

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

TERHAD

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For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

Rom. 14:7-8



Season of Creation & PROTEC

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A humble, joyful Church in the heart of God

VATICAN: "I had the grace of meeting, in Mongolia, a humble Church, and a joyful Church, which is in the heart of God", said Pope Francis as he expressed his gratitude for the experiences and encounters he had during his short and intense visit to Mongolia, which ended on September 4.

He said this in his catechesis delivered during the Sept 6 general audience, entirely dedicated to re-proposing images and impressions of the journey, during which he had the opportunity to embrace the Catholic Church and the Mongolian people, "a humble and wise people".

In the introductory part of the catechesis, Pope Francis shared some of the reasons that made his trip to Mongolia an important moment for every Catholic community in the world.

"One might ask: why did the Pope go so far to visit a small flock of the faithful?" Pope Francis said to the general audience. "Because it is precisely there, far from the spotlight, that we often find the signs of the presence of God, who does not look at appearances, but at the heart."

"The Lord," he explained, "does not look for the centre stage, but the simple heart of those who desire Him and love Him without ostentation, without wanting to tower above others. And I had the grace of meeting, in Mongolia, a humble Church and a joyful Church, which is in the heart of God, and I can testify to their joy of finding themselves also at the centre of the Church for a few days."

The Pope recounted what he called the "touching history" of the Christian community in Mongolia.

"It came about, by the grace of God, from apostolic zeal — on which we are reflecting at the moment — of a few missionar-

ies who, impassioned by the Gospel, went about 30 years ago to that country they did not know," he said.

"They learned the language — which is not easy — and, despite coming from different nations, gave life to a united and truly Catholic community. This is the meaning of the word "Catholic", which means "universal".

He praised the inculturated Catholic community the missionaries formed, saying they did not rely on proselytism to convert people to Christianity but showed how to live the Gospel within the Mongolian culture.

"This is how the Church lives: bearing witness to the love of Jesus meekly, with life before words, happy with its true riches: service to the Lord and to brethren."

The young Church in Mongolia, added Pope Francis — was born "in the spirit of charity, which is the best witness of faith". The Pope also mentioned that at the end of his visit, he had the joy of blessing and inaugurating the "House of Mercy", which he defined as the "first charitable work to be established in Mongolia as an expression of all the components of the local Church."

"A house," added the Pope "that is the calling card of those Christians, but that asks every one of our communities to be a house of mercy: that is, an open place, a welcoming place, where the sufferings of each person can enter without shame in contact with God's mercy, that lifts up and heals".

Pope Francis is the first pope in history to travel to Mongolia.

During his four days in the large, landlocked Asian country Sept 1-4, he met with government leaders, engaged in interreligious dialogue with Buddhists and people of other Eastern religions, and presided over the first-ever papal Mass for the country's small Catholic population.

"I was in the heart of Asia, and this did me good. It is good to enter into dialogue with that vast continent, to glean its mes-



(CNA EWTN News/Colm Flynn)

sages, to know its wisdom, its way of looking at things, to embrace time and space," Pope Francis said.

"Thinking of the boundless and silent expanses of Mongolia," he added, "let us be stirred by the need to extend the confines of

our gaze, so that we may be able to see the good in others and be capable of broadening our horizons." — **Agencies**

● See also pages 10 & 11

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Revisit *Laudato Si'* to prepare for Pope's new document on ecology

In less than a month, Pope Francis is scheduled to release a new apostolic exhortation on the environment, which is being described as a follow-up to his 2015 encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*, on *Care for Our Common Home*. The publication of this document on October 4 coincides both with the liturgical celebration of the Feast of St Francis of Assisi and the conclusion of this year's annual "Season of Creation."

The impacts of the ongoing and increasing climate crisis affects everyone and every creature that shares "our common home." These communities are interconnected. As Francis said in *Laudato Si'*, "We have to realise that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."

It would be helpful to return to *Laudato Si'* in preparation for receiving the Pope's forthcoming magisterial teaching. Since what has been mentioned by the Pope and others has focused on both the human toll (think climate refugees) and human cause (think unbridled capitalism and the decadent life of wealthy nations), it seems to me wise to revisit Chapter 3 of *Laudato Si'*, titled "The Human Roots of the Ecological Crisis."

Chapter 3 is organised into three parts: "Technology: Creativity and Power," "The Globalisation of the Technocratic Paradigm," and "The Crisis and Effects of Modern Anthropocentrism." I would venture to guess that these three themes will again make an appearance in some way in the Pope's "updating" of *Laudato Si'*.

The first part focuses on the role of human technology over the course of history for both positive development and catastrophic destruction. Regarding the former use, the Pope explains, "Technoscience, when well directed, can produce important means of improving the

quality of human life."

But, as he quickly notes, "it must also be recognised that nuclear energy, biotechnology, information technology, knowledge of our DNA, and many other abilities which we have acquired, have given us tremendous power. Never has humanity had such power over itself, yet nothing ensures that it will be used wisely, particularly when we consider how it is currently being used."

Here we find Francis' warning that uncritically embracing technology is problematic both on practical and moral fronts. Indeed, there are many positive things for which technological development is responsible, but we should never lose sight of the shadow side of unchecked technology.

The warning Francis presented eight years ago still rings true today: "Our immense technological development has not been accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience."

The second section of the chapter builds on the first, calling out the way technological developments have informed a widespread global ideology motivated by financial profits.

One of the hidden consequences of this "technocratic paradigm" is the belief that "current economics and technology will solve all environmental problems, and ... that the problems of global hunger and poverty will be resolved simply by market growth." As with the poor and vulnerable in the human family, so too the rest of creation suffers the consequences of reckless economic and technological policies.

Francis calls us to "broaden our vision," to expand our way of thinking beyond the limitations of economic and technological development at any cost.

Herein lies one of the major problems to persist since the promulgation of *Laudato Si'*. We have not done enough to "broaden our vision,"

or to invest in another paradigm such as the "integral ecology" that Francis has been advocating. Instead, most people in power have treated each ecological hurdle as a discrete problem with a potential technological or economic solution. And things are only getting worse.

Finally, the last section, the largest of the three, focuses on "modern anthropocentrism," that erroneous way of thinking that places the human species at the heart of the universe and suggests the only thing that matters is our comfort, safety, success and future.

Francis notes: "Once the human being declares independence from reality and behaves with absolute dominion, the very foundations of our life begin to crumble."

Indeed, we have deluded ourselves into thinking that we are all that really counts, and the consequences have been devastating not only for the nonhuman world, but for the human family too.

Francis describes this anthropocentric worldview as a form of relativism. "When human beings place themselves at the centre, they give absolute priority to immediate convenience and all else becomes relative. Hence we should not be surprised to find, in conjunction with the omnipresent technocratic paradigm, and the cult of unlimited human power, the rise of a relativism which sees everything as irrelevant unless it serves one's own immediate interests."

Like many others, I eagerly await this new exhortation, expecting that the Pope will build on these themes and expand on them to address the current post-pandemic climate catastrophe.

At the heart of whatever the particular shape the document may take is sure to contain a strong call for a new way of thinking and living, rooted in the call to "integral ecology." In the meantime, we would all do well to revisit *Laudato Si'* to prepare for what is to come. —
By Fr Daniel P. Horan, OFM, NCR

Forgive others as we have been forgiven

In the course of our daily lives, we encounter different kinds of people. Because of this, the way we communicate will depend on the kind of people that we encounter. However, most of the time, the words that we use fall broadly into two categories i.e., those that build up a relationship or words that tear them down. In other words, what we say will be either good for the person and for us or it can be harmful for others and ourselves as well. Often times, we find that saying kind and encouraging words is not easy. Personally, I think there are two words that many people find hard to say — "I am sorry" and "I forgive you"

There will be times in our lives when we find ourselves in situations where we have offended someone but are too proud to ask for forgiveness. Sometimes, this is because we do not feel that we are at fault and it is the other person who should apologise. However, if we are honest with ourselves, we know that often the opposite is true. In the case of forgiveness, or unforgiveness, as taught by Jesus in today's Gospel, this is even more difficult to do. When someone has hurt us, it is very difficult to forgive that person, especially if what was done to us is very hurtful. This is the question that is asked of Jesus today — how many times must one forgive?

Of course, we know the answer that Jesus gave. The number 70 times seven is not to be taken literally, that once we have reached that number of times we forgive, we stop forgiving. We should not, and must not, take this literally. Jesus meant for us to forgive



infinitely.

This leads us to another question — why should I forgive? Shouldn't the other person ask for forgiveness first? Unfortunately, this kind of reasoning will not do us any favours. We think that by not forgiving the other person and waiting for them to ask for forgiveness, we are punishing them. The sad reality is that we are punishing ourselves. Regarding unforgiveness, there is a saying that "Not forgiving someone is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die." In reality, we are the ones who are slowly dying from the effects of this poison.

Unforgiveness is like a wound within ourselves that cannot be healed and it will just continue to consume us until we succumb to it. Sometimes the other party does not even care if we forgive them or not and, worst of all, this does not bother them.

Unforgiveness is not about letting the

other person off the hook. It is about freeing ourselves from the prison that we have checked ourselves into. By not forgiving someone, we intentionally lock ourselves up in prison and throw away the key. The only way to free ourselves from this prison is to forgive. There is no denying that forgiveness is difficult. Sometimes the hurt is too deep and the wound so great that we cannot find the strength to forgive. Unforgiveness will just exacerbate our hurt and we will not be able to come out of this cycle.

I mentioned that unforgiveness does not mean that we let the person off the hook. When we forgive, we also need to let the other person know the hurt that they have caused us. They need to know that their behaviour or their words have hurt us and that they must take responsibility for what they have done.

Forgiveness puts the ball back into their

Reflecting on our
Sunday Readings
with Fr Philip Tay, OCD

**24th Sunday of
Ordinary Time (A)**

Readings: Sirach 27:30 – 28:7;

Romans 14:7-9;

Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

court. Whether or not they apologise or accept our forgiveness is not our concern. The important thing is that we have freed ourselves from prison by this courageous act of forgiving. However, we cannot do this with our own strength. This is where God's grace comes in to give us that strength. We forgive the other person with the help of God but we do not forget that it was by God's grace that we are able to forgive.

In the parable in today's Gospel, Jesus pointed out that, as we have been forgiven ourselves, so too must we learn to forgive others. God forgives us readily for all our sins and transgressions and it would be hypocritical if we do not do the same to those who have hurt us. After all, the Lord's Prayer puts it very aptly, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Asking forgiveness from God is tied to us forgiving others. Otherwise, we have no right to recite this prayer daily because we are only looking at one side of the equation. Only when the equation is balanced can we achieve peace in our lives.



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

September & October

- 17-22** Clergy Annual Retreat – Penang
23 Mass for Neophyte – Church of the Holy Rosary, KL
24 Mass – International Day of Sign Language, Church of the Visitation



PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal-Elect Sebastian Francis

September & October

- 18/9-** Consistory of Cardinals and the
7/10 Opening Mass of the Synod – Rome



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

September

- 11-17** Clergy Annual Retreat – Penang
21 Meeting – Graceville Board of Management, Graceville
22 Confirmation – Church of St Andrew, Muar
23 Meeting – BM Language Cultural Council (BMLCC), Melaka
24 KEP (Kursus Evangelisasi Peribadi) Retreat Commissioning Mass – Oasis, Kluang GSS Melaka

Ready to fill new role at CBCMSB

KUALA LUMPUR: Richard Chia Kee Kong has been appointed Executive Secretary for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei (CBCMSB) effective September 1, 2023. He takes over from Charles Bertille who served for five years in that position.

Richard, a parishioner of the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist in Kuala Lumpur, worked in the corporate sector with an international company and several large corporate organisations.

His involvement in Church work started when he was a youth in the Church of the Holy Rosary (HRC). After completing his studies in Australia, he returned to HRC and was involved in RCIA, catechetical, and eventually appointed into the Parish Pastoral Council. Over the past 40 years, he has been active in several roles at parish and archdiocesan levels.

Reflecting on Archbishop Julian Leow's message as the new president of the CBCMSB, Richard has this to say. "Archbishop Julian's vision of developing and improving lines of communication and collaboration among members of the conference, and also within its many commissions and ministries, is the right way to go. As the archbishop pointed out, we have been working in silo far too long".

"If we look at how corporations and big businesses functions today, it is all about collaboration, sharing of knowledge and resources, and each unit specialising in its own area of expertise. As a regional bishops' conference, we should have the ability to draw on the best of the three countries, and even tap on our relationship with the Federation of Asian

Bishops Conferences and beyond," says Richard.

Sounding excited about his new position, Richard says he is now ready to take his Church involvement to the next level, beyond parish and diocesan boundaries. He hopes to utilise his Church network to realise the vision set forth by Archbishop Julian, but at the same time recognises the challenges ahead as the universal Church moves towards synodality.

A simple handover ceremony was held on September 2 during which Archbishop Julian formally received the files of the CBCMSB from the outgoing president, Cardinal-elect Sebastian Francis. A similar handover took place between Charles and Richard.



Richard Chia (right) receiving the file from Charles Bertille.



Cardinal-elect Sebastian Francis hands over the CBCMSB file to Archbishop Julian Leow.



ARCHDIOCESE OF KUALA LUMPUR

CHAN/CD/09/2023

Chancery Notice

Oratory for the Korean Catholic Community

In consultation with the College of Consultors and the Council of Priests, Most Rev Julian Leow, the Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, as per the Code of Canon Law 1223 and 934 §2, has granted permission for the following:

1. The setting up of an oratory (a place for divine worship) to serve the Korean-speaking

Catholics in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

2. Reservation of the Most Holy Eucharist at the same oratory.

The oratory will be located at Daegeon House, 51 Jalan Ismail Ghaney, off Jalan Ipoh, 51200 Kuala Lumpur.

The blessing of the oratory will be on 17 September 2023.

CHAN/CD/10/2023

Clergy appointment

Rev Fr Jean Claude Lourdes has been appointed assistant parish priest to the Church of Jesus Caritas, Kepong, Kuala Lumpur effective September 1, 2023.

His primary duties will be the pastoral, spiritual, sacramental, and administrative care of the parishioners of the Chapel of Kristus Aman, Taman Tun Dr Ismail, Kuala Lumpur.

Clarence Devadass

Rev Fr Dr Clarence Devadass
 Chancellor
 Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur
 September 5, 2023



DIOCESE OF PENANG

PKK/BDN/2023/09/167

Notifications and Updates

1. Bishop's travel abroad

Please be informed that I will be away from the diocese and will be in Rome from September 18 to October 7, 2023 for the Consistory of Cardinals and the Opening Mass of the Synod in Rome. In my absence, Msgr Stephen Liew will be responsible for all urgent diocesan matters. I humbly ask for your continued prayers for me, for all the newly elected cardinals and for all those involved in the upcoming Synod in Rome.

