

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

PP 8460/11/2012 (030939) ISSN: 1394-3294 | Vol: 30 No. 33 | September 3, 2023

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I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Rom. 12:1



Lenten Campaigns raise more than RM2 million

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Mentakab parish celebrates 60th year

■ P5



Spirit come, light a fire and move

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# Innocent children casualties of war



UNICEF/Alessio Romenzi

**VATICAN:** Nearly 550 Ukrainian children have been killed since the start of the war following Russia's invasion on February 24, 2022, states *Save the Children*.

The international humanitarian organisation dedicated to helping children and protecting their rights has been operating in Ukraine since 2014, delivering humanitarian aid to children and their families affected by hostilities. It is also supporting refugee families across Europe and helping children access education and other critical services.

In a recent statement, the charitable organisation lamented that child casualties in the country increased by more than seven per cent between May and August, compared to the previous four months, as air and drone attacks tripled. Since May 2023, according to UN data, a total of 148 children have been killed or injured in Ukraine, bringing the number of child casualties since the escalation of war on Feb 24 last year to more than 1,700.

This includes 545 deaths, with 24 children killed this summer.

Save the Children's Advocacy director in Ukraine, Amjad Yamin, decried that "18

months into full-scale war," there "seems to be no reprieve from the perilous circumstances endured by children and families.

"We have witnessed numerous attacks on populated areas that took the lives of children and their parents, left hundreds of people injured or severely distressed, and damaged or destroyed homes, plunging thousands of families into uncertainty.

"Since last February, more than 1,700 children have been killed or injured due to unrelenting hostilities. The vast majority of those casualties are attributed to missiles and drones being fired at residential areas.

This, he emphasised, serves as "a grim reminder" that "explosive weapons should not be used anywhere near populated areas, such as towns and villages."

Save the Children is appealing to all sides to adhere to obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, and ensure that civilians and civilian objects, especially those used by children such as homes, schools, and hospitals, are protected from attack.

The organisation offered some chilling accounts on the matter:

On Aug 19, a six-year-old girl was among the seven people killed and 180 injured in an attack in the northern city of Chernihiv.

In the Kherson region, on Aug 13, a fami-

ly of four was killed by shelling, including a 23-day-old baby girl and a 12-year-old boy.

On Aug 11, an eight-year-old boy was killed in Kolomyia, western Ukraine, after a missile struck the garden of his family home.

On July 31, in the morning, a missile hit an apartment block in Kryvyi Rih, Southern Dnipro, destroying five stories of a high-rise building, and killing a 10-year-old girl and her mother. More than 80 others, including seven injured children, were reported casualties.

**MEANWHILE** in war-torn Sudan, many young lives have been lost due to starvation as a result of food supply depletion or the closure of crucial medical services.

The aftermath of the ongoing conflict between military and rival paramilitary forces has led to the confirmed deaths of 498 children. But doctors and other officials on the ground said that the death toll is much higher than the reported statistics.

According to the doctors, the mortality rate of children caused by malnutrition is equal to 20 per cent of cases received by the hospital. About 31,000 children were unable to receive treatment for malnutrition and other related diseases as the charity, "Save the Children" organisation, was forced to close 57 of its nutrition facilities.

"We never thought we would see so many children starving in Sudan, but this has become a reality today. Seriously ill children arrive in the arms of desperate mothers and fathers in nutrition centres across the country, and our staff have few options to treat them. We see children dying from avoidable hunger," said Arif Noor, Save the Children's Country Director in Sudan.

Following a similar incident in May, the World Food Programme (WFP) announced that at least \$14 million (RM65,114 million) in food inventories had been looted. Dozens of warehouses housing food for the WFP and humanitarian groups such as Save the Children have been raided and destroyed.

Supplies of medical food are running low in the 108 Save the Children centres that are still open, and emergency supplies are now being used in the most severe cases.

The organisation urges the international community to raise funds and work together to create collaborative solutions to ensure that humanitarian supplies and food reach children and their families.

Many families across the conflict-torn country are living without electricity, water and medical facilities in Sudan have collapsed. — **By Deborah Castellano Lubov & Agnel Maria, Vatican News**



# HERALD

ESTABLISHED 1994

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Website : www.heraldmalaysia.com

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Jointly published by the  
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Diocese of Malacca Johore, Diocese of  
Penang and Diocese of Keningau

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## Climate action requires interfaith collaboration

As morning storm clouds cleared over Lake Michigan August 17, leaders from more than a dozen Christian faith traditions gathered by the shore to sign an ecumenical declaration on care for creation. The event was part of the 2023 Parliament of the World's Religions held in Chicago Aug 14-18. The 13 leaders who signed this particular declaration were but a small sampling of the approximately 200 belief systems and 6,000 religious leaders represented at the Parliament.

Two days earlier, faith leaders from around the world gathered along the Chicago lake-shore for a climate repentance ceremony where members from Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist and Christian communities read 10 spiritual practices for addressing climate change. Among them: "We must care for each other and the planet."

The camaraderie and collaborative pursuit of the common good is a marker of the interfaith gathering, and this year's theme *A Call to Conscience: Defending Freedom and Human Rights*, placed ecological concerns prominently throughout the weeklong programme.

It's not the first time in recent years that faith leaders from around the world have gathered to join forces in advocating for effective climate action. But it is one of the latest iterations of a multi-faith approach to addressing climate change and related issues that's thankfully becoming the norm.

We need interfaith climate action to continue with increased intensity, like the extreme weather events, which, according to Matteo Bruni, director of the Holy See Press Office, will be the focus of Pope Francis' reported update to his landmark ecological encyclical *Laudato Si'*, on *Care for Our Common Home*.

In 2021, ahead of the United Nations climate change conference in Glasgow, COP26,



File photo of a climate change march with interfaith participants in Vatican. (GreenFaith/Mat McDermott)

nearly 40 heads of major religions, including Pope Francis, issued what was, at the time, considered an unprecedented joint appeal calling for governments to cut greenhouse gas emissions — the leading drivers of climate change that result from burning fossil fuels.

And last year in Montreal at COP15 marked the first time faith-based organisations held an official side event at a UN biodiversity conference, with hopes to raise their moral voices and contribute to implementation strategies for conservation initiatives.

At a Climate Action Assembly on Aug 18, Emily Echevarria, director of climate action for the Parliament of the World's Religions, encouraged faith leaders in attendance to support three more initiatives: the Plastics Treaty, the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (which more than 50 religious institutions backed ahead of the UN climate change conference, COP27, in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, last year) and the Faiths for Biodiversity Statement.

Because access to a healthy environment is a human right, "defending freedom and human rights means taking action on climate now," said Karenna Gore, founder and executive director of the Centre for Earth Ethics at

Union Theological Seminary, during the assembly. She added that approaching that work from a place of interconnection "can be a force for good."

"Alone is not enough," said Anna Thurston, research associate at Yale University's Forum on Religion and Ecology, during an Aug 17 panel discussion titled *Interreligious Ecological Collaboration: Partnerships as Spiritual Practice*. "We need each other," she said, not just to do this work in a practical sense, but also to live out the type of mutual relationship required by ecological spirituality.

"Partnerships are practical, but they also provide spiritual nourishment," she said.

It doesn't make sense for faith groups to approach climate action only from their own respective traditions. As Pope Francis said in *Laudato Si'*, "We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. ... We require a new and universal solidarity."

The vital work of care for creation must be done together, and in working together across denominational lines, people of faith take the first step toward the integral ecology about which Francis so often speaks. — *NCR*

## Jesus' demands are a loving invitation

St Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians (11:14), reminds us that Satan will appear as the "angel of light" to confuse even the most faithful soul. Meanwhile, St Ignatius, in his Spiritual Exercises, stated that it is the characteristics of the devil who takes on the appearance of an angel of light, to influence an upright soul starting with good and holy thoughts but towards the end manipulates those innocent souls by enticing them towards evil and cunning intentions.

Hence, it is fair to say the human mind is an active battlefield and continuously engaged in spiritual warfare with the evil one. As we can see in today's Gospel reading, St Peter, despite his noble intention to protect Jesus, his "beloved master," suggested a proposal which was contrary to God's redemptive plan and, as a result, Jesus rebuked him in a very stern tone, "Get behind me, Satan!"

Similarly, in our day-to-day life, we need to be always on alert and consciously examine every thought that "pops up" in our minds before taking ownership and acting on those thoughts. Every thought needs to be discerned in the spirit of the Gospel message or, in other words, each time a random thought appears, ask yourself, how would Jesus respond to such thoughts or ideas. Call upon the Holy Spirit to guide you, especially in examining the spiritual fruits which could be reaped and also to identify any potential negative consequences if you act on it.

Based on my observation, one of the



major confusions in modern society is the lack of discernment of the Spirit. Thus there is a lot of confusion in many areas of human lives. The current generation is prone to own and impulsively act on every single thought that "pops up" in their mind, without distinguishing whether those thoughts are coming from divine inspirations or the evil one.

Besides that, imitating our Lord Jesus Christ in this Gospel, we need to consistently think and act in God's way. Our Lord puts on a high demand for those who wish to follow Him. He demands that we renounce ourselves, carry our own crosses and follow Him. If those demands are taken out of context, some people might even interpret Jesus as a sadistic, cruel dictator! However, as Christians, we know that Jesus is a loving Lord. "He came so that we may have life and have it abundantly." (John 10:10).

Thus, reflecting on this passage, together with St Paul's message to the Romans from today's second reading in which St Paul called upon his community in Rome to offer their bodies as a living sacrifice pleasing to God, it is very obvious that Jesus wants to free us from our bondage and slavery from the temporal material world, especially addiction to the flesh (sexual misconducts). Jesus demands moral integrity for the well-being of an individual, as well as society as whole. "Do to others what you want them to do to you." (Luke 6:31). Those who have renounced themselves for Jesus would be selfless, prioritise the well-being of others above personal gain, and love everyone unconditionally, thus committed to upholding moral values and acting virtuously even when faced with challenges and temptations for the sake of love of God.

On top of that, Jesus' assurance "and follow me," is a very significant affirmation that we are not alone in our "journey." In fact, Jesus walks before us, clearing the paths, providing support, and ever ready to lend His hand to remove any obstacles that we face, as long as we confidently and humbly seek His assistance. "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged. For the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9). Yes, the Lord is always with us! Just like the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night which guided the Israelites during their exodus from Egyptian bondage. To quote the youngest Carmelite saint,

### Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Bro Ron Fernandez Sandanasamy

#### 22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time (A)

Readings: *Jeremiah 20:7-9;*

*Romans 12:1-2;*

Gospel: *Matthew 16:21-27*

19-year-old St Teresa of Andes, "To be in the presence of God is to be in the state of Joy, for Joy is to rejoice in the presence of the beloved."

Therefore, let us look at Jesus' request as a loving invitation rather than a demanding order. An invitation to walk on the path of salvation towards our eternal home in heaven. As the saying goes, "life is short, death is certain, eternity is long (forever)." Let us prepare ourselves, so that when the Son of Man comes in glory, we shall be rewarded accordingly. Let us use this little time on Earth to be the "little" Simon of Cyrene to help each other, to lighten our neighbour's crosses, just as Simon of Cyrene assisted Jesus to carry His cross on the way to Calvary. Let us show more patience, kindness and gentleness towards each other.

God is great, life is great.

Bro Ron Fernandez Sandanasamy is a first year Theology student at St Peter's College Major Seminary in Kuching.





## KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

### Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

#### September

- 5 **Yayasan Tan Sri Vendargon Board Meeting**
- 9 **World Mental Health Day – Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras**
- 9 **Worldwide Marriage Encounter Asian Conference Opening Mass**
- 11-15 **FABC First Consultation Meeting on Synodal Formation in Asia**
- 15 **Pray for Malaysia Day**
- 16 **Closing Mass for World Meeting of Families – Church of the Holy Family, Kajang**
- 16 **Confirmation – Church of Sts Peter & Paul, Banting**



## PENANG DIOCESE

### Diary of Bishop Sebastian Francis

#### September

- 4 **Consecration & Blessing of Chapel – Stonyhurst International School, Penang**
- 5 **Penang Diocesan Finance Committee Meeting**



## MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

### Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

#### September

- 4-6 **ECMI Annual Conference – Penang**
- 11-17 **Clergy Annual Retreat – Penang**

# Towards building a strong foundation

KUALA LUMPUR: The Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur will hold its pastoral assembly on October 14, with the theme 'Rebuild our Church'.

The one-day event will be held at the Church of St Francis of Assisi in Cheras and is expected to gather a total of 450 delegates from all the parishes and various ministries throughout the archdiocese.

"We thank Almighty God for the opportunity of dialogue and listening through the many Parish Pastoral Assemblies (PPA) and the Synodal journey initiated by Pope Francis. Following the comprehensive engagement in the local synodal procedure and PPAs across the archdiocese, we embark on the subsequent stage of our expedition toward forging a cohesive Malaysian Church. This procedure has endowed us with an understanding of current trends, urging us to translate this understanding into tangible actions and missions," said Archbishop Julian Leow in his pastoral letter dated August 10.

The Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly (APA) serves as a pivotal juncture for representatives to delve into three salient ar-



Archbishop Julian Leow

reas that emerged from the PPA and Synod process: Relationship, Leadership, and Formation. The day's programme includes workshops, insightful speeches, and interactive discussions to exchange ideas and learn from each other's perspectives.

"As we progress towards the Malaysia Pastoral Convention in 2026, the Bishops of Malaysia, in collaboration with the steering committee, have carefully con-

sidered the specific focal points of Family, Church, Ecology, and Society. This focus aligns with the overarching vision of the Catholic Church in Malaysia uniting as clergy, religious, and laity to commemorate, listen, and journey in the radiance of the Lord (cf. Isaiah 2:2-5)," said Archbishop Julian.

Due to the clergy's participation and commitment throughout the assembly, sunset Masses will not be celebrated across the archdiocese on October 14. Instead, the sunset Mass will be live-streamed that evening from the venue. The faithful are invited to join in the Eucharistic celebration online. On Sunday, October 15, Masses will resume in the Klang Valley parishes and wherever feasible. For specific information, kindly check with your respective parishes.

In conclusion, the prelate expressed hope that the presence and contributions of the delegates will build a strong foundation, create meaningful connections, and foster a spirit of unity that will have a lasting impact on our churches and the wider community.

## Close to RM2 million raised for 2023 Lenten campaign

KUALA LUMPUR: This year's Lenten Campaign invited the faithful to be the "Salt of the Earth and Light of the World" while focusing on the three Lenten pillars of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

United in their cause to raise funds for the less fortunate, the three dioceses in Peninsular Malaysia embarked on various campaigns to achieve their goal of raising money to carry out programmes in their various ministries.

In the **Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur**, the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD), whose theme was *Light of Life*, raised RM1,123,768.75.

"We'd like to give our heartfelt gratitude to all who supported us throughout

the Lenten season and donated generously to those in need. All donations collected during this period will be directed towards supporting the ministries under the AOHD.

Let us continue playing our part by participating in our respective Parish Integral Human Development Ministries (PIHDM) so we can continue lighting up the lives of those around us."

The **Diocese of Penang**, under Caritas Penang, collected RM456,426 which was an almost 10 per cent increase from last year's RM419,541.

The diocese believes there was greater awareness of the social mission work carried out by the various parishes' Lenten

teams. Utilising social media for the Lenten Campaign *Kasih* heightened awareness about the challenges faced by the less fortunate. Inspirational videos, along with content shared on social media platforms, websites, posters, and other mediums, played a crucial role in fostering a compassionate response. As a result, the donors within the diocese were moved to offer their generous support.

The **Diocese of Malacca Johore's** Lenten campaign this year was themed *A Light of Hope*, based on Pope Francis' encyclical on dialogue and social friendship. There, Caritas Malacca Johore raised RM394,448.

## Called to love, serve and heal

KAMPAR, Perak: Seminarian George Vaithynathan was ordained a transitional deacon on August 17 at the Church of the Sacred Heart.

More than 600 parishioners and 27 priests across dioceses attended the multilingual Eucharistic celebration presided over by Cardinal-elect, Sebastian Francis, with Msgr James Gnanapiragasam, Msgr Stephen Liew, Msgr Henry Rajoo, and Msgr Jude Miranda concelebrating.

