

What's your story



Pope St John Paul II instituted World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life in 1997. He compared the diverse expressions of consecrated life to a flourishing plant with numerous branches deeply rooted in the Gospel. This spiritual garden yields abundant fruit, enriching the Church throughout its seasons. In the kaleidoscope of veils – full, short, or absent – and the array of habits and robes, donning hues of brown, gray, white, blue, black, beige, and more, consecrated men and women are called to illuminate the world with the radiance of Jesus.

In conjunction with World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life 2024, we amplify the often-overlooked perspectives of individuals within the religious community, whose voices resonated during the inaugural Malaysia Religious Assembly. While their charisms, practices, and communities may differ, their collective focus remains directed towards God and the vision of the Church, as reflected in this 12-page supplement.

“What’s your story? What’s your journey? Who’s listening and who’s discerning?”

Friar Derrick Yap OFM (*pic*) asked in his opening speech at the Malaysia Religious Assembly which reflects a deep sense of gratitude, reflection, and a call to authenticity within the context of the religious community.



Friar Derrick, president of the Conference of Religious Major Superiors (CRMS) of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei encouraged the religious to savour the *Kairos* moment, recognising the significance of the present time and the inter-connectedness of their stories.

He emphasised that despite diverse backgrounds, the religious community is united by a common religious calling. The decision to

follow Jesus radically and build His kingdom of love on earth is a shared commitment.

Highlighting the beauty of the Catholic Church, he acknowledged the members from different nations who have dedicated themselves to serving the people in Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei.

“And this family, in this season of her life, is intentional in her discernment, in taking stock of what has transpired these past years and to chart the trajectory for the decades ahead, simply put, to be authentic and prophetic as her Lord is.

“This family has many members, and will gather for prayer and conversation, segment by segment. Now, we have the consecrated religious members gathered, here in MAJODI, a milestone for the Malaysian Church but also for the consecrated community. We ought to be grateful to the bishops

for their foresight and wisdom to have this Malaysia Pastoral Convention (MPC) and to include the voices of consecrated religious as an integral part of this journey.”

Friar Derrick spoke of the ongoing conversations and the necessity for audacious authenticity in sharing experiences. The religious communities are called to be heralds of the Gospel, embodying God’s love wherever they serve. The importance of contemplative silence and deep listening in discerning the Spirit’s promptings was highlighted as an essential aspect of their journey.

“This ability for deep and contemplative listening is a muscle we need to continually exercise, especially in our religious communities,” he said.

The mission of the MPC is to listen to the voice of the people within the context of community living. Friar Derrick challenged the religious to examine whether their communities

truly embody and evangelise the Good News.

“Only with this deep honest look at our personal journeys, our communal journeys, our ecclesial journeys, can we see where the Lord is leading us into the fullness of life, which is what the Lord desires for us! That these journeys are not separate journeys but the same path in the growth of holiness, which is the third mission of the MPC.

“And by our very being as consecrated religious, we embody and enfold the reality of the fullness of life and growth in holiness. Let’s listen from *Perfectae Caritatis*, the VCII on Consecrated Life.

“Although the religious state constituted by the profession of evangelical counsels does not belong to the hierarchical structure of the Church, nevertheless it belongs inseparably to her life and holiness.”

“My dear friends, we are graced and privileged to be on this journey together as a Malaysian Church, and I think many countries can take the cue from the prophetic vision and courageous action of the Malaysian Bishops to take God’s people on this journey.”

Friar Derrick acknowledged the privileged access that religious communities have into the depths of people’s souls. This access allows them to touch people’s pain and joy, hopes and dreams, bringing these experiences for shared reflection and transformation by grace.

The Malaysia Religious Assembly was held from June 8-11, 2023 at MAJODI Centre, Plentong, Johor.



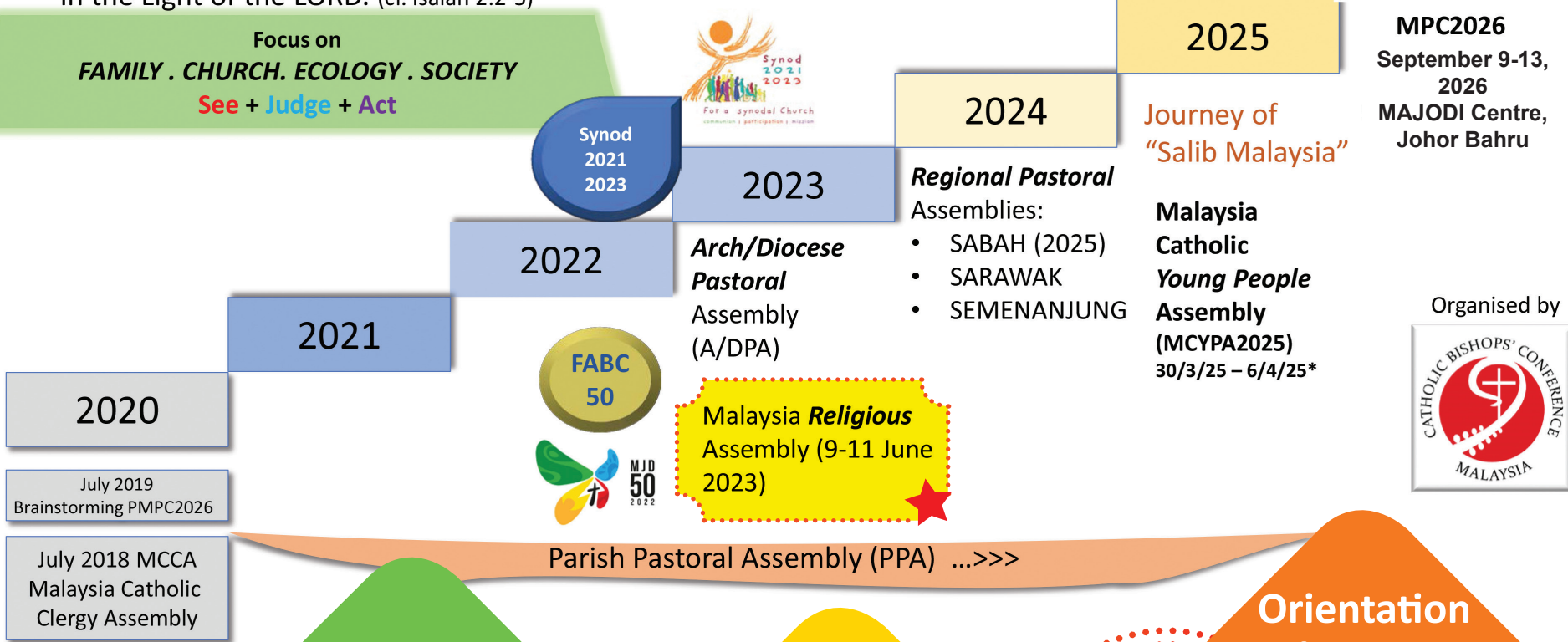
Journey towards the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026

The Catholic Church in Malaysia coming together as clergy, religious and laity to ...

CELEBRATE, LISTEN and WALK

in the Light of the LORD. (cf. Isaiah 2:2-5)

Focus on
FAMILY . CHURCH. ECOLOGY . SOCIETY
See + Judge + Act



Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA) ...>>>

Orientation and Direction

We come together and celebrate the beauty and uniqueness in the cultures and regions of Sabah, Sarawak and Semenanjung. **[CELEBRATE]**

We share the uniqueness of the respective pastoral progress and initiatives in Sabah, Sarawak and Semenanjung. **[LISTEN]**

We focus on challenges affecting the Church in Malaysia, especially **Family, Church, Ecology and Society** issues and in response to them, we take up the mission of the *Church in Malaysia to be salt of the earth and light of the world.* **[WALK]**

Objectives

Coming together to express our oneness and celebrating our richness of diversity and uniqueness in *communion with Christ* as the Catholic Church in Malaysia.

