



Celebrating, Listening, and Walking Together

Patricia Pereira

PLENTONG, Johor: The Peninsular Malaysia Regional Pastoral Assembly 2024 (RPA2024), held from August 25-27 at the MAJODI Centre, brought together 427 participants, comprising of clergy, religious, and laity from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur and the Dioceses of Malacca Johore and Penang. The assembly also welcomed two observers from East Malaysia and seminarians from College General Seminary in Penang.

The assembly featured keynote addresses presented in three parts each day based on the RPA's theme. *Celebrating, Listening, and Walking in a Spirit of Communion, Participation, and Mission*. The speakers, Archbishop Julian Leow, Bishop Bernard Paul, and Cardinal Sebastian Francis, each highlighted different aspects of the Church's journey in Peninsular Malaysia.

The event concluded with a presentation of "Counsels," which emerged from the discernments of the participants through the

"Conversations in the Spirit," on the areas of four pastoral concerns. They are on the areas of Family, Church, Ecology, and Society. At the RPA2024, the participants were invited to discern and contemplate together the journey and direction of the Semenanjung Malaysia Church, to listen deeply to God's voice, and commit to walking together in mission.

Day One: Celebrate

Archbishop Julian Leow, the prelate of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, inaugurated the assembly with a keynote address centred on the theme *Celebrate*. He invited participants to reflect on the Church's journey from 1976 to 2024, noting that this was the sixth such gathering since the *Aggiornamento* in 1976. The archbishop highlighted both the milestones achieved and the challenges overcome during this period.

Drawing from personal experience, Archbishop Julian shared an anecdote from his time in Taiwan, where he completed a marathon despite a swollen ankle, using it as a metaphor for the Church's perseverance through difficulties. He emphasised that celebration is not only about recognising successes but also about acknowledging the challenges overcome, the unity forged, and the faith that has sustained the Church through difficult times.

The archbishop outlined several key ar-

reas for celebration, including the evolution of Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs), the Church's mission to make Christ known in an ever-changing world, and the importance of unity amidst diversity. He expressed gratitude for the peace, prosperity, and faith the Church enjoys but urged vigilance in safeguarding these blessings while continuing to innovate and grow. Archbishop Julian also called on the participants to embrace the future with hope and determination, reminding them that the Church's nearly 50-year journey is a testament to its resilience and unity.

The archbishop also noted that there is a marked difference with the RPA2024 as opposed to the past Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Conventions (PMPCs) or that we might even be tempted to see it as PMPC-V. He said, "the difference is we are coming together in preparation for MPC in 2026," and that, "These findings from our RPA will then be collated and brought to the MPC in 2026."

Day Two: Listen

On the second day, Bishop Bernard Paul of the Diocese of Malacca Johore delivered a keynote address focused on 'Listening'. He distinguished between merely hearing and truly listening, explaining that while hearing is a physical process, listening involves the heart and mind. He described listening as the begin-

ning of love and the foundation of fellowship, both with God and others. He emphasised that true listening is a divine grace that allows individuals to hear God's voice and act from a place of love, courage and trust.

The bishop highlighted the Biblical tradition of listening, tracing it through history of the Church and noting its significance in the Malaysian context, particularly following the Second Vatican Council. He stressed the importance of inclusive listening, reminding participants of the thorough surveys conducted across all the arch/dioceses, which laid the groundwork for the assembly's discussions on Church, Family, Society and Ecology.

Bishop Bernard expressed some concerns on pastoral orientations that may be self-serving to some aspect and challenged participants to reflect on their mission, asking whether they see their mission as part of God's mission or if they are safeguarding a 'silo mentality.'

The bishop concluded his address by encouraging participants to listen with their hearts and act in unity. He left the assembly with key reflections on discerning God's voice, overcoming resistance and trusting their inner divine image.

Continued on back page

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HERALD

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Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur,
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**EDITOR**

Patricia Pereira
editor1@herald.com.my

**ASSISTANT EDITOR**

Sandra Ann Inbaraj
sandra@herald.com.my

**GRAPHIC DESIGNER**

YOUTH SECTION
Amanda Mah
amanda@herald.com.my

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

Kevin Francis
kevin@herald.com.my

**BAHASA MALAYSIA**

Melania Liza Magnus
liza@herald.com.my

**MANDARIN**

Adelina Wong
yin4482@gmail.com

**TAMIL**

RK Samy
rksamy3@hotmail.com

ADVERTISEMENTS / SUBSCRIPTION

advertisement@herald.com.my

MEMORIAM

memoriam@herald.com.my

LETTERS

letterseditor@herald.com.my

Social Media

www.heraldmalaysia.com



@heraldmalaysia



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Herald Snapshot



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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

As *HERALD, The Catholic Weekly*, marks its 30th anniversary on September 8, 2024, we find ourselves reflecting on a journey that began three decades ago. A journey that has seen the paper evolve from humble beginnings into a cherished voice within the Malaysian Church and beyond. As we mark this milestone, we reflect on our history, our mission, and the road ahead.

HERALD's story began on September 8, 1994, with a fortnightly publication of just 12 pages in English, sold at 70 sen per copy. It was a modest start, yet one that carried the hopes of a growing Catholic community eager for a publication that could connect them to both parish and global Church news. In the next issue, two weeks later, the paper expanded to 16 pages — a sign of the growing demand for Catholic news and teachings in Malaysia. One year later, *HERALD* goes multilingual with an additional four pages thus increasing the price to 80 sen.

The journey has been one of continuous growth and adaptation. In January 1999, *HERALD's* price increased to RM1.00, reflecting rising production costs and our commitment to quality content. A significant turning point came on March 25, 2001, when *HERALD* transitioned from a fortnightly to a weekly publication, rebranding as *HERALD, The Catholic Weekly*. This evolution mirrored the changing needs of our community and the dynamic nature of the Church, both locally and globally. It allowed us to provide our readers with more timely and relevant news, commentaries, and teachings of the Catholic Church.

The digital era beckoned in August 2001, when *HERALD* first became available online. This move was not just about embracing new technology, it was about reaching a broader

audience, particularly younger generations who were increasingly engaging with content through digital platforms.

By September 28, 2003, *HERALD* expanded to 24 pages and went partially colour on October 5, 2003. The following year, on August 15, 2004, the paper further increased to 28 pages, demonstrating our commitment to providing comprehensive coverage of Church events, both local and global.

The opening of our office in the Diocese of Keningau in 2011, dedicated to serving the Bahasa-speaking community and incorporating news from East Malaysia, marked another significant milestone. This expansion reflects our commitment to addressing the diverse linguistic and cultural needs of our Catholic community across the nation.

Since November 30, 2011, *HERALD* has maintained a steady 32 pages, comprising 19 pages in English, three in Mandarin, two in Tamil, and eight in Bahasa Malaysia. This multilingual approach underscores our mission to be a paper of the people, inclusive and representative of the rich tapestry of Malaysia's Catholic community.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges. On March 22, 2020, *HERALD* was forced to stop printing and move fully online, a decision that was necessary but painful. The pandemic tested our resilience, yet it also highlighted the enduring need for a trusted Catholic voice in times of uncertainty. We resumed printing in September 2022, with the price increasing to RM2.00 — a reflection of the changing economic landscape.

HERALD's journey has also been marked by significant leadership transitions. On October 28, 2020, we mourned the loss of Cardinal Soter Fernandez, our first publisher, whose vision and guidance were instrumental in the

paper's early years. June 30, 2021, marked the retirement of Fr Lawrence Andrew SJ, our founding editor, after 27 years of dedicated service. Under his leadership, *HERALD* grew in scope and influence, becoming a vital part of the Malaysian Church.

On July 1, 2021, I was appointed as *HERALD's* first female and lay editor, ushering in a new chapter in the paper's history. This transition from a clergy editor to a layperson editor reflects the broader changes within the Church, where laypeople are increasingly taking on leadership roles. My appointment is a testament to the Church's recognition of the talents and contributions of the laity.

Today, as we celebrate 30 years, *HERALD* goes full colour, a fitting tribute to our vibrant and diverse community. But as we look to the future, we must also confront a sobering reality — our circulation has decreased from over 12,000 pre-COVID to less than 6,000 today. This decline is a reminder of the challenges we face in a rapidly changing media landscape.

Yet, *HERALD* remains committed to its mission of providing parish and global Church news, commentaries, and teachings of the Catholic Church. We are a paper of the people, inviting laypeople to share their thoughts and insights, and fostering a sense of community and shared faith.

As we celebrate this milestone, we encourage more people to read *HERALD*. Whether in print or online, *HERALD* is your paper, a voice for the Catholic community in Malaysia. Together, let us continue to support and strengthen this vital publication as we journey forward, heralding the future with faith, hope, and love.

For a preview of *HERALD's* 30-year journey, turn to pages 9, 10, and 11.

Patricia Pereira

Change begins with us

In recent years, there has been a growing trend among content creators to produce videos centred on practicing moral values in society. A prevalent theme in these videos is the issue of profiling individuals based on their appearance or skin colour.

For example, we often see videos of CEOs going undercover as low-paid employees or even posing as customers. While these scenarios are not new and reflect timeless moral values that have existed for thousands of years, they highlight a persistent issue: despite our efforts to instil these values in everyday life, prejudice and bias continue to thrive. The question remains: why, despite extensive education and awareness campaigns, does a lack of respect still prevail in society?

There are two possible explanations. The first has to do with the sheer amount of content that has been produced in the recent years. The biggest channel is *Dhar Mann*, whose tag line is "changing the world one video at a time" I remember watching the first few videos and it had quite a profound impact on me but after too many videos, fatigue started to set in. The videos became predictable and thus diminishing the effect. After all, too much of a good thing isn't necessarily healthy. The second is accessibility to social media. Despite advances in technology and smart phones becoming more affordable, there are still many people who do not have access to these gadgets. Of course, we can argue that these values are also taught in schools. Alas, even this can be inaccessible, especially if one does not see the importance of going to school.

How can we impart these values more effectively? At the recent Regional Pastoral Assembly, one of the themes discussed during the Conversation in the Spirit was 'Society.' I highlighted a point about racial prejudice and societal divisions, noting the lack of unity that persists. Prejudice of any kind will continue as long as we fail to educate the younger generation. Values are first instilled in the family before anything else. I recall my grandaunt expressing a dislike for Indians, a sentiment not unique to the Chinese community alone. However, as a child, I had friends from all races and never saw them as different. Whether we were poor, middle class or rich, all of us studied and played together. Therefore, it is crucial for families to be the first to inculcate and practice these values themselves.

The second reading from the letter of St James tells us that we should not combine our faith with the making of distinctions between classes of people. He then gives an example of two people entering the synagogue, one well dressed and one poorly dressed, the well-dressed man is treated with dignity while the other was banished to a corner. Consider our own behaviour in church — many of us, whether consciously or not, treat people differently based on their appearance or race. The troubling part is that we often do this without batting an eyelid and feel no guilt about it. St James warns us that such actions turn us into corrupt judges, indicating that our minds and souls have been corrupted by the ways of the world.

If we want to make the world a better

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Fr Philip Tay, OCD

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Readings: Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8;
James 1:17-18, 21-22, 27;
Gospel: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

place, to make it a place where there is no prejudice or bias, we need to open not only our eyes and minds but our souls as well. We need to be healed by Jesus as he healed the man who was dumb and deaf. The "Ephiphata" that comes from the mouth of Christ not only open our mouth and ears but also our minds and soul. It opens up a new horizon where we see the world with the lens of God instead of our lens which are tainted and corrupt. As the Responsorial Psalm tells us, "it is the Lord who gives sight to the blind." We may not be blind physically but we are certainly blind in our personal prejudice and bias.

We cannot change others; we can only change ourselves because it would be foolish to think that we can change others. As the lyrics of Michael Jackson's "Man in the Mirror" goes ... "If you want to make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and then make a change." When we point one finger at others, three fingers point back at us. Let us then pray for an "Ephiphata" experience so that we can free ourselves from the prejudices and bias that blinds us from seeing people as they are, the children of God.



CFM 2024 Merdeka and Malaysia Day Media Statement

Let us celebrate our diversity with respect and trust for all Malaysians

The Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) wishes all Malaysians a *Selamat Hari Kebangsaan* and *Hari Malaysia* 2024. CFM joins all fellow Malaysians in this national celebration with deep gratitude to God for the peace, harmony and prosperity that we continue to enjoy especially in this Post COVID-19 era.

This year our nation celebrates 67th *Hari Kebangsaan* (Merdeka Day) and 61st *Hari Malaysia* (Anniversary of the Formation of Malaysia) under the theme of *Malaysia Madani: Jiwa Merdeka*. CFM welcomes this vision for the creation of a just and inclusive society in Malaysia through the concept of "Madani Malaysia." CFM hopes this vision is embraced and realised by and at every level of society.

Respect and Trust which are two of the six main core values promoted under



Malaysia Madani that must be pursued if this vision is to be realised. By enhancing respect amongst us we will be creating greater trust and confidence in our unity and togetherness that has been the hallmark of this nation over the years. It is therefore

important for everyone and all parties to cultivate and instil the culture of mutual respect for the diversities and values found in the many of our cultures and creeds prevailing in Malaysia.

Today, we are living in a time where

we are facing various challenges within, and externally — various geo-political conflicts and diversions regionally and internationally. To overcome these challenges, it would require concerted effort by all parties to preserve our attained liberty and cohesion we seek. Let us work as one and pray for God's blessings to be upon our King, Rulers, and Government as they lead our nation into greater freedom as expressed in *Jiwa Merdeka*.

Let us therefore celebrate our diversity building further upon the respect and trust that we have inherited from our founding fathers and ensure that this is passed on to the future generation of Malaysians.

Selamat Hari Kebangsaan and Hari Malaysia!

