

The Catholic Weekly HERALD

Mission Statement

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

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But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.

1 Tim 6:11-12



Canossian sisters celebrate 120 years of mission in Malaysia

■ P4



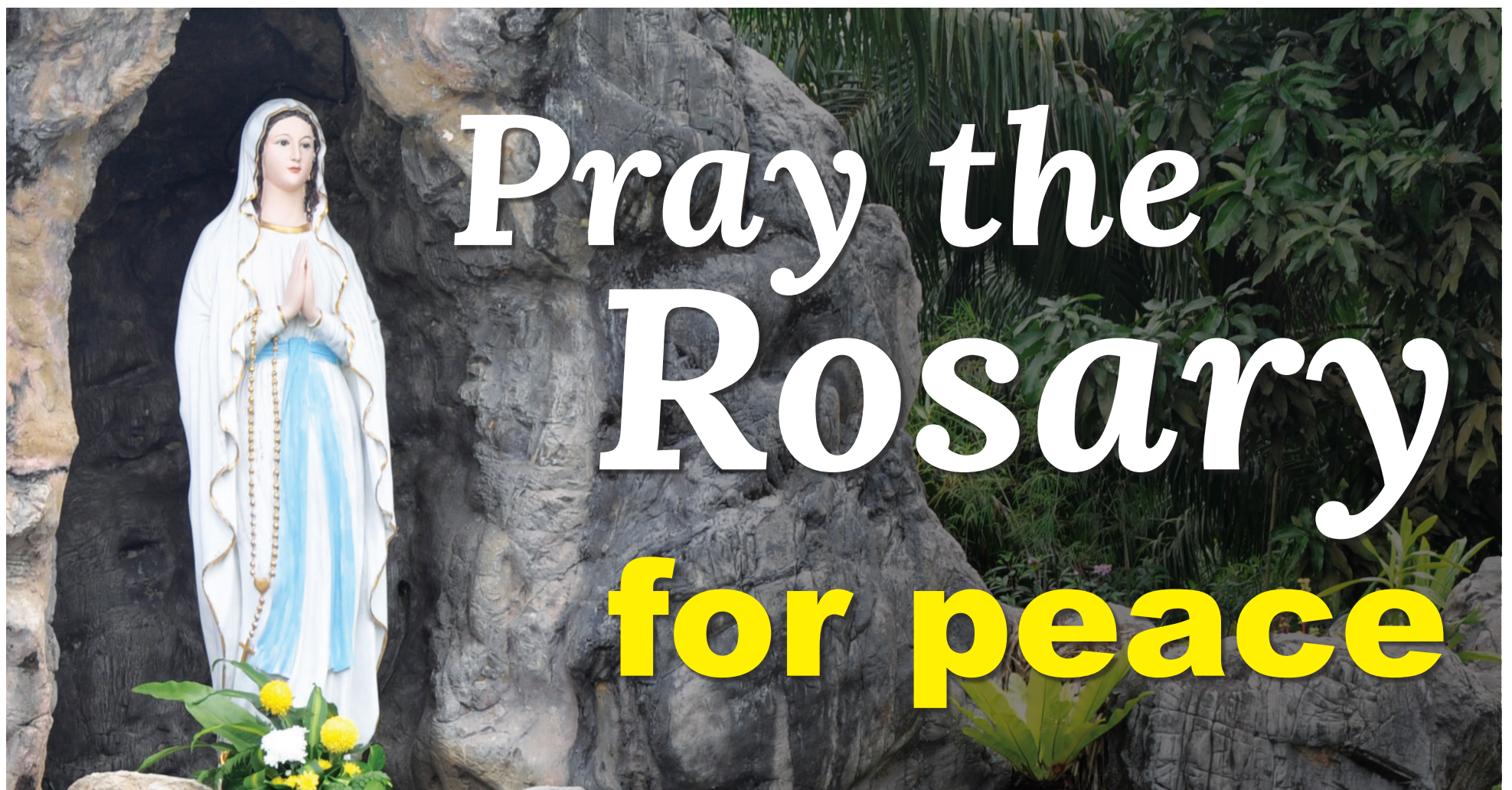
Parish jubilee pilgrimage strengthens faith and unity

■ P6



Building a Church of healing

■ P10



Lifting voices for a wounded world

VATICAN: With wars raging in Ukraine, the Middle East, and Africa, and divisions wounding societies everywhere, the Church is calling Catholics worldwide to lift their voices in a powerful chorus of prayer this October, the Month of the Holy Rosary.

Pope Leo XIV has urged the faithful to pray the Rosary daily — personally, in families, and in communities — for peace and unity. At his Wednesday General Audience on September 24, the Pope announced that on October 11, thousands of pilgrims will gather in St Peter's Square at 6.00pm to pray the Rosary.

The date is significant: it marks both the Jubilee of Marian Spirituality (October 11–12) and the 63rd anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's opening by Pope St John XXIII in 1962. The original image of Our Lady of Fatima will be brought to St Peter's Square for the prayer event, highlighting the Church's trust in Mary's intercession for peace. Vatican employees will also be invited to pray the Rosary daily at 7.00pm in St Peter's Basilica throughout October.

This papal initiative coincides with the 20th edition of Aid to the Church in Need's (ACN) One Million Children Praying the Rosary campaign, which will unite children across the globe on October 7, the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary.

In Malaysia, a special worldwide Holy Hour and Rosary for children will be held on October 13 at 7.00pm, lives-



treamed from the Diocese of Sandakan. This gives Malaysian children and families a chance to join hands spiritually with millions of others around the world in praying for peace and healing.

The campaign began in 2005 in Caracas, Venezuela, when a small group of children prayed the Rosary in a public square. Witnesses reported a mysterious shimmer like glitter on the children's hands, which they saw as a sign from heaven. Inspired by this moment, the campaign spread across schools, parishes, and homes worldwide, echoing St Padre Pio's conviction that "when one million children pray the Rosary, the world will change."

Fr Anton Lässer, ACN's ecclesiastical assistant, encouraged Catholics to join this global wave of prayer: "Chil-

dren's prayer has a special power before God, a power that can break down walls, heal wounds, and bring light to darkness." Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, ACN's international president, added: "In a time when the silence of prayer is too often drowned out by the noise of the world, the Rosary offers an oasis of contemplation — a gentle and powerful path that leads us to the heart of the Gospel."

Throughout Church history, the Rosary has been seen not merely as a repetition of prayers but as a meditative journey through the life of Christ, seen through the eyes of Mary. Each bead becomes a step closer to Jesus, and each decade invites reflection on the mysteries of His life, death, and resurrection.

St John Paul II, in his apostolic letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, described the Rosary as a "compendium of the Gospel" and a "spiritual weapon" against the forces of evil. Tradition holds that St Dominic received the Rosary from Our Lady as a means of combating heresy and leading people back to faith.

In many cultures, the Rosary is also called a "chain of roses" — a spiritual garland offered to Mary. Its circular form is a sign of unity, reminding believers that prayer links the faithful together across nations, generations, and circumstances.

This October, take up the Rosary as a prayer for peace and healing. Whether prayed in a cathedral, with a parish group, in a classroom, or around the kitchen table, every Hail Mary becomes a link in a global chain of prayer, entrusting our world to Mary's maternal care. **Agencies**

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We're looking for concise articles between 400 to 500 words, accompanied by high-resolution photos (300 DPI) in JPG or PNG format.

Don't forget to include captions that bring your images to life.

Your contributions are essential in keeping our faith community connected and informed.

Send your articles to editor1@herald.com.my

BM and the Church: A *lingua franca* deferred?

Few may realise that the largest group of Catholics in Malaysia are the bumiputeras — the Orang Asal and Orang Asli, the indigenous peoples of this land. Most live in Sabah and Sarawak, with smaller settlements in Peninsular Malaysia. Over recent decades, with globalisation, better access to education, and the search for employment, many have migrated to the Peninsula. Some came temporarily for studies or work; many later married and settled here, weaving themselves into the diverse tapestry of urban Catholic life.

This demographic movement has quietly transformed the face of the Malaysian Church. No longer can Catholics in Peninsular Malaysia think of the Church as primarily English, Chinese, or Tamil speaking. The indigenous faithful, together with East Malaysians who now call the Peninsular home, bring with them their faith, languages, and cultural richness. For them, Bahasa Malaysia (BM) is not merely a second tongue — it is often the natural language of prayer, worship, and daily life.

The Foresight of the 1980s

The story of BM in the Malaysian Church is not new. As early as the 1980s, Church leaders recognised the potential of Bahasa Malaysia as a unifying language. It was already the national language, capable of bridging ethnic divides and fostering a deeper sense of common identity. Some even envisioned it as the *lingua franca* of the Church in Malaysia — a language in which Catholics from all backgrounds could gather, pray, and celebrate the sacraments together.

The late Fr Anthony Thomas contributed significantly to this vision. He composed Mass propers in BM, and many of his compositions are still used in parishes today. His work was rooted in the conviction that BM could give voice to the faith of all Catholics, not just a linguistic

minority. At that time, the hope was that BM would eventually take its place alongside, or even above, the traditional three languages of English, Chinese, and Tamil, serving as a bridge across cultures.

More Than Three Decades Later

Yet, more than 30 years on, we must ask: has BM become the *lingua franca* of the Malaysian Church? The honest answer is no. While Masses in BM exist, they often cater to specific groups rather than being embraced as the norm. At major diocesan or parish celebrations, we continue to opt for multi-lingual liturgies instead of a unified celebration in BM.

This reveals a tension. On the one hand, we pride ourselves on being a multicultural Church. On the other, we may be unintentionally reinforcing divisions by remaining in linguistic silos.

A Synodal Moment

The universal Church is currently undergoing a process of discernment through the Synod on Synodality. At every level, the call is to listen — to the joys, struggles, and hopes of all the faithful, especially those often unheard. In Malaysia, one recurring theme has emerged from parish assemblies and diocesan consultations: the need for wider, consistent use of BM in the Church.

This is not simply about language. It is about inclusion, identity, and mission. If Bahasa Malaysia is the language that binds our nation together, should it not also be the language that helps bind Malaysian Catholics as one Body of Christ?

A Pastoral and Missionary Challenge

The issue goes beyond liturgy. Language shapes catechesis, formation, and evangelisation. In rural areas, BM is the main medium of instruction in schools. Young Catholics in Sabah and Sarawak

often grow up with BM as their heart language, even when their ethnic group has its own mother tongue. In the Peninsula, children from mixed marriages — Chinese-Kadazan, Tamil-Iban, Eurasian-Bidayuh — often find BM the easiest language to communicate in.

If the Church continues to limit BM to the sidelines, it risks alienating a growing portion of its faithful. On the other hand, embracing BM more fully could open new doors for evangelisation, interfaith dialogue, and national witness. Imagine diocesan celebrations where BM is the primary language, allowing every Catholic, regardless of ethnicity, to pray together with one voice.

The Question Before Us

The Malaysian Church has long proclaimed that it is “one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic.” Yet our linguistic divisions sometimes obscure that unity. The foresight of the 1980s remains unfulfilled, but the call is louder than ever. The challenge is not merely whether we can translate prayers into BM, but whether we have the courage to let BM shape our common life as Church.

So the question remains: will we allow Bahasa Malaysia to truly become the *lingua franca* of our Catholic Church in Malaysia, or will we continue to worship in parallel, speaking past one another in separate tongues?

The 2026 Malaysia Pastoral Convention in Sibul will be a defining moment. Will it mark a turning point where the Malaysian Church chooses BM as a unifying path forward, or will it remain another missed opportunity?

The answer will determine not just how we pray, but how we live as a Church in this nation — one people of God, united in faith, and truly Malaysian in spirit.

Sandra Ann

From shy Catholics to bold witnesses

Have we ever stopped to wonder why we Catholics are often shy about expressing our faith? This hesitation is most noticeable when it comes to practising it publicly or sharing personal testimonies. I remember my college days — I wouldn't even say grace before meals. It wasn't that I was ashamed of my faith; I simply had never grown up with the practice. Ironically, every T-shirt I wore practically screamed “Catholic,” yet I rarely lived out my faith in a visible or practical way.

When we compare ourselves to our Protestant brothers and sisters, the difference can be striking. They are often bold, openly sharing their faith with others — even strangers. What makes them so different from us? To be fair, many Catholics courageously witness to their faith, but they remain the minority. Among the young, the challenge is even greater. Many do not appreciate or value the faith they have inherited. So, what went wrong? Or perhaps the better question is: how did we get here?

I have noticed, over the years, that there is often a difference between those baptised as infants and those baptised as adults. Cradle Catholics like myself sometimes take faith for granted because it was handed to us before we could choose it. Those who come to faith later in life often value it more deeply because they had to search for it. Of course, this doesn't mean cradle Catholics cannot grow in faith, nor that adult converts will necessarily persevere. Faith ultimately comes down to a personal choice that must be renewed daily.

When the disciples asked Jesus to “increase their faith,” it wasn't because they had none. Their struggle was that their faith was misplaced — they were expecting a political Messiah, not a spiritual one. They needed faith to recognise Jesus' divinity and trust in

His mission. When we truly place our faith in something, it can give us incredible strength and courage. Yet when it comes to faith in God, we often falter — because how do we believe in what we cannot see?