Accepting *challenges and opportunities*, we are strengthened in communion to grow in *hope, holiness and mission.*

As a communion of missionary disciples, we become more the *salt of the earth and light of the world.*

Mission

- The Church as the Voice of the People.
- The Church reaching out in Mercy.
- The Church communicating fullness of Life.
- The Church growing in Holiness.

Vision

The Catholic Church in Malaysia coming together as clergy, religious and laity to celebrate, listen and walk in the light of the Lord. (cf. Isaiah 2:2-5)

The Malaysia Religious Assembly (MRA)

The objectives

- To discern what the Spirit is calling us to respond to through the input sessions, prayerful reflections and sharings.
- To explore ways of moving forward as consecrated religious congregations and each congregation to carry out the implementation after the MRA.
- To prepare and submit a reflective report for the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026.

Hopes

- Hopes for MRA 2023 gathered at the online meeting:
1. To participate actively in the assembly by sharing own experiences and learning from one another.
 2. To grow together as one religious family to move forward and witness to the unconditional love of God.
 3. To strengthen relationships and collaboration among Religious of different congregations in Malaysia to meet the emerging needs of society in creative and effective ways.



Superiors of the Religious congregations with some of the arch/bishops.



Led by the Spirit, the inter-connectedness of the focus areas namely **Family, Church, Ecology and Society** challenges us to be the salt of the earth and light of the world.

The flame and spiral movement reflect the dynamic and evolving nature of a Synodal Church: communion, participation and mission.

The religious congregations



Presently, there are 29 religious congregations actively serving in the various arch/dioceses in Malaysia, comprising 16 female and 13 male congregations.

Women

1. Canossian Daughters of Charity (FDCC)
2. Carmelite Sisters (OCD)
3. Congregation of Putri Karmel (PKarm)
4. Daughters of St Paul (FSP)
5. Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM)
6. Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood (FMDM)
7. Franciscan Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus (OSF)
8. Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (FSIC)
9. Good Shepherd Sisters (RGS)

10. Little Sisters of the Poor (LSP)
11. Missionary Sisters of the Lord's Table (MSLT)
12. Poor Clare (OSC)
13. Sisters of St Francis of Sarawak (SSFS)
14. Sisters of the Divine Saviour (SDS)
15. Sisters of the Infant Jesus (IJS)
16. Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary (CSCM)

Men

1. Brothers of Carmelita Sancte Eliae (CSE)
2. Brothers of St Gabriel (SG)
3. Brothers of the Christian Schools (FSC)
4. Claretian Missionaries (CMF)
5. Clerical Society of the Most Holy Trinity (SST)
6. Congregation of the Disciples of the Lord (CDD)
7. Discalced Carmelite Friars (OCD)
8. Marist Brothers of the School (FMS)
9. Order of Friars Minor (OFM)
10. Order of Friars Minor Capuchins (OFM Cap)
11. Redemptorist Community (CSsR)
12. Salesians of Don Bosco (SDB)
13. Society of Jesus (SJ)

The process

The working committee comprising members of the different congregations met online and physically to plan for the Malaysia Religious Assembly (MRA).

Their task was to collect and synthesise information gathered from all the religious congregations in Malaysia.

Using the documents chosen by the Bishops' Conference for the four different areas, Family: *Amoris Laetitia*, *Christus Vivit*, Church (body of Christ): *Evangelii Gaudium*, Social: *Fratelli Tutti*, Ecology: *Laudato Si'*, they used the See, Judge and Act Theological Reflection process for their members to review, reflect and respond to the questions as a religious individual, as a religious community and as a religious congregation (in Malaysian context) from three regions.

Each congregation in the respective diocese submitted their responses. From the information collated, a regional report



was prepared for Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak.

The MRA which was held physically at MAJODI, was also available online for those unable to attend.

At the MRA, the delegates deepened their reflection and responded to the collated data in order to:

- i. discern what the Spirit is calling us

to respond to through prayerful reflection, sharing and input.

ii. explore ways of moving forward as consecrated religious congregations and each congregation to carry out the implementation after MRA.

After the MRA, a reflective report will be submitted for the 2026 Malaysia Pastoral Convention.



Members of the steering committee meeting with the drafting committee.

MRA Steering committee:

Chairperson: Fr Valentine Gompok, OFM Cap

Secretary: Sr Calista Saliun, FSIC

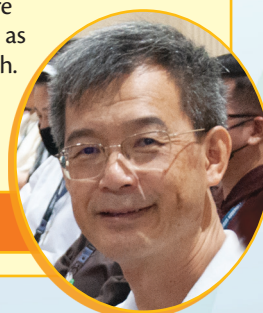
Treasurer: Sr Catherine Uming, SSFS

Logistics: Sr Retta Savariannan, FDCC, Sr Chennisia Seting, SSFS

Members: Sr Salomi Cruz, RGS, Sr Laurina Loh, RGS, Br Thomas Paul, SG, Sr Rose Wong, SSFS

"As a CDD priest serving in the Diocese of Malacca Johore, I am privileged to be part of the first Malaysia Religious Assembly. Engaging in spiritual conversations and reflecting on Church, Family, Ecology, and Social issues with other participants was truly enriching. Each religious order has its unique charism, and it is evident that collaboration among orders and with the entire Church is crucial to achieving our goals. Let us continue our journey with hope and enthusiasm, always remembering we are brothers and sisters as religious and Church. May the Holy Spirit guide us in our endeavours."

Fr John Chia, CDD



Sr Angeline Lau, RGS



"It is good to be here as it is the first time having religious from all over Malaysia coming together. Even though we have many religious congregations, but now we are here as a group.

"The four topics chosen for the synodal journey are very relevant and need to be addressed as a Church.

"There was a lot of input in the last few days. One thing that came out during our reflections is that we need to walk the talk.

"I hope that there will be follow-up at the different levels — personal (in the congregation), networking (with other congregations and the Church as a whole).

"We need to bring the issues forward in these challenging times and expand our tent. We have to reach out to those in the peripheries, we have to become a field hospital.

"One of the areas — ecology was highlighted. Though we may have different groups/segments doing something already, it is time for the Malaysian Church to come together as one.

"It is necessary to respond to the sign of the times, especially with regard to migrants, refugees and the undocumented refugees. We have to be more welcoming and inclusive. It is not just by our words but by our actions too. How can we be a friend to them?"

Fr Nicholas Hoh, OCD



"Our Malaysian Religious Assembly has been a memorable and joyful one. To see all of us, despite our diverse and unique callings, coming together as one to listen to the Holy Spirit and chart a common direction together. Also, sharing our experiences in the Lord's vineyard has given us fresh perspectives and broadened our horizons."

Bishops show their support

A majority of the bishops attended the assembly to show their support and appreciation to the religious. Below are some of their thoughts.

The greatest challenge is being brothers and sisters to each other

The pandemic and superstorms have caused shutdowns, slowdowns, and clampdowns worldwide. **BISHOP BERNARD PAUL** said this in his welcome address.

But other dark clouds have descended, in the form of distortions of modern times:

- ❖ The manipulation and deformation of concepts such as democracy, freedom, and justice.
- ❖ The loss of the meaning of social community and history.
- ❖ Selfishness and indifference toward the common good.
- ❖ Unemployment, racism, poverty, and slavery.
- ❖ The “culture of walls” that favour the increase of organised crime, fuelled by fear and loneliness.
- ❖ Spiritual Desertification, places where people live as if God does not exist.

Christian communities were meant to be sources of liv-

ing water, quenching thirst with hope. But some have become preoccupied with their smallness, weakness, powerlessness, and fruitlessness.

However, we can overcome these dark clouds by:

- ❖ embracing consecrated life, encountering living obedience, and prophetic vision.
- ❖ countering mediocrity, devaluation of spiritual life, and a mentality of resignation.
- ❖ showing kindness to strangers, seeing the vision of an open world, and having a heart for the world.
- ❖ recognising the common good, promoting solidarity and human dignity, and having an attitude of kindness.



