

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

A diverse but harmonious symphony

VATICAN: Pope Francis on September 30 elevated 21 clergymen from distant corners of the world to the rank of cardinal, saying diversity was indispensable to the future of the Catholic Church. Among the new cardinals was the bishop of Penang, Sebastian Francis, making him Malaysia's second cardinal, and the fourth in the region of Malaysia-Singapore-Bruni.

During the ceremony that lasted just over an hour, Pope Francis gave the symbols of office to each of the new cardinals after they had recited the oath of lifelong faithfulness to Christ and obedience to the Pope. Each cardinal received a red hat, a ring and the title to a titular church in the city of Rome, thereby making them members of the clergy of the Diocese of Rome of which the Pope is bishop. Francis Cardinal Sebastian has been entrusted with the Church of Mary, Cause of Our Joy (Santa Maria Causa Nostrae Laetitiae).

Under sunny skies and with a crowd that filled half of Vatican City's grandiose, colonnaded St Peter's Square, the 86-year-old Pope welcomed the new "Princes of the Church"



Pope Francis created 21 new cardinals in St Peter's Square, Sept 30, 2023. (Vatican Media)

and shared a guiding image for the College of Cardinals.

"The College of Cardinals is called to resemble a symphony orchestra, representing the harmony and synodality of the Church," said Pope Francis, seated under a canopy before the gathered cardinals on the steps of St Peter's Basilica.

"A symphony thrives on the skillful composition of the timbres of different instruments: each one makes its contribution, sometimes alone, sometimes united with someone else, sometimes with the whole ensemble. Diversity is necessary; it is indispensable. However, each sound must contribute to the common design.

"This is why mutual listening is essential," he said. "Each musician must listen to the others. If one listens only to himself, however sublime his sound may be, it will not benefit the

symphony; and the same would be the case if one section of the orchestra did not listen to the others, but played as if it were alone, as if it were the whole."

Reflecting on his own role, Pope Francis said that the orchestra's conductor must listen more than anyone else.

"His job is to help each person and the whole orchestra develop the greatest creative fidelity: fidelity to the work being performed, but also creative, able to give a soul to the score, to make it resonate in the here and now in a unique way."

Pope Francis urged the new cardinals to "have the Holy Spirit as our master: the interior master of each one of us and the master of walking together. He creates variety and unity; He is harmony itself. We entrust ourselves to His gentle and strong guidance."

Over the past 10 years, Pope Francis has forged a College of cardinals that reflects his vision of the Church. Contrary to what some claim, they are not ideological progressives. Rather, they respond to the Pope's expectation that men from the peripheries of the Catholic Church should participate in the next conclave.

This latest consistory is the ninth — and largest — of Pope Francis' decade-long papacy, where he has continued to leave his imprint on the elite body of men who both serve as his closest collaborators and will one day decide who succeeds him.

The array of cardinals represents a richness and a variety of experience, and that's what the Church is all about. This consistory — which included individuals from countries like South Sudan, Tanzania and Hong Kong — continues the Pope's efforts to make the College of Cardinals more diverse and less European.

It's no coincidence that the Pope chose to summon these men, symbols of the future of the Catholic Church, to the Vatican on Sept 30, the same day he had also invited a dozen Christian leaders not in full communion with Rome to come to pray together in St Peter's Square. It was a historic ecumenical gathering that was a prelude to the Synod assembly on synodality, which commenced on Oct 4, and which will be decisive for the future of the Church. —

Agencies

Congratulations to Malaysia's second cardinal, His Eminence Sebastian Francis



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OPINION

Getting ready for the next conclave

No one likes to think about getting old and dying, but both are an inevitable part of life, for those we love and for ourselves. Pope Francis, already 86, will turn 87 on December 17. During his recent trip to Mongolia, he admitted that he will have to limit his travels in the future. On the up side, he shows no indication of slowing down mentally. He continues to give talks and interact with people with ease.

Seeing the Pope in a wheelchair is disconcerting, but we should remember that Franklin Delano Roosevelt led the country through the Great Depression and World War II from a wheelchair and crutches.

Yet, the Pope himself is not blind to the inevitable. He has been preparing for the next conclave by appointing cardinals who will select his successor. With his latest consistory on Sept 30, he has appointed 99, or 72 per cent of the 137 cardinals under 80 years of age, who are allowed to vote in a papal conclave.

Francis has broken with tradition in these appointments by ignoring archbishops who occupy sees that traditionally had cardinals — Milan, Venice and Los Angeles among them — and instead appointing bishops from little-known dioceses around the world, such as Mongolia, Sudan and San Diego.

In making cardinals, Francis has looked for bishops who are pastoral and close to the poor and marginalised. These men are firmly committed to the social teaching of the Church, without necessarily being liberal on hot-button issues of concern to progressive Catholics in the West.

Because of these choices, Francis has dramatically changed the geographical breakdown of the electoral college. At the 2013 conclave that elected him, 24 per cent of the electors were Italian. After the September consistory, only 11 per cent are Italians, the lowest percentage ever,

the same percentage as the combined U.S. and Canadian contingent.

Likewise, the European proportion of the electors has been reduced from 52 per cent at the last conclave to 39 per cent, the lowest percentage ever.

The winners under Francis have been Asia, whose representation in the consistory has risen to 17 per cent from 9 per cent, and Africa, up to 14 per cent from 9 per cent. Altogether, the Global South will now make up half the electors. Surprisingly, Latin America's percentage of the electors has remained almost the same. Unlike Pope John Paul II, who favoured Eastern Europe, Francis, an Argentine, has not favoured his part of the world when creating cardinals.

One of the disadvantages of Francis' diverse and dispersed electors is that many of them do not know each other, as most cardinals did when they were mostly Italian or European. Under John Paul especially, the cardinals got to know each other through a series of special consistories called by the pope for consultation on particular topics. Francis has not done this, preferring to rely on the synod of bishops for advice.

Some cardinals, too, get to know the other cardinals through travel. Karol Wojtyła, before he became John Paul II, visited the Polish diaspora around the world. Cardinals from the Global South also travel to richer countries begging for money to support their churches. However, they rarely visit each other for the express purpose of discussing Church policy.

It is the curial cardinals who know the other cardinals best, since every cardinal comes to Rome to meet with the Pope and curia officials. As a result, when it comes time for a conclave, electors will turn to curia cardinals for information about papal candidates. Curial cardinals have had an outsize influence at every conclave.

As in every election, the cardinal electors will

have to sift through the noise and make judgments about who they can trust.

Each elector will also ask how a prospective pope will be received in his country if he is elected. Cardinals from the Global North want someone who has dealt well with sex abuse, who is ecumenical and has not said anything stupid about women or Jews. They do not want someone who will make their lives more difficult.

Cardinals from the Global South want someone concerned about religious freedom, refugees, famines, neocolonialism and the negative impact of globalisation. They do not want a pope who is only concerned about the Church in wealthy countries.

And most importantly, each elector asks, how will we get along if he becomes pope? Will he listen to me? Does he speak my language?

Because the cardinals do not know each other well, there is a danger that the conclave system will force them to decide too quickly. Conclave rules, with up to four votes a day, pressure the cardinals to elect a pope as soon as possible.

There is also psychological pressure on the cardinals to do their work quickly since the whole world is watching. They don't want the people to think they are divided and incapable of agreeing on who should be pope.

In recent years, conclaves have been short. The last conclave to last more than five days was in 1831; it lasted 54 days.

Granted that the current electors do not know each other well, there is a need to change our attitude toward short conclaves. It is better to take a couple of weeks to pick a pope than to vote quickly with insufficient knowledge. The Church can survive a few weeks without a pope as long as the best possible candidate is eventually selected. — **By Fr Thomas Reese SJ, NCR**

The Kingdom of God can never be destroyed

“Below expectation and beyond expectation” could be a perspective from which to reflect on today's readings, especially the Gospel. Our way of life and the fruit we bear fall below God's expectation. Yet, what God has done and will continue to do goes beyond our expectation.

The first reading gives us the famous song of the vineyard from Isaiah. The song sings of the love of the singer's “friend (‘beloved’ in the Hebrew text) for his vineyard”. Every detail in the song conveys an aspect of the meticulous care the friend took of his vineyard in which he “planted choice vines”. Naturally his expectation was for the vineyard to produce good grapes; but instead “sour grapes were all that it gave.”

From what follows, it is clear that the song depicts God and the care He took of His people made up of the “House of Israel and men of Judah”, that is, those in the northern and southern kingdoms. Such care included His liberation of them from slavery in Egypt to bring them to the land He had promised Abraham, their ancestor, to give them. On their way, at Sinai, He sealed a covenant with them to make them His own people and to be their God. After 40 years of sojourn in the wilderness, He brought them to the Promised Land and established them as a great kingdom.

But what was the outcome? The people's infidelity to the covenant and disobedience to God. This certainly fell far short of God's expectation. The song could not be any clearer and stronger in conveying this failure of the people than through its very skilful play on words in the concluding lines of the first reading: “He expected *mishpat* (justice) but found *mishpach* (bloodshed), *tsedaqah* (integrity)



but only *tse'aqah* (cry of distress).” Far from the fine grapes God expected after all His meticulous care of it, the vineyard produced sour grapes.

In His disappointment, God exposed His people to invasion by the Assyrians and the Babylonians. That resulted in their exile. Nonetheless, He still acted in their favour. He did not mean to destroy His people through their exile but to give them a lesson to secure their conversion. He later brought them back from exile and restored the land to them. For God is God and not man. His ways were not man's ways. His ways go beyond human expectation.

Through the parable of the vineyard, today's Gospel reading recalls this story of God's people. The vineyard refers to the people and its owner God. After doing everything necessary to ensure their safety and fruitfulness, God “leased” the vineyard to “tenants”. That means, God entrusted His people to the care of leaders like the priests, elders and scribes. At the time of harvest, God sent servants to

“collect the produce”. These servants refer to the prophets God sent to His people to call for repentance. As was often the case, many of these prophets were rejected and some were even killed by the leaders. In the end, God sent His Son in Jesus, on the grounds that “they will respect My Son.” But as it turned out, the leaders claimed ownership of the people and swayed them over to demand that Jesus be crucified.

Little did the leaders and the people realise that Jesus would rise from the dead. Through His resurrection, Jesus brought life even to those who had put Him to death on the cross. On this score, as Jesus' quotation from Ps 118:22-23 affirms, “It was the stone rejected by the builders that became the keystone. This was the Lord's doing and it is wonderful to see.” Indeed, the crucified and risen Jesus became the foundation of the kingdom of God, beyond anyone's expectation.

Yet another point beyond expectation came from Jesus' words, “I tell you then, that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Archbishop Emeritus
John Ha

27th Sunday of Ordinary Time (A)

Readings: Isaiah 5:1-7;

Philippians 4: 6-9;

Gospel: Matthew 21:33-43

given to a people who will produce its fruit.” The kingdom of God could never be destroyed. Rejected by those chosen to inherit it, it passed into the hands of new “tenants” — the Apostles chosen by Christ for the new people of God, the Church.

The Church is universal. She embraces the Old Testament people of God as well as His new people. The produce she yields for God is none other than the life that Jesus came into the world to bring to all fallen humankind. This life is marked by justice and integrity. We are this universal Church. We stand to possess this life, which is eternal life in the kingdom. Jesus is the cornerstone and stands as our guarantor.

Humankind has fallen far below God's expectation. But God has transformed this fall into a platform where He acted beyond any human expectation. He rescued sinful humankind from death. He turned His Son's death into a life-giving event. On this score, eternal life in the kingdom has now become our expectation. To meet it, we must yield “fine grapes”, that is, justice and integrity.

Strengthening faith and community bonds

PENANG: The faithful of the Diocese of Penang have reason to rejoice as they embark on a journey of dialogue, discernment, and unity under the guidance of their spiritual leader, Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang (pic). In a heartfelt message to the people of God, Cardinal Sebastian extended his gratitude to Almighty God and announced the much-anticipated Diocesan Pastoral Assembly (DPA) 2023.



This assembly, set to take place on November 18 at the Church

of the Immaculate Conception in Pulau Tikus, Penang, from 8.00am to 8.00pm carries the theme, *A Synodal Church – Communion, Participation, and Mission*. It marks a significant milestone in the diocese's spiritual journey, forged through rigorous local synodal processes and Parish Pastoral Assemblies.

The DPA 2023 represents a unique opportunity for delegates from various parishes and diocesan ministries to engage in insightful deliberation. Building on the areas of concern that emerged from the synodal consultation phase, specifically "Relationship, Inclusivity and Mission," this assembly promises to be a day of formation, spiritual reflection, and

interactive discussion. It seeks to encourage the exchange of ideas and the sharing of diverse perspectives among participants.

Delegates selected by their respective parish priests and diocesan heads of ministries are expected to play an integral role in the pastoral growth and development of the diocese. The DPA serves as a crucial stepping stone on the path to the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026, a larger gathering that unites the Bishops of Malaysia in a common vision.

The Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026 will focus on four vital areas: Family, Church, Ecology, and Society. Its vision, inspired by Isai-

ah 2:2-5, envisions "The Catholic Church in Malaysia coming together as clergy, religious, and laity to celebrate, listen, and walk in the light of the Lord."

In a move to encourage greater participation of the clergy in this momentous event, all sunset Masses throughout the diocese will be suspended on Nov 18. Instead, the evening's Eucharistic celebration will be live-streamed from the venue, inviting the faithful to join the online congregation at 6.00pm. Weekend Masses will resume in parishes as usual on Sunday, Nov 19.

The prelate hopes the presence and contributions of all attendees will lay a robust foundation, foster

meaningful connections, and cultivate a spirit of unity that will resonate within and beyond the Church. He called upon the intercession of Our Lady to guide and bless the synodal journey of the Diocese of Penang.

In conclusion, the faithful are encouraged to heed the cardinal's call to *Be Disciples of Hope* and embrace this opportunity to engage in dialogue, deepen their faith, and contribute to the growth and vitality of the diocese. The Diocesan Pastoral Assembly 2023 promises to be a pivotal moment in the spiritual life of the Diocese of Penang, a testament to their commitment to living out the Gospel message of love and unity.

Christians pray for the nation

SUBANG JAYA: Christian leaders from various churches converged at Wisma Eagles on September 15 to pray for our nation.

The event *Praying for Malaysia* was organised by the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship (NECF) Malaysia, the Council of Churches of Malaysia (CCM), and the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

Christian leaders present were Archbishop Julian Leow, Bishop

Rev Jeyakumar (Methodist Church), Pastor Ong Sek Leang (Church of the Tabernacle of Glory), Elder Dr Khoo Kay Hup (Full Gospel Assembly) and NECF chairman Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng, Secretary-General Pastor Samuel Ang and secretary Rev Elisha Satvinder.

Several members from the Catholic Church, including representatives from the Archdiocesan Ministry of Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs (AMEIA) were

present. Member of Parliament for Seputeh YB Teresa Kok also made an appearance.

Celebrating her 60th Malaysia Day, the *Praying for Malaysia* event was a positive way for the nation's Christians to gather and pray for the country after many had observed a 40-day fast.

There was also Praise and Worship in between speeches and prayers.

At the start of the event, repre-

sentatives carried the state flags with the *Jalur Gemilang* to the stage before singing the *Negara-ku*.

The Gospel was proclaimed by Pastor Ong. Elder Dr Khoo said a prayer for the nation while the intentions was led by Bishop Jeyakumar, during which the congregation knelt in prayer.

In praying for the country, Archbishop Julian implored that peace continues to prevail in the country and for protection from all

disasters and danger to our nation.

The Catholic prelate said, "All of us are disciples of Christ and we are responsible for developing and prospering our beloved Malaysia."

Next was *Urgency of the Times Prayer* by Rev Dr Eu followed by Rev Elisha praying the Declaration Prayers. Benediction and closing remarks were by Pastor Ang.

