

But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Hebr 2:9



**Prayer, the key which opens God's heart**

■ P5



**Navigating mental health and legal challenges**

■ P6



**Kuching Archdiocese Youth Day 2024**

■ P16

# Synodality is not democracy

**VATICAN:** As the Catholic Church embarks on the second session of the Synod on Synodality, Pope Francis took the opportunity to address key issues during his visit to Asia and Oceania in September. On his first day in Singapore, September 11, the Pope engaged with Jesuit clergy, offering insights into the Church's future, particularly in light of the ongoing synodal process in Rome from October 2 to 27.

During a private conversation with his fellow Jesuits, one priest asked Pope Francis about his vision for the Church in the context of synodality — a theme that has taken centre stage in his papacy.

"The synod we are conducting is on synodality," the Pope emphasised. He reflected on the origins of the Synod of Bishops, tracing it back to St Paul VI's initiative after the Second Vatican Council. According to Pope Francis, St Paul VI founded the Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops to restore a "synodal dimension of dialogue" in the Western Church, which had been somewhat lost over time, in contrast to the Eastern Church that maintained it.

"In 2001, I was at the Synod of Bishops. I remember being tasked with collecting and arranging material. However, at that time, synodality was still misunderstood," the Pope recalled, explaining how certain decisions

were dismissed without proper discussion or voting, undermining the synodal process.

Pope Francis pointed to a key development in the current synod, namely the inclusion of voting rights for laypeople and, for the first time, women. "This is the first time women can vote in a synod. This shows a development in how we live out synodality," he said, describing the process as "a grace from the Lord" and a necessity for all levels of the Church — from the global Church to local parishes and educational institutions.

The Pope was clear in distinguishing synodality from democracy. "Synodality is a value of the Church, but it is not democracy. It is a grace that requires discernment," he noted, stressing that the synod is meant to foster collective discernment rather than political debate.

While synodality was a key theme, Pope Francis also touched on other pressing issues during his Sept 4 meeting with Indonesian Jesuits in Jakarta. Though not addressing synodality directly, the Pope highlighted concerns that resonate deeply with Catholics, especially in developing countries — such as the ongoing persecution of Christians.

The Pope urged Jesuits to embrace their calling to serve in the most difficult and challenging places. "Jesuits must be in the most difficult places, where it is least easy to act. It is our way of 'going above and beyond' for the greater glory of God," he said. Referring to the Gospel, he encouraged them to "make a noise," a concept he linked to the Holy Spirit's guidance, which often leads to "uproar."

Pope Francis addressed clericalism during

his Sept 10 meeting with Jesuits in East Timor, warning that it remains a persistent issue within the Church. Clericalism, he said, "is everywhere," especially in the Vatican, where efforts to dismantle it are ongoing. He described it as "one of the subtlest means the devil uses."

Pope Francis elaborated on clericalism, calling it "the highest form of worldliness within the clergy." He drew attention to St Ignatius of Loyola's teachings on the dangers of worldliness, which the Pope believes are particularly perilous for clergy serving on the frontlines. "Spiritual worldliness is the most difficult disease to overcome," he added.

The Pope also spoke candidly about the challenge the Church faces in remaining connected to the faithful. "The challenge of the Church is always not to move away from the people of God," he said, advising Jesuits to steer clear of "ecclesial ideologies" that could distance them from the people they are called to serve.

As the Church embarks on the Synod on Synodality, Pope Francis' words during his visit to Asia are likely to resonate with participants. His call to resist clericalism, maintain close ties with the people, and embrace synodality as a grace will undoubtedly influence the discussions in October, shaping the future of the Church in profound ways.

In the lead-up to this important gathering, Pope Francis has left clergy and laity alike with a clear message — the Church's path forward lies in discerning together, walking with the faithful, and resisting the temptations of worldliness that can lead it astray. **Crux**



**For a synodal Church**  
communion | participation | mission

**Prayer for the Synod**

**Adsumus Sancte Spiritus**

We stand before You,  
Holy Spirit,  
as we gather together  
in Your name.  
With You alone to guide us,  
make Yourself at home  
in our hearts;  
Teach us the way we must go  
and how we are to pursue it.  
We are weak and sinful;  
do not let us promote disorder.  
Do not let ignorance lead us  
down the wrong path  
nor partiality influence  
our actions.  
Let us find in You our unity  
so that we may journey  
together to eternal  
life and not stray  
from the way of truth  
and what is right.  
All this we ask of You,  
who are at work in  
every place and time,  
in the communion of  
the Father and the Son,  
forever and ever. Amen.

## Francis

THE POPE PLANS TO LEAD A Penance SERVICE BEFORE THE OCTOBER SYNOD.



I USED TO LIKE GOING TO CONFESSION WHEN I WAS A KID.



THE SINS INCLUDE THE ABUSE OF CHILDREN, NOT TAKING RESPONSIBILITY, EXCLUDING WOMEN, SINS AGAINST THE EARTH, FOR WAR, AGAINST THE POOR AND MIGRANTS FOR LORDING IT OVER THE LAITY.

TO FIND PEACE, YOU HAD TO HAVE "A FIRM PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT."



WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?

IT MEANS YOU HAVE TO CHANGE. REALLY CHANGE. YOU KNOW, I THINK THE POPE EXPECTS REAL CHANGE FROM THE SYNOD.

NCOnline.org/cartoons



# HERALD

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The Synod on Synodality, taking place from October 2 to 27 in Rome, is an important time for the Church. This second phase of the Synod seeks to shape the Church's future by embracing a synodal approach, emphasising listening, dialogue, and communion. For Catholics, it's crucial not only to stay informed but also to actively pray for the success of this Synod and the participants, including the four delegates from our region — Archbishop Julian Leow, Fr Dr Clarence Devadass, Anna Teresa Amandus, and Dr Christina Kheng. This gathering has far-reaching implications for the local and universal Church, as well as for each of us.

Pope Francis has stressed that the Synod on Synodality is one of the most significant initiatives of his papacy. He envisions a Church that listens closely to the People of God, especially those on the margins. In a world increasingly divided, the Pope calls us to rediscover what it means to walk together — synodality comes from the Greek *synodos*, meaning "together on the way."

The heart of the Synod is discerning the voice of the Holy Spirit, expressed through the prayers and experiences of the faithful. Thus, the Synod isn't an event just for those in Rome; it concerns the entire global Church.

It's easy to dismiss the Synod as something for bishops and theologians in Rome. However, this would be a mistake. As Pope Francis has warned, "Indifference is a great sickness in our time." The Synod is about each of us — every Catholic who professes faith in Christ. The Church is not a monolith; it's a community of believers called to journey together, and we each play a part in shaping this journey.

This phase of the Synod will address crucial issues — how to promote unity amidst diversity, how to engage young people, the role of women in the Church, and how to respond to social and environmental crises. These are not abstract matters but deeply connected to



our lives in our parishes, communities, and families. The decisions made will impact how the Church engages with the world for years to come.

The decisions made during this Synod will ripple through our experience of the faith, from how we celebrate the sacraments to how we engage with other Christian communities and serve those in need. If we remain indifferent, we miss an opportunity to participate in the Holy Spirit's work of guiding the Church.

Our delegates carry the unique responsibility of representing Southeast Asia's perspective. Their participation is not just symbolic — it's a vital contribution to the universal Church. They bring our region's hopes, concerns, and faith to Rome, ensuring that our voices are heard. Their presence reminds us that the Synod is not just about "the Church in Europe" or "the Church in Rome" but about the Church in Malaysia, Singapore, and every part of the world. We must support them with our prayers.

Pope Francis has consistently emphasised the need for prayer, especially during times of discernment. "Without prayer, there will be no Synod," he said, highlighting that prayer is the foundation upon which the Church builds its future. The outcome of the Synod is not just a matter of discussion and debate; it is deeply spiritual. Our delegates need our prayers for

wisdom, courage, and openness to the Holy Spirit.

For those of us not present in Rome, prayer is our way of participating. We must pray for clarity and wisdom for our delegates as they face complex issues. We must also pray for unity, that this Synod will not foster division but instead bring the Church closer together, united in Christ's mission.

The Synod on Synodality is an opportunity for every Catholic to renew their commitment to the Church. It challenges us to reflect on our faith — are we listening to one another? Are we open to new ways of engaging with our communities? Are we willing to embrace the diversity within our Church while remaining rooted in the Gospel?

As the Synod unfolds, let us remain informed, engaged, and, most importantly, prayerful. The decisions made in Rome will shape the future of the Church, but it is our collective prayers and participation that will ensure the Church remains faithful to the mission Christ entrusted to it. As Pope Francis reminds us, "A synodal Church is a Church of participation and co-responsibility." Let us take that call seriously and, with hearts full of faith, accompany all the delegates in prayer, trusting that the Holy Spirit will guide them in truth and love.

Patricia Pereira

## Defending the heart of family life

It is noteworthy for contemporary readers that in this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus strongly — almost irritably — defends two of the most-attacked elements of family life in today's world: marriage and children. Divorces, it seems, were not new to the people of Jesus' time; in fact, we learn that this practice dates back as far as Moses himself. Our Lord was insistent that divorce was never part of God's plan. He referred to the story of Adam and Eve, which the Israelites would have been familiar with, the same story that we hear today in the First Reading from the book of Genesis (Gn 2:18-24). From the very beginning, God intended for man and woman to remain united; their marital union was meant to be unbreakable, hence the emphasis on "they become one body." And a body only breaks down once it is dead, hence the mantra of every married couple: "Till death do us part."

But while death may dissolve the earthly bond between a husband and wife, it dramatically fails to separate the Church from her bridegroom, the risen Christ. We hear from the author of the Letter to the Hebrews (Heb 2:9-11) that Jesus, who suffered and died, has been raised in glory and splendour. Through His sufferings, He sanctifies and brings mankind to perfection and redemption. This motif of marriage between God and His people, and between Christ and His Church, is richly described in both the Old and New Testament,

especially in the prophetic books such as Isaiah and Hosea, as well as the Pauline epistles. This is a beautiful exposition of marriage for our modern world: whatever hardships or sufferings are endured by both husband and wife, they will lead to the sanctification of their souls. Faithful obedience to God and love for one another in their marital vocation is salvific. In fact, man and woman's faithfulness in marriage is a reflection of God's love for us, and ours for Him. Disobedience led to separation and death for the first man and woman; Christ's obedience (and ours too) will bring reunion and life once again.

We read extensively about the Lord's defence of marriage, but what about the children? In the Gospel, some of the Lord's own disciples were stopping the children from coming to Jesus, and he responded with indignation, anger, and annoyance. How many of the Lord's own disciples in our present time have stopped or attempted to stop children from coming to Him? Some of these children were physically removed at conception — aborted. Some were spiritually abandoned and malnourished in their Christian faith education, consequently preventing them from coming to the Lord. Others, imitating the less exemplary lives of their parents, end up abandoning their faith. And divorce, that painful evil that affects many families? How many families have been broken, and how many children have become displaced

## Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Bro Ashley Chan

27th Sunday in  
Ordinary Time (B)

Readings: Genesis 2:18-24;

Hebrews 2:9-11;

Gospel: Mark 10:2-16 or 10:2-12

from their homes and parents, who were supposed to protect and care for them? The sins of abortion and irresponsible parenting are grave offenses because they prevent the children, the little ones of God, from coming to Him.

This is how the two great problems of the human family — divorce, abortion, and irresponsible parenting — contribute significantly to the division of the family institution and our churches. The question remains: what can we do about it? The answer lies in the Lord's words today: "What God has united, man must not divide." If God has united man and woman together in His family and given them children, then our actions must not contribute to the separation of this union and this family. What affects families affects the Church and the world as well; our lives are meant to be lived for God and for one another, in faithfulness and love. "Till death do us part," they say in marriage, yes, but also beyond earthly death: "May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives" (Ps 128:5).



# Fulfilling the mission of Christ

Fr George Packiasamy

PLENTONG, Johor: Every year in September, clergy members from Peninsular Malaysia come together for their annual spiritual retreat, held across three locations. The year the retreat took place in the first week at Cameron Highlands, in the second and fourth weeks in Penang, and in the third week at MAJODI Centre in Plentong. This six-day retreat, beginning on Sunday evening and concluding on Friday evening, serves as a time for reflection and renewal. Twenty-three of us attended the retreat at MAJODI Centre led by Fr John McGowan, ODC, a Carmelite priest from England. With 42 years of priesthood, Fr McGowan currently serves at the Church of St Joseph in England.

On the first day, the retreat master emphasised key insights from *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, the Vatican II document on the Ministry and Life of Priests. He reminded us that the Sacrament of Holy Orders imparts an indelible mark, calling us to embrace our role in representing Christ, *Persona Christi* (cf. PO #2). He further highlighted that our primary duty as priests is to communicate the Gospel in a way that resonates with people, ensuring that Christ's message is conveyed through both

words and actions (cf. PO #4). Additionally, he underscored the importance of celibacy as a precious gift to the priesthood, along with the virtues of humility and obedience (cf. PO #16), all guided by the Holy Spirit.

The following day, Fr McGowan guided us through the teachings and spirituality of St Paul's Epistles, emphasising that "love is all you need." As priests, we often face obstacles and challenges in our ministry, but St Paul deeply understood the suffering of Christ. For Paul, "to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil 1:21). This was his central message, as from his conversion to his martyrdom, he proclaimed the Gospel, imitated Christ, and sought the knowledge of Christ. Jesus, who called us to the priesthood, is the source of our strength and wisdom in ministry. Whoever lives for Christ will never be disappointed by His love (cf. Rom 5:5).

For the next two days, our focus shifted to the Synod of Synodality 2023. This provided an excellent opportunity to review key documents such as *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Christifideles Laici*, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, and *Instrumentum Laboris*. These texts are meant to help us uncover our unique charisms and draw inspiration from our love for Christ and the Church. They also emphasise the vital role



The clergy with retreat master Fr John McGowan, ODC (front row, fourth from left), during their retreat at MAJODI Centre, Johor, from September 15 to 20.

of collaboration with the laity and our shared responsibility in strengthening the Church and fulfilling Christ's mission.

As our retreat drew to a close, we explored in depth the spirituality of St Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the vital role of prayer in the life of priests. Her profound influence, rooted in her teachings on humility, love, missionary zeal, and prayer, is both remarkable and inspiring. We look to her for guidance, seeking to embody her exemplary virtues of humility and unwavering love for the Church and its missionaries. As the patroness of missions and missionaries, we humbly ask for her intercession, that we may be nurtured in the spirit of love, humility, and prayer.





