



Apostolic Journey of Pope Francis to Mongolia  
Ulaanbaatar 31 August – 4 September 2023

**U**LAANBAATAR, Mongolia: Pope Francis soared high in three different ways on the penultimate day of his four-day visit to Mongolia. He did so, first of all, by celebrating the first public Mass in the history of this majority Buddhist country of 3.4 million people on September 3. For the tiny Catholic community of some 1,500 faithful, that moved them, for a short time, from the periphery of the Catholic world to its centre.

He soared high in a second way by participating in a historic ecumenical and interreligious meeting that morning that brought together, perhaps for the first time ever, representatives of all the religions present in this land of clear blue skies. Pope Francis encouraged these faith leaders “to cultivate hope” by working together for harmony, justice and peace in their homeland and in the wider world.

He soared high finally by setting aside the offense given to him by authorities in Beijing, who had prevented China’s Catholic bishops, priests and faithful from coming to Mongolia for the papal visit. In true Gospel fashion, he turned the other cheek and sent a message of friendship to the Chinese people and to the Catholics in mainland China, a message that has been widely understood as a message to China’s leaders.

Since the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis has constantly looked to the peripheries both in the choice of countries to visit and men to make cardinals. And he has consistently looked to the East where he detects the first signs of a new springtime for the Catholic Church. All three elements came into play in the decision to visit Mongolia.

When Pope Francis arrived at the Steppe Arena in a golf car on the afternoon of Sept 3, the congregation of 2,000 faithful — including not only Catholics from Mongolia but also from China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia and other countries — erupted with applause and chants of “Viva il Papa.” Francis’ face reflected the joy he felt in his heart as he was driven around the stadium; he waved and blessed people and kissed many babies, drawing loud cheers from the crowd.

In his homily, at the Mass which he celebrated in English with prayers in Mongolian, Chinese and other languages, he told them, “At the heart of Christianity is an amazing and extraordinary message. If you lose your life, if you make it a generous offering in service, if you risk it by choosing to love, if you make it a free gift for others, then it will return to you in abundance,



(Vatican Media)

# Pope Francis soars high in Mongolia

and you will be overwhelmed by endless joy, peace of heart, and inner strength and support; and we need inner peace.”

At the end of the celebration, he thanked all those who had made it possible and then, departing from his script, he called to his side two Chinese bishops from Hong Kong who had concelebrated with him: Cardinal John Tong Hon, the emeritus bishop of that diocese, and Cardinal-elect Stephen Chow, SJ, the current bishop of the diocese.

As he held up their hands, he said: “I would like to take this opportunity, in the presence of these two brother bishops, to send a heartfelt greeting to the noble Chinese people. I send my good wishes to them all: always move forward, always advance! And to Chinese Catholics: I ask you to be good Christians and good citizens. To all of you, thank you!”

Earlier that day, Francis was driven into the hill country to a ski-resort in the mountains, 10 miles from the capital city, where in the Hun Theatre, that is formed in the shape of a ger — the traditional nomadic tent dwelling of Mongolia, where he met with 12 religious leaders and representatives of Shintoism, Buddhism, Islam,

Judaism, Hinduism, Shamanism, and other Christian denominations.

Each representative of the other religions spoke for five minutes, but Francis was granted 15 minutes. He began by presenting himself to the 200 persons present as “a brother in faith to those who believe in Christ” and as “a brother to all of you in the name of our shared religious quest and our membership in the one human family.”

“The fact that we are meeting together in one place already sends a message: it shows that the religious traditions, for all their distinctiveness and diversity, have impressive potential for the benefit of society as a whole.”

He said that if world leaders were to choose the path of encounter and dialogue with others, “it would be a decisive contribution to ending the conflicts continuing to afflict so many of the world’s peoples”.

He pointed out the shared goal of followers of different religions to promote a reconciled and prosperous humanity, symbolised by harmony, togetherness, and openness. He said that this should inspire a commitment to justice and peace grounded in humanity’s relationship with

the divine.

“In this sense, dear brothers and sisters, we share a great responsibility, especially in this period of history, for we are called to testify to the teachings we profess by the way we act; we must not contradict them and thus become a cause of scandal,” he said.

The Pope emphasised the crucial importance of promoting justice and peace and warned against mixing “of religious beliefs and violence, of holiness and oppression, of religious traditions and sectarianism”.

He assured that the Catholic Church is committed to ecumenical, interreligious, and cultural dialogue, respecting the conscience of others and seeking the greater good of all.

“We can discover in our common humanity, blessed by heaven, the key to our journey on this earth. We share a common origin that confers equal dignity on everyone and a shared path that we can only travel alongside one another, as we dwell under the one sky that surrounds and illumines us,” he said. — **Agencies**

● See also page 2 & more on the Pope’s visit to Mongolia in our next issue.

Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Rom. 13:8



Unity is strength

■ P3



Catholic Social Teaching is essential to our faith

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Creating emphatic ‘Navigators’

■ P7



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## SPOTLIGHT – MONGOLIA

## ‘God loves littleness’

While the Catholic population in Mongolia is one of the smallest in the world, “being little is not a problem,” Pope Francis assured the local missionaries, because God can accomplish great things with small numbers.

“God loves littleness, and through it He loves to accomplish great things, as Mary herself bears witness,” Pope Francis said in Ulaanbaatar’s Cathedral of Sts Peter and Paul on September 2.

“Brothers and sisters, do not be concerned about small numbers, limited success, or apparent irrelevance. That is not how God works. Let us keep our gaze fixed on Mary, who in her littleness is greater than the heavens.”

As on every papal trip, the Pope’s itinerary included an address to the local priests and religious of the country, but in Mongolia this includes only 25 priests (19 religious and six diocesan) and 33 women religious. There’s only one bishop — Giorgio Marengo — who is also, at age 49, the Church’s youngest cardinal.

Joining them in the cathedral were some Catholics who traveled from the Philippines, South Korea, and other Asian countries to see the Pope as well as catechists and other members of the Church who are involved in the country’s eight Catholic parishes.

As the Pope noted, however, this small group is very active in their vast nation, investing their time in six educational centres and 48 charities, which are what he called a “calling card” of their Christian lives. There were 35 baptisms in the last year, representing a steady increase to the 1,450 Catholics in the country.

In the midst of their demanding pastoral work, the Pope urged the Church leaders to take care that with the “wide variety of charitable initiatives, which absorb much of your energy and reflect the merciful face of Christ the Good Samaritan,” they continuously re-



*Pope Francis meets with local priests and religious of Mongolia, which includes only 25 priests (19 religious and six diocesan), 33 women religious, and one bishop — Cardinal Giorgio Marengo — in Ulaanbaatar’s Cathedral of Sts Peter and Paul on Sept 2, 2023. (Vatican Media)*

turn to the source of their ministry.

He exhorted them to go back often to that “original ‘gaze’ [of Jesus] from which everything began” so that their work doesn’t become an “empty delivery of services, a roster of duties that end up inducing only weariness and frustration.”

He stressed the importance of prayer, inviting them to “remain in contact with the face of Christ, seeking Him in the Scriptures and contemplating Him in silent adoration before the tabernacle.”

“Our Mongolian brothers and sisters, who have a keen sense of the sacred and — as is typical here in Asia — an ancient and complex religious history, look for your witness and can recognise if it is genuine,” the Pope pointed out.

In his address, the Pope noted the history of the Church in Mongolia, both in centuries past and in the three decades since missionar-

ies arrived after the fall of communism.

“Dearest missionaries,” the Pope exhorted them, “‘taste and see’ the gift that you are, and the beauty of giving yourselves entirely to Christ who called you to be witnesses of His love here in Mongolia.”

“May you always be close to the people, personally caring for them, learning their language, respecting and loving their culture, not allowing yourselves to be tempted by worldly forms of security, but remaining steadfast in the Gospel through exemplary moral and spiritual lives,” Pope Francis said. “Simplicity and closeness! Never tire of bringing to Jesus the faces and the situations you encounter, the problems and concerns. Devote time to daily prayer, which will enable you to persevere in the work of service and to draw consolation from the ‘God of all consolation’ and thus bring hope to the hearts of all those who suffer.” — **By Rachel Thomas, CNA**

## Purifying our flaws

“For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help.” (Ecclesiastes 4:10) The Gospel today speaks about companionship, specifically during the time when tension arises when one side falls short of the glory of God. Instead of looking from the perspective of the righteous one, we will start by looking at it from the other perspective as there are instances when we too have fallen into sin.

Acknowledgement of our own sinfulness, followed by repentance, are part of the integral act of faith. By doing so, we believe that we need a Saviour and salvation requires our response to the call of repentance. If you notice, both the Gospel as well as the first reading today mentions a companion that helps to point out one’s own error. In fact, the latter goes further to stress that without which, that companion would be held accountable when another falls into sin.

So, just as sin has a social dimension, repentance too involves social motivation. Therefore, Christianity is not a facile religion between my personal Saviour and me. In fact, as Christians, we are intricately one as the body of Christ that “if one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.” (1 Corinthians 12:26)

However, at times, we find it hard to

accept when someone corrects our faulty choices and behaviour, primarily because it hurts our ego. Of course, many times the person does it out of good intention — to pull us back from straying further away. However, there are other times when people do it in an uncharitable way, despite the good intention. A lot of times, these criticisms put us off since they may sound harsh, personal or sarcastic. Therefore, while fraternal correction is crucial, it is never an easy task because it requires prudence for it to result in goodness instead of harm.

In other words, it is our duty to reprimand someone when s/he strays from the right path, but it is never our right to be rude while doing so for “a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1). Also, “let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.” (Ephesians 4:29) If you notice, the method mentioned by Jesus involves a gradual process to win the sinner back, sparing him public shame initially and providing the chance for repentance. So, fraternal correction should always be motivated by charity and only charity because “love does no wrong to a neighbour” (Romans 13:10), as mentioned in the second reading today.

The journey of repentance involves a

gradual process of self-denial, without which we can be so sure of our own selves while persisting in error. That explains why sometimes the witnesses of a few, and not even of a whole community, can help to open our eyes to realise our own errors. Humility is the price to pay to chip off that pride which clings so easily to our own ego. It is through frequent self-examinations, with the aid of God’s grace, that one slowly peels off the sphaelus of pride to expose the fresh wound underneath for it to heal. That ‘debridement’ of pride may be an arduous process, but it is necessary for purifying the flaw in us.

At the end, after all the attempts in trying to bring back a fallen brother have failed, it is mentioned that we should treat him as a Gentile or a tax collector. The literal way to understand this is to have nothing to do with such an unrepentant sinner lest one may follow suit, as “bad company ruins good morals.” (1 Corinthians 15:33) So, unrepentance may be the limit for companionship.

Nevertheless, some may think that Jesus had fondness and tended to always associate with Gentiles and tax collectors. The very reason for that was because Jesus intended to call them for repentance. He was neither being politically correct by being oblivious or assenting to the way of life of the wayward heart, nor compromising His

Reflecting on our  
Sunday Readings

with Br Joseph Wong Pak Yui

23rd Sunday of  
Ordinary Time (A)

*Readings: Ezekiel 33:7-9;*

*Romans 13:8-10;*

*Gospel: Matthew 18:15-20*

standards. In fact, He came to transform their hardened hearts with love. That was why He reminded the prostitute to go and sin no more after forgiving her. (John 8:11) On another occasion, He warned the man healed by Him to sin no more, so that nothing worse may happen to him (John 5:14).

Christ has the power to bring about conversion of hearts. So, while we may choose to cut off the association with unrepentant sinners, we ought to pray earnestly and do penance for their conversion as a community of Church since “if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.” (Matthew 18:19) Though it may be unavailing from our part, nothing is impossible for God!

*Bro Joseph Wong Pak Yui is a second year Theology student at St Peter’s College Major Seminary in Kuching.*





**ARCHDIOCESE OF  
KUALA LUMPUR**  
CHAN/CD/06/2023

## Chancery Notice

### Banns of Sacerdotal Ordination: Rev. Deacon Gnana Selvam Berentis

Having consulted the College of Consultors, Most Reverend Julian Leow D.D., the Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, has agreed to ordain Rev Deacon Gnana Selvam Berentis, to the Order of Presbyterate at the Church of St Paul the Hermit, Bestari Jaya, Selangor on Monday, November 13, 2023 at 10.30 am.

Canon Law obliges Catholics to reveal any impediment or circumstances that would prevent the above candidate from receiving Sacred Orders and should contact the Chancery or the Archbishop with such information as soon as possible.

You may contact the Chancery by emailing us at [chancery@archkl.org](mailto:chancery@archkl.org)

Let us offer our prayerful support for Rev Deacon Gnana Selvam Berentis as he prepares for presbyteral ministry to serve the People of God in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

*Clarence Devadass*

**Rev Fr Dr Clarence Devadass**  
Chancellor  
Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur

August 30, 2023

# Unity is strength

KUALA LUMPUR: As Malaysians celebrated the 66th anniversary of Merdeka Day on August 31 and are gearing up for the 60th anniversary of the formation of Malaysia on Sept 16, the nation stands united under the theme “Malaysia MADANI: Determination in Unity, Fulfilling Hope.”

However, amid the celebrations, concerns over the state of national unity and divisive forces are emerging. The Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) in their Merdeka/Malaysia Day message have called on Malaysians to stand strong against those who continue to sow division within the country along racial and religious lines, especially after the polarising elections.

In its message dated August 30, the umbrella body representing the majority of Christians in Sarawak, Sabah and Semenanjung expressed concern about what they see as attempts to reinterpret the Federal Constitution to cater to racial and religious sentiments.

The Federal Constitution, the bedrock of Malaysia’s constitutional democracy, is being re-interpreted by certain groups to further their agendas of separation. In this context, the CFM is urging Malaysian Christians to join hands with fellow citizens to counter divisive narratives and promote an inclusive interpretation of the Constitution.



(photo/Merdeka 360)

“We Malaysian Christians must unite with like-minded fellow Malaysians to work even harder to silence those voices of separation and to build a strong and united nation whom we love and cherish,” CFM said in a statement.

The statement was signed by CFM chairman, Anglican Bishop Philip Thomas from the Council of Churches in Malaysia, and his three vice-chairmen, Roman Catholic Archbishop Simon Poh, Anglican Bishop Datuk Danald Jute, and Reverend Eu Hong Seng from the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship.

“We need to uphold our Federal Consti-

tution by interpreting it inclusively for all Malaysians and to ensure its protection of everyone in Malaysia,” CFM said.

The religious heads also said that beyond the Federal Constitution, there is the *Rukun Negara* as a guiding principle to unite Malaysia’s diverse population.

The *Rukun Negara*, established in 1970 after the racially charged events of 1969, remains a guiding light for national unity. Its noble objectives — achieving unity, preserving democracy, fostering a just society, embracing heritage, and promoting progress — remain pertinent.

“Without a doubt, our national leadership then were very concerned that national unity was something not to be toyed with and so the *Rukun Negara* was their considered solution to ensure that national unity would be the enduring bastion of a multi-racial, multi-cultural, and multi-religious Malaysia,” CFM said. The CFM also called on political leaders to work together to build a united Malaysia.

National and community leaders are encouraged to lead by example and strengthen social cohesion. The focus should be on inclusivity and well-being across economic strata, and urban and rural areas. To this end, the establishment of *Rukun Negara* Clubs in schools is suggested as a means to sow the seeds of unity among the younger generation.