This is where the second reading gives us hope. St Paul reminds us that the Spirit of God is not a spirit of timidity, but of power, love, and self-control. Through Baptism and Confirmation, this Spirit already dwells within us. The gift has been given — we simply need to fan it into flame. The image recalls Pentecost, when the fearful Apostles were transformed into bold witnesses. But for this to happen in us, we must first open our hearts to a personal encounter with God. Without this encounter, faith remains abstract — a label rather than a lived reality.

Looking back, I can see this in my own journey. I never attended catechism as a child because my parents never registered me. I only discovered catechism in secondary school and, truthfully, learned very little. It was only when I moved to Kuala Lumpur to study that I began to set my life in order. My faith truly came alive when I experienced the love of God personally. That encounter convinced me that what I professed was real and worth living for.

Learning about the faith is important, but even more vital is experiencing it. It's like learning a sport — you can read about techniques all day long, but until you get on the field, it doesn't become real. Both knowledge and experience are necessary for faith to grow. Spiritual growth is a lifelong journey that will only be complete when we meet God face to face.

Today, we have more resources than ever before. Faith formation materials, online retreats, videos, and podcasts are just a click

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Philip Tay, OCD

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Readings: *Habakuk 1:2-3, 2:2-4;*
2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14;
Gospel: Luke 17:5-10

away. And yet, many of us scroll endlessly through content that does nothing for our souls. Is faith really that boring? Not when we are personally invested in it. Without personal choice and personal encounter, we risk remaining Catholics in name only.

This is why the first reading reminds us: “the upright man shall live by his faithfulness.” Faithfulness makes us good servants and stewards. When Jesus says we do not need to be thanked for doing our duty, He is teaching humility — reminding us that God is Creator and we are His creatures. Strong faith allows us to serve Him joyfully, not for recognition but out of love.

So let us strive to grow in faith until it is strong enough to “move mountains.” We have countless opportunities to witness to Christ — even online. A simple Scripture verse, prayer, or song shared on social media can touch someone's heart. Imagine if more of us used these platforms to share hope, light, and encouragement. Together, we could fan the flame of faith until it becomes a firestorm.

The Spirit has been given to us. Let us not allow it to lie dormant. As St Ignatius of Loyola reminds us: “Pray as if everything depended on God, and work as if everything depended on you.” If we do what we can, God will do the rest — and through us, the light of His love will shine ever brighter in today's world.



ARCHDIOCESE OF KUALA LUMPUR
CHAN/CD/08/2025

Chancery Notice

Appointment of New Archdiocesan Financial Administrator

The Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr Jude A. Braganza as its new Financial Administrator, effective October 1, 2025.

A professionally trained accountant, Mr Braganza brings with him over 35 years of international experience across a wide range of industries. His deep expertise in financial management and strategic planning will be a great blessing to the Archdiocese as we continue to strengthen our mission of stewardship and service to the Church. We warmly welcome him to this important role and entrust his ministry to God's guidance.

At the same time, we express our heartfelt gratitude to Mr Ong Cheng Watt for his exemplary service to the Archdiocesan Finance Department over the past 30 years, including his faithful leadership as Acting Financial Administrator for the last six years. His steadfast commitment, integrity, and generosity have been instrumental in guiding the Archdiocese through times of transition.

As Mr Ong steps back from day-to-day responsibilities, he will remain engaged in a consultative role, offering his guidance and support as we move forward.

Let us give thanks for the contributions of both Mr Braganza and Mr Ong, and let us pray that the Lord will bless them abundantly in their continued service to the Church.

Clarence Devadass

Rev Fr Dr Clarence Devadass
Chancellor
Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur

September 26, 2025



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

October

3-9 On Leave

11 World Mental Health Day – Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

October

6 Young Priests Gathering 2025 – MAJODI Centre

Opening Mass – Church of St Joseph, Plentong

7 Young Priests Gathering 2025 – MAJODI Centre

Mass – Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Johor Bahru (MJD)

9 MJD Young People's Network meeting with the Bishop

11 Confirmation – Church of St Joseph, Plentong

12 Mass in Tamil – Church of Divine Mercy, Skudai

Prayers rise for Malaysia's blessing

Grace Annammal

RAWANG: On September 16, the Church of St Jude had the great privilege of hosting the Malaysia Day of Prayer for the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, in collaboration with the Council of Churches of Malaysia. Guided by the powerful theme, "... that they may all be one..." (John 17:21), the gathering became a living witness to the call for Christian unity and the power of communal prayer.

The day opened at 7.00am with *Lauds*, a beautiful time of Morning Prayer led by John Chooi of The Upperroom Music Ministry. This was followed by a session of praise and worship, lifting the hearts of all present and filling the church with a spirit of joy and reverence.

At the heart of the celebration was the Mass, presided over by Fr Jonathan Rao, uniting parishioners and clergy in a shared act of faith and devotion. The liturgy became a moment of grace, reminding everyone that unity in Christ



Children dressed in traditional attire during the Malaysia Day of Prayer.

is the foundation of a vibrant Christian witness.

In a special gesture, the Ecumenical Celebration was livestreamed nationwide, extending the spirit of prayer and solidarity to Christians across Malaysia. Together, they prayed for God's blessings upon the nation — for peace, harmony, and prosperity — entrusting Malaysia to the loving care of

the Lord.

This Malaysia Day of Prayer was a powerful sign of hope, bringing together Christians of different traditions to stand united in prayer and mission. It reminded the faithful that the call to unity is not merely a wish but a Gospel mandate — one that continues to inspire the Church to work, pray, and walk together as one body in Christ.



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #242



Welcome dear friends,

The Pilgrim Cross is now at the Church of St Henry, Batu Pahat and journeys through the parish until October 25, 2025.

Malacca Catholics recalled the 480th Anniversary of the "Landing of St Francis Xavier at Malacca" on September 24 and 25 with Masses on St Paul's Hill.

From September 28 - October 2, College General celebrated her 360th Anniversary in Penang. The alumni from Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Singapore and Malaysia, with MEP Fathers from France attended. It was going down memory lane for them.

Local Takes. Going forward or Gostan-ing?

The law minister upholds that statutory rape is statutory rape. A police chief wants victims of statutory rape, who consented to sex, to be punished.

Concert goers in Malaysia were advised to dress appropriately, avoid disruptive behaviour, and respect the nation's cultural and religious sensitivities. Puspal clarified that the dress code was only for artists, not concert goers.

Local universities are being internationalised, favouring full fee-paying students, and restricting local UPU places.

Perks for the rakyat: *Sara100, Budi95*, RM600 Senior Singles. and RM600 for the hardcore.

MM2H, Making Malaysia Second Home scheme is back on track.

Wildlife Conservation requires at least 5000 wildlife rangers to check the internationalised and

syndicated poachers.

Britain, Australia, Canada, France and Portugal recognised the State of Palestine on September 22. The number of Palestinians killed in the Gaza Strip since October 2023 has surpassed 65,000, according to Gaza-based health authorities.

The UN Commissioner revealed to the Pope the world's complexity and many crises that continue to plague the world., and many instances of violation of international humanitarian law. Globally there are estimated 120 million plus refugees and the displaced.

The Catholic Church dedicates October Rosary to Mary, Queen of Peace: remember the innocent victims of Myanmar's Rakhine State; Nepal's calm and reopening after stormy unrest; and the Argentina's Guardians of Creation —children who are living their faith, caring for our planet.

A Thought For The Week: The Other Side

A Mother was reading a magazine, and her cute little daughter distracted her every now and then. To keep her busy, she tore one page on which was printed the map of the world. She tore it into pieces and asked her to go to her room and put them together to make the map again. She was sure her daughter would take a lot more time and probably the whole day to get it done. But the little one came back within minutes with a perfect map.

When she asked how she could do it so quickly, she said, "Oh Mom,

there is a man's face on the other side of the paper. I made the face perfect to get the map right." She ran outside to play, leaving the mother surprised.

Lesson from the Little One: Perhaps there is always the other side to whatever you experience in this world. Whenever we come across a challenge or a puzzling situation, look at the other side. There may be the solution.

QnQ! Q asks: Do small successes matter?

You once thought the biggest victories were public — the promotion, the applause, the recognition.

But the truth is, the greatest victories are private, personal. The habit you finally broke. The trauma you overcame. The insecurity you conquered. The patience you practised in silence. The emotions you mastered when no one was watching.

The world may never see them. But they're the wins that quietly shape your entire life; your character, your self-belief and personal credibility. What was your recent private victory?

Holy Spirit@work: "Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe." *St Augustine*

Something to tickle you: "Your most important work is always ahead of you, never behind you." *Stephen Covey*

Bishop Bernard Paul

Parish jubilee pilgrimage strengthens faith and unity

SEBERANG PERAI: The Jubilee Year 2025, themed *Pilgrims of Hope*, offers families a special opportunity to celebrate, reflect, and rekindle their faith and relationships. Proclaimed by Pope Francis, this year invites the faithful to rediscover God's grace and love in the heart of family and community life — a call that resonated deeply with the Church of the Holy Name of Mary, Permatang Tinggi.

Responding to this invitation, parish priest Fr Louis Loi, organised a one-day pilgrimage to the Chapel of Annai Vellaganny in Jelapang, Ipoh, and the Church of the Sacred Heart, Kampar. This journey was designed to help families live out the Jubilee theme by becoming "pilgrims of hope" within their homes and communities.

In the days leading up to the pilgrimage, some parishioners expressed concern about the chosen date, given the long weekend and



Pilgrims assisting the wheelchair bound through the pilgrimage.

unpredictable weather. Trusting in God's providence, Fr Louis pressed ahead with the plans. The faith of the organisers was richly rewarded — while the previous day had seen heavy downpours, the pilgrims were blessed with fine weather and a



Pilgrims venerating the relics at the Church of Sacred Heart, Kampar.

smooth journey. God's presence was felt throughout, like a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

At 8.00am, some 600 faithful set off from the parish in a fleet of 13 buses, filled with joyful anticipation. Their first stop, the Chapel of Annai Vellaganny, provided a powerful start to the day. The pilgrims were warmly welcomed by Fr George Vaithynathan, who offered a brief

but insightful history of the chapel. This was followed by the celebration of Holy Mass, presided over by Fr Louis. In a beautiful testament to the universality of the Church, the liturgy was celebrated in four languages, reflecting the parish's rich diversity.

The pilgrims then proceeded to Kam Ling Restaurant, where they shared a fellowship meal that strengthened both body and spirit for

the afternoon's programme.

Their next destination was the historic Church of the Sacred Heart in Kampar, where they were led in a time of praise and worship. A parish representative shared a concise history of the church, followed by a short video presentation introducing the saints and blessed whose holy relics are enshrined there. This set the stage for a moving period of veneration, leaving many pilgrims visibly touched.

The Church of the Holy Name of Mary extends its deepest gratitude to both host parishes for their warm welcome, gracious hospitality, and patient guidance throughout the day.

This grace-filled journey brought families closer together, inspired those who had drifted from the Church to reconnect, and even welcomed those from other faiths to rejoice in God's gift of family — celebrating the Church at its most essential level: the domestic church.

Caritas Friends in Need outing 2025

KULAI, Johor: The Caritas Family from five parishes — Kulai, Ulu Tiram, Masai, Plentong, and Skudai — converged at the picturesque IOI Palm Villa Golf and Country Resort Kulai recently. Organised by Caritas POHD Christ the King (CTK) Kulai, the event brought together volunteers and parishioners, celebrating their shared mission of service and unity in a vibrant spirit of togetherness.

The day's programme began with registration and light breakfast, where participants were welcomed and energised for the activities ahead. Friar Joe Matthews, OFM Cap, led the opening prayer, setting a reverent and spiritual tone for the day. His words of blessing and encouragement served as a timely reminder of the true mission of Caritas — to serve with compassion and unity.

By 9.30am, the participants got moving with an energetic Zumba and aerobics session. Laughter, music, and cheerful voices filled the hall as everyone joined in the fun. At 10.00am, it was FUNTIME (Games), with the Palm Villa staff organising four lively and interactive

activities. The games had everyone on their feet, laughing, and cheering each other on, while the children ran about with unrestrained joy, forging new friendships and filling the venue with energy — a beautiful reminder of how such gatherings strengthen community bonds.

By 12.15pm, participants gathered at the banquet hall for a hearty lunch hosted by Palm Villa, a welcome opportunity to rest, recharge, and enjoy one another's company. The afternoon then shifted to the much-anticipated 'Caritas Got Talent,' where children shone on stage-singing, dancing, and showcasing their creativity to an appreciative audience. The excitement continued with 40 lucky draws, adding an extra spark of joy to the afternoon. Each family received thoughtful gifts and hampers, while every child was presented with a special souvenir. Each family was also blessed with a "Bag of Love," filled with food provisions — a gesture that beautifully reflected the spirit of giving and sharing.

At 1.45pm, the programme headed outdoors for the highly awaited 'Deep Dive' — a refreshing swim-



ming session in the resort's three pools. Children and adults alike splashed, played, and bonded in a relaxed, carefree atmosphere, rounding off the day with joy and laughter.