**KUALA LUMPUR  
ARCHDIOCESE**

**Diary of Archbishop  
Julian Leow**

**October**

**2-27 Synod Assembly – Rome**




**PENANG DIOCESE**

**Diary of Cardinal  
Sebastian Francis**

**October**

- 10 Meeting – Dr Gabriel Dy-Liacco & Director for Ecclesial Relations and Safeguarding, Founder of Catholic Safeguarding Institute (CSI) at 11.00am – Bishop's Office**
- 11 Confirmation – Church of St Michael, Alor Setar at 7.30pm**
- 12 Confirmation – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam at 6.00pm**
- 13 Confirmation – Taiping Catholic Church, Taiping at 9.00am**



**MALACCA JOHORE  
DIOCESE**

**Diary of Bishop  
Bernard Paul**

**October**

- 10 Meeting – MJDYPN at Bishop's Office**
- 12 Confirmation – Church of Divine Mercy, Skudai at 11.00am**
- 12 Confirmation – Church of St Joseph, Plentong at 5.00pm**
- 13 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of St Joseph, Plentong at 10.30am**



**Malacca Johore Diocese  
News Update #192**



## Greetings dear friends of MJD.

Planning and planning. Yet nature has its ways. Landslides in Cameron Highlands. Flooding in Penang, Kedah, Perlis and Perak, the worst affected being Kedah with 8,394 people being housed in 41 flood relief centres. Malaysia grapples with the complexities of becoming an ageing society, numbering 2.5 million, who are left navigating the twilight of their lives in uncertainties, longing for dignity and a place to belong. Medical inflation does not favour the financially burdened. By June 2025, agencies are predicting 51,000 will lose their jobs due to layoffs and downsizing. A Malaysian spent RM400 to feast on a big plate of *nasi kandar* and finished it on his own. About 430,000 borrowers have yet to repay their PTPTN loans, estimated at RM6 billion. The Pandora box of scandals are open. Disasters do happen. But some could be avoided with foresight, early warning systems, vigilant watchers and decisive enforcement.

**Caring Times:** The disciples failed to grasp the mission of Jesus as a mission of sacrifice and service. They were only interested in sitting on the right or left...in being the greatest. Pride closed their hearts to the words of Jesus. A silence of shame followed when confronted. Pope Francis, during a recent *Angelus*, has reminded us that true greatness is in service, when life is offered up as a gift for others. True power is not in domination by the strong, but in caring for the weakest...receiving children, the little ones, the poor and the vulnerable in society. Like children, many are powerless. Many suffer or die because of power struggle. The Pope reflects with us: If

we know how to see Jesus in the least and the smallest. If we care for our neighbours. If we have been thankful to those who have helped us.

## A Thought For The Week: The Drowning Cat

A wise old man was sitting at the river bank when he saw a cat that had fallen into the water, flailing around, trying to save itself from drowning. He tried again and got scratched. He was about to try the third time, when a watcher nearby shouted: Why try? Haven't you learnt your lesson? The wise man paid no heed to him, tried again and saved the cat. The old man walked over to the mocker and told him: Son, the cat's nature is to scratch, but it is in my nature to save.

*Lesson from the scratched:* Don't let others define who you are. They may scratch you or sting you or hurt you, do not become them. Be who you are — your nature is to save, love and free others from their lot.

## Announcements For The Week:

1. On October 6, at the **Church of St Henry, Batu Pahat**, a Mass will be celebrated to **launch the diocese's PROTEC 5 at 9.00am**, with Fr Paul Wong and Fr Patrick Tyoh. After Mass, there will be an opening speech, distribution of PROTEC 5 posters for parishes followed by planting and blessing of trees and a formation "Save the Trees - Every Bit Counts", ending with lunch. All creation thank you for your commitment and action. All parish representatives and creation justice ministries, see you there!

## QnQ? Q ask: Food waste, is it a real concern?

1. The International Day of Awareness on Food Loss and Waste Reduction,

on September 29 reminds us to join in. ([https://youtu.be/qynuwRoVx\\_4](https://youtu.be/qynuwRoVx_4))

2. "Food waste has been a longstanding issue in Malaysia. According to a report, we are wasting approximately 16,720 tonnes of food daily, which accounts for 44 per cent of the total waste. All this food waste will end up in the landfill, where it will slowly decompose, releasing harmful substances into the soil and methane into the atmosphere. Notably, methane is a greenhouse gas that is estimated to be 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide." EMIR Research

3. Try these ways to reduce food waste:

a) Have "gap days" between the day you finish your perishables and the day you shop for the next week. This "gap day" will ensure you use up your leftovers and any remaining perishables.

b) A meal plan for the week will cut down on food wastage.

c) Make a grocery list and stick to it. Don't stock up unnecessarily.

d) Finish your food! Keep to an amount that you can finish.

4. For more info, visit International Day of Awareness on Food Loss & Waste Reduction United Nations.

**I See The Holy Spirit @ Work:** This is the work of the Holy Spirit: He brings us the new things of God. He comes to us and makes all things new; He changes us. The Spirit changes us! *Pope Francis*

**Something To Tickle You:** Life is God's novel. Let Him write it. *Isaac B Singer*

*Bernard Paul*

**Bishop Bernard Paul**



## Community support vital in our faith journey

MANTIN, Negeri Sembilan: The Church of St Aloysius held its Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA) on September 21. The assembly brought together representatives from various parish ministries and Language Apostolates, including four delegates from the Orang Asal community of Kg Belihoi. Also present was Archbishop Julian Leow; and Rita Krishnan and Kevin Chung from the Archdiocesan BEC Animating Team.

Parish priest, Fr Christopher Soosaipillai, delivered the opening address and led in the recitation of the prayer for the pastoral assembly. Rita followed with a presentation summarising the findings from the earlier 'Study Day,' which focused on four key areas of concern — Church, Family, Society, and Ecology. Kevin then

provided a brief translation for the benefit of the Mandarin-speaking parishioners.

The participants then moved into 'Conversation in the Spirit' breakout sessions, where four groups shared on the key areas of concern. Each group's facilitator presented the views gathered from their sharing. After hearing the feedback from the groups, Archbishop Julian delivered the closing address. He reminded the assembly of the importance of evaluating activities to ensure that objectives are met and emphasised the need for the community to support one another in their faith journey. Fr Christopher then thanked everyone present and concluded the assembly with a prayer, followed by a blessing from Archbishop Julian.



*The participants of the Parish Pastoral Assembly of the Church of St Aloysius, Mantin.*

## Family takes centre stage at St Theresa's PPA

Aileen Anthony

NILAI, Negeri Sembilan: The recent Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA) for the Church of St Theresa (CSTN) concluded with a strong sense of purpose and renewed commitment in attendees. The assembly aimed to foster collaboration and enhance the parish community's efforts moving forward.

CSTN Parish Pastoral Council Chairman Duncan Lucas kicked off the session by reflecting on the previous year's activities, highlighting both successes and areas needing improvement.

While the ministries carried out many planned activities, the chairman called for increased ministry participation and a deeper commitment to faith formation. He emphasised the importance of focusing on internal parish life and ensuring that the parish's actions resonate outward to the community. The assembly then discussed the four core areas: Family, Church, Ecology, and Society.



*Archbishop Julian Leow, Fr Christopher Soosaipillai, and parishioners of the Church of St Theresa, Nilai, at the Parish Pastoral Assembly.*

Family life took centre stage as members voiced concerns over mixed marriages, which are often a source of domestic and social tension for couples and their children. Another significant issue was the growing emotional distance between parents and children who have left their homeland for work, studies, or marriage. The need for more communication and connection was clear.

The assembly called for BECs and parish ministries to provide spiritual and emotional support through community prayers and house visits, particularly for the elderly and the sick.

The parishioners discussed the need for stronger outreach to young people and new families. There was a special emphasis on welcoming university students, encouraging them to attend ser-

vices regularly and engaging in the church's youth ministry. Likewise, new families must be encouraged to join their respective BECs and deepen their sense of belonging in the parish community.

On the ecological front, members agreed that the Church must prioritise environmental awareness across all ministries. Discussions focused on breaking down

large, often intimidating ecological concepts into practical steps that the parish can implement, fostering greater understanding and action within the community.

As part of the discussion on society, there was a strong call to witness Jesus to those of other faiths in the simplest and most authentic ways. Actions speak louder than words; we can reflect Christ's love and teachings through our everyday deeds. Parishioners must be encouraged to let their lives serve as a living testimony, showing compassion, kindness, and understanding to others.

The session ended on a reflective note with an address from Archbishop Julian Leow, who reminded everyone that "the most effective teacher is an example." He urged parishioners to ask themselves, "How can I be an example in my parish?" This question, he noted, should guide every action as the parish moves forward, committed to living out its faith and reaching out to those in need.

## SSVP retreat for Negeri Sembilan



SEREMBAN: The recent retreat at Villa Dominic in Genting, held from September 20 to 22, brought together 23 participants from the Conferences of St Aloysius; St John Vianney, Visitation, and Immaculate Conception. Over the course of three days and two nights, attendees participated in enriching sessions led by Benedict, who focused on the core values of the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP) and encouraged innovative thinking.

Participants engaged in spiritual discussions, particularly

bonding with fellow SSVP members and fostering connections with their families in need (FINS). They explored ways to reach out to the Holy Spirit for guidance and support in their mission.

Leaving the retreat feeling rejuvenated and inspired, attendees were equipped with new ideas and strategies to implement within their communities. This gathering fostered a spirit of collaboration and growth among the participants, reinforcing their commitment to service and outreach. **Selva Manogary**



# Prayer, the key which opens God's heart

Bro Peter Langgayang, OFM Cap and Angila Yong

ULU TIRAM, Johor: The Capuchin friars of Johor celebrated the Feast of St Padre Pio of Pietrelcina on Sunday, September 22 at the St Pio Spirituality Centre, the first centre of devotion to St Pio in Malaysia. Although the feast is traditionally observed on September 23, this year's celebration was moved up for logistical reasons.

The event drew a substantial gathering of devotees from Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines, showcasing the widespread devotion to St Padre Pio among the faithful in the region.

This year, Bishop Bernard Paul served as the principal preacher, marking a departure from the traditional choice of a Franciscan Friar. His invitation underscores his alignment with Franciscan values, represented by the Tau cross in his coat of arms. In his homilies, the bishop emphasised the significance of prayer in the context of forgiveness, nurturing relationships, and saying "Yes" to God. The Feast centred around the theme of prayer, reflecting Pope Francis' call for a year of prayer in preparation for the 2025 Jubilee year.

The triduum commenced on Sept 19 at the Church of the Holy Family, Ulu Tiram, themed *Prayer is Forgiveness*. In his homily, Bishop Bernard emphasised the

transformative power of prayer in nurturing peace and forgiveness. He remarked, "When we encounter God in prayer, our anger, fear, and guilt dissipate. It is through this divine encounter that we experience true forgiveness, enabling us to extend forgiveness to others." He encouraged the congregation to envision themselves seated beneath a waterfall, expressing gratitude for the outpouring of God's forgiving love and mercy cascading over them.

On the second day, the theme shifted to *Prayer is Relationship*. Bishop Bernard urged the congregation to view prayer as a way to connect with God and build relationships with those around them. "When we pray, we create space for God to enter our hearts. In this sacred space, we are invited to live in God's grace and reflect His love to the world," he said. He illustrated this concept by likening prayer to roots growing in the soil of God's love, emphasising how these roots can intertwine with one another.

The final day of the Triduum on September 21 was themed *Prayer is Saying 'Yes'*. Bishop Bernard reflected on Padre Pio's teachings, stating that a Christian's journey involves a continuous struggle against oneself, with the soul achieving perfection through enduring pain. "Prayer is about surrendering to God," he emphasised, reminding the faithful that God meets us in our daily lives, calling us to serve. Using



The statue of St Pio of Pietrelcina carried in the procession.

Matthew's example, he urged the congregation to respond to God's call, affirming their commitment to His mission.

On Sunday, Sept 22, the feast day at St Pio's Spirituality Centre saw over 1,100 attendees. The celebration began with the Rosary, followed by testimonies from devotees who shared personal stories of St Padre Pio's intercession. Bishop Bernard, presided over the Mass with the Capuchin Friars concelebrating and assisted by Deacon Steven Wong.

In his homily, Bishop Bernard emphasised humility and simplicity in prayer, encouraging a childlike trust in God. He quoted St Pio, "Prayer is the oxygen of the soul," while warning against the pitfalls of selfishness.

Fr Joe Matthews, OFM, Cap, guardian of the St Pio Friary & Spirituality Centre, thanked attendees for their dedication despite challenging travel conditions. Pilgrims enjoyed a delicious lunch, with packed meals provided for those leaving early.

The next Feast of St Padre Pio will be on Sunday, September 21, 2025, with the triduum scheduled for September 18-20.



Bishop Bernard Paul celebrating Mass at St Pio's Spirituality Centre.

Devotees are encouraged to mark their calendars, as the celebration is expected to take place at the newly constructed Church of the Holy Family.

Retreatants are also invited to the tranquil St Pio Spirituality Centre for personal and group retreats. For bookings, contact Fr Joe Matthews at 012 290 0547.

KUALA LUMPUR: The Chapel of Our Lady of Good Health, located at Lorong 1 in the now-modernised Kampung Pandan, recently celebrated its 70th anniversary during the nine-day annual feast of Our Lady of Good Health, which culminated on September 7. A cake-cutting ceremony to mark the chapel's Platinum Jubilee took place following the grand procession in honour of Mother Mary.

For nine consecutive days, Fr Joseph Stephen, CSsR, from the Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in Ipoh, served as the preacher and main celebrant, drawing an average of 500 faithful who ardently participated in the Novena Masses during the first seven days. Parish Administrator Msgr Stanislaus Soosaimariam, who is also the parish priest of the Church of

## Kg Pandan chapel celebrates 70th anniversary



Pilgrims walking in the candlelight procession

the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Jalan Peel, and Archbishop Emeritus Murphy Pakiam concelebrated the Masses.

On the eight day, over 1,300 faithful from near and far gathered for the evening Mass and participated in the hour-long candlelight procession through the surrounding residential area to celebrate the chapel's anniversary. Many came seeking the intercession of Our Lady of Good Health, who continually prays for us to her Son, Jesus Christ. They came in faith, offering thanks to God and Our Lady for an-

swered prayers.

Fr Joseph highlighted in his homilies that Mother Mary plays a vital role in our earthly pilgrimage and guides us through her messages in different places and times. He invited the faithful to reflect on Mary's significance today and how her messages apply to our lives. During the Novena Masses, he detailed several Marian apparitions, including those of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Fatima, Lourdes, La Salette, Knock, Czestochowa, Velankanni, and Mary Major; he shared their history and messages of hope, healing, and her call back to her Son, Jesus Christ.

Fr Joseph emphasised that Mary is our mother, interceding for us and helping us remain rooted in Christ's Gospel, serving

the community, and spreading the Good News. He also urged the faithful to reflect on their discipleship and whether they are bringing the joy of Christ to others.

The feast concluded on Sunday with two Masses attended by around 1,000 faithful.

To commemorate the chapel's 70th anniversary, a mini exhibition was held in the foyer, featuring photos and articles highlighting the chapel's rich history (pic). Many visitors took time to explore the displays and learned that a few Catholic families had already settled in Kampung Pandan long before the original wooden chapel was completed in 1954. The current brick chapel standing today, was dedicated and opened in 1982. **Bernard Anthony**





# Navigating mental health and legal challenges

PETALING JAYA: The Catholic Lawyers' Society of Kuala Lumpur (KL), in collaboration with the Catholic Doctors' Association, recently hosted a mental health awareness talk at Loyola Hall, Church of St Francis Xavier. The event sought to shed light on the rising mental health challenges faced by society today.

