

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

TERHAD

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For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebr 4:12



A celebration for migrants and refugees

■ P5



Caritas Malaysia enhances disaster preparedness through training

■ P7



Deaf sculpture guided by the Holy Spirit

■ P12



Synod

2021 - 2024

For a synodal Church

communion | participation | mission

Prayer for the Synod

Adsumus Sancte Spiritus

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;

Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever.

Amen.

Pope leads Rosary for peace

VATICAN: Pope Francis presided over a solemn Rosary prayer in Rome's Basilica of St Mary Major on October 6 evening, invoking the intercession of the Virgin Mary for peace in the world amid an escalating conflict in the Middle East.

On the eve of the one-year anniversary of the Hamas attack on Israel, the Pope implored Our Lady, Queen of Peace, to "dispel the dark clouds of evil."

"Mother, intercede for our world in danger, that it may protect life and reject war, care for the suffering, the poor, the defenceless, the sick, and the afflicted, and guard our common home," he prayed during the October 6 service.

"We beg you to intercede for God's mercy, O Queen of Peace! Convert the souls of those who fuel hatred, silence the noise of weapons that give rise to death, extinguish the violence that broods in the heart of human beings, and inspire projects of peace in the deeds of those who govern nations."

Rome's largest Marian basilica was packed for the Rosary prayer on Sunday with bishops, cardinals, priests, religious sisters, and laypeople — many of whom are delegates in the Synod on Synodality assembly taking place at the Vatican this month. Foreign diplomats ac-

credited to the Holy See could also be seen in the crowd praying for peace.

Two young people led the congregation in the glorious mysteries of the Rosary with a choir singing a short Marian hymn between each mystery.

Pope Francis sat in a white chair in front of the basilica near the chapel that contains the Marian icon "Salus Populi Romani," an icon he has visited more than 100 times since becoming pope.

The congregation sang the traditional *Salve Regina* prayer in Latin and the Litany of Loreto at the end of the Rosary before the Pope read out his prayer for peace.

"O Mary, our mother, once again we stand before you. You know the sorrows and difficulties that burden our hearts in this hour. We lift our gaze to you, we focus on your eyes and entrust ourselves to your heart," Francis said.

"You who are ready to embrace our sorrows, come to our aid in these times oppressed by injustice and devastated by wars, wipe away the tears from the suffering faces of those who mourn the death of their loved ones."

A small crowd stood outside the basilica praying the Rosary in union with the Pope inside.

At the end of the prayer, the 87-year-old Pope was brought in his wheelchair to pray in silence before an icon of the Virgin Mary. Pope Francis has said that he wishes to be buried in

the Basilica of St Mary Major.

A few hours earlier, the Pope made an impassioned appeal for peace in the Middle East during his *Angelus* address in St Peter's Square.

"Tomorrow marks one year since the terror attack on the population in Israel, to whom I once again express my closeness. Let us not forget that there are still many hostages in Gaza. I ask for them to be released immediately," Pope Francis said.

"Since that day, the Middle East has been plunged into a condition marked by increasing suffering, with destructive military actions continuing to strike the Palestinian people. The people are suffering very much in Gaza and other territories. Most of them are innocent civilians, all of them are people who must receive all necessary humanitarian aid. I call for an immediate cease-fire on all fronts, including Lebanon. Let us pray for the Lebanese, especially for those who live in the south, who are forced to leave their villages," he added.

Appealing to the international community to stop "the spiral of revenge" and to prevent attacks "like the one recently carried out by Iran," Pope Francis underlined the right of all nationals to exist in peace and security.

"In this situation, prayer is more necessary than ever," Francis said, reiterating his invitation for a global day of prayer and fasting for peace in the world on Oct 7. **Courtney Mares, CNA**



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Pope's vision for a unified Diocese of Rome

Pope Francis' October 1st *Motu Proprio*, *La Vera Bellezza* (*True Beauty*), signals a major reorganisation of the Diocese of Rome aimed at fostering greater ecclesial unity. This restructuring integrates the five central prefectures with the outer peripheries, addressing the growing divide between the historic centre and its outlying areas. Pope Francis envisions a more unified Rome, describing it as "one large home for all," where ecclesial communion triumphs over fragmentation.

This decision comes at a critical time as the Church prepares for the 2025 Jubilee of Hope, an event that Pope Francis views as an opportunity for Rome's faithful to rediscover the beauty of unity. The *Motu Proprio* is more than an administrative shift; it is a pastoral response to the social and spiritual realities facing the diocese today, emphasising the Pope's broader vision for the Church.

Rome, like many modern cities, is experiencing a growing divide between its historic centre and expanding outskirts. Pope Francis has expressed concern that the centre, once the heart of Roman Catholicism, risks becoming more of a tourist destination than a living faith community. Meanwhile, the peripheries, where parishes serve as vital community hubs, are often under-resourced and neglected. This division is both geographic and pastoral.

In *La Vera Bellezza*, Pope Francis proposes a new pastoral vision that integrates the centre and periphery into a harmonious whole. "There is no longer an isolated centre and a fragmented periphery," he writes, "but a dynamic view that seeks not walls, but bridges." By breaking down barriers and encouraging collaboration, the Pope aims to foster a shared sense of purpose across the diocese, creating a spirit of unity that strengthens the entire Church.

At the heart of Pope Francis' vision is a more dynamic pastoral approach — one that adapts to the rhythms and needs of the People of God. The Pope stresses the importance of recognising the changing cultural landscape and responding accordingly. He has long advocated for pastoral and sacramental activities that meet the real needs of families and communities. This restructuring is a practical step toward ensuring that the Church remains responsive to these evolving needs.

The integration of Rome's central and peripheral areas goes beyond symbolism. It grants the peripheries, which have historically played a key role in nurturing the faith, greater access to the rich spiritual and historical heritage of the city's centre. Pope Francis envisions a diocese where celebrations, gatherings, and meetings occur in historic spaces, reconnecting the faithful with the deep roots of Roman Catholic identity. This blending of physical and spiritual elements enriches the diocese and strengthens the bonds within its community.

As the 2025 Jubilee approaches, Pope Francis invites Romans to become pilgrims in their own city. While the Jubilee will attract visitors from around the world, the Pope emphasises that Romans themselves should seize this opportunity to rediscover their city's sacred sites. He highlights spiritual journeys, such as the Seven Church Walk, the Lenten Station Churches, and visiting Marian icons and the Holy Cradle at Santa Maria Maggiore, as ways to reconnect with their faith and heritage.

However, the Pope's reflection on beauty extends beyond historical monuments and sacred architecture. He reminds the Church that true beauty lies in caring for the vulnerable. "The more we care for the vulnerable, the more beautiful we become," he writes. For Pope Francis, Rome is not just a historical centre, but also a living expression of the Church's

maternal care, particularly for the poor and marginalised. He praised the volunteers and organisations dedicated to serving the most vulnerable and encouraged the diocese to expand these efforts. In his view, compassion and beauty are inseparable, and it is this kind of beauty that will ultimately transform the world.

One of the central themes of *La Vera Bellezza* is Pope Francis' firm condemnation of divisions within the Church. He rejects the formation of "fiefdoms" that foster separation instead of communion. Whether through isolated parishes or ecclesial movements that emphasise differences, these divisions are a "sin against ecclesial communion," according to the Pope.

Pope Francis calls on the Diocese of Rome to embrace synodality, which promotes unity and rejects elitism. "Our diocese must throw open bridges," he writes, "to strengthen ecclesial communion so that all, individually and collectively, belong solely to Christ and His Church." This is a clear directive for every member of the Church to prioritise unity over personal preferences or divisions, calling for a spirit of communion at every level.

As the Diocese of Rome prepares for the Jubilee, the restructuring serves as a timely reminder of the Church's mission to be a place of communion and welcome. Pope Francis' vision for a unified diocese — one that bridges the center and periphery, adjusts to the pastoral needs of the people, and cares for the vulnerable — offers valuable lessons for the global Church.

In a world often divided by walls, Pope Francis' call to build bridges is both timely and necessary. Beginning with the Diocese of Rome, the Church must reflect the beauty of unity, ensuring that all, both Romans and non-Romans, find a home within Christ's Church. **Antonella Palermo, Vatican News**

Finding freedom in the temporary

In 1998 and 2008, Singapore film producer and actor Jack Neo made two movies entitled *Money No Enough* and *Money No Enough 2*. These two movies showcased the story of three brothers with their families. The eldest brother has the most children but has the least money; the second one has only one daughter but is considered the most well to do among them and the youngest one has no children but is always aspiring to make it big in life.

At the end of the first movie, the youngest brother (if I remember correctly) reflected on their lives and saw how they compared to one another. The eldest brother and his family have the least money and yet they were happy and could spend time together as a family and enjoyed the simple things in life. The second brother has the most but is never happy and never bonded with his family and the youngest one never appreciated what he had in the person of his devoted and loving wife but always craved for more.

This kind of story may seem to be very cliché but it speaks volumes about our human nature. Money has always been a point of contention among people; it can break families up and drive friends apart. However, is money the real reason for such clashes? Will a family who has less be happier than a family who has more? Does it mean that only those who have less will enter the kingdom of heaven and the rich will not be granted access? If we read today's Gospel the answer would seem to be a resounding yes. Unfortunately, that is a rather superficial answer.

Let us examine a hypothetical scenario.

There are two men — one who is extremely wealthy and the other is extremely poor. Even though the first man is extremely wealthy, he is generous and is always ready to lend a hand to anyone who is in need. For him, money is meant to be used and not to be hoarded. The second man is always angry and bitter for being poor, blaming everyone for his condition. One day, the poor man wins the lottery and is suddenly flushed with money. However, he doesn't share it with anyone but instead hoards it. He dismissed people who asked for help and forgets that he was once poor. Hypothetical as this may be, I think the chances of this happening is quite likely.

In actual fact, it is not the question of being rich or poor, or having little or more money. It is the love of money and the interior disposition of a person that will determine a person's behaviour towards others. A person can be wealthy but at the same time not attached to what he has. His interior disposition is such that he is not attached to anything that he owns and is always willing to part with them. A person who is poor can be nasty if they suddenly become rich, especially if he forgets how he was poor in the first place. Perhaps he is also afraid to lose the new things he has gained. Whatever a person's disposition may be, there is something that we can use to guide us — wisdom from above.

A person who is endowed with the wisdom of God will come to understand that every created thing will eventually pass away. Riches can never come with us when we die. This truth can only be realised if we

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Philip Tay, OCD

28th Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Readings: **Wisdom 7:7-11;**

Hebrews 4:12-13;

Gospel: Mark 10:17-30 or 10:17-27

value wisdom over everything else in life. Unfortunately, the popular adage of "wisdom comes with age" does not really apply anymore because one thing is clear, wisdom comes to those who earnestly seek it. It is only when we are able to recognise the temporary nature of created things that we can truly live in freedom of heart and spirit. No accumulated knowledge can achieve this because our weak and corrupt nature will always gravitate to what is pleasing to the senses. Only when we realise that wisdom is peerless when compared to other things that we can truly escape the shackles that binds us from living freely.

Finally, Jesus never said that a rich person cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. All He said was, it is harder for them to enter and that with the power of God, everything is possible. When we entrust ourselves to God and seek His wisdom in guiding our daily life, the likelihood of going astray is reduced dramatically. The wisdom that comes from God will always guide us along the path that leads to Him but the love of things of this world will always lure us away from that path. The choice is ours to make.



**ARCHDIOCESE OF
KUALA LUMPUR**
CHAN/CD/10/2024

Chancery Notice

Appointment of New Parish Priest Church of St Ignatius, Petaling Jaya

Archbishop Julian Leow has appointed Rev Fr Thomas Koo CDD as the new Parish Priest of the Church of St Ignatius, Petaling Jaya, Selangor, effective November 1, 2024.

He takes over from Rev Fr Lawrence Ng CDD who will be taking on a new assignment within the Congregation of the Disciples of the Lord (CDD).

We thank Rev Fr Lawrence Ng CDD for his dedicated service and pastoral zeal while serving in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. We wish him God's continued blessings as he embarks on a new ministry for the greater glory of God.

We also pray for Rev Fr Thomas Koo CDD as he takes up this new appointment.

Clarence Devadass
Rev Fr Dr Clarence Devadass
Chancellor
Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur
October 1, 2024



**KUALA LUMPUR
ARCHDIOCESE**

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

October

2-27 Synod Assembly, Rome



PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

October

17 Asian Forum of IJ Sisters and Lay Collaborators at 4.00pm – Cititel Hotel, Penang

20 Confirmation – Church of St Anthony, Teluk Intan, Perak at 9.00am



**MALACCA JOHORE
DIOCESE**

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

October

15 Quarterly Meeting – Deliverance and Exorcism Office, MPI

19 Meeting – MJPT, Church of St Louis, Kluang at 9.00am

19 100th Centennial Celebration and Blessing of newly renovated Chapel of St James, Merlimau



DIOCESE OF PENANG

Notifications and Updates

PKK/BDN/2024/10/191

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Acts 2: 42-45

1. Dedication of the Church of the Holy Name of Mary, Permatang Tinggi

We are pleased to have the opening of a new church in the premise of Church of the Holy Name of Mary, Permatang Tinggi. This sacred occasion will be held on Thursday, October 31, at 9.00am, at the Church of the Holy Name of Mary, Permatang Tinggi. All are welcome to be present. Let us come together to honour this sacred space, dedicated to our Lord and to the service of our community, as we unite in prayer and thanksgiving. Go to <https://shorturl.at/7jAfp>

2. Thank you Fr Anthony Heng, CDD

I would like to extend my thanks to Fr Anthony Heng, CDD for his invaluable service as the Administrator of St Michael's Church in Ipoh, a role he held until September 30. His dedication and commitment have greatly enriched the parish. Let us continue to support him in our prayers as he embarks on his next journey.

3. Appointments at the Church of St Michael, Ipoh

From October 1, Fr Philip Lai, CSsR will serve as the Administrator of Church of St Michael in Ipoh and retired Fr Charles Chin will also be residing as priest in residence.

Please join me in extending a warm welcome to them and let us keep them in our prayers.

4. Second Session of 16th General Assembly of the Synod

As we approach the Second Session of the XVI General Assembly of the Synod, taking place from October 2 to 27, I invite you to join me in prayer during this significant time for our Church. The



Synod of Bishops is a privileged time of community discernment that is fostered by prayer and begins with each person's readiness to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church. Over the next four weeks, our pastors, accompanied by a congruent number of witnesses of the synod process, will work intensively trying to listen to the voice of the Spirit in order to offer Pope Francis their suggestions on how to be a synodal Church in mission. To read more, go to <https://www.synod.va/en.html>

Sebastian Francis
Cardinal Sebastian Francis



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #193

F12
MJD NEWS
UPDATES

Greetings dear friends of MJD

Failing to see! Shortsightedness! Selective seeing! Seeing wonders! Indonesia unveils the World's Tallest Statue of Jesus, *Jesus Christ the Saviour* — a stunning display of faith and craftsmanship, rising majestically above Sibeabea Hill in North Sumatra, towering at 61 metres.

The MOE said: "Degrees cannot guarantee a job." Approximately 90,000 graduates in Malaysia are facing unemployment in the current job landscape for lack of skills, knowledge and attitudes sought by employers.

The Global Human Rights Federation president said: "Bringing race and religion into politics is only inviting failure. No country harping on the 2Rs has become a developed nation". Another surprise: an activist and preacher asked why non-Muslims create content in Bahasa Melayu. Seeing differently to build or seeing differently to divide.

