St Francis of Assisi who is often associated as the patron saint of conservation, several saints also inspire us to live a virtuous life through the example of their ordinary lives, even by caring for the environment, all of God’s creation and the common good.

St Augustine of Hippo (354-430) (Feast day: August 28)

All of nature, therefore, is good, since the Creator of all nature is supremely good, said this most prolific of all the Early Church Fathers and the greatest theologian. Ten years after his baptism, at the age of 43, he penned his Rule of Life, where he summed up what would seem like a concise definition for our modern-day concept of sustainability: “enough for all, always”.

He wrote to a racially, socially and economically diverse audience while still in his birthland, northern Africa, where there were affluent landowners as well as those more humble, rural folks such as the indigenous Berbers (like his mother, Monica), and those aspiring towards upward mobility in the Roman empire (like his own father, Patricius).

The invitation, he said, was for all to find God in themselves and one another – leaving no one behind and he warned against self-centredness. St Augustine believed no one is entitled to take sole ownership of what God had gifted to all people. And this bore testimony to how the Catholic Church has long been about caring for all of God’s creation.

An American philosophy professor, in



writing about St Augustine’s deep love for creation, highlighted that the saint’s “ideal would be to see nature as God sees it, feeling deeply both its beauty and its impermanence, loving nature without clinging to it”.

The Carmelites commemorated the Feast of All Carmelite Saints on November 14, so let us look at two Carmelite saints for inspiration:

St John of the Cross (1542-1591) (Feast day: December 14)

Pope Francis dedicated a section of *Laudato Si’* to this saint, highlighting this life, actions and his writings. He taught that all the goodness present in the realities and experiences of this world “is present in God eminently and infinitely, or more properly, in each of these sublime realities is God”. This is not because the finite things of this world are divine, but because of the mystic experiences of the intimate connection between God and all beings, and thus feels that “all things are God”.

“Standing awestruck before a mountain, he or she cannot separate this experience from God, and perceives that the interior awe being lived has to be entrusted to the Lord: ‘Mountains have heights and they are plentiful, vast, beautiful, graceful, bright and fragrant. These mountains are what my Beloved is to me. Lonely valleys are quiet, pleasant, cool, shady and flowing with fresh water; in the variety of their groves

and in the sweet song of the birds, they afford abundant recreation and delight to the senses, and in their solitude and silence, they refresh us and give rest. These valleys are what my Beloved is to me.”.

St Therese of Lisieux (1873-1897) (Feast day: October 1)

The Little Flower was only 24 when she died, leaving behind stacks of writing, instructions almost, on how to admire and be in awe of creation. Here are a few notable quotes recorded by the Society of the Little Flower, an organisation dedicated to spreading devotion to St Therese:

“Far away on the horizon, we could see the great mountains . . . The sight of these beauties made a deep impression on my thoughts; I felt as if I were already beginning to understand the greatness of God and the wonders of heaven.

“The sun’s light that plays on the cedar trees plays on each tiny flower as if it were the only one in existence; and in the same way our Lord takes a special interest in each soul.”

She invites us to practise the little way of love: a kind word, a smile or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship.

As the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP) highest decision-making body convenes for a deliberation at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, let us seek the intercession of these saints for the deliberations that take place. The Church continues to be a voice of reason, wisdom and conscience for Mother Earth and humanity, echoing her call in *Laudate Deum* for a new process marked by three requirements: drastic, intense and commitment of all.

The Church holds on to the hope for a binding form of energy transition

that meets three conditions: efficiency, obligatory and readily monitored. The common of all, the future of their children and shared prosperity must remain at the forefront and centre of the conference agenda.

The difficult question from *Laudate Deum* must resound in every human heart of every decision-maker at the conference: “What would induce anyone, at this stage, to hold on to power, only to be remembered for their inability to take action when it was urgent and necessary to do so?”

