

# HERALD

The Catholic Weekly

## Mission Statement

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

TERHAD

PP 8460/11/2012 (030939) ISSN: 1394-3294 | Vol: 30 No. 39 | October 15, 2023

[www.heraldmalaysia.com](http://www.heraldmalaysia.com)

I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.  
*Phil. 4:12*



One in faith, family, Church

■ P4



Fuelling a change

■ P6



Celebrating International Day of Sign Languages

■ P7



The procession for the opening Mass for the Synod on Synodality on Oct 4, 2023. (Vatican Media) Inset photo: Cardinal Sebastian Francis greets Pope Francis.

# The Church is here for you!

**V**ATICAN: Pope Francis opened the work of the assembly of the Synod of Bishops asking members to meditate on ancient theological texts about the Holy Spirit, to have the courage to be honest about their disagreements and focus much more on listening than on sharing their opinions.

The pontiff appealed to the Synod assembly's participants to leave their "ideologies" at the door of the Paul VI Hall, where for more than three weeks they will meet to work in groups on such crucial issues as decision-making in the Church, the place of women and the formation of priests.

The Eucharistic liturgy, which took place on the morning of Oct 4 before more than 20,000 worshippers who gathered in a sun-drenched St Peter's Square, was an opportunity for the Pope to recall what the synod process launched back in 2021 is all about. And above all, what it is not, and absolutely must not be.

"We are not here to carry out a parliamentary meeting or a plan of reformation," he



General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. (Vatican Media)

made clear from the very outset.

The 86-year-old Jesuit Pope said it is about leading these titanic projects, which require us to question the internal culture of the institution. "We do not need a purely natural vision, made up of human strategies, political calculations or ideological battles," he said dismissively. "The Holy Spirit is the protagonist," he insisted.

At a time when the Synod is giving rise to both hopes and fears about possible reforms, depending on the currents within the Church, the Pope also recalled what — in his view — constitutes the real challenge of the process. "The question for us is this: God

has spoken, He has truly broken the great silence, He has shown Himself, but how can we communicate this reality to the people of today, so that it becomes salvation?" he said, quoting Benedict XVI.

In fact, the Catholic Church, faced with a crisis of credibility and vocations, is divided on which path it must take in order to remain relevant in the world. Faced with situations that divide Catholics, such as blessing same-sex couples or welcoming migrants, Francis pleaded for a Church that places at the heart of its message a pastoral care of welcome and mercy.

"A Church 'with a gentle yoke', which

does not impose burdens and which repeats to everyone: 'Come, you who are weary and oppressed, come, you who have lost your way or feel far away, come, you who have closed the doors to hope: the Church is here for you!'," he said.

In the face of the challenges and difficulties awaiting the Catholic Church at the dawn of a crucial undertaking, the Pope also drew up a list of "dangerous temptations" Synod members must avoid. They include that "of being a rigid Church... which arms itself against the world and looks backward; of being a lukewarm Church, which surrenders to the fashions of the world; of being a tired Church, turned in on itself".

Basically, Francis has sought at all costs to depoliticise the synodal assembly and to anchor it in an essentially spiritual dimension. "The more fruitful moments of the Synod are those connected to prayer, an atmosphere of prayer," he said in an unscripted remark.

Cardinal Sebastian Francis of Malaysia, who participated in the opening Mass expressed an overwhelming feeling that the Holy Spirit will not fail the Church and will lead the Synod. "I had the graced moment to share these sentiments with the Holy Father after the Mass," said the cardinal. —

Agencies



# HERALD

ESTABLISHED 1994

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Website : [www.heraldmalaysia.com](http://www.heraldmalaysia.com)

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Jointly published by the  
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Diocese of Malacca Johore, Diocese of  
Penang and Diocese of Keningau

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## May new life emerge out of the messiness of this synod process

The Synod on Synodality is awkwardly named, expressive of a reality that is lightly modelled in the past while being described as a journey in the present, a process in formation even as it is being used.

The process itself is massive, global in scope and exhaustive in its attempt to hear voices from all quarters, at least at the start, without judgment or filters.

No surprise then that it is messy and promises only to get messier before clarity emerges. It is understandably jarring to those educated to believe the Church is immutable, that certain “moral teachings” defined in the *Catechism* are beyond change, that tradition means stasis and that unity translates as uniformity.

Francis wasn’t formed within the narrow and often crushing hierarchical culture of the Northern tier. He came to a position of authority through the crucible of the Latin American hierarchy’s defining confrontations with historic ecclesiology. Continent-wide, as their documents show, Church leaders in much of Latin America came to understand themselves in relationship to the poorest of the poor and the most marginalised.

Francis thus came to the papacy as a very different cleric from most of his predecessors. He came with new eyes, able to see a path forward toward which a patient Spirit had been pointing for decades.

Peter Hebblethwaite, a singular Vaticanologist of the last century, noted in his book *The Year of Three Popes*, that 1978, that time of unusual ecclesial turmoil in Rome, was reflective of “the pressures, anxieties and some of the dreams of the late 20th Century. The Church and the world do not stand still,” he wrote. “Although an outmoded apologetic would have us believe otherwise, the papacy has changed and is changing.”

Change need not threaten the richness of Catholic history and tradition. It rather might signify a Church alive and vibrant.

Those who represent polar opposites when it comes to opinions on the synod — those who wish to destroy it at worst and those who wish to push for degrees of change likely beyond the possible — will dominate the news cycle. They always do.

It is, however, wrong to see them as equally damaging of synodality. In the arc of history that runs through the 1962-65 Second Vatican Council and crosses the current synod, it is not those pressing the questions and advocating for change who have been declared heretical. Quite the opposite.

While the previous two papacies may have created hellish conditions for theologians and other thinkers and questioners in the Church, it was nonetheless those who wished to regress who were formally excommunicated. Lefebvreites may have been reduced by that act to an irrelevant sect, but the feverish resistance to the change they represented has morphed into countless forms and expressions. One of the most aggressive forms, a kind of Catholic fundamentalism wrapped in political and economic ideology, has emerged among the right wing of the US Church. The resistance, however, serves to highlight the need for a new direction.

Early on, it was believed that the message of Jesus was reserved to Jews. Then gentiles were allowed only if they observed Jewish laws about circumcision and diet. Then the early leaders determined those rules did not apply.

Women were imagined as malformed males, even though God found fit to have them be the first to discover and declare the Easter miracle.

The Church later regularly applied the adjective “perfidious” to Jews and prayed for their conversion. Then a council deemed that that was wrong, and popes began visiting synagogues and describing Jews as brothers in Abraham.

There was no salvation outside the Church, until there was, and a pope invited other de-

nominations and faiths to join him in prayer in Assisi, a practice that continued for decades.

LGBTQ people were described as “intrinsically disordered,” a term that has quickly gone out of use. Now a pope says, when asked about homosexuality: “Who am I to judge?”

Slavery was once justified. Earning interest on loans was once forbidden.

The earth, the Church once insisted, was the centre of the universe.

“The Church and the world do not stand still.” Nor do they stand in isolation from one another.

Change is threatening. It unravels the certainties that bring comfort. It calls into question aspects of culture that some see as immutable. It brings differences into sharp relief. It is unsettling.

Would the community, in lieu of change, remain convinced, for instance, that women are inferior to men? Would it remain convinced that slavery is justified? Would it continue to insist that the Earth is the centre of the universe? Would it allow the understanding of human behaviour, sexuality, psychology, medicine, to remain stuck in some imagined time from which nothing can change?

Certainty does not require immutability. The certainty is assured, it is contained in its most compact form in the *kerygma*, the ancient statement of faith. As the late theologian Richard McBrien put it in his massive work *Catholicism*: “The message of the New Testament was always the message of the Resurrection.”

That’s where the immutable certainty lies. And what of all those pesky issues causing anxiety and division? Perhaps Francis believes the Church has reached a level of maturity where the questions can flow without retribution, where the messiness of the complex human family can be reflected in our deliberations. Where the awkward mouthful of syllables — synod on synodality — will come to model a new manner of life within the Church. — *NCR*

## Say ‘Yes’ to the invitation

It’s quite a story. First, we have a wedding — the setting for many a romantic-comedy — think *Steel Magnolias*, *Crazy Rich Asians* or *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*.

After the complexities of courtship, the happy couple are ready to tie the knot. They secure a reception venue, settle the guest list, send out posh invitations. So far, so good. But then we hear the invitees, even perhaps the relatives, decline to attend: perhaps the venue was known for bad catering! What’s worse, the postmen end up dead. The father of the groom is furious and has the troublemakers rounded up and executed, razing their town for good measure. Romantic comedy turns to horror movie.

On its own, this first episode of our Gospel story is exciting enough, with its romance and mayhem. But in the sequel, as in many a feel-good movie, a rag-tag group of nerds and misfits saves the day. They might not know the happy couple, but they’re up for a free feed. The reception hall is filled with guests — festivities begin; the grief turns to joy.

But then there’s another mood swing. In the series conclusion, the revelry is interrupted. The host notices something jarring: a badly dressed guest — a crooked bow tie, too-skimpy gown, maybe he hadn’t bothered changing. He demands

an explanation and there’s an awkward silence. Then he tells the bouncers to cuff the guy and throw him out. Back to party time.

It’s a wedding none will forget — certainly not the bride and groom! Nor, I think, should we, for this is no rom-com, horror or feel-good movie: it’s an intimate look at the to and fro between the human and divine. It’s about invitation and response, salvation and damnation, sin and virtue.

Look again at our trilogy, this time with the eyes of faith. As in today’s First Reading and Psalm, the regal Father-God invites the People of Israel to a heavenly wedding banquet (Is 25:6-10; Ps 22/23). Crucially, He invites: He doesn’t force Himself upon anyone. God offers humanity His friendship, and we are free to accept or not. But just in case we don’t really hear it or don’t respond as we should, He renews the invitation. He gives us another chance, many more chances, in fact. He sends lots of ‘messengers’: prophets, missionaries and saints. Perhaps we keep refusing, or more likely sometimes say YES, sometimes NO, mostly MAYBE. Lots of chances, lots of choices. Bottom line: don’t squander them.

Next up, God extends invitations beyond the Old Israel to the New Israel, that is the Church — and even beyond

that. We should harbour no illusions that we are the only ones God loves. Our invitations are personal but not exclusive. If the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was essentially for Israel, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is revealed to be for all humanity. Not just the high and mighty, or even the low and holy, but for the rag-tag band found at the crossroads, ‘the bad and good alike’. There’s comfort in this: that no-one is predestined to hell, all are called to heaven. But if we give up our place at the heavenly banquet, someone else will gladly take it. If we renounce heaven, we cast ourselves into that “outer darkness where there is weeping and grinding of teeth”. The history of divine invitation and human response is also the story of salvation and damnation.

In the third and final episode, God has a good look at His guests. Tradition calls this the Particular Judgment, God’s assessment of a person’s life immediately after their death. In our story, a man has said YES to the invitation and come along for the ride. But his heart’s not in it; he behaves like a gate-crasher rather than a wedding guest. So, he’s cast out.

To believe that all are invited to heaven, and to recognise that some accept and some decline, is not the end of the matter. For to say YES to the invitation, by assenting to the Creed or receiving

## Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Archbishop  
Anthony Fisher OP

### 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

**Readings: Isaiah 25:6-10;**  
**Philippians 4: 12-14, 19-20;**  
**Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14**

Baptism, Confirmation and the rest, but then go on living exactly as before, as the world lives, is to fail to change your clothes. To go through the motions of good works while your heart is far from God is not to join in the spirit of the party. We should not imagine we are on the way to the heavenly banquet if we do not live in the spirit of God’s kingdom here and now on earth.

The person without a wedding suit, says St Gregory the Great, is the one who believes in Christ and His Church but lacks Christian love. St Augustine goes further: only ‘love that springs from a pure heart, a clean conscience, and a genuine faith’ is the right gear for that banquet; so dress yourselves in those clothes. — *Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney homilies archive (Reproduced with permission)*





## KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

### Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

#### October

- 16 **Annual General Meeting of Malaysian Catholic Education Council**
- 17-18 **Monthly Clergy Recollection**
- 19 **Archdiocesan Finance Meeting**
- 20 **Opening Ceremony and Mass — Archdiocesan Chinese Language Apostolate Committee (ACLAC) 30th Anniversary**
- 21 **ACLAC AGM & Anniversary Dinner**



## PENANG DIOCESE

### Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

#### October

- 15 **Confirmation — Church of St Louis, Taiping at 9.00am**
- 15 **Confirmation — Church of St Joseph, Bagan Serai at 5.30pm**
- 16 **Meeting — Malaysian Catholic Education Council in Kuala Lumpur at 2.30pm**
- 17-18 **Monthly Clergy Recollection with Religious at Stella Maris, Penang**
- 20 **Signing of Tripartite MOU — Assumption International School at 3.00pm**
- 21 **Mass — Church of Holy Redeemer, Tanjung Malim at 6.00pm**



## MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

### Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

#### October

- 17-18 **Monthly Clergy Recollection — MAJODI Centre**
- 19 **Meeting — MJD Young People's Network Staff**
- 21 **English Language Cultural Council Meet — Kluang**
- 21 **Confirmation — Church of St Mary, Ayer Salak, Melaka**



## DIOCESE OF PENANG

PKK/BDN/2023/10/170

# Notifications and Updates

The Synod of Bishops is a momentous event in the life of the Church, where bishops from around the world come together to discuss and discern matters of great importance. As they embark on this important journey, let us keep them in our thoughts and prayers as we remember the words of Pope Francis, "Without Prayer There is No Synod".

### 1. Instrumentum Laboris XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops — First Session (October 2023)

I am pleased to share with you the Final Working Document compiled from the feedback from all over the world including Malaysia and Asia for the upcoming Synod in Rome, October 2023. Emphasising on this document, I invite you to explore and deepen the practice of "Conversation in the Spirit" as a dynamic of discernment and discussion in the synodal Church.

Go to: <https://bit.ly/46vriE7>

### 2. Pray for those representing us at the Synod

Cardinal William Goh, Fr Clarence Devadass and Anna Teresa Peter Amandus with expert and facilitator, Dr Christina Kheng, have been

entrusted with the significant responsibility of being our voices at this Synod. May the Holy Spirit guide and inspire them as they actively participate in the discussions and decisions that will shape the future of our Church. I invite you to pray for these representatives from our region and for all representatives present at the synod in Rome.

### 3. Silver Sacerdotal Jubilee celebration of Fr Vincent Paul

With grateful hearts we celebrate 25 years of faithfulness in the priestly Silver Jubilee of Fr Vincent Paul, parish priest of the Church of the Holy Redeemer, Tanjung Malim (October 7, 2023). Continue to keep him in prayer as we praise and thank God for the gift of his priesthood.

### 4. Contribution for the recent Papal Visit to Mongolia

The Catholic Bishop's Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei contributed RM189,000 (USD41,000) to aid in the expenses of the recent visit of the Holy Father, Pope Francis to Mongolia in September 2023. Let us continue to pray for the Church and the community of Mongolia.

### 5. Young Priests' Gathering 2023 of Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei

The Young Priests' Gathering this year was hosted by the Diocese of Keningau, Sabah from October 9 – 13. A total of seven young diocesan and religious priests from our diocese participated, namely Fr James Pitchay, Fr Louis Loi, Fr Konstend Gnanapragasam, Fr Desmond Jansen, Fr Raymond Raj, Fr Crispus Mosinoh OFM and Fr Gilbert James OFM Cap. Fr James Pitchay was the person in charge of the young priests from the Diocese of Penang.

### 6. Placement of Fr Oliver Tham, OFM

Fr Oliver Tham has been assigned as priest in residence at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Penang since September 1, 2023 after concluding his role as Chaplain in Residence at the Little Sisters of the Poor (LSP) in Batu Lanchang, Penang. Let us remember him in his priestly ministry and vocation and keep him in our prayers.