**KUALA LUMPUR  
ARCHDIOCESE**

### Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

#### September

- 11-15** *FABC First Consultation Meeting on Synodal Formation in Asia*
- 15** *Pray for Malaysia Day*
- 16** *Closing Mass for World Meeting of Families – Church of the Holy Family, Kajang*
- 16** *Confirmation – Church of Sts Peter & Paul, Banting*



**PENANG DIOCESE**

### Diary of Bishop Sebastian Francis

#### September

- 16** *Mass – Cathedral of the Holy Spirit*
- 16** *Meeting – Bishop of Chuncheon & Apostolic Administrator of Hamhung, Bishop Simon Kim – Bishop’s Residence*
- 17** *Ordination Mass to the Permanent Diaconate – Minor Basilica of St Anne, BM*



**MALACCA JOHORE  
DIOCESE**

### Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

#### September

- 11-17** *Clergy Annual Retreat – Penang*



## Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #145

**F12**  
MJD NEWS  
UPDATES

#### Greetings, dear friends and fellow Catholics:

On August 31, we celebrated Malaysia’s 66th Independence Day. The local brands — Ramly Burger, Beryl’s Chocolate, Lingham’s Hot Sauce, San Francisco Coffee and Aik Cheong Coffee — are better than international brands, say Malaysian Twitter users. Malaysian Badminton returns with a bronze from the World Championship at Copenhagen. We are proud to be Malaysians. Continue to pray for the country, the leaders and the genuine Malaysian spirit to drive us.

**Disturbing Times:** Half a world away, but Malaysia is where my heart is, said one.

“Tunku advocated for a united Malaysia”, quoted Lara, the granddaughter of Tunku Abdul Rahman. “Tunku’s unwavering commitment to forging a cohesive Malaysia stands as a testament to his belief in shared prosperity and communal understanding”.

Tan Sri Sheriff Kassim, founder of G25, commented that conservatives should be more tolerant of modern lifestyles and understand the generational change.

National unity efforts and national development agenda should not be disrupted.

Matured leaders will say: *Share the similarities, celebrate the differences.* Stephen Covey quotes that *strength lies in differences, not in similarities.*

#### Thought for the Week: The Body Part

A mother asked her son, “Do you know which is the most important body part?” She saw the confusion on his face and

told him, “This question is very important. It shows if you have really lived your life.”

She looked down at him with tears in her eyes and said, “Son, the most important body part is your shoulder.”

“Is it because it holds up my head?”

She replied, “No, because it can hold the head of a friend or loved one when they cry. Everybody needs a shoulder to cry on sometime in life, my son. I only hope that you have enough love, friends and a shoulder to cry on when you need it.”

*Lesson from the mother: People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel. Your shoulder gives rest to the other.*

#### Announcements for this Week

1. The MJD bade farewell to **Fr Dr Michael Teng** who passed away on August 25, 2023.
2. **Charis Malaysia celebrated the 50th Anniversary** of the Peninsular Malaysia Catholic Charismatic Renewal (August 31 – September 2) at the Church of the Holy Family, Kajang.
3. The Migrant & Refugee Ministries of Malaysia gathered for the **ECMI Conference** at Stella Maris Penang from September 4 – 6.
4. The month of September is the month of **clergy retreats**. Pray for your priests, deacons and religious.
5. Protect Our Earth. Protect Our Children. **Protec Year 4 and Season of Creation** commenced on Sept 1 and will continue till Aug 31, 2024. The focus this time is “Cut Fuel Consumption”. Waste not, want not!

#### This Week’s Question and Query.

**The Question asks: Is there any lesson in the irritations we encounter daily? THERE ARE LESSONS IN EVERYTHING.**

Anything that annoys you is teaching you patience.

Anyone who abandons you is teaching you how to reclaim your autonomy. Anything that angers you is teaching you forgiveness and compassion.

Anything you judge is teaching you acceptance.

Anything that has power over you is teaching you how to take your power back.

Anything you hate is teaching you unconditional love.

Anything you fear is teaching you courage to overcome your inhibitions. Anything you can’t control is teaching you how to let go.

Anything you encounter in life is teaching you a lesson of personal mastery.

*After the WYD 2023, Pope Francis told 1.5 million weary-eyed and sleep-deprived young people in Lisbon not to let their “great dreams” of changing the world be “stopped by fear.”*

*Let’s all repeat this phrase in our hearts: ‘Don’t be afraid’.*

Hidup Malaysia! May the Lord God bless us with leaders who serve without fear or favour, who hear the cry of the poor and the earth. Do good to one another.

God bless Malaysia.

*Bernard Paul*

**Bishop Bernard Paul**



# In the footsteps of a humble king

By Kimbelle Lee

KLUANG: The parish of St Louis celebrated the feast day of St Louis, King of France, for the 95th time on August 26. Over 450 faithful from near and far, participated in a multilingual Eucharistic celebration presided over by parish priest, Msgr Peter Ng.

Prior to the procession, Msgr Peter urged parishioners to march on with the patron saint, and all the saints, while chanting the litany of St Louis and reflecting on the contents of the multi-lingual homilies shared during the Masses over the four days prior.

The concelebrants included Fr Patrick Tyoh, Fr Adrian Francis and Fr Andrew Arokiasamy. Assisting were Deacons Aaron Alammalay, Arama Das P. Sinnathamby, Joseph Arokiam Gratian and Louis Martin.

Speaking on the memorial of the Queenship of Mary, Deacon Aaron said that Mary's queenship was not merely a title of adornment but a significant mark of her hand in the salvation that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, brought to the world. Mary, our mother, portrays a



Parishioners walking in procession to mark the feast of St Louis.

light of hope to us, just as we are called to share the light in our unique ways.

Fr Patrick highlighted the Seventh Crusade where Louis IX led his regiments in displaying courage and tenacity in liberating the Holy Land upon the siege of Jerusalem in the 13th century. However, eventually taken in as a prisoner by his opponents, Louis was steadfast in his prayers and prepared to suffer any kind of torment for the love of Jesus Christ rather than committing mortal sin. His dedica-

tion to the passion of Christ became poignant when he prayed and fasted before receiving the Crown of Thorns after hefty discussions and negotiations. The Crown of Thorns now remains safe at the Cathedral of Notre Dame, Paris.

Fr Patrick concluded that St Louis, though an earthly king, was faithful and hopeful in God's plans where humility and sincerity brought the grace and blessings of wisdom bestowed by our Father Almighty.

Fr Andrew shared about the works of mercy by St Louis that we should observe, imitate, and practise. Rooted on the values and teachings imparted by his mother, Blanche of Castile, St Louis lived a life filled with compassion for others. In addition to the drive for justice and striving for integrity, he established schools, hospitals, and reform institutions for the underprivileged, the troubled, the sick and the dying. St Louis always appreciated the greater beauty in creation and the collaborative dynamics of nature where he sought God's grace of love and wisdom as the ruler of France.

Msgr Peter concluded the feast day Eucharistic celebration on Saturday by saying Jesus Christ is the sceptre and beacon in the storms we experience in life. He urged us to trust Him as our Lord and Shepherd, while encouraging us to partner with each other in our spiritual journey heavenward. Like St Louis, we should strive to overpower the individualism and materialism in the secular world with compassion, empathy, solidarity, and hopefulness — a Light of Hope to our neighbours.

## Taiping's St Louis parish marks 125 years

TAIPING: The vibrant parish community of St Louis came together in a spirit of joy and unity to mark its patron's feast on August 25 and the quasiquintennial celebration of the church on August 26, with a heartfelt tribute depicting *Our Journey in Faith, Our Past, Our Present, and Our Future*.

The theme for this significant milestone, *Touching Hearts and Changing Lives*, encompassing the human and spiritual dimensions of the celebratory journey, was a masterstroke of the parish priest, Msgr Stephen Liew.

The thanksgiving Mass witnessed an overwhelming turnout of more than 1,000 parishioners, each radiating enthusiasm and devotion. Fr Simon Labrooy, the rector of College General, was the main celebrant, accompanied by a distinguished assembly of three monsignors and 10 priests who jointly officiated the

ceremony. Adding a touch of reverence to the occasion was the gracious presence of Bishop Emeritus Antony Selvanayagam.

The first of the three-in-one celebration was the grand dinner after Mass which saw the presence of approximately 1,300 attendees, including devoted parishioners, cherished friends, well-wishers, local political dignitaries, and residents of nearby charity homes.

The parish's 125th-anniversary celebration wasn't merely a tribute to the past; it was a testament to the enduring faith that had sustained the community throughout its rich history. As the celebrations concluded, the resounding message of unity, faith, and hope reverberated, setting the stage for a future guided by the values that have held the community together for over a century.

The second celebration in this trifecta of events was to honour the 25th anniversary

of the amalgamation of two churches — Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Klian Pau and the Church of St Louis. This historic merger gave rise to the Taiping Catholic Church, symbolising the unity of both congregations under a common devotion to God.

The third celebration marked the Golden Jubilee of the Peninsular Malaysia-Singapore Chinese Apostolate Seminar. This prestigious event is the longest-running Catholic seminar, a testament to its enduring significance.

In a touching gesture, the celebrations also included an unexpected tribute to Msgr Stephen. The community acknowledged and appreciated his unwavering dedication and 42 years of selfless service as a priest.

The festivities were a delightful blend of good food, the symbolic cutting of cakes, and lively entertainment courtesy of the Sam Tet School Band. The celebrations reached their grand finale with a spectacular display of fireworks, marking the conclusion of the eventful days.

Adding a layer of historical significance, the community dedicated a special 125th-anniversary Souvenir Book to honour those who had laid the foundation for the parish. The book paid homage to the pioneers who established the parish, the families who nurtured and sustained it, and the parish priests who provided spiritual and administrative leadership. It also delved into the rich history of the Catholic churches and Christian schools' education in Taiping, shedding light on Msgr Stephen's key initiatives at the Taiping Catholic Church. — **By Dr Calvin Dinesh**



The three-in-one celebration attended by over 1,300 people.

## Offering support and connectivity for bereaved spouses

KUALA LUMPUR: The Women's Ministry of the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD) held its inaugural Bereavement Support Group (BSG) on August 26.

Held at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre, the BSG offered a secure and unbiased environment for both men and women who have lost their spouses to come together.

The support group aimed at providing them with an opportunity to connect and

derive support from fellow participants. This setting encouraged open sharing of their challenges, with the reassurance that they are not solitary in their grief journey and that they have a network of support.

Women from various parishes came with open hearts as they shared their struggles and how they processed grief in different yet similar ways. They talked about beautiful memories shared with their lost spouses which led to laughter and joy. The participants supported each

other through words of affirmation and encouragement.

The session ended with a closing prayer, followed by lunch fellowship. To foster the needs to support this group, this session will be conducted monthly and the next session on Sept 30 will be on 'Grief through Art Therapy', aiming to explore the healing potential of creative expression in the grieving process.

For more information, please contact Susan Thomas 012 934 4133.

## An exhibition fit for a Queen



A moving carousel made by catechism students.

SHAH ALAM: An exhibition on *Mary, Queen of Heaven* was held at the Church of the Divine Mercy (CDM), August 19-20 by the members of the parish's Marian ministry.

Though the organisers faced the challenging task of gathering and curating content for the exhibition, they found the experience enlightening. Despite feeling initially ill-equipped due to shallow knowledge on the subject, they focused on Vatican-approved Mary apparitions and saints she appeared to. Only seven out of thousands of reported apparitions are endorsed by the Vatican — Our Lady of Good Health, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Our Lady of La Salette, Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Knock and Our Lady of Fatima.

The team delved into the history of the Rosary and its origins, revealing its significance and connection to the Bible. The exhibition covered the four Marian Dogmas supported by biblical references: Mother of God, Immaculate Conception, perpetual virginity, and the Assumption. Catechism children's creativity was showcased through 70 art pieces, including paintings, collages, and a carousel, celebrating *Mary, Queen of Heaven*. The exhibition was adorned with flower arrangements by CDM's Flower Deco team.

The exhibition space drew a crowd before and after weekend Masses, with attendees studying posters and admiring art. Various ministries contributed to the success of the event. The *Mary, Queen of Heaven* exhibition is set to return in October 2023 during the month of the Rosary. Additionally, CDM's Rosary Relay 2.0 The Night Edition is scheduled for October 7, after the sunset Mass. — **By A. F. Patricks**



# Catholic Social Teaching is essential to our faith

By Cassandra Jayasuria

KUALA LUMPUR: The Catholic Social Teaching 101 or CST101 is a central and essential element of our faith. It is an area of Catholic doctrine which focuses on human dignity and human life. It is rooted in the principle of communion, and it is a call for inclusion.

CST101 has been articulated through a tradition of papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents. With reference to these documents, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the Catholic Relief Services derived CST 101. This immersion programme was brought to action in a combined effort with the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur's Central District Churches via an online formation session.

The seven-part video brought the Catholic Social Teaching themes to

life and inspired us to put our faith into action. We were fortunate to have guest speakers directly from the grassroots, sharing their hands-on experiences with us. To further enhance the experience, online outreach initiatives were incorporated into this virtual event.

A total of 120 Catholics from Malaysia, Singapore, Perth, Colombo, Vietnam, and Indonesia, embarked on this first CST101 online immersion programme for seven weeks, starting July 9. This programme was conducted by lay Catholics from East and West Malaysia together with Fr Martin Arlando, parish priest of the Church of Our Lady of Good Health, Parit Buntar, who journeyed with the team.

Director of the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD) Dr Gary Liew, joined us on the first day. He shared his testimony on the love and compassion

for the less fortunate, marginalised, and those living on the fringe of society. He encouraged the participants to reach out to the people around us and extend the kindness that exist deep within each of us.

Fatima Emmanuel, formerly a nun with the Little Sisters of the Poor in Cheras, received a 'call within a call' to serve the homeless brothers and sisters living around the streets in Kuala Lumpur. She now runs the Samaritan Hope Home in the vicinity. Fatima also journeyed with the participants through the seven episodes and shared her testimony on how to reach out to strangers, following Jesus's example of dignity and respect for life, through the parable of The Good Samaritan. Not all are called to go to the streets, but we are called to give hope and to hear the cry of the poor. How are we responding?



Fatima Emmanuel, Caroline Soon and a few of the participants from CST101 on the Street Feeding mission.

Over the course of seven weeks, other speakers included YB Hannah Yeoh's political secretary Yap Yee Vonne, who spoke on *Rights and Responsibilities*; Yeo Kar Peng from the Tzu Chi Foundation shared on *Call to Family, Communion and Participation*; lay Catholic Cheryl Lee on *Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable*; from Beyond Borders Malaysia Mahi Ramakrishnan spoke on *The Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers*; AOHD's Josephine Tey shared on *Solidarity* and Fr David Au, OFM from Kuching preached on *Care for*

*God's Creation*.

After the fourth session, several participants together with Caroline Soon, a lay Catholic put their faith into action and prepared home cooked meals and collected essential items like mosquito coils and toiletries and braved their way to the streets with Fatima, to meet those in need and most importantly, listen to the poor with compassion. This brought the participants to a deeper level of experience and exposure, opening their eyes and transforming them to discover that they can do much more with great love for our neighbours.

## Caritas MJD outing for FINs

JOHOR: A total of 142 Friends-in-Need (FINs) and volunteers from various parishes in South Johor came together for a joyful day out at Pulai Springs Resort on August 19.

The sunny morning saw everyone enjoying telematch games that ended with a water balloon fight. Children, bubbling with excitement, couldn't wait to plunge into the resort's inviting swimming pool. The adults proceeded to join the *Smart Money Management* workshop where they had a chance to learn and get some tips on how to make better financial decisions for their families. At noon, it was time for a delicious buffet lunch. The spaghetti and french fries were a hot favourite among the children. Amidst bites of delicious food, connections were forged, and friendships kindled.