The event ended with fellowship. — **By Dr Florence John and Bernard Anthony**




**KUALA LUMPUR
ARCHDIOCESE**

**Diary of Archbishop
Julian Leow**

October

- 14 Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly – Church of St Francis of Assisi**
- 15 Confirmation – Church of the Immaculate Conception**
- 16 Annual General Meeting of Malaysian Catholic Education Council**
- 17 & Monthly Clergy**
- 18 Recollection**
- 19 Archdiocesan Finance Meeting**




**MALACCA JOHORE
DIOCESE**


**Diary of Bishop
Bernard Paul**

October

- 13 MAJODI Centre Reporting Meet**
- 14 Diocesan Pastoral Assembly – MAJODI Centre**
- 17-18 Monthly Clergy Recollection – MAJODI Centre**
- 19 Meeting – MJD Young People's Network Staff**



**Malacca Johore Diocese
News Update #148**



Greetings to you, dear friends and faithful. Interesting things happening in Malaysia. Pineapples returns as the No 1 fruit in output, not durian. The top five fruits currently are pineapples, durians, bananas, watermelon and papayas. The new cardinals made their appearance. The whole Church entered into prayer on September 30 for the Synod which commenced on October 4 in Rome. Malaysia prepares to be an aged nation by 2050. Some say the birth rates have dipped.

Recovery Times: The Malaysian athletes are in Hangzhou to regain lost glory and the elusive gold. The government is singing "comeback, comeback" to the lost and those who left — the brains, the talented and the skilled overseas. The negative impact is significant. The afflictions include starvation of talent replacement, poor governance, and policymaking, middle-income trap, low industry development (less breadth and depth), corruption and loss of tax revenue. The policies have forced migration and have retarded us from becoming a better nation. Cold policies, indifferent leadership and discriminatory enforcements are suffocating.

There is a need for sensitivity to the young, the elderly, the diversity and the many gaps, not only in the country but also in the Church. **Indifference rejects. Inclusivity invites.** Pope Francis says: *Too often we participate in the globalisation of indifference. May we strive instead to live global solidarity.*

A Thought for the Week: Disgusted Diners
A son took his very old and weak father to a restaurant for an evening dinner. He made a mess while eating, dropped food on his shirt and pants. The other diners were disgusted while the son remained calm. After they were finished eating, the son, who was not embarrassed at all, quietly took him to the washroom,

wiped off the food particles, removed the stains, combed his hair and fitted his glasses firmly. When they came out, the entire restaurant was watching them in dead silence, not able to grasp how someone could embarrass themselves publicly like that. The son settled the bill and started to leave the eatery with his father.

At that time, an old man amongst the diners called out to the son and asked him, "Don't you think you left something behind?" The son replied, "No sir, I haven't." The old man retorted, "Yes, you have! *You have left a lesson for every son and hope for every father.*" The restaurant went silent.

A lesson from the son: We are put on this earth to assist one another, show compassion and empathy, especially to care for those who once cared for us. When we really love them as ourselves, we find that we feel more content, satisfied, and happy about our own lives. Many, many times, we will discover that *the happiest people in the world are the helpful and caring ones.*

Announcements This Week

1. At the last *Kursus Evangelisasi Peribadi* or KEP Commissioning on September 24 at GSS Melaka, 44 BM-speaking were commissioned as evangelisers, and three as instructors. Our thanks to the formation team from the Diocese of Bogor.
2. *Deliverance & Healing Programme* ended on September 29 at MAJODI, with 32 priests, pastoral workers, charis members and those sent by the parish priests. The basic course attempted to enlighten and help participants experience inner freedom, and setting people free.
3. The diocese prepares for October 14 *Diocesan Pastoral Assembly* at MAJODI Centre; and the *priestly ordination of Deacon Aaron Alammalay*, fixed for November 20 in Muar.

This Week's QnQ? Q asks: "You are invisible!" What does it mean?
"When my family and I were driving through France a few years ago, we were enchanted by the hundreds of storybook cows grazing on picturesque pastures right next to the highway. For dozens of kilometres, we all gazed out the window, marvelling about how beautiful everything was. Then, within 20 minutes, we started ignoring the cows. The new cows were just like the old cows, and what once was amazing was now common. Worse than common. It was boring. Cows, after you've seen them for a while, are boring. They may be perfect cows, attractive cows, cows with great personalities, cows lit by beautiful light, but they're still boring. A Purple Cow, though. Now that would be interesting. For a while." — **Seth Godin, Purple Cow.**

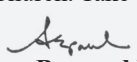
For Godin, it is all about being remarkable, being unique, standing out, being interesting, exceptional and worth noticing. It stands in contrast to the "perfect" normal brown cow.

If you are not remarkable, you are invisible. Not being uniquely you and adding compounding value to others makes you invisible.

Godin asks: What's stopping you from being a "purple cow", from finding your voice and being remarkable? What are you afraid of?

The opposite of being remarkable, a purple cow, is being "very good", being the "perfect brown cow" ...and that is as common as muck. "You are either remarkable or invisible. Make a choice."

Hear. Think. Pray. Heed the words of Cardinal Sebastian Francis: There is no Synod without prayer. Pray to the Holy Spirit to lead the Church. Take care. God bless.


Bishop Bernard Paul

Meditation to cultivate harmony

PENANG: Aligned with the theme *Fostering Harmony in Diversity*, the Penang Harmony Corporation (HARMONICO) recently hosted the inaugural Penang Harmony Celebration 2023, from August 31 to September 21. The event aimed to showcase the diverse cultural heritage of Penang and underscore the value of community inclusiveness. Various activities were featured during the celebration, including arts, exhibitions, multicultural music, dialogues, meditation workshops, and educational programmes.

Central to this celebration was *Meditate*

21, a campaign encouraging individuals and communities to engage in meditation for peace over 21 days, beginning Sept 1, and concluding on the International Day of Peace Sept 21. This initiative witnessed collaboration involving 14 religious and non-religious groups from Penang.

The Cathedral of the Holy Spirit Meditation Group (CHS Meditation Group), in collaboration with the World Community of Christian Meditation (WCCM), played a significant role in supporting Meditate 21. They organised a workshop on the John

Main way of Christian meditation at the cathedral on Sept 6.

During the workshop, Bernard Capel of the CHS Meditation Group guided 40 participants, elaborating on prayer practices within the Catholic Church. He emphasised that the John Main way of meditation aligns one's spirit with the Spirit of Jesus, promoting communion with the Father within the heart. Key aspects of this practice, similar to various prayer traditions, include silence, stillness, and focused attention. Bernard underscored the importance of discipline in

prayerful meditation as it enables individuals to delve into the core of their being and encounter the Spirit of God.

The workshop concluded with a 20-minute meditation session, during which participants silently recited the Aramaic phrase, "Ma - Ra - Na - Tha," translated to "Come Lord." Bernard highlighted the significance of dispelling thoughts, words, or images, allowing individuals to remain present in the Creator's presence, shaping it into a profound "prayer of the heart". —

By Basil Surin

Neophytes reminded to 'listen'

KUALA LUMPUR: More than 100 neophytes gathered to celebrate the third "Mass for the Neophytes" at the Church of the Holy Rosary, September 23. "Neophyte" is a Greek word meaning "newly planted" or "newly converted to a belief".

The Mass was held to provide those who journeyed in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) and were baptised at the Easter Vigil in 2023, the opportunity to celebrate the Holy Eucharist with the bishop of the diocese.

Joining the neophytes were individuals who had been received into full communion with the Catholic Church. These are persons who were previously baptised into a non-Catholic ecclesial community or denomination but wished to become members of the Catholic Church. Family members of the neophytes and parish RCIA team members were also present.

At the beginning of the Mass, Archbishop Julian Leow expressed his joy in celebrating Mass with the neophytes. In his homily, the archbishop expounded on the reading from the Gospel of Luke 8: 14-15. He stated that Jesus, the Sower, is constantly sharing His Good News. Jesus speaks to us and invites us to listen to His "voice". However, the challenges of life and the temptations of the world can distract or even distance us from Him. As such, the Good News of Jesus can be "taken away" from us. This is why it is essential for us to constantly "listen" to Jesus.



Archbishop Julian Leow and co-celebrating priests with the neophytes.

At the same time, said the archbishop, we need to be with and be for the community into which we are initiated. The community can help us sustain and grow in our faith. The archbishop gave the example of a campfire. If a piece of burning wood is removed from the fire and set aside, it will gradually grow cold. Similarly, if we move away or stay apart from the community, our faith too can become "cold". In this way, the archbishop encouraged the neophytes to remain close to, and become involved in the community, be it in the family, parish or Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC).

Before the congregation received the final blessing, four neophytes were invited to share their testimonies. These were presented in Bahasa Malaysia, Tamil, Mandarin and English respectively. Each neophyte shared how he or she decided to join the Catholic Church. The testimonies revealed their personal struggles in

trying to understand the meaning of life amidst challenges and uncertainties, the "calling" from God, and how they entered the RCIA. They also expressed the joy they now felt in knowing Jesus and in being a Catholic; many of those present felt encouraged and inspired by these stories.

After Mass, everyone posed for a group photo followed by a fellowship lunch at the parish hall.

According to Dr Steven Selvaraju, Director of KL Archdiocesan Catechetical Centre, the idea of the "Mass for the Neophytes" is from the RCIA document which was published by the Congregation for Divine Worship in 1972 with the approval of Pope Paul VI. The document specifies that after the Easter Vigil, the bishop should arrange to meet the neophytes and preside at a celebration of the Eucharist with them to show his concern for them. This is

more so, said Dr Steven, since the archbishop was not able to be present when the neophytes received the Sacraments of Initiation in their parish at the Easter Vigil.

He added that "we plan to celebrate the Mass at a different church each year to give the newly baptised a chance to visit the church and meet the parish community."

On the whole, many neophytes and others expressed that the Mass was a meaningful occasion for them. It allowed them to celebrate the Eucharist with the archbishop, the chief shepherd of the diocese, and to meet him personally. It also enabled them to "catch up with old friends", especially those who had journeyed in the RCIA with them. May this experience of our Catholic community inspire and encourage our newly baptised and all those present on that day. — By KL Archdiocesan Catechetical Centre

ULU TIRAM, Johore: The feast of St Pio of Pietrelcina was celebrated on September 24, at the St Pio's Spirituality Centre. It was preceded by a Triduum of Masses Sept 21-23 at the Church of the Holy Family. The presider, Fr Alberto Poblete OFM, Cap from the Philippines preached on the theme *Pray, Hope and Don't Worry*.

On the first night, Fr Poblete touched on Padre Pio's love for family, going back to his early experiences of love and communion, of intimate prayers, of toil and hard work in his family, of his spiritual visions and desire to serve the Lord as a living sacrifice for souls. He also noted the great threat to a family's communion and the subsequent loss of real spirituality due to misuse and abuse of social media to the point of addiction — something, he said, we have to regulate better by spending more time together at home (praying together, eating together, telling our stories, recreating together, etc).

On the second night, he reflected on Padre Pio's love for the Church by focusing on the way he lived and celebrated the Holy Eucharist, as well as by hearing confessions for long hours. In this way, he contributed to the building up of the unity of the Church by nourishing her and healing her wounds.

Padre Pio's love for society was the focus of the third night. One way of showing it was his reverence for the Pope at that time, Paul VI. He would always pray for him and write him letters of encouragement. He also left spiritual and material legacies for his spiritual children, the "Padre Pio prayer groups" — the Casa

Pray, hope, and don't worry



Parishioners carrying the statue of St Pio in procession.

Sollievo della Sofferenza and two other social institutions for the education of poor children (Santa Maria delle Grazie and Pace e Bene Kindertgartsen), and the Institute of Tertiary Capuchins of the Addolorata for Professional Training (Istituto Tecnico Commerciale Statale since 2002). Even amid great suffering such as calumny, unjust censorship by the Holy See due to all sorts of false accusations (mishandling of money, illicit relationships, etc) to destroy his reputation and to stop his social projects of charity, he remained calm because he lived out his motto of "Pray, Hope, and Don't Worry," noting that "God is merciful and He will hear your prayers," if we are doing His will.

Like St Francis of Assisi, there are also anec-

dotes of how animals could sense Padre Pio's holiness and obeyed him, similar to Francis' encounters with the wolf or his preaching to the birds at Mount La Verna. It was observed that when Padre Pio celebrated Mass in the early days, stray dogs from surrounding areas would come and sit in the square just in front of the church. When Mass was over, they would leave the area. If he were alive today, Padre Pio would admonish us about the state our world and how we have done poorly as stewards of life and creation. We have to accept the fact that we have, to some extent irreversibly, already damaged our world. Not stopping emissions and allowing global temperatures to rise means our children and grandchildren would have to bear the brunt of our inaction and deal

with unimaginably devastating consequences.

The above scenario was sketched by the Filipino priest during his homily on Sunday. Almost 1,000 pilgrims, devotees, volunteers and friends from the different parishes within and outside the diocese, and Singapore participated.

According to the homilist, we have to start thinking of the Earth and how to preserve it so we "don't die out...so that we don't become extinct. Extinction is not only because of natural phenomena like asteroids hitting the earth and causing various species of plants and animals to die. No. We can bring it on ourselves if we worry too much about not having enough...Greed is what is going to harm us. Our refusal to let go and give up what we have and entrust all to God's wisdom and plan for our lives is what is going to get us into trouble. If we don't do something now, there will not be a future generation. We might be the last generation."

He ended with the familiar quote of Padre Pio: *Pray, Hope and Don't Worry* that, according to him, is a reflection of what Jesus said in Matthew's Gospel in chapter 6:25-34: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat [or drink], or about your body, what you will wear..."

Prior to the Mass, there was a Rosary recitation in different languages and testimonies by those who have been healed through the intercession of Padre Pio, after which the statue of Padre Pio was carried in procession to the sanctuary despite the inclement weather. — By Sr Anna Yap fsp

World Day of
Migrants and
Refugees
24-IX-2023



"Free to choose whether to migrate or to stay"

The 109th World Day of Migrants and Refugees was observed on September 24. The theme was *Free to choose whether to migrate or to stay*. Pope Francis in his message stated that the decision to migrate should always be free, yet in many cases, it is not. Conflicts, natural disasters, or more simply the impossibility of living a dignified life in one's native land is forcing millions of people to leave.

To make migration a choice that is truly free, joint efforts are needed by individual countries and the international community to ensure that all enjoy the right not to be forced to emigrate, in other words, the chance to live in peace and with dignity in one's own country.

Here is a round-up of some of the activities organised in the three Peninsular Malaysia arch/dioceses.

Celebrating migrants and refugees

In Penang

BUKIT MERTAJAJM: Caritas Diocese of Penang and Caritas Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam collaborated with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) / Doctors without Borders conducted a workshop on *Refugee Crisis in Malaysia*, September 23 at the Minor Basilica of St Anne.

During the half day workshop, MSF shared about their operational presence in Malaysia since 2015 as part of their response to the Rohingya crisis and provided an overview of the regional refugee crisis. They engaged with participants and addressed misconceptions and distinguished the differences between asylum seekers, refugees and economic migrants.



Médecins Sans Frontières team

They also discussed the factors contributing to the displacement and challenges faced by refugees. MSF also highlighted initiatives and challenges in providing primary health-care at their KM6 medical clinic in Butterworth.

This was followed by a session where members from Caritas, church ministries, various NGOs and learning centres for refugee children shared their services to mi-

grants and refugees. The challenges faced by them in getting volunteers, financial constraints and reaching out to refugees and asylum seekers who live in fear of being caught by authorities was emphasised.

The application for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) documentation — which recognises a refugee or asylum seeker for international protection — is a long process during which time they can be subjected to being caught and sent to detention centres.

During the workshop it was evident that church ministries and organisations are stepping forward in advocating the rights of refugees. But unfortunately, the scale of the refugee crisis in Malaysia is enormous. Church parishes networking with NGOs and learning centres would certainly create a better impact in restoring dignity among the refugees.

Caritas Diocese of Penang will be creating a database of NGOs providing services to migrants and refugees and learning centres for refugee children, that would be shared with the parishes in the Diocese of Penang and hence help to network and work together for these particularly vulnerable group of people.