We can overcome these dark clouds by renewing the spirit of communion, participation, and mission, which means:

- ❖ Re-looking at communion and recognising our interconnectedness and sharing in One Body.
- ❖ Re-embracing participation and encouraging one another's gifts and giftedness.
- ❖ Renewing mission and going beyond ourselves to form a society based on service to others.

By doing so, we can overcome the dark clouds with renewed encounter and promote peace, justice, and mercy.

Working together for the Church

“We are one Church, and we are constantly thinking about Church reform, as the Church must also grow. The theology of the Church says that the bishop is the Apostle — the overseer. We need an Apostle to guide us. Whether this will change in the future, we do not know. But for now, that is the theology. So, the bishop of the diocese is an overseer of his diocese including the religious present there.”

“There has always been a healthy tension between the bishop of the diocese and the religious. Some say that there are two churches working in parallel. One of the reasons, I feel is our failure to communicate, which is something both groups are guilty of. They are all doing good work, but maybe the bishops aren't informed or aware of what the religious are doing. Perhaps this is due to the lack of communication and information sharing between both sides throughout the years.”

“I see that what they are doing is good. They are looking into the people and trying to do something relevant to the times. They are willing to go beyond and impact new horizons. They are doing it in the name of Jesus to make the Church present in the world today. The religious have a place in the Church, along with the bishops. We should see them as together, not as separate, working together towards building the church. We must remember that it is not just the religious, but the whole Church and the laity working together as one.”

BISHOP JOSEPH III OF SIBU



Charisms meant to be shared

“The different charisms of the religious orders are meant to be shared with all people. Their zeal to serve and build the Kingdom of God is to be commended.”

“The MRA was very well organised. There was active participation from the religious who know the importance of the MRA and want to be part of the building up of the Kingdom of God in Malaysia.”

“I was at the MRA to journey with them and to be with them and, at the same time, to learn from them. I pray and hope that they will journey and share their charisms with others and for others because all of us really belong to One Body, that is the Church.”

ARCHBISHOP JOHN WONG OF KOTA KINABALU



Recognising their indispensable contribution

“The Church in the Archdiocese of Kuching recognises the indispensable contribution of the Religious — both men and women congregations — who run parishes, schools, kindergartens, especially the various commissions and ministries in the archdiocese. The religious, together with the priests, are my closest collaborators.”

“The religious have a particular charism that our Church need and their witness to the Gospel in living out their vows of evangelical counsels — chastity, poverty and obedience — encourage the Sarawak Church in mission, especially to go beyond the church door to ministry with our private mission schools and kindergartens, migrants, ecology, resilience, the indigenous, rural families and youth empowerment, spiritual direction, interceding and praying and providing altar bread from our Carmelites, and the various active congregations' direct involvement in various social work and the



other areas of mission from their respective charisms.

“I was in MAJODI to support and acknowledge the Religious from my Archdiocese and throughout Malaysia. Together we are the synodal Church, comprising lay faithful,

religious and the ordained.

“In the Archdiocese and the Dioceses in Sarawak, we have many Catholic villages and vast areas to cover in respective parishes. The Religious who are priests are a blessing for the people as we go to the outstations for Masses and pastoral care. I see there is close collaboration between the diocesan and Religious, especially to celebrate Masses in one another's parishes. I believe that being in Mission territories, this has helped us keep the unity and cooperation in the Archdiocese. Every priest — whether diocesan religious, or visiting priest — is welcome to stay and have a meal in the priests' houses.”

ARCHBISHOP SIMON POH OF KUCHING



VISION OF A SYNODAL CHURCH

BISHOP SEBASTIAN FRANCIS



now
CLERGY

Forward & Beyond

APOSTLES

Successors of the Apostles (The Bishops)
Primacy of Love, Truth, Unity and Continuity
Communion, Mission & Kenosis

RELIGIOUS

DISCIPLES

Clergy, Religious, Laity
Baptised and Sent
Baptism, Confirmation & Eucharist
Communion, Mission & Kenosis

LAITY

PEOPLE OF GOD

Vatican Council II
"Fratelli Tutti"
Communion, Mission & Kenosis



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

Moving towards a synodal Church

“It is no longer the old way of clergy, religious and laity. Now, with our focus on a synodal Church, all of us are going for a period of purification. There is still a need for structure. The Holy Spirit is moving us to a more Gospel-based structure where our common denominator is our baptism. “We must have an openness towards the wider community.”

CARDINAL SEBASTIAN FRANCIS OF PENANG

Church (Joy of the Gospel)

The delegates listened to the combined report on Church which was based on *Evangelii Gaudium*, followed by a session by Bro Thomas Paul SG (see Page VI). After a break and time given for personal reflection, they went into groups for the Spiritual Conversation which was reported to the assembly.

CELEBRATE

What are our experiences of living the joy of the Gospel?

Personal

The Gospel is a powerful manifestation of God's immeasurable love and mercy towards us. It fills us with great joy to encounter Emmanuel, the God who is present among us always. We find inspiration in God's truth, beauty, and goodness, and are guided by His infinite wisdom that leads us to a new life full of hope. Through prayer and contemplation, the joy of being in the presence of the One who is always with us deepens within us. The Gospel is not only a source of ongoing conversion and personal transformation but also a personal encounter that leads us to reach out to others.

In Community

The Gospel serves as the foundation of our diverse charisms. It helps us attract individuals from different backgrounds to share in a common life centred around Christ. The Gospel is also the root and source of vocational callings in our congregations and institutes. The consecrated life invites us to seek that one necessary thing—living a simple life, appreciating the love and support of our brothers and sisters in our communities, and being filled with Gospel joy. Moreover, it encourages us to work together in a common apostolate.



Sharing the Gospel

The Gospel teaches us to empathise with and support those who are suffering and in need of healing. This includes individuals who are sick, imprisoned, marginalised, migrants, the elderly, LGBTQ persons, and more. We should strive to share the joy and fulfilment that we have experienced through our relationship with God with others. This requires a greater willingness to connect with and serve others with a sense of peace, love, generosity, and openness. We should also be bold and resilient in our efforts to help others, even in the face of adversity and challenges.

Sr Maria Goretti Heng, CSCM



"We would like to thank you for the full support from all the Malaysian bishops. We also much appreciate that CRMS Fr Derrick Yap gave full empowerment to Fr Valentine to organise this assembly (MRA ~ Malaysia Religious Assembly). With the full support from everyone, we made the MRA from "impossible" to "possible". The results from this MRA were very fruitful. Among the religious gathered together, we shared our charism and enjoyed the discovery of the differences and diversity of each order.

"Throughout the four topics (Church, Family, Ecology and Social) shared by the speakers, personal reflections and groups discussions, we can bring back new ideas which may be more practicable to our community. Despite the short time of the Assembly, it was possible to gather the front-line experiences of all the religious from whole Malaysia.

"Our hope after this Assembly is that we can have an internet platform so that all the religious orders can discuss or exchange their ideas. In this way, the Assembly can continue working together throughout the journey towards MPC 2026. The religious are the "Prophets of the Universal Church" and can be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Mt 5:13-14). We still need the Holy Spirit to face the challenges of today's world. It is really an "Amazing Grace". Congratulations to the MRA. Malaysia Boleh!"

"The MRA was a valuable experience for me in meeting fellow religious from different parts of Malaysia, especially from Sabah and Sarawak. I learnt a lot from what was shared by the presenters, especially the session on ecology.

"I am also inspired by the deep conversations with those in my group and I myself am inspired to practise in small steps what I have learnt.

"Finally, I have to thank God for the inspirations received as well as for reminding me that He is always with me and will never let me down. I must move forward to continue bringing Christ to the people I encounter daily in my life."

Bro Peter Foo, FSC



"Yes, indeed it's KAIROS! God's appointed time for us religious in Malaysia as HE has summoned us to come together to celebrate, to listen and to walk forward with faith in Him.