Despite the TNB power blackout and the heavy rain in the afternoon that curtailed the movie time and *Smart Money Management* workshop for children, their spirits were not dampened. Undeterred, volunteers transformed the situation into an opportunity, crafting impromptu table games that filled the hall with



Adults and children engaging in a telematch.

even more laughter and joy. Plenty of prizes were up for grabs, much to the delight of the kids. At around 3.00pm, power was restored and the rain finally cleared up. The children received the green light for one last swim and their faces lit up with joy! Even adults joined in the fun at the pool.

At 4.00pm, the final whistle was blown for everyone to get out of the pool which they reluctantly did. Soon it was time for a group photo, followed by tea. Farewell and hugs among friends and new acquaintances ended this beautiful outing.

Fr Martinian Lee's presence added a touch of warmth, dining with volunteers and interacting with the FINs. Kudos to all volunteers from the Parish Offices of Human Development (POHD) of St Theresa, Masai, St Joseph, Plentong, Sacred Heart Cathedral, Johor Bahru, Holy Family Ulu Tiram, Christ the King, Kulai and members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul from the Church of the Immaculate Conception, JB who helped organise and even ferry the FINs for the day.

## Banana leaf fundraiser at Nilai parish

NILAI: Food is always a unifying factor and the Banana Leaf Luncheon held at the Church of St Theresa Nilai (CSTN) on August 27 was a great example.

Organised by the Parish Integral Human Development Ministry (PIHDM), with support from the various parish ministries, over 200 servings of the Malaysian favourite were served up to raise funds for the year-end children's party.

"Work started yesterday when BEC members came to help with preparation such as peeling potatoes and onions," said Catherine Abrose, CSTN BEC chairperson. "Everyone enjoyed the food, but more importantly, we witnessed the work of the Holy Spirit through the help we render each other," said parish priest, Fr Christopher Soosaipillai. — *By Aileen Anthony Jason*



Parishioners and friends at the banana leaf fundraiser.

## Focolare Movement members reflect on 'being a living prayer'



Several members of the Focolare movement during their annual retreat at MAJODI Centre.

PLENTONG, Johor: The Focolare Movement in Johor held its first in person retreat from August 25 to 27 at the MAJODI Centre. The Focolare Movement is an international organisation founded in 1943, that promotes the ideals of unity and universal brotherhood.

Since the early years of the Focolare Movement, people have gathered in Italy, the birthplace of the movement, for a few days in the summer to live its spirit together and to give witness to how society would be if everyone lived the Gospel law of love.

This year's gathering, called *Mariapolis*, which means "City of

Mary" in Greek, was a dual-language event, in English and Mandarin. There were 180 participants from 10 countries, of all ages, and all walks of life. The members had not met in-person for this annual event since 2020.

Based on this year's theme, *Be a living prayer*, the focus was to have a good prayer life, and how each of us can be a physical manifestation of a prayer for the people around us. This serves as a driver to further discover how we can live by loving our neighbours better and being united with them through Jesus' inspiring words, especially His prayer "May they all be one" (Jn 17:21)

The three fun-filled days were spent reconnecting with old friends and making new ones while trying to be a living prayer for each other. We felt the fire that can only be experienced when we live in the City of Mary. There were games and programmes for the different age groups, meditations, sharing of experiences and group sharing.

We were also blessed to have Bishop Bernard Paul celebrate Mass on the first day of our *Mariapolis*, and he captured the essence of our theme beautifully during his homily. — *By Johnathan Dorneles Francis*



# Embracing the freedom of missing out

By Christine Ong

MELAKA: In the era of media influence, Fr Michael Rossman, SJ stands out as the “One Minute Jesuit.” His weekly appearances on YouTube delivering one-minute homilies centred around the Sunday Gospel, have solidified his reputation as a prominent figure in this digital age.

The parishioners of the Church of St Theresa were privileged to attend a two-hour session conducted by Fr Rossman on the *Freedom of Missing Out* on August 24. The response to the session was overwhelming, with over 200 parishioners made up of youths, young adults and elderly in attendance.

*Freedom of Missing Out* is also the title of Fr Rossman’s recently published, award-winning book.

Fr Rossman began by explaining what *Freedom of Missing Out* is. It is how we can let go of fear and find freedom in our commitments. Nowadays, the younger generation has more opportunities compared to decades ago. However, they often grapple with decisions and commitments. Questions like: What if a better option comes along? Will I be missing out on something important or enjoyable? What is God’s plan for our lives?

and many more keep arising.

The fear of missing out is fuelled by the abundance of opportunities and the constant flow of information from devices and social media. Amid this information overload, three paths stand out: First, the path of saying ‘no’. Second, the path of accepting ‘no’ from others or circumstances. Third, the path of giving a resounding ‘yes’. Embracing the possibilities that ‘no’ offers opens up new avenues. Wholeheartedly saying ‘yes’ involves a commitment to something meaningful and the pursuit of a purposeful life.

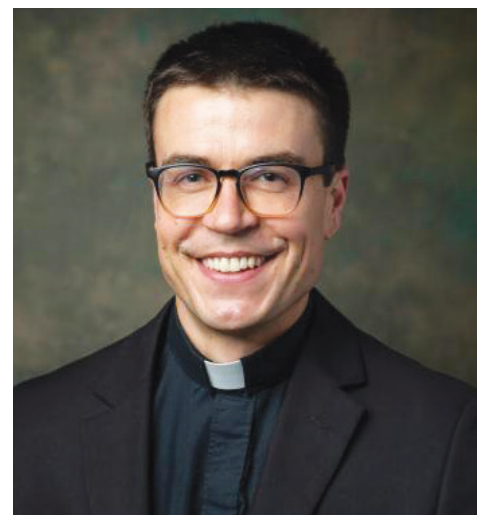
Constantly seeking other options can prevent us from fully experiencing the present moment. Spreading ourselves thin across numerous activities deprives us of depth. Fr Rossman likened this to spreading a thin layer of *kaya* on toast — it lacks substance. True freedom, he emphasised, is intertwined with responsible relationships. Real freedom flourishes when we wholeheartedly invest in a specific commitment.

The concept of ‘resume virtues’ versus ‘eulogy virtues’ presents an intriguing contrast in how we perceive our lives. ‘Resume virtues’ are akin to a job CV, where the focus is on individual achievements, while ‘eulogy virtues’ encapsulate the qualities people remember about us after we pass away. These virtues are

a reflection of our dedication to commitments and relationships.

Profound connections, such as those within our family, workplace, community, and spiritual affiliations, offer us immense value. When we make commitments, we make deliberate choices, opting for one path while relinquishing others. These commitments encompass marriage vows and the pursuit of specific dreams — selecting some aspirations while releasing others. There’s been a noticeable rise in delayed marriages, an increased number of individuals remaining unmarried, and a growing trend of people choosing to have children later in life or opting not to have them at all, both in the US and perhaps, even in Malaysia.

Often, young people seek certainty before embarking on commitments like marriage, the priesthood, religious life or lifelong partnerships. Yet, what often eludes us is the realisation that making substantial commitments involves venturing into the unknown. We learn, evolve, and mature throughout the journey, transitioning from a state of adolescence to one of greater maturity. The beauty of commitments lies in the growth they facilitate — growth that wouldn’t be possible without venturing into commitments in the first place.



Fr Michael Rossman SJ

Bypassing commitments means missing out on the rich experiences they offer. People often do not consider the Church as a ‘place of freedom’. Fr Rossman aptly illustrated this by likening it to a playground where children play close to the edge of a cliff. While the playground itself seems inviting, it poses a significant risk. However, by constructing protective fences around the playground, children can play with both liberty and safety.

Likewise, Christianity allows persons to flourish within the Church. We experience freedom, and not the absence of restrictions. In positions of leadership, we may experience criticism, but by trusting God and following His ways, we flourish as a person. Committing to something larger than ourselves (even though it entails hardship) makes our lives richer and more meaningful. The Scriptures are a source of hope and freedom when we encounter fear in challenging times.

## Risen Christ parishioners learn spirituality of soap moulding

PENANG: The Church of the Risen Christ was a hive of activity as 40 parishioners and their parish priest, Friar Esmond Chua, OFM, gathered in the church hall, to embark on a work of mercy — moulding soaps to be presented to prisoners in the states of Penang and Kedah, August 26.

This year, the soap moulding workshop took on a different approach as the participants were walked through two reflection sessions on *What the Bible says about Prison Ministry* and the *Spirituality of Soap Moulding*. It wasn’t only the senior citizens and adults, but also children supervised by their parents, who participated in this activity. As the saying goes, ‘start them young’, it was heartening to watch the children as they went about moulding the soaps, not without a fair amount of spillage.

The parish is humbled that by God’s grace and mercy, the workshop went on well due to the tremendous support given by the parish priest funding the raw materials, donors of the moulding tools and sponsors of the breakfast, lunch and drinks, and last but not least, the enthusiastic participants who came from the dif-



The students at the moulding station.

ferent BECs.

A total of 1,195 pieces of soap were moulded. The soaps, packed into four boxes, were presented by assistant priest, Friar Crispus Mosinoh, OFM to Peter Teh from the Penang

Diocesan Prison Ministry.

Melissa Nithianathan said, “The reflection sessions were inspiring and helped us understand the spirituality of soap moulding, comparing this process with our walk with

God. I learnt patience as well, as we need it to successfully mould the soaps. I enjoyed the delightful experience of working with people from different age groups.”

“It is a wonderful project as we were made to think of those in prison who need our care and concern so they may not feel left out from this world,” chipped in Anne Wong.

“What the Bible says about Prison Ministry was an enlightening presentation and I learnt our roles as prison ministry members/laypersons based on the Scriptures,” remarked Chan Lilian.

Carol Lim added, “My husband and I not only learnt physical soap moulding but received the spiritual aspect as well.”

A happy Annastasia Ignasius commented that it was fun and exciting to work with church members on this project and she looked forward to more of such activities to help the prisoners.

It is the parish’s fervent hope that these soaps, moulded with much love, will bring joy and hope to the prisoners. — **By Stephanie Cheong**

## GEM of a gathering!

KUALA LUMPUR: One is never too old to be in the gem of life and be the gem the young can aspire to be.

Martin Jalleh motivated 170 senior citizens from 12 parishes to embark on the mission described during the inaugural gathering of the newly formed *Grandparents and Elderly Ministry* (GEM) of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur on August 26.

Martin started his first talk, *Gems of Grandparents and the Elderly* by Pope Francis, declaring: A day of acknowledgement, affirmation and appreciation through grandparents and elderly/seniors is a day of acceptance.

Pope Francis is passionate about the crucial roles of the elderly in families, communities and the Church. Martin shared many of the Pope’s quotes, including: “By their weak-

ness, the elderly can teach those who are living in other ages of life, that we all need to abandon ourselves to the Lord, to invoke His help. In this sense, we must all learn from old age: Yes, there is a gift in being elderly, understood as abandoning oneself to the care of others, starting with God Himself.”

In the second talk, *Growing old gracefully*, Martin offered 10 practical tips: Hope in God, humility, head, heart, hands, healing, humour, health, holistic maturity and heavenwards. He provided the Scriptural basis and examples of how to apply such tips.

Earlier, Archdiocesan Family Life Commission (AFLC) assistant chairperson, Selvanatan Sargunam, welcomed the participants and led in reciting the Prayer of Grandparents and the Elderly, while GEM chairpersons Andrew and Andrene Teoh



Martin Jalleh and members of GEM at their inaugural meeting.

introduced the ministry conceived by the AFLC.

The AFLC ecclesiastical assistant, Fr Andrew Kooi, celebrated Mass. In his homily, he reminded the elderly to keep active because “you are the gifts and greatest treas-

ures from God to the community and the Church.”

All enjoyed a sumptuous lunch and lots of fellowship before going home with a mission, “Aspire to inspire before you retire and expire!” — **By Prof Christopher Ng**



# Creating empathetic ‘Navigators’

KLANG: Building upon the positive feedback from the inaugural session held in July, the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes (OLL), orchestrated a second installment of their enlightening discourse entitled “Why be a Navigator?”

This subsequent event remained steadfast in its purpose: to enlist and cultivate empathetic navigators capable of providing invaluable solace to cancer-afflicted individuals through conscientious guidance. The gathering on August 19, witnessed the participation of 75 attendees hailing from diverse churches, denominations, religious groups, organisations, and NGOs.

Parish priest Fr Gregory Chan, warmly welcomed fellow congregants representing various faiths. He referred to the collective intention driving the assembly — the shared commitment to spread hope and comfort to cancer patients and their caregivers via the Navigator initiative.

Guiding the congregation with her charismatic and dynamic presence, Vijayalakshmy Silvathorai (Madam Viji), led a riveting session. Employing a series of real-life scenarios laced with a touch of humour, she adeptly illuminated the realities cancer patients face and the arduous chal-



lenges they grapple with. Madam Viji then proceeded to delineate the pivotal role of a Navigator, accentuating the profound companionship they offer throughout the patient's earthly journey.

CR Selva, affiliated with the Sai Baba Centre in Klang, reflected, “Today's encounter left me deeply moved and enlightened. While I had heard of the remarkable contributions of Navigators, it wasn't until now that I comprehend their profound impact. The word EMPATHY was repeated numerous times, and the need for the community to create a sense of purpose. The session wasn't just about volunteering; it was about being part of a movement that holds the hands of those in

*Potential Navigators at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang.*

need and guides them through the darkness.”

Articles such as handcrafted pillows for mastectomy survivors and silicone or quilt materials for children afflicted by cancer, were showcased. These articles served to underscore the significance of seemingly minor gestures that bestow comfort upon these patients.

Kavita, who recently completed the Navigator module, recounted the poignant tale of a friend with breast cancer. Balancing the responsibilities of running a nasi lemak stall, caring for her children, and tending to household matters, her delayed medical attention casts light on

the hurdles many people face. Kavita highlighted the Navigator's role as a beacon of hope for such individuals, navigating them through their distress.

Participants were touched by the narratives and 25 participants answered the call to become Navigators. The next step is the commencement of a training module at OLL, Klang.

Gnana from Persatuan Kebajikan OKU Berdirikari Malaysia acknowledged the formidable commitment of a Navigator's role and was moved to register for the training module.

Fr Gregory agreed to make provisions for the upcoming training sessions, to be conduct-



*Madam Viji leading a session.*

ed by professionals from the National Cancer Society Malaysia (NCSM).

Beyond the Navigator training, the organising committee is exploring avenues to extend support to NCSM as some participants expressed interest in volunteering their time for auxiliary roles. These could be quilting, providing transportation to hospitals, assisting with marketing, and procuring groceries — all contributing to the patient's well-being.

For those keen on offering their services, kindly contact Damian at 019 3054441 or Mathew at 012 3235313 via WhatsApp. — **By OLL Organising Team**

## BEC members living *Laudato Si'*

SHAH ALAM: The St Maximilian Kolbe BEC of the Church of the Divine Mercy, recently held a picnic and a park clean-up in celebration of their patron saint's feast day.

Newly elected BEC coordinator, Christopher Teoh and his wife, prayer coordinator Dr Diana Raj, said they wanted to hold an activity that would be meaningful and make an impact on their BEC members.

“A pressing subject in the church right now is the issue of climate change and care for God's creation. We decided to do a park clean-up. This is something we do regularly. I thought it would be nice if we did it as a community,” explained Christopher.

“Although the phrase *Laudato Si'* has been going around a lot, many do not know what it is all about or how they can apply it in their lives. We did some research, and then spent time explaining it to our BEC members.

Some 70 per cent of the BEC's active members participated in the event, held on a Saturday morning. Christopher was happy with the turnout. It saw both old and young members working side-by-side cleaning up the neighbourhood park.