August 26, 2024

Cor Episcopa Philip Thomas
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Archbishop Dr Simon Poh
Vice Chairman

Bishop Datuk Danald Jute
Vice Chairman

Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng
Vice Chairman



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

September

- 11-13 His Holiness Pope Francis' Visit to Singapore
- 14 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of the Immaculate Conception BVM
- 15-20 Clergy Annual Retreat
- 21 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of St Aloysius, Mantin
- 21 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of St Theresa



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

September

- 13 AGM, Mass – Catholic Nurses Guild, Melaka
- 15 Feast of Santa Cruz, Mass in English at 9.30am – Santa Cruz Chapel, Melaka
- 16 Family Day – Sacred Heart Cathedral JB, MAJODI Centre
- 18 Meeting – Caritas MJD Exco, Caritas MJD Centre
- 19-21 St Pio's Triduum – Church of the Holy Family, Ulu Tiram
- 22 Feast of St Pio – St Pio's Friary and Spirituality Centre, Ulu Tiram
- 28 Confirmation – Church of St Francis Xavier, Melaka



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #188

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MJD NEWS
UPDATES

Greetings dear friends of MJD

Malaysia celebrates her 67th *Hari Kebangsaan*. One *Jalur Gemilang* per home campaign began in July 2024. The ringgit hits a high. "Chinese companies and goods flooding the nation" fears among the local traders. Contending with a failing education system, with many excellent teachers leaving and many young people emigrating. The unwritten policies and the "little napoleons" are blamed. Melaka prepares for 200,000 international tourists. Its reported that officers from the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (Jakim), will be placed in every government department to ensure decisions align with Islamic principles. In the midst of these happenings, I find the song by Dr Sam *Saya Anak Malaysia* patriotic and arousing.

"Moving Forward Times": The Regional Pastoral Assembly or popularly known as PMPC5 for the Peninsular ended on August 27. It came and it went. The "Conversations in the Spirit" created an air for sharing, searching, silence, sensing and discerning. A total of 61 groups with the three shepherds, endorsed four pastoral directions for the Semenanjung ie. Accompanying the Family, Merciful Church, Stewards of Ecology and Prophets in Society. The Peninsular Church readies herself for what is obvious to people: Equity, Inclusion, Education, Conversions and Passive Leadership. Together, Togetherness and To Gather is the underlying whisper of the Holy Spirit.

A Thought For The Week: The Poison

#Petrina had a strange hatred for her boss. Everyday, while at work, Petrina would spend her time devising a cunning plan to take revenge. Every night, upon returning home, she would make a poison for her boss. And every night, she drank that poison and expected to hurt her boss. Instead it was Petrina who fell violently ill with stomach cramps and sickness. But that did not stop her. She kept creating new poisons and kept the same routine. The poison she concocted was a mixture of anger, hatred and pent up rage.

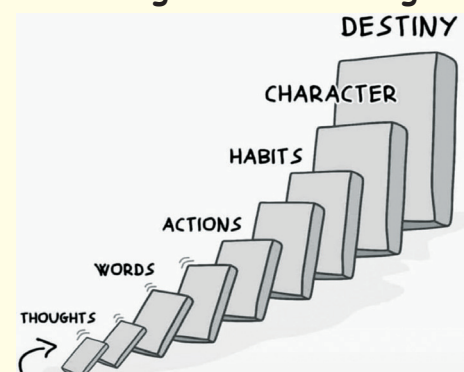
A lesson from Petrina: Anger, pent-up rage and hatred cannot be felt by the other. The poison we feed on harms us, and not the one we are angry with. Stop! Breathe! Watch the hurt! Forgive! Rewrite the story! Be healed!

Announcements For The Week:

1. *The nation celebrates her Hari Kebangsaan. The Prime Minister called for patriotism, love for the country and on working together to build the nation. Once our Merdeka was from colonial rule, may Today's Merdeka is freedom from discrimination, differentiation and division.*
2. The September month is dedicated as the *Season of Creation*, with the World Day of the Poor and the Migrant Sunday slotted in.
3. The first batch of Clergy will be away for the *Annual Retreat at Cameron Highlands* from September 1-7.
4. Coming next: The Novenas and the Feast of the *Santa Cruz* Chapel Malim, the *Padre Pio Centre*, Ulu Tiram and the *Catholic Nurses' National Conference* in Melaka.

QnQ? Q ask: How do we get where we want to be?

It all begins with a thought!



A long time ago, the great Chinese sage, Lao Tzu said this: Watch your thoughts, they become your words; watch your words, they become your actions; watch your actions, they become your habits; watch your habits, they become your character; watch your character, it becomes your destiny." We can create heaven or hell, accomplish or destroy dreams; or remain where we are or BECOME MORE THAN WHAT WE ARE.

Hans Urs von Balthasar said: "What you are is God's gift to you, what you become is your gift to God."

See The Holy Spirit @ Work: The Holy Spirit is a great worker, not a 'trade unionist.' He is a great worker, and He works in us always. He does this work of explaining the mystery of Jesus, and of giving us this sense of Christ." *Pope Francis*

Something To Tickle You: Instead of pursuing happiness, pursue God. And happiness will find you, deep in your soul." *Leila Grandemange*

Bishop Bernard Paul

Foundation and Archdiocese partner for indigenous language, sustainability

KOTA KINABALU: The Kadazandusun Language Foundation (KLF) has partnered with the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu to advance its mission of sustainability through Indigenous language conservation. This strategic collaboration aligns with the Foundation's efforts to promote the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through its programmes in Sabah and Malaysia.

KLF's Board of Trustees Chairman, Datuk Philip Lasimbang, highlighted the importance of such partnerships in diversifying their initiatives. The Foundation recently sponsored the publication of Reading Project with 5sMMS on 17SDGs, a book developed in collaboration with author Bernadette Peter Lidadun, her doctoral supervisor Dr Nancy Chiuh and Archbishop John Wong of Kota Kinabalu.

The book, which was discussed in January, details the UN's 17 SDGs and aims to integrate these goals into KLF's

sustainable methods.

During a courtesy call to Archbishop John, Philip emphasised the value of the book as a tool for implementing sustainable practices. "We are pleased to provide 100 complimentary copies of this book to the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu. These will serve as training material for the aspirants at the Aspirant Preparatory Seminary and the seminarians at the Initiation Year Seminary, St Peter's College," he stated.

"We hope that distributing this book will enhance public knowledge and awareness of the 17 SDGs. We also want to express our deepest gratitude to the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu for placing their trust in KLF for this publication, which is the culmination of the author's three years of research at the Aspirant Preparatory Seminary," said Philip. Archbishop John welcomed the contribution and involvement of those working to build a more informed and engaged society.

"I found the content of this book to be both comprehensive and practical. It is presented systematically with engaging



Archbishop John Wong and Datuk Philip Lasimbang, KLF's chairman of the board of trustee holding the book together with members of group.

illustrations. I believe it will serve as a valuable resource that encourages interest in sustainable development, harmonising it with faith and spirituality. The lessons from Catholic Social Teaching can guide Catholics, in particular, in adapting and implementing action plans to meet the targets of the 17 SDGs in their communities," he said.

Fr Isidore Gilbert, Director of the Aspirant Preparatory Seminary, praised the book's relevance and applicability, describing it as an accessible resource that simplifies complex topics through a structured

reading approach.

Rita Lasimbang, CEO of KLF, reaffirmed the Foundation's commitment to Indigenous language conservation and its dedication to partnering with various stakeholders. "Since its establishment in 1994, KLF has been devoted to preserving Indigenous languages in Sabah. This book's publication is a special effort that reflects our ongoing mission," she said.

Author Bernadette Peter Lidadun, who has been a Visiting Lecturer at the Aspirant Preparatory Seminary since 2014,

explained that the book was developed as part of the Malaysian National Reading Decade (2020-2030) initiative. It is designed to enhance literacy, critical thinking, and cultural awareness while addressing barriers to reading.

The book employs Monroe's Motivated Sequence (5sMMS) to engage readers and inspire action towards positive change. It features 100 topics related to the SDGs and includes a guide for learners to access accurate information from official UN and relevant organisational websites.

The project has received accolades, including the Diamond Award at the 2nd International Conference on Biodiversity and Sustainable Development 2023 and the Gold Award at the Virtual International Innovation Competition (VIIC) 2023.

Bernadette emphasised that the book is a significant resource for language educators and special interest groups, equipping them with a comprehensive understanding of Education for Sustainable Development, particularly Target 4.7 of SDG4 – Quality Education. **Daily Express**

HERALD
30TH
Anniversary
1994 - 2024



Banns of Diaconate Ordination

Upon the recommendation of the seminary formators and having consulted with the College of Consulters, Most Rev Bishop Datuk Cornelius Piong, DD, Bishop of Keningau, has agreed to ordain the following Seminarian to the Order of Deacon:

Seminarian Nelbart Peter
Date: Sunday, November 10, 2024

Venue: Dataran Keuskupan
Cathedral of
St Francis Xavier
Time: 4.00pm

Seminarian Nelbart Peter hails from Kg Simbuan, Sook. He completed his ecclesiastical studies in philosophy at College General, Penang from 2018-2019 and proceeded to complete his studies in the theology cycle at St Peter's College, Kuching, Sarawak from 2020-2024.

Canon Law (1051.2) obliges Catholics to reveal any impediments or circumstances that would prevent Seminarian Nelbart Peter from receiving Sacred Orders and they should contact the Chancery or Bishop Datuk Cornelius Piong with such information as soon as possible.



Currently Seminarian Nelbart Peter is doing his pastoral immersion at St Theresa Tambunan. So let us offer our prayerful support to him as he is preparing for his Diaconal ministry and service to the people of God in the Diocese of Keningau.

You may contact the Chancery by emailing momcit@yahoo.com

Fr Rudolf Joannes,
Chancellor
Diocese of Keningau

29 August 2024

Liturgy Alive: A call to deeper participation

RAWANG: On August 14, the Church of St Jude hosted an enriching formation session designed to empower its dedicated ministers. The event brought together Lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Hospitality Ministers, Altar Ladies, and Choir members, all united under the theme, *Liturgy Alive*.

The theme resonated deeply with the 53 participants, who were eager to reignite their passion for liturgical participation. The session, conducted by Richard Ganesh in English and Theresa Ayyahkannu in Tamil, offered invaluable insights and inspiration to those who serve in these vital roles within the church.

At the core of the discussion was a fundamental question: "Is Liturgy alive in your Church?" A question that hung heavy in the air, unanswered. It was a poignant reminder that while we may go through the motions of liturgical celebrations, the true essence of the liturgy – its life-giving spirit – might be waning.

According to Richard, the *Cat-*

echism of the Catholic Church (CCC 1323) offers a profound insight: "Liturgy is the wellspring of Christian life and the source of all Christian activity."

He said it is where we encounter the living Christ, where our faith is nourished, and where our mission to the world is ignited.

The session underscored the crucial role of liturgical ministers. Richard said they are not merely functionaries but custodians of the liturgical celebration. Their actions, words, and demeanour shape the experience of the entire congregation.

Liturgical Ministry chairman Judy Xavier shared her heartfelt experience: "I was deeply moved when Richard asked me to carry all those books, symbolising the heavy responsibility of being a liturgist. It brought me to tears because it truly touched me — no one really understands what I go through. This session revived my passion and reaffirmed my conviction that serving God is His will for me."

Another participant, Helen Ambrose, reflected on the session's



Richard Ganesh, presenter for the English session.

impact: "I found it incredibly insightful. It reminded us that the celebration of the Eucharist is not just about the Eucharist itself, but is composed of many crucial elements that we often overlook or haven't been exposed to. These elements are essential for a meaningful experience at Mass, in prayer, and in our daily lives."

The session concluded with Deacon Jonathan Rao presenting a purse to Richard Ganesh, symbolising the community's support for his ongoing efforts in nurturing liturgical life. This gesture recognised the vital importance of this ministry and underscored a commitment to its continued growth. **Mercy Almeida Stellus**



Lifeline on an unchosen journey

PETALING JAYA: The Church of St Francis Xavier marked International Widows Day with a special Mass and fellowship event aimed at supporting and uplifting widows navigating their new lives.

The parish's Widow to Widow ministry, established to provide a supportive community for those grieving the loss of a spouse, was at the heart of the day's activities. The ministry operates a buddy system that pairs widows with others who share similar experiences. This initiative fosters companionship and mutual support, offering a lifeline to those who might otherwise feel isolated.

Shirley Corray-Lopez, a participant in the buddy system, praised her support partner, noting, "... has been my pillar of strength and support ever since my husband passed away. She took the trouble to call me, text

me, and visit me... She checks on me constantly to see if I am alright."

The day began with a Mass celebrated by parish priest Fr Alvin Ng, SJ, who offered a message of hope and encouragement. Drawing parallels with Job's perseverance in the face of trials, Fr Alvin reminded attendees of their loved ones' continued support from Heaven and provided a special blessing for all who had lost a spouse.

After Mass, a fellowship meal was organised in collaboration with the Bereavement Support Group (under the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development). Widows from various churches across the Klang Valley attended, some travelling long distances and using public transport to participate. The gathering highlighted the importance of community



and shared support in the healing process.

Emily Teo, a participant, reflected on the significance of the event: "The commemoration of International Widows Day was indeed an appreciable gesture to widows that they remain valuable assets in society. Sadly, widows often feel labelled as weak and overlooked after losing their spouses. In

reality, they are warriors learning to navigate their new lives."

For those seeking support or a community to share their journey of healing, contact Caroline Tay, Coordinator of the Widow to Widow ministry at 012-7018185.



St Maximilian Kolbe named patron of KL archdiocesan prison ministry

Stanislaus Emmanuel

KAJANG: On August 17, the Catholic Prison Fellowship Association (CPFA) celebrated a historic milestone with its first-ever Prison Ministry Mass at the Church of the Holy Family. Endorsed by Archbishop Julian Leow, this significant event also marked a key moment for the ministry as St Maximilian Kolbe was officially recognised as the patron saint of CPFA.

The celebration began at 11.15am with the recitation of the Rosary, followed by a solemn Mass celebrated by Ecclesiastical Assistants Fr Bonaventure Rayappan and Fr George Packiasamy, along with Jesuit Fathers Fr Alvin Ng, SJ and Fr Gregory Tan, SJ.

Although Archbishop Julian was unable to attend due to prior commitments, he sent his blessings and support through a heartfelt video message, expressing deep gratitude to all the volunteers for their dedicated service.

In his homily, Fr George honoured the legacy of St Maximilian Kolbe, drawing parallels between the saint's sacrifices and the transformative work carried out by CPFA volunteers. He emphasised the unique calling of prison ministry, referenc-



Fr Bonaventure Rayappan receiving gifts of bread and wine during the offertory.

ing the words of Jesus, "I was in prison and you visited me," to underscore the profound impact of this service. Fr George also extended his gratitude to the volunteers, acknowledging their unwavering commitment to this challenging yet re-

warding mission.