"During these days of silent reflection, listening and sharing, especially in our spiritual conversations in groups, we felt the awakening call to personal and communal conversion and renewal as consecrated persons walking side by side with the clergy and laity in synodality as Church in Malaysia, today.

"All praise and thanksgiving to the Holy Spirit for accompanying us and inspiring our arch/bishops to steer the whole Church – clergy, religious and laity, into this process so necessary for us to be relevant while being faithful to our identity/vocation that He has deemed us to be."

Sr Christin Law, FDCC

LISTEN

In the midst of today's realities, what may be our challenges as "missionary disciple" in the Church and in society / the world?

The three-fold mission of Christ: Priest – for Sanctifying (A mediator/bridge between God and humanity); Prophet – for Teaching (A messenger for God, to preach the Good News); King – for Leadership (An authority to bring about the Kingdom of God).

PRIESTLY PEOPLE

(A bridge between God and humanity)

We need to lead an authentic religious life, not only in the way we live but also in our conversations. To express true love, we must practise what we preach and communicate gently and kindly.

However, the ageing and dwindling number of religious members poses a challenge to fulfilling growing and changing pastoral demands. We need to show compassionate listening to those suffering, starting with our families and communities.

Unfortunately, the insular lifestyle of religious individuals makes it difficult for them to respond to the impact of worldly

values, such as consumerism, secularism, clericalism, individualism, and more.

PROPHETIC PEOPLE

(A messenger for God, to preach the Good News)

Many of us are caught up in our comfort zone and are unable to respond to the new needs of our society, especially those of the less fortunate, the poor, the marginalised, itinerant persons, LGBT, migrants, and undocumented persons. The threat of "Islamisation" and religious freedom, coupled with the weakening of faith formation, is leading to a decrease in evangelisation among the people.

The social mentality and ideology of the New World Order have changed significantly, which challenges our understanding of the world today and how we should live our faith in today's context. The insular lifestyle of religious individuals is preventing them from responding to the impact of worldly values such as consumerism,

secularism, clericalism, individualism, and others.

KINGLY PEOPLE

(An authority to bring about the Kingdom of God)

The downside of modern technology and social media have led to individualism, which has resulted in cyber-addiction, unfiltered interactions, less interpersonal interaction, a decrease in concentration span, easily being distracted, and a lack of creativity. This has led to people losing interest in listening to God's Word. It is important to change our mindset and approaches to a new way of being Church, as rigidity in "old ways" can impede change.

The New World Order has changed significantly, affecting our social mentality and ideology. This presents a challenge for how we see the world and how we live our faith in today's context. It is important to adopt a new evangelisation for the youth of today and to understand their needs.

WALK

In the light of our charism, as religious and Church, how can we continue to respond to be effective "missionary disciples" and agents of evangelisation?

1. Formations and Trainings are much needed to gear us during these challenging times:

Where the government is actively implementing Islamisation, and there are various family and social issues, environmental issues, and technology influences, formations and trainings are much-needed to gear us.

There is a great demand for us to reach out and minister, to be a companion on the journey for the marginalised, LGBT, young, old, displaced people, itinerant persons, unemployed, undocumented, multi-disabilities, etc.

To do this, creative and tactful approaches are needed, and we must have a welcoming attitude towards others while being authentic in our religious life and commitments.

2. Constant dialogue with others is necessary, including Church authorities, NGOs, government agencies, religious congregations/orders, and other Christian groups.

This will help us strengthen relationships, foster unity and understanding, and enhance collaboration and networking. We can't work alone in our ministry and outreach.

3. The Religious must maintain a deep and lively communion with God by being open to continued personal conversion and being more centred upon Christ and His Gospel. A strong and constant personal prayer life will strengthen our communion with Christ and lead to greater confidence, commitment, and commitment in our personal/communal witnessing and apostolate. It is important to be ever rooted in the sources of our faith, namely the Scriptures and Tradition that the Church has passed down to us.

4. Mission and outreach are also important. Religious need to be rooted in the charism of their institute and share it with others. Inculcating the love for the Lord among the people through the sacraments, Scripture,

the teachings of the Church, and through spiritual accompaniment is crucial. We must continue to reach out to those who are suffering and the marginalised.

Jesus wants us to be a Church that is liberated from deafness and dumbness. A Church that listens and is attentive to His words, that understands that love, truth, and the justice of the Kingdom are essential in the life of faith. If we do not listen attentively to the words of Jesus, we will not put words of hope in the lives of those who suffer.

Our nation needs the Church to be more prophetic. To achieve this, she must listen to Jesus in the silence of meditating on the Gospel and the events of history. Our country expects clear-sighted, courageous, enlightening, and Gospel-inspired words from Christians. More than ever, our nation needs a Church that is sensitive to the suffering of people, and that instinctively knows how to defend their dignity. (Silvio José Baez OCD)



Fr Andrew Kim, SST

"I understand that the MRA is part of the journey towards the Malaysia Pastoral Convention in 2026. Along with the Synod journey from last year, the people of God in the universal and local churches, religious in Malaysia in particular, saw this as an excellent opportunity to share their opinions.

"It is true that while serving as a religious priest in Sabah, I did not have the opportunity or time to interact with the religious from the peninsular and Sarawak. However, through this MRA, I am delighted to spend time with religious from all parts of Malaysia, to sympathise with each other as religious, and listen to and share opinions.

"For religious, it is not important which place or region they are in. It is more important to keep one's identity as a religious. Religious beings made a vow before God, promising the Evangelical counsels, so we must live without losing our identity no matter what place or region we are dispatched to. Temptations and difficulties in the world cannot be avoided, but as religious, we always ask God for help to overcome temptations and problems. As one community, we can protect and live."

Religious: joyful witness of the Church

A Church Which Goes Forth



Quoting extensively from *Evangelii Gaudium*, Bro Thomas Paul SG, spoke on Jesus' command to "go and make disciples" echoes amidst the ever-new challenges to the Church's mission of evangelisation. All of us are called to take part in this new missionary "going forth".

To encounter Christ in the vulnerable, we must take the first step towards those in need and become involved by word and deed. We are called to be instruments of

God for the liberation and promotion of the poor and to enable them to be fully a part of society.

Missionary disciples need to be relationship-focused instead of activity-focused, with personal attention as a hallmark of an evangelising mission. To be an Ambassador for Christ means to invite everyone to a personal encounter with Jesus. The Church is mission and being sent for a purpose.

Mission is not a unilateral act but is a participatory endeavour. The Call is to create a

shared mission — clergy, religious and laity. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light.

To work in communion with people of goodwill, we need to connect or collaborate with people of other faiths or atheists. To be evangelisers of souls, we need to develop a spiritual taste for being close to people's lives and to discover that this is itself a source of greater joy. To be Mission is a passion for Jesus and his people.

Ecology (*Laudato Si'* on

Two representatives shared on the combined report based on the reflections on *Laudato Si'*.

Clare Westwood, the director of the Episcopal Commission for Creation Justice of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei gave an in-depth explanation on global warming and the dangers threatening all life on Earth. Unless and until we, human beings, change the way we live and develop, global warming can rise up to 1.5oC as early as 2030 and to over 4 degrees Celsius by the end of the century. This will be devastating for millions of people.

Clare also shared some initiatives that the congregations can do on their own.

After a break and time given for personal reflection, they went into groups for the Spiritual Conversation which was reported to the assembly.



CELEBRATE

The responses were grouped according to the elements that make up an ecological Church. Many expressed a spiritual connections with nature and frustration at its degradation. Some ecological practices were being carried out and a small number was cognizant of the need to collaborate with others to care for our common home. There was little on the exercise of developing leaders/leadership and building resilience to ecological threats, indicating a need to build capacity in these areas.

1. Leader

- Prioritise care for creation.