“To spice up the event, we had a competition. The person who collected the most garbage received a prize. In total, 15.2kg of garbage was collected,” said Diana.

After this activity, the group

enjoyed a potluck breakfast, followed by a game of charades based on Bible events. Christopher said it was a challenge getting everyone to play — the old, the young, the newly baptised, cradle Catholics — all claiming to have inadequate knowledge of biblical events.

“But it was great fun. It ended up bringing everyone together. I'm glad we incorporated something for everyone in our Saturday morning programme,” said Christopher, who also took the opportunity to introduce the new core team members to the group. He said the team had some interesting events lined up for the coming months. — **By Rachael Philip**



*The young ones doing their part to clean up the park (CDM FB pic)*



*Some of the students proudly displaying the succulent plants which they were given to take home.*

## A promise for a greener and healthier world

KUALA LUMPUR: With its focus on inculcating a culture of care for our earth among the young ones, the Creation Justice Ministry (CJM) of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur collaborated with Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (T) Thamboosamy Pillai, Sentul, on August 23.

A total of 30 Eucalyptus saplings were planted during this collaborative effort, with enthusiastic participation from 40 students spanning years three, four and five.

The event started with the volunteers gathering for a prayer at the Church of St Anthony and

then carpooling to the school. The tree planting activity, was held in conjunction with the ‘Season of Creation’, which runs from Sept 1 to Oct 4 and *Program Intervensi Obesiti* — an initiative run by the school under Kementerian Kesihatan, to encourage children to stay healthy, and to get involved in physical activities.

Green spaces were designed to be interactive spaces for people to engage with nature, learn about plants and serve as educational tools.

Archdiocesan Creation Justice Ministry ecclesiastical assistant Fr. Andrew Manickam OFM Cap,

and volunteers, encouraged the young children, as they carefully planted their saplings, to regularly spend more time outdoors. Some children spoke words of encouragement, while others gave their saplings a high five, and one was seen praying for the plant to grow well.

For 18 students, this was the first time they planted anything, and they are eagerly looking forward to more such opportunities. Each child was given a succulent plant to nurture at home while they continued caring for these young trees at school. — **By Marilyn Menezes Simon**



# People, not machines, are the value of work

VATICAN: Pope Francis told a group of entrepreneurs that work's greatest value comes from human beings, not from machines.

He also said businessmen and businesswomen can contribute to the common good through job creation, especially for young people.

"Today, an increasingly important way of participating in the common good is to create jobs, jobs for everyone, especially young people — trust young people: They need work, and you need them," he said in the message delivered August 28.

"Every new job created is shared wealth," the Pope said, "which does not end up in the banks to generate financial interest but is invested so that new people can work and make their lives more dignified."

"Work is legitimately important," he underlined. "For if it is true that work ennobles man, it is even truer that it is man who ennobles work. It is we, and not the machines,



(Unsplash/LYCS Architecture)

who are the true value of work."

Francis' message was read by Bishop Matthieu Rougé of the Diocese of Nanterre, France, on the first day of the Meeting of Entrepreneurs of France at the Paris Longchamp Racecourse Aug 28–29.

Pope Francis noted that, like many people today, the business world is facing challenges such as the war in Ukraine and the eco-

economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Entrepreneurs suffer when their business suffers, and they suffer a great deal when the business goes bankrupt and has to close," he said.

"The Book of Job," the Pope added, "teaches us that misfortune is not synonymous with fault, because it also strikes the righteous, and that success is not immediate-

ly synonymous with virtue and goodness."

"The Church understands the suffering of the good entrepreneur, she understands your suffering. She welcomes it, she accompanies you, she thanks you," he underlined.

Pope Francis told entrepreneurs: "The first capital of your company is you: your heart, your virtues, your will to live, your justice."

Human capital is worth more than economic and financial capital, he said, encouraging entrepreneurs to live their jobs like a vocation and "moral task."

He also urged them to contribute their creativity to civil society.

"Without new entrepreneurs, our planet will not withstand the impact of capitalism. So far, you have done something, some of you have done a lot: But it is not enough. This is an urgent time, a very urgent time: We must, you must, do more. The children will thank you, and I with them," Francis said. — **By Hannah Brockhaus, CNA**

## Abrahamic religions sign declaration for the protection of the elderly

BUENOS AIRES: On August 28, at the headquarters of the Catholic University of Argentina in Buenos Aires, the "Declaration of the Abrahamic Religions: Elderly persons in contemporary society and their protection," was signed under the patronage of the Pontifical Academy for Life, represented by Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, the Academy's president.

The Declaration was formalised by Prof. Don Rubén Revello, Director of the Institute of Bioethics of the UCA Faculty of Medicine, Rabbi Prof. Fernando Fishel Szlajen on the Jewish side, and Sheikh Prof. Abdala Cerrilla on the Islamic side.

In a joint statement, the representatives

from the Abrahamic Religions noted how the increasing aging of the world population could be seen as an opportunity for older people to "contribute significantly to social or community volunteering, education, and intergenerational knowledge transfer, among other activities that have not yet been properly sized in their positive potential for society."

By addressing the issue from a holistic and humanitarian perspective, the document read, "We may be facing an unbeatable opportunity to change the paradigm of conceiving the elderly as a negation and in a superfluous stage of life," transitioning to a phase "worthy of respect, care and participation, recognising the

value and experience of the elderly, providing them with the necessary support and building a more inclusive and supportive society for all ages and for the collective benefit."

This would be possible by dignifying the elderly, as "the physical wear and tear of the passage of time is compensated" by their "acquired wisdom."

The joint statement stressed the importance of assisting older people not merely out of "mercy and kindness" but, most importantly,

"out of justice."

Integration also plays a crucial role, as "Abrahamic cultures conceive old age as a stage of development and not a period of life condemned to social marginalisation."

"Our society looks down on old age, linking it with the past and the obsolete, but old age is the future for all of us. To honour the elderly today is to prepare the future dignity with which we aspire to be treated." — **By Edoardo Giribaldi, Vatican News**

## Philippine churches open 'Season of Creation,' call for accountability

MANILA: Christian Churches in the Philippines marked the start of the month-long observance of the "Season of Creation" with a call for justice for communities affected by development aggression.

In a press briefing on August 29, religious leaders demanded accountability from the Philippine government and big businesses "for their role in the socio-ecological crises that beset" the country.

"We come together to call for justice and peace to flow like a river as we demand accountability from our government leaders and urge them to impose sanctions on concerned government agencies and corporations who have caused irreparable damage to the environment and communities," said John Din, National Coordinator, *Laudato Si'* Movement Pilipinas.

Christians around the world observe the "Season of Creation" on Sept 1 with the theme "Listen to the Voice of Creation." The observance will culminate on Oct 4, the liturgical memorial of St. Francis of Assisi, patron of ecology.

Robert Samsion of the Episcopal Com-

mission on Ecumenical Affairs of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, said the recent issuance of the writ of *kalikasan* against several mining proponents is a "right step towards holding accountable the concerned agencies and mining firms for causing serious harm to the environment".

Rev Aldrin Peñamora, executive director of the Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation Commission of the Philippine Council for Evangelical Churches, underscored the need for President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. "to issue an executive order to ensure that the projects are really suspended."

Protestant pastor Irma Balaba said the National Council of Churches in the Philippines renews its commitment to "uphold the rights and dignity of the marginalised" and the role of the church in fostering climate justice.

"We will continue to be bearers of hope to the victims and survivors of human-induced and natural disasters through accountable service while acting locally and speaking globally towards safeguarding the environment and its defenders," she said.

— **LiCAS News**



The launch of 2023 Season of Creation. (LiCas News photo/Caritas Philippines)



Pope Francis blesses a woman, where he presided over a special papal Mass on July 23, 2023, marking the third annual World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly. (Vatican Media)

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# Lessons from my 50-year career in adult faith formation

After working for 12 years as a religious educator of both children and adults in the Archdiocese of New York, in July 1988, I accepted a ministry position at the Centre for Pastoral Life and Ministry in the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, Missouri.

For several years I had been searching for a position that would allow me to focus exclusively on adult faith formation, and the centre proved to be just what I had always desired. I worked with the centre's very professional pastoral staff for almost 18 years, until the centre was officially disbanded by then-Bishop Robert Finn, who implemented a more traditional view of Church and ministry.

I was then invited by a local pastor in the diocese to continue my adult faith formation ministry at St Sabina Parish in Belton, Missouri, south of Kansas City. In May 2006, I began my parish ministry and continued to focus on adult faith formation ministry for an additional 17 years in the parish. In June of this year, I felt that it was time to retire, and I proceeded to leave the parish setting.

As I reflect on my ministry and faith journey since coming to the Kansas City diocese, I want to share some things I learnt along the way regarding the meaning and significance that adult faith formation has had for me all these years.

## 1. Adult faith formation is an essential component of what it means to be Church

The institutional church must commit itself to promote and provide the best adult faith formation possible at both the diocesan and parish level. While Catholic and parish schools have an important role in educating and forming elementary and high school children, much more resources have to be allocated for the education and faith formation of adults. In so doing, the community forms adults who have appropriated their faith into their lived experience and in turn, model Christian living.

## 2. Adults desire to appropriate the faith in a way that is consistent with their lived experience, linking faith to the reality of their everyday lives

A great hunger exists among faith-filled adults for proper education and formation based on Vatican II teachings and its vision of Church and discipleship. Once exposed to the fullness of Christian faith and tradition through the lenses of Vatican II, adults begin to appreciate and appropriate their faith for themselves. They learn how to reflect on the values being offered, to articulate how those values cohere with their lived experience, and consequently freely choose to appropriate for themselves what speaks to them of God and their faith journey.

## 3. Adults desire to be treated as adults

When it comes to both the good and the not-so-good of Church history, theology, biblical interpretation, moral decision making and so on, adults want to know the fullness of the truth of what really happened. They are not content with a triumphalist telling of the story, but favour a telling that manifests both the goodness and the shortcomings of the tradition. Often the phrases that I consistently hear are "Why weren't we told this before ..." or "If only I knew this then ..." or "I have never heard that before ..."

## 4. Adults need to be affirmed in their adult relationship to God in and through



Biagio Mazza, an adult faith formation and religious educator for nearly 50 years, leading adult formation at St Sabina Parish in Belton, Missouri. (NCR photo/Biagio Mazza)

## Jesus. They need to know:

- That God loves them in and through the very messiness of life.
- That they are created with freedom to choose how that love relationship will unfold in their lives.
- That they have a brain they are to use in correlation with their conscience, that inner sanctuary between themselves and God in which no one can interfere.
- That we are all called to accompany one another on our faith journeys, helping one another to see how God is present in life's complexities and challenges.

## 5. Adult faith formation is more expansive than catechesis

Catechesis focuses on what the Church teaches and why. Faith formation includes catechesis but also exposes adults to the richness and variety of both tradition and new developments in various fields like theology, Scripture, liturgy and morality. Once exposed, they can use all they have learnt as a guide to form their conscience and act in accordance with it.

## 6. Vatican II links the call and responsibility of ministry to one's baptismal call and commitment

In so doing, ministry, or service to God's human family, was forever severed as the exclusive right of the ordained. All baptised are called to

model Christ, putting their freely given gifts at the service of all God's people wherever they happen to be planted in God's vineyard.

## 7. Faith formation on any level, especially with adults, is essentially a training in the art of synodality

Synodality presumes that the Spirit speaks in and through the lived experience of all God's people. Faith formation enables personal encounters with one another, which lead to active listening to one another, so as to hear the Spirit speaking. Faith formation involves taking one another seriously when it comes to each person sharing how God operates in their lives. Faith formation provides the setting in which this encounter can take place on an adult, faith-filled and engaging manner that respects the wisdom and dignity of all participants.

The late Kansas City-St. Joseph Bishop John Sullivan, who first hired me for this diocese, had a vision of Church that saw adult faith formation as its essential and most important component. Two of his consistent sayings have remained with me all these years:

Even if we had more than enough priests, there would still be a need for lay faith formation, for we are all Church, called to put our gifts at the service of one another.

Your ministry as faith formation facilitators is to work yourselves out of a job, by forming and training the ministers and trainers of the future.

In all the faith formation offerings that I facilitated in my close to 50 years of ministry in various settings, I strove to adhere to this vision of Church by implementing these principles of adult faith formation.

Even when I faced pushback from Church authorities, often at the cost of my employment, I still continued to be a facilitator that enabled others to appreciate the fullness of their Catholic tradition and appropriate the faith for themselves. Even in my retirement I plan to continue using my gifts to facilitate adult faith formation opportunities. There is no retirement from serving God's people. —

By Biagio Mazza, NCR

# Beyond burnouts: Moving from profession to vocation

A friend, a dedicated social worker of more than two decades, gave me a shock when she confided, "I feel that I have to quit, I cannot take it anymore! I am going through a burnout." I understood her pain, but also felt deep within that she would be able to navigate through this burnout experience and emerge afresh. There are several other similar cases of burnout in social workers in India — as they are involved in complex working environments.

It seems to me that the reasons for such stress can be traced to four causes: their work, the organisation, their personal lives, and their personalities. The nature of their work is dynamic and organic. The client or the stakeholder cannot be reduced to a mere "number" or a "case," for they are fellow human beings who need compassion and care.

Secondly, many organisations place high demands and set impossible targets, causing the social workers to overstretch their physical, mental and emotional capacities. Additionally, unsuitable and toxic working conditions, including poor salaries or remuneration, lack of recognition or organisational support add to the stress levels.

The third aspect — their personal lives — relates to the insufficient time that the social workers get to spend with their families; and

in several cases, a lack of empathy and understanding from their family and relatives adds to the stress.

The fourth aspect is their personalities: Some of them work without much awareness of themselves and — having "emotional baggage" of their own — they tend to cause more stress to themselves. No wonder that another friend, a social worker who herself experienced domestic violence, found it very stressful to challenge the belief system of her clients.

I discovered that there could be three stages of resolving this issue. The first stage to resolve such troubled states of inner anguish and rise above them is awareness of one's anchoring bias. We hold on to the first information that we receive from outside sources — either about the task given or the situation. I recall an incident where a student pursuing her internship with me found it difficult to relate and work with women outside her caste. Her thoughts were anchored on the bias she developed since childhood about persons of another caste. She was unaware of this cognitive bias. When it was brought to her notice she denied initially but gradually made efforts to free herself from it.

The second stage is the movement into stillness. Stillness is not an emotion. Stillness is the

calm centre of one's self. It is a space that is attained when all beliefs, ideas, compulsions, perspectives, and unresolved accumulation of years that created the inner clutter are given an opportunity to be decluttered and renewed! It is the stage when moving towards stillness, one is able to name and own up to feelings of loneliness, loss of identity, uselessness, uncertainty, exhaustion, or hopelessness. This stillness is a gift, a divine invitation.

The third stage of resolving the issue of burnout is the realisation of a call. It is to re-understand what social work is and what it is not. It cannot be reduced to a mere profession. It is a vocation. One of my college professors used to often remind us that social work was not just about accomplishing tasks/activities: Rather, it is about helping another person to evolve, become one's best version of themselves, and outgrowing the present tumultuous or stagnated moment. And so, sharing one's resources such as time, intellect, emotional energies, and other resources are not to be considered wasted. During a conversation with a colleague on social work as a vocation, she realised that and recalled moments when she had been instrumental in helping the others to discover their beloved-ness. This helped her face her struggles of being impulsive and has

now helped her to ponder and respond creatively to life.

This is a call that social workers are privileged to receive. In the process of this vocation, every step in it, even painful ones, are nothing but reminders of this call. This way, burnout experiences become reminders of the call. Such reminders then become positive agents of renewal. They turn out to be blessings as they become opportunities to move into stillness, thus decluttering thoughts and feelings, and helping us realise our call at a deeper level.