Throughout the day, volunteers served with dedication and joy, faithfully carrying out their assigned tasks and ensuring that every activity unfolded smoothly.

At 3.15pm, participants gathered for a tea break as they began preparing to depart. During this time, Caritas MJD director, Andrew Leo, expressed deep gratitude to the organisers, volunteers, sponsors, and participants for their commitment and joyful spirit. His words provided the perfect conclusion to a day filled with fellowship and fun. Before leaving, each participant received a



Participants having a fun time with exciting games.

packed meal from CTK, a final gesture of hospitality to take home.

As families departed — carrying with them the thoughtful Bag of Love, along with memories of laughter and camaraderie — the spirit of joy, gratitude, and unity was

unmistakable. This year's Caritas Friends In Need Outing was more than just a day of recreation; it was a celebration of faith in action, a reminder of the mission that unites them: to serve with love, compassion, and joy. **Justina Jun Sen**



Fr Desmond Jansen giving a gift to one of the winners.

Kulim parish celebrates feast and family day

KULIM, Kedah: The Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus celebrated the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross together with its much-anticipated Annual Family Day 4.0 on September 14, bringing parishioners together in a spirit of faith, fellowship, and fun.

The day began with a multilingual Eucharistic Celebration, presided over by Fr Desmond Jansen. In his homily, Fr Desmond reflected on the deep significance of the Holy Cross, reminding parishioners of the mystery of salvation it represents. "This feast reminds us

of the mystery of salvation through the Cross of Christ, and how we are called to carry our daily crosses with faith and love," he said, encouraging the faithful to strengthen their bonds as a community and to love one another as Christ loved.

After Mass, the celebration continued in the parish hall with activities, games, and entertainment. The event, coordinated by Parish Pastoral Council chairperson Vimala Thomas, was a true community effort, with participation from the English, Mandarin and Tamil-speaking BECs, as well

as various parish ministries.

Adding to the festive cheer, food stalls offered a delightful spread of free treats generously prepared by the dedicated ladies of the Altar Flower Ministry. Both breakfast and lunch were provided, ensuring that everyone was nourished and could enjoy the festivities together.

The celebration concluded with a final blessing by Fr Desmond. Parishioners left with grateful hearts, renewed faith, and a deeper sense of fellowship, carrying forward the spirit of the Cross into their daily lives.

Tangkak church marks a century of witness

Bernard Anthony

TANGKAK, Johor: The Church of St Matthew, North Central Johor Vicariate, marked a historic milestone on September 21, 2025, celebrating 100 years of faith, hope, and service. The centennial celebration, which coincided with the feast of St Matthew the Apostle, patron saint of the parish, drew hundreds of parishioners and friends from Tangkak, Segamat, Muar, and Sagil for the feast and centenary Mass. The chosen Scripture verse for the occasion was Matthew 9:9: *Follow me.*



Hundreds of parishioners participating at the feast day Mass.

Bishop Bernard Paul of Malacca was the main celebrant, joined by parish priest, Fr Jason Wong, and his assistant, Fr Aaron Alammalay. During the celebration, Bishop Bernard also administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to 18 young candidates.

In his homily, Bishop Bernard focused on the newly confirmed, inviting them to live out the three “G’s”: Grace – recognising that God is always with us and at the centre of our lives; Gratitude – cultivating thankfulness wherever we go, knowing God’s presence surrounds us; and Givers – being people who care and share generously with others. He reminded the community that living these values is what makes faith credible and draws others to Christ.

In his closing speech, Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) chairperson,

Jeffery Yong Chu Kai, expressed gratitude to the bishop for presiding over the Mass and Confirmation, and thanked Fr Jason, Fr Aaron, resident priest Fr Bartholomew Wong (who was not present), catechists, the liturgical team, and all who helped prepare for the feast and centennial celebrations. He also thanked God for His blessings on the parish community over the past century.

In his address, Bishop Bernard reflected that a century is a remarkable milestone, noting that few people live to see 100 years. He observed how the Catholic community in Tangkak had grown from its humble beginnings to having a larger, modern church building. However, he acknowledged the challenge of many young Catholics leaving for bigger cities in search of

work, often returning only for major occasions such as Chinese New Year and Christmas.

Despite this, Bishop Bernard urged the faithful to become “magnets” that draw others back to the Church, not only by maintaining the church building but by living vibrant, authentic faith lives. “If we have faith, people will be drawn to us,” he said.

He expressed gratitude to the PPC, choir, liturgy team, and all who contributed to making the centenary celebration meaningful and joyful. While recognising that the parish community may now be smaller, he encouraged them to persevere. “We have faith in God and should pray and strive to grow the Catholic community here in Tangkak,” he reminded parishioners.

The centennial celebrations fea-



Collection of photos and articles chronicling the parish’s journey.

tured an exhibition displaying photographs and articles chronicling the parish’s journey. Centennial T-shirts and woven bag souvenirs were sold to raise funds for church maintenance, while commemorative fridge magnets were distributed to all attendees. The day concluded with a community luncheon in the parish hall, which brought together parishioners and friends in a spirit of thanksgiving and fellowship.

The triduum leading up to the feast was celebrated by Fr Jason on September 18 and 19, and by Fr Aaron on September 20, who preached on the Parable of the Sower. He reflected on how the parish had grown over the past 100 years — from seed to tree to fruit — reminding parishioners that the Church is not just the building, but the people who form it. Drawing

from the Memorial of St Andrew Kim Taegon, he called on the faithful to be credible witnesses, saying, “We are learning from the martyrs and St Matthew: becoming credible witnesses through our own witnessing to others in Tangkak and beyond. Our witnessing of the faith must go beyond what we are celebrating now.”

The Church of St Matthew’s story began in 1925, when the Missions Étrangères de Paris (MEP) missionaries first brought the Catholic faith to Tangkak. Since then, the parish has grown alongside the local Catholic community, with its church building undergoing several expansions and renovations over the decades. The current modern structure, completed in 2010, stands as a testament to the perseverance and commitment of the faithful.

Go, be a little saint — faithful celebrate St Thérèse’s centenary

NILAI: The Church of St Theresa was filled with the fragrance of roses on September 16 as more than 350 pilgrims from parishes across the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur gathered to celebrate the centenary of St Thérèse of Lisieux’s canonisation. The day-long celebration honoured the *Little Way of Love* that made the saint a beloved model of holiness.

As it was Malaysia Day, parishioners in colourful national costumes welcomed the visitors, waving the *Jalur Gemilang*, and together everyone sang the *Negaraku* with pride.

The programme began with participants writing petitions to St Thérèse and hanging them on a petition tree, recalling her promise, “I will let fall a shower of roses.”

Mass was celebrated by Carmelite priest Fr Nicholas Hoh, OCD, who reminded participants in his homily to “serve with love,” performing small acts with humility, trust, and great love for God. After Mass, Sr Margarete Sta Maria, FdCC, shared on, *Why Saints Matter Today*, reminding everyone that saints are not distant heroes but companions who intercede for us and guide us

closer to Christ.

Breakout sessions followed, with talks focused on encounter, trust, and mission: *I want to know Jesus more (Encounter)* by Brian de Rozario of AMNEC; *There must be more than this (Entrustment)* by Judy Raj from the Church of the Sacred Heart, KL and *Your mission begins now (Go)* by Lucas Yong, another AMNEC member.

Henrietta Charles from Sacred Heart parish described the talks as eye-opening and uplifting. “I left feeling encouraged, renewed, and reminded that God has a purpose for each of us,” she shared.

Children were also given special attention, enjoying a variety of faith-filled activities — colouring, building towers with straws and clay, collecting Scripture verses, and singing hymns such as “I’m in the Lord’s Army, Yes Sir!” under the care of volunteers from the Church of the Holy Family, Kajang.

After lunch, participants joined in a time of adoration and healing with Praise and Worship led by the Cornerstone Disciples from the Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam, followed by exposition of the Blessed Sacrament by Fr Nicholas.

The highlight of the afternoon was a session titled *Becoming a Saint Today* by Andrew Lim (AMNEC), who introduced the AMNEC-CCO Faith Series as a practical tool for spiritual growth and mission. He linked each stage — Discovery, Source, Growth, Trust, and Commission — to moments from St



Children and parents join in for praise and worship.

Thérèse’s own faith journey.

The celebration concluded with a sending forth, *Go, Be a Little Saint Where You Are*, where participants laid roses and mission commitment cards at the altar as a sign of dedication to living out the Little Way in their daily lives.

As the hymn “Pass It On” echoed through the church, the celebration felt like a commissioning — sending participants forth to live the mission.

Dominic Hong from the Church of Sts Peter and Paul, Banting gave a heartfelt testimony on how the Faith Series deepened his relationship with God. Others, including Joseph Mariadass, Philip Zarsadias, Maliana Salampin, and Audrey and Fiorentina Anne, shared how the series helped them place Jesus at the centre of their lives and inspired them to become missionary disciples.

“It was such a beautiful, enriching,

and spirit-filled occasion. My family and I truly enjoyed every moment of it. I’m sure St Thérèse is smiling in heaven too,” said Jason Fernandez from the Church of St Theresa, Nilai.

“It felt like a spa for the soul — a true detox for the spirit,” shared Ramona Saw Yen, while William Nadeson added, “I’m glad there’s an avenue for Catholics to learn tools to share Jesus with others.”

Parish priest Fr Christopher Soosaipillai thanked AMNEC for organising the event and invited all to return for the upcoming Launch of the Mission Rosary on October 1 in conjunction with Mission Month.

The AMNEC-CCO Faith Series is open to anyone wishing to reignite their faith and deepen their relationship with Christ. For more information, contact Andrew Lim (012-3173677), Veronica Lim (012-3313997), or Brian de Rozario (012-2584622).



Children building towers with straws.

Canossian sisters celebrate 120 years of mission in Malaysia

MELAKA: The Canossian Sisters marked their 120th anniversary at the Sacred Heart Convent on September 19 with a solemn Eucharistic celebration and a time of fellowship, commemorating more than a century of faithful service in Malaysia.

The Mass was presided over by Bishop Bernard Paul, with concelebrants Frs Devadasan Madala Muthu and Neville Arul Sinnappah.

Bishop Bernard reminded the congregation that the occasion was “not merely a commemoration of time passed, but a celebration of lives poured out in love, of faith lived boldly, and of charity that has truly set the world on fire.”

Drawing inspiration from Matthew 25:40, the bishop highlighted how the Sisters have consistently seen Christ in the poor, the sick, the abandoned, and the young. “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me,” he said, underscoring the heart of the Canossian mission.

He also evoked the words of St Magdalene of Canossa: “Charity is



a fire that ever spreads out,” noting how that fire has burned through classrooms, convents, homes for the aged, and pastoral ministries — warming hearts, healing wounds, and lighting the way for countless souls seeking hope.

“Your light has shone brightly,” Bishop Bernard affirmed, echoing Jesus’ words from the Sermon on the Mount: “Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” He encouraged the Sisters

to be renewed in their vocation, to continue spreading the fire of charity, and to inspire all to serve with humility, love without limits, and hearts set ablaze for Christ.

The year 1905 holds a special place in the history of the Canossian Sisters. Responding to the call to serve the Portuguese missions in Malacca, the Sisters journeyed from Singapore at the invitation of the Bishop of Macau. Welcomed warmly by the local community as the “Portuguese Sisters,” they

established their first foundation at the Sacred Heart Convent on Jalan Parameswara, Bandar Hilir, Melaka, also known as the “Portuguese Convent.” In 1950, they further expanded their mission by founding Canossa Convent in the Portuguese Settlement.

From these humble beginnings, the Sisters’ mission blossomed over 120 years, growing to include six schools, four kindergartens, two learning centres, pastoral ministry in parishes and dioceses, care for

the elderly, and collaboration with the Gabrielite Brothers at Montfort. Their compassionate presence and tireless dedication have left an indelible mark on countless lives.

Today, the Canossian Sisters carry forward their mission across Malaysia, serving in the Diocese of Malacca Johore and the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, with convents in Melaka, Kluang, Segamat, Jinjang, and Sungai Siput. Guided by the vision of their foundress, St Magdalene of Canossa, who reminded them, “We are but simple, humble women, called to do the greater work of love and service,” the Sisters have remained steadfast as missionaries and pastoral workers, living out a life of love, humility, and service.

As they celebrate this remarkable journey, the Canossian Sisters mark 120 years of devotion and mission, reflecting a legacy of faith, compassion, and selfless service. Their commitment continues to inspire and guide generations to follow in their footsteps, a radiant testament to a life set ablaze for God and humanity.

Rediscovering the joy of the priesthood

PENANG: Clergy from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur and the Diocese of Malacca Johore gathered for their annual retreat from September 14–19 at the Stella Maris Retreat House. The retreat was led by Archbishop Socrates Villegas of the Philippines.

Over six days, participants reflected deeply on the renewal of their vocation, the call to live celibacy faithfully, the demands of pastoral fidelity, and the cultivation of a rich interior life.

The retreat combined biblical reflection, practical formation, daily Mass homilies, and prolonged times of prayer, inviting priests to a renewed surrender to Christ and a deeper commitment in service to the Church.