The synodal path that we have undertaken as a Church leads us to see in those who are most vulnerable — among whom are many migrants and refugees — special companions on our way, to be loved and cared for as brothers and sisters. Only by walking together will we be able to go far and reach the common goal of our journey. (Excerpts from Pope Francis' message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees)



Participants at the workshop.

KL Archdiocese

Many activities from Mass animation, sessions and fellowship were organised by the parish migrant ministries in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.



Migrants animate the Mass at the Chapel of Christ the Light, Kuala Lumpur.



Performance by the children at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang.



The Filipino community performing at the Church of Jesus Caritas, Kepong.



Fellowship after Mass at the Church of St Thomas More, Subang Jaya.



The different migrant communities at the Church of the Sacred Heart, Kuala Lumpur.

In Johor

Bishop's Delegate for Diocesan Ministry for Migrants & Refugees: Friar Clairence Motoyou, OFM and the Myanmar migrants from around the diocese during Migrant Sunday at the Church of the Immaculate of Conception.



Family bonds are precious

KAJANG: The Archdiocesan Family Life Commission (AFLC) celebrated a Family Day recently to end the year-long activity of the World Meeting of Families (WMOF), initiated by Pope Francis in Rome. The event took place at the Church of the Holy Family and was a joyous occasion that brought together families from across the archdiocese.

The festivities commenced with Mass presided over by Archbishop Julian Leow, and con-celebrated by Fr Peter Anthony, Fr Andrew Kooi, Fr Michael Chua, Fr Philip Chua, Fr Bonaventure Rayappan and Fr Alberto Irenus David SJ.

Following the Mass, a thanksgiving speech was delivered by Robert and Shelah Basker, the AFLC chair couple where they provided a synopsis of the WMOF activities in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

The journey began August 21, 2022, with Mass at the Cathedral of St John. This event set the tone for the memorable trip that was to follow. The speakers highlighted every aspect of the launch, from the musical video presentation of the song *We Believe in Love*, to the display of a vibrant cultural show, celebrating the rich diversity of the archdiocese through song, dance, and artistry. There was also mention of the detailed study of the nine chapters of *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*). Family talks by guest speakers on



Performance by the Bahasa Malaysia Apostolate members.

various topics related to family life, spirituality, and holiness. Promotion campaigns were also held at the Church of St Jude, Rawang and the Church of the Assumption, Petaling Jaya, to spread the message and mission of the Family Life Ministry.

On behalf of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, the speakers expressed their gratitude to Fr Michael Chua, the parish priest, and the clergy of the Church of the Holy Family Church, for generously hosting the Family Day. There was also a special mention of the efforts of Noel and Sharon Santiago from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes Klang, and the dedicated efforts of many individuals and representatives who

worked tirelessly to make the event a resounding success.

It was a day of fun and togetherness, for the young and the old alike. The event featured a wide array of activities including games, delightful stalls, and delectable food for all to enjoy. It was a clear message that family is the cornerstone of our lives, and cherishing the moments spent together is of utmost importance.

In celebrating Family Day, the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur sent a clear message: family bonds are precious, and these moments of togetherness are to be cherished. The event was a fitting conclusion to a year-long celebration of love, faith, and family.

The missionary aspect of families

KLANG: The family holds a unique position in society and in our Catholic homes. It is said to be the building block, the foundation upon which we shape our lives. But it is not just about the bonds within the family itself. It extends far beyond the walls of our home and encompasses a broader sense of community.

A pastoral family operates with love, compassion, and empathy. It seeks to support and guide its members through the challenges and triumphs of life. Within this context, the concept of the missionary family emerges. A missionary family takes their love and compassion beyond their immediate circle and reaches out to others, offering them the same support, guidance, and care that they embody within their household.

Fr Stanley Antoni, a versatile speaker on pastoral and missionary work, shared his wisdom and experience with parishioners of the Church of the Holy Redeemer, September 23, helping them understand the importance of extending the love and care they have within their families towards their broader communities.

Through his words, the parishioners gained valuable insights into practical ways they can reach out as a family, taking on a missionary role to make a positive impact on those around us.

Fr. Stanley also imparted guidance on how to cultivate strong family bonds, foster a spirit of service, and create a culture of inclusion that extends beyond the borders of our family life.

Outing for Orang Asli children

KUALA LUMPUR: In commemoration of World Humanitarian Day which is observed globally on August 19, the Ministry of the Poor and the Ministry for Orang Asli, both operating under the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD), joined forces to organise a special two-day excursion for 32 Orang Asli from Pahang in Kuala Lumpur recently.

This adventure marked their first visit to the city, and it was met with great anticipation, particularly by the four to 14-year-old children who made up the majority of the group, accompanied by some of their parents and teachers.

After a lengthy five-hour journey by chartered bus from their rural village to the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre (APC), they were warmly welcomed and given an opportunity to relax before indulging in dinner and a cozy movie screening. The highlight of the evening was an exhilarating Nerf Battle (Foam Darts) held at Dewan Dominic, where even the parents and teachers eagerly joined in on the action. Initially reserved,

they cautiously acquainted themselves with the toy blasters during the first round, but soon adapted, strategised, and grasped the game's dynamics. The night culminated after six competitive rounds of battle, leaving both adults and children brimming with excitement and smiles.

The following day, they were treated to a hearty breakfast and a tour of the AOHD office, as well as the premises of the Church of St Anthony. They then embarked on a bus journey to Zoo Negara. During the ride, some of the children were transfixed by the modern cityscape, gazing out the windows in awe, catching glimpses of iconic landmarks like the distant Petronas Twin Towers.

The group captured numerous collective memories with group photos before venturing in smaller clusters to explore the various animal enclosures. They were enthralled by the animal show, particularly enjoying the sea lion's entertaining tricks performed with the help of its skilled trainers. The visit allowed them to encounter various animals,



Both children and adults enjoying the Nerf Battle.

some familiar, and others, like the giant pandas, they encountered for the very first time. The day at the zoo concluded with a satisfying lunch before they made their way back to the bus at the entrance. Amidst heartfelt farewells, the group bid adieu, expressing a wish for more time to explore the city.

As they journeyed back to Pahang, they shared stories of their remarkable adventures and cherished the newfound friendships they had forged during this memorable experience. — **By Devon Chew Social Communications Officer Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD)**



The children playing one of the games.

Parish Community Month at Peel Road parish

KUALA LUMPUR: The Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus commenced her Parish Community Month with a mini fun fair and the mid-autumn festival on September 24. The Parish Community Month planned activities to connect with one another in the parish community which will go on till the end of this month.

During the four-hour carnival arranged by the Catechism students, many games were held such as water balloons, pin the donkey tail, bowling and buzz wire, hula hoop, stacking of cups, ping pong ball throwing, shooting game, Rubik cube solving, FIFA video games, penalty shootout and many more. Yummy treats were also

sold during this fun fair. Children and parents enjoyed their time together playing, dancing, and socialising at the event.

That same evening, parishioners came together with the Mandarin-speaking community to celebrate the mid-Autumn festival. Fr Philip Chua from the Church of the Holy Family Kajang joined the celebration. In his opening address, he explained the moon cakes are round not just to reflect the round moon, but also as a symbol of union, with family and the community. About 120 elderly and young parishioners of different races were present and participated in the activities.

The lantern decorating competition drew

many non-Chinese participants to take part and showcase their creativity. The choir's performance inclusive of Mandarin, English, Tamil, and Burmese choir groups cheered the mood even more.

There was also a riddle guessing game and lantern walk at the end of the session. For the Chinese community, the mid-Autumn celebration was a time for the family and community to come together. This event, which was also part of the Parish Community Month, was a great experience for the community. The organising committee was delighted with the support and participation of the parishioners. — **By Cecilia Grace**

Growing in the Holy Spirit

By Karen Ann Theseira

JOHOR BAHRU: The Church of the Immaculate Conception (CIC) was the venue for the Growth in the Spirit Seminar (GSS) held on the weekend of September 16 and 17. Facilitator Martin Jalleh, in his usual animated and enthusiastic way, provided profound, practical and powerful ways towards spiritual maturity; empowering us to be Salt of the Earth and Light of the World.

The GSS was a follow-up seminar to the Life in the Spirit Seminar (LSS) held earlier in the year.

Martin started off on a reassuring tone of how our spiritual journey is an on-going one, and with the right tools, it will be less bumpy.

He touched on 10 Profound, Powerful and Practical Ways Towards Spiritual Maturity. Encouraging us to press on (Heb 6:1-2), Martin encouraged the retreatants to make a conscious, and steadfast effort to live our faith and not just exist in it. For we are God's chosen people, not God's frozen people. And to put into action the lessons acquired at the LSS.



CIC parish priest, Fr Edward Rayappan, in his opening address expressed hope that the experience would result in the participants becoming 'less BUSY' (burdened under Satan's yoke) but instead choose a new way of life, one of peace and joy which the world cannot give but can be found in our relationship with the Saviour. At the GSS, this sentiment was echoed by Martin who cautioned that our busyness takes our time away from God. And all that busyness increases the noise that distracts us from the essence of life, contemplation, meditation — making us afraid of silence. Pope Francis wants us to learn to be silent in our hearts and before God.

It was noted that Jesus was a

man of prayer who prayed during ordinary moments and before critical decisions. Martin suggested the ACTSSS method (adoration, contrition, thanksgiving, supplication, Scripture, silence) as a practical approach to enrich one's prayer life. Participants were encouraged to avoid empty phrases and embrace meaningful prayer.

The importance of the Christian community in spiritual growth was emphasised. It was acknowledged that our purpose and mission may evolve as we mature spiritually, but we cannot grow spiritually in isolation. The Christ-Catholic Church-Community connection was highlighted, stressing the need for synergy within the community. The

group discussions at the GSS provided a supportive space for participants to openly share their spiritual struggles and receive care and concern from fellow believers.

Martin reminded us to call on the communion of saints in times of trouble, struggle and difficulty. Pray to St Michael to defend you against evil, to be a better worker look to St Joseph and for a change in our outlook on life, listen to Padre Pio's advice of 'pray, hope and don't worry.' Pray the Rosary daily.

Spiritual maturity is intentional; it is a choice; it requires commitment and effort. If we do not grow and mature, we become stunted, stultified, shallow, superficial and sterile. Participants need to establish, re-es-

tablish or deepen a personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, to be part of a Christ-centred ecclesial community, to yield to the action of the Holy Spirit and to make use of effective means of growth like Prayer, Word of God and the Sacrament of Reconciliation in their relationship with the Lord.

Regarding the final aspect of growth and maturity — evangelisation, Martin pointed out that in the New Testament, whenever the Holy Spirit comes upon someone, that person is sent out. For instance, after the Holy Spirit over-shadowed Mary, she visited Elizabeth. Following His Baptism, Jesus went into the desert and then began His ministry in Galilee. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended on Peter, and he spoke to the crowds.

Martin emphasised that while the "Life in the Spirit Seminar" may have ended, life in the Spirit continues. Encountering the Spirit compels us to follow the examples mentioned above and go out to share the Good News. This aligns with Pope Francis' call to "Go out! Go forward and keep on going!"

Compassion as Jesus practised

KLUANG: Members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul and the Parish Office of Human Development from Johor gathered for a spiritual formation by Fr Andrew Arokiasamy at the Church of St Louis recently.

Fr Andrew enlightened participants about how we can "be compassionate the way God is compassionate" where he outlined five points:

Compassion is a wide embrace and longing for wholeness — like the shepherd looking for the lost

sheep despite having 99 safely in hand; the woman celebrating the finding of the lost coin out of the 10 coins she had; the father pleading for the elder son to join in the celebration of the prodigal son's homecoming. For God everyone is important.

Compassion cuts across all boundaries — the washing of feet in the Gospel of John showcasing the basin and towel instead of the bread and wine of the Eucharist; the need for humble daily action to serve.

Compassion is leaving judgement to God — from the story of the stoning of the woman caught in adultery, Jesus chose to leave the judgement to God, not stoning people with the commandments and speaking up for her who was voiceless (advocacy).

Compassion is giving way to the human finitude to the mother of Jesus — where Jesus gave way to his mother's request to help in the wedding of Cana, changing water into wine. Mary gave voice to human inadequacy.

Compassion is collective — Jesus did not write a book but formed communities of men and women around Him, of which we are still part of.

The principles and spirituality of Justice, particularly of the need to advocate the rights of those who are less able to express their rights, spiritual leadership and examples of how Pope Francis is leading as the Pope of the Peripheries was touched on. Participants were left inspired and rejuvenated to continue their service to the hungry, thirsty, naked and in prison; answers we all need to provide in our final judgement (Mt 25). — **By Andrew Leo**



Participants in groups, sharing their thoughts.

A time to reflect on the Cross

MALIM, Melaka: Thousands of pilgrims participated in the annual celebration of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross at the Santa Cruz Chapel, September 14 – 17.

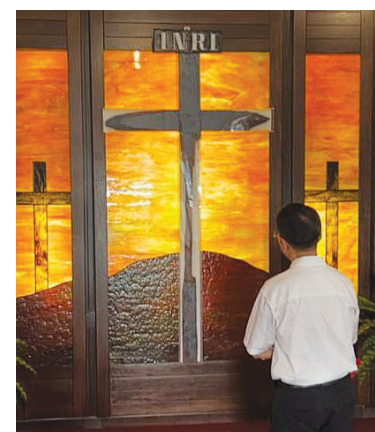
The festival's highlight was the daily veneration of the Holy Cross, where thousands lined up to enter the chapel.

Chapel Administrator, Fr Lionel Thomas, said the feast of Santa Cruz is always a time to reflect on the Cross of Christ and to be grateful for the love and mercy that flow from the Cross. Jesus paid our debts with His precious Body and Blood and He took away the sins of the world.

This year the chapel's sanctuary sported a new look and the Cross looked more prominent with its stained-glass backdrop, creating a prayerful ambience. Fr Lionel also blessed the faithful individually as they queued for veneration.

During the first three days, Eucharistic Adoration preceded the Masses. Besides the Masses in English, there were separate Masses in the other three vernacular languages.

Before the evening Mass on Sept 16, Fr Lionel, the Church of St Peter's parish priest, led the assembly of more than 1,500 people in the Eucharistic Adoration and reflection.



(photo/ St Peter's Melaka facebook)

During his homily, Fr Lionel emphasised our divine calling to extend forgiveness to one another and to approach God with a heart marked by contrition and humility rather than pride. He encouraged everyone to go for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Our sins accumulate like a mounting debt, and we owe God an insurmountable sum that we can never fully repay. Fr Lionel noted that many have refrained from going to confession for an extended period.

"Reflect how we have sinned and hurt others. God has forgiven us but, in return, we must forgive those who have hurt us." — **By Bernard Anthony**

Meditation classes for the elderly

KUALA LUMPUR: The Golden Eagles of the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist can now learn to meditate before the 1.00pm Mass on Fridays.

Parish priest Fr Gerard Theraviam recognised the importance of beginners starting their meditation practice as a group, emphasising the value of collective support and encouragement. The concern with beginners meditating in isolation is that they might be more susceptible to giving up or losing their way. The 20-minute meditation at the parish house begins at 11.30am, followed by Rosary and

silent adoration before Mass for the convenience of the Golden Eagles.

This meditation group, coordinated by Golden Eagle Cheryl Rita Lock, is in addition to the regular SJC Christian Meditation Group which comes under the umbrella of the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM).

It was formed after the Golden Eagles expressed their enthusiasm during two talks by Fr Gerard, who is also the WCCM national spiritual director.

The talks, organised by the Golden

Eagles, were held on February 28 and Aug 5. The first, attended by 60 elders, was an introduction to Christian meditation, while the next talk themed, *Be Still*, focused on the principles of meditation was attended by 42 people. Using the wheel as a metaphor, Fr Gerard said "Prayer is the wheel that moves our life spiritually towards God".

He likened the spokes of the wheel to the different forms of prayer. "All forms of prayer are valid and effective. We have the Eucharist, Intercessory Prayer, the Sacraments, the

Reading of Scripture and Personal Devotions," he said.

What holds the spokes together and turns the wheel is the hub. "We can think of the hub as the Prayer of Christ dwelling in our hearts," he quipped.