### 7. Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral theme and focus for 2024

The Liturgical Celebrations for 2024 along with the overall theme and monthly focus for the year has been compiled for your easy reference.

Go to: <https://bit.ly/48z2tJb>



## Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #149

F12  
NEWS  
MJD  
UPDATES

**Greetings to you, dear friends and faithful.** The haze is back. The medal chase is on. Another by-election is around the corner. The authorities are still looking for the missing high-profile individuals. The shortage of local white rice and subsidised cooking oil and rising costs worries the M40s and B40s. The public perceive the promised reforms as slow. The haze is real.

**Impatient Times:** It was the same impatience that hastened the collapse of the GE 2018 government. It is hardly 10 months since GE 2022 and the pressure to speed up reforms and save the nation is deafening. Impatient young. Impatient old. Impatient people. Impatient faithful. Outcomes, successes and personal comfort is our criteria. Waiting, endurance and sacrifice are not favoured. The ways of the farmer, to wait for the yield has been side-lined by the "instant" mentality. We want things quick and fast. Patient waiting is biblical. It is to understand the ways of God. What we dream, what we plant, what we will harvest takes time. Relationships and intimacy are also built on patience. How do we go on? Continue working at it. Picture the reality. Let God spark the growth.

*A dream doesn't become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination and hard work. Colin Powell*

### A Thought for the Week: 9X1=7?

One day, a school teacher wrote the following maths equations on the blackboard;  $9 \times 1 = 7 \dots 9 \times 2 = 18 \dots 9 \times 3 = 27 \dots 9 \times 4 = 36 \dots 9 \times 5 = 45 \dots 9 \times 6 = 54 \dots 9 \times 7 = 63 \dots 9 \times 8 = 72 \dots 9 \times 9 = 81 \dots 9 \times 10 = 90$ .

When he was done, he looked at the students who were all laughing at him, because the first equation was wrong. The teacher then said the following: "I wrote that first equation

*wrong on purpose because I wanted you to learn something important. This was for you to know how the world out there will treat you. You can see that I wrote the equations nine times correctly but none of you congratulated me for it; you all laughed and criticised me because of the one wrong thing that I did.*

A lesson from the blackboard: "The world will never appreciate the good you do a million times, but will criticise you for the one wrong thing that you do...don't get discouraged." "ALWAYS RISE ABOVE THE LAUGHTER AND CRITICISM...STAY STRONG!"

### Announcements for this Week

1. The Creation Justice Commission of the diocese organised a workshop, entitled **Building Low-Carbon Communities** on Saturday, September 30 at the Good Shepherd Seminary, Malacca. With Dr Maria Lee, the participants studied the many initiatives of Pope Francis on the "world in crisis", learnt the making of eco-enzymes and solarising homes.

2. On October 1, **PROTEC Year 4** was launched at the Church of St Francis Xavier (SFX), Malacca, with the theme "Cut Fuel Consumption" with a walk from A Famosa to SFX by the many parish Creation Justice (CJ) representatives. The call to *Cut Fuel Consumption*...means to decarbonise Malaysia, cut air pollution, cut wasteful travels, cut petrol and diesel burning, reject plastics especially online packaging.

3. From October 6-7, the **BM Charis for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal** organised a Deliverance Retreat for its 44 leaders and team members, on the topic "Created To Be Free".

4. The upcoming event includes the November 20 **Priestly Ordination of Deacon Aaron Alammalay** in Muar.

### This Week's QnQ.

**The Q asks: What blocks Wisdom?**

1. The "VIKING LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES" state that close-mindedness is the block to wisdom. CLOSED-MINDEDNESS is the unwillingness to consider ideas and opinions that are new or different to one's own." We see arrogant rigidity, obstinate inflexibility to even understand differences of ideas, experiences, processes, opportunities and insights. We also see it in individuals who either stand on the "left or right" of any issue and demonise anyone who does not believe in what they believe in; their thinking, philosophy, religious orientation, paradigm, etc. Closed-minded people listen to win, not to understand. They kill INCLUSIVITY, DIVERSITY and WISDOM that come from "others".

2. The opposite of the above is not just about being open-minded, it's about having the "beginners' mindset"; looking at every situation you're placed in as if it's the first time you are seeing it. Open-mindedness is the doorway to discovery. The Fifth Habit of Stephen Covey defines it as "Seeking first to understand, then to be understood."

**Do we have the mental and emotional space to explore "what if's" and "why not's" that challenge our preconceived ideas and beliefs?**

We have heard the expression "Spiritual Conversations" and lately "Conversations in the Spirit". Google and discover what it means. It is a way to listen to the Spirit, to discern God's Will for our Church and community. Be ready for this change. The Malacca Johore Diocese prepares to become a Synodal Diocese. Let's move together. God bless.

Bishop Bernard Paul



## Winds of change in Nilai parish

NILAI: There was much enthusiasm at the Church of St Theresa's (CSTN) Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA), which took place on September 24. The session was well-attended by parishioners of all language groups and held in an informal setting. Starting with a fellowship meal, everyone then came together to share insights in a comforting 'family setting'.

"This would be very much like how Sts Louis and Zelig Martin would have ended each day, praying and spending time with one

another," enthused parish priest, Fr Christopher W. Soosaipillai, alluding to St Theresa's parents and their emphasis on a Christ-centred upbringing for their children.

The meeting covered a spectrum of important topics, spanning from fostering unity within the parish to enhancing interaction with the community. Those who attended shared significant concerns and expressed changes they hoped to see within the parish. There were requests for Sunset Masses, weekday Masses for Senior Citizens, and

suggestions on operational issues. "Everything is possible if parishioners step up and offer their services," said Fr Christopher.

Issues revolving around reviving and activating Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) were aired, lacklustre youth commitment continues to be of crucial concern. However, there have been welcome developments, as seen through the encouraging participation in the Parish Integral Human Development Ministry (PIHDM) events. "We must get past the ob-

session of anguishing over how many persons attend; instead, we should continue to organise activities and systematically reach out," advised Fr Christopher.

The Parish Ministry for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (PMEIA) will be an area of focus in 2024 to build better faith understanding beyond the church. Families are core units of a parish, and the Family Life Ministry plays a role in looking into their needs. "Everyone must work side by side to build our children's faith," em-

phasised Fr Christopher, calling for more persons to take up catechist roles.

The highlight was Fr Christopher's sharing about plans for the new church as CSTN was razed to the ground during a New Year's Day fire in 2012. As the final hymn began, strong gusts of wind, which lasted a few minutes, sent everyone scrambling to pick up strewn pieces of paper and fallen furniture. In the mayhem, everyone overlooked the must-have PPA group photo. — **By Aileen Anthony Jason**

# One in faith, family, Church

By Jennifer Duarte

IPOH: There was an air of festivity at the Church of St Michael towards the end of September 2023. Small brightly coloured bunting gaily decorated the church vicinity while the floral arrangements in and around the premise added to the festive mood. Behind the scenes, the sound system was improved, hymns chosen, choirs practised, liturgical scripts and Power Point slides prepared for the nine-day novena in honour of St Michael the archangel, the patron saint of the parish.

Preparation was indeed an arduous task as Masses were in two languages — English and Mandarin. Parish priest, Fr Anthony Liew, termed it as their 'heart-work' to make the celebration of St Michael meaningful.

The theme of this year's novena which began on September 22, was

*That they may be one. One in Faith, one Church, one Family in Christ* cf. John 17:21. The congregation recited the Chaplet and Litany of St Michael daily before Mass. From Sept 22 to 26, the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick was administered after Mass.

On Sept 27 Archbishop Julian Leow celebrated and preached at the English Masses while Fr Simon Lau celebrated and preached for the Mandarin-speaking congregation. Fr Simon Anand celebrated and preached for the Tamil-speaking congregation on Sept 29.

The nine-day novena culminated with Mass presided over by Archbishop Julian Leow with Fr John Anandan OFM, Cap and Fr Anthony concelebrating. Thereafter, a candlelight procession encircling the church took place. During the procession, representatives of BECs and parish ministries proudly carried their banners while



SMC Parishioners walking in procession.

solemnly reciting the Chaplet of St Michael, in English and Mandarin.

The prelate praised the congregation as he had observed that all who joined in the procession made it 'very prayerful, concentrating on being a witness of their faith'.

Many (even those watching the online streaming of the Mass and procession) said that it was a beautiful celebration, spirit-filled and memorable. After the procession, the congregation was invited to a simple dinner catered for more than

1000 pax at Sam Tet school hall where food was served in recyclable containers.

May St Michael continue to strengthen the faith of the parish of St Michael so all may grow as one community, as one family in Christ.

## Thirty-two receive Jesus for the first time



The First Holy Communists in a group photo with the parish priest and catechists.

RAWANG: The Church of St Jude's parish priest, Fr Vincent Thomas, inquired of the 32 children gathered at the Sunset Mass on September 23, "Why are you here?" In unison, they responded, "To receive Christ Jesus."

Fr Vincent presided over the Sacrament of Holy Communion with the children, their parents, teachers and parishioners. The young ones were filled with excitement as they prepared to partake in the Body and Blood of Christ for the first time.

The church was aptly decorated in red and white-coloured flowers,

symbolising the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

By 6.00pm, the church was packed as parishioners eagerly waited to welcome the communicants. Dressed in white and cream-coloured attire, the children processed into the church and took their seats.

After Mass, Fr Vincent thanked the communicants' parents and catechists for preparing the children to receive Christ. The communicants were then presented with gifts and their certificates.

In preparation for receiving the

Blessed Sacrament, the standard three catechism pupils attended a three-day two-night in-house camp in August.

Catechism coordinator Rachel De Cruz described it as a joyous celebration and expressed her pride in the children. She considered the celebration remarkable, with the children and her catechists making her exceedingly proud. Displaying the communicants' names on little hearts between the altar flower arrangements was a new gesture and it made the children feel extra special. — **By Mercy Almeida Stellus**

## Healing ministry celebrates 41st Anniversary

KUCHING: The Holy Cross Ministry of Deliverance and Healing celebrated its 41st anniversary September 14, Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Archbishop Simon Poh, Fr Nicholas Ng, founder Stephen Bong, leaders and prayer warriors were present for the celebration.



Cake cutting by Stephen Bong (left), Archbishop Simon Poh (centre) and Fr Nicholas Ng (right).

In his address, Archbishop Simon praised and thanked the ministry for serving the Church and added that the Holy Cross (the Crucifix) is so dear to him, being a convert himself. He further encouraged all to intensify in prayers and intercession to give glory to God through the help of the Holy Spirit.

Stephen shared briefly how wonderful it is to experience the Love and Power of God that is witnessed through God's great signs and wonders. Many souls have come to know Jesus, those afflicted are set free and the sick are healed. Signs and wonders are very important for the Church to grow, develop and bear fruit. At the age of 82, Stephen is still actively serving at the Holy Cross Centre.

It is so incredible how God has sustained the ministry, 41 years and beyond, because it is all about the victory of the Cross and what God wants to do for His people, all the good and wonderful things. Indeed, a great blessing for all!

May God's name be praised forever! — **By Clara Chan, Today's Catholic**



# Vincentians called to care for the 'new poor' amongst us

By Lucia Lai

SELAMA, Taiping: "Serving the poor is to be preferred among all things." Msgr Stephen Liew passionately emphasised this during the celebration of the Feast of St Vincent de Paul, October 1.

Every year, the modest St Vincent de Paul chapel springs to life during its feast day celebration. This year, approximately 300 Vincentians, along with their families and friends from the Diocese of Penang, congregated at the chapel to partake in the Eucharistic Celebration and a warm fellowship lunch.

Msgr Stephen began his homily by sharing a profound and meaningful passage from the writings of St Vincent de Paul, particularly resonant for Vincentians. Within this inspiring text, St Vincent emphasised the divine choice of poverty by God, signifying a special love for those who extend their care and compassion to the poor.

Following the reading, Msgr Stephen drew



St Vincent de Paul members.

attention to the presence of the 'new poor' among us, individuals and groups who also deserve our assistance and service. He listed them in three categories - refugees and migrants, odd-job workers, and the elderly and lonely.

"The refugees and migrant workers are usually marginalised and exploited while the odd-job workers only get paid when they work, when there is no work, they are help-

less. We have seen an increase in odd-job workers since the pandemic," he said.

Msgr Stephen added that when it comes to the elderly and lonely, their poverty may not be material, but it is often mental and emotional. Many of them are left behind by their children or live in solitude, which creates a different form of need. Vincentians must extend their outreach to these individuals within their community.

On that note, he congratulated the SSVF for coming up with the Ozanam Retirement Village (ORV), which caters to the elderly.

Msgr Stephen wound down his homily by challenging Vincentians with two codes to live by, as taken from St Vincent's writings.

"The first," he said, "is — 'Go to the poor and you will find God'. If you make God the centre of your life, go out and seek the poor. Your mere presence to them will touch hearts."

"The second code is very powerful from St Vincent and all Vincentians are urged to strongly adhere to — 'It is our duty to prefer the service of the poor to everything else.'"

Following the conclusion of the Eucharistic Celebration, a tradition observed every year, the Society presented a gift to Paul, the generous landowner of the chapel grounds. Paul, who consistently sponsors a whole roasted pig for the fellowship lunch, was once again acknowledged for his gracious contribution.

## Let us love, since our heart is made for nothing else



Catechism students dressed as Carmelite nuns, led the indoor procession with the statue of St Theresa.

NILAI: The Church of St Theresa (CSTN) recently celebrated the triduum of her patron saint themed *My Vocation is Love*. Excitement was already mounting for a few weeks, beginning with talks on the French Carmelite nun who lived between 1873 and 1897 and her "extraordinary" family.

Coincidentally, CSTN also held its Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA) in September, which added to a deeper appreciation of St Theresa, who died at the age of 24 and whose greatest desire was to 'love, since our heart is made for nothing else'.

The Feast of the Archangels, September 29, ushered in the celebrations with Mass presided over by Fr Moses Rayappan from the parish of St Francis Xavier, Melaka. His homily drew much laughter but dove in profound reminders that 'Our spirits are always willing, but our flesh is weak'.

"St Theresa of the Child Jesus was no different. She struggled to love the sisters in her convent that annoyed and irritated her, but she inspires us to talk to God, look inside ourselves, and focus on being our best self," he said.

The procession on the church grounds on the second day was cancelled due to wet weather conditions. But the showers did not dampen the enthusiasm of the catechism class children, dressed as little Carmelites, from reverently leading the procession inside the

church. Fr Peter Anthoney from the Church of Christ the Light, Kepong, who celebrated the Feast Day Mass on Oct 1, shared about the devout family of St Therese. St Therese was among five siblings who became nuns. She had another sister who was beatified in 2015, and her parents, Louis and Zelig Martin were canonised in 2015.

On Sunday, Fr Peter continued the celebrations and he shared during Mass that, "Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but God made another tree that gave us the wood upon which hung the Saviour of the world." He advised, "We must reconcile our sins through confession so that our hearts will be open to receive and give love."

Parish priest, Fr Christopher W. Soosaipillai, expressed his heartfelt gratitude to everyone who had dedicated their efforts to prepare for the Triduum. "We are so happy to see visitors from other parishes who have come to celebrate our Little Flower," he said. The three-day festivities saw CSTN's Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) coming together to prepare and donate food for the receptions after Mass.

The calming and loving feeling of 'family' was felt throughout the three days, exemplifying the prayers of a young woman 126 years after death, "In the heart of the church, my Mother, I will be love." — **By Aileen Anthony Jason**

## Wait upon the Lord, don't grow weary

KLANG: In line with the ongoing Synod in Rome, the theme for the Church of the Holy Redeemer's 53rd anniversary Triduum from September 22 to 24, was **Communion, Participation and Mission**.