Key Themes Explored

Vocation and Mission: The retreat opened with searching questions that invited deep personal reflection: “What makes you happy? What makes you afraid? Where are you going?” Priests were challenged to rediscover their joy, confront their fears, and clarify their vision for mission. The invitation was clear: “You will be empowered to run the race — and to complete it.” A cen-

tral refrain echoed throughout the week: “Lord, do not give up calling me” and “Lord, change me even if I am not ready.”

Scripture and Formation: Drawing from the lives of David, Samuel, Bathsheba, and Nathan, Archbishop Socrates reflected on vocation, holy indifference, authenticity, and the perils of pride and temptation. He invited priests to identify the “Samuels, Bathshebas, and Nathans” in their own lives — those who call them forth, those who tempt them, and those who correct them with truth and charity, leading them toward deeper conversion.

Conversion and Mercy: Using the account of the raising of Lazarus (John 11), the clergy were urged to confront the “convenient darkness” of sin and the habits that keep them bound. The archbishop exhorted them to “come forth” from their personal tombs of complacency and to allow brother priests to “unbind” them through fraternal correction and support — an act of mercy that restores freedom and life.

Celibacy and the Interior Life: Special attention was given to the graces and trials of celibate living. Archbishop Socrates described ce-

libacy as both a contemplative and loving commitment to Christ, and he acknowledged that it remains one of the wounds of the priesthood. Despite its challenges, priests were reminded that Christ’s love for them never falters. They were encouraged to root themselves in daily Eucharist, personal prayer (including the Divine Office, Rosary, and *Angelus*), monthly confession, and to continually cultivate a deep interior intimacy with God.

Praise, Perseverance, and Purification: Through Scripture — from David’s psalms to the courage of the three young men in the furnace, and the perseverance of the apostles — as well as the insights of spiritual writers such as St Teresa of Jesus, St John of the Cross, and the Church Fathers, participants were reminded that praise is a spiritual weapon against desolation. Purification, while often demanding, was presented as the ongoing and tender work of God, shaping the soul into greater freedom and fidelity.

Daily Prayer and Reflection

Holy hours, contemplative silence, and Eucharistic adoration formed the very heartbeat of the retreat. The homilies — including one for the



The clergy participating in the Rite of Prostration before the altar.

Mass of Our Lady of Sorrows — invited priests to experience the maternal tenderness of Mary and to embrace their vocation to serve God’s people with both fatherly guidance and motherly compassion.

The retreat concluded with a call to daily self-denial so that the life of Christ might grow ever more fully within them. The renewal of priestly promises, the reception of candles symbolising the “Light of Christ” to be carried into the world, and the solemn benediction of the Blessed Sacrament brought the retreat to a profound and grace-filled close.

Rite of Prostration

On the final day, the priests participated in the Rite of Prostration before the altar, symbolising total surrender to God. One participant reflected, “As priests, we are called to be bridges of grace — carrying the prayers of the world and the mercy of Christ. This moment of surrender renewed my spirit and reminded me that my vocation is never my own achievement, but always a gift from God. I leave this retreat inspired, humbled, and strengthened

for the mission ahead.”

Conclusion

“Priesthood is not comfort or status but a costly call to be a bridge for God’s people,” Archbishop Socrates reminded us. “Even in temptation and failure, God’s call to conversion and mission remains.”

This message became the heart of our retreat. Together, we rediscovered the joy of our vocation and the courage to face its challenges. The days of prayer, silence, and fraternity renewed our spirits, strengthened our commitment to pastoral service, and deepened our communion with one another.

For me, this retreat was a deeply meaningful journey of reflection, prayer, and spiritual growth. It renewed my spirit and reaffirmed my commitment to the priesthood. I am grateful to Archbishop Socrates, our retreat master, whose wisdom, humility, and deep faith led us closer to the heart of the Lord and reminded us that, despite struggles, our vocation is always a gift of God and a mission to embrace daily.

Fr Philip Chua



Recollection ignites ecological conversion

BANTING: Members of the Creation Justice Ministry, from both the Archdiocesan and parish levels, gathered for a one-day recollection at the Church of Sts Peter and Paul, in conjunction with the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. This year's theme, *Seeds of Peace and Hope*, set the tone for a day of prayer, reflection, and renewed commitment to care for our common home.

A light drizzle, the chirping of birds by the river, and the cool morning air created a serene atmosphere as participants assembled after breakfast. The day began with the *Laudato Si'* prayer from Pope Francis' encyclical, followed

by an exhortation from Archbishop Julian Leow.

The archbishop reminded participants of humanity's humble place in the vast universe. "God loves us so much that He created us to live on earth, and though we disobeyed Him and sinned, He sent His Son to save us," he said.

Calling for deeper ecological conversion, Archbishop Julian stressed that reconciliation and conversion are essential to heal the harm done to creation. "The values of the world tell us to accumulate more and become richer," he noted. "The earth has enough for man's needs,

but not enough for man's greed."

Highlighting the seven Rs of Sustainability — Rethink, Refuse, Reduce, Repair, Reuse, Repurpose, and Recycle — Archbishop Julian encouraged participants to embrace a transformation of mindset. "We must keep building resilience and cultivating new attitudes. Change begins with one person at a time, and eventually, entire communities will be transformed," he said.

Inviting the participants into deeper prayer, the archbishop reflected: "Lord, teach us to value a glass of water in the desert, the breath of fresh air, and the smile on a child's face after its first meal in the morning."

During the period of quiet reflection, participants were given guiding questions:

- How have I personally harmed God's creation?
- What harm have I caused to creation and to others?
- How have I broken my relationship with nature, my loved ones, and those around me?

Afterwards, participants gathered in small groups to share their insights. They agreed that lasting change must begin with individual conversion before it can ripple outward to society.

The cool, rainy weather lingered into the second half of the session, adding to the re-

flective atmosphere. Archbishop Julian urged participants, "Focus on one another and do not neglect those around us who need our care. Respect the dignity of every person." He also reminded them of the words of Pope St John Paul II: "There will be no peace without justice and no justice without forgiveness."

He then guided the group to consider, "How do we move forward together as a community? We need everyone on board — every individual matters. Mother Nature has a way of correcting the imbalance that man has created."

The second set of reflection questions invited participants to look inward:

- What can I do to look after God's creation?
- What can I change within myself? — Think big: change the behaviour of the head, heart, feelings, and hands.

Following the sharing, discussions, and ministry updates, the day concluded with a time of Holy Adoration. Participants were invited to sit at the feet of the Lord, listen to His voice, and return to the world renewed, ready to live as true stewards of God's creation.

The Archdiocesan Creation Justice Ministry expressed their gratitude to Archbishop Julian for his time, support, and presence, which made the recollection especially meaningful. **Archdiocesan Creation Justice Ministry**



Participants praying silently during the Adoration.

Cathedral of St John commits to green mission

KUALA LUMPUR: The Cathedral of St John the Evangelist became the 23rd parish in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur to sign the Ecological Parish Pledge.

The Eucharistic celebration was presided over by Archbishop Julian Leow and concelebrated by parish priest Fr Gerard Theraviam, Fr Andrew Manickam OFM Cap, Ecclesiastical Assistant to the Archdiocesan Creation Justice Ministry, and visiting Bishop of San Pablo, Philippines, Most Rev. Marcelino

Antonio "Junie" Malabanan Maralit Jr.

During the entrance procession, ten catechism children carried hand-drawn posters bearing messages advocating for environmental care — urging the community to protect Mother Earth, conserve water, keep oceans free from plastic pollution, oppose single-use plastics, and strive to be a green parish.

Archbishop Julian emphasised the importance of environmental responsibility, reminding the congregation that our planet's resources

are finite. He highlighted the urgent threats faced by wildlife and plant species, rising temperatures, and water scarcity, urging everyone to do their part in caring for our one and only home.

Fr Gerard underscored the cathedral's commitment to sustainability for 2025-26, with a focus on reducing single-use plastics — a challenge the parish aims to tackle through education and formation, fostering a conversion of heart among parishioners as stewards of creation. Future initiatives include exploring solar energy solutions and rainwater harvesting at the Magnificat Community Centre, as well as promoting sustainable practices like recycling and waste reduction.

Although the cathedral already practices recycling of e-waste, paper, plastic, and metal, parishioners are encouraged to improve waste segregation and minimise consumption, recognising that recycling should be the last resort.

Fr Andrew congratulated the cathedral for becoming the 23rd parish in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur to sign the pledge and shared that more parishes are expected to follow suit. He expressed appreciation for Creation Justice Ministry coordinators from various parishes, including some from as far as Klang.



Catechism children walk in procession with their creative posters on environment care.

A notable part of the event was the planting of a willow tree by Archbishop Julian after Mass. Symbolising resilience and adaptability, qualities vital in facing climate change, the willow's flexibility in the wind serves as an inspiring reminder of our collective strength and perseverance.

Parishioners were invited to take home a potted plant curated by the cathedral's *Laudato Si'* team, encouraging families to nurture their love for nature and live out the call to *Care for Our Common Home*.



Fr Gerard Theraviam signing the Ecological Parish Pledge as Archbishop Julian Leow and Fr Andrew Manickam OFM Cap look on.

Letters to Editor

Transparency, accountability and trust-building

Dear Editor,

I refer to the letter from Solomon Gideon Chong, 'Call for Transparency on Lenten Campaign Funds' (*HERALD*, September 7, 2025), as well as a recent signature campaign calling for clearer disclosure of parish accounts in a church in Kuala Lumpur.

This is a matter of growing concern, and it highlights an important point — every parish and every ministry in our dioceses must uphold the highest standards of financial transparency and accountability.

The money collected is the fruit of parishioners' hard-earned labour, given in good faith to support the Church's mission.

When there is even the slightest perception that funds are being mismanaged or channelled into purposes other than those intended, trust is eroded. If this perception continues unaddressed, parishioners may choose to stop contributing to parish collections altogether and instead make direct donations to charities where they feel confident their contributions will be properly used.

This is why checks and balances are crucial. It is not enough for accounts to be presented; there must also be independent oversight, regular audits, and clear reporting that parishioners can access and understand. Transparency is not just good admin-

istration — it is a matter of building and sustaining trust between the clergy and the faithful. It is an act of respect and stewardship, affirming that the Church is a faithful guardian of the resources entrusted to it.

And if I may speak frankly, merely giving the individuals concerned a slap on the wrist is insufficient. A more meaningful response might be to assign them to a smaller, resource-strapped parish where they can directly experience the challenges of managing limited funds. Such an approach could be both corrective and formative, helping them appreciate the importance of integrity and good stewardship.

I sincerely hope the bishops of each dio-

cese will treat this matter as a priority and issue clear, standardised guidelines for parish priests and ministry heads to follow. If such guidelines already exist, it is evident that not all parishes are adhering to them.

Implementing and enforcing these guidelines will not only prevent public outcry, such as letters to the editor or signature campaigns, but also build trust, strengthen community bonds, and encourage the faithful to give with open hearts, knowing their contributions are handled responsibly and with integrity.

Norman Lourdes
Butterworth, Penang



Send your letters to ► letterseditor@herald.com.my

The Editor, HERALD, 5 Jalan Robertson, 50150 KL | Please include your name and address. *Letters without name and address will not be entertained.*

Perjalanan Salib brings Cross to St Jude's parish



Jason Nair

RAWANG: The Church of St Jude welcomed the arrival of the *Perjalanan Salib* to the parish recently, marking the start of a two-week faith journey of prayer, reflection and renewal in preparation for the Malaysia Pastoral Convention (MPC) 2026.

The programme featured a series of activities that brought the Cross into the lives of parishioners, uniting the faithful from every corner of the parish in prayer, reflection, and community participation until August 31.

The *Perjalanan Salib* began with the launching of the Cross on August 16 and culminated in a closing Mass on August 31, animated by the Family Life Ministry. Over the two weeks, the Cross journeyed through all 10 parish zones and was carried by ministries and communities, becoming a powerful sign of unity and missionary zeal.

The programme was rich with moments of grace and encounter: a Taizé prayer night led by the Youth Ministry, the 25th anniversary dinner of the Chinese Apostolic Ministry, a health camp offering care for the sick and elderly, and a catechism class activity that brought the Cross to the younger members



Parish priest, Fr Simon Labrooy with a youth during the launch of the *Perjalanan Salib*.

of the parish.

Participation was broad and deeply unifying, drawing together every corner of the parish — Youth and Family Life Ministries, Institut Kraftangan Malaysia students, Legion of Mary, Tamil Charismatic, Komuniti Umat Berbahasa Malaysia (KUBM), Chinese Apostolic Ministry, and all parish zones — a vibrant testimony of faith, unity, and missionary spirit in action.

For many, the experience was deeply

moving. Parishioners shared how they felt “the presence of Jesus Christ himself”, as the approach of bringing the Cross to the people offered a fresh encounter with faith. One parishioner remarked that it was “a different approach of the Cross coming to the people instead of people going to the Cross.”

The *Perjalanan Salib* at the Church of St Jude was a visible sign of the Church walking together, united in prayer and mission, as Malaysia prepares for the landmark MPC2026.

Inspiring young hearts to love the Word of God

KLANG: The Catechetical Ministry of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes organised a series of engaging, faith-filled activities for students throughout August in conjunction with Catechetical Sunday. Each week offered a blend of fun, learning, and meaningful moments to deepen their love for God and His Word.