New Times: Jack Ma the richest man in China said, "If you put a banana and money in front of a monkey, the monkey will choose the banana because the monkey doesn't know that money can buy a lot of bananas." In fact, if you offer WORK and BUSINESS to people, they will choose to WORK because most people don't know that a BUSINESS can make more money than salary. One of the reasons the poor are poor is because the poor are not trained to recognise the entrepreneurial opportunity. They spend a lot of time in school and what they learn in school is to work for a salary instead of working for themselves. Profit is better than wages because wages can support you, but profits can make you a fortune. Salaried or Entrepreneurs? Wages or

Fortune? Money or Happiness?

A Thought For The Week: THE MAN AND THE SNAIL.

One day, a snail saw a man walking into the woods, and he began to scream: "Mister! Mister! Come over here! Please, do me a favour!" The man stopped and walked over and asked: "What's the matter with you?" The snail whistled, "Get me out of my shell, please. I'm so uncomfortable inside it." Wondering the man asked: "Funny! Why do you want to come out of your protective shell? The snail snapped, "I told you I feel very uneasy inside it! It's a heavy burden to carry. I want freedom. Get me out of this nasty shell!" Then the man whispered: "Are you serious?" The snail hollered, "I am very serious! I want to be free like other creatures, such as the slug, the worm, the squid, the octopus, the snake, etc." The man attempted to make the snail understand: "Your shell is a gift from God to you, a unique gift. It protects you from the harsh environment and even from predators. However, if you choose to come out of it, you will lose that precious gift forever and you will never be able to get back inside it. The snail wailed with impatience: "Mister, I don't care about that. Just get me out of my shell!" Because of the snail's persistence, the man agreed, gently pulled the snail out of his shell, though it was a painful process. But the snail was happy. Free at last! As the excited snail began to crawl away, a hungry bird suddenly flew down, struck it hard and swallowed it immediately.

The lesson from the unhappy snail: Don't take for granted our blessings. Be grateful. Refrain from dwelling on what you don't have or striving to be someone else or comparing ourselves to

others. Remember your innate ability, your worth and your blessings. You will always be one of a kind. The Lord delights in you.

Announcements For The Week:

1. The Centennial celebration of the Chapel of St James, Merlimau will take place on October 19 with Mass at 7.00pm.

QnQ? Q ask: Looking for something better, is it okay?

Hirokyu Sanada once said, "There are those who want a swimming pool in their home, while those who have it barely use it." Those who have lost a loved one miss them deeply, while others who hold them close often complain about them. Who doesn't have a partner longs for it, but who has it, sometimes doesn't value it. He who is hungry would give everything for a plate of food, while he who has plenty complains about the taste. The one who doesn't have a car dreams it, while the one who has it always looks for a better one.

"The key is to be grateful, to stop looking at what we have and to understand that, somewhere, someone would give everything for what you already have and don't appreciate."

See The Holy Spirit @ Work: The Spirit of God falls on the painter and the preacher, on the merchant and the missionary. *Anonymous*

Something To Tickle You: Dirty water does not stop plants from growing, so don't let negative words stop your progress. *Tom Cruise*

Bernard Paul
Bishop Bernard Paul

Discovering our own 'little way of love'

Francis Ong

MELAKA: The Parish of St Theresa celebrated the Feast of its patron, St Therese of Lisieux, with a novena followed by a Triduum. The Novena, which began on September 17, drew parishioners to the skyroof beside the Church, where a beautifully adorned statue of St Theresa stood. For an hour each night, the faithful engaged in prayer through listening to Scripture, watching 10-minute segments of a video on St Therese's life, participating in Taizé chants, silent reflections, the Litany to St Theresa, and offering personal intentions.

Prayers were conducted in both Mandarin and English, with different chapels and ministries leading each night. The video, titled *TERESA*, was in English

with Chinese subtitles. It was truly a grace-filled experience for all involved.

The theme for this year's Feast Day celebration was *The Teachings of St Therese — The Science of Love*. Fr Chin Sin Wee, OCD, was the preacher for the Triduum, and the Mass was celebrated in both Chinese and English. Fr Chin emphasised that love is the greatest knowledge of all, noting that St Therese, a Doctor of the Church, expressed this in her only book, *The Story of a Soul*, where she "majored in love."

Fr. Chin broke down St Therese's spiritual teachings into four key lessons for us to follow:

1. The mercy of God

Fr Chin explained that mercy is love, and knowing that God is merciful helps us turn to Him when we make mistakes. St Therese learned



The congregation at Mass.

early from her father that when we do something wrong, we should say "sorry" and trust that God will forgive us. Fr Chin observed that nowadays, many children hesitate to apologise, and parents often rush to judge or scold without teaching the value of mercy. He reminded everyone, "God is mercy — why aren't you embracing Him?"

2. God reveals Himself to little children

Fr Chin emphasised that children often have a sincere and pure understanding of God's love, which adults may overlook. St Therese's deep faith and closeness to Jesus

began in childhood. Parents should not delay teaching their children about faith, as young hearts have a natural openness to God.

3. My vocation is love

Our calling is to return God's love by loving others. Every day, we owe God love, and we should repay it through our actions. Some may serve the Church but neglect their families and neighbours. Fr Chin stressed that our true vocation is love, both within and outside our homes.

4. The little way — A path to holiness

St Therese taught that God does

not ask more of us than we are capable of. If you can love one per cent today, love one per cent. If tomorrow you can love two per cent, then love two per cent. This "Little Way" encourages us to love as much as we can, in small, manageable ways. Fr Chin concluded by highlighting the importance of family life — working together, praying together, and spending time together — so that each of us can discover our own "Little Way of Love."

This feast day reminded all who attended of the simplicity and power of love, as taught by St Therese.

SMC commemorates 75th anniversary of the Legion of Mary

IPOH: The Legion of Mary was founded 103 years ago in Ireland and introduced to Ipoh in 1949 by Mother Pauline of the Infant Jesus Convent. The first English praesidium, Our Lady of the Annunciation, held its inaugural meeting in the Main Convent Library, starting with six members and Fr Heane, an army chaplain, as its spiritual director. Shortly after, a second English praesidium, Our Lady Queen of Missions, was established.

For many years, Bernadette Chin led the Our Lady of the Annunciation praesidium, while Margaret Lee guided the Our Lady Queen of Missions praesidium. Both received the *Bene Merenti* medal from the Pope for their active involvement in the church's pastoral affairs during the 1970s.

On September 3, the two English praesidia united to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Legion of Mary with Rosary, Mass, and buffet lunch at the Church of St Michael (SMC). The event was well-attended by Legion members, their auxiliary members, prayer partners, and well-wishers.

During the Mass, Fr Anthony Heng, the administrator of SMC, delivered a homily reminding the

congregation of the spirituality of the Legion members. As soldiers of Mary, they are called to embody the spirit of Mother Mary, whose obedience to God was paramount. He emphasised that through the daily recitation of the rosary, they could lead others to recognise God's love in a world often clouded by confusion.

Before lunch, Sr Dorothy Khaw, the spiritual director of the Our Lady Queen of Missions praesidium for 21 years and a member of the Legion for 60 years, spoke on the importance of building a personal relationship with God. "People must see us happy and humble in who we are and what we do. And with that, we must also support one another," she said.

Of the six members who attended the first meeting in 1949, only Louisa Lean (92 years old) was present. Monica Chin and Rosie Yan were unable to attend, while the other three members have since passed away. From the original two groups, numerous other praesidia have been established for both adults and youth, serving English-speaking and Chinese-speaking communities in churches, schools in Ipoh, Batu Gajah, and Teluk Intan. **Jennifer Duarte**



Fr Anthony Heng with Srs Anna, Louisa Lean and Sr Dorothy cutting the anniversary cake.

Feast day celebrations focusing on the sacraments

IPOH: This year, the parish feast at the Church of St Michael was celebrated in a low-key manner. A triduum of Masses centred around the theme, *Sacraments: Encountering, Knowing, and Uniting with Christ*. The Chinese and English Masses were held simultaneously, with the Chinese congregation gathering at the Parish Activities Centre's Peter Pang Hall, while the English Mass took place in the church.

For the triduum, Fr Anthony Charles, CSsR, from the Redemptorist community in Singapore celebrated Masses for the English-speaking congregation while parish administrator Fr Anthony Heng, CDD, celebrated for the Chinese-speaking congregation.

On September 26, the first day of the triduum, Fr Anthony laid the foundation and spoke about the seven Sacraments and the differences between the Sacraments and sacramentals.

The second day of the triduum, Fr Simon Anand from Kampar, celebrated Mass for the Tamil-speaking congregation at the St Francis Xavier Hall. In the meantime, Fr Anthony, with the English-speaking congregation spoke about the different ways we could encounter Jesus: through the Scriptures, through assembly, in the poor, sick and marginalised, in the person of the priest and most importantly, in the Sacraments. The Sacraments are the means



First Holy communicants with Fr Anthony Heng CDD.

to our salvation, so much so that there was no salvation without Sacraments, he preached. When we make it our goal to meet God himself through the Sacraments, they will transform our abilities and we will enjoy a personal encounter with God.

On Saturday, the third day, there was no procession, neither was there a bilingual Mass. The Chinese-speaking community gathered at the parish's Peter Pang Hall, while the English-speaking community celebrated Mass in church. In his homily, Fr Anthony spoke about how the Sacraments were instituted by Jesus Christ Himself — the Way, the Truth and the Life. Jesus is the sole source of grace and salvation. The Church also makes Christ present in today's world in all her activities to serve the poor and the marginalised. Fr Anthony ended on a strong note, stating that we should all strive to make Jesus the centre of our lives everyday as His

love is permanent, genuine and everlasting.

On the actual feast of St Michael, Sept 29, the Sunday morning Masses were joyously celebrated by the parish as there were 9 candidates at the English Mass and 12 candidates at the Mass in Chinese who received Jesus in the Sacrament of Holy Communion and felt His real presence for the first time in their lives.

Fr Anthony Heng offered heartfelt support and encouragement to the First Holy Communion candidates, urging them to grow in Christlikeness through the Word of God. He emphasised that without the Word, we lose our sense of direction in life. Holy Communion, he preached, strengthens us in God's love, aligning our words and actions to fulfil His will. He prayed that through the Sacraments, we may continue to deepen our love for Christ and His Church and become stronger witnesses of His presence in the world.

Rachel Anbumalar Sebastiyen

KAMPAR, Perak: In conjunction with the 110th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, the Church of the Sacred Heart hosted a vibrant two-day celebration on September 28 and 29. The weekend, themed *God Walks with His People*, brought together around 500 individuals from various nationalities, celebrating faith, unity, and community.

The event commenced on Sept 28 with an evening of praise and worship, followed by a formation session and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament led by the Carmelite Sisters from Balik Pulau, Penang. An inner healing session provided a space for personal reflection and spiritual connection.

The next day's activities began with a communal prayer ses-

sion leading up to the Holy Mass, which was attended by parishioners from various parts of the world. One of the most moving highlights of the Mass was the screening of a special video performance of *The Blessing*, sung by the migrant community together with the local parishioners. Parishioners from Nigeria, South Korea, The Philippines, Myanmar, Vietnam, Timor-Leste, and Indonesia came together to offer their rendition of the blessing in nine different languages. It was a poignant moment that deeply touched the congregation, symbolising the unity and diversity of the Church.

In his homily, Fr Simon Anand delivered a compelling message, drawing parallels between the biblical exodus and the struggles faced by today's migrants. Inspired by Pope Francis, he highlighted that just as God walked with the Israelites on their journey, He



A celebration for migrants and refugees

continues to accompany migrants today, guiding them through their hardships.

Fr Simon also stressed the importance of recognising God's presence in everyday life, whether through the Meeting Tent that housed the Ark of the Covenant or the bronze serpent that symbolised healing. He commended the volunteers serving the migrant community, likening them to Good Samaritans, and encouraged the congregation to be mindful of not wasting God's gifts, citing the biblical stories of manna and water from the rock as reminders of God's providence.

Following the Mass, participants were treated to a sumptuous lunch, prepared by the parish, which allowed for fellowship and the sharing of cultures through food. As the day progressed, various activities were organised for the migrant

community.

A key highlight of the day was the free health check-up provided in collaboration with Hospital UTAR and Klinik Kesihatan Kampar. The medical services offered consultations with specialists, including a cardiologist, ophthalmologist, obstetrician and gynaecologist, and dentist, ensuring comprehensive care for the community.

For the younger members of the parish, there were numerous fun activities that kept them entertained throughout the day. The children had the time of their lives, participating in games and activities facilitated by local volunteers, and parishioners from the Church of the Holy Name of Mary, Permatang Tinggi and the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Nibong Tebal. Caritas diocesan staff were also present, providing support and

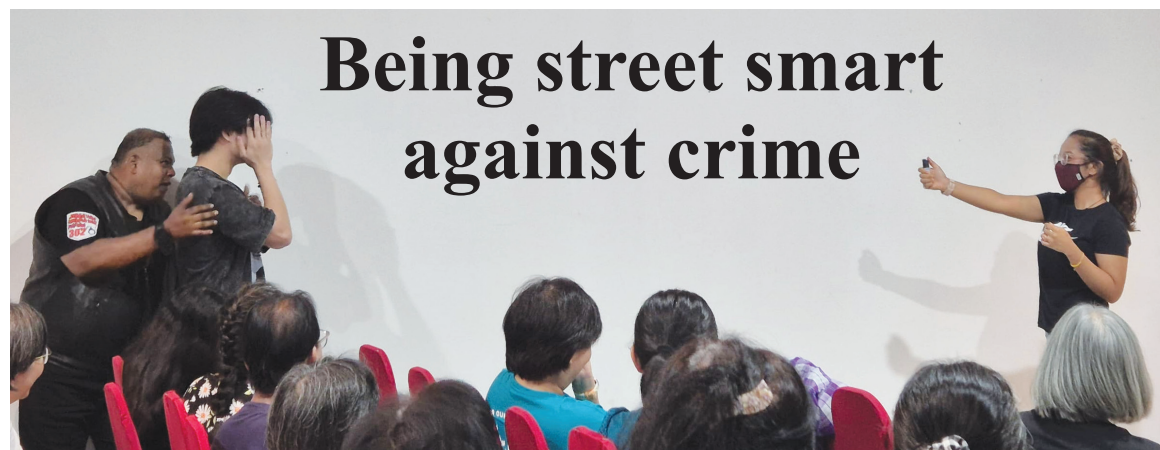
ensuring the smooth execution of the day's events.

In the spirit of camaraderie, the day also featured sports tournaments, including volleyball and football, which brought the community together in friendly competition and fun. These activities fostered a sense of togetherness, underscoring the importance of recreation and shared experiences.

As the weekend concluded, participants shared their heartfelt reflections on the event. Primus from Indonesia expressed his hopes for a more peaceful world, saying, "I hope the world could be a safer place with no war, and we could always gather and have fun like this." Similarly, Daisy from Timor-Leste shared her desire for more frequent gatherings of this kind: "I hope we can gather and spend weekends like this, walking with God and His people frequently."



Being street smart against crime



KUALA LUMPUR: What do you do if you are face to face with a home intruder? Do you scream, stay still or run for cover?

On September 21, more than 60 women and a handful of men spent a productive afternoon attending an interactive talk on Crime Awareness Campaign 2024 at KL Gateway Mall organised by the Women Ministry, under the Archdiocese Office for Human Development.

The session included topics ranging from burglary, home intrusion, snatch thefts, road rage, stalking and drug trafficking to other violent crimes.