To turn, he said, the wheel must make contact with the ground. "If the wheel does not touch the ground, it cannot move the cart and the wheel will just spin ... So, there must be a real-time and place in our daily life which we give to prayer."

On being still, Fr Gerard said:

"Without the still point at the centre, the wheel cannot turn ... This is the relationship between action and contemplation." He added, "When we meditate, we come into the central stillness, which is the source of all our action, our movement towards God through Christ within us."

The first session on Sept 8 saw the participation of 10 Golden Eagles, and the subsequent session on Sept 15 garnered an attendance of 12. Cheryl hopes to see more participants in the coming sessions. — **By Bob Ho**

Healthcare workshop for all

By Patricia Bai

KUALA PENYU, Keningau: Being healthy and taking care of our health is one way of being a good witness.

Caritas Keningau, in collaboration with Caritas Malaysia, hosted a healthcare awareness workshop on general health issues at the Diocesan Retreat House, September 16. The session was conducted by former Sabah health director, Datuk Dr Christina Rundi and her team.

"The aim for this workshop is to raise awareness of various health conditions, health needs, diseases and preventive measures, and to create a healthy community without relying on the Health Ministry or the government," said the Caritas Keningau director, Patricia Bai.

Seven sessions were delivered by doctors and healthcare professionals during the event. Dr Johnathon Lin discussed *Oral health basics*, Ariannie Charles shared insights on *Nutritional awareness*, Matron Mariana Chin addressed the topic of *Teen pregnancy*, and Ester Barnard presented on *Infectious Diseases*. Dr Arthur Tendahal provided an overview of *Mental Health*, while Dr Jenifer John and Datuk Dr. Christina presented on *Healthcare in Emergency and Disaster* and *The roles of public health in society*, respectively.

Dr Christina emphasised the critical importance of maintaining a healthy body for growth and development. Many individuals, regardless of age, must acquire the knowledge and habits necessary to attain and sustain good health. Regrettably, most people only prioritise their



Dr Christina Rundi, former Sabah Health Director, giving a session on healthcare.

health once they encounter issues with their bodies. If they were more proactive in monitoring their health, it is conceivable that they could have prevented numerous health-related problems from arising.

She went on to say, "The active involvement and empowerment of individuals, communities, and societies in promoting self-care for health is of critical importance. It falls upon us to modify our behaviours, apply our knowledge of health, embrace healthy practices to prevent the onset or worsening of chronic illnesses and enhance our overall well-being. "It is also timely for the Sabah state government to improve primary healthcare coverage in remote areas. At least to improve road infrastructure and or build bridges so healthcare professionals can reach the sick and needy," she added.

Dr Arthur explained, "Mental health is rarely talked about openly because, those who suffer from it are scared of being judged and looked down upon. Society looks down on mental health disorders, thus making sufferers hide their condi-

tion. The best way to deal with this stigma is through facts and a better understanding of mental health dilemmas."

Caritas Malaysia's national office director, Fr Fabian Dicom, was also in attendance and commended Caritas Keningau on organising the workshop. "I hope it has given the participants a clearer picture of healthcare. Improving our health strengthens the faith and leads us closer to God."

Caritas Keningau's spiritual advisor, Fr Wilfred James, thanked the doctors, healthcare professionals, Caritas Keningau and all those involved. "It was heart-warming to see the healthcare professionals spending a day giving talks and advice to the attendees. May all healthcare professionals be nourished and enlightened by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as they continue to be pillars of medical service for the Church," said Fr Wilfred.

The course ended with the presentation of the Certificates of Appreciation to the speakers and Certificates of Attendance to the attendees.

Forging ahead with faith, fortitude and freedom

GENTING HIGHLANDS: A group of 26 participants gathered for the Catholic lawyers' annual retreat led by Martin Jalleh, at Villa Dominic from September 22 to 24.

It was a fruitful, refreshing and rejuvenating three days of engaging sessions. The theme *Forging Ahead with Faith, Fortitude and Freedom* was relatable to the participants.

Among other things, Martin taught the partakers to pray the Rosary using Scripture. There was never a dull moment throughout the retreat where the attendees were in good spirits as they ate, laughed and prayed together.

Tony and Adelene Fenelon together with David Charles and David Lazaroo led the Praise and Worship sessions. Fr Gregory Chan dropped by to hear confessions and celebrate Mass for the group.

As Catholic lawyers, the partici-

pants were reminded that in their calling, they will encounter challenges and fear. However if they are firmly rooted in the Word of God, He will grant them the wisdom and fortitude to live out their mission daily. Personal counselling sessions with Martin during breaks proved useful for participants and an inner healing session on the final day was a moving and personal encounter.

The retreatants also enjoyed an evening of barbecue fellowship where they exchanged life stories and experiences while feasting on deliciously grilled food and refreshing drinks.

A major takeaway from the retreat was to **put God first** as Psalm 23 affirms, "Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me." —

By Christina Rachel Param, Hon Assistant Secretary of CLS



The Catholic lawyers with Martin Jalleh.

Doctors go on retreat



PETALING JAYA: Seven members from the Catholic Doctors Association of Malaysia (CDAM) visited La Vang, Vietnam during our annual retreat this year. Our purpose was to attend the triennial feast celebration in mid-August at the Minor Basilica of Our Lady of La Vang, a Roman Catholic sanctuary, commemorating a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary seen there in 1798.

As the main venue was bustling with more than 200,000 pilgrims

from the world over, we found it impossible to have a quiet retreat. Instead, we spent time in prayer at a nearby chapel and before the Shrine of Our Lady of La Vang.

We offered personal petitions and asked for Mother Mary's intercession to bring peace to our beloved multi-racial and multi-religious country, Malaysia. We were also deeply touched to witness the faith of the thousands of pilgrims at the feast. — By Dr Freddie Loh

Parishioners get CPR and AED training

PENANG: The Church of the Holy Name of Mary, held her second public CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) training with an AED (automated external defibrillator) on September 24. About 140 people attended the event.

The parish was fortunate to have trainers from the Penang CPR Society to run the session. A team of 20 trainers comprising consultants, specialist doctors, senior medical officers, senior nurses/nurse educators, and experienced paramedics carried out the training.



A young participant learning to administer CPR on a manikin.

The co-hosts of this event were the Permatang Tinggi Village Committee and the Alumni Association of the Permatang Tinggi Chinese Primary (National Type) School. Both organisations work closely with the church.

In 2017, the school's alumni donated an AED to the church and the first round of training was carried out for about 100 people by the Penang CPR Society. However, with the considerable lapse of time, many church members had forgotten how to carry out CPR and were unsure

how to use the AED. Hence the need for this refresher.

The three-hour event started with a welcome address by parish priest, Fr Louis Loi, followed by a lecture on CPR by Penang CPR Society president and Consultant Cardiologist and Physician, Dr Goh Eng Leong. Many questions were raised at the end of the lecture. During the hands-on session, every participant had a chance to perform chest compressions, only CPR, on manikins, followed by learning how to use an AED.

The Penang CPR Society also presented four LifeSavers Award Certificates to individuals who performed CPR, and used the church AED on a victim who had suffered a cardiac arrest while playing badminton in the church hall the previous month and successfully revived the victim. This incident further emphasised the urgent need for CPR and AED training.

The church would like to thank the Penang CPR Society for conducting the course, the co-organisers, and all volunteers, especially to Teoh Siang Boon, who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make the event a success.



By Ravindran Raman Kutty

KUALA LUMPUR: The *Malaysia Madani: A Determined Quest for Wholesome National Unity Interfaith Forum* took place at the Church of St Francis of Assisi on Malaysia Day. This collaborative effort was led by Fr Xavier Andrew, the Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Archdiocese Ministry of Ecumenism and Interreligious Affairs (AMEIA) and Archbishop Julian Leow, who joined forces with religious leaders and organisations to orchestrate this event. Over 200 individuals representing diverse races and faiths attended.

The panel featured representatives from various faiths, including Prematilaka KD Serisana (Buddhist), Rane Sreedharan (Baha'i), Dr Muhammad Fairuz Azmi (Muslim), Dr Poey Tiang Peow (Taoist), Dr Muralidaran Paramasua (Malaysia Hindu Sangam), Prabhial Singh Daler (Guru Granth Sahib), and Fr Edwin Peter (parish priest of the Church of the Risen Christ). The session was moderated by Ravindran Raman Kutty, a Fellow of the Institute of Public Relations Malaysia.

The forum commenced with some cultural dances, followed by the singing of *Negara Ku* and the recitation of the *Rukun Negara* by all present.

The first speaker, Prematilaka, espoused the true teachings of Buddha – “If there is no peace inside, then there is no peace outside,” — a simple philosophy that stipulates the importance that what comes from within you becomes you and spreads across to the others.

Rane outlined all the Prime Minister's slogans and singled out *Madani* which means civilisation. She reiterated Bahauddin's teachings that “Narrow minds don't bring peace” and a good family is the impetus of our great nation.

Love all and share with all; love unites, hate divides.

Dr Fairuz said that *Madani* cannot be associated with *Medina*. He highlighted the Prophet's teaching of “do not defend your tribe even if you are wrong.” Everyone was allowed to agree to disagree. Islam always believed and still believes in unity and not to divide.

Dr Poey Tian Peow highlighted the three tenets of Taoism professed by Lao Tze — Compassion, Frugality and Humility — and these combined as one is the best way of life to live in peace. He also emphasised that this combination is critical, especially for leaders.

Dr Muralitharan spoke about the fifth-century Hindu scholar Thirunavukkarasu who taught the importance of good governance, sustainable development and racial harmony. He also reminded the attendees that we should accept and understand differences, rather than just tolerate them. He ended with the *Rigveda* which states “Truth is one, paths are many”.

Prabhial Singh spoke about the importance of gratitude. Oxygen is free as compared to water and electricity which are metered and we must pay. Every Malaysian must be grateful for the abundance our nation is blessed with. He reiterated that Sikhism is about three things, meditation in the name of the creator, doing charity towards anyone in the name of humani-

ty, and never expecting anything to fall on your lap, but working hard for it.

Fr Edwin spoke about citizenry and a sense of belonging. Malaysians are connected through food, our style of speaking and the way we played football back in the day. “Malaysia's best team comprised Arumugam on goal, Santokh on defence, Soh Chin Aun the captain and Mokhtar Dahari as forward. We had everyone winning our medals. Words such as *pendatang* are not in line with the *Madani* concept and our leaders must embrace unity in all that we do.

Throughout the discussion, the religious leaders emphasised a common goal: religion aims to contribute to a more civilised society, aligning with the concept of *Masyarakat Madani*. It was highlighted that no religion advocates evil, malevolence, or cruelty. The conversation revolved around the virtues, values, and principles of *Masyarakat Madani* and how each faith can play an inclusive role in the development of a greater Malaysia.

During the Q&A session, a question was raised about atheists, who number around 300,000 in our country, and whether they pose a threat to the nation. The moderator said that as long as atheists do not engage in harmful actions, break the law, respect the monarchy, the nation, and its people, and do not cause harm, they can coexist harmoniously in our country.

The forum also addressed the issue of polarisation in schools and universities, with examples of teachers exhibiting excessive control. The panel asserted that it is the parents' responsibility to ensure their children receive basic religious teachings to foster awareness of their faith alongside educational excellence.

Another query revolved around the declining attendance of young people in churches, temples, and mosques. The panel's response stressed the importance of instilling religious teachings from a young age, starting at birth (or even before). This solid foundation would help the youth appreciate and practise their respective religions by visiting holy places.

A participant asked whether it is more appropriate to speak of religious tolerance or religious awareness, and the panel unanimously agreed that religious awareness surpasses mere tolerance.

The event was a significant and enriching opportunity for the participants to come together and discuss the role of religion in shaping a better, more enlightened, and more civilised Malaysia.

The panel unanimously concurred that healthy discussions like this contribute to the betterment of society and Malaysia. Fr Xavier expressed the need for more forums like this within the *Malaysia Madani* framework, and Dr Poey highlighted how such forums go beyond social media discussions and promote unity among Malaysians.

Dr Muhammad stressed the importance of exposing children in our neighbourhoods to various cultures and practices beyond what schools offer, as this would foster greater unity and understanding, truly uniting our nation.

The forum concluded with a closing address by Archbishop Julian, who reminded everyone that love unites while hate divides.



The panellists and moderator at the inter faith forum.

Season of Creation ecumenical celebration in Penang

PENANG: The Season of Creation (SoC) being an ecumenical celebration globally, unites Christians of all churches and denominations in prayer and action for the protection and care of our common home.

The Penang State Creation Justice Commission organised the ecumenical side of SoC through a series of meaningful activities on September 23 at the MCKL College Penang Pykett Campus.

This celebration was made possible in collaboration with leaders and members from the churches of Methodist, Baptist, and Anglican denominations.

MCKL CEO Dr Chua Ping Yong commenced the celebration with his message highlighting the importance of caring for God's creation. Rev Ronald Yap of the Wesley Methodist Church, Penang, then led the opening prayer followed by his Spirit-filled

team leading an amazing session of Praise and Worship.

An hour-long forum titled *The importance of ecological living from the Christian perspective* was moderated by Make Living More Learning and Development and Corporate Trainer for MNCs CEO, Vernon Fernandez (Catholic), with panelists from Pro Cathedral of St George the Martyr — Janet Saw (Anglican), Jaringan Ekologi dan Iklim (JEDI) vice president, Evelyn Teh (Methodist), and Penang State Creation Justice Commission coordinator, Magdalene Chiang (Catholic).

Challenging questions from the floor included that of the government, the powerful, and the wealthy exploiting the earth's resources like deforestation, causing massive ecological problems, and how ecological conversion efforts among Christians could be

helpful in such a situation.

Tokens of appreciation in the form of foldable silicon cups were given out to encourage BYO (bring-your-own) practices, and to say no to single-use plastics. After the forum, everyone adjourned to the college cafeteria for light refreshments and individual/small group photos at the ecology corner.

Exhibition booths with concepts related to the SoC 2023 theme *Let Justice and Peace Flow* provided more awareness to the participants. Eden Handicap Recycling Unit showcased its waste segregation facilities while displaying some handcrafts from recycled materials made by its mentally or physically challenged members, which saw good support from the participants. *Kebun Kitar* of Bayan Greentech displayed its hydroponic set and educated the crowd on urban farming; enthusiasts also got the chance to taste and purchase the peppermint tea processed from the harvest on its farm. *KakiClean* showcased its mindful shoreline clean-up to heighten the urgency for a clean environment and discourage littering. All these booths opened the opportunities for everyone to volunteer with personal actions in respective communities, versus looking and listening and then walking away without much impact and commitment.

Some participants were attracted to apply their creativity in decorating tabletop rattan baskets with colourful pebbles, lettering, and

even mini-LED lights, an interesting initiative by the college students. Many thronged to a booth that caught their attention through the little candles with soothing colours and sparkling glitter in adorable shapes; there were also wax seals with colours of an individual's choice, all from eco-friendly materials. These make great gifts, besides becoming a hobby that trains one's patience and exquisiteness.

Participants were also spoiled for choice of workshops for knowledge and hands-on experiences in soap making through natural ingredients with zero waste in mind, upcycling non-biodegradable aluminium sachets into usable items to prolong their shelf life, waste segregation for reuse, repurpose, or recycling to avoid landfills being piled up excessively, making eco-enzyme and compost, learning the three tools to increase climate knowledge (by JEDI), and disaster response by Asia Crisis Response Alliance (ACRA). All workshops were conducted by Christians from different churches and denominations, with caring for God's creation in mind.

Some visitors were amazed at the century-old college site, its European architecture with modern facilities and the surrounding layout with abundant greens which blended with the SoC theme fittingly.

Rev Philip Ong led the crowd to praise and thank God in his closing prayer. — **By Jeanne J Saw**



The panellists and moderator of the hour-long forum.

