

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

TERHAD

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Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

Hebr 4:14



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# Church must reach out to everyone

**VATICAN:** In his message for World Mission Day 2024 which falls on October 20, Pope Francis has emphasised the Church's mission to evangelise with renewed zeal, urging Catholics to invite everyone to the banquet of God's love, echoing the theme from the Gospel of Matthew: "Go and invite everyone to the banquet" (Mt 22:9). He encouraged the faithful to spread the Good News with compassion, joy, and dedication, aligning with the ongoing journey of synodality, focused on Communion, Participation, and Mission.

Reflecting on the parable of the wedding banquet (Mt 22:1-14), Pope Francis explained the significance of "going out" and "inviting" others to encounter God. He highlighted that the mission of the Church is to tirelessly extend this invitation, even in the face of rejection or indifference. "God's love is boundless," the Pope said, "and the Church must emulate this by constantly reaching out to everyone."

He praised missionaries worldwide who have dedicated their lives to evangelisation, particularly those

who have left their homelands to share the Gospel in regions where it is still unfamiliar. The Pope encouraged all Catholics to participate in this mission, not just those in formal ministry roles. He emphasised that every Christian is called to share the Gospel in their daily lives, contributing to a broader missionary movement.

The Holy Father urged the Church to imitate the kindness and compassion of Christ when spreading the Gospel. Evangelisation, he said, should never be coercive or aggressive but instead reflect the love and tenderness of God. The mission is not about proselytism but about sharing the beauty of God's saving love with joy and humility. "Missionary disciples should go forth with the joy and benevolence that are fruits of the Holy Spirit," the Pope stated, calling for evangelisation rooted in compassion, understanding, and respect for others.

The Pope also connected the mission of the Church to the image of the wedding banquet, which represents the eschatological feast of salvation in God's kingdom. This heavenly banquet, he said, is prefigured in the Eucharist, where the faithful are invited to share in the Body and Blood of Christ.

He reminded the faithful that Christ's mission is tied to the fulfilment of time and salvation, urging them to preach the Gospel with the urgency and joy of those who know "the Lord is near." He also stressed the importance of the Eucharist in fuelling the Church's missionary zeal, describing it as a foretaste of the eternal banquet prepared by God. "Every Eucharistic celebration sacramentally accomplishes the eschatological gathering of the People of God," he said, calling for a deepened awareness of the Eucharist's missionary and eschatological dimensions.

Pope Francis emphasised the universal nature of the Church's mission, urging that the Gospel message be shared with everyone, regardless of their social or moral status. He pointed to the inclusiveness of the parable, where the king's invitation was extended to "both good and bad" (Mt 22:10), and the special attention given to society's marginalised, such as the poor, crippled, and blind (Lk 14:21).

In a world fraught with division, conflict, and self-interest, the Pope reminded the Church that God desires all people to be saved (1 Tim 2:4). Evangelisation, he stressed, must be conducted in a spirit of unity and fraternity, inviting all to the divine banquet marked by joy, justice,

and communion with God.

Pope Francis highlighted the importance of synodality in the Church's mission, describing it as inherently missionary. He called for closer collaboration in evangelisation efforts, both within local churches and at the global level, noting the urgent need for missionary cooperation in today's world.

The Pontifical Mission Societies, he noted, play a vital role in fostering a universal missionary outlook and supporting the Church's mission through prayer and financial contributions. He called on all dioceses to participate in the annual World Mission Day collections, which fund missionary efforts worldwide.

As the Church continues its synodal journey and prepares for the Jubilee of 2025, Pope Francis called for a renewed commitment to prayer and participation in the Eucharist. He reminded the faithful that the Church's mission is sustained through daily prayer, particularly the "Our Father," which petitions for the coming of God's kingdom.

Finally, the Pope invoked the intercession of Mary, the Star of Evangelisation, urging Catholics to go forth with her same maternal care and tenderness to bring the invitation of Christ to all corners of the world. "Let us implore her maternal intercession for the evangelising mission of Christ's disciples in our own time," he concluded, encouraging the faithful to embrace their missionary calling with renewed fervour and hope.

To read the full message, go to <https://bit.ly/3Nm0RJG>



During the Melaka Vicariate assembly in 2023. (file photo)

# HERALD

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

World Mental Health Day 2024 brought a critical theme to the forefront: "It's time to prioritise mental health in the workplace." This serves as a rallying cry for all sectors to take action and address the often-overlooked mental health needs of workers. For many, the workplace occupies a significant portion of their lives, shaping well-being and quality of life. Yet, conversations about mental health often take a back seat to business targets and productivity goals, perpetuating an environment where stress, burnout, and anxiety thrive.

In recent years, the world has made strides in recognising the importance of mental health, yet the workplace lags behind. While the stigma surrounding mental health is decreasing, employees still find it challenging to speak openly about their struggles in professional settings. Long hours, pressure, and unrealistic expectations all contribute to an environment that can be mentally taxing. It is vital that society as a whole acknowledges the importance of mental health for both personal well-being and professional success. Ensuring a supportive workplace environment is not just a practical concern but a moral obligation.

The pressures of modern life, with its relentless drive for performance and success, can have devastating effects on mental health. Stress, anxiety, and depression are now commonplace in many workplaces, leading to isolation and a sense of hopelessness for many employees. The World Health Organization (WHO) has highlighted that poor mental health is one of the leading causes of absenteeism and reduced productivity. Left untreated, mental health challenges harm not only the individual but the broader work environment, damaging relationships, lowering morale, and ultimately decreasing overall efficiency.

Catholic social teaching provides a valuable lens through which to view this issue. Work is more than a means of survival — it is a way for

individuals to participate in God's creation. As St John Paul II articulated in his encyclical *Laborem Exercens*, work must serve the person, not the other way around. A toxic work environment that disregards mental health undermines this core principle. Prioritising mental health in the workplace is a concrete affirmation of the dignity of the worker and an essential element of creating humane and just workplaces.

The Church has long advocated for communities to support individuals grappling with mental health challenges. Pope Francis, in particular, has been a vocal advocate for destigmatising mental illness. He urges society to view mental health conditions not as signs of weakness but as issues that require compassion, understanding, and appropriate care. In a 2019 address to health care professionals, Pope Francis pointed out that mental health needs are often invisible and, therefore, overlooked. He emphasised the importance of responding to psychological suffering with "solidarity and accompaniment," especially from leaders and employers.

Beyond offering spiritual guidance, the Church can provide practical resources that can complement psychological support. Prayer, meditation, and the sacraments can offer strength and healing, providing a foundation for mental and spiritual well-being. However, the Church also acknowledges the vital role of professional mental health care, encouraging a holistic approach that embraces both spiritual and medical interventions.

Workplaces that fail to address mental health concerns neglect their moral responsibility to protect human dignity. Mental health must be recognised as a crucial part of measuring a workplace's success, on par with financial performance and productivity. Global statistics show that approximately 15 per cent of working adults experience some form of mental health condition, often going untreated due to fear of

discrimination. The WHO estimates that this results in a \$1 trillion (RM429 trillion) annual loss in productivity. But these numbers do not reflect the real cost — borne by individuals who silently suffer under the weight of untreated mental health challenges.

For those in unsupportive work environments, the toll of depression, anxiety, and burnout is not limited to their professional lives but extends into their personal well-being. Addressing mental health in the workplace is not just about productivity; it is a matter of social justice. Catholic social teaching calls for a culture of care and solidarity. This requires workplaces to go beyond token gestures of mental health awareness and to actively foster environments that support mental well-being.

A workplace culture that normalises mental health discussions offers flexible working hours, and provides resources such as counselling services is essential for creating a healthy work-life balance. Leadership plays a vital role in embodying these values, fostering an environment where vulnerability is seen as a strength and where mental health struggles are met with empathy.

The Church joins the global call to prioritise mental health in all areas of life, including the workplace. Mental health is not just a private issue but a shared responsibility. Whether we are employers, colleagues, or members of a faith community, we are called to accompany one another in times of distress, offering compassion and practical support.

Prioritising mental health in the workplace is a way to honour human dignity and the sanctity of work. As Pope Francis reminds us, "It is not enough to give solutions to problems, we must also look into the hearts of people." Let us answer this call, ensuring that our workplaces are places where everyone can thrive — mentally, physically, and spiritually. *Patricia Pereira*

## Called to serve in a changing world

Today, the Mother Church celebrates World Mission Sunday. But what exactly is "mission"? Mission is the service and sacrifice we offer in love, aimed at the salvation of others. This love is marked by patience and obedience to God's will. It begins with our own transformation, enabling us to become instruments of salvation for others. Yet, to fulfil this calling, we must first understand the mission entrusted to each of us by God. How can we take responsibility for a mission if we don't first discern what it is?

Through baptism, you and I are called to participate in this mission. We are set apart for this purpose, each in different capacities and at various levels. For a priest, God has consecrated, anointed, and entrusted him with a specific mission. Likewise, whether you are a husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter, sibling, or in your own job or profession, remember that you too have a mission from God. But it is essential to recognise and understand the mission God has given you.

Our families are called to be missionary, as the home is the first place where faith is nurtured. It is here that parents teach their children to grow in faith. I remember my own parents teaching me how to attend church, how to dress for Mass, how to pray, and even taking my siblings and me to the grotto, lighting candles, and praying together as a family. Thus, we need to recognise that mission begins at home.

Jesus knew from the start that His mission was to do the will of the Father who sent Him (John 6:38). This reminds us that the mission does not belong to us — it belongs to

God. Even the Church is His. We are merely instruments, called to participate in the mission entrusted to us by God. Today, the world is in desperate need of this mission as it grapples with issues like abortion, same-sex marriage, and dysfunctional families. While the challenges we face in mission today differ from those in Jesus' time, the mission itself remains the same, though the needs and contexts have changed.

As Christians, we are all responsible for this mission. It's not enough to leave it to priests, religious leaders, or parish councils. We might think our role is just to attend Mass, participate in the Eucharist, and then go home, but that's not what the Church expects of us. Wherever we are, we must bear witness to Jesus, sharing our personal story with Him. The first disciples, when they began their journey, didn't carry books — they carried their experiences with Jesus. They shared how He taught and touched their lives. In the same way, we need to proclaim what we have seen and heard from God. To do this, we must listen to His voice and recognise our mission in today's world. I must be a missionary wherever I am.

In today's Gospel, we hear the bold request of James and John: "Master, we want you to do us a favour. Allow us to sit, one at your right hand and the other at your left in your glory." In response, Christ gently reminded them of the weight of such a request by asking, "Can you drink the cup that I must drink?" They confidently replied, "We can." This question from Jesus is a reminder to each of us of the challenges we will face. It invites us to reflect on our personal response to Christ's mission.

## Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Deacon Jonathan Rao

### 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Readings: *Isaiah 53:10-11;*

*Hebrews 4:14-16;*

*Gospel: Mark 10:35-45 or 10:42-45*

Jesus teaches that true greatness comes from being ready to serve and make sacrifices for others. This is a call to renew our faith and rededicate ourselves to Christ's mission.

In the first reading, Isaiah tells us, "By his sufferings shall my servant justify many, taking their faults on himself." This passage points to the Son of God, who came to give His life as a ransom for many. His mission was to save humanity from sin, even to the point of dying for others. In liberating others, we also liberate ourselves. By offering peace to others, we find our own peace, and by our identifying with others, Christ identifies with us.

The work of salvation entrusted to each of us by Christ continues today, and our response must be a deeper commitment to God's mission. This also reminds us of the significant challenges we face — shifting societies, evolving cultures, changing lifestyles, and rapid technological advancements — all of which need to be addressed and evangelised with wisdom and care. Amid these challenges, we can find comfort in the words from the second reading: "Let us be confident, then, in approaching the throne of grace, that we shall receive mercy and find grace when we are in need of help" (Hebrews 4:16).

# United in prayer and fasting

Rachael Philip

SHAH ALAM: In response to Pope Francis' call for a Day of Prayer and Fasting on October 7, the Church of the Divine Mercy (CDM) invited the faithful to gather and recite the Rosary in various languages from midnight to noon.

Parish priest Fr George Harrison embraced the occasion to reflect the global unity of the Church by encouraging prayers in multiple languages.

The Rosary was recited hourly in Iban, Bidayuh, Kadazan and Indonesian, followed by Tamil, Hindi, BM, Urdu, Mandarin, Sinhala, Hiligaynon (a Filipino dialect), Italian, Russian, Malayalam and ending in English.

In addition to the Rosary, the faithful who gathered in church, sang Marian hymns and worshiped in silent adoration before the Blessed Sacrament.

Richard Rajak, head of CDM's Kumpulan Umat Bahasa Melayu, said he was particularly touched by effort of the parish priest in quickly organising the 12-hour Rosary.

"I prayed that peace will flourish in the Middle East, in other places of conflict worldwide, and also



The faithful spending time in prayer.

within families," he said.

"It was great to be in communion with the universal church, knowing that we were praying together for the same intention in the same moment and on such a symbolic date — the anniversary of Lepanto (1571) and the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary," said Carmelo Ferlito, who led the Rosary in Italian.

Perzeus James, who was present for three hours, reflected on the grace-filled experience before the Blessed Sacrament, saying, "we didn't realise the time passing".

Amor Ronquillo Nobleza and husband Tee Chee Wee, who recited the Rosary in Hiligaynon, felt blessed to pray in their dialect. "May it

bring peace, unity and love," Amor said.

Sachintha and wife Shubashini Ferdinandusz who prayed the Rosary in Sinhala, shared, "It was a special experience to pray in our mother tongue. Jesus and Mother Mary were with us, and we believe our prayers will be answered, bringing an end to senseless violence".

At noon, the *Angelus* and the Mid-Day Prayers were recited, followed by Taize chants and sacred silence. The day culminated with Mass at 1pm, honouring Our Lady of the Rosary. After Mass, the faithful brought forward rosaries, scapulars and images of the Blessed Virgin for blessing.



## Celebrating 29 years as bishop

KUALA LUMPUR: Parishioners of the Chapel of Our Lady of Good Health, Kg Pandan, surprised Archbishop Emeritus Murphy Pakiam with a celebratory cake on October 6, following the Sunday Mass to commemorate the 29th anniversary of his episcopal ordination.

Archbishop Emeritus Murphy was ordained as bishop on October 4, 1995, and later became the third metropolitan archbishop of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur on May 29, 2003. He retired on Dec 13, 2013, upon reaching the age of 75 and subsequently took up residence at the chapel in Kg Pandan.