Dr Xavier Vincent Pereira, a psychiatrist, provided valuable insights into mental health, giving the audience a deeper understanding of the challenges faced in today's society. Following his presentation, senior lawyer Trevor Jason Mark Padasian led an engaging session on the legal aspects of mental health, focusing on how mental illness affects legal capacity, with references to the Mental Health Act 2001.

The event was moderated by Annou Xavier, whose humour kept the audience engaged throughout. Claudia Silva, with her eloquent and charismatic introductions, left a lasting impression, adding a touch of flair to the proceedings as she introduced the speakers.

Dr. Xavier's resume reads like a "Who's Who" of global mental health. A practicing consultant psychiatrist and psychotherapist at both Damai Service Hospital and KPJ Selangor Specialist Hospital, Dr Xavier not only talks the talk — he trains the trainers. As an internationally certified



Dr Xavier Vincent Pereira conducting a mental capacity assessment with Christina Rachel.

psychotherapist and supervisor in Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT), he has been shaping minds and methods since 2006. His impressive credentials include serving as the global chair of the subsection on Interpersonal Psychotherapy with Cultural Adaptations under the Psychotherapy section of the World Psychiatric Association and being a leading figure in IPT Malaysia.

Dr Xavier's contributions extend beyond the professional sphere. He co-founded Health Equity Initiatives, providing vital

mental health services to refugees in Kuala Lumpur, and he was a pioneer in establishing the Catholic Counsellors and Therapists of Malaysia. In a field where the stakes are high and the demands relentless, Dr Xavier's impact is as profound as his dedication is unyielding.

During his talk on mental health issues in today's society, Dr Xavier didn't just lecture — he brought the subject to life with an interactive demonstration. With a big smile, he invited Christina Rachel to join him on

stage for a playful yet insightful mental capacity assessment. To everyone's delight, Christina passed with flying colours, showing she's not just an outstanding volunteer but also sharp and mentally strong!

The legal aspect of the talk was expertly handled by Trevor Padasian, who delivered a thorough and engaging presentation on mental health and its impact on decision-making capacity. Using comprehensive slides, Trevor delved into key issues, such as whether a mentally disordered individual can make informed decisions, how consent is handled in such cases, and the guidelines in place to safeguard patient rights. He also addressed the appointment of a Committee of Person to manage the affairs of those deemed mentally incapable, referencing critical legislation such as the Mental Health Act 2001, the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008, the Powers of Attorney Act 1949, and the Advance Care Directive.

The session concluded with both speakers addressing a wide range of questions from an eager audience, keen to clarify doubts and gain further insights after such an informative and eye-opening talk. Following the Q&A, attendees gathered for a relaxed lunch and fellowship, leaving everyone in high spirits — feeling more informed and better equipped to navigate mental health issues.



## Spirituality of soap moulding

AIR ITAM, Penang: Caritas Risen Christ Catholic Church and its BEC coordinating team members, recently collaborated on a soap moulding project to produce herbal soaps for prisoners in the Diocese of Penang. A total of 45 participants from 10 BECs and apostolates enthusiastically engaged in this corporal work of mercy, resulting in the moulding of 1,150 pieces of soap.

The session on the *Spirituality of Soap Moulding and the Walk with God*, proved to be highly beneficial. One participant reflected, "This session was enlightening, as it highlighted how our lives encounter trials and tribulations, much like the soap moulding process. The hard soap base is cut, melted, moulded, unmoulded, and cured until the final pieces become a gift of love for the prisoners. In the same way, God allows us to face challenges, pain, and suffering, shaping us into masterpieces of the Lord."

The participants, representing various

BECs and apostolates in the parish, collaborated so effectively in their roles and responsibilities that the moulding was completed ahead of schedule. They understood that, while they could not visit the prisons without permits, the soaps they created would bring great joy to the prisoners. This awareness motivated them to put in extra effort to mould high-quality soaps.

Equally important was the sense of fun and joy shared among everyone, evident in the excitement that filled the church hall as the participants admired the beautiful pieces of soap they had crafted by hand, neatly arranged in rows for the curing process.

This project has inspired the Senior Group of the parish to initiate a similar endeavour in October. The parish hopes that more groups will join in collaboration with the parish Caritas to make soap moulding a cherished part of their corporal works of mercy. **Stephanie Cheong**

## Silver Liners Ministry celebrates faith on mini pilgrimage

CHERAS: The Silver Liners Ministry (SLM), a ministry for the elderly at the Church of St Francis of Assisi, organised a mini pilgrimage to the Churches of Immaculate Conception in Port Dickson and the Church of the Visitation in Seremban on September 19. Accompanied by parish priest Fr Paul Cheong, OFM Cap, a bus filled with 44 enthusiastic members departed at 8.15am after breakfast.

Upon arrival at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, the pilgrims were warmly welcomed by parish priest Fr Edwin Peter and his congregation. The beauty of the church captivated many members, who eagerly took photographs. Fr Edwin provided a brief history of the church, followed by a fun quiz hosted by a church member, with small gifts awarded to the winners. The highlight of the visit was Mass, after which the group enjoyed local delicacies and coffee. Notably, the oldest member of the church, a remarkable

91-year-old woman who drives herself to church, served the guests, leaving a lasting impression on the pilgrims.

Afterward, the seniors gathered for lunch at a seaside restaurant before heading to Seremban, arriving at the Church of the Visitation around 2.45pm. Fr Xavier Andrew extended a warm welcome before leading the Divine Mercy Prayer and Chaplet at 3.00pm.

A short video showcasing the church's history was also presented. Many pilgrims were particularly moved by the meditation room, where the statue of Mother Mary carries the Blessed Sacrament during the exposition, a unique experience for all.

The day concluded with a tea break at the church before the group departed at 4.15pm. The priests at both parishes received the pilgrims with great warmth, making the day a memorable one, despite their fatigue. The Silver Liners are already looking forward to their next mini pilgrimage. **Jeselin Xavier**





# Building bridges at Segamat interfaith gathering

Richard Joseph

SEGAMAT, Johor: On September 22, the Church of St Philip welcomed delegates from the *Program Harmoni Madani — Lawatan Mesra RISI Daerah Segamat*, a project organised by the Segamat District Office of the Department of National Unity and Integration. The visiting group was multi-religious, comprising representatives from Masjid Jamek, Segamat's main mosque; the Church of St Philip; a Taoist temple; and a Hindu temple in Segamat Baru.

The programme commenced with all participants gathering at Masjid Jamek for breakfast, followed by a speech from the Officer of the National Unity Department. He emphasised the importance of tolerance and understanding the sensitivities of each other's religions, encouraging attendees to better appreciate beliefs beyond their own.

In his address, the Chairman of Masjid Jamek highlighted that matters related to



The attendees visiting the Sri Mariamman Alayam temple.

*halal* and *haram* are significant to Muslims. He noted that while individuals of other faiths are welcome to practice their own religions, they should refrain from interfering in Islamic affairs.

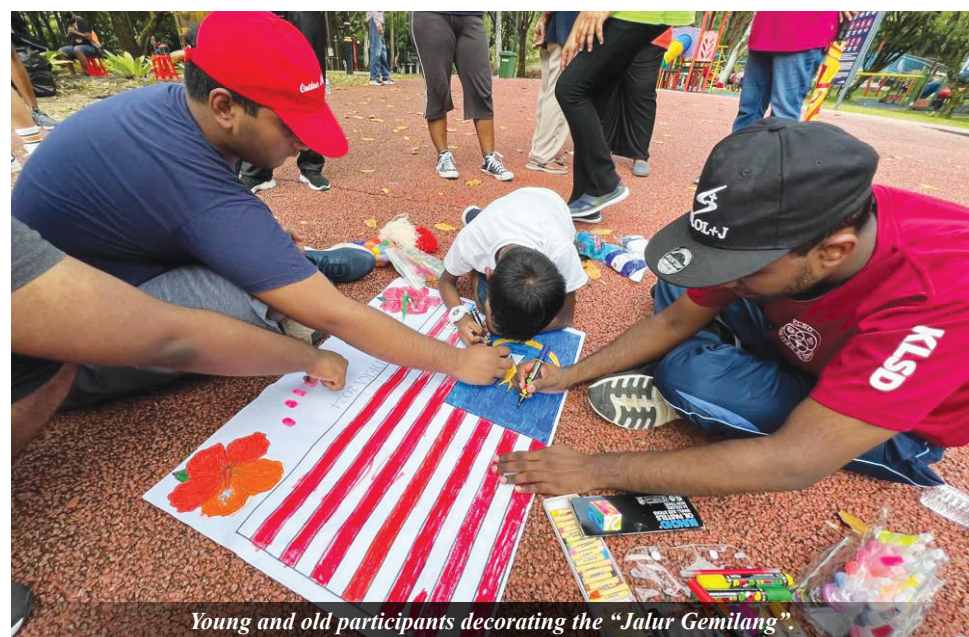
The delegates then went on to the Church of St Philip, where more parishioners joined to welcome them at St Joseph's Hall amidst a relaxed atmosphere. The parishioners

were delighted to see Muslims, Hindus, and Taoists gathering in their church after such a long time.

Joseph George, a representative of the parish, addressed the attendees on behalf of the parishioners and offered a warm welcome. He provided a brief history of the Catholic Church in Segamat and shared a video presentation of the recent centennial

celebration, which impressed the delegates. Joseph also highlighted the church's various activities and its contributions to the Segamat community, particularly in education and the charitable work of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, which provides rations, financial aid, and other forms of assistance to the needy in the district. Additionally, he informed the delegates about upcoming programmes planned for this year and next year, culminating in the closing of the 100-year celebration on May 3, 2025.

The Chairman of St Philip's Post Centennial Committee, Benedict Pang, along with committee members Richard Joseph, Joseph George and Louis Vincent, expressed their gratitude to the delegates and the officers from the District National Unity Department for their visit. They conveyed their hope that the people of Segamat, regardless of faith or race, will continue to live in harmony. The members then accompanied the delegates in their visit to the Taoist and Hindu temples.



Young and old participants decorating the "Jalur Gemilang".

## Celebrating Merdeka in the park

CHERAS: On the morning of August 31, around 50 enthusiastic members from the Church of St Francis of Assisi (SFA) Youth Ministry and the parish's ABC (Assisi Beloved Community) Ministry gathered at Taman Tasik Permaisuri for a meaningful *Merdeka* celebration. Despite a light drizzle, the group's spirit and sense of unity remained strong.

The event began with all present singing the national anthem, *Negaraku*, stirring a powerful sense of patriotism as voices united in harmony. Participants then set off on a 2km walkathon through the scenic park, surrounded by lush greenery and vibrant wildlife.

After the walk, an energetic Zumba

session led by enthusiastic coaches got everyone moving, fostering both physical activity and community bonding. This was followed by a creative segment where participants decorated the *Jalur Gemilang* (Malaysian flag), displaying their artistic flair and patriotic pride.

The celebration ended with a joyful fellowship feast, featuring a diverse spread of culinary delights. This gathering seamlessly blended nature, fitness, and community spirit, reminding everyone of the joy in coming together to celebrate our nation's independence day. Despite the rain, the day stood as a memorable testament to unity and pride in our country.

## Ozanam Home kids enjoy a day of strikes and floats

KUALA LUMPUR: Each quarter, the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD) organises a team-bonding outing to foster camaraderie and connection. This time, we chose to spend the day with the children of Rumah Ozanam. For many of them, it was their first experience bowling. It was an afternoon of fun at the Endah Parade bowling alley.

As we stepped into the bowling alley, the atmosphere was electric. The sound of balls crashing into pins echoed through the air, mingling with the infectious laughter of people gathered around us. The energy was palpable, and we could feel the excitement bubbling up among the team and kids. We eagerly selected our bowling shoes based on our sizes and moved to the bowling lanes assigned to us. A total of six teams were created, comprising five persons per team.

The ritual of choosing the perfect bowling ball was an adventure in itself. Some of us gravitated towards the heaviest balls, seeking power in each throw, while others opted for lighter ones, preferring precision. It was a moment of playful camaraderie, filled with laughter. The game began with a few shaky throws as we found our rhythm, but soon strikes and spares were being cel-

ebrated with exuberant cheers.

As the game progressed, the competitive spirit within us ignited. Each strike was met with high-fives, and even the near-misses were celebrated with encouragement. We shared tips, traded tricks, and even devised ridiculous victory dances for every spare. The afternoon was not just about the game; it was about the bonds we were strengthening with each roll of the ball. We saw how the kids were encouraging each other, helping out and cheering for one another. These kids were fully pumped up and had the spirit of "never giving up" until the end.

What truly made the evening unforgettable was the sense of togetherness. It was not about who won or lost; it was about the laughter, the shared experiences, and the mutual support. We were there for each other, lifting each other up with every pin knocked down. The joy was in the journey, not the destination, and the game became a symbol of our friendship — a reminder of the simple yet profound pleasure of being surrounded by people who care.

After the final strike, we ventured out for a meal at A&W to enjoy chicken, crispy fries and root beer floats, followed by continuous laughter and sharing of stories. The food was delicious, but it was the company



The children displaying their skills at the bowling alley in Endah Parade during their outing with the AOHD team. (Pic used with permission from Rumah Ozanam)

that made the meal truly special.

Upon returning to the Home, the children were asked to write about their experiences; their reflections were truly touching to read. The word "grateful" stood out

in nearly every piece. Coming from challenging backgrounds, they appreciated this simple outing which had brought them immense joy, fun, and cherished memories.

Cheryl Kristine



# Learning to aid others to safety

## Working together among members in the region



**Eta Ting, OCDS**

*The delegates at the Caritas Asia Regional Humanitarian Forum in Bali.*

BALI, Indonesia: Caritas Indonesia hosted the Caritas Asia Regional Humanitarian Forum from September 17 to 19.

Over 40 humanitarian practitioners and executive directors from 21 member organisations and global partners, supported by Caritas Internationalis and Caritas Austria, shared their knowledge, best practices, and experiences in emergency preparedness and response.

Malaysia was represented by Fr Fabian Dicom, National Director of Caritas Malaysia, and Eta Ting Ming Na, Diocesan Director of Caritas Sibiu.

Key highlights included:

- Mapping of the humanitarian context in the region
- The revised CI Toolkit (CHAT, CI Emergency Framework, Emergency Appeal), its challenges, and recommendations
- The Regional Emergency Support Mechanism (RESUM) and its application
- The Community of Practice

(CoP) on Local leadership, Volunteer Management, MEAL, and various innovations in the humanitarian sector in the region.

John Paul Coughlin and Arpana Karki provided updates on the CI Toolkit, Caritas Humanitarian Accompaniment Team (CHAT), and the CI Emergency Appeal and Framework. Alexander Tripura from Caritas Bangladesh shared valuable experiences regarding the Emergency Appeal as a Programme Framework.

On day two, Ranjit Silway from Caritas Nepal recapped the previous day's discussions. Participants also engaged in conversations about CI Protocols, communication mechanisms during emergencies, and challenges in reporting, emphasising the necessity for training to enhance effective disaster response teams.

Fr Guido Trezzani's presentation on the flood response in Kazakhstan illustrated the diversity of Emergency Support Mechanisms (RESUM) tailored to each country's unique protocols

and policies.