2. Appointment as Administrator – Fr Nelson Joseph

Fr Nelson Joseph has been appointed as the Administrator for Gereja Immaculate Conception, Changloun, Church of Our Lady of Fatima, Kangar and Holy Cross Chapel, Arau, Perlis from August 1 until further notice while Fr Francis Xavier, who is currently on medical leave, recuperates. Let us lift our priests up in prayer.

3. Permanent Diaconate Ordination in the Diocese of Penang

Andrew Loh Su Aun, Devakumaran S Narayanasamy @ Dave Kameron, Paul Kang Hian Beng and Richard Wilson who have been under formation for the vocation

to the Permanent Diaconate will be called to the Order of Permanent Deacons and ordained on September 17, 2023 at 6.00pm at the Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam. All are welcome to witness and join in this Eucharistic Celebration. I invite you to pray with them and for them as they prepare for their ordination.

4. Diocesan Pastoral Assembly 2023

The Diocesan Pastoral Assembly for our diocese will be held in November 2023. Details of the assembly and information on the Masses during that weekend can be found here: bit.ly/3PqHTmK

5. SEEDS Young Adults Ministry

Sharing here the Seeds Young Adults Ministry new leadership with effect from September 2023. Let us pray for this ministry as they begin physical gatherings in different locations and continue with their digital evangelisation. For more information, check this link: bit.ly/45xImt3

Sebastian Francis

Cardinal-elect Sebastian Francis



Be not afraid, go forward!

By Cecilia Grace

KAJANG: The Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Peninsular Malaysia turned 50 with a three-day celebration at the Church of the Holy Family, August 31 - September 2.

The theme *Rebuild, Restore, Renew, Behold I Make all things new* (Rev 21:5), encapsulated the essence of the journey over the past 50 years.

The three-day event, organised by CHARIS Peninsular Malaysia Service of Communion (CPMSC), drew about 1,700 people, including clergy and religious from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, Diocese of Malacca Johore, Diocese of Penang as well as those from Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore.

The event commenced with Praise and Worship by the music ministry of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. During the celebration, the Music Ministry from the other two dioceses also took turns to lead the multi-lingual Praise and Worship and were involved in the Mass animation.

Fr Michael Payyapilly, VC from the Divine Retreat Centre of Colombo, Sri Lanka, Deacon Clement Samuel, former PMST Chairman (2004 - 2008) and Jude Antoine, Catholic lay missionary from Kuala Lumpur, were among the speakers for this event.

On the first day, Fr Payyapilly used the verse from Revelation 21:5 as the opening prayer. As this was also the theme for the event, he used it to share about the meaning of renewal in Christ and that our life is all about receiving Jesus and celebrating Him.

In another talk, Jude and Deacon Clement shared their experience of the Charismatic renewal which is about encountering the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Deacon Clement invited Rosalind Pereira, whose faith formation started in 1973, when Infant Jesus Sr Cyril (Sr Mary Cammody) who experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in Ireland, started the first prayer group in Taiping with the permission of the Bishop of Penang at that time.

Rosalind shared her experience of the 'Baptism of the Holy Spirit', about the growth and renewal in the Spirit thereafter all these past years. Rosalind, who is now based in Kuala Lumpur, is still living a communitarian lifestyle and doing her mission through the Servants of Yahweh, Covenant Community, which started in 1984 in Kuala Lumpur. She highlighted that the renewal of the Holy Spirit has imparted the authentic Christian life and knowledge of Scripture.

The day concluded with Mass celebrated by Archbishop Julian Leow. The entrance procession was led by the East Malaysians. In his homily, the archbishop reflected on

living in a righteous way and urged the people to always stay awake for God's coming. At the end of the Mass, the congregation celebrated the 30th sacerdotal anniversary of Fr VA Michael.

On the second day, Fr Payyapilly spoke about holiness which we are to build through a relationship with God with the help of the Holy Spirit. One of the most important points shared during this session was about the Blessed Virgin Mary and her spousal relationship with the Holy Spirit. The day then concluded with Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Eucharistic celebration by Fr VA Michael, and general healing by Fr Payyapilly.

The programme on the third day commenced with a talk on the *Domestic Church: Family*, where Fr Payyapilly touched on family life, based on Bible verses related to love, marriage and giving to one another. Thereafter, during the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, which was held after the talk, many present spent time in front of the Blessed Sacrament to receive and experience the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Cardinal-elect Sebastian Francis, celebrated the closing Mass. He began his homily with a question, "What is the Holy Spirit saying to us, to the Synodal Church and to the Peninsular Malaysia Catholic CCR, after 50 years of its conception and birth, historically in Taiping, and then moved from there to the North, South, East

and West of Malaysia?" He concluded with a strong message to the community to move forward without fear as that is the only direction to look on, because the Spirit is moving the Church, humanity and creation forward since Pentecost.

At the end of the Mass, Cardinal-elect Sebastian, together with the clergy and deacons, commissioned the leaders of CHARIS Peninsular Malaysia Service of Communion (CPMSC) to continue their mission with tremendous confidence wherever the Holy Spirit leads.

Simon Matthew, the chairman of CPMSC, conveyed his gratitude to all present, the organising team and all those who worked tirelessly towards this glorious event, making it a successful and memorable celebration. He also said that the School of Charism would be

launched in the first quarter of next year. This is an initiative by CPMSC that holds immense promise for growth and development of Renewal in Malaysia.

Many faithful from different parishes and dioceses who attended the Golden Jubilee celebration were overwhelmed by the event and how it was conducted, especially by the Bahasa, Mandarin and Tamil community who were assisted with translation service all through the three-day session.

Children were also part of this celebration, where the youth from Church of Jesus Caritas managed the children's programme (age between four to eight) with many activities during the three-day celebration.



Fr Michael Payyapilly, VC



Cardinal-elect Sebastian Francis praying over the CHARIS Peninsular Malaysia Service of Communion members. (photo/Robert Das)



Fr Michael Payyapilly, VC, speaking to a packed congregation during one of the sessions. (photo/Alex Johnson)

Sharings

"For me, the three-day experience was, one, the CCR celebration itself and the other, the depth of Gospel preaching which touched me in many ways and bringing joy to me. I have understood how the Holy Spirit works within the Church and its people, all for the glory of God alone." — Regina Chiam, Church of the Holy Family, Selangor Darul Ehsan



"The sessions were fruitful, and I came for the renewal of my spirit. From here I realise that Charismatic is not only about the gift of tongues or healing, but also about creating a relationship with God and to encounter Him personally in our lives. I also now understand we are all evangelists; we are not only identified as spiritual leaders etc, but most important is to move forward to evangelise." — Eunice Loh Mee Yau, Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help, Ipoh, Perak. (Lead of the Mandarin Charismatic group)



"I have been too busy with work and I always feel the emptiness in me. This journey of experiencing the Holy Spirit made me realise how Jesus sacrificed himself to redeem from sin. This 50th Golden Jubilee celebration has brought so much joy within me and it's going to help me to share the joy of Spirit with others in my mission."



"I am also delighted to take part in the praise and worship sessions which I led in Bahasa with the Diocese of Malacca Johore." — Daniel Bedilly Kasianus, Church of Immaculate Conception, Johor Bahru

"This was a totally new experience for me where various language groups came together to celebrate this Golden Jubilee of the Peninsular Malaysia CCR. This shows how the Spirit works within us and in the Church. I also benefited from the talks about holiness in life to continue with my mission work for the glory of

God." — Navin George, Church of Holy Family, Ulu Tiram, Johor. (Tamil Charismatic Chairman of the Diocese of Malacca Johore)



"I praise and thank God for the gift of each of you. This 50th CCR Golden Jubilee celebration sparked a new fire in me to embrace the new wine (Jesus) with new wine skin (all of us), which is necessary for God to make things new in our lives. The glory of God in the holiness of His people, our intimacy with our Lord Jesus are crucial principles which must constantly permeate the CCR to effectively bring renewal to the Church." — Adeline Teh, CHARIS Penang Service of Communion



"This celebration has been a stepping stone for my ministry to encounter Christ through hymn and praise. It has been a new experience to encounter and build a relationship with Jesus. From this gathering, I have gained friendship with many young people who came together to serve the Lord."



Kevin Sirach Louis, Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam - Music Ministry

Church, driving force for care for creation

MIRI: The Season of Creation and the "Protect Our Earth, Protect Our Children" (PROTEC) campaign for Malaysia was launched at the Cathedral of St Joseph on August 31.

The hope of keeping average temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius is fading. The future of young people is threatened by the cascading impacts of the loss of biodiversity and a changing climate.

Bishop Richard Ng presided over the Eucharistic celebration. Concelebrating with him were the president of the Episcopal Commission Creation Justice of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei, Bishop Joseph Hii, and the Spiritual directors of the Commission for Creation Justice from the arch/dioceses of Malaysia.

He began his homily by explaining the meaning of justice. "The First Reading and Gospel speak about justice. Justice, as a very basic concept, means a kind of balance, equal distribution of benefits for those in society. When there is no balance, there will be a lot of upheaval.



The members of the Episcopal Commission Creation Justice of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei led by Bishop Joseph Hii with Bishop Richard Ng at the Cathedral of St Joseph, Miri.

"Justice is founded on God. It is one of the main attributes of God. In the *Book of Exodus* when He first revealed Himself to Moses and commissioned him to set the people of Israel free, among other things, God said, I am the God of mercy and justice. God is a sure defender of those who find themselves in an unjust situation, for God is the defender of the weak and the oppressed.

"This care of God is universal and it extends beyond human beings to the whole of creation. We can find many examples of this in the Old Testament. There are many laws and regulations for the care of crops,

animals, land, food, and so on. This idea of justice is not restricted to human beings but extends to the whole of creation because, if something is wrong in one area, it affects all, as we are all connected. We cannot just say, 'Yes, of course, I support justice for the poor and the oppressed,' but we must also remember that the whole of creation is included in our care and responsibility.

"Since the justice of God is characterised by special regard for the poor and the weak, a corresponding demand is made of God's children. In the First Reading, God sent the prophet Amos to the southern King-

dom of Judah to warn the people because they were living in excess and exploiting the poor. The First Reading shows the demand for justice is so central that the other responses to God, like offerings or sacrifices, prayers, and religious festivals are empty or meaningless without justice. Justice is so central, and we find the Church is deeply involved in promoting justice in the world.

"In the 10 years of his papacy, Pope Francis has raised our conscience in defending not only the poor and the oppressed, but also extending this to the care of nature, God's creation. The Holy Father is

in the process of updating his encyclical *Laudato Si'* to include climate change. So, the Church is always trying to be the driving force in the proper care of God's creation."

During the multilingual general intercessions, each delegate read a prayer for true ecological conversion.

At the end of the Mass, Bishop Joseph told the congregation that during the regional conference of bishops' meeting in July, the nine Malaysian bishops signed pledges to make their dioceses ecological.

This was followed by the launching of PROTEC-4 and Season of Creation. Bishop Richard unveiled the banner for PROTEC-4, and Bishop Joseph unveiled the banner for the Season of Creation campaign.

After Mass, the Episcopal Commission Creation Justice ran a workshop on de-carbonisation to give some idea of how to respond, individually and collectively, to reduce carbon footprints.

Let justice, love and peace flow like a river

SIBU: The Creation Justice Ministry of the Sacred Heart Cathedral organised a "pouring of enzymes" to help revitalise the drainage system around the Bukit Asset Area, along the parish's neighbourhood, on September 2.

This annual activity encourages the faithful to come together and play their part in caring for their home.

On the same day, Bishop Joseph Hii launched the diocese level Season of Creation and the PROTEC Campaign "Protect our Earth, Protect our Children".

Representatives from all parishes in the Diocese of Sibu were also present.

In his homily, Bishop Joseph echoed the words of Pope Francis to join him in synodality in this Season of



A parishioner pouring enzymes to help revitalise the drainage system.

the Care of Creation and put it into practice in our daily lives, the call to take good care of Mother Earth, with special emphasis this year to cut fossil fuel consumption, and in the process, cut the carbon footprint.

He shared his reflection on the wis-

dom of the late Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI who questioned the kind of world we are living in, "what he called a world of alienation, suffering and death that he said had become a spiritual desert. There are so many kinds of deserts — poverty, hunger

and thirst, abandonment, loneliness, and destroyed love. Inside us lies the emptiness of souls no longer aware of their dignity or the goal of human life. The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast."

There is a war inside us. To bring harmony, he echoed Pope Francis' call for conversion, an ecological conversion, so we realise the ecological mortal sin humanity has committed against Mother Earth.

He encouraged all present to persevere on this difficult journey. "We need just one good man. One good heart which can change the world, which can transform this spiritual desert into life on earth, so Love, Justice and Peace may flow like a river" (Amos 5:18-27)

Reflection on the Season of Creation

PENANG: On September 1, the Church of the Risen Christ conducted a paraliturgy and reflection session, followed by a Eucharistic celebration to launch the Season of Creation in the parish.

Parish priest, Friar Esmond Chua, OFM, brought to light that we have allowed injustice and greed to drown out the virtues of justice and peace all in the name of progress and development. Yet, we still refer to ourselves as "Christians" living a double life: pious and humble in church, but selfish and wasteful when in the world.

Our response to care for creation has to be one that is internalised.

He then invited us to reflect on the image of rivers. Just as rivers are persistent, such that nothing can stop a stream from flowing, we are to be persistent to let "justice" and "peace" flow. We give up easily even before trying to respond to the call to care for creation because just the thought of what needs to be done can be overwhelming — from having to bring our own utensils wherever we go or to speak out for environmental policy changes. We do not want to be

inconvenienced and thus, as a result of our choices: global warming, polluted rivers and land.

He further pointed out to us how we may grow and be persistent like a river, that is to transform our perception, our hearts and our lifestyle. Transforming our perception needs us to see the bigger picture from the "Me, Myself and I" to "You and We"; from "obstacles" to "opportunities"; from "too much work" to "what more must be done"; and from "no one's watching" to "even if no one's watching." This transformation will, then, lead us to see the need, importance and urgency to allow justice and peace to flow in our relationships, perceptions, and treatments towards one another and creation.

Transforming our hearts needs us to make time to listen with the ears of our heart, that is, to dialogue with the oppressed and the voiceless, both people and creation. We are to work together in this, just as the lakes and seas are a collection of rivers.

Friar Esmond requested those present to reflect on the individual commitments that they could make,

using the following questions as a guide:

1. What are some of my perceptions about "Caring for Creation" that need to change?
2. What collaborative opportunities are there in my neighbourhood which I can participate in to care for creation?
3. How can I contribute to the care of creation with the unique gifts and talents that I have been entrusted with?

The Litany of Repentance was led by assistant priest, Friar Crispus Mosinoh, OFM. Then the people were invited to make a commitment on how to care for creation; by symbolically pouring water into a common pot, reminding us of how small each of our actions may be to care for creation but we can still make a difference when we come together as one.