On the inaugural day, parish priest Fr Andrew Kooi celebrated Mass where he delivered a sermon centred on the theme of **Communion**. During his homily, he emphasised crucial aspects of the Gospel regarding the significance of refraining from distorting messages to serve personal agendas. He also guided the congregation on avoiding the adoption of teachings that deviate from those of our Lord. Additionally, he motivated parishioners to consider enrolling in courses to deepen their knowledge of the faith, underlining the importance of grasping the fundamentals before sharing the teachings of our faith with others. After Mass, Fr Andrew anointed the sick and elderly.

On the subsequent day, Fr Michel Dass, from the Church of the Divine Mercy, presided over the Mass, themed **Participation**. He said that our thoughts often clash with God's thoughts. He said that in the First Reading, we might feel tempted to think that God is not listening to us when our prayers are not answered. In reality, we give up so easily because we grow tired of waiting. However, Fr Michel drew inspiration from St. Paul, who reminds us that the essence of life is found in Christ in every circumstance. Fr Michel advised us to align our lives with Christ even when things don't unfold as we desire. From the day's Gospel reading, Fr Michel empha-

sised that God's justice is not according to how we think. We see God's generosity as partial and not fair and that might stir up envy and jealousy. He urged us to remember that God's justice transcends our understanding, and He consistently provides in His way and according to His divine timing.

On the third day, Fr Christopher Wee, SJ, celebrated Mass centred on the theme of **Mission**. He initiated his sermon by asking the parishioners if they would be excited to work in the Lord's vineyard. He said many might respond by expressing concerns about the sustainability of such work for their families and livelihoods. However, Fr Christopher explained that participating in the mission of Jesus Christ through the various church ministries is synonymous with becoming the salt and light of the world. He urged us to actively engage as contributors within the church community.

Furthermore, he stressed the importance of re-evaluating the source of our existence, recognising that the author of life has endowed us with a purpose. Our mission is to fulfil that purpose. Concluding his sermon, Fr Christopher reminded us that working in the Lord's vineyard is not an additional task or distinct from our existing responsibilities. He said we are already in the Lord's vineyard, whether at home or in the workplace, and our lives are inherently a mission — a purpose entrusted to us from the moment God breathed life into us.

The Triduum ended with a fellowship lunch at the church hall. — **By Jessreena Jeanne Michael**



Fr Andrew Kooi anointing the sick and the elderly on the first day of the Triduum.



# Fuelling a change

By Karen Ann Theseira

MELAKA: The launch of Protect Our Reath, Protect Our Children (PROTEC) Year 4, *Cut Fuel Consumption* was a two-day event held on the weekend of September 30 and October 1.

The programme consisted of talks, fellowship, a walk and Mass at the Church of St Francis Xavier (SFX). The participants who were from several parishes in Malacca and Johore gathered at the Good Shepherd Seminary for lunch before the first presentation, The Global Climate Emergency: what everyone needs to know.

Creation Justice Commission of the Malacca Johore Diocese (CJCMJD) lead Dr Maria Lee, reiterated how 'the effects of climate change are already impacting Malaysia, with hot days above 32 degrees Celsius becoming the new normal along with more frequent rain and floods.' Dr Maria went on to say that we are indeed 'in a climate emergency brought on by human activity and in order to slow down the devastating effects of climate change, we must take action now by changing the way we live — a societal change as time is running out'.

Dr Maria cautioned against the scepticism many people may have about their actions making a real impact. She added, "COVID-19 proved how humanity, when we work together on a common goal, can change things. The pandemic was a sign that, with less human activity and a reduction in our carbon footprint, the earth can recover."

*Laudato Si' Mi Signore (LS): Hope for A World in Crisis* was the next topic Dr Maria went on to present. LS is Pope Francis' encyclical, a papal letter addressed to the Church, clergy and laity in a particular area, like the environment. Like all past letters written by

the Pope; these are grounded in the reality of the times. Thus, Pope Francis asks, 'What kind of world do you want to leave to those who come after us?' (LS 160) This question must propel us — with great urgency 'to pursue low-carbon pathways to safeguard our Earth, our communities and our children from the threat of climate change.' *Laudato Si' Mi Signore* means, 'Praise Be To You, My Lord.' Pope Francis' beautiful encyclical on care for our common home, is a call to us to be better stewards of God's Creation. The mandate of the Church reinforces this; 'The work of the Church seeks not only to remind everyone of the duty to care for nature, but at the same time, she must, above all, protect mankind from self-destruction.'

Sustainable Energy Development Authority (SEDA)'s Market Operation Division deputy director, Ts. Rubita Hani bt Abdul Samad, provided participants with interesting information with her talk on, *Solarising your Home*. Solar energy is better for the environment and is also a reliable source of energy. Rubita took several questions, adding that solar energy can lead to long-term savings on monthly electric bills. She went on to say that solar systems have a lifespan of 25 - 30 years, and with further technological advancements, we will see more durable and less expensive panels over time.

The day concluded with a workshop on bio-enzyme making. Participants were shown how a simple recipe of one cup of jag-gery (coarse, dark sugar), three cups of fruit peel (preferably orange or pineapple) and 10 cups of water, results in an environmentally friendly, multi-purpose cleaner, repellent and disinfectant. One participant was invited to try her hand at mixing all the ingredients in a plastic container. She found, as did many others, how easy the process was. The conco-



The participants at A Famosa before walking to the Church of St Francis Xavier.

## Expressing grief through art therapy

KUALA LUMPUR: The Archdiocesan Office for Human Development's Women's Ministry hosted its second Bereavement Support Group activity at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre on September 30.

The gathering began with an opening prayer, followed by a session of Praise and Worship. Afterwards, a healing art workshop took place, guided by a group member. During this workshop, participants were encouraged to channel their grief and emotions into meaningful and captivating pieces of art.

As we took a break from our daily routines and immersed ourselves in some creative expressions, we centred our activities around faith and spirituality.

I found myself deeply engrossed in the process of learning to draw, and to my surprise, noticed that my usual trail of thoughts had taken a back seat. The experience was soothing and relaxing, providing a welcome escape from our mundane concerns. It was rather amusing to witness some ladies at-

tempting to rekindle how to draw using a compass set, considering that most of us had not used one since our school days. We were also given sketchbooks to take home, to practise and draw whatever inspired us.

While it was fun and games, we moved on to sharing our thoughts, feelings and how life went on without our spouses, how we coped, how we cried, how we missed them and most of all, how much we turned to our Lord, Jesus when we needed comfort.

Having a supportive environment where we could openly express our emotions with sisters who share similar experiences was incredibly meaningful. It reassured us that we aren't isolated in our struggles. Discovering that others also grapple with unconventional thoughts and emotions made us realise the universality of our experiences, making us feel more at ease. We've chosen to perceive ourselves as survivors rather than victims. We live with optimism, expressing gratitude to the Lord for every



Bishop Bernard Paul viewing the unveiled banners.

tion would be ready for use in three months and during the fermentation process, it is advised to store the plastic containers in a cool place like under the kitchen sink. Participants took home bottles of ready-to-use bio-enzymes to try at home. Harsh, toxic, off-the-shelf cleaners will be a thing of the past as making one's own cleaner gains popularity.

The following morning saw a gathering of over 50 participants at A'Famosa for the walk to the Church of St Francis Xavier. The walk took the group through Sunday morning streets, narrow lanes and over calm waters before arriving at the destination. It was encouraging to see several teenagers and youths passionate to help promote the PROTEC theme with banners and singing the official *Laudato Si'* song. One such young person was Bethilda Viviana Richard, a student of dentistry at Manipal University College Malaysia in Melaka. Bethilda shared how she is concerned about carbon emissions and our excessive use of plastic. "I use my own shopping bags and carpool by picking up my friends for classes." Bethilda added that it would be great if there was a reliable train system, like in Singapore, to get around instead of always having to drive.

Another participant, Marina Lee, commented that she has made a conscious effort to shop less. "Given the rising cost of everything; I am more aware of what I buy and the amount of things I buy. I don't want to accumulate things and I don't want to waste."

The Sunday morning Mass that followed was especially joyous with Bishop Bernard Paul of the Malacca-Johore Diocese as the main presider. Concelebrants included the Church of St Francis Xavier's parish priest,

Fr Moses Rayappan, and his assistant Fr Alexuchelvam Mariasoosai, the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe's parish priest, Fr Joseph Heng, the Church of Christ the King's parish priest, Fr Matthew Bun, the Church of St. Philip's parish priest, and Fr Paul Wong, the bishop's delegate for Creation Justice Commission.

After the final blessing, parishioners watched a video prepared by the Creation Justice Commission of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur on practical ways to cut fuel consumption. Bishop Bernard and Fr Moses unveiled the official banners of PROTEC Year 4 in various languages. To conclude the proceedings, Fr Paul handed out PROTEC Year 4 posters and banners to the parish representatives.

The PROTEC campaign is a five-year nationwide campaign from September 1, 2020 to August 31, 2025, initiated and signed by all archbishops and bishops of Malaysia. Each year, a specific theme is promoted. The first campaign theme launched in 2020 was, *Use Less Electricity* followed by, *Cut Down Meat, Dairy & Food Waste*, and *Stop Plastic Pollution*.

Bishop Bernard sent us off on an encouraging note of making choices and decisions that reflect our care for Creation — that we must not leave a desert to our children and future generations. *Laudato Si' Mi Signore!*

We thank the delegates from the Malacca parishes of Our Lady of Guadalupe, St Anne, St Theresa, St Mary and St Francis Xavier and those from the Johore parishes of Christ the King, Immaculate Conception, Cathedral of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, St Philip, St Simon, St Theresa and St Joseph for the commitment and enthusiasm shown during the two-day event.

challenge we've faced and eagerly anticipating our journey towards healing and a happier future.

I lost the love of my life, my husband, five years ago. Before this support group, I wondered why the Church never had a support group for those who had lost their spouses until, lo and behold, a few weeks later, a close friend sent me the flyer. I attended the first meet; it was a huge success. We went with the flow, allowing each of us an intimate and safe space to be with like-minded or rather, I would say, similar grief-minded ladies.

Loss, grief, memories and coping with these becomes a real-life struggle when we lose our loved ones. While married couples constantly bicker, annoy and paint a rather terrifying picture of being married, we miss these times more than anything when our spouses depart. Now, what we are left is annoying ourselves!

Time flew by during our art endeavours as we transitioned to sharing our thoughts and

feel-  
i n g s  
a b o u t  
life without  
our spouses.  
We discussed  
coping mecha-  
nisms, moments  
of grief, and how we  
leaned on our faith in Jesus  
Christ for comfort.

I am anxiously looking forward to the next session for widows and widowers scheduled for Oct 21 at the Bread of Life Corner, Petaling Jaya from 11.00am to 1.00pm. — **By Sabrina Jane Anthony**





# Celebrating International Day of Sign Languages

By Celine George

SEREMBAN: The International Day of Sign Languages (IDSL) was celebrated by the Catholic Ministry of the Deaf (CMfD) on September 24, at the Church of the Visitation. The theme for this year was, *A World Where Deaf People Everywhere Can Sign Anywhere*.

Archbishop Julian Leow was the main presider, with CMfD's ecclesiastical assistant, Fr Michael Chua, concelebrating and interpreting. The Church of the Visitation's parish priest, Fr Xavier Andrew, was the other concelebrant.

The main objective of the celebration was "Ephphatha" (Be Opened!), encouraging hearing people from all walks of life to be open-minded towards Deaf culture and Deaf inclusivity. The theme for this year's IDSL celebration at Mass was taken from Psalm 63:4 "I will praise you as long as I live and, in your name, I will lift up my hands."

Two Deaf persons shared their testimonies after Mass. IDSL coordinator, Geraldine Shalini John, spoke about how she felt when she was growing apart from God and becoming spiritually weak. Wanting to learn more about God and to deepen her faith, she joined RCIA and was touched to learn more as the lessons were conducted in *Bahasa Isyarat Malaysia* (BIM). BIM has been recognised by the Malaysian government as the official sign language of the country since 2008, through the enactment of the Persons with Disabilities Act.

Geraldine, who was baptised during Easter 2022, urged the hearing not to feel handicapped when communicating with the deaf and encouraged them to learn BIM.

The second testimony was by Caroline Anne B, who shared about her life growing up as a Deaf Catholic within her Catholic family, and her experiences attending Masses without a BIM interpreter in church. She proposes that everyone learn some level of BIM, and cater for better accessibility for the deaf in the Church.

Various activities were held at the parish hall to create further awareness and to promote the Deaf Culture. It was a collaborative effort between CMfD, and representatives from the host parish. Several booths exhibited CMfD programmes, activities and Deaf skills, such as a *batik* arts booth by Deaf artist Lim Anuar, and religious statues sculptured by Deaf sculpture Raymond Raj. There was also a biscuits and cakes

booth by Deaf baker Yogeswary Baluras.

The programme after Mass started with an opening prayer and blessing by Fr Xavier, after which Fr Michael gave his welcome address.

In her opening statement, CMfD coordinator, Melina Fair, expressed her delight and appreciation to all, celebrating the unity of the community as they come together in the spirit of Christ. Geraldine extended a heartfelt welcome to all in attendance and conveyed her deep appreciation to the volunteers. She also commended the collaboration with the Church of the Visitation team, led by Florence and Eddie.

The first presentation was by CMfD's senior BIM interpreter, Joseph Loh. He said sign language is a beautiful language normally perceived by the public as 'hand language'. The tonality and the emotion of the language are presented by handshapes, facial expressions, body language and the space of signing, which all add up, making this language beautiful. However, such beauty is lost when someone steps forward to interpret without knowing much about the theory of interpreting. As such, the dignity of the deaf community is violated.

People equal spoken language to sign language without knowing that sign language is a language by itself, not an equation of another language. While a signor may possess the ability to sign, proficiency in interpreting skills is a competence that can only be honed through years of dedicated experience in the field. The term "translators" often falls short of capturing the essence of sign language as it fails to fully convey the beauty inherent in sign language. In contrast, a skilled interpreter adeptly transforms the semantic content of spoken language into visual imagery or concepts, preserving the original beauty of sign language.

Stephen Lee, a CMfD senior Deaf, spoke next on the "Deaf Culture". He said that Deaf people preferred to be identified as "Deaf" with a capital D. This is their identity. The word "deaf" with the small letter "d" is a noun and/or a verb used to describe a person with a hearing disability. Deaf Culture forms the vibrant core of the Deaf Community, encompassing both Deaf and hearing people who use sign language. This community not only values sign language but also cherishes its rich heritage and cultural dimensions. Stephen also provided valuable insights into communicating with Deaf people. Among the various guidelines, one notable recommendation



Caroline Anne B. from the Church of the Visitation shares her faith journey as a Deaf Catholic, while BIM interpreter Christina Lee stands by to assist.

is to invest time in meaningful communication and connections with them. Modern technology has transformed how we can engage with Deaf people, including video chats, Google Meet with closed captions, WhatsApp texts, and numerous other alternatives, surpassing older methods such as sending notes via fax or pagers.

Geraldine then led an engaging "Let's Learn BIM" activity that captured the attention of all participants. This interactive session not only piqued the interest of the hearing participants but also encouraged them to seek more sign language words to master. The result was a delightful and interactive experience that fostered strong connections between Deaf and hearing individuals, truly exemplifying the essence of collaboration.

IDSL volunteer Jennifer Leong gushed, "My most cherished moment of the day occurred when I sat beside a CODA (Child/Children of Deaf Adults) in church. I was truly captivated as I observed the mother placing her hands under her child's and signing the Mass responses and prayers. It's a remarkable method for introducing a new language to a child, and it's equally enlightening for us as well."