2. Ecological Education, Ecological Spirituality, Integration

- Appreciate and marvel at the beauty of creation.
- Understand that everything is interconnected.
- Express gratitude towards Mother Earth
- Promote stewardship and solidarity.
- Experience joy in caring for the environment.
- Acknowledge frustration, anger, hopelessness, and tension in relation to environmental degradation and pollution.
- Attend lectures/talks and integrate their teachings to protect nature and be responsible stewards of creation.
- Combine care for the environment with

social justice and care for the poor.

3. Resilience

Learn from the natives of Sarawak, who live with greenery and farming without eradication, pollution, or big buildings, and lead simple and humble lives.

4. Movement Building

- Join the Creation Justice Commission, such as the Protect Campaign and Earth Hour.
- Recognise the efforts of NGOs

5. Accountability

- Share resources.
- Avoid waste.
- Use environmentally friendly materials
- Practice the 6Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle, refuse, repair, and rot) and promote a

green environment.

- Celebrate by planting trees and other plants.

Gospel Message

1. *Creation Theology (Chapter 2 of LS)*
Read Genesis 1 and 2, Genesis 2:15, John 1:1-8, John 1:3, and LS 99.

Refer to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* CCC 339 and LS 69.

2. *God Provides*

Read Psalm 107:8-9 and Mt 6:28.

3. *Mission/Responsibility/Accountability*
Refer to Mark 16:15, LS 14, Genesis 2:15, 1 Cor 16:14, St. Francis Of Assisi, and Mt 14:13-21 (Sharing of resources).
Refer to Proverbs 27:17-18 for a call to reconciliation.



Sisters of St Francis of Sarawak (SSFS)

The feeling of profound gratitude for our religious consecration has been strengthened through the enriching encounter with our fellow religious in MRA. Dark clouds over a closed world are spreading everywhere, even into our community, leaving us in a hopeless situation. This assembly opened a small window where a ray of light shining through has given us hope that we are not alone in our journey. It is no longer an option, but a mandate given by Jesus, echoing in the voice of Pope Francis, "go forth, evangelise, be involved in the life of the Church and help the poor". We will be the joy, hope and light in this wounded and disconnected world, so that through us, more people become free inwardly from bondage. As they become more connected with God, they can possibly outpour their love towards His creation.

"We are challenged to go beyond this assembly, either to be the Levi or the priest, disconnected with the wounded stranger and pass by or, like the good Samaritan, moved with compassion, 'stop' as we encounter the wounded stranger and get involved in caring for him. The spirit of the MRA will only come alive when we choose the latter."



Sr Marie Antoinette, LSP

"...this is a blessed and God given experience.

Expectation: The Holy Spirit empowers us to move forward. God is in us with us among us."

It was an extraordinary experience being present at the MRA for me. 28 different congregations, 200 over religious and with the presence of two Archbishops and three Bishops, I felt the oneness and connectedness of the Church. It was a time to celebrate with one another to listen to one another and learn to walk with newness as one church. Coming to my mind at the end of MRA is Micah 6:8 "Do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God."

Bro Peter K, FSG



Fr Gerard Louis CSsR



The MRA was really wonderful. Just to bring the Religious, more than 200 of us here in Plentong was a wonderful experience because we got to share about the work we are doing, the mission we are doing.

"I think the topics were challenging – Church, family, ecology and social. They pushed us to live the prophetic side of our charism, to reach out to those who are abandoned, enlarge the size of our tent and sometimes the most difficult is moving our tent from one place to another place. Those were our challenges.

"What can we expect to come out later? I think it's a call to the Church in Malaysia – to the clergy, religious and laity. The fruits can only be seen in how daring we are in making those changes moving forward. I think the challenge has been given to us and it's up to us to respond.

"So, I think the major superiors have to talk, the congregations have to talk and we have to speak with the bishops and hopefully, with MPC26 we are going to be moving in a prophetic direction that Pope Francis has set out for the Church."

The bishops' idea to bring us together gave me a chance to appreciate my vocation in the wider circle of the Church.

"It was a transformative experience to reconnect with old friends and make new ones. In our small group, we realised that we cannot work alone and that it has to be a collaborative missionary action. One simple way is our commitment to pray for one another and which demonstrates a strong sense of communion.

"I hope that the Conference of Religious will take this seriously and use our material to unpack and give it to others. The bishops were inspired by the spirit to call for this assembly, and they are serious about it.

"The recognition of religious as an integral part of the Church, beyond being a mere workforce, is significant. The shift towards being co-partners in the mission and the recognition of our identity and charism beyond traditional roles is a crucial step forward.

"The insights into the international community's role and the need for growth and discussion within local contexts are valuable. The joy and gratitude expressed throughout convey a sense of fulfilment and purpose in responding to our vocation. It's clear that this assembly has ignited a renewed sense of purpose, collaboration, and commitment to the mission."

Sr Nora Gomes, FMM



Care for Our Common Home)

LISTEN

The responses were clustered into four main categories, namely, lack of awareness, (destructive) human actions, sin and how to deal with the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. There was an overwhelming awareness that human beings were the ones perpetrating the destruction of the planet. There were very few suggestions on how to deal with the crisis however which may indicate that people are still unsure about to do so.

1. Lack of Awareness/Knowledge:

Many people lack awareness about global climate change and are unsure about what they can do to reduce its impact. It is important to educate ourselves and others about renewable energy and sustainable practices. However, convincing others about the need to change can be challenging as some people are sceptical or do not believe that climate change is real. Additionally, parents may not teach their children the importance of caring for the environment.

2. Human Actions (LS202):

Human actions contribute significantly to climate change. Our consumerist lifestyles and accumulation habits lead to excessive

wastage. The world is becoming a dumping ground for plastic, toxic, and hazardous materials. Deforestation, hills cutting and reclamations, emissions of carbon, and killing of many species of plants and animals are accelerating global warming, floods, and drought. Environmental pollution is a significant issue affecting water, soil, marine life, and contributing to global warming.

3. Human Roots of the Crisis (Sin):

The crisis of climate change is rooted in human actions, such as greediness and selfishness, lack of social responsibility, indifference, consumerism culture, focus on human living comfort and convenience, absence of personal and communal will, and a tendency

to listen to the cries of the rich rather than the cries of the poor. We need to challenge ourselves to be responsible and treat others not as burdens but as fellow human beings.

4. Dealing with the impacts of climate change:

The impacts of climate change can cause a lack of food and migration. People may feel helpless due to government policies and congregation's red tapes. Therefore, we need to be courageous and find ways to help those affected by climate change. We cannot rely solely on monetary handouts. Governments need to regulate plastic pollution, including production, consumption, and disposal.

WALK

Here again, the responses were assessed according to the five elements of an ecological Church. Realisation of the need for ecological education and ecological spirituality was strong. This was followed by taking accountability for personal lifestyle changes and a readiness to collaborate with groups beyond the Church to stop and repair ecological destruction. However, there was little on collective or bigger/macro-actions on accountability. Awareness of the need to build leadership and community resilience was also low, indicating that these areas require some attention for capacity-building.

Here is a list of actions that can be taken to promote ecological sustainability and education:

1. Leadership

- Every parish should implement an Earth Care Programme.

2. Ecological Education, Ecological Spirituality, Integration

- Provide training on ecological education and spirituality.
- Encourage gratitude towards God for His creation.
- Promote and participate in ecological education programs.
- Educate the next generation on ecological sustainability.
- Foster continuous ecological conversation and education.

- Use Scriptures to encourage the laity.
- Pray for leaders of nations to make eco-friendly and sustainable policies.

3. Resilience and Ecological Focal Points

- Establish ecological centres to provide experiences of natural areas and conservation efforts.
- Teach people how to make compost.
- Create green corners in convents and plant fruit trees.

4. Movement Building and Advocacy

- Encourage government agencies, establishments, and churches to take environmental issues seriously.
- Collaborate with environmental groups.
- Join NGOs for beach, river, village, and town cleaning activities.
- Network with other religions.