During the offertory procession, petitions from inmates, volunteers, and clergy were presented. Fr Bonaventure lifted these petitions during the Eucharistic celebration, praying for the mercy of Jesus to grant

the prayers of all those who serve and are served by the ministry.

Before the final blessing, Fr Bonaventure took a moment to thank the volunteers present and offered his gratitude for those unable to attend. The Mass concluded with a moving video presentation about the life of St Maximilian Kolbe, leaving many volunteers visibly touched by the saint's profound dedication to the welfare of prisoners.

Following the Mass, attendees gathered for a fellowship at the church hall, where volunteers, both new and senior, shared their experiences and strengthened their bonds. The event was hailed as a great blessing and a testament to the power of faith and service in the lives of those who minister to the most marginalised.

The CPFA extends its heartfelt gratitude to President Gnadaas Amalass and Vice President Audrey Freeman for their exemplary leadership and dedication. Special thanks also go to the Organising Head for the Mass, Charles Soosaimany and his team, whose efforts were instrumental in making this blessed celebration possible for all volunteers and inmates. Their commitment ensured the success of this spiritually significant event, uniting the CPFA community in prayer and fellowship.

Film sparks compassion and dialogue among SIC parishioners

PETALING JAYA: A film depicting the grief and trauma of survivors of the May 13, 1969, racial riots stirred compassion

among Catholics for those who lost loved ones. Viewing *Snow in Midsummer* together allowed parishioners of the Church of St

Ignatius to discuss the once-taboo topic of May 13 with family and friends.

On August 16, parish priest Fr Lawrence Ng, CDD, led his congregation to the cinema, confident that the emotionally impactful film would be therapeutic. "It's highly recommended, especially for those affected by May 13," he said.

The audience of 163 included Archbishop Julian Leow, Fr Andrew Wong, CDD, Provincial Superior of the Congregation of the Disciples of the Lord (CDD), and assistant parish priest Fr Thomas Koo, CDD.

Parishioner Looi Art Yew noted, "The film sparked a meaningful family discussion the next day. It helped us understand how our country has evolved."

The film, directed and written by Chong Keat Aun, received the Best New Director award at the 57th Golden Horse Awards in 2020. Its screening was a step towards breaking the silence around this tragic event.

Mandarin Apostolate head Sebastian Yew saw the film as a reminder to cherish peace and harmony, while BECCOT chief Jo Lee hoped it would help lay to rest the ghosts of May 13 and foster peace.

Snow in Midsummer is a story of two survivors still seeking the elusive closure in the aftermath of a tragedy rarely spoken of in the open.

The poignant final scene, shot at the Sungai Buloh graveyard where 114 victims are buried, prompted Fr Lawrence to invite parishioners to visit the site and pray for the deceased.

Snow in Midsummer has received critical acclaim, winning Best Film (Chinese Language) at the 48th Hong Kong International Film Festival and securing nine nominations at this year's Golden Horse Awards.

The National Operation Council's report on the May 13 tragedy recorded 196 deaths. BECCOT, SIC



A scene from *Snow in Midsummer*.

Zero-waste initiative promotes eco-friendly practices

Elvina Fernandez

KUALA LUMPUR: On average, each Malaysian generates 1.2 kilogrammes of waste daily, enough to fill the Petronas Twin Towers in just seven days. To address this issue and make a positive impact on our environment, the Parish Integral Human Development Ministry's Ecology and Environment team at the Church of St Anthony invited Malaysia's first zero waste store on wheels, Refiller Mobile, to the parish on August 18.

The mobile van, stationed for three hours from 9.00am to 12 noon in the church compound, had a clear green mission: to raise awareness about reducing single-use plastic packaging and to encourage parishioners to refill eco-friendly detergents in their reusable bottles. The van offered a range of products, including eco-friendly household cleaners such as dish soap, hand soap, floor cleaner, toilet cleaner, laundry detergent, and fabric softener, as well as shampoo bars, toothpaste, personal care items, dried foods, vegetable snacks, and dog treats.

The zero-waste mobile van drew a diverse crowd, including church members aged 12 to 70 and regulars from the Refiller Mobile who eagerly tracked the van's location for their chance to replenish eco-friendly household detergents and favourite snacks.

As the inaugural event of its kind, the refilling exercise was a significant success in promoting sustainable practices across all age groups within the parish. The activity



The catechism students learning about the importance of zero waste to the environment.

underscored the rising demand for sustainable products, with a record 133 one-litre bottles and over 30 single-use packages saved from landfills, contributing to a cleaner, more sustainable future.

In addition to purchasing eco-friendly cleaning agents and snacks, parishioners had the chance to learn about the importance of reducing waste through zero-packaging options. Many first-time refillers appreciated the convenience and affordability of the event, valuing the opportunity to actively contribute to waste reduction.

Elizabeth Shirley, 60 said she had always been on the lookout for household cleaning products that do not harm one's health and the environment.

"This is a great campaign organised by the church team. I brought my empty handwash bottle, and it only cost me about 50 cents to

refill it with eco-friendly handwash liquid, in comparison to purchasing a new handwash bottle that between RM5 to RM10," she said.

The zero-waste mobile van also offered a hands-on refilling experience for eager catechism students who brought their clean, dry containers. The students had the chance to go through the entire process — from refilling their bottles and weighing them to labelling their eco-friendly products. This experience not only taught them about the importance of reducing waste in landfills but also helped them understand the benefits of using eco-friendly products in their daily lives.

Oh Sok Peng, who runs Refiller Mobile, said the collaboration with the Church of St Anthony has been invaluable and will continue to work with the Ecology and Environment team to promote sustainable practices

and make a positive impact on the community and environment.

"We were also thrilled to have had the opportunity to share knowledge with Sunday School students, educating them on sustainable practices and empowering the next generation to make informed choices and become more aware consumers," she said.

Parish priest Fr Dr Clarence Devadass explained that the initiative was designed to raise awareness about rejecting single-use plastics and to encourage parishioners to develop habits of refilling and adopting eco-friendly products that are both safer for use and gentler on the environment. "Starting with simple, small actions can make a difference," he said. "For instance, bring your own tupperware for take-away meals or use your own bag at the grocery store to avoid single-use plastic packaging."

SIC motor treasure hunt creates cherished memories

PETALING JAYA: A typical Saturday morning turned lively as 23 teams, comprised mainly of families and members of various ministries from the Church of St Ignatius, embarked on a motor hunt. Navigating their way through the streets surrounding the church in Kelana Jaya, the teams participated in a paperless hunt that energised the parish community.

The hunt featured 25 riddles and questions, plus five treasure items to collect along the route. Starting at 9.30am and concluding at 3.00pm, the event was followed by teatime treats. Clerk of Course Christopher Foo announced the winners, with Parish Priest Fr Lawrence Ng, CDD, and Fr Martin Then, CDD, on hand to present shopping vouchers ranging from RM100 to RM800 to the top five teams.

Cheer and applause filled the air as participants celebrated their achievements. Laughter and merrymaking continued over tea. One team shared, "We didn't come here to win, we came to create memories as a family." This sentiment embodies the mission of the Family Life Ministry — to foster family bonding and deepen their love for each other and for God, the lover of our souls.

The SIC Motor Treasure Hunt was just one highlight of the month-long celebrations for the Feast Day of St Ignatius Loyola on July 31. With enthusiasm already building for next year's event, be sure to stay tuned for more details if you want to join in the fun!

Understanding Mary's unique role

KUALA LUMPUR: A one-day formation titled *The Trinity's Embrace: Mary's Unique Role* was held at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on August 24. Facilitated by Msgr Stanislaus Soosamariam *pic*, the session was conducted in Tamil and drew 92 participants from various parishes in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, primarily Tamil-speaking Legion of Mary presidiums.

Msgr Stanislaus spoke on the humility of Mary and explored the four categories of the Holy Rosary — the Joyful, Luminous, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries. He also discussed the Wedding at Cana, emphasising Mary's role in urging others to 'listen to my Son' and the symbolism of wine as the blood of Christ for our salvation.

Three participants also shared their experiences during the session:

Grace Joseph from the Chapel of Christ

the King in Selayang discussed her history with the Legion of Mary and her presidium.

Philomena from the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Puchong recounted how she joined the Legion of Mary.

Dr Florence John from the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, shared her personal experience of caring for a sick patient and her feelings as a legionary after the patient's passing.

The session which began at 8.00am, concluded with a blessing from Msgr Stanislaus, followed by tea at 4.30pm. **Bernard Anthony**



The diverse group at the 'Blue Mosque' in Shah Alam.

Interfaith group visits places of worship

SHAH ALAM: On August 10, a diverse group of 26 residents from Subang Jaya visited the 'Blue Mosque' in Shah Alam. The group consisted of individuals from diverse racial and religious backgrounds, predominantly representing the Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and Bahá'í faiths. This visit followed an earlier walkabout to the Buddhist, Sikh, and Hindu temples in Subang Jaya, all conveniently located within the SS13 vicinity, allowing the

visits to be completed in a single morning.

The setting up of the Interfaith group was the initiative of the Parish Ministry of Ecumenism and Inter Faith Affairs (PMEIA) of the Church of St Thomas More. The objective of this interfaith group is to foster fraternity, harmony and goodwill within the township of Subang Jaya/USJ in spreading love, joy and peace among all children of God. **Angeline Lesslar**

KUALA LUMPUR: The GEM Gathering 2024 drew 200 spirited seniors who dedicated seven hours of their Saturday to fellowship during the KL Archdiocese's World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly celebration.

The participants listened attentively as advice was given on maintaining both physical and spiritual stability. Archdiocesan Family Life Commission (AFLC) Ecclesiastical Assistant Fr. Peter Anthony emphasised the importance of assessing both physical and spiritual steadiness. "In spiritual care, we also want you to test your stability. Where do you stand with God? Are you anchored in the rock, the church that supports and nourishes you with Christ?" he asked.

Fr Peter and Fr Andrew Kooi, also an AFLC Ecclesiastical Assistant, concelebrated the Mass, the highlight of the gathering at the Archdiocese Pastoral Centre on August 24.

Prof Dr Tan Maw Pin, senior consultant

Seniors deepen faith in God



From left: Francis Magimay, Fr Peter Anthony, Charlotte Xavier, Vivien Tham and Fr Andrew Kooi.

geriatrician at the Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Malaya, noted that life expectancy has increased from 54 to 74 years over the past 60 years due to advancements in healthcare. In her talk, *Faithfully Ageing Healthily*, she provided insights into healthy

aging, including brain exercises, physical activity, a balanced diet, social engagement, and cardiovascular risk management. She also observed a decline in church attendance among the younger generation, attributing it to decreased birth rates from an average of

six children per couple 60 years ago to 1.6 today.

GEM (Grandparent and Elderly Ministry) coordinators Andrew and Andrene Teoh who had earlier welcomed attendees to the gathering, encouraged fellowship among seniors from various parishes. "As we connect, let's pray for those unable to attend and reach out to them, embodying our celebration theme: 'Do not cast me off in my old age' (Psalm 71:9)," said Andrew.

In the afternoon, Martin Jalleh enlivened the gathering with humour in his talk, *Living and Loving Psalm 23 in Our Senior Years*, focusing on the good Shepherd.

The event concluded with recognition of three "super seniors" — Francis Magimay (90), Vivien Tham (87), and Charlotte Xavier (86) — who each received a bottle of wine for being the oldest attendees. **GEM, ArchKL**



Spiritual formation on the "Greater Discernment of Spirits"



KUCHING: On the morning of August 17, a spiritual formation on the *Greater Discernment of Spirits* was held at the Mater Domini Auditorium, ACCPC, drawing around 130 participants. The session was facilitated by Fr James Tan, SJ, *pic*, from the Jesuit Development Office of Malaysia-Singapore.

Building on the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola, this 'greater' formation served as a sequel to an earlier session in April, which explored the dynamics between the good and bad spirits, along with the concepts of spiritual consolation and desolation.

Fr James began by discussing consolation from God, describing it as 'a touch' or 'a taste' experienced without any preceding cause — when no thought, event, or person seems to be the source of such a movement.

While consolation from the good spirit strengthens one's relationship with Christ, participants were cautioned against the bad spirit, which can manipulate positive feelings. This subtle transformation often starts with pious thoughts or holy desires that can gradually shift toward selfish motives.

"We can grow as discerning persons by carefully examining the path our experi-

ences have taken," Fr James explained. "If we find that our eyes have remained fixed on the Lord from beginning to end, we can be sure that the good spirit has been guiding us." He also urged participants to recognise God as the true source of all consolation.

The formation concluded with a lively Q&A session followed by Holy Mass, offering attendees a time of spiritual communion and reflection. The participants also bid farewell to Fr James, who has frequently visited Kuching over the years. His role will be succeeded by Fr Sebastian Koh, SJ. **Shannon Wei, Today's Catholic**

A spirit-filled weekend at HRC Klang

KLANG: The Church of the Holy Redeemer (HRC) held its annual Life in the Spirit Seminar (LSS) on August 17 and 18. The event saw 45 participants engaged in a transformative experience, facilitated by the Charis Kuala Lumpur Service of Communion (CKLSC) and supported by the HRC Prayer Group Team. This LSS is part of a series of programmes leading up to HRC's 55th anniversary celebration in 2025.

The participants, primarily middle-aged and senior members from HRC and other Klang parishes, found the praise sessions deeply spirit-filled, leading to moments of intense praise and communion with God. The speakers delivered profound, Scripture-based teachings of the Catholic Church, sharing their personal experiences of God's presence in their lives and in the lives of those they have ministered to. These powerful testimonies moved many participants to tears and praise. Despite initial hesitations, group sharing was embraced by all, allowing participants to reflect and share their experiences throughout the various parts of the LSS.

Participants shared testimonies of their ex-

periences during the LSS, including encounters with the love and goodness of God, healing, the power of the Holy Spirit, and the gift of praying in tongues. We pray and hope that they will continue to grow in the life of the Spirit — frequenting the Sacraments, deepening their prayer life, reading and living the Gospel, and becoming more involved in BEC and church ministries, striving to be people after God's own heart.