Overall, the IDSL event was a resounding success and a truly memorable experience. It served as a joyous celebration and a source of blessings for the Deaf and hearing communities.

## Deaf Asian Catholics unity at 3rd annual conference

JAKARTA: Several representatives from the Catholic Ministry for the Deaf (CMfD) of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur attended the 3rd Asian Deaf Catholic Conference (ADCC) recently. Delegates from 12 Asian countries, namely Hong Kong, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Philippines, India, Sri Lanka, China, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia attended this five-day conference.

The speakers consisted of both Deaf and hearing priests, with simultaneous sign language interpreting in the respective sign languages of the participating nations.

The objective of the Asian Conference for Deaf Catholics was to unite Catholic individuals who are Deaf from various parts of Asia, to foster and fortify their faith.

Fr Henry (Harry) Andrew Stocks, a Holy Cross missionary serving in India and the Philippines, initiated the annual conference which only involved South East Asian countries. Following Fr Harry's demise in 2013, Fr Benedict Min Seo Park, the first Deaf Catholic priest in Korea and Asia, proposed extending its reach to include other coun-

tries in the Asia region

Vikep Kategorial KAJ of the Archdiocese of Jakarta, Fr Edi Mulyono, was on hand to welcome the delegates on the first day. He shared his joy and blessings to all delegates gathered in one Catholic faith and reiterated the theme of the conference, *Mission and Collaboration which signifies the synodality of the Catholic Church*.

The following day, the delegates toured Jakarta and visited the National Monument. Delegates were told that the Catholic Church played an important role in Indonesia's independence.

In the afternoon, the conference was officially launched with Mass celebrated by Cardinal Archbishop Ignatius Suharyo Hardjoatmodjo at the Cathedral of the Assumption.

The plenary talks began on the third day. Vikep Pastoral Fr Didik (RD. Agustinus Tri Budi Utomo) from the Diocese of Surabaya, Indonesia spoke of the vocation of Deaf Catholics to emulate Jesus who had called them to grow

in love and holiness. This requires an intimate relationship with Mary who teaches us to do the Will of God. Although the Deaf may not be able to hear with their ears, they can listen with their hearts. The first step of evangelisation is to offer a smile, as stated by Mother Teresa, because one can speak a thousand words with a smile. In the afternoon, the team from the Philippines National Association of Deaf Catholics proposed the establishment of the Asia Deaf Catholic Association (ADCA), which will act as a support group for deaf ministries throughout Asia.

The next day, delegates from each country reported on their respective activities and structures. It was also announced that South Korea would host the next ADCC in 2026.

During the last night of the conference, the delegates showcased their rich cultural heritage from across Asia.

On the fifth day, Fr. Charles Dittmeier, a missionary working in Cambodia, celebrated Mass after which another lay missionary signed the Lord's Prayer in the Cambodian Sign Language. A day trip was organised for the delegates to Kepulauan Seribu (Thousand Islands) and in the evening, they were treated to a special dinner at Bandar Djakarta restaurant by the jetty. The conference's closing ceremony involved delegates sharing their testimonies, thanksgiving and prayers.

Before the delegates left for their respective countries, Fr Benedict celebrated Mass and several other priests helped bless the group.

Having received much from the Lord, we would like to thank everyone for your prayers and express our deep gratitude to our CMfD Spiritual Director, Fr Michael Chua and the Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya parish priest Fr Norris Seenivasan, SJ, for their unfailing support to enable 10 CMfD delegates to participate in ADCC in Jakarta, Indonesia. — **By Jomeilyn Fogata**



Delegates from the Catholic Ministry for the Deaf (CMfD) of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur during the 3rd Asian Deaf Catholic Conference (ADCC) opening ceremony at the Jakarta cathedral.



# Pope gives Curia assignments to new cardinals

VATICAN: Four days after creating new cardinals, Pope Francis gave an extra job or two to the 18 prelates who are under the retirement age of 80.

All active cardinals, whether they lead a diocese far from Rome or head a department of the Roman Curia, are appointed members of Vatican dicasteries, tribunals and offices as part of their service to the pope and the universal Church.

The new assignments for the cardinals created September 30 were published by the Vatican Oct 4, and the cardinals with full-time Curia posts received multiple new tasks.

Cardinal Sebastian Francis of Malaysia will be a member of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández, prefect of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, will be a member of the Dicastery for Evangelisation's Section for Fundamental Questions regarding Evangelisation in the World as well as its Section for the First Evangelisation and New Particular Churches. He also will be a member of the dicasteries for the Eastern Churches, for Bishops, for Laity, the Family and Life, and for Culture and Education.

Cardinal Robert F. Prevost, the US-born



Pope Francis creates 21 new cardinals from across the world in St Peter's Square, September 30, 2023. (Vatican Media)

prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, will be a member of the Dicastery for Evangelisation's Section for the First Evangelisation and New Particular Churches and a member of the dicasteries for the Doctrine of the Faith, for the Eastern Churches, for Clergy, for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, for Culture and Education and for Legislative Texts. Francis also named him to the Pontifical Commission for

Vatican City State.

Cardinal Claudio Gugerotti, prefect of the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches, was named a member of both sections of the Dicastery for Evangelisation and of the dicasteries for the Doctrine of the Faith, for Bishops, for Promoting Christian Unity, for Interreligious Dialogue, and for Culture and Education. He also was named a member of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican

City State.

Among the other new cardinals, Cardinal Christophe Pierre, nuncio to the United States, was named a member of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See, the Vatican's investment office. And Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, was named a member of the dicasteries for the Eastern Churches and for Promoting Christian Unity. — *NCR*

## Vietnam Catholics find inspiration in papal letter

HANOI: Vietnamese Catholics say they're inspired by Pope Francis' letter urging them to have dialogue and cooperate with people of other faiths and the authorities to better serve the nation.

"We are so pleased and delighted to read the Pope's letter because this is the first time a pope has officially written to Catholics in Vietnam," said Fr Thomas Phan Ngoc Hiep, pastor of Thanh My Parish in Thua Thien Hue province.

The 86-year-old Pope wrote to Vietnam's 7 million Catholics after reaching a landmark pact with the communist-ruled country that would allow the Vatican to open an office for the first time since the last apostolic delegate was expelled from the country in 1975.

"The heartfelt letter is a sure sign that our Holy Father gives special attention to us, although he has not had the opportunity to visit us," Hiep said.

The 68-year-old priest said the Pope is right in asking local Catholics, "as faithful, responsible and credible believers", to have dialogue with followers of other faiths and cooperate with authorities for the development and progress of the nation.

James Phan Canh Ban, head of a parish council in Thua Thien Hue province, said the papal letter will indirectly encourage the government to create favourable conditions for local people to participate in the country's life.

"That is our greatest wish, to accompany the nation," he said.

Matthew Le Quoc Thinh, who works for a brick company, said he was "moved" by the papal letter.

"The Pope really touched my heart and I am proud to be a manual worker making useful contributions to social development," the 40-year-old said. — *ucanews.com*

## Exhibition on Korean martyrs draws thousands



Visitors look at the portraits of Korean Catholic martyrs at Jeonju Shrine of South Korea in September. (UCA News Photo/Catholic Times of Korea)

SEOUL: More than 5,000 people visited a photo exhibition at the Jeonju Shrine of South Korea that showcased portraits of 124 early Catholic martyrs beatified by Pope Francis in 2014.

The Council of Lay Apostolic Organisations of Jeonju Diocese arranged the month-long exhibition *You can never abandon your faith* at the Hall of Peace of the shrine recently.

This was the first such exhibition by the lay Catholic group, which sought to motivate Catholics about their faith that has somewhat shrunk during the COVID-19 pandemic, organisers say.

"The exhibition offered a calming impression not only to believers but also to non-believers," said the council's chairman, Han Byung-Seong.

The event "motivated non-believers to become interested in faith through the lives of martyrs who overcame the class system

and realised equality and brotherhood," Han added.

The exhibition featured portraits of 124 martyrs who were killed for refusing to recant their faith in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The persecution, amid a ban on Christians that spanned over a century produced between 8,000 to 10,000 martyrs, Church records say.

During the beatification ceremony in Seoul on August 16, 2014, Pope Francis hailed the Korean martyrs for their great sacrifice.

"In God's mysterious providence, the Roman Catholic faith was not brought to the shores of Korea by missionaries. Rather, it entered through the hearts and minds of the Korean people themselves," Francis said.

The 124 martyrs are one step away from sainthood in the Catholic Church. — *ucanews.com/Catholic Times of Korea*





# Pope denounces 'body-shaming'

## admits to bullying overweight friend as a child

In a recent video call with university students from South Asia, Pope Francis highlighted the dignity and value of all human persons, denouncing "body-shaming," and admitting to bullying an overweight boy as a child.

The Pope's comments were given during a livestreamed dialogue with students titled *Building Bridges Across South Asia*, which was hosted by Chicago's Loyola University and the Pontifical Commission for Latin America.

Responding to a question raised by Merlin Rosemary, a student at St Joseph's University in Bengaluru, India, Francis said that body-shaming is "something artificial" that disrupts the ability to live "in harmony with your hearts."

"It's not only a question of measurements or sizes, it's a harmonic beauty that every woman, every man, has, and we have to cherish that," Francis said.

"I recall a friend of mine, who was a bit fat, and we would actually mock him, I daresay, bullying him," the Pope confessed to the students.

One day, Francis said that he and his friends "once hit him and he fell down."

Upon learning of the incident, Francis said his father made him go to the bullied child's home to apologise.

Years later, the Pope said, he reconnected with the friend who had since become an evangelical pastor.

"It was beautiful," Francis said, "he had overcome all his trauma, all his bullying, all his shame, all his body shame."

Still responding to the student's ques-

tion, the Pope also said that plastic surgery "serves no purpose," because, he said, "this beauty is going to fade eventually."

"There was a famous actress, Anna Magnani. When talking about her wrinkles she said: 'No, I won't get rid of them. It cost me to get these wrinkles, they are my beauty,'" the Pope said. "So, we all have our beauty, and we have to accept it and we have to live in harmony with it."

"There's the beauty of the harmony of the individual, regardless of you being fat, thin, short, tall. The important thing is to live in harmony, in your hearts," Francis said. "So, beauty makes us grow, in terms of our mental health, every man, every woman has their own beauty. We only have to learn how to see it, how to recognise it."

### Social media and suicide

During the call with students, Francis also addressed the high suicide rates among young people, anxiety, and what he called "digital manipulation" on social media.

"While this is a tragic reality, young people commit suicide because they are faced with closed doors, they were looking for something and they couldn't find it," the Pope said. "There are countries where the suicide rate is incredibly high among young people because they can't manage failure, especially when they can't find a job, so they lose all hope."

Francis said that failure "is actually a call, it's an appeal."

"We're not angels because angels have fallen only once whereas we fall many



Pope Francis holds a Zoom conversation with *Building Bridges Across South Asia*.

times due to our limits. But God always gives us the reliance to stand up again, so He takes us by our hands and helps us stand up," he went on. "The important thing is not to not fall, but not to stay, or lie on the ground. That's wisdom, I fall down but then I stand up again."

According to Francis, "digital manipulation" on social media is "altering our understanding of social and political reality."

By this phrase, the Pope explained that messaging young people are exposed to through social media, the media, and entertainment distracts from true beauty and harmony.

"So, what's really pressing is being educated to a new form of communication

to avoid this anxiety of digital manipulation," Francis said. "So as professionals, as students, I'm asking you to take a critical stance towards the positions expressed by the media, by TV programmes. You are university students, you must have some critical thinking."

The Pope concluded this portion of his talk with young people by imploring them to "look for the true beauty and the true harmony of an individual."

"A person that lives in harmony regardless of being fat, thin, skinny, is the most important thing," Francis said, adding: "Don't be afraid, don't lose your sense of humour, because humour means mental health." — **By Peter Pinedo, CNA**

## The Church can offer Gospel responses that are no longer known

At 54, François Bustillo, Bishop of Ajaccio in Corsica, was created cardinal by Pope Francis during the consistory, September 30. He had been noticed by the Pope for his work, which encourages religious men and women to rediscover the prophetic dimension of their commitment by bearing witness to the intense and overflowing love in ministering in today's ever-changing world. Pope Francis had asked that Bustillo's book, entitled *Witnesses, Not Officials* that offers ideas for pastoral ministry and calls attention to old and new challenges, be distributed to all the priests of the Diocese of Rome.

For Conventual Franciscan Cardinal Bustillo, the path to restoring the Church's credibility involves a return to "the basics". "I'm concerned about the violence in our society", he says in this interview with *La Croix's* Loup Besmond de Senneville and Céline Hoyeau. "I believe the Church can provide an answer." Cardinal Bustillo also underscores the significance of being present in the lives of contemporary society. He shares his personal commitment to connect with people who might not attend Mass.

**LCI: Many people say that the Catholic Church is in crisis. An internal crisis, with abuses, declining vocations, and a loss of credibility. Do you share this assessment?**

**Cardinal François Bustillo:** I agree on the crisis part. But life itself is a crisis, and it shouldn't paralyse us. Since its inception, the Church has been persecuted, and it has always survived. From the Roman Empire



**Newly created French cardinal discusses the Catholic Church's crisis and emphasises returning to Gospel values, addressing societal issues, and building relationships outside traditional Church settings.**

to the 1960s, through the modernist crisis, crises remind us of the paschal dimension of our spirituality: we go through death to reach the light. It's not about being naive or denying the problems, but we do have significant human and spiritual potential. What do we do with it? We need to try to be creative and bold.

### How can the Church regain its credibility?

By getting back to the basics. When you ask some Catholics what the Church means to them, they might complain about declining vocations, a decrease in practice, or negative media coverage. But who sees the soul of the Catholic Church today? In other words, who knows the Gospel today? I'm concerned about the violence in our society. I believe the Church can provide an answer. If our politicians are so tough and uncompromising among themselves, how can they call for calm? The Church can offer Gospel responses that are no longer known.

### Is this your way of evangelising?

It depends on the perspective we have on the world. The fact that we have a society that is distant from religion, even indifferent, is an opportunity to seize. We won't conquer society with new communication or seduction tactics, but with what is

uniquely ours. Young people are asking existential questions about death, the afterlife, and love. More and more people who are distant from the Church will challenge us on our values, principles, and the backbone of the Church. How do we respond to that? People who are not Catholics are often in churches for baptisms, weddings, or funerals, in honour of their friendship with their loved ones. In these existential moments, we have a unique opportunity, but we must be very good at it. It would be irresponsible to have 400 people in front of us and serve them a bland, generic, and overly sweet message. Without trying to seduce, this is where we need to convey the message we have about life, the afterlife, and hope... And perhaps in the assembly, five out of 400 people are questioning their lives, and we can awaken their consciousness.

### And outside of the churches?

The whole question is how we can be present in the lives of our contemporaries. When I attend sports events, it's not just because I love it, but also because it's a way to meet people I wouldn't have seen at Sunday Mass. I'm there to create a relationship, a connection, and to give visibility to the Church.

### But are you avoiding talking about Jesus?

If I show up in the stadium stands dressed as a Franciscan, I'm quickly noticed. But my goal is not to make people feel guilty by saying they should go to Mass. I will focus on the quality of relationships. I'm interested in people and what they're going through. And maybe they will become interested in me. We live in a society where there is so much distance between people that before we move on to a direct message, as the Romans used to say, we need to create *captatio benevolentiae* — a field of trust. And when that foundation is in place, we can go further.

### Today, Catholics are a minority in most Western countries. Is that a problem?

Is there anywhere that says we have to be powerful? Nowhere. At the same time, we have a powerful and significant heritage for our world. It's this overlooked heritage that we should bring, without complexes or arrogance.