The Mass was celebrated by Fr Michael Teng OFM Cap,

with Archbishop Emeritus Murphy concelebrating. The retired prelate joyfully cut the anniversary cake alongside the chapel's children, while Fr Michael, offered a special prayer in his honour.

The celebration continued with a simple fellowship in the chapel courtyard, allowing parishioners to come together and celebrate this special occasion.

Archbishop Emeritus Murphy is well-known for his steadfast commitment to social justice, his deep concern for migrants, and his role as a promoter of interfaith dialogue. His profound compassion has left a lasting impact on both the community and the Church. **Bernard Anthony**




**KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE**

**Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow**

**October**

**2-27 Synod Assembly, Rome**



**PENANG DIOCESE**


**Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis**

**October**

**22-23 Council of Priests**

**22-23 Clergy Monthly Recollection – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam**

**24 Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) at 4.00pm – Zion Cathedral, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Kuala Lumpur**



**MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE**

**Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul**

**October**

**21 Council of Priests (COP) at 8.00pm**

**22 Meeting – Melaka Vicariate Clergy at 9.00am**

**22 Meeting – North Central Johor Vicariate (NCJV) Clergy at 1.00pm**



**22-23 Clergy Monthly Recollection – MAJODI Centre**

**26 Melaka Vicariate Family Day – Church of St Mary, Ayer Salak**


**26 Annual Gathering with Mission Authority – Infant Jesus Convent, Melaka**

**26 Confirmation at 5.00pm – Chapel of Corpus Christi, Terendak Camp**

**27 Confirmation at 9.15am – Church of St Mary, Ayer Salak**

**Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #194**



**Greetings dear friends of MJD**

Thunderstorms expected nationwide. Floods, landslides and storms next. Emmy awards ended with *Shogun* sweeping the most awards. There are more and more international film submissions for the Oscars. Datuk Faridah Mercian recognised as pioneer in country's performing arts at the 2024 *Merdeka* Award. Inappropriate running attires. More tourists, more refugees, more migrants, are we ready for culture shocks? A New Zealander starts schools for the marginalised in Malaysia. Storms come and go. Hot air remains hot air. **Only good deeds prevail.**

**Painful Times:** So much division, strife, anger and "evil piled upon evil" deeds. Justified or unwarranted! So much shouting! Slogans and shawls! PM decides but his ministry is unprepared. We open doors, but have no protocols, no hand-on experience and get caught with unprecedented "kekecohan". Wars are evil. The women, children and innocent suffer. Collateral damage is no excuse. Violence breeds violence. Where there is hardness of heart, turn to prayer. Only prayer can move mountains. Continue with Pope Francis, who began a Day of Fasting and Prayer for World Peace on October 7, to **declare Fridays, a prayer day for World Peace in your families, BECs and parishes indefinitely.**

**A Thought For The Week: Big God or Small God?**  
A boy asked the father: How Big is

God? Then the father looked up to the sky and seeing an airplane asked the son: "What's the size of that airplane?" The boy answered: "It's very small. I can barely see it." So the father took him to the airport and as they approached an airplane he asked: "And now, what is the size of this one?" The boy answered: "Wow daddy, this is huge!"

**Lesson from the Father:** "God, is like this, His size depends on the distance between you and Him. The closer you are to Him, the greater He will be in your life!" How close are you to Him?

**Announcements For The Week:**

1. **Pastoral statement from Bishop Joseph Hii**, Episcopal President of Malaysian Catechetical Commission: *The CBCMSB has endorsed the proposal to observe the First Sunday of August as Catechetical Sunday, instead of the earlier custom (last Sunday of January).*

**QnQ? Q ask: Can all our stress be eliminated?**

1. Judith Moskowitz says it is impossible to eliminate all our stress, but science shows we can **manage it better**. She has researched a set of eight skills and practices to increase positive emotions and decrease anxiety.

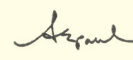
2. The **eight recommended practices** are:

- Focus** on positive events — the something good today.
- Savour** the event — stop and look,
- Gratitude** for the small and big things,
- Daily mindfulness** by focusing on your breath and breathing in a quiet place
- Positive reappraisal** by seeing the silver lining in the unexpected,
- Self-compassion** by being less self critical and doing what makes you feel good,
- Personal strengths** by recalling what you are good at and empowers you,
- Attainable goals** by writing them down in a notebook to tick off.

3. Your first reaction maybe is, that it will never work. **Skills are not magic.**

**See The Holy Spirit @ Work:** The Holy Spirit is a great worker, not a 'trade unionist'. He is a great worker, and He works in us, always. He does this work of explaining the mystery of Jesus, and of giving us this sense of Christ. *Pope Francis*

**Something To Tickle You:** God loves each of us as if there were only one of us. God never said that the journey would be easy, but He did say that the arrival would be worthwhile. God will meet you where you are in order to take you where He wants you to go. God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supplies. *Anonymous*

  
**Bishop Bernard Paul**

# Sabahans exhorted to walk together as a synodal church

Liza Magnus

KOTA KINABALU: Cardinal Sebastian Francis encouraged the 637 participants of the recently concluded PAX Assembly 2024 to “rejoice because your name is written in heaven!” The prelate said this during the assembly’s closing Mass. The PAX event took place at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart Centre from October 3 to 5, drawing attendees from 23 parishes across the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu.

The PAX Assembly has been a cornerstone of the Catholic Church in Kota Kinabalu since its establishment in 1971 under Bishop Peter Chung, the former Apostolic Vicar. PAX, which stands for the Pastoral Constitution of the Catholic Church in Sabah, means “peace” in Latin. Historically, the assembly

has functioned as a forum for addressing pastoral issues raised by parishes and PAX commissions. While annual themes were introduced in 1979, they were discontinued in 1997 after the launch of the Diocesan Vision and Mission, which now guides the assembly as a platform for collective discernment.

The assembly began with a para-liturgy led by Fr Thomas Madanan, centred on the theme *Celebrating and Listening*. Archbishop John Wong, the prelate of the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu, inaugurated the event and expressed his delight at the impressive turnout. He highlighted the significant changes in this year’s PAX Assembly format, noting that it was the first time the gathering was held at the Centre instead of the Bundu Tuhan Retreat Centre, allowing for a larger group of participants.

This year’s assembly introduced a unique format that promoted active participation. Rather than a few speakers dominating the stage, participants were divided into 77 groups for sharing and engaging in spiritual conversations. Archbishop Wong underscored the significance of sharing the history of early evangelisation in Borneo and presented 23 videos that highlighted the missionaries’ initial arrival and their parish pastoral action plans addressing various church, community, ecological, and social issues.

On the final day of the assembly, Cardinal Sebastian delivered a talk on the *Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026 (MPC2026)*, encouraging participants to reflect on Ephesians 4:23-24, which speaks to renewal and the pursuit of righteousness. He emphasised the importance of synodal

conversion, framing every correction from the Church as an invitation for repentance and renewal.

The cardinal also announced several significant upcoming events scheduled from 2025 to 2027:

- Malaysian Youth Assembly: April 1-5, 2025, in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.
- Launch of the Malaysian Cross Journey: Beginning at the Youth Assembly in Sabah, visiting nine dioceses, and concluding at MPC2026 in Johor.
- Sabah Regional Pastoral Assembly: May 2025, in Kota Kinabalu.
- College General Penang’s 360th Anniversary: September 28-October 1, 2025.
- Second Asian Mission Congress: November 13-16, 2025, at the Minor Basilica, St Anne, Bukit Mertajam, Penang.
- First MPC: August 2026, culminating with the Malaysian Cross Journey at MAJODI, Johor.
- World Youth Day: 2027 in South Korea, themed *Take courage! I have overcome the world* (Jn 16:33).

In his closing remarks, Cardinal Sebastian encouraged participants to continue walking together as a synodal Church, committed to communion, participation, and mission in preparation for the upcoming MPC, and urged them to engage in regular conversations in the Spirit.



## St Jude youth seek greater trust in leadership opportunities

RAWANG: The Church of St Jude held its Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA) recently, drawing around 200 parishioners to discuss the findings from a recent Study Day and outline a roadmap for the parish’s future.

The assembly featured a keynote address by Archbishop Julian Leow, who commended parish priest Fr Vincent Thomas for organising the event and garnering significant attendance. In her opening remarks, Parish Pastoral Council chairperson Christine Vincent expressed gratitude to the archbishop for making time to attend and extended a warm welcome to the Archdiocesan Pastoral team, led by Rita Krishnan, Walter Victor, and I. Pathinathan.

The key focus of the PPA was the findings of a study conducted on September 6, which identified four major areas of concern: family, church, ecology, and society. The study revealed that parishioners are grappling with financial and health challenges, straining fam-

ily relationships and increasing the need for community support. Furthermore, a lack of strong leadership within the parish was cited as a barrier to effectively engaging the community.

In particular, the parish’s youth voiced their desire for greater trust to take on leadership roles within the church. They suggested that senior leaders, having served long enough, should consider stepping aside to allow new leadership to emerge.

On the environmental front, the study underscored the need for enhanced environmental education and sustainable practices within the parish. It suggested incorporating the 3R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) principle into catechism classes, with a focus on tree planting and creating awareness among both children and adults about sustainability. However, resistance to participation in ecological initiatives remains an issue.



Group discussions.

Archbishop Julian highlighted the importance of unity, service, and commitment to Christ’s teachings throughout the assembly. The PPA concluded with a call for the parish to address the challenges outlined and work toward building a more vibrant, engaged

community.

As St Jude’s parish moves forward, the insights gathered from this assembly are expected to guide its future direction, addressing critical concerns and fostering greater involvement. **Mercy Almeida Stellus**

## Pet blessings around the parishes

In celebration of the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, many parishes organised special blessings for pets.

St Francis is revered as the patron saint of animals, and these events highlight his deep love for all creatures.

In the next four pages, we share some photos of the blessing in the Peninsular Malaysia parishes.



Church of the Immaculate Conception, Johor Bahru



Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras



Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, Kuala Lumpur

# SFA parish celebrates feast with novena, procession, pet blessing

Jaclyn Sharmelee

CHERAS: A four-day celebration in honour of St Francis of Assisi began on October 3 with the *Transitus*, commemorating the passing of St Francis from this life to the next. This significant event, marked by the Franciscan order, featured a poignant play depicting the final moments of St Francis' life.

In this moving portrayal, the audience witnessed St Francis praising the Lord and encouraging his companions to do the same, emphasising the importance of loving God. In a powerful moment, he welcomed death, which many view with dread, saying, "Welcome, my sister death," inviting it to reside with him as he joyfully approached his end. This heartfelt performance left a profound impact on all present, reflecting St. Francis' life of humility and devotion.

The theme for the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology, merchants and animals this year was; *Rebuild My Church* — St Francis' vocation calling when he began his priestly mission more than 800 years ago.

Fr Dr Nithiya Sagayam Anthony OFM



The statue of St Francis of Assisi carried in procession on October 5, 2024.

Cap, a Franciscan priest from India, the main celebrant for the four-day novena, captured the theme of *Rebuild My Church* by focusing on four areas for each Mass celebration; *Rebuild the Church amidst challenges*;

*Rebuild the Church through interpersonal relationship*; *Rebuild the Church with the Marginalised* and ending with a community Mass on Sunday; *Rebuild the Church in the family*.

The celebrations saw enthusiastic participation from parishioners of all ages, including youth and members of the church's four main language groups. On the eve of the community Mass, a solemn procession took place around the church compound, with parishioners carrying the statue of St Francis of Assisi while reciting the Rosary.

A pet blessing was also held in the compounds of the church, with many parishioners bringing their beloved pets, ranging from dogs, cats to reptiles for a special blessing on Oct 5.

The community Mass on Sunday was presided over by Archbishop Wojciech Zaluski, the Apostolic Nuncio to Malaysia who extended warm greetings from the Holy Father and congratulated the Church of St Francis of Assisi as one of the designated churches for the Jubilee year in 2025.

During the community Mass, Fr Paul Cheong, OFM, Cap, parish priest of the Church of St Francis of Assisi, known for promoting a holistic lifestyle, officially launched the *Eight Habits of Effective Christian Living* booklet. Free copies were distributed to all attendees.

## Celebrating the feast of St Thérèse of Lisieux

NEGERI SEMBILAN: The Church of St Theresa Nilai (CSTN) marked the feast day of St Thérèse of Lisieux with a four-day celebration, beginning on her feast day, October 1. The event drew hundreds of parishioners and pilgrims, who gathered to honour the young Carmelite nun, who passed away 127 years ago in Lisieux,

France, at the age of 24.

The celebrations began with the launch of Mission Month and the Holy Childhood Box by the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) and the Archdiocesan Mission of New Evangelisation for Christ (AMNEC), following a Mass presided over by Fr Xavier Andrew. CSTN is the first of five parishes

scheduled for pilgrimages in October, a fitting tribute to St Thérèse, the patron saint of missions, and one of four women saints designated as a Doctor of the Church.

On Oct 4, the second day of the triduum, Fr Gnana Selvam Berentis celebrated the Mass, focusing on St Thérèse's 'little way,' highlighting how even the smallest gestures, like a simple smile, can have a significant impact.

The theme of family life took centre stage on Oct 5 during a Mass presided over by Fr Michel Dass. He addressed the challenges faced by families, drawing parallels with the life of St Thérèse and her parents, Sts Louis and Zélie Martin, who endured the loss of four of their nine children but raised five daughters all of whom became Religious.

After Mass, a solemn procession took place across the church grounds. Six sets of bearers carried the statue of St Thérèse through six stations, preceding the Blessed Sacrament. Parish priest Fr Christopher Soosaipillai remarked on the significance of the procession, saying, "It's time our beautiful saint takes a walk with us," as we reflect on the hardships brought on by the

pandemic and previous years when inclement weather prevented processions.

The triduum concluded on Oct 6 with a Mass celebrated by Fr George Ho OCD, who further entrenched the message that family life is a vocation capable of sending ripples outward, affecting community and society. At the heart of the celebrations was the cornerstone of faith — Christ as the core of both personal and communal life, guiding us through surrender, prayer, and example.

Each day of the celebrations concluded with fellowship, where parishioners and visitors shared meals, sponsored and prepared by the community, accompanied by music and joyous gatherings. As the triduum came to a close, devotees were invited to take home flowers from the church décor, reminding them of St Thérèse's words: "I understood that every flower created by Him is beautiful... we all have a role to play in building the kingdom of God."