Safety activist, Captain Balasupramaniam Krishnan more fondly known as Captain Bala, spent more than three and a half hours sharing his experience. For preventive measures, he introduced some practical home locking devices and demonstrated the use of pepper spray to deter attackers. He also advocated neighbourhood vigilance, if there is something suspicious, report to the police. We should always

have our district police headquarters (IPD) phone number in hand.

He also taught us how to check if there are hidden cameras in your hotel room, changing rooms at shopping malls and restrooms. He told us that after this session, we will be suspicious of everything. While it was a joke, it also alerted us on the importance of being vigilant and not fall prey to such crimes.

Women Ministry coordinator Susan Thomas was pleased with the turnout and the active engagement from the participants. "Besides participation from more than eight parishes, we had people from other faiths attending this talk. It was a good eye opener for everyone whether you are a teenager, a young adult, a parent or a senior citizen — learning ways to be alert, how to react and to equip oneself with basic knowledge."

The feedback from the participants were very positive with most saying they benefitted from the session and would recommend the programme to family and friends.

One participant commented that this session would have benefited teenagers. As can be seen from the slides that Capt Bala presented, most victims and those who commit crimes are teenagers. She hopes Capt Bala can design a programme for teenagers and young adults to be more aware of the dangers and take the necessary precautions.

Another commented that the programme was indeed very helpful to acquire good knowledge on how to keep safe and protect oneself and family.

Capt Bala was knowledgeable, his useful case study and sharing with his sense of humour made the session so lively and not too heavy.

"While it is our mission to empower women to flourish and grow to their full potential, they also need to feel safe when at home and outdoor."

The refreshments were provided by Tender Hearts Cafe whose special need youths baked delicious muffins served with hot milk tea. **Melina Yeoh**

Church closes for renovations

PARIT BUNTAR, Perak: The Church of Our Lady of Good Health has officially closed its doors for renovations following persistent issues with leaking and flooding. The final Mass, celebrated on September 29 by parish priest Fr Martin Arlando, was a poignant moment for the community, blending celebration with an undercurrent of sadness.

During the Mass, parishioners reflected on cherished memories associated with the sacraments received in the church. BEC coordinators symbolically lit candles, passing the flame to their members to represent the "little churches" within the community that will continue to thrive even as the "Mother Church" undergoes significant changes.

Senior citizens were invited to close the church doors, one by one, marking the end of an era. The congregation, led by the youngest members, processed out of the church, signalling a new chapter for the parish.

Attendees placed their thumbprints on a communal canvas, which will be incorporated into the renovat-



Parishioners placing their thumbprints on a communal canvas.

ed building. This act symbolises the continuity of the parish's journey and the enduring spirit of its community.

The renovations are set to begin shortly, promising a revitalised space for worship and fellowship when the church reopens. In the meantime, the community remains committed to nurturing their bonds and supporting one another as they navigate this transitional phase.



Parishioners praying together with their lit candles.

Mass for the Neophytes

Christine Lim

PETALING JAYA: More than 118 neophytes (newly initiated) and 22 persons recently received into the Catholic Church participated in the Mass for the Neophytes held at the Church of St Francis Xavier on September 28. The celebration drew over 270 attendees, including family members, RCIA facilitators, and catechists who gathered to support the newly initiated in their faith journey.

The Mass for the Neophytes has been held annually in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur since 2019. This is to provide the neophytes and the newly received the opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist with the Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur. This year, however, the Mass was presided by Msgr Patrick Boudville, who stood in for Archbishop Julian Leow, concelebrated with Fr Alvin Ng, the parish priest of the Church of St Francis Xavier.

In his homily, Msgr Patrick referred to the gospel reading and stated that “the factor that will bring in others to join the Church is your behaviour. The way you manifest your baptism... There is something there. That something there is what you have been given to the world because of Jesus. The rest, let Jesus do”. He also told the neophytes “be whoever Jesus wants you to be. Life is a great challenge. No one is perfect, but we have Jesus, Mother Mary and the Saints to help us.”



Before the congregation received the final blessing, six neophytes gave their testimonies. The testimonies were presented in English, Tamil and Mandarin language and Bahasa Malaysia, in two video clips and three in-person presentations.

“The RCIA opened up a number of things really. It provided a platform for me to ask some of the questions with those who are more familiar with the teachings of the church... some of the answers really satisfied the quest for information... There is a certain amount of calmness in me now...even the relatives detect a change in me as I try to move closer to God. 50 odd years in the wilderness, and I was baptised just days before my 74th birthday. Without God I would be a physical if not emotional wreck by now”, said Harry Kek Sew Ben from the Church of St Francis Xavier, PJ who shared in English.

“Whatever you do, just trust in the Lord, and He will provide”, was the main message shared by Steven Vigayan, from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang in his testimony given in Tamil.

“In RCIA, I learnt about the life of Jesus Christ ... RCIA continues to help me change my lifestyle to become someone good, faithful and with self-confidence. It also helped me to serve the House of God as a lector, hospitality minister, commentator, gift bearer during Offertory and facilitator for RCIA”, shared Antonio Anjah from the Church of the Holy Family, Kajang in Bahasa Malaysia.

“My life has changed for the better after I received the sacrament of baptism. I pray to God for every decision I make. I ask God for guidance in my business, my family, and for everything in life” said David Chew Boon Lee, from the Cathedral of St John the

Evangelist, KL who shared in Mandarin.

After listening to the testimonies, in his speech, Fr Alvin Ng said “It is an honour and privilege to be able to host this event. As neophytes, you will continue to be inspiration to us Catholics. Your desire to find God is the lesson for us never to stop discovering and asking questions... Your role is to live your life as well as you can, and as authentically as you can. This will start the ball rolling for others to want to discover Christ”.

After the Mass, the neophytes and the newly received gathered with Msgr Patrick and Fr Alvin in front of the sanctuary to take a group photo. They then adjourned to Loyola Hall for a fellowship meal. Also in attendance were Sr Margarete Sta Maria, FdCC the Director of Archdiocesan Pastoral Institute and Sr Retta Savariannan, FdCC, the Pastoral Coordinator of the Archdiocesan Catechetical Ministry.

Celebrating 41 years of faithful service



Fr Francis Selvarajoo receiving a bouquet of flower from parishioners.

PENANG: Diocesan priest Fr Francis Xavier Selvarajoo marked the 41st anniversary of his sacerdotal ordination on August 31. At 67 years old, Fr Francis, from the Diocese of Penang, was ordained at the Church of Christ the King in Sungai Petani, Kedah, on August 31, 1983, at the young age of 26.

The celebration began with Mass at the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception in Changlun on August 30, followed by another service at Ave Maris Stella Chapel in Langkawi, Kedah, on September 1. Parishioners surprised him with a cake, which was a heartfelt gesture of appreciation. There was a simple fellowship at both the Church of Our Lady of Fatima in Kangar and the Chapel of the Holy Cross in Arau, Perlis, where additional cake-cutting and celebrations took place.

Fr Francis expressed his thanksgiving to God for sustaining him in his priestly ministry. He also conveyed his deep appreciation to his parishioners and friends for their unwavering support, which he described as enriching his life as a priest and servant of God. He prayed for God's continuous love, blessings, and mercy upon the faithful and their families, as their kindness is his source of strength to further glorify God as a servant-priest.

Currently, Fr Francis serves as the parish priest in Kangar and as the Chapel Administrator in Arau and Changlun. **Bernard Anthony**

Rededication of Pusat Jagaan Istimewa Nathanael

PETALING JAYA: Pusat Jagaan Istimewa Nathanael (PJIN) reopened its doors after three years on September 27, in conjunction with the Feast of St Vincent de Paul. The centre was officially opened by Archbishop Julian Leow in the presence of its students, parents, teachers, and guests from various parishes in the Klang Valley.

PJIN began more than 30 years ago as the Special Needs Learning Centre of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. The centre was renamed PJIN in recognition of the disciple Nathanael, whose name means ‘the one who is without deceit’—truthful, innocent, and pure. This name is fitting for a centre dedicated to special needs, symbolising the purity and innocence of the children it serves.

Archbishop Julian blessed the home, its learners, and their teachers, emphasising the importance of embracing the dignity of every person and ensuring no one is left behind. “As the home is rededicated, the community is reminded to keep God's love in their hearts, reflecting the love seen in the faces of the children.”

He added that the success of the centre lies in the collaboration of many individuals as a commu-

nity, including caregivers, medical professionals, volunteers, and the wider community. Everyone has a role in creating an environment of inclusion and understanding.

“The rededication is a true response to the needs of special children in our community and reflects the love of Christ. With God's grace, a community that values each person can be created.”

The event also saw the launch of the book *From Anne to Zac*, authored by a caregiver-grandparent of a special needs child. The book aims to inspire parents on similar journeys and raise awareness about autism spectrum disorder, creating more opportunities for children like Zac.

The rededication was attended by Dr Gary Liew, director of the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD), and Fr Albet Arockiasamy and Fr Andrew Manickam OFM Cap, both AOHD ecclesiastical assistants.

The centre's administrator, Gunavathi, expressed that the rededication was a dream come true after three years. “Special children are often overlooked and underserved. PJIN is a sanctuary where they are seen, valued, and loved,” she added.

A parent, T Rajeswary, 38, who faces the challenge of raising three special needs children aged 12, 14, and 15, said it was a struggle to find a suitable educational support centre for her children and was overjoyed when PJIN was introduced to her by a friend.

Her children were initially attending a centre in Brickfields, which only provided classes until they were six years old. She attempted to enrol them in a government school; however, the teachers found



Archbishop Julian Leow leaving his handprint on the wall.

it hard to manage their needs and were later deemed ineligible as they did not meet the 3M criteria — *menulis* (writing), *membaca* (reading), and *mewarna* (colouring).

“I can't afford to send them to a private special needs school, where the educators will know how to manage and teach them according to their needs. And PJIN helped fulfil their needs with the necessary support.”

For three years, her children went to PJIN; unfortunately, they closed doors in mid-2022. Prior to that, the students were supported through online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic for over a year. With the closure of the centre, Rajeswary took on the responsibility of home-schooling her children.

“I am extremely glad that PJIN is now reopened, as the teachers and facilitators here have significantly improved my children's learning experience.” She added that the teachers at PJIN offer invaluable support and guidance, making her children happier and more engaged in their education.

The reopening of PJIN, which started as the Special Needs Learning Centre more than 30 years ago, marks a significant milestone in the community's commitment to supporting special needs children. It is a testament to the collective effort to ensure that every child is valued and loved, reflecting the true spirit of inclusivity and care. **Elvina Fernandez**



Caritas Malaysia enhances disaster preparedness through training

GEORGETOWN: Caritas Malaysia is enhancing its capacity to respond to disasters and emergencies, as part of its ongoing mission to serve vulnerable communities. In response to the increasing frequency and impact of natural disasters, particularly floods, the organisation is taking proactive measures to improve its disaster preparedness and response mechanisms.

From September 22 to 25, Caritas Malaysia organised a four-day training session focused on the Caritas Internationalis (CI) Toolkit and disaster response strategies. Supported by Caritas Asia and its fraternal member organisations, Caritas Philippines and Caritas Nepal, this training was part of the Regional Emergency Support Mechanism (RESUME) and Strengthening Humanitarian Action, Partnership and Exchange (SHAPE). Seventeen participants from eight arch/dioceses attended the training, which aims to bolster Caritas Malaysia's organisational capacity in providing humanitarian aid and disaster response.

The training was facilitated by Arpana Karki, Manager of the Disaster Management

Department at Caritas Nepal, and Cecilio Ava Guardian from Caritas Philippines. Both trainers brought extensive experience in emergency response and community development. Karki has been with Caritas Nepal since 2006, delivering aid to crisis-affected communities, while Ava has been actively involved in the Community of Practice and the RESUM initiative under Caritas Asia.

A significant outcome of the training was the groundwork for establishing a Disaster Response Committee at both the diocesan and national levels. This committee will play a vital role in coordinating and streamlining disaster response efforts throughout Malaysia. Its mandate will include improving preparedness, enhancing strategic planning, and ensuring a swift and coordinated response during emergencies. Discussions during the training helped participants shape the committee's structure and operational framework, allowing them to identify key priorities and action points to address recurring disasters like floods.



During the group discussion.

The training programme covered essential topics in disaster management and humanitarian aid, providing participants with a comprehensive understanding of key concepts. Key areas of focus included humanitarian principles, rapid needs assessments, emergency operations centres, volunteer management, and safe programming. Participants learned about ethical standards guiding humanitarian efforts, techniques for quickly assessing community needs, and best practices for managing emergency coordination centres and camps.

By combining PowerPoint presentations, group work, and case studies, the training encouraged hands-on exercises, allowing participants to apply their learning to realistic scenarios and share lessons from their own experiences.

At the end of the training, participants left with a robust set of tools and resources to enhance Caritas Malaysia's disaster response capabilities. Key achievements included the establishment of the Disaster Response Committee structure, clarity on roles and responsibilities, and the development of an initial action plan for the committee's growth. Participants also gained practical knowledge

of the CI Toolkit and humanitarian standards while fostering collaboration among diocesan representatives.

In his closing address, Fr Fabian Dicom, National Director of Caritas Malaysia, emphasised that the training marks just the beginning of a larger initiative to strengthen disaster response capacity. He noted that as Malaysia continues to confront challenges posed by natural disasters, Caritas Malaysia is better positioned to respond with increased preparedness and compassion.

The committee will engage in follow-up activities, including additional online meetings, mentoring, and support from the Caritas network to ensure that each diocese is equipped to respond effectively to emergencies. This initiative underscores Caritas Malaysia's commitment to building a resilient network capable of providing timely humanitarian aid to those most in need. Looking ahead, the newly formed Disaster Response Committee will refine its strategic goals and operational plans with guidance from Caritas Asia, Caritas Philippines, Caritas Nepal, and other regional Caritas members.



The participants at the training session focused on the Caritas Internationalis (CI) Toolkit and disaster response strategies.

OLF catechism students engage with nature

KUALA LUMPUR: The catechism students of the Church of Our Lady of Fatima (OLF) celebrated the 2024 Season of Creation with an outdoor lesson at Perdana Botanical Gardens, Kuala Lumpur, on September 29. Three busloads of teens, tweens and tots, their catechists, Creation Justice Ministry volunteers, and a few parents spent the morning in the sprawling 91ha city park appreciating nature and contemplating their own roles in the care of our common home.

The day began early at church with a prayer led by Fr Andrew Manickam, OFM Cap, parish administrator of OLF and Ecclesiastical Assistant to the Archdiocesan Creation Justice Ministry. He also gave everyone an insight into the significance of the Season of Creation and led the multi-vehicle convoy.

At the park, the 150 students spent a full hour in an outdoor lesson with their respective catechists. Each class held their own activity related to Creation at various loca-



The students at Perdana Botanical Gardens for their outdoor lesson in relation to the 2024 Season of Creation.

tions inside the 136-year-old park.

All of them were simply in awe of nature right in the heart of the city. The younger children squealed with delight on seeing turtles, birds, fish and insects... ooooh, lots and lots of bugs. Some students reported spotting otters. The amazing array of native and introduced plant species revealed

diverse shapes, sizes, colours, textures and unique features like thorns and even zig-zag patterns on their leaves. One fascinating phenomenon was a rainbow on the lake – the refraction and reflection of sunlight on water droplets of the fountains. Secondary students recognised Lake Gardens to be an eco-system in itself, in which humans

are greatly privileged to play an important role.