Fr Fredy from Caritas Indonesia presented the "One Caritas One Response" approach, detailing collaborative efforts to address disasters like tsunamis and earthquakes. He outlined a four-step framework for developing local leadership and sustainable funding: Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing. This model has fostered stronger partnerships among Caritas Indonesia, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and Caritas Germany since March 2024.

On the final day, Linus Ng from CHARIS, Singapore, introduced the digital CHARIS Volunteer Management System, which serves as a critical database for managing trained volunteers. There was a proposal to establish a network of well-trained volunteers across Caritas Singapore, Caritas Malaysia, and other member organisations for effective deployment during emergencies, ensuring readiness for disasters such as typhoons, tsunamis, and earthquakes.

The SHAPE (Strengthening Humanitarian Partnership and Exchanges) initiative, spearheaded by Caritas Asia, is a collaborative effort that emphasises mutual engagement among member organisations in the region. Instead of operating in isolation, it encourages each Caritas member organisation to actively participate and strengthen humanitarian aid partnerships and exchanges across Asia.

Representing Caritas Malaysia, Eta Ting has been actively involved in the SHAPE Working Group since 2021, collaborating with representatives from Caritas Indonesia, CHARIS Singapore, Caritas Cambodia, Caritas Myanmar, Caritas India, Caritas Bangladesh, Caritas Nepal, and Caritas Philippines.

The recent meeting on September 20 brought together SHAPE Working Group members and representatives from Caritas Austria, including Matteo Putzolu and Sunil Simon. The discussions were productive, focusing on three essential groups:

- MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning): Led by Dr Dileesh from Caritas India.
- CoP (Community of Practice): Headed by Jeanie

Curanio from Caritas Philippines.

● RESUM (Resilience and Sustainability): Coordinated by Ari Nugroho from Caritas Asia.

A crucial takeaway from these discussions is the understanding that the success of SHAPE relies not on Caritas Asia initiating projects alone but on the collective efforts of all member organisations. This collaboration will enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian aid and foster stronger partnerships.

With 13 months remaining in the project timeline, there is optimism that the initiative will yield meaningful outcomes. Caritas Malaysia hopes to implement the CI Toolkit and Disaster Response Training (DRT) across its nine dioceses. This training aims to facilitate impactful exchanges and develop coordinated, collaborative strategies among the Caritas Asia family.

The SHAPE initiative embodies the spirit of "Together We Can Make A Greater Difference." Through love and shared purpose, the Caritas community aims to enhance its humanitarian efforts, ensuring that all members can contribute to the common good in fulfilling God's Ministry of Love.



*The SHAPE working group of Mini Project and CoP which Eta Ting (front row, second from left) is also a member. This SHAPE meeting was held after the Caritas Asia Regional Humanitarian Forum September 17-19.*

## Collaborating to address societal and environmental needs

TAIWAN: Archbishop Julian Leow recently visited Tzu Chi in Taiwan, accompanied by Fr Andrew Manickam OFM Cap (Ecclesiastical Assistant to the Archdiocesan Creation Justice Ministry), Dr Gary Liew, (Director of the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development), and members of Tzu Chi Malaysia. Founded in 1966 by Master Cheng Yen, Tzu Chi is a leading humanitarian organisation focused on charity, education, medicine, environmental protection, and community volunteerism.

Tzu Chi operates in 136 countries, with volunteers in 68 regions, providing long-term care for the underprivileged, disaster relief, and livelihood training to promote independence.

The delegation began at Jing Si Tang in Taipei, learning about Tzu Chi's origins and Master Cheng Yen's philosophy. A significant moment in Tzu Chi's formation came



*Archbishop Julian Leow and his delegation in Taiwan to visit Master Cheng Yen the founder of Tzu Chi.*

in 1966 when Master Cheng Yen discussed community service with three Roman Catholic nuns. This discussion is credited with having made Master Cheng Yen realise that Buddhism had to do more than simply encouraging the private cultivation of people's souls, it had to do more for society as well.

They also visited DA.AI

Technology, which produces eco-friendly textiles from recycled materials, supporting Tzu Chi's environmental mission.

A highlight was meeting Master Cheng Yen in Hualien, where Tzu Chi Malaysia shared their collaboration with the Catholic Church particularly the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur

during the COVID-19 pandemic, including fundraising for medical equipment. Since then, Tzu Chi Malaysia has been working closely on environmental and recycling efforts as well as volunteering hand in hand on various occasions, this has fostered a sense of community, collaboration and learning from one another which they said feels

like family.

Archbishop Julian expressed gratitude for Tzu Chi's work and hopes for future initiatives.

Before exchanging gifts, Archbishop Julian learned that Master Cheng Yen remains in contact with the three nuns from their pivotal 1966 meeting, showcasing enduring bonds of shared mission.

The visit concluded with a tour of Tzu Chi Hospital in Hualien, featuring inclusive prayer rooms and a peaceful garden for patients and families.

This trip was both humbling and inspiring, highlighting the dedication of Tzu Chi volunteers. Archbishop Julian is eager to foster more collaborations as they work together to address societal and environmental needs.

Archbishop Julian Leow's message from Taiwan: <https://shorturl.at/tKcOc>



# African influencers trained to evangelise on social media



*Certified faith influencers of Burkina Faso, September 12, 2024 in Ouagadougou (LCI Photo/LD)*

BURKINA FASO: How can Christians build a thoughtful and effective missionary presence on social media? This was the focus of a six-month training organised by the Pan-African Network of Theology and Pastoral Ministry (PACTPAN), running from February to August 2024. Out of 141 original participants, 56 received diplomas, including nine from Burkina Faso, who were awarded their certificates in a ceremony in Ouagadougou on September 12.

"It is essential to evangelise on social media," said Fr Valéry Sakougry, representing Archbishop Prosper Kontiébo of Ouagadougou at the event. He praised the programme as being of "high quality and relevance," covering "timely, diverse, and rich topics." The curriculum spanned digital presence strategies, servant leadership, spiritual maturity, non-violence principles, synodal dialogue methods, and the understanding of the church as God's inclusive family. The students completed 29 evaluated courses over seven months.

Fr Sakougry, drawing from Pope Francis' exhortation *Christus Vivit*, highlighted the potential of social media as "a gift from God, a grace of our time." He emphasised that the virtual world is "a pastoral field like any parish." Through initiatives like this, PACTPAN aimed to tackle the current

challenges of evangelisation, including "changing mindsets, boldly addressing matters of faith without fear or shame in the digital space."

For Lazare Combarry, a marketing and communication student who graduated from the programme, the mission now is to "communicate faith-based values and promote social justice across Africa." Belemsagha, a physician and fellow graduate, felt ready to embrace her new role: "to be a model for social change in African society" and "a catalyst for societal transformation through digital dialogue on faith for a greater positive impact on our environment."

She and two other graduates are developing a project to "create and promote a safe and supportive digital space where young people can express their concerns and ask questions about personal and community development." But first, she plans to deepen her knowledge by "further engaging in continued education on the Church's social doctrine, the synodal process, and theology."

Roger Dayamba, a sociology PhD student and fellow graduate, plans to "produce diverse content to spread the Gospel message through audio, video, and written materials." Recognising the PACTPAN's ongoing support, he is working on a humanitarian project

to assist vulnerable groups, particularly displaced people affected by Burkina Faso's security crisis. These efforts, including cultural activities, interfaith dialogue, and training programs, will be shared on social media "to encourage society to show greater compassion and solidarity."

While equipped with tools from PACTPAN, the new influencers are also aware of the potential pitfalls. Belemsagha acknowledged risks such as "getting distracted by the digital world; living a false version of yourself to win over your audience; acting like celebrities; creating online churches and positioning oneself as a spiritual leader; and being seduced by fame." Dayamba sees the risk stemming from "the autonomy offered by the digital space," which may tempt influencers to "shift their mission's focus onto themselves and prioritise followers over spreading the Word of God."

Nevertheless, the sociology doctoral student is encouraged by the programme's efforts to address these risks. This includes "instructors urging collaboration with priests and bishops, embracing the Catholic Church's social doctrine, and constantly remembering that we are instruments for the glory of God alone." **Davy Soma, LCI** (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

## Tokyo archbishop urges patience and unity in Synodal journey

JAPAN: Archbishop Isao Kikuchi of Tokyo *pic* called for patience, discernment, and a commitment to God's values in the ongoing synodal process of the Catholic Church, urging the faithful to embrace the journey despite worldly challenges and expectations.



In his homily on September 22, the prelate offered clarity on the significance and purpose of the synodal path, as the Church prepares for the second session of the Synod in Rome this October.

"The meeting in Rome is not a place for each country to present a report, but a place for concrete work to determine the path we should take," he said.

He said the Synod is an opportunity to collectively discern the way forward, rather than just a forum for delivering conclusions.

Archbishop Isao pointed out that the synodal process might not lead to immediate or concrete decisions, stating, "There may not be any concrete decisions made. Also, this October meeting will not be the end of everything."

He emphasised that the synodal journey is an ongoing process and that the Church must view it as the beginning of a continuous effort to embody synodality.

"From now on, the Church will always continue to strive to be a synodal Church. This is because the Church, the People of God, is by its very nature synodal and continues to walk together," he explained.

He acknowledged the various opinions and misconceptions about the Synod, including questions about whether it signifies the introduction of democracy into the Church or represents a new political ideology.

Addressing these concerns, Archbishop Isao said, "However, that is not the point. The purpose of the current Synod is to concretely embody and live the image that is at the origin of the birth of the Church, the walk of the Virgin Mary and the Lord Jesus, and the walk of the Lord Jesus and his disciples."

Archbishop Isao reminded the faithful that the synodal path requires time, effort, and above all, patience. He acknowledged that this journey is not without difficulties, as it requires confronting opposing opinions and societal norms.

"This path of synod, which we walk together while continuing to discern the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is not an easy one," he stated. "It takes time and effort, and above all, it requires patience."

He expressed reaffirmation that, even in the face of challenges, the Church must remember that God finds value in the path of suffering and self-sacrifice.

"At the heart of God's plan of salvation is always the suffering of the cross. As we walk the path of synod together, we will face various difficulties. We will be at the mercy of various opposing opinions. We will encounter the barriers of common sense. We may hesitate when we think about the impact of our decisions. But it is at such times that we must remember that God finds value in the path of suffering and self-sacrifice," he said. **LiCAS News**

## Celebrating Caritas Nigeria Day 2024

ABUJA: Caritas Nigeria Day is an annual event inaugurated in 2010. It is an occasion to reflect on the local Church's humanitarian strides and challenges.

This year, the activities began with a Thanksgiving Mass at the Catholic Secretariat's Chaplaincy, and focused on the theme, *Giving back to the community*.

The Thanksgiving Mass was celebrated by the Ordinary of Wukari Diocese, Bishop Mark Maigida Nzukwein. In his homily, the bishop commended Caritas Nigeria for reaching over 10 million beneficiaries since 2010. He further encouraged Caritas Nigeria staff to work towards a more holistic service to their clients.

Recounting the journey so far, the Executive Secretary and CEO of Caritas Nigeria, Fr Uchechukwu Obodoechin, emphasised the need for a generous approach to humanitarian service that embodies a compassionate heart and spirit.

Earlier in his welcome remarks, Fr Peter Babangida Audu, the Deputy Executive Secretary of Caritas Nigeria, appealed for sensitivity to the needs of society's underprivileged.

"Can you find your brother in the midst of this brokenness? Can you find your sister in



*Caritas Nigeria Day 2024 annual celebration.*

the midst of what they are going through? Can you find your neighbour in the midst of all this? Dear friends, we are called to be a light in a darkened, broken world. To identify with those who are in misery and those who are suffering. The little you give will go a long way to building our society and making a harmonious environment," Fr Audu said.

For his part, Fr Michael Banjo, Deputy Secretary-General at CSN, encouraged Caritas Nigeria staff and all those who work with disadvantaged people to always uphold the dignity of the human person, including

that of those we consider as "the poor."

"It is one thing that you go out as a staff of Caritas to do what Caritas has asked you to do. It is another thing that you are deeply involved in that act of charity. Charity is more meaningful when that personal dimension is present in your actions. Charity is not charity until your heart is involved in your actions. Our human dignity can never be removed, regardless of our personal circumstances or predicament. Even the worst human beings, or criminal, still possesses human dignity," said Fr Banjo. **Vatican News**



# Five things to watch for in the October synod

Thomas J. Reese

The second session of the Synod on Synodality, October 2 to 27, is a follow-up to the first session that occurred last October. Here are five things to look for as the synod delegates gather in Rome.

## **First, how is the second session similar to the first session of the synod?**

The first session of the synod took place last October after a worldwide consultation process that asked people how they thought the Church should respond to the challenges that faced it and the world.

The consultation began at the parish and diocesan level and was further discussed and synthesised at the national and continental levels. All of this was passed on to the synod office in Rome, which synthesised the suggestions and shared them with the synod participants.

This first session was like no other synod before it. There were fewer long speeches, and discussion took place at roundtables of 10, with delegates following a methodology of “conversations in the Spirit.” Earlier synods had only bishops and a few priests, while at the Synod on Synodality about a quarter of the participants were lay people, including women. The second session will include the same delegates as last year except for a few substitutes who will replace those unable to return.

Rather than simply debating issues at the tables, the stress at last year’s synod was on listening to each other. First, each participant would share his or her thoughts and feelings about an issue without interruption. Then they would go around the table again with each person sharing what they heard.

Only after listening and sharing what they had heard was there a free discussion. In the process, everyone was treated equally whether they were a lay person or cardinal. Moderators were present at each table to guide

the process and to make sure bishops did not dominate the discussion.

Each table drew up a report on its conclusions, which were shared with the rest of the synod. The full synod ultimately voted on a final report, each paragraph of which required a two-thirds vote.

All of this was done behind closed doors with the members of the synod instructed not to share with the press or the public what went on in the synod. Only the final report was public.

This year’s session will follow the same methodology of “conversations in the Spirit” as the first session.

## **Second, how will the second session differ from the first session?**

The agenda for the first session came from the worldwide consultations. As a result, lots of issues were discussed including controversial ones like women deacons and the church’s approach to LGBTQ+ persons.

Many of the controversial issues could not be resolved because of disagreements among the delegates. For example, although the term LGBTQ+ is now commonly used by the Vatican, it was left out of the final report because the drafters feared that any paragraph including this term would not get a two-thirds vote due to opposition from African and Eastern European bishops.

In the final report, the synod called for further study of the issues they could not resolve. The assumption was that the results of these studies would provide input for the second session of the synod.

Pope Francis, however, decided these issues need more study than could be completed in a year. In addition, he thinks the complexity of these topics would distract from the main theme of the synod. He wants the synod to focus on “How to be a synodal church on mission?”

As a result, last February, he sent the controversial topics to 10 study groups or

committees where the synod organisers would collaborate with curial offices to study them further. The committees are to report back to him in June of 2025, although they will also make an interim report to the synod in October.