The feast day celebrations left a lasting impression on all who attended, as they reflected on the teachings and legacy of the Little Flower. **Aileen Anthony**



Little Carmelites



Church of the Holy Family, Kajang



Church of Divine Mercy, Sg Ara, Penang



Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang

# Be empowered: Reduce risks of developing dementia

Stephanie Cheong

PENANG: On the Fourth World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, July 28, 2024, Pope Francis delivered the message with the words, "We can be certain, then, that He will be close to us also in old age, all the more because, in the Bible, growing old is a sign of blessing." At the same time, in the Psalms we also find this heartfelt plea to the Lord: "In my old age do not abandon me" (cf. Ps 71:9).

On September 29, the Msgr Aloysius Spirituality Centre (MASC Penang) hosted an informative talk by Dr Cecilia Chan who has been involved in the eldercare industry for more than 20 years. She is a gerontologist who is very passionate in advocating for those with dementia, and also a columnist with *HERALD*.

Statistics shown have proven that dementia is our most-feared illness, more than heart disease or cancer. Dementia is a complex condition not caused by a single factor unlike



The participants listening intently to the presentations.

pneumonia. Sadly, every three seconds someone in the world develops dementia. According to WHO, 2023, currently more than 55 million people have dementia worldwide with a yearly increase of nearly 10 million new cases. On home ground, Malaysia, dementia cases are set to rise 312 per cent by 2050. (T. Arumugam, 2022).

However, we praise God that one in three cases of dementia (according to The Lancet Commission Report July 2017) can be prevented by

addressing the following lifestyle factors: INCREASE education, physical activity, and social contact; and DECREASE hearing loss, hypertension, obesity, smoking, depression and diabetes.

Our brain is an amazing organ reaching complete physical maturation only at puberty. Our brain has no access to the outside world. It needs a healthy body, that is all our organs to serve it: the heart, lungs, sensory system, GI tract and liver.

The cause of dementia is mul-

tifactorial and therefore needs effective prevention and integrative treatment. How do we go about it? These are the important factors that need our close attention in our fight against dementia: physical exercise; healthy diet; social connection; treatment for conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, stroke, depression and obesity; smoking; hearing loss; sleep; use of our brains and our mental and emotional wellbeing.

When the talk drew to an end, Anthony Michael shared his thoughts. He commented, "The talk was very informative and suggested an array of ways of how to reduce the risk of developing dementia. The idea that a healthy body can actually slow down dementia has a new meaning for me. It came as a surprise to me that a combination of physical activity and a balanced diet can reduce the risk of dementia by 67 per cent. I think that there should be a follow-up session on this issue."

We are sure that the rest of the 60 attendees of this very useful talk were of the same opinion.

## EOHSJ vigil and investiture ceremonies

IPOH: The Penang Section of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem (EOHSJ), Australia (Western) celebrated this year's Vigil and Investiture Ceremonies at the Church of St Michael over the weekend of October 5 and 6. A total of 14 members were added to the Order — four new Knights and 10 new Dames. The ceremonies were presided in both English and Mandarin by Prior Fr Dato' Michael Cheah KCHS, who was delegated by the Grand Master from Rome, His Eminence Fernando Cardinal Filoni.

The EOHSJ Penang Section also celebrates her 10th anniversary this year and was delighted that the 14 members of EOHSJ Australian (Western) were present for the joyous occasion. Our visitors were led by Lt Kevin Soosai KC\*HS and accompanied by Lt Hon Robert Peters KGHS and their spouses. The celebrations ended with a gala dinner at a local restaurant.

PENANG: With all the animosity and negativity in the world around us today, it is imperative that we become agents of hope, peace, justice and positivity.

The Alternative to Violence Project Malaysia (AVP) and Friends Peace Teams (FPT) know this only too well as they work mainly with refugees, immigrants and communities in conflict. Heeding Pope Francis' call to be inclusive of all groups of people, Caritas Malaysia partnered with AVP Malaysia and FPT to organise a Power of Goodness project to inspire the general public about the importance of being kind and welcoming when interacting with people who are different from us. The two-hour program titled *Storytelling On Justice and Peace* took place at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit Penang on October 4.

The purpose of this programme is to use the power of storytelling to explore practical ways to act with courage and bring goodness in our



## Storytelling for impact

lives. This program is grounded in values that resonates deeply across all faiths and religions — the call to love, the pursuit of justice and the commitment to maintain peace. These values, that are typically shared by many spiritual traditions, remind us of our responsibility to care for one another and to seek non-violent solutions to conflict and injustice. Though we are of many faiths, we all share a common vision of the world where peace prevails. This programme therefore, offers participants the opportunity

to explore ways to make that vision a reality in our communities.

An estimated 50 participants from various parishes, ministries, faiths, Rohingya communities and non-governmental organisations attended this interactive programme. Melanie Siaw, who currently resides in Pennsylvania, USA was invited to facilitate the programme. Though a pharmacist by training, she became a passionate advocate for justice, peace and positivity due to her many life-changing experiences. She currently serves in the

North American Regional Team with Friends Peace Teams and is deeply involved in supporting invigorating justice and peace works in diverse communities. She was also one of the pioneering members in Caritas Malaysia before she left for America. She is committed to nurturing communities of love and conscience and offers a transformative approach to stopping violence that is rooted in compassion and respect.

Having embraced the AVP skills and tools, she teaches and equips

people of all walks of life to use their listening and speaking skills as a way to spread kindness in hopes to eradicate violence and oppression. The ultimate hope is that communities will learn these skills, make it a lifestyle and eventually employ it in all areas of their lives.

During the programme, participants were encouraged to connect and socialise with one another through sharing in small groups and ice breaker games. In these, participants were taught to practice their listening and speaking skills by taking turns as they shared their views and opinions on the topics presented. Among the fun filled games, participants were asked to use positive adjectives to describe themselves based on the first initial of their names and reintroduce themselves to one another. In a nutshell, the programme showed participants interactive ways to connect with one another with calmness, gentleness and positivity. **Carmel Dominic**

## Pet blessings around the parishes



Church of St Joseph, Plentong



Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya



Church of the Risen Christ, Air Itam



Church of the Assumption, Petaling Jaya

# PROTEC creation by using less paper and wood

Karen-Ann Theseira

BATU PAHAT, Johor: On the morning of October 6, the Church of St Henry was the venue of the diocesan launch of the PROTEC Year 5 Campaign, organised by the Creation Justice Commission of the Malacca Johore Diocese (CJC MJD). The theme of *Use Less Paper and Wood*, fitted perfectly with the parish's lush greenery and wide open spaces — an apt reminder of preserving the beauty of nature.

The programme included the unveiling of the official PROTEC Year 5 banner by Bishop Bernard Paul. Also present were with Bishop's Delegate for Creation Justice Commission and parish priest of Church of St Philip, Fr Paul Wong, parish priest of Church of St Henry, Fr Patrick Tyoh, Fr James Rajendran, Fr Jason Wong and Fr William Pillai.

Among the congregation were parishioners from parishes in the diocese who had travelled for the launch. Despite the wet weather, the tree planting ceremony of two avocado trees by Bishop Bernard proceeded. An enlightening and informative talk *Save the Trees, Every Bit Counts* by Dr Maria Lee, Head of CJC MJD, took place in the hall. This was followed by lunch.

PROTEC, the 'Protect our Earth, Protect our Children' campaign is a five-year nationwide initiative endorsed by all the bishops of Malaysia on August 5, 2020. Each year, the campaign promotes a specific environmental theme. This year's focus is on reducing the use of paper and wood products. The campaign highlights the link between paper and wood consumption and deforestation, noting that globally, the use of paper and paperboard generates over 100 million tons of waste annually, with paper accounting for 50 per cent of business waste.

Bishop Bernard in his homily spoke of how love transforms. When we become one with God, His love moves us to love neigh-



Bishop Bernard Paul blessing the avocado trees.

bour, family, enemy, country, creation. Love everything that God loves. And with such a love, everything around us will impress us, excite us! Later, in the bishop's message following the official launch of PROTEC Year 5, we were reminded that we are Stewards of Creation, and protectors, care-takers of Creation. The prelate added another 'R' to the growing list, namely Resilience. It is in the spirit of resilience and mission that we must be better advocates for Creation by adopting a more sustainable lifestyle.

Dr Maria's talk showcased how the convenience of various types of tissue paper comes with great ecological cost in terms of both resource use and waste generation. Dr Maria's call to switch to reusable alternatives like handkerchieves and cloth towels thus becomes an act of mercy to Creation. Johnson Gomez, a parishioner of the Church St Henry, commented that he uses handkerchieves instead of tissue paper and went on to express his concern over the increasing heat we have been experi-

encing. Gomez attributes the development of skyscrapers and the ever growing number of vehicles as a suffocating enemy to nature.

Fr Paul later distributed the PROTEC Campaign posters to the parish representatives present at the launch.

PROTEC Year 5 is the final campaign in the series of campaigns with the first launched on September 1, 2020. The theme was, 'Use Less Electricity,' followed by, 'Cut Down Meat, Dairy and Food Waste,' 'Stop Plastic Pollution,' and 'Cut Fuel Consumption,' consecutively.

Philip Packium, a parishioner from the Church of St Philip, Segamat, mentioned how campaigns such as PROTEC do make an impact and that he would share with his family the necessity of not using so much tissue paper. Such programmes aim to make people reflect, rethink and to be open to change. To start off participants on the journey of change, they were given a door gift in the form of a handkerchief at the talk!

## Church of St Anthony embraces a plastic-free future

KUALA LUMPUR: In a move towards environmental sustainability, the Church of St Anthony took a pledge to be a plastic-free environment effective October 1. This initiative is a testament to the church's unwavering commitment to protecting our planet and fostering a community that values and respects God's creation.

The plastic-free move is not just a policy change but a call to action for the entire parish community. Parishioners are now encouraged to bring their own containers and reusable bags for breakfast mornings, all parish events, and ministry activities.

In a bid to start the next generation from young, all catechetical activities will also now exclusively use reusable tableware. This small but significant change will in many ways help reduce the reliance on single-use plastics and promote a culture of sustainability among parishioners of all ages.

Parish priest Fr Dr Clarence Devadass emphasised the importance of this initiative, stating that each and every one of us are called to live our vocation to be guardians of God's creation.

"Our commitment to a plastic-free environment is a reflection

of our dedication to living out the values of respect and care for God's creation. It is a journey we embark on together, as a community, to protect and preserve the beauty of our world for future generations."

He added that this calling is not an optional or secondary aspect of our Christian experience, as shared in a powerful message inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical letter, *Laudato Si' on Care for Our Common Home*, which highlights the spiritual and moral responsibility we all share in caring for the environment.

"This is a process to gradually educate people of all ages so that we can together make a significant difference in protecting our planet. We may not achieve 'success' overnight, but we take little steps towards the intended goal," he said, adding that the eco-friendly habit not only reduces waste but also fosters a sense of personal responsibility to care for our environment.

By adopting sustainable practices, the parish is not only reducing its environmental footprint but also setting a powerful example for others to follow in their families, BECs, schools, colleges, offices, and neighbourhoods. **Elvina Fernandez**



Parishioners enjoying some light refreshment with reusable cups during the fellowship.



Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam



Church of the Holy Family, Ulu Tiram



Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Brickfields

# Flood relief mission in Kelantan

Aaron Koh

KELANTAN: From October 3 to 5, the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD), led by Director Dr Gary Liew and Ministry of the Poor Coordinator Aaron Koh, conducted a flood relief mission in Rantau Panjang and Pasir Mas, Kelantan, near the Thai border.

The mission, organised in partnership with the Kelantan Disaster Relief Network (KDRN) and Crisis Relief Services and Training (CREST), focused on building emergency rafts for villagers in flood-prone areas. Several *kampungs* benefited from the initiative, with rafts constructed

to help safeguard essential items during future floods.

The emergency rafts are part of CREST's disaster risk reduction plan, designed to help high-risk, flood-prone villages protect electrical equipment and essential items during floods and minimise damage and losses.

This project, a collaboration between CREST and AOHD, began earlier this year with on-ground assessments and support from KDRN to identify villages in need and source materials locally. Each of these 13.38 square metre rafts costs over RM2,500 to build using high-quality tools to ensure safety and buoyancy. The rafts can hold goods for five to six families and

are equipped with a canvas roof to protect items from getting wet while remaining anchored during floods.

AOHD also sought cooperation from the Civil Defence Force (Angkatan Pertahanan Awam Malaysia) to ensure the success of this project. With the assistance of local villagers, 30 emergency rafts were built, at a pace of approximately three rafts per day. The goal is to complete and hand over the rafts before the Northeast Monsoon hits the country.

The number of emergency rafts will increase as the need grows, with AOHD aiming to continue its partnership with KDRN and CREST to assist more flood victims and reach other affected communi-



Local villagers working together to build emergency rafts.

ties. Resident Juliana Mat Zaid, 48, expressed her gratitude for the donation, saying the emergency raft was essential in a flood situation. "Our settlement was submerged in water up to five meters, resulting in the loss of property, including

many electrical items," she said. "I had considered building a raft like this, but the high cost made it impossible. Praise the Lord, today we received this raft, and I promise to take good care of it so it can be used whenever floods strike."

## GO Mission Journey 2024 commences at Nilai parish

NILAI, Negeri Sembilan: The GO Mission Journey 2024, a pilgrimage across five churches in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur during Mission month, began at the Church of St Theresa, Nilai (CSTN) on October 1. Organised by the Kuala Lumpur Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) in collaboration with the Archdiocesan Mission of New Evangelisation for Christ (AMNEC), the journey reflects Pope Francis' theme, *Go and Invite Everyone to the Banquet*.

Around 120 pilgrims from various parishes within the archdiocese gathered at CSTN, joined by an equal number of local parishioners, to celebrate the feast of St Therese of Lisieux. The pilgrimage aimed to foster communion, participation, and mission among the faithful, emphasising the call to mission outlined in the Great Commission.

The event commenced at 5.00pm with a welcome address and opening prayer by CSTN parish priest, Fr Christopher Soosaipillai. Pilgrims participated in the "Little Flower Pilgrimage Walk," a reflection on the life of St Therese presented by Jason Fernandez and Aileen Anthony from the Family Life Ministry. This was followed by praise and worship led by the Cornerstone Disciples.