The month began with a lively singing of Christian Songs' competition for our youngest students, aged 4 to 9. Their voices rang out in English, Tamil, and Bahasa Malaysia, filling the church hall with joyful praise. Their enthusiasm and confidence reminded everyone that faith can be beautifully expressed through music.

In the second week, the spotlight turned to the Standard 4 to Standard 6 students, who took part in a written Bible quiz. This fun yet challenging activity tested their knowledge of Scripture and encouraged them to grow deeper in their understanding of God's Word.

Next came an exciting Scavenger Hunt for the Form 4 students. Working in teams, they raced to solve clues and complete challenges, learning about the Bible in a crea-

tive, hands-on way that fostered teamwork, problem-solving, and friendship.

The Catechetical month concluded with the much-anticipated oral Bible quiz for Form 1 to Form 3 students. The participants impressed everyone with their confident answers, demonstrating not only their memory skills but also their growing grasp of the teachings of the faith.

Through these weekly activities, our students were given the opportunity to share their talents, deepen their knowledge of the faith, and grow together as a vibrant community. We are grateful to our parish priest, Fr Gregory Chan, assistant parish priest, Fr Gnana Selvam, as well as the dedicated catechists, parents, and volunteers who guided and supported the children throughout this meaningful journey.

We warmly congratulate all the winners of the competitions and activities, while also celebrating every participant as a true winner for their enthusiasm, effort, and faith. This year's Catechetical Sunday was a beautiful reminder that learning about God can be both joyful and enriching — especially when faith and fun go hand in hand. **Pauline S**



Archbishop Julian Leow and the clergy at the unveiling of the sculpture of Mother Mary.

Feast day celebration at Holy Name of Mary parish

PERMATANG TINGGI: The Church of the Holy Name of Mary celebrated its annual feast day on September 14 with a solemn yet festive gathering of about 1,250 parishioners and visitors from neighbouring parishes.

The celebration marked the conclusion of a spiritually enriching novena triduum held in three languages — Mandarin, Tamil, and English — with daily themes focused on Prayer, Sacred Scriptures and Tradition, and Community Life.

The triduum provided a special opportunity for the parish's multilingual and multicultural community to gather in prayer and reflection. Each evening featured liturgies, spiritual reflections, and fellowship activities, celebrating the richness of the Church's heritage and the shared journey of faith.

The day's highlight was a solemn multilingual Mass presided over by Most Rev Julian Leow, the archbishop of Kuala Lumpur. In his homily, he highlighted the Eucharist as “the source and summit of our Christian life” and reflected on the role of Mary, Mother of the Church, in the life of Jesus and the early Christian community.

Msgr Henry Rajoo, Vicar General of the Penang Diocese, concelebrated the Mass and shared an inspiring reflection on the Eucharist, drawing on the example of St Carlo Acutis, the young saint renowned for his Eucharistic devotion and innovative use of technology to share the faith.

During the feast day celebration, the clergy and parish community gathered outside the church for the unveiling of the new Mother Mary sculpture by Archbishop Julian. The four-foot sculpture, accompanied by a plaque bearing the names of donors who contributed RM10,000 and above, stands as a testament to their generosity and deep devotion.

The evening concluded with a fellowship dinner that brought the parish community together around a common table. The gathering became a living expression of what had been celebrated at the altar — communion with Christ and with one another. The joy, laughter, and shared conversations reminded everyone that the feast day was not merely an event, but a renewed call to live as a Eucharistic people, carrying Mary's faith and Christ's love into the world.



Catechism children singing a set of Christian songs.

Trust in Church collapses in Poland

WARSAW: Trust in the Catholic Church in Poland has plummeted to a historic low, with barely one-third of Poles now expressing confidence in the institution. According to a new survey by the Polish Institute for Market and Social Research Foundation (IBRiS), trust has fallen from 58 per cent in 2016 to just 35.1 per cent in September 2025. Distrust, meanwhile, has nearly doubled in the same period — rising sharply from 24.2 per cent to 47.1 per cent.

Commentators attribute the decline to the bishops' mishandling of abuse scandals, excessive involvement in politics, and the perception of being preoccupied with money. "The blame for the significant decline in trust in the Church lies solely with the bishops," wrote Tomasz Krzyzak, editor of the *Rzeczpospolita* journal. "No more distorting reality. The Church is an authority only for a handful of Poles."

Bishop Artur Wazny of Sosnowiec was the first and only Polish bishop to publicly comment on the findings. In a post on X (formerly Twitter), he acknowledged the gravity of the crisis, writing: "I beat my breast, even though I know that this is not enough." Quoting the prophet Ezekiel, he warned: "Woe to the shepherds of Israel who have been pasturing

themselves! Should not shepherds pasture the flock?"

Poland's abuse crisis came to light in 2018, prompting several reforms. The Church established the St Joseph Foundation in 2019 to fund therapy and assistance for survivors and created the Office of Delegate of Child Protection under Archbishop Wojciech Polak. However, no comprehensive national report on abuse cases has been published, despite promises made as early as 2023 to form an independent investigative commission. Two years later, the commission has yet to be established.

Krzyzak summarised the Church's woes with what he called the "three P's": *polityka, pedofilia, pieniądze* — politics, paedophilia, and money. Robert Fidura, a survivor and prominent advocate for victims, added a fourth: poor communication. He criticised Church leaders for speaking in overly formal, theological language that alienates ordinary Catholics. "For many, this is empty talk," he said.

Fidura also argued that the Church in Poland has been in a "black hole" since the death of St John Paul II in 2005. "The bishops merely implemented his vision. When he was gone, there were no new ideas, no strategy," he said.



Polish Bishops Sławomir Oder of Gliwice and Artur Wazny of Sosnowiec attend a press conference June 12, 2025, after the June 10-12 plenary meeting of the Polish bishops in Katowice, Poland.

The crisis deepened further this month when Marta Titaniec, president of the St Joseph Foundation and the only laywoman in Poland's national Church leadership structures, announced she would not seek another term. While expressing gratitude to survivors for their trust, she admitted she "did not always encounter understanding" for the foundation's work among bishops.

Fidura warned that her departure could spell the end of survivor-centred reform efforts. "It

looks like there will be no independent commission, nor the foundation in the welcoming form that Marta Titaniec created and led," he said.

Krzyzak concluded his editorial with a pointed reminder of Pope Francis' call for bishops to be close to their flock: "A good shepherd must smell the scent of his sheep. The problem is that many Polish hierarchs don't even try — and the effect is visible." OSV News

Migrants affirmed as 'living face of Christ'

TAIWAN: Thousands of migrant workers from Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines filled the Taoyuan Arena on September 21, where the Catholic Church in Taiwan honoured their dignity, celebrated their faith, and affirmed them as "missionaries" at the heart of the Church's life.

More than 8,000 people — including archbishops and bishops, about 400 priests, consecrated men and women, and members of

local church communities — joined the first national Gathering for Migrant Workers and Immigrants.

The event, held in the Diocese of Hsinchu, was part of the Jubilee of Hope and, according to church leaders, must not be seen as "an isolated moment, but as one step in a journey" to strengthen the pastoral care of migrants in Taiwan.

The morning session featured testimonies

and presentations from immigrant communities, followed by the reading of Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle's message by Msgr Erwin Balagapo, Undersecretary of the Dicastery for Evangelisation, according to a report by *Fides News Agency*.

The cardinal emphasised that the pastoral care of migrants "is rooted in the very Word of God." In the Old Testament "the Lord Himself commanded His people to welcome and care for the stranger," while in the Gospels, Christ "not only shows compassion for them, but even identifies Himself with them."

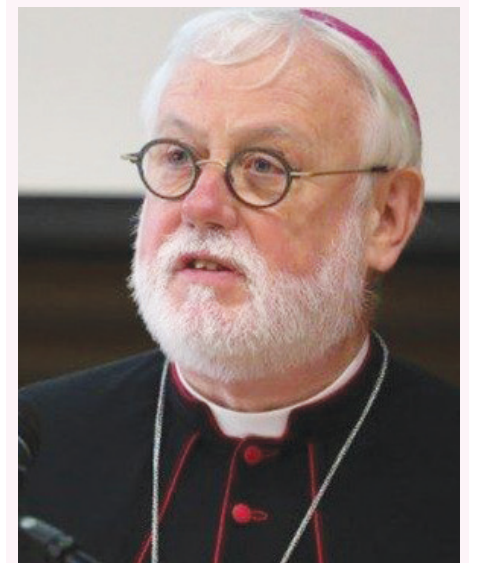
"To extend care to migrants is, therefore, a sacred duty, a mission that draws down blessings," the cardinal said, adding that migrants "are never to be regarded as a problem, but rather, as persons who bear the living face of Christ."

He urged the faithful to welcome migrants "into the life of the community, accompanied and formed so as to attain the fullness of their humanity, and — when they are Christians — to be strengthened as "authentic missionaries of the Gospel." LICAS News



Migrant workers and their families in traditional dress join cultural performances during the first national Migrants and Immigrants Gathering in Taiwan, held September 21 at the Taoyuan Arena. (LiCas News photo/Immaculate Heart of Mary Cathedral Hsinchu)

Women's dignity must be defended, not debated



NEW YORK: At a United Nations high-level meeting marking 30 years since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, *pic*, the Secretary for Relations with States and International Organisations of the Holy See, reflected on progress and persistent challenges in achieving equality for women. He called for renewed commitment to upholding women's dignity, stressing that poverty, lack of education, and wage inequality still hinder women from fulfilling their potential.

Archbishop Gallagher strongly condemned all forms of violence against women and girls — including trafficking, domestic abuse, prenatal sex selection, and female infanticide — calling them grave injustices that must be eradicated. He also warned of technology's role in amplifying abuse.

Highlighting maternal health, he urged greater access to prenatal care and skilled birth attendants while rejecting abortion as a solution. True equality, he said, requires respecting the dignity and right to life of every person, from the unborn to the elderly, and fulfilling commitments made in Beijing. *Vatican News*

Mexico's oldest diocese marks 500 years with 500 hours of adoration

PUEBLA, Mexico: The Diocese of Tlaxcala, the oldest in Mexico, commemorated the quincentennial of its canonical establishment with a 500-hour period of continuous Eucharistic adoration before the Blessed Sacrament as an expression of gratitude and renewal of faith.

The initiative began on September 12 and concluded on Oct 3, with the hours being distributed among the 93 churches that make up the seven deaneries of the diocese. Each deanery was responsible for 50 hours of adoration.

A statement noted that the objective of the activity is to spiritually prepare for the celebration of the jubilee of the 500th anniversary "as a form of thanksgiving and renewal of faith."

Parish priests, vicars, and community leaders were also invited to promote the initiative during Sunday Masses and encourage families, parish groups, and the faithful in general "to join in this moment of unity

around Christ."

This period of adoration was part of the commemorative programme for the five centuries of the diocese's existence. At a Sept 23 press conference, the diocese announced that a jubilee Mass will be held on Oct 12 at 11.00am local time at the Conciliar Seminary of Our Lady of Ocotlán, celebrated by Archbishop Joseph Spiteri, apostolic nuncio to Mexico.

During the ceremony, a replica of the image Our Lady of Guadalupe will be presented along with three palm branches in memory of the Holy Children Martyrs, a heart symbolising Mary's maternal love under her title of Our Lady of Ocotlán, and the sending off on mission of more than 1,000 catechists. Parish Masses will be cancelled on that day so that the entire community can participate in the solemn jubilee Mass.

The official blessing and consecration of the Holy Cathedral of Tlaxcala — a former Franciscan convent dedicated to Our Lady



Nave of the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption, Tlaxcala, Mexico.

of the Assumption, which was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in July 2021 — will take place on Oct 13. Although the church has historically functioned as a cathedral, it had never been formally dedicated. The ceremony will also be conducted by the apostolic nuncio. *CNA*

Building a Church of healing

Forming a community mental health ministry

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a noticeable rise in the number of people experiencing mental health disorders, particularly common conditions such as stress, anxiety, and depression. In response, many countries have turned to community-based mental health initiatives, especially in low- and middle-income nations where access to mental health professionals is limited.

The theme of World Mental Health Day 2025 — focusing on improving access to mental health services — underscores the urgent need for such initiatives, which bring care closer to those who might otherwise go without support.

Where there is no psychiatrist

One of the foremost global champions of community mental health is Professor Vikram Patel of Harvard University, author of the influential book *Where There Is No Psychiatrist*. This book was later adapted into a practical training manual for community mental health, enabling the development of community health workers in low-resource settings. The model has been successfully implemented in several low-income countries, empowering trained workers to reach people who would otherwise have no access to mental health care.

Inspired by this approach, the Malaysian NGO Health Equity Initiatives (HEI) developed a community mental health training module for refugees in 2008. Significantly, the first cohort — about 40 Myanmar refugees — was trained at Assumption Church, Petaling Jaya, through the kind support and hospitality of then parish priest, the late Fr Phillips Muthu. The church provided a safe and welcoming space where weekly training sessions were held over nine months, embodying the Christian call to serve the marginalised.