The LSS was a blessing for both participants and facilitators. Inspired by St Paul's words in 2 Timothy 1:6, we pray that they will 'stir into flame the gift of God,' bringing glory to Him through their love for God and neighbour.

We offer our praise, thanksgiving, and glory to God for the abundant grace He bestowed upon us during the weekend, and to Mother Mary for her loving intercession. A heartfelt thank you to parish priest Fr Andrew Kooi for his prayers and support, to CKLSC for their anointed ministry, to Patrick and Elaine Eng and their team for providing the meals, and to the HRC community for their faithful intercession. **Ireneaus Bay**



Enthronement of the Bible at the beginning of the formation.

Bible formation on the roots and blessings of Scripture

KLANG: In conjunction with the celebration of the Word of God, the Formation Team of Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, recently organised a Bible Formation led by Richard Ganesh from the parish of St Joseph, Sentul.

The session commenced with a meaningful enthronement of the Bible, establishing a reverent atmosphere. Participants were then introduced to the first session, *Roots of Scripture*, where they delved into the origins of God's Word. This exploration traced its evolution from oral traditions — stories of God handed down through generations — to the development of the Gospels. Richard skilfully led the participants through this journey, covering the Old Testament, transitioning to the New Testament, and examining the stages of Gospel formation: the life and teachings of Jesus, the oral tradition, and

the written Gospels.

The second session, *Deeply Rooted in Scripture*, focused on the abundant blessings gained by being deeply rooted in the Word of God. Richard emphasised that Scripture is both transforming and reforming, sharing inspiring stories of renewal from the early Church and the saints, all attributed to the power of God's Word.

Participants were anchored in St Paul's letter to the Colossians 2:6-7, which urges them to stay rooted in Christ and be strengthened in faith. Participants also enjoyed a lively Bible Quiz, with exciting prizes awarded to the winners. The formation concluded on a joyful note, as participants eagerly awaited the quiz answers and celebrated the success of the quiz winners. **Formation Team, OLL Klang**

Taekwondo athlete “on behalf of Afghan women”



Refugee Paralympic Team's Zakia Khudadadi celebrates a victory one of the Paris 2024 Summer Paralympic Games (PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES/MAXPPP)

KABUL: “I am an Afghan Paralympic athlete. Despite all the struggles I have faced, I am currently confined to this apartment, unable to go out... I ask you to extend a hand to me.”

As the Taliban took Kabul on August 15, 2021, Zakia Khudadadi, a para-taekwondo athlete, made a plea for help to escape her country and reach the Tokyo Games. France was the first to respond, allowing her to board a plane on August 19, which was chartered to evacuate prominent women targeted by the fundamentalists.

Zakia Khudadadi was born in 1998 in the province of Herat. A woman, born with an atrophied arm, and a member of the Hazara Shia minority, she faced numerous obstacles in a predominantly Sunni Afghanistan, where men hold sway.

Destined for an unenviable fate, her life took a turn in 2008 when she saw on television that taekwondo athlete Rohullah Nikpai, also a Hazara, had won Afghanistan's first Olympic medal. Around the same time, she met a coach who took her under his wing. “You are a strong girl, start sports to escape your status as a woman and a disabled person,” he advised.

“I chose taekwondo because you fight with your feet,” says Zakia Khudadadi. She then donned a kimono and trained in secret in a small nine-square-metre room. “My father and brothers always encouraged me,” she notes.

As the first Afghan woman with a disability to dare to play sports, she quickly rose through the ranks, travelling to Kabul for training camps and competitions, and becoming a double champion in her country against... able-bodied athletes. In 2016, at the African Championships (which also invited Asian athletes), she won the title in her category. Buoyed by this victory, the pioneer prepared for the Tokyo Games.

Everything changed in the summer of 2021, when, two weeks before the competition, the Taliban took control of the capital. “You are a woman, an athlete, a disabled person: you are a danger to our team of men,” her coach told her. “I cried, I took refuge with relatives, but I didn't give up,” she recalls, her voice trembling.

Evacuated, she made a stop in Paris before rejoining the team, which had abandoned her, in Japan. “After Tokyo, many countries offered me asylum,” she says, “but I chose France

because they helped me escape the Taliban.” Seven months later, her family joined her.

Now based in Paris, she trains daily with the French team. “I'll perfect the language after the Games,” she confides in hesitant French. “Right now, my only focus is on medals.” Of the six medals she has already won, two fill her with pride. The first is the gold she won at the European Championships in the 47kg category on August 15, 2023, two years after leaving her homeland. “I proved to the Taliban that I am stronger than before,” she declares.

The second is her qualification, achieved on March 8, International Women's Day. “I want to win these medals for the women of my country. Don't forget Afghan women!” urges the athlete, who will be competing this time under the refugee flag. “I feel solidarity with everyone who has left their country in search of peace or freedom. But for Los Angeles, I hope to be on the French team!”

Mission accomplished. She won bronze on August 29, becoming the first Paralympic athlete to medal in the history of the refugee delegation. Vinciane Joly, LCI (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)

Indian Church banks on youth to bring peace in Manipur

NAGALAND: Church denominations in India's northeastern region are hopeful of a youth initiative to help bring peace in strife-torn Manipur where tribal Christians have been fighting the majority Hindu Meiteis for the past 16 months.

“The youths can play a pivotal role in restoring peace in Manipur,” said Fr C P Anto, founder and principal of the North East Institute of Social Sciences and Research (NEISSR) based in neighbouring Christian-majority Nagaland state.

Different Church denominations are backing the peace efforts by the youth in the northeastern region, comprising eight states.

“The youths from the warring communities of Kuki-Zo tribal Christians and Hindu Meiteis in Mizoram, Nagaland and Manipur states could help restore peace as they have many things in common,” said Fr Anto.

The youths have already started talking, a Church official familiar with the peace efforts said.

“No doubt, it is a challenging task,” added the official who did not want to be named.

The Kuki-Zo tribal people, who are mostly Christian, have been targeted by the Hindu Meiteis after violence broke out on May 3 last year in Manipur, bordering civil war-hit



Students from the North East Institute of Social Sciences and Research take part in a cultural programme. (Photo/NEISSR)

Myanmar.

The violence killed 226 people, and 39 are still missing, according to figures presented in the state legislative house. The official statistics said the violence also destroyed 11,133 houses, mostly of Christians, and some 60,000 people now live in various relief camps.

The violence began over a state top court order allowing the demand for granting the Meiteis tribal status to avail benefits of the government's affirmative action programme.

The move, according to the tribal people, would not only reduce their share of welfare benefits, including educational and job quotas but also enable the influential Meiteis to purchase their protected land in the state's hilly region, leading to their further deprivation.

The Meiteis, who comprise 53 per cent of the

state's 3.2 million people, control Manipur's legislature and administration, while the 41 per cent tribal people have little say.

The state is ruled by the pro-Hindu Bharatiya

Janata Party (BJP) of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Catholic Church has a diocese in Manipur, based in the state capital Imphal and headed by Archbishop Linus Neli. Few Christians are among the Meiteis, too.

On Aug 27, Fr Anto addressed 220 youth from Nagaland and urged them to take the lead in restoring peace in Manipur.

“They [youth] have the skills and the will to convince their elders to shed the differences for the sake of their future,” said the priest.

A lasting peace could be achieved only when the displaced indigenous people are allowed to return home, Anto said. ucanews.com

‘Natural burial’ option debuts in Archdiocese of Chicago

ILLINOIS: The Archdiocese of Chicago has announced the debut of a new “natural burial” option at one of its Chicago-area cemeteries, reportedly the first such Catholic offering in the state and one that officials say will help “honour the dignity of life” while respecting the environment.

Catholics will now have the option of using natural burial plots at St Michael the Archangel Cemetery, about 25 miles outside of Chicago, the archdiocese said in a press release.

Natural burials — sometimes called “green” burials — have been growing in popularity in the US in recent years, including at Catholic cemeteries. The practice seeks to use fewer resources than modern burial practices, including steel-free caskets and burial directly into the earth rather than encased by a concrete “vault.”

The archdiocese said that natural burials “emphasise simplicity and environmental responsibility by allowing the body to return to the earth naturally.”

The archdiocese said it had set aside a section of the St Michael Cemetery in Palatine, Illinois, for the natural burial plots. Dubbed the “Meadows of St Kateri” after St Kateri Tekakwitha, the first Native American to be

recognised as a saint by the Catholic Church, the area will offer “winding walking trails, native plants, and a mixture of meadow and forest terrain.”

Burials in the natural plots “will be memorialised with a choice of flush lawn-level memorial, an engraved boulder, or a boulder with a bronze nameplate,” the archdiocese says on its website.

Ted Ratajczyk, the executive director of Catholic Cemeteries of the Archdiocese of Chicago, said in the release that the archdiocese was “honoured to offer a new natural burial option that not only respects the environment but also aligns with Catholic teachings for treating the human body with dignity.”

“This initiative reflects our commitment to providing choices that honour the dignity of life, the needs of our community, and the values of our faith,” Ratajczyk said.

Natural burials have seen increased interest in the US in recent years amid concerns over the environmental and financial costs of conventional options.

On its website, the archdiocesan cemetery office says that natural burials represent “a return to tradition.” Daniel Payne, CNA

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• BUILDING OF MONUMENTS • SUPPLY OF CONDOLENCE WREATHS •

A 10-year vision finally realised

Our First Publisher Cardinal Antony Soter Fernandez 1994- 2003

“The launch of HERALD on September 8, 1994, was more than just the debut of a Catholic newspaper; it was the realisation of a vision that had been close to my heart for a decade.” Archbishop Anthony Soter Fernandez aptly described it as a dream fulfilled, and indeed, it marked the beginning of a new chapter in how the Church engages with both its members and the wider society.

HERALD's Purpose and Impact

HERALD was conceived as more than just a newspaper. The goal was to provide accurate, unbiased information while offering analysis through the lens of Catholic teachings. This dual focus — reporting news and providing context — aims to clarify how global events and societal changes intersect with our faith. HERALD seeks to bridge the Church's teachings with contemporary issues, offering perspective and responding to readers' concerns.

Addressing Church Concerns

The Church is deeply concerned with upholding the sanctity of life and family values. We have voiced concerns over international documents that prioritise population control over development. The Vatican advocates for addressing social justice, political stability, and economic inequality alongside population



Archbishop Soter Fernandez holding the first issue of the HERALD, September 8, 1994.

growth. We also support national policies that align with our values, such as rejecting abortion as a population control method.

Nation-Building and the Church's Contribution

In alignment with Malaysia's Vision 2020, the Church actively participates in nation-building. We focus on promoting family integrity, supporting youth development, and fostering national identity. HERALD plays a crucial role in this by providing information that helps Catholics engage with their civic responsibilities.

Filling the Information Gap

One of the challenges we faced was the lack of awareness among Catholics about Church



Cardinal Soter Fernandez holding the 25th anniversary edition of the HERALD, September 8, 2019.

teachings and current social issues. HERALD was established to bridge this information gap. We aim to ensure that Catholics are well-informed and prepared to act upon their knowledge. By addressing this gap, HERALD encourages readers to participate actively in national and community life, embracing their roles as informed and responsible citizens. In essence, HERALD is more than a news outlet; it is a call to action. It serves as a platform for educating, inspiring, and empowering individuals to engage meaningfully in both the life of the Church and the broader society. As we continue to fulfill this vision, our goal remains to be a source of truth and guidance, helping to shape a more informed and compassionate world.

This is a summary of a 1994 interview.

Our Second Publisher Archbishop Murphy Pakiam 2003 - 2014



Be well-informed and knowledgeable in faith

KUALA LUMPUR: There are no two ways about it. And no short-cuts either. To be an effective evangelist one has to know and be well-informed first, about every facet of one's faith, Church and community.

To achieve this, the then Auxiliary Bishop Murphy Pakiam offered a simple rule to follow. Read and be well-informed, he told the Catholic faithful at the celebration of the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes in Puchong, where two thousand devotees gathered under a makeshift tent to attend Mass, Benediction and a healing service, Feb 11, 1996.

Speaking from the pulpit at the end of the celebrations, Bishop Murphy expressed his regret that out of a population of six hundred thousand Catholics in Malaysia, the circulation of the HERALD, Malaysia's Catholic Fortnightly is only a meagre seven thousand.

Clutching a copy of the HERALD in his hand, he told the congregation that in every issue of the newspaper there are many informa-

tive, interesting and meaningful articles and features which will go a long way towards inspiring and educating Christians in matters of their faith. He also pointed out that the HERALD is the work of Catholic professionals and that it comes with a high command of the English language as well as unique literary and news presentation styles comparable to national secular newspapers. He advised youths to read the HERALD to tap the information in it and also to improve their English in the process.

“As a newspaper the HERALD extends a sense of bonding among Catholics and it would also be a good idea to leave issues of the paper in waiting rooms and reception halls as a simple way of reaching out to nominal Christians and lapsed Catholics. The paper also has pages in Bahasa Malaysia, Mandarin and Tamil and this helps to bring together the various vernacular groups with the mainstream of the Church.”

Our Current Publisher Archbishop Julian Leow 2014 - present



A prophet of our time

“This publication has been the ‘voice’ of the Church in providing universal and local news, sharing the Gospel, forming and reaching out to the Catholic community at large.

“We have witnessed the growth of HERALD and the evolution of the paper over the years in staying relevant and keeping up with the times. You can certainly be proud of your achievements over this quarter of a century — starting from a fortnightly, now to a weekly publication and also recently with an online presence.

“However, there are hard questions to ask ourselves. What is the future of print media? How do we continue to offer a channel of

communication that will speak to our people and about them? Does HERALD need transformation?

“The journey has certainly not been an easy one, with many obstacles along the way. Nevertheless, your steadfast dedication has helped you persevere in weathering these storms. Reaching such a milestone reminds us all of the Lord's faithfulness and mercy that abounds for His people.”

Archbishop Julian gave this message during our 25th anniversary celebration in 2019. Six months later, due to the lockdown, HERALD went fully online, reaching more than 280,000 readers with more than half a million visiting our website.



Our key milestones

SEPT 8, 1994

HERALD — The Catholic Fortnightly is launched at the Cathedral of St John. It has 12 pages in English and is sold at 70 cents a copy.