In his address to the congregation, the prelate outlined the responsibilities George assumes as a deacon. A deacon helps the bishop and priests as servants of the Word of God at the altar and in terms of virtue. He will humble himself to become a servant to all people.

Deacon George will serve at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Silibin during this transitional period, added Cardinal-elect Sebastian.

The prelate also encouraged the new deacon, saying, "You not only hear the Word of God but also spread it to other people. Never give up on the hope that the Gospel has promised. Hold fast to the mystery of faith

with a sincere heart. Do what your mouth says. Everyone who follows Christ, made alive by the Holy Spirit, will be a constant offering accepted by God. So that when you meet God at the end of time, you will hear Him say, "Well done, faithful servant, rejoice with your Lord."

In his multilingual thanksgiving speech, the newly ordained Deacon George began with an aphorism, "Whoever fails to love does not know God because God is love." He chose the theme "God is love" (1 John 4:8), as it speaks of fraternal faith and love in Jesus.

"This evening, God has chosen to bestow on me the gift of servanthood in the priesthood of Christ. It is a call to love, to serve, and to heal," said Deacon George. He also expressed his deepest gratitude to his family, his formators, seminarians, and the ministries he was involved with during his pastoral phase, for their unwavering support and fervent prayers all these years. He also expressed his gratitude to the Church of the Sacred Heart's parish priest, Fr Simon Anand, and its parishioners, for their tireless efforts leading up to his



Cardinal-elect Sebastian Francis praying over Brother George Vaithynathan.

diaconate ordination.

Deacon George ended his speech with this beautiful prayer:

*O God, when your love spilled over creation, you thought of me.*

*I am from love, of love, for love.*

*Let my heart always recognise, cherish,*

*enjoy your goodness in all of creation.*

*Teach me reverence for every person, all things.*

*Imbue me in your service and may I always live my life pleasing to you.*

*Amen. — By Rachel Anbumalar Sebastiyen*



## Segamat parishioners bid farewell to a beloved priest



Fr Paul Wong praying for Fr James Rajendran.

SEGAMAT, Johor: After serving for more than seven years at the Church of St Philip, Fr James Rajendran, is moving to the parish of the Divine Mercy in Skudai.

When he was first posted to Segamat on May 16, 2016, Fr JR as he is fondly called, being *au fait* (familiar) with managing a rural parish, promptly settled down and whittled his pastoral niche in the hearts of his parishioners.

He quickly set in place clear perimeters of what he expected and what to expect from him. His hallmark, without a doubt, was his abject compassion when dealing with all and sundry, especially the poor, the marginalised and the migrant community. Many stories abound regarding his stance on the poor. Having been exposed to poverty at an early age, he readily identifies himself with the little, the least, the lost, and the last. His frugality and simplicity in navigating his life bear eloquent testimony to this.

The thrust of his pastoral pitch resonated with the basic needs of his flock and he often took this to the next level when addressing their concerns. He habitually went the extra mile when fulfilling the tenets of his sacred ministry. He was also a robust proponent of the popular adage, 'Justice delayed is justice denied!'

During Fr JR's tenure at St Philip's, the sitting Member of Parliament was a Catholic. Their mutual respect and friendship cannot be overstated. It obviously resulted in the improvement and provision of numerous basic amenities for the church community.

The farewell Mass was concelebrated with the incoming parish priest, Fr Paul Wong.

In his farewell address, Fr JR reiterated his priestly passion to reach out and serve with compassion and integrity.

He thanked the community for patiently journeying with him and appealed for the same cooperation for his successor, Fr Paul. He lamented about not being able to complete renovations on the parish hall. His anathema had been the stark inadequacy of those around him who failed to keep pace with him. He concluded, stating that the ongoing preparations for the centennial celebrations should be successful and come to fruition.

Fr Paul then invited Fr JR to be seated at the front of the altar facing the congregation. He requested the congregation to extend their hands to prayerfully bless Fr JR. This was followed by an impromptu song of thanksgiving for his services to the parish. The Parish Council chairman then presented Fr JR with a computer as a farewell gift.

Finally, the congregation was invited to the parish hall to share in the meal prepared in honour of Fr James. — *By Philip Packium*

# Religious Superiors discuss struggles and challenges at annual meet

By Sr Theresa Chua IJ and Friar Derrick Yap OFM

BUNDU TUHAN, Sabah: Seventeen Religious Major Superiors and delegates of the different congregations gathered at George Adventure Base, near Mt Kinabalu, August 10-17, for their second gathering for 2023.

The Conference of Religious Major Superiors (CRMS) of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei is a canonically instituted association where Religious Superiors work towards greater collaboration with one another and also to "establish appropriate coordination and cooperation with the conference of bishops and also with individual bishops" (CIC 708).

For the past few meetings, CRMS president Friar Derrick Yap, OFM, focussed on the group's attention and efforts regarding the Safeguarding and Protection of Minor and Vulnerable Persons. There is a two-prong approach to safeguarding: (1) the reactive approach is taken when there is a complaint of abuse, and (2) the proactive approach is adopted to promote mental and spiritual well-being and thus is a preventive strategy against any form of abuse happening in the first place.

This round of formation sessions were targeted on the proactive preventive approach. Dr Joachim Lee, a psychotherapist, was invited to inform and introduce the group to the latest research in Brain Science and Psychology. Under the guidance and sharing of Dr Joachim, the group experienced a powerful message to be open and recognise "The Wisdom of Trauma", which is the title of a documentary the superiors watched before the input session.

The group learnt that dysfunctional behaviours and addictions are often trauma-based. It was with this awareness that Dr Joachim helped trace the journey in discovering a good enough authentic self, involving the brain, psychology and ourselves. Other topics covered included the mental health continuum, causes of anxiety disorder, stress, burnout and depression. These topics were contextualised within the life



The 17 Major Superiors at George Adventure Base, Sabah.

of a Religious and community living, and there was plenty of material to further our reflection on.

With such awareness of the struggles within religious living, this group of religious leaders found themselves confronted with this challenging reality and how to journey and accompany the Religious men and women under their care. The call to personal conversion and deep compassion rang in our hearts as we felt the continuous call to follow Christ more closely as servant-leaders and authentic Religious.

The second part of the gathering consisted of the official meeting. The Religious Superiors shared the latest updates in their respective congregations. They also had a brief Zoom session with Friar David Leary, OFM, reflecting on and studying issues and policies surrounding the protection of minors and vulnerable persons, which is focussed on the reactive approach.

This August meeting was also an opportune moment for feedback regarding the Malaysian Religious Assembly held in June; they have decided to carry on the good works and conversations that have taken place, and to keep it up-to-date for the Malaysian Pastoral Convention in 2026.

Finally, the superiors had open and free conversations in small groups about mat-

ters affecting our congregations in this part of our world. There was some alignment among the small groups revolving around issues of greater collaboration in the areas of ministries and formation; sharing and optimisation of human and land resources; care plans for aging and infirmed religious.

Being in Sabah and accompanied by the hospitality of the Sabahan Religious brothers and sisters, especially through Capuchin Friar Valentine Gompok's arrangement, we spent our last day together visiting the interesting shrines and sites in Ranau, namely the Church of St Peter Claver (Ranau) and Puncak Kasih Bonda. They had us soaking our feet twice in a day, once in the river where beautiful fish swam close, and in the afternoon, at the Poring Hot Springs. It was truly a time of laughter, friendship and enjoyment of nature.

Taking time for relaxation and appreciating the gifts of God in these places provided us with a more holistic experience as men and women called by God to build God's kingdom of love.

At the end of our time together, the 17 superiors returned to their communities refreshed and recharged with greater zeal for mission in the world, in and through advancing a more effective and authentic community living

## Blessing of Putri Karmel's Monastery in Penang

BALIK PULAU, Penang: Cardinal-elect Sebastian Francis blessed the Sisters of Putri Karmel's Monastery on the Solemnity of the Assumption, August 15.

About 200 people were present, including Msgr Jude Miranda, two priests from the Catholic School of Evangelisation (CSE) Sabah, (Frs Giovanni C Sugau, CSE and Sharbel Francisco De Karem'Ei, CSE), the

Superior General of CSE from Indonesia (Fr Sergius Paulus), the Superior General of Putri Karmel from Indonesia, and the IJ sisters who occupied this house before, to name a few.

The cardinal-elect led the blessing ceremony accompanied by the four priests immediately after the homily. The monastery, named Our Lady of Mount Carmel, is situated op-

posite the Jabatan Kerja Raya, adjacent to the Church of the Holy Name of Jesus, and in the proximity of the Sacred Heart School.

Currently the monastery is inhabited by four Sisters of Putri Karmel, dedicated to serving and ministering in diverse capacities aligned with their unique charism.

Their activities encompass retreats, recollections, camps for youth and children, counselling, intercessory prayer for healing, personal retreats, prayer gatherings, healing rallies, administering communion to the sick and elderly, and other spiritually oriented endeavours.

The Putri Karmel was founded by Fr Yohanes Indrakusuma CSE in Ngadireso Tumpang, Malang Indonesia on March 19, 1982. It became an order affiliated to the diocesan bishop on December 19, 2002.

It is based on a contemplative life inspired by the Carmelite spirituality integrated with the Charismatic Renewal.



The chapel at the Putri Karmel Monastery.



# Mentakab parish celebrates diamond jubilee

By Bernard Anthony and Gwen Manickam

MENTAKAB, Pahang: From humble beginnings in 1963, the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help (OLPH) celebrated its 60th anniversary with a Triduum from Aug 17 to 20.

The overall theme this year was *Mary, Mother of all Families*. Parish priest, Fr Terrence Thomas, invited Carmelite friars Philip Tay, OCD, and Nicholas Hoh, OCD from the Church of the Visitation, Seremban to preach and celebrate the multi-lingual Masses during the Triduum.

The friars took turns preaching in English, Bahasa, and Mandarin on the sub-themes of *Mary Glorifies the Lord* on Thursday, *Mary Blesses Our Marriages* on Friday, and during the Saturday mid-morning Mass, they shared on *Mary Bless Our Children*.

Novenas are often synonymous with the Catholic faith and a great way to honour our Blessed Mother. On Saturday, similar to the Novena Church in Singapore, the Mentakab parish hosted nine novenas to OLPH at half-hour intervals from 8.00am to 5.00pm, with a two-hour break from 11.00am to 1.00pm for Mass and lunch.

The main celebration of Mass and procession on Saturday evening was presided over by Fr Nicholas, with Fr Terrence, Fr Philip, and Fr Eugene Benedict concelebrating. Two buses from Kuala Lumpur and one from Kuantan brought pilgrims to join in the festivities.

Fr Philip preached *Mary Bless Our Families* in three languages, and Fr Terrence gave a sharing in Tamil.

Fr Philip spoke on the importance of the family unit. He said, "Without this basic unit, there would be no society or Church. This is



Priests and pilgrims walking in procession.

why we need to preserve the unity and faith of the family. But we can't do it on our strength. We need Mary's blessing.

"The Holy Family is a model family we look up to. They were not perfect, yet they did not give up living as a family. The modern family is in danger of detaching from one another. Social media is creeping in, drawing us unconsciously into our shells. If we allow this to continue, the family unit will be destroyed," said Fr Philip.

"Remember, each family makes up the local Church. If these family units collapse, so will the Church. So, we have to constantly ask for the intercession and blessings of the Blessed Virgin Mary that the faith and unity of each family remain intact."

After the short sunset procession which extended outside the church to Jalan Tanjong Karayong and Jalan Tun Razak, the congregation of about 500 people took part in an adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, followed by Benediction.

A week before the feast, a group of parishioners joined forces in the spirit of *gotong royong*, coming together to tidy up the surroundings of the parish and adorn it with colourful buntings.

In his closing address, Fr Terrence expressed his admiration for their collaborative work. The parish priest also thanked God, particularly for the blessing of the Carmelite friars who took turns overseeing the festivities during the four-day celebration. He also appreciated the participation of Fr Eugene, who was present during the main event.

Fr Terrence emphasised the importance of faith both in gathering for the procession and in the journey of life. He extended a warm welcome to attendees from both near and far, and invited everyone to partake in the fellowship event at the canteen area.

There was a Thanksgiving Mass on Sunday to close the celebration. Fr Philip, with Fr Nicholas concelebrating, jointly preached on *Mary Bless All People* in three languages.

## Exhibition to mark 120-year history

KUALA LUMPUR: The Church of the Holy Rosary (HRC) built in 1903 by French missionary Fr Emile Terrien, marked her 120th anniversary with an exhibition showcasing her rich history and significant milestones.

The exhibition features fascinating facts about the church's journey over the years, along with a special interactive element: the HRC Family Tree, a charming symbol to remind visitors, ministry members, parishioners and fellow Christians that we stand united under the shelter of one vast tree — representing God's embrace. By pinning their names onto the tree, attendees embody their connection to this shared spiritual journey.

The parish is extending an invitation to everyone — Catholics and non-Catholics alike — to visit this enlightening display and to participate in the culmination of the anniversary celebration, which is the Family Day festivity, to be held on Sept 10 at the parish grounds.

Come celebrate 120 years with us! —  
By Christopher Tan



Parishioners listing their names on the Church of the Holy Rosary's Family Tree.

## Recognising the indigenous people in Negeri Sembilan

LABU, Negeri Sembilan: International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples was celebrated at the Negeri district level on August 20. Themed *Bersatu Iman Berkembang*, it was held at Chapel Kristus Cahaya, Kg Sebir.

Archbishop Julian Leow was the main celebrant, while the Ecclesiastical Assistant for Orang Asli, Fr Paulino Miranda, gave the homily. Also concelebrating were the priests of the district, Fr Xavier Andrew, Fr Christopher Soosaipillai, Fr Albet Arokiasamy, Fr Jestus Pereira, Fr Kenneth Gopal OCD, Fr Philip Tay OCD, Fr Nicholas Hoh OCD, and Fr George Ho OCD.

The event started with the welcoming dance by the communities there. As an opening gambit to officiate the pro-

gramme, the archbishop and priests were invited to blow the *sumpit* (blowpipe) and burst the balloon.

A booth was set up to highlight the history and background of the indigenous people in the district.

Mass began at 6.00pm, followed by a fellowship serving exotic meats like monkey, monitor lizard, snake, squirrel, and many others, cooked by the community. While the community indulged in the unique dishes, there were lucky draws and karaoke sessions featuring 'Orang Asal' songs.

It was a fruitful and spirit-filled day. It was a great experience for the first-timers to witness how the Orang Asli live in Malaysia. — By Sabrina Smith

## Ground breaking ceremony for new site in Masai



Bishop Bernard Paul leading the prayers at the new site.

MASAI, Johor: Parishioners of the Church of St Theresa gathered excitedly at Plot 684, Jalan Besar, Masai, to joyfully participate in the ground breaking ceremony for their new church building, August 23.

The event was graced by Bishop Bernard Paul, who led the prayers and blessings of the site, together with parish priest, Fr Cyril Mannayagam. Also present were Msgr Peter Ng, Msgr Michael Mannayagam, and Fr Andrew Arokiasamy.

Initiated by Bishop Bernard, the ground breaking symbolised the beginning of a new chapter, signifying not only the inception of the church's physical structure but also the spiritual advancement of its congregation. It carried a sense of nostalgia as the congregation fondly recalled the years spent in the old church.

Building chairman, Dennis Ignatius, pro-

vided a concise overview of the journey toward fulfilling the dream of constructing the new church. He urged the congregation not to become complacent, emphasising that there was still a considerable distance to go in terms of raising the necessary funds.

In his congratulatory address, Bishop Bernard reminded the congregation that they should undertake their endeavours with prayerful and thankful hearts. He encouraged them to continuously seek guidance from the Holy Spirit and to keep their gaze directed upwards.

The ceremony concluded with an air of joy, contentment, and gratitude evident on the faces of the community gathered. Their excitement was palpable as they eagerly anticipate the fulfilment of their long-cherished dream: the construction of the Church of St Teresa in Masai, Johor. — By Irene Mirandah



Archbishop Julian Leow attempting to burst the balloons using the 'sumpit'.



# Medical counselling session for seniors

By Alosious Ignatious Fabian

**BUTTERWORTH:** In response to Pope Francis' institution of Grandparents Day, a medical counselling session for seniors was held at the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (NBVM) on August 13. The half-day event was organised by the Care Team of the parish.