The programme drew to a close with Mass and fellowship.

This event was put together in collaboration with Caritas Penang and the Creation Justice Commission of Penang Diocese. — *By Stephanie Cheong*

ArchKL launches PROTEC campaign

KUALA LUMPUR: The World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, and the launch of Year 4 (PROTEC) campaign was held on September 2 at the Church of St Anthony.

Archbishop Julian Leow was the main celebrant, with Fr Andrew Manickam OFM Cap, the Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Creation Justice Ministry (CJM), concelebrating.

In his homily, Archbishop Julian reminded everyone that, as stewards of our planet, we are called to embrace sustainable practices and to advocate for justice and compassion. "We have to do away with the clenched fist, the wicked word, just like prophet Isaiah mentions in the first reading. Let's keep the unfortunate and the ones that no one cares for in mind. While doing so, let's not forget the cries of the unborn child," he stressed.

Fr. Andrew expressed his appreciation for all the support given for the activities by CJM. He concluded by saying, "Now we go back to touch lives in our environment and then meet again for prayer, on Oct 4 at the Church of St Francis of Assisi for the close of the Season of Creation."

The Archdiocesan Creation Justice Ministry encourages everyone to be mindful of our role as stewards of all that God has created for us; give public transport a try, reduce the number of trips and carpool whenever possible, in trying to reduce fuel consumption. A day to appreciate our beaches is being organised on Sept 28 and a half day recollection on Oct 4. — *By Marilyn Menezes Simon*



The congregation pouring water into a common pot, reminding us of how small each of our actions may be to care for creation but we can still make a difference when we come together as one.

Invite confirmands to join PIHDM

KUALA LUMPUR: The Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD) held a roadshow to dialogue and discuss matters related to the human development in the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus recently.

The two-hour roadshow commenced with fellowship, continued with introduction and group sharing by Adira Galusin, who represented AOHD, and Lydia Pinto from the Parish Integral Human Development (PIHDM).

Among the topics discussed were the creation of a database system to input cases filed under AOHD which could be accessed by authorised members of AOHD in all parishes, standardisation of the forms for financial aid and also ways to create awareness on the active working committee to contribute to the community and to help those in need to sustain themselves financially in the long run.

Also present were members from the sub ministries under PIHDM such as Migrant Ministry, Women's Ministry, Prison Ministry, SSVF Ministry, Eagles Wings Ministry and Shepherd Street Outreach Ministry to share on their mission work.

AOHD Director, Gary Liew, suggested the parish run a six-month programme for Confirmation students where they could volunteer in the activities of AOHD before they receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. He mentioned that at least 10 per cent of confirmands would continue to serve in the community and churches after they are confirmed. The PIHDM lead expressed her gratitude to the 24 parishioners who attended this fruitful roadshow in order to serve the community. — *By Cecilia Grace*

Annual retreat for Equestrian Order

IPOH: English-speaking members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, Penang Section from Perak, Penang and Kedah attended their annual retreat on August 26 and 27 at the MU Hotel.

The Prior of the order, Fr Michael Cheah, KCHS, was the retreat master and set the theme for the retreat in two sessions: *I say I am a Christian?* and *In one with the heart of the Master (Lk 10)*.

Fr Michael started the session by asking what it means to be a Christian. He acknowledged that it may be difficult to explain one's Christianity. It is more than just being baptised, saying prayers, attending Mass in church and helping out in the Order's activities. Whilst such a life is nothing extraordinary, it cannot be said to be bad either. In the session, each retreatant was invited to ponder deeper into what it meant to be a Christian.

Fr Michael pointed out that faith is something that needs to be developed all the time. So, we ought to search for God in order to understand Him and to lead a reasonably happy life because we would not be looking for God if we have already found Him. However, he explained the difference between finding God and experiencing God. The latter means to be like Jesus — we will do, think and act like Jesus. He cited contemplatives as examples of those who have found and experienced God, happy to be outside of the world, to live in prayer most of the time and work happily because they have experienced God.

The retreat ended with a meeting at the Church of St Michael, followed by Mass celebrated by Fr Michael.

Forming liturgical ministers

By Shirly A.Savariappan

JOHOR BAHRU: A formation for lectors, psalmists and announcers was held at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, September 2. Fr Adrian Francis, head of the Malacca Johore Diocese Liturgical Commission conducted the formation in English while Irish Leong and Ben Chong conducted the sessions in Mandarin.

The formation was attended by 48 English-speaking and 32 Mandarin-speaking parishioners from various parishes in South Johor. It began with the *Spiritual Reflections on the Ministry of Reader*. In Session One, Fr Adrian explained why Liturgy is the right and duty of all the baptised. He further explained that the Christian faithful, by virtue of their function, should do all and not only those parts that belong to them.

In Session Two *The Role of Lectors or Readers*, he said that lectors should be well prepared for their roles and carry them out with reverence, dignity and understanding. They should accept some responsibilities for the liturgy. Lectors should be familiar with the text that they deliver and also make those words their way of life. In addition, the text should be delivered in a loud and clear voice and should correspond to the genre of the text. Fr Adrian reminded the participants that the readings



Fr Adrian Francis during the session.

should be given from the ambo (General Instruction of the Roman Missal 58) and each reading ends with 'The Word of the Lord'.

In the final session, the focus was on the role of announcers. Fr Adrian provided a very clear description of how an announcer should act during the Eucharistic Celebration. He or she should be confident and competent. Adequate preparations such as arriving early, checking the prayers of the faithful, and familiarising with the microphone are vital for an announcer. He or she should also make their own prayers and meditate before Mass. As

for petitions or the prayers of the faithful, the announcer offers four intentions only: (i) for the needs of the Church, (ii) for public authorities and the salvation of the whole world, (iii) for those burdened by any kind of difficulty, and (iv) for the local community. In short, the petitions should be sober, well composed and express the prayer of the community.

The formation concluded at 12.00 noon, after a question and answer session. The participants found the formation eye-opening and uplifting. They were appreciative and left with a deeper understanding of the Liturgy.

Being an EMHC is a vocation ... not a privilege



The participants with Fr Vincent Thomas.

KUALA LUMPUR: The Church of the Good Shepherd (GSC) recently played host to four parishes in the North District for an Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion (EMHC) Retreat. About 100 EMHC from the Church of Jesus Caritas, Church of the Risen Christ, Chapel of Christ the Light and Chapel of Christ the King attended the retreat by Fr Vincent Thomas.

GSC's Head of Liturgy, Cassandra Grace, welcomed and thanked Fr Vincent and the attendees for their presence. Fr Vincent then said the opening prayer and began the retreat.

He started by emphasising that being an EMHC is a vocation and not a privilege. An EMHC's duty is not only administering Communion to those at Mass, but they must also see to everyone who needs Jesus. Fulfilling a vocation is listening to God's voice. We are called to live a holy life — as God has said "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Leviticus 19:2).

Vocation is also doing God's will. In answering God's will and His call, there will always be a struggle. We as EMHC, when we are faced with this struggle, we must ask ourselves "is my duty as an EMHC supposed to please God or to please people?"

GSC parish priest, Fr Mitchel Joseph, in his address said that EMHC are not made but are all chosen by Jesus, through the priests. Therefore, as an EMHC, we must remain faithful and truthful. All EMHC must ask ourselves, "am I holy?", "do I pray?", "do I read the Bible?", "am I truthful to God and to others?"

Fr Vincent continued with more emphasis on VOCATION. He said that vocation is LIFE; vocation is not work. "Why did God choose me to administer His Holy Body; I am a sinner, I am not worthy" ... This is what we must always ask, as we fulfil our vocation. In asking this of ourselves, we will

be reminded that God has a plan for us. We were chosen as EMHC because God knows us. And we must always better ourselves, to live holy lives.

Fr Vincent highlighted three characteristics as a reminder to EMHC and Christians:

1. HUMILITY — to be humble always, humble to God and to everyone
2. OBEDIENCE — to always be obedient and listen to God and to everyone
3. PRAYER — constant daily prayers will build relationship with God and with everyone

Then Fr Vincent and the ministers moved to the church for Holy Hour and Adoration. The retreat came to a close with a lunch fellowship.

It is safe to say, the EMHC who attended this retreat, went home with a new and deeper insight of what it is to be an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. — *By Ruby J*

Understanding the process of healing and deliverance

JOHOR BARU: The Malacca Johore Diocese Deliverance & Exorcism Office conducted its third session of the Healing & Deliverance Programme on August 31 at Majodi Centre.

The programme, consisting of 10 modules, started on May 1 and will end on Sept 28. This programme is open to all the clergy and nominated laity from the parishes in the diocese.

The purpose is to assist each parish to equip themselves to help parishioners who are in need of healing and liberation so as to "Set God's People Free." A total of 12 clergy and 22 laity attended.

The speakers for the English

programme were Bishop Bernard Paul and Agnes Lim whereas Fr Benedict Yee presented for the Chinese section.

We began by discovering and understanding the meaning of spiritual freedom. God created us to be free. To have freedom of mind and heart. To know who we are, our giftedness, our limitations and to be comfortable with who we are. But most importantly, to live as God intended us to live.

We lose our spiritual freedom when fears, greed, prejudices, need to control, perfectionism set in. These create chaos within us and leads us to make poor choices

and holds us back from loving God, ourselves and our neighbours as we ought to. We become preoccupied and are excessively attached to material possessions, popularity, status, money.

Recognising our sinfulness, we choose to return to God and His teachings. To take hold and reclaim the God-given freedom we need to determine the root cause of the problem.

Every module includes time for reflection and group sharing, practicum with role play. Participants took turns to help each other identify sins and to renounce the spirit attached to the sins. —

By Christina Tan, OFS



Bishop Bernard Paul at the session.

Masses in BECs — a springboard in bridging communities



By Moses Sinnapan

KUALA LUMPUR: The "turun pang" concept was adopted to help BECs foster spiritual growth by extending outreach and affiliation. The reception from the 26 BECs within Christ the Light Chapel was nothing short of overwhelming. The venture spanned a period of three months, culminating in a journey of undeniable spiritual enrichment.

Parish administrator, Fr Peter Anthony, with members of BEC Coordinating Team (BECCOT) and BEC Animating Team (BECAT), established closer connections with the BEC families, while enabling them to grasp the challenges and grievances encountered within the BECs.

In emphasising the essence of BECs, Fr Peter highlighted their fundamental purpose of fostering communities. He drew inspiration from the early Christians who congregated in intimate groups within homes, united by prayer, care, and mutual support in their faith journey.

Within this context, Fr Peter encouraged BEC families to not merely voice concerns, but to uplift the BEC coordinators and the priest in their prayers. He accentuated that BECs symbolise faith-based com-



BEC members of Christ the Light Chapel with Fr Peter Anthony.

munities wherein individuals from local geographical areas unite to nourish themselves through the Word of God. The Word of God stands as the nucleus of BECs, propelling them into a shared mission.

Fr Peter reminded them that faith must not just be professed, but enacted with love and substantiated by action, lest it become lifeless.

During the Masses, the clergy conveyed captivating homilies and enlightening narratives that deeply resonated with numerous BEC families. He summoned the BEC coordinators and core team members to adopt Jesus as their paramount role model, perpetuate the construction of a faith-based community, and radiate love. He encouraged them to be responsive to emerging needs within the BECs, to listen, to discern, and to journey collectively as

a domestic church.

The BEC coordinators and core team members were duly commissioned and blessed, with special blessings extended to those commemorating birthdays and anniversaries. Special intentions, memorials and healings were offered during each Mass.

The exhortation to heed Jesus' call to bear fruit for His kingdom was underscored as the foremost priority for all leaders.

Guided by the Scripture from Hebrews 10:25, "And let's consider how we may spur one another on to love and good deeds, and not cease from gathering together," this transformative journey embodies a shared commitment to cultivating love and goodwill, fostering a congregation that thrives through unity and action.

Building bridges for humanity

KUALA LUMPUR: The Crisis Relief, Service & Training (CREST) Medical Mobile Vehicle, started in January 2022, has been an integral part of the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD)'s medical outreach for the past year. It was used to reach out to migrant communities throughout the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, occasionally also being a medical standby vehicle on parish feast days.

AOHD had been renting the vehicle from CREST Malaysia, a non-profit faith-based humanitarian organisation registered in 1998. When the opportunity arose to purchase the medical mobile vehicle, AOHD made the arrangements to acquire the vehicle under the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, with the plan to build bridges.

"In my tour of different dioceses, I realised that our neighbours in the Diocese of Penang were doing so much in terms of mobile clinics, especially for the migrants, and saw an opportunity to build bridges with this vehicle. It is important to support each other as we can do so much more together", said Gary Liew, Director of AOHD.

The idea of this collaboration on a larger scale was mooted in June of this year with the two dioceses working closely towards the possibility of having this vehicle serve communities across borders.

Sept 2 saw the official handover between the Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur and the Bishop of Penang. The simple ceremony started with CREST chairman,

Rev Dr Ng Swee Ming, giving a tour of the vehicle and explaining the medical equipment on board which includes a full-size examination couch, ECG, Ultrasound, an Oxygen tank, a stainless-steel sink, locker drawers for medical supplies, etc to Caritas Penang and their Medical Mission team at the handing over.

This was followed by the signing of a shared agreement between Archbishop Julian Leow and Cardinal-elect Sebastian Francis and the handing over of keys.

Cardinal-elect Sebastian said that the medical mobile vehicle will be parked in a parish in Perak for the use of Medical Mission, especially dealing with the migrant communities in the area. This medical mobile vehicle will help highlight the struggles of migrants in Malaysia and the growing need to respond as church in this area.

"Today's handing over is a very good sign of collaboration firstly from CREST and Dr Ng as we got the medical mobile vehicle from them and now as the vehicle is in the Archdiocese, we are sharing it with the Diocese of Penang. I think it is a collaboration. Wherever there is a need, this mobile clinic can be used for the different ministries," said Archbishop Julian.

He added that while it is for the use of the Diocese of Penang, there is a mutual understanding that the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur will have access to it whenever needed, ensuring its availability for use across the entire Peninsular Malaysia region.



Cardinal-elect Sebastian Francis and Archbishop Julian Leow flanked by CREST chairman, Rev Dr Ng Swee Ming, with Caritas Penang and AOHD members, September 2, 2023.

Cardinal Bo calls for ecological justice

NAYPYIDAW: Myanmar's Cardinal Charles Maung Bo has called for ecological justice as Pope Francis plans to publish a second *Laudato Si'* next month.

"This ecological injustice has robbed food from the plates of millions of children in poor countries and snatched water from their thirsty mouths," Cardinal Bo, president of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference, said on September 1 to mark the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. This year's theme is *Let Justice and Peace Flow*.