The students then returned to OLF in Brickfields in perfect time for Mass celebrated by Fr Andrew.

This year's theme "To Hope and Act with Creation" tells us with certainty that there is hope for a better future and that we must actively work for it even in the midst of difficulties.

The Season for Creation originated from Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, which called on all people to protect the environment, reduce the use of fossil fuels, and deal with the dangers and challenges of climate change. Since 2015, *Laudato Si'* has steadily cascaded into the workings of catechetics worldwide, bringing to young Catholics the message that we cannot take the Earth for granted, and empowering them to collaborate with all people to protect this planet, our only home. **OLF Catechetical Ministry**

Prayer Missionaries pray for nation and various community needs

KUALA LUMPUR: The Prayer Missionaries organised a special prayer event on *Merdeka*. This group of differently-abled individuals hosted an online multilingual rosary, uniting in prayer for the nation and various community needs. The initiative is supported by the Pontifical Mission Societies of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

The virtual gathering featured Archbishop Julian Leow, Fr Raymond Pereira, Director

of the Pontifical Mission Societies, and Fr Edwin Peter. Participants included representatives from four parishes – Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam, Church of the Immaculate Conception, Port Dickson, Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Puchong, and Church of Christ the Light, Kepong. Also present were seminarians Brother Gabriel from Kuching and Brother Ashwin Xavier from the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese.

The prayer session began with an introduction by Fr Raymond, followed by the National Anthem, the Angelus, and the rosary recitation. Bro Ashwin announced the intentions for each decade, and various representatives led the prayers, concluding each with the *Ave Maria*, sung by the Prayer Missionaries.

The group also recited the Prayer for Priests and the Prayer to St Michael. Archbishop Julian Leow offered a blessing

for all participants and expressed gratitude for the team's prayers for priests.

Fr Raymond shared his heartfelt appreciation for the Prayer Missionaries' initiative to host the Online *Merdeka* Day Rosary, highlighting the participation from diverse language groups and the archbishop's prayer for all Malaysians. He noted that this Prayer Group also gathers every Saturday at noon to pray for missionaries.

SIGNIS Asia Assembly 2024 explores digital communication for peace

Melissa Fernando

TOKYO, Japan: The SIGNIS Asia Assembly 2024 (SAA2024), held from September 23 to 27, brought together 70 delegates from 12 countries to address the theme “Human Communication in the Digital World for a Culture of Peace.” The assembly, organised by SIGNIS Asia and SIGNIS Japan, explored the intersections of faith, technology, and peace-building in the digital age.

The event was inaugurated by Fr Stanley Kozhichira, President of SIGNIS Asia, and Itaru Tsuchiya, President of SIGNIS Japan. Video messages from Dr. Paolo Ruffini, Prefect of the Dicastery for Communication, and Helen Osman, President of SIGNIS World, added further depth to the assembly’s theme.

Bishop Paul Toshihiro Sakai, the keynote speaker, stressed the importance of truth in the digital world. “Communicate the truth,” he urged the delegates.

As the advisory bishop to SIGNIS Japan and head of communications for the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Japan, Bishop Sakai emphasised Japan’s role in promoting human values and solidarity through digital communication tools.

Apostolic Nuncio Francisco Escalante Molina echoed Pope Francis’ call for ethical considerations in artificial intelligence

(AI). He spoke about the interconnectedness of human communication and digital platforms in fostering peace, stating, “To foster truly human communication, we must reflect from the heart and harness technology’s opportunities while avoiding its dangers.”

The assembly’s first panel discussion, led by Melissa Fernando, featured perspectives from youth, women, and lay professionals on the role of digital communication in peace-building. Panelists Naoki Nakanishi Fernandes, Makoto Yamada, Kazue Suzuki, and Ryu Suzuki shared their experiences of fostering peace in a digitally connected world.

Bishop Linus Seong-hyo Lee of Korea emphasised the role of journalists in shaping communication during a session on AI. He noted that, “The heart of information is people, not the shock and awe they bring to their leaders,” highlighting the importance of people-centred communication in the AI-driven world.

Workshops on AI for faith-based missions and innovative communication approaches were held on the second day of the assembly.

Mennen Aracid introduced various AI technologies and resources designed to enhance the efficiency of faith-based outreach.

Fr Arun D’Souza Prakash’s session on the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm — context, experience, reflection, action, and evaluation



Presentation by one of the groups.

— offered participants a practical framework for integrating peace-building into communication strategies.

A key highlight of the assembly was the evening film screenings. The first film, *Water, Not Weapons – The Greening of Afghanistan*, told the story of Dr Tetsu Nakamura, a Japanese physician who dedicated his life to transforming Afghanistan’s desert regions through water conservation.

The second film, *The Face of the Faceless*, directed by Shaison P. Ouseph, narrated the inspiring story of Sr Rani Maria, an Indian martyr whose legacy of mercy, forgiveness,

love, and sacrifice continues to inspire.

The assembly concluded with the adoption of the SAA2024 Statement, calling for the responsible use of digital media to promote dialogue, unity, and peace. The closing Mass, celebrated by Archbishop Tarcisio Isao Kikuchi at St Mary’s Cathedral, marked a moment of reflection and unity. Participants departed with a renewed commitment to engage future generations in peace-building, guided by Pope Francis’ reminder that “true human communication must come from the heart, even in a world increasingly driven by AI.”

Call for faith renewal at Born Again seminar

PENANG: “If you want to be in a winning team, be in Team Holy Spirit,” were the opening words of Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of the Penang Diocese, as he welcomed participants to the inaugural *Born Again* seminar, recently organised by CHARIS Penang Diocese Service of Communion (CPDSC).

Held at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, the event saw parishioners from various parishes across the diocese in attendance. In his welcoming speech, Cardinal Sebastian emphasised that we are living in the era of the Holy Spirit and invited participants to embrace three key experiences with the Holy Spirit. He highlighted the universality of the Holy Spirit, urging attendees to see unity in God rather than uniformity. This universality, he said, fosters the inculturation of faith, where people of all cultures can feel welcomed. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Church is called to move outward into the world as



missionary disciples.

The seminar, which spanned three days, was a combination of vibrant praise and reflective worship. It revolved around seven main topics — *Born Again; The Light of Love; Born of God’s Love; Real Presence; Hurdles and Heroes; Infilling of the Holy Spirit*, and *Here After*. Each session

encouraged participants to engage deeply with these spiritual themes, fostering both heartfelt worship and thoughtful reflection.

Speakers at the event enthusiastically shared their personal faith journeys, describing how cultivating a relationship with the Holy Spirit had enriched their lives and deepened their intimacy with God. They began by emphasising the critical need to recognise the presence of the Holy Spirit. Though all have received the gifts of the Holy Spirit through Baptism and Confirmation, life’s challenges often diminish the fire of the Gospel within

us. The seminar invited participants to seek continual renewal by being filled with God’s presence, offering healing from the past, peace in the present, and hope for the future.

A short, insightful presentation on the person, works, and gifts of the Holy Spirit helped attendees better understand how to invoke His presence. Seven practical steps were shared to guide participants in cultivating a deeper relationship with the Holy Spirit. Ministering teams were available throughout the seminar, offering prayers and healing to those in need. Many participants came forward, seeking solace and spiritual renewal at the foot of the Cross, where a Crucifix had been placed in the hall.

The general consensus among participants was one of overwhelming joy, peace, love, healing, and forgiveness. Many felt a renewed sense of freedom and purpose. The seminar concluded with a high-energy session of praise, as both young and old danced in celebration before the Lord. The event underscored the importance of continuously being filled with the Holy Spirit in order to fulfil God’s command to love our neighbours.



CCBI unveils Canon Law guide

BANGALORE: The Commission for Canon Law and Other Legislative Texts of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) has recently released *Aggiornamento in Canon Law: Theory and Praxis*. Edited by Rev Prof Merlin Rengith Ambrose, under the guidance of Most Rev Dr Antonysamy Savarimuthu, the book offers valuable insights for canonists worldwide.

Launched during the 95th Executive Committee meeting of the CCBI, the book features contributions from bishops, Vatican officials, and professors. His Eminence Filipe Neri Cardinal Ferrão praised it as a vital resource, providing clarity on recent canonical amendments and their practical application.

Most Rev Dr Antonysamy Savarimuthu highlighted its role in guiding canon lawyers, especially in cases involving the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. The book’s updated interpretations, reflecting the Pope’s vision, were commended by Most Rev Juan Ignacio Arrieta, Secretary of the Dicastery for the Legislative Texts.

First copies were received by Cardinals Oswald Gracias, Antony Poola, and key CCBI officials. Published by CCBI and ATC Publications, the 252-page book is a timely contribution to Canon Law.

To purchase the book, contact: info@atcpublishers.com or online store: www.joyofgifting.com

Elderly to outnumber youth by 2030

NEW YORK: The fastest-growing age group in Europe is 65 years or older. By 2030, the United Nations report this group is expected to outnumber the younger generation globally. As the number of elderly grows, so does the demand for healthcare and social support. Each year since 1990, the United Nations has set aside a day dedicated to addressing the needs of this age group.

Every October 1 marks the International Day for Older Persons to highlight the challenges the elderly face and the impact they have had on society. The United Nations' theme for this 34th International Day is *Ageing with Dignity: The Importance of Strengthening Care and Support Systems for Older Persons Worldwide*.

This year, experts gathered in New York to discuss policies and practices needed to

better care for the elderly. They addressed the shortage of caregivers worldwide, the need for training for specialised care, and the importance of protecting the rights of the elderly and their caregivers.

Care and respect for the elderly have also been a constant theme of Francis' pontificate. In 2021, he inaugurated the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly. It is held on the fourth Sunday of July — near the feast of Sts Joachim and Anne, the grandparents of Jesus.

This year, the theme was *Do not cast me off in my old age* from the Book of Psalms. The Pope called attention to the situation of many elderly people today who live alone and often experience loneliness, encouraging the young to devote time to them. **Kielce Gussie, Vatican News**



Pope Francis greets an elderly couple at his general audience on January 11, 2023. (Vatican Media)

Asansol laity prioritise children's catechesis

BURDWAN, India: A group of lay people in Asansol diocese of eastern India has decided to take children's catechesis to families and parishes as a priority.

This was the outcome of the two-day orientation programme, attended by about 100 lay leaders from 14 parishes at Chetana, diocesan pastoral centre, in Asansol.

The September 26-27 programme dealt with the Word of God, Basic Ecclesial communities, catechesis, proclamation and role of laity.

Mary Immaculate Sr Rajni Marandi, the program facilitator, pointed out that the laity has an important role in the Church. With various examples, she explained how laity can be active in parishes.

"Presently most of our laity are sleeping giants, they need to be woken up," asserted Sr Marandi, who is involved in pastoral work for more than a decade in West Bengal dioceses.

Sr Marandi's companion, Sr Sangeetha Macwan, stressed the need for making catechism teaching more creative. She invited all to reflect on the personal experience of



Matters India photo

God and to share it with others. "When our method is effective, the message will reach our audience convincingly," she added.

Sisters of Charity Sr Roshita Murmu, involved in catechesis for more than three decades in the Asansol diocese, said children will learn better when catechism is taught systematically with regularity.

"Our life should be a great example for the

children," she added.

Xavier Xalxo of the Burdwan parish bemoaned that lack of regular faith formation in the families and in parishes has led to many youth losing faith gradually.

While Babulal Hembrum, a catechist from Kalna parish, said children need to be guided well in faith, prayer and moral values, Ashima Toppo, another participant,

said the regular catechism is essential for our children in the current situation.

Anita Minj from Burdwan noted that children now are busier with studies and media and catechism teachers have to encourage them to spend time for faith formation in families and parishes.

The participants planned to share their decision of children's catechesis as a priority in parishes and parish councils. Emeritus Bishop Cyprian Monis of Asansol appreciated them for their initiative and asked them to use the Bible stories as medium of catechesis.

Every baptised person is chosen by God to proclaim the Gospel to all people in the neighbourhood, said Bapi Soren, a youth while sharing about Proclamation.

"God has loved us and he has invited us to share the Good News of Jesus to all," he added, referring to various Church documents.

Alphonse Hembrum from Bolpur said the laity need to take up catechesis as an important mission in the parish and to motivate others for faith formation. I P Sarto, **Matters India**

How Catholic NGOs are helping in Lebanon

BEIRUT: On October 1, the Israeli military announced a ground offensive in southern Lebanon, following a week of intense bombings that have left hundreds dead. This escalation of violence adds yet another layer of hardship for Lebanon, a country already grappling with a severe economic crisis since 2019, worsened by political stagnation and the Israel-Hamas war. Many Catholic NGOs are working tirelessly, providing critical lifelines to Lebanon and addressing both immediate needs and long-term rebuilding efforts.

Since 1856, L'Œuvre d'Orient has been of-

fering humanitarian aid to Christians in the Middle East, including Lebanon. However, the Catholic organisation faces challenges due to a lack of reliable local partners. "We have long witnessed a deadlock in the Lebanese parliament," explained Msgr Pascal Gollnisch, the organisation's director-general, during an October 1 press conference. "The issue is not only institutional — it's also destroying Lebanon's religious balance. Many people are ready to help Lebanon, but credible, effective, and competent interlocutors have been lacking for two years."

Gollnisch also called on Christian leaders to unite: "Too many Christian leaders are too complacent about the situation, at the expense of the Lebanese people."

Beyond emergency humanitarian aid such as food and medicine, L'Œuvre d'Orient also funds hospitals and clinics run by local churches and religious congregations, providing care to people of all backgrounds and faiths. The NGO also supports French-speaking Christian schools and the rebuilding of damaged churches, convents, and homes.

Caritas Lebanon, active in the country since 1972, provides food, water, medical aid, and psychosocial support to both the local population and migrants. The NGO funds psychosocial centres across the country and runs mobile clinics that travel through rural regions. Caritas also coordinates donations and works with the Council of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops, dioceses, and priests to distribute emergency humanitarian aid.

As the crisis worsens, Caritas Lebanon is providing vital support to displaced families across 790 shelters. Through Primary Health Care Centers and Mobile Medical Units, they offer consultations, medication, and psychological aid in 15 shelters. Caritas is also distributing essential supplies like food, hygiene kits, blankets, and mattresses, while assessing shelters for rehabilitation. Caritas Youth volunteers are actively assisting

displaced families on the ground.

Papal charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), currently involved in nearly 300 projects in Lebanon, is particularly active in the south, where bombings have intensified since late September. Through its emergency aid, ACN distributes food and hygiene products, but it also plays a key role in offering spiritual support, especially in areas where local or immigrant Christian communities are in distress. The NGO helps with the construction and upkeep of churches, pastoral care, and training programmes.

The airstrikes targeting Hezbollah strongholds in Lebanon are devastating the entire population, including Christians, and may prompt even more people to leave the country, warned Marielle Boutros, ACN project coordinator in Lebanon. "It is affecting everyone because all [of] south Lebanon is being targeted, and we have many Christians there. These are not purely Shia or Hezbollah areas; we have a lot of Christian families living there. Some have lost their houses, and they are moving now from the south to other places in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, and the north to find safety," she said.

ACN was founded in 1947 to meet the material and spiritual needs of homeless and displaced people of World War II. **Youna Rivallain, LCI** (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)



A man collects Lebanese flags from the debris of a building following an Israeli airstrike in Beirut's Bachoura neighborhood, Lebanon, October 3, 2024. (LCI Photo)

Snippets from Fr Dr Clarence Devadass

September 30

On Monday, September 30, we began the two-day retreat as part of the Synod gathering. The first meditation was given by Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP. His four meditations are based on the resurrection of Jesus.