Before the event, Stephen Francis, from the NBVM.SCIC Senior Citizens Ministry, arranged a full and comprehensive blood test through BP Laboratory at a reduced cost for those interested. Recognising the significance of providing medical guidance post-event, Stephen teamed with the NBVM.SCIC Care Team chairperson, Matron Stella, to arrange a medical counselling session at the parish. This session aimed to assist senior citizens grappling with various health challenges or pressing health-related inquiries, offering them a reliable source to address their concerns and alleviate their anxieties.

The pair worked tirelessly to bring together five doctors, nurses, an ophthalmologist, optometrists, a physiotherapist, and eye and ear consultants from NBVM.SCIC parish. They also arranged for nine

Form Four student volunteers and several helpers from Pantai Hospital to make the medical counselling session a reality and a huge success.

The NBVM Nativity Centre was abuzz as early birds seized the opportunity to stream in from 8.00am onwards. The 44 participants who showed up were full of praise for the doctors and their helpers who attended to them. Ten of those who sought medical counselling on their blood test results were impressed by their care, patience, and knowledge of their respective fields. The seniors appreciated the time the volunteers took to answer their queries. They explained what the Low (L) and High (H) in their blood test results meant as well as what they can do to maintain or improve their health.

This time, unlike previous medical camps fielded in NBVM, which offered BMI, blood pressure, and fasting blood sugar tests, the Care Team included eye and hearing check-ups and free medical counselling by Drs Devina, Selwyn, Rose and Helena from NBVM.SCIC parish. The Eye and Hearing partners brought their machines to help them with their diagnoses. Although it was Dr Selwyn's first experience of being



A senior citizen getting her eyes checked during the medical counselling session.

involved in a medical counselling session at the parish, he was very happy to be in service.

Elizabeth Ng led the opening ceremony, marked by bursting balloons, at 10:30am after Stephen said a prayer.

James Selvaraj and Lawrence said they found the NBVM.SCIC Care Team helpful, patient, friendly and knowledgeable. Josephine and Patiama were glad to help instil healthcare awareness in the participants

who went home happy, having gained a better and clearer understanding of their medical issues. They requested a similar event be held annually.

The event ended at 12.30pm, with a note of thanks to Matron Stella and her hardworking and dedicated Care Team. Stephen expressed his gratitude to the volunteers who served by presenting them with a small token of appreciation for their contributions.

## Golden Eagles mark first anniversary

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Golden Eagles of the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist celebrated their first anniversary on August 8.

The 10.00am Mass was celebrated by parish priest, Fr Gerard Theraviam, who is also a Golden Eagle.

Peter Raiappan, 79, who served as lector and commentator in St John's from the 1960s to 1970s, reprised his role as commentator.

Octogenarian Nancy Emaung went to the ambo again as lector. She was Liturgy leader and secretary of the Church of the Annunciation in Raub from 1980 to 2021.

After Mass, the 60 Golden Eagles interacted in a fellowship and brunch.

The anniversary celebrations began on July 18 when the senior parishioners braved the morning rain, walking from the cathedral to a nearby cafe for a fellowship and lunch, which included a Praise and Worship session.

Golden Eagles sang along with retired church musicians John Chong and Max Yong and their repertoire of oldies. Some even danced. It was a glorious trip down memory lane, which Prof Chris Ng called reminiscence therapy, that could help the elderly delay the onset of dementia. Research has shown that as older persons remember the past, new pathways are formed in the brain to stimulate the cognitive faculty.

Chris said, "Talking about our childhood, adolescence, friends and our parents can ignite memory and activate emotion. So does looking at old photos. Listening to old songs brings back fond memories, joys and tears, the so-called good old days. More pathways or channels have been formed in our brains today."

Coordinator Christine Suan gave a sharing on St Bernadette Soubirous and Our Lady of Lourdes.

Five youth — Marissa, Fiona, Bethany and twins Emma and Eva Lee — added meaning to *His mercy is from age to age* (Luke 1:50) by assisting the old folks. They managed screen projection, manned reg-

istration and served the buffet brunch of a delicious spread of food. And they had fun too.

It was a "double grand" morning as Emma and Eva were with their grandparents, Chris and Suan. Angeline brought her grandsons Elvin Roy, nine, and Heroshan, two.

On July 23, the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly instituted by Pope Francis, the Golden Eagles animated the 8am Sunday Mass, with Elizabeth Yeo and Suan as lectors, and Rose Rethual as commentator. Joan Low and Adeline Dihon were among the hospitality ministers. — **By Bob Ho**



Fr Michael Raymond OFM Cap anointing a parishioner.

## Day of Prayer for the Sick at CDM Penang

**PENANG:** Fifty people were administered the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick at the Church of the Divine Mercy (CDM) August 19.

Seven non-Catholics in poor health who came for Mass, were given a blessing instead of anointing. After each anointing and blessing, they were given a souvenir prayer card of St Teresa of Calcutta that contained a third-class relic from her blanket.

In his homily, CDM parish priest, Fr Michael Raymond OFM Cap, reminded the congregation of God's unconditional outpouring of love in all circumstances. But to receive this love, we need to have faithfulness. He explained that when the anointing is carried out, three moments may be experienced. First, a laying of hands and a prayer is recited where the priest, as well as the community present, will pray for the person. Secondly, the possibility of a profound encounter with God, based upon one's faith, without which, it will only be a ritual. Lastly, the anointing with Chrism oil on the forehead and hands

signifies a release of divine healing and strength.

We are reminded in the Gospel that we need to be like little children in trusting and placing our total confidence in the Lord. To achieve this, we need to have three prerequisites. The initial one is the humility to know that we are nothing before the Lord. The second is to persevere in the light of temptations and weaknesses. And lastly, to have faithfulness and be steadfast for Him to bless you. The Psalm of the day reminds us we need to let God be our inheritance.

At the end of Mass, Fr Michael invited the Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to assemble at the front of the sanctuary to receive a special blessing as they renewed their commitment to serving the church community. There were also the ones who planned the event.

Each person who came for anointing also received a food packet as a parting gift.

It was encouraging to note that this event attracted even the non-Catholics within the community. — **By Dr Ivan Filmer**



# Leaders need to be constantly informed, formed and transformed!

By Sunny Lee

GENTING HIGHLANDS: “As leaders in a very challenging post-pandemic world, we must be informed, formed, and transformed by the Holy Spirit. If this does not happen, then we become leaders with minds deformed and lives conformed to the world.”

This introductory thought-provoking advice and warning came from Martin Jalleh, who conducted a Leaders’ Formation Programme for 43 coordinators of different ministries and BECs of the Chapel of Kristus Aman in Villa Dominic, Genting Highlands, from August 18 to 20.

Throughout the programme, entitled *Forging Ahead in Faith and Fortitude as Leaders in a Post-Pandemic Era*, Martin revealed the impact of the pandemic on one’s personal faith and church life, and the necessary proactive steps to take if one were to be an effective leader.

What remained etched in many participants’ minds was the constant emphasis given to the need



Left photo: The leaders working together to solve a puzzle. Right photo: Youth leaders.



for leaders to “be transformed by the renewing of the mind” (Romans 12:2), i.e. making relevant and necessary paradigm shifts, or changing our mindsets.

Martin gave real and practical examples of paradigm shifts and the necessary change needed in a leader’s perceptions in areas such as one’s relationship with God (God’s love) and one another; prayer; the community (BEC) and the Catholic Church.

Speaking at length on the indispensability of the community to one’s life of faith, Martin said that “community is God’s gift of grace to the Church in this post-pandemic era. The only way we can move from social isolation and withdrawal to compassion and involvement, is through and with the community’s support.”

Commenting on the belief by many of having a “DIY (Do-It-Yourself) Salvation”, Martin quot-

ed Pope Francis as saying “No one saves himself. The community is essential.”

Martin also shared Pope Francis’ expression of the need for community when he was a priest: “I was always looking for a community. I did not see myself as a priest on my own. I needed a community.”

Martin told the leaders that there are many obstacles to a “spirituality and culture of community” – a

grave concern of Pope Francis himself: “Our culture has shaped us into radical individualists; deceiving us into thinking we do not need anyone else.”

Given such a reality and the growing “virus of individualism” (Pope Francis), Martin said leaders must be more intentional and determined about creating community — and working as close and united collaborators in the Kingdom of God.

Martin Jalleh also touched on topics such as *Called to be a Servant-Leader*; *The Christ-Church-Community Connection*; *Unity, Synergy and Synodality*; *Christian Conflict Resolution* and *Constants of Spiritual Maturity of a Leader*.

It was a meaningful and beneficial weekend for KA leaders. Due to his constant and effective use of alliterations, Martin’s talks will surely be remembered!

The *Affirmation* session was touching and healing to all. The Commissioning Prayer during which the leaders prayed for each other was a fitting and Spirit-filled ending.

## Transforming lives with ‘Beyond Success’

KUALA LUMPUR: The ‘Beyond Success’ programme by John Maxwell was a profoundly transformative event that had a huge impact on millions of people throughout the world. John is a leadership expert, speaker and author, his mission is “to see effective Christian leaders fulfil the Great Commission in every nation”.

Twenty parishioners from the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist recently participated in this session online. This programme focuses on changing and growing as a person. John emphasised that real success

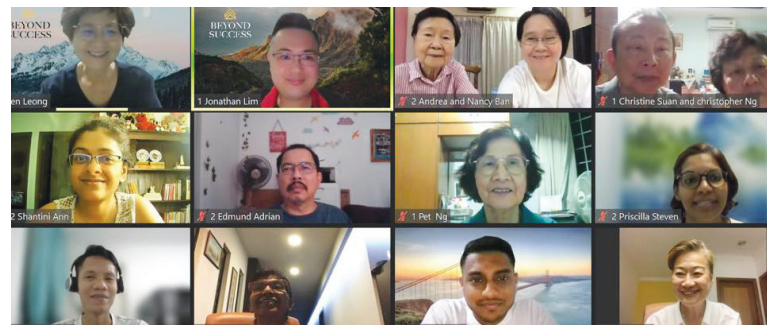
comprises more than just material gains and includes things like forging deep relationships with people and God, making a positive impact on others, and living a life of purpose and significance.

The content was extensive and aligned with Christian principles and values. Topics covered ranged from leadership principles to personal development techniques. John breaks down difficult concepts into manageable steps to motivate us to move outside our comfort zones. Round-table-style interactive sessions encouraged a sense of community and

collaboration where we could learn from one another.

One of the most valuable takeaways for me was the emphasis on intentional growth rather than just setting goals. I learnt not to ask “How long will this take?” but “How far can I go?” John’s message was very clear: to succeed, we must dedicate ourselves to ongoing learning and intentional growth. He gave us the resources and tools we need to develop our growth plans, improve both our lives and that of others, and give value to our lives.

All the participants had a sense of



Participants at the online session of the Beyond Success programme.

empowerment and renewed motivation at the programme’s conclusion. “I feel energised to add values to my life and to the lives of others,” one participant exclaimed.

Find out more at <https://www.facebook.com/beyondbeyondsuccessmalaysia>

[book.com/beyondbeyondsuccessmalaysia](https://www.facebook.com/beyondbeyondsuccessmalaysia)

For more information, contact Jonathan Lim at [beyondbeyondsuccessmalaysia@gmail.com](mailto:beyondbeyondsuccessmalaysia@gmail.com) or call 0178839737. — By Professor Christopher Ng

## Philanthropist donates RM15K to SSVP home

KAJANG: Dr P. Pathmanaban, author of *A Boy from Teluk Intan* recently fulfilled his pledge to donate proceeds from the sale of 500 copies of his book to Rumah Keluarga Kami (RKK).

He presented the RM15,000 cheque to the management and children of RKK before some 50 guests at the home at Jalan Bukit, Kajang. Coming from humble beginnings, the non-Catholic author has a big heart for the underprivileged and less fortunate.

RKK, a project of the SSVP Conference of the Church of the Holy Family, is a home for underprivileged children. Since its inception 33 years ago, over 420 children have resided at its home. At present, there are 30 resident multiracial children aged four to 18 years old. The home is managed by a committee of nine volunteers, with founding mem-

ber, Joseph Netto, at its helm. Their monthly operations costs amounts to RM35,000.00.

Joseph said, “The expenses consist of salaries for a full-time Home Supervisor and three House Mothers, tuition fees, utility bills, food and sundry provisions, clothing and travel costs. We need volunteers to provide F2F (face-to-face) coaching classes for the children.”

The home depends on public donations which comes in cash and kind. RKK also embarks on other fund-raising projects such as Charity Dinner, the sale of calendars, and the soliciting of funds through appeal letters.

After the presentation, Dr Pathmanaban and family treated the children to a sumptuous lunch. Committee members, Jonathan Roland distributed gifts.

## SSVP Tea Dance in aid of the poor

PETALING JAYA: The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SSVP), Conference of Assumption, held a fundraising Tea Dance in aid of the poor at the Jasmine Banquet Hall on August 20. With the band *Nightbirds* on stage, and activities like raffle draws and auctions, this event aimed to raise RM100,000 to support SSVP’s mission of helping the underprivileged. The 50 tables were sold out by the end of July.

Central to SSVP’s mission is their unwavering belief that education is the key to breaking free from the cycle of poverty. The funds raised during the event will directly sup-

port SSVP Assumption in assisting families/individuals from the B40 group, fondly referred to as ‘Friends In Need’ (FINs), in activities like Ration Sundays, the Ozanam Education Centre (EduCentre) — providing quality preschool education, higher education support, health initiatives etc. SSVP aims to create a lasting change and open doors to a brighter future for the poor and the needy they assist. They are currently assisting 35 families and have 35 children registered at the Educentre.

The Tea Dance brought together a diverse community of individuals united in their commitment to mak-

ing a difference in the lives of the less fortunate. Attendees danced, mingled, and engaged in heartfelt conversations, fostering a sense of solidarity and compassion. The event served as a powerful reminder that by working together, we can empower individuals through education and uplift communities, breaking the chains of poverty.

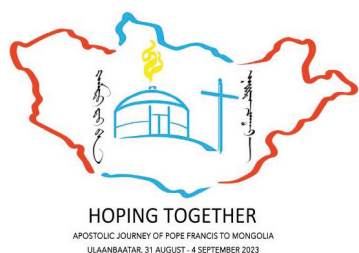
SSVP Assumption is grateful to parishioners, well-wishers and friends for their support and generous donations. This, together with the tireless effort and commitment of members and volunteers, contributed towards the event’s success.

It was a heart-warming and enjoyable event, both in terms of fundraising and community engagement. Many who attended said that they were looking forward to similar events in the future. The committee is in the midst of finalising the amount raised. At press time, it is believed they achieved their target. — By SSVP Assumption Conference



Appreciation speech by the organising committee.





# Pope Francis' historic visit to Mongolia

ULAANBAATAR: Pope Francis continually calls Catholics to go to the “peripheries,” and that is exactly what he did on August 31 when he boarded a plane to Mongolia for an official trip, making him the first Pope to visit this Asian nation.

He landed at Ulaanbaatar’s Chinggis Khaan International Airport on September 1 for a four-day visit to this Asian nation, which is home to some 1,500 Catholics.

Close to 28 per cent of the population live below the national poverty line, according to the Asian Development Bank.

Cardinal Giorgio Marengo, who has served as a missionary in Mongolia for more than 20 years, said that about 70 per cent of the Catholic Church’s time and resources in Mongolia are devoted to charity and social activities, including running day-care centres, a trade school, homes for orphaned or homeless children and soup kitchens.

Pope Francis’ last appointment in Mongolia is scheduled to be a meeting Sept 4 with charity work-

ers and the inauguration of the House of Mercy, which will house a shelter for women and children escaping domestic abuse and offer temporary housing to migrants forced to return to Mongolia.

The UN International Organisation for Migration country’s report for Mongolia estimates one in 11 Mongolians are living outside the country, and those leaving tend to be young, educated and skilled.

But the organisation also drew attention to “internal migration” — people leaving their traditionally nomadic lives as herders and moving into the city. The population of Ulaanbaatar, now estimated at 1.6 million people — half the country’s population — is more than double what it was in 2000. The urban influx has been pushed by a search for economic opportunities, particularly in light of fast-growing desertification from climate change and overgrazing and environmental degradation caused by mining for coal, copper, gold and other minerals.