Since then, HEI has trained 15 cohorts of refugees from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, including communities from Myanmar, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, the Middle East, and Africa. These trained refugee community mental health workers now serve within their own communities, conducting “Echo Trainings” — sessions that mirror the instruction they received on stress, anxiety, and depression. Participants are screened for these conditions, and those with higher scores are referred to HEI’s counsellors and psychologists for further support. Where needed, psychiatric referrals are arranged.

Beyond clinical care, these sessions also teach relaxation techniques and problem-solving strategies, empowering participants with practical skills to manage stress. In this way,

October 10 marks World Mental Health Day, a timely occasion to reflect on our shared responsibility in nurturing mental well-being. This year’s global theme, ‘Access to Services – Mental Health in Catastrophes and Emergencies’, together with the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan theme, ‘Community: Supporting Mental Wellbeing Together’, calls us to build networks of care that extend beyond clinics and hospitals. Prof Xavier V. Pereira, psychiatrist and founding chair of the Catholic Counsellors, Therapists, Psychologists, and Psychiatrists of Malaysia (CCTPPM), explores how community-based initiatives can bridge gaps in care, bring hope to those most in need, and remind us of the Church’s mission to heal, accompany, and be a compassionate presence for those who suffer.



Prof Xavier V. Pereira (seated, centre) with the first cohort of trained Catholic Community Mental Health Ministers from the parishes, alongside staff from Health Equity Initiatives.

the ministry of mental health becomes not only about treatment but also about restoring dignity, hope, and wholeness — values deeply rooted in the mission of the Church.

Transforming a vision into a mission

From May to August 2025, the Catholic Counsellors, Therapists, Psychologists, and Psychiatrists of Malaysia (CCTPPM), in collaboration with Health Equity Initiatives (HEI), conducted a comprehensive training programme in community mental health. After a period of discernment, the CCTPPM committee recognised that this initiative could be translated into a concrete mission to respond to the growing mental health needs within the Catholic Church.

The training covered a wide range of topics, including understanding and managing common mental disorders such as stress, anxiety, depression, mood disorders, schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders, as well as the prevention of self-harm and suicide. Participants also explored issues related to alcohol and substance use disorders. Human sexuality was addressed with sensitivity, including sessions on understanding LGBT concerns and

sexual dysfunctions.

In addition to knowledge-based learning, participants were equipped with practical skills such as attending and listening techniques, screening for stress and common mental disorders, teaching relaxation methods, applying problem-solving strategies, and offering psychoeducation.

Personal growth was a key focus of the training, with sessions on self-awareness, healthy interpersonal relationships and communication, self-affirmation, and learning to affirm others. All sessions were prayerfully grounded, enriched with Scripture and reflections, reminding participants that caring for mental health is also a way of participating in Christ’s healing ministry.

Acknowledging the need for healing

This training programme also recognised the deep need for healing — particularly inner healing — among those who minister to others. The concept that many who are called to heal are themselves “wounded healers” was introduced through the writings of Henri Nouwen, particularly his classic *The Wounded Healer*. Nouwen’s Creative Ministry was also

recommended as a valuable resource, offering profound insights into the realities of woundedness and the call to serve.

Thus, the training aimed not only to build awareness and understanding of mental disorders, but also to bring healing to the participants themselves. One approach involved developing a biological / physical–psychological–social–spiritual self-formulation, adapted from Dr George L. Engel’s bio-psycho-social model. This holistic framework helped participants identify areas of vulnerability requiring attention and healing, as well as strengths that could be drawn upon in their personal growth.

Another exercise invited participants to chart significant life events, particularly moments of sadness or hurt, so that they could acknowledge these experiences and seek healing. Gratitude was intentionally incorporated into this process, encouraging participants to give thanks for moments of joy and blessing alongside their pain.

This training in community mental health is very much a living mission. The first phase has been completed, but ongoing formation, accompaniment, and outreach are already underway. At its heart, this initiative reflects the Church’s call to be a field hospital — a place where wounds are tended, hope is rekindled, and those who are hurting can encounter Christ’s healing love.

An expansive mission

This training began as a pilot project for the Catholic Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, laying the groundwork for a wider mission. The long-term vision is to conduct similar training and establish community mental health ministries in other dioceses across Malaysia.

Because the programme is designed to be adaptable, it can also be implemented across Christian denominations and even among other faith traditions. In fact, the Bishop of the Anglican Church of West Malaysia has already requested that this training be offered to help create an Anglican Community Mental Health Ministry.

It is our prayer that this ministry of healing will grow — within the Catholic Church and beyond — uniting communities in caring for mental wellbeing. Now is the time for parishes, dioceses, and lay groups to answer this call: champion mental health, create safe spaces for healing, and ensure no one suffers in silence. In doing so, we truly live the late Pope Francis’ vision of the Church as a “field hospital,” tending wounds and bringing Christ’s mercy to a hurting world.

Study highlights Rosary’s positive impact on mental health

In an age where mindfulness apps dominate and meditation studios thrive, a new international study suggests that praying the Rosary — a centuries-old Catholic devotion — offers mental health benefits comparable to popular meditation techniques.

The research, published in the *Journal of Religion and Health*, surveyed 361 practising Catholics across Italy, Poland, and Spain. Participants who regularly prayed the Rosary reported higher levels of well-being, increased empathy, and significantly lower levels of religious struggle or spiritual anxiety. These effects, the researchers note, rival those attributed to mindfulness and other Eastern practices.

“We were struck by how this traditional practice transcends educational and generational boundaries,” said lead researcher, Fr Lluís Oviedo, OFM, from the Pontifical University Antonianum in Rome. The study revealed that

62.2 per cent of respondents held graduate or master’s degrees, challenging stereotypes that traditional Catholic devotions mainly attract the less educated.

The findings varied by country. Poland reported the highest frequency of Rosary practice (3.70), reflecting its strong Catholic heritage. Italy showed moderate engagement but the highest empathy scores (4.31), suggesting that the practice fosters deeper social connection. Spain reported lower Rosary frequency but strong well-being outcomes among those who do pray, highlighting the devotion’s resilience in a more secular context.

Beyond spirituality, the study highlights the Rosary as a potential mental health intervention. Participants cited benefits such as “spiritual peace, calm, and confidence” (26.3 per cent), help with “coping with problems” (10.2 per cent), and even “protection against evil”

(8.6 per cent). One participant shared, “Praying the Rosary saved my life. After my husband’s death, I couldn’t cope with the pain and emptiness. Every day, I reached for the rosary and it gave me the strength to survive. Without it, I don’t know how I would have managed.”

The research showed that praying the Rosary correlates with reduced depression, greater optimism, and improved emotional regulation — without the cost of therapy, retreats, or app subscriptions.

Importantly, the study challenges the neglect of Western contemplative traditions in academic research. While PubMed contains over 30,000 entries on mindfulness, there are only 13 on Rosary prayer. “Mindfulness is seen as glamorous and fashionable, while the Rosary is dismissed as outdated,” the researchers observed. Yet the data shows that repetitive prayer functions much like mantra meditation, calm-

ing the mind and fostering empathy.

Fr Oviedo believes the Church must bridge the perceived divide between devotion and social engagement. “It is time to overcome this binary model and adopt a style that combines devotion and empathy towards others,” he said. “A divorce between the two makes the Christian message less credible.”

As societies grapple with mental health crises and the limits of pharmaceutical solutions, the Rosary offers an accessible, low-cost path to inner peace and resilience — requiring only beads, time, and an open heart.

“The Rosary is more than a private piety,” Fr Oviedo said. “It is a lived theology, a way believers experience faith, healing, and salvation in action. Recognising its value may help renew both the Church’s pastoral approach and our understanding of human flourishing.”
CNA

Pope's prayer intention for October

Beyond Politeness: Building real interreligious collaboration in Malaysia

The world today aches for peace. Wars continue to rage, hatred spreads quickly on social media, and walls of suspicion rise between peoples. Yet in every corner of the earth, men and women of faith are also rising up, searching for a way to live as brothers and sisters. This is the vision the Pope places before us this October, when he asks us to pray “For collaboration between different religious traditions — that believers in different religious traditions might work together to defend and promote peace, justice and human fraternity.”

This is not just a polite wish. It is a daring challenge. It asks us to believe that, despite our differences, God has written in every heart a desire for harmony, and that every faith carries within it treasures of peace, justice, and human fraternity. The task before us is not to erase our differences, but to discover the thread that binds us together and to weave it into the fabric of our common life.

The Golden Thread and the Golden Rule

Every great religion carries within it the call to live for others. Islam teaches: “None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself” (Hadith 13, 40 Hadith an-Nawawi). Buddhism declares: “Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful” (Udana-Varga 5:18). Hinduism prays: “This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you” (Mahabharata 5:1517). Sikhism reminds us: “Precious like jewels are the minds of all. To hurt them is not at all good. If thou desirest thy Beloved, then hurt thou not anyone’s heart.” (Guru Arjan Dev Ji 259, Guru Granth Sahib). Christianity proclaims: “In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12).

This shared “Golden Rule” is a sign that fraternity is not a foreign concept to any religion. It lies at the heart of our faiths. And beyond this shared rule, there is also a deeper golden thread — the call to peace, justice, and human dignity — that runs through all our sacred texts and teachings.

● **Islam:** The Qur’an commands: “Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even though it be against yourselves” (Qur’an 4:135). Here justice is not an option but a duty flowing from faith.

● **Buddhism:** The Dhammapada insists that only love overcomes hatred (1:5). True enlightenment is inseparable from compassion.

● **Hinduism:** The Rig Veda envisions harmony: “Let us walk together, let us speak together, let our minds be in harmony” (10.191.2).



PRAYER PRISM

Fr Fabian Dicom

● **Sikhism:** Guru Gobind Singh declares: “Recognise the whole human race as one” (from Akal Ustat, Dasam Granth).

● **Christianity:** From the beginning, the Bible affirms that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). Human dignity is not earned, it is given. The dignity of every person is at the heart of Christian teaching Jesus teaches, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). The prophets of Israel cried out against oppression, proclaiming God’s demand for justice. The early Church dared to imagine a new humanity, where “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

These teachings are not marginal. They are central. They remind us that authentic faith always opens outward, never closes in on itself.

From the World to Malaysia

If the call is so clear, why do we struggle to live it? Globally, we see faith manipulated to divide, to justify violence, or to entrench privilege. In Malaysia too, our interfaith encounters often remain at the level of ceremony: festive greetings, photo opportunities, and cautious statements. These gestures are good beginnings, but they stop short of the prophetic call of our traditions.

Meanwhile, the wounds of our land cry out for more:

● Floods and climate disasters devastate the poor year after year. Imagine what it would mean if mosques, temples, churches, and gurdwaras stood together not only to deliver food aid, but to demand systemic solutions for environmental protection.

● Migrant workers and refugees continue to suffer exploitation and invisibility. What if believers joined hands to insist on just wages, safe conditions, and recognition of their dignity?

● The pain of Palestine is felt deeply in Malaysia. What if interfaith voices spoke together — not from rivalry, but from shared compassion — insisting on peace with justice?



HARMONICO together with MCCBCHST members participating in the National Day parade in Penang. (Penang Harmony Corporation-HARMONICO facebook)

● Racism and hate speech poison our common life. What if religious leaders and grassroots believers together said “no” to prejudice and “yes” to fraternity, in both word and action?

If interreligious collaboration never enters these spaces of suffering, then our harmony risks becoming hollow.

Believing in Ourselves

Here lies a crucial truth: the future of interreligious harmony in Malaysia does not depend only on leaders or institutions. It depends on ordinary believers who dare to live the fullness of their own faith.

Pope Francis insists in *Fratelli Tutti*: “A journey of peace is possible between religions. Its point of departure must be God’s way of seeing things, for God does not see with the eyes; God sees with the heart. And God’s love is the same for everyone, regardless of religion.” (FT 281).

If we take this seriously, then the first step is to believe in ourselves - to believe that the values of our traditions are strong enough to guide us into genuine fraternity. We cannot wait for permission or endorsement from our leaders. We cannot remain content with politeness. We must embody the courage, compassion, and justice that our faiths demand.

In Malaysia, we have already been given a lamp on the hill — the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Taoism (MCCBCHST). For decades it has spoken boldly for justice, peace, and harmony. It has shown that interreligious dialogue must go beyond festivals and handshakes, becoming instead a prophetic witness to the dignity of every Malaysian. The challenge is whether ordinary believers will claim this vision as their own, and dare to live the golden thread of their faith in the marketplace, in schools, in politics, and in daily life.

What the Church in Malaysia Can Do

For Catholics, this prayer intention is also a mission. What concrete steps can we take?

1. Formation and Catechesis

⇒ Teach Catholics that interreligious dialogue is not a luxury, but part of our discipleship. Introduce parish groups to *Nostra Aetate*, *Fratelli Tutti*, and the teaching on human dignity.

⇒ Explore the Golden Rule in other faiths alongside the Beatitudes, to awaken recognition of our shared vocation.

2. Joint Action with Other Faiths

⇒ Move from shared meals to shared missions: flood relief, environmental campaigns, migrant protection, and anti-poverty initiatives.

⇒ Encourage Caritas and parish ministries to partner with local mosques, temples, and gurdwaras on specific projects.