The living Church of the faith-filled and departed

A synodal Church must sincerely listen to the profound questions of truth, faith, and belonging of those Catholics who have walked away

In the ever-evolving landscape of faith and spirituality, the Catholic Church finds herself at a crossroads. The synodal process, which emphasises the importance of listening, has been underway for several years. However, as any true listener knows, the act of listening is far more profound and complex than mere intention. To truly engage with the faith-filled-and-departed, the Church must adopt a multifaceted approach that respects the diversity of voices, languages, and cultures within its global congregation.

Listening to the ‘departed’ members of the local Church is perhaps the most crucial, yet challenging, aspect of this synodal journey. Many who have left the Church did so in pursuit of a more authentic spiritual experience. They no longer consider themselves part of their local congregation, and some even view themselves as having transcended the Church. Engaging with these individuals is not just an exercise in missionary outreach but an exploration of the profound questions of truth, faith, and belonging.

In our intercessory prayers, we often petition the Lord for the return of those who have strayed from the faith: “We pray for those who have left the Church and pray for their return”. Framing the prayer this way implies that faith and church attendance are intimately linked and that those who leave have a problem to be fixed. The prayer centres on those who are not at Sunday Mass, exposing a deeper undiagnosed dysfunction.

A more authentic prayer might acknowledge the complexity of both departure and continued adherence. It might ask the Lord to guide everyone to a place of mutual understanding and growth, where a genuine connection between the faith and Sunday Mass exists.

Evangelisation or “religionisation”?

The history of Catholicism is marked by a deep-rooted missionary fervour. Over millennia, individuals and groups have ventured forth from their established religious communities to spread the Word of God and share the teachings of Jesus. However, it’s important to distinguish between two distinct forms of mission: evangelisation and “religionisation”.

Evangelisation involves reaching out to those who have not yet encountered the message of God. It aims to bring the light of faith to those living in spiritual darkness. Unfortunately, some missionaries inadvertently fall into the trap of superiority, believing they possess an unassailable truth. This top-down approach, often characterised as a “jug-mug” model, presupposes that only the missionary holds the divine truth.

Such an approach neglects the possibility that God is already present in the lives of people, regardless of their religious affiliation. It assumes that the missionary alone carries the voice of the divine, a presumption that can hinder genuine dialogue and understanding.

In the modern Western world, where tra-

ditional religious practice is on the decline, there is a prevalent urge to “save” those who have supposedly strayed from God (the Church). This mentality often leads to religionisation, where religious practices, structures, and institutions are imposed on cultures in an effort to bring them under religious control. Religionisation does not offer the liberating message of Augustine’s “love God and do as you will” but rather, seeks to bind faith to a particular theological and ecclesial form.

Adherents are presented with an institution as the sole means of practising their faith and achieving salvation. This mechanistic approach undermines the organic and transformative nature of faith, reducing it to a set of rigid practices and doctrines.

Belief without religious practice and religious practice without genuine faith

The contemporary challenge facing the Church involves reconciling the rejection of formal religious culture with the search for an authentic spiritual experience. Many people today doubt the Church’s ability to witness to God without resorting to religionisation. Furthermore, the diversity of religious

practice calls into question the necessity of a singular sacral culture with a uniform liturgy, rites, and ecclesiastical laws.

In the Western world, people are reluctant to embrace a jug-mug model of evangelisation or be coerced back into religious practice through exclusionary rites. The Church must grapple with the tension between belief without religious practice and religious practice without genuine faith.

Addressing these complex issues requires a nuanced and comprehensive response. It is not enough to dismiss secularisation as the enemy of faith; instead, the Church must adapt and evolve to meet the spiritual needs of a changing world. In doing so, it can demonstrate that the faith-filled-and-departed can coexist within a living Church that is willing to listen, adapt, and evolve in the spirit of genuine dialogue and understanding. — **By J.P. Grayland, LCI** ([https:// international.la-croix.com/](https://international.la-croix.com/))



Bishops should get regular performance reviews

As the Synod on Synodality is currently underway, we have heard much talk from the information-gathering process about greater inclusion and diversity in Church governance. However, there has been little discussion about the shape of the Church hierarchy, particularly with respect to accountability for performance.

We often think of the accountability of the parish priest to the diocesan bishop or local ordinary. But for better and worse, the hierarchical structure stops there. Yes, each diocesan bishop reports to the Pope. But there are over 3,000 diocesan jurisdictions in the Roman Catholic Church. Among the leaders of these local jurisdictions are “ordinaries” with the titles of bishop, archbishop and cardinal. While the variety of these titles give the impression of a hierarchical structure, there really is none. At the level of diocesan leadership, the hierarchy flattens out.

Most countries have a national conference of bishops that, among other functions, makes statements about public policy, but it has no real jurisdiction over its members. There are also ecclesiastical provinces, in which an archbishop, called a metropolitan, presides at meetings of the ordinaries, but the bishops are not officially accountable to their metropolitan. Finally, there are Vatican diplomats, called apostolic nuncios, assigned to particular countries, but they have no jurisdiction over the ordinaries in their countries, and their role is only advisory to the Dicastery for Bishops in Rome. In legal terms, each diocese is a “corporation sole,”

under one person, with no corporate board of trustees.

So, we have more than 3,000 ordinaries reporting directly to the Bishop of Rome, who is aided in the governance of bishops by the Dicastery for Bishops, with a cardinal as its prefect.

What happens when an ordinary is not performing well? I am not referring here to episcopal negligence or misconduct related to finances or the abuse of minors. I mean normal performance evaluation.

Of course, the ordination of a bishop includes a prayer for the charism of good governance. Bishops are carefully vetted by the nuncios and by the Dicastery for Bishops before they are assigned by the pope to their respective dioceses, but these appointments are made with less-than-perfect information. Some bishops are able to hit the ground running when they assume governance of their diocese, but others may need more guidance. Regular performance reviews, as found in most career fields, could help both them and the people under their pastoral care. Again, I am not referring to disciplinary matters. I am speaking about effective performance.

One important distinction is that bishops are not doing their jobs with an eye toward salary increases or promotion. We can take it on faith that they want to be more effective in their apostolic mission. So, the metrics for performance review should entail more than statistics about sacramental participation. Reviews should include intangible factors such as the morale of the local clergy, the

participation of the laity in the governance of local churches, transparency in decision making, the ability of the bishop and pastors to communicate with one another and with their lay colleagues, and confidence in the pastoral care and formation of young people in matters of faith.

Many diocesan bishops have clearly succeeded in these intangibles, but in dioceses where they have not, there is a loss of morale among the clergy and laity. Again, this is not about misconduct relating to finances or sexual abuse. This is about being an effective pastor. These intangible factors could be measured through confidential interviews with clergy and lay leaders by an evaluation team, and there could also be more extensive surveys of parishioners.

Yes, bishops do go on *ad limina* visits to Rome every five years to give an account of their governance, but that is directly to the Dicastery for Bishops. Every five years is too infrequent, and Rome is too distant from the conditions in the dioceses themselves for clear feedback.

In some cases, there is no real evaluation unless it becomes obvious that there is misgovernance by a bishop, in which case the laypeople and priests of the diocese, and sometimes neighbouring bishops, write to the nuncio, who forwards these complaints to the Dicastery for Bishops. After further assessment, the dicastery may appoint several bishops to make an apostolic visitation to the diocese. After a visitation, often with consultation with the Dicastery for Bish-

ops, the pope can remove the ordinary or invite him to resign, perhaps “for reasons of health.” But these are rare situations and often come too late, after much damage has been done in a diocese.

Is this a good way to run a railroad, as the saying goes? Rather than leave matters to the nuncio, the Dicastery for Bishops and apostolic visitors, why not have regular performance reviews for diocesan bishops? Can we prevent problems in performance from turning into full-blown crises of misgovernance requiring intervention by the Vatican?

Bishops have the grace of office for apostolic governance, but we know that grace builds on nature. I am not suggesting a new level of authority between the pope and bishops, but the Church can institute procedures for regular, formal and fraternal review.

Pope Francis has often warned against the spirit of clericalism, or an “elitist manner,” as detrimental to the Church’s ministries and charisms. The Synod on Synodality would be a good starting point for exploring how to mitigate this ever-present spirit in favour of a humbler and effective leadership in our Church. As it has done in the past, the Church can and should learn from other institutions how to reform itself and improve.

— **By Fr Paul D. McNelis, SJ, America**

Paul D. McNelis, SJ, is America’s contributing editor for economics and professor emeritus of finance at the Gabelli School of Business at Fordham University, in New York City.

Catechesis and the *Kerygma*

This is the second part of my article entitled *Catechesis and the Kerygma*. In the first instalment (see *HERALD*, Oct 1, Pg 11), I examined the relationship between *kerygma* and catechesis from the time of the Apostles to the fifth century, when *kerygma* had a powerful and essential link with the ministry of catechesis. I concluded by stating that in the sixth century, this relationship had weakened. In this article, I will examine the situation from the Middle Ages to the present time.

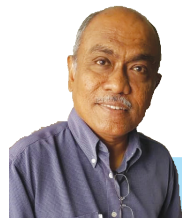
The disappearance of the kerygmatic element in catechesis

From the time of the Middle Ages (500AD-1500AD), the common form of catechesis was the homily preached by the clergy at Mass. The truths of the faith were explained with examples from daily life, the lives of the saints and writings of the Church Fathers. Examples were also taken from the Bible, especially stories of biblical figures. Parents were expected to share the contents of the homily with their children at home.

After the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, catechisms became the main form for catechesis. Catholic theologians produced catechisms in response to those written by Martin Luther for the Reformists. In most catechisms, although references were made to the Bible, the methodology largely used was doctrinal-apologetical. It was to ensure that children and youth were taught the truths of faith in a way that they would remember them for good. This type of approach, often devoid of the kerygmatic-biblical element, was prevalent in the Church until the 20th century.

Re-discovering the link between kerygma and catechesis

Sometime in the 19th century, there were efforts, by a number of theologians, liturgical and catechetical experts, to re-discover



ECHOING THE FAITH

Dr Steven Selvaraju

the kerygmatic-biblical element in the Church. Nevertheless, it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that kerygmatic renewal really found its way into the field of catechesis. The key breakthrough came with the publication of *The Good News and Our Preaching of the Faith* by Fr Josef Jungmann, SJ in 1936. According to Jungmann, catechesis is not meant to be “a form of theology”. Instead, it should be about the proclamation of the Gospel with Jesus Christ at its centre. The purpose of catechesis must focus on the Good News of salvation by which God challenges sinful humanity to a new life in Christ.

The years 1936–1960 are considered the high point of the kerygmatic renewal in catechesis. The renewal found support from the biblical, liturgical, and pastoral movements. The biblical movement helped link catechesis to the Holy Scriptures while the liturgical movement linked the liturgy and the mysteries of the Sacraments. The pastoral movement pointed out that the understanding and implementation of catechesis must be closely connected to the mission of the Church. In this way, the kerygmatic movement restored concepts that had faded in catechesis, such as, the centrality of Christ, the Word of God, *kerygma*, revelation, history of salvation, and others.

After the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), there were tensions in the catechetical movement. Concerns arose among experts on the increasing stress on catechesis of the biblical aspect at the expense of the doctrinal. The Bible, for example, began to replace the catechism as the main tool

for catechesis. Bible stories and activities became the norm while the teaching of the doctrines of the Church was given less importance. Therefore, there were calls for a balance between the biblical and doctrinal elements in catechesis. In the following years, as the Bible and the catechism gradually found their rightful places in catechesis, the impact of the kerygmatic element, however, was diminished. This led to calls for the importance of the kerygma to be re-emphasised.

Entering more deeply into the kerygma

In recent years, this call has been taken up by Pope Francis. In his encyclical, *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), the Pope states:

“In catechesis too, we have discovered the fundamental role of the first announcement or *kerygma*, which needs to be the centre of all evangelising activity and all efforts at Church renewal” (EG, 164).

The Pope, however, stresses that we have to avoid seeing the *kerygma* as only a preliminary stage to catechesis:

“The first proclamation is called “first”, not because it exists at the beginning and can then be forgotten or replaced by other more important things. It is first in a qualitative sense because it is the principal proclamation, the one which we must hear again and again in different ways, the one which we must announce one way or another throughout the process of catechesis, at every level and moment” (EG, 164).

Here, the Pope is saying that *kerygma* and catechesis are not just two separate stages in the evangelising mission of the Church, with one following the other. Instead, the *kerygma* must be like a golden thread that runs through all catechetical activity:

“We must not think that in catechesis the *kerygma* gives way to a suppos-

edly more “solid” formation. Nothing is more solid, profound, secure, meaningful and wisdom-filled than initial proclamation. All Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the *kerygma* which is reflected in, and constantly illumines, the work of catechesis, thereby enabling us to understand more fully the significance of every subject which the latter treats” (EG, 165).

Conclusion

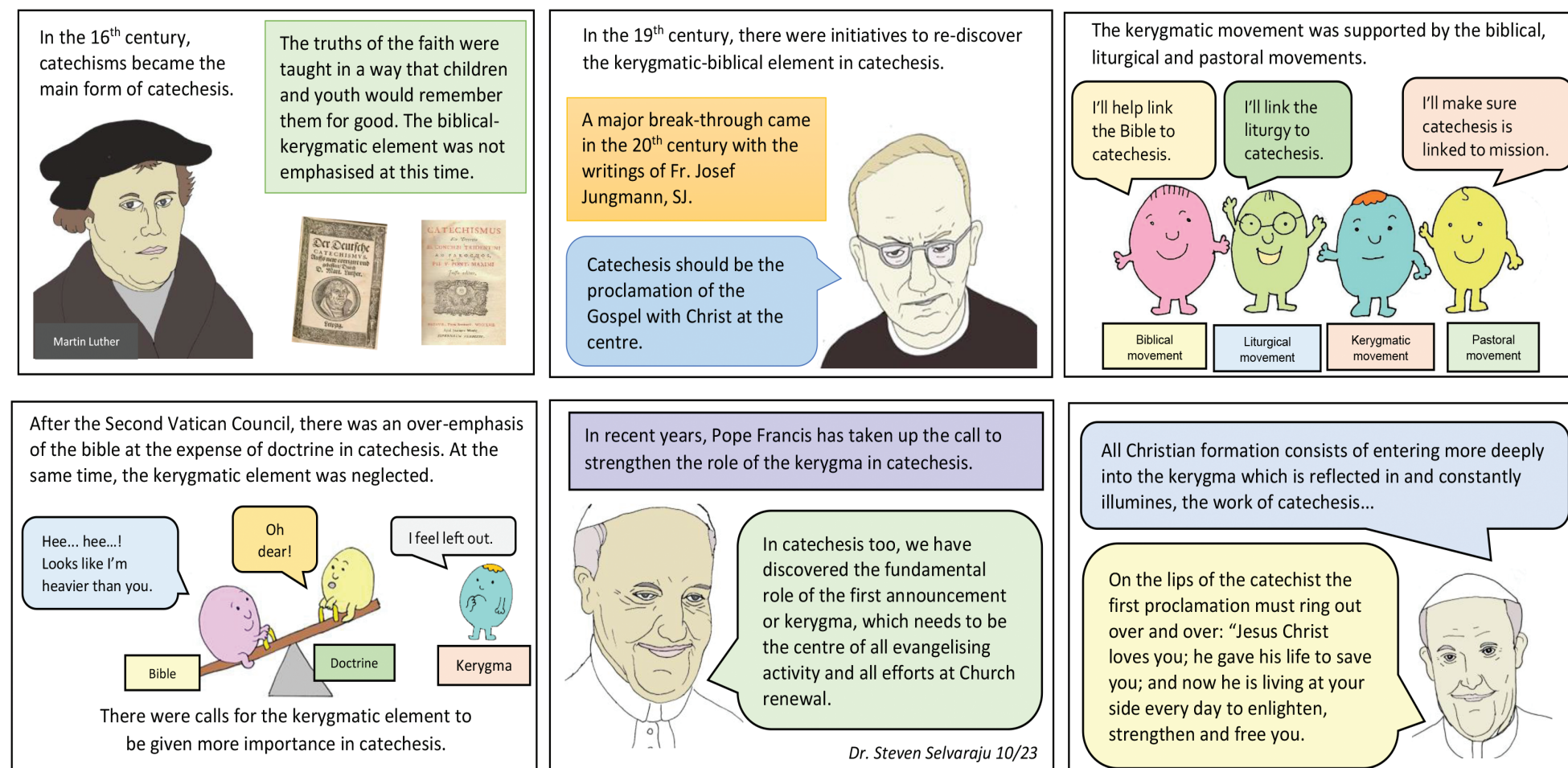
The call of Pope Francis is taken by in the *Directory for Catechesis* (DC) published in 2020. The directory helps catechists become aware that the role of the *kerygma* is to help them become true missionary disciples. In this regard, the catechist has always to be ready, as commanded by Jesus (Mat. 28: 19-20), to “go” with haste not only to convey the message of Christ, but more importantly, to share “the life that comes from God and communicating the joy of having encountered the Lord (DC, 68).” Therefore, catechists have to constantly keep in mind the words of Pope Francis:

“On the lips of the catechist the first proclamation must ring out over and over: “Jesus Christ loves you; He gave His life to save you; and now He is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you” (EG, 164).