The situation is a perfect setting



Pope Francis with Cardinal Giorgio Marengo at the Consistory on August 27, 2022. (Vatican Media)

for Pope Francis to talk about the importance of “integral ecology” as proposed by Catholic social teaching, recognising how the preservation of the natural environment also means preserving Mongolian culture, the dignity of its people and their livelihoods.

In the 1920s, the Vatican formally established mission struc-

tures in Mongolia, but within a year of the country becoming communist, it ceased to function. It wasn’t until 1991 that Catholic missionaries returned and began rebuilding the community.

At the time of publication, it is noted that Pope Francis is scheduled to hold an ecumenical and interreligious meeting on the morn-

ing of Sept 3 before celebrating Mass with the country’s Catholic community.

While a variety of other Christian missionaries are expected to attend, the Buddhist delegation is expected to be the most significant.

Pope Francis had met with Buddhist leaders from the country at the Vatican in May 2022. He told them that even though the Catholic community in Mongolia is small, “the Church is fully committed to fostering a culture of encounter, in imitation of her master and founder, who commanded His disciples: ‘Love one another as I love you.’”

“Let us strengthen our friendship for the benefit of everyone,” the Pope told his guests.

Citing Mongolia’s “ancient history of harmony in diversity,” Pope Francis told them he hoped such attitudes would grow “through the effective implementation of religious freedom and the promotion of joint initiatives for the common good.” —

Agencies

## San Francisco Archdiocese announces Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing

WASHINGTON, DC: San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone on August 21 announced that the archdiocese would be submitting a Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing, a development the prelate had earlier warned might come about as a result of numerous abuse filings against the bishopric.

Cordileone earlier in August had warned that the filing was “very likely” in response to the “more than 500 civil lawsuits” alleging clerical sexual abuse filed against the archdiocese.

A Chapter 11 filing, the archbishop said at the time, would allow the archdiocese to deal with those cases “collectively rather than one at a time,” resulting in both a “faster resolution” of the crisis as well as “fair compensation” for the victims.

In an announcement posted on the archdiocese’s website, Cordileone said that “after much reflection, prayer, and consultation with our financial and legal advisers,” the archdiocese has “filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy reorganisation.”

“We believe the bankruptcy process is the best way to provide a compassionate and equitable solution for survivors of abuse,” the archbishop said, “while ensuring that we continue the vital ministries to the faithful and to the communities that rely on our services and charity.”

The prelate noted that San Francisco is one of a growing number of dioceses and archdioceses filing for Chapter 11 as a way to address abuse lawsuits. At least 13 dioceses



Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone meets with homeless people at St Anthony’s Dining Hall in San Francisco’s Tenderloin neighbourhood on Nov 6, 2021. (CNA photo/Dennis Callahan)

are currently engaged in bankruptcy proceedings, while 18 have emerged from it.

Cordileone said only the “legal entity” of the archdiocese itself would be covered by the bankruptcy filings. “Our parishes, schools, and other entities are not included in the filing,” he said. “Our mission will continue as it always has.”

The archbishop said offertory funds from individual parishes, as well as funds raised during annual appeals, would not be used to cover the costs of the settlements. “These funds, which you so generously donate, are collected for use by the stated ministries, which exclude legal settlements or related expenses,” he said.

Cordileone noted that the “great majority” of abuse claims occurred “many decades ago,” with most of them involving “priests who are deceased or no longer in ministry.”

The archbishop urged the faithful to “join together on a daily basis in praying the Rosary, spending an hour each week in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, and fasting on Fridays for the survivors of abuse, for the mission of our archdiocese, and for the eradication of this shameful crime from our society as a whole.”

The San Francisco Archdiocese covers about 2,300 miles of area in northern California; it lists about 440,000 Catholics in its boundaries. — Daniel Payne, CNA

## German cardinal disappointed over staff’s attempts to access pornography

COLOGNE, Germany: Cardinal Rainer Maria Woelki (pic) expressed profound disappointment over an internal IT report finding that employees in his Archdiocese of Cologne had attempted to access pornographic websites.

“To some, the consumption of pornography may seem harmless. But I stand firmly with Pope Francis, who unequivocally condemns it and warns of its insidious dangers, particularly the egregious violation of human dignity,” said Woelki.

“Upon learning of this unsettling news, I immediately called for a thorough examination of the incidents and insisted they be addressed in strict accordance with legal regulations,” the German prelate said in a public statement.

Cologne’s public prosecutor’s office, which is in possession of the archdiocese’s list of implicated users, stated that there was “currently no suspicion” of criminal activity warranting an investigation.

Woelki took the opportunity to defend the reputation of the Church’s workforce. “We have a large number of committed and reliable employees in the Church sector. It is crucial to me that we do not cast a shadow of general suspicion over everyone at this time,” he emphasised.

The archdiocese revealed that the discovery was made during a routine IT security check undertaken a while ago. “There had been no indications of criminally relevant



behaviour,” the archdiocese stated. “Our firewalls had effectively blocked access to these problematic sites. The checks were not explicitly aimed at scrutinising the usage behaviour of individual persons.”

Pope Francis has been vocal about the perils of pornography, warning that it “weakens the soul.”

The Pontiff cautioned seminarians in October 2022: “The devil comes from there: It weakens the priestly heart.” He urged everyone to “reflect on whether they have ever fallen into the temptation of digital pornography,” adding: “Dear brothers, be careful of this. The pure heart, the heart that receives Jesus every day, cannot receive this pornographic information.”

However, a few weeks later, one German priest advocated for pornography as a form of “sexual relief” for celibate people. Criticising Pope Francis, Fr Hermann Backhaus in November 2022 argued that pornography could serve as a “pressure relief valve” for priests and religious individuals committed to celibacy. — AC Wimmer, CNA



# Pope Francis is writing *Laudato Si'* 2.0

VATICAN: Pope Francis has announced that he is writing a “second part” to his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

Speaking off-the-cuff to a delegation of lawyers from member countries of the Council of Europe on August 21, the Pope said he was writing a second part of his *Laudato Si'* encyclical to update it to “current issues”.

The Pope was expressing his appreciation for the attorneys’ commitment to developing a legal framework aimed at protecting the environment.

“We must never forget that the younger generations have the right to receive a beautiful and livable world from us, and that this implies that we have a grave responsibility towards creation which we have received from the generous hands of God,” said the Pope. “Thank you for your contribution.”

In a statement later, the Director of the Holy See Press Office, Matteo Bruni, explained that the new updated version of *Laudato Si'* will focus, in particular, on the most recent extreme weather events and catastrophes affecting people across five continents.

*Laudato Si'* is Pope Francis’ second encyclical letter. It was published on June 18, 2015, and bears the date May 24 of the same year, the Solemnity of Pentecost.

The encyclical, on safeguarding the common home that God has created for humanity, was written in the context of the United Nations’ conferences on climate change.

Pope Francis has recounted the genesis of this text on various occasions, explaining what he discussed with Ségolène Royal, then French Minister for Ecological Transition, during her visit to Strasbourg in 2014.

He recounted in June, “She told me that

she had heard that I was writing something on the environment. I replied, yes I was talking to a group of scientists and also a group of theologians. She then said: “Please publish it before the Paris Conference.” So that was what happened.”

Rarely has an encyclical had such an echo, even in circles far removed from Catholicism, as the concern about global warming goes well beyond confessional bounds. At the time of its publication, dozens of heads of state welcomed the position taken by the head of the Catholic Church.

Francis himself does not classify it as a “green” encyclical, saying that in fact it falls in the great tradition of the Church’s “social encyclicals.” In it, the Pontiff makes, above all, a call to personal conversion, noting how the environmental crisis is inseparable from a human crisis. — **Agencies**



## Chinese Catholics support flood-affected communities



Rescue personnel evacuate residents from a flooded area following heavy rains in Zhuozhou, in northern China's Hebei province on Aug 2, 2023. (UCA News photo)

BEIJING: Catholics in China have donated funds to support communities hit by recent devastating floods that left at least 62 dead and affected millions of people.

Shanghai diocese donated 500,000 yuan (RM321,150) to Hebei province, one of the worst-hit regions, Fides news agency reported on August 21.

The donation was through Jinde Charities, a Catholic social service group based in Hebei province. The money is to be used for the recovery and reconstruction of houses of affected people.

Some 500 sets of tarpaulin sheets and blankets were also sent by the diocese for flood-affected people in Hebei's Gaobeidian city on Aug 18.

The Catholic donations came in response to an appeal by Bishop Joseph Shen Bin who called for the opening of hearts for people in dire need following the natural disasters.

Taking cues from Pope Francis’ environmental encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Bishop Shen also urged people to “protect and safeguard

Creation” and to tackle the climate crisis that triggers extreme weather situations.

Jinde Charities chief, Fr John Baptist Zhang, said the agency has sent 1,200,560 yuan (RM766,455) to disaster-hit areas thanks to donations collected from various sources.

Catholics from other areas have also raised funds for flood victims.

A Catholic community in Tangshan city, in Hebei, collected 100,350 yuan (RM64,067).

Catholics in Taihu parish in Wuxi, eastern Jiangsu province, collected 30,770 yuan (RM19,644) on the solemnity of the Assumption of Mary on Aug 15.

Many Catholics volunteered to offer aid to flood victims in various provinces.

“The strength of a single person is limited, but the unity of all people can bring greater assistance to affected areas,” Chen Baolu, a Catholic humanitarian worker told *Fides*.

Aid must be given to all, without distinction of faith, age or origin, in accordance with the teaching of the Church, Chen said. — **ucanews.com**

## Pro-life groups march for the Rights of Unborn Children

PUNE, India: Cardinal Oswald Gracias led a “March for Life” in Pune, Maharashtra, to protest India's abortion law.

The Archbishop of Bombay, along with participants of the march, submitted a memorandum in support of the rights of the unborn to local authorities. Despite opposition from a majority of Indians from various religious organisations, abortion has been gradually legalised.

The date chosen for the march, August 10, marks the anniversary of India's Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act that legalised abortion 52 years ago.

CHARIS India, the National Governing Body of Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services in India, hosted this second National March for Life in Maharashtra, India.

The event included an Exhibition for Life hosted by the Catholic Diocese of Pune. Many school students, amongst the participants, were educated about the dignity and respect for the life that the Lord has gifted each and every one. Other events included the performance of an acapella group, “Joyful 6”, described as a living testimony to witness that children are a blessing.

The “March for Life” anthem by Ajin

Joseph, national coordinator of the Youth United 4 Faith, was also released during the same occasion to bring awareness against abortion.

“It is said that more than 15 million abortions take place annually in our country,” said Archbishop Francis Kalist, who also serves as the national episcopal advisor for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (CHARIS).

Prolife organisations such as Jesus Youth Prolife, Youth United for Christ (YU4C), Human Life International, Saved Pearl Foundation, Life for All, Coimbatore and Eva Prolife participated with their members chanting slogans and holding placards that called for the repeal of the Act.

Regarding the latter, the archbishop stated: “We should continue to pray and discern God's will and launch this ministry. The remarkable thing is that the youth wing of CHARIS India — YU4C — undertook the initiative.”

“We decided to take a bold step last year to create a greater impact in our country by introducing the first March for Life India 2022, in the 51st year of legalising abortion in our country” one member of YU4C said



March for Life participants marching to protest against abortion.

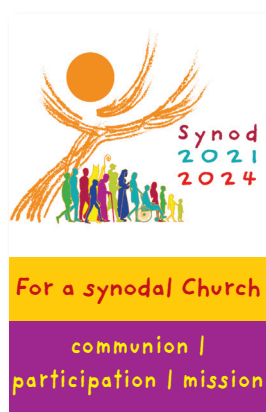
speaking to reporters, “Two hundred people joined together to fight for the common cause of protecting life from conception till natural death. We're very excited to see nearly five times as many people turn out for the second march for life this year.”

The main agenda of the march is to continue to raise awareness and involve more

secular participation from different religions and cultures in the next years.

The Charismatic Commission of Kerala Catholic Bishops' Conference (KCBC) and the Archdiocese of Trichur is scheduled to co-organise ‘India's March for Life - 2024’ next year on the same black day of August 10. — **By Agnel Maria, Vatican News**





# What I learned from listening to non-practising Catholics ahead of the Synod

The Vatican named 363 voting members for October's Synod on Synodality recently, including Archbishop Paul Etienne of Seattle at the personal invitation of the Pope. Since this synod was announced in 2021, I have worked with the Seattle chancery as a synod volunteer and responded to the call for dialogue by personally talking with 100 people who were baptised and are now non-practising. Having found that the archdiocese took my findings seriously, I was heartened by the Vatican's announcement.

When I first heard about this synod, I was caught off guard: The Catholic Church was interested in informing institutional direction by listening to her members? Equipped with a background in research and design thinking,

I asked the Seattle archdiocese how I could help.

The archdiocese had a robust plan in place. Our diocesan phase listening sessions were liturgical: Parish groups opened in prayer and facilitators used questions like, "How are you journeying in your faith?" and "What is the Holy Spirit asking for us to do next?" Prayer, intentional listening and an emphasis on the Holy Spirit disarmed political agendas. But I noticed that the plan had a gap: We were reaching the baptised through parishes. How might we hear from baptised Catholics who no longer went to church?

I made it my mission to reach non-practising Catholics and to embrace the stories of people who had not yet been heard.



Photo by Priscilla Du Preez on Unsplash

## A personal mission

I am a cradle Catholic, in my 30s with an engineering degree, a love of Lindy Hop dancing and a penchant for the outdoors. My city is very secular, and I have not always been outspoken about my faith. Encouraged by the excitement surrounding the synod, I gradually opened up. On the edge of the dance floor, someone would ask, "What do you do?" I would respond: "I'm working on a project to learn how all the baptised experience their faith." They would say, "I'm baptised." I would leave a small silence, my eyes looking out at the floor and then back at them, and within seconds they would tell me their story. I listened with genuine interest, hearing questions about identity and experiences of spirituality. I encountered these conversations on hikes, at coffee shops and in other routine spaces in my everyday life.

**"I noticed that archdiocese's plan had a gap: We were reaching the baptised through parishes. How might we hear from baptised Catholics who no longer went to church?"**

One day, I noticed that a friend liked a page called "The Saints" on Facebook, but I had never heard him talk about God. The next time I saw him, my stomach twisted as I asked, "What is your experience of faith and religion?" He responded, "You're Catholic, right?" He went on to explain that he had grown up Catholic and had made most of his friends at the Newman Centre in college. Then one of his best friends came out as trans. He grimaced as he said he could not be affiliated with a homophobic institution. Out of allegiance to his friend, among other things, he became agnostic. It had been two years. I asked him about his personal relationship with God. He said he'd never had one.

By this point, I began not only to record

the stories I heard but to place myself in them. I felt the pain of my friend's ostracisation. I felt the clash of God against culture. I questioned why God would put us in a position to choose between God's love and the pain of institutional wrongs. I grew angry with God and sad on behalf of the baptised who shared their stories with me. In empty chapels, I cried, listened for God in the silence and wrote reflections in paper notebooks. I brought the stories to the diocese, spiritual mentors and therapists. I hungered to understand other perspectives, so I listened to podcasts, sought out opinions in foreign environments and discussed the experiences with friends.

We know that disengaging from the Church can be painful — and that the pain is often left unaddressed. Addressing it now opens a window of hope. Maybe God exists; maybe the institution is learning;

maybe I can have the community I was promised as a kid. One person said, "Faith is usually something I suppress, but now that you bring it up, it's all I can think about." Another person told me, "My mom said I would always be Catholic, no matter what." So many people had questions from their adolescence that were never answered.