SEPT 25, 1994

In the next issue, it increases from 12 to 16 pages.

SEPT 10, 1995

One year later, it goes multilingual and increases to 20 pages — English (16 pages), Mandarin (2 pages), Tamil and BM (1 page each) The price increases to 80 cents a copy.

JAN 10, 1999

Price increases to RM1.00

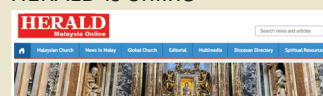
MARCH 25, 2001



Becomes a weekly, HERALD — The Catholic Weekly

AUGUST 2001

HERALD is online



SEPT 28, 2003

Increases to 24 pages

OCT 5, 2003

Some inside pages in colour

AUG 15, 2004

Increases to 28 pages

NOV 30, 2008

Increases to 32 pages until today
Eng (19 pages), BM (eight pages) Mandarin (three pages) and Tamil (two pages)

OCT 20, 2011

Opening of our office in the Diocese of Keningau



SEPT 8, 2019

HERALD celebrates its 25 anniversary with Mass at the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist followed by dinner.



Our Mission Statement

The HERALD is a Catholic Weekly of the Peninsular 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.

Our key milestones

MARCH 22, 2020

HERALD stops printing and goes fully online

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OCT 28, 2020

Cardinal Soter Fernandez, our first publisher passes away.

JUNE 30, 2021

Fr Lawrence Andrew SJ, the founding editor retires after 27 years.

JULY 1, 2021

Patricia Pereira is appointed HERALD's first female and lay Editor.

JAN 2, 2022

The Catholic Weekly
HERALD

We have a change in our masthead

SEPT 11, 2022

HERALD begins printing. Price increases to RM2 until today

SEPT 8, 2024

Herald celebrates 30th anniversary
Goes full colour



Under the patronage of our blessed Mother Mary

Founding Editor
Fr Lawrence
Andrew SJ
1994-2021



“In a remarkable journey, HERALD has become a cherished presence in Catholic homes across Malaysia.

This milestone echoes the biblical message of joy heralded over two millennia ago. On that historic night, the angel's proclamation to the shepherds was, 'I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people' (Luke 2:10). In a similar spirit, HERALD has dedicated itself to spreading joy and spiritual enrichment, becoming a cornerstone of Catholic life in Malaysia.

“The founding of HERALD is deeply connected to the Annunciation — the pivotal event in the life of Mary, the mother of Jesus. We initially aimed to launch HERALD on March 25, the Feast of the Annunciation. However, due to delays in obtaining our Printing Permit (PP), our plans shifted. On May 7, 1994, we received the long-



The first staff of HERALD: Tan Kah Peng, Joseph Masilamany, Andrew Soh, Anthony Lee Tee, Linda Kathleen and Carol Low.

awaited approval from the Kementerian Dalam Negeri (Ministry of Home Affairs), allowing us to proceed. Although the Annunciation had passed, we chose to dedicate HERALD to the Blessed Virgin Mary on her feast day, September 8, 1994. This date, the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, symbolised a new beginning and the start of HERALD's mission.

“The launch of HERALD at the Cathedral of St John on September 8, 1994, at 5.00pm, marked the beginning of a new chapter. With deep gratitude, we acknowledge the Blessed Virgin Mary's role in guiding and protecting

HERALD. Her intercession has been a source of strength, ensuring that HERALD continues to reach churches across Malaysia every Sunday, fulfilling its mission to bring the Good News to the faithful.

“As we celebrate this significant anniversary, we express our heartfelt thanks to God for the blessings and guidance that have sustained HERALD. We remain committed to our mission of sharing joy and faith, inspired by the enduring example of the Blessed Virgin Mary.”

Current Editor
Patricia Pereira
(2021 - present)



Patricia Pereira, was appointed as the new editor of HERALD, succeeding pioneering editor Fr Lawrence Andrew SJ. Her appointment was announced by the joint publishers: Kuala Lumpur Archbishop Julian Leow, Penang Bishop Sebastian Francis, and Malacca Johore Bishop Bernard Paul.

In her first statement, Patricia expressed excitement and trepidation about her new role. She acknowledged the significant responsibility of maintaining the high standards set by Fr Lawrence, particularly amid the challenges posed by the pandemic and declining print circulation.

A woman at the helm

“Our Holy Father Pope Francis has called for greater roles for women in Church leadership and my appointment is proof that the Malaysian Church has always been open in having women play prominent roles and hold esteem positions whenever the opportunity arises.

“This is a realisation and acceptance that laypeople especially women are capable of making a great contribution to the Church in more ways than one.”

She plans to implement gradual changes based on feedback from a recent Catholic Media Survey and is focused on adapting to the digital age while enhancing the newspaper's impact and relevance. Patricia aims to create a synergy

between the HERALD's print and online editions to better serve the Catholic community.

“I see our publication, as a great tool of evangelisation for catechesis, formation, enrichment of the Catholic faith and others.

“My wish is that the paper will not be cast aside after one has read it (like a daily) but will continue to serve as a reference and resource tool long after its publication date is over.”

With over 25 years in the field of communications, Patricia brings extensive experience from her previous roles in public relations and media. She previously worked at HERALD as a sub-editor and journalist and returned to the Church's media team in 2017 as Communications and Media Relations Officer for the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

The history of the 'Allah' controversy

HERALD first received a show cause letter in 1998. This issue was raised in Cabinet and resolved.

However in the early 2000s, we started receiving many letters amounting to the show-cause ones.

We also faced difficulties in renewing our annual publishing permit – which caused great anxiety and led us to the decision to go to the courts.

On December 31, 2009, the Kuala Lumpur High Court ruled in favour of HERALD, declaring that the prohibition on using 'Allah' was unconstitutional and that the term was not exclusive to Islam. The court emphasised that the term's use by Christians was protected as long as it was not used to proselytise Muslims.

The Court of Appeal overturned the High Court's decision, stating that 'Allah' must be reserved for Islam to prevent public disorder.

The Federal Court of Malaysia upheld this ruling in June 2014, confirming that non-Muslims did not have a constitutional right to use the word “Allah”.

Following the 2009 ruling, there were attacks on churches in Malaysia, prompting increased security. The government's handling of the case faced criticism, and the law firm representing the HERALD was burgled.

The 2021 case clarified that the use of 'Allah' and related terms in Christian contexts is permitted, contrasting with earlier decisions that restricted these uses.

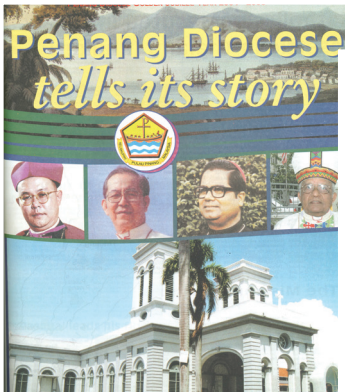
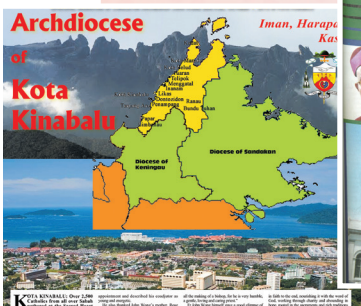


Fr Lawrence Andrew SJ, Archbishop Emeritus Soter Fernandez, Fr Dr Clarence Devadass, with the HERALD lawyers, S. Selvaraja and Porres Rayan (file pic)

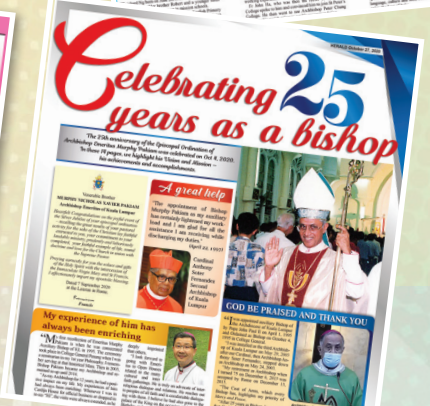
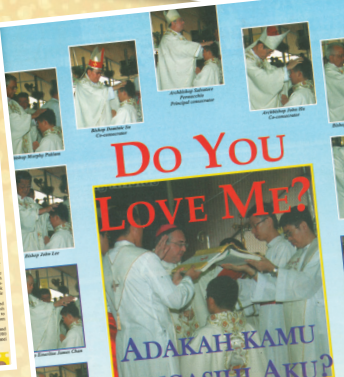
The 'Allah' case has brought about good for the country:

- The abolishment of the annual printing license. No publication (newspapers, magazines) need to renew annually.
- The 'Allah' ban is only for HERALD. Other publications are not bound by it.

Heralding the pastoral journey of the local Church



COVERAGE OF OUR SHEPHERDS



BAVE Chamber Choir



The BAVE Chamber Choir performing at the Friendship-Concert.



A celebration of faith, unity, and musical excellence

The BAVE Chamber Choir, under the visionary leadership of Dr Casey Broadway, recently achieved remarkable success on the international stage, bringing home prestigious awards to our Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur and Malaysia from the 13th Musica Eterna Roma held from July 17 to 21, 2024. This triumph not only marks a significant milestone in the choir's journey but also underscores the power of music to unite and inspire.

A Triumph in the Eternal City

Competing against choirs from around the world, the BAVE Chamber Choir delivered outstanding performances that captivated both judges and audiences. The choir earned Three Golden Diploma Awards in the Mixed Voices Category, Musica Sacra Category, and Gospel and Spiritual Category. In a particularly impressive feat, they emerged as Category Winners in both the Mixed Voices and Gospel and Spiritual categories, further solidifying their reputation for excellence. The choir's exceptional performance also secured them a coveted spot in the Grand Prize competition, a testament to their skill, dedication, and the strong leadership of Dr Casey.

Unity Through Music

What makes the BAVE Chamber Choir's achievement even more significant is the diverse and united nature of its members. The choir is composed of passionate youths, aged 25 to 43, from various Catholic parishes within the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. For the first time, these talented individuals have come together to sing in one voice, united by their shared faith and love for music. Under the direction of Dr Casey, the choir has not only excelled musically but has also fostered a sense of community and belonging among its members.

Rehearsals, held at the Broadway Academy, have been a space where these young voices are nurtured and honed, preparing them for the rigours of international competition, music festivals and the joy of communal worship.

Spiritual Guidance and Pilgrimage

Accompanying the choir on this remarkable journey was their Spiritual Director, Fr Gerard Theraviam from the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, Kuala Lumpur. Under his spiritual guidance, the choristers had the blessed opportunity to embark on a pilgrimage to various holy sites in Rome. This pilgrimage enriched their experience, deepening their faith as they visited sacred locations that hold great significance in the Catholic tradition.

One of the highlights of the trip was when the choir was warmly greeted by the Ambassador of Malaysia to the Holy See, His Excellency Hendy Assan, at the Embassy of Malaysia in Vatican City. The choir was honoured to perform for the ambassador during a special lunch hosted at the embassy. His Excellency further showed his support by attending the competition at the Basilica Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, proudly standing behind Malaysia's one and only representative in the event.

Adding to their spiritual journey, the choir was invited to sing for Mass at the iconic Pantheon in Rome. Fr Gerard had the distinguished opportunity to concelebrate this Mass alongside other clergy and bishops of Rome. The choir's time in Rome also included visits to the St. Peter's Basilica where they joined the Angelus prayer recited by Pope Francis and the visit to the Vatican Museums, enriching their spiritual and cultural experience. As a fitting conclusion to their victorious trip, the choir made a pilgrimage to Venice, marking the finale of their journey with reflection and celebration.

A Shared Success and Gratitude

The success of the BAVE Chamber Choir in Rome is shared with another ensemble, the Broadway Academy Christian Fellowship Choir, conducted by associate conductor Mr Henry Gultom, which also achieved outstanding results. This choir, composed mostly of senior adults from various Catholic parishes, won the Golden Diploma Award and emerged as the Category Winner in the Senior Choir Category, bringing Malaysia its 4th Gold Award and 3rd Category Winner in the competition. The BA Christian Fellowship Choir meets weekly at the Broadway Academy for choir training and prayer, embodying the spirit of community and worship through music.

The BAVE Chamber Choir wishes to express their sincere thanks and appreciation to Archbishop Julian Leow for all the support he has given from the start of this project until today. Their heartfelt gratitude extends to all the priests, parishioners, family and friends of the various churches who have supported them and contributed to making their journey to Europe a tremendous success. Your efforts have brought glory to our Archdiocese, and these victories are as much yours as they are the choir's.

The BAVE Chamber Choir's victories in Rome are a source of pride not only for the choir but for the entire Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur and the nation. As they continue their journey, they are eager to welcome new voices into their fold, offering an opportunity for more individuals to experience the joy of singing in harmony, both musically and spiritually.

This is an invitation to anyone who feels called to join a community of faith-filled musicians committed to excellence and service. Together, let us continue to celebrate and elevate the gift of music in our worship and in our lives.

A call for new voices

As the BAVE Chamber Choir returns from their victorious journey in Rome, they are looking to expand their ranks and welcome new members into their musical family. This September and October 2024, the choir is holding auditions for both experienced and non-experienced singers who wish to join them in their mission of spreading the beauty of sacred choral music.

Selected members will receive comprehensive training in vocal technique and music rudiments as part of the choir's sacred choral training programme. This training is designed to cultivate not just technical skill but also a deep appreciation for the spiritual and communal aspects of choral singing. Those who successfully complete the programme will have the opportunity to represent Malaysia in Europe in 2026, following in the footsteps of the current choir members who have already made their mark on the international stage.

Why Join the BAVE Chamber Choir?

- **Spiritual Enrichment:** Singing in the choir offers a unique way to deepen your faith, as you engage in the ancient tradition of using music as a form of worship.
- **Musical Growth:** Under the expert guidance of Dr Casey, you will develop your vocal skills and musical understanding, regardless of your prior experience.
- **Community and Fellowship:** The choir is more than just a musical ensemble; it is a community where friendships are formed, and every member's contribution is valued.
- **International Opportunities:** Members who complete the training programme will have the chance to perform on international stages, as exemplified by the choir's recent success in Rome.