Master of Nature (Prayer of St Augustine of Hippo)

*O God, by whose laws the poles revolve,
The stars follow their course,
The sun rules the day,
And the moon presides over the night;
And all the world maintains,
As far as this world of sense allows,
The wondrous stability of things
by means of the orders
And recurrences of seasons:
Through the day by the changing
of light and darkness,
Through the years by the successions of
Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter,
through the cycles by the completion
of the sun’s course,*

*Through the great eras of time
by the return of the stars
to their starting point.*

● *In the Beginning* is a series of ruminations from **Mary Terra**, a not-so-young Catholic striving for holiness with a desire to grow in grace and leave behind a legacy of love for God, for others and all His creatures and, hopefully, leave this earth with a significantly reduced ecological footprint.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Bread and wine

At the Last Supper when Jesus instituted the Eucharist, He chose to use two elements, bread and wine. The images are now so deeply ingrained in our consciousness that we never stop to ask, why bread and wine? Among all the things Jesus might have chosen, why these two? What do they carry in themselves that make them particularly apt to give expression to the body and blood of Christ? What, more particularly, does each represent?

As they are used in the Eucharist, bread and wine symbolize very different aspects of our lives, of our world, and of Jesus' life.

Bread. What is bread? What did it represent for Jesus at that first Eucharist? A loaf of bread is made up of many kernels of wheat which, when ground up, lose their separate identity and become a single loaf. In the Eucharist, the bread represents us, many individuals, now together as one body, the Body of Christ. But it also represents a particular aspect of our lives, namely, our lives insofar as we are joyous, healthy, in community with each other, and thriving as God's children. The smell of fresh bread speaks of life. So does the bread at the Eucharist. It becomes the bread of the world's achievements and holds up for God's blessing all that is young, healthy, creative, and

bursting with life.

Metaphorically, the bread celebrates the Galilean period in Jesus' life and in our own lives – the time of youth, of miracles, of walking on water, of raising people from the dead, of the joyous energy of life, of falling in love, and of the birth of new life.

The wine. What did it represent for Jesus and what does it represent in the Eucharist? Wine is made from crushed grapes and represents blood. And as the blood of Christ, it represents all that is broken, fragile, not whole, sick, suffering, and dying in the world. It is the wine of the world's mortality and inadequacy, the blood of all is crushed as the world's achievements take place.

Metaphorically, the wine commemorates the Jerusalem period of Jesus' life and that period in our own lives – the time of misunderstanding, of being the victim, of mental anguish, of physical anguish, of being ostracised, of the loneliness of dying when others can't help us.

And the two together make for one balanced whole, life in all its aspects. In effect, when the presider at a Eucharist holds up the bread and wine, this what is being said: *Lord, what I hold up for You today is all that is in this world, both of joy and suffering - the bread of the world's achievements and the blood of all that's*

crushed as those achievements take place. I offer You everything that is healthy and thriving in our world – the joy at our tables, the joy of children, the hopeful dreams of the young, the satisfaction of achievement, and everything that's creative and bursting with life, even as I offer You all that is weak, feeble, aged, crushed, sick, dying, and victimised. I offer to You all the pagan beauties, pleasures, and joys of this life, even as I stand with You under the cross, affirming that the one who is excluded from earthly pleasure is the cornerstone of the community. I offer You the strong, along with the weak and gentle of heart, asking You to bless both and stretch my heart so that it can, like You, hold and bless everything that is. I offer You both the wonders and the pains of this world, Your world.

Spirituality might take some lessons from this. Too often spiritualities are one-sided and need balance.

On the one hand, a spirituality can centre itself too one-sidedly on human thriving to the neglect of human inadequacy: suffering, sin, mortality, and of Jesus' invitation to take up His cross. It celebrates only youth, health, prosperity, and goodness – and presents a Jesus who offers us a Prosperity Gospel rather than a Whole Gospel.

Conversely, a spirituality can centre itself too one-sidedly on human inadequacy: sin, mortality, asceticism, and the renunciation of pleasure. It celebrates the old but not the young, the sick but not the healthy, the poor but not the prosperous, the dying but not the living, and the next world but not this one. This strips the Gospel of its wholeness and presents a Jesus who is an unhealthy ascetic and frowns on natural human happiness.

The bread and wine in the Eucharist give voice to all aspects of life. In the words of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the words of consecration at a Eucharist in essence read like this: "Over every living thing which is to spring up, to grow, to flower, to ripen during this day, I say again the words: 'This is My body'. And over every death-force which waits in readiness to corrode, to wither, to cut down, I speak again Your words which express the supreme mystery of faith: 'This is My blood.'"

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

There are many and various ways for us to approach and encounter God. No one means of prayer has a monopoly over our journey to God. God welcomes and blesses every sincere effort we make to draw close to Him.