He said, "Farmers have lost their seeds and forests have lost their topsoil. Poor countries are strangled with an existential crisis."

The 74-year-old cardinal slammed the rich nations who plunder resources from the third world, and termed it 'incremental genocide'.

"This is a horrendous injustice."

Stop inflicting mortal wounds on Mother Earth. She is the only mother gifted by a generous and all-loving God, Bo said.

Prophet Amos called for a world where justice and peace flow like a river. The modern Amos, Pope Francis, knocked on the

doors of all nations with his path-breaking encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, in June 2015, the Myanmar cardinal noted.

On Aug 30, speaking at the end of his general audience, Pope Francis said he plans "to publish a second *Laudato Si'*," on Oct 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

Covering current issues, the second part will be an exhortation, which will take the number of exhortations by Pope Francis to six.

In May 2020, more than 40 faith groups, more than half of them Catholic, decided to divest from fossil fuel firms, following the papal call on ecology.

The Institute for Works of Religion (IOR), popularly known as the Vatican Bank, has said it does not invest in fossil fuels, *Reuters* reported in June 2020.

At the meeting of the International Association of Penal Law on Nov 15, 2019, the Pope proposed that "sins against ecology" be added to the teachings of the Catholic Church and declared "ecocide" as a fifth category of crimes against peace.

"Wounding and killing her [nature] is a matricide," a crime of catastrophic propo-



Women carry drinking water near Naypyitaw, Myanmar. (CNS file photo/EPA/Hein Htet)

sition, the cardinal said.

"The time for action is now. There is no tomorrow for children" in ecologically sensitive countries, he stressed.

"Never in history have so many millions suffered for the egoistic enjoyment of a few."

The cardinal quoted the Pope's 225-page

encyclical that called the environmental crisis a social evil.

"Let environmental justice and peace flow like a river" as the modern Amos wants it, Cardinal Bo demanded, referring to the Church's crusade against the current ecological crisis under Pope Francis. — ucanews.com

Philippine archdiocese divests from fossil fuels

MANILA: The Archdiocese of Manila has announced it has divested from fossil fuels such as coal and other businesses that destroy the environment in line with Pope Francis' famed environmental encyclical, *Laudato Si'*.

The archdiocese started the divesting process "years ago" in response to the Pope's 2015 encyclical, Manila Archbishop Cardinal Jose F. Advincula said in a pastoral letter on September 4.

The letter has been posted on the archdiocesan website on the occasion of the ongoing *Season of Creation* which runs from Sept 1–Oct 4.

During this annual ecumenical event, the world's 2.2 billion Christians unite, pray and act to care for God's creation and the common home, the earth.

Advincula said that the decision to divest from "destructive businesses" was also "in consonance with our faith and the earlier social teachings of the Church."

"We commit to relentlessly support all initiatives that will protect, preserve, nurture, and respect God's creation," he said.



A file photo of Archbishop Ramon Arguelles of Lipa, Philippines, centre, joins more than 10,000 marchers May 4 in a Break Free from Fossil Fuels demonstration in Batangas City, in the Batangas province, in the Philippines. (350.org/Veejay Villafranca/Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities)

The archdiocese started observing the Season of Creation 11 years ago as the efforts for ecological conservation were a part of preparations for celebration of the 500 years of Christianity in the Philippines, he noted.

He noted that 35 years ago, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Philippines (CBCP) issued a pastoral letter, "What is happening to our beautiful land?" to inform every Filipino of the ecological and environmental situation of our country.

"At this point in the history of our country, it is crucial that people, motivated by religious faith, develop a deep appreciation for the fragility of our island's life systems and take steps to defend the Earth," he quoted from the letter.

"It is a matter of life and death," it stated, referring to the vulnerability of the Philippines amid frequent natural disasters further worsened by climate change.

Divestment from fossil fuels has become a major Catholic climate action campaign in recent years. Dozens of Catholic and faith-based institutions have made their assets off-limits for fossil fuel companies.

Manila archdiocese is committed to responding to the goals of *Laudato Si'* "by mobilising various institutions to become part of the *Laudato Si'* Action Platform to achieve integral ecology," Advincula said.

The Season of Creation ends on Oct 4, the feast of St Francis of Assisi. In the Philippines, the dioceses extend the observance to the second Sunday of October, known as Indigenous Peoples' Sunday. — ucanews.com

Mother of two is Institut Catholique's new dean of theology



PARIS: The Institut Catholique of Paris (ICP), which was founded in 1875 and counts numerous cardinals and bishops among its alumni, has appointed the first-ever layperson to be dean of its Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies.

Anne-Sophie Vivier-Muresan (*pic*), a 45-year-old theology professor who is married and has two children, was elected by her peers at the end of last month to the three-year post. She took up her post as the dean of the "Theologicum" on September 1.

She succeeds Fr Jean-Louis Souletie as head of the world's largest French-speaking faculty of theology, which numbers some 1,000 students, over 700 auditors and 200 members of the teaching staff.

Following her appointment, Vivier-Muresan said she intends to "pursue and renew the efforts already undertaken to decom-

partmentalise the teaching of theology, so as to enable it to assume its full role in the service of the ecclesial body and society".

This concern is illustrated by her own career path. It was her studies in social anthropology, as well as her encounter with Islam — "the Muslim world questions the Christian faith a lot on the Trinity" — and then with the Christian East, in Egypt and Iran, where she spent several years, that particularly led her to theology.

"I began to increasingly specialise in matters of religious anthropology, and, at a certain moment, I realised that if I wanted to go all the way in my quest to understand what people are and their search for transcendence, I needed to open up to theology," said Vivier-Muresan, who has a double doctorate in theology and social anthropology.

She has been a professor at the Theo-

logicum since 2009 and has held positions of responsibility as deputy director of the Institut de Sciences et Théologie des Religions (ISTR) from 2011- 2020. Long committed to building bridges between cultures, she directs the university degree on "pastoral care in encounters with Muslims" (Dupram) and, since 2020, the Institut Supérieur d'Études Écumeniques (ISEO).

A polyglot theologian of religions, Vivier-Muresan has worked on ecumenical and interfaith issues. Convinced that "theology can help the Church out of the crisis", she is aware that "for a lay person, doing theology is neither obvious nor easy". She said that, like her predecessor, she plans to eagerly "encourage the teaching of theology among lay people". — **By Christophe Henning and Céline Hoyeau, LCI** (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

Change is possible if we work together

“On this 60th anniversary of the birth of Malaysia, (1963 - 2023), I join my fellow countrymen and women, the admirable, indefatigable and spirited *rakyat* to pray in faith, hope and love for this beautiful country we call home. Sixty years is relatively short in the lifespan of a nation.



“It gives me hope that change for the better is always possible, especially when we join hands to change the narratives that are past their time and replace them with those which champion our unity in diversity.

“They say it takes a village to raise a child. So, it is going to take every peace, food and music-loving Malaysian to raise a country where we can shout out with pride and joy: MALAYSIA BOLEH!” — **Fr Alvin Ng, SJ**

“For me, it’s how the government plays its role in binding us together as one, to make *Malaysia Madani* a reality.

“The government should consider every aspect of race, culture and religion and be fair to every one. In a nutshell, the hope for unity lies in the hands of the government. — **Margaret Soosaimanickam, Church of St Francis Xavier, Melaka**

“With the tumultuous period ranging from medical, political to economic crises behind us, it is a time to rebuild our nation by rediscovering our common goals and embracing our differences as we work towards the progress and growth of our multiracial society. Let us carry the same spirit of independence envisioned by our forefathers in attaining a united and prosperous

Malaysia that shines brightly as a beacon of hope to the world.”

— **Aaron Lim, City Parish, Penang**



“I remember a time when learning History in school was a bore. It was a subject I would rank one out of 10. Even the unfortunate teacher could be viewed as a zombie!

“Today, I find that history of humankind and all its happenings is an incredible need for me. By sharing the past and connecting with the present we can understand how to build a



better future, be it personal, professional or corporate development.

Knowing how we got here equips us with wisdom moving forward. This in return breaks down arrogance and indifferences.

The facts, the struggles, the achievements, the vision and mission our heroic ancestors laboured for should be the basis for *Malaysia Madani*.

“For *Malaysia Madani* to achieve resounding success, it is imperative that all citizens are inculcated with a strong sense of responsibility towards their neighbours. This commences with respect, honour, and in-depth understanding of one another, irrespective of one’s religion and where they choose to worship.

“Community leaders in the various residential areas have to play a



pivotal role in the eventual realisation of these noble objectives. These can be realistically achieved through the close cooperation and rapport with the National Unity Ministry. A Malaysian nation at peace, and true harmony comes from the people themselves — through unwavering patriotism.” — **Dominic Savarimuthu, Church of the Immaculate Conception, Port Dickson**

“The *Malaysia Madani* framework calls for a reformation of our nation’s identity.

In order to build a country that is peaceful and harmonious, we must focus on mitigating identity-based inequalities. Hence, the hope to rebuild this nation must begin with a shared



identity: a community that observes mutual respect, is prayerful, and possesses immense soft skills.

The fundamental process in achieving unity in diversity is fostering acceptance in both personal and communal ecology. — **Dr Grace Gnana Piragasam, Church of St Jude, Rawang**

We need to return to the spirit of patriotism, living ethically, practising true cultural values, displaying courtesy and showing respect. Let’s sing the *Negaraku* frequently. Let’s recite our *Rukun Negara* after every national and state anthem. Let’s make both a subject matter in schools from kindergarten onwards. *Malaysia Madani* is achievable! — **Vernon Christopher Fernandez, Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Butterworth**

“I believe in order to achieve a *Madani* nation, we should first strive to be good citizens. We must have courage, compassion, civility, and calmness in our actions. We should always think of what is the best for all — the common good.

“Second, we must love our neighbours as we love ourselves — reflect this every day of our lives by being a little kinder to each person we meet, regardless of race or creed. Show genuine kindness in the form of our actions, words and thoughts and I’m sure others would reciprocate.

“Although, these are easier said than done, we should take baby steps and practise them consistently. It is possible if we always ask God for strength and guidance; praying to be like Jesus in everything we do — that whatever we do begins with His inspiration and continues with His saving help.” — **Everlyn Ravidas, Church of St Louis, Kluang**



Heartiest Appreciation and Thank You
to each and everyone for your support and contribution
directly or indirectly, to the success of the
National Day and Malaysia Day celebrations.



HOPING TOGETHER

Pope Francis' six great

Here is a round-up of Pope Francis' trip to Mongolia, a central Asian country with around 1,500 Catholics.

From August 31 to September 4, Pope Francis visited Mongolia, as the

destination of his 43rd apostolic trip abroad.

This central Asian nation welcomed Pope Francis with great excitement on this visit marked by geopolitical undertones and historical significance.

3. Our Lady of Heaven: From the garbage to cathedral

After meeting the political representatives, Pope Francis went to the Cathedral of St Peter and Paul to meet the country's small Catholic community, made up of only eight parishes and featuring the Church's youngest cardinal. Before the event began, he met with an elderly woman, Tsetsege, who, more than a decade ago, found a statue of Mary in the garbage. Our Lady of Heaven, as the statue is called, now has a special place in the Cathedral.

"Let us acknowledge too, all those many faithful servants of the Gospel in Mongolia who are here with us now and who, having spent their lives for Christ, can 'see' and 'taste' the marvels that His goodness continues to accomplish in you and through you," Pope Francis told the clergy, missionaries, and other Church workers present, remembering also all those who have contributed to the evangelisation of Mongolia in the last 30 years of Catholic presence in the country.

"The Lord Himself has chosen you and believes in you; I am with you and with all my heart I say to you: thank you; thank you for your witness, thank you for your lives poured out for the Gospel!"



Pope Francis blesses Tsetsege, who found the statue of Mary in the garbage. (Vatican Media)

1. First Pope to ever visit Mongolia



Mongolia community people gave Pope Francis an enthusiastic welcome on Sept 1, 2023. (Vatican Media)

2. The Holy See and Mongolia: A long history of relations

On September 2, Pope Francis participated in his first engagement in Mongolia, meeting with state leaders, politicians, local authorities and the diplomatic corps. Pope Francis met with the country's president, Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh, and gave him, as a gift, a copy of an ancient manuscript held in the Vatican Library.

Dating from 1246, this letter showed some tension at the time between Pope Innocent IV, and the ruler of Mongolia, the Khan Güyük, Genghis Khan's grandson. However, Pope Francis wanted to remember it as the first historic contact between the two states and hoped it could be a "sign of an ancient friendship that is growing and

being renewed."

The Pope then gave a speech to the authorities, highlighting how Mongolia is, and has been, a promoter of peace and religious freedom throughout history.

"A profound spiritual sensitivity belongs to the very fibre of your cultural identity, and it is proper that Mongolia should be a symbol of religious freedom. In the contemplation of boundless and sparsely settled horizons, your people have developed a refined spiritual sense, born of nurturing silence and interiority," the Pope explained.

He then highlighted how Catholics can also contribute to the future of the nation.

"I am pleased that this community, however small and discreet, shares with enthusiasm and commitment in the country's process of growth by spreading the culture of solidarity, the culture of universal respect and the culture of interreligious dialogue, and by working for justice, peace and social harmony," the Pope said. "I am certain that Mongolian Catholics will continue to offer readily their proper contribution."

Pope Francis and Mongolian President Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh shared several memorable moments on September 2, 2023. (Vatican Media)

Mongolians express pride in hosting Pope Francis

Pope Francis had one of the most unusual popemobile tours of his decade-long pontificate in Mongolia when he entered an ice hockey arena in the capital, Ulaanbaatar, for a Mass with the country's tiny Catholic community.

Far from the jubilation that usually pervades the Pope's public appearances in stadiums and airports around the world, the welcome Francis received inside the Steppe Arena was as discreet as the country's 1,500-member Church. But the 86-year-old Francis was visibly moved by the fervour displayed by the clusters of people who pressed up against barriers to try and greet him.

A personality who inspires confidence

Many of the 2,000 people inside the arena came from other Asian countries, including Singapore and South Korea. Others came from China and Russia. There were also Mongolian Catholics sitting in the blue and yellow seats of the small ice arena on the

outskirts of Ulaanbaatar.

A 15-year-old girl named Anujin came with her parents from their town of Shuwuu, two hours away. While waiting for the Mass to begin as a brass band (surprisingly) played *Carmen Toreador*, she told us through the use of a smartphone translation app that "we wouldn't know Jesus" without the Pope. She was counting on the Pope to "teach us understanding, respect and trust", the teen said.

"We are united for the protection of human rights, peace and democracy," added Oyunjargal, a 47-year-old lawyer who came with a friend from her parish.