How to Join

If you are passionate about music and wish to be part of a choir that combines artistic excellence with a deep sense of purpose, the BAVE Chamber Choir invites you to audition. Auditions will take place throughout September and October 2024. For more information or to schedule an audition, please contact us at Broadway Academy +60172916160 (whatsapp available).



Choir Workshop with Choir Expert from Croatia Ms Valaria.



WORD IN PROGRESS

Karen-Michaela Tan

There's a comfortable acceptance that comes with nearly turning 50. My friends in the same boat share my sentiments about loving the freedom that age brings, because lived wisdom has shown us its not how much we weigh, or the dress size we wear that matters, as much as the experiences we have lived through.

However, with age also comes a certain complacency, and a greater adherence to routine and familiarity. I would rather go to a tried and true café than traipse across town to some undoubtedly overpublicised restaurant where the crowds almost assure a slower, substandard dining experience.

I have been such a stickler for the safety of routine these past few years that I have tried my hardest to plan trips and vacations so they would see me home by either Saturday or Sunday in order for me to participate at Mass at either of the two parishes most familiar to me. I kid you not, I would rather take the red eye flight overnight and arrive at KLIA at 3.00am and make my way to 6.45am Mass on Sunday at my Petaling Jaya parish rather than be caught in a different state or country when I'd be forced to seek out the nearest church and try to align Mass times with my travel itinerary.

This is a fairly new thing with me. Prior to this, I loved experiencing

Masses in the language of the nation I was in. I have heard Mass in Russian in a monastery, celebrated it with a group of Greek neophytes newly received into the Catholic church in Santorini, heard the kyrie in strongly accented Australian, and the Our Father in Afrikaans, as well as been present at Masses in Vietnamese, Thai and Indonesian. Each of these experiences underscored the universality of the Catholic church. No matter the language, I knew exactly which part of the Mass I was at, and knew when to bow, genuflect or kneel. That feeling of always being 'home' no matter what language Mass was in is something that I loved.

So what has changed, to the point that even a different presider at my parish makes me squirm? Much of it comes from the need for familiarity as I age. I see it in my 82-year-old father too, the disgruntled face he pulls when the choir suddenly decides to incorporate electric guitars and drums, or when the time for daily Mass changes.

This demand for things to never change is kind of Catholic. After all, Hebrews 13:8 says it quite plainly, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Somehow this idea that Jesus Christ is exactly the same in the past, in the present, and in the future has spilled into the way we want our Church to be. We grumble when Malay hymns are introduced into the order of Mass, we shuffle when made to sing *Agnus Dei* instead of Lamb of God, and we took a long time to get into the habit of responding "And with your spirit"

instead of "and also with you" when our priests say "Peace be with you."

There is a very real danger of stagnation when our faith is built on such doggedness. Our desire for uniformity and sameness can make us blind to things that need to change, both in liturgy and in the parts we play in our way of being Church. In these days of such flux, the Church is challenged when it is called to be a constant in a world of shifting views and opinions. However, we must never forget that when Jesus began his public ministry, He was regarded as an upstart and renegade simply because He broke the mould of a preacher. He did not scorn non-Jews, He ate with the supposed enemies of the Jewish people, and consorted with women of dubious repute. And yet, this rabbi with a difference was to bring back the lost tribes of Israel, and add to their numbers millions of people from different tribes and tongues.

This is why it is important for every Catholic to catch ourselves when we feel we are too mired in the usual, the average, and the mundane. While it is not wrong to like regularity and routine, it is wrong if we make gods out of our need for constant consistency. Upon reaching a certain age, many Catholics feel it is their right to want things to remain a certain way.

We forget that Jesus in Matthew 10:34-36 said, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a

daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's foes will be members of one's own household." While this seems antithetical to Jesus' message and ministry, we must realise that all four Gospels contain the message that following Jesus is no easy path. Following a trailblazer didn't mean that the men and women who came after Jesus were not picking stones out of their sandals.

The deeper truth behind this passage is the fact that choices have consequences. When we hold on to how we believe things should be, we are blind to how things can be made better or are being made better. Unshakeable persistence to the 'old way of doing things' shut us out from the graces, knowledge and learning that come with new experiences. If Sarah could bear a child at 90, how much more can we be enriched with new experiences and wisdom if we go out of our way to challenge our comfort zones?

Perhaps it is time for us to look at our lives and call our obstinate clinging to routine by its real name: cowardice. When we shrink our world to suit our level of risk, we also close ourselves to growth. No matter our ages, we need to remember that God calls all His people to push out into deeper water (Luke 5:4) because there is where the bounty is.

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



INFORMED OPINION

Prof Xavier V. Pereira

The two major international sporting events of the summer of 2024, the European Nations Cup 2024, or Euro 24 football tournament and the 2024 Paris Olympic Games are now behind us. Both events were televised to many countries around the world and had a large global audience. Spectator sports has become increasingly popular globally. Being a former sportsperson, I enjoy watching athletic events, and highlights of football matches. Like many of my generation, I have a favourite English professional club team which I support.

Over the past few decades there has been an increase in ethnic diversity in the composition of Western European club football teams. The four major European football leagues – the English Premier League, the Spanish LaLiga, the Italian Serie A and the German Bundesliga – have experienced an influx of players from South America and Africa, with smaller numbers hailing from Asia and North America. Despite this inevitable in-flux of quality football players from around the world there are hints of racism that casts a shadow over European football. This has prompted the European football governing body UEFA, to display the word RESPECT at football matches. In some countries like England the players bend a knee before the start of a game to acknowledge that Black Lives Matter. Most football fans though show unified support for the players of their favourite club.

Internationally too there has been a greater diversity in the composition of national football teams. The German FIFA World Cup champions of 1974 led by the legendary Franz Beckenbauer was an all-Caucasian team whereas the 2014 winning squad was more ethnically diverse.

The emphasis on the 2014 champions over the more ethnically diverse French FIFA World Cup champions of 1998 and 2018 is to highlight the change in attitude toward ethnic diversity in Germany. Former chancellor Angela Merkel's Germany was supportive of diversity in contrast to that of Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany which championed Aryan supremacy. There is however the grievance that many migrants in Germany have not integrated into German society and there is a rising anti-migrant sentiment not only in Germany but in other Western European countries as well. Right wing anti migrant political parties have also gained popularity in recent national and European Union elections.

The diversity policies in many European countries are thought to stem from the principles or values of human rights. Some experts are of the opinion that these policies have arisen from Christian values of respect, dignity, equality, and liberty that have been prevalent in western European countries in the past.

Closer to home Malaysia had successful ethnically diverse football teams in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. In the 1970s, Malaysians watched legends like M. Chandran, Soh Chin Aun, Mokhtar Dahari, Santokh Singh, Shukor Salleh, and others qualify Malaysia for the 1972

Olympics. The Malaysian teams of this era also won the Merdeka Tournament several times beating the national teams of Japan and South Korea. This team's greatest achievement was winning the bronze medal at the 1974 Teheran Asian games behind host Iran and second placed Israel. This was an ethnically diverse group of Malaysians footballers who brought glory to the country through patriotic unity backed by a united multiethnic Malaysian people.

The US Olympic contingent, from observations of outward appearance and surnames, was the most diverse of all the countries that participated in the 2024 Paris Olympics. It is a fact that the USA has citizens who have roots in many different countries of the world. This diverse population provided the country with a diverse group of athletes and sportspersons. Many are also of mixed parentage which is further proof of a greater acceptance of ethnic diversity and the growth in numbers of multiethnic individuals. Thus, the triumph of the USA contingent in the final medal tally of the Paris Games is also a triumph for multiethnic diversity, and is an excellent example of unity in diversity.

In the Bible, the story of the Tower of Babel (*Genesis* 11: 1 – 9), metaphorically portrays the division of monolingual humanity into people who spoke many different languages. It is obvious that human beings are ethnically, culturally, and linguistically different. Research evidence strengthens the obvious. Today we have scientific evidence that population of human beings are genetically

diverse. Sociological research confirms cultural differences. These differences have historically often led to conflict yet there have been examples throughout history of cohesion despite differences.

Pentecost was one such experience. The experience of Babel is often compared to the experience of Pentecost. The experience of Babel was divisive. The experience of Pentecost was unifying (*Acts of the Apostles* chapter 2). People from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds were depicted as being able to understand each other. The community of early believers were described to be one in heart and mind (*Acts* 4:32). This unity has often been the goal of the church, schisms, and reformation notwithstanding. Dialogue continues to be a tool in accepting the diversity of religion and denomination.

In a world consisting of countries torn apart by conflict because of differences in ethnicity and religion, sports seems to be a powerful tool of unity amidst diversity. The 2024 Paris Olympics may be behind us now but it will be remembered fondly for the unity among teammates, the friendly exchanges between competitors, and warm audiences that applauded both winners and losers.

Xavier V. Pereira is a medical doctor, psychiatrist and psychotherapist, and an adjunct professor at Taylor's University School of Medicine. He is also co-founder, director and pro bono psychiatrist of Health Equity Initiatives, an NGO that serves refugees with mental health challenges.

Sports, Diversity and Unity





Fr Ron Rolheiser

Dark memory



Inside each of us, beyond what we can picture clearly, express in words, or even feel distinctly, we have a dark memory of having once been touched and caressed by hands far gentler than our own. That caress has left a permanent mark, an imprint of a love so tender and deep that its memory becomes a prism through which we see everything else. This imprint lies beyond conscious memory but forms the centre of our soul.

This is not an easy concept to explain. Bernard Lonergan, one of the great intellectuals of the past century, tried to explain it philosophically by saying we bear inside us “the brand of the first principles”, namely, the *oneness, truth, goodness, and beauty* which are the attributes of God. That’s accurate, but abstract. Maybe the old myths and legends capture it better when they say that, before birth, each soul is kissed by God, and it then goes through life always in some dark way remembering that kiss and measuring everything it experiences in relation to that original sweetness. To be in touch with your heart is to be in touch with this primordial kiss, with both its preciousness and its meaning.

What exactly is being said here?

Within each of us, at that place where all that is most precious within us lives, there

is an inchoate sense of having once been touched, caressed, loved, and valued in a way that is beyond anything we have ever consciously experienced. In fact, all the goodness, love, value, and tenderness we experience in life fall short precisely because we are already in touch with something deeper. When we feel frustrated, angry, betrayed, violated, or enraged, it is because our outside experience is antithetical to what we already hold dear inside.

We all have this place, a place in the heart, where we hold all that is most precious and sacred to us. From that place our own kisses issue forth, as do our tears. It is the place that we most guard from others, but the place where we would most want others to come into; the place where we are the most deeply alone and the place of intimacy; the place of innocence and the place where we are violated; the place of our compassion and the place of our rage. In that place we are holy. There we are temples of God, sacred churches of truth and love. There we bear God’s image.

But this needs understanding: the image of God inside of us is not a beautiful icon stamped inside of our soul. No. The image and likeness of God inside us is energy, fire, and memory; especially the memory of a touch so tender and loving that its goodness and truth become the prism

through which we ultimately see everything. Thus, we recognize goodness and truth outside of us precisely because they resonate with something that is already inside us. Things touch our hearts when they touch us here. Isn’t it because we have already been deeply touched and caressed that we passionately seek a soulmate, that we seek someone to join us in this intimate place?

And, consciously and unconsciously, we measure everything in life by how it touches this place: why do certain experiences touch us so deeply? Why do our hearts burn within us in the presence of any truth, love, goodness, or tenderness that is genuine and deep? Is not all deep knowledge simply a waking up to something we already know? Is not all love simply a question of being respected for something we already are? Are not the touch and tenderness that bring ecstasy nothing other than the stirring of deep memory? Are not the ideals that inspire hope only the reminder of words somebody has already spoken to us? Does not our desire for innocence (and innocent means “not wounded”) mirror some primal unwounded place deep within us? And when we feel violated, is it not because someone has irreverently entered the sacred inside us?

When we are in touch with this memory

and respect its sensitivities, we are in touch with our souls. At those times, faith, hope, and love will spring up in us, joy and tears will both flow through us freely, and we will be deeply affected by the innocence and beauty of children, as pain and gratitude alternately bring us to our knees.

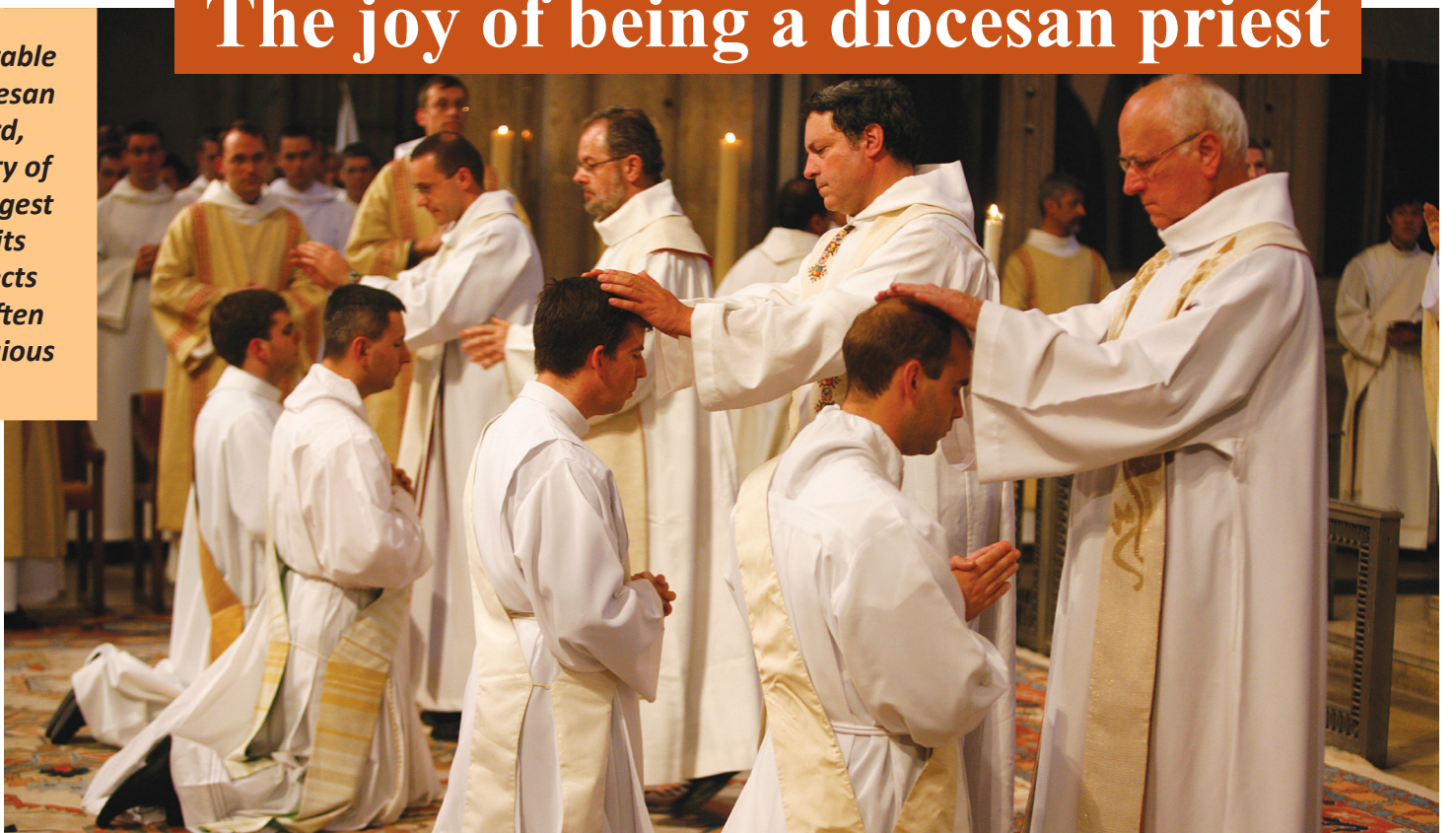
That is what it means to be recollected, centred. To be truly ourselves is to remember, to touch and to feel the memory of God’s original touch in us. That memory fires our energy and provides us with a prism through which to see and understand.