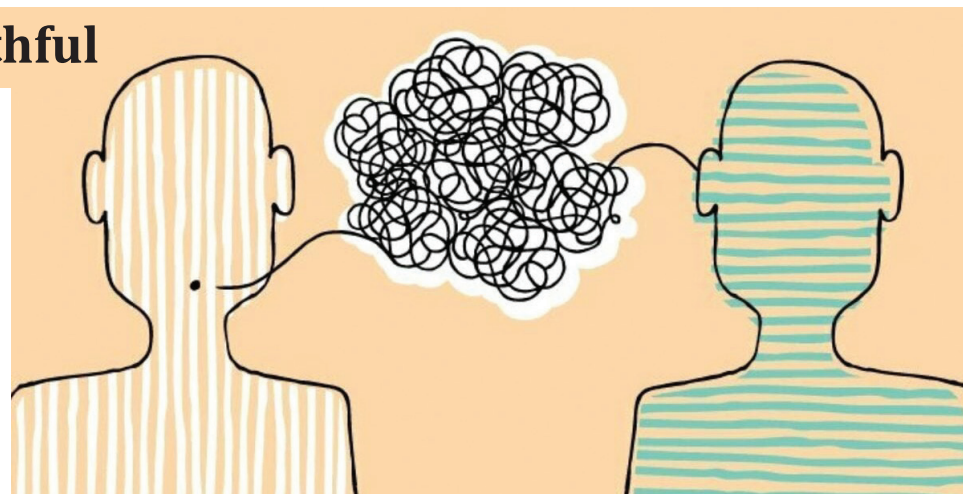
Less than 24 hours after I left my agnostic friend, he sent me a message: "Can we talk? I barely slept just thinking about what we talked about.... I would like to listen [to] what your faith means to you. I'd like to hear more about your experience with God." I met him for coffee, prepared to discuss L.G.B.T. issues. But he only wanted to talk about my faith and how God is working in my life. Two hours later, he went to Mass for the first time in two years and asked the priest for spiritual direction.

**"My city is very secular, and I have not always been outspoken about my faith. Encouraged by the excitement surrounding the synod, I gradually opened up."**

## Listening to the faithful

In April 2022, I brought the stories I had heard to Archbishop Etienne. I have learned that to be heard well, you must listen first, so I asked about his needs for the archdiocese. Seattle was about to implement a plan in which two or more parishes would be clustered in a new family structure. The archbishop and I planned how we might use the momentum of the synod to invigorate the laity. How might the laity participate in pastoral care through accompaniment and discipleship? How might we better shepherd Catholics as we encounter attrition in our parishes? How might we not just retain Catholics but engage, inspire and transform their relationships with God?

That summer, I participated in a synod reading retreat of 30 individuals who reviewed reports from the parish listening sessions, synthesising stories from just over 11,000 Seattle Catholics. We tried to identify themes and quotes that captured the spirit of these conversations for the report that we would send to the US bishops. Through the summer, I assisted in editing the final report, appreciating that the messages from



the non-practising Catholics continued to be present.

Our report is just one among thousands that will inform the prayerful plenary assemblies of cardinals, bishops, priests, men and women religious and laity who will gather in Rome for nearly a month in October 2023 and 2024.

Many of the discussions might focus on the issues of the Church born of human imperfections. These issues were repeated in synod reports at every level: The Church

needs to feel more like a home, not a rule-laden institution; disenfranchised groups need to be loved and empowered; leadership needs to be re-examined and resourced.

While I am eagerly anticipating institutional healing, over the last two years I have been even more encouraged by the healing I see already happening through listening. Becoming a more synodal Church allows us to listen to how God is speaking through each of us, including those who no longer sit in our pews.

## What I have learned

When people find their faith challenged and no one willing to listen to their doubts or questions, they are likely to disengage. By accompanying people in their faith, we provide opportunities for them to get to know God personally. When people ask about God, they are really asking: "Do you know God? Can you introduce me to Him?"

Encountering people in this synodal spirit has changed me. I enter into the stories of particular discomforts and conflicts with faith, and then I ask myself and others to consider experiences of beauty, goodness and truth. I am still challenged to enter spaces where I might disagree or be judged, and while I am afraid I will lose friends, I am getting better at it. Synodality humbles us to learn how to communicate sensitively, to care pastorally and to enter into spiritual friendship. God's people will continue wrestling with their challenges, but we can ease each other's suffering with our presence. We need each other's synodal listening because it renews our sense of hope. —

By Sarah Marie Chan, *America*



# Missionary dimension of catechesis

In the previous article, the focus was on the identity of catechesis. Catechesis receives its dynamism and identity from the Church's evangelising mission, which in itself is founded on the mandate of Jesus Christ (Mt. 28: 19-20). The aim of the present article is to examine more closely the relationship between evangelisation and catechesis. We do this to understand the missionary dimension of catechesis.

## Evangelisation

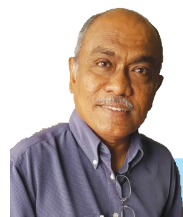
The word "evangelisation" comes from the Greek term *evangelion*, meaning "good news". The first papal document devoted entirely to the topic of evangelisation is *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (On Evangelisation in the Modern World) promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1975. According to the Pope, evangelisation means, "bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new..." (EN, 18).

The Pope stated that evangelisation is a multi-dimensional process made up of a number of elements, all of which are aimed at bringing the Gospel of Christ to the whole of humanity. These include the renewal of humanity, witnessing, explicit proclamation of the Gospel, conversion and obedience to Christ, initiation into the Church and mission (EN, 43).

In the process, said the Pope, catechesis must not be neglected since "the work of evangelisation will profit greatly from the catechetical instruction given at Church, in the schools, and in every case, in Christian homes" (EN, 44).

## No separation between evangelisation and catechesis

In *Catechesi Tradendae* (Catechesis for Our Times) promulgated by Pope St John Paul II in 1979, the relationship between



## ECHOING THE FAITH

Dr Steven Selvaraju

evangelisation and catechesis is further emphasised. The Pope stated that catechesis cannot be disassociated from the Church's missionary activity. According to him, catechesis is "a very remarkable moment" in the whole process of evangelisation (CT, 18) and that there can be no separation or opposition between catechesis and evangelisation.

Nevertheless, catechesis has its specific character when compared to evangelisation. The aim of evangelisation is to proclaim and witness to the Good News and lead a person to initial faith in Christ, and experience initial conversion as someone wanting to follow Christ. The aim of catechesis is to develop the initial faith so that it "may nourish day by day the Christian life of the faithful, young and old" (CT, 20). It is the teaching stage which helps baptised persons to grow and mature in their faith by means of a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the Person and message of Jesus Christ.

## A new stage of evangelisation

In 2013, *Evangelium Gaudium* (Joy of the Gospel), a papal document on evangelisation, was published. In promulgating it, Pope Francis expressed his wish to "encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelisation..." (EG, 1). The Pope reiterated the inseparable connection between evangelisation and catechesis, and pointed out that the new stage of evangelisation is to be carried out in three main spheres.

Firstly, to those who do not know Christ. Secondly, to the baptised who "lack a meaningful relationship with the Church" or who have become lukewarm in their faith. Thirdly, the baptised who regularly take part in community worship and those who have a deep and sincere faith but seldom take part in worship (EG, 14). It means that not only those who do not believe in Christ are to be evangelised. Evangelisation is aimed also towards those who are baptised.

## Catechesis at the service of the new evangelisation

Pope Francis' insights are taken up in the Directory for Catechesis published in 2020, in which catechesis is described as a privileged stage in the process of evangelisation. The document states that in the face of the present realities and cultures, such as globalisation, social inequality, global tensions, science and technology, digital and mass media, the Church has to re-think the work of evangelisation with new categories and new languages. In this regard, catechesis is to be at the service of the new evangelisation so that every person may have personal access to Christ and be able to encounter Him (DC, 48).

The directory proposes that three new "accents" (special emphasis) have to become more evident in the catechetical ministry.

*Catechesis "in a missionary going forth"* Catechesis has to form believers for mission, accompany them in their maturation of the faith, and help them become aware that they are missionary disciples. It has to help them participate actively in the proclamation of the Gospel and to make the Kingdom of God present in the world (CD, 49-50).

## Catechesis under the sign of mercy

Since the Church is called to proclaim the love and mercy of Christ, catechesis has to teach believers to be "merciful like the Father" (Lk. 6: 36) by fostering knowledge of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, and by becoming actively involved in acts of mercy. The document states that "The practice of mercy is in itself an authentic catechesis; it is catechesis in action" since Christ can be encountered through works of compassion and charity (CD, 51-52).

## Catechesis as a "laboratory" of dialogue

The Church is called to dialogue with the people of her time because she "has something to say, a message to give, a communication to make" (*Ecclesial Suam* (His Church), 65). In present times, the dialogue with family, society, cultures, sciences, ecology and with every person is particularly essential. In this context, the Church desires that catechesis becomes an authentic "laboratory" of dialogue with the existing realities and concerns of humanity. In other words, catechesis is to connect faith and life (CD, 53-54).

## Conclusion

Basically, it is important to understand that catechesis is not a "stand-alone" ministry. As mentioned, it receives its identity from the evangelising mission of the Church, and at the same time, participates in the Church's task of evangelisation. Both evangelisation and catechesis have their own place and role in the Church, and yet, they integrate and complement each other in her mission of making Christ known and loved. Therefore, it is essential that the missionary dimension of catechesis be constantly explored and emphasised in our present catechetical efforts.

## The missionary dimension of catechesis

Catechesis receives its identity and dynamism from the evangelising mission of the Church founded on the mandate of Jesus (Mt. 28: 19-20).



Catechesis is closely connected to the process of evangelisation. Therefore, catechesis has a missionary dimension.

*Evangelii nuntiandi* (1975) is the first papal document entirely devoted to evangelisation.

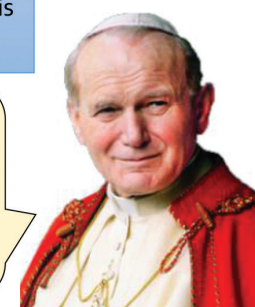


Evangelising means "bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new" (EN, 18).

In the work of evangelisation, catechesis is an element that cannot be neglected (EN, 44).

In *Catechesi tradendae* (1979) the relationship between catechesis and evangelisation is further emphasised.

Catechesis cannot be disassociated from the Church's missionary activity. It is "a very remarkable moment" in the process of evangelisation (CT, 18).



Catechesis has its specific character when compared to evangelisation.



**Evangelisation** – to proclaim and witness the Good News leading to initial faith and initial conversion to Christ.

**Catechesis** – to develop and mature the faith by teaching a deeper and more systematic and holistic knowledge of Christ and his message.

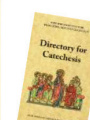
Dr. Steven Selvaraju 8/23

In *Evangelium Gaudium* (2013), Pope Francis speaks about the new stage of evangelisation. The pope also emphasises the inseparable connection between catechesis and evangelisation.

I wish encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelisation..." (EG, 1).



The *Directory for Catechesis* (2020) states that catechesis has to at the service of the new evangelisation. It emphasised three accents in the task of catechesis.



**Catechesis "in a missionary going forth"** - Catechesis has to form believers for mission and become aware that they are missionary disciples.

**Catechesis under the sign of mercy** - Catechesis has to help believers to be "merciful like the Father" (Lk. 6: 36)

**Catechesis as a "laboratory" of dialogue** - Catechesis has to become an avenue of dialogue between life and faith.



# Transforming young lives through football

The Little Flower Football Academy in Kerala, India has transformed many young lives from the coastal belts of Trivandrum and Kanyakumari.

Becoming a part of the LiFFA Football team was how the organisation improved the lives of many people by training and providing education to bring order into their lives.

“Many neglected pearls” is how their head coach, Cleofas Alex, refers to the players of the team. LiFFA is transforming these uncut diamonds into refined ones by facilitating players with the essential requirements.

Msgr James Kulas, with the Latin Archdiocese of Trivandrum, started the initiative in 2015 as a residential football academy solely for coastal villagers.

LiFFA was established to uplift the lives of young talented coastal children. It all started when Msgr Kulas noticed that alcohol and other drugs were influencing the lives of young people and they were losing the power to dream and aspire for the future.

For this initiative, meetings and discussions with football specialists, educators, representatives of various teams from the coastal region, and representatives from the Archdiocese of Trivandrum were held over a five-year period in order to prepare for the launch of this project.

## Facilities offered by LiFFA

LiFFA not only provides free education, accommodation and food, but also proves that dreams are attainable for anyone with ambi-

tion and the right guidance.

In an interview with *Vatican News*, Alex said that creating discipline and order in the lives of the youth, along with helping them to realise that attaining their dreams is not impossible, were one of the reasons to establish the organisation.

The archdiocese provided admissions in schools and universities under their management and offered young people contact with professionals on the field to give guidance and support.

## Triumph over Challenges

Challenges are always part of any beautiful journey. Parents and players gradually had to realise that football was not just a game, but a profession.

Alex said there are now almost 14 parish clubs, but one challenge they faced early on was a shortage of faculty members to organise and coach the athletes, since people were still not fully convinced that football could be a profession for them.

In the initial days of LiFFA, the only aim of the players was to get a job and make money. But now the mindset of the players leans towards making football a profession and creating a social identity for themselves.

The organisation is enabling the young athletes to see things from a more open-minded perspective.

Alex expressed that the athletes still face various challenges regarding access to facilities, such as transport, but in the end, the



LiFFA players practising football with coach Cleofas Alex [Blue jersey] near the coast of Kerala, India. (Vatican News)

teams have been sponsored by people who appreciate the LiFFA initiative.

## Selection Process

Getting recruited by the LiFFA football team has become a dream of many children from the coastal belt of Kerala. Most athletes are recruited through LADDER Cup (Latin Arch Diocese Elite Recruitment) events, and parish club playgrounds are used for the matches.

The academy's selection process is a year-long procedure that takes place throughout the coastal region through intensive scouting, regular short-term zonal visits by the LiFFA technical staff, tournaments, decentralised camps, and centralised residential camps.

The LADDER Cup tournaments are crucial for the selection process as the children participate in the tournament after months of preparation as parents cheer them on.

The Cup is conducted exclusively for parish clubs belonging to the coastal regions of Trivandrum and Kanyakumari coming under the Latin Archdiocese of Trivandrum.

The LADDER Cup is conducted among 7th graders who as the athletes are recruited, then undergo training along with their eighth grade education.

The 10-day long tournament sees over 50 teams participate and more than 550 students play, showing the magnitude and demand among parents for their children to participate.

Alex said the need not to worry about saving money for their children's food and edu-

cation offers parents an additional incentive.

## Achievements and Goals

The impact of LiFFA can also be seen in the numerous trophies they have secured from various cups, ranging from school to international leagues.

There are even two players under the age of 19 who are currently part of the Indian team. They have also won 11 national level cups, 17 state level cups, eight district level and 12 school level cups.

High-school age LiFFA boys have represented Kerala in the Under-14 league and won the Subroto Cup International Championship at Delhi, India. They are champions starting from the school level and making their way up to the international level.

Alex expressed his joy that LiFFA has transformed the young people's minds to dream big and wide. The athletes dream to play in the Indian leagues as a team by the year 2030. He also added, “The organisation is also looking for more opportunities to expand in accommodating many more students from different religions who are struggling and willing to learn.”

Finding meaning and value from among the neglected communities to train the young talents to become champions that the world would have failed to see without the initiative of LiFFA, according to Alex, who added that the Church works towards the upliftment of the community and letting the future generations have a dream and work towards achieving it. — **By Agnel Maria, Vatican News**



Players undergoing training. (Vatican News)

## California's new abbey is inspiring young men to join the priesthood

DENVER: Just outside the City of Angels lies an abbey whose residents are praying to the angels. St Michael's Abbey, outside of Los Angeles in Orange County, opened in 2021 and is one of the newest abbeys in the world.

“It's sort of the perfect distance between the busyness of the city, where we need to be doing our apostolic work, and the quiet of the desert, where we need to find Jesus in contemplation,” Fr Ambrose Criste, a priest at the abbey, told *EWTN*.

The Very Rev Chrysostom Baer, prior of St Michael's Abbey, shared that it is like “heaven on earth.”

“It's filled with the Catholic truth and the solemn celebration of the liturgy. It's a place to work out your salvation, to grow in virtue, to overcome your vices, and help lead people to heaven,” he added.

Despite the recent decline in religious vocations in many parts of the world, St Michael's Abbey has 42 men studying for the priesthood and many more waiting to enter.

This past summer, the order established a new priory in Springfield, Illinois, where seven of the California Norbertine priests now live.

Criste believes young men are being drawn to the community because the abbey has stayed true to the order's traditions.