Below is a simple infographic which I prepared to help readers capture the essence of my article (the drawings in the infographic are my own).

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Catechesis and the *Kerygma*



Dr. Steven Selvaraju 10/23

Sr Maria Filia Docilis professes perpetual vows

PENANG: On the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, September 8, the Church of the Immaculate Conception witnessed the solemn yet joyous celebration of Sr Maria Filia Docilis (Amy Cheah) as she professed her perpetual vows in the Institute Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará.

At the Mass celebrated by then Cardinal-elect Sebastian Francis, Sr Docilis professed to embrace forever the religious vows of chastity, obedience, poverty and Marian slavery.

The Mass was celebrated in a reverent manner. The atmosphere was especially sol-

emn when Sr Docilis prostrated in front of the altar as the litany of saints was chanted, and as she stood to profess her vows.

As part of the Perpetual Profession rites, Sr Docilis received a ring, a sign of her espousal with Jesus Christ, and a crown, a sign prefiguring that eternal crown the Religious hope to receive from God. As the ring was put on Sr Docilis' finger, the prelate prayed:

"Maria Filia Docilis, docile daughter: Docility of heart, following Mary's example will be the door that opens your life to the plan that God has had in mind for you from all eternity;

Accept it as a pledge of the desire of Jesus Christ to win your freedom and conquer your heart so as to associate you with His spousal mystery..."

With the ring and crown of flowers worn, Sr Docilis was declared to be perpetually bound to the Institute Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará.

The entire celebration was tranquil and prayerful. This was felt even by friends and relatives of Sr Docilis of other faiths who were also in attendance.

In her speech, Sr Docilis thanked the people to whom she is grateful, including Cardinal-elect Sebastian and CIC parish priest, Msgr. Jude Miranda, for allowing her to celebrate her Perpetual Profession at her home parish, all who were instrumental in her faith formation and discernment, and the many people who prayed for her and helped make this celebration possible.

It was indeed a good witness of the grace of God; that He bestows on her who "offers herself and all that is hers to God without keeping anything back... (Const 51)".

Sr Docilis will return to the Our Lady of Sheshan Monastery in Zhongli, Taiwan, after spending some time with her family in Penang. — *By Ivy Cheah*

● Sr Docilis shares her vocation story below



As part of the Perpetual Profession rites, Sr Docilis receives a ring, from then-Cardinal-elect Sebastian Francis as a sign of her espousal with Jesus Christ.

True happiness comes from doing the will of God

By Gwen Manickam

Sr Maria Filia Docilis is the second of four siblings. As a young teenager, she had doubts about her Catholic identity but at the end of her three-year journey with her catechism formators, Lilian Cheah and Fr Andrew Khoo, she concluded that the Catholic Church is the one true Church that Jesus established and this led her to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation and begin a life of service in the church. She was in various ministries such as the Latin choir, catechetical ministry, and lectors and commentators ministry. This enabled her to grow in her faith and love for God and her neighbour.

When she first heard the call of God to consecrate herself as a religious sister, she was not able to give her 'yes'. God, who is merciful, slowly prepared her in the next two years to accept His call. In 2013, while preparing for her Certificate of Legal Practice (CLP) Exam, she met with the sisters of the Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará (SSVM) and the priests of the Institute of the Incarnate Word (IVE). She was captivated by the joy on the sisters' faces and knew at that instance that if she were to join a religious order, it would be with these sisters.

Being one of the youth who participated in the annual Youth Day held by the religious family of the Incarnate Word in the Philippines allowed her to experience their life of prayer and the way they did their apostolate. One of the things that impressed her was when she saw the priests and the sisters playing basketball, volleyball, and football with the youth. She also quickly adapted to the sisters' schedule, which included daily adoration and the joyous community life spirit.

For Sr Docilis, this call of God required a complete change of direction in her life, so after completing the CLP exam, she took a sabbatical to experience this way of life. After all, she thought, 'If it was a matter of a mere

impulse, I would regret my decision in three months when the emotion wore out'. That which seemed so logical for her did not appear as such to those around her.

After living in the convent for a year, Sr Docilis was even more convinced that "This is the Will of God for me" and on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, her home parish, the CIC was pleased to host her perpetual vows. She attributes her ability to respond and persevere in her vocation to the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary and to all the support she received from the CIC parishioners. "They have accompanied me throughout these years. I know they care and pray for me," said Sr Docilis.

When asked if she has any advice for those seeking to consecrate themselves to God, she says, "You have to seek the Will of God and if something is God's Will for

you, then you have to fight to follow it, only then will you achieve happiness in your life, and your family will be blessed. Be generous to God, do not be afraid of God, Who is Goodness itself. He will not allow you to outdo Him in His generosity'.

On why she chose the name Maria Filia Docilis meaning Mary, the Docile Daughter, she said she proposed three names to her superior and this was chosen for her. "I find the word docile very meaningful. It means being attentive and prompt in responding to God's Will. Mary was always docile to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, we see that she was not surprised at the appearance of an angel during the Annunciation, although she was surprised with the choice of words that the angel used to greet her, 'full of grace'. I hope I remain in close intimacy with God and will be able to do His Will at all times, in line with our constitution which states, 'We would like to live in maximum docility to the Holy Spirit'.

"The second part of the name means daughter. Mary, being so



Sr Maria Filia Docilis with then-Cardinal-elect Sebastian Francis and Rt. Rev Enrique Figaredo Alvargonzalez, Bishop of Cambodia.

Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará



The Institute Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará, a religious community of Diocesan Right, was founded by Rev. Carlos Miguel Buena on March 19, 1988 in San Rafael, Argentina. The Institute Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matará and The Institute of the Incarnate Word (IVE), comprise of religious priests and brothers, along with the Third Order, make up the Religious Family of the Incarnate Word. The two religious institutes share the same charism, have twin constitutions and both include active and contemplative branches.



Sr Docilis receives her crown of flowers from the Provincial Superior of the Asia Province, M. Compassionis.

docile, is the beloved daughter of God. I hope to receive the favour of being the beloved daughter of God, one who knows she is greatly loved by her Father and has unlimited trust in Him; one who can also obtain many favours for all whom she prays for."

Sr Docilis is currently based at the Our Lady of Sheshan Monastery (佘山聖母隱修院) in Zhongli, Taiwan. The monastery's main intention is to pray that the Chinese people may come to know and love our Lord Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother. The monastery is annexed to the St John Paul II Spiritual Centre. They offer Ignatian retreats for youths, families, and individuals. They also provide formation talks for youths and host events like Family Day at the Spiritual Centre. The sisters also work on embroidery pieces and stitch liturgical vestments.

Sr Docilis speaks English, Bahasa Malaysia, Spanish, Italian, and the Cantonese and Hokkien dialects, and is studying Mandarin as she intends to preach the Ignatian retreat shortly. She also works as a secretary at the monastery and assists the sisters in the formation house in the Philippines with their philosophical subjects like Gnosology via an online platform.

If you want to know more do email: sec.mon.ourladyofsheshan@servidoras.org m.divinemercy@servidoras.org

Mary in our lives today

If you ask any baptised Catholic who Mary is, chances are you will receive a litany of nouns and adjectives commonly used to describe her. Immaculate Mary, Immaculate Mother, Queen of Heaven, Mother of God, Mother of the Church, Virgin of Virgins, Mystical Rose and many more. Adjectives used to describe her include loving, angelic, obedient, pure, humble, faithful, patient and more. These are what many of us have been taught in catechism and at formations.

The Catholic Church has always given Mary a special place, as mother of Jesus, in our faith life. The tradition of the Church has sprouted many devotions to Mary, bringing forth many groups of devotees, each focusing on one or more of her virtues. Devotions to Mother of Perpetual Help, devotions to Mary of the Rosary, devotions to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, devotions to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, just to name a few.

Her many appearances to people over the centuries at Fatima, Guadalupe, Lourdes, and at many unapproved locations all over the world, have further propagated the deep devotions that Catholics have for Mary. Many who had “encountered” or experienced Mary will surely attribute this to divine intervention, and would not be able to contain themselves in the joy and happiness of this experience.

The universal Church has dedicated the months of May and October to Mary, two out of twelve months in a year. Surely this signifies the special position the Church has given to her. For the month of May, we honour Mary, Mother of God. This month is a special time for Catholics to pay homage to our Blessed Mother Mary.

We also honour Mary in the month of October, the month dedicated to the Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This is primarily because the liturgical feast of Our Lady of the Rosary is celebrated annually



REMINISCING CHURCH

Richard Chia

on October 7, to honour the Blessed Virgin Mary in gratitude for the protection that she gives the Church.

Numerous prayers and hymns have been composed in honour of Mary. Catholics memorise many of these prayers by reciting them, either alone or in group prayers. The *Magnificat*, the *Angelus*, the *Hail Holy Queen*, the *Memorare*, the *Hail Mary*, and more. Equally plentiful are the hymns composed and dedicated to Mary. *Mother Dearest*, *Mother Fairest*, *Ave Maria*, *Dear Lady of Fatima*, *On this Day O Beautiful Mother*, and lots more.

There are also no shortages of churches and chapels named in honour of Mary. Church of the Immaculate Conception, Church of the Assumption, Church of the Holy Rosary, Church of Our Lady of Visitation, Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and more.

During the Year of Faith 2012-2013, declared by Our Holy Father Pope Francis, the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur organised a first ever Marian Rally at Kelana Jaya stadium on Sunday Oct 13, 2013. Despite it being a very hot day, more than 12,000 Catholics, from all walks of life, were present to attend the Eucharistic celebration, preceded by recitation of the full 20 decades of the Rosary in 20 different languages. The large diverse Catholic community in Malaysia clearly highlights the universality of the Church. In that rally, Archbishop Emeritus Murphy Pakiam, in his sermon, expounded the virtues and role model we have in Mother Mary, as passed down to us in the tradition of the Church.

With the abundance of traditions and honour given to Mary, it is not difficult to understand why Catholics possess a strong and dedicated devotion to Mary. For the many experiences and “unexplained” divine interventions we have attributed to Mary. For the comfort and solace we have felt each time we sought her intercession. For the many small miracles we have had in our daily lives. All these add up to increase our love and devotion for a woman in the Bible whom we have never met in person and about whom not much has been written.

A quick check in Google will tell us that Mary, Mother of Jesus, is mentioned 19 times in the Gospels of *Luke*, *Matthew*, *Mark* and the *Acts of the Apostles*. Each time her name is mentioned in passing, except during the Annunciation, and during the Visitation of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth, where Mary becomes the main character in that Bible passage. Other times, Mary becomes the supporting actor, while Jesus is centre-stage, e.g. at the Wedding at Cana, Mary’s role was merely to tell Jesus there was no more wine, and she told the servants to do what Jesus asked.

Perhaps at some stage in your life, you have been asked by non-Catholic friends or family members why our religion places so much emphasis on Mary. Perhaps you may even have engaged in some lively deliberations on this topic, attempting to “defend” your faith. I certainly have, not once, but many times.

Our response should not be defensive, but rather, to show them the love, care and humility that the biblical Mary represents during the life and times of Jesus while on earth. Like most mothers, Mary is the behind-the-scenes person for her Son. She does all the small insignificant duties and tasks, and is usually in the shadows of Jesus.

Though the Gospel writers do not mention



her often, her presence is certainly together with the groups of women who followed Jesus during His three-year ministry. There are no miracles attributed to her in the Bible. No preaching from her. No words of wisdom or anything that warrants giving her a full mention in the Bible.

Our devotion to Mary may not be to the biblical Mary, but rather, to the spiritual Mary who has been assumed into Heaven, and continues to watch over us. Her many interventions in our lives continue, as evidenced by the numerous testimonies given by the lay faithful all over the world. It may be difficult to defend Mary’s special place using Scripture texts, but we can certainly invite others to experience the divine intervention that Mary can do for us in our lives today.

● **Richard Chia** shares his experiences on the journey of the Church in Malaysia in the past 40 years — its challenges and achievements as it moves toward synodality.



Making a Difference

Tony Magliano

Life is God’s most precious gift. Please never consider ending it. No matter what problems you have, no matter how serious they may be, no matter how much pain they cause, God, and many good people, as well as professional organisations, are there to help you. You are not alone!

September 10 was World Suicide Prevention Day (see: <https://www.iasp.info/wspd/about/>), and all of September was National Suicide Prevention Month in the US. Since suicide is a tragically sad occurrence throughout the world, let’s examine both global and US facts and ways to help prevent suicides.

Everyone has difficult times and heart-breaking events in her/his life. And most people find healthy ways to cope and eventually return to a stable disposition.

But sometimes, some people feel so overwhelmed with a problem or various difficulties that they consider suicide.

Among the problems that sometimes lead some people to think suicidal thoughts are abuse and domestic violence, anxiety, bullying, depression, family, grief and loss, serious illness, loneliness, substance abuse, having had an abortion, and a terminal illness diagnosis.

Jeannette Hall, who was diagnosed as having inoperable colon cancer, was given six months to a year to live. Instead of fight-

No matter what, life is always worth living!

ing the cancer with radiation and chemotherapy, she decided to seek physician-assisted suicide, which is legal in the US state of Oregon. She then asked her doctor to write a prescription that would cause her death. But her doctor, a radiation specialist, had a better idea. For the rest of this inspiring story watch and read it here <https://daily-sign.al/454NGDb>.

The US has one of the highest suicide rates among wealthy nations. According to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2021, suicide was responsible for the deaths of 48,183 persons in the US — which is approximately one death every 11 minutes. And in that same year there were 1.7 million suicide attempts.

Globally, according to the World Health Organisation, more than 700,000 people kill themselves every year. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among 15-29-year-olds.

And throughout the world, 70 per cent of suicides occur in low- and middle-income

countries where poverty rates are high (see: <https://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/suicide>). So, greatly reducing suicides is another commendable reason for us to work to end poverty.

No one ever needs to take his or her life.

There are always good reasons

to live. And there is lots of help available. Often family, friends, school counsellors, clergy, a physician, a therapist, mental health clinics can be of extraordinary help. Find someone to share your problems with. Never leave serious problems bottled-up inside of you — instead share them!

And please share this column with anyone you suspect may be contemplating suicide. And compassionately listen and talk with them.

In Malaysia, psychosocial support services such as the KKM-Mercy Malaysia hotline (03-29359935), the Befrienders (03-76272929), and *Talian Kasih* (15999) are available for those who might be going through a difficult time.

ARE YOU OK?

LET'S TALK



YOUR LIVE MATTERS

In Peninsular Malaysia, the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan Mental Health Ministry, together with the Malacca Johor Diocese’s Counselling Ministry and the Good Shepherd Counselling Ministry of Penang Diocese, offer the Shalom Careline (03-2723 7272).

It is open every day (Monday to Sunday) from 10.00am to 1.00pm and from 7.00pm to 11.00pm.

The service is free-of-charge, confidential and provided by trained volunteers. Be assured that during these uncertain times, you are not alone.

No matter how serious the issues you face seem, remember it is OK to ask for help, and there are people who care.