Sadly, today, too often a wounded, calloused, cynical, over sophisticated, and overly adult world invite us to forget God’s kiss in the soul, to view this as childish. But, unless we lie to ourselves and harden ourselves against our own selves (the most dangerous of all activities), we will always remember, dimly, darkly, unrelentingly, the caress of God.

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

In a context not particularly favourable for promoting the vocation of diocesan priesthood, Fr Emmanuel Goulard, rector of the Saint-Sulpice Seminary of Issy-les-Moulineaux, one of the largest seminaries in France, highlights its most significant aspects and reflects on the commitment to celibacy, often undervalued compared to the religious vow of chastity.

The joy of being a diocesan priest



The vocational context is not very encouraging. There are multiple reasons for this: a loss of the sense of commitment, the over-solicitation of young people, a decline in religious practice, the tarnished image of priests following the painful revelations of abuses committed by some ordained ministers, and more.

While the vocation of the diocesan priesthood is struggling, the diocesan clergy remains the “backbone” of the church’s life and mission. Rooted in a specific area and belonging to a presbyterium, diocesan priests are close to all the baptised, who have varied spiritual motivations and live through unique situations (birth, illness, death).

“Faithful at their post,” diocesan priests welcome those who knock on their door over time and in all circumstances, reach out to those who no longer come to church, travel miles to animate parish communities, and invest their energy in organising events of grace (youth camps, pilgrimages, training, celebrations, etc.).

This beautiful ministry is lived out in faithful and joyful discretion in the heart of a vast missionary field with limited means.

However, the unique mission of the diocesan priest is often devalued.

They are perceived more as “general practitioners,” occupied with various tasks,

often material or organisational in nature. As celibates, they are the courageous prophets who proclaim that the jar of flour will not run out, nor will the jug of oil be empty (cf. 1 Kings 17:14)! As collaborators of the bishop, they are tireless pastors and servants of ecclesial communion, truly lived amid the waves.

The diocesan ministry is thus misunderstood. Some faithful even go so far as to assert that the commitment of diocesan ministers to priestly celibacy is less serious and total than that of religious priests!

It is necessary to recall the difference between the two paths. Before being ordained priest, a religious has already freely committed, after reflection, to

follow Christ in a life of poverty, chastity, and obedience by professing the three vows. This commitment is lived within a community or congregation and follows the spiritual intuitions of a founder. Thus, the commitment to celibacy by the religious priest at the time of ordination renews and strengthens his profession of the vow of chastity.

For the diocesan priest, it is at the time of diaconal ordination that he commits to living celibacy to signify the gift of himself to Christ and to manifest the presence of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Thus, even though the form may differ (religious vow or commitment at the time of ordination), the choice to follow Christ in priestly celibacy is equally demanding

for both the diocesan priest and the priest belonging to a religious congregation.

I would add that the commitments to priestly celibacy are far more numerous than we might imagine, far more valiant than athletic feats, and far more fruitful over time. Let us not allow occasional counterexamples to make us forget these real and daily fidelities.

Let us strive to better understand the beauty, necessity, and demands of the diocesan priest’s ministry in the complementarity of vocations and states of life. I particularly invite my fellow priests to openly and collectively bear witness to the joy of living the presbyteral ministry in their dioceses of incardination. LCI (<https://international.la-croix.com>)

Little Catholics' Corner



Happy Birthday Mother Mary!
Hail Mary word search:

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

HAIL MARY
FRUIT
HOUR

SINNER
LORD
GRACE

HOLY MARY
PRAY FOR US
BLESSED

Dear children,

Being able to hear is a wonderful gift from God. Imagine what it would be like if you couldn't hear anything!

In today's Gospel reading, people begged Jesus to heal a deaf man.

What do you think it was like for that man when suddenly he could hear everything that was going on around him?

God has given us the gift of hearing to be able to talk and listen to other people and to appreciate the sounds of creation. We use this gift to hear God's Word at Mass and when we are being taught.

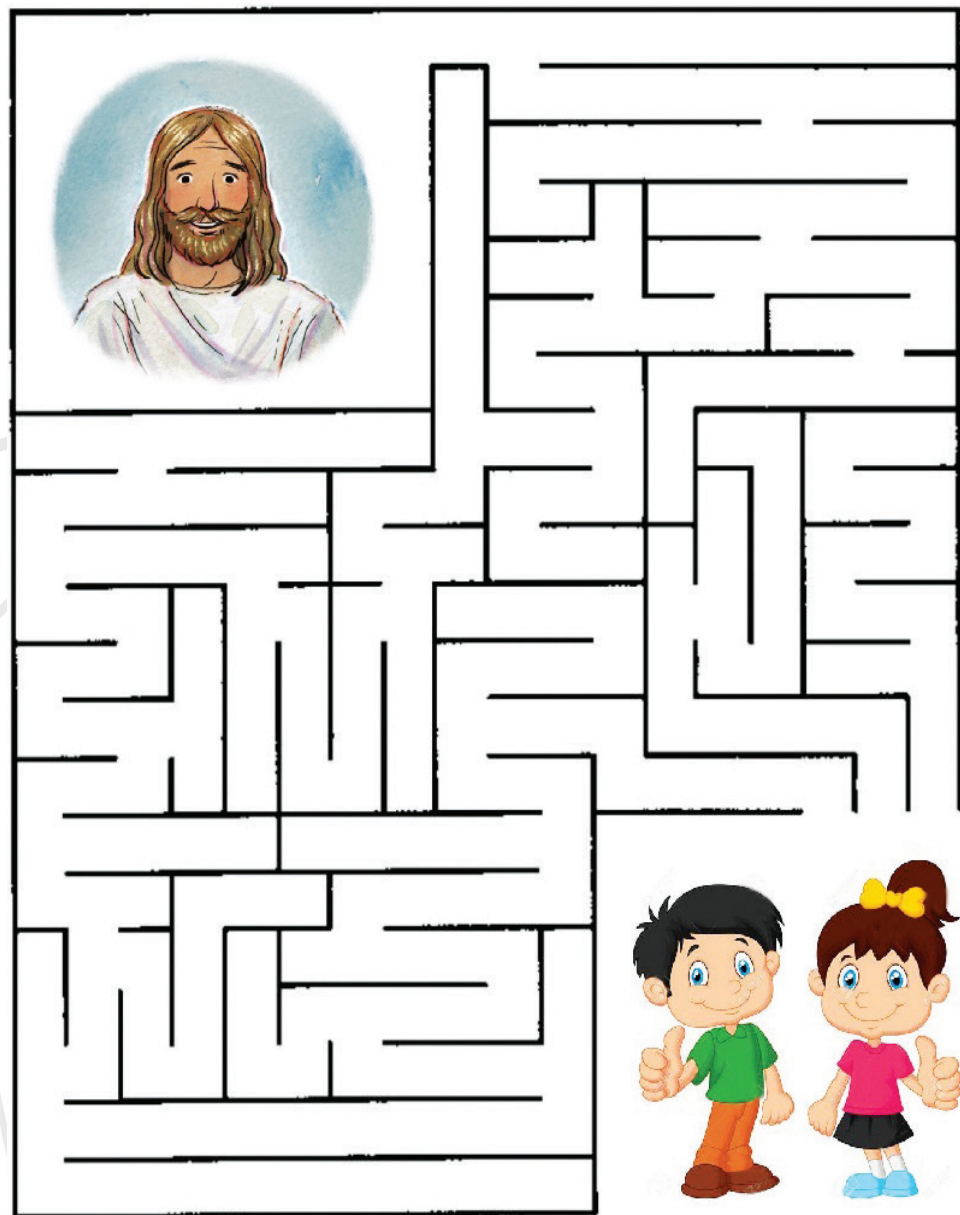
Think of all the things that we can do because we can hear. We listen to and play music, we can sing and talk with people, we can hear birds and wind in the trees, and we can also be warned of things like barking dogs, or cars coming.

Did you ever thank God for the gift of hearing? Thank Him today!

Love
Aunty Eliz

These two children want to meet and thank Jesus

Can you help them find a way to meet Jesus?



HIDDEN PICTURE | Jesus heals a deaf man

Find these objects hidden in the picture below:

book, crown, fish, jug, moon, necktie,
needle and thread, snail, sock, star.



OLF youth leaders' formed

TO SERVE THEIR PEERS

KUALA LUMPUR: In today's rapidly changing world, strong, faith-driven leadership within the Church community is essential to addressing the challenges faced by youth. Recognising this need, the youth leaders of the Church of Our Lady of Fatima (OLF) recently took part in a two-day formation. Organised with the support of the Seeds Ministry, the event aimed to inspire and guide these leaders on their spiritual journey.

This formation was both a chance to deepen personal faith and a call to action — an opportunity to equip themselves with the spiritual and practical tools necessary to effectively serve their peers and community. Participants were reminded of their vital role within the church and the broader community, entrusted with the responsibility of guiding and supporting others on their spiritual journeys. The event also offered them a moment to reflect on their roles, strengthen their relationship with God, and draw from the wisdom and experience of the Seeds Ministry.

As young leaders, they were challenged to grow both in their faith and in their commitment to engaging with and uplifting others. The formation featured inspiring talks, interactive workshops, and communal prayers, all rooted in the teachings of Christ.



Central to this formation were the vibrant praise and worship sessions that filled each day with energy and spirit. These moments of collective worship went beyond singing, as participants united in their voices and opened their hearts to God's presence. The Seeds Ministry's heartfelt and passionate approach to praise and worship inspired participants to fully embrace their spirituality and experience the joy of worshipping together.

Reflecting on the transformative two-day formation event, it's clear that the experience was much more than a series of sessions and activities. The guidance provided by the Seeds Ministry has left a lasting impact on the OLF youth leaders. They emerged with renewed faith, a deeper sense of purpose, and a strengthened commitment to their roles within the church community. The powerful insights gained and the bonds formed during the event will serve as a strong foundation for their future endeavours. As they move forward, they carry with them the lessons learned and the spirit of unity fostered over these two days, ready to apply their newfound knowledge and enthusiasm to their ministry. The growth they experienced will continue to inspire and guide them in their mission.

POPE'S APOSTOLIC JOURNEY

INCLUDE VISIT TO YOUTH

EDUCATION HUB IN INDONESIA

JAKARTA: Pope Francis visited the first regional headquarters of Scholas Occurrentes in Southeast Asia during his visit to Indonesia from September 3 to 6.

The global educational project, which started in 2001 under his leadership as Archbishop of Buenos Aires, focuses on engaging youth in education, art, and sports.

On September 4, Pope Francis visited the "Grha Pemuda" Youth House in Jakarta, where he met 200 Indonesian students from various islands, schools, and religions.

The visit highlighted the values of unity in diversity and the Culture of Encounter, key principles of Scholas Occurrentes.

Scholas Occurrentes also launched the Scholas Citizenship programme in Southeast Asia. This initiative is in partnership with Indonesia's Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology and the Global 5P Movement.

The programme will train university stu-

dents and young teachers in the Scholas methodology, which they will implement in their communities.

Scholas Occurrentes said that the approach seeks to address the needs of Indonesian society, where the youth population is growing rapidly.

Scholas Occurrentes started as a project in Buenos Aires to bring together students from public and private schools, regardless of religious background, to work for the common good.

The organisation, which became a pontifical foundation in 2013, now partners with nearly 450,000 schools and educational institutions worldwide.

In 2022, Scholas Occurrentes participated in the G20 Summit in Bali, where it presented its educational model to global leaders.

The organisation also visited Genggeng village in Lombok, engaging with local youth and planting an olive tree as a symbol of peace. These activities laid the groundwork for the new regional headquarters in Southeast Asia. **LiCas News**



Young people from across Indonesia gathered at the Jakarta University of Art for the closing of the Scholas Occurrentes x Tunas Bineka programme on August 13. (LiCas News/Scholas Occurrentes)

KUALA LUMPUR: In an age where digital interactions often overshadow meaningful face-to-face connections, many of us yearn for a deeper sense of purpose and belonging. Despite the constant connectivity that defines modern life, feelings of loneliness and isolation remain prevalent. To bridge this growing disconnect, a CHOICE weekend retreat was held from August 9 to 11, bringing together 36 adults for a transformative experience centred on open communication and personal growth.

Through workshops and group discussions, participants explored the importance of authentic relationships, navigated the challenges of contemporary life, and reflected on the vital role of faith in personal development. Honest sharing allowed participants to break through barriers like fear, past wounds, and societal expectations, fostering genuine connections and personal transformation.