With such an awareness in mind, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* lists various wellsprings within the Church's spiritual tradition. Each of these different wellsprings offers a unique way to draw close to God and nurture our interior relationship with Him.

Among these various wellsprings, it's no surprise that the Word of God receives first priority.

Quoting the Second Vatican Council's *Constitution on Divine Revelation*, the *Catechism* explains: "The Church 'forcefully and specially exhorts all the Christian faithful . . . to learn 'the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ' by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures.... Let them remember, however, that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that a dialogue takes place between God and man. For 'we speak to Him when we pray; we listen to Him when we read the divine oracles.'"

As believers, we cannot know who Jesus Christ is without reading and studying the Sacred Scriptures. As Christians, we need to be familiar and comfortable with the Bible and should frequently open its pages and be taught by God and His divine wisdom.

Our reading and studying of the Bible, however, should also be accompanied by prayer. The Bible should be an established part of our prayer life, since we need to learn the valuable skill of allowing the written Word of God to weave itself into our communication with God. We cannot study the words of God in one part of our life, while in another trying to internally listen to His words in our own hearts.

There is only one voice of God and the more we allow the words of the Bible to be a part of our prayer life, the more we will



In praying the Bible, God's own words speak for us

be able to hear and discern God's words to us.

The Bible is a gift. It contains the deeds and words of God. It recounts for us the interaction of God among His people through the ages. It is also a living Word. When we read the Bible, it is not the mere studying of an ancient manuscript or the simple gleaning of human wisdom from previous generations. The Bible is the living Word of God. When we engage the Bible, God will act and speak to us just as He did to our forebears.

The more we know about His deeds and words from the Bible, the more we can recognise and appreciate them in our own lives. The more we know the ways of God through the Bible, the more we can discern and see His ways in our journey of faith.

The *Catechism* summarises this blending of the Bible and our personal prayer, and teaches us: "The spiritual writers, paraphrasing Matthew 7:7, summarise in this way the dispositions of the heart nourished by the word of God in prayer: 'Seek in reading and you will find in meditating; knock in mental prayer and it will be opened to you by contemplation.'"

By opening and reading the Bible, we are led to meditation. The meditation of mental prayer will open our minds and hearts and lead us to deeper forms of prayer in contemplation. This movement of prayer begins and springboards from a devout reading of the Bible.

While we can pray spontaneously from our hearts, it is only our hearts we bring to God. Our hearts are fallen and

oftentimes they are confused, wayward, and treacherous. Left to their own devices, our hearts can be unstable guides to the interior life. By bringing in the Bible, our prayer is given a stability beyond our efforts. In reading and praying with the Bible, God's own words elevate and direct our own words to Him.

Just as we cannot walk the way of the Lord Jesus without the grace of God, so we cannot truly pray without the words of God. We need the Bible if we are to pray with a mature heart. We need the Bible if we are going to pray and give our whole heart to the living God.

The Word of God, therefore, is the first wellspring that we need to drink from if we are going to be a people of prayer and growth in spiritual life. **Fr Jeffrey F. Kirby, Crux**

Little Catholics' corner

Word Search



Colour the picture



**Heaven and earth will pass away,
but my words will never
pass away (Mark 13: 31)**

Dear children,

In our Gospel reading this Sunday, Jesus told His followers that a very important day was coming.

He told them that on that day, people would see Him coming in the clouds with power and glory.

He told them that on that day, He would send His angels to gather His people and take them home to heaven to be with Him.

That's an important day, isn't it? When is that day going to be? Jesus didn't tell His followers that.