### Do you think the Church should be less moralistic?

It is important to rediscover a spirituality of incarnation that is neither soft nor vague, one that speaks to modern man. We talk a lot about having, power, knowledge, and doing in our Western society, but who speaks of being? Perhaps psychologists and coaches, but in a commercial logic as well. Who cares for people in our society in a selfless way? We need to bring a quality of being to Western people who have lost their inner GPS, whose deep being is without density and unhappy. — **LCI (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)**



## Let's learn to journey together

Almost 11 years ago, I walked past a pair of Swiss guards, their right hands raised in salute, into the Synod Hall at the Vatican and sat down. It was the first time ever that a young, lay journalist was allowed inside a synod of bishops to help tell the story.

It was the opening of the synod on “the new evangelisation,” convoked and presided over by Pope Benedict XVI. It turned out to be his last synod as Pope; he resigned a few months later in February 2013.

That October 2012 changed my life. I was just starting my career in Catholic media, working alongside Thomas Rosica, CSB, who had been appointed by the Holy See Press Office as the English-language media attaché. Effectively, he was charged with disseminating official information about the synod to the English-speaking media.

My role was quasi-official: I was assist-

ing Fr Rosica in his work with the media and producing short video interviews with the synod delegates. I would approach them during the coffee breaks and ask them to say a few words about their interventions or about the themes that were emerging in the synod. Most delegates were happy to share a few thoughts and the experiences of their local Churches.

What I remember most about that synod — a synod which did not include Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio of Buenos Aires—is the organic shift in tone that took place among the participants inside. Let me explain: In the first week of the synod, bishops from the Global North sounded the alarm about the decline of faith in Europe and the dangers of hyper-secularisation pulling people away from church. But as the sessions rolled on and we heard from bishops from the Global

South, the dire situation of Europe began to melt into a broader survey of Catholicism, replete with totally different and complex pastoral challenges. Bishops shared remarkable stories of faith, perseverance and hope in their local communities.

The result of this shift turned the bishops’ focus inward — in a prayerful, reflective way — to their own personal failings regarding evangelisation. It became less about what was happening “out there in the world” and more about what was happening — or not happening — in the Church. They began to speak with deep simplicity and humility.

In a little known but powerful pastoral letter addressed to “the people of God” at the end of that synod, the bishops wrote, “With humility, we must recognise that the poverty and weaknesses of Jesus’ disciples, especially of his ministers, weigh on the

credibility of the mission.” They acknowledged that a new evangelisation had to begin with their own personal conversion. “If this renewal were up to us,” they concluded, “there would be serious reasons to doubt. But, conversion in the Church, just like evangelisation, does not come about primarily through us, but rather through the Spirit of the Lord.”

Anyone who has attended a synod of bishops will tell you that it’s more about the journey than the destination. And if you’ve been following the Synod on Synodality, you know that synod literally means to “journey.” It’s about learning to journey together. I don’t know what will happen this October 2023. But I do know that most people inside the synod hall will be changed by it, perhaps in unexpected ways. — **By Sebastian Gomes, America**

# What's in play at the Synod on Synodality?

As the Vatican prepared to welcome participants of the Synod on Synodality, Pope Francis seemed to acknowledge that the gathering he initiated to bring the Church together into fruitful dialogue has amplified intense divisions in the body of Christ.

This month he has repeatedly called for a “synodal atmosphere” imbued with a “spirit of prayer”, rather than “political chatter” full of “ideologies” that divide the faithful. The synod, he has said, is “an exchange between brothers and sisters,” and “the protagonist of the synod is the Holy Spirit.”

To heed the Holy Father’s warning not to view the synod like a television talk show but rather, as a spiritual event, it’s helpful to put it into proper historical and ecclesiastical context. It’s also helpful to examine our own conscience and increase our prayerfulness so our hearts and minds remain open to the Holy Spirit’s action in our lives.

Synods in the Catholic Church were most recently configured during the Second Vatican Council by Pope St Paul VI. The contemporary synod was envisioned as a means of bringing bishops together from all over the world so that they could act as a consultative body to the pope on timely issues. As a consultative body, not a council, with no power over the pope or over Church teaching, a synod can only advise, and the pope is free to do with the advice as he sees fit.

Perhaps because the synod includes votes, some mistakenly think that it is a deliberative body, meeting to make decisions in representation of a whole and thus participants should be lobbied one way or another. However, as a consultative body, the synod votes are symbolic at best, marking opinions of the individual members present.

The initial phase of this synod, which took place at the local and national levels over the

last two years, identified many of the hot-button issues facing the Church from questions over more inclusivity for Catholics who identify as LGBTQ or divorced-and-remarried Catholics, to the reopening of debates on women deacons and married priests, to how to better evangelise young people, increase vocations, and heal the wounds of sexual abuse within the Church. These topics, and many more, are delineated in the form of worksheets, with discussion questions in the *Instrumentum Laboris* (working document) published by the Vatican to guide the synod’s deliberations. Judging by the commentary coming from different parts of the Church, it is clear that there are agendas in play; if not by the synod participants themselves, then certainly from outsiders hoping to influence the discussion and outcome.

Looking at the 2019 Synod on the Amazon, it’s also clear that a lot of the polarising conversations did not take place inside the synod hall. At the time, the dominating issue was the ordination of married men who were known to be dedicated to their local Church communities (*virī probati*).

In the end, the synod participants did not approve a recommendation for married priests and the teaching remained the same. But anyone who was following Catholic media will recall the tumult that was almost worthy of comparison to a rumble during one of the ecumenical councils in the first few hundred years of the Church.

Paraphrasing Pope Benedict on Vatican II, there are two synods: that of the media and the actual synod itself.

While not whitewashing the seriousness of the concerns raised by many, we need to step back and understand what the synod is and the impact that it can have.

A potentially damaging impact comes from the rehashing of settled Church teach-

ing such as women’s ordination. Clearly, there’s a lot of confusion already existing for such settled teaching to be challenged so frequently, and it’s important to listen to those who disagree; but, historically, the synod’s purpose is to clarify Church teaching — not to challenge it.

Practically speaking, synod participants are typically only able to give brief (three-minute to five-minute) interventions (talks), and there’s little time for authentic dialogue and debate. As a consultative body, the participants come to a consensus on priorities to recommend for the Pope. From this synod, we might see participants who are advocating a change in Church teaching recommend that the Church study a particular issue more deeply. We might also see the synod assembly make suggestions on how to improve the communication of our teachings.

Undoubtedly, there are serious threats to the promotion and understanding of Catholic teaching within the global Church today. Pope Francis has highlighted the danger of the German synodal process, which includes suggested changes in the Church’s teachings on reserving priestly ordination to men, offering a blessing for same-sex unions, and other controversial issues. Yet, strangely, many of these issues have made their way into the working document for the Synod on Synodality.

Nevertheless, a quick look at Church history reveals that not only have there been periods of greater confusion and dissension than now, but that Our Lord always maintains His promise (Matthew 28:20): “And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

Times of terrible conflict have given us great saints and greater clarity regarding Church teaching. And regardless of whatever confusion may be happening in Rome

or elsewhere, we all still have the means of our sanctification at hand as we each live our daily lives.

No matter what happens at the Vatican’s synod or much closer to our own homes, we are all called to be great saints and have the means to do so.

While it’s easy to understand why some Catholics are concerned about the ongoing synod, we might best keep a peaceful countenance and prepare to conform our own heart and mind to Christ in this moment through a particular examination of conscience: Am I building up the body of Christ or am I tearing it down? A lack of peace (which is not the same as conviction or righteousness) might be a sign that what we are doing is tearing down the body of Christ and we need to change.

Every Mass includes the words of Our Lord, “My peace I give to you.” Assuming we ever accepted the gift of that peace in the first place, like Peter walking on the waves, we tend to give up that same peace all too quickly.

Heroes and saints, especially the quiet ones whom most of us will never know, always impress me by their peace. They hold it together while the world around them falls apart.

For some of us, this might mean that we back away from media coverage of the synod. For some, it might mean an increase in prayer.

In the midst of a recent outrage in Catholic social-media land, a priest messaged me that he got off those platforms and went to see if he could spot a hummingbird.

Honestly, that’s probably a better use of time for most of us than feeding whatever outrage the latest Church news robs us of: the peace of Christ. — **By Pia de Solenni, Register**





# Pope Francis replies to new “dubia” related to Synod



Left to right: German Cardinal Walter Brandmüller, Guinean Cardinal Robert Sarah, Mexican Cardinal Juan Sandoval Íñiguez, American Cardinal Raymond Burke, and Chinese Cardinal Zen Ze-Kiun (photo: Bohumil Petrik/CNA; Interirifica.net; Daniel Ibáñez/CNA)

On October 2, 2023, the Vatican’s Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith made public Pope Francis’ letter of July 11, responding to five cardinals who had sent the Pope a message expressing their doubts — “dubia” in Latin — in the run-up to the opening of the Synod, Oct 4 on the future of the Church.

Relying heavily on the writings of John Paul II, the Argentine pontiff responded to the questions one by one.

In response to the five questions posed on July 10 by these cardinals — German Cardinal Walter Brandmüller (94), American Cardinal Raymond Burke (75), Guinean Cardinal Robert Sarah (78), former Hong Kong bishop Joseph Zen (91) and Cardinal Sandoval Íñiguez (90), former Archbishop of Guadalajara, Mexico — the Pope reacted the very next day with an eight-page reply written in Spanish. The cardinals, dissatisfied with this letter which was still private at the time, decided to write to the Pope again on Aug 21, asking for a “yes” or “no” answer to each of their five questions.

“Although it does not always seem prudent to answer questions directed directly at me, and it would be impossible to answer them all, in this case it seems important to do so, given the proximity of the Synod,” writes the Pope in the preamble to this message addressed to his “dear brothers.”

## Blessings for homosexual unions?

When asked about the question of homosexual unions, Pope Francis insists that “the Church has a very clear conception of marriage: an exclusive, stable, and indissoluble union between a man and a woman, naturally open to the begetting of children.” With this in mind, “the Church avoids any type of rite” for couples in an irregular situation that might “contradict this conviction,” he adds.

The Pope’s answer on this issue is in the context of certain countries having tried to establish a blessing for homosexual unions, and a 2021 answer from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that the Church can’t perform a rite of blessing on these partnerships.

Still, a request for a blessing, the Pope clarifies, is a request for God’s help.

He says that “pastoral prudence” can discern if there are “forms of blessing” for people who are seeking blessings, which do not convey “an equivocal conception of marriage.”

While acknowledging that some situations confronting pastors “are not morally acceptable from an objective point of view,” Francis draws on John Paul II’s apostolic exhortation *Reconciliatio et Pœnitentia* (1984) to recall that the “guilt or responsibility” of some people can be mitigated “by various factors that influence subjective responsibility.”

## Acknowledging theological pluralism

In response to the cardinals’ first question on the “new anthropological vision” that they say will guide the Synod, the Pope questions the understanding the cardinals have of “reinterpret” divine Revelation. There is the sense of “interpreting it better,” he says.

“Cultural changes and the new challenges of history do not modify Revelation, but can stimulate us to better explain certain aspects of its overflowing richness,” says Francis.

“It is true that the Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but it is also true that both the texts of Scripture and the witnesses of Tradition need an interpretation that allows us to distinguish their perennial substance from cultural conditioning,” says the pontiff.

The Pope also notes that some of St Paul’s statements on women “require interpretation.” Faced with all this complexity, “the Church must constantly discern between what is essential for salvation and what is secondary,” according to a “hierarchy of truths” that can lead to “different ways of expressing the same doctrine.”

“Every theological approach has its risks, but also its opportunities,” Pope Francis explains.

## Synodality

The Pope recognises the legitimacy of expressing various opinions in the Synod — including here, therefore, expressions of scepticism — but he refuses to impose a methodology that would lead to “freezing” this process by “ignoring the different characteristics of the distinct particular Churches and the varied richness of the universal Church.”

The cardinals’ own questions, he says, show their need to “participate, to express opinions freely and to collaborate” and are thus an expression of a desire that the Pope exercise his ministry in a synodal way.

## On the priestly ordination of women

The Pope also returns to the impossibility of granting priestly ordination to women, established by John Paul II in the 1990s. This position of his predecessor was a “definitive statement.”

He emphasises in particular the complementarity and not the inferiority of the “common priesthood” of the faithful in relation to the “ministerial priesthood” of priests.

Referring to John Paul II’s apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (1988), Francis reminds us that the Polish Pope’s vision of the priestly function is “totally ordered to the holiness of the members of Christ,” and is not based on the idea of male domination over women.

If this isn’t understood, and if the practical consequences of this aren’t lived, then it is difficult to understand a priesthood reserved to men, he warned.

The Pope added a final point, noting that strictly speaking, John Paul II’s definition is definitive but not “dogmatic” and that there is still not a clear and exhaustive doctrine on the exact nature of this type of definition. It cannot be “publicly contradicted” but can be “studied,” he assures the cardinals.

## Contrition and the sacrament of reconciliation

With regard to the validity of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Pope acknowledges that “repentance is a necessary condition for the validity of sacramental absolution, and implies the resolution to sin no more.”

Still, he reminds the cardinals that confessors must be flexible, taking into account that “approaching confession is a symbolic expression of repentance and of seeking divine help.”

The theoretical conditions for the validity of confession “are not applicable when the person is in agony, or with very limited mental or psychological capacities,” Francis also points out. — *Aleteia (I.Media)*

## What are dubia?

The word *dubia* — plural for a *dubium* — literally means, from the Latin, “doubts.” But another way of translating it is to see the word meaning “questions that seek clarification.” A *dubium*, then, is a request for clarity from a dicastery or office of the Roman Curia, or even of the Holy Father, himself on a matter of Church teaching, a liturgical issue, or a fine point of interpreting canon law. The questions most often arise from the daily issues of Church governance and liturgical and sacramental practice. In fact, *dubia* are a regular feature of the interaction between the Vatican’s various dicasteries and Catholic dioceses around the globe.

## What questions are submitted?

A *dubium* is most often sent to one of three Vatican offices: the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, and especially the Dicastery for Legislative Texts, which is asked to interpret the meaning or applicability of a canon in the Code of Canon Law.

*Dubia* can cover almost every imaginable topic. A few of the questions asked in recent decades include: “Can the title of minor basilica be granted to a cathedral?”, submitted to the Congregation for Divine Worship; “Are Mormon baptisms valid?”, sent to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; and “Are already-married candidates for the permanent diaconate required with their wives to practice perfect and perpetual continence after ordination?”, submitted to the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts.

Most often, *dubia* are submitted by bishops, bishops’ conferences, or religious communities, but any Catholic may send them, as was shown in 2021 when three German lay Catholics from the Diocese of Essen submitted a *dubium* to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith asking if the Church in Germany is in a state of schism as a result of the German Synodal Way.

## Who responds to dubia?

The three German Catholics, expressed at the time, a realistic expectation about hearing back from the Vatican dicastery. They said that had “no sense of entitlement” to a reply. The laypeople were correct in their expectation, as the Vatican offices are not required to respond to any *dubium* sent for consideration. Certainly, the submission of *dubia* by bishops and bishops’ conferences is more likely to elicit a response, as are questions that emerge out of matters of grave importance to the Church. Members of the College of Cardinals, such as the so-called *dubia* cardinals of 2016 and now 2023, can also have some anticipation of a response, given they are, by tradition, considered close advisers to the pope. Nevertheless, the Holy Father is not required to respond and might also reply in a manner or through a representative of his choosing.

By custom, when a Vatican dicastery does answer a *dubium*, it is through a *Responsum ad dubium* (literally, a response to the doubt), and customarily, the response can be answered in the affirmative or the negative, “yes” or “no.” Almost always, the terse reaction is accompanied by a fuller explanation or commentary.