The spiritual journey continued with a talk titled *I am a Mission*, delivered in English by Ben Savarimuthu and in Bahasa Melayu by Lucas Yong. The talks, which highlighted St Therese's missionary spirit, encouraged pilgrims to

embrace their call as missionary disciples.

The pilgrims then gathered in the church for the recitation of the Mission Rosary, led by the AMNEC team, followed by the novena to St Theresa, led by CSTN's Liturgical Ministry. The celebrations culminated with Mass celebrated by Fr Xavier Andrew, with concelebrants Fr Raymond Pereira, Fr Edwin Peter, Fr Albet Arockiasamy, and Fr Christopher.

After Mass, the Mission month was officially launched. Fr Raymond and Fr Edwin introduced Mission month and AMNEC before unfurling the official banner, marking the launch of Mission month 2024.

Fr Christopher then explained the theme of the Holy Childhood Collection *Children Helping Children*. The priests presented Holy Childhood collection tins to five child representatives, symbolically launching this initiative. Children under 14 are encouraged to collect coin boxes from their parishes and return them on the Feast of the Epiphany in January 2025.

The evening ended with dinner, fellowship, and music, leaving participants inspired and motivated to continue the mission. The GO Mission Journey proceeded to the Church of St Thomas the Apostle in Kuantan on Oct 12, followed by visits to Sts Peter and Paul Church in Banting, Church of the Risen Christ in Kuala Lumpur, and Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Puchong later this month. **Brian de Rozario**



Fr Raymond Pereira and Fr Edwin Peter launching the 2024 Mission Month.



Parishioners singing 'A Family of Faith'

## CHS Parish Pastoral Assembly reflects on inclusivity, care, and unity

PENANG: Parishioners of the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit (CHS) came together recently for their Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA) to reflect on their progress in addressing the pastoral priorities identified during the 2023 PPA — Inclusivity, Care, and Unity (ICU). The assembly began with an opening prayer led by Fr Fabian Dicom, who warmly welcomed all attendees.

The journey towards the 2024 PPA started with a review of 2023 Day of Planning around ICU followed by 2024 Parish and Leaders' Formation in March 2024 on living the four Virtues. The survey results from the Formation were shared as perspectives of our parishioners of where we are on ICU and helped to identify the areas of ICU that the parish needs to continue to grow for 2025.

Parish priest, Fr Joachim Robert, shared the elements of 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope: Renewed Faith, Enthusiasm for Our Lord, Peace Making and Cancellation of Debts. In aligning to the Regional Pastoral Assembly (RPA), parishioners were reminded to Celebrate, Listen and Walk together as Disciples on our journey towards the 2026 Malaysia

Pastoral Convention. Out of the four focus areas (Church, Family, Society, Ecology) from the RPA, 'Family' was chosen as the focus for CHS 2024 PPA.

Fr Joachim then led parishioners through a reflection on *Finding Jesus in the Temple* where Mary, Joseph and Jesus travelled on their annual pilgrimage to offer thanksgiving to God. Parishioners were reminded that as we prepare to celebrate and journey, we sometimes unknowingly leave Jesus behind. When this happens, it is important that we acknowledge and quickly come back to Church to find Jesus. As pilgrims of Hope, we need to "Look at our Past with Gratitude", "Live in the Present with Enthusiasm" and "Look to our Future with Hope".

After the reflection, parishioners spent time in silent adoration before the Blessed Sacrament followed by Benediction and then proceeded to the Dewan Holy Spirit for the spiritual conversation.

Fr Fabian led the parishioners through the process of Spiritual Conversation. Twenty-one table facilitators guided the spiritual conversation. A representative from

each table was then invited to summarise the one area most in need of focus. Among the top five most common words were Love, Christ/God, Communication, Together and Forgive.

Before the PPA ended, Deacon Andrew Loh gave a sneak preview of the plans for 2025 Jubilee Year for CHS on pilgrimages and hosting pilgrims, while David Chan shared the setting up of Saints Corner for Blessed Elena Guerra, Blessed Carlo Acutis and Blessed Nicolas Bunkerd Kitbamrung.

During the *Questions and Answers* session, parishioners shared sentiments, thoughts and suggestions for continued growth. The Parish Pastoral Council will discern on the questions collected.

While the sharing and conversations were carried out in English, slides in Mandarin and Tamil were projected as an effort to be united and inclusive.

The 2024 PPA concluded with the final blessing by Fr Francis Anthony and sing-a-long of *A Family of Faith*. Handprints of the parishioners on a white linen cloth symbolised being part of CHS Family. **Thaddeus Chan**

# Korean Mission Society to revitalise missionary work for jubilee

SEOUL: The Korean Mission Society (KMS) has announced plans to revitalise diocese-level collaboration with missionary priests and a vision for lay missionary formation as part of its golden jubilee in 2025.

At a press conference ahead of its 50th anniversary on October 4, KMS officials acknowledged the importance of lay missionaries in the Korean Church's missionary activities.

"The rich experience of lay people who have been active in various fields of society will be of great help to the Korean Church in its mission," said Fr Stefano Choi, a member of the KMS, based out of South Korea.

The congregation said it will organise its anniversary celebrations to live out its new missionary slogan, "Going Out."

KMS held a symposium, 50th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Korean Missionary Society and 50th Anniversary of Overseas Mission, at the Catholic University of Korea's College of Theology in Hyehwa-dong in the capital Seoul on Oct 19.

The congregation will also organise a Mass on Feb 26, 2025, and release a 50th anniversary booklet.

In October 2025, nine missionary bishops will be invited to celebrate a Thanksgiving Mass with the sponsoring members. A mu-



A missionary from the Korean Mission Society distributes Communion in Baguio diocese in the Philippines. (Photo: Korean Mission Society)

sic concert will take place at the time.

The KMS was established in February 1975 at the request of the late Bishop Emeritus John A. Choi Jae-seon of Busan and was approved by the Korean Bishops' Conference.

Established around 22 years after the end of the Korean War in 1953, the KMS has played a key role as a catalyst in helping

the Korean Church grow from a "receiving Church" to a "giving Church," KMS officials said.

The missionary congregation currently has 87 members, including 85 missionary priests and two lay missionaries. It works in nine countries, including Papua New Guinea, Taiwan, and China.

Choi pointed out that five priests from

various dioceses in South Korea have been going abroad as missionaries for several years.

"We will further strengthen and revitalise our cooperation with each diocese in the face of the sharp decline in missionary priestly vocations," Choi added.

The Korean Church's own research in 2023 found a decline in priestly vocation and the number of priests ordained every year.

In 2023, a total of 85 new priests were ordained compared with 131 in 2011, and seminary admissions dropped by 30 percent in 2021 compared with 2011, the study said.

An alarmingly low birth rate and secularisation were cited as major factors behind the drop in priestly and religious vocation in the country.

Fr Jeong Doo-young, president of the missionary congregation, pointed out that the spirit of "sharing together" of the Korean Church, which has been realised by sending missionaries to foreign countries despite the lack of material resources, "has been highly praised by the world Church."

"However, due to the declining birth rate and the trend of indifference to religion, the number of missionaries has slowed down, so we need the attention of sponsors and the entire Church community," Fr Jeong emphasised. [ucanews.com](https://ucanews.com)

# Pope welcomes growing roles for women in the Church



Pope Francis meets with a delegation of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (Vatican file photo)

VATICAN: The subject of women and their role in the Catholic Church was central to a conversation Pope Francis had with 150 Jesuits from Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, during his recent Apostolic Visit.

The meeting, which took place in the Collège Saint-Michel in Brussels, included a discussion covering a range of issues from secularisation to inculturation, from the Synod to migration.

Responding to one Jesuit's question about "the difficulty of giving women a more just and adequate place in the Church," Pope Francis said: "The Church is woman. I see women blessed with charisms, and I do not want to limit the discussion of women's role in the Church to the topic of ministry. In general, masculinism and feminism are 'market' themes."

The Pope stressed that at this point in time, he is trying more and more to bring women into the Vatican with roles of higher and higher responsibility. "Things are changing," he said. "You can see and feel it."

Pope Francis reminded everyone that the deputy governor of the Governorate is a woman (Sr Raffaella Petrini), that the Dicastery for Integral Human Development "also has a woman as its deputy" (Sr Alessandra Smerilli), and that in the 'team' for the appointment of bishops, there are three women (Sr Raffaella Petrini, Sr Yvonne Reungoat and Dr Maria Lia Zervino, appointed in 2022 as members of the Dicastery for Bishops).

"Since they are in charge of selecting candidates, things are much better... They are acute in their judgments," he said.

Even in the Dicastery for Consecrated Life, the deputy is a woman, (Sr Simona Brambilla, secretary) and in the Council for the Economy the deputy coordinator is a woman, Dr Charlotte Kreuter-Kirchhoff.

"Women, in short, are entering the Vatican in roles of high responsibility: we will continue on this path. Things are working better than before," the Pope assured his listeners.

The Pope then recalled an anecdote with

the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen: "We were talking about a specific problem, and I asked her, 'But how do you handle these kinds of problems?' She replied, 'The same way all of us mothers do.' Her answer gave me much to think about."

Later the subject of the shortage of vocations to the priesthood in Europe was raised. One religious asked Pope Francis: "How do you see the future of parish communities without priests?"

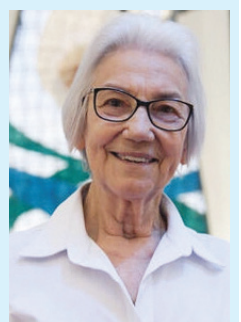
The Pope responded: "The community is more important than the priest. The priest is a servant of the community."

He then cited the example of women religious who take on leadership roles in some parts of the world, such as the Peruvian congregation of nuns who have "their own specific mission" of going "to those situations where there is no priest. They do everything: they preach, they baptise. If a priest is eventually sent, then they go somewhere else," to look after another community. —

ICN

# Brazilian nun honoured for aid to refugees

BRASÍLIA: Rosita Milesi, a 79-year-old Brazilian Catholic nun, was awarded the prestigious Nansen Award by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) October 9, for her tireless work supporting displaced people and refugees.



For over 40 years, Sr Milesi has helped thousands of people gain access to administrative documents, housing, and the job market in Brazil, the UNHCR emphasised when announcing the laureate's name.

"I decided to dedicate myself to migrants and refugees. I am inspired by the growing need to help, welcome, and integrate refugees," said Scalabrini Sr Milesi in a statement. "I am not afraid to act, even if we don't achieve everything we want," she added. She leads the Institute for Migration and Human Rights, a humanitarian agency.

The UNHCR highlighted her work as an advocate, noting that it had been "essential" to the development of Brazilian legislation, helping to improve refugee rights and align them with international standards.

"Too often, women face increased risks of discrimination and violence, especially when they are forced to flee," said Filippo Grandi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "But these five laureates demonstrate that women also play an essential role in humanitarian responses and in finding solutions," he emphasised.

Created in 1954, the award includes a prize of \$100,000 (RM429,100) and is named after Norwegian polar explorer Fridtjof Nansen, Nobel Peace Prize laureate in 1922 and the first High Commissioner for Refugees of the League of Nations, the precursor to the United Nations. [LCI \(https://international.la-croix.com/\)](https://international.la-croix.com/)

## Snippets from Anna Amandus

### October 4

The fruits of the spiritual conversation on the "foundation" section of the *Instrumentum Laboris*, were shared at the General Assembly. Not only did we listen to each other in our small groups yesterday, but we also had the opportunity to hear reports from other language groups.

After the reports were presented, members of the synod had the opportunity to share their reflections and opinions on the key themes that emerged

from the summary reports in the free intervention session. This provided a chance for a more in-depth exploration and understanding of the content in the initial section.

Today also marks the feast of St Francis of Assisi, so we took the opportunity to wish Pope Francis a happy feast day. We hope that Pope Francis continues to be guided and inspired by the works of St Francis of Assisi especially as the shepherd of the Church.



The Asian lady sitting next to the Pope is Momoko from Japan. She is a consecrated woman and one of the President delegates.

### October 5

Today, we conclude the week by formulating the reports on the "Foundation" section of the *Instrumentum Laboris*, based on the insights shared during yesterday's free interventions session. The final and refined report will be submitted to the General Secretariat.

The process that we went through this week was slightly different from last year. However, prayer and moments of silence continue to play an important role, as we acknowledge our reliance on the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

As I look ahead to the coming weeks of the Synod, I am reminded to "Take Off My Shoe" and fully surrender to the works of the Holy Spirit.

Rest, I must. And be prepared for the next section of the *Instrumentum Laboris on Relations*, which will begin on Monday, October 8.

### October 6

Tonight's dinner was special. Eight others and I visited our last year's accommodation, Casa per ferie Felice Prinetti via di Bravetta, Rome. It is managed with love and dedication by the Congregation of the Daughters of St Joseph of Genoni, founded by Fr Felice Prinetti.

Upon our arrival, we immediately felt a sense of warmth and love, as if we had returned home. The sisters greeted us with

their beautiful smiles and warm hugs.

Our month-long stay at Casa per ferie Felice Prinetti was filled with countless wonderful memories. The dining area became our sanctuary, a space where we could truly be ourselves. We shared laughter, stories, and, of course, discussions related to the synod. It also served as a place to unwind after long hours of sitting and listening.

We miss this place we call home.



### October 7

The Synod members joined the Rosary Prayer for peace with Papa Fransiskus at the Basilica of St Mary Major. Let us continue to pray for peace and love for the world and for our hearts.

Last year, I visited this Basilica to pray to Mama Mary. I prayed for my husband and me to be blessed with a child and have the opportunity to become parents. A year has passed, and I'm here again, feeling a bit emotional. However, I continue to pray through the intercession of Mama Mary, especially for those married couples, like my husband and me, who are trying to conceive. I hope that the good Lord will grant our prayers in His time.

To all married couples out there who are trying to conceive, continue to pray and do not give up on hope.



### October 8

"Walk, Don't Run. That's it."

We started the process in my new group with an invitation to reflect on the poem by Rob Bell shared by our facilitator. The poem reminds us not to rush things out and to take time to listen to God's voice in our hearts.

The section on *Relations* emphasises the importance of relationships at all levels, and the fundamental one is the relationship with God.

In the first phase of spiritual conversations, we need to reflect on what is valuable and worthy of

acceptance to be included in the final document and identify points that need further discussion and correction. In the afternoon, we completed the second round of our spiritual conversation.

It was a fruitful sharing experience. Everyone in the group shared their reflections and how they felt or were challenged after listening to each other.