During the second session of the synod, the Pope wants the delegates to focus on the topic of synodality rather than these controversial topics. How can the Church become more synodal on the parish, diocesan, national and international level? How can the Church be more consultative, more listening and less clerical? How can the Church listen to the Spirit and follow where it is leading us? How can the laity become more involved in the mission of Jesus?

Pope Francis has repeatedly made clear that for him, this should be the true focus of the synod, not the controversial issues discussed in the media.

The focus on synodality could have practical implications. The synod office announced in March the formation of an additional five working groups to address topics such as the role of bishops, decentralisation in the Church and how to inject synodality in church structures, theology and mission.

This could lead to real-world changes in how parish and diocesan councils function in the Church. The synod might even call for a process whereby the laity could participate in a periodic review of the ministry of their bishop.

## **Third, what will be in the committees’ interim reports to the synod?**

In an attempt to keep the synod informed, the papally appointed study groups or committees will give interim reports to the delegates.

The topics being studied by the committees include ecumenical dialogue, the formation of priests, the role of bishops and papal representatives, theological questions on ministries and “controversial doctrinal, pastoral and ethical questions.” Women deacons will be

studied under the rubric of “ministries,” while LGBTQ+ issues will be studied under the rubric of “the circular relationship between doctrine and pastoral care.”

My guess is that these committees will report more on topics needing study than on any results from their studies. I don’t think we are going to see any first drafts of their conclusions.

## **Fourth, what will be the reactions from so-called conservative and progressive activists to the second session of the synod?**

The conservative response to the first session of the synod was largely negative. They warned that the Church is not a democracy and feared that the role of the hierarchy was being diminished.

Progressives, on the other hand, were generally ecstatic about the involvement of the laity and the openness of discussion. They praised the roundtable format and the conversations in the Spirit, although they would have preferred allowing members to speak freely about their experience.

Will progressives continue to praise Pope Francis and the synodal process or will they revolt against his narrowing of the agenda of the synod?

RNS Vatican reporter Claire Giangravé reports that Catholic women remain hopeful in the synod despite the challenges. Although women deacons is off the agenda, the *Instrumentum Laboris* instructed participants to consider practical actions to realise Catholic women’s “untapped” potential and to develop new possibilities for women at every level.

Giangravé reports that the document suggested creating new spaces where women may share their skills and insights, allowing for more women in decision-making roles, expanding the roles and responsibility of religious women and increasing the leadership of women in seminaries and church tribunals.

## **Fifth, how will the synod end? With a bang or a whimper?**

## Vatican secretary of state calls out UN for promoting abortion, gender ideology

NEW YORK: In an address to the United Nations’ “Summit of the Future” in New York, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Holy See’s secretary of state, emphasised the need for promoting the dignity of the human person and voiced the Vatican’s disapproval of the assembly’s promotion of abortion and gender ideology.

Parolin addressed UN members gathered for the summit on September 23. Though praising summit attendees for engaging in dialogue, Parolin commented that there is a “need to rethink actions in a number of areas.”

The cardinal voiced the Vatican’s concerns with a document titled *Pact for the Future*, which was passed by summit attendees on Sunday. He said that “in conformity with its nature and particular mission, [the Holy See] wishes to express its reservations” regarding the assembly’s promotion of abortion and gender ideology.

The Holy See retains the status of a non-voting “permanent observer” in the United Nations.

### **What did Parolin say?**

Parolin emphasised the need to promote the

dignity of the human person across the world. He praised the summit as a “reason for hope” amid a time of crisis in which there is an ongoing “erosion of trust between nations, as evidenced by the growing prevalence and intensity of conflict.”

“Today, the sense of belonging to a single human family is fading, and the dream of working together for justice and peace seems outdated and utopian. This need not be the case, if there is a will to engage in genuine dialogue,” Parolin said. “If dignity is the foundation and integral human development is the goal of our future, dialogue is the necessary means.”

Though the “Pact for the Future” passed by the summit does not mention abortion explicitly, it states the summit’s goal to “ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.” “Reproductive health” and “reproductive rights” are terms used to refer to an array of primarily women’s health services, often including abortion.

“Regarding the terms ‘sexual and reproductive health’ and ‘reproductive rights,’ the Holy See considers these terms as applying to a holistic concept of health, which embrace, each

in their own way, the person in the entirety of his or her personality, mind, and body, and which foster the achievement of personal maturity in sexuality and in the mutual love and decision-making that characterise the conjugal relationship between a man and a woman in accordance with moral norms,” Parolin said.

“The Holy See does not consider abortion or access to abortion or abortifacients as a dimension of these terms,” he clarified.

“With reference to ‘gender,’” Parolin continued, “the Holy See understands the term to be grounded in the biological sexual identity that is male or female.”

### **What other issues did Parolin emphasise?**

Parolin went on to emphasise the Vatican’s belief that the “eradication of poverty” through global development must be the “over-arching goal of all future action.”

He also stressed the need for the pursuit of peace through global disarmament and the “total elimination of nuclear weapons,” saying that “narrow geopolitical considerations must be put aside and strong economic lobbies must be resisted in order to uphold human dignity and ensure a future in which all human



beings can enjoy integral development, both as individuals and as a community.”

Finally, Parolin also said there is an “urgent need” for governments to regulate the development of artificial intelligence to promote “AI ethics that encompasses the life cycle of AI and addresses, inter alia, data protection, accountability, bias, and the impact of AI on employment.”

“Above all,” Parolin said, “thinking of the future should take into account the needs and interests of future generations. It is imperative that a dignified future is guaranteed for all, ensuring the provision of the requisite conditions — including a nurturing family environment to facilitate flourishing while simultaneously addressing the myriad challenges that impede this, including those resulting from poverty, conflict, exploitation, and addiction.” **Peter Pinedo, CNA**



# For a shared mission: Embodying synodality in the Malaysian Church

## Pope's prayer intention for October

As we reflect on the Pope's prayer intention for October — "For a shared mission — We pray that the Church continue to sustain in all ways a Synodal lifestyle, as a sign of co-responsibility, promoting the participation, the communion, and the mission shared among priests, religious, and lay people" — we are invited to deepen our understanding of what it means to share in the mission of the Church. In the diverse and multicultural context of Malaysia, this call resonates strongly. But how do we move beyond the rhetoric often surrounding synodality and mission and begin truly living it in ways that reflect our Malaysian reality?

### The Pope's Vision of Shared Mission

Pope Francis consistently emphasises that the mission of the Church is not the sole responsibility of the clergy or religious. Instead, he calls for a Church where all the baptised share in its mission equally and co-responsibly. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, he writes, "By virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples" (EG, 120), making it clear that the Church's mission is a shared task that includes everyone.

This concept of shared mission is further grounded in synodality, which Pope Francis describes as "walking together," promoting active participation, inclusion, and collaboration. The Pope highlights that every baptised person is called to contribute to the life and mission of the Church, and this shared responsibility is a way to reflect the unity and diversity of the Body of Christ. Documents like *Lumen Gentium* and *Christifideles Laici* echo this vision, affirming that the laity, together with clergy and religious, have a distinct yet complementary role in building up the Church.

### Moving Beyond Rhetoric: Facing the Reality in the Malaysian Church

In Malaysia, there is no shortage of discourses, pastoral letters, and homilies that use the language of mission and synodality. Many Church leaders — bishops and priests alike — have spoken about the importance of these concepts. However, much of what has been said remains in the realm of rhetoric. It is worth asking if our prelates, priests, and religious truly understand what it means to share the mission of the Church in a synodal way.

One such example is the frequently invoked phrase "turun padang" — literally, "descending to the field" — to describe a missionary approach of engaging with the people. While this may sound admirable, it often comes off as condescending. The very notion of "turun padang" implies a top-down mentality, as though leaders are stepping down from a higher place to visit those below them. This is not the way of Christ. Jesus did not



### PRAYER PRISM

Fr Fabian Dicom

merely "descend" temporarily or superficially into humanity; He incarnated fully, embracing our human condition completely. His mission was one of humility and service, leading Him to the point of death on the cross, a total and unconditional gift of Himself for us.

The *turun padang* rhetoric runs the risk of arrogance, presenting leaders as if they are making a sacrifice to be with the people, when Christ's model is one of *kenosis* — a complete emptying of oneself to serve others. Jesus made it clear that He "came not to be served but to serve" (Mark 10:45). We are called to the same radical service, not a performative or temporary engagement that can alienate rather than unite.

### A Shared Mission in the Malaysian Context: Practical and Revolutionary Steps

To embody a truly shared mission, we must move beyond mere words and into transformative action. This shift towards synodality challenges us to break down traditional roles and boundaries, creating a Church that is inclusive, participative, and authentic. I propose the following practical steps:

#### 1. Building Collaborative Structures: Moving Beyond Silos

Often, ministries and groups within parishes operate in isolation, with little interaction or cooperation. For a shared mission to flourish, we need structures that encourage collaboration. Regular joint meetings between parish councils, religious orders, lay movements, and social ministries could create synergy and shared goals. For example, a parish could unite its Caritas group, youth ministry, and catechetical team to work on a programme that serves the community's spiritual and material needs, exemplifying the Church's mission as a shared effort.

#### 2. Empowering the Laity: From Passive Recipients to Active Participants

In many Malaysian parishes, the laity often see themselves as passive recipients of the Church's ministry, relying on the clergy to lead. This mindset must shift. Pope Francis stresses that laypeople must be empowered to take active responsibility in the Church's mission. This involves offering formation programmes that



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equip the laity with theological, spiritual, and practical tools, so they can truly take up leadership roles in ministries and initiatives. By empowering laypeople, the Church unlocks the potential for greater participation and a more dynamic and engaged community.

#### 3. Mission as Witness: Living the Gospel in the Public Sphere

A shared mission extends beyond the walls of the Church. In Malaysia, where ethnic and religious diversity is rich but often tense, the Church's witness in the public sphere is crucial. A shared mission means all Catholics — clergy, religious, and laity — must actively promote peace, justice, and the common good. Collaborative efforts to address issues like poverty, environmental degradation, and human rights violations demonstrate the Church's commitment to living the Gospel. Every Catholic is called to be a missionary disciple, reflecting Christ in their daily life, workplace, and community.

### Overcoming Challenges: Transforming the Vision of Shared Mission

While the vision of a shared mission is inspiring, it is not without challenges. The Malaysian Church, like others, faces obstacles such as clericalism, individualism, and complacency. Pope Francis has spoken against these issues, particularly clericalism, which he calls an obstacle to synodality and shared mission.

In *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis criticises clericalism directly, particularly in paragraph 98, where he highlights it as a temptation that affects both clergy and laity. He emphasises that clericalism distorts the Church's mission by reinforcing power structures and limiting the participation of the faithful. This ties closely with his call for co-responsibility in *Evangelii Gaudium*, where he stresses that the mission of evangelisation is not the sole responsibility of the clergy, but a task shared by all the baptised. By fostering a truly synodal Church, we

ensure that every person has an active role in the Church's life and mission.

To truly live out a shared mission, we need an intentional approach that addresses these challenges:

#### 1. Clericalism vs Co-Responsibility

Clericalism — where the clergy are seen as the sole leaders of the Church — stands in stark contrast to the Pope's call for co-responsibility. This approach requires priests and religious to work alongside laypeople, valuing their gifts and sharing leadership. As Pope Francis notes in *Evangelii Gaudium*, "It is impossible to think that the mission of evangelisation could be carried out only by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients" (EG, 120).

#### 2. Individualism vs Communion

In a society that often values individualism, the Church's shared mission reminds us that we are stronger together. Emphasising communion over individualism fosters a culture of trust, where differences are respected, and unity is prioritised. This requires a collective effort where clergy, religious, and laity work hand-in-hand, overcoming personal ambitions for the sake of the common good.

#### 3. Complacency vs Bold Engagement

The call to shared mission demands bold engagement. Pope Francis often urges the Church to step out of its comfort zones and be "a Church which is bruised, hurting, and dirty because it has been out on the streets" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 49). In Malaysia, where religious practice can sometimes become routine and insular, we must be willing to take risks for the Gospel. Whether through innovative ministry programmes, advocacy for social justice, or commitment to the poor, this bold engagement breathes new life into the Church's mission.

### Conclusion: For a Truly Shared Mission

As we continue to pray for a Synodal Church, let us also commit to embodying a shared mission in our Malaysian context. This mission is not just the responsibility of priests or religious; it belongs to all of us. Together, we are called to be the hands, feet, and heart of Christ in the world, bringing His love, justice, and peace to all corners of our society.

In the spirit of synodality, let us walk this path together, supporting and empowering one another as we strive to build a Church that truly reflects the unity and mission of the Body of Christ. Let this shared mission be our response to the challenges and opportunities of our time, a living witness to the power of the Gospel in Malaysia and beyond.



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# The Lord hears you in all ways you speak to Him

## International Day of Sign Languages (IDSL) 2024

Elvina Fernandez

KUALA LUMPUR: The Church of the Holy Rosary in Brickfields was filled with devoted members of the Deaf community for a special Mass on September 22, held in celebration of the International Day of Sign Languages (IDSL) 2024.

Organised by the Archdiocesan Catholic Ministry for the Deaf (CMfD), the international theme for this year's IDSL was "Sign up for Sign Language Rights," while CMfD's theme was inspired by Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

The event brought together the Deaf community and their families from Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Ipoh, Seremban, Sib, and Singapore. The day began at 8.00am with Rosary recitation in sign language, interpreted by Genevieve Yap and Celine George.

After the rosary (in sign language), the Mass was presided over by Archbishop Julian Leow with CMfD's Ecclesiastical Assistant, Fr Michael Chua, interpreting the Mass and Fr Dominic Tan, the parish priest, concelebrating. In his homily, Archbishop Julian emphasised the importance of learning sign language to break communication barriers and foster love and understanding.

"As we celebrate IDSL, it reminds me that we, before the Deaf community, are the ones who are Deaf for not being able to communicate with them. Seeing Fr Michael communicate the homily to the Deaf community, I felt that I am Deaf, because I can't 'speak' in their language. I think we should make an effort to learn sign language so we can reach out and break the barrier of love. Let's take the effort to communicate through our eyes and with our

hands, with our faithful brother and sister," he said.

The Mass saw Deaf members actively participate in the celebration, including in the offertory, and serving as wardens. Before the final hymn, Beatrice Anne shared her journey to Catholicism, taking up RCIA classes in sign language online via Zoom while working in Sri Lanka, then continuing the journey through physical classes when she returned back to Malaysia.

"I was drawn to know Christ and Catholicism, and all the struggles in between did not seem like a battle but in fact an encouragement that made me want to defeat it to get closer to the Lord," she said, while highlighting that the support she received from the CMfD community and her Godmother, Geraldine Shalini John, played an important part in her baptism on July 27, by Fr Alvin Ng, SJ, parish priest of the Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya.

After Mass, Dewan Hsiong had a fun-filled vibe with various booths showcasing the Deaf community's skills and talents, including henna art, cookies by Deaf baker, Beatrice Anne, and religious statues by Deaf sculptor Raymond Raj. There was also an activity corner for Children of Deaf Adults (CODA) and a mini exhibition on Deaf culture, basic communication with the Deaf, and a showcase of CMfD's hosted programmes, including the recent Papal visit in Singapore.