Very often as well, the answer from a dicastery is considered a “private response,” meaning it is not universally applicable nor can it be applied to address a situation in some other forum, even if the facts or circumstances are similar. How the response is issued matters as well, as a private reply by way of a letter has far less weight and far narrower applicability than a formal instruction or notification. Traditionally, the Dicastery for Divine Worship has published its *responsa* in the *Notitiae*, a publication issued bi-monthly that, until recently, contained all important statements, documents, and responses pertaining to the liturgy and the sacraments. For those questions that require a formal statement, dicasteries will issue them publicly. — **By Matthew Bunson, CNA**



# Priest finds homes for stray dogs one Mass at a time

A Brazilian priest is certainly taking care of all of God's creation when he spends his time finding homes for stray dogs.

Fr João Paulo not only welcomes stray dogs off the streets, but also feeds them and gives them a good bath. With the dogs all cleaned up, the priest then takes them along to Mass in the hope that a member of the congregation will offer the dog a home.

The efforts of Fr João Paulo were shared on Facebook, and many people were inspired by his work. And as one commentator pointed out, "God is smiling down upon you, Father. You speak for those that cannot talk or fend for themselves."

While it might be unusual to see the church becoming a shelter for these abandoned four-legged friends, Fr João Paulo is emulating the beloved Catholic St Francis of Assisi, who took care of all of God's creatures.

In one of his Facebook posts, Fr João Paulo writes: "Authentic and Christian love is inclusive and never exclusive. Loving animals does not mean loving human beings less, but it is the great school of love and universal empathy. Loves do not oppose each other, but complement each other. Love everyone and everything, never leave room for any form of evil and you will live the Gospel."

In fact, by sharing with his congregation his devotion to God and these poor strays, he's encouraging the young and old at Mass to consider God's message that we should care for others — whether it's a fellow human being or a humble hound.

Thanks to his hard work, dozens of dogs have found new homes, and who knows? Perhaps this initiative will take off in other parishes. — **By Cerith Gardiner, Aleteia**



Fr João Paulo Araujo Gomes takes abandoned dogs off the streets, feeds them, bathes them, and then presents a dog at each Mass, to be adopted. (João Paulo Araujo Gomes facebook)

## Teen reaches the "God frequency" on 'Britain's Got Talent'

Singing at a rare 963 Hz, Malakai Bayoh (pic) reached the God frequency with his stunning rendition of *Pie Jesu*.

At seven years of age, Malakai Bayoh joined a choir. In fact, he shared that he only started singing because his "bossy" mother forced him to go. But from the moment he started singing, he decided that it would be his future career.

In his bid to achieve his dreams, the now-13-year-old British boy went on *Britain's Got Talent* to perform in front of the crowd and judges, including the notoriously critical Simon Cowell.

The minute the youngster started singing *Pie Jesu*, he lit up the stage. Reaching all the tricky high notes, Bayoh impressed the judges and garnered a few tears among those who listened to his dulcet tones.



One of the reasons many were particularly moved by the chorister's rendition is because he managed to achieve a musical rarity: He obtained an impressive frequency of 963 hertz.

### What is the "God frequency"?

When listening to this sound level, listeners are brought to a level of happiness that is known as the "God frequency." And when you hear Bayoh, it's hard not to feel you're in the presence of an angel.

Yet, there is a science behind the "God frequency." The elusive 963 hertz activate the pineal gland that produces serotonin, or the happiness hormone. Some people refer to this as the "spirituality gland," as the individual feels a strong sense of peace and harmony, balancing emotions and elevating

the mood.

After completing his audition, the crowd and judges gave a standing ovation to the young teen. And, understandably, Cowell, who described Bayoh as having the "best voice he'd ever heard," rewarded him with the golden buzzer that catapulted him into the final.

Interestingly, the God frequency also had its effect on the judges, who described the songster's voice as "heavenly," that listening to him was like "being in heaven," and that he "sang like an angel."

Although Bayoh didn't win the final of the competition, he has since signed a record deal and has released an album fittingly called *Golden*. And, hopefully, he will continue to inspire others with his heavenly tones. — **By Cerith Gardiner, Aleteia**

## Jane soaks in her investiture

Nine months following her recognition as a recipient of the Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) award, Jane Chelliah-Manning received her medal at Windsor Castle on September 26. Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, presented her with the medal during the exclusive ceremony with 62 other recipients. Accompanying Jane were her spouse, Roger Manning, their daughter, Maelo, and her younger sister, Dr Janet Chelliah.

The honour acknowledges Jane's exceptional contributions to the civil service and her impactful role in benefiting British society. Additionally, the award recognises her dedicated three-year tenure as the chairperson of Powerhouse, a London-based charity supporting women with learning disabilities.

An assistant director at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategies, the London-based Jane was a freelance journalist before joining the civil service 20 years ago.

In preparation for the big day, in addition to prayers, the 60-year-old spent a month doing 100 stomach crunches a day, she switched to a Mediterranean diet and read motivational books to be mentally ready.

"It's such a grand event that you can't go from an ordinary day to that without preparation," said Jane, who spent a week before the

event waking up at 4.00am to rest assured she was bright-eyed and bushy-tailed when the actual investiture day arrived.

"The day was an early start. We caught the 7.30am train to Windsor. It was surreal being there. I crossed myself before entering the castle."

Reflecting on her emotions throughout the journey, Jane expressed, "I experienced profound joy that seemed to permeate my entire being — mind, body, and soul. There are few instances in life when one attains such a level of happiness, and receiving this award marked one of those moments for me. It made me feel appreciated not only for my professional contributions but also for my beliefs and personality. It's astonishing to contemplate the distance travelled by a girl from Kuala Lumpur."

Jane said the staff at Windsor Castle were friendly and thanked her for her contribution to the country.

She had no clue which member of the royal family would be carrying out the investiture until an hour before it was her turn. Jane was briefed on the protocol to approach and address Princess Anne and reassured that if she forgot anything, it was alright. She should just enjoy herself and experience the moment.

"Princess Anne gave me a big smile and



The Royal Princess pinning the medal on Jane.

asked about my work. I also told her that when she and the Queen visited Malaysia in the 1970s, I was a schoolgirl and lined up along the road waving as their motorcade drove by. The princess appeared taken aback. She said she'd forgotten all about that and thanked me for reminding her of a "happy time".

Asked if she felt the jitters, Jane said, "I wasn't nervous for even a minute. It felt like it was my moment. This is my day, I deserve this and I am immensely grateful."

"Navigating the dual worlds of two cul-



Jane Chelliah-Manning outside Windsor Castle, was awarded an MBE on Sept 26, 2023.

tures for over 40 years has been a challenging journey. It has been a while since I last visited Malaysia, so I hold on dearly to my cherished memories. I take enormous pride in my Malaysian-Indian heritage and am celebrating this award with different groups of Malaysian friends." — **By Gwen Manickam**

For more on Jane, <https://www.heraldmalaysia.com/news/sunshine-after-the-rain-an-mbe-for-jane/69715/1>



# Context is everything

The Church is universal, and so is stupidity. Being a member of one automatically co-opts me into the other. One of the most misguided things about one's interpretation of our faith is based on the admonition to turn the other cheek. Based on Matthew 5:38-40 Christians are supposed to offer the other cheek to be hit after someone strikes us. However, taking this literally, with no understanding of context or knowledge of the storytelling styles of the time of Jesus is to invite trouble.

If you don't know it already, it is time you were told. Not everything in the Bible is to be taken or to be understood literally. The creation story? Myth. But that word does not mean what you think it does. Readers of today interpret the word 'myth' as 'make-believe' or 'legend'. However, myth as a genre is a type of writing that seeks to explain the origins or the meanings of things.

The creation story in Genesis is a case in point. In calling these stories 'myths,' we are simply saying that they are not to be read literally. Science has already proven the theory of evolution. We may be creationists because the Bible says that God created the world in six days (yes, six, because He rested on the seventh!), but we do not need to defend the belief that God actually created the universe in seven days. The objective of Genesis is the spiritual truth that God is the creator of all things. That is why biblical scholars spend decades combing through the sacred texts,



## WORD IN PROGRESS

Karen-Michaela Tan

refining interpretations, comparing translations, weighing rhetoric against the understanding of a particular audience in a particular time in history.

Bible knowledge is an important and integral component of our lives as Catholics, but of equal importance is the understanding of context. The time of Jesus differed dramatically from our times, and parables meant to help agrarians understand the concepts of social justice, mercy and generosity may not be as clear cut to us today.

Of late I have struggled with the kind of mercy demonstrated in the parable of the good Samaritan because of something that happened in my neighbourhood. About ten years ago, after being asked to be the liturgical coordinator for my BEC, I decided that I would launch a charm offensive on people or families which were listed as members of the BEC, but who did not attend gatherings.

As liturgy coordinator, I was sure that I was going to be able to change the minds of those who did not attend gatherings because they were 'boring'. I messaged, visited and called at homes and managed to get a few of

the outliers to agree to attend an up-coming gathering. After that gathering, I messaged the new attendees to ask for feedback on the session. I was taken aback when a man from one of the families texted me saying he had been "so mesmerised by (my) feet, that he had not been able to pay attention." That red flag should have been warning enough to cease contact with that person, but I was zealous and perhaps a bit too fool-hardy. I was adamant that my faith and ability to make the word of God come alive would convince this man of God's love, strange peccadillos aside.

The reality was a stream of messages which began innocently enough, but quickly escalated to sexual innuendo and lasciviousness. I alerted my BEC coordinator, and was advised to block him on both phone and social media. Yet, I still hung on to the mistaken belief that I could 'fix' him.

That all ended when I caught him walking past my house at all hours of the day. There were times when I was in the yard tidying up or feeding the dog when I looked through the spaces in my wall and found him staring at me. When I rounded on him in indignation, he would turn and walk away, saying nothing.

His stalking became so bad my neighbours noticed, and would call to tell me he was outside. And then, I caught him removing garbage bags from my rubbish bin! I tried to be merciful, as my heavenly father is merciful, and wondered if he was going through my trash for food, but my friends shot down the

idea. To protect me, they began taking away my rubbish and placing it into their own bins. A visit to the local police station confirmed what I already knew: unless he threatened or made a physical move on me, he was standing on public land. Taking household discards from a municipally given bin was also not a crime. The police could not, and would not, take any action. This went on for close to three years.

Recently that man's family was evicted from the house they had rented. In spite of how disgusted I was at his behaviour my heart was sore for them. It was, I thought, a clear cut case of hating the sin and loving the sinner. It took a severe admonishment from a fellow catechist to stop me from offering any kind of aid.

"Be aware of your motivations," she warned. "Are you trying to be like God, or to be God? Do your intentions stem from true compassion, or from a misguided understanding of what it means to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8)?"

And just like that, I realised that our calls to love, mercy and justice must also work with Jesus' admonishment for us to be as gentle as doves, but as wise as serpents (Matt 10:16).

● **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.

It all started in 2018 when I received a brochure from a friend to attend a three-day seminar in Batu Pahat. The *Seminar Keluarga Kanak-kanak Khas* was organised by the National Conference of Special Needs' Children of Malaysia. It was the first time that I was among parents of special needs children. There were physically disabled children, some who were mentally challenged, visually disabled and those with autism. I also got to know many NGOs and religious organisations that were trying to care for and meet the unique needs of these children.

As I moved among them, listening to the stories and experiences of these parents, I started to wonder whether the standard dynamics of family that I knew was just a fallacy. I was encountering a whole new definition of marriage and family life. Husband and wife live their marriage in a way that cannot be explained. The siblings of a special needs child have their own way of being "in the family". I asked myself what I was doing here since I did not have 'a son or a daughter with a disability'. I spent three days at the seminar, fully engrossed in this new adventure into a new world. I was forced to learn a new language, listen with total attention to the parents who seemed to live in a different world that I had lived in prior to this seminar. God had a big hand in it and from that moment on, I knew it was no accident or coincidence. I had, in the process, also realised that every human being is imperfect and each of us have our own personal disabilities. It takes humility to accept them.

When I returned after the seminar, I contacted many Catholic families with special needs children who have kept away from church because of the fear or embarrassment that their child may cause disturbance in church. Many of these children were attending government schools and private schools run by Christian churches. I wonder how many of us realise that we hardly see these children in our churches for worship services. It is as if they do not exist. We began in 2018, with a monthly activity with about 14 special needs children and their parents. The parents requested that their child be able to

## My synodal journey with families of special needs children

receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The parents had such tremendous faith in the Eucharist because it was their only hope. I asked the father of one child why he wanted his son to receive Holy Communion. His answer was simple yet amazing. He said, "I know Jesus can make him better."

Many would say that the "Eucharist" means nothing to these special children as they are not capable of understanding what they are receiving, but are they not children of God, made in His likeness and image? Why should they be denied Jesus Who died for them too? As I spent time observing them and reading much about autism and related neurological disorders, I came to understand that they too have their own language and understanding of their world and perception of things.

The crux of why I am so convinced that special needs children above the age of 13 should receive the sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation is because they catechise



By Deacon Dr Leslie Petrus

their parents. I have seen parents, especially Christian parents, grow so deep in their trust, strength and hope. Their faith is being tested to the extreme day by day. Every day is different. Any slight change of routine can disrupt everything. Their patience, perseverance and relentless sacrifices is commendable. The parents even sacrifice their married

life and pay the price of being a dysfunctional family. The normal siblings that come along are affected and they carry the guilt that is unfairly bestowed upon them. Mothers feel responsible for their child being born with such disability and they feel shunned by society.

In the Gospels, we hear how the disabled and sick came to Jesus. But special needs children are often not made to feel welcome in our churches because of their disruptive behaviour. Yet, these parents have a faith that is unique, deep, and even stronger and more firm. They may not be Scripture savvy or have simple theological knowledge but

God knows their genuine needs. He allowed these special needs children to teach them the kind of faith He wants and gradually we see them as living "saints in the making" which they themselves are unaware of. They do experience pain, fatigue, distress, helplessness and hopelessness. There are moments when suicidal thoughts surface, getting into depression, loneliness, being excluded from family and friends

Some of them have failed marriages and are handling the family single-handedly. Where did such deep, concrete faith come from, such intimacy and trust? I do not know but I am certain it is from their special needs child. Thus, for the sake of these parents, their child should receive the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist, not on their child's merit but on the parents'. Their only prayer and hope is that Jesus in them will help them in ways that only God can. This is their belief. This will mean so much to them. Their years of struggle and prayers will one day be answered.

This year, 2023, I hope to witness four autistic teenage boys receive First Holy Communion. The joy that these parents are experiencing as they prepare their sons and their own preparation with a unique catechetical formation is something so meaningful. My only prayer is that all four boys will receive Jesus in the Eucharist this November. This is the least the church can do for these parents who have been keeping away from the community. It is here that we show inclusivity. When parents with special needs children **Participate** in worshipping God in church, they are in **Communion** with everyone — abled and disabled. When this happens, these parents become **Mission** as they witness their unique faith which will definitely encourage everyone. They become the light of Hope. This is synodality.



Some of the special needs children and their parents taking part in an activity. (Photo used with permission)





Fr Ron Rolheiser

# Our deepest loneliness

Harvard psychologist Robert Coles, in describing the French mystic Simone Weil, once suggested that what she really suffered from and what motivated her life was her moral loneliness. What is that?

Moral loneliness is what we experience when we ache for moral affinity, that is, for a soulmate, for someone who meets us, understands, and honours all that's deepest and most precious inside us.

We are lonely in different ways. We feel restlessness despite experiencing intimacy, and we feel a nostalgia for a home we can never quite find. There's loneliness, a restlessness, an aching, a yearning, a longing, an appetite, a disquiet, a nostalgia, a timelessness inside us that never quite feels consummated.