Tomorrow will be a long day as we will listen to reports from each language group, as well as personal reflections during the free intervention session.

May the Holy Spirit continue to work in us as we prepare for tomorrow.

### October 9

We started the day by congratulating the Synod members who were announced as Cardinals by the Pope. We also watched a powerful video message from the parish in Gaza. It was a heartfelt video, and we continue to pray for Gaza and all parts of the world that are at war. May peace prevail!

Before discussing the reports on *Relations* by the language groups, the synod members voted for one member

from each continent to be part of the drafting team. Fr Dr Clarence Devadass was voted for by the Asian members.

Today was a challenging day as we listened to reports and interventions on key themes from the language reports. Some of the key themes discussed were Christian initiation for a synodal church, exchange of gifts, and Ecclesial discernment.

Rest, rest, rest for a more energising day tomorrow.

### October 10

On the third day of the second week of the synod, we continued to discuss the key themes that emerged from the language group on *Relations*. After listening to several interventions, a five-minute time was given for the group to share what touched or challenged them in related to the key themes. It was tiring, but the process had to continue, and everyone was giving their best until the end.

During the afternoon, we had the chance to participate in the Maronite rite Mass presided over by Bishop Paul Rouhana at St Peter's Basilica. Last year, we experienced the Byzantine Rite. I am so grateful for the opportunity to witness and experience the Eastern Catholic church rites. It truly captured the essence of the exchange of gifts, as mentioned in the *Instrumentum Laboris under Relations*.

And thanks to the General Secretariat of the Synod, we all had the chance to participate in the theology-pastoral



forum on two topics: *The People of God: The Subject of The Mission and The Role and Authority of the Bishop in a Synodal Church*.

I chose *The People of God: Subject of the Mission* and had the opportunity to attend the forum at the Jesuit Curia. The forum was informative and enriching. It deepened my understanding of the people of God, and I hope it will help me contribute more as I continue in this process until the end.

I am looking forward to exploring more amazing experiences in the days to come.

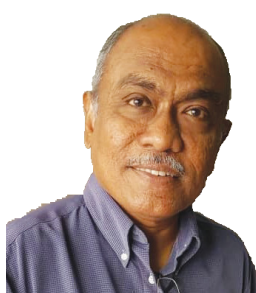
Carpe Diem!



This is my new group for module on relations, pathways and places of the *Instrumentum Laboris*. Group 39.

# Collegiality of Bishops and Catechesis

In concluding the previous article, I stated that after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), there emerged an understanding that all bishops, under the leadership of the pope, are responsible for catechesis in the Church. It is related to one of the most distinctive features of the Council, namely the collegiality of bishops. In this fourth and final article on the role of bishops in catechesis, I will discuss the importance of collegiality in catechesis, by giving, as an example, the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.



**Echoing the Faith**

DR STEVEN SELVARAJU

## Collegiality of bishops

In general, 'collegiality' refers to "the doctrine that all bishops, with the pope, have a corporate responsibility for the unity of the faith and of communion in the universal Church" (The New Dictionary of Theology). It also refers to the mutual interaction and collaboration within the college of bishops on the international, national and regional levels.

One important expression of collegiality is the synod of bishops. It was established by St. Paul VI in 1965. According to the 1983 Code of Canon, "a synod is a group of bishops who have been chosen from different regions of the world and meet at fixed times to foster closer unity between the Roman Pontiff and bishops who assist the Roman Pontiff with their counsel in the preservation of faith and morals and in the observance and strengthening of ecclesiastical discipline, and to consider questions pertaining to the activity of the Church in the world" (Can. 342). Basically, a synod allows bishops to periodically come together

to discuss important issues for the Church and to offer advice to the pope.

## Collegiality at work

As far as catechesis is concerned, two synods of bishops have to be highlighted. These are the synod to discuss the theme of catechesis in 1977, which resulted in the promulgation of the *Catechesi Tradendae* by St John Paul II in 1979 and the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in 1985, whereby bishops came together to

reflect on the impact of Vatican II, twenty years after its closing. At this synod, some bishops proposed that a "compendium of the Catholic faith" or a universal catechism be produced.

The call for a universal catechism was not something new. The Council of Trent (1545 – 1563) led to the publication of the first universal catechism, the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* in 1556. Requests were made for a similar catechism at First Vatican Council (1869-1871) but it did not materialise. At the Second Vatican Council, although there were requests for a catechism, the majority of bishops did not agree. In 1985, however, most of the bishops were convinced that the time had finally arrived for work to begin on a new catechism for the entire Church.

## The appointment of a commission

On the recommendations of the Synod, in 1986, St John Paul II appointed a commission, consisting twelve cardinals and bishops under the leadership of Cardinal Josef Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI). It was decided that the catechism should be aimed, above all, at the bishops since

they have the greatest responsibility for catechesis in the diocese and in the Church. Through the bishops, the catechism was to be the Church's book of inner unity in faith and proclamation, while at the same time, providing a standard by which doctrine is preached and taught at the local level. The catechism was intended to reflect the faith of the Church.

## The editorial committee

An editorial committee, headed by Bishop Christoph Schonborn (now Cardinal), made up of seven bishops who had catechetical expertise, was set up. The committee was responsible for the writing of the text. The catechism was not to be the work of specialists but of pastors. Therefore, the first three parts of the catechism were assigned to three pairs of bishops from different parts of the world. The fourth part on prayer, which was added later, was assigned to a priest, an expert on Eastern theology. Reflecting on this years later, Cardinal Ratzinger stated:

*"To be frank, I did initially feel it was rather rash to suppose that a group of authors like this, spread all over the world - authors who as bishops were in any case already carrying heavy workloads - could manage to complete a book together."*

## The bishops share their opinions

The first draft of the catechism was sent to forty consultants in 1987. The revised draft was sent (sub secreto) in 1989 to bishops all over the world for their comments. More than a thousand bishops made their opinions known, with about twenty-four thousand observations sent to the committee.

## The fruit of collegiality

The catechism was published in 1992. It was the ninth and final draft and bore the name: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

On June 25, 1992, St John Paul II gave formal approval to the final text and on December 7, 1992, a formal ceremony of transmission of the Catechism to the whole Church was held. In his Apostolic Constitution, *Fidei Depositum*, the Pope wrote:

*"It can be said that this Catechism is the result of the collaboration of the whole Episcopate of the Catholic Church, who generously accepted my invitation to share responsibility for an enterprise which directly concerns the life of the Church... This achievement of the Catechism thus reflects the nature of collegial nature of the Episcopate, it testifies to the Church's catholicity."*

## Conclusion

The role of bishops in catechesis has evolved over the centuries. Today, bishops are the teachers and guardians of the Faith, the catechists par excellence, the first catechists, and those most responsible for catechesis in their diocese. They also share this responsibility with the pope for the whole Church. According to St John Paul II, by involving the bishops in the task of catechesis, "they are invited by the Holy Father to sound out, together with him, the symphony of faith of the Church". May the Lord bless and guide them in this crucial task.

The key ideas of the article are presented in a simple illustrated format below. The images are taken from the public domain.

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## COLLEGIALITY OF BISHOPS AND CATECHESIS

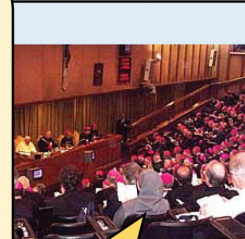
After the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the understanding that all bishops, under the leadership of the pope, are responsible for catechesis for the whole Church emerged. This is related to one of the distinctive features of the Council, namely, that of the **collegiality of bishops**.



'Collegiality' refers to "the doctrine that all bishops, with the pope, as head of the college, have a **corporate responsibility** for the unity of the faith and of communion in the universal Church" (The New Dictionary of Theology).



An excellent example of collegiality in catechesis can be seen in the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. At the **Extraordinary Synod of Bishops** held in 1985 to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, some bishops proposed that a universal catechism be produced.



The time is ripe to begin work on a new catechism!

On the recommendations of the Synod, in 1986, St. John Paul II appointed a commission, consisting twelve cardinals and bishops under the leadership of **Cardinal Josef Ratzinger** (later Pope Benedict XVI). The catechism was aimed, above all, at the bishops since they have the greatest responsibility for catechesis in the diocese

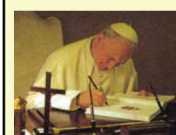
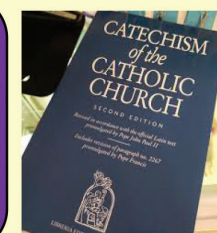


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# Saving a school and a house called Nazareth

By Joan Foo

Convent Bukit Nanas (affectionately known as ‘CBN’), one of Kuala Lumpur’s oldest and most prestigious girls’ schools, is on the cusp of celebrating its 125th anniversary since its founding by the Infant Jesus Sisters (IJS) in 1899. As I began writing this article, it struck me that I must first include an important prelude — how CBN was saved, ensuring that this historic 125th anniversary could even take place.

Let me take you back to 2021. The lease for the land on which CBN had proudly stood for 122 years was set to expire on September 6, 2021. The school had applied for a renewal as early as 2017 but received no response to that or subsequent follow-up letters. Then, in the midst of the COVID-19 lockdown, in January 2021, CBN received a letter from the Government, dated December 18, 2020, abruptly stating that the land would be taken over once the lease expired on September 6, 2021.

The nuns were at a loss. But, public indignation was aroused and CBN’s prominent Alumni Tan Sri Rafidah Aziz and human rights lawyer Dato’ Ambiga Sreenevasan led the way asking the Government for an explanation. The school had been educating thousands of young girls through generations, it was a national heritage and the school’s land was next to a forest reserve.

How were the nuns expected to handle this in court? They lacked the funds to cover the enormous legal fees. Just when all seemed lost, a cavalry of lawyers, including the late Datuk Seri Gopal Sri Ram (former Federal Court judge), Damien Chan, and others, stepped forward to work *pro bono*. Together with the CBN nuns, alumni, and friends, they pressed on — despite the challenges posed by the COVID lockdown.

On April 7, 2021, CBN filed the application for a judicial review; they



challenged the government’s decision to not extend the school’s land lease and CBN sought a stay of proceedings against the authorities and a mandamus to compel the Federal Territories Lands and Mines (PTGWP) director to revoke the land lease non-renewal letter dated Dec 18, 2020.

Then, things moved very fast. A big sigh of relief went out when PTGWP officially wrote to CBN that they would extend the land lease for the school for another 60 years! On June 3, CBN discontinued its lawsuit against the PTGWP.

Today, as we celebrate 125 years of CBN and raise our glasses in gratitude, we are mindful that the school’s new land lease has only 57 years remaining. However, the CBN community — nuns, alumni, lawyers, and friends — remain hopeful. The 60-year extension granted by the PTGWP in 2021 brings us closer to the possibility of CBN being listed as a national heritage site under the National Heritage Act 2005. We hold on to that hope, knowing the importance of preserving this national educational treasure.

## This brings us to ... A House called Nazareth

With this hope in mind, the nuns continue their efforts to secure funding to repair and maintain CBN. Their focus is on providing a safe and nurturing environment for students, never cutting corners in the restoration process. They take a long-term view — far beyond the next 60 years. When they purchased the vast land on Bukit Nanas hill in 1898, their vision was equally expansive: to provide quality education to hundreds of thousands of schoolgirls, not only in Kuala Lumpur but across the entire country.

When the IJS sisters founded their first school in Kuala Lumpur, it began in a humble house they built in 1898, which they named ‘Nazareth’. This historic house, a grande dame of Gothic architecture, was named after the ancient town of Nazareth — a name that has endured to this day. Nazareth House is now part of the ever-expanding CBN campus, which includes both primary and secondary schools. For generations, it has been a place where Malaysian women are educated with the CBN spirit, instilled with a strong moral compass and a deep love for their fellow human beings.

## Ah — if only walls could talk!

The many buildings of CBN and in particular, Nazareth House, have seen many transformations through more than a century. During the war, Nazareth House was requisitioned by the Japanese as the Domestic Science School for girls. It also once served as the Chief Justice’s residence and a Teachers’ Training College.

Nazareth House currently serves as the home of the library and CBN’s cooperative outlet on the ground floor. However, in the late 1960s, it was a bustling hub of activity, housing all the Form 6 classrooms and playing a vital role in the daily life of the school.

Karen Wong, a Form 6 student in 1982-83, fondly recalls her time at Nazareth House, where her classroom was located. As seniors, they felt privileged to have their own house within the expansive CBN campus. However, the grand “isolation” of Nazareth House took on a different purpose at the end of each school year during Charity Week. Karen remembers that Nazareth was transformed into the “Horror House.” All the lights were turned off, and eerie decorations lined the bannisters and walls. Older Form 6 students would dress as ghosts, vampires, and monsters, lying in wait upstairs to frighten younger students who dared to venture into the Horror House. Karen recalls those moments filled with happy screams.

Sadly, today, Nazareth House has become a real “Horror House.” All the second-floor rooms are now off-limits due to termite infestation, and some floorboards have become too dangerous to walk on. Extensive repairs and refurbishments are planned, but they cannot commence until the nuns and alumni secure the necessary funding. The fundraising dinner on November 2, 2024, at MITEC aims to do more than celebrate a milestone; the alumni hope to raise much-needed funds to restore their beloved and increasingly dilapidated school. Tickets are still available at [finance@cbn alumni.org](mailto:finance@cbn alumni.org).



CBN before the war



Nazareth House Chritianne Goonting sketch

“The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.”

With these powerful and directional words, the very first sentence from *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, Vatican Council II), those present in the nearly five-year long Council situated and directed the path of the Church. Pondering and praying for the second session of Synod on Synodality taking in Rome, I found myself revisiting some of the reflection and teachings found in *Gaudium et Spes* (GS).

Unlike the *Dogmatic Constitution of the Catholic Church (Lumen Gentium)* which serves to clarify and identify who were as Church to ourselves, *Gaudium et Spes* aims to clarify our relationship with the world. Thus, *Gaudium et Spes* complements *Lumen Gentium*.

*Gaudium et Spes* calls us to engage the world of which we are part of especially in societal issues with the hope of ensuring human dignity and equality. This includes political engagement, the promotion of peace and human development, and dialogue. Areas such as human rights, social

## Citizens of two cities



**Canvas**

FR RICHARD ANTHONYSAMY SJ

justice, marriage, family, and war are mentioned.