5. Accountability

- Start by taking individual efforts towards ecological sustainability.
- Grow your own food and plant more trees.
- Clean the environment.
- Work on personal and community projects with young people.
- Stop plastic pollution through campaigns.
- Practice the 6Rs: Refuse, Reuse, Repair, Recycle, Rethink.
- Adopt a simple lifestyle and be a minimalist.
- Avoid wasting resources.
- Implement the 4Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recover) in your community.
- Practice simple day-to-day activities to minimise energy use.

Family...

God's Gift to Humanity; Seedbed of Vocation for the Church and Society

Part 1: We CELEBRATE.

In living out the Gospel values such as love, respect, forgiveness and acceptance, we are faced with the challenges of daily living. But in all these circumstances, we also experience the joy of love. Our faith guides families to strengthen relationships with one another and calls us to reach out to those in need.

There is that strong sense of the intrinsic value of connectedness among us... starting from our families, extending to the Church, to society, and the whole of creation. Living in harmony creates joy. However if this relationship is broken, it is not just the concerned person that is affected but it affects so many others, too. These pain and struggles are a cry from within wanting to be healed and get connected.

What are our EXPERIENCES of living the joy of the gospel?

1. Building bridges and strengthening relationships and interconnectedness.
2. Growing together as families.
3. Deepening and witnessing faith through families and the Church.
4. Enhancing family life ministries and outreach services.

Part 2: We LISTEN.

What GOSPEL MESSAGE speaks to you?

What are the challenges we may face

when reaching out to families and those in vulnerable situations in today's world? Here are three possible issues:

1. Church leaders and members may not be effectively sharing and embodying gospel values.
2. Church and religious practices may not be relevant or meaningful to families in today's context.
3. Need for updated knowledge/professional competencies to address the needs of families.

The problems faced by individuals and families today have become more challenging and complex. Unfortunately, faith and Catholic teachings are no longer seen nor valued as guiding principles in facing these challenges. The Church lacks the necessary psychological and spiritual support for those in need. We recognise that there is a lack of relevant skills and knowledge among church leaders and the religious. It is important for them to keep abreast of current realities and update their necessary skills. Additionally, it is crucial to seek alternative ways to reach out to families in the context of today's affairs.

Part 3: We Walk

It is urgent to provide relevant programmes, both preventive and remedial, to help individuals and families experience God's com-



passion and healing. A welcoming Church that makes vulnerable individuals and families in crisis feel safe, accepted and empowered should be created.

It is crucial to accompany families in difficulties with necessary support, so they can experience mercy and compassion. Church leaders and religious must feel confident and competent to address issues that challenge families today. They must be equipped with proper attitude and relevant skills to network with other agencies that advocate the same goals.

As religious and Church, we must con-

tinue to respond to the invitation of being a sign of mercy and closeness. This can be achieved through collaboration and networking among religious in family ministry, pastoral care and physical visits to families, and religious communities' ongoing formation and witnessing through updating and community living.

Perhaps, one reason why we, religious, are called not to have families of our own is for us to become God's gift of love to all families, especially those in crisis. Through our pastoral presence as religious, families in crisis may feel that Christ is with them.

This MRA has made a very significant impact. We have been very much enriched by the following:

1. This gathering of so many religious from the 28 congregations represented is an expression of the ONENESS in our diversity of charisms and the revelation that we all work for the Kingdom of God as One Big Body, the CHURCH!

The fellowship experienced throughout this assembly is a concrete expression of this ONENESS, particularly the coming together of both East & West Malaysians

We thank God with our hearts full of gratitude that God has allowed this to happen as part of the synodal process.

2. The contents of the four sessions based on the four documents (*Evangelii Gaudium – Joy of the Gospel*, *Laudato Si – Care of our common home*, *Amoris Laetitia – The Joy of Love*, *Fratelli Tutti – Fraternity and Social Friendship*) were so well-presented by the four speakers.

We felt empowered, energised, deeply moved and challenged as we entered into the process of spiritual conversation (both individually and in small groups).

This whole experience of 'celebration', 'listening' and walking' together as a body of Christ, was culminated in the celebration of the Feast of Corpus Christi, making it a true expression of our oneness in CHRIST!

3. Mission:

The awareness of the present realities shaped by the pandemic, for both the religious and the poor we work with, revealed the fact that this pandemic has affected our lives. This calls for a review of our mission approaches.

4. Our lives as religious:



Sisters of the Infant Jesus (IJS)

4.1 This MRA calls us to re-examine, re-visualise and re-imagine our vocation as religious in this part of the world.

4.2 We are challenged to self-conversion especially in our community living.

Fr Alvin Ng in his sharing on 'cura personalis' reminded us of the need to relate with love e.g. fraternal correction in community living that calls us to see Christ in the Sisters/Brothers in our communities, accepting the strengths and weaknesses in each other. This is the prophetic witnessing to a world of broken relationships.

Expectations after this MRA:

1. We need to 'walk the talk'.

2. One interesting question on the invitation to imagine our founder, Blessed Nicolas Barre to be in Malaysia today. What would he say to us? He would certainly remind us of the root of the foundation of the Institute – to help restore the dignity of every person especially those who are rejected, marginalised, neglected in our society as well as to restore the mother earth to its original nature. Concrete steps to take in

order to make this happen as we move forward in this new journey.

3. We want to continue to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit in our 'communion', 'participation' and 'mission' walking with the Church towards the Synod.

Grateful:

1. To the organising committee for the beautiful and sacrificing ways in the ways they worked and toiled to make this MRA a fruitful one for all. They even thought of those who could not make it to be present with the online facility so that they did not miss the important parts of this significant event. This is truly commendable and how wholesome in the ways they managed the whole event!

2. The presence of the Bishops was truly a great sign of their support, encouragement and love for us the RELIGIOUS in MALAYSIA!

FINALLY, TO GOD BE THE GLORY AND PRAISE! THIS HAS MARKED ANOTHER CHAPTER IN THE LIFE OF THE RELIGIOUS IN MALAYSIA.

"As the Secretary of the Conference of Religious Major Superiors (CRMS), I came with no expectation except to observe and meet my fellow religious brothers and sisters. I am inspired to see almost 200 religious people from East and West Malaysia gathered, intending to share and deepen their sense of presence in the Church of Malaysia. I am very impressed with the whole Assembly and humbled to see so many religious gathered to discuss the current issue of the world and the Church seriously. Through the presentations, talks and group sharing, I can feel the presence of the Holy Spirit in the midst. The various colours of the religious habits reflect the gifts and talents that manifest the richness of the Church. I am glad that I participated in the whole Assembly. I am grateful to see that the religious are filled with so much passion for the mission and the people they are called to serve, and at the same time, there's so much hope in the future for religious life in Malaysia. This is a great witness of the Church, that religious life is still very much alive, relevant, and important in the Church.

"I sincerely hope that the fire that we all felt in the Assembly will continue to inflame in the heart of the religious as we go forth to our mission place. May the same fire from our hearts be felt by the members of our communities and the people we encounter. I expect this will not be the first and only MRA, but that there will be more such assemblies (perhaps more frequently in the various states, like once in two years); and my dream will be this Religious Assembly will grow to be one serving Asia, being the people for God and capturing the hearts of women and men for HIM."



Sr Jocelyn Veritas Kwek, FSP

Initiative to promote a strong family life

The family embodies God's dream for humanity and Pope Francis urges the Church to counter individualism and consumerism that leads to a decline of the family life.

Take a fresh look at *Amoris Laetitia* to identify the pastoral priorities that relate to the current needs of our local Church. Let's address them with creativity and missionary zeal.

We are grateful for the gift of our faith, which strengthens our relationships with family and inspires us to help those in need.

Living in harmony brings joy, but we recognise that the challenges faced by individuals and families have become increasingly complex. Therefore, we must find alternative ways to reach out to families in today's context with creativity and missionary zeal.