Most of all, please always remember God is truly our best friend! He is always there to comfort us, to heal us in the way He knows best, and to bring us His divine peace. It is in realising this wonderful truth, and thus taking our problems to the Lord in prayer, that we can surely experience God’s fatherly love and healing. He is the Creator God, the God of life who, in the words of His Son Jesus said, “A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly!” (John 10:10). This is of the highest importance. Please always remember it!

● **Tony Magliano** is an internationally syndicated Catholic social justice and peace columnist. He can be reached at tmag6@comcast.net.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Surrendering to love

Perhaps all of Jesus' invitations to us can be summarised in one word — surrender. We need to surrender to love.

But why is that difficult? Shouldn't it be the most natural thing in the world? Isn't our deepest desire a longing to find love and surrender to it?

True, our deepest longing is to surrender to love, but we have some deep innate resistances to giving ourselves over in surrender. Here are a couple of examples:

At the Last Supper in John's Gospel when Jesus tries to wash Peter's feet, He meets a stiff resistance from Peter — Never! I will never let You wash my feet! What's ironic here is that, perhaps more than anything else, Peter yearned precisely for that kind of intimacy with Jesus. Yet, when it's offered, he resists.

Another example might be seen in the struggles of Henri Nouwen. Nouwen, one of the most gifted spiritual writers of our generation, enjoyed immense popularity. He published more than 50 books, was a much sought-after professor (tenured at both Harvard and Yale), received invitations daily to give talks and lectures around the world, and had many close friends.

And yet, inside all that popularity and adulation, surrounded by many friends

who loved him, he was unable to let that love give him any real sense of being loved or of being lovable. Instead, through most of his life he laboured inside a deep anxiety which had him believe that he wasn't lovable. On occasion, this even landed him in clinical depression. And so, through most of his adult life, surrounded by so much love, he was haunted by a sense that he wasn't loved, nor worthy of being loved. Moreover, he was a deeply sensitive person who, more than anything else, wanted to surrender to love. What held him back?

In his own words, he was crippled by a deep wound he couldn't quite name and whose grip he couldn't shake. This was true for most of his adult life. Eventually, he was able to free himself from his deep wound and surrender to love. However, it took a traumatic death experience for that to happen. Standing too close to the highway at a bus-stop one morning, he was struck by the mirror of a passing van which sent him flying. Rushed to a hospital, for some hours he hovered between life and death. While in that state, he had a very deep experience of God's love for him. He returned to full consciousness and normal life as a profoundly changed man. Now, after experiencing God's love for him, he could finally also surrender to

human love in a way he had been incapable of previous to his "death" experience. All his subsequent books are marked by this conversion to love.

Why do we fight love? Why don't we surrender more easily? The reasons are unique to each of us. Sometimes we are dealing with a deep wound that leaves us feeling unlovable. But sometimes our resistance has less to do with any wound than it has to do with how we are unconsciously fighting the very love we so painfully seek. Sometimes, like Jacob in the Bible, we are unconsciously wrestling with God (who is Love) and, consequently, unconsciously fighting love.

In the Bible story where Jacob wrestles all night with a man, we see that in this struggle he has no idea that he is wrestling with God and with love. In his mind, he is wrestling with a foe he needs to conquer. Eventually, when the darkness of the night gives way to morning light, he sees what he is wrestling with — and it is a surprise and shock to him. He realises he is fighting love itself. With that realisation, he gives up struggling and instead clings to the very force he had been previously fighting, with the plea: "I will not let you go, until you bless me!"

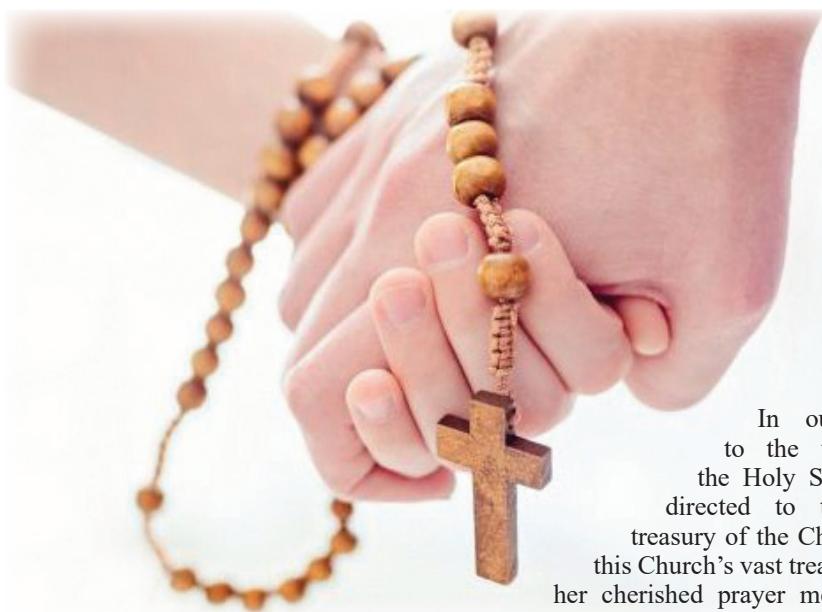
This is the final lesson we need to learn in love: We wrestle for love with every

talent, cunning, and strength inside us. Eventually, if we are fortunate, we have an awakening. Some light, often a crippling defeat, shows us the true face of what we have been wrestling with and we realise that it's not something to be conquered, but it's the very love to which we have been longing to surrender.

For many of us, this will be the great awakening in our lives, a waking up to the fact that in all our ambitions and schemes to show the world how worthwhile and lovable we are, we are, in unconscious ways, fighting the very love to which we ultimately want to surrender. And, usually, as with Jacob in the biblical story, it will take the defeat of our own strength and a permanent limp before we realise that what we are fighting against is really that to which we most want to surrender.

And this is surrender, not resignation, something we give ourselves over to rather than something that defeats us.

● **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



Rosary an interactive prayer method with our senses

..and the world beyond our souls

In the heart of every person, there is a desire to be in union with God. Such a union is realised and deepened by a life of prayer. Such a summons to prayer is as necessary and essential to human flourishing as breathing and eating. If we neglect prayer, our souls suffocate and starve. If our souls are depleted, they cannot perform the functions for which they were made. These functions include showing faith, persevering in hope, and labouring to love others.

As Christians, we have a super-sized call to prayer, since we know that God became a man and dwelt among us. He showed us what it means to be a person of prayer. He has offered us His Spirit to lead us in a life of prayer.

St Paul teaches us: "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the Will of God."

In our openness to the workings of the Holy Spirit, we are directed to the spiritual treasury of the Church. Within this Church's vast treasury, we find her cherished prayer methods. Such methods have made saints, mystics, and spiritual masters out of ordinary people just like us. The methods work when they're used.

The prayer methods of the Church are countless. However, there are certain favoured methods in the history of the Church. One of the favoured prayer methods is the Rosary. Of the principal prayer methods, it's the only one that involves both mental and oral prayer.

The Rosary involves the spiritual imagination in a way similar to the composition of place method. In most instances, the Rosary is usually composing events from the Bible, which means the key distinction between the composition of place and the Rosary is the Rosary's use of repetitive oral prayer. In a unique fashion, the Rosary calls for the use of our voice and hearing as we pray its prayers out loud (as well as touch as we move through the beads

of the Rosary). The Rosary, therefore, is a very interactive prayer method with all of our senses and with the world beyond our own souls.

The Rosary is also one of the more structured prayer methods in the Church. For most of the prayer methods, a general template is given and souls navigate the method as needed or directed by the Holy Spirit. In comparison, the Rosary is very systematic and calls for souls to follow its directive course of prayer. Both approaches are needed, and sometimes the formality of the Rosary can be a great consolation and help to a tired or distracted soul. Its rhythmic praying of the Hail Mary can be soothing and a means of relief to any soul.

In times past, monks faithfully chanted the 150 psalms of the Old Testament. The laity wanted to be involved in the chant of the monks. Because of the duties of their state in life, and the fact that many members of the laity were not able to read or formally chant, they could not actively participate in the psalmody. And so, the laity began to pray 150 Our Father's or Hail Mary's. In the course of time, and through the influence of apparitions to various Dominican saints, the

Hail Mary became the principal form of the prayerful repetition.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains: "Medieval piety in the West developed the prayer of the Rosary as a popular substitute for the Liturgy of the Hours. In the East, the litany, called the *Akathistos* and the *Paraclesis*, remained closer to the choral office in the Byzantine churches..."

The Rosary begins with some introductory prayers, such as the Sign of the Cross, the Apostle's Creed, an Our Father, three initial Hail Mary's, a Glory Be, and then a series of five decades — which is 10 Hail Mary's — based on various events in the life of the Lord Jesus or the Blessed Mother. There are four rotations of decades focusing on Joyful, Sorrowful, Luminous, and Glorious mysteries in the life of the Lord and Our Lady.

For each decade, we're asked to spiritually compose the event in their spiritual soul while simultaneously praying aloud 10 Hail Mary's. There are times in which the mental prayer is stronger than the oral prayer (which at times can also be optional), just as there are times in which the oral prayer is stronger than the mental prayer, especially among those who might be new to prayer or who are distressed or mentally tired.

There is more to be said about the Rosary, but it is a cherished prayer form within the Church's rich spiritual treasury. — **By Fr Jeffrey F. Kirby, *Cruz***

“Prayer is when we speak to God openly from our hearts and when we slow down and attempt to hear him speak to us.”

Little Catholics' Corner

Hello children of God, The First Reading talks about how Israel is warned that they must be faithful. The Psalm begs God to return to the vineyard and care for it once again. The Second Reading encourages Christians to continue along the path that Jesus has shown us.

In the Gospel, Jesus tells the parable of the vineyard

leased out to tenants. When the owner's servants came to collect their pay, the tenants beat them. When the owner sent his son, they killed the son because they thought they would be able to take the vineyard if the son was dead.

In a way our life is like a vineyard too. God has given it to us and cared for us all our

life. When God wants us to do something for Him, we have the choice of doing what He asks or being like the bad tenants and refusing. Whenever we don't do what is right, we are offending Jesus. But we don't want to be like those bad tenants, do we?

Let us make sure that everything we do is for God!

Love Aunty Gwen

PARABLE OF THE LANDOWNER (MT 21:33-43)

A landowner leases a vineyard but the tenants mistreated his servants and killed his son. When asked, the elders agree that the owner will evict these tenants and find new ones. Jesus warns that those who reject the cornerstone will lose the kingdom of God.

Each number represents a letter of the alphabet. Substitute the correct letter for the numbers to reveal the coded words.



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
T	O	J	Z	H	F	A	D	S	U	E	I	N	X	Y	V	L	W	Q	B	R	P	K	C	G	M

A. 9-1-2-13-11-8 _____

B. 18-2-21-23-11-21-9 _____

C. 6-21-10-12-1 _____

D. 2-18-13-11-21 _____

E. 16-12-13-11-15-7-21-8 _____

F. 3-2-10-21-13-11-15 _____

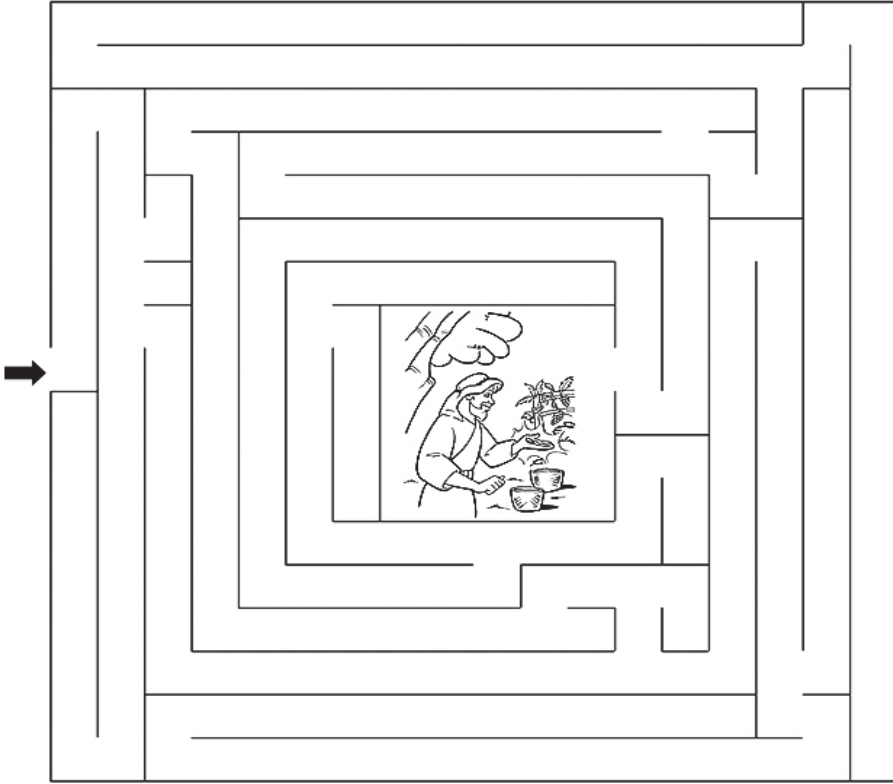
G. 9-2-13 _____

H. 1-11-13-7-13-1-9 _____

I. 5-12-21-11-8 _____

J. 24-2-17-17-11-24-1 _____

VINEYARD	OWNER	WORKERS	TENANTS	HIRED
COLLECT	JOURNEY	FRUIT	STONED	SON



PARABLE OF THE WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD (MATTHEW 20:1-16)

The parable of the vineyard highlights the theme of God's ownership and care over His creation. The vineyard symbolises God's kingdom, and the tenants represent humanity's responsibility to steward it.

YOUTH

OCTOBER 8, 2023

Bridging the Divide: Making Connections

By Pauline Leong
and Melissa Fernando

The 109th World Day of Migrants and Refugees was significant to participants of the weekend stay-in journalism programme by SIGNIS Malaysia, as they learned firsthand the plight of those who were forced to leave their homelands to search for safety and security in a foreign land.

In addition to a panel discussion with three migrants and refugees, the participants also watched a documentary about human trafficking and engaged in a conversation with Irene Xavier, a prominent human rights activist and co-founder of Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor. These interactions were eye-opening for the participants who saw a “human” side to the migrant and refugee issue that often hogs the news headlines.

This was precisely the topic of the presentation by Dr Peter Rachada Monthienvichienchai, SIGNIS Secretary-General and executive director of *LiCAS.news*, a media organisation established under Bangkok

Archdiocese’s Catholic Communications Office.

Focusing on stories of the marginalised and those on the fringes of society, Dr Peter shared on the importance of humanising their news stories by reporting with empathy and respect. Urging participants to focus on “who is the story?”, rather than “what”, he shared valuable insights into narrative techniques that can evoke emotional responses in readers, hence making an impact on society. It was a powerful reminder to the participants — young journalists, undergraduate students, researchers, activists, and freelance content producers — of the impact

storytelling can have on the world.

Thus, it was with this aim of empowering the next generation of young media practitioners that SIGNIS Malaysia embarked on this programme themed *Bridging the Divide and Making Connections: A Platform to Seek Solutions Together*. Facilitated by Augustine Anthuvan, a former journalist and executive producer at Singapore’s *CNA (Channel NewsAsia)*, the training focused on equipping the diverse group of participants with the skills and inspiration to humanise stories and bridge societal divides through impactful narratives in their storytelling. It is through



Participants engaging in a presentation.

the media platform that society can come together and seek solutions to the most pressing issues that affect them.

One way of achieving this is through Solutions Journalism, conducted by Kavita Chandran, a consultant and trainer with Thomson

Reuters Foundation. The participants also learned about investigative journalism from Datuk James Sarda, Editor-in-Chief of *Daily Express Malaysia* in Sabah, and environmental journalism from Soon Li Wei from the national news agency, *Bernama*.

Keeping up with the trend, participants learned about 30-second journalism session by Norman Goh, a journalist with *Nikkei Asia* and how artificial intelligence has transformed the practice of journalism from Medhi Lebouachera, *AFP’s Asia Pacific Editor-in-Chief*. Participants were further inspired by Archbishop Julian Leow’s presence at the documentary screening and a brief fellowship.