Underlying such engagement is the firm belief that God loves and cares for everyone (Matthew 5:43-48). It is a belief that God is actively at work to bring about the good of all. Thus, one could say, our engagement in the world is essentially to find God in all things and all things in God. This call resonates very much with the prayer of Jesus (John 17:15) “I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.” So, engage the world as we are protected, but not removed. Quite clearly, then, we cannot run away from the world or pretend we have nothing to do it.

Each one of us who claims to be a follower of Christ must engage the world. In paragraph 43 of *Gaudium et Spes* we read, “This council exhorts Christians, as citizens of two cities, to strive to discharge their earthly

duties conscientiously and in response to the Gospel spirit. They are mistaken who, knowing that we have here no abiding city but seek one which is to come, think that they may therefore shirk their earthly responsibilities. For they are forgetting that by the faith itself they are more obliged than ever to measure up to these duties, each according to his proper vocation.” Thus, as Christian professionals

(doctors, lawyers, teachers, armed forces, caregivers, engineers, scientists, politicians, nurses, etc) we are called to engage “conscientiously and in response to the Gospel spirit.” One is reminded of the words of Jesus in gospel according to St Matthew (5:13-16): “You are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world...”

Journeying the synodal way has, in my opinion, brought us back to the foundational insights of *Gaudium et Spes*. The fact that the delegates of

the Synod are not limited to clerics is significant. We are, one could say, engaging the world within Church even as we strive to engage the world outside. Perhaps, as we await of the outcome of the Synod on Synodality, we can ask ourselves if we have taken to mind and heart what *Gaudium et Spes* exhorts us to do. Put simply, am I being a good Christian lawyer, doctor, caregiver, administrator, scientist, etc where I am? How can we engage more fruitfully the world in which we have been placed? Every small effort makes a difference.

In conclusion, allow me to share with you a prayer by St John XXIII, the Pope who convened Vatican Council II found in his own prayer journal,

*O Lord, do not let us turn into “broken cisterns,” that can hold no water....*

*Do not let us be so blinded by the enjoyment of the good things of earth that our hearts become insensible to the cry of the poor, of the sick, or orphaned children and those innumerable brothers of ours who lack the necessary minimum to eat, to cloth their nakedness, and to gather their family under one roof.*

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

## Good Catholic literature forms knowledgeable Catholics

In July this year, the Vatican published a letter of His Holiness Pope Francis on the Role of Literature in Formation. In the letter, Pope Francis underscored “the value of reading novels and poems as part of one’s path to personal maturity.”

The Church is abundantly blessed with a rich tradition of Catholic writings and literature, which serve as invaluable resources for deepening our faith and guiding us toward spiritual maturity. Cultivating the habit of reading these works is essential for becoming well-informed and grounded Catholics. Below, I’ve compiled a list (in no particular order) of some Catholic writings and publications that have greatly enriched and shaped my own faith journey.

### The Code of Canon Law

The Code of Canon law contains ecclesiastical laws governing the Catholic Church. Because of this, many people perceive it as a serious and boring read. However, I choose to read it to have a deeper understanding of the laws of the Church which can come in handy at times.

For example, my mum who follows a keto diet usually prepares meat dishes without a care about the Church’s law to abstain from meat on Fridays. When I called her out for it, she asked in which church document is that law mentioned in? I explained that Canon 1251 states the following: “Abstinence from meat, or from some other food as determined by the Bishops’ Conference, is to be observed on all Fridays, unless a solemnity should fall on a Friday. Abstinence and fasting are to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.”

So now you know which Church document has the law on meatless Fridays. It certainly was not conjured from thin air.



**Faithfully Speaking**

JULIE LIM SEET YIN

### The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)

The CCC is a statement of the Church’s faith and of Catholic doctrine, attested to or illumined by Sacred Scripture, the Apostolic Tradition and the Church’s Magisterium.

When I was serving as a catechist, I referred to the CCC when preparing lessons. And I still refer to it at times when I need to check something about the faith. I encourage all Catholics to read the CCC to have a

deeper understanding of the teachings of the Church. Let us all not just be Sunday Catholics, but be knowledgeable Catholics about the faith that we profess.

### The writings of Pope Benedict XVI

Pope Benedict XVI wrote many books throughout his life. However, his three-volume meditation on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ stands out. The first volume (in order of publication date) is titled, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* (2007), followed by *Jesus of Nazareth – Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection* (2011), and lastly, *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infant Narratives* (2012).

Written on the book flap of the second volume is this description: “Benedict brings to his study the vast learning of a brilliant scholar, the passionate searching of a great mind, and the deep compassion of a pastor’s heart. In the end, he dares readers to grapple with the meaning of Jesus’ life, teaching, death and resurrection.”

If you’re interested to read more of Pope Benedict XVI’s writings, the Vatican website has his homilies, messages, letters, encyclicals, etc preserved for generations to read and reflect upon.

### The Return of the Prodigal Son by Henri Nouwen

The book essentially captures Nouwen’s reflections on a painting by renowned

Dutch artist, Rembrandt (1606 – 1669) titled, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. As the name suggests, the painting is Rembrandt’s interpretation of the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15: 11 – 32).

There were three parts in Nouwen’s book that grabbed my attention, and all of it was about the hands of the father:

From Chapter 7: “The true centre of Rembrandt’s painting is in the hands of the father. On them all the light is concentrated; on them the eyes of the bystanders are focused; in them mercy becomes flesh; upon them forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing come together, and through them, not only the tired son, but also the worn-out father find their rest.”

From Chapter 8: “It all began with the hands. The two are quite different. The father’s left hand touching the son’s shoulder is strong and muscular. The fingers are spread out and cover a large part of the prodigal son’s shoulder and back. I can see a certain pressure, especially in the thumb. That hand seems not only to touch, but, with its strength, also to hold. Even though there is a gentleness in the way the father’s left hand touches his son, it is not without a firm grip.”

From Chapter 8: “How different is the father’s right hand! This hand does not hold or grasp. It is refined, soft, and very tender. The fingers are close to each other and they have an elegant quality. It lies gently upon the son’s shoulder. It wants to caress, to stroke, and to offer consolation and comfort. It is a mother’s hand.”

Nouwen’s reflections on Rembrandt’s masterpiece added a new dimension to my understanding of the parable of the prodigal son.

### The writings of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen

Fulton John Sheen (1895 – 1979) was an American bishop known for his preaching and his work on television and radio. Some of his notable writings are “Life of Christ”, “World’s First Love” and the “Life is Worth Living” series.

I first came to know about Bishop Sheen’s writings when a BEC member who was spring cleaning her home gave me two of Sheen’s books, *Those Mysterious Priests* and *Christ-Centred Wisdom for the Third Millennium*.

I discovered that Sheen’s writings were written in a down to earth manner and easy to comprehend. Reading those books motivated me to begin a collection of his books.

### Consecration to St Joseph, The Wonders of Our Spiritual Father by Donald H. Calloway, MIC

The Bible does not have much information about the earthly father of Jesus, so I picked up this book to learn more about St Joseph and the Church’s teaching about this silent witness who played a pivotal role in the life of Jesus.

### HERALD – The Catholic Weekly

I wouldn’t do justice with this article if I don’t mention *HERALD* as a regular source of informative articles about the Catholic faith. The publication’s mission is 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. Herald is my weekly must-read to keep abreast about what’s happening in the local and international Church.

### Conclusion

In his Letter on the *Role of Literature in Formation*, Pope Francis highlights how “reading prepares us to understand and navigate various life situations. Through reading, we immerse ourselves in the thoughts, concerns, tragedies, and fears of characters who, in the end, overcome challenges. In following these stories, we may discover insights that later prove helpful in our own lives.”

May we continue to enrich and deepen our faith through good Catholic literature.

Julie Lim Seet Yin believes that a satisfied life measured by one’s heart, mind and soul is better than a successful life measured by worldly yardsticks.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

# Refugees, Immigrants, and Jesus

On borders everywhere in the world today we find refugees, millions of them. They're easily demonised, seen as a nuisance, a threat, as invaders, as criminals fleeing justice in their homelands. But mostly they are decent, honest people fleeing poverty, hunger, victimisation, and violence. And these reasons for fleeing their homelands strongly suggest that most of them are not criminals.

Irrespective of the fact that most of them are good people, they are still seen most everywhere as a problem. We need to keep them out! They are a threat! Indeed, politicians frequently use the verb invasion to describe their presence on our borders.

What's to be said about this? Do we just let everyone in? Do we select judiciously among them, letting some in and keeping others out? Do we put up walls and barbed wire to block their entry? What's to be our response?

These questions need to be examined from two perspectives: pragmatically and biblically.

Pragmatically this is a huge issue. We cannot simply open all borders and let millions of people flood into our countries. That's unrealistic. On the other hand, we may not justify our reluctance to let refugees into our countries by appealing to the bible, or to Jesus, or to the naïve ration-

alisation that "our" countries are ours and we have a right to be here while others don't unless we grant them entrance. Why not?

For Christians, there are a number of non-negotiable biblical principles at play here.

First, God made the world for everybody. We are stewards of a property not our own. We don't own anything, God does, and God made the world for everybody. That's a principle we too easily ignore when we speak of barring others from entering "our" country. We happen to be stewards here, in a country that belongs to the whole world.

Second, the Bible everywhere, in both testaments of scripture, is clear (and strong) in challenging us to welcome the stranger and the immigrant. This is everywhere present in the Jewish scriptures and is a strong motif at the very heart of Jesus' message. Indeed, Jesus begins his ministry by telling us that he has come to bring good news to the poor. Hence, any teaching, preaching, pastoral practice, political policy, or action that is not good news for the poor is not the gospel of Jesus Christ, whatever its political or ecclesial expediency. And, if it is not good news for the poor, it may not cloak itself with the Gospel or with Jesus. Hence, any decisions we make vis-à-vis

refugees and immigrants should not be antithetical to the fact that the Gospels are about bringing good news to the poor.

Moreover, Jesus makes this even clearer when he identifies the poor with his own person (Whatever you do to the least of my people, you do to me) and tells us that at the end of the day we will be judged by how we treat the immigrants and refugees (Depart from me because I was a stranger and you didn't welcome me). There are few texts in scripture as raw and challenging as this one (Matthew 25, 35-40).

Finally, we also find this challenge in scripture: God challenges us to welcome foreigners (immigrants) and share our love, food, and clothing with them because we ourselves were once immigrants (Deuteronomy 10, 18-19). And this isn't just some abstract biblical axiom. Except for the Indigenous nations we are all immigrants here and are challenged by our faith never to forget this, not least when dealing with hungry people on our borders. Of course, those of us who have been here for a number of generations can make the moral case that we have been here a long time and are no longer immigrants. But perhaps a more compelling moral case can be made suggesting it can be rather self-serving to close the borders after we ourselves are in.

These are biblical challenges. However,

after they are affirmed, we are still left with the practical question; what realistically do we (and many countries around the world) do with the millions and millions of men, women, and children arriving at our border? How do we honour the fact that the land we live in belongs to everyone? How do we honour that fact that, as Christians, we have to think first about the poor? How will we face Jesus in judgment when he asks us why we didn't welcome him when he was in the guise of a refugee? And how do we honour the fact that almost everyone of us is an immigrant, living in a country we forcibly took from someone else?

There are no easy answers to those questions, even while at the end of the day we still need to make some practical political decisions.

However, in our pragmatism, in sorting this out, we should never be confused about which side Jesus and the Bible are on.

**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)



## In the New Testament, prayers of lamentation give way to an explosion of praise

In the New Testament, the prayers of lamentation are greatly diminished, but the rich patrimony of prayers of praise is continued and even heightened in the early Church. The New Testament is filled with beautiful prayers of praise to God. Many of these prayers continue to inspire and shape the spiritual life of the Church today.

In many respects, the prayers of praise in the New Testament find their foundation and impetus from the psalms of the Old Testament. The earliest Christians prayed the psalms in the mystery of Jesus Christ and their own prayers of praise were understandably and rightly structured by the psalms.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains: "[Address] one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart." Like the inspired writers of the New Testament, the first Christian communities read the Book of Psalms in a new way, singing

in it the mystery of Christ."

In the singing of the psalms, the souls of the early believers were led to deeper and more profound prayers of praise. In opening their hearts, the Holy Spirit lifted up the prayers of the first Christians and brought about a new expression and treasury of praise to God.

The mighty events throughout salvation history are the basis of the praise of God's people. They saw the deeds and words of God in their midst and so exclaimed their praise to him. As the Exodus, the Passover, the reign of King David, the restoration after the Babylonian Captivity, and other events have served as the cause of the praise by God's people, no other event comes close to the singular and saving event of Jesus Christ.

The event of Jesus Christ, especially His Paschal Mystery, namely, His Passion, Death, and Resurrection, are the particular and culminating reality that ushers forth prayers of praise by God's people. Inspired by the

Holy Spirit, the New Testament is power packed with hymns and songs of praise to God for his mighty and wonderful work in Jesus Christ.

The *Catechism* explains: "In the newness of the Spirit, they also composed hymns and canticles in the light of the unheard — of event that God accomplished in his Son: his Incarnation, his death which conquered death, his Resurrection, and Ascension to the right hand of the Father."

In this way, the collection of the prayers of praise in the New Testament is the fulfilment and completion of the Old Testament.

The *Catechism* teaches: "Doxology, the praise of God, arises from this 'marvellous work' of the whole economy of salvation."

The entirety of salvation history is contained and expressed in doxology, in praise. The people of God witnessed what God was doing and they praised Him. They rejoiced in His presence and power. They

acclaimed His goodness and grace.

The praise of God's people also directed their hearts and attention to the things to come. As redemption was begun by Jesus Christ, so God's people await the consummation of all things in Him.

The *Catechism* observes: "The Revelation of 'what must soon take place,' the Apocalypse, is borne along by the songs of the heavenly liturgy but also by the intercession of the 'witnesses' (martyrs)."

The praise of God's people reaches new and glorious heights in the sacrifice and prayers of those who laid down their lives in witness to God.

The *Catechism* explores this aspect of the spiritual tradition and teaches: "The prophets and the saints, all those who were slain on earth for their witness to Jesus, the vast throng of those who, having come through the great tribulation, have gone before us into the Kingdom, all sing the praise and glory of him who sits on the throne, and of the Lamb."

The praise of God's people on earth is closely connected to the tender and powerful prayers of these witnesses. The *Catechism* tells us: "In communion with them, the Church on earth also sings these songs with faith in the midst of trial."

In the various prayers of God's people, especially their prayers of praise, their life with God is strengthened and graces of perseverance are given.