3. Spaces for Ordinary Believers

⇒ Establish parish-based “friendship circles” where Catholics and people of other faiths meet not just for discussion, but for practical acts of solidarity.

⇒ Develop interfaith youth programmes where young people learn and serve together.

4. Prophetic Witness

⇒ When human dignity is violated, the Church should not remain silent. Invite other faith communities to join in issuing statements, holding vigils, or advocating systemic change.

5. A National Initiative

⇒ The Church could initiate an annual Faiths for Justice and Peace week. During this time, believers of every tradition could engage in coordinated acts of service and advocacy — tree planting, food distribution, migrant support, and forums on corruption and racism. Such an initiative would embody the Pope’s vision and give the Malaysian Church a concrete way to lead.

A Prayer and a Challenge

This October, we will pray with the Pope. But prayer must become flesh. Fraternity is not built by politeness alone. It is born when believers dare to take their traditions seriously and to walk together into the places where humanity is hurting.

The Golden Rule shows us the way: to treat others as we wish to be treated. The golden thread of peace, justice, and dignity binds us together across traditions. Our task is to weave it into a fabric strong enough to hold Malaysia together in the face of division and despair.

When we move beyond politeness into genuine collaboration, our diversity is no longer fragile. It becomes the very harmony God intended from the beginning — a harmony that sings of justice, peace, and human fraternity.

Fr Fabian Dicom is the National Director of Caritas Malaysia.



File photo of students visiting a Hindu temple.

Colours of Creation: Malaysian Catholic painter brings *Laudato Si'* to life

Catholics around the world have found many ways to answer Pope Francis' call in *Laudato Si'*. Some plant trees, others take recycling seriously, while many embrace simpler lifestyles in solidarity with the earth.

For Malaysian artist Christine Das, the response took an unexpected path; her brush became her voice, and her canvas a witness.

Her journey into wildlife conservation art did not begin in the rainforest or among elephants, but in classrooms and studios. After high school, her parents enrolled her in a graphic design college, setting her on a path through diverse artistic disciplines.

"Over the years, I worked as a storybook illustrator, a fine art painter, a 2D animator, and even as part of the team creating props and scenic backdrops for the Hollywood film *Anna and the King*. Later, I took roles as a multimedia designer and an in-house hotel artist."

She tells *Radio Veritas Asia* in a recent interview that by the time 2006 arrived, she had spent 18 years building a career. Yet something inside her stirred. She felt called to something deeper. With what she describes as "blind faith," she left the security of her full-time job and walked into the uncertain world of contemporary art.

"I told myself," she recalled, "that if I was going to be an artist, then my art must be attached to a worthy cause. It had to serve God and the world."

A question, a leaf, a revelation

At first, Christine imagined she would become a Catholic painter in the tradition of the great masters. A cradle Catholic herself, she thought of Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, or Correggio, and how their works adorned churches with transcendent beauty. For three years, she pursued religious art. But the commissions were scarce, the fit was not perfect, and she felt the stirrings of a deeper search.



Malaysian Artist Christine Das and her paintings.

"I asked myself the big questions," Christine said. "Why did God put me here? Why this gift of art? If the Church doesn't need my paintings, then who does?" One day, she took her question to her parish priest. His answer was surprising. He asked her to touch a leaf. Christine did, and in that simple act, something shifted.

"Apparently, when I touched the leaf, I felt the tangible presence of God the Father," she said. "My confusion turned into contemplation."

The experience bore fruit. Soon after, Christine was commissioned to create a piece inspired by the "Tree of Life," marking the beginning of her journey as what she now calls an "eco-artist."

"Unwittingly, I was drawn to the natural world in a way that echoed the message of *Laudato Si'*, to see creation not just as a backdrop, but as a living, sacred gift worthy of care, respect, and protection."

Meeting Lil' Joe

Later that same year, Christine travelled

to Sabah, where the Borneo Conservation Trust arranged a meeting with Lil' Joe. The calf had been rescued and placed at the Lok Kawi Wildlife Park.

"When he walked up to me," Christine recalled, "I knew instantly why God had led me here. My art was meant to speak for creatures like him, their plight, their purpose on earth."

That trip also brought her into the rainforest of Kinabatangan. For Christine, it was a spiritual awakening. "It felt like I had walked into the heart of God," she said. "I finally understood what my priest meant when he told me to touch a leaf. My Creator Father is the natural world. They are not separate. His intelligence and love are manifested in nature."

A Vocation Shaped by Creation

From that moment on, Christine's work took on a new identity. She became not just a painter but a wildlife conservation artist. Her canvases began to fill with elephants, orangutans, hornbills, and the lush greens of Borneo's forests.

Each piece was more than an artwork, it was an act of advocacy, a call to protect creation.

"It felt as though I was thrown into the university of the natural world," she said. "My learning is endless. Every creature, every tree, every river teaches me something about God's intelligence and love."

Her work has supported conservation efforts across Malaysia, raising funds, awareness, and empathy. Just as importantly, it has touched hearts. Viewers who encounter her paintings do not only see endangered animals; they feel the sacredness of creation itself.

Laudato Si' and the Art of Witness

This year marks the 10th anniversary of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' groundbreaking encyclical on the care of our common home. The Pope wrote of the "cry of the earth and the cry of the poor," insisting that environmental degradation and human suffering are inseparable.

Catholics worldwide have responded in diverse ways to the call of *Laudato Si'*. Christine's art is another kind of response, one that resonates with the encyclical's call to see creation not as a resource to exploit but as a gift to cherish.

"Today, my art is my response to *Laudato Si'*," she said. "Each painting is a prayer, a way of giving back the love God has shown me and the talent He entrusted to me. Through my images, I speak for the earth, for its creatures, and for the beauty of our common home, bringing the message of *Laudato Si'* to life on canvas."

As *Laudato Si'* enters its second decade, Christine's art reminds us that to care for creation is to honour God, turning every brushstroke into a prayer and every act of stewardship into hope for our common home. For her, the path is clear: to let her brush speak, again and again, for the fragile and wondrous gift of creation. **Joseph Masilamany, RVA**

A stethoscope, a smile and genuine compassion

SHANGHAI: At the Starlight Centre, the usual white coats were set aside. Instead, doctors and therapists from the Shanghai Catholic Intellectuals Association greeted children and parents as though they were beloved aunts and uncles — bringing not just medical skill, but warmth, dignity, and hope.

On Sunday, September 21, the association's team of Catholic doctors spent the entire day serving 28 families with children having special developmental needs, including autism. Their mission was simple yet profound: to offer free medical consultations and accompany these families with compassion.

To make the experience as gentle and reassuring as possible, the doctors organised five "mini-clinics" covering internal medicine, surgery, ultrasound, electrocardiography, and dentistry. Each area consisted of a team of experienced medical professionals who deliberately avoided wearing traditional doctor's coats to create a familiar, comforting atmosphere for the young patients and their families.

Beyond physical care, they listened deeply to parents' concerns, offering individualised guidance on treatments, home care, and nutrition — empowering families to nurture their children with confidence.

This initiative is a shining example of the Association of Catholic Intellectuals of the Diocese of Shanghai living out its mission of faith in action. Founded in June 1986 under the inspiration of the late Bishop Aloysius Jin Luxian, the association has grown to over 600 members, including doctors, educators, artists, and those involved in charitable works. Together, they seek to be a leaven in society, serving with integrity and joy.

"As Catholic intellectuals, we must always keep the association's mission in mind," Fr Anton Chen Ruiqi reminded members at the Mass for the association's third annual retreat earlier this month. "We must never abandon our faith but place our talents and energies at the service of Shanghai society and the country."

Their service at Starlight Centre reflects this calling beautifully — transforming



medicine into a ministry of presence and healing. In the gentle listening, the careful check-ups, and the quiet moments of reassurance, the children and their families encountered not just medical professionals, but companions who walk with them in

their struggles.

This act of love, rooted in faith, is a reminder that evangelisation sometimes begins not with words, but with a stethoscope, a smile, and a hand that says, "You are not alone." **Fides**

What I learnt from KPop Demon Hunters

Never would I have imagined myself identifying so much with a Korean pop song:

"I was a ghost, I was alone.. Given the throne, I didn't know how to believe I was the (king) that I'm meant to be I lived two lives, tried to play both sides But I couldn't find my own place Called a problem child, 'cause I got too wild But now that's how I'm getting paid I'm done hidin', now I'm shinin' Like I'm born to be.."
 ('Golden', from KPop Demon Hunters)

I heard this song when I was first introduced to the movie *KPop Demon Hunters*, recently released on Netflix, and whose title initially made me assume that it was not for me. Yet how wrong I was when I finally decided to watch it.

One thing that really hit me in the movie was how Rumi was told to hide her patterns and scars, to not let anyone see them, until the demons could be completely destroyed. I identified so much with it in a culture where I was often expected to hide my wounds and not talk about them. People would even get uncomfortable when I did so, and try to shut me up.

But in the movie, Rumi realised that it is only when you speak about your scars, and allow others to be there for you in spite of your wounds and patterns, that you can more fully overcome your demons. Truth and honesty are what defeat the lies and voices that try to put you down and keep you trapped and helpless.

As I have discovered, this is so true in psychology, where it is in naming your 'demons' and talking about them in a safe space that you gain back control and power over them, and eventually

learn to make better choices, to allow your true and beautiful self to come out and shine as God had intended it to be.

Personally, this is the work that I have committed to doing, first for myself, and then for others. My hope is that no one ever has to feel alone like a ghost, no longer need to lead two lives to try to please others, or listen to and believe in the labels placed on them. Instead, I pray we may slowly discover our rightful place on the throne which God has already prepared for us, and eventually come out of our hiding and start shining our Light as we were meant to. Seeing my work being affirmed through an animated movie, with a K-pop soundtrack to go along with it, was really golden for me.

"You got a dark side, guess you're not the only one"

What if we both tried fighting what we're



Word Made Fresh

NICHOLAS LYE

running from? We can't fix it if we never face it

What if we find a way to escape it?

We could be free"
 ('Free', from KPop Demon Hunters)

What I had not expected, subsequently, was to somehow feel inspired to use certain snippets of the same movie for a young adults community retreat I was recently asked to lead.

But it was also unexpected that I had to fight my own demons just hours before the retreat started. Due to certain events that triggered feelings of hurt and frustration within me, the 'demon' voices in my head were so loud and taunting that I was even tempted to walk out of the retreat entirely.

When I could no longer keep those feelings to myself, I finally decided to share how I really felt with the core team. It was something I was very reluctant and

afraid to do, for fear of how they might take to my honesty, and how it might actually ruin the start of the retreat.

Thankfully, they received my honest sharing well, offered an apology, and made me feel more heard and acknowledged. That led me to feeling much better and more ready to begin the retreat from a better heart space.

Little did I realise how this incident allowed me to offer a personal example and witness to what it looks like, to not try to cover up or hide our scars and wounds, but actually show others what is underneath, and trust them to be on our side, and be there for us as we deal with our inner demons.

Eventually this led the community to practise greater vulnerability and intimacy among themselves, by boldly sharing with one another their honest struggles and feelings, and allowing others to hold space and be there for them, as their jagged edges meet the light.

I am so grateful to this community for accepting and loving me as I am, and being open to receiving all that I bring

to them. I pray that we may have more of such spaces within the Church where we do not feel like we need to always hide our faults and fears, scars and wounds, but can allow others to love ALL of us, for who we are, and even accept that our scars are part of us, part of the harmony that God is bringing to everyone through honesty and healing.

Nicholas is a lay missionary and creative evangelist who loves to use creativity and various art forms to share the faith and help people encounter God's truths in a fun and meaningful way



From inconvenience to an ecological conversion

Cultivating a green lifestyle is not easy. Many of us are set in our ways and forming new habits can be a momentous task. In fact, it is an inconvenience.

Those new on the journey may begin to have doubts when pessimists challenge their attempt to go green, "Why bother to wash and dry soiled plastic containers for recycling when everything can be dumped into the trash?"

"Why bring your own container for take aways when the eatery provides disposable containers?"

"Why take public transport when it is more convenient and comfortable to drive in my air-conditioned car?"

In parishes, the coffee mornings on Sundays can be a challenge in going green. Whilst the objective of the activity is for parishioners to build camaraderie, it can cause divisions when the parish requests sellers to sell food and drinks in paper containers or reusables; whereas there are those conveniently continue to use plastics and Styrofoam containers. It is an uphill climb to form green habits in a world of convenience.



Faithfully Speaking

JULIE LIM SEET YIN

Green habits

When I stay at hotels, I bring a reusable water bottle and refill it at the hotel restaurant or from a water dispenser. In this way, I avoid drinking water from the plastic bottles replenished in the hotel room daily.

Many people would find this peculiar, simply because the bottles are paid for in the room rates. And not consuming it would be silly because they want to make their money's worth.

A travel companion who was travelling with me for the first time noticed my habit and knew my reasons for doing so. Although I never mentioned anything, she said she respected what I was doing but felt she couldn't do the same.

What she expressed is understandable because, until and unless a person has experienced an ecological conversion, they will not be inspired to change their lifestyle for the sake of creation.

So, what is an 'ecological conversion'?