In fact, He told them, "No

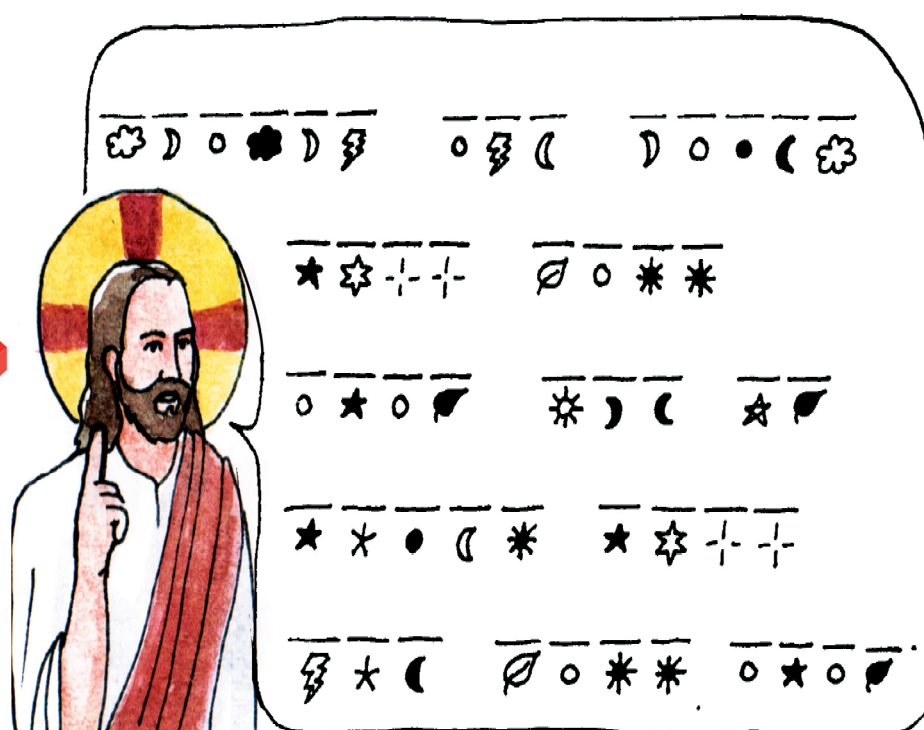
one knows the day or hour when I will return. Only the Father knows. That is why you must be ready, I will come at a time when you least expect it."

Wow! If we don't know when He is coming, how will we be ready?

We can be ready by doing the things that Jesus would want us to be doing — loving one another, caring for the sick, feeding the hungry, and helping the poor.

If we are busy doing those things, we will be ready when He comes.

Aunty Eliz



In today's Gospel reading Jesus tells the disciples what will happen at the end of time.

Mark 13:24-32

The sun and moon will become dark and the stars will fall down from the sky, and then Jesus will come back.

What else does he say?

Use this code to find out!

[illegible]

A B D E H I L M N O P R S T U V W Y
 O * () * * * * * * * * * *



SERIAN, Sarawak: An Altar Servers Workshop was held at the Church of St James, recently, bringing together altar servers from nine surrounding villages. Organised by the Church of St Theresa, the event saw the participation of 96 altar servers from Kampung Paon Gahat, Kampung Paon Rimu, Kampung Krait Situbuh, Kampung Krait Mawang, Kampung Sumpas Tampek, Kampung Sungai Aping, Kampung Sungai Paoh, Kampung Sungai Buru, and Kampung Tong Nibong.

The workshop began with registration and a welcoming session, setting the stage for a day of learning and spiritual growth. Augustine Lian spoke on the significance of the altar server ministry, emphasising its importance in the liturgical life of the Church. He also introduced the participants to the six liturgical seasons, highlighting the symbolic colours associated with each season and explaining the various items used during Mass.

Christ Davis, leader of St Theresa's Altar Servers, followed with a comprehensive breakdown of the parts of the Mass. His presentation clarified the roles and respon-

Servers workshop strengthens faith and Ministry



The servers from the nine villages surrounding Church of St Theresa.

sibilities of altar servers, ensuring that participants understood their vital role in the celebration of the Eucharist.

The final session, led by Jesse William, was a hands-on demonstration of a Mass, where four altar servers from the participating villages assisted him in performing the various tasks. Jesse also provided valuable tips and guidelines on what to do — and

what not to do — during the liturgy, further enhancing the altar servers' practical skills.

The workshop concluded with a Mass celebrated by Fr. Robert Jissem, who expressed his gratitude to the altar servers for their dedication and service. During his homily, Fr. Robert encouraged the youth to continue growing in their faith and to deepen their commitment to the altar server

ministry.

The event was not only an educational experience but also a chance for the young participants to strengthen their relationship with God. The workshop reminded them of the importance of fulfilling their duties as Catholics, living fully by faith, and sharing the Catholic message with others. **Today's Catholic**

Conference inspires young people to witness to Christ

INDIA: Young Catholic leaders have gathered in India to reflect on Pope Francis' call "Christ is alive! He is our hope," from his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*.

The 6th National Youth Conference comprised 598 delegates from across India, including leaders from the Indian Catholic Youth Movement (ICYM), youth delegates, animators and priests, hailing from 14 regions, 81 dioceses.