A greater union with God is found through prayer. In time, prayer and faith become interchangeable in the soul that seeks God.

The *Catechism* stresses this point when it teaches: "By means of petition and intercession, faith hopes against all hope and gives thanks to the 'Father of lights,' from whom 'every perfect gift' comes down. Thus faith is pure praise." **Fr Jeffrey F. Kirby, Crux**

# Little Catholics' corner

Dear children,

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus tells us that the people who are really great are those who serve. Here are some really great people: Mary, the Mother of Jesus - God asked her to be the mother of His Son.

Our Lady spent her whole life caring for Jesus, and now she watches over us and helps us. She is the greatest saint of all.

The pope has a very big job looking after the whole Church. Did you know that the pope is called "The servant of the servants of God"? He is great because he is using his life to take care of God's people

But who do you think is the best example of all? Jesus!

He helped people all His life and then He died so that everyone would have the chance to go to Heaven.

Children, today, October 20 is World Mission Sunday. World Mission Sunday is a special day when Catholics around the world gather in prayer, solidarity, and support for the Church's mission efforts.

This year's theme, chosen by Pope Francis, is based on the Gospel of Matthew: "Go and Invite Everyone to the Banquet," expressing the inclusive and urgent call to spread God's love to all.

My dearest, let us pray and join the celebration of World Mission Sunday, to support our sisters and brothers in Christ who live in areas of poverty, conflict, and oppression.

Let us continue to pray for our missionaries and the people they serve, and may we always be mindful of our call to be missionaries in our own lives.

Love  
Aunty Eliz

JUSTIFYJES  
CRUSHLIFEI  
AFFLICTION  
UUFSDIEDFF  
PLEASEDFFI  
GLROROALER  
INIURSYIRM  
VENINSSGII  
ESGUILTHNT  
SSERVANTGY

## Isaiah 53 Word-Find



Try to find in the puzzle the words written in CAPITALS in today's first reading. Use the leftover letters to fill in the blanks at the end!

The Lord was **PLEASED**  
To **CRUSH** him in **INFIRMITY**.

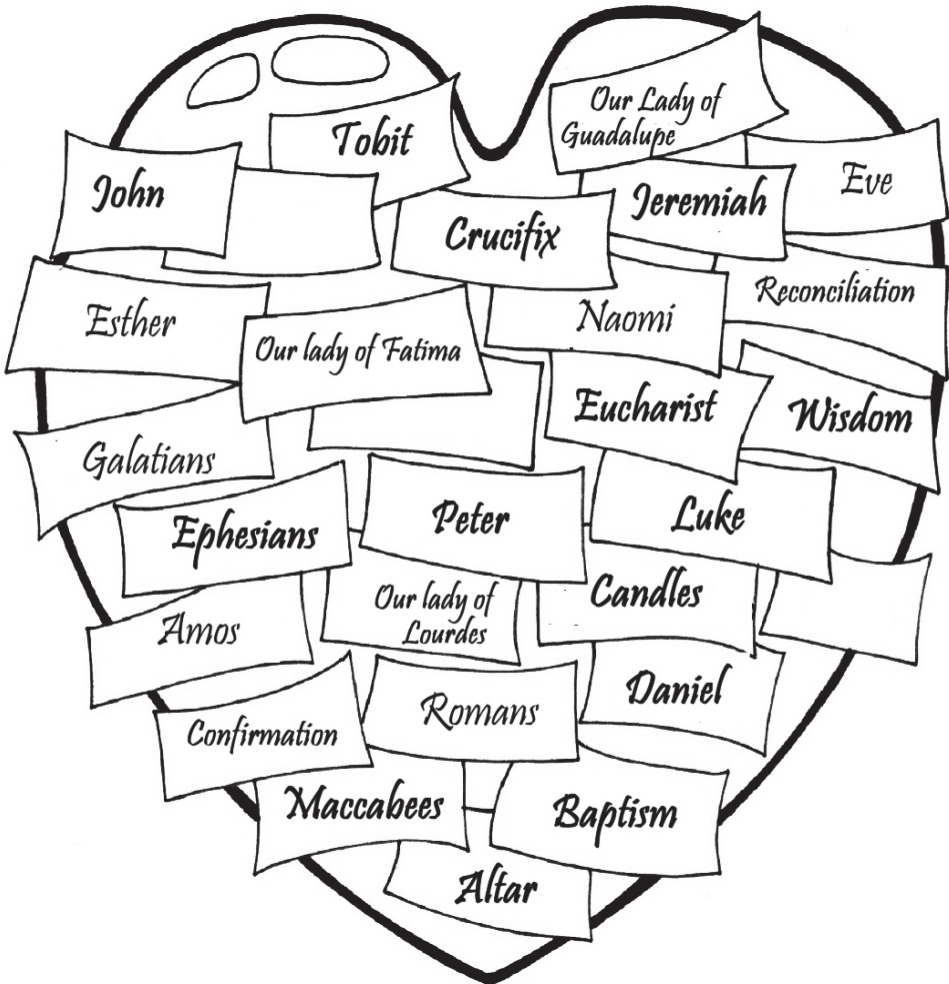
If he **GIVES** his life as an **OFFERING** for sin,  
he shall see his descendents in a long **LIFE** and  
the will of the Lord will be accomplished through him.

Because of his **AFFLICTION**  
He shall see the **LIGHT** in **FULLNESS** of **DAYS**;  
through his **SUFFERING**, my **SERVANT** shall **JUSTIFY** many,  
and their **GUILT** he shall bear.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Answer the question below and look for the answer in the picture. Colour each answer/box according to the specified colour.

- 1. Three names of Jesus disciples (Red)
- 2. Three titles of Mother Mary based on location of her apparitions (Yellow)
- 3. Four Sacraments (Pink)
- 4. Three prophets from the Old Testament (Blue)
- 5. Three women from the Old Testament (Light Blue)
- 6. Three Deuterocanonical books (Green)
- 7. Three Letters of St Paul (Light Green)
- 8. Three things you see in the church (purple)

1. Peter, John, Luke;  
2. Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Guadalupe  
3. Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation  
4. Jeremiah, Amos, Daniel  
5. Eve, Naomi, Esther  
6. Tobit, Wisdom, Maccabees  
7. Romans, Galatians, Ephesians  
8. Crucifix, candles, altar

Answer: Jesus died for our sins.

What is World Mission Sunday's theme for this year? Decode the code below:



= invite



= banquet



= to



= the



= everyone



= and



= Go





**S**HILLONG: Ibahunlang Nongrum, a young female member of St Paul's Parish in Upper Shillong from the Archdiocese of Shillong, embarked on an extraordinary solo trip to Taize, France, from May 29 to August 14, 2024. This journey was inspired by her long-standing dream of volunteering at the renowned Christian community, celebrated for its focus on prayer, meditation, and music. "I received a phone call that excited me — an international solo trip to France; the land of bread and cheese," she recalled enthusiastically.

Upon arrival at the airport in France, Ibahunlang was greeted by a friendly volunteer holding a name board with her name. This warm welcome set the tone for her adventure, while she marvelled at the sunny weather, advanced technology, and delectable French cuisine. "Seeing my name on one of the name boards held by a volunteer from Taize thrilled me," she said, expressing her excitement about the experience.

In Taize, Ibahunlang connected with individuals from diverse nationalities, races, denominations, and cultural backgrounds. "Spending time connecting with them made me realise that, while we are all unique, the obstacles and struggles we face are universal," she noted, reflecting on the profound lessons learned through her interactions.

A significant highlight of her experience was being selected for the singing support team, where she joyfully sang Taize chants in multiple languages. "Singing those Taize chants in several languages is such a thrill," she exclaimed, underscoring how this opportunity reinforced her faith and brought her closer to her Creator.

Ibahunlang also volunteered in the El-Abiodh kitchen, assisting in meal preparation for fellow participants. "Lending a hand gives me great satisfaction," she shared, recalling the fun and camaraderie fostered while working as part of a team.

## Shillong youth embarks on transformative



The brothers and sisters at Taize, who looked after the participants, embodied love, kindness, humility, and generosity. Ibahunlang was touched by their friendly smiles and the sense of belonging they provided. "I was drawn in by their friendly smiles and felt like I belonged," she said, highlighting the warm atmosphere of the Taize community.

A standout moment of her stay was participating in "Prayer around the Cross," where the lyrics and melodies of the songs prompted her to reflect on her life and identity. "The song lyrics and melody led me to ponder more about my life," she explained, revealing how this experience helped her find answers to some lingering existential questions.

Ibahunlang expressed gratitude to several individuals and organisations that supported her journey, including Archbishop Victor Lyngdoh of the Shillong Archdiocese and the Parish Priest of St Paul's Parish, Fr Tobias Kharngapkynta. "I sincerely thank everyone for being so kind and considerate

and supporting me throughout my journey," she stated.

Fr John Barman, Director of NERYC, remarked, "Taize prayer is an integral part of our ICYM-NE. Shillong has a strong Taize team, and her experience will further enrich the youth in Northeast India."

Her three-month stay in Taize has left a lasting impact on Ibahunlang. "Taize and its people will always hold a special place in my heart," she affirmed, as she continues to grow in faith and service.

At Taize, volunteers, aged 18 to 29, engage in various practical tasks to support youth meetings. However, volunteering first and foremost offers an opportunity for personal reflection, regular community prayer, and sharing experiences with others. Each volunteer meets regularly with one of the sisters (for women) or brothers (for men) to discuss their thoughts and questions.



Becoming a volunteer at Taize involves: Actively participating in daily community prayers, Being available for various tasks and services during the meetings, Contributing to and enriching the common life of the group. **Fr Kampan Chinnam, ICN**

## Youth movement in India empowers teens to tackle modern-day challenges

**INDIA:** Recently, the Diocese of Tura hosted a two-day animation and training session on October 5-6, bringing together young participants from five parishes despite heavy rains.

The YCS movement, which focuses on teenagers and adolescents, offers a structured approach to self-development through its SEE, JUDGE, and ACT methodology.

This approach encourages young people to become more aware of the world around them, reflect on their circumstances, and take action to make positive changes.

The method, designed to foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills, also emphasises personal reflection and evaluation.

At the recent event in Tura, teens from St Luke's Walbagre, St Mary's Araimile, Sacred Heart Shrine Chandmari, St Sebastian Danakgre, and St Dominic Garobadha participated in discussions and activities centred on the challenges they face.

Resource persons, including Sister Wansuk Mary Lyngdoh, Regional YCS/YSM Coordinator, Alva Khyriem, former YCS/YSM Regional President, and Janseng N. Sangma, YCS/YSM Animator for Tura Diocese, guided students through group dynamics, role-plays, and interactive sessions that encouraged open dialogue.

"This programme made me feel confident in myself. It allowed everyone to express their views and improved my social life. I

learned to respect everyone," said Kadisa R. Marak of St Mary's Araimile.

Another student, Amasa R. Marak from Sherwood Secondary School in Tura, shared her elation over attending the programme, saying, "I would definitely come here again; there's a spiritual experience in everything we do."

One of the key highlights of the programme was a session led by Bishop Andrew Marak of Tura, who shared his own journey of faith with the young participants.

Bishop Marak stressed the importance of attending Mass and Sunday school, underscoring how these practices can help teens navigate the pressures they face in today's world.

The YCS movement's approach to

empowering teens is centred on the belief that young people can become agents of change, not only in their own lives but within their communities.

By encouraging self-reflection, group support, and taking meaningful action, the movement gives teens tools to address real-life challenges such as peer pressure, family issues, and academic stress.

Diocesan Youth Secretary Fr Lyndoh T. Sangma further emphasised the importance of spiritual growth. On the final day, he led a session on the "Importance of Prayer and the Holy Eucharist," urging students to uphold the values of the YCS movement and promising more programmes aimed at teenagers. **Fr Kampan Chinnam, LiCas News**

# HELPING YOUTH UNDERSTAND THEIR MISSION IN a digital environment

**Jane Buniel**

KUALA LUMPUR: Thirty-five participants from the Church of St Joseph's youth ministry and Form 4 catechism gathered at the parish Formation House recently to discuss the impact of the digital age on their faith. This session was organised in response to the Synod's report on *Mission in the Digital Environment*, aiming to provide young people with a platform to reflect on how the digital world influences their faith and spiritual lives.

This initiative also drew upon insights from Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation on *Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment*, which includes a section analysing "the digital environment." The Pope highlights how this environment can endanger society in ways that must be taken more seriously, serving as a wake-up call to Catholics and advocates of the common good. The respon-

sibility to shape the hearts and minds of so-called digital natives is intensified, particularly when it comes to sharing the tools and values needed to navigate the digital world wisely.

In his address, Msgr James Gnanapiragasam, echoed these concerns, noting that today's youth are "digital natives," deeply familiar with technology, unlike older generations who are often termed "digital migrants." He emphasised the importance of engaging these digital natives to understand the unique challenges they face online and how they can be empowered to make a positive impact as future leaders of the Church.

Group discussions explored responsible use of digital platforms, with participants acknowledging the temptations and the prevalence of misinformation in the online space. The youth urged the community to critically evaluate the information they encounter, advocating for practices such as verifying sources, deactivating harmful websites, and creating platforms where young people can share their faith and strengthen their spiritual growth.

Additionally, participants were encouraged to be mindful of their online activities and the lasting effects of their digital footprints. They were reminded that every post, comment, or interaction online leaves a trace, and they were urged to reflect on how their digital presence reflects their values and faith. By being more conscious of their actions, the youth can contribute to a more positive and responsible digital environment.



## Young disciples embrace their faith



Altar server handing the lighted candle to the confirmands.



Confirmands with Cardinal Sebastian Francis.

PENANG: Ten students from the Church of the Risen Christ took a major step in their spiritual life when they received the Sacrament of Confirmation on September 29. The confirmands were called and strengthened in faith when Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang conferred upon them the gifts of the Holy Spirit, through the laying on of hands and anointing with Holy Chrism.

Cardinal Sebastian shared with the confirmands, whom he called young disciples of the Lord, the message of faith and in-

clusivity through a video, showing Catholic youths in Myanmar singing out loud the hope that arises from the ruins of their church destroyed in the throes of their country's civil war. This group of young people is optimistic that one day their church will be restored.

The Second Reading, taken from James 5:1-6, aligned perfectly with the celebration of the World Migrants and Refugees Sunday. The condemnation of the rich's selfishness, illustrated through vivid imagery as warnings, remains relevant today.