Ecological conversion

In the encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis described the ecological crisis as a call to deep inner conversion. He notes that some Christians ridicule environmental

concerns and others resist changing their habits. All, he argues, require an "ecological conversion" so that an encounter with Christ is reflected in how we relate to creation. Caring for God's handiwork, he insists, is central to living a virtuous Christian life (LS 217).

Fr Jostrom Kureethadam, head of the Vatican's Ecological and Creation Office, writes in his book *The Ten Green Commandments of Laudato Si'*, that ecological conversion involves turning back to God in sincere repentance, recognising Him as Creator, and healing our relationship with both God and one another. It also calls for turning toward creation as responsible and caring stewards.

How does one become ecologically converted?

True ecological conversion begins in the heart. This renewal begins with understanding why we care for creation and what inspires us to take action. An ecological conversion can begin by awakening our awareness, cultivating a reverence for creation, making lifestyle changes, engaging with the community and committing to lifelong learning about environmental sciences and policies.

Different levels of going green

Following an increase in awareness to care for our common home, more people have

begun adopting a green lifestyle.

Some do the bare minimum which is convenient like bringing their own bags when doing grocery shopping. But they stop at anything that is an inconvenience to them.

Those in the middle path try their best to cultivate a green lifestyle by making many lifestyle changes, but there is still more that can be done.

The hard-core zero-wasters are in a league of their own. They bring containers and bags wherever they go. They shun tissue paper and wet wipes, opting instead to use handkerchiefs. Their entire lifestyle revolves around being green.

No matter what level of green lifestyle we are at, there is always something more that we can do, and we need to help those around us take the first step, albeit imperfectly. As what zero waste chef, Anne Marie Bonneau said, "We don't need a handful of people doing zero waste imperfectly. We need millions of people doing it imperfectly."

Each of us must learn and transition from a lifestyle of convenience to an ecologically converted lifestyle.

Julie Lim believes that a satisfied life measured by one's heart, mind and soul is better than a successful life measured by worldly yardsticks.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Everything is wrong about them, except themselves

Gilbert K. Chesterton, the renowned Catholic apologist, was great friends with George Bernard Shaw, the famous playwright, even though Shaw, an agnostic, had major issues with Chesterton's belief in God and especially with him becoming a Roman Catholic. Indeed, when he heard that Chesterton had become a Roman Catholic, he wrote him a letter expressing his disappointment.

Ever the colourful writer, Shaw ended that letter describing to Chesterton a vision he had of him going to Confession: "You will have to go to Confession next Easter, and I find the spectacle – the box, your portly kneeling figure – all incredible, monstrous, comic. Now however I'm becoming personal (how else can I be sincere?)."

But these differences didn't deter them from being great friends. They had a deep respect for each other and valued each other. Indeed, at one stage, Chesterton felt a need to defend Shaw from well-intentioned Christians who were vilifying him because of his agnosticism. Speaking in Shaw's defence, he wrote: "There is one fundamental truth in which I have never for a moment disagreed with him. Whatever else he is, he has never been a pessimist or, in spiritual matters, a defeatist. He is at least on the side of Life. Ev-

erything is wrong about him except himself."

Most of us, I suspect, have friends like that, people who no longer walk the path of explicit faith with us. From a certain Christian point of view, most everything is wrong with them, except themselves. They aren't professed agnostics or atheists, but they don't fit the description of a practising Christian either. They rarely go to church, mostly disregard the Church's teaching on sex, pray only when in crisis, consider us church-goers naïve, and are too immersed in life here-and-now to think much about God, Church, and eternity.

Yet they radiate life, often in ways that challenge us. There's something about them that's very right, inspiring even, and life giving. They may be practical agnostics and ecclesial atheists, but their presence often brings positive energy, goodness, love, intelligence, sunshine, and humour into a room.

Don't read this wrong: This does not imply (as does an over-simplistic, rationalising notion that's popular today) that those who do go to church and try to follow the Church's rules are naïve and immature, while those who don't go to church and make their own rules are the enlightened and the mature. No. There's nothing enlightened about people drifting away from the Church, thinking they are beyond Church, living outside its

rules, or believing that a passionate focus on this life justifies a neglect of the other world. That's a fault in religiosity, and often a fault too, in wisdom and maturity.

Simply put, the wonderful energy we see in the many good people we know who no longer go to church is precisely just that, wonderful energy, though not something to be confused with depth.

For example, I look at many of our talented pop musicians and see how they can make people dance, no small thing, a godly thing even. We dance too little and our spirits are often too heavy. But that doesn't give us license to confuse playful energy ("Ob-la-dee, Ob-la-da, life goes on!") with wisdom or depth. It's a wonderful thing to make people dance, to bring sunshine into a room, to lift human hearts so they can drink in life a bit more, but that's not the full menu, nor indeed the deeper part of the menu. It is what it is, a good thing in itself, but only that.

But it's on the right side of things. It's on the side of life. It helps bring divine energy into a room, and that needs to be blessed. That's why, as Christians, we need to bless our good ecclesial agnostic friends and let ourselves be blessed by them.

That's also why we should be more discriminating in our use of phrases like "a cul-

ture of life" and "a culture of death." God is the ultimate author of all that is good, whether that goodness, sunlight, energy, colour, and warmth is seen inside a church building or outside of it. And wherever that energy is good, there's "a culture of life," even if it might also be carrying some elements of "a culture of death."

Richard Rohr says not everything can be fixed or cured, but it should be named properly. What's wrong is wrong, and should be named as wrong, but what's good is good, and should be named as good. I look at some of my "pagan" friends, at their energy, their warmth, what they bring into a room, and it helps lift my heart. Everything is wrong about them, except themselves. God also made their sunshine and their warmth. They don't go to church, and that isn't good; but they are often on the side of life and their implicit faith helps me to remain on the right side of things. And that is good.

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

Pray for our priests more than ever

Across the Church today, it seems that no matter what a priest does, there will always be comments about him. Some say the homily is too long, while others feel it lacks depth. Some find a priest too strict, while others say he is too lenient. Some expect him to be more visible among the community, while others insist he should devote himself more to prayer. Whatever the case, there always seems to be something to criticise.

And now, these comments do not remain within parish walls. They often spill into digital spaces, where words are quick, sharp, and sometimes cruel. What might once have been whispered in private is now broadcast publicly for the world to see. The result is that our priests, who have given their lives to serve God's people, are exposed to more judgement than ever, while receiving less prayer than they deserve.

Of course, priests are not perfect. They are human like the rest of us. Yet before we judge, have we stopped to reflect on how much we actually pray for them? Have we thought about the weight of the priesthood and what it truly means to carry it?

The Sacred Mission

The priest stands *in persona Christi*, in the person of Christ. The hands that consecrate the Eucharist are not his own but Christ's. The voice that absolves sins is not his, but Christ's. The anointing of the sick is not just a gesture of care but a real encounter with Christ.

When we lose sight of this, we reduce the priest to a mere man and forget the sacred office he carries. The result is that instead of praying for him, we complain about him. Instead of supporting him, we criticise him. And in doing so, we dishonour the one he represents.

Sacrifices Unseen

Most of us only see our priests when they

are at the altar. Yet their responsibilities extend far beyond what we notice. They are shepherds, counsellors, teachers, administrators, and mediators, all while striving to remain faithful in their personal prayer and relationship with God. They are often called in the middle of the night for emergencies. They preside at funerals and comfort the grieving. They carry burdens that are rarely spoken of, and many do so in silence.

Do we ever stop to ask ourselves whether we have thanked God for their sacrifices? Or have our lips been quicker to speak words of criticism rather than words of prayer?

Respect or Rudeness

It is one thing to share feedback with respect. It is another when criticism turns into rudeness. Some speak sharply to their priests as if they are mere employees. Some openly belittle them. Others treat them with indifference, as though their presence in the parish is of no importance.

Such behaviour is not just discourteous. It wounds the very heart of the Church. Even when a priest makes mistakes, the way we respond should reflect Christian charity. If something truly requires attention, there are proper ways to address it, but never through gossip, disrespect, or hostility.

When Preferences Divide

There is also the problem of favouritism. It is natural to feel drawn to a certain priest because of his preaching style or personality. But when this leads us to reject or dismiss another priest, the Church suffers. The Eucharist remains the same, no matter who celebrates the Mass. The worth of the Sacraments does not depend on whether the priest appeals to us personally.

Respecting the priesthood means honouring the sacred mission entrusted to every priest, not just the ones we happen to prefer.



Respect with Charity

Respecting a priest does not mean ignoring his faults. Priests are human and can make mistakes. But when correction is needed, it must be offered with humility and through the proper channels. There is a difference between constructive concern and outright disrespect.

To tear a priest down through harsh words or careless gossip is not to defend truth. It is to wound the Church itself. To pray for him, to support him, and when necessary to correct him with charity, is to honour both his dignity and his office.

Praying for Vocations

We say we pray for vocations, but how many young men would dare to answer the call if they see only constant criticism and disrespect toward priests? If we truly want vocations, we must create an environment where priests are loved, supported, and prayed for. Otherwise, we are discouraging

the very men we say we need.

Holy Priests and Holy People

If we want holier priests, we must strive to be holier ourselves. If we want priests who love the Church, we must love the Church too. The priest is not perfect, but he is chosen. He is not above us, but he carries the weight of leading us to Christ. When we dishonour him, we dishonour the one he represents.

To every priest who continues to serve faithfully, who carries hidden burdens without complaint, who gives his life in service to God and His people, we thank you. May our prayers rise constantly on your behalf.

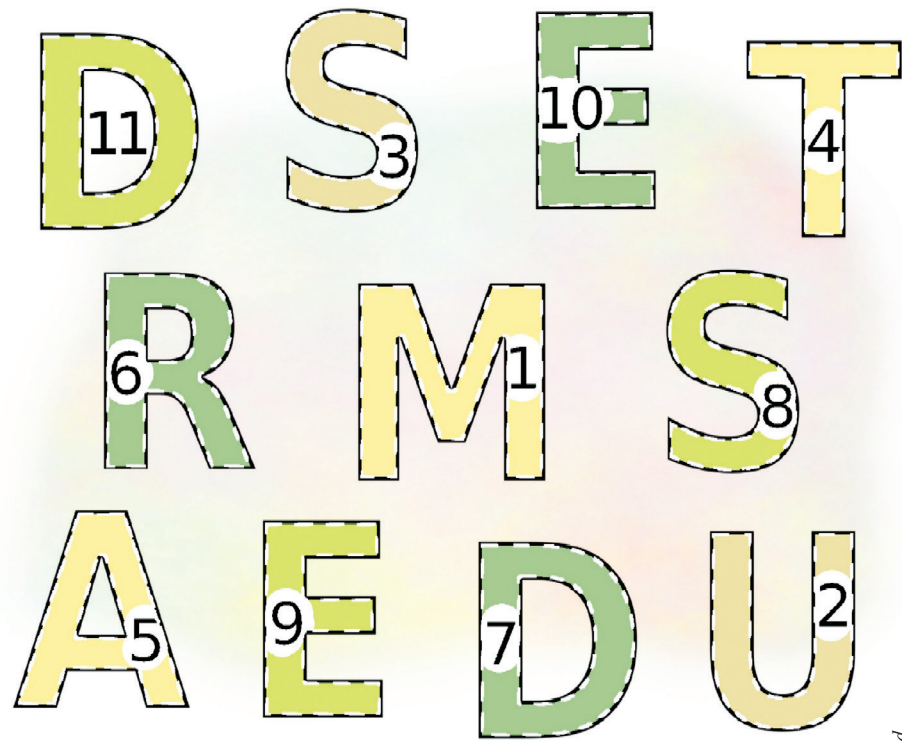
May we, as the faithful, never cease to pray for our priests. For without them, there is no Eucharist, no absolution, no anointing, no visible sign of Christ present in our midst.

Thomson Emmanuel Wong, Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang

Little Catholics' Corner

What did Jesus say in today's Gospel reading when the apostles asked Him to give them more faith?

Sort out the letters by number and put them in the spaces below.



"If you have faith the size of a

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. Luke 17:5-10

answer: mustard seed

Mustard Seed Word-Find

M U S T A R D F A
 U P R O O T E D R
 L I N C R E A S E
 B P S E E D P A P
 E L O B E Y O I L
 R A T H I S S D I
 R N I F A I T H E
 Y T O U R Z L S D
 O E T T R E E H
 U D H A V E S A Y

Here is part of today's Gospel reading. See if you can find all the words written in CAPITALS. Use the leftover letters to fill in the blanks at the end.

The APOSTLES SAID to the Lord, "INCREASE OUR faith." The Lord REPLIED, "If you HAVE FAITH the SIZE of a MUSTARD SEED, YOU would SAY to THIS MULBERRY TREE, 'Be UPROOTED and PLANTED in the SEA and it would OBEY you."



answer: faith

Check the six images below. Can you identify the two identical pictures of Jesus?



answer: b & f

Dear children,

In today's Gospel, we learn a little bit about faith.

In fact, Jesus says we only need a tiny bit of faith to do amazing things.

If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, He said, you can tell a tree to throw itself into the sea and it will!

But what is faith? Faith is believing.

We have faith in our parents and teachers.

That means that we believe what they tell us and we trust them.