All these three stages need time and courage. It takes courage to acknowledge our burnouts and it takes courage to say goodbye to them too! Instead of quitting, if we are willing to look within and become aware of the various anchoring biases that we have; if we keep moving towards stillness; and if we can gain a new perspective and move away from the idea that we have a profession to the idea that we have a vocation, then, burnouts would disappear altogether!

After all, we are invited to keep going, keep growing, aren't we?! — By Lavina D'Souza, *Global Sisters Report* (NCR)

• Lavina D'Souza is a Canossian sister from Mumbai, India



# The synod — and a sign of the times

It is proverbial wisdom that 'One picture is worth a thousand words.' That is certainly true of the picture below — it is worth many thousands of words as we approach the synod in October. Dare I say it — it is worth a thousand of the numbered statements in Denzinger!

Please study the picture closely.

It is typical of the signs one sees on the outskirts of villages and towns in Germany. The image of a building in yellow tells the viewer that the only church/chapel in the town is Catholic.

The letters and numbers tell the days and times when Catholics there gather to celebrate the Eucharist. 'Sa' is an abbreviation for Saturday, and 'So' for Sunday; the numbers

are self-explanatory.

Now look more closely! There used to be — in the time since the sign was put up — three celebrations: one on Saturday evening, and two on Sunday morning. Now part of the sign has been painted over: there is now only one Eucharistic assembly!

Why is this? It could be that the population has dropped by 66 per cent. But that cannot explain it since there is a big new housing estate nearby: the town is growing in population. It could be that there are fewer people 'going to Church.' That is almost certainly the case. Rejection of the church has been increasing in recent years with more and more people formally renouncing their membership of the Catholic Church;

and there has been a decrease in religious practice across the churches generally. But would that explain why there is now only one Mass over a weekend instead of three? Of course not!

## The real problem

The reason is not hard to find: it is due to there being not enough presbyters to preside over the assemblies — what is incorrectly referred to as either 'the priest shortage' or 'the vocations' crisis.' It is the same story across diocese after diocese and country after country.

Fewer presbyters, older presbyters, and empty seminaries mean that the few men available there are being spread thinner and thinner. That is why the white paint has been applied to this sign to alter it.

We can engage in platitudes. One diocese claims that it is not 'closing parishes' but 'restructuring.' Such statements belong to the deceitful world of spin doctors rather than to those who claim to be the successors of the Apostles.

Many other dioceses try to avoid facing the issue by importing young presbyters from the developing world. Are they not needed there? Is there no need for them to help their communities? Is this not a form of neo-colonialism — stripping the developing world of its assets for the sake of the rich countries? Should not a presbyter emerge from out of the community: a basic sign of an inculturated liturgy?

## Older and more tired

What happened in this town is that where there used to be three presbyters in three

towns, now there is one man travelling between them. You probably know a place near you where this is happening.

But the presbyters are old and often tired. The assemblies are often too big — one cannot genuinely relate to a community of hundreds! To imagine one can just 'scale up' the size of a congregation from 100 to 200 — or even more — without detriment to the level of participation in the liturgy is a failure to understand both how humans relate and the nature of a Eucharistic celebration. It is a gathering of family (we call each other 'brothers and sisters') and friends ('I call you friends' — Jesus) not a 'service provision event.'

Moreover, the presbyter has to pretend that each celebration is the centre and summit of his day — yet his demeanour may reveal his exhaustion.

Please do remember that it is less than a 100 years ago since celebrating two Masses on one day (except in an emergency) needed a special permission from the bishop — 'bination' was seen as most exceptional. Most of the Orthodox churches still do not permit it.

## Face the problem

Meet any group of presbyters and they will openly talk about the problem. Often as soon as a bishop enters the room, the discussion falls silent! But if this problem is not addressed openly at the synod, then much of what it will discuss will have an air of unreality.

That sign is truly a sign for the times. —  
By Thomas O' Loughlin, LCI (<https://international.la-croix.com>)



A sign of the times for celebrations of the Eucharist in a provincial German town. (LCI Photo/Thomas O'Loughlin)

## A call to resolve Ernakulam-Angamal liturgical conflict

Kerala is known as God's Own Country and visitors are invariably impressed by its beauty and splendour. Diversity marks all aspects of life in Kerala. Varieties of landscape and cuisine, cultures and religions, occupations and trades, thoughts and opinions make it unique.

In Kerala, Christianity is both ancient and new. On this sacred land, Christianity, particularly different shades of Catholicism, survived and flourished for millennia, facing unimaginable challenges external and internal. Through the thick and thin the faithful allowed God to mould and shape them, faithfully and heroically.

Features that make the Church in Kerala outstanding include its ability to give saints and mystics as well as several thousand missionaries, not to mention thousands of nurses and teachers and others whose services are gratefully remembered.

For more than 100 years, clergy, men and women Religious and others have gone from Kerala to different parts of India, and eventually to diverse corners of the world, to enkindle or nourish people's faith. Whether the missionaries have come from Syro-Malabar or Syro-Malankara or Latin rites, their lives have formed a magnificent mosaic.

The current issue that is at the centre of conflict in Ernakulam-Angamaly Archdiocese — in which direction the celebrant will turn during the Eucharist — is hardly intelligible for those who have no idea of the diverse rites and their traditions in the Catholic Church, and how the faithful prize them and find ways to foster them.

Those of us who attended the Masses in both modes will know that both are rich. Certainly, we feel more connected with each other and with God when the priest faces us all the time, and, equally, when the priest turns

to the altar, one certainly experiences a great sense of awe and mystery, connected with God's immensity and otherness.

Though theologically one can make a case and say that one is preferable, arguments that make one better than the other are futile. Just because a priest turns to the faithful, our sense of communion and participation don't increase multi-fold. Every mode has strengths and limitations.

While the faithful are free to cherish and promote one or the other, it is difficult to imagine why a faith-community has come to the point of splitting on this issue. While there is a core to the problem, many added-layers have made it extremely complex. Strong emotions, displayed by both groups, have added fuel to the fire.

While there is a genuine issue that needs to be resolved, a time has come when there is no point in arguing who was right and who was wrong and who will win and who will have to concede. Success and defeat are unhelpful and futile ways of measuring, especially in evaluating spiritual matters. Win-win options have to be explored now rather than trying to blame one or the other group entirely.

Also, it is good to acknowledge that there are no innocent participants in this episode: in one way or the other, all, Church's leaders as well as the faithful and media, have contributed to the conflict. Finding out who did what or said what, when and where, is unhelpful.

As it is clear by now, the issue is not directly about faith or morals or doctrines. While uniformity is helpful in liturgy, in several contexts, the faithful celebrate variations, more so when they begin to be expressive.

Pope Francis gives us some clues. He upholds and promotes formalities, systems and traditions but is willing to go out of the way to meet people where they are and is ready to



A priest of the Syro-Malabar Church in India celebrates Mass facing the altar in this undated photo courtesy of the Holy Qurbana of the Syro-Malabar Church Facebook page. (UCA News photo)

accommodate in this less-than-perfect-world. Synod on Synodality reminds of speaking and listening, discerning and learning, listening to and learning even from those who were wounded by the Church or have left the Church.

Saint John Paul II repeatedly said that the Third Millennium will be of the laity. Laity, *laos* in Greek, originally meant people. All of us are — laity, clergy or religious — God's People. More so now than in the past, laity begin to find their voice and long to contribute to the building of God's Kingdom. They become aware of their dignity and equality and sanctity, of their rights and privileges and responsibilities.

Laity assuming responsible and leadership roles in the Church are comparable to the tectonic shifts and they are irreversible. While maintaining the distinctions between the clergy and laity and their vocations and roles, the

Church ought to prioritise its image as People of God, an image that precedes all others.

India is going through an unprecedented crisis. There are uncertainties and fears at various levels, including threats to our Christian and national identity itself. While reviewing to find ways to resolve the liturgical-crisis, recall the faces of all those Christians (as well as others who constantly strive to uphold Constitutional values and are ready to sacrifice their lives for it) whose lives were violated, be at Kandhamal that happened fifteen years ago or what is going on now in Manipur.

Christians in India, and all over the world, expect a speedy resolution for this crisis. —  
By Fr Stanislaus Alla, SJ, *Matters India*

Jesuit Father Stanislaus Alla teaches moral theology in Delhi's Vidyajyoti College of Theology. He is a native of Warangal in Telangana state, southern India



# Evangelisation and New Evangelisation

Evangelisation and mission are at the heart of being Christian. The Church has always placed mission and evangelisation as its priority. Jesus' mission on earth is exactly that, mission. Even the four Gospel writers are called evangelists, not authors or novelists. The *Acts of the Apostles* is so named as it documents the actions of the early Apostles in spreading the message of Jesus.

Evangelisation at its simplest is to "speak about Jesus to others" or "tell others about Jesus". The Catholic Church advocates mission in words and deeds, not just preaching or quoting scriptures. We evangelise with our life, as role model as well as with words and actions. We do acts of charity, foster peace and justice. We show kindness, compassion and love to people around us.

Throughout the past century, the universal Church had issued many documents based on evangelisation and mission. Of the 16 documents in the Vatican Council II, two documents (*Gaudium et Spes* and *Ad Gentes*) contains the spirit of evangelisation. Other not so known Vatican documents on mission includes *Maximum Illud* (Apostolic letter of Pope Benedict XV on the Propagation of the Faith throughout the World, 1919), *Rerum Ecclesiae* (Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on Catholic Missions, 1926) and *Evangelii Praecones* (Encyclical of Pope Pius XII on promotion of Catholic Missions, 1951).

In 1975, Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntianti* (on Evangelisation in the Modern World), addressed specifically the need for evangelisation in today's modern world. In his Apostolic Exhortation, he called upon the "pastors of the universal Church ... a fresh forward impulse ... a new period of evangelisation". He went on to say "The conditions of the society in which we live oblige all of us therefore to revise methods, to seek by every means to study how we can bring the Christian message to modern man".

In 1979, Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic pilgrimage to Poland started using the term "new evangelisation". He said "We were given a sign that on the threshold of the new millennium, in these new times, these new conditions of life, the Gospel is again being proclaimed. A new evangelisation has begun,



## REMINISCING CHURCH

Richard Chia

as if it were a new proclamation".

In subsequent speeches and documents, Pope John Paul II continued to expound on this "new era of evangelisation" and "new evangelisation". His Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (on the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate, 1990) speaks at length of this new evangelisation, followed through with his Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (towards the Third Millennium, 1994) and his Apostolic Exhortation *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (at the beginning of the new millennium, 2001).

As a lay faithful, like me, you may have asked "What is new evangelisation?"; "Why NEW?"; "What is the difference between the old evangelisation and the new evangelisation?" Without attempting to give any theological or philosophical answers to the above questions, my grasps of the questions are as follows.

#1. The world has changed. It is no longer, Catholic Christians versus non-Catholics. The Vatican Yearbook states there are 1.3 billion (17.7 per cent) Catholics in the world. Meaning, Catholics, though many, are no longer the majority or dominant religion, unlike the colonial days when the world was divided between Spain and Portugal, each sending missionaries out to convert the population.

#2. Previously, mission work was done mainly by clergy, religious and fulltime pastoral workers, sent to various parts of the world to preach the Word of God, and to convert. Today, the dwindling response to vocations to the priesthood and religious life means mission work has to fall upon the lay faithful as well.

#3. During the industrial era, people mostly worked, played and prayed. Resources were limited, social activities were scarce and job employment was few and far between. Religion and faith provided "support" and "means" for them to hope for a better life. To



A file photo of Miri vocation camp.

day, in the age of internet, social media and globalisation, career choices are plentiful. The numerous 24 hours' day activities give people plenty of opportunities for other pastimes, except think of God, Church or religion.

The list goes on. Many papers have been written about the declining interest of people in faith and religion. With these as its backdrop, our Holy Fathers saw it coming and simply calls it "the Church in the modern world". In light of the above, the universal Church came out with a string of initiatives. In 2010, Pope Benedict XVI established the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelisation. In 2012, he called for a Year of Faith on the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council. He opened it with a general assembly of the Synod of Bishops on *The New Evangelisation for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*.

In 2013, Pope Francis released the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*) on "the Church's primary mission of evangelisation in the modern world". In its opening paragraph, Pope Francis calls the Church to a new chapter of evangelisation and invites every Christian to a life of missionary discipleship. The Holy Father writes that "the Word of God constantly shows us how God challenges those who believe in Him 'to go forth'."

The Church in Malaysia too had embarked on her own initiatives — the School of Evangelisation and the current Institute for New Evangelisation. Despite her best efforts to train and form the people of God on the need for mission and new evangelisation, success is mostly slow. Perhaps it is because many see evangelisation as equal to conversion. In

Malaysia, conversion from one religion to another is a very sensitive subject.

The *Catholic Asian News* had a feature article "The New Evangelisation is for Everyone" (*CANews*, July 2023). Among others, the article states that "although we speak of evangelisation as 'new', it only seems new to our present generation of Catholics". Our Christian mission has not changed. Quoting from the late Pope Benedict XVI "the entire Christian community is called to revive its missionary spirit in order to offer the new message for which the people of our times are longing".

In addition, a "new form" of evangelisation had grown during the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital evangelisation became synonymous with new media tools such as the internet, social media and smartphones, where talks, seminars and formation sessions were conducted online. Media organisations like *EWTN*, *National Catholic Register*, *Word on Fire*, *Catholic Answers* and *Formed* use the new media to promote the work of evangelisation. Individuals do the same with their social media accounts.

Is this really what Jesus meant when He said "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (The Great Commission, Matthew 28:16-20).

● **Richard Chia** has been actively involved in Church since young. He held full-time corporate jobs while serving in ministries and groups at various church levels for the past four decades.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE



## Making a Difference

Tony Magliano

You may not think about it. You may not pray about it. You may not even know about it. But like it or not, if you've been baptised, God is calling you to be a prophet!

"A prophet? Who, me?" That's right, a prophet. And yes, you!

Now just because you probably don't predict the future, don't let that throw you. Because predicting the future is not the normal gift of prophecy.

When you were baptised, the Holy Trinity called you, and gave you the grace to be priest, prophet, and king. That prophetic calling given to you means that you were, and will continue to be, until you take your last breath, an instrument of communicating the Almighty's will. You are called to speak for God. And not in a timid, sheepish way, but in a courageous, confident way like the great biblical prophets: "Thus says the Lord!"

But speaking with bold confidence must be tempered with deep humility. For all gifts, including the baptismal gift of prophecy are not

of our own making, but come from our gracious God.

And it is essential to remember that the words of God's truth, as essential as they are for us to speak, are empty unless they are accompanied by sacrificial, selfless acts of love. For as the saying rings true: "Actions speak louder than words."

For as Jesus said, "By their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father in heaven."

As true prophets, we are always called, to the very best of our ability, to both speak and act as Jesus would. To be imitators of Christ Jesus.

But how can we know how to imitate Jesus? Pray with the Gospel every day! It is there that we have the life, teachings, lived example, miracles, suffering, death, and resurrection of God who loved and loves us enough to take on our flesh and human nature so as to show us the Way, the Truth and the Life!

## God's challenging call — are you up for it?

And as you reflect on the Lord Jesus, reflect on the concerns of your personal life, and the concerns of our suffering brothers and sisters, and that of our wounded earth-home. Ask yourself "WWJD" — that is, "What Would Jesus Do?" And what would Jesus not do?

Who would Jesus abort? Who would Jesus let go hungry? Who would Jesus euthanise? Who would Jesus bomb? Who would Jesus shoot? Who would Jesus execute? Who would Jesus turn away at our border? Whose suffering would Jesus ignore? And who would Jesus not encourage to care for our critically wounded planet which future generations will need to live on?