In the first meditation, we looked at Mary Magdalene who went to the tomb searching for Jesus in the dark. In her sadness she meets Jesus who calls her by name.

Mary Magdalene, the beloved disciple, and Simon Peter went in search.... Each one looking for Jesus to fill their void differently. There was no competition but only a sincere desire to “find Jesus”. What are we looking for?

The second meditation focussed on the disciples who were gathered in the locked room. The darkness of fear engulfed them. The coming of the Holy Spirit freed them from fear. What are we afraid for the Church? Let the Holy Spirit free us.

October 1

On the second day of the retreat, Oct 1, the third meditation focused on the account where the disciples encountered a “stranger” on the beach who asked them to put out their nets again.

The disciples went back to their old lives of being fishermen. Their lives were empty, no more enthusiasm because their Lord was crucified. They could not even recognise “it is the Lord” who came to them. It was the beloved disciples who recognised Jesus with His “eyes of love”. How are we to recognise the Lord among us today? We (the Church) need that same eyes of love to see Jesus around us.

The fourth and final meditation was anchored on the account of Jesus while having breakfast with His disciples asked Simon Peter three times... do you love me?

Jesus makes no reference to Peter having denied Jesus but seizes the moment. Despite his failing, Jesus entrusts the care of the Church to Simon Peter. Do we trust each other? In the synod, trust is the most beautiful thing we can give each other – the synod depends on this. *Carpe diem!*

October 2

In his opening address to the general assembly of the synod, Oct 2, Pope Francis reminded the delegates the importance of trusting the Holy Spirit... is the Spirit that guides and leads us in this synodal gathering. We need to have hope and it is the Holy Spirit that bring us that hope for the renewal of the church. In this synodal process, we need humility, a gift of the Holy Spirit that we need to ask for. Humility keeps us grounded in God and one another. A synodal church must be relational.

On the opening day, I had the opportunity to greet Pope Francis personally. During the synod, he makes himself available during the breaks to greet the delegates. Such a powerful gesture of his availability to all. He embodies the loving face of the church.

It is always a moment to remember and treasure even though the conversation was brief. Among other things, I told him... “I bring you the greetings of the people of Malaysia”. He nodded, smiled and gave me a blessing. I’m sure that blessing extends to all of Malaysia. God bless.



October 3

Today the assembly worked in small groups. The groups are divided linguistically to work on Module 1. We focused on the “Foundations” as in the *Instrumentum Laboris* (working document). Each one has an opportunity to share what was good in this section and then what needs to be improved. It gave us the opportunity to not only share our experiences, challenges, and expectations, but also to listen to one another attentively.



Church needs new ways for bishops to be ‘synodal’

At the first meeting of the full assembly of the Synod on Synodality, Pope Francis said a bishop’s ministry should include co-operation with laypeople and that the synod will need to identify “differing forms” of the exercise of this ministry.

That bishops, laymen and laywomen, priests, and religious are all synod delegates was an intentional choice, the pontiff said in the Vatican’s Paul VI Hall on October 2, and it “expresses a way of exercising the episcopal ministry consistent with the living tradition of the Church and with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council.”

“Never can a bishop, or any other Christian, think of himself ‘without others,’” he continued. “Just as no one is saved alone, the proclamation of salvation needs everyone and requires that everyone be heard.”

“Differing forms of a ‘collegial’ and ‘synodal’ exercise of the episcopal ministry” in dioceses and in the universal Church, Francis said, “will need to be identified in due course, always respecting the deposit of faith and the living tradition, and always responding

to what the Spirit asks of the Churches at this particular time and in the different contexts in which they live.”

The Synod on Synodality reflects this “inclusive understanding” of a bishop’s ministry, the Pope underlined, adding that bishops and laypeople must learn how to better cooperate in the Church going forward.

Pope Francis in his speech addressed the more than 400 participants in the second session of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of Bishops on the first day of the Oct 2–27 Vatican gathering on synodality. The 2024 meeting has 368 voting members (delegates), 272 of whom are bishops and 96 of whom are not bishops. Among the 96 non-bishops, about half are women.

The first general gathering, or “congregation,” as it is called, was dedicated to opening greetings by Pope Francis and Cardinal Carlos Aguiar Retes as well as introductory speeches from synod leaders Cardinal Mario Grech and Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, SJ.

During the three-and-a-half-hour meeting, delegates also watched informational videos about the synod

including videos presenting the 10 theological study groups and a canonical commission formed by Pope Francis.

In his remarks, the pontiff assured that the presence of non-bishop delegates at a Synod of Bishops does not diminish or put limitations on the authority of individual bishops and the college of bishops. “Rather, it points to the form that the exercise of episcopal authority is called to take in a Church that is conscious of being essentially relational and therefore synodal,” he said.

“Harmony is essential,” Francis emphasised, noting that there are two dangers to avoid: the danger of becoming too abstract and the danger of “pitting the hierarchy against the lay faithful.”

Recalling the focus of the month-long meeting, which is to reflect on how to be a Church in mission, the Pope added that the Church also needs to ponder how to be more merciful.

Pope Francis in his reflection said the Catholic Church must first acknowledge its sins and ask for forgiveness before it can be credible in carrying out the mission Jesus Christ entrusted to it.

Hannah Brockhaus, CNA

It’s not time for women deacons

On the first working day of the Synod on Synodality at the Vatican, Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, addressed speculation about the ordination of women as deacons.

“Based on the analysis conducted so far — including the findings from the two commissions established by Pope Francis on the female diaconate — the dicastery concludes that there is still no basis for a positive decision by the magisterium regarding women’s access to the diaconate, understood as a degree of the sacrament of holy orders,” Cardinal Fernández stated on October 2.

Although study groups from the 2023 Synod have explored various controversial topics, such as women’s ministries, LGBTQ ministry, and seminary education, the cardinal emphasised the need to study the historical roles women have played in the



Bishops process towards the altar in St Peter’s Square during Mass with Pope Francis for the opening of the Synod of Bishops on synodality at the Vatican October 2, 2024. (CNS/Lola Gomez)

Church. He cited figures like St. Hildegard of Bingen and Dorothy Day, who exerted significant authority and influence without being tied to sacramental ordination.

The Synod remains focused on a range of topics, including how the Church can respond to contemporary

social and ethical issues, how seminary formation can promote collaboration with laypeople, and how bishops can adopt more transparent and accountable leadership practices. These ongoing discussions reflect the Church’s path toward greater inclusivity and cooperation, guided by the Holy Spirit.

A Journalist's Journey

What it's like to travel with the Pope

Courtney Mares

The papal trip to Asia shows how such pilgrimages are an encounter of deep faith in far-flung places.

For nearly two weeks in September, I travelled with 87-year-old Pope Francis as he visited some of the world's most remote and diverse island countries in Southeast Asia and Oceania with stops in Papua New Guinea, East Timor, Singapore and Indonesia.

As a journalist tagging along on the papal plane, you can expect certain things: sleep deprivation, endless security protocols, and those fleeting moments where you can catch a glimpse of a place — if only through the cracked window of the press corps van in the papal motorcade. What you do not expect is how this type of trip can change you as you

encounter deep faith in far-flung places.

In Papua New Guinea, we were welcomed by the beating drums of some of the country's Indigenous tribes who have embraced the Christian faith thanks to the work of many missionaries who ventured deep into the country's uncharted jungle rainforest.

One of the first people I interviewed was a Papuan chief from the Huli tribe, Mudiya Kepanga. Decked out in an ornate feathered headdress with a quill running through his nose, Mudiya described how his "heart was pumping" when he met the Pope and how happy he was to receive a papal blessing.

At the Shrine of Mary, Help of Christians in Port Moresby, I met Agnes Michael, a Catholic from Papua's Western Highlands adorned with her tribe's signature intricate red-and-white face paint and dozens of speckled sea-



Journalist Courtney Mares with Papuan chief Mudiya Kepanga, of the Huli tribe, who hails from Papua New Guinea's Hela Province. (EWTN News/Courtney Mares)

shell necklaces. Agnes waited for hours at the gate of the shrine with her daughter Rita for the Pope's arrival. She told me that it felt amazing when the Holy Father finally arrived at sunset.

Pope Francis himself ventured to "the peripheries" of Papua New Guinea by visiting

the remote northern jungle outpost of Vanimo, only accessible by boat or plane. The Pope arrived with the help of the Royal Australian Air Force in a C-130 military aircraft filled with toys, medicine and other humanitarian aid for the local population.

Unforgettable East Timor



Best friends Lareina Rosa Marcia Claver Da Cruz (left) and Zuizina Abigail Maria Fatima de Jesus (right), waited since 4.00am for the Mass scheduled to start at 4.30pm. The 12-year-olds said that the wait in the hot sun was totally worth it, especially since they had each other to keep company during the wait for the papal Mass in the East Timor park. (EWTN News/Courtney Mares)

One of the most unforgettable stops on our journey was the small Catholic island-nation of East Timor. From the window of the papal plane, the country's clear waters and pristine coral-reef beaches appeared as a tropical paradise. Tales of the dangerous salt-water crocodiles that have overrun its beaches and the illegal martial arts gangs that roam its streets only increased my sense of anticipation to discover this place, which has the distinction of being one of the least visited countries in the world.

With a population that is nearly 98 per cent Roman Catholic, East Timor calls itself "the most Catholic country in the world after Vatican City," and as soon as we landed, the country showed us why.

Massive crowds lined the streets of the Timorese capital of Dili for miles, waving Vatican flags and cheering as if they had just seen the Beatles as the papal motorcade passed by.

An estimated 600,000 people — nearly half of the country's entire population — turned up for the papal Mass. East Timor's government declared the three days of Pope Francis' visit as a national holiday. With most of the shops and streets closed, many people trekked on foot to the Mass in Tasitolu park, where the throngs of people waited for long hours in the scorching island sun under yellow-and-white Vatican-themed umbrellas.

East Timor, located between Australia and Indonesia, fought long and hard for its inde-

pendence from Muslim-majority Indonesia, which it finally gained in 2002 with the help of UN peacekeeping forces who remained in the country until as recently as 2012.

Years of violence and instability left the young country deeply impoverished and lacking infrastructure. More than 40 per cent of the Timorese population lives below the poverty line.

Sisters from the Hospitaler Sisters of Mercy I spoke with told me that when they arrived in Timor in 2011, they were shocked to discover that young girls who lived in the mountains had to walk three to four hours to attend school. The sisters, who had come to the impoverished island to care for the sick and malnourished children, also opened a dormitory enabling girls to pursue their education without needing to walk hours each day.

Throughout the Pope's time on the island, Francis praised East Timor's "culture of life," commending the country's high birthrate and large families.

"I have been thinking a lot about what is the best thing about Timor," Pope Francis said in Spanish at the end of Mass. "The best thing about this place is the smiles of its children."

Over the course of 12 days, the Pope, who will turn 88 years old in December and frequently uses a wheelchair, traveled a total of 20,000 miles on seven flights, yet he did not miss a beat. Pope Francis stuck to every bit of his arduous schedule; and if he was feeling tired, he did not show it.



Religious sisters from the congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame (SND) smile at an encounter with Pope Francis in the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption in Jakarta, Indonesia, September 4, 2024. (EWTN News/Courtney Mares)

Indonesia's Cathedral

When we touched down in the Indonesian capital, we were instantly hit by the thick humidity that hangs over Jakarta's crowded streets. Entering the city's Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption, the Muslim call to prayer could be heard next door from the largest mosque in Southeast Asia.

Indonesian Catholics, though representing just three per cent of Indonesia's Muslim-majority population, were some of the loudest and, dare I say, rowdiest crowds we encountered on our journey. Catholics filled up not one but two sports stadiums in Jakarta for the papal Mass with more than 100,000 people.

Again and again, Catholics told me how they harmoniously live and work side by side with their Muslim neighbours. Baso Darmawan, a Catholic from the outskirts of the capital, told me that he personally knows many Indonesians who have converted from Islam to Catholicism, including his own father. He added that he uses the daily Muslim call to prayer as a reminder to pray the Angelus and Liturgy of the Hours.

Singapore's True Riches

For the final leg of the journey, the Pope visited the multicultural city-state of Singapore, one of the wealthiest countries in the region, with a higher gross domestic product per capita than the United States.

What stuck out in Singapore was not the soaring skyscrapers but the faces of the elderly and disabled whom the Pope went to greet at St Theresa's Nursing Home, like 55-year-old Gabriel who shared with a big toothy smile from his wheelchair about his dream of someday making a pilgrimage to the Marian shrine of Lourdes.

At Singapore's National Stadium, I met a couple from Vietnam who flew to Singapore for the Pope's final Mass of the trip.

Communicating through a Vietnamese translator app on a cellphone, the husband explained how he longs for the day when a pope will someday be able to visit his native home.

During the papal trip, we crossed the globe, touched down on islands few of us ever thought we would see, and encountered a dizzying range of humanity. Yet the thing that stuck with me was a line from Psalm 97 that the Pope quoted in one of his



Eight-month-old Vera became a Catholic last June! She attended the papal Mass in Singapore with her mom (EWTN News/Courtney Mares)

first speeches, "Laetentur insulae multae," meaning, "Let the many islands rejoice."

Each of the countries we visited was unlike the last. But joy was the consistent feeling we encountered at every stop. Whether in the rhythmic chants of tribal dances, the smiles of cheering children, or the solemn hymns in stadium Masses with tens of thousands of worshippers, the islands did, indeed, rejoice. **NCR**

Deaf sculpture guided by the Holy Spirit

Elvina Fernandez

Raymond Raj, a talented young sculptor from Cheras, shines as an inspiration to many. As the only deaf member of his family, Raymond has overcome challenges to carve a niche for himself in the world of art and sculpture. His journey reflects unwavering resilience, deep faith, and an unyielding pursuit of creative freedom, all guided by the Holy Spirit.

The 33-year-old, when met at his humble workshop in Balakong, was overjoyed to share his journey and the stories behind the statues he was working on for restoration and repainting. "This is a 40-year-old statue, and this one has been passed down through three generations," he signed and gestured as he warmed up before the interview session.

After almost three years of hard work, Raymond is today widely known among the Catholic community for his expertise in not only sculpting Catholic holy statues but also repainting and restoration work. "Many send their statues for restoration from places like Ipoh, Melaka, Johor Bahru, and even Singapore."

The statues he shared are made of clay, marble, and resin. "I have created a total of 20 large statues so far and prefer not to rush my work to ensure good results. And have worked on about 200 restoration and painting projects."

When asked which of his works so far is his favourite, the parishioner of the Church of St Francis Xavier Petaling Jaya, said, "They are all my favourites!"

Raymond said he finds joy in turning his inspiration, guided by divine intervention, into reality. "I feel a lot of peace when working on my statues, and I am very excited to come to my workshop every day," he said, adding that he does not replicate statues online or from images unless they are custom-made orders who asked him to do so.

"The idea of how to sculpt the statues just comes to me when I sit down and decide to make one. Before I start, I always pray and ask our Blessed Mother to help me each and every time," he said and added that once completed, he uploads his work on his social media channels (Raymond Artistry) for sale.

For customers who send him pictures to replicate a statue, Raymond said they often say the one he did looks better. "When they give me a reference, I will always add my ideas through our communication, and once the statues are completed, they will tell me that the one I have done is better than the image they sent me," he said.

However, he did not deny that there were a couple of instances where customers were not satisfied with their orders. "It was for a cross and a Sacred Heart statue that are still here," he pointed to the two recent works.