Through programmes like this, SIGNIS Malaysia aims to engage media professionals and support Catholic communicators to help transform cultures in the light of the Gospel and promote a culture of peace and reconciliation.”



ALWAYS TURN TOWARDS THE LORD

MUAR: “What would Jesus expect from His followers or disciples?” Rocks, not *lalang*, finish strong and complete the race. These three requirements were addressed by Bishop Bernard Paul to the 12 candidates from the Mandarin-, Bahasa Malaysia- and English-language groups of the Churches of St Andrew, Muar and St Matthew, Tangkak who received the Sacrament of

Confirmation on September 22, at the Church of St Andrew.

Concelebrating was the parish priest of the Church of St Andrew, Fr Jason Wong. Also present were catechism teachers, parents and godparents of the candidates, with the faithful from the three language groups.

In his homily, Bishop Bernard affirmed the candidates to experience

the presence of the Holy Spirit through sight, feel, touch and dialogue. He said it begins their journey in the life of the Church, making them adults in their faith through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which they would receive. Through the Holy Spirit, they would discover God who is not just a God but a generous God who is beyond our thoughts and ways as the First



Bishop Bernard Paul anoints a confirmand.

Reading from the *Book of Isaiah* says. Bishop Bernard also went on to elaborate that through the Sacrament of Confirmation, Jesus offers an opportunity to join Him, serve Him and have a share in God’s blessing.

We hope and pray the candidates will always know that our Lord is generous and loves them very much, just as they are. Just as Isaiah’s experience led him to turn away from

wickedness and evil, may they also turn towards the Lord, who is near, merciful, and the source of our life. Likewise, drawing inspiration from St Paul’s interaction with the Philipians, may they consistently choose to embrace a life that aligns with the values of the Gospel.

At the end of Mass, certificates and a small token were given out to the candidates. — **By Deacon Aaron Alammalay**



LEARNING TO BE modern-day disciples



By Vanessa Eu

GOPENG, Perak: Being Catholic is answering a call to discipleship. What comes to mind is a fruitful journey that builds upon a personal relationship with God. And yet, the calling to discipleship is different for each person.

What does it mean then, in a broader sense, to be a disciple of Christ in today's society? That is what a group of young adults sought to discover over a weekend away with speaker and spiritual director, Fr. Alvin Ng, SJ. The Lifeline Young Adults Ministry of the Parish of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya, welcomed youths from all over to their annual Lifecamp, with this year's theme being *Modern-Day Disciple*.

They spent the weekend of September 22-24 at Harvest Haven, a beautifully-kept lodging amid sprawling palm tree plantations

in the area. Early risers were greeted by the chirping of insects, crowing of roosters, and the crisp chill of the morning air. Far away from the bustle of urban life, the young adults were led into a recollection focused on discussing personal identity, a relationship with God, and walking the path of discipleship.

On the first evening, participants were welcomed by the speaker to reflect on some themes in preparation for the rest of the weekend. Mass was celebrated thereafter (and daily) and several participants assisted in the roles of lector, cantor, and altar server.

A prayer room was available for participants to retreat to, while spiritual direction with Fr Alvin was available and much sought-after during the camp. After breakfast the following day, participants shuffled into the hall for a beautiful and reverently-led session of Worship. Fr Alvin then proceeded with an engaging talk on how one approaches and views their relationship with God, especially amid the noise of the world.

After lunch, the talks resumed with a session on how one recognises a calling to discipleship, apart from other responsibilities in life. Participants were then given some time off for a siesta and miscellaneous activities. In what was described by some as the day having flown by, the evening closed with a touching and thought-provoking movie centred around the themes of love, loss, dignity, and duty.

A beautiful Sunday morning greeted the participants as they wrapped up with a closing session by Fr Alvin, Mass, and lunch.

As they donned their camp shirts, the young adults gathered by the porch and posed for pictures that will no doubt be a keepsake of their brief weekend away as renewed and refreshed disciples of Christ.



HEALTHY BODY, HEALTHY MIND THIS MERDEKA

IPOH: The Sports Ministry of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes celebrated Merdeka and Malaysia Day by promoting physical and mental well-being through various sports activities. Under the theme *Healthy Body, Healthy Mind*, two tournaments were organised to commemorate the days.

On August 31, the committee hosted a Merdeka Badminton Tournament that saw enthusiastic participation in multiple categories. The day commenced with

an opening prayer by Deacon George Vaithynathan, who also officially inaugurated the tournament. As the National flag bearers entered the centre court, everyone joined in singing the national anthem *Negaraku*. The linesmen and umpires were all chosen from among the former badminton-playing parishioners. Deacon George presented medals to the winners, leaving everyone with a sense of accomplishment and pride.

Continuing their celebrations, the committee organised a Malaysia Day Futsal and Netball Tournament on Sept 16. Like the previous event, this tournament attracted numerous participants across different categories. The day began with an opening prayer and tournament declaration by Fr Robert Daniel. As the National flag bearers graced the centre field, the song *Saya Anak Malaysia* was performed by some of the children.

The umpires for this event were chosen from among former futsal and netball-playing parishioners. Fr Robert awarded medals to the deserving winners, fostering a spirit of healthy competition among all participants. In both tournaments, the Sports Ministry successfully brought the parishioners together in the spirit of unity, patriotism, and physical fitness, making these Merdeka and Malaysia Day celebrations memorable and meaningful.



Children of the Parish singing "Saya Anak Malaysia"



Pope makes history to pay respects to former Italian president



ROME: Francis always has been a pope of firsts, and on September 24, he added another novelty to the list, becoming history's first pope to set foot inside the Italian Senate in order to pay his respects to former President Giorgio Napolitano who died Sept 22 at the age of 98.

After having returned the previous day from an overnight trip to Marseille, Pope Francis left the Vatican on Sunday shortly after his noon-time *Angelus* address to arrive at Rome's Palazzo Madama, the headquarters of the Italian senate, where Napolitano's body was lying in state.

Napolitano, a former leader of Italy's Communist party, was a non-believer, and in accord with his wishes, his funeral was a civil ceremony, marking the first time in Italian history that a former head of state did not receive a Catholic funeral Mass.

Nevertheless, in a sign of the respect Napolitano always showed to the Church and its leaders, Italian Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, a longtime personal friend, will be among the speakers paying tribute during the ceremony.

In a brief note to reporters announcing the Pope's visit, the Vatican said Francis made the visit "in order to express, with his presence and his prayer, his personal affection to [Napolitano] and his family, and to honour the great service he rendered to Italy."

After arriving in the chamber of the senate in a wheelchair, the 87-year-old pontiff rose using a cane and stood in silence for several moments of silence before the coffin containing Napolitano's remains, which was draped in the Italian flag.

Francis then greeted Napolitano's widow, Clio Maria Napolitano, who was also seated in a wheelchair.

In a telegram dispatched after Napolitano's death, Francis already had expressed "feelings of emotion and gratitude."

"I appreciated the humanity and foresight in making important choices correctly, especially in delicate moments for the life of the country, with the constant intention of promoting unity and harmony in a spirit of solidarity, animated by the

Pope Francis stands before the coffin of former Italian President Giorgio Napolitano (inset pic) on Sunday, September 24, 2023. (Vatican Media)

search for the common good," the pontiff said.

Napolitano joined Italy's Communist party in 1945 after having participated in the anti-fascist resistance during World War II, and went on to be elected to Italy's Chamber of Deputies for the first time in 1953. He became a leader of the various leftist coalitions that followed the dissolution of the Communist party, and was elected to the Italian presidency in 2006.

Though the presidency in Italy is largely a ceremonial role, Napolitano nevertheless is credited with having skillfully overseen the end of the term of former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi in 2011 amid a massive debt crisis, engineering a transition to respected economist Mario Monti that many observers credit with saving Italy from financial collapse.

Napolitano reluctantly accepted reelection in 2013, becoming the first Italian president ever to serve a second term and the longest-serving head of state since the foundation of the Italian republic in 1946.

The non-believing Napolitano nevertheless enjoyed close personal friendships both with Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis.

Benedict XVI once said of Napolitano, "For Italy, it was certainly fortunate to be guided in difficult times, among obstacles of all kinds, by a man like that." In turn, Napolitano was one of the few people to whom Benedict XVI revealed his plan to resign in February 2013 in advance.

Ravasi said that Francis' physical presence on Sunday was "not only a gesture of institutional respect, but also respect for a man who always had within himself a moral dimension and an openness to what goes beyond appearances."

"Let us never forget that Christ did not hesitate to go into highly secular environments," Ravasi said. "This is the strength of Christianity: not being closed in its protective garden but listening to what lies beyond and to the other who listens to you." — *Cruz*

MEMORIAM

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First Death Anniversary In Loving Memory of

Pakiesamy S. Savary
To the Lord: 10.10.2022

*This day is remembered and quietly kept,
No words are needed, we shall never forget,
For those we love don't go away,
They walk beside us every day.
Unseen and unheard, but always near,
So loved, so missed, and so very dear,*

A loving tribute from,
Bereaved Wife, Daughter, Son, Grandson,
Relatives & Friends.

Memorial Mass will be celebrated at the
Church of the Holy Family, Kajang on
October 10, 2023 @ 7:00 am &
October 15, 2023 @ 9:30 am.

*So also you
have sorrow
now, but I will
see you again,
and your hearts
will rejoice, and
no one will take
your joy
from you.*

John 16:22

18th 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.

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In Ever Loving Memory of 24th Anniversary 27th Anniversary



Mdm Saveriammal
Departed: 9-10-1999



S. Anthonysamy
Departed: 7-04-1996

*"I am the resurrection and the life," says the Lord, "If anyone
believes in Me even if he dies, he will live" - Jn 11:25.*

*Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light
shine upon them. May they rest in peace, Amen.*

Mass will be celebrated on October 8, 2023 at 9.30am
at the Church of the Holy Family, Kajang.

Deeply missed and forever remembered by:
Family and Loved Ones.

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REST IN PEACE

Silence is essential for Christians

ROME: On the eve of his highly anticipated Synod of Bishops on Synodality, Pope Francis joined other Christian leaders in praying that the event will be a unifying process free from ideological polarisation.

Speaking during the September 30 ecumenical prayer vigil in St Peter's Square, Francis prayed that the synod would be "a *kairós* of fraternity, a place where the Holy Spirit will purify the Church from gossip, ideologies and polarisation."

"As we approach the important anniversary of the great Council of Nicaea," which took place in 325, "let us ask that we may know how, like the Magi, to worship in unity and in silence, the mystery of God made man, certain that the closer we are to Christ, the more united we will be among ourselves," he said.

The vigil was organised by the Taizé Community ahead of the Oct 4 opening of the Synod of Bishops on Synodality, which will close Oct 29 and is the first of two Rome-based gatherings closing the synod process, the second of which will take place in October 2024.

Earlier that morning, before presiding over the consistory in which he created 21 new cardinals, Pope Francis held private meetings with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I; the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby; and Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius Aphrem II, and their delegations.

The three religious leaders were in Rome to attend the prayer vigil where faithful from various confessions were invited to attend.

Francis, in his address at the prayer vigil, thanked the various church leaders and rep-

resentatives present, saying, "Let us walk together, not only Catholics, but as all Christians, all of the baptised, the whole people of God, because only the whole can be the unity of all."

He reflected on the importance of silent prayer, saying the discipline of silence "is important and powerful: It can express unspeakable sorrow in the face of misfortune, but also, in moments of joy, a gladness that goes beyond words."

Silence "is essential to the life of a believer," he said, as it lies at the beginning of Jesus' earthly existence, in the manger, and at the end of it, on the cross.

"In a world full of noise, we are no longer accustomed to silence; indeed, sometimes, we struggle with it, because silence forces us to face God and ourselves. Yet it lies at the foundation of the word and of life," he said.

Francis insisted that "truth does not need loud cries to reach people's hearts," and that even in Scripture, "God does not like declarations and shouting, gossiping and noise: rather, He prefers, as He did with Elijah, to speak in the 'still small voice,' in a 'thread of resounding silence.'"

Christians, the Pope said, "need to free ourselves from so much noise in order to hear His voice. For only in our silence does His word resound."

Silence is also essential for the life of the Church, he said, saying that silence in the ecclesial community "makes fraternal communication possible, where the Holy Spirit draws together points of view."

"To be synodal is to welcome one another like this, in the knowledge that we all have



Ecumenical vigil in St Peter's Square.

something to share and to learn, gathering together to listen to the Spirit of truth in order to know what the Lord is saying to the churches," the Pope said.

Francis said observing silence "enables true discernment" through an attentive listening to the Holy Spirit's "sighs too deep for words," which he said often echo in a hidden way "within the People of God."

"Therefore, let us ask the Holy Spirit to bestow the gift of listening on the participants of the Synod," he said.

The Pope said silence is also important on the journey of Christian unity, calling it a "fundamental" aspect of prayer, and insisting that "ecumenism begins with prayer and is sterile without it."

"Jesus Himself prayed that His disciples 'may all be one,'" he said, saying, "The silence that is prayer enables us to accept the gift of unity as Christ wills it...by the means He

chooses, not as the fruit of our own efforts and according to purely human criteria."

The more one turns to God in prayer, the more God "purifies us and unites us beyond our differences," he said.

Pope Francis noted that he will give seeds to each of the religious leaders present in a symbolic gesture, saying the seeds represent "the different gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit on the various traditions: it is up to us to sow them, in the certainty that God alone brings about the growth."

These seeds, he said, "will be a sign for us, who are called in turn to quietly die to selfishness in order, through the action of the Holy Spirit, to grow in communion with God and in fraternity among ourselves." He closed his address praying that, just as "the wise men from the East were led to Bethlehem by a star, so may the heavenly light guide us to our one Lord and to the unity for which he prayed." — *Cruz*

Europe needs hope, Pope says

VATICAN: To deal properly with the crises it faces, Europe must first have hope, Pope Francis said at his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square on September 27.

"Hope needs to be restored to our European societies," the Pope said, "especially to the new generations."

"Our societies, many times sickened by individualism, by consumerism, and by empty escapism, need to open themselves, their souls, and spirits need to be oxygenised, and then they will be able to read the crisis as an opportunity and deal with it positively," he continued.

During his Wednesday audience with the public, Pope Francis spoke about his Sept 22-23 visit to Marseille, France, to participate in the *Rencontres Méditerranéennes*, or Mediterranean Encounter, a meeting of bishops, mayors, and young people to confront issues facing the Mediterranean region, including immigration.

"What came out of the Marseille event? What came out is an outlook on the Mediterranean that I would call simply human, not ideological, not strategic, not politically correct nor instrumental; no, human, that is, capable of referring everything to the primary value of the human person and his or her inviolable dignity," he said.

He also noticed, he added, that there was a hopeful and fraternal outlook, even, surprisingly, from those who "have lived through inhuman situations."

"This hope, this fraternity must not 'evaporate'; no, rather, it needs to be organised, concretised through long, medi-

um, and short-term actions so that people, in complete dignity, can choose to emigrate or not to emigrate," he urged.

"In fact, how can we welcome others if we ourselves do not first have a horizon open to the future?" Francis said. "How can young people, who are poor in hope, closed in on their private lives, worried about managing their own precariousness, open themselves to meeting others and to sharing?"

Pope Francis said he saw a lot of passion and enthusiasm during his visit to Marseille, a port city in southern France, including at the Mass he celebrated on Sept 23.

He encouraged the continent of Europe to also cultivate this passion and enthusiasm so that the Mediterranean region can be "a mosaic of civilisation and hope" rather than "a tomb" or a "place of conflict."

"The Mediterranean Sea," the Pope said, "is the complete opposite of the clash between civilisations, war, human traffick-

ing." Francis said the Mediterranean Sea is a channel of communication between Africa, Asia, and Europe, and though "the sea is always an abyss to overcome in some way, and it can even become dangerous," still, "its waters safeguard treasures of life; its waves and its winds carry vessels of all types."

The Gospel of Jesus Christ even departed from the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, he noted. — **By Hannah Brockhaus, CNA**

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