Moreover, this disease lies at the centre of our experience, not at its edges. We are not restless people who sometimes get restless, serene people who sometimes experience disquiet, or fulfilled people who occasionally get frustrated. Rather, we are restless beings who sometimes find rest, disquieted persons who sometimes find solitude, and dissatisfied men and women who sometimes find satisfaction.

And, among all these many yearnings, one is deeper than the others. What we ultimately long for beneath everything else is moral affinity, for a soul partner, for some-

one to meet us in the depth of our soul, for someone who honours all that's most precious in us. More than we long for someone to sleep with sexually, we long for someone to sleep with in this way, morally.

What does this mean?

It might be expressed this way: Each of us nurses a dark memory of once having been touched and caressed by hands far gentler than our own. That caress has left a permanent mark, an imprint in us of a love so tender, good, and pure that its memory is a prism through which we see everything else. The old myths express it well when they tell that, before we were born, God kissed our souls and we go through life always remembering, in some intuitive way, that kiss and measuring everything else in relation to it and its original purity, tenderness, and unconditionality.

This unconscious memory of once having been touched and caressed by God creates the deepest place inside of us, the place where we hold all that's most precious and sacred to us. When we say that something "rings true", what we are really saying is that it honours that deep place in our hearts, that it coincides with a deep truth, tenderness, and purity that we have already experienced.

From this place issues forth all that is deepest and truest inside us — both our kisses and our tears. Paradoxically, this is

the place that we most guard from others, even as it is the place that we would most like someone to enter, providing that entry respects the purity, tenderness, and unconditionality of the original caress of God which formed that tender cavity in the first place.

This is the place of deep intimacy and deep loneliness, the place where we are innocent and the place where we are violated, the place where we are holy, temples of God, sacred churches of reverence, and the place we corrupt when we act against truth. This is our moral centre and the aching we feel there is aptly called moral loneliness. It's here that we long for a soulmate.

And it's in this longing, in this unyielding ache, that we are driven outward where, like the Biblical woman in the *Song of Songs*, we achingly search for someone to sleep with morally.

Sometimes that longing is fixed on a certain person, and that fixation can be so obsessive that we lose all emotional freedom. As well, we can conclude, as does our culture, that this at its root is a longing for sexual union. There's some truth in that, despite its one-sidedness. Sexual union, in its true form, is indeed the "one-flesh" consummation decreed by the Creator after the condemnation of loneliness — "it is not good for the man to be alone." Outside of sexual union, in the end, one is always

somewhat alone, single, separate, cut off, a minority of one.

But ultimately, we are lonely at a level that sex alone cannot satisfy. More deeply than we long for a sexual partner, we long for moral affinity. Our deepest longing is for a partner to sleep with morally, a kindred spirit, a soulmate in the truest meaning of that phrase.

Great friendships and great marriages invariably have this at their root, namely, deep moral affinity. The persons in these relationships are "lovers" in the deep sense because they sleep with each other at that deep level, irrespective of whether or not there is sexual union. At the level of feeling, this type of love is experienced as a "coming home".

Therese of Lisieux once suggested that, as humans, we are "exiles of the heart" and we can only overcome this by moral communion with each other, that is, through sleeping with each other in charity, joy, peace, patience, goodness, long-suffering, and faith.

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

## Sacred art opens the eye of the beholder

I have purchased enough olive wood in support of the Holy Land over the years to sink a boat. But it was at an olive wood sale that I first noticed her, and knew she had to come home with me: a 14-inch olive wood statue of the Samaritan woman walking, balancing her jug on her head with one thick and sturdy arm.

She is a striking figure. Her face is neutral, lending the beholder no idea if she had just met Jesus or was yet to. There is no way to judge just how heavy her jug might be. All one can see is her movement; either hurrying toward Jesus or away from Him.

She holds her clothing up enough for her bare feet to show, and my eye is drawn upward from her fingertips to the black grain running through the wood. It becomes a blended, dark, bruising landscape flowing the entire length of the front of her arm. I am afraid. I don't want to look at her anymore.

But I can't take my eyes off her to glance at the Blessed Virgin holding her child for consolation as I know this Samaritan woman doesn't belong

here among the shepherds leaning on their sticks, carrying flutes, looking sleepy. Here stands Joseph, a father, a properly married man in a stable with cute, sweet animals helping them stay warm. None of this seems to fit next to this out-of-place, powerful woman; nor does she fit in with the wise men or wooden rosaries.

I am afraid to pick her up for a closer look, but I do — with both hands. I see and feel her for what she really is, standing alone and out of place.

Why didn't the artist cut out this obvious defect in the wood? It could be easily done. My husband carves pickles from wood every Christmas and has tools to take out such blemishes for a cleaner, purer, whiter surface. But no, on closer examination, the artist's will endured. Here is proof. What is medically called an "orbital blowout."

The darkest point of the grain flows directly below her right eye, from inner to outer edge. A large surface of her face is black, covering cheekbone clean back to the ear. Her chin is

dark; her face familiar; her eyes blank.

Now the words come back to me, "Go and call your husband." And when she confesses, Jesus says to her, "You're not lying to me. I know. You've had five husbands. And the man you're living with is not your husband either" (John 4:17-18).

What is her story? We do not know. But it is possible that it involved what we might today call sex trafficking, or slavery. It certainly involved suffering.

In 1999, St John Paul II wrote in *Letter to Artists* — Society needs artists, just as it needs scientists, technicians, workers, professional people, witnesses of faith, teachers, fathers and mothers, who ensure the growth of the person and the development of the community by means of that supreme form which is "the art of education."

He later writes: "Every genuine art form in its own way is a path to the inmost reality of man and of the world." Art, he writes, "is therefore, a wholly valid approach to the realm of faith, which gives human experience its ultimate meaning."

Homilies on the Samaritan woman's conversation with Jesus leave us asking more questions. She feels almost completely misunderstood. Her conversation with Jesus seems to be part of a much larger conversation just beginning. After all, His companions arrive after being away for a long period of time. What would Jesus say to a woman he finds in this bruised and battered condition? Art breaks us, shatters us, shakes us into a new realm of ideas; landscapes where spending a few moments take on many other possibilities.

Sacred art surprises, and in the eye of the beholder it has the capacity to strike a



Olive wood statue of the Samaritan woman (NCR photo/Sue Stanton)

chord like a symphony in the heart. Some symphonies make us sad, others uplift our spirits, but both work in harmony to inform us of the complexity of life.

We need such art now. New voices, new perspectives, new eyes and ears. Art that enlightens, lifts and extends the essence of our faith spirit.

When you stumble upon an object that opens up God's world inside you, don't forget to thank the other helper involved. I hope the artist of my statue is doing well and has not given up on the holy moments that inspired their work.

Unfortunately, no artist can ever fully know just how much their creation works on the eye of a beholder. God willing, I pray and hope they will always persevere. — **By Sue Stanton, NCR**



# Little Catholics' Corner

Hello children of God,

Imagine you live in a great kingdom with a king and queen and many other great people. You hear that the king's son is getting married and there will be a great wedding feast. All the lords and ladies and rich land owners are invited. On the day of the wedding, the servants go out to call the guests to the wedding, but all those important people refuse to go! They say they are too busy with other things, and can't be bothered to go!

Now imagine that you are one of the children in a poor family that lives down a back street. Suddenly you hear people calling out that the king has invited your family to the feast! What excitement! Everybody puts on their best clothes and goes to the castle. In a little while the king comes in and you see him pointing to a man who isn't dressed neatly, and hasn't washed his face or brushed his hair. He sends the man out of the hall.

This is the story that Jesus told about the kingdom of Heaven. Many important people have been invited, but they decided they were too busy with other things. But the King has invited us too! We should rejoice and "dress" our souls by being the best we can be! Don't be a half-hearted Christian!

Love Aunty Gwen

## Colour this picture of St Luke the Evangelist

St Luke, also known as St Luke the Evangelist, lived a long time ago in the first century. People celebrate his special day on October 18. He wrote two books in the Bible called the Gospel According to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. He was a good friend of another important person in the stories, St Paul the Apostle.

Even though we don't know a lot about St Luke's life, some stories say he was a doctor and not from the same group of people as most of the other people in the stories. He might have travelled with St. Paul to help spread the Good News.

St Luke is the patron saint of doctors and artists.



## Word Search - Parable of the Banquet

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

ANYONE	BANQUET	BIBLE	EVERYONE	SALVATION
FOOD	GOD	INVITATION	INVITED	SERVANTS
JESUS	KING	KINGDOM	MATTHEW	WEDDING
PARABLE	REFUSE	REJECT	RELIGIOUS	

## PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST

Circle the correct answer (Matthew 22: 1-14)

1. Who invited important people to the wedding party?



2. What is not an appropriate outfit to wear to a wedding?



3. What kind of feast was it?



4. Who did the king send to destroy the murder's city?



5. Jesus likened the parable of the wedding feast to the kingdom of ...?





# YOUTH

OCTOBER 15, 2023

## SABAH YOUTH listen to the cries of the earth

**P**APAR, Sabah: One hundred and fifty youth from Sabah participated in the Eco Youth Camp recently at the Pace Bene FSIC Retreat Centre.

It was organised by the Eco Outreach Team in collaboration with the Creation Justice Commission (CJC) Sabah and the Episcopal Commission for Creation Justice of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei's (ECCJ-MSB) support.

The youth between the ages of 15 and 30, from the Arch/diocese of Kota Kinabalu, Keningau, and Sandakan, responded to the call to listen to the cries of the earth and the poor during the camp.

The objectives were: to guide the youths to reflect on the Creation Story in Genesis 1 and 2 — God created every creature with its own dignity and beauty, therefore all living beings have the right to live with dignity, to create a deeper awareness of the reality of climate emergencies and ecological crises, to introduce the attendees to the stance of the Catholic Church on nature and its relationship with God and humanity, based on the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* and to instil a sense of responsibility among the youth to care for and love God's Creation.

These objectives aligned with the *Decarbonising Malaysia* campaign launched by the ECCJ-MSB, which calls on all walks of life regardless of background, race, and religion to unite to reduce carbon emissions and formulate an action plan to control global warming.



Two main pillars identified by ECCJ-MSB to make the *Decarbonising Malaysia* campaign a success were Capacity Building and Ecological Education. Under the leadership of CJC Sabah, the Eco Outreach team focused on fostering ecological education and engaging the Sabahan Catholic youth communities to instil a profound understanding of the pressing climate and biodiversity challenges.

On the first day of the programme, a safety briefing was delivered by the Eco Outreach team, in which Enrique Emerson reminded

the participants of the emergency response plan. The programme continued with Mass and the launch of the Protect Our Earth, Protect Our Children Campaign (PROTEC Campaign) Year Four with the theme *Reduce Fuel Consumption*.

Archbishop John Wong was the main celebrant with Msgr Nicholas Stephen, Fr Joshua Liew, and Friar Arul A. Mariadas concelebrating. Also present were Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu CJC spiritual director Fr Russel Lawrine; Kota Kinabalu Archdio-

cese Youth Commission coordinator Sr Terry Loukang, Kota Kinabalu Family Life Commission coordinator Sr Susana Guntabid, Diocese of Keningau CJC coordinator Ester Ermelissa Ngoai, and Diocese of Sandakan CJC representative Irene Palisa,

At the end of the Mass, Archbishop John conveyed his delight in the presence of the youth and all attendees. He expressed his gratitude to God the Father for providing an opportunity to those who had dedicated their time and resources to participate in this camp, considering it an "investment" in the growth of faith and a heightened awareness of the distressing environmental challenges.

The prelate extended his profound appreciation to the CJC Sabah for organising this programme for Catholic Youths, which served to raise awareness about pressing environmental issues. He noted that the young Catholics who attended the programme were a source of hope for the world, as they had enthusiastically embraced the mission of making our planet a better place by saying "Yes" to positive change.

Next, camp coordinator, Evangelisa Anna, welcomed the youth and expressed her appreciation to all parties who were directly and indirectly involved in organising the camp. The programme coordinator also took the opportunity to express her special appreciation to the ECCJ-MSB and its president Bishop Joseph Hii (Sibu Diocese), and the ECCJ-MSB director, Geraldine Clare Westwood, for fully supporting the camp.

● Continued on Pg 17





# YOUNG COMMUNICATORS MEET IN ROME

By Sebastian Samson Ferrari

Leticia Araujo, from Brazil, is the communications assistant of the *Laudato Si'* Movement and is participating in the third edition of the training programme of the Dicastery for Communication, *Faith Communication in the Digital World: A synodal perspective*. She arrived in Rome from South America in the last week of September to meet other young communicators from different parts of the world. This initiative aims to promote best practices in spiritual formation and to spread inspiration to find new and effective ways of proclaiming the Gospel in virtual arenas.

## The Roman sojourn

After several months of online sessions, together with some 16 young men and women working in various fields of communication, they engaged in many ac-



The young people during their visit to the Dicastery for Communication. (Vatican Media)

tivities in the Italian capital: they visited the four papal basilicas, the headquarters of *Vatican Radio - Vatican News*, and the Vatican museums; and greeted Pope Francis at the end of the general audience on September 27. Leticia was very excited to get in touch with creative colleagues from different regions of the world, many from Asia. "Being able to learn from each other," she explains, "is very special for me".

## An exchange between different cultures

The main lesson she brings back home are the different ways of communicating for a greater purpose, which can be acquired through relationships with other cultures. Leticia also emphasises the need to always keep in mind the point of departure, the grassroots community. After her stay in Italy, she will spend some more time in Europe and share her knowledge with the faith communities and religious congregations that have influenced her journey.

## Participating in the Vigil

For Tâm Bùi, a volunteer at the Press Office of the Archdiocese of Saigon in Vietnam, this opportunity was extremely enriching and he is eager to exchange information on communication, liturgy, youth, and other topics to strengthen mutual understanding.

He is also very happy to be able to participate with the group in the ecumenical prayer vigil 'Together 2023' to entrust to the Holy Spirit the work of the 16th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. The Vigil was held on the evening of Sept 30, in St Peter's Square. In fact, he shares that he has also organised a similar activity in his ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

For Emmanuel Donatus, a Nigerian freelance journalist, the experience was extraordinary, and stimulating, and allowed him to review several concepts, including, for example, the importance of enhanced listening in one's daily work and the urgency of always transmitting the Truth. — *Vatican News*

## Being immersed in Laudato Si'

● Continued from Pg 16

On the first day, participants watched a documentary titled *The Letter*, which highlighted the efforts of environmentalists worldwide to engage with Pope Francis in Rome to discuss the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*. The day ended with reflections from the attendees.

The second day featured core activities centred around ecological education. Sr Calista Saliun discussed the Church's role in fostering an appreciation for God's creation, as emphasised in *Laudato Si'*. Prof Dr Felix Tongkul and Dr Justin Sentian presented alarming climate emergency scenarios and the importance of ecological education for humans living in harmony with the environment. Japson Wong from the Tanjung Aru Marine Ecosystem (TAME) Centre, discussed recycling and waste utilisation, while Dr Susan Pudir

explained the government's role in environmental protection.

In the evening, the Eco Night event showcased various performances related to the theme *Let Justice and Peace Flow*. Notable acts included a song titled "Eco Warrior" by the Catholic Student Group of Universiti Malaysia Sabah and a presentation on the Fast Fashion Industry's environmental impact, particularly the pollution of the Tullahan River in the Philippines.

The last day focused on practical ecological education through the Eco Outreach Mission, offering 10 stations where participants learned simple ways to care for the environment in their daily lives, such as proper waste separation, composting, candle making from used cooking oil, and identifying medicinal plants. The camp concluded with participant reflections and sharing sessions.



Turning nesppresso coffee capsule to insects.