The conference, organised by ICYM and taking place from October 21 to 25 at Trinity College, Jalandhar, India, emphasised the collective responsibility of young Catholics in building the Church.

Call to responsibly witness Christ

The plenary sessions centred on the theme of witnessing Christ, a key point in the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India's strategic plan. Each individual is called to play their role in introducing Jesus to others.

In a world marred by chaos and violence, the Church calls on the young to "take the Gospel beyond mere spiritual and faith matters into realms of social reformation," Fr. Chetan Machado, Executive Secretary of the National Youth Commission, told *Vatican News*.

One of the focal points of the conference was 'youth engagement in social action.' Participants were encouraged to critically assess information, rather than be swayed by media narratives, speak out against injustice, and engage in study groups on key encyclicals by Pope Francis, together with non-Christians.

The crisis in Manipur was highlighted, which enabled the participants to recognise the urgency for collective voices to address such issues. In their discussions, there was a strong call for the Church in India to come together to rebuild Manipur and regions facing similar situations.



Team building

Challenges

The conference also addressed the diverse yet interconnected challenges faced by young people. A significant issue raised was the increasing pressure from social media, which often creates an imbalance between virtual and real-life experiences, leading youth to adopt a superficial approach to life.

Another challenge identified was the lack of relevant faith formation for young Catholics, which allows external influences to overshadow their faith. Amidst rising religious tensions, there is a struggle to openly testify to Christ in the secular world. On the other hand, the young often feel judged by the Catholic community.

Other challenges discussed included mental health issues, unemployment, delays in finding life partners, and caring for aging parents. The negative impact of broken families, troubled parenting, and generational gaps was also highlighted.

The way forward

To address these challenges, the conference proposed several key recommendations:

- ❖ Foster greater synergy between Church leaders, parish communities, and the youth.
- ❖ Rejuvenate the significance of the Eucharist and promote a proactive attitude of prayer and contemplation in action.

❖ Create forums for open dialogue, allowing young people to express their hopes and fears, understand their challenges, and seek guidance.

❖ Strengthen faith formation to ground young people amidst external influences.

❖ Provide opportunities for mentorship and shared experiences to address the declining motivation among the youth and offer robust external support.

❖ Prioritise missionary formation, offering short-term community living experiences to strengthen vocations.

❖ Foster inclusiveness, ensuring ministry reaches not only the elite but also youth at the peripheries, including those distant from traditional Church activities.

❖ Encourage sustainable living practices, cultivating a love for creation and implementing sustainable practices.

Participants observed that youth ministries should shift from being event-oriented to focusing on formation and training, promoting servant leadership that prioritises service over recognition.

Indian Catholic Youth Movement (ICYM)

Founded in 1999, this parochial youth movement operates under the aegis of the CCBI Commission for Youth, aiming to animate the holistic growth of all youth in Latin rite parishes across India. **Sr Florina Joseph SCN, Vatican News**



State-wise representation at the conference

CONFIRMANDS URGED TO LIVE THEIR LIVES AS FAITHFUL CATHOLICS

ULU TIRAM, Johor: On November 2, the Church of the Holy Family was filled with joy as 22 young people received the Sacrament of Confirmation. This significant occasion was presided over by Bishop Bernard Paul, with parish priest Fr Martinian Lee concelebrating the multilingual Eucharistic celebration, assisted by Deacon Steven Wong.

Bishop Bernard engaged with the confirmands, enquiring about their readiness for this sacred sacrament. During his homily, he delved into the profound significance of Confirmation. He highlighted that it is not merely a graduation from Catechism or a prerequisite for marriage. Referencing Deuteronomy 6:6, the reading of the day, he urged the young people to love God with all their heart, soul, and strength. Bishop Bernard encouraged them to use the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit to serve others, spread love, and make a positive impact within the community. Drawing an analogy of a plant that is



Bishop Bernard Paul, Fr Martinian Lee and Deacon Steven Wong with the newly confirmed.

rooted in the ground flourishing and bearing flowers and fruits, so must the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit enable them to grow spiritually.

The bishop's message resonated deeply with the congregation. He encouraged

the newly confirmed to live their lives as faithful Catholics. Whether they pursue future careers as entrepreneurs, teachers, doctors or in other fields, he urged them to embody and uphold the values of their faith. Integrity, morality, and a

commitment to doing the good and right thing should be the hallmarks of their lives. The Holy Family parish looks forward to witnessing the positive impact of these newly confirmed Catholics on their families and their community.