As the weekend concluded, participants gained more than just a renewed sense of purpose. The CHOICE Weekend offered lasting change, empowering them with the clarity and confidence to face life's challenges with faith and grace. This transformation is best expressed in the words of those who experienced it firsthand.

Dereen shared, "Attending the CHOICE weekend was an incredible experience. It gave me the chance to reconnect with my faith and reflect on my spiritual journey. Connecting with others was uplifting, and the weekend was truly fruitful, helping me realign my life and better understand myself. I also made new friends. I left feeling renewed, inspired, and with a stronger sense of purpose. I highly recommend this program to my family and friends."

Shini expressed, "I had a great time and learned many positive things. Experienc-

RECONNECTING WITH PURPOSE CHOICE KL 107



ing CHOICE weekend for the first time and being part of Christianity has been wonderful. Thank you to the team for creating these opportunities."

Jessmine reflected, "I must admit that I could not, in my wildest dreams, have imagined the impact the CHOICE experience had on me. Since my CHOICE experience, I have noticed a change in me. It may sound like a rouse to gain more pledges, but I have come to notice the similarity amongst CHOICE pledges that I am beginning to see in myself. I value my relationships with greater fervour and

I have a newfound serenity that is difficult for me to explain with mere words. I hope I have said much what CHOICE is truly about and should you ask me what it is, I have but one response "join in and find out for yourself!"

Nicholas said, "Returning from the hilltop to the plain, where the sun's rays touch everything — those three days were a true sanctuary, shielding us from the heat of life's challenges."

These heartfelt testimonies remind us of the powerful impact of the CHOICE weekend in drawing people closer to their

faith and to one another, anchored by the motto "To know, to love, to serve," the programme deepens participants' understanding of the value of relationships - whether with family, friends, the Church, the community, and God. If you're seeking to reconnect with what truly matters, consider joining us for the next CHOICE weekend. It is open to single adults aged between 24-40 years old and the next CHOICE Weekend will be in 2025, dates to be confirmed. For further enquiries please email choice@archkl.org. **Shireen Pereira**



Nearly 2,000 Christian youth in Iraq gather for prayer, faith formation

ERBIL, Iraq: Nearly 2,000 young people from Christian youth groups across Iraq gathered for the seventh annual Ankawa Youth Gathering held August 22-24 in the Mar Elia Shrine Courtyard in Ankawa-Erbil.

The event was sponsored by the Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil and held in the Mar Elia Shrine Courtyard in Ankawa-Erbil and its theme, *Joy of Love*, was inspired by Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation on love within the family.

Bashar Matti Warda, the Chaldean archbishop of Erbil and patron of the gathering, delivered the welcoming address. He emphasised the significance of this year's theme, explaining that it reflects the very

identity of God: a trinity of love, inseparable and interdependent. Warda stressed that without one element, the others lose their meaning.

"Through Pope Francis' teachings, we seek to free ourselves from misconceptions that have tarnished the beauty of our fundamental purpose: to love and be loved," Warda said. "We must reject the distortions that our human frailty has imposed on love, reducing it to mere fleeting pleasure, temporary commitment, or a simple contract where we seek minimal input for maximum benefit from our partners. It's crucial to understand that everyone yearns to receive love before they can fully give it."

Warda affirmed that love is not merely the

sum of romantic feelings but rather the actions we take to deserve the love of others. He cited the biblical story of Isaac, referring to Isaac's patience and his arduous labor for 14 years to win Rachel's heart, whom he believed God had chosen for him.

A message from the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, was read before the participants. Addressed to the Chaldean archbishop of Erbil, Parolin conveyed Pope Francis' delight in the annual gathering of young people there.

The Pope reassured them of his prayers, hoping they would find inspiration in "the spirituality of family life and relationships." He also expressed his spiritual connection to all participants. The Holy Father entrusted

ed them and their loved ones "to the care of the Holy Family in heavenly Nazareth," joyfully bestowing his blessing "as a token of wisdom, joy, and peace in the Lord."

The opening ceremony began with an evening of hymns by the choir of Mar Yousuf Cathedral and concluded with another performance by Lebanese singer Christian Najjar. The event also included panel discussions.

The event's programme included several lectures on family-related topics in the context of contemporary challenges, presented by both religious and lay speakers from Iraq and Lebanon. In addition to cultural and recreational activities, participants visited monasteries, churches, cultural centres, and archaeological sites.

The lectures focused on key themes from Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*), including the role of education in fostering loving and joyful families, addressing common family issues, and the importance of forgiveness in healing wounds.

As the largest Christian youth gathering in Iraq, the Ankawa Youth Gathering has been organized annually by the Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil since 2018. It serves as a vital platform for strengthening connections among young people and deepening their faith and solidarity.

The event concluded with a communal celebration of the holy Mass at Mar Yousuf Cathedral in Ankawa, Erbil. **Georgena Habbaba, CNA**



Nearly 2,000 young people from Christian youth groups across Iraq gathered for the seventh annual Ankawa Youth Gathering 2024 held August 22-24, 2024, in the Mar Elia Shrine Courtyard in Ankawa-Erbil, Iraq. (Photo/Ankawa Youth Gathering 2024 Facebook page)

Fr Jean-Claude Lourdes passes away

KUALA LUMPUR: Fr Francis Gerard Jean-Claude Lourdes passed away on September 1, 2024, just 17 days' shy of his 60th birthday.

Fr Jean-Claude's life was a testament to the power of faith and the depth of commitment to God's calling. Born on Sept 18, 1964, he embarked on his spiritual journey at the Good Shepherd Minor Seminary in Melaka in 1986, where his spirit was nurtured and his vocation deepened. He continued his formation at the College General Major Seminary in Penang, leading to his ordination on July 8, 1994, by then Archbishop Anthony Soter Fernandez at the Church of St Joseph, Sentul, Kuala Lumpur.

Throughout his priestly ministry, Fr Jean-Claude was known for his humility, wisdom and steadfast service. From his first assignment as assistant priest at the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist in Kuala Lumpur (1994-1997) to his roles at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Port Dickson; the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes in Klang, and the Church of Our Lady of Fatima in Banting, he touched countless lives with his grace and wisdom.

In April 2004, Fr Jean-Claude was appointed parish priest at the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Mentakab where he shepherded the flock for seven years. His pastoral journey continued at the Church of



the Assumption in Petaling Jaya and the Church of the Risen Christ in Kuala Lumpur, where he brought people closer to God through his gentle leadership. In January 2022, Fr Jean-Claude embraced his role as parish administrator at the Chapel of Kristus Aman, serving with unwavering devotion until his final days.

His dedication to the Church extended beyond parish boundaries; he pursued an MS in Development Communication at the University of the Philippines Los Banos and served as Consultant and Spiritual Director for Social Communication in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur from 1998 to 2012.

On July 7, 2019, Fr Jean-Claude celebrated his Silver Jubilee Sacerdotal Anniversary, marking 25 years of unwavering service to God and His people. He was known for his concise yet impactful homilies, distilling profound wisdom into every sermon. Though he may have appeared reserved, those who knew him found a warm and friendly priest whose counsel was invaluable.

The packed congregation at the funeral Mass, held on September 4 at the Church of St Joseph, Sentul, stood as a poignant tribute to a life devoted to faithful service. This Mass was followed by his burial at the Kajang Catholic cemetery.

Top soccer manager's poignant message

SUNNE, Sweden: Even if you don't like soccer, the legendary soccer manager Sven-Göran Eriksson's message on life and death is definitely worth reading.

The Swedish soccer legend, Sven-Göran Eriksson, passed away on August 26, after battling pancreatic cancer. Since then, tributes have poured in for the much-respected former soccer player and manager from other sports legends, royalty, and fans.

Eriksson had disclosed in January this year that he'd been diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer. Doctors had given him a year at most to live. Despite his seemingly impressive strength, the 76-year-old died surrounded by his loved ones just eight months after he'd shared his devastating prognosis.

Yet in his final months, the Swede, who'd managed an array of world class soccer teams throughout his career, including 10 national teams, returned to his home in his native Sweden to enjoy moments of quiet and to appreciate the little things in life.

While there Eriksson, who was not known to be religious, made a show with Amazon Sports in which he gave a heart-breaking farewell and a poignant reminder to all about death. It is as inspiring as his genuine



love for soccer and those he managed.

"I had a good life. I think we are all scared of the day when it's finished, when we die, but life is about death as well. You have to learn to accept it, for what it is. Hopefully at the end people will say, 'yeah, he was a good man'. But everyone will not say that..."

The father-of-two went on to say:

"I hope you will remember me as a positive guy trying to do everything he could do. Don't be sorry. Smile. Thank you for everything — coaches, players, the crowd. It's been fantastic. Take care of yourself, and take care of your life, and live it. Bye."

His acceptance of the role death has to play in our lives is something we should take on board, as well as the importance of gratitude for the life we have. **Cerith Gardiner, Aletea**

MEMORIAM

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In Loving Memory of Rita Ross

20 September 1933 – 10 August 2024

A wonderful mother whose love, kindness, and strength touched everyone who knew her. Her teachings will guide our steps, her love will comfort us in times of sorrow, and her spirit will be with us in everything we do.

Psalm 23: The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want. Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life.

Eternal rest grant unto her O Lord, May the perpetual light shine on her. May her soul rest in peace.

Remembered by:

Sister, Son, Daughters, Daughter-in Law, Sons-in Law, Grandchildren, Great-Granddaughter, nephews, nieces and loved ones.

6th Anniversary In Loving Memory of Anthony Fong



14.1.1964 – 16.9.2018

Your legacy of strength & compassion lives on in the lessons you taught. Today our hearts are filled with gratitude as we remember you.

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

8th Anniversary In Loving Memory of Fr Phillips Muthu



Departed on 10th September 2016

Your ministry was characterised by a deep love for the marginalised and a tireless commitment to bringing comfort and hope to those in need.

Your legacy endures in the countless lives you touched, reminding us of the power of kindness and the importance of a life devoted to service.

Your memory continues to inspire and guide us.

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This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life.

Psalm 119:50

1st Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Margaret Scott Scanlan

1 January 1961 - 8 September 2023

"Come to me and I will give you rest"

Always in our thoughts, hearts and prayers

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Shepherds present Counsels from RPA2024

PLENTONG, Johor: At the conclusion of the Peninsular Malaysia Regional Pastoral Assembly 2024 (RPA2024), the three shepherds presented the pastoral counsels that emerged from the assembly's discussions.

Cardinal Sebastian Francis emphasised that these counsels, focused on the four key areas of Family, Church, Ecology, and Society, are intended to guide the local Church as it continues its journey towards the Malaysia Pastoral Convention

2026 (MPC2026).

These pastoral counsels, discerned and synthesised by the RPA2024 Discernment Team from Round Three of the "Conversations in the Spirit" with the 427 participants, were presented by Cardinal

Sebastian Francis, Archbishop Julian Leow, and Bishop Bernard Paul. They provide guidance and recommendations for each diocese, parish, and ministry to apply within their specific pastoral contexts.

Family Accompanying

Rationale

We are called to nurture family values; accompany those facing challenges; strengthen faith and relationships toward building God-centred families.

Pastoral Recommendations

1. Creating time for bonding, formation, and prayer.
2. Creating space and freedom for growth.
3. Reviewing and updating programmes in the light of current issues.
4. Developing programmes which are inclusive and integrate all sectors.

Church Merciful

Rationale:

We are called to be a merciful Church whereby people will see the face of Jesus in each other. By being merciful, the Church fosters a sense of belonging and empowers us to evangelise.

Pastoral Recommendations:

1. Embracing the diversity of our communities.
2. Creating a space of shared responsibility and collaborative ministry.
3. Adapting Basic Ecclesial Communities to respond creatively to the emerging trends and grassroots realities.
4. Catechising disciples to become servant leaders for mission.

Ecology Stewardship

Rationale:

We are called to take ownership of the urgent mission of saving Mother Earth which includes stopping the plunder and exploitation of resources and avoiding wastage. Act Now!

Pastoral Recommendations:

1. Ensuring consistent education and implementation at all levels
2. Practising the 4 R's — Refuse, Reduce, Recycle and Restore.
3. Fostering a spirituality which rejects the culture of consumerism and upholds creation justice.

Society Prophetic

Rationale:

We are called to build a harmonious society through visible collaboration while reinforcing gospel values

Pastoral Recommendations:

Promoting:

1. Social Action
2. Participation in Awareness Programmes.
3. Sharing Resources and Talents.
4. New Ministries in response to current social challenges.
5. Dialogue of Life.

Final Day: Walk

Continued from the Front Page

The final day saw Cardinal Sebastian Francis tying together the themes of Celebration and Listening, with a call to 'Walk Together in Mission'. He framed the journey as a spiritual revolution, inspired by St John Eudes, who revitalised the Church during a time of corruption and despair in France. Cardinal Sebastian emphasised that walking together requires repentance, hope and deep reliance on the Holy Spirit.

He urged participants to walk together with confidence as they journey towards the Malaysia Pastoral Convention (MPC) in 2026.

Cardinal Sebastian also highlighted the significance of walking with the Universal Church, particularly with Pope Francis during his upcoming visit to

Asia in September, and in preparation for the Jubilee Year of Hope in 2025. He called on the assembly to respond to the various calls to action from the Malaysian bishops, including the Malaysian Youth Assembly in 2025 and the 360th anniversary of College General Penang.

In concluding remarks, Cardinal Sebastian invoked the words of St John Paul II, "Let us remember the past with gratitude, live the present with enthusiasm, and look forward to the future with confidence." He encouraged the participants to continue walking together as a synodal Church, committed to communion, participation and mission to prepare for the upcoming MPC by engaging in regular conversations in the Holy Spirit.

The Peninsular Malaysia Regional Pastoral Assembly has set the tone for the Church's future in Malaysia. The messages from Archbishop Julian, Bishop Bernard, and Cardinal Sebastian, emphasising the importance of celebrating the past, listening deeply to God's voice, and journeying together with determination and hope, will continue to steer the Church in Peninsular Malaysia as it faces the challenges and opportunities ahead. As participants return to their dioceses and parishes, the assembly's discussions are poised to significantly influence the Church's mission and vision, especially in the lead-up to MPC2026.



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