Also inside the arena, wearing the yellow volunteer vest, was 17-year-old Anu. She's not Catholic, although her mother and aunt, who asked her to "tell them about the Pope", are. She said she loves going to churches, and appreciates "the way Catholics help the poorest". When asked about the Pope, Anu described him as a "great figure" who projects a "good image". "I'd like to know what

he thinks of our country, if he's surprised by the people he meets, if he thought he'd see so many people," she said.

"It's a great opportunity for the country"

Many of the Mongolian Catholics at Steppe Arena said they were proud that Pope Francis chose to visit their country.

"These days, the whole world is watching Mongolia," enthused Michel, a 27-year-old engineer originally from Ulaanbaatar, but who has been living in the Czech Republic for the past five years. "It's a great opportunity for the country," continued the young man, who defines himself as "without religion, but respecting them all". He said he hoped that, as a result of the papal visit, "Mongolia's image will improve and tourists will come."

That's also an objective of the Mongolian government. In fact, the leaders of this Central Asian country that is wedged between Russia and China have been trying for several years to put the country on the map of

international opinion.

"His visit will bear fruit for Mongolia, particularly in terms of affirming its democracy, independence and status in the world," said Gabriel, a former Buddhist who converted to Roman Catholicism as a 15-year-old. Now 36, he expressed more spiritual expectations of seeing Francis. He praised the Pope for his "love and benevolence towards the region", calling him "the most important man on earth". "He is a symbol of hope for the whole world, especially through his commitment to peace," added Gabriel, who lives in Ulaanbaatar where he works for a mining company.

These are words Pope Francis seemed to hear as he made his way through the arena before the Mass, as evidenced by his closing remarks at the conclusion of the liturgy. "May we continue to grow closer in fraternity," he said, "as seeds of peace in a world tragically devastated by all too many wars and conflicts." — **Loup Besmond de Senneville, LCI** (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

moments in Mongolia

4. A unique interreligious meeting



On September 3, Pope Francis met with 11 different religious leaders, representing the many faiths in Mongolia. He notably heard Kamba Nomun Khan, abbot of the Gandan Buddhist monastery in Ulaanbaatar, who highlighted, without stating names, the different persecutions that his Buddhist brothers have suffered in the past and still today. Buddhism is the major-

ity religion in Mongolia.

The Pope then heard from representatives of the Shaman, Orthodox, Jewish, Baha'i, Muslim, Hindu, Evangelical, Adventist and Jehovah's Witness communities.

"Here indeed, the sky, so clear and blue, embraces these vast and imposing lands, as if to remind us of the two essential aspects of human life: the earthly, made up of our

relationships with others, and the heavenly, consisting in our quest for the transcendent Other," the Pope said.

"Brothers and sisters, the social significance of our religious traditions can be gauged by the extent to which we are capable of living in harmony with other pilgrims on this earth and how we can foster that harmony in the places where we live."

5. "Ciao, Ni Hao, Viva Il Papa"

On Sunday afternoon Pope Francis celebrated Mass for the Mongolian faithful and the hundreds of other Catholics that came from neighbouring countries. There were, notably, a number of Chinese Catholics that had come to see the Pontiff, despite a ban by their government. They had been noticed on the streets of the Mongolian capital, often covering their faces or avoiding questions from journalists.

At the end of the Mass, in an unexpected and spontaneous move, Pope Francis sent a direct message to China, while taking by the hand the Bishop of Hong Kong, cardinal-elect Stephen Chow. The Pontiff asked Chinese Catholics "to be good Christians and good citizens."

"Ciao, ni hao, viva il Papa," they shouted, a mix of Italian and Chinese meaning "Hi, hello, long live the Pope!"

"In this life we often experience the

desert with loneliness, fatigue and emptiness," the Pope said during his homily to the around 2,500 faithful present. "The Christian faith is the answer to this thirst. For in this thirst lies the great mystery of our humanity: it opens our hearts to the living God, the God of love, who comes to meet us and to make us His children, brothers and sisters to one another. Let us never forget: love alone truly quenches our thirst."



Catholics hold Chinese flags at Pope Francis' Mass in Mongolia's Steppe Arena in Ulaanbaatar on September 4, 2023. (Vatican Media)

6. House of Mercy inaugurated in Ulaanbaatar

For his last event on Mongolian soil, Pope Francis inaugurated the House of Mercy, a centre for the Church's charitable activities that will assist the homeless and others in need in Ulaanbaatar. "Though small in size, [the Church in Mongolia] life is marked by fraternal communion, prayer, selfless service to those in need, and witness to its faith," the Pope said, remembering how the missionaries that came to the country in the 1990s "immediately sensed a summons to works of charity."

He noted his hopes that this new charity centre will welcome people of all faiths, either as volunteers or as people using its facilities.



Pope Francis blesses a young boy at the "House of Mercy". (Vatican Media)

A "myth needing to be dispelled is that the Catholic Church, distinguished throughout the world for its great commitment to works of social promotion, does all this to proselytise, as if caring for others were a way of enticing people to 'join up.' No! Christians do whatever they can to alleviate the suffering of the needy because, in the person of the poor they acknowledge Jesus, the Son of God, and, in Him, the dignity of each person, called to be a son or daughter of God," Francis emphasised. — By **Isabella H. de Carvalho, Aleteia**

Holy Father finds his ideal Church in Mongolia

They all gathered for a family photo, which almost looked like a scene from a film. On leaving Sts Peter and Paul Cathedral in Ulaanbaatar September 2, the tiny Catholic community of Mongolia — one of the smallest of any country in the world — formed an honour guard around Pope Francis. They were accompanied by Cardinal Giorgio Marengo, the country's only bishop. Francis had just addressed them in the church shaped like a Mongolian yurt and now they were shouting over and over *Viva il Papa!* Some of those present had tears in their eyes and were still trying to process this historic moment. The entire Church of Mongolia was there, it seemed.

During his Sept 1-4 visit, Francis encountered what he has consistently portrayed as an ideal form of Church — a Church at the peripheries of the world, as he likes to call it, in a country where Catholics are only a

tiny minority. But numbers, he told them, don't matter.

"Being little is not a problem, but a resource," the Pope said while speaking inside the cathedral. "God loves littleness, and through it He loves to accomplish great things," he added.

The Church in Mongolia was founded on works of charity. The first missionaries cared for orphans and the sick and opened homes for people with disabilities. A few hours before leaving the country on Sept 4, the Pope told the people that Catholicism is developing here by adopting "the 'style' of service that Jesus taught us".

Francis likened the Church in Mongolia to "the first Christian community" that carried out "Jesus' words" in its time. The Pope insisted that the Church cannot grow through proselytism, an ideology he has always vigorously rejected. Nor is there any

question of using social works in a spirit of conquest, he asserted.

"I encourage you to continue along this path, which has proved so fruitful and beneficial for the beloved Mongolian people," he said in the cathedral. "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," he added.

Everything in Mongolia reminded Francis that he was far from Rome. Even when, on several occasions, he found himself presenting the Catholic Church, in a simple way, to political leaders who obviously knew very little about it.

"The Catholic Church, as an ancient institution present in almost every country of the world, embodies a spiritual tradition, a noble and fruitful tradition that has contrib-

uted to the development of entire nations in numerous fields of human activity, from the sciences to literature, from the arts to political and social life," he insisted in his very first speech in the Mongolia, which was at the presidential palace on Sept 2 before the country's leaders.

Pope Francis' affection for Mongolia's tiny Church was also concretely demonstrated during the four-day visit by the constant presence of Cardinal Marengo at his side. The apostolic prefect of Ulaanbaatar, the only bishop in a country that doesn't even have a single diocese, is one of the principal architects of the Church's presence in the region. The 49-year-old Italian missionary was named a cardinal last year and remains the Catholic Church's youngest prelate with the red hat. — By **Loup Besmond de Senneville, LCI** (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

How Blessed Mary found her way to Mongolia

During his apostolic trip to Mongolia, Pope Francis blessed a statue of Our Lady known as “Heavenly Mother,” which was miraculously discovered in a landfill in the northern region of that country by a Buddhist woman.

Fr Andrew Tin Nguyen, SDB, the parish priest of Mary Help of Christians Church in the city of Darkhan, shared with *CNA* that the woman who found the statue can’t recall the exact year she discovered it. However, she insists that it was even before the missionaries arrived in Darkhan 18 years ago.

“This discovery might signify something profound, perhaps a sign from our Blessed Lady Mary that she had been present here before us, preparing for our arrival. She appeared in the humblest and poorest of places, which could signify her desire for us to care for the poorest among us,” he reflected.

The statue was bestowed with the title “Heavenly Mother” by Pope Francis himself. In an interview with *catholic-kazakhstan.org*, Cardinal Giorgio Marengo, apostolic prefect of Ulaanbaatar, explained that in January, he presented various titles collected from the Mongolian faithful to Pope Francis. The Pope chose “Heavenly Mother” as the most fitting title, recognising the significance of heaven in Mongolian culture.

According to Nguyen’s account, the people of Darkhan used to collect recyclable materials such as plastic and metal to make a living. Among these individuals was a lady named Tsetsegee, who had spent many years scavenging in landfills. One day, as she sifted through the refuse, she stumbled upon a statue carefully tucked away in some clothing. When she asked those around her if anyone wanted to keep it, no one expressed any interest.

Captivated by the statue’s beauty, Tsetsegee decided to take it home. When some Missionary Sisters of Charity visited her family, the story came to light, and Tsetse-



Fr Andrew Tin Nguyen, parish priest of Mary Help of Christians in Darkhan, Mongolia, with Tsetsegee, who found a statue of the Blessed Mother in a landfill. The statue was blessed by Pope Francis during his trip to Mongolia from August 31 – September 4, 2023. (CNA photo/Photo courtesy of Fr Andrew Tin Nguyen)

gee decided to offer the statue to Mary Help of Christians Parish. Initially, it was kept in the parish office until Marengo became aware of it.

On December 8, 2022, the cardinal enthroned the statue in the Cathedral of Sts Peter and Paul in Ulaanbaatar, consecrating Mongolia to the Virgin Mary. A few months after this solemn consecration, he visited Tsetsegee in Darkhan, as she was too ill to participate at the time. In an interview with *catholic-kazakhstan.org*, the cardinal

explained that Tsetsegee felt so ill as she was nearing death and expressed, “If I am alive now, it is thanks to that Lady.” She requested to be baptised, feeling a profound bond with “that Lady” whom she had once discovered in a landfill.

Within the Catholic community, devotion to Mary has been wholeheartedly embraced. In Mongolia, mothers hold a special place in people’s hearts, both within families and in society.

“In our parish, it’s common for men to come to the parish and first pay their respects to Mary by lighting a candle, writing intentions on pieces of paper, or making donations at the box in front of her statue. To me, this reflects remarkable faith and trust in her,” Nguyen shared.

At the time when the statue was found, the Mongolian Catholic community consisted of just a handful of individuals, numbering only 14 in 1995. However, according to the latest statistics in 2023, the Catholic population has grown to approximately 1,500 members, spread across eight parishes.

As a testament to the growing devotion to the Virgin Mary and the deepening faith of the community, Marengo declared 2023 a Marian Year. — By Alexey Gotovskiy, *CNA*



Cardinal Giorgio Marengo, together with clergy consecrated Mongolia to the Virgin Mary on December 8, 2022, in the Cathedral of St Peter and Paul in Ulaanbaatar. (CNA photo/Catholic Church in Mongolia)

Nun’s short film wins award, goes international

A Catholic nun in the western Indian city of Mumbai is making ripples in the movie world with her seven-minute fiction film shot in just two days on a mobile phone.

Sr Josefina Albuquerque’s zero-budget movie *D for Dumbo* tells the story of Sam, a fourth grader who is ridiculed because he could not recount tables as quickly as his peers. However, the child — labelled the class dumbo — outshines his classmates when another teacher gives them a creative exercise.

The member of the Religious of Jesus and Mary was applauded recently by renowned Bollywood actor Naseeruddin Shah.

He presented Sr Josefina, as she is popularly known, the first prize at a function in Mumbai recently.

The movie was made as a class project by the first batch of Professional Filmmaking Course at St Paul’s Communication Centre, Bandra, a Mumbai suburb.

The film is now on its way to the online ALP International Film Festival.

The nun says the film was made with available resources and its topic “resonates with everyone on some level. It was a pleasant surprise for me when Naseeruddin Shah mentioned it during the convocation and

said he identified with the protagonist.”

She said her biggest challenge was writing the script.

“I had little training or experience in writing. On the other hand, cinematography and direction came naturally to me. Skills which I self-learned during the lockdown period came handy while editing my films,” said the nun, who is currently the principal of St Agnes High School, Byculla. She had sought permission from her superiors to make the movie at her convenience. She said she wanted to experience the whole process of film-making.

Sr Josefina shot the film at St John the Evangelist School at Marol, Andheri, another Mumbai suburb where she was the principal for five years. Her cast comprised students attending summer classes.

The nun, who has a soft spot for students who are naughty or with learning difficulties, found something unique about the boy who played the character of Sam during the audition.

“The boy comes from a very modest background and was not considered academically bright. We witnessed a transformation in his personality during the acting sessions.”

Earlier, she made a documentary *Under the banyan tree – a path to self-discovery*, that traces the life of an engineer who gave up his material comforts to live in the forest of Aarey and help people with their true calling resonates well with many.

Her cinematography skills were applauded when she made an observation shoot in which she had covered the life in a day of an Adivasi. She was intrigued by the lifestyle of the tribals when she went to Aarey forest for walks. She based her shoot on them.

A science and math teacher, Sr Josefina believes in taking her students outdoors for learning sessions as she strongly feels education doesn’t happen only in classrooms. She also points out that we can educate today’s generation using films as a medium.

She says the award means “recognition



Sr Josefina Albuquerque, from the congregation of Religious of Jesus and Mary in Mumbai, India, has won accolades for her zero-budget short film, ‘D for Dumbo,’ which was shot on a mobile phone and awarded first prize by the St Paul’s Communication Centre in Bandra. (UCA News photo)

and confirmation of my belief, combining my passion for filmmaking and education, I feel I can expand my reach to a larger audience.” — *Matters India*

Increased hindrances to nation building

We are at the tail-end of the season of Merdeka, and the country seems to be enjoying a respite from the usual heated political goings-on.

With the state elections behind us, the road to healing the country's divide and return of the focus to the economy, livelihood and the people is surely next on the agenda.

We can finally return to building the nation.

Or can we?

Widening political divide

Plenty of things were said during the run-up to the state elections. Most of these were not addressed by either side running, and have widened the gap between communities, particularly between Muslims and non-Muslims. Christians, used to being the political bogeyman, have been accused of all and sundry, from covert proselytisation, to having a clandestine agenda for the country.

For "evidence", politicians offer very little, like video clips of people praying for the country. It is alarming that these small things may be drastically misconstrued to support a flimsy argument.

Using that as a base, anything less than complete majority dominance in the political sphere, including voting, is seen as a direct challenge to the special position of Malays and Muslims as per the Constitution, which is a rather convoluted argument.