“We say our prayers; we wear our religious habit; we live according to the charism of our order and the traditions of our order, and we've never really given any of that up,” he said. “And that's why young people want to come and be a part of it.”

The abbey follows the canons of the Norbertines, which was founded in 1121 by St Norbert in France.

The order's mother abbey is called the Abbey of Csorna, which is in Hungary. In 1950, the police warned the Norbertines in the country that they would be taken away under the Communist regime and never be allowed back into Hungary. A small group of priests then sought and received permission to leave the country in order to keep the order alive elsewhere.



A group of men studying to become priests at St Michael's Abbey in California. (EWTN News In Depth)

Today, St Michael's Abbey has 70 men living in it, half of whom are priests and the other half who are seminarians.

“Those religious communities and those seminaries that represent authentic, full-bodied traditional Catholicism — the young people are flocking to it because it's exactly what the young people want,” Criste explained. “It's what the world needs.”

Baer said he hopes, first and foremost, that the abbey will “save souls and be a beacon of light and hope in a very strange land, a land that thinks that it's gone beyond God and doesn't need Him anymore.”

“We're trying to fill that gap in the human heart with the truth of Christ and the love of the Holy Spirit,” he said. — **By Francesca Pollio Fenton, CNA**



# United, we stand as one

*Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body; so it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body — whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. - 1 Corinthians 12:12-13*

The Bible contains various verses that emphasise the importance of unity, love, and equality among all people, regardless of their race or ethnicity and I would add, religious or political beliefs.

The recent state elections in Malaysia have revealed just how fragmented the country is, with people voting along racial or religious lines.

Racial and religious politics have played a significant role in the history and contemporary dynamics of Malaysia. Ethnic and religious identity have historically influenced political strategies during elections. Parties often play up issues related to particular communities to gain support, which can sometimes exacerbate existing tensions.

The interaction between these different ethnic and religious communities has shaped the political landscape in complex ways and the ethnic and religious diversity in Malaysia has, at times, led to tensions and conflicts. Issues related to language, education, and cultural practices have occasionally sparked disputes between different communities.

It certainly does not help that many of the political parties in Malaysia often have ethnic or religious affiliations. These party divisions have often been based on appeals to specific ethnic or religious groups.

Being a multiracial community can be a double-edged sword, depending on one's perspective. Viewed from the point of "unity in diversity", which has been seen as the ideal scenario for most Malaysians, we can boast



**FROM THE  
OTHER SIDE**

**Regina William**

that it is our diverse cultural backgrounds which makes Malaysia truly unique from our neighbours.

This concept has even been the tagline of Tourism Malaysia for years — *Malaysia Truly Asia*. However, when viewed from a religious or racial fanatic's eyes, this diversity leads to the decay of their culture, religious strength, and poses a big threat to their future generations.

Hence, the constant cry to preserve the dominance of one race or religion over all others and when these views are echoed by prominent personalities, even a lie becomes the absolute truth.

The Catholic Church in Malaysia has, for some time, advocated a neutrality of multi-culturalism and multi-religion concept through continuous engagement with other religious organisations in the country such as the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST), which has strived continuously to be a bridge of harmony with Islamic councils and authorities to resolve sensitive matters related to religion and race.

It is hoped that these groups will continue to be beacons of unity and strength for all races and religions in Malaysia, amidst its political divide.

It is important for all of us to recognise that Malaysia's experience with racial and religious politics is complex and different perspectives exist within and outside the coun-

try. These dynamics are shaped by historical, social, and economic factors, and they continue to evolve over time.

The Catholic Church, being a global institution, has had a diverse population since its inception. However, various forms of racial segregation, discrimination, and inequality have been present in different parts of the world at different times.

Historically, racial segregation and discrimination were prevalent in many societies, and the Church was not immune to these social dynamics. In some regions, racial segregation was institutionalised, leading to separate churches, schools, and other religious spaces for different racial or ethnic groups.

Many local churches have worked to dismantle racially segregated practices and institutions, but challenges and remnants of historical discrimination still persist in some places.

While progress has been made, addressing racial segregation and discrimination is an ongoing process that requires continuous commitment and effort. The divide and rule based on one's ethnicity is still very much in practice today, as it has been all these years.

Though many would disagree with me, I believe that having segregated congregations, as is the practice today in Malaysia, does not really help with the integration and inclusivity efforts.

We have Masses in Tamil, Mandarin, English, Bahasa Malaysia and other dialects. We also have the Tamil, Chinese and English apostolates in every parish. I acknowledge that this is due to the language barrier and this might have been the ideal scenario 66 years ago when we gained independence as a nation, but not today.

Most, if not all of us, especially the younger generation, are well versed in Bahasa

Malaysia and would not have any problems adapting to such a scenario. 60 years ago, the Catholic Church stopped Masses in Latin as part of efforts to modernise the Church and allowed priests to celebrate Masses in other languages. This was also to allow more participation and understanding of the Mass by the congregation.

Using the national language ensures that the majority of the congregation can understand the message being conveyed during religious services. It also promotes inclusivity by making religious services accessible to a broader range of people, regardless of their linguistic backgrounds.

When everyone can understand and participate in the same language, it fosters a sense of unity and togetherness among the congregation. People from diverse linguistic backgrounds can come together to worship, pray, and learn without feeling alienated.

Members of the congregation can actively participate in discussions, ask questions, and contribute to the church community when they understand the language being used. This empowerment can lead to a more engaged and enthusiastic congregation.

If the Church is a part of the national culture and heritage, using the national language helps preserve and transmit religious traditions, practices, and teachings in the language that is most familiar to the local population.

Well, just food for thought. Maybe not in the next few years, but it can be a work in progress towards integration and inclusivity for generations to come.

● **Regina William** is an ex journalist turned head of communications, now full-time grandmother to three, crisscrossing the globe to play the role. She can be reached at [regina.william1223@gmail.com](mailto:regina.william1223@gmail.com)

## Consecrated life is spiritual motherhood

I was reflecting recently on a celebration held in my home parish, Church of Our Lady the Healer in Karumandapam, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, earlier this year.

We were celebrating the Day of Consecrated Life on February 6. All the religious women and men were welcomed with roses and sandalwood paste on our foreheads, as is the custom here. The Daughters of St Paul, the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Franciscan Sisters of St Joseph, the Montfort Brothers, the Capuchins and the Rosarians are the congregations that serve our parish community.

It was joyful and heart-warming, with all of us renewing our commitment to God to sacrifice our lives to serve humanity with compassion, competence and commitment. Religious life is full of sacrifices: We give up our desires, dreams and reputation, lose our identity. There are misunderstandings, loneliness, transfers and all the other life challenges along the way.

While at the Mass, I saw the words written on the wall above the crucifix: "I am for you." What does that mean to me today?

We all have complaints that our lives are not what we expected. Sometimes we feel tired, worn out and ready to give up. People misunderstand us, and sometimes we have doubts about who we are and what we are doing here for God and people.

For all these doubts and tribulations, Jesus is the answer. He moved from place to place to preach the Good News. All His friends and followers deserted Him, and He was all alone in Gethsemane. He was crucified, losing His identity. There was no place to bury His body, and He was blamed for doing



*Religious communities gather for Mass on the Day of Consecrated Life at Church of Our Lady the Healer in Karumandapam, Tiruchirappalli. The words written on the wall above the crucifix translate to "I am for you." (GSR/Robancy Helen)*

good. He is our model and our solution.

When we choose to dedicate our lives to Christ, we first give up our home, family and friends. We are asked to change our habits and characters for the good of all. For example, I do not like to eat bitter gourd and eggplant, but I have learned to eat them!

With great difficulty, we learn other languages for the good of the mission to which we are assigned. For some, it is a pain, but for others, it is a pleasure. At home, many of us never did any housework, but in the convent, you are supposed to cook, clean and take care of others, besides performing multiple missionary tasks.

It might have been easy for us to live with our own families and tolerate their character, but in community life, everyone has set habits, likes and dislikes, and we are asked to adjust to everyone and tolerate each other for the sake of community life and the common good, in the spirit of evangelical vows and Gospel precepts.

Coming from a small village to live with foreigners or strangers — with whom we did not have much in common — was not at all easy. Yet we learnt to accommodate, to be open to other cultures and appreciate them, and learnt to live with diversity.

Sometimes we wonder if it is worth living religious life, and we are tempted to abandon our vocation. It is a cross and yet, with a devoted heart, many have accepted it and sacrificed their desires for the sake of Jesus and His mission.

It is not a bed of roses, but consecrated life is a life of fulfilment and satisfaction. For those who feel religious life is a burden, recollect the moments when you experienced love and happiness from God. Think of people as our co-pilgrims in mission; we are responsible for their moral and spiritual lives, and we are called to work and live with them, sharing their struggles and joys.

Our religious identity is not in the dress we wear; it is in our faces and actions that reflect

the face of Christ shining through us as the "light of the world" and "salt of the earth."

Some of my friends at the university have asked me if I have ever felt that I missed the opportunity of giving birth to children and having a family.

For the world, we religious are the people who have sacrificed the happiness of having a family — and I think for women religious, it is harder. Sacrificing the gift of motherhood is hard, but in religious life, we share in the motherhood of Mother Mary for the sake of God's mission. We do not know the spiritual needs and thirsts of people, but when we love and take care of them, it is a real offering of ourselves.

What is our responsibility? Many religious found our vocations because of religious women and men who were examples, an inspiration, role models and a road map to choosing this life.

The Church needs people to work for God's kingdom. We need people who can offer their time, energy and talents for the good of humanity.

There are people out there who are poor, orphaned, widowed, abandoned or differently abled. They need spiritual fathers and mothers who can show them the love of God.

Some people are oppressed in the name of caste, class, gender, race, religion or other differences. It is time for us to kindle our consciousness and work for God's kingdom with dedication. — **By Sr Robancy A. Helen, Global Sisters Report (NCR)**

● **Sr Robancy A. Helen** is a member of *Idente Missionaries (Religious Institute of Christ the Redeemer)*





Fr Ron Rolheiser

# Unfinished relationships

A colleague of mine, a clinical therapist, shares this story: A woman came to him in considerable distress. Her husband had recently died of a heart attack. His death had been sudden and at a most inept time. They'd been happily married for 30 years and, during all those years, had never had a major crisis in their relationship. But, on the day her husband died, they had gotten into an argument about something very insignificant and it had escalated to where they began to hurl some mean and cutting words at each other. At a point, agitated and angry, her husband walked out of the room, told her he was going shopping, then died of a heart attack before he got to the car. Understandably, the woman was devastated, both by the sudden death of her spouse and by that last exchange. "All these years," she lamented, "we had this loving relationship and then we have this useless argument over nothing and it ends up being our last conversation!"

The therapist led off with something meant in humour. He said: "How horrible of him to do that to you! To die just then!" Obviously, the man hadn't intended his death, but its timing was in fact awfully unfair to his wife, as it left her holding a guilt that was seemingly permanent, with

no apparent avenue for resolution.

However, then the therapist went into a different mode. He asked her: "If you had your husband back for five minutes, what would you say to him?" Without hesitation, she answered: "I'd tell him how much I loved him, how good he was to me for all these years, and how our little moment of anger at the end was a meaningless episode that means nothing in terms of our love."

The therapist then said: "You're a woman of faith, you believe in the communion of saints; well, your husband is alive still and present to you now, so why don't you just say all those things to him right now. It's not too late to express all that to him!"

He's right. It's never too late! It's never too late to tell our deceased loved ones how we really feel about them. It's never too late to apologise for the ways we might have hurt them. It's never too late to ask their forgiveness for our negligence in the relationship, and it's never too late to speak the words of appreciation, affirmation, and gratitude that we should have spoken to them while they were alive. As Christians, we have the great consolation of knowing that death isn't final, that it's never too late.

And we desperately need that particular consolation, that second chance. No mat-

ter who we are, we're always inadequate in our relationships. We can't always be present to our loved ones as we should, we sometimes say things in anger and bitterness that leave deep scars, we betray trust in all kinds of ways, and we mostly lack the maturity and self-confidence to express the affirmation we should be conveying to our loved ones. None of us ever fully measures up. When Karl Rahner says that none of us ever have the "full symphony" in this life, he isn't just referring to the fact that none of us ever fully realises her dream, he's also referring to the fact that in all of our most important relationships, none of us ever fully measures up. We cannot not be disappointing sometimes.

At the end of the day, all of us lose loved ones in ways similar to how that woman lost her husband, with unfinished business, with bad timing. There are always things that should have been said and weren't and there are always things that shouldn't have been said and were.

But that's where our Christian faith comes in. We aren't the only ones who come up short. At the moment of Jesus' death, virtually all of His disciples had deserted Him. The timing here was also very bad. Good Friday was bad long before it was good. But, and this is the point, as Christians, we

don't believe there will always be perfect endings in this life, nor that we will always be adequate in life. Rather, we believe that the fullness of life and happiness will come to us through the redemption of what has gone wrong, not least with what has gone wrong because of our own inadequacies and weaknesses.

G.K. Chesterton said that Christianity is special because, in its belief in the communion of saints, "even the dead get a vote". They get more than a vote. They still get to hear what we're saying to them.

So, if you've lost a loved one in a situation where there was still something unresolved, where there was still a tension that needed easing, where you should have been more attentive, or where you feel badly because you never adequately expressed the affirmation and affection that you might have, know it's not too late. It can all still be done!

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

## This prayer method can help you see the light in dark times

There are days when nothing can go right. Relationship problems, work stress, setbacks, holes in the budget, sick children... Everything seems to be working against us, and when things keep getting worse, we can reach a point where we feel we just can't anymore. It's just too much.

We've all had days like that. Days that are not only powerfully frustrating and irritating, but even physically painful.

I read somewhere that Jews and Arabs living in the Holy Land have a common word, which is *khalas*. It means something like "finish, enough, stop it." They use it when they've had enough problems, when they have had enough of EVERYTHING.

Sometimes we utter a sort of *khalas*. tearfully somewhere in the depths of our souls. Unfortunately, there are also times when really bad days can come in twos and threes or even longer sequences.

Willingly or unwillingly, black bitterness can begin to seep into the recesses of our heart. It can insidiously and effectively poison us from the inside. This, unfortunately, makes it unlikely that we will perceive the following days as being better.

Is there any way to break this vicious cycle? In my opinion, there is. It just takes a little perseverance and patience.

### Difficult prayers

One of my favourite saints, Nicholas of Flüe, used to say that sometimes God gives us such a desire for prayer that "we yearn for it as if we were waiting to go to a dance." However, there are also times when talking to God comes to us with the greatest difficulty and effort.

I'll be honest, I have trouble praying when life gets me down. It starts with not being able to gather my thoughts. I feel bad. I can't seem to pray at all. Some people recommend

worshipping God just then — and they do, and reap the fruits of such extreme prayer.

Some people are able to pull themselves together even at a difficult time in their lives to offer prayers of reparation. One devotion is to do this on the first Saturday of the month. Not long ago, a friend of mine stayed for adoration on the first Friday of the month. As I left the church, I saw that she was still praying. The next afternoon she came to lead the First Saturday service, but ... with a cast from her foot to her knee. The previous day, leaving the church, she had broken her leg. Yet, just a matter of hours after the accident, probably still in great pain, she came to serve and to offer her sufferings in reparation.

If it had been me, I probably would have skipped the prayer service and concentrated on the pain of the broken limb. It's clear that it's not the form of prayer itself, but our condition and attitude that makes it more or less difficult ... or easier.

I am not yet able to worship sincerely when the world is crashing down upon me. But I am trying something a little different, which is more to my liking. It's not easy for me, but it works.

### Things large and small we can take for granted

At a moment when bitterness had just poured out of me profusely, I had an inspiration: Start praying prayers of gratitude.

Everything boiled inside me at the idea. I'm in a black hole! What should I be grateful for?

But after a while, I tried it. I gave thanks, for the fact that ... I have a roof over my head, I have something to eat, I can walk, I have my sight, and I have a family.

The list continued. And immediately I realised, "Yes, it may not be too rosy right now, but these things for which I gave thanks

ARE REAL AND GOOD. And after all, they could be absent! And then I would have a problem indeed."

In moments of sober thought, when I've cooled down a bit from my bitterness and anger, it occurs to me that most of my problems live in my head. And this life isn't always logical and orderly. That's why I go back to the facts, and they are these: that today I had a good lunch, someone praised me, I got to work safely, I paid my bills....