Indonesian Catholic youth commission celebrates 'Youth Pledge'

JAKARTA: The Catholic Church in Indonesia, through the Commission on Youth, celebrated the 96th Youth Pledge with a Thanksgiving Mass and a discussion dedicated to young Catholic bureaucrats recently.

The event was held at the Indonesian Bishops' Conference (KWI) Building in Jakarta, according to *MIRIFICA News*, the official news service of the Conference.

In his homily, Fr Frans Kristi Adi, secretary of the KWI Youth Commission urged young Catholics to embody the spirit of unity demonstrated in the historic 1928 Youth Pledge, where youth of diverse faiths and cultural backgrounds declared their commitment to the Indonesian nation.

Reflecting on this legacy, he highlighted how "the form of love of Indonesian youth has never been forgotten by time," referencing the film *Eksil* by Lola Amaria which portrays the enduring patriotism of exiled Indonesian youth.

He encouraged young Catholics, known as Orang Muda Katolik (OMK), to cultivate a dedication to the "common good (*bonum commune*)" for Indonesia.

Following the Mass, a discussion led by Yanuar Nugroho, a lecturer at the Driyarkara School of Philosophy and coordinator of the Expert Team for the National SDGs Secretariat, provided a deep dive into the challenges and aspirations for Indonesia's

future.

Nugroho framed his presentation with data on the country's socio-economic and political challenges, particularly highlighting the economic hurdles Indonesia faces after re-entering the "middle income trap" due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to him, achieving a prosperous "Golden Indonesia 2045" will require "a targeted, collaborative, and sustainable transformation strategy."

In a personal reflection, Nugroho shared his commitment to public service and his journey back to Indonesia, saying, "I really wanted to go back to Indonesia, to work in Indonesia. I wanted to serve Indonesia even though I didn't think of being part of the government at first."

He emphasised that his dedication to public service is deeply rooted in his spirituality, inspired by the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola.

Nugroho explained that the public sector requires humility, free from material attachments: "So our attitude must be free and loose: using all means when needed, but not attached to those means. Position, official car, official residence, all of those are just means."

Addressing young civil servants, Nugroho stressed the importance of mental resilience and support networks to prevent burnout in high-pressure roles.



Fr Frans Kristi Adi, secretary of the Youth Commission of the Indonesian Bishops' Conference, presides at a Thanksgiving Mass commemorating the 2024 Youth Pledge at the Franciscan Chapel of the KWI Building. (Ucanews photo/KWI Komkep Documentation)

"We cannot desolate (feelings of misery, sadness, etc.) for long. Because time is limited, or even non-existent. While there is a lot of work," he said, underscoring the value of having a "peer group and spiritual guide" to sustain morale and clarity.

Further, Nugroho urged young bureaucrats to promote teamwork and equality, reflecting on his own leadership approach as Deputy II of the Chief of Staff of the President of Indonesia from 2015 to 2019.



"In one organisation, team members must know each other's abilities so that the work process becomes easier, more effective, and more transparent," he said.

The discussion concluded with an exchange, as participants raised numerous questions for Nugroho, who advised the young Catholics in attendance to design a "life roadmap" to guide their professional and personal growth. *LiCAS.News*



(Ucanews photo/KWI Komkep Documentation)

Memento Mori: Are you prepared to die?

When I was a little girl, I lived in my grandparents' home, alongside my father and brother. Because of this, I was privy to a lot of early life lessons, particularly related to death.

I would sometimes hear my grandparents gripe about old age, doctors' appointments and sicknesses, and they would often call friends and relatives to offer condolences upon hearing that someone had died. It seemed like they were constantly going to funerals, but they always spoke about it matter-of-factly. One afternoon, my grandfather looked at me and said, "Mija, we are all going to die one day. No one makes it out of here alive; it's the only way we can get to heaven."

As a seven-year-old, I was horrified — but as the years went on, I too began to look at death as a stepping-stone. It wasn't necessarily a scary end, but a beginning. I kept that lesson near my heart all these years, because, as I look back, my grandpa did me an incredible service.