Isabella Peng, IDSL Coordinator, welcomed everyone to the IDSL celebration 2024 and emphasised the importance of the IDSL celebration. "IDSL is an opportunity for us to support the Deaf community, protect their identity, and support their talents so they do not go



One of the activities by the Deaf community.

unnoticed among the larger community," she said.

Parishioners also had the opportunity to participate in an interactive basic sign language learning session taught by Geraldine Shalini John. The celebration also saw a beautiful Chinese dance by Teresa Chong, portraying the possibility of having harmony between dance and music despite being Deaf.

CMfD's senior BIM (Bahasa Isyarat Malaysia) interpreter, Anthony Lim, at the celebration, highlighting his journey in becoming a church interpreter, said that his initial interest in learning sign language was sparked by curiosity and that it would be fun to learn a language that relies on hand gestures and facial expressions to communicate.

"Just as any other learning journey, mine had its fair share of challenges at the initial stage, but it is a fulfilling one, as through this, I am now able to communicate with the Deaf and open doors for others to also learn BIM and help us become a more inclusive faith

community," he said.

CMfD coordinator, Melina Fair, said the celebration would not have been possible without the support from everyone involved. "I thank all who participated in IDSL, the organising committee who assisted in planning and organising the IDSL 2024, and also the many sign language students who came in to assist us as volunteers, not forgetting parish priest Fr Dominic Tan, as well as each and every one from Holy Rosary Church."

There was also a drama performed by Deaf members illustrating the ease of communication when sign language is known by members of the community, for instance, when communicating with a Deaf e-hailing driver or when someone in the service or health care industry is communicating with a Deaf customer or patient.

Fr Michael said sign language opens up one's world, the world of the Deaf and bridges communication to create opportunities for the Deaf. "People often group Deafness as a disability. But the real issue is accessibility. The Deaf do not wish to be treated differently or accorded with special rights. Through the wider use of sign language, what the Deaf want is an opportunity, which they can have through a common communication when we take the effort to learn sign language."

Before leaving, Archbishop Julian encouraged everyone to learn sign language to be able to communicate with the Deaf and concluded by signing "Jesus loves you," which was followed by clapping (hands raised up in the air) by all present.



## Priest hopes to inspire after his "Jeopardy!" appearance

Viewers were slightly stunned to see a Catholic priest on the September 19 episode of Jeopardy!

While fans of the show couldn't help but share their delight at seeing Fr Steve Jakubowski in his Roman collar — with comments on social media directed at his physical attributes — others were more impressed by his theological knowledge, with one person on X commenting that the parochial vicar at St Ignatius Martyr Catholic Church in Austin, Texas "killed it" with his replies to the religious questions.

Unfortunately for the religious contestant, his answer in the final round about Frank Sinatra, which saw him risk \$5,301 (RM21,881.20), was incorrect and he left the show with \$99 (RM408.65).

However, Fr Steve explained to *Fox News Digital* that it was a "great experi-

ence." Furthermore, he hopes it can serve a meaningful purpose.

Interestingly his appearance on the gameshow did encourage discussions other than his looks! As some people pointed out, ordinarily the host Ken Jennings refers to people by their first name, however, with the clergyman he continually referred to him as "Fr Steve."

This gesture of respect led to a discussion on the show's Reddit page on the use of honorifics for contestants. While some people felt it was a little confusing to go against the show's seemingly usual policy, someone did point out that Fr Steve was "wearing his profession on his sleeve."

And perhaps it is this exact image that Fr Steve was trying to highlight in reaching out to others beyond his usual community. **Cerith Gardiner, Aletea**





# What if you're not a fan of the Rosary?

In a blink of an eye, we have reached the final quarter of the year, and amidst the chaos of what the year has been, soon the chaos of the Christmas season will ensue. October is indeed a great time to spend in quiet reflection of the many blessings the year has brought, and a silent prayer for what is yet to come. The Catholic version of Octoberfest is centred around the Rosary as we celebrate World Rosary Day on October 7.

I, for one, am honestly not a fan of reciting the Rosary as I always found it long and boring, a mindless repetition of three different prayers we were made to memorise from the time we were conceived in the womb. I often find my mind wandering during these Rosary sessions, unless of course I am to recite a decade in the midst of a gathering, then of course, my mind would always be focused on ensuring I say the ten Hail Mary, not one more or one less, so I don't get the judgemental Catholic stares that we are all so accustomed to.

My favourite memories of Rosary recitals were in my younger days when BECs were more active, or rather, when I was more active in my BEC, and as children, we always participated in all BEC activities. I remember often looking forward to the months of May and October, where we went for daily Rosary sessions at our neighbours' houses, and had people come over to our house for the Rosary. As a child, it was a great deal if you could recite a decade, or get to read those mysteries. But,



## On the Fence

JACELYN JOHNSON

more importantly, it was that gathering of people that got you closer to BEC members, who until now, are akin to your extended family because of the years spent growing with them. I do not have that any longer.

I do know as a Catholic, I'm supposed to be devoted to praying the Rosary on my own, or with my family ever so often, but I just haven't got round to appreciating the beauty of it. In fact, truth be told, sometimes, I would use those Rosary hours before Mass to read the

HERALD. Terrible, I know!

This got me researching on why the Rosary is such a quintessential part of the Catholic faith. The Rosary is widely believed to have been promulgated by St Dominic in 1214, where he had a vision of Mary who presented him with a Rosary, both the beads and prayers to be recited, and this got St Dominic to promote praying the Rosary in small groups and communities wherever he travelled to preach.

Interestingly, the name 'Rosary' was derived from the rose being a symbol of Our Lady, as Mary was associated with roses and rose gardens in the medieval period. The Church officially recognised the Rosary in 1571, when Pope Pius V asked all Christians to pray the Rosary for the help of Christians defending Christian Europe from Muslim invasion at the great sea Battle of Lepanto. On October 7, the smaller Christian fleet triumphed, and ever since, that day, has been celebrated as

the Feast of the Holy Rosary.

The first three mysteries of the Rosary were introduced to give each decade of the Rosary significant meaning as each mystery leads us to ponder very specific events in the lives of Jesus and Mary and the lessons they hold for our own lives today. In 2002, it was Pope John Paul II who introduced the fourth set, the luminous mysteries.

However, did you know that prayer beads are generally used in various faiths including in Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam? They may take different types of beads and vary in the number of beads used, but essentially they all have a similar focal point, to help centre a person as part of a meditative prayer. Prayers or mantras are repeated with the aim of deepening or strengthening one's faith through keeping track of the number of prayers and maintaining one's focus on prayer. In fact, even yoga these days are practised using beads as a way to maintain focus or deviate from distractions.

Perhaps, there is a better appreciation of the Rosary once people are beyond a certain age group, as I do tend to associate praying the Rosary with a different generation. It could simply be because the older generation tend to have more time on their hands, or perhaps as they get older they have a better appreciation of meditative prayer rituals. I say this because it is a rarity for me to come across young people with a set of beads in



Unsplash/James Coleman

their hands, completely devoted to half an hour of prayer meditating upon the Rosary. Distractions are manifold in this day and age.

That said, I am not sure if I will progress in my faith to being a Rosary enthusiast, despite owning various fancy rosaries — the Swarovski type, the famous pink rosewood rosary from Rome, olive wood, random crystals. You name it, I have it, but they are simply placed in various places like under the pillow, in my handbag, on the altar, because clearly, my mom made me do so. But I do intend to try to approach the Rosary in a way that I feel comfortable, perhaps starting with the Our Father, and a couple of Hail Mary's as I end each day, and with the family. After all, the Rosary was meant as a collective prayer ritual.

And my favourite quote on the Rosary is one on the criticism of the Rosary as a vain repetition of prayer — to which, one Archbishop Sheen commented, "Do you ever tire of hearing someone you love say 'I love you'?"

Jacelyn Johnson enjoys the occasional religious discourse and says it as it is, in an attempt to diffuse stereotypical observations.

"Some days later, the younger son gathered all his belongings and started off for a distant land" (Luke 15:13)

For some time, it has been difficult for me to feel like I still belonged to the Church. Given some rather painful experiences that left me feeling rejected, unwanted, unseen, it was easy to just wander off and fade in the background, and not want to have any part in what was once home for me. Even going for Mass could sometimes be difficult and painful, for it reminded me of the rejection and pain, and made it difficult to even celebrate God's love with a family whom I was not sure could really accept me for who I truly am.

Still, God continues to be faithful in healing me and calling me home. When



## Word Made Fresh

NICHOLAS LYE

# Welcomed home by Papa Francis

I was asked to be a part of the recent Papal Mass in Singapore, to provide spiritual guidance for the multimedia team in charge of creating the beautiful visuals and animation to accompany the prayers, Mass and songs for the event, I felt God affirming me of my special and unique role in His Church. Through the monthly spiritual preparation sessions where I used different

creative activities to help the team own their uniqueness, and listen to the Spirit bringing everyone together for a common purpose, I felt seen and appreciated for the unique gifts I could offer, and celebrated for the unique person that I am without needing to conform to what others expect

of me, or 'fit in' in order to be welcomed.

"This is not where we would choose to be," said Big Panda, "but it is where we are... And if we try to forget about what has happened, just for a moment, and look around, you might see that this is one of the most beautiful moments we have ever experienced." ('Big Panda and Tiny Dragon', James Norbury)

Indeed, it was such a great delight for me to have had the chance to be in the national stadium during the Papal Mass, and witness the efforts of the multimedia team bring so much depth, beauty and meaning to the celebration, as well as see members of the Church coming together as one to experience God's love, presence and beauty. I may not have been up on stage, or in the limelight, but I was very much content with being in the background, marvelling at God's greater work in and through each of our unique gifts and personhood.

Where I am in life at the moment may not have been what I might have chosen for myself in the past, but as I learn to accept all that has happened, both the good and the challenges, and be open to where God had planned to lead me to all along, then I can better appreciate and embrace the beauty of where He has brought me to in this season of my life, and even praise and thank Him for choosing something for me that I would now actually choose for myself as well.

"He was still a long way off when his father caught sight of him. His father was so deeply moved with compassion that he ran out to meet him, threw his arms around his neck and kissed him." (Luke 15:20)

But what I did not expect to experience at the Papal Mass was a powerful healing moment through the coming and presence of Papa Francis. At his appearance, I felt him calling me home to the Church, assuring me that I do belong, and that the Church is family to me too, even if people do hurt one another unintentionally as in any family. Seeing Papa Francis in person allowed me to also see the larger family of God as my real and true family. Even if people misunderstand me, or struggle to appreciate my own uniqueness, I can still learn to accept and embrace them for where they are and who they are, for they too are special and unique in God's eyes, and also serve a special and unique role in His Church.

Through this experience, I can truly marvel at the greater beauty of what it means to be one Church and one family of God, despite the hurts and wounds we experience from one another, for God's healing and fruitful love is greater, if only we allow Him to work in His time and purpose. At this point in time, I would not say that I am fully healed of the hurt and pain, but I am learning to keep choosing every day to claim the truth that I still do belong, that I am of value and worth, and that I do have a special and unique place in this Church and family. And so do you, my fellow brother and sister in Christ.

Nicholas is a lay missionary and creative evangelist who loves to use creativity and various art forms to share the faith and help people encounter God's truths in a fun and meaningful way. Check out his upcoming Rosary Made Fresh workshop via [tinyurl.com/rosarymadefresh](http://tinyurl.com/rosarymadefresh).



Vatican Media





Fr Ron Rolheiser

# When is fear healthy?

**W**hy don't we preach hellfire anymore? That's a question asked frequently by a lot of sincere religious people who worry that too many churches, priests, and ministers have gone soft on sin and are over-generous in speaking about God's mercy. The belief here is that more people would come to church and obey the commandments if we preached the raw truth about mortal sin, God's wrath, and the danger of going to hell when we die. The truth will set you free, these folks assert, and the truth is that there is real sin and there can be real and eternal consequences for sin. The gate to heaven is narrow and the road to hell is wide. So why aren't we preaching more about the dangers of hellfire?

What's valid in this kind of reasoning is that preaching about mortal sin and hellfire can be effective. Threats work. I know. I grew up subjected to this kind of preaching and admit that it affected my behaviour. But that effect was ambivalent: On the one side, it left me scared enough before God and life itself to fear ever straying very far morally or religiously. On the other side, it also left me religiously and emotionally crippled in some deep ways. Simply stated, it's hard to be intimate friends with a God who frightens you and it's not good religiously or otherwise to be

overly timid and afraid before life's sacred energies. Fear of divine punishment and fear of hellfire, admittedly, can be effective as a motivator.

So why not preach fear? Because it's wrong, pure and simple. Brainwashing and physical intimidation are also effective, but they are antithetical to love. You don't enter a love relationship because you feel afraid or threatened. You enter a love relationship because you feel drawn there by love.

More importantly, preaching divine threat dishonours the God in whom we believe. The God who Jesus incarnates and reveals is not a God who puts sincere, good-hearted people into hell against their will on the basis of some human or moral lapse which in our religious categories we deem to be a mortal sin. For example, I still hear this threat being preached in our churches: If you miss going to church on Sunday, it's a mortal sin and should you die without confessing it, you will go to hell.

What kind of God would underwrite this kind of a belief? What kind of God would not give sincere people a second chance, a third one, and seventy-seven times seven more chances if they remain sincere? What kind of God would say to a repentant person in hell: "Sorry, but you knew the rules! You're repentant now, but it's

too late. You had your chance!"

A healthy theology of God demands that we stop teaching that hell can be a nasty surprise waiting for an essentially good person. The God we believe in as Christians is infinite understanding, infinite compassion, and infinite forgiveness. God's love surpasses our own and if we, in our better moments, can see the goodness of a human heart despite its lapses and weaknesses, how much more so will God see this. We have nothing to fear from God.

Or have we? Doesn't scripture tell us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom? How does that square with not being afraid of God?

There are different kinds of fear, some healthy and some not. When scripture tells us that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, the kind of fear it is talking about is not contingent upon feeling threatened or feeling anxious about being punished. That's the kind of fear we feel before tyrants and bullies. There is however a healthy fear that's innate within the dynamics of love itself. This kind of fear is essentially proper reverence, that is, when we genuinely love someone we will fear betraying that love, fear being selfish, fear being boorish, and fear being disrespectful in that relationship. We will fear violating

the sacred space within which intimacy occurs. Metaphorically we will sense we are standing on holy ground and that we'd best have our shoes off before that sacred fire.

Moreover, scripture tells us that when God appears in our lives, almost always, the first words we will hear are: "Don't be afraid!" That's because God is not a judgmental tyrant but a loving, creative, joy-filled energy and person. As Leon Bloy reminds us, joy is the most infallible indication of God's presence.

The famous psychiatrist, Fritz Perls, was once asked by a young fundamentalist: "Have you been saved?" His answer: "Saved? I'm still trying to figure out how to be spent!" We honour God not by living in fear lest we offend him, but in reverently spending the wonderful energy that God gives us. God is not a law to be obeyed, but a joyous energy within which to spend ourselves generatively.