It is sad that some statesmen have denigrated into cheap politicians to play up these sentiments, driving Malaysians apart both on basis of race/religion and politics, which have intertwined. It would not be an exaggeration to say, the hope is for the two to remain so, to encourage the confusion and increase the



MAKING SENSE

Emmanuel Joseph

efficacy of emotive arguments used in both.

There is an urgent need for dialogue, and the opening of channels that facilitate this.

Yet, opening such channels are seen as a challenge to the majority, as our social institution has deteriorated to such a point, due to several factors that have accumulated over the years.

Growing socio-economic difference

One chief reason is socio-economic inequality.

For example, the Bumiputra community have been at the fringes of Malaysia's economic gain. Most are employed in the Government sector, where wages are artificially low. Another segment is employed in farming and fisheries, which are seasonal and highly volatile, depending on prices of commodities, weather and yield.

Although land and equity ownership in this community have increased, it is mostly on reserved land, where the net capital increase is lesser than non-reserved types.

Similarly, other B40 communities are stuck in the vicious cycle of poverty, unable to break free from its shackles, despite various aid programmes — SME start-up funds, education scholarships and grants, and so on.

Even if one does manage to obtain requisite education to get a white-collar job, starting salaries have remained largely stagnant and unable to meet fresh graduate requirements, especially those from poor families and those

who are looked upon to look after ailing parents and to educate their other siblings. Many of these relent and revert to blue-collar, better paying jobs, or resort to gig economy type arrangements, sometimes foregoing a long-term career to fulfil immediate needs.

The results are the rich get richer, and the poor remain poor.

Parents lucky enough to have amassed some savings or properties pass it on, together with the advantages they confer, to their kids, while those who did not make enough to save, pass the disadvantages of non-ownership to their kids as well, causing them, and the unhappiness associated with it, to be passed down, generationally.

Poor, worsening communication

The diversity of channels available for communication have both democratised, as well as cheapened its value. What was to be presented previously as fact, would have had to pass through various sieves to determine its authenticity. Today, opinion, often biased, and speculation, often completely made up, are presented as Gospel truth and its perpetrators, sometimes anonymous, are allowed to get away with it.

This breakdown follows in the trend of the era of personalised communication, where content online is customised to its reader, where algorithms determine what you like to hear or read, not necessarily what you need to, or even if it is true.

The idea was probably noble — to gather like-minded people, enhance qualities of discussions and produce meaningful output. Advertisements would be targeted at specific groups and less would go to waste.

These have, though, effectively created

echo chambers or opinion bubbles where our thoughts are shared within groups of people with similar thoughts.

Now, however, even divisive propaganda is being broadcast as news, which is deeply detrimental to our social cohesion.

Juxtaposed against our already split communities, this only widens the gap between communities.

Return to Rukun Negara?

The government has a tall order ahead of it if it wishes to restore our country to her former state of harmony.

The first steps of reintroducing the *Rukun Negara* is wise, though it would be hard, as the concepts found therein could seem alien to some, and incompatible to their idea of a religious-centric state.

Words like "liberal", "progressive" that are in it have become anathema, no thanks to certain people with onomatophobia, including even university professors!

There needs to be a gradual re-introduction of these values, of nation-building and community ties, which have taken a backseat in the past decades, in favour of the economy and more recently, politicking.

Of equal urgency, is to keep the political temperament in check and to address bread and butter issues that risk tearing these efforts apart, before they even had a chance to begin.

● Emmanuel Joseph oversees IT as his 9-5 job and from 5-9, he serves a few NGOs, think tanks and volunteer groups. He serves as an advisor for Projek Dialog and is a Fellow with the Institute of Research and Development of Policy.



... meanwhile

Joanne Lim

Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find that faith on earth?" — Luke 18:8

It was 5.45pm in this affluent town 'by the river', and the Saturday sunset Mass was scheduled to take place at 6.00pm. We arrived at 5.15pm, thinking we would have time to pray the Rosary. Who knows, maybe we could even possibly pray the Saturday Novena, a somewhat forgotten devotion in so many churches. With no one in sight and piles of dried leaves left near the main entrance, we thought "no way will there be Mass celebrated here today." We walked around the church thrice; it was getting to be quite disappointing. Where's the choir, we thought...they would need to set up at least an hour before Mass? The cold chill wind outside was pressing us to leave. It was, after all, getting dark and our walk back would take 15-freezing-cold-minutes (which would seem like three hours). However, I wasn't about to give up. Despite the doors being shut tight, I spotted the sanctuary lamp through one of the glass windows. "The Blessed Sacrament is there...this can't possibly be an abandoned church." And so we waited.

At 5.50pm, the friendliest face emerged — the fairly young parish priest himself. He smiled and said, "Sorry to keep you guys waiting outside, come on in..." He stayed to chat for a couple of minutes, asking us where we were visiting from. He quickly shared that he had left India many years ago and had come to this first-world country to serve...however, this was a small congregation and there were probably only two 'native' priests in this entire diocese. At that point, we thought we would be the only two people attending Mass, until

another lady came through the side door...she hurried along, opening the main doors and we made our way to the front oak pews.

Within just a few minutes, perhaps another 35 parishioners walked through the door, and Mass started. The entrance hymn *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty* sprang suddenly — through a compact disc...though beautiful and resounding. The Gospel reading told the story of Peter remonstrating with the Lord, and the priest gave a truly powerful and heartfelt message from the front pew about how we can sometimes be 'weak' like Peter was in the Gospel...how we often see things from a weaker human point of view, and not from God's. The world today is a classic example, pivoting to a weakened response to faith in many corners of the world.

Alas, where were the altar servers? The choir members? The extraordinary ministers of communion? There were none. There were no magnificent flowers on the altar as we were used to back home. By contrast, Malaysian churches are full and so many work to make the celebration of thanksgiving materialise like clockwork. No sacristan assisted this priest, he prepared everything himself. We immediately realised that the lady who was commenting was also the first and second reader, the psalmist and possibly the person who ran to press 'play' to manage the music.

When it was time to leave, we stayed for a while and enquired about the community here. What we learnt pierced through our hearts.

"Father, you must be visiting hospitals here often?" — well, whenever I am called to visit...but it doesn't happen often...there is not much trust here...

"Why Father?" — there's a deep sense of hurt here...deep scarring...people cannot forget that 40 years ago, the priest who built this church had an "issue" with young boys...

He continued... I've been here for five years...if it was bad then, it's worse now...no-

A glimpse of tomorrow

body's come back after COVID-19...I hardly get invited to their homes and as hard as I try, I just can't fix certain things".

We tried to make sense of it: "Yes, Father, everyone's gone online..." — oh, is that so? he said, unconvinced. COVID-19 was just an excuse not to come back, not to serve, not to bring children to learn about their faith and to know Jesus...it was an excuse to no longer be associated with the Catholic Church.

The Mass was so meaningful. The priest knew the Eucharistic prayers by memory. There were no frills. He didn't care about his next meal, or his next trip home (he hasn't been home in all these years). He clearly lived alone amidst a stream of new churches of other denominations which have sprouted, each supposedly bearing the 'real' mission of faith. His mission was clearly to rebuild this church, to regain the trust of the community, and to save these souls. What made it more compelling was that this priest had to travel to another rural area to serve that small community for Sunday Mass and rush back to his fledgling community here by the river.

When we said goodbye after carrying out our standard Malaysian 'wefie' ritual to which he so graciously obliged, it was a 15-minute walk back that was filled with a myriad of emotions — we were in awe at God's blessings to grant us the gift of the Holy Eucharist when there was so little faith around us...we were immensely grateful to have met such a kind and warm person of Christ who welcomed us wholeheartedly. Amidst his rejection here, he so wanted to welcome us and be a friend, even amidst the disappointments. We were on holiday too but felt a deep sense of despair and desperation — it was as if we were served a glimpse of how the world could be when Jesus returned. Would Malaysia ever suffer this fate? Would we one day decide that there's so much going wrong about our church that we think it's just better to stay home? With

all the hype about the upcoming synod will we too run into despair and confusion? Would we find ourselves saying yes when our baptised children, having been confirmed in their faith, go on to marry outside the Church and then offer to take us to their church? Some would even think 'so long they attend a church!' Would we see our grandchildren embrace another religion (or to be atheist) because they didn't know how to say "no" nor fight to remain true to the Catholic faith, embattled by a world going wrong?

...meanwhile, it was indeed a long walk home...it wasn't the cold at all that made it seem like a long journey. I was contemplating how we would all eventually answer to what has become of the world when He comes again... "I'm sorry, Lord, I tried but being Catholic was too difficult"; "The children found their own path and made their own decision about 'You' and about their life..."; "We carried out our duty as parents and sent them for catechism, but we also wanted our Sundays so we didn't attend Mass"; "We didn't like the priest and his sermons so we thought why bother?" What in the world would we say to account for a faithless world? Or will He find faith, because we will take His Name upon ourselves and live His Divine principles...we will give up sloth, gluttony, pride and greed...all our 'riches'...and follow Him? This may sound like a tall order, but there is only the narrow door to enter through. The world outside is fast falling, changing with the advent of a digital currency, a one system for all, religious extremism and a watered-down faith-life. These are the realities of today, these are also the glimpses of our tomorrow. What's your glimpse of tomorrow?

● Professor Joanne Lim shares the faith in Catechism and music in Church. She is Deputy Dean and lectures on media and society at the University of Nottingham Malaysia.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Divine permission for human fatigue

Someone once asked Therese of Lisieux if it was wrong to fall asleep while in prayer. Her answer: *Absolutely not. A little child is equally pleasing to her parents, awake or asleep — probably more when asleep!*

That's more than a warm, cute answer. There's a wisdom in her reply that's generally lost to us, namely, that God understands the human condition and gives us sacred permission to be human, even in the face of our most important human and spiritual commitments.

This struck me recently while listening to a homily. The preacher, a sincere and dedicated priest, challenged us with the idea that God must always be first in our lives. So far so good. But then he shared how upset he gets whenever he hears people say things like: "Let's go to the Saturday evening Mass, to get it over with." Or, when a celebrant says: "We will keep things short today, because the game starts at noon." Phrases like that, he suggested, betray a serious weakness in our prayer lives. Do they?

Maybe yes, maybe no. Comments like that can issue out of laziness, spiritual indifference, or misplaced priorities. They might also simply be an expression of normal, understandable human fatigue — a fatigue which God, the author of human

nature, gives us permission to feel.

There can be, and often is, a naïveté about the place of high energy and enthusiasm in our lives. For example, imagine a family who, with the best of intentions, decides that to foster family togetherness they agree to make their evening meal, every evening, a full-blown banquet, demanding everyone's participation and enthusiasm and lasting for 90 minutes. Wish them luck! Some days this would foster togetherness and there would be a certain enthusiasm at the table; but, soon enough, this would be unsustainable in terms of their energy, and more than one of the family members would be saying silently, *let's get this over with, or can we cut it a little short tonight because the game is on at 7.00*. Granted, that could betray an attitude of disinterest; but, more likely, it would simply be a valid expression of normal fatigue.

None of us can sustain high energy and enthusiasm forever. Nor are we intended to. Our lives are a marathon, not a sprint. That's why it is good sometimes to have lengthy banquets and sometimes to simply grab a hotdog and run. God and nature give us permission to sometimes say, *let's get it over with*, and sometimes to rush things so as to not miss the beginning of the game.

Moreover, beyond taking seriously the normal ebb and flow of our energies, there

is still another, even more important angle to this. Enthusiastic energy or lack of them don't necessarily define meaning. We can do a thing because it means something affectively to us — or we can do something simply because *it means something in itself*, independent of how we feel about it on a given day. Too often, we don't grasp this. For example, take the response people often give when explaining why they are no longer going to church services, "*it doesn't mean anything to me*." What they are blind to in saying this is the fact that being together in a church means something in itself, independent of how it feels affectively on any given day. A church service means something in itself, akin to visiting your aging mother. You do this, not because you are always enthusiastic about it or because it always feels good emotionally. No. You do it because this is your aging mother and that's what God, nature, and maturity call us to do.

The same holds true for a family meal together. You don't necessarily go to dinner with your family each night with enthusiasm. You go because this is how families sustain their common life. There will be times when you do come with high energy and appreciate both the preciousness of the moment and the length of the dinner. But there will be other times when, despite

a deeper awareness that being together in this way is important, you will be wanting to *get this over with*, or sneaking glances at your watch and calculating what time the game starts.

So, Scripture advises, avoid Job's friends. For spiritual advice in this area, avoid the spiritual novice, the over-pious, the anthropological naïve, the couple on their honeymoon, the recent convert, and at least half of all liturgists and worship leaders. The true manual on marriage is never written by a couple on their honeymoon and the true manual on prayer is never written by someone who believes that we should be on a high all the time. Find a spiritual mentor who challenges you enough to keep you from selfishness and laziness, even as she or he gives you divine permission to be tired sometimes.

A woman or man at prayer is equally pleasing to God, enthusiastic or tired — perhaps even more when tired.

● **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**

The Liturgy method of prayer

All Christians are called to pray. They must actively seek ways in which they can pray and pray well before God. The Church nurtures the life of prayer. She readily offers her various prayer methods to all.

The prayer methods are guides on how to do mental prayer, which is a speaking and listening to God. The task of mental prayer should not be dismissed or neglected. The Christian way of life demands a life of prayer.

Of the various prayer methods, the liturgy method is the one that is the closest to the sacred liturgy and the Church's public life of prayer. While all prayer is fed by the sacred liturgy and flows from it, the liturgy method is expressly about the praying and spiritually experiencing of the sacred liturgy itself.

In the liturgy method, we employ our spiritual imagination. In this way, the liturgy method is similar to the composition of place prayer method. Although, the composition of place itself is always in reference to the Sacred Scriptures, the liturgy method is focused on the prayers and rituals of the sacred liturgy. And so, while similar approaches are used, the content and focus of the liturgy method is very different from that of the composition of place method.

The Eucharistic Sacrifice is an anamnesis, a remembering, of the Lord's sacrifice. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches us: "The Eucharist is a sacrifice because it represents (make present) the sacrifice of the cross, because it is its memorial and because it applies its fruit."

Since the Holy Spirit is doing such a powerful supernatural work, we are able to tap into the divine action and allow ourselves to experience it fully. And so, by provoking our spiritual imagination, we attempt to form in our minds the images and scenes of the



Young adults pray during eucharistic adoration at St Patrick's Cathedral in New York City in a 2015 file photo (CNS/Gregory A. Shemitz)

sacred liturgy.

While we are at Mass, we are only seeing the human component of worship. We know by faith that there is an abundance of other actions and realities taking place. Through the liturgy method, we allow ourselves the flexibility of spiritually seeing the transcendental, spiritual, supernatural aspects of the sacred liturgy.