And then prayerfully ask yourself what Jesus is inspiring you to do to make a difference, to advance His kingdom on earth. And then put one foot in front of the other ... and do it!

In a letter to St. Francis Xavier before his departure to India in 1541, St. Ignatius of Loyola famously used the Latin phrase *Ite, inflammate omnia*, meaning, "Go, set the world on fire!"

And St. Francis did exactly that. He set the

world on fire! And in our own sphere we too can set the world on fire. On fire for love of God, for love of neighbour — especially the poor and vulnerable — and on fire for our earth-home (see: <https://www.xavier.edu/mission-identity/xaviers-mission/who-is-francis-xavier>).

God is calling you to higher heights. Don't be daunted by the long journey. Think of the Chinese proverb: "A journey of a thousand miles starts with one step."

So don't be timid, don't be afraid. God doesn't call us to be prophets without giving us His prophetic grace. Take one step further. And take another step further, and every once in a while, look back at how far you have come. And then take another prophetic step forward.

And that's what a prophet is called to do.

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# Popular podcaster priest urges Catholics to 'Get back in the game'

The greatest basketball players of all time aren't remembered because they never committed a foul, but because of how they played the game, Fr Mike Schmitz told an estimated 1,000 Catholics at a seminar in Plymouth.

Likewise, the greatest saints of the Catholic Church aren't remembered because they never sinned, but because they played to win, he said.

"Fr Mike," as he is known from his wildly successful podcasts, including *The Bible in a Year* and *The Catechism in a Year*, kicked off the third season of a monthly speaker series in the Detroit Archdiocese with his address August 8.

He stressed how, all too often, Christians dwell too much on the times when they have fallen or might fall, and not enough on the end goal.

"So many times we Christians act like we don't know what it's like to play to win," said Fr Mike, a priest of the Diocese of Duluth, Minnesota. "We know what it's like to play not to lose, and there is a huge difference. Players who play not to lose, play scared. As opposed to those who play to win, who make an error and think, 'OK, on to the next thing.' Tonight, let's have a radical mind shift to have the life of a Christian who plays to win."

Fr Mike said the goal in life isn't to be perfect, but to fulfill the meaning God intends for each and every one of His creations.

"Why did God make you? To know Him and love Him and serve Him in this life, so as to live with Him forever in the next. That's the reason that ends up becoming the goal. ... That is the point of being alive. That is the goal: to be with God."

To reach this goal, Fr Mike proposed an exercise: When a person dies and stands before the gates of heaven, and the angels ask the person why they should be let in, what should a person say?

"I ask middle schoolers this all the time, and the answers are what you expect ... 'Well, I'm a good person. I'm nice. I serve people. I went to Mass every single Sunday. Didn't lie, cheat, steal. I'm not the worst person I know.'"

"But there really is only one right answer," he continued. "There are two versions of it. The one-word answer, 'Jesus.'"

That's it. It's impossible to work our way into heaven. It's impossible to be good enough for heaven. It's impossible to white-knuckle your way to heaven. The long answer, by the way, is, 'Because Jesus died for me, and now I live for Him.'"

Christ's sacrifice on the cross is a gift that could never be earned, only received, Fr Mike said. There are only two good ways to receive a gift, he added: One is to give thanks. The other is to use the gift, by living the life God wants His creation to live. To use God's gifts is to cultivate the cardinal virtues.

The cardinal virtues — "cardinal" coming from the Latin word for "hinge" — aren't meant to be means unto themselves in the Christian life, but key components that allow people to enter into a proper Christian understanding of life, he said. Those virtues are justice, prudence, temperance and fortitude.

"Justice means giving another what is owed to them," Fr Mike explained. "Directly under this virtue of justice is the sub-virtue of religion. Because who do I owe everything to? It's God. I owe obedience to God because I owe Him everything. Worship belongs to justice: I worship God because I owe it to Him."

He then moved to temperance.

"Temperance is doing the right thing at the right time in the right way," Father Schmitz said. "To be intemperate is to not use the right thing, or not at the right time, or not in the right way. We live in a world with so many gifts; God has been so good to us. Yet, if I've been intemperate, then I have the tendency to take good things and make them idolatrous."

Prudence, Fr Mike said, has nothing to do with one's attitude or how they dress. Rather, prudence is about knowing one's goal in life and taking the appropriate measures to reach that goal.

"Prudence takes its root from the word 'priority,' meaning to be prudent is to live according to one's priority in life. What's the goal of life? To get to heaven. One of the reasons why I do these exercises is to get people to think: If it's your funeral, and you are there in the box, what will people get up and say about you? What is it you want to be true about you? What will people remember?"

"When I take my last breath, I want to have been a friend



Fr Mike Schmitz, the popular host of Ascension Press Media's "The Bible in a Year" and "The Catechism in a Year" podcasts, speaks August 8, 2023, at St John's Resort in Plymouth, Mich. (OSV News photo/Daniel Meloy, Detroit Catholic)

of God. A prudent person knows the goal and takes the wise steps to reach the goal. No one gets to the Olympic podium and wonders how they got there. They knew their goal and took the wise steps to reach that goal."

He finished with fortitude, joking — to groans — that fortitude is the fourth virtue because it is "fourth-ti-tude."

Fortitude is doing what's right and just, even when it's difficult. In many ways, fortitude is a prerequisite to any of the other virtues, said the priest.

"C.S. Lewis said (fortitude) is all the other virtues at the moment of testing. It's easy to be honest when telling the truth will not get you in trouble. It's easy to be prudent when it's what you wanted to do anyway. It's easy to be temperate when it's not in front of you. That's why we need this virtue called fortitude. The reality is, if I don't have fortitude, I don't have any of the other virtues."

These four virtues aren't the means of being with God in heaven — it is grace and grace alone that brings about salvation — but these four virtues are how people can properly receive the gift Christ has won for us, Fr Mike said.

"As Christians, we can fail, but failure isn't final. In these moments where I have failed, now I begin again. In those moments, I say, 'I'm not playing alone, I have divine help.' And I start anew," he concluded. — **By Daniel Meloy, OSV**

## Barber who doubles up as professor

For Jetish Shivdas, being a college professor and working as a barber are of equal status. "What supported me in life is the salon," he says, with a twinkle in his eyes.

Since 2012, Shivdas, who has a doctorate, works as assistant Malayalam professor at St Kuriakose College, at Kuruppampady, Kerala.

What makes him stand out is that after college hours he is at his "Modern Gents Beauty Parlour." He says that it is the place where he did most of his studies — between cutting the hair of different people.

His family is originally from Manikandam Chal in Ernakulam district and made a living by weaving mats of bamboo. He went to school with his brother and friends braving several hurdles, such as crossing a river and walking about 10 km as the place had poor bus service in those days.

As a child, he suffered from respiratory illness and had to stop schooling in the ninth grade. The family migrated to Kuruppampady, another village in Ernakulam district, to attend to his medical needs and help him continue schooling. He completed his 10th grade at the new place. He then left studies to help the family and learned hair cutting at his uncle's shop and then started his own shop later.

"My father also did the same job for a long time. While I was at the barber's shop, I still had a burning desire to study. I used to read books that inspired me to do something better in life. So I joined a course in electronics and telecommunications and passed with good marks."

He then worked in an electronic shop as a TV mechanic for two years before starting his own shop. "I studied for Plus Two (12th grade) sitting in the shop. I realised that in the barber shop I would get more time for studies. So, I



Jetish Shivdas cutting a customer's hair at his salon. (Matters India photo)

gave up the electronic shop and started the salon. For me my work and study were not two separate programmes."

He completed his 12th grade working in the salon and joined a Bachelor of Arts course in history. He passed the course with good marks through distance learning from Calicut University.

"This gave me the confidence that I could do well in studies. And then there was no turning back. I also did my

post-graduation in Malayalam. I had a desire to be a college professor."

Among his customers were teachers too. They suggested writing the NEET (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test) which would help him get a job in a college. He wrote and passed the test.

For a year he taught in Baharat Mata College at Trikkakara, near Kochi. In 2012, he joined St Kuriakose College of Management and Science, Kuruppampady.

His friends in the college encouraged him to apply for a doctorate and he applied for the course in Mahatma Gandhi University.

In 2015, he received a junior research fellowship which helped him financially.

He says he is happy with any work. "In my childhood after school hours I and my friends helped our parents in weaving bamboo mats. My father used to go to the jungle with others to collect bamboo and send them down the river. They would return after five or six days," he recalled.

"When people ask me why I do jobs side by side I tell them I am a mechanic, barber, and weaver. All jobs are equal," he asserted.

He regrets that people tend to consider some jobs as inferior and keep away from those involved in it. "When we sideline a job, we are sidelining human beings too. We live in a culture where we say people are equal, then how can we differentiate the jobs," he asks.

"This is the reason why I can go to work in the salon in the evening without any hesitation," says Shivdas, who also writes songs for films. — **By Lissy Kurian, Matters India**



# The God of little things

When we live in a world so dominated by social media, it is hard not to feel that the grass is greener on the other side. We see attractive couples who seemingly are living their best lives on camera, appearing to be completely devoted to each other and their relationship. We try out recipes which social media influencers assure us are easy as one-two-three, only to produce blobs that look nothing like the purportedly easy bake dessert or frozen treat.

Every place on the Internet seems to feature people in control of their lives: 60-something flabby women who took up weight training and who are now single digit dress sizes, couch potatoes whose new dog sparked an exercise revolution that turned them into marathon runners, thrift shop hunters who chanced on a priceless piece of whatever century French furniture which turned out to be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, septuagenarians who went back to school to finish SPM ... the list goes on.

These stories may make for great content, but a constant bombardment of them (and it is truly easy to overdose on social media consumption without knowing), can make an average Joan feel pretty inconsequential. No one makes content about mothers who work 10-hour days, and then come back to clean and vacuum, and stay up tending to a feverish child. There's no views to be had for an older single man who continues to



## WORD IN PROGRESS

Karen-Michaela Tan

live at home because he is his elderly father's only help and caretaker. No one is inspired by an 81-year old widower who continues to serve as a warden in church. It truly seems that unless one is beautiful, or has come through dire circumstances in life and triumphed, the simple act of simply being means naught.

And yet, God draws from the ordinary. Apart from the awe and wonder of the creation story — a universe and a world in six days! — God has always looked to the small and insignificant when He wanted to make big impressions. From the simple girl whose fanfare-less 'yes' led to a saviour being born, to the homespun regularity of her earthly spouse who knew little beyond carpentry, and yet became the patron saint of the Universal Church, families, fathers, expectant mothers, travellers, immigrants, house sellers and buyers, craftsmen, engineers and working people, our God has always looked to the humble in which to create great things.

In a world where professionals are urged to upskill and recertify in order to remain on

top of their game, in a society where politicians who shout the loudest get the most airtime, and where perfect Instagram photos mask the fracture within families and relationships, we must consistently remind ourselves that we are worthy as we are, for who we are.

God loves us *now*. He does not withhold His love and approval until we achieve something. Created in His likeness and being, we are already worthy and loveable in His eyes. God has no interest in great and grandiose gestures of love, because He is love Himself. Just as it is impossible for us to make the ocean wetter by emptying a litre of water into it, God does not need sweeping protestations of love to give us love. And we are loved whether we deserve it or not. Like the father of the prodigal son, like the father of the two boys who were told to go to work in their father's vineyard, God knows our faults, and chooses to love us anyway.

He is constantly seeking to communicate that love. Which is why it is important for us to regulate social media consumption, and try to achieve some form of spiritual and secular balance. While the God of the burning bush is still the God of today, His calls to us are far less flashy these days.

One of my favourite passages in the Old Testament is 1 Kings 19:11-13, which tells the story of Elijah seeking God. Because he has walked so long with God, Elijah knows

the heart of God, and thus is unmoved at the sound of violent wind, daunting earthquake, and conflagration. Only at the sound of a gentle breeze does the prophet shield his face with his cloak, and venture out to meet God.

Elijah knew from the powerful works of wonder performed by the Lord, that God is indeed magnificent and awe inspiring. But his intimacy with God also taught Elijah how to recognise God's gentleness.

In this time of social media bombardment, we need to see God in the small and unobtrusive. God's love, His guidance, the wisdom He chooses to impart to us is many times communicated in little ways. Waking up mobile in spite of being overweight, seeing through clear eyes despite the threat of diabetes, are just a few of the ways God shows grace to His children.

God continues to speak to us in a myriad of ways: a homily from a visiting priest which makes us sit up and take notice, advice from a friend who had hitherto always minded their business, Scripture shared by a neighbour, the kindness of strangers, all these are ways God proves He continues to bless and be with us. It is only whether we can recognise Him in the little things.

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



## FAITHFULLY SPEAKING

Julie Lim Seet Yin

Gardening is a hobby I have taken up lately. Even though I am an amateur at gardening, I have picked up many pointers from watching YouTube videos and from other gardening enthusiasts. There are various common indoor and outdoor plants to learn about, and how to care for them.

During this gardening journey, I have come to discover that plants can teach us about spirituality, remind us about the "enemy", or even inspire us to read more of the Bible, especially the Old Testament which I

## Planting inspirations in my faith journey

often neglect. Here are three types of plants that have inspired my faith journey.

### Prayer Plant

Prayer plants are named as such because the leaves unfurl in the daytime and fold up at night to look like hands held together in prayer. The movement of the leaves is known as nyctinasty. Prayer plants are also known as calatheas.

A few months ago, I bought a Prayer plant from a nursery in Klang. My mum selected it because of the beautiful markings on its leaves that look like brushstrokes in a painting. That inspired me to name the plant "Rembrandt" after my favourite painter.

After bringing "Rembrandt" home, I read

up about how to care for this type of plant. I discovered that calatheas are relatively difficult to grow because they are sensitive plants. Calatheas require minimum sunlight, minimum amount of water, don't like chlorine water, and need high humidity. If any of the conditions are not met, the plant will immediately show its "displeasure" by turning the edges of its leaves brown.

The challenges of growing Prayer plants are similar to the challenges in nurturing our prayer life. Often, we don't make time to pray; and when we do, we rush through prayer for the sake of praying. I am guilty of that, especially when praying the lauds, vespers, and the rosary.

Even though Prayer plants are difficult to grow, if cared for properly, they will grow into beautiful plants that are a joy to look at. Similarly, it may be challenging to have a prayer life, but if nurtured correctly through discipline, prayer will help us develop a beautiful relationship with God.

My "Rembrandt" is still growing, albeit a few leaves turned brown which I snipped away. Shoots are growing too and soon I'll have to transfer "Rembrandt" into a bigger pot. I will continue to place "Rembrandt" in my living room, so that whenever I see its leaves unfurl and fold up, it will remind me to put my hands together in prayer.

### Devil's Ivy

Devil's Ivy is also known as *pothos*. It is named after the Devil because it is a hardy plant and difficult to kill, just like the Devil.

After learning the reason behind its name, whenever I see Devil's Ivy growing almost everywhere — in restaurants, spas, public washrooms, homes, planter boxes, at the side of the road, etc., it reminds me that the Devil is everywhere and always seeking the ruin of souls.

I have in my collection five different types of Devil's Ivy, i.e. exotica, gold, jade, marble queen and neon. I would like to think that the different types of Devil's Ivy represent dif-

ferent types of sin. I should probably grow another two types of Devil's Ivy — to represent the seven deadly sins of pride, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, wrath and sloth.

Devil's Ivy is also known as money plant. Since money is the root of all evil, the money plant is a reminder that many lives have been ruined because of the love of money.