**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)

**P**ope Francis' recent visit to Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste and Singapore brought a lot of excitement, not just for Catholics but also for people of other faiths who greeted him enthusiastically. Indeed many from our parishes were disappointed that they were unable to get tickets to be there in person in Singapore although I dare say that better views were to be had on TV screens.

It amazes me that earlier, more than half of the population of Timor Leste were there for an open-air Mass, braving the heat and the elements, arriving hours before to greet the Pope and to participate in the Eucharist. Many had travelled from so far and yet they were there! What a contrast this poorer nation was to the next stop, Singapore, with its towering skyscrapers! The Pope seemed completely at ease with the poor and the rich, the ordinary parishioner and presidents – truly living out his call of *Fratelli Tutti*.

It was beautiful to see people on the streets in Jakarta just waiting to wave at him, and how touching it was to see the Pope stop and despite language barriers, lovingly communicating God's love as he blessed children at the tearful requests of their parents. It strikes me that people, even non-Catholics, simply loved the Pope. Likewise, he showed his love for his flock, by undertaking the longest journey of his pontificate, wheelchair and all. At an age when many choose to retire comfortably, he strives on with his mission despite the cost to himself. This puts many of us to shame and perhaps is an invitation to go on bravely, trusting in God's grace and strength working in us.

As always, he reached out lovingly to people of other faiths, seeing them as sisters and brothers was a reminder to us all to keep the avenues of dialogue always open and to make the Church really a sacrament of Jesus' mercy and compassion to others. His visit to the Istiqlal mosque in Jakarta and signing a declaration on religious harmony with the grand imam is a reminder to all of us to look at commonalities, rather than what divides. The

## Now that the dust has settled ... revisiting the Papal visit

powerful image of Pope Francis holding the arm of the Grand Imam Nasaruddin Umar, and him kissing the head of the Pope was a powerful sign to the world that went viral over the media.

His warm outreach was also seen in the stadium in Singapore with the young as well as the old in wheelchairs coming to greet him and to receive a rosary from him. He was unhurried, offering the gift of himself to those blessed individuals while the rest of us felt also blessed as we watched vicariously on the screens. Again, his visit to the elderly the next day was a reminder to care for the elderly, who continue to share in the mission of the Church by their prayers.

Likewise, his time spent with the young, children as well as youth was a reminder to me that they are a priority and important part of the Church today, not tomorrow! In his encounter with the youth of Singapore, of all faiths, he showed us a beautiful example of openness to all people. He encouraged the young to be critical thinkers, and to be unafraid to criticise constructively and be criticised themselves. He challenged them to take risks, be unafraid to make mistakes and go out of their comfort zones and have the courage to build and to move forward. He also invited young people to use social media, but without being enslaved to it.

Prophetically, he reminded Singapore's parliamentarians not to forget the poor and elderly whose labours have laid the foundations for the progress we see today. He also singled out migrant workers, asking that their dignity be protected.

I was blessed to have had the opportunity



**As I was  
Contemplating**

FR GERARD THERAVIAM

to be at the Papal Mass in Singapore. There was a sense of anticipation as I took a bus and stayed with friends who were also going and whose son was one of the many servers. We braved the crowds and got in after clearing the tight security. I was then ushered to a holding room, waiting with other priests before we entered the stadium in procession. Soon Pope Francis came in, in his buggy, greeting the elderly and children before he finally was brought up to the sanctuary and the Mass began.

While Pope Francis presided and gave the homily, it was good to see two Malaysian bishops, Archbishop Julian Leow and Cardinal Sebastian Francis flanking Cardinal William Goh at the altar later.

The homily was a powerful call to see love as the centre of the Gospel. Like St Paul at the Areopagus in Athens centering on what was visibly evident, Pope Francis spoke of what he saw around in the grand buildings and invited us to see the stories behind the architects and workers, men and women united in community, citizens dedicated to their country, mothers and fathers concerned about their families, committed professionals and workers – all building up together what had been achieved. Nothing lasting is born or grows without love. Without love, we are nothing! At the root of our capacity to love and be loved is God Himself, who has redeemed us and freed us from sin and death, through the death and resurrection of His only Son. All that we are and can become has its origin and fulfilment in Jesus. Thus, in our love we see a reflection of God's love. He also made mention of both Mother Mary and St Francis

Xavier. The homily was truly an exhortation to listen and respond to "the invitations to love and live justly that continue to come to us today from the infinite love of God."

The singing was magnificent, with the crowd being led by a huge choir. The liturgy was meticulously planned and there was a sense of awe and reverence. It truly was a powerful celebration and I was deeply moved. There was a poignant moment after Mass when Pope Francis was wheeled to the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, where he just sat in quiet prayer, reminding us all of Mary's motherly intercession as well as her role as missionary-disciple.

That night I went home exhausted but exhilarated, having truly experienced the theme of *Unity & Hope* in the celebration. Here was I, a foreigner, yet feeling united with all my fellow Catholics and people of goodwill and buoyed by a strong sense of Hope that emanated not just from the words of the Pope but by the very celebration itself.

Upon his return to Rome, the Pope remarked he found the Church in Asia to be vibrant and alive, contrasting it with Europe. May that encourage us to keep the flame of faith alive, and continue to share the love of Christ, being light and salt where we are! May this historic visit not just fade into history but may we live out the messages we have received.

Meanwhile, he is on his next papal visit, this time to Luxembourg and Belgium, continuing tirelessly on his mission to the world. God bless Pope Francis!

**Fr Gerard Theraviam** is the Parish Priest of the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist in Kuala Lumpur, as well as the Spiritual Director to the World Community for Christian Meditation, Malaysia.



# Little Catholics' corner

Jesus said to the apostles when they tried to keep the children away?

Mark 10:13-16



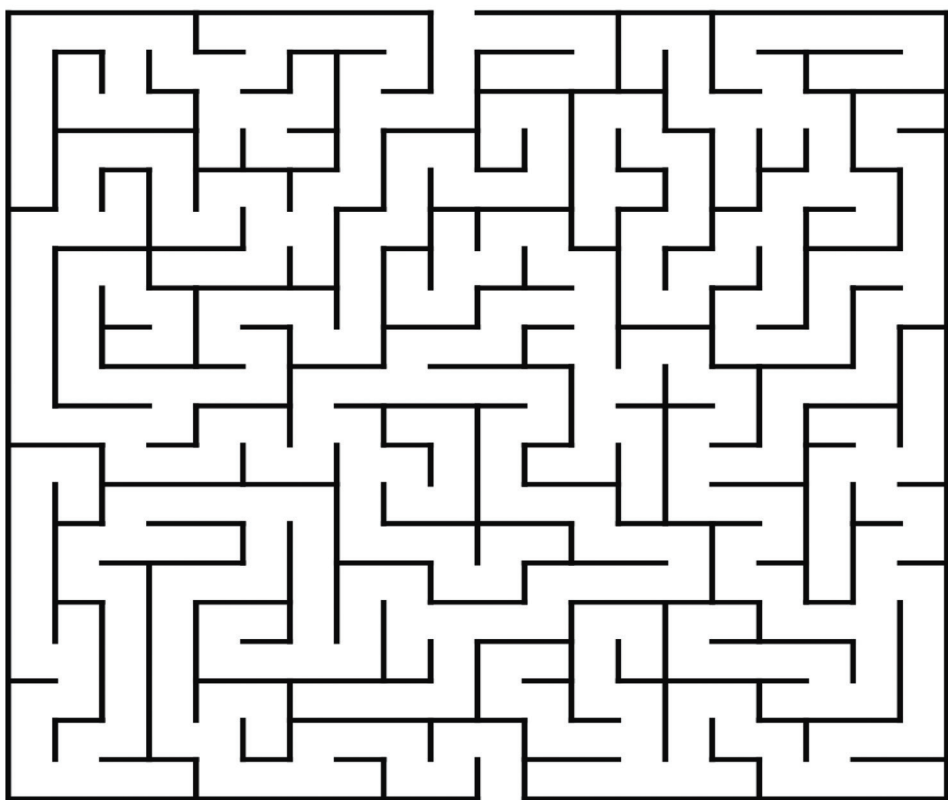
Let the children come to Me!

What did Jesus say to the apostles when they tried to keep the children away?

Use the code to find out!

1. . . 1 E - 1 ^ ^ \ 9 1  
C D E H I L M N O R T

Can you help the family to find a way to attend the wedding?



Dear children,  
In today's Gospel reading, Jesus was telling the people about God's idea of marriage.  
You know that marriage is what happens when a man and woman get married.  
But did you know that it is a sacrament?

God gives special graces to people who get married so that they can love each other well and raise good children.  
Do you know what marriage is for? God made husbands and wives so that they could help each other to get to Heaven.  
But that's not all. When people get married, they are

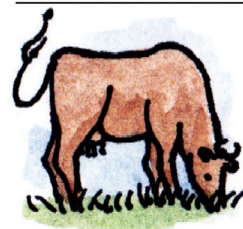
also starting a new family. Together with the father and mother, God brings new children into the world.  
He gives the parents all the help they need to raise their children.  
Till we meet again, be good okay?

Love  
Aunty Eliz

## Fill In The Missing Words!

Use the words at the bottom to fill in the blanks

The man gave \_\_\_\_\_ to all the cattle, all the \_\_\_\_\_ of the air, and all wild \_\_\_\_\_; but none of them proved to be the suitable \_\_\_\_\_ for the man.



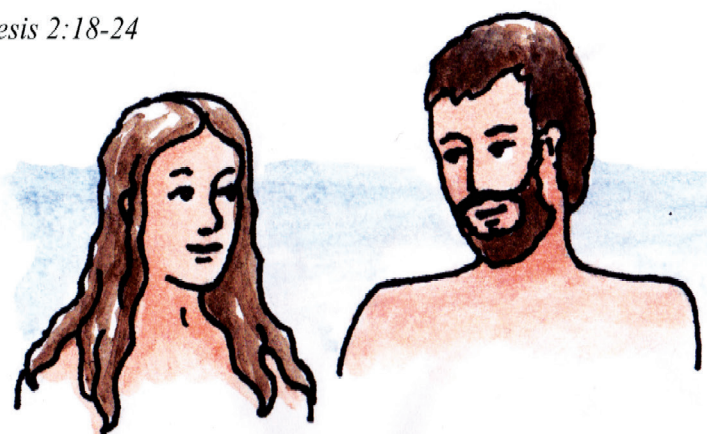
So the Lord God cast a deep \_\_\_\_\_ on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. The Lord \_\_\_\_\_ then built up into a woman the rib that he had taken from the man. When he brought her to the man, the man said: "This one, at last, is \_\_\_\_\_ of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called '\_\_\_\_\_', for out of 'her man' this one has been taken."



PARTNER NAMES  
BONE GOD  
WOMAN BIRDS  
ANIMALS SLEEP



Genesis 2:18-24







# THOSE WHO HOPE IN THE LORD WILL RUN AND NOT BE WEARY

## KUCHING ARCHDIOCESE YOUTH DAY 2024

By Christine Cyrill

**K**UCHING: After a five-year hiatus, the Kuching Archdiocese Youth Day 2024 (KAYD 2024) took place from September 14-16 at the Archdiocesan Curia and Cathedral Pastoral Centre (ACPC).

Organised by the Kuching Archdiocesan Youth Commission (KAYC) in partnership with Parish Youth Ministries, Youth Groups and Young Adult Groups — the event gathered about 240 servants and 640 participants from the rural and urban parishes throughout the archdiocese.

### Day 1

KAYD 2024 began with Mass presided over by Msgr William Sabang with Salesian priests Fr Ramon Borja and Fr Ben Hur Borja concelebrating. The spirituality of synodality was evident during the entrance procession with the KAYD Cross as a focal point, with youth representatives from each parish and youth groups carrying their banners and crosses. Inspired by World Youth Day,

the KAYD Cross serves as a reminder of the collective faith journey of our young people. This Cross was “entrusted to the youth as they were given the commission to carry it throughout the world as a symbol of Christ’s love for humanity, and announce to everyone that only in the death and resurrection of Christ can we find salvation and redemption.”

The evening proceeded with a plenary message and Eucharistic Adoration by Fr Alvin Ng, SJ with opportunities for confession. It was a quiet evening with reflective moments, allowing the youth to surrender their worldly burdens, seek forgiveness and prepare their hearts for the weekend ahead.

### Day 2

On the second day, sessions were conducted in three languages — English, BM and Chinese — to include all young people and to reflect the call of our Holy Father to be a synodal church.

Participants chose which language stream they preferred, all of which focussed on the theme of *Wholistic Wellness as Catholic Youth*, aimed at encouraging young Catholics to nurture both their spiritual and human development in the context of today’s challenges. The English sessions were led by Fr Ben Hur Borja, SDB from the Philippines, while the Bahasa Malaysia sessions were conducted by Anna Teresa, while Mary Feng led the Chinese-speaking group. Each session emphasised the importance of nurturing faith and personal well-being.

Continued on Page 17





# Preparations for World Youth Day 2027 in Seoul, Korea unveiled

By Thaddeus Jones

**SOUTH KOREA:** On September 24 at the Holy See Press Office, organisers and promoters of the next global gathering of youth presented World Youth Day (WYD) 2027 to be hosted by the Catholic Church in Seoul, South Korea.

The theme for this 41st World Youth Day (2026 and Seoul 2027) is taken from John's Gospel, recalling Jesus' words: "Take courage! I have overcome the world." (Jn 16:33). Also announced was the theme for the 40th World Youth Day coming up before that in 2025, also from John's Gospel when Jesus says: "You also are my witnesses, because you have been with me" (Jn 15:27).

Presenting details of the Seoul global celebration of faith were Cardinal Kevin Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, the Vatican office overseeing the WYD events; Archbishop Peter Soon-Taick Chung of Seoul, South Korea, and President of the Local Organizing Committee of Seoul 2027; Bishop Paul Kyung Sang Lee of South Korea, General Coordinator of WYD Seoul 2027; and Ms. Gabriela Su-Ji Kim, a young Korean who participated and previous World Youth Days and who shared her experiences and hopes.

In his address, Bishop Kyung-sang Lee thanked Pope Francis for the choice of



**Take courage!  
I have overcome the world.**  
(Jn 16:33)

Logo for World Youth Day - WYD Seoul 2027

the theme, "Take courage! I have overcome the world." (Jn 16:33), saying it "resonates deeply with the circumstances faced by the Catholic Church of Korea and the challenges confronting today's youth." He also noted that "Korea stands in a unique context distinct from previous World Youth Day hosts, characterised by the harmonious coexistence of diverse religious traditions" that can offer a unique and rich experience for youth from around the world. In reference to the division of Korea, he said "the Church has diligently worked to resolve the conflicts inherent in this division over the past seven decades, seeking peace and unity for the Korean people."

In addition to presenting organisational details and events for promoting WYD 2027, Bishop Kyung-sang Lee presented the logo for the event, noting that central

to the logo is a cross with the red and blue colours symbolising Christ's triumphant victory over the world. The left element, reaching upward, signifies God in Heaven, while the right element, pointing downward, symbolises Earth, illustrating the fulfilment of God's will on Earth through their unity, all inspired by traditional Korean art.