We compose the scene by asking ourselves what we see, hear, taste, touch, and smell. We create the scene based on our knowledge of the sacred liturgy and the mystery of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. We ask ourselves what is truly happening in

front of us and use our spiritual imagination to set the scene.

We are able to engage in such a supreme mystery because we are a part of it. As

“Through the liturgy method, we allow ourselves the flexibility of spiritually seeing the transcendental, spiritual, supernatural aspects of the sacred liturgy”

baptised Christians, we are members of the Body of Christ. The *Catechism* again teaches us:

“The Eucharist is also the sacrifice of the Church. The Church which is the Body of Christ participates in the

offering of her Head. With Him, she herself is offered whole and entire. She unites herself to His intercession with the Father for all men. In the Eucharist, the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of

His Body... Christ's sacrifice present on the altar makes it possible for all generations of Christians to be united with His offering.”

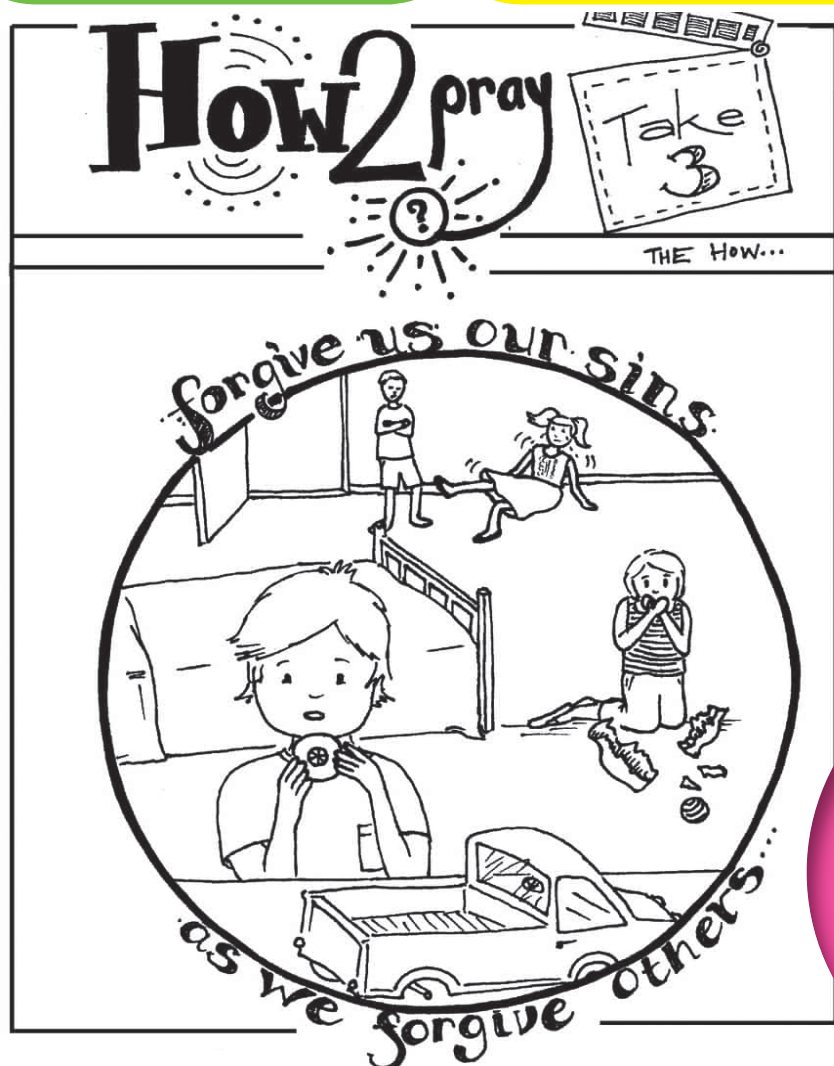
Since the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is also our sacrifice, we are able to actively participate in it. This participation is enhanced by praying about the mystery of the Eucharistic Sacrifice and possibly using the liturgy method to consciously understand and realise the reality of what is occurring during the sacred liturgy.

For example, at Mass, we can see the priest or deacon proclaiming the Gospel. Through the liturgy method, we allow ourselves to spiritually see the Lord Jesus Himself announce the Gospel in our midst. We can imagine his face, emotions, bodily movements, tone and pitch of voice, and other aspects. We allow ourselves to see what is truly happening. Through the liturgy method, we move beyond the material, utilitarian, and practical, and let our hearts encounter what is fully and actually happening.

Still further, during the institution narrative of the Eucharistic Prayer, we can see the Lord Jesus nailed and dying on the Cross. We can spiritually witness His blood, sweat, groans, and tears before God the Father. Rather than simply seeing and hearing the priest pray the Eucharistic Prayer, we lift the veil and come into contact with the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

The liturgy method is an invaluable resource to believers who live in a secular age where supernatural realities are denied and mocked. The liturgy method helps us rendezvous with the presence and action of God within the Eucharistic Sacrifice and so realise more deeply what has been offered for us and how we are called to live as the chosen people of so loving a God. — **By Fr Jeffrey F. Kirby, *Cruz***

Little Catholics' Corner



Hello children of God,

Today's Gospel focus is on mercy and forgiveness. In the first reading, we are told we must forgive each other for "wrath and anger are hateful things". The Psalm reminds us that God shows us mercy.

The second reading tells us to live for Christ instead of ourselves. And in the Gospel, Jesus tells a parable about mercy and tells Peter that we must forgive "70 times seven" times.

Love,
Auntie Gwen

Pray these three things:
Be thankful for something you're sorry for, and something you would like Jesus to bless. Then end with an Our Father, a Hail Mary and a Glory Be.

Sts Andrew Kim Taegon, Paul Chong Hasang, and Companions
Sts Andrew Kim Taegon and Paul Chong Hasang, were leaders of the Catholic Church in Korea. Andrew Kim Taegon was born to Korean nobility, and his parents converted when he was 15-years-old. He travelled over 1,000 miles to study in a seminary and became the first native Korean priest.



Keep On Forgiving

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. Matthew 18:21-22 (NIV)

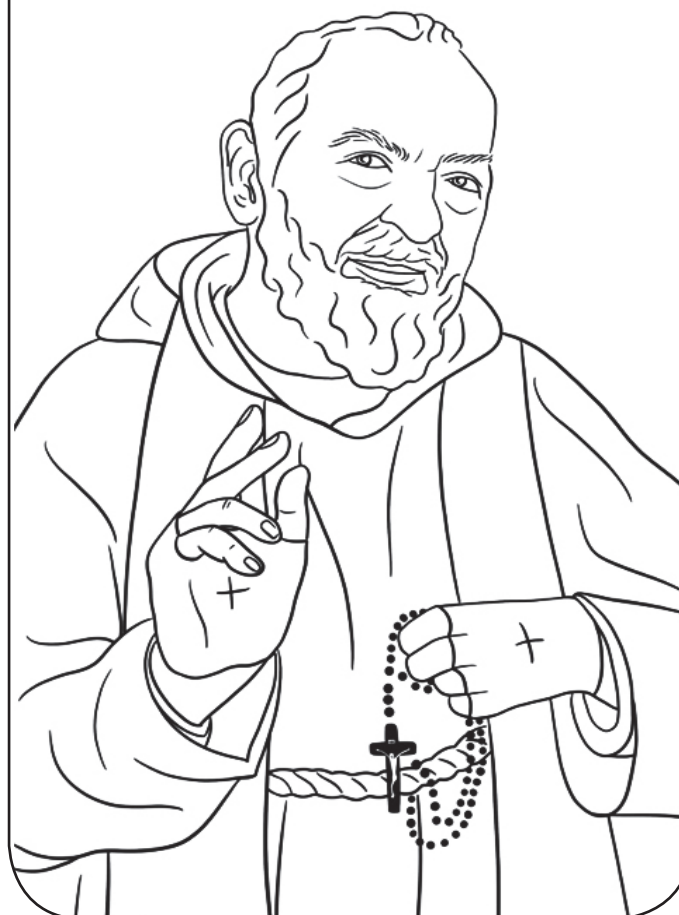
Based on Matthew 18:21-22

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



PETER
SINS
ASKED
ANSWERED
FORGIVE
TIMES
MANY
HOW
BROTHER
JESUS
LORD
SEVEN

ST PADRE PIO



Padre Pio is also known as St Pio of Pietrelcina. His feast is celebrated on September 23. This famous saint is a favourite amongst our elders and is well known for helping people from all over the world to get closer to God through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He helped the poor, founded a hospital and lots of prayer groups. Padre Pio is well known for his stigmata (bleeding wounds just like Jesus' crucifixion wounds) on the palms of his hands.

YOUTH

SEPTEMBER 17, 2023



Sandakan Youth Day gathers 197 young people

SANDAKAN: Anyone who believes that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life, will gain knowledge of the truth, which sets us free (John 8:32) and leads us to salvation (1 Tim 2:4).

Fr Simon Kuntou said this at the closing Mass of the Sandakan Youth Day 2 or Temasya Belia Keuskupan Sandakan (TBK2). TBK2 is the largest youth programme in the diocese.

This second TBK brought together 197 youth from five parishes for a mission in the diocese from August 28 - September 1. It was held at St Joseph Parish, under the patronage of St Mary's Cathedral, Sandakan.

Bishop Julius Dusin Gitom celebrated the opening Mass. In his homily, he emphasised to the youth to be like Mary who arose and went with haste to serve others. He said, the "spirit of haste" is what should be instilled in the youths so that they are always ready to serve others.

But in haste, Bishop Julius reminded the youth, "you should think of the pros and cons of your action, be-



cause the spirit of serving should begin with a clear mind to instil the seed of faith".

He also emphasised that the spirit of serving should be sincere like Mother Mary. If you're serving with an insincere heart filled with greed and not for Jesus, it can harm the Church, the community and even oneself.

Despite not being able to be with the youth at the TBK2 closing Mass, Bishop Julius apologised and prayed for them to continue to be witnesses of Christ.

At the closing Mass, some youth who felt the call to join the priesthood and the religious were asked to stand to receive a special blessing.

Immediately after the speech, the procession of the icon of Mother Mary and the torch was held. This procession was symbolic as the host for the next Sandakan Youth Day would be announced — Church of the Holy Trinity, Tawau.

This five-day gathering has brought a very positive impact among the youth. Throughout the days, games and faith deepening sessions were held in the morning while noon time was filled with physical activities.

The organisers also provided space for counselling sessions by the religious and qualified counsellors.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation was also available during the Adoration, where the bishop and several priests gave absolution.



A LIFELONG JOURNEY OF FAITH



PETALING JAYA: The Sacrament of Confirmation was administered by Archbishop Julian Leow to 76 confirmands from the Church of St Ignatius, August 26. Fr Lawrence Ng CDD and Fr. Martin Then CDD served as concelebrants in this bilingual Mass.

"Do you know who Jesus is?" asked Archbishop Julian to the confirmands at the beginning of the homily. And he continued, "Do you personally know Him? Have you established a relationship with Him? Is

this relationship growing?"

His Grace continued by saying their faith journey was only beginning and that Confirmation is not the end. Catechesis continues even after catechism classes are over. For, it is about translating our faith knowledge into action, moving from spiritual theory into practice. One can accomplish a lot in life but must never lose faith and relationship with Jesus. "You must develop your faith; it cannot stay at Form Five level!" Archbishop Julian stressed.

Fr Lawrence thanked the archbishop for confirming the candidates and the catechists for their tireless effort in preparing the students. He also thanked the godparents, sponsors and parents who had been nurturing them lovingly.

For the confirmands and the community, the Mass was a momentous event. The feeling of harmony and joy, as well as a sense of belonging, was evidence of the "One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic" Church. —
By Christopher Ng

CAMPFIRE TO BRING THE YOUTH TOGETHER

PENANG: The St Anne Youth Group (STAY) had a campfire night with 55 youth after the sunset Mass on August 26. It was a potluck and a campfire gathering to bring the youth together.

The event began with a welcoming session, followed by dinner and ice-breakers, games and

also a sharing session by Chris Santhakumar and Jason Alexander about their experience at the World Youth Day 2023 in Lisbon, Portugal.

The campfire night then ended with the youths singing worship songs such as *Hari Ini* and dancing together in a big circle.



St Anne youth singing and dancing during the campfire night.

Young people deepen their understanding of the liturgy

MIRI: Eighty youth from Taman Tunku parish participated in the DISCIPLE programme at the Church of St Dominic and the Rosary recently. The programme aimed to deepen their understanding of the Liturgy.

It comprised of workshops for song selection in the choir ministry and leadership skills among musicians and singers.

Stella Lungan (Head of DISCIPLE) began the programme with an ice-breaker.

The first session touched on the *Role of Youth Ministry in the Church* by Andrian Enggkin (Acting Youth Minister of Diocese Miri).

On the second day, Amy Lee, Liturgy Music Coordinator, conducted a session on *Liturgical Music in the Church*. This session helped the youth learn appropriate song selection and the role of music in the



Liturgy introduction

Liturgy.

Then, Hendrick Kelly from Taman Tunku Parish presented on how to build a team in a ministry through the *Building Leadership and Musicians in Church* session.

Next, Fr Sylvester Ngau Juk conducted the session on the *Roles of leadership and*

Musicians in Church. Among the things he emphasised was that God chooses us to serve the relevant ministries in the Church.

The DISCIPLE programme ended with a Worship Night — catechesis with Fr Sylvester, Adoration and presentation of prizes to the winners of group activities throughout the programme.



Group presentation.



Practising for Mass.

LEARNING TO SERVE GOD THROUGH THE MINISTRIES

KUALA LUMPUR: The Liturgy Ministry of the Chapel of Christ the Light and the Chapel of Christ the King organised a *Plug In Yourself* workshop on September 2. This half-day event saw 75 catechism students between the ages of 10 and 16 attending.

With a team of 20 dedicated facilitators representing five different ministries — Altar Servers, Lectors, Music, Media, and Flower Arrangement, the workshop was designed to introduce the various ministries of service within the church.

The workshop started with an address by parish administrator, Fr Peter Anthony, who encouraged the participants to harness their unique talents and skills to serve God. He thanked the attendees for their commitment and enthusiasm.

Dividing the students into groups based

on their chosen ministries, the workshop was interactive and hands-on. The senior altar servers offered insights into the responsibilities and discipline required of those who serve at the altar. This practical experience left the young aspirants with a deeper appreciation for the sacred duties of altar servers.

The Media team explained the inner workings of the Mass, shedding light on the responsibilities of the media team during church services. The students also received a crash course in poster production and photography, equipping them with valuable skills for future church events.

The Flower Arrangement team shared the significance of meticulous planning while imparting knowledge of the art of floral arrangement. The workshop nurtured creativity and emphasised the impor-

ance of attention to detail in beautifying the church environment.