When asked about the time he takes to complete a statue, he said it varies: "Small statues take about three days, while bigger ones can take one and a half weeks to a month, depending on the detailing."

He added that he prefers the gentle colours and features of Catholic statues and feels a sense of calm working on them.

Raymond also added that the Catholic Ministry for the Deaf (CMfD) had provided him with many opportunities and exposure during events for the Deaf to showcase his work. "I recently had a booth at the Church of the Holy Rosary during



the International Day of Sign Language 2024 celebration to sell my handmade statues, artwork, and scented candles."

He shared that his passion for art began early. He pursued graphic design at Lim Kok Wing University, where he relied on interpreters and friends to navigate the challenges posed by his limited English proficiency. His determination to learn and grow was evident as he continuously sought assistance and guidance to improve his skills.

After graduation, he worked as a graphic designer for a private company, designing cards, clothes, and posters. He also taught graphic design and sign language to special needs students aged 10-16. Despite being valued for his talent, Raymond yearned for creative freedom, feeling constrained by the demands of his job, which did not give him the satisfaction he longed for.

Raymond's career took a significant turn during the lockdown. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic led to his layoff, pushing him to reconsider his career path. Encouraged by his family, Raymond decided to venture into sculpture, a field he had always been passionate about. "But I wasn't sure if I was skilled enough to begin. I remember praying a lot about it, and God spoke to me to not be afraid and let the Holy Spirit guide me."

He spent a year practicing clay work at home, striving for perfection in colour mixing and quality. His dedication paid off as he began taking orders in 2021 with the support of his family members, who constantly and very proudly shared his work through word of mouth.

Raymond's journey was not without challenges. Initially struggling to promote his work, he turned to social media platforms for help. "I tried posting on Instagram, but it wasn't that encouraging, so I decided to try uploading my work videos on TikTok, which helped a lot!"

Some of the restoration work he has done includes a 6.5-foot statue of Our Lady of Fatima, completed in just

three days; a week-long restoration of a statue of St Joseph, involving intricate colour work and repair of weather-damaged parts; and repainting and restoring the half-broken face of Baby Jesus on a statue of Our Lady of Good Health.

"Churches also bring over statues, for example, the Church of St Jude, Rawang. And if the statues are big, I would go to the church, such as for the Church of Christ the King in Selangor."

Raymond also tours churches to collect and restore broken statues, offering them for those interested with a token in kind or hands them away as gifts, emphasising respect and restoration over disposal. "A lot of families find handed-down statues while decluttering and will bring them over to me to restore and repaint."

He also expressed his willingness to work with Ecology and Environment teams in parishes to collect statues from churches and restore them.

"Besides this, I also create graphics for holy pictures, then print and frame them for sale. I also make acrylic holy picture paintings on canvas and scented candles at RM15."

His social media presence has made him a recognisable figure, even among non-Catholics. "A lot of people now recognise me from my videos on Instagram and TikTok when I walk along the streets in KL or even in Singapore recently for the papal Mass, but they don't realise that I am deaf," he said.

He mentioned that those who approached him included non-Catholics who have followed him on social media for up to three years.

"But sometimes it gets frustrating because I am excited to communicate but can't fully engage with them as they don't know sign language, so I have to try hard to read lips, gesture to answer them, and type on my phone's notepad," he said, adding that he hopes more people will learn sign language to improve communication with individuals like him.

On the side, he also creates customised cake toppers for bakers and saree draping for Velankanni statues. His custom-made work ranges in price from RM80 to RM1,500, depending on size and details, while the ready-made statues range from RM20 to RM800. His work can be viewed or contacted through Instagram/Tik Tok at 'Raymond Artistry'.

Raymond's journey is a powerful reminder of the strength of the human spirit. His success is a testament to the power of faith, family, and unwavering dedication. His sculptures are not just works of art but symbols of hope and resilience, inspiring all who encounter them.

The interview session was interpreted by Veronica Cornelius (CMfD)



The science of confession

Ask any secondary school catechist and you'll soon realise the majority of teens currently attending faith formation classes have not made a Confession since their first Holy Communion in Standard Three. Unless something changes, the next time they will be obligated to exercise this sacrament will be before they are confirmed in Form Five.

While they were hanging out at my home, I asked a group of my 16-year-old's Catholic friends about the Sacrament of Reconciliation and if they availed themselves of it. The majority had not been in a confessional in years, while two said they were made to go during the Lenten and Advent penitential services. My teen who has set herself a quarterly confessional schedule spoke for her friends when she said, "I don't blame my friends for not going to Confession. The advice the priest gives is so basic ('basic' in teen-speak being uninspired and humdrum.)"

All my life, before and after I became Catholic, I have heard questions of the need to confess before a fellow human, and the Christian school of thought that generally skews to being able to speak to God in one's own heart or head and find absolution.

The folly of mankind is still the refusal to believe that something greater than us exists. The ego that drives man to create something that might be his own undoing, like Artificial Intelligence, is only matched by the stubbornness to believe in certain things unseen. And that is what the definition of faith is: the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1).



Word in Progress

KAREN-MICHAELA TAN

Some things in our faith life can, in fact, be explained and understood with due study. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC, my favourite Catholic resource and sometimes door stop and paper weight) states that Confession is called "the sacrament of conversion because it makes sacramentally present Jesus' call to conversion, the first step in returning to the Father from whom one has strayed by sin."

It is called the sacrament of Penance since it consecrates the

Christian sinner's personal and ecclesial steps of conversion, penance, and satisfaction. It is called the sacrament of confession since the disclosure or confession of sins to a priest is an essential element of this sacrament. In a profound sense it is also a "confession" — acknowledgment and praise — of the holiness of God and of his mercy toward sinful man. (CCC 1423-1424) The amount of thought put into this convinces me that because the Church deems it so important, I, as a part of the physical body of Christ, should too.

The former faith educator in me asked the group of teens what they expected during the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Most of them said 'advice'. It makes me believe that many Catholics mistake the confessional for a therapist's couch. The same way that people may pick a counsellor or psychologist is used to decide when to go to confession. I've heard people in the penitential line say, "I hope I get Father So-and-so because he's a very understanding priest." I also have people tell me they go to confession only when the priest is someone not known to them/not their parish priest.

The role of priests in any sacramental rite is to serve *in persona Christi* — in the person of Christ. In the bible wherever a confession is made to Jesus, He doesn't respond with paragraphs of advice, suggestions and a life plan. To the woman caught in adultery in John 8: 11, the only thing Jesus said was, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."

Jesus doesn't wait for a confession from the paralytic in Luke 5:17-26, but immediately grants absolution: "Man, your sins are forgiven you." The woman branded a sinner who washed Jesus' feet in Luke 7: 36-50 said nothing of her wrongdoings to the Master. She simply broke down under the weight of public judgement, and let her penitence speak by the way she abased herself, using her free-flowing hair to wipe Jesus' feet before anointing them with expensive lotion. Jesus simply said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven."

The confessional should not be confused as a place for therapy or counselling. There are many guides to making a good confession, and all of them centre on the actions of the penitent. The examination of conscience is not to give God ammunition against you. A good examination of conscience is not about just ticking off yes or no to the long list of prompting questions. An examination of conscience compels someone to face straight on their wrongdoings with honesty and openness. One needs to be brave enough to call to mind personal transgressions without adding on justification such as, "But I only did it because they first did something bad."

In accepting responsibility for our actions, we are led to see the error of our ways, and how it impacts on our relationship with God and our fellow men. The work of reconciliation happens before one enters the confessional. Hence the importance of prayer

before the examination of conscience. In that lead-up we pray for supernatural wisdom to see our faults, and for heavenly strength to own up to our wrong doing. It is during this time that the Holy Spirit convicts us of things. Strengthened by the wisdom of the Spirit, we enter the confessional and state our transgressions.

The end game in the confessional is the blessing and absolution from whichever priest is serving *in persona Christi*. Should a penitent have the fortune to come face to face with a confessor with the acumen of St Alphonsus Liguori, patron of lawyers, vocations and confessors; or the kind astuteness of Saint John Vianney, well and good. Comfort, assurance, good counsel is an added benefit of the sacrament. But it is the words of absolution "I absolve you from your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," which we thirst for, because it does not come from the priest in front of us, but the loving Father in heaven and the Son who died for us.

If we believe enough to seek out the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we must also believe in the forgiveness that comes from it. Perhaps the examination of conscience or something the priest says may prompt a penitent to go in search of a counsellor, therapist or psychologist. Then it is undoubtedly the Holy Spirit which moves a person towards a greater understanding of an underlying issue, but until such time, it is prudent for us to continue to expect chairs in the confessional and not a psychologist's couch.

Karen-Michaela Tan is a poet, writer and editor who seeks out God's presence in the human condition and looks for ways to put the Word of God into real action.

BE OUR GUEST

The science and powers of nostalgia

Emeritus Professor Ng Kwan Hoong



As a medical physicist, I've always been fascinated by the intersection of our emotional experiences and their physical manifestations. Nostalgia, often dismissed as mere sentimentality, is a prime example of this intersection. It's not just a fleeting emotion or a wistful daydream — it's a tangible, physical phenomenon that can profoundly affect our bodies and minds.

When we experience nostalgia, our bodies react in some measurable ways. Heart rates may fluctuate, skin conductance can change, and specific regions of the brain light up with activity. It's as if our entire physiological system is participating in the act of remembering, creating a full-body experience that goes far beyond simple recollection.

I recall a compelling 2015 study where participants were exposed to nostalgic stimuli while undergoing functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). The results were striking: areas associated with reward, positive emotion, and social connectedness showed increased activity. This neurological response suggests that nostalgia isn't just in our heads — it's a whole-body event that can influence our physical state.

While nostalgia can be a source of comfort and strength, it's crucial to recognise its potential for both positive and negative impacts on our well-being. Just like any powerful emotion, it requires a mindful approach to harness its benefits while minimising potential harm. (cf. Phil 3:13-15)

On the positive side, nostalgic reflections can boost our mood, reduce stress, and even alleviate physical pain. Studies have shown that

individuals who engage in nostalgic thinking often relate feeling warmer — a subjective sensation that corresponds with actual increases in body temperature. This physical warming effect might explain why we often turn to nostalgia during times of loneliness or discomfort.

However, the physical manifestations of nostalgia aren't always beneficial. For some, particularly those with traumatic pasts, nostalgic triggers can lead to increased heart rate, sweating, and other stress responses associated with anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In these cases, what begins as a mental journey into the past can quickly become a very real, tangible discomfort.

To illustrate this duality, let me share an experience of a parish priest, an avid cyclist. Three years ago, he suffered a severe accident during a rural cycling trip, leaving him physically and emotionally scarred. On the third anniversary of the incident, he reluctantly agreed to revisit the accident site.

As he confronted these sensations and the memories they accompanied, something unexpected occurred. His breathing slowly steadied, his muscles relaxed, and he felt a wave of relief wash over him — a powerful reminder of resilience, embodying the essence of the Chinese saying, 'Where you fall, there you get back up.' (cf. Micah 7:8 'when I fall, I shall rise')

This visceral experience allowed this priest to process the trauma in a new way. The physical sensations, initially distressing, became a pathway to healing. It's a powerful reminder that nostalgia's impact on our bodies can be

transformative, for better or worse.

Harnessing nostalgia's power

Understanding nostalgia as a physical phenomenon opens new avenues for its therapeutic application. In medical practice, this knowledge has been leveraged to enhance mental health therapy and support healthy ageing.

For instance, guided nostalgia exercises have shown promise in alleviating symptoms of depression and anxiety. By intentionally evoking positive nostalgic memories, patients can experience physical relaxation, reduced heart rate, and decreased cortisol levels—all indicators of reduced stress.

In the field of geriatrics, nostalgia-based interventions are being explored to combat the physical effects of social isolation among the older persons. Engaging in nostalgic activities not only improves mood but can also boost immune function and cognitive performance, demonstrating the far-reaching physical benefits of this unique experience.

As we continue to unravel the complex relationship between our memories, emotions, and physical states, the study of nostalgia promises to yield fascinating insights. Advanced neuroimaging techniques and biometric sensors are allowing us to map the bodily expressions of nostalgia with unprecedented clarity.

This research may lead to innovative treatments for various physical and mental health conditions. Imagine a future where personalised nostalgia therapy is prescribed alongside traditional medical interventions,

tailored to everyone's unique life experiences and physiological responses.

As we explore the physical effects of nostalgia, it's essential to approach our memories with both appreciation and discernment, ensuring we engage with nostalgia wisely to fully harness its benefits while minimising potential drawbacks.

The next time you find yourself swept up in a wave of nostalgia, take a moment to perceive its physical effects. How does your body respond? Do you feel warmth spreading through your chest, or perhaps a quickening of your pulse? By tuning into these sensations, we can develop a more nuanced understanding of how our past experiences continue to shape our present physical reality.

In conclusion, nostalgia is far more than a sentimental journey through memory lane. It's a complex psychophysiological experience that can influence our health, well-being, and perception of the world around us. By recognising and respecting its unique power, we can learn to use nostalgia as a tool for physical, emotional and spiritual healing, personal growth, and connection with others.

As we move forward in our understanding of this fascinating phenomenon, let us embrace nostalgia not just as a feeling, but as a holistic experience that bridges our mental and physical selves, connecting our past with our present in profound and meaningful ways.

As we continue to unravel the mysteries of nostalgia, one question remains: are we shaping our memories, or are our memories shaping us?



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Our unfinished symphony

"In the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable we come to understand that here, in this life, all symphonies remain unfinished."

Karl Rahner wrote those words and to not understand them is to risk letting restlessness become a cancer in our lives. What does it mean to be tormented by the insufficiency of everything attainable? How are we tortured by what we cannot have?

We all experience this daily. In fact, for all but a few privileged, peaceful times in our lives, this torment is like an undertow in everything we experience. Beauty makes us restless when it should give us peace. The love we experience with our spouse does not fulfil our longings. The relationships we have within our families seem too petty and domestic to be fulfilling. Our job is inadequate to the dream we have for ourselves. The place where we live seems boring in comparison to other places. We are too restless to sit peacefully at our own tables, sleep peacefully in our own beds, and be at ease in our own skins.

When we feel this way, our lives will forever seem too small for us and we live them in such a way that we are always waiting, waiting for something or somebody to come along and change things so

that real life, as we imagine it, might begin.

I remember a story a man once shared with me. He was forty-five years old, had a good marriage, was the father of three healthy children, had a secure, if unexciting job, and lived in a peaceful, if equally unexciting neighbourhood. Yet, to use his words, he was never fully inside of his own life. Here's his confession:

"For most of my life, and especially for the past twenty years, I have been too restless to really live my own life. I have never really accepted what I am – a forty-five-year-old man, working in a grocery store in a small town, married to a good woman, aware that my marriage will never fulfil my deep sexual yearnings, and aware that, despite all my daydreaming, I'm not going anywhere, I will never fulfil my dreams, I will only be here, as I am now, in this small town, in this particular marriage, with these people, in this body, for the rest of my life. I will only grow older, balder, and physically less healthy and attractive. But what's sad in all of this is that, from every indication, I have a good life. I'm lucky really. I'm healthy, loved, secure, in a good marriage, living in a country of peace and plenty. Yet, inside of myself I'm too restless to ever fully appreciate my own life, my wife, my kids, my job, and the place where I live. I'm always at some

other place inside of myself, too restless to really be where I'm at, too restless to live in my own house, too restless to be inside of my own skin."

That is what the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable feels like in actual life. But Rahner's insight is more than diagnostic, it is prescriptive too. It points out how we might move beyond that torment, beyond the cancer of restlessness. How do we do that?