Archbishop Soon-taick Chung of Seoul, underscored how the Korean Catholic Church "stands as a testament to the voluntary and dynamic faith of its first believers, who embraced the seeds of the Gospel without the assistance of missionaries, guided by the Holy Spirit." He said this dimension will be appreciated by the many young people arriving in 2027 when they meet the young believers of Korea, "who have inherited the steadfast faith of their ancestors. Together, they will rekin-

dle a passionate zeal for faith."

Cardinal Farrell described how the WYD events will have great spiritual benefits for the Church in Korea, Asia and the Church globally. He also noted that Asia's natural openness to the coexistence of cultures, dialogue, and complementarity, "will be of great help to young pilgrims on their path of learning to become messengers of peace in a world so torn by conflict and confrontation." He also paid tribute to the dynamism of Asia that "will help young people to think about the dialogue between faith and modernity."

Ms Suji Gabriella spoke about her passion for youth leadership and her hopes for contributing to a rekindling of faith. She said the Covid pandemic caused some communities of faith to dissolve and she said "we face the challenge of a scattered flock, struggling to pass on the experience of faith." At the same time she expressed confidence that "WYD Seoul 2027 will provide a crucial opportunity to rekindle the flames of faith, not only in Korea but also around the world." She expressed enthusiasm in building a "path of unity, hope, courage, and passion, welcoming people from all walks of life, not just Catholic believers, to walk together in harmony" with trust in the Lord that He "will walk with us on this pilgrimage to the 'Far East' and beyond" along with all people of goodwill. **Vatican News**

## RENEW YOUR FAITH AND SOAR LIKE EAGLES

Continued from page 16

A Worship Night concluded Day 2, led by the worship team followed by a message from Fr Alvin and a skit performed by the Dance and Drama team.

The skit, inspired by Isaiah 40:31, showed the struggles young Christians face today. It featured five scenes that included family arguments, a student being bullied after failing an exam, a broken relationship, a young person feeling ashamed for not having enough, and a girl falling into addiction because of peer pressure. Each scene highlighted the difficulties of dealing with personal setbacks, rejection, and societal pressures.

In their darkest moments, the characters realised that God had been with them all along, helping and protecting them. When they turned to God, they found new

strength, just like Isaiah 40:31 promised through their faith, they learnt to overcome their struggles, knowing that God was always there for them, providing hope and support.

### Day 3

The final day of KAYD 2024 was dedicated to reflection and action plans. Youth ministers Julian, Maria, and Joan led a session where participants were encouraged to internalise the lessons learnt over the past two days and think about practical ways to implement them in their daily lives, to grow continually in their faith and wellness post-KAYD. This concluded with a plenary session delivered by Fr Alvin about growth, both spiritually and personally. Participants gathered to reflect on their experiences from KAYD 2024 and the insights gained throughout the event.



The event came to an end with Mass and commissioning presided over by Archbishop Simon Poh (pix), concelebrated with Fr Ramon Borja, SDB, Fr Andre Delimarta, SDB, and Fr Prince Cornelius, CMF.

In his homily, Archbishop Simon shared a heartfelt account of his experience meeting Pope Francis during his Papal visit to Singa-

pore. He also prayed for our nation, Malaysia in conjunction with Malaysia Day.

The return of KAYD in 2024, after a long wait since 2019, was more than just an event; it was a much-needed revival of spiritual life for the youth of the Archdiocese of Kuching. As they go forth, the message of Isaiah 40:31, trusting in God for renewed strength, will continue to guide them, helping them to soar with wings like eagles, run without growing weary, and walk without growing faint.

### Feedback from participants:

**"F**ramong hypocrites who called Him a false prophet, blasphemy, etc. However, blessed are those who are persecuted by His name. Therefore, I will do what Jesus did; regardless of how others treat me, I will show love and kindness! "





# Pope prays for victims of Iran mining disaster



Image distributed by the Iranian Ministry of the Interior, showing a tunnel in a coal mine in Tabas, in the province of Khorasan.

IRAN: Pope Francis, in a telegram signed by Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, expressed his condolences for the victims of an explosion in a coal mine in Tabas, in the north-eastern region of Iran.

The accident, which occurred in the evening of Saturday, 21 September, claimed more than 50 victims. A number of people are still missing.

Pope Francis said he is praying "for those who died and for their bereaved families", and expressed his "spiritual solidarity with the injured".

The Pope invoked "upon all those affected by this tragedy" the divine blessings "of strength, consolation and peace".

## The disaster

According to Iranian media, the explosion occurred while about 70 people were working at the site and was caused by a methane leak. Authorities believe the workers trapped in the mine did not survive.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has ordered an investigation in the wake of the accident, which is one of the worst mining disasters in Iran's recent history.

According to local sources, safety measures required by Iranian regulations were neglected. **Vatican News**

# Church helping thousands of Christians forced into exile

BURKINA FASO: The Church — with support from a leading Catholic charity — has stepped up help for thousands of Christians driven out of their homes by extremists in Burkina Faso, according to a priest caring for displaced people.

Fr André Poré from Ouahigouya Diocese told Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) that around 2,000 people who fled their homes last year after an attack are still living in "makeshift shelters".

The priest said that the Church is relying on CAN's support to provide food, medicine and psychological help for traumatised IDPs (internally displaced persons).

He added: "When the extremists arrive, either they kill the whole population, or — having killed several people at random to show that they are serious — they force the people to leave their houses before nightfall."

"In Rollo in particular [in May 2023], the terrorists ransacked and burned everything, and the next day they killed several people who were fleeing along the road."

Fr Poré said, "The 2,000 or so refugees had to cover about 40 kilometres [25 miles] on foot, in the middle of the night, as far as Kongoussi, along roads mined by the terrorists..."

"A mine exploded that very night, killing some of the livestock which they had taken with them, only a few seconds before the men, the carts, the women and children passed by... The people could all have died. But God's hand was with them."



He added that the parishioners at his church, Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus in Kongoussi, came together to provide food and clothes for the IDPs.

He stressed that 400 of the IDPs have died this year because of lack of sanitation and high temperatures.

Those who survived need help to heal from the traumas they have endured, according to Fr Poré, who has organised pastoral activities and spiritual support with ACN's help.

The charity has also supported the construction of shelters for IDPs and funded children's education, as well as providing pastoral and income-generating programmes.

Fr Poré said that "there are evident parallels" between "the deportation of the people of Israel to Babylon" and the Christian communities being forced out of their homes in Burkina Faso.

He added, "What we are living here is something which the people of God have already lived in history and which we know through the Bible."

ACN previously reported that extremists killed around 100 Christians and kidnapped many more in Burkina Faso between May and August this year.

**Amy Balog, ICN**

## MEMORIAM

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### 19th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



**John Baptist Yeo Ah Han**  
Called to the Lord: 07-10-2005

*"In God's care you rest above,  
in our hearts you stay with love.  
We will always love and remember you."*  
Deeply missed and fondly remembered by  
Family, relatives and friends.

### In Loving Memory of



**Mariammal Sebastian**

Departed: 12 Oct 1994



**Susaiammal Arulandu**

Departed: 12 Oct 1994

They were friends first,  
Later to be 'sambanthies'  
Thirty years ago, the Lord called them both  
on the same day.  
Forever in the hearts of both families,  
relatives and friends.

Blessed are the pure in heart  
for they shall see God. — Matthew 5:8

### 3rd Year Anniversary In Loving Memory of



**PLASIDA MARIA FRANCIS**  
Called to the Lord on 4th October 2021

*When the one you love  
Becomes a memory  
That memory  
Becomes a treasure*

Deeply missed by family, relatives and friends.

### In Ever Loving Memory of **ANTHONY MARTIN** Born: 17.12.1934 Departed: 8.10.1984



*"Blessed are those who die in  
the Lord... for they will rest  
from their hard work; for their  
good deeds follow them!"  
Revelation 14:13*

40 years ago  
Your heart of gold  
stopped beating  
Two smiling eyes at rest  
God broke our hearts to prove  
He only take the Best  
The tears in our eyes  
will wipe away  
But the love in our hearts  
Will forever stay

Deeply missed and cherished by:  
Loving wife: Thresy Martin,  
children, daughters-in-law, grandchildren  
and a host of relative and friends.

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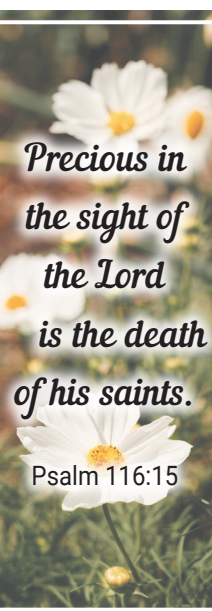
### 40th Day Memorial Mary Euchrista Arul



Born: 1st April 1954  
Departed: 2nd Sept 2024

Requiem Mass offered on  
Friday, 11th October 2024  
at 6.30 pm at the Church of  
Our Lady of Lourdes,  
Silibin, Ipoh.

Forever remembered by  
Family, Relatives and Friends.  
**BLESSED BE THE MERCIFUL!**



*Precious in  
the sight of  
the Lord  
is the death  
of his saints.*

Psalm 116:15

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## Join *HERALD*'s reforestation project for a greener future!

KUALA LUMPUR: As part of the celebrations marking *HERALD*'s 30th anniversary this year, we are proud to launch an inspiring Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative that extends far beyond the pages of our publication. In response to Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, which calls all of us to care for our common home, *HERALD* is stepping up to embrace its responsibility for creation with the *HERALD Tree Planting Campaign*.

To mitigate the environmental impact of producing print media, *HERALD* has partnered with APE Malaysia under their ROAR (Restore Our Amazing Rainforest) initiative. This collaboration has already seen the planting of 100 trees in the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary in Sukau, Sabah on behalf of *HERALD* — a significant milestone that marks the beginning of a long-term effort to rejuvenate Sabah's delicate rainforest ecosystems.

The reforested area, once a barren patch of land overrun by grasses and ferns, is now being transformed into a thriving forest, brimming with life and potential. Over the next four years, APE Malaysia will work diligently to nurture the saplings, ensuring they are safeguarded against weeds and invasive species. Within five years, these trees will stand tall at around five metres, and within a decade, they will blend seamlessly into the existing forest canopy. This rejuvenated habi-

tat will become a sanctuary for countless species of wildlife, from gibbons and birds to monkeys and even orangutans — bringing life back to this fragile ecosystem.

While the world is shifting toward digital platforms, *HERALD* remains deeply committed to the value of print media. The printed word offers something uniquely tangible — it endures as a trusted source of information, reflection, and the preservation of Church teachings. Newspapers hold a special place in our lives, preserving stories, perspectives, and history for future generations. Yet, as stewards of the planet, we must also recognise the ecological toll that print production can have on the environment.

Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si'*, emphasised the moral imperative of protecting the environment, and *HERALD* is proud to act on this call. Through our reforestation efforts, we are not only addressing



the need to balance our ecological footprint but also contributing to the global fight against deforestation, climate change, and biodiversity loss.

Reforestation initiatives, like the one in the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary, are among the most impactful actions we can take to combat environmental degradation. Trees play a critical role in sequestering carbon, improving air quality, conserving water, and fostering biodiversity. By restoring forests, we also create critical wildlife corridors that allow species to thrive, contributing to the health of entire ecosystems.

*HERALD* is extending an invitation to YOU, our valued readers, to take part in this important mission. For just RM35 per sapling, which includes four years of care and maintenance, you can sponsor a tree through the ROAR initiative. Your contribution will go directly toward

restoring the degraded forest corridors of the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary, helping to rebuild natural habitats for a wide array of wildlife while also supporting the local communities who rely on this environment.

Every tree that is planted is a small step toward healing the planet. Together, we can create a lasting legacy for future generations — a forest that will stand the test of time and serve as a symbol of our collective commitment to the environment. As a sponsor, you will become part of this journey, directly contributing to the reforestation and rejuvenation of one of Malaysia's most important ecosystems.

This tree planting campaign is more than just a symbolic gesture — it is a real and tangible way for each of us to respond to Pope Francis' call to be protectors of creation. By participating, you are not only helping to restore a critical ecosystem, but also making a personal commitment to the care of our common home.

We invite all readers, supporters, and friends of *HERALD* to join us in this powerful initiative. Together, we can make a difference — one tree at a time. Let's plant the seeds of change and watch them grow into a future where our forests flourish and our planet thrives.

For more information on how you can sponsor a sapling or participate in the campaign, please visit *HERALD*'s website at <https://www.heraldmalaysia.com/tag/CSR-reforestation>.

## In a secularised Luxembourg, Pope Francis tells Catholics to evangelise Europe

LUXEMBOURG: During his four-day tour of two historically Christian European nations, Pope Francis began his visit in Luxembourg on September 26. As religious adherence in both countries declines amidst increasing secularisation, the Pope urged Catholics to re-evangelise Europe. He called on local politicians to lead with spiritual values and urged the faithful to embrace a "missionary proclamation" of the Gospel.

At Luxembourg's 17th-century Notre-Dame Cathedral, Pope Francis emphasised the need for the Gospel to be shared through both words and actions, echoing St John Paul II's sentiments from his 1985 visit. Luxembourg, a wealthy and tiny nation, hosts key institutions of the European Union, including its highest judicial authority, the Court of Justice of the European Union.

Pope Francis was greeted by modest crowds as he navigated the rainy streets. He spent time at the Archdiocese of Luxembourg, led by Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, SJ, who described the challenges of secularisation in the country. Luxembourg, once deeply Catholic, now has a largely in-

ternational and multicultural population, with only 30 per cent of its people born in the country. The Church reflects this diversity, with thriving communities speaking Portuguese, English, French, and Polish, among other languages.

The Pope listened to testimonies from members of the local Church, including Sr Maria Perpétua Coelho Dos Santos, who spoke about the richness that linguistic and cultural diversity brings to the Church in Luxembourg. Young resident Diogo Gomes Costa shared how his faith was reignited during World Youth Day 2023 in Lisbon, and Christine Bußhardt, a diocesan council leader, highlighted the opportunity for renewal through the global synodal process.

As part of his visit, Pope Francis inaugurated a Marian Jubilee Year, marking 400 years of devotion to Luxembourg's patroness, Mary, Consoler of the Afflicted. He gifted the cathedral a golden rose sculpture, continuing a papal tradition tied to Marian devotion.

Pope Francis also met with Luxembourg's royal family and political leaders, addressing government officials at Cercle Cité. He



Pope Francis meets the grand duke of Luxembourg, Henri, and his wife, Grand Duchess Maria Teresa, at their official residence, the Grand Ducal Palace, along with their five children and seven of their eight grandchildren on Sept 26, 2024. (CNA photo/Daniel Ibañez)

reminded them that wealth comes with responsibility and urged them to support disadvantaged nations and reduce the forces driving migration. The Pope highlighted Luxembourg's unique position as a country with a diverse, immigrant-heavy population, calling it a model for integrating migrants and refugees.

The Pope's message extended to Europe's political landscape, as he emphasised the

need for profound spiritual values to guide leaders and help heal societal divisions, especially in light of ongoing conflicts on the continent.

Following his visit to Luxembourg, Pope Francis continued his journey to Belgium, where he marked the 600th anniversary of the Catholic universities of Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve. The trip concluded with his return to Rome on September 29. CNA