My grandparents, good and humble people, lived *memento mori* ("remember your death" in Latin). They would go to daily Mass and weekly confession, and pray daily rosaries and novenas. Before any vacation, they looked up the schedule of the Catholic church nearest to their destination. They didn't tolerate any funny business — not when it came to their faith. Though my grandmother has now passed on, my grandfather remains the same: full of life, with eyes on the next life.

Dying is not to be glorified, but dying in Christ is not to be feared. As Catholics, we should understand this the most.

We want heaven, but we don't want that walk to Calvary. Can you blame us, though? No one wants to be sick or see their loved ones in pain. Interestingly enough, when we suffer on earth, we often cling to the hope of heaven. But what's the point if we disregard the steps we must take to get there?

Death is promised; eternal life for us is not. It is true: The Lord has a place for us at His heavenly banquet. But will we make it to the reservation?

He offers us an eternity with Him — but are we making adequate preparations?

Some may cavalierly joke about purgatory as a funny idea "those Catholics" have, but don't be fooled. It's



(Freepik/
paulapolaka)

not a made-up place, and it isn't a serene waiting room. In St Faustina's diary, she recounts her vision of purgatory, referring to it as "a prison of suffering where souls are longing to be with God." Upon witnessing this reality, she heard an interior voice say, "My mercy does not want this, but my justice demands it" (Diary, 20). It purifies our soul, but the reality of such a place is not to be dismissed.

But we don't have to live in constant fear — we just need to live with an understanding of truth and in a state of grace so that our souls are ready. We may not get a heads-up, a notice from a doctor that we are gravely ill. We may not make it to old age, where we can be satisfied with a life well lived. We don't know the day or hour.

Because of my grandparents, I had many friends who were 60-plus years my senior. I've seen their caskets

close, with one last drop of holy water sprinkled upon them.

For many, their funerals were marked as joyous because they were well prepared, even if their deaths came as a surprise. Despite it all, they knew their loved ones would be fervently praying for their souls.

It can be that way for you, too. As the saying goes, "It ain't over till it's over."

You're alive right now — it's not over. You still have a chance to go to confession, where Christ makes all things new. Run to the Eucharist. Don't purposefully miss Mass. Pray for a peaceful death, for the souls in purgatory, and for the conversion of sinners.

Memento mori. Remember that you will die. Then live accordingly.

As St Thérèse of Lisieux said, "It is not Death that will come to fetch me — it is the good God." **Christina Herrera, Register**

MEMORIAM

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13th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Albert Ebenezer Devadass Called home to be with the Lord 18th November 2011

*My dear where are you during these miserable thirteen years
It's still so painful, lonely and extremely sorrowful
Lord enough of miseries, torments and tears
I know life has to move on and I cannot be fearful.*

*If it's God's will that you should leave us and journey on
Who are we to put a stop and demand that you must stay
You weren't ready to leave and we didn't expect you to be gone
Why so soon is what we ask ourselves and what a price to pay*

*When everything went so smoothly and so very joyfully
It just took a terrible turn and just like that all got shattered
Before the fruits of your labour could be realised contentedly
Our dreams, hopes, peace and love completely battered*

*We are still in a daze without realising what took place
Everything must have been for a reason in the past
Hoping to find solace in time to come with God's grace
Not accepting the dreadful tragedy that happened so fast.*

Ever loving grandchildren,
children and wife.

In Loving Memory of



Eruthyanathan @ Rogers

Departed:
November 23, 2023

*"Happy the man
who has placed
his trust in the Lord."
Psalm 40:4*

Forever cherished by
family and all loved ones.

16th Anniversary In Ever Loving Memory of



LOURDES PITCHAIMUTHU, AMN Departed: 16-11-2008

*Your life was a blessing,
Hands that never stopped
giving, A heart that never
stopped loving and a soul
that never stopped believing.*

Deeply missed by
Husband, Paul Nathan
and Son, Anthony Paul Raj,
Relatives and Friends.



(Unsplash/Sven Mieke)

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Westminster Cathedral to be featured on British Christmas stamp

LEICESTER, United Kingdom: London's Westminster Cathedral will be featured on a Christmas stamp from Britain's Royal Mail.

The leading church of the Diocese of Westminster is the only Catholic representative of a series of five stamps featuring cathedrals in the United Kingdom. The other stamps will show the Anglican cathedrals in Edinburgh, Liverpool, Armagh, and Bangor.