Body prayer with nature



## Some sharings from the participants

**Chloe Leonora Petrus**, 15, the youngest participant from the Church of St Michael, Penampang, Sabah, shared that after attending the Eco Youth Camp, she was very happy to know that there is still hope for us to save our earth. "I am very grateful for the knowledge I have gained because it gives me hope and confidence to become a more responsible and mature person in caring for the environment. I feel proud for giving myself the opportunity to get out of my comfort zone and participate in this programme and become an Eco Warrior to take care of our environment. May more youths be open to participate in similar programmes and start to take responsibility in taking care of our earth for future generations. Be a light to those who are still in the dark".

**Baxerchrist Moloney**, a youth from the Church of the Good Shepherd, Mengatal, Kota Kinabalu said the programme opened his heart to appreciate our earth more and fuelled his spirit to become an Eco Warrior who fights for the justice of creation. Baxerchrist calls on everyone from all walks of life, regardless of background, race, and religion to join hands and work together to protect our environment.

**Lus Clarita George**, Tambunan Catholic Youth from the Diocese of Keningau, shared that Eco Youth Camp made her aware of the reality of the world that is in a dire situation, and the sessions in this camp provided her with knowledge and lessons on how to address the climate crisis and the biodiversity crisis. "Let us be aware of our negative actions towards the earth to ensure that our future generations enjoy the beauty of our earth." Clarita hopes that all of us will start to change our negative way of life and start to take care of our suffering earth.

**Ceron Ezra Yangun**, the President of the Catholic Student Group (CSG) from the Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Kota Kinabalu Campus expressed her gratitude to God for the blessing and opportunity to participate in the Eco Youth Camp. Throughout the camp, she gained a lot of knowledge which boosted her spirit to take better care of the environment for future generations. Ceron welcomed more young Catholics to get involved in activities such as Eco Youth Camp because "Youth are the hope of the next generation and they are capable of bringing change to the world. If we do not act now, the world will continue to suffer and nature will respond to irresponsible humans."

**Nigel Abraham Guntingan** from the Diocese of Sandakan, shared that this Eco Youth Camp gave him a deep awareness of how the earth is in a critical state due to our irresponsible actions towards the environment. He hopes that people from all walks of life, especially the youth, will start taking serious steps to restore our earth. "Be a seed in your parish and grow and bear fruit for our community. Do the little things first because these little things are the seeds of bigger things".

The camp coordinator concluded the session by encouraging the participants to start their respective journeys to become Eco Warriors after the camp and continue our efforts in protecting the earth from destruction.



# Chicago auxiliary bishop recalled for his devotion, kindness, joy

Auxiliary Bishop Kevin M. Birmingham of Chicago (pic), former secretary to Chicago Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, died unexpectedly October 2 at age 51. He was just a few days' shy of his 52nd birthday.

"He passed away in his sleep," archdiocesan spokesperson Yasmin Quiroz told local media.

"The Church has lost a wonderful priest and bishop today and I lost a dear friend and valued colleague," Cupich said in a statement. "From the start of his ministry, Bishop Kevin Birmingham was a devoted and joyful priest. He felt called to serve Latino Catholics especially, and he learned Spanish in order to do so."

"He served in my office for six years as priest-secretary, always with dedication and attention to every detail, a role in which his reputation for kindness only grew," he continued. "May we honour his memory by continuing to do as he did, and model the love God has for His children in all we do."

The late bishop, ordained as a priest of the Chicago Archdiocese in 1997, was named an auxiliary bishop for his home archdiocese by Pope Francis Sept 11, 2020, along with another archdiocesan priest and a Franciscan friar who has been serving in the archdiocese since 2005: Then-Fr Jeffrey S. Grob and then-Fr Robert J. Lombardo, a Franciscan Friar of the Renewal.

Grob had known his fellow auxiliary his whole priesthood, and they worked together when Grob was serving in the chancery. "He was genuine, personable, funny and pastoral. He had a pastor's heart," he said in a statement. "Even after he became a bishop he did not put



on airs, you saw the true man. His laughter was contagious, but in the moment, he could be genuinely concerned about an issue. Sincere and genuine: That is what drew people to him."

Lombardo shared that he always found "Bishop Kevin" a joy to be with. "He was dedicated to God and the Church and always had a very joyful spirit. He will be greatly missed," he said in a statement.

Sarah Machaj, senior administrative assistant in the archbishop's office, worked with Birmingham from 2015 until 2020.

"Bishop Kevin lit up every room he walked into and brought with him his dry wit and just a little bit of mischief," Machaj said. "He was an incredibly hard worker, but never asked for recognition. He was humble, truly kind and had a laugh that was contagious. He was the most genuine person I've ever known, and he will be greatly missed." — NCR

## MEMORIAM

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### 13th Anniversary In Loving Memory of our beloved Mum

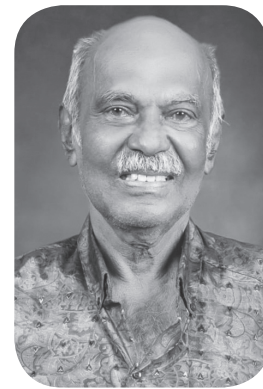


**MARY NEVIS RAJ**  
Gift from God:  
07-07-1932

Returned to the Lord:  
18-10-2010

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

### 2nd Anniversary In Memoriam Beautiful Memory of My Loving Hubby



**M. ARUL DASS**  
Departed:  
17th October 2021

*Though sad,  
memories of you  
Always bring smiles  
to our faces*

*Though painful,  
we are still learning  
to live without you*

*Though you are gone,  
we will always love and  
cherish you*

*In our hearts.*

Deeply missed and  
fondly remembered by  
Loving Wife,  
Sons, Daughters-in-law,  
Grandchildren, a host  
of relatives and friends.

### 10th Anniversary In Loving Memory of Rosie Alexander



**October 26th, 1927 –  
October 19th, 2013**

10 years now since you left  
us. You were a Mother,  
a Grandmother,  
a Great Grandmother,  
a Sister, a Daughter,  
an Aunt and a Friend to all.  
You are, and will always be  
the Queen of our hearts.  
Love you, and miss you  
dearly, Amma!

### 28th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



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

*Dearest Brother/  
Brother-in-law/ Uncle*

*Twenty-eight 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  
and nephews.

### 25th Anniversary I thank my God each time I remember you – Phil 1:3



**JOSEPH FRANCIS**  
19th October 1998

*Son, Brother, Husband, Father,  
Uncle and Most of all, Friend*

We celebrate your legacy, your love, your life.  
You built a bridge from your heart to ours,  
You taught us a simple  
yet profound road map for life's journey,  
Even in your absence,  
you continued to guide us through,  
The challenging terrain of hope  
and the serene valleys of love,  
The memory of your **Smile** navigates us,  
through it all.

Thank you for choosing us in your lifetime!  
A foundation of love, unwavering and wide,  
a legacy that'll forever reside in us.  
We will carry this heritage on, a gift so divine,  
in our hearts it will forever shine.

*Fondly Cherished, Exquisitely Treasured  
and Forever Revered*  
Wife, Daughters, and Loved Ones.

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### In Loving Memory of

Rev. Father Francis  
Regis Thraviam  
(21st Anniversary)

Dr Pangiras Michael  
(15th Anniversary)



**Born: 6-7-1945  
Departed: 15-10-2002**



**Born: 16-9-1948  
Departed: 14-9-2008**

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only  
Son, that whoever believes in him should not  
perish but have eternal life."

John 3:16

Deeply missed and forever cherished by  
siblings and loved ones.



# The poor pay the highest price

*while inflicting the least damage on the planet*

VATICAN: Pope Francis warns that the clock is ticking on the dangers of climate change — and both a paradigm shift and practical action are critically needed to avert looming disasters in nature and human society.

The Pope released his new apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum* (Praise God) October 4, as a follow-up to his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*, *On Care for Our Common Home*. By choosing Oct 4, the feast day of St Francis of Assisi, often associated with nature, Pope Francis once again places ecology at the centre of his pontificate. The publication of this text on the same day as the opening of the synod on the future of the Catholic Church, which promises to be decisive, further enhances its significance.

Though only about one-fifth the length of *Laudato Si'* (which it references extensively), the exhortation's message is even more urgent, since "the world in which we live is collapsing and may be nearing breaking point," wrote Pope Francis. "Climate change is one of the principal challenges facing society and the global community."

The text reiterates key messages that have resonated throughout Pope Francis' papacy — among them, concern for the marginalised, care for creation, human ecology and a "synodal" approach to resolving global problems.

With "the effects ... borne by the most vulnerable people," the issue of climate change is "one intimately related to the dignity of human life," he said.

Addressed to "all people of good will," the exhortation declares that "it is no longer possible to doubt the human ... origin of climate change," citing data from sources such as the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the

US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

While noting that "not every concrete catastrophe" is due to global climate change, humans bear responsibility for specific changes that have led to "extreme phenomena" — such as storms, heat waves and flooding — that are "increasingly frequent and intense," said the Pope.

He pointed to rapid, human-driven upticks in greenhouse gas emissions, which trap radiation from the sun in earth's atmosphere and warm the planet. The global average temperature — a metric that tracks changes in the earth's surface temperature against long-term averages for a given location and date — has risen over the past 50 years in particular, at a rate that could approach the recommended ceiling of 1.5 degrees Celsius in just 10 years, said the Pope.

That acceleration has a profound impact, causing dangerous shifts in climate and weather with effects ultimately felt "in the areas of healthcare, sources of employment, access to resources, housing (and) forced migrations," Pope Francis said.

He challenged "resistance and confusion" regarding climate change, "even within the Catholic Church," stressing that "the overwhelming majority of scientists specialising in the climate" support the correlation between global climate phenomena and spikes in greenhouse gas emissions.

Pope Francis said the planet itself has become a mirror of a deeply flawed view of human life and activity. Such a "technocratic paradigm" (as the Pope described it in *Laudato Si'*) exalts technological and economic power as sources of reality, goodness and truth, promising unlimited potential if methodically developed.

In recent years, that paradigm has advanced still further, with a goal of "(increasing) human power beyond anything imaginable, before which non-human reality is a mere resource at its disposal," he said.

Yet "not every increase in power represents progress for humanity," said the Pope, especially since (as he wrote in *Laudato Si'*) "we cannot claim to have a sound ethics, a culture and spirituality genuinely capable of setting limits and teaching clear-minded self-restraint".

The poor pay the highest price while inflicting the least damage on the planet, said Pope Francis, citing the United Nations Environment Programme's 2022 Emissions Gap Report, which found that per capita greenhouse gas emissions of richer countries far exceed those of poorer ones.

The question of human power itself must be re-examined, and "human beings must be recognised as a part of nature," the Pope said, stressing that "everything is connected" and "no one is saved alone."

Lamenting the "weakness of international politics" in addressing climate change, Pope Francis drew on his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* to call for a "reconfigured multilateralism" — one "not dependent on changing political conditions or the interests of a few," but possessing a "stable efficacy" that can resolve "the real problems of humanity" by placing "the dignity of persons" before all.

The Pope invited Catholics and those of other faiths to recall their "spiritual motivations" for addressing the climate crisis, asking "everyone to accompany this pilgrimage of reconciliation with the world that is our home and to help make it more beautiful, because that commitment has to do with our personal dignity and highest values."

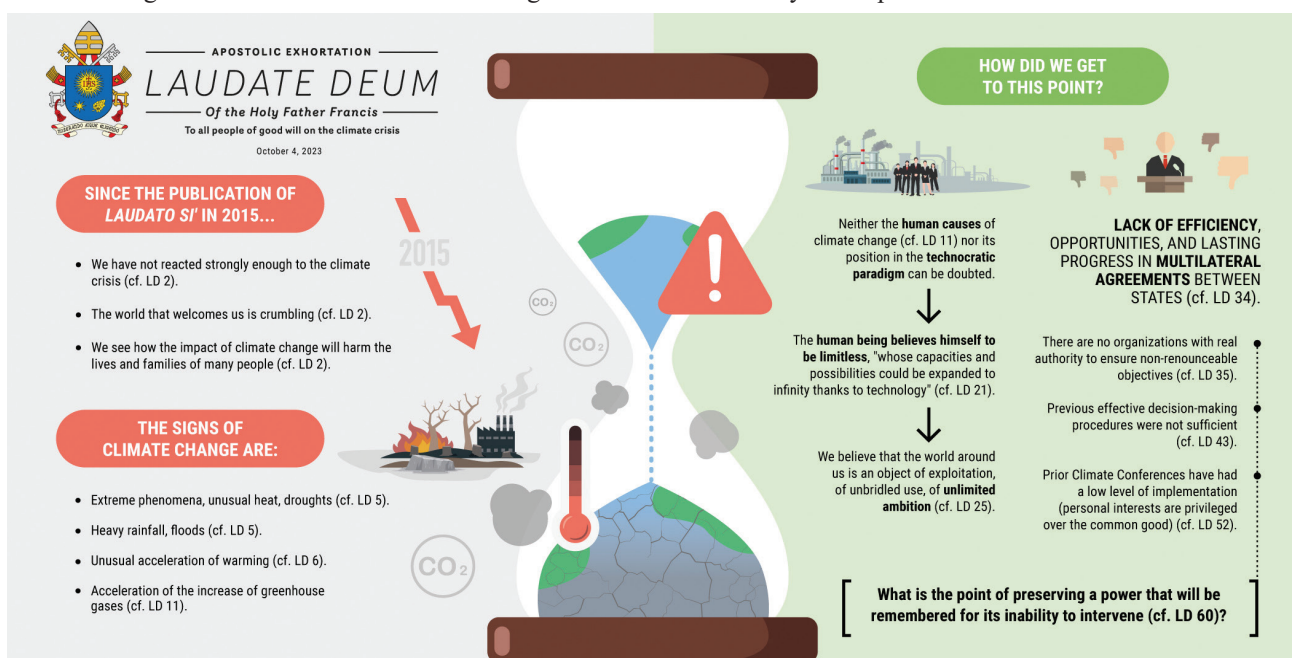
Humility is essential in this journey, he said, "for when human beings claim to take God's place, they become their own worst enemies."

The Holy Father reminds us in *Laudate Deum* of two convictions he repeats frequently: "Everything is connected" and "No one is saved alone." He reminds us that even in the face of such intractable challenges, we have to work not only toward better policies and more effective implementation, but also toward greater solidarity. "To say that there is nothing to hope for would be suicidal, for it would mean exposing all humanity, especially the poorest, to the worst impacts of climate change." It is only by renewing our hope that a better world is indeed possible, that we can begin to build it.

Pope Francis' choice to publish *Laudate Deum* at all is striking. If a follow-up is made to an encyclical, it is usually not done until decades later (see *Quadragesimo Anno*, published 40 years after *Rerum Novarum*). For this exhortation to be published a mere eight years after *Laudato Si'* underscores the pressing reality at hand: We are running out of time to act on the climate crisis.

For too long, we have paid for our lifestyle with a kind of ecological credit, watching the seas rise and the gases accumulate in the atmosphere with the sinking feeling that soon, the bill will come due. It is due. — *Agencies*

**Photo: Flood victims seen wading through floodwaters in Taman Sri Muda, Shah Alam December 20, 2021. (Malay Mail photo)**



**“ ”**

The whole of the universe shows the inexhaustible richness of God (cf. LD 63). Let us join this path of reconciliation with the world that shelters us (cf. LD 69). "There are no cultural changes without changes in people" (cf. LD 70). "Praise God": a human being who pretends to take his place becomes the worst danger to himself (cf. LD 73).

POPE FRANCIS



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- It should be a turning point to react and show that what has been done was worthwhile (cf. LD 54).
- It should help us to make a better energy transition (cf. LD 59).
- It should help us to get out of the logic of patchwork solutions in order to seek the common good and ensure the future of coming generations (cf. LD 58, 60).

DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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Infographic published by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development on October 4, 2023. (Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development).

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