Pope Francis calls us to embark on a journey of consecrated life, leaving our comfort zones and serving as agents of communion and encounter. Our mission impulse, driven by our charisms, compels us to move forward.

Our prophetic journey of transformation must be both personal and insti-

tutional, and it requires creativity and missionary zeal.

We need to enlarge the space of our tent in our communities by welcoming others, accepting and celebrating their diversity. This diversity, which mirrors the diversity of humanity, will be found within our congregation. We must broaden our horizons and be open to new realities, different cultures, emerging peripheries and changing necessities that require our discernment and a call to action.

Biblical symbols are an indication that we should be guided by small and frail signs, which we can discern through continuous practice. Our hope should not be based on our strength, numbers, or successes, but on our experiences of weakness, confusion, searching, managing change, and being among the men and women of our day.

The synodal journey is a moment of novelty and freshness, a deep desire for radical inclusion, and an invitation from God to launch ourselves into the deep with faith and courage, embracing new approaches and the unknown."



"We are grateful for our active participation in the Malaysia Religious Assembly together with the other religious congregations. These were days filled with the spirit of God; as we build and renew friendship, listen to the speakers, to one another in our small group sharing, in our prayers and reflections. Indeed, there's a reason to celebrate with gratitude, hope and joy for the Church in Malaysia and the Universal Church!"

Missionary Sisters of the Lord's Table (MSLT)



Ten-point reflection on *Amoris Laetitia*

1. The Church needs to understand families and individuals in their complexity

Taking people where they are! One size doesn't fit all. (Par 296)

2. The role of conscience is paramount in moral decision making.

The Church is called to form consciences, not replace them, people need help discerning not just following rules. (Par 303, 37)

3. Divorced and remarried Catholics need to be more fully integrated into the Church

They are not excommunicated and specifics of their situations need to be respected. (Par 243)

4. All members of the family need to be encouraged to live good Christian lives

A good marriage is a dynamic process

– love grows and develops through imperfection (Par 113). No one must feel excluded.

5. We should no longer talk about people living in sin

There is a new approach here. Non-traditional families, single mothers and irregular situations need understanding (Par 301, 49, 305)

6. What might work in one place may not work in another

This understanding concerns geographical areas as well as Individuals. In Par 3 Pope Francis says not every question can be settled by the magisterium.

7. Traditional teachings on marriage are affirmed, but the Church should not burden people with unrealistic expectations

While the invitation is always to a healthy marriage. (Par 36) The ideal can

be a tremendous burden. (Par 122)

8. Children must be educated in sex and sexuality

Children need education in understanding sex and sexuality within love and mutual self-giving. (Par 280) Sex to be understood as always open to new life.

9. Gay men and women should be respected

While same-sex marriage is not permitted, Francis wants to reaffirm the dignity of the homosexual person. Families with LGBTQI+ members are to be given respectful pastoral guidance. (Par 250/1)

10. All are welcome

Amoris Laetitia offers the vision of a pastoral and merciful Church that encourages people to experience the 'joy of love'.

The family is an absolutely essential part of the Church – the Church is a 'family of families'. (Par 87)

Sr Josephine Thong, OSF

"I am very happy to have the opportunity to participate in the MRA. My experience is very enjoyable — moments of praying, and sharing life experiences in the context of family, ecology, Church and society.

"I hope that the end of this assembly is the starting point of a new milestone — that all our religious can cooperate and work more actively together. Be more energetic, creative and journey together with the people of God."



Sr Dariah Ajap, FSIC

"The MRA was an extraordinary experience. It was informative, motivating, and inspiring for me.

"At first, I felt isolated and awkward in meetings with the religious from the other dioceses. After getting to know them especially those in my group, it was easier.

"During the spiritual conversation, one question that challenged us was whether the call to be a religious is still relevant today.

"I am challenged and inspired to listen more and to reach out to those in need. We have to go out into the world and offer them Jesus. We need to spend time listening, reaching out and visiting them, especially the families who are in crisis.

"Ongoing faith formation needs to be given to families to help build a strong family life."

"The Malaysia Religious Assembly (MRA) has really been a great experience for me. It was a chance for me to get to know a multitude of religious from different parts of Malaysia. Before, we were miles apart, but now distance is just a number. I felt really happy making new friends every passing day of the assembly. My encounter and dialogue with them opened my way of thinking and helped cultivate my knowledge especially on how other religious from various congregation tackle a number



of faith living issues in the world as it is.

"I also learned a lot from the speakers as they beautifully guided the participants to a better understanding of what MRA is all about. Walking together as a Church is the red string that binds together all the topics that has been presented. I believe that while attending the assembly, we as the participants, became one in Christ. We enriched each other through the sharing of our own personal and collective experiences on various levels of livelihood. I think the fruit of the assembly is a cumulation of different degrees of information that couldn't have been brought out without the intervention of the assembly.

"All in all, the MRA is a wonderful platform where people can share the joy of the gospel together. In my opinion, the MRA is not just about collective work, but also to show how much we care. Not only to those who are in need, but also to those who are right in front of us. I hope the MRA will become a continuous effort for generations to come."

Fr Giovanni Sugau, CSE

Fraternity, social friendship and *cura personalis*

The final topic on the assembly was on social dimension

Fr Alvin Ng SJ shared deeply on *cura personalis* and challenged the religious to reflect on their own attitude towards their fellow congregation members.

This struck a chord in many present and they shared these during the Spiritual Conversations.

There are three key words that we can take from *Fratelli Tutti* — Fraternity, Social friendship and *cura personalis* (care of the whole person).

Our religious community is the greenhouse of the fraternal charity we exercise. We need to practice Fraternal correction, dialogue, communion and communication in our religious community.

Social friendship is a movement from the community to the society at large.

Cura personalis is understood as the care of the whole person. It is a way of living life as being present to the self and to others

Looking deeply into the person in order to see his or her gifts, weaknesses, challenges, needs, and desires.

Helping the person grow in his or her relationship with God.

Envisioning and caring for the person as God envisions and cares for him or her.

Cura personalis revolves around the idea of accepting people for who they are and ministering to their needs. As such, there is not set format for *cura personalis*; the only purpose is to be completely present to their needs and support them. There is no urgency to solve their problems, they can



do that themselves. Simply walk with them on their journey.

A stranger on the road — Dissecting the parable of the Good Samaritan

Let us admit that, for all the progress we have made, we are still “illiterate” when it comes to accompanying, caring for and supporting the most frail and vulnerable member of our developed societies. (FT 64)

Each day, we have to decide whether to be Good Samaritans or indifferent bystanders... All of us have in ourselves something of the wounded man, something of the robber, something of the passer-by, and something of the Good Samaritan (FT 68)

What would we do if we were there when the man was being robbed and beaten up?

One detail about the passers-by does stand out: they were religious, devoted to the worship of God: a priest and a Levite. This detail should not be overlooked. It shows that belief in God and the worship of God are not enough to ensure that we are actually living in a way pleasing to God. A believer may be untrue to everything that his faith demands of him, and yet think he is close to God and better than others.

St John Chrysostom expressed this pointedly when he challenged his Christian hearers: “Do you wish to honour the body of the Saviour? Do not despise it when it is naked. Do not honour it in church with silk vestments while outside it is naked and numb with cold”. [58] Paradoxically, those who claim to be unbelievers can sometimes put God’s will into practice better than be-

lievers. [FT 74]

Robbers are encouraged by the apathy of passers-by and uninvolved onlookers.

Temptation to be self-righteous judges — “The man should know better than to travel alone on that crime-infested road to Jericho. It is his fault. Now we are saddled with the problem of caring for him!”