The Lectors instilled confidence in the young ones in learning voice projection and enunciation. This newfound confidence encouraged many students to consider volunteering as lectors in the future.

The Music team introduced the participants to new instruments and guided them in singing as a choir.

The workshop was a resounding success, achieving its primary objective of nurturing the talents and interests of the younger generation. The students carried with them newfound knowledge and skills and a sense of purpose and enthusiasm to serve God through their respective ministries.



Work together for a united Malaysia

The theme *Malaysia Madani: The Commitment of Unity Fulfills Hope* beautifully expresses the importance of unity among Malaysians for national betterment. Drawing inspiration from John 17:22



and 1 Corinthians 12:12, we are reminded of Jesus' desire for unity, just as He and the Holy Father are united, and we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. Our shared hope, especially in the wake of a three-year pandemic, is to rebuild our scattered communities and strengthen our economy. This hope can only be realised through collective effort. Recognising that we cannot build our nation alone, let's stand together in unity." — **Jason Tioh, Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam**

"As this year is Malaysia's 66th year of independence, there have been many circumstances where the citizens of our country are not united. Unity is extremely crucial in retaining a country's stability, as without unity, we can cease to function at any moment.

"The most important factor in achieving unity is by respecting and embracing each other's differences rather than pushing others away. We also should be more respectful in our communication and communicate wisely so that we do not offend others.

"By being more open minded and understanding other people's perspective, we can thrive better as a multiracial country." — **Jennifer Junita Franklin, Church of St John Vianney, Tampin**

"To achieve Unity in Malaysia today, we need to address the racial and prejudiced mindsets of the past, to adapt a better understanding.

"This, I believe, will help us to embark on the journey of healing and put an end to stereotypes that we associate with the different races in our country. We must begin to understand how judging an individual's behaviour as reflective of the majority is damaging.

"Let us not repeat mistakes of our parents and grandparents for the betterment of our country. As Malaysians, let us help one another and ensure peace amongst our diverse communities." — **Daniel Kenny, Church of St Ignatius, PJ**

"This year's theme is particularly significant as Malaysia is going through a challenging time in terms of dealing with the pandemic, political turmoil, and social issues. The term *Malaysia Madani* aptly describes the vision of a civil society that promotes inclusivity, justice, and harmony among all Malaysians.



"The commitment of unity is crucial in achieving this vision, and it is only possible if we embrace diversity and respect each other's differences. It is heartening to see Malaysians coming together to help one another during this difficult time, transcending racial and religious boundaries.

"The spirit of unity and hope is evident when we look back at the history of our nation. *Merdeka* and Malaysia Day celebrations are a reminder to us that the strength of Malaysia lies in the diversity of its people. We must cherish our cultural heritage, learn from our history, and build a better future that promotes social justice and equality.

"As we celebrate our nation's independence and unity, let us renew our commitment towards building a better *Malaysia Madani* where every citizen can live with dignity, respect, and harmony. With a shared commitment towards unity, we can fulfil our hope for a brighter future for all Malaysians." — **Maria Patricia Robert, Church of St Thomas, Kuantan**

Mother Teresa

epitomised the complete teacher



Mother Teresa died on September 5, 1997, and was canonised 19 years later on Sept 4.

Her first major responsibility in 1931, after her profession as a sister of the Loretto Congregation, was to teach in St Mary's Bengali-medium school for girls in Kolkata.

This was an assignment she undertook with great love and dedication, until she left the Loretto Sisters in 1948 to establish the Missionaries of Charity.

From then on, there was no looking back for Mother Teresa. In word and witness, she proved to be a teacher par excellence.

She was convinced that the poor children of the slums had to be taught the 3Rs (reading, [w]riting, and [a]rithmetic) but more than that, she realised that she had to communicate to the world the values of Jesus who, for her, was the Master Teacher.

As a human being and particularly as a teacher, Mother Teresa was the embodiment of many values but high among them were compassion, courage, and commitment.

Compassion

If ever one would dare to give a core competency to Mother Teresa, it is the single characteristic of being a compassionate person.

She epitomised this value in a way few humans will ever do; her love for the marginalised and the vulnerable, the excluded and the exploited, and particularly for the poorest of the poor, was boundless. She gave and did not count the cost.

It was her ability to be compassionate towards others that motivated her to found the Missionaries of Charity. She was effusive in her compassion for others.

Courage

It takes courage to answer a call and Mother Teresa demonstrated this value many times over. As a very young European, she left the distant shores of her country to come to serve in India. Living in India in those days was not easy, yet she opted for a tougher life, literally 'pitching her tent' among the poorest of the poor in the slums of Kolkata.

She had to face several obstacles all through her life but she faced them squarely, proving that she was truly a woman of substance. She was indeed a courageous woman!

Commitment

For Mother Teresa, there was never a looking back. Her commitment to the cause to which she espoused herself is legendary.

At times, she, her Sisters, and the people entrusted to her care had nothing to eat; but she never gave up, because she knew that her God would never let her down.

She remained a committed person till the very end. This unflinching commitment also became a hallmark of her way of proceeding. A quality which she radiated all her life!

Today, more than ever, our world, our country, cries out for Compassion, Courage and Commitment. Gimmicks, theatrics, half-truths, and high-profile publicity can never generate these. Mother Teresa was the complete teacher.

Through her simple and selfless lifestyle, she epitomised Compassion, Courage, and Commitment.

In a manner most unassuming, she taught the world the need and importance of embracing these non-negotiable values for all time! — **By Fr Cedric Prakash, SJ, Matters India**

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1st Anniversary In Loving Memory of



A. Franklin Netto

27.01.1947 – 17.09.2022

*"I have the strength to face
all conditions by the power
that Christ gives me."
(Philippians 4:13)*

Deeply missed by
his family and siblings.

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF LIFE IN HEAVEN

Remembering you
always... more so,
a decade after
you left me.

*You were indeed....
A caring and loving sister
A helpful and
committed Vincentian
A smiling face always
to your friends.*

With love, from:
Lucia Lai

*"The life of the dead
is placed in the heart
of the living"*
— Cicero



**Teresa Lai
Chiew Khim**

**16 November 1957 –
17 September 2013**



Deeply missed and cherished by
Beloved wife, Melrose
and daughter, Felicity.

5th Anniversary In Ever Loving Memory of

Anthony Fong Yoon Chong

14.1.1964 – 16.9.2018

NEVER FORGOTTEN

*You'll never be forgotten
That simply cannot be.
As long as we are living
We'll carry you with us.
Safely tucked within our heart
Your light will always shine;
A glowing ember never stilled,
Throughout the end of time.
No matter what the future brings,
Or what may lie ahead;
We know that you will walk with us
Along the path we tread.
So rest my angel, be at peace
And let your soul fly free.
One day we will join your glorious flight
For all eternity.*

In Loving Memory



Michael N. Revi

8 Jan 1936 – 17 Sept 2005

**'Missing you more than
you'll ever know'**



*~ Eternal rest grant unto his soul, O Lord
And let Your perpetual light shine upon him.
May his soul rest in peace, Amen ~*

With much love,
Patricia, Leslie, Tabitha and loved ones.

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**In Loving Memory of
Rev. Fr. Mari Arokiam
09.10.1958 – 15.09.2018**



5th Anniversary

Never will I leave you,
never will
I forsake you.
Fear not for I am
with you,
be not dismayed,
for I am your God.
I will help you,
I will uphold you
with my righteous
right hand.

*Deeply missed and
forever loved by
Family and Friends.*

Synod proceedings will be secret

VATICAN: Pope Francis said that next month's hotly anticipated Synod of Bishops will be open to the Holy Spirit — but not so much to the press or the public.

"This is not a television programme where we can talk about everything," said the Pope.

Pope Francis' remarks came during an inflight press conference back to Rome on September 4, after a four-day stay in Mongolia, and exactly four weeks before he is set to officially open the high-stakes, month-long Vatican meeting where a number of controversial issues facing the Catholic Church in the modern world will be discussed by Catholic bishops and lay representatives.

The Pope answered several questions about the synod and insisted on the need to ensure the privacy

of the proceedings to allow participants to speak freely. He announced that a commission of the synod will provide the media with information each day but not with gossip of what clashes took place in the meetings.

Pope Francis, who has previously expressed frustration that synods before his papacy were too tightly controlled, told reporters that the religious character of the gathering must be preserved, in an apparent sign that the Pope is not willing to overhaul the standard operating procedures of this closely watched synod.

Confirming that the synod's proceedings will not be public, the Holy Father said, "We must protect the privacy. This is not a television programme where we speak of everything; it is a religious moment, it is a moment for religious exchange."

He said the synod members will each speak for three or four minutes and then there will be a period of silence with prayer, a moment of prayer. "Without this sense of prayer there is no synodality," he said, "It is political, it is parliamentarianism, but the synod is not a parliament."

Among the topics expected to be debated are a number of sensitive issues concerning the future of the Church and its structures — including the role of women in Church leadership, ministry to LGBTQ Catholics, access to the priesthood for married men and clergy sexual abuse.

"There will be a commission, presided over by Paolo Ruffini, prefect of the Dicastery for Communication, that will issue press releases on how the synod is going, [but in] the

synod, we must protect the religiosity and the identity of the person who speaks," said Pope Francis.

A journalist asked the Pope, "How can we journalists explain the synod to people without having access at least to the plenary sessions to be sure that the information given to us is true. Is there not some possibility of being more open?"

The Pope insisted that the synod will be "most open," adding that Ruffini's commission will provide updates each day of the proceedings. "This commission will be very respectful of the interventions of each [participant]," Pope Francis said, "but it will seek to not give room for gossip when it gives information on the proceedings of the synod, which is constitutive for the Church. If one wants to get the news

that this one clashed with that one, that is gossip."

He acknowledged that the commission will not have an easy task, "but it will tell that the synod went this way today, it will provide a synodal dimension, not a political one."

"Remember the protagonist of the synod is the Holy Spirit," Pope Francis said, "and how does one explain this [except] by transmitting the ecclesial happenings."

The Pope's remarks seemed to go against a number of efforts by Vatican officials, including those involved in organising the synod, to make the October meeting a more open and transparent gathering than past proceedings, with even the possibility of having livestreamed broadcasts for as many of the sessions as possible. — *Agencies*

First house of worship at Putrajaya's multi-religious conclave

PUTRAJAYA: A Unity Open House was hosted by the Buddhist Missionary Society Malaysia (BMSM) at its newly completed RM8 million Pusat Buddhis Dhammaduta Malaysia (PBDM) in Precinct 20, September 2.

Minister of National Unity, YB Datuk Aaron Ago Dagang, together with religious leaders and members of the Hindu, Christian, Sikh and Tao faiths, were the first visitors from the Government and neighbouring religious communities to this first *Rumah Ibadat* or House of Worship completed in

this multi-religious enclave in Putrajaya specially demarcated by the Government for the five major faiths (other than Islam) practised in Malaysia.

BMSM President Loh Pai Ling said: "As the first resident of this multi-religious enclave, it is incumbent upon us to start off with the fostering of greater interfaith harmony, thus this Unity Open House where we have brethren of other faiths with us in togetherness."

"It is heart-warming that our initiative has been so well and warmly received by our brethren of other

faiths as demonstrated by their kind attendance today."

She added that this is encouraging for BMSM and its Putrajaya branch which had, from the outset, at the planning stage, made clear its intentions to make PBDM our national headquarters, to be also one of its key centres for promotion of inter-religious harmony.

This intention is in line with the Government's efforts to bring together multi faiths in close proximity at Precinct 20 for greater understanding and trust amongst one another to be further developed.



Pusat Buddhis Dhammaduta Malaysia in Putrajaya.

Another five houses of worship, i.e. for the Hindu, Christian, Sikh and Tao faiths are to be built to populate the multi-religious enclave.

Loh said BMSM, as the national organisation dedicated to the propagation of Buddhism in Malaysia, is grateful to the Government for allocating the 0.67 acre parcel of land in Putrajaya to build the Buddhist dhammaduta centre.

Contemporarily-designed with significant and symbolic elements to showcase the relevance of the

Buddha's wisdom and compassion, the two-level PBDM, with a garden rooftop, has a total built up area of 20,000 sq feet.

PBDM houses an exhibition hall to showcase various aspects of the teachings of the Buddha. It will, over time, be equipped to be a centre facilitating the study, practice and realisation of the teachings of the Buddha as well as to carry out Dhammaduta or Dhamma propagation activities that range from exhibitions, lectures, seminars, workshops etc.



Minister of National Unity, YB Datuk Aaron Ago Dagang standing next to Archbishop Julian Leow and other religious leaders and ministry officials at the Pusat Buddhis Dhammaduta Malaysia in Precinct 20, Putrajaya. (photo/Jason Leo)

Pope Francis to hold virtual dialogue with South Asian students

VATICAN: Pope Francis will hold an online dialogue with students across South Asia on September 26 as part of a programme that provides young people a rare opportunity to engage in frank conversations with the pontiff about challenges facing their lives and the church in the modern world.

The *Building Bridges Initiative* — organised by Loyola University Chicago, with the collaboration of the Vatican's Pontifical Commission for Latin America — is part of an effort to continue the Pope's promotion of synodality, and to show his commitment to directly listening to voices

across the Catholic Church.

The Sept 26 dialogue, expected to last about 75 minutes, follows virtual dialogues between Francis and students in the Americas in February 2022 and Africa in November 2022.

"Working with universities, professors, and students in Latin America, then Africa, and now South Asia, we continue to seek out the voices of young people everywhere, seeking to listen and learn from them and to amplify their voices and perspectives," said Peter Jones, interim dean of the Institute of Pastoral Studies at Loyola University Chicago.

During the encounter, four groups of three students will have 15- to 20-minute unscripted conversations with the Pope on a range of topics, which will be livestreamed with simultaneous translations into English, Spanish and Hindi.

Student participants are currently enrolled in Catholic higher education institutions that include Loyola Hall Research and Spirituality Centre in Lahore, Pakistan; Christ University in Bengaluru, India; St Xavier's College in Kathmandu, Nepal; St Stephen's College in Delhi, India; Loyola College in Chennai, India; and

St Joseph's University in Bengaluru, India.

Emilce Cuda, a secretary of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, recalled the Pope's now poignant phrase during the recent World Youth Day in Lisbon, Portugal that the Catholic Church should be open to everyone.

"Pope Francis says *todos, todos, todos*, and so for the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, it's important to be in open dialogue between Latin America and the rest of the continents."

Jones said, "Everywhere we look

we see students with a clear vision of their situations and a desire to work for the common good. What they often lack is the agency supported by the institutions in which they participate."

A core aim of these virtual meetings, he said, is to provide "an opportunity for young people to proceed together in synodal fashion and assert their voices and agency authentically, with institutional support, with a global audience, and with the ear of this ope, a man who wants to hear them and listen to them carefully."

By Christopher White, NCR