"We're so proud because it means that the image will be seen by many, many people," said Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the Archbishop of Westminster.

"I hope that seeing the image, they'll understand that a church is a place where God dwells and where that sense of God's presence is intense, comforting and consoling," he said.

Westminster Cathedral, officially the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Most Precious

Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, is the largest Catholic church in England and Wales.

"The presence of a church points directly to the birth of Jesus, because that is how God comes into our world in flesh and blood. To honour and praise Him, we create buildings of beauty – places of prayer – and Westminster Cathedral is an outstanding example of that," Nichols said.

The cathedral was designed in a neo-Byzantine style by John Francis Bentley, a Catholic convert. He began working on the church in 1895, and it was completed in 1903.

David Gold, the Royal Mail's Director of External Affairs and Policy, explained why the organisation chose to dedicate the Christmas stamps to cathedrals.

"Cathedrals are a hugely significant part of our cultural heritage and play an important role in local

communities," he said.

"They also offer space for peaceful reflection and a bit of an escape from the challenges of daily life, which can be especially important at Christmas," Gold added.

The stamp that features Westminster Cathedral has a value of £2.80 (RM15.95), the current rate for international letters.

The Archbishop of Westminster said the Westminster Cathedral is a wonderful site for Christmas.

"If you're in London over the Christmas period, come down Victoria Street and visit the Cathedral," Nichols said.

"It's always open. There are thousands of visitors every day, and you'd be most welcome. Once inside, you'll be touched by something of the beauty of God and of His delicate, humble, compassionate presence among us," the cardinal added. **Charles Collins, Crux**



A new Christmas stamp from Britain's Royal Mail features the Cathedral of the Diocese of Westminster in London. (Crux/Royal Mail)

Jubilee of Sport 2025 photography contest

VATICAN: In the context of the Jubilee of Sport for the Year 2025, the Dicastery for Culture and Education (Vatican) is promoting an international photography contest, under the title: *Sport in Motion*. The contest is aimed at young photographers, professional or amateur, under 25.

The contest includes five categories of photography: sport and hope (sport as a message of hope to society), sport and family (sport as a moment of family life), sport and disability (sport as a platform for inclusion), sport and politics (sport as a resource accessible to all), sport and ecology (the relationship of sport with the elements of nature).

The deadline for participation ends on April 30, 2025 and the winners will be announced at the Jubilee of Sport (June 14-15, 2025). The winners will be awarded a meeting with the Holy Father, a visit to the Vatican Museums, a workshop in the *Osservatore Romano* newspaper and the international dissemination of the photos in the Holy See's media.

Entries can be made by e-mail (sportinmotion@dce.va) and further information (entry form / rules / jury) can be found on the Dicastery's link (www.dce.va): <https://www.dce.va/it/news/2024/concorso-di-fotografia.html>

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Bishops urge 'charity, respect, and civility' after historic 2024 election

WASHINGTON, DC: The US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) is calling for respect and civility after the 2024 US elections concluded with Donald Trump winning a second term as president.

Trump won the race against Vice President Kamala Harris with a sizable Electoral College victory that stood at 306-226 on Wednesday afternoon. The Republican president-elect also held a roughly five-million-vote lead in the popular vote.

In a statement posted to the USCCB's website, conference president Archbishop Timothy Broglio (*pic*) congratulated Trump on his victory and praised the US' "ability to transition peacefully from one government to the next."

The archbishop noted that the Catholic Church is "not aligned with any political party, and neither is the bishops' conference."

"No matter who occupies the White House or holds the majority on Capitol Hill, the Church's teachings remain unchanged, and we bishops look forward



to working with the people's elected representatives to advance the common good of all," the prelate wrote.

"As Christians, and as Americans, we have the duty to treat each other with charity, respect, and civility, even if we may disagree on how to carry out matters

of public policy," he said. "As a nation blessed with many gifts, we must also be concerned for those outside our borders and eager to offer assistance to all."

The archbishop urged Americans to pray for President-elect Trump and all elected officials so that they might "rise to meet the responsibilities entrusted to them as they serve our country and those whom they represent."

"Let us ask for the intercession of our Blessed Mother, the patroness of our nation, that she guide to uphold the common good of all and promote the dignity of the human person, especially the most vulnerable among us, including the unborn, the poor, the stranger, the elderly and infirm, and migrants," he said. **Daniel Payne, CNA**