We need only to have a pure and simple desire to be a people, a community, constant and tireless in the effort to include, integrate and lift up the fallen (FT 77)

I should no longer say that I have neighbours to help, but that I must myself be a neighbour to others (FT 81)

Cura personalis of the Good Samaritan in three steps

1. *Make the first move to help* — he was moved with pity — is the single prerequisite to be a neighbour — “without fear of pain or a sense of inadequacy” (FT 78)

2. *Don’t do it all alone; seek the help of others* — the Samaritan elicited the assistance of the inn keeper — “collaboration”

3. *Move on from there but check back again where possible* — when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend — eschatological dimension to our exercise of *cura personalis* — I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Mt.25:37-40)

The existence of each and every individual is deeply tied to that of others: life is not simply time that passes, life is a time for interactions (FT 66)

Call and challenge of *Fratelli Tutti* to religious men and women of today

Fr Arockyaraj Pavulu, CMF



“The four days of Malaysian Religious gathering was a moment of grace and joyful event. I am happy to see the members of 28 different congregations; with different Charism of the Congregations come together and share their missionary experiences as part of one Malaysian Church. Though the religious are working in three different regions Sabah, Sarawak and Semenanjung Malaysia; we prayed together, reflected together, shared together, lived together and got connected to one another for Christ’s Mission. I felt hope within me for the Malaysian Church amidst troubled social, economic, political and religious scenario of the nation.

“The gathering gave me the feeling of One Church and One Mission of Christ in Malaysia, envisaged by the Holy Spirit for the salvation of all. It was enriching and enlightening experience for me. The presence and participation of our bishops in the MRA is an encouragement and strength to all religious congregations to work together for evangelisation in Malaysia.

“I hope this feeling of togetherness and connectedness grows in our spirituality, shared mission, collective responsibility to keep us together and work together for the mission in Malaysia. The different gifts of the Holy Spirit, different charisms of the congregations, and people of different cultures in Sabah, Sarawak and Semenanjung celebrate the Christian faith and Christian life as one Malaysian Church.”

A closed world: Where do we find ourselves as religious men and women in today’s world? How connected are we to the questions of the church, family, youth, and ecology?

A stranger on the road: To whom, what, where, when, and which type of *cura personalis* are we invited to exercise?

An open heart: An honest examination of our respective congregational mission in the present is necessary.

Dialogue and friendship: How can we re-engage the world and envision it anew in Christ?

Our commitments include:

➤ Being more welcoming, hospitable, inclusive, and promoting gender equality.

➤ Reaching out to marginalised groups such as refugees, migrants, and the LGBT community.

➤ Collaborating and networking with church-based groups, NGOs, and other Christian denominations.

➤ Focusing on the common good among people of different faith traditions, using this to create unity, friendship, and charity.

➤ Striving to see goodness in all, refraining from being judgmental while exercising patience and humility.

Anthropologist Margaret Mead was once asked by a student what she considered the first sign of civilisation in a culture. The student expected the anthropologist to talk about fishhooks,

clay bowls, or sharpening stones, but no. Mead said that the first sign of civilisation in an ancient culture is the evidence of a person with a broken and healed femur.

Mead explained that *in the rest of the animal kingdom, if you break your leg, you die*. You cannot run away from danger, go to the river to drink water or hunt for food. You become fresh meat for predators. No animal survives a broken leg long enough for the bone to heal. A broken femur that has healed is proof that someone took the time to stay with the one who fell, healed the injury, brought the person to safety, and nurtured them back to health.

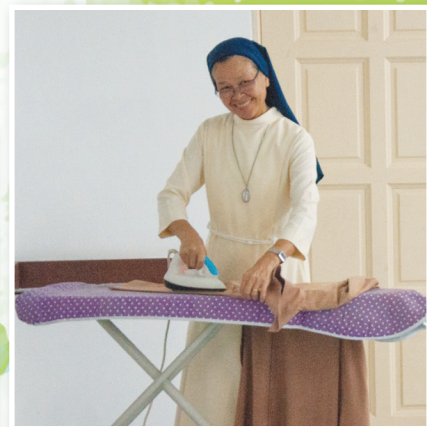
“Helping someone through difficulty is the starting point of civilisation,” she explained Mead. *Civilisation is a community aid*.

Blessed Charles [de Foucauld] directed his ideal of total surrender to God towards an identification with the poor, abandoned in the depths of the African desert. In that setting, he expressed his desire to feel himself a brother to every human being, and asked a friend to “pray to God that I truly be the brother of all.” He wanted to be, in the end, “the universal brother”. Yet only by identifying with the least did he come at last to be the brother [and sister] of all. May God inspire that dream in each one of us. Amen. [FT 287]





Religious in Action



The final statement

Church



We celebrate and acknowledge the uniqueness of our charisms which enriches our local Church by witnessing to God's mercy and compassion in the society through personal and communal presence. Rooted in our personal relationship with God and embodying the gospel values, we are challenged to live joyfully the evangelical counsels to be countercultural witnesses in a world that promotes the culture of individualism and consumerism.

We need to move out from our comfort zone to the periphery where the marginalised live and experience much injustices. To listen compassionately to the cries of the poor and to be in solidarity, calling forth for personal and communal transformation; and that will lead us to be the authentic witnesses to the Church and to be transformational leaders in Society.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:35)

Family

We celebrate our sense of belonging in our family, community and Church as a whole and our inter-connectedness with the larger society. We treasure the harmonious relationships which exists in a multi-racial society with people of different faith, diverse languages and culture.

The Gospel values of acceptance and welcoming attitude, to forgive and to embrace one another unites us as a family.

While acknowledging the blessings of family life, the problems faced by individuals and families have become more challenging and complex due to the negative influences of social media, dysfunctional families, etc. There is

a great need for accompaniment, listen with empathy without being judgemental and prejudice; and to be creative when doing family ministry.

Therefore, we need to upgrade and update ourselves in professional skills and knowledge to be relevant and effective. There is an urgent need to collaborate and network with various religious congregations, church groups, private and public agencies and other faiths bring healing and reconciliation within persons and families.

"Bear with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgive each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." (Col. 3:13)

Ecology



In celebrating Earth our common home, we acknowledge the sacredness of our inter-connectedness with God, one another and whole of creation. The survival of human life and every living creature are interdependent on the resources of the earth. However, our attitudes of greed and selfishness has led to the destruction of our own survival.

The global ecological crisis is rapidly affecting human family and all of life on earth and we know there is no reversal. The crisis is interconnected from climate change to biodiversity loss, depletion of resources, and many more which leads to other social problems such as extreme poverty and social inequality, climate refugees, etc. Hence, the

cry of the earth and the cry of the poor is one global crisis. There is an urgency to ensure protection and sustainability of the earth and its resources for future generations.

As religious, we have a responsibility to assume a leadership role in undergoing a personal and communal ecological conversion that comes from within our hearts. This conversion should lead to every possible effort to care for the earth, even in the face of indifference and resistance. We need to adopt an integrated approach at personal and communal levels; to live a simple lifestyle, and to reduce waste, dialogue and partnerships with government agencies and private sectors to collaborate and implement programmes for care of the earth and sustainability of resources for future generations.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. (Gen 2:15)

Social

We celebrate unity in diversity and uniqueness of cultures among the multi-racial and multireligious society in Malaysia. As religious, we are also blessed with different charisms in the Church which is given by God to be at the service of mission. It is imperative to reclaim our Founders' and Foundresses' original charism and vision that empowered them to go beyond boundaries, race, colour, and creed to new frontiers to announce the Gospel message of unconditional love, peace and harmony through creative mission.

In reaching out to the poor and marginalised, we are called to be bridge builders, to work for the common good, respecting human dignity and transforming the conditions that causes suffering. In the spirit of fraternal love and social relationships, we accept and complement each other, recognise the dignity and God's unconditional love for each person, inclusivity, and unity in diversity.

Rooted in God's love, we as religious are urged to radiate this same love (*Cura Personalis*: care for the entire person) to our brothers and sisters in community, and to all whom we encounter in our apostolate especially those in the peripheries. This two-fold mission needs to take into account the signs of the time, through our collaborative efforts as religious communities and with various groups and agencies.

The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