Precisely by understanding and accepting that here in this life all symphonies remain unfinished. By understanding and accepting that the reason we are tormented is not because we are over-sexed, neurotic, ungrateful persons who are too greedy to be satisfied with this life. Not that. The deep reason is that we are congenitally over-charged and over-built for this earth. Built that way by God. We are infinite spirits living inside a finite world, hearts made for union with everything and everybody but meeting only mortal persons and mortal things. Small wonder we have problems with insatiability, daydreams, loneliness, and restlessness! We are Grand Canyons without a bottom. Nothing, short of union with all that is, can ever fill that void.

To be tormented by restlessness is to be human. Moreover, in accepting that we are human and that therefore, for us,

there can be no finished symphony this side of eternity, we can become more easeful in our restlessness. Why? Because we now know that everything comes to us with an undertow of restlessness and inadequacy, and that this is normal and true for everyone.

As Henri Nouwen once put it: *Here, in this world, there is no such a thing as a clear-cut, pure joy. Rather, in every satisfaction, there is an awareness of limitations. Behind every smile, there is a tear. In every embrace, there is loneliness. In every friendship, distance.*

Peace and restfulness can come to us only when we accept that limitation within the human condition because it is only then that we will stop demanding that life – our spouses, our families, our friends, our jobs, our vocations and vacations – give us something that they cannot give, namely, clear-cut pure joy, full consummation.

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

Over the past few months, the internet has been teeming with memes riffing on singer Charli XCX's latest album, "BRAT." Though the internet has yet to settle on one single definition, being "brat" is decidedly a good thing. On October 1, we celebrated the feast of St Thérèse of Lisieux, and I think it's only fitting to add her to the list of all things brat. Allow me to explain.

Most of us experience the entrance into young adulthood as fraught with confusion, frustration and constant reminders of our own inadequacy. But I would argue that if you're an only child like me, it's particularly intense.

I'll admit it: The rude awakening of having to take responsibility for my own career path and life decisions stripped me naked. The illusion that mummy and daddy would figure it all out for me wore off when I got my first full-time job, in which I was subject to the authority of someone unwilling to give me an easy break when I boo-hoed to them, or to give me a raise merely because I wanted it.

Entitlement is not generally seen as a commendable virtue. Think of the beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit ... those who suffer ... those who mourn." The beatitudes are hardly an invitation to hearts engorged with excess. Should we really expect to enter eternal life just because we want to?

And yet the "childishness" of such an entitled attitude is exactly what allowed St Thérèse of Lisieux (also known as "Thérèse of the Child Jesus") to grow in simplicity of spirit and to live "like a child" before the great Mystery of God.

In her autobiography, *Story of a Soul*, Thérèse recounts a moment from her early childhood in which her older sister Leonie offered her and her other sister Céline a chance to pick from a basket of toys:

One day Leonie, thinking no doubt that she was too big to play with dolls, brought us a basket filled with clothes, pretty pieces of stuff, and other trifles on which her doll



Thérèse of Lisieux flips entitlement on its head

was laid: "Here, dears," she said, "choose whatever you like." Céline looked at it, and took a woollen ball. After thinking about it for a minute, I put out my hand saying: "I choose everything," and I carried off both doll and basket without more ado.

Thérèse, the baby of the family, was used to special treatment. She admits to having been spoiled as a child, but recognises the value it had as she pursued her vocation in the Carmelite convent of Lisieux:

This childish incident was a forecast, so to speak, of my whole life. Later on ... I understood that there are many degrees of holiness, that each soul is free to respond to the calls of Our Lord, to do much or little for His Love – in a word, to choose amongst the sacrifices He asks. And then also, as in the days of my childhood, I cried out: "My God, I choose everything, I will not be a

Saint by halves, I am not afraid of suffering for Thee, I only fear one thing, and that is to do my own will. Accept the offering of my will, for I choose all that Thou wilt.

This whimsical anecdote from the childhood of a "spoiled brat" is telling of the markedly Theresian spirituality that manifested during her life in the convent, and even more so in her heavenly life, from which she promised to offer "a shower of roses, doing good" for those on earth. Her sense of entitlement took on new meaning as she matured: Rather than expecting to always get every material good she asked for, she expected to be embraced and blessed by Christ every time she turned to Him.

In asking for every spiritual good rather than for every material good, Thérèse understood that the willingness to sacrifice and suffer was necessary. And yet her desire

to receive God, who is truly "Everything," made it so that suffering was an opportunity to express her love for the One who satisfies her infinite desire for "everything."

These days, the attainment of material wealth and an infinite amount of finite goods seems to dominate our sense of self and purpose in life. Thérèse's sense of entitlement offers us a more enriching — and lasting — alternative.

The human desire for "everything," for a sense of completeness and fullness in life, is inherent to us who were made in the image and likeness of God. Yet the materialising of the desire sets us up to fall short in our pursuit of real fulfilment. Instead, we ought to look more deeply into our hearts with childlike simplicity and ask if the "everything" we seek is finite, or if it is the One who is Infinity itself. **Stephen G. Adubato, NCR**

Little Catholics' corner

Dear children,
One day, a rich young man came to Jesus and asked what he needed to do in order to go to heaven.

Jesus asked him if he followed all the commandments since he was young such as "do not murder, do not steal, do not cheat" etc.

The young man said "yes". Then Jesus told him there was one more

thing he needed to do: "Sell all you have and give the money to the poor."

The young man was very disappointed. He turned and walked away because he was very wealthy, and he wasn't willing to give up his wealth.

Jesus said to His disciples, "It is easier for a camel to pass through

the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Putting thread through the eye of the needle can be pretty difficult. How would you like to try to put a camel through the eye of a needle? That seems impossible, doesn't it?

Does that mean Jesus was saying it is impossible for a rich man to

enter into heaven? I don't think so, because next, Jesus said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God. With God, all things are possible." That is the God we serve. The God of the impossible!

Till we meet again next week, be good, okay?

Aunty Eliz

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:25)

Each line of the puzzle has one word hidden in a list of random letters.

The blank space is a missing letter that belongs to that word.

Fill in the missing letter.

1.	H	N	B	T	E	T		R	N	A	L	X	H
2.	D	W	T	E	A	C		E	R	Z	E	G	U
3.	T	Y	M	K	F	S		L	L	L	J	E	Q
4.	J	T	C	N	P	Y		I	V	E	A	K	F
5.	G	F	P	P	O	O		N	E	A	T	F	X
6.	Z	I	N	W	E	A		T	H	Y	B	D	I
7.	B	T	O	A	I	J		I	C	H	J	K	K
8.	S	C	I	W	N	S		I	F	E	N	T	T
9.	W	D	H	I	N	H		R	I	T	T	I	U
10.	X	D	J	G	R	E		T	N	C	C	L	J

rich
teacher

inherit
eternal

life
sell

give
poor

great
wealth

Jesus and the rich young man (Mark 10:17-31)



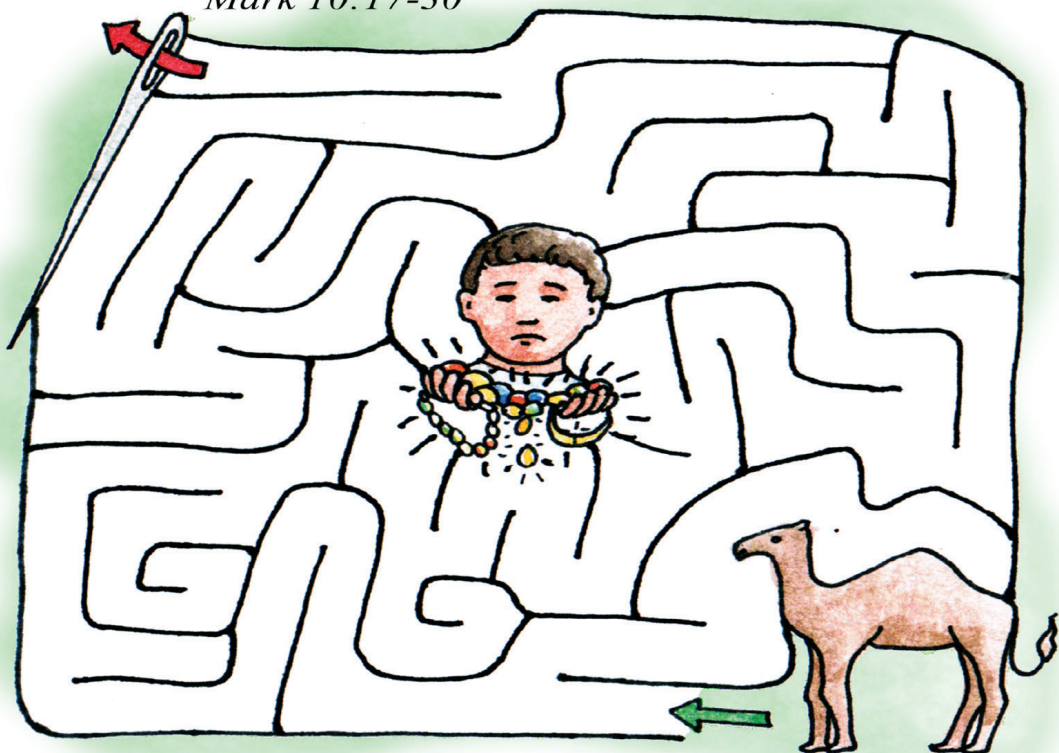
1. Eternal 2. teacher 3. sell 4. give 5. poor 6. wealth 7. rich 8. life 9. inherit 10. great



Can you find SEVEN differences in the picture below?



Mark 10:17-30



Can you find the way for the camel to go through the needle?



SYD-7, see you in Lahad Datu, 2028!



By Liza Magnus

KENINGAU: "The presence of thousands of young Catholics here showed that Christ is alive in every one of you, then, now, and forever," said Cardinal Sebastian Francis, who was overjoyed to see so many young people at the sixth Sabah Youth Day (SYD).

The prelate presided over the SYD-6 closing Mass at Dataran Solidariti, near the Cathedral of St Francis Xavier. The day also marked the commemoration of Korean martyrs Andrew Kim Tae-gon, Paul Chong Ha-sang, and their companions.

Over 3,000 young people were registered for SYD-6 from September 16 to 20. The participants came not solely from Sabah but also from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, the Dioceses of Penang, Malacca Johore, and the Vicariate of Brunei.

Kada korosi! (Do not be afraid!)

"Your participation in SYD-6 shows not only the presence of the Holy Spirit, but also empowers you to be a Missionary. And that mission is yours. You are the mission. You are the 'now' of God! (*Christus Vivit*)"

"It is not a coincidence why you are here; you are chosen, called, and sent by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel. Do not be afraid to be called and sent as a missionary of Christ because the Holy Spirit

lives in you! As Christ's missionary, you are not only strengthened by the Holy Spirit, but also by Mother Mary, all the saints, and martyrs from Asia, as well as us, the Catholic Bishops of Malaysia, who will always pray for you.

Referring to the women in the Gospel from the reading of the day, Cardinal Sebastian prayed that the SYD participants, like Mary Magdalene, Yohana, and Suzana, "you too are forgiven, touched, healed, and transformed by Jesus Christ and now become members of a family and community freed from slavery sin.

"Dear young people! You are young ambassadors of the Good News. You are the young missionaries of the Holy Spirit's mercy and hope. You are the young missionaries of Joy, Mercy and Hope. Tell other young people in Sabah and outside Sabah, about the Gospel of Joy when you go back to your parishes.

"Remember to serve the youth so that the Church does not lack young prophets and missionaries."

Our Lady of Mount Kinabalu

Cardinal Sebastian was also inspired by Bishop Cornelius Piong, who gave the title to Mother Mary, "Our Lady of Mount Kinabalu."

"Our Lady of Mount Kinabalu will become the identity of not only Sabah but also Malaysia and Asia. With the spirit of Mother Mary, our first missionary, let us prepare for the following great events:



1. Malaysian Youth Assembly in the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu, in April 2025
2. The Malaysian Way of the Cross begins in April 2025 and ends in Majodi, Johor, in conjunction with the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026.
3. World Youth Day 2027 (WYD 2027) in Seoul South Korea

"After SYD-6, let us rise with Jesus and Mother Mary across Sabah and Malaysia! Be ready! The youth of Sabah lead the youth of Malaysia. See you at MPC 2026. Amen. Amen," Cardinal Sebastian Francis said.

After the closing Mass, a gimmick was performed to unveil the host of SYD-7 - St Dominic Lahad Datu Parish in the Diocese of Sandakan in 2028!

SHARING

During the youth-serving youth session, I was able to be vulnerable and share about myself while relating to the videos that they showed. This session was very well thought out with the aid of facilitators. I truly enjoyed it because I could get to know my groupmates better and make a new friend who was our facilitator. After that session, it inspired me to go to confession. While praying my penance, I cried because of how touching it was to feel the love of God and how much I could feel His presence. It felt like a weight was off my shoulders. Going to a caregiver session was also a perfect opportunity to open myself up and talk about my worries when I had no one to talk to. It felt comforting and I felt like another set of weights were off my shoulders. All these made this SYD6 impactful for me. It made me realise how much God loves us, and how he uses his people to show it to us.



SYD has inspired me to create events as impactful as SYD for our youth in Brunei. I want to touch the hearts of our youth and make the fire of faith grow stronger for the Catholic youth in Brunei. To spread the good news to our youth.

SYD opened my eyes about the Synodal church and the 2026 Malaysia Pastoral Convention. As a Bruneian I have never realised that the Catholic youth in Malaysia are so strong in their faith and enthusiastic about Catholic events. There is so much hope here for Catholics.

For SYD-7, I hope that more Brunei youths will be able to experience the joy and love for our Lord Jesus Christ.

I hope that our youth will be inspired by other Catholic youth in SYD7, who are full of hope in the Lord so that they can feel hopeful too and become stronger in their faith. **Faustina Thane Ee Hui, Apostolic Vicariate in Brunei Darussalam**



EMPOWERING YOUTH, BUILDING BRIDGES: FAITH IN ACTION

By Jennifer Juanita Franklin

TAMPIN: The Church of St John Marie Vianney in Tampin became a place of warmth and community where 30 young people gathered in search of deeper connection and God's presence recently.

Under the theme *Empowering Youth, Building Bridges: Faith in Action*, what unfolded over the two days was a transformative experience filled with love, laughter and profound moments of spiritual growth.

As we entered the retreat, each participant arrived with their own story, carrying hopes, burdens and questions in their hearts. Some came feeling lost or unsure, others seeking purpose while a few carried silent prayers that had yet to find their voice. Yet, as we gathered, it became clear that this was a journey we wouldn't walk alone. In this shared space, we weren't just a group of strangers, we were a family in faith, united by a deep yearning for God and for something greater than ourselves.

From the very first activity, we were encouraged to break through the barriers of uncertainty and step out of our comfort zones. The group dynamics, team-building, and ice-breaking activities weren't just about fun.

They were about forging connections. Slowly but surely, walls came down, and in their place, a beautiful sense of trust and belonging emerged. These moments taught us the power of vulnerability that when we open our hearts to others, we invite them to do the same.

As the retreat progressed, Fr Philip Tay OCD guided us on a journey of self-discovery and faith, sharing insights that resonated deeply within us. In his first session, *The Psychological Self*, he encouraged us to confront our true selves with compassion, embracing both our strengths and imperfections. He created a safe space for us to reflect on our feelings and experiences, reminding us that vulnerability is a strength.