Prayer of gratitude

Slowly, not immediately, I learned the prayer of gratitude for things big and small. As I said, it's not easy. But gradually, every evening I tried to find a few things that were really good that day. And then I began to expand my list and found more reasons to be thankful!

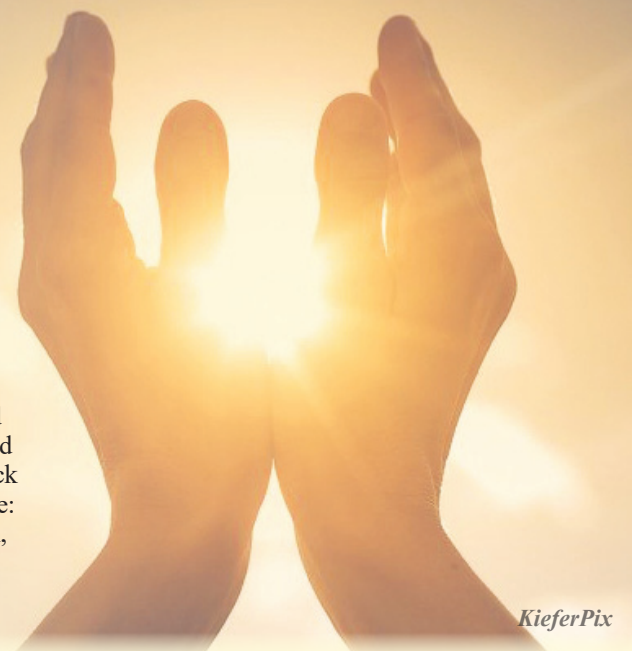
One evening I took the Rosary in my hand. I recited the "Our Father," and then on each "Hail Mary" bead, I listed one thing I wanted to thank the Lord God for that day. Between the decades, I recited a "Glory to the Father." At the end I recited the "Hail Mary."

In this way, I found 50 things that were good that day. Recently, I've been trying to pray this way every day. It finally occurred to me how many wonderful things happen during the day! Each bead of the Rosary is a seed of goodness that I collect into a bowl, and at the end I see how much there is.

Even when the day was difficult, after all, I received so much good from a loving God!

Will you find as many as 50 gifts from the Father every day? You will! Just give it a shot.

Maybe someday you'll also start giving



KieferPix

thanks for difficult things, but that's an advanced level. It's still beyond me.

An important tip that makes the prayer of gratitude easier? Don't compare yourself with others — "he has it better, she leads a happier life, that guy always succeeds." Don't think like this. It's your life, your path that God is leading you down. And how do you know what's really going on in the lives and hearts of those supposedly lucky ones? Really, get busy with your own life, and most of all, with the good you're experiencing.

### The antidote to toxic bitterness

Tonight, I'll thank God for the delicious coffee I drank in the morning. I'll thank him for breakfast. For managing to get this article to the editor. For feeling good about my writing. For all the hardworking people at *Aleteia* who will publish it for me. And also for ... I'll find 50 reasons to be thankful.

And you, what do you want to thank the Lord God for tonight? — **By Łukasz Witkiewicz, *Aleteia***



# Little Catholics' Corner

Hello children of God,

What would you think if your best friend said you have to die if you wanted to stay friends?

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus told the Apostles if they wanted to be like Him they have to take up their crosses and follow Him.

Jesus was teaching them that this world is only a preparation for Heaven. If we make sacrifices for love of God then we will be ready for Heaven. Jesus opened the gates of Heaven to us by dying out of love for God the Father and for us.

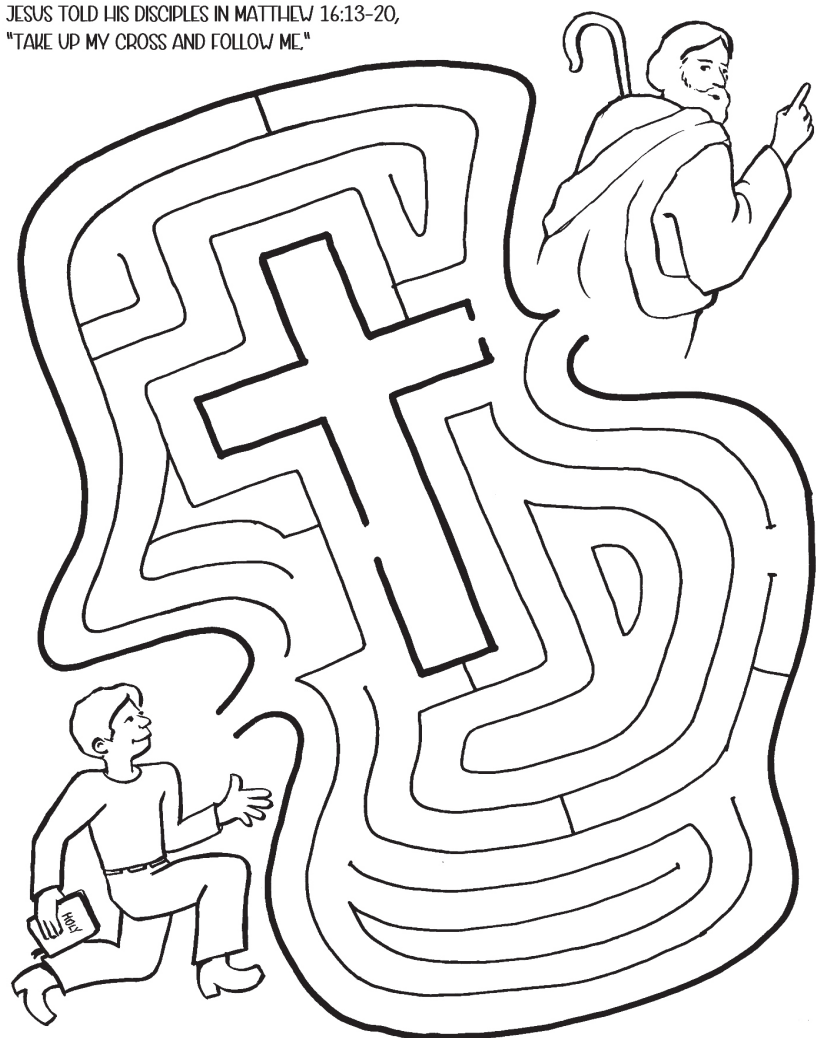
We get little crosses every day when things make us unhappy. If we offer them to God with love, they are like

dying a little bit, and they prepare us for Heaven.

Sometimes we think that we need nice things or to be with fun people if we want to be happy. It's easy to forget that we will never be completely happy here. Next time you feel unhappy, remember that it's a cross that can help you get to Heaven!

Love Aunty Gwen

JESUS TOLD HIS DISCIPLES IN MATTHEW 16:13-20,  
"TAKE UP MY CROSS AND FOLLOW ME."



*Happy Birthday Mother Mary*  
September 8

Complete the prayer at the bottom

*Hail Mary, full of grace*

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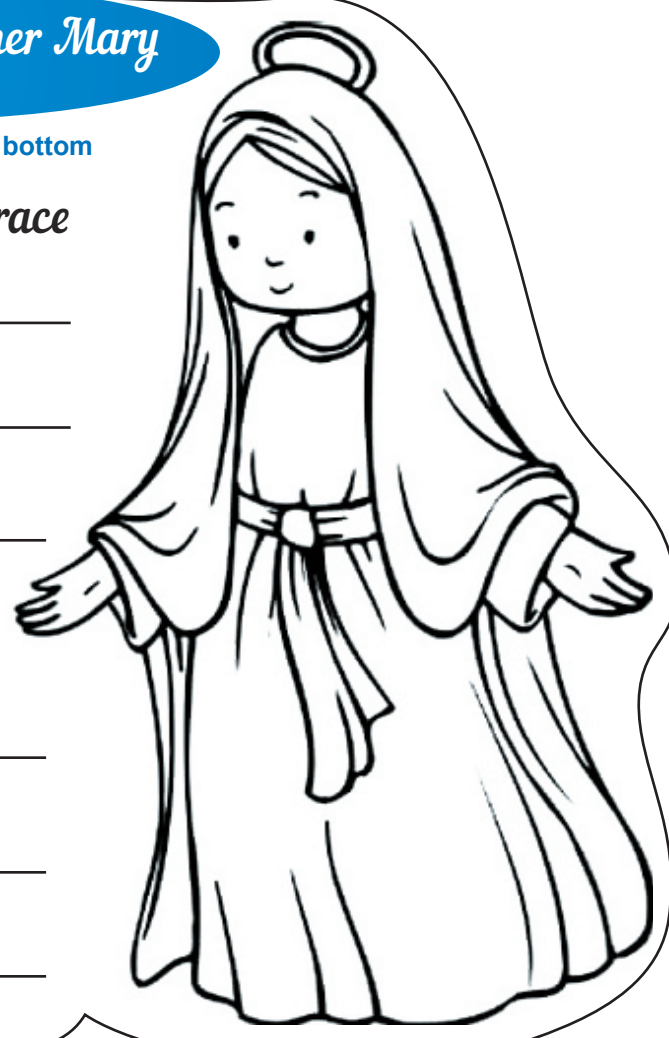
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Draw and colour four pictures in the boxes

	<p>How DO I Follow Jesus</p>	



# YOUTH

SEPTEMBER 3, 2023

## SPIRIT COME, LIGHT A FIRE AND MOVE

**I**POH: The Penang Diocese Catechetical Commission (PDCC) organised a two-day-one-night Perak Deanery level Confirmation camp at the Church of St Michael on August 19 and 20.

The camp was conducted by The Seeds, a charismatic ministry for young adults.

Sixty-four confirmands, from the parishes of Our Mother of Perpetual Help and St Michael's, Ipoh, St Anthony's, Teluk Intan, St Mary's, Tapah, the Most Holy Redeemer, Tanjung Malim, and St Joseph's Batu Gajah, attended.

This camp aimed to bring together confirmands from across the state of Perak, to help them prepare for the sacrament of Confirmation. The Seeds and everyone participating in the camp were supported by parish priest, Fr Anthony Liew, and Paul Julianose, a lay missionary from Batu Gajah, with organising parish St Michael's backing. Teachers, advisers, and youth members from each participating parish also gave their all with a smile and most importantly, showcased God's love and strength while ensuring the camp's smooth sailing.

The first day started with an icebreaking session between the participants and the camp facilitator. This was followed by sessions on worship, sharing and, in the end, inner healing, led by The Seeds, comprising young adults from all over Malaysia. The Seeds ministry advisor, Paul, also helped mentor the candidates. The camp commenced with sessions led by Paul, focusing on themes of *God's love* and *Salvation*. In the subsequent part, Jonathan Charanraj from The Seeds delved into

concepts of *New Life* and *Repentance*, placing a strong emphasis on these aspects.

The worship and Christ-centred music was the tool for submission and praise or in the words of some participants, "spiritual weapon and remedy" that united everyone during the camp. The initial shyness and uncertainty, projected by a significant number of participants, gradually dissipated through the blessings of God's grace. As time went on, the confirmands exhibited a growing eagerness, affection, compassion, and a profound desire for repentance in the presence of the Lord.

The night concluded with an inner healing session highlighting the confirmands' openness to submit themselves, and wholeheartedly receiving God's love and mercy. Their cries of sadness, rage, and unforgiveness were transformed into enormous joy and, for some,

freedom from the shackles of spiritual imprisonment.

The second day began early with sessions refuting the feelings that one may have experienced during the inner healing session and ex-

plaining the Holy Spirit's gifts. Again, the confirmands' willingness and openness affirmed and warmed the hearts of The Seeds members. The day continued with further worship and praise to the Lord, but this time the voices of the confirmands overshadowed the sound and voices of The Seeds' instruments and vocals with their praises of loud joy.

Subsequently, there was a session on *Growth and Transformation*, followed by the confirmands' testimonies on their camp experience. Even though it was towards the end of the camp, the joint session with the confirmands and their parents was the biggest highlight. It brought about laughter, tears of sadness and joy, and the outpouring of God's love, reflected in the night's weather with a downpour of rain. The camp ended with a Eucharist celebration by Fr Robin Loman-gkok, CsSR from the Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help.

As the camp drew its curtains closed, the confirmands were affirmed to walk in the footsteps of our Lord and become the best version of themselves in God's image, spreading the Good News and evangelising to all corners of the earth.





# Saying "Yes, I do" to God at Confirmation

KLANG: Sixteen excited and eager teenagers received the Sacrament of Confirmation at the Church of the Holy Redeemer, August 19.

Archbishop Julian Leow, told the confirmands "You are adult Catholics today. You have received the seal of the Holy Spirit on your foreheads, which means a mark of ownership of God over us. Don't forget that. And as adults in this community, we also have responsibilities to deepen our faith and the faith of others."

He also reminded them, "To the last day, to our last breath, may we always be grateful for what we have. And, dear young people, I hope you know that the Lord loves you. God blesses each one of us, especially the little ones, and know that the Lord loves you as



Confirmands with Archbishop Julian Leow and Fr Andrew Kooi.

you are."

The prelate concluded his sharing with, "I pray the Holy Spirit, which you recently re-ignited in your lives, remains a guiding force throughout your journey. The same Spirit that has been within you since Baptism, is revitalised during Confirmation, and I pray it keeps shining brightly, sustaining its flame. I

also pray that you will not be afraid, and you will take your rightful place in church and society, as children of God."

The confirmands were beaming from ear to ear as they received the prelate's message, knowing that the fire of the Holy Spirit burns brightly in their hearts, as each went forth to receive their anointing.

In addition to family and friends, the confirmands extended invitations to all their catechists who guided them since Standard One up to their recent Confirmation camp. These mentors were filled with excitement and pride, as they witnessed the students' transformation into young adults, prepared to embrace the responsibilities of being devoted followers of Jesus. It was indeed a good day.

We hope and pray that, as the archbishop said, they will always know that our Lord loves them very much and loves them as they are. May they always remember to turn back to God if and when they have strayed and not be afraid to come back to Him, as His love is ever so wide and deep. As in the parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus is always ready to receive them. — **By Joanne Shak**

# Jesuit retreat attracts Thai youths from various faiths

CHIANG MAI, Thailand: The Jesuit priests in Thailand have come up with an innovative retreat involving backpacking and motorbike-riding, drawing young people from various faith groups in the Buddhist-majority nation.

The Seven Fountains Jesuit Spirituality Centre in Chiang Mai, in northern Thailand, hosted the *Retreat on the Way*, August 12-13 which drew some 20 participants including Christians, Buddhists and Animists, said a report on the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific (JCAP) site on Aug 15.

*Retreat on the Way* combined three different activities or sources of inspiration: Ignatian spiritual exercises, Buddhist meditation, and motorbike backpacking.

Vietnamese Jesuit Fr Pham Ngo Hoang Dung said that enriching the spirituality of the youth was a difficult task which the retreat achieved.

"In the context of Buddhist countries and modern technologies, it is not easy to keep young people, especially university students, away from their cell phones and the demands of society, even for a short retreat to enrich their spiritual lives," Dung said.

"Thank God for this trip. It was a good opportunity for them to build their relationship with God, nature, and one another," he added.



The participants of 'Retreat on the Way' pose for a photo at Seven Fountains Jesuit Spirituality Centre in Chiang Mai in northern Thailand. (UCA News Photo/Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific)

Dung is the university chaplain of the Catholic Student Network in the north of Thailand and director of the Seven Fountains Scholarship Fund.

The network aims to unify university-level Catholic students in Thailand, to educate and promote the right understanding, and to deepen the experience of the Catholic faith in being the religion for life, among other goals.

The network also works to raise social awareness in accordance with religious beliefs and to coordinate with other organisations.

Some of the students who were initially hesitant to participate in the retreat found the process uplifting.

"This is the first time I have joined this kind of retreat. Initially, I was hesitant to come along, but now, I found that it is worthwhile to

be here," said an unnamed student.

"Being alone is a good opportunity to slow down from the things that keep me busy," the student said.

"I also had a chance to make new friends. Through this trip, I realised that my life will be more meaningful if I have time to stop and reflect," the student added.

The retreat, spanning two days and one night included participants travelling by motorbike from the spirituality centre to St Joseph Church in Ban Den Hom in Samong, covering around 85 kilometres.