### Joseph's Coat

The Joseph Coat plant has brightly coloured foliage just like the colourful coat owned by Joseph in the Old Testament. The plant loves the sun and heat, similar to the heat of the desert.

In the book of Genesis, Joseph was one of Jacob's 12 sons. Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons, and gave Joseph a coloured cloak (or coat) with long sleeves. His brothers became jealous of him and sold him into slavery. Joseph was taken to Egypt where he was eventually selected as governor of Egypt after he successfully interpreted Pharaoh's dream. Joseph was also responsible for preparing the people of Egypt for the great famine by rationing the country's produce.

I refreshed my reading of the Old Testament after adding Joseph's Coat to my plant collection.

### Conclusion

There are many plants with names associated with Christianity such as Crown-of-Thorns, Bishop's Weed, Holy Basil and St John's Wort. Perhaps I will read up more about each plant and try to grow them. If they grow and thrive in the heat and humidity of Malaysia, they can be sources of reflection. Beautiful plants are not only a joy to look at, they are an inspiration in my faith journey.

● **Julie Lim Seet Yin** believes that a satisfied life measured by one's heart, mind and soul is better than a successful life measured by worldly yardsticks. She can be reached at: [limseetyin@gmail.com](mailto:limseetyin@gmail.com)



The leaves of a Prayer plant unfurl in the daytime and fold up at night to look like hands held together in prayer.





Fr Ron Rolheiser

# Giving up on fear

A friend of mine shares this story. He was an only child. When he was in his late 20s, still single, building a successful career and living in the same city as his mother and father, his father died, leaving his mother widowed. His mother, who had centred her life on her family and on her son, was understandably devastated. Much of her world collapsed, she'd lost her husband, but she still had her son.

The next years were not always easy for her son. His mother had lost much of her world, save him, and he felt a heavy responsibility toward her. She lived for his visits. His days off and his vacation times had to be spent with her. Much as he loved his mother, it was a burden that prevented him from having the social life and relational freedom he yearned for, and it prevented him from making some career decisions that he would otherwise have made. He had to take care of his mother, to be there for her. As one can guess, their times together were sometimes a test of loyalty and duty for the son. But he did it faithfully, year after year. There was no one else his mother could lean on.

When his mother's health began to decline, she sold her house and moved into

a Seniors' complex. Most times on his day off he would pick up his mother, take her for a drive in the country, and then take her to dinner before dropping her back at her mini apartment. One day on such an outing, driving along a country road in silence, his mother broke the quiet with words that both surprised him and, for the first time in a long time, had his full attention.

She shared words to this effect: *Something huge has happened in my life. I've given up on fear.* All my life I have been afraid of everything — of not measuring up, of not being good enough, of being boring, of being excluded, of being alone, of ending up alone, of ending up without any money or a place to live, of people talking about me behind my back. I've been afraid of my shadow. Well, *I've given up on fear.* And why not? I've lost everything — my husband, my place in society, my home, my physical looks, my health, my teeth, and my dignity. I've nothing left to lose anymore, and do you know something? It's good! I'm not afraid of anything anymore. I feel free in a way I have never felt before. I've given up on fear.

For the first time in a long time, he began to listen closely to what his mother

was saying. He also sensed something new in her, a new strength and a deeper wisdom from which he wished to drink. The next time he took her for a drive, he said to her: Mom, teach me that. Teach me how not to be afraid.

She lived for two more years and during those years he took her for drives in the country and for lunches and dinners together, and he drew something from her, from that new strength in her, that he had not been able to draw from before. When she eventually died and he lost her earthly presence, he could only describe what she had given him in those final years by using biblical terms: "My mother gave me birth twice, once from below and once from above."

It's not easy to give up on fear, nor to teach others how to do so. Fear has such a grip on us because for most of our lives we in fact have much to lose. So, it's hard, understandably so, not to live with a lot of fear for most of our lives. Moreover, this is not a question of being mature or immature, spiritual or earthy. Indeed, sometimes the more mature and spiritual we are, the more we appreciate the preciousness of life, of health, of family, of friendship, of community — all of which

have their own fragility and all of which we can lose. There are good reasons to be afraid.

It is no accident that this man's mother was able to move beyond fear only after she had lost most everything in life. God and nature recognise that and have written it into the aging process. The aging process is calibrated to take us to a place where we can give up on fear because as we age and lose more and more of our health, our importance in the world, our physical attractiveness, our loved ones to death, and our dignity, we have less and less to lose — and less and less to be afraid of.

This is one of nature's last gifts to us, and living in a way that others see this new freedom in us can also be one of the last great gifts we leave behind with those we love.

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

## 'Examen' is the most introspective form of Christian prayer

At Baptism and throughout the life of a Christian, an internal call is given to us to seek and develop a life of prayer. We are summoned to seek fellowship with the God Who created us and Who is redeeming us. Such fellowship is marked by speaking and listening to God.

The task of praying is not easy. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* rightly speaks of the "battle" of prayer. In a passage that exudes spiritual wisdom, the Catechism teaches us:

"Prayer is a battle. Against whom? Against ourselves and the against the wiles of the tempter who does all he can to turn man away from prayer, away from union with God. We pray as we live, because we live as we pray... The 'spiritual battle' of the Christian's new life is inseparable from the battle of prayer."

Such a spiritual work is made even harder in a secular age that does not value prayer or acknowledge its power. There is no encouragement to pray in an age that denies the revealed God and does not readily welcome His grace within the human family. The work, however, must still be done. Christians are called to pray. We are to be a people of prayer.

As a help to us in our labours to pray, the Church provides us with many prayer methods. While there are countless such methods within the various spiritualities and charisms in the life of the Church, we can speak of seven principal methods. These include *lectio divina*, composition of place, *poustinia*, the saint method, the *examen*, the liturgy method and the Rosary.

Of the seven methods, the *examen* is the

most introspective, which means it's also the easiest one to manipulate and deform. The *examen* is a thorough evaluation of a day (or some other designation of time). Such an examination is not for ourselves or from ourselves. The *examen* is about communing with God, reviewing our day in light of our relationship with Him, and seeking to find His mercy and promptings throughout our day. It is not self-help or self-improvement.

The *examen* is an opening of our day to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and asking God to show us where His grace triumphed and where we need more of His grace. The *examen* is about our communion with God and our desire to live and thrive by His good pleasure.

An *examen* is usually done in the evening, but it can be done at other times in the day depending on circumstances and the need for divine light.

An *examen* can be done in several different ways. Three of the more popular ways include an hourly review, a review by virtue, or a review by our interaction with people.

In the hourly review, we begin with the hour in which we woke up. We assess how we started our day. Did we hit the snooze button three times, drag ourselves out of bed, and not pray? Did we start our day with gratitude and make an offering of our day to God? How did we start the day? After the first hour, we walk hour by hour through the day. Where was God's presence? What was his will? How did we respond? Where were we selfish or closed to the workings of grace? By going hour by hour, we can track how we did. We can identify times in the



(Unsplash/Aaron Burden)

day when we are more responsive to grace. We can recognise hours of greater struggle or difficulty.

In the review by virtue, we focus solely on one virtue. We examine our day looking for where the virtue was triumphant by grace or where it suffered because of negligence or rebellion on our part. The form of the *examen* is usually done when we are seeking to work on a particular virtue. Any virtue can be used for the *examen*. Some of the more popular virtues for the *examen* include humility, patience, heroic charity, and kindness.

The review by our interaction with people is when the entire *examen* is about a

particular personality type, or temperament, or specific people. This type of *examen* is done when we realise a pattern of behaviour with a type of person. For example, we might gossip around people we're comfortable with, we overreact to people with strong personalities, or we dislike people who are introverts or extraverts. The method helps us to keep our charity and apply our basic Christian virtue to all people.

These are three ways to do the *examen*. In general, the *examen* is about actively engaging the grace of God and allowing it to transform us and help us to live as the children of God. — **By Fr Jeffrey F. Kirby, Crux**



# Little Catholics' Corner

Use the coordinates to finish the sentence.

Jesus said,  
"Where two or three are  
gathered..."

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	T	I	L	R	I	N	O
2	F	S	T	H	E	X	F
3	M	I	D	S	T	X	R
4	O	F	P	L	K	J	H
5	C	B	T	H	E	M	X
6	H	E	B	E	A	Q	R
7	S	J	R	L	M	G	H

1,A 2,D 2,E 6,G 5,E

6,E 3,A 3,B

1,E 1,F 5,C 2,D 6,B

3,A 1,E 3,C 7,A 5,C

4,A 4,B 5,C 2,D 6,B 3,A

**Jesus is teaching the disciples about the Church. The Church isn't just the building – it's all of the people that worship God!**



☐ Daniel and the lions' den (Daniel 6)



☐ The wedding at Cana (John 2.1-11)



☐ Adam and Eve (Genesis 1-3)



☐ Noah's ark (Genesis 6.22-8.22)



☐ Jonah and the whale (Jonah)



☐ Fall of Jericho (Joshua 5.13-6.21)



Hello children of God,

In the Gospel story we heard today, Jesus tells us that if someone does something wrong to us, we should go and talk to them quietly.

Have you ever seen a friend doing something that's not so nice? Did you talk to them about it?

When we talk to our friends

about things that aren't good, we should use gentle words and kindness. We're not trying to make them sad; we want to help them be better!

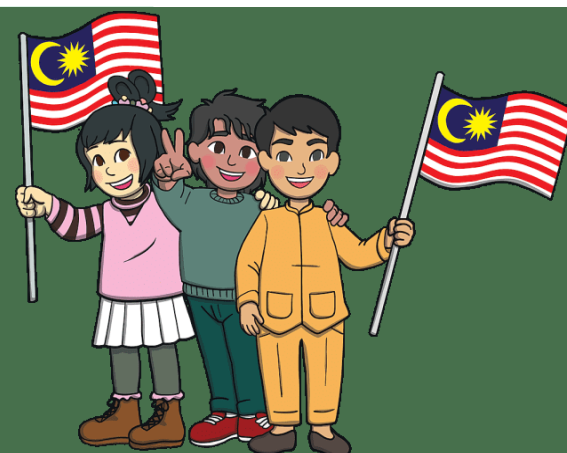
Did anyone ever tell you when you did something that wasn't right? Was it easy to listen to their words? When we want to help friends who did something wrong, God wants us to be nice and help them choose better

things. It's not easy, but it makes God very happy when we help our friends come closer to Him!

Remember it is important to forgive someone who has hurt us and keep the peace with one another.

**HAPPY 60TH MALAYSIA DAY!!!**

Love Aunty Gwen





# YOUTH

SEPTEMBER 10, 2023

## Merdeka Outreach by St John's Youth

KUALA LUMPUR: For the 66th Independence Day of Malaysia, the youth of the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, were determined to ensure that the day would be a memorable one for all.

The day began with Mass animated by the Youth Ministry at the Parish House.

The choir beautified the celebration with a selection of Bahasa Malaysia hymns. The celebration concluded with everyone singing *Negaraku*.

After Mass and a short fellowship, the youth gathered at the grotto together with Fr Gerard Theraviam and Deacon Selva.

After a quick brief on the agenda of the day and a prayer for the safe journey of all our youth, we began our Merdeka Walk from the Cathedral of St John all the way to Central Market.

Along the journey, we sang our favourite Merdeka songs, such as *Tanggal 31*,

*Keranamu Malaysia* and *Jalur Gemilang*, waving our flags high and proud, spreading the joy of Merdeka with everyone that we encountered on our journey.

We also gave out Merdeka cards with personalised wishes to the people around us. After reaching the first destination, the youth then proceeded to the Midvalley Mall by public transportation where we had a hearty lunch together, before proceeding to the Arcade in the mall for some games.

All in all, this national day served as a reminder that despite the challenges and trials that we go through, this country will always be a place that we will love and fight for because Malaysia will always be our HOME. — *By Jacqueline Fiona*



## Our Faith Journey Continues

By Melissa Tang & Marcus Lim

**P**ENANG: Catechism disrupted our Sundays, causing us to miss significant life events — family trips, extra study time before exams, and school activities. Returning to these classes after the two-year pandemic, during which we could not participate in sacraments or connect with our peers, left us with even stronger resentment towards this weekly ritual. Our faith began to wane.

But now, with Catechism behind us, some feel somewhat empty. Catechism nourished us spiritually over the past decade, with dedicated catechists investing their time and effort in developing specialised teaching materials and methods. They carefully curated activities such as the passion play, camps, and sessions led by topic experts to give us a deeper understanding of God and his teachings.

On August 20, we, a class of 19 young men



Cardinal-elect Sebastian Francis with Msgr Jude Miranda, Fr Simon Labrooy, catechists and confirmands.

and women, received the Sacrament of Confirmation at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Penang from Cardinal-elect Sebastian Francis. Also present were our parish priest, Msgr Jude Miranda and College General rector, Fr Simon Labrooy concelebrating Mass.

We eagerly anticipated this significant milestone in our faith journey — completing our Sacrament of Initiation (Baptism, Eucharist, and Confirmation) and strengthening our bond with the Lord. As young adults, we made a deliberate choice to be confirmed, solidifying our identity as faith-

ful followers of Christ.

At this Eucharistic celebration, the prelate encouraged us to have faith akin to the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15: 21-28), emphasising that our faith would be tested in the real world. We had the privilege of serving as lectors and psalmist before renewing our baptismal promises. We were anointed with holy oil, symbolising our acceptance of the Holy Spirit into our lives.

Will we miss Catechism classes? How could we not? While our faith journeys may not have commenced simultaneously, our understanding of our Catholic faith has only

deepened, and we've grown alongside each other, not the closest of friends, but uniquely bonded in faith.

Our Catechism journey may have concluded, but our journey with God continues. We thank all our catechists, namely, uncles Valentine Singh, Simon Chan, and Joseph Doss, for guiding and preparing us for this sacrament.

In the words of Uncle Valentine, the Sacrament of Confirmation is not merely a ceremony but a symbol of new beginnings to spread the message of Christ. We now stand ready to answer questions about our faith and uncover what God has planned for us.

## Young Europeans reaffirm global friendship for a future of peace

ROME: Some 1,000 young people, high school and university students, from 13 European countries gathered August 25-27 in the northern Italian cities of Padua and Venice for the international meeting of the "Youth for Peace" movement of the Community of Sant'Egidio, the Italian-based worldwide Catholic lay association committed to promoting dialogue, peace and solidarity in the world.

Titled *Global Friendship for a Future of Peace*, the gathering affirmed their aspiration and commitment to promoting a more peaceful world as the devastating war waged by Russia against Ukraine rages on, along with

other conflicts around the globe.

Some 70 Ukrainian girls and boys from Kyiv, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk joined the event to share their hopes for peace with their peers from other European countries, and discuss various topics, including ecology, migration, poverty, to foster a culture of solidarity and integration.

The event included a prayer vigil for peace presided over by Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, the president of the Italian Bishops' Conference (CEI) and Pope Francis' special envoy for peace in Ukraine. The Archbishop of Bologna visited Kyiv and Moscow in June, and Washington in July to open up paths for a just



Global Friendship for a Future of Peace-Sant'Egidio. (Sant'Egidio facebook)

peace in Ukraine and is expected to continue his mission by travelling to Beijing, China, to further discuss a possible peaceful solution to the conflict, as both parties seem unwilling to negotiate a compromise.

On Sept 2, participants joined in a meeting

with Marco Impagliazzo, the president of the Community of Sant'Egidio, entitled "Everything can change".

The gathering concluded on Sept 3, in Venice, with a flash mob for peace in St Mark's Square. — *Vatican News*



# Be rocks NOT LALANG



By Jo Cheah

Bishop Bernard Paul with the priests, catechists and confirmands.