In his second talk, *The Spiritual Self*, Fr Philip reminded us that our faith should be the cornerstone of who we are, inspiring us to nurture our spiritual lives.

Lastly, in *Servant Leadership*, he taught us that genuine leadership is about serving others with humility and love. His heartfelt words urged us to recognise the needs of those around us and to lead with open hearts.

Sabrina Marie Smith's talk, *Serve with Love*, was one of the most heart-stirring moments of the retreat. With gentle grace, she



invited us to release the fears and doubts that often weigh us down and trust fully in God's call for our lives. Sabrina reminded us that we are all called to live with purpose. Our gifts are not just for ourselves but are meant to be shared with the world, to serve others and to spread the light of God's love. She highlighted that the peace we so often search for in the busyness of life doesn't exist in the world around us, it's already within us, quietly residing where God's love has always been. Her words were a gentle awakening, calling us to fully embrace this love, to trust it, and to live it out in everything we do.

One of the most deeply emotional moments of the retreat came during Adoration and Taizé prayer when hearts were laid bare before God. As we knelt before the Blessed Sacrament, the weight of our worries, pains, and silent battles seemed to dissolve in the stillness. The silence felt like a sacred gift, allowing us to simply be in God's presence without judgment or expectation. Adding to the experience, we each had tea candles to light representing our prayers and needs. Seeing those little flames flicker while we prayed made everything feel even more special and heartfelt.

In that moment, we weren't just a group in prayer, we were a family, united by faith, connected by love, and bound together in the divine presence, feeling God not only around us but alive within each one of us.

Saturday night was a celebration of the

bonds we had formed. The BBQ dinner, games, and campfire were filled with joy and laughter, as the friendships that had begun in the morning were now deepened in the evening. As we gathered around the campfire, sharing stories and singing songs, there was a sense of warmth that went beyond the flames, a feeling that we had found something special here, a community built on faith, trust and love.

Parish priest, Fr Albet Arockiasamy, was a steady presence throughout the retreat, offering his quiet support and guidance. His love for the youth and his dedication to their spiritual growth was evident in every moment and we are so grateful for his leadership. He created an environment where we felt safe to explore our faith, fostering a sense of belonging that encouraged each of us to grow closer to God and to one another.

As the retreat came to an end, it was hard to say goodbye. Each of us was touched differently, but we all shared one thing in common, we were leaving changed. The experiences, the talks, the prayers and the connections had awakened something within us. A renewed sense of purpose, a deeper connection with God and a profound understanding that we are never alone on this journey. We left with hearts full of gratitude knowing that the bridges we had built with one another and with God would carry us forward, empowering us to live out our faith in action.



Learning the Language of God: A Journey in Faith for KL Youth

PETALING JAYA: From September 13 to 15, the Church of St. Francis Xavier (SFX) welcomed youth from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur for a three-day retreat titled *Learning the Language of God*.

Organised by the SFX Lifeline Young Adults Ministry and led by Fr Hung Pham SJ, an American Jesuit based in St Louis, USA, the retreat was crafted to help young participants understand themselves more deeply and strengthen their relationship with God through Ignatian spirituality.

The retreat commenced with the *Walk of Faith*, where participants, paired as guide and blindfolded, symbolised trust and surrender to God's guidance. Fr Hung guided a reflection on how these roles mirror our faith journeys, fostering a sense of vulnerability and dependence on divine leadership. The day closed with Mass, offering a moment of unity and collective prayer.

Day two of the retreat explored deeper themes of spirituality. Fr Hung shared the Parable of the Sower, using props like a

vase and rocks to represent personal burdens — such as fear, pain, and exhaustion — while encouraging participants to recognise moments of joy and triumph. The evening concluded with a healing Mass, where participants were anointed with holy oils, offering a time for spiritual renewal and reflection.

On the final day, Fr Hung celebrated evening Mass, delivering a homily on the question, "Who do you say I am?" — inviting participants to consider their personal relationship with Jesus. The retreat concluded with a reflection on the "Parable of the Reluctant Messiah", challenging the youth to examine distractions and desires that may hinder spiritual growth. A Q&A session offered an open space for participants to seek guidance on faith and life matters.

Through prayer, engaging activities, and meaningful discussions, *Learning the Language of God* offered participants a profound and transformative spiritual experience of Ignatian Spirituality.



Risen Christ Youth Camp Four

PENANG: A spiritually enriching Risen Christ Youth Camp 4 (RCYC4) was held from September 20-22 to ignite the faith and love for God among the youth.

Organised by the Risen Youth Ministry and the Society of St Stephen (Altar Servers Ministry), and facilitated by the Seeds Ministry, RCYC4 gathered a total of 50 youth including facilitators, focusing on the theme: *Living In God*, inspired by 1 John 4:12: "No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us."

The camp sought to help participants experience God's love through the Holy Spirit and the power of repentance. Sessions included inner healing, worship, and reflections on Christian identity.

Here are a few testimonies from participants:

"The camp deepened my faith and gave me joy. The inner healing ses-



sion was especially powerful, and I felt God's presence healing my heart."

"I came to the camp burdened, but through worship and prayer, I experienced God's healing, and my faith was restored."

"I now understand my identity in Christ and how God's love is the foundation of my life, above any worldly expectations. I hope to have more camps like this!"



Music for migrants: A Mediterranean Requiem Mass



File photo of "The Quartet of the Sea" with Sting.

In October 2013, 636 migrants died in two separate shipwrecks in the Mediterranean Sea. Eleven years later, on Oct 3 2024, the anniversary of the first tragedy, the Basilica of Sant' Ambrogio in Milan will host a tribute to the memory of all those lost in the Mediterranean. In the last decade alone, this number has topped 30,300 deaths.

On this anniversary, the *Quartet of the Sea* (in Italian, "Quartetto del Mare") will take to the stage, offering a symbolic performance of an arrangement of Mozart's Requiem. As is every string quartet, the *Quartet of the Sea*, is made up of two violins one viola, and one cello. Although the formation remains the same, the instruments are far from ordinary. They have been crafted by inmates from two Italian prisons from the wood of boats that once carried migrants across the sea. The concert is part of the "Metamorphosis" project, an initiative that seeks to turn instruments of danger into tools of beauty and reflection and will open with the testimonies of a refugee and an inmate, who will share their experience of survival, transformation, and the power of second chances.

The music

The Quartet of the Sea is made up of musicians Eugjen Gargiola and Agnese Tasso on violins, Eva Impellizzeri on viola, and Michele Ballarini on cello. The arrangement of Mozart's *Requiem* was written by Eva Impellizzeri herself, who entitled it *Mozart's Unfinished*. This title draws attention to the composer's untimely death, which left his masterpiece incomplete, thus drawing a parallel to the lives cut short in the waters of the Mediterranean, which Pope Francis has repeatedly described as "a graveyard" for so many seeking a new beginning.

Requiem Masses, or Masses for the dead, are

celebrated as suffrages for the souls of the deceased. Eva Impellizzeri chooses to end her arrangement on *Lacrimosa* (meaning *tearful in Latin*), a poignant, and perhaps the most well-known, segment of Mozart's Requiem, left incomplete at the time of Mozart's death, just as the lives of the migrants who drowned.

Eva Impellizzeri notes how the composer's student, Süßmayr, completed the remaining work, drawing an analogy to how humanity continues to carry the burden of unfinished stories, those of migrants, prisoners, and all who are marginalised.

The event, and the organisations and people behind it, all follow the teachings of Pope Francis, who tirelessly advocates for the lives of migrants at sea. "Migrants", he recently said, "should not be in those deadly seas".

This concert is not just a tribute, but a prayer for the future, where love reigns, even for the most broken among us.

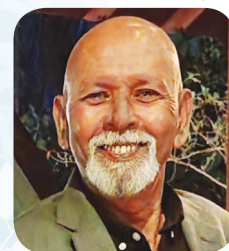
A project following Pope Francis' teachings

The Metamorphosis project gave light to the quartet and was founded, by the Casa dello Spirito e delle Arti Foundation, and involves inmates from the prisons of Opera and Secondigliano who craft musical instruments, from the wood of migrant boats. This initiative aims to symbolise transformation and redemption, with the prisoners gaining new skills and purpose. The foundation, created in 2012 by Arnaldo Mosca Mondadori and Marisa Baldoni, focuses on offering second chances and works with vulnerable individuals through various projects, both in Italy and around the world. The project is supported by the Realmonte ETS Association, which aids asylum seekers. **By Francesca Merlo, Vatican News**

MEMORIAM

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2nd Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Pakiesamy S. Savary
To the Lord: 10.10.2022

If we live, we live for the Lord,
and if we die, we die for the Lord.
Either in life or in death, we
belong to the Lord. Romans 14: 8

Deeply missed and
remembered by
Family, Relatives & Friends.

Memorial Mass will be
celebrated at the Church of
Holy Family, Kajang on
13 October 2024 at 9:30 a.m.

1st Year Anniversary

In loving memory of



Marsh Soosay @ Philomena

CAME FROM THE LORD:
25.02.1966

RETURNED TO THE LORD
19.10.2023

"Your life was a blessing, Your memory was a treasure,
You are loved beyond words and missed beyond measure."

Forever loved and dearly missed by:

Husband: Anthony

Son: Terence

Daughters: Adelin & Jennifer

Brother, sisters, relatives & friends.

14th Anniversary In Loving Memory of our beloved Mum



MARY NEVIS RAJ

Gift from God:
07-07-1932

Returned to the Lord:
18-10-2010

Forever cherished and
loved by Children,
daughter-in-law,
grand-daughter
and loved ones.

1ST YEAR ANNIVERSARY In Loving Memory of Joseph Marie Aime

Born :
15.10.1932
Departed :
14.10.2023

John 3:16.
For God so loved the world
that he gave his one and
only Son, that whoever
believes in him shall not
perish but have eternal life.



Forever cherished and remembered by:

Wife: Amalaganda Elizabeth

Children, Son-in-law, Daughters-in-law,
Grandchildren, Family & Friends.

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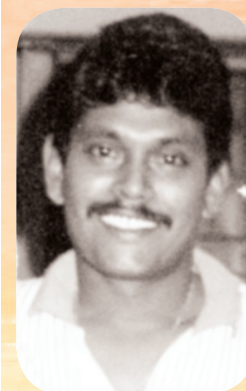
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29th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



**Arul Jagan
Savarinathan**
Departed:
16-10-1995

Dearest Brother/
Brother-in-law/ Uncle

Twenty-nine years
have passed since God
took you home;
No words can express
our loss and sorrow
Although we cannot see
you, we know you are
always with us in spirit
Our hearts will
always cherish
fond memories of you.
May you rest in peace
in God's arms.

Deeply missed and
fondly remembered by
sisters, brothers,
sisters-in-law, nieces
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Pastoral statement on the shift of Catechetical Sunday

Dear People of God,

As we continue our journey of nurturing faith in our communities, I wish to share with you an important announcement regarding an adjustment to our celebrations of Catechetical Sunday. After much prayerful discernment together with the Malaysian Catechetical Commission, the Catholic Bishops' Conference has endorsed the proposal for Catechetical Sunday to be observed on the first Sunday of August, instead of the last Sunday of January, as has been our custom.

By shifting to August, we trust it would allow us more breathing room for the various programmes in our dioceses and parishes — especially in the beginning of the year, as well as to focus more intentionally on our



work of catechesis. As we transition to this new schedule, I encourage all our faithful to embrace this change as an opportunity to strengthen our efforts in nurturing the faith of our community.

Furthermore, while Catechetical Sunday itself will be celebrated on the first Sunday of August, this dedication towards

catechesis may be extended for the whole month of August, according to the discretion of the local Bishop. Additionally, the commissioning of catechists may continue to take place earlier in the year, or in August. This too shall be according to the discretion of the local Bishop, according to the needs of the diocese. This flexibility will allow

each diocese to discern the most suitable time for this important event.

On behalf of the Bishops of Malaysia, I express my deep gratitude to our parents, guardians, catechists and priests. Thank you for your labour of love in this important ministry of catechesis. I invite you to continue walking together, as we strive for a strong foundation for our future. May the Lord bless us abundantly, and grant us grace and wisdom in our mission.

Yours in Christ,

+Rt Rev Joseph Hui Teck Kwong, D.D.
Episcopal President Malaysian
Catechetical Commission

October 7, 2024

Pope Francis names 21 new cardinals

VATICAN: Pope Francis on October 6 announced that he will create 21 new cardinals, giving the 87-year old pontiff another opportunity to further cement his legacy by now naming 80 per cent of the men who will one day elect his successor.

The Pope made the surprise announcement at the end of his weekly Sunday *Angelus* prayer from a window in the Apostolic Palace overlooking St Peter's Square. The consistory for new cardinals will take place at the Vatican on Dec 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.

The new cardinal-electors hail from six continents around the world, including bishops from Australia, Canada, Indonesia and Iran. Eleven of the new red hats will go to bishops and priests from religious orders.

Among the most notable names is Dominican Fr Timothy Radcliffe, the former master of the Dominican order. Radcliffe, 79, was effectively exiled from Vatican circles under Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI, but his emphasis on pastoral theology has been elevated by Francis, who invited the Dominican friar to lead the spiritual retreats for both the 2023 and 2024 synod on synodality.

Also on the list is Archbishop Francis Leo of Toronto, Canada. The relatively unknown 53-year-old was tapped to lead Canada's largest diocese in 2023 and is considered among one of the Pope's most significant legacy appointments in North America.

Only two Vatican officials were among the newly announced names: Scalabrian Fr Fabio Baggio, who heads the migrants and refugee's division of the Vatican's Dicastery for Integral Human Development; and Msgr George Jacob Koovakad, who is currently the lead organiser for papal trips abroad.

The full list of new cardinal electors:

- Archbishop Angelo Acerbi, Apostolic Nuncio;
- Archbishop Carlos Gustavo Castillo Mattasoglio of Lima, Peru;
- Archbishop Vicente Bokalic Iglic

Cm, of Santiago Del Estero (Primate of Argentina);

- Archbishop Luis Gerardo Cabrera Herrera of Guayaquil, Ecuador;
- Archbishop Fernando Natalio Chomali Garib of Santiago De Chile, Chile;
- Archbishop Tarcisio Isao Kikuchi of Tokyo, Japan;
- Bishop Pablo Virgilio Siongco David of Kalookan, Philippines;
- Archbishop Ladislav Nemet of Belgrade; Serbia;
- Archbishop Jaime Spengler of Porto Alegre, Brazil;
- Archbishop Ignace Bessi Dogbo of Abidjan, Ivory Coast;
- Archbishop Jean-Paul Vesco of Algiers, Algeria;
- Bishop Paskalis Bruno Syukur of Bogor, Indonesia;
- Archbishop Dominique Joseph Mathieu of Tehran Ispahan, Iran;
- Archbishop Roberto Repole of Turin, Italy;
- Bishop Baldassare Reina, Auxiliary Bishop of Rome and Vicar General for the Diocese of Rome;
- Archbishop Francis Leo of Toronto, Canada;
- Archbishop Rolandas Makrickas, coadjutor Archbishop of the Papal Basilica of St Mary Major;
- Bishop Mykola Bychok of the Ukrainian Eparchy Sts Peter and Paul of Melbourne, Australia;
- Dominican Fr Timothy Peter Joseph Radcliffe, former master of the Dominican Order;
- Fr Fabio Baggio, under-secretary of the Migrants and Refugees section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development; and
- Msgr George Jacob Koovakad, official of the Vatican's Secretary of State, responsible for travel. **Christopher White, NCR**



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