During the motorbike backpacking, the group halted at three stops or prayer points taking a 20-minute break for silence or meditation.

The main themes which the students meditated on at each stop were: "letting go," clearing their minds of thoughts and worries, finding the Lord in nature and creation, and engaging in self-reflection and thanksgiving.

The students took part in a Taize prayer and gathered around a campfire to share their experiences creatively through drama, singing, and dancing at St Joseph Church, their designated overnight stop.

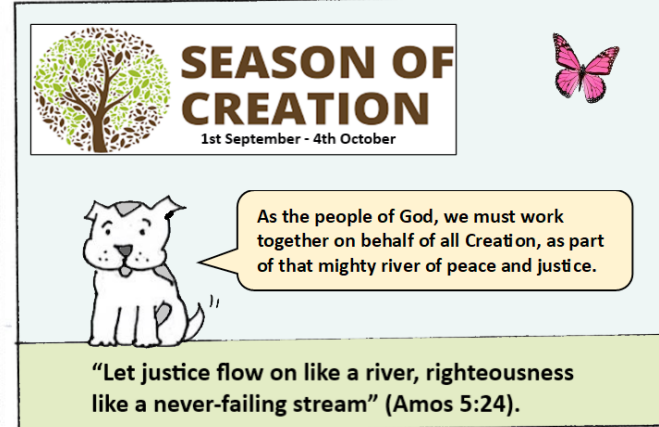
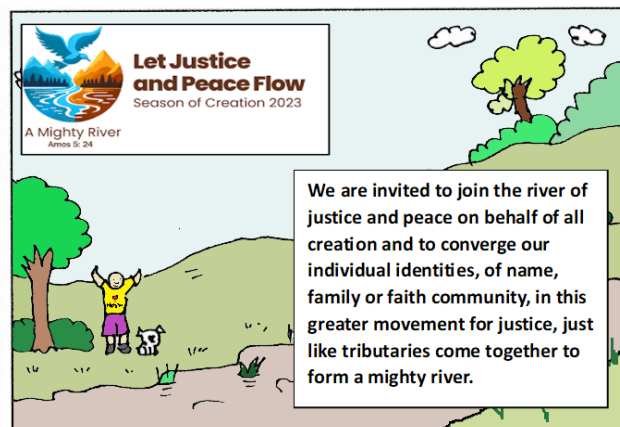
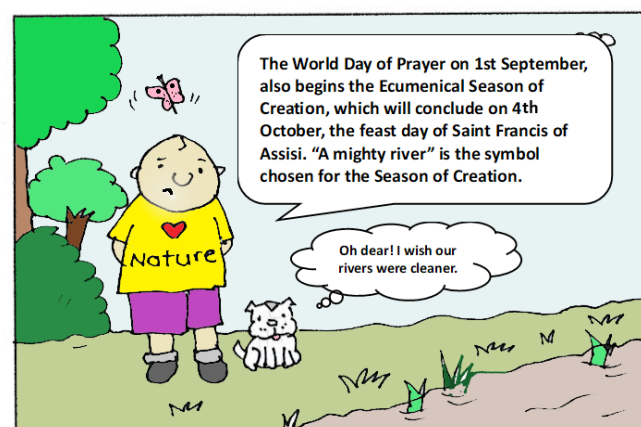
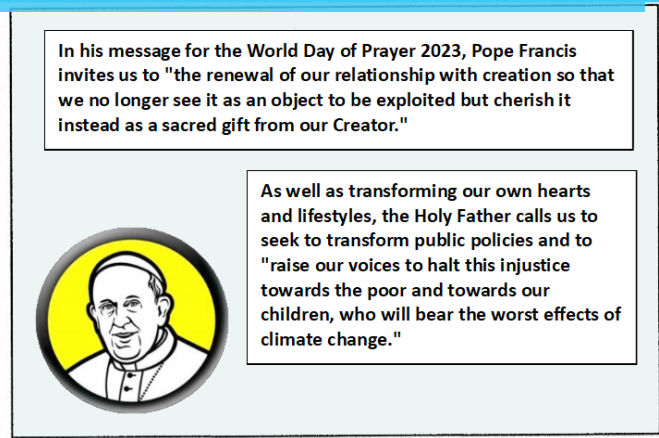
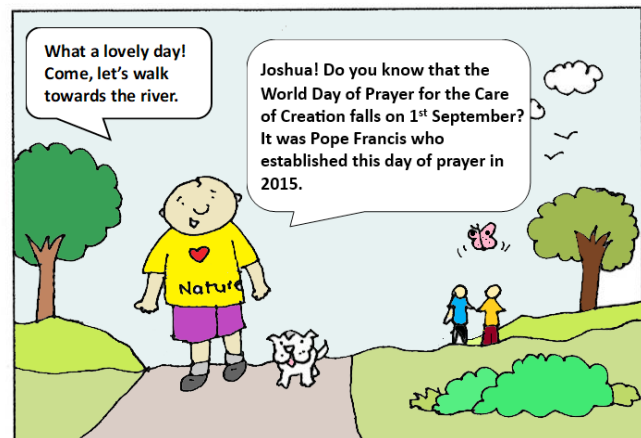
The Taize prayer is a simple, meditative form of worship, calling individuals to dwell deeply on Christ's presence around and within them.

On the last leg of the retreat, the students shared their experiences of the entire process.

— **ucanews.com**

# THE SIMPLE LIFE...

Created by Dr Steven Selvaraju, this is a comic strip that wishes to tell simple stories of life and faith.





# Fr Dr Michael Teng loses battle to cancer

JOHOR BAHRU: Fr Dr Michael Teng Woon Pheng, aged 62, passed away at approximately 11.09am on August 25 at Graceville, MAJODI Centre.

Fr Michael had cancer for several years before his demise.

He was born in Johor Bahru on Oct 2, 1960 to Paul Teng Kee Wah and Rosa Tan Lock. He has an elder brother and three younger sisters.

The seeds of vocation were planted early in his life as he studied at St Joseph's in Johor Bahru, a school managed by the Brothers of St Gabriel. He continued his education at Stamford College in Singapore for his 'A' levels. After graduating in 1979, he studied printing at Baharuddin Vocational Institute in Singapore. In 1982, he joined the Gabrielite brothers as an aspirant. While there, he also served as a printing instructor at the vocational training centre at Montfort Boys' Town, Batu Tiga, as an aspirant of the Gabrielite Brothers.

Michael left about two years after discerning that he may be more suited to serve in parish communities. Before applying for the seminary, he sought work experience. Among his work experiences was as a clerk in a legal firm. However, he enjoyed his time best as a sales assistant at MPH Bookstore due to his love for books. He was also active in his home parish, Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. His activities included participating in youth groups, Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC), Charismatic Renewal, and Parish Renewal Weekends.

After some years of discernment, Michael applied and was accepted to the seminary in 1989. He did his Initiation Year in January 1989 at the Good Shepherd Catholic Seminary in Melaka and then continued his formation at College General Penang for philosophy and theology. He completed his priestly studies in December 1996 and graduated with a Baccalaureate from the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome.

His first posting was to the Church of St Theresa, Melaka, in 1997. The parish priest then was the late Fr John Yu. Here, he gained more pastoral experience and improved his Mandarin. On May 1, 1998, he was ordained a deacon at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Johor Bahru. He continued to serve as a deacon at the Church of St Theresa, From May 1998 to September 1998. He was then posted to the Church of St Francis Xavier, Melaka, from October 1998 to May 1999 under the guidance

of the then parish priest, the late Fr Francis Ng.

Fr Michael was ordained to the priesthood at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart on June 23, 1999. He was posted as an Assistant Parish Priest at the Sacred Heart Cathedral Parish on July 8, 1999, where he served until he was assigned to the Church of St Theresa, in February 2001.

In 2002, Fr Michael left for Rome to obtain his licentiate in Moral Theology at Alphonsianum. He did well in his licentiate that his professors recommended he continue his studies with a doctorate in Sacred Theology, which he completed in 2009.

He took about seven years to complete his doctorate as he was diagnosed with throat cancer. His battle and living with cancer demonstrated his will and determination to press forward once he set his mind to accomplish a goal.

A trait of Fr Michael was his love for reading and his desire to understand the content of faith. Even in the seminary, he would engage with his professors to better understand a subject. Students have often remarked that entering his room was like entering a mini library, as books were littered everywhere.

However, Fr Michael could not be said to be bookish, as his passion for learning was met equally by his love for sports, especially football. He was a talented player and was on the seminary football team when they won the College Cup in 2000. He was a man who had great energy and passion for life. His struggle with cancer did not diminish that.

Upon returning to ministry, Fr Michael initiated a ministry to the sick and served for as long as possible until his decline in recent years. Fr Michael also served as Head of the Diocesan Biblical Ministry and Rite Christian Initiation of Adults Facilitator from December 1999 to January 2001 and Executive Secretary of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei from 2011 to 2016.

Earlier this year, Fr Michael informed the Bishop's office that in the event of his passing, he would like his theme to be "I will sing of the Mercy of the Lord, forever.... (Ps. 89:1)" May Fr Michael who saw fit to proclaim and sing of the Lord's mercy while he lived now be embraced by the mercy of God's love.

The wake and funeral was held at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. Bishop Bernard Paul presided over the Funeral Mass on August 28.



## MEMORIAM

For enquiries, please contact:  
Email: advertisement@herald.com.my  
Tel: 03-2026 8291

### 1st Anniversary In Loving Memory of



**Philip Anthony  
a/l Joseph**

**Born: 30.9.1960  
Departed: 6.9.2022**

*"I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live even though they die" (Jn 11:25)*

Memorial Mass on  
6th September 2023 at  
6.45am and  
9th September 2023  
at 6.00pm at the Church of  
the Visitation, Seremban.

There will be a small  
thanksgiving dinner on  
9th September 2023 at  
1171, Jalan 17 Taman Bukit  
Blossom Height 70100  
Jalan Tok Ungku, Seremban,  
Negeri Sembilan.

Contact person  
Alex: 017-6811915  
Veniza: 011-28240557

### 8th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



**Kathryn Ching Noy Tiang**

*Departed: 30th August 2015*

**8 years pass,  
Pain still last, Memories last forever.**

Lovingly remembered by:

Husband: Kenneth Aw,  
Son: Alwyn Aw, Daughter: Louisa Aw,  
Son-in-Law: Shaun Tay  
Grandniece: Angeline Chin,  
Relatives and Friends.

### 22nd Anniversary In Loving Memory of



**Arul Dass**

**Departed: 10-08-2001**

*"Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul rest in peace."*

Dearly missed and  
forever remembered by:  
Wife, children, son-in-law,  
daughters-in-law,  
grandchildren, relatives  
and loved ones.



### 1st Anniversary In Loving Memory of Esther Wong Voon Sim Called home to the Lord: 3rd September 2022

*If roses grow in Heaven  
Lord, please pick a pretty bunch for us;  
Place them in our dear Mama's arms  
And tell her they are from us;  
Tell her that we love and miss her,  
And when she turns to smile,  
Place a gentle kiss upon her cheek,  
And hold her for a little while.*

Deeply missed and forever cherished by

Children

Pauline

Patrick

Jacqueline

and grandchildren

Spouses

Danny

Jojeanne

Alan

### In Loving Memory of



**Mary Philomena  
Santhanasamy**

Retired SGH Nursing  
Officer (PTS 25)  
Retired Ling Kwang  
Home Matron

Age 87

Was called home  
to the Lord on  
20 August 2023

*A Special Tribute for a Special Person  
A Special Smile. A Special Face.  
A Special Person We Cannot Replace.  
Much Loved and Fondly Remembered.*

Beloved Husband: Lourdes Mathews  
Daughter: Marie Mathews  
Son-in-Law: Cecil Pereira  
Grandson: Emmanuel Pereira

### 2nd Anniversary 6th Anniversary In Loving Memory of Our Beloved



**Noel Ernest  
Dicom**

**To the Lord:  
1st August 2021**

**Josephine Dicom  
nee Jeganathan**

**To the Lord:  
23rd August 2017**

*Our thoughts are forever with you  
Though you have passed away  
But those who loved you dearly  
Are thinking of you today*

*Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord  
And let perpetual light shine upon them  
May their souls rest in peace. Amen*

**Dearly missed, & fondly remembered by  
Loving children, grandchild  
and all your loved ones.**

### 1st Anniversary In Loving Memory of



**Martha Manamuny**  
**August 6, 1951 –  
September 1, 2022**

*"Blessed are the pure  
in heart, for they  
shall see God."*  
Forever in our  
hearts.

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# Bishops applaud India's moon mission success

NEW DELHI: India's Catholic bishops celebrated along with the rest of the country after an Indian-built lunar lander touched down on the moon's surface August 23, a win for the country's still-developing space programme.

"The progress made by our scientists and engineers in the field of space research is truly commendable and fills our hearts with pride," said the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) in a press statement.

Archbishop Andrews Thazhath of Trichur, apostolic administrator of Ernakulam-Angamaly and the conference president, said: "The pursuit of knowledge and exploration knows no boundaries and brings together people from all walks of life, reflecting the unity in diversity that India represents... May this achievement serve as a reminder of what we can accomplish when we come together with a shared vision."

The prelate offered the prayers of the country's Catholics "for the continued success of ISRO's endeavours and for the well-being of our great nation. May this achievement serve as a reminder of what we can accomplish when we come together with a shared vision."

"The progress made by our scientists and engineers in the field of space research is truly commendable and fills our hearts



India became the first nation to successfully land a craft on the Moon's south pole. (English Jagran photo)

with pride. The efforts of ISRO and the entire team behind Chandrayaan 3 serve as an inspiration to the entire nation," the CBCI president said in a press statement.

"The pursuit of knowledge and exploration knows no boundaries and brings together people from all walks of life, reflecting the unity in diversity that India represents," added the statement issued by Fr Robinson Rodrigues, the CBCI public relations officer.

The All India Catholic Union too congratulated the scientists for the moon mission's success. "On this occasion, we recall Pandit

Jawaharlal Nehru and his stress on scientific temper which led to the founding of ISRO by Vikram Sarabhai and succeeding scientists, including [APJ Abdul] Kalam," said AICU spokesperson John Dayal.

The touchdown of the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft marked mankind's first successful mission to the moon's south pole, which is an interesting site for scientists due to the presence, scientists believe, of substantial quantities of water ice. The mission also represents a redemption for India's space program, as a previous attempt to reach the

moon in September 2019 ended in failure amid a software glitch.

The solar-powered lunar rover will now spend two weeks exploring the vicinity of the landing site, studying the chemical composition of moon dust and gravel, *Space.com* reported. The rover and lander are not expected to survive past the next lunar night (lunar days and nights are two weeks long, and the nights are frigid).

India's successful landing took place just days after Russia — attempting to revive its space sector amid its war of aggression in Ukraine — failed to land its Luna-25 mission in the same area following a botched orbital maneuver, *Space.com* said.

Similar to the Indian bishops, Pope Francis has spoken about space exploration — recalling the 50th anniversary of the moon landing in 2019, the Pope encouraged Catholics to look to that great event for inspiration to overcome injustices and mistreatment of the weak.

"Fifty years ago yesterday man set foot on the moon, realising an extraordinary dream," the Pope said at the time. "May the memory of that great step for humanity ignite the desire to progress together towards even greater goals: More dignity for the weak, more justice among peoples, more future for our common home." — *Agencies*



**PAX ET BONUM! COME AND CELEBRATE!**  
**FEAST OF ST. PIO**  
**(21-24 SEPTEMBER 2023)**

<p><b>THURSDAY 21 SEPT @ 8PM</b> DAY 1 @ Holy Family Church THEME: ST. PIO'S LOVE FOR FAMILY</p>	<p><b>FRIDAY 22 SEPT @ 8PM</b> DAY 2 @ Holy Family Church THEME: ST. PIO'S LOVE FOR CHURCH</p>
<p><b>SATURDAY 23 SEPT @ 6PM</b> DAY 3 @ Holy Family Church THEME: ST. PIO'S LOVE FOR SOCIETY</p>	<p><b>SUNDAY 24 SEPT @ 10.30AM</b> DAY 4 @ ST. PIO'S CENTRE, ULU TIRAM THEME: ST. PIO'S LOVE FOR ECOLOGY</p>

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