Many continue to exploit the vulnerabilities of migrants and refugees, especially those without proper documentation, forcing them to work for miserable wages and live in conditions that can hardly be called homes. We must recognise that the Lord hears the cries of those we have stolen from or exploited.

The confirmands' faith journey has included participation in the Diocese of Penang's Lenten Campaign formation, engaging in the Seed of Hope Lenten programme in collaboration with students

from the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, assisting the Society of St Vincent de Paul in packing rations for their Friends in Need (FINs), and attending a combined confirmation camp with students from the Church of the Immaculate Conception.

The confirmands shared their reflections on what the Sacrament of Confirmation means to them and their mission following this significant spiritual milestone, encapsulated in the words of Gabriel Gautam and Tiffany Monica.

Gabriel expressed that the Sacrament provides him with an opportunity to follow Jesus more closely, dedicating his life to His teachings. Embracing the divine gifts he has received, he feels empowered to live as a true disciple of Christ and a beloved child of God. He intends to use these gifts to serve others, grow in holiness, and fulfil God's will.

Tiffany believes that the Holy Spirit will guide her toward personal transformation, which she aims to reflect in her actions, relationships, and engagement with the world. She feels called to live a life that embodies the love, compassion, and integrity of Christ.

The celebration ended with a photography session, fellowship and presentation of certificates in the church hall. **Stephanie Cheong**

# Bishops honour legacy of Indian industrialist and philanthropist

MUMBAI: The Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) has paid tribute to Ratan Tata, the iconic industrialist and philanthropist who recently passed away at the age of 86.

In a statement, the CCBI acknowledged Tata's unparalleled contributions to India's social and economic landscape, calling him a "beacon of compassion and generosity."

Ratan Tata, widely recognised as a visionary leader in business, was praised by the CCBI for his transformative impact on society through his philanthropic initiatives.

The organisation noted that his efforts, particularly through the Tata Trusts, touched millions of lives, addressing key areas such as education, healthcare, rural development, and social justice.

The CCBI remarked that Tata's values and commitment to serving the marginalised aligned closely with the Catholic Church's mission to uplift the poor and vulnerable.

"Ratan Tata was not merely a titan of industry, but a beacon of compassion and generosity," the CCBI said. "His unwavering commitment to social causes set a new standard for corporate social responsibility in India, demonstrating that ethical leadership and business success can go hand in hand."

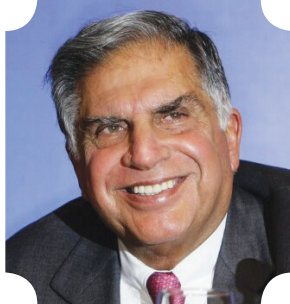
The CCBI highlighted Tata's role in nation-building, acknowledging his efforts to establish India as a global economic force while never losing sight of the needs of the underprivileged.

His dedication to ethical leadership and social responsibility, the bishops said, would continue to serve as an example for future generations.

The Catholic Church in India has offered prayers for Tata's soul and extended condolences to his family, friends, and those touched by his life's work.

The CCBI called upon its faithful to remember Tata in their prayers and to draw inspiration from his life's work, which embodied the principles of selflessness and compassion.

The CCBI reaffirmed its commitment to promoting a more equitable and just society, saying that these values were important to Tata throughout his life.



Ratan Naval Tata was born on December 28, 1937, to Soonoo and Naval Tata in Bombay.

He was a chairman of the Tata Group from 1990 to 2012, and interim chairman from October 2016 through February 2017. He continued to head its charitable trusts. In 2008, he received the Padma Vibhushan, the second highest civilian honour in India, after receiving the Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian honour in 2000.

In 1991, Ratan Tata took the charge of the Tata group, taking up the mantle from his predecessor JRD Tata, and led the conglomerate until December 2012. Since then, he has been the chairman emeritus of the nearly US\$130-billion (RM558 billion) salt-to-software group.

Anand Mahindra, an industrialist, said that he was unable to accept Tata's absence.

"India's economy stands on the cusp of a historic leap forward. And Ratan's life and work have had much to do with our being in this position. Hence, his mentorship and guidance at this point in time would have been invaluable," Mahindra wrote on X.

He urged people to continue to emulate the example of Tata, "a businessman for whom financial wealth and success was most useful when it was put to the service of the global community."

In a heartfelt statement, N. Chandrasekaran, Chairman of Tata Sons, said, "It is with a profound sense of loss that we bid farewell to Mr Ratan Naval Tata, a truly uncommon leader whose immeasurable contributions have shaped not only the Tata Group but also the very fabric of our nation. For the Tata Group, Mr. Tata was more than a chairperson. To me, he was a mentor, guide and friend."

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said India lost an "invaluable son." He said that Tata was a philanthropist par excellence whose commitment to India's inclusive growth and development remained paramount. Tata was an inspiration and icon for many people and synonymous with ethical leadership and integrity, Kharge added. **LiCAS News/Matters India**

## Ethel Kennedy dies at 96

WASHINGTON: Ethel Kennedy, the wife of the late US Sen Robert F. Kennedy and a mainstay in American politics for decades, died on October 10 at age 96.

Ethel passed away in her sleep due to "complications related to a stroke [she] suffered last week," according to a statement on behalf of the Kennedy family posted on X by her grandson Joe Kennedy III.

"She was a devout Catholic and a daily communicant," the statement reads, adding: "We are comforted in knowing she is reunited with the love of her life, our father, Robert F. Kennedy; her children David and Michael; her daughter-in-law Mary; her grandchildren Maeve and Saoirse; and her great-grandchildren Gideon and Josie."

Born Ethel Skakel on April 11, 1928, Kennedy was the daughter of wealthy Protestant coal magnate George Skakel and his wife, a faithful Catholic, Ann Brannack Skakel. Both of her parents died tragically in a plane accident in 1955, according to the John F. Kennedy Library.

Kennedy met her future husband, Robert F. Kennedy, at a ski resort in Canada in 1945 when she was 17 years old. The two eventually married in June 1950 at St Mary Catholic Church in Greenwich, Connecticut.

Deeply interested in politics, Kennedy was a staunch supporter of her husband's career and also campaigned on behalf of her brother-in-law, John F. Kennedy, during his presidential campaigns.

Kennedy's husband, Robert, successfully campaigned for and won a seat in the US Senate representing New York in 1964. He was assassinated on June 6, 1968, less than 24 hours after announcing that he had won two presidential primaries in California and South Dakota.

Ethel Kennedy, who was by Robert's side as he died, gave birth to their 11th and last child six months later.

Immediately after her husband's death in 1968, Ethel founded the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights centre, dedicated to continuing his work in the human rights and journalistic spheres.

She never remarried but instead dedicated the rest of her life to public service, both through the RFK Human Rights centre and the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Project, a community development organisation in Brooklyn, New York. She was a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

The centre issued a statement after she passed, highlighting her extensive record as a human rights activist as well as her perseverance and strength, which she maintained despite suffering loss throughout her life. **Madalaine Elhabbal, CNA**



## MEMORIAM

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### In Ever Loving Memory of

15th Anniversary

5th Anniversary

4th Anniversary



**Gertrude Gomes**  
Departed: 20-9-2009



**Gerard Gomes**  
Departed: 18-06-2019



**Cytian Gomes**  
Departed: 23-10-2020

*"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."*

Deeply missed and remembered by family and loved ones.

**40th Day Prayer**  
**In Loving Memory**  
**of Our Beloved**  
**Appa, Husband,**  
**Uncle and Brother**  
**AROKIANATHAN**  
**ANTHONY SAMY**

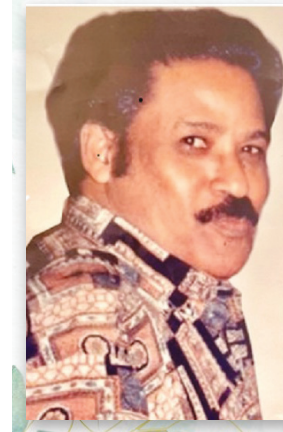


**Born:**  
**November 13, 1949**  
**Departed:**  
**September 8, 2024**

### 26th Anniversary

*Philippians 4:7*

*"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*



**JOSEPH FRANCIS**  
**19th October 1998**

*There's a special feeling when we think of you now, knowing you are with the Lord, surrounded by His love. We find comfort in your eternal peace.*

*"Through the resurrection of your Son, you assure us today that for your faithful people death is those who believe even though they die, shall live."*



**40TH DAY MEMORIAL PRAYER**  
**Michelle Gabrina a/p M G Maegal**  
**31 March 1985 - 18 September 2024**

We cordially invite your presence to attend the 40th Day Memorial Mass at Holy Family Church, Kajang at 7.00am on 27th October (Sunday) and thence to house prayer at 7.00pm on the same day at our residence No: 18 Jalan Tanming Sari 3, Taman Tanming Jaya, Balakong, 43300 Seri Kembangan, Selangor.

**There is not a day when we do not think of you and the love you had shown towards us. You are forever alive in our hearts.**

**Dearly missed and forever cherished by**  
**Murphy (Husband), Matthew, Melvin and Michael (Children),**  
**Melissa (Sister) and Mark (Brother) and loved ones.**

*Please treat this as a Personal Invitation.*

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# Prioritising mental health in the workplace

Elvina Fernandez/AMHM

PETALING JAYA: The Archdiocesan Mental Health Ministry (AMHM) in collaboration with Bethany Counselling Centre hosted a workshop in conjunction with World Mental Health Day 2025, with the theme *It's Time to Prioritise Mental Health in the Workplace*. The event held at the Church of St Ignatius drew over 350 participants from various walks of life, all united by a common commitment to the well-being of individuals in professional settings.

The event commenced with an opening prayer by Fr Philip Chua, the ecclesiastical assistant for AMHM, setting a tone of reflection and compassion. Participants also watched a short video message from Archbishop Julian Leow highlighting the paramount importance of mental health in today's fast-paced world. "It is very important for all of us to prioritise mental health, especially in the post-pandemic era," he said while highlighting the various stages of depression individuals might encounter and the necessity for sustained support and understanding.

Officiating at the event alongside Fr Philip was Archbishop Wojciech Zaluski, Apostolic Nuncio to Malaysia together with clergy from the Church of St Ignatius, Frs Thomas Koo, CDD and Fr Martin Then, CDD.

In his speech at the opening ceremony, Archbishop Wojciech emphasised that the focus at workplaces should not solely be on increasing productivity but honouring the dignity of every individual, who is created in the image of God.

"As children of God, we are called to love one another, and part of this love involves creating supportive work environments. This includes promoting work-life balance, providing counselling, and encouraging individuals to set boundaries and practice self-care."

He added that with increased workloads and constant pressure to perform, many employees find themselves wearing multi-

ple hats, affecting their personal and family lives. The pandemic further highlighted the necessity of such discussions, as isolation and depression became prevalent issues. "We must strive to create a space where people feel supported, cared for, and free to speak up," he said.

He reiterated that the mental health crisis in workplaces cannot be overlooked. "The time has come to prioritise and invest in our well-being, ensuring that work environments nurture both body and soul."

A host of educational and interesting activities and workshops catering to a wide range of mental health topics were organised in conjunction with the event. Therapists specialising in music therapy, laughter yoga, sand play therapy, expressive art play, and card play conducted experiential booths that offered attendees hands-on experience in creative methods for managing stress, improving emotional balance, and enhancing mental well-being. The workshop was a nexus of innovation, featuring experimental booths and a comprehensive exhibition. The session delved into the profound impact of workplace mental health on daily lives.

One notable session was *A Practical Guide to Building Resilience in Children and Youth* conducted by Dr Gerard Louis, CEO of HELP University. Dr Gerard eloquently

articulated the importance of resilience, highlighting that behind every statistic lies a life impacted by displacement and the mental health challenges that accompany it. "Change is the only constant, and adapting to it is crucial, such as when faced with the loss of loved ones or significant life changes. We must teach our children how to face these changes and handle stress as they grow into young adults entering the workforce."

Dr Gerard also shared alarming data from the United Nations about the prevalence of post-traumatic stress and depression among children, exacerbated by today's changing climate and constant stressors.

Another session by Eric Brian Amaladas, director of CAREERsense at Help University, life coach, and counsellor, titled *Recognising the Red Flags of Psychological Distress*, provided crucial insights into mental health awareness.

Brian highlighted that presentism, where employees are physically present but mentally disengaged, is more dangerous than absenteeism. He pointed out red flags such as decreased motivation, withdrawal, irritability, and mood swings.

"It is important for us to reflect on our emotional states compared to a year ago and identify any significant changes." He stressed the need for resilience, learning to manage stress through time management, setting boundaries, and maintaining a positive outlook on life.

"Take a step back every month and evaluate when your busy weeks are. Now, do all your chores, such as groceries and running errands over the weekend for that week, to keep your weekdays on that busy week solely to focus on the important work project. And be sure to tell your family and friends that you should not be interrupted."

This, he said, will help individuals have a grip on their lives, and that is self-care, not only pampering sessions as commonly understood. He also emphasised on the importance of emotional fitness: "It is normal to experience down days, but it is crucial to bounce back and not remain in a negative state."

Dr Nicole Chen delivered the final plenary talk, shedding light on the importance of building resilience in both family and workplace settings. She focused on the profound impact and consequence from the pressures of modern life, including feelings of disconnection and being overwhelmed, which can affect both personal and professional relationships. She further underscored the importance of self-discovery, aligning actions with core values, and embracing adaptability at different life stages, along with the need to create resilient environments at home and at work, where emotional well-being is prioritised and vulnerability is not only accepted, but embraced. Her talk also offered the attendees practical strategies to strengthen relationships and cultivate mental resilience.

In his closing speech, Fr Philip expressed deep gratitude to the participants, speakers, and volunteers for making the event a resounding success. He underscored the importance of advancing the mental health agenda in line with AMHM's mission. Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many praising the event's insightful talks, diverse topics, and interactive activities.

This year's World Mental Health Day event highlighted the urgent need to prioritise mental health in the workplace, family life, and personal well-being. Engaging workshops and thought-provoking discussions marked another significant step forward in fostering supportive environments. With AMHM's 10th anniversary approaching, anticipation is already building for next year's event. The ministry remains committed to raising awareness and making mental well-being a shared priority across communities.



From left: Fr Thomas Koo, CDD, Archbishop Wojciech Zaluski, Fr Philip Chua and Fr Martin Then, CDD launching the World Mental Health Day.