JOHOR: A total of 57 candidates — 49 from the Church of the Immaculate Conception and eight from the Church of the Divine Mercy, Skudai were anointed with the oil of Chrism August 26.

Bishop Bernard Paul, the main celebrant, spoke about the true meaning of being confirmed. He reminded the confirmands to focus on their special anointing

by the Holy Spirit. With the presence of the Holy Spirit, they are no more children, but adults, in the faith. Not only must they feel closer to God, but they must also be able to say “No” to self-indulgence and “Yes” to living God’s Way. They must recognise that the old is gone, and from now on, they must have a new life and a new spirit.

The prelate told the confirmands to ask

God for the grace to learn from the Holy Spirit and become “Rocks in the faith, not lalang”. They must be strong, spirit-filled Catholics and not ‘empty’ Catholics. He also encouraged them to take part in ministries and contribute to their communities. He said that whatever we do is an opportunity to evangelise. We should not just talk about Jesus but live Jesus by our care and concern for others.

## To follow Jesus means to be persecuted

KLANG: Confirmands from the Church of Our Lady of Ouadalupe (OLOG) received the Sacrament of Confirmation at the Church of the Holy Redeemer, Klang, as the parish is under renovation.

This year there were 42 candidates for Confirmation. These young adults had been in preparation since January and their excitement that the day had finally come, was apparent on each face. The girls looked resplendent in their white dresses and the boys handsome in their

white and black outfits with red ties.

Mass was celebrated by Archbishop Julian Leow and concelebrated by parish priest, Fr Raymond Pereira. Archbishop Julian explained to all present that to follow Jesus means to be persecuted. He asked the confirmands if they are ready to face persecution in His name because worldly values (power, money, fame, etc) are not Gospel values. Each candidate listened attentively and one could see that as they lined up

to be confirmed, they were ready to be soldiers for Christ.

To make the celebration more participatory, the confirmands were the lectors, cantor, and proclaimed the Gospel acclamation. A parent was the commentator. Parents and family members carried the offertory gifts.

After Mass the young adults were presented with their Confirmation certificate and a gift of a hand-made Rosary. — *By Bridget Antoinette Pereira*



Confirmands with Archbishop Julian Leow and Fr Raymond Pereira.

## Who do you say I AM?

PARIT BUNTAR, Perak: Cardinal-elect Sebastian Francis conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation on six youth from the Church of Our Lady of Good Health (OLOGH) on August 27, 2023. Concelebrating with him was parish priest, Fr Martin Arlandu.

In his sermon, the prelate posed the thought-provoking question that Jesus Christ asked: “Who do you say I am?” This question challenged the confirmands and the congregation to reflect on their understanding and relationship with Jesus Christ. The cardinal-elect emphasised the importance of faith in Christ and asked attendees to consider how strong their faith truly is.

The cardinal-elect also encouraged everyone to reflect on how they react to various events and situations in life. This reflection can reveal the depth of their

faith and how their beliefs guide their actions and decisions. The event was a momentous one, combining spiritual reflection and celebration within the context of the Confirmation ceremony.

During the event, the parishioners of OLOGH were joyful, and there was an atmosphere of spiritual connection, much like the wind that blows where it will. The comparison to the wind suggests that the guidance and presence of the Holy Spirit was felt, even though the direction it came from and where it went to was unknown.

At the end of the Mass, Jesus Anthony, representing the parishioners, carried out a *Ponnadai* (to adorn a shawl around the shoulders of a dignitary who is being honoured) ceremony on the cardinal-elect, in recognition of his elevated status. — *By N. S. Sebastian*



Cardinal-elect Sebastian Francis blesses the confirmand.

## Create an inclusive environment

Youth share their thoughts on how we can achieve *Malaysia Madani*: *The Commitment of Unity Fulfills Hope* in conjunction with Merdeka and Malaysia Day celebrations.

Achieving this goal begins in the realm of early childhood care and education. Actions of young children are products of modelling adults around them: physical actions, verbal finesse, values, routines, and everything else. As simple as parents offering food or a friendly morning greeting to neighbours, children observe and quickly establish that sharing is acceptable, urging them to replicate kindness regardless of race, religion, gender, language, and background. Nevertheless, by embracing good habits grounded with emotional and spiritual support, the commitment to unity is not farfetched towards realising hope for an encouraging future for our young Malaysians pursuing dreams together. — *Kimbelle Lee Mung Kim, Church of St Louis, Kluang*



When you think of Malaysia, the first thing that always comes to mind is awesome food, but this beautiful country has something more valuable than that, a diversity of people. It's the Malaysian people, made up of different races and religions which make this country beautiful, in line with this year's Merdeka theme. To move towards that theme, we need to unite more, put aside our differences and this needs to start from the ground up. We need to encourage open-mindedness and respect among our different cultures, and the best way to start is with ourselves. See what we can do to encourage this unity. We must lead by example, and treat our fellow Malaysians the same way we want to be treated. Let us start by saying ‘I am Malaysian’ instead of ‘I am Malay, Chinese, Indian, etc’. Smile at each other, respect each other's cultures, help each other and celebrate together. To unite we must start at home, and we will see that unity spread like wildfire. That's the kind of Malaysia I want. — *Adrian And're Pereira, Church of the Sacred Heart, KL*

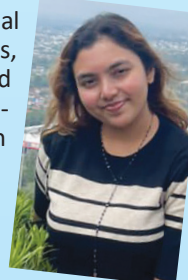


Achieving the theme *Malaysia Madani: The Commitment of Unity Fulfills Hope* necessitates the creation of an inclusive environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds are valued and heard. Embracing diversity in ethnicity, religion, and other aspects of identity is essential.

Leadership plays a crucial role in unity. Political figures, community influencers, and everyday citizens should demonstrate commitment through words and actions.

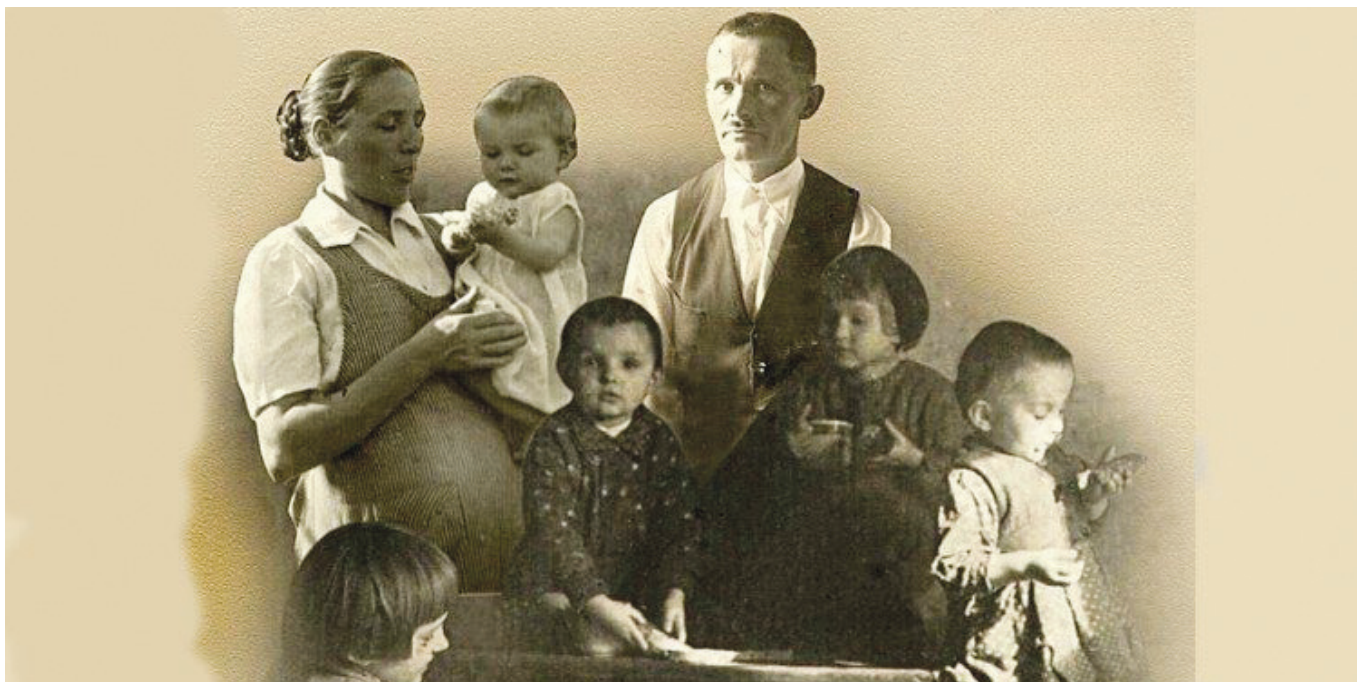
While developing unity, potential conflict may arise. Therefore, it's vital to establish effective conflict resolution methods to reduce tensions and prevent minor issues from growing into larger ones.

Building hope and unity is a never-ending process that requires constant effort and cooperation. It's about developing an atmosphere where everyone feels like they belong and can look forward to a better future for themselves and their nation. — *Harolyn Sabastian Santhiyagu, Church of St Peter, Malacca*





# The Ulma family: a remarkable beatification of martyrdom



VATICAN: The beatification of the Ulma family on September 10, marks an unprecedented event in the modern canonisation process.

This family, made up of parents Josef and Wiktoria Ulma and their children, including the unborn child Wiktoria was carrying, will be collectively honoured. This unusual beatification stands as a testament to their sacrifice during World War II, when they sheltered and protected eight Jews from persecution.

## Who were the Ulmas?

The Ulma family led an ordinary life against the backdrop of the Second World War. Josef worked in the fields, while Wiktoria managed their home and cared for their six children and another on the way. Through their simple daily routines, they exemplified the teachings of the Gospel. Family prayers, shared faith education, and Bible readings turned their household into what Pope John Paul II termed a “domestic Church,” extending their warmth and support even to the most vulnerable members of society, including Jews who faced immense danger.

Journalist Manuela Tulli, in collaboration with historian Fr Paweł Rytel-Andrianik, uncovered the Ulma family’s story, and together they published a book entitled *Martyred and Blessed Together: The Extraordinary Story of the Ulma Family*.

During a trip to Ukraine, Tulli stumbled upon their tale, a discovery that resonated deeply. The Ulmas’ images were scat-

tered throughout Poland, portraying a young couple with many children. This poignant image prompted reflection on contemporary and historical wars, friendships, and the Ulmas’ remarkable act of opening their humble abode — consisting of just two rooms — to eight Jews seeking refuge.

## The journey towards beatification

The Ulma family’s journey towards beatification began with the postulator of their cause, who introduced Tulli to their story. Tulli then embarked on a quest to better understand their history. Through her research, she delved into the life of this family that would soon be beatified.

Embedded within their family Bible, a word was underlined: “Samaritan,” accompanied by a resounding “yes.” This choice epitomised their commitment to aiding others, a commitment that persisted amidst a world fraught with violence and division. Captured in numerous photographs taken by Josef Ulma, an amateur photographer, their industrious and harmonious life stood in stark contrast to the chaos of the era.

## The betrayal

Tragedy struck when the Ulmas were denounced and betrayed. Nazi forces stormed their home, and their attic, where they had concealed their Jewish friends, became a site of horror. Josef and Wiktoria were executed in front of their children, with Wiktoria being seven months

pregnant. Even the children were not spared. The house was set ablaze, marking the tragic event on March 24, 1944.

## A Jewish-Christian martyrdom

Fr Paweł Rytel-Andrianik noted that the Ulmas’ martyrdom extended beyond a Christian context; it was a Jewish-Christian martyrdom. This perspective emphasised the senseless killing of innocent lives — the Ulma family and eight Jews — including a chilling detail where the dripping blood of victims stained a photo of two Jewish women hidden beneath, preserved as a relic of their martyrdom. This heartrending story showcased the duality of horror and hope, with the Ulmas attempting to embody the Gospel’s light within the challenges of daily existence.

Recognised as ‘Righteous among the Nations’ by the State of Israel and soon to be Blessed by the Catholic Church, the Ulma family’s light continues to shine. Their story defies the darkness of war, and their beatification — including the beatification of their unborn child — is a remarkable affirmation of their sacrifice. Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, likened this exceptional case to a “Baptism of Blood,” echoing the tragic narrative of the Holy Innocents. In their entirety, the Ulma family’s legacy underscores the power of love, compassion, and sacrifice amid the darkest of times. — **By Francesca Merlo and Emanuela Campanile, Vatican Media**

## MEMORIAM

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### RENAE ANGELIQUE



28 January 1985 ~ 14 September 2006

You were taken so suddenly  
Without any warning  
Your going left my heart filled with pain  
But though you are not here  
In my heart you will always remain  
I think about you everyday  
Memories of you still fresh in my mind  
I wish I could see you one more time  
But I know that is impossible  
So I wait till the day we meet again

Forever Missed,  
Mummy

### 10th year Anniversary In Ever Loving Memory of



MR. KOLANDASAMY  
INNASI

Called by the Lord on  
13th September 2013

Those who are righteous  
will be long remembered.  
(Psalm 112:6)  
Blessed are the dead who die in the  
Lord from now on. “Yes,” says  
the Spirit, “they will rest from their  
labour, for their deeds will follow  
them.” (Revelation 14:13)  
You were never forgotten.  
Each time we hear your name,  
Tears were shed but the bruises in  
our broken hearts remained.  
We miss our times together,  
And all the things  
in common that we shared.  
Nothing filled the vacuum.  
Yet we have many precious  
memories,  
To last a lifetime.  
Each one of them reminds of how  
much we’re missing you...  
Deeply missed by wife, children  
and children in-law.

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### 14th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Amalar Mary d/o  
Lourdesamy  
Departed: 10/09/2009

“Our greatest gift  
from the Lord”  
“The Lord is my shepherd.  
I now dwell in the  
house of the Lord.”  
Deeply missed by  
Loved ones.

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REST IN PEACE



## Website to promote synod in Asia launched

BANGKOK: The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Office of Social Communication (FABCOSC) launched a website to coordinate and promote communication of the Synod on Synodality in Asia through a newly developed web portal.

Inaugurating the portal in a virtual meeting August 29, Cardinal-elect Sebastian Francis, Chairman for Social Communication in FABC, said that for the local Churches in Asia, spread across this vast continent, the Synod is a privileged moment to continue the threefold dialogue with cultures, religions and the poor.

The Synod Asia website, he said, is an important point of reference for the Church in Asia and all media which are interested in Asia. He invited everyone to share the resources and richness of the Synod "as we walk together as a People of God."

In a recorded video message, FABC President, Cardinal Charles Bo, called the Synod "a moment of grace." "It is a call to witness to Jesus and His message in this vast continent of Asia and to the millions of brothers and sisters in whose midst we live", he said.

A member of the Vatican's Dicastery of Communication and of the Ordinary Council of the Synod, Cardinal Bo recalled the

leadership, and vision of Pope Francis who initiated and is guiding the Synod. We hear many heart-warming stories about the Synod from all over the world, particularly from the parishes, dioceses, and episcopal conferences of Asia.

He thanked the FABC Office of Social Communication for launching a digital platform for gathering and sharing the stories about the Synod with special focus on Asia, and the forthcoming assembly in Rome, so that all people of God can be part of the synodal journey.

The inaugural event was attended by several bishops and secretaries of social communication in episcopal conferences in Asia and leaders and members of the Synod communication team.

Synod Asia Website & Social Media Links

- WEBSITE: <https://asia.synod2023.org>
- INSTAGRAM: <https://www.instagram.com/synod.asia/>
- YOUTUBE: <https://www.youtube.com/@SYNODASIA>
- FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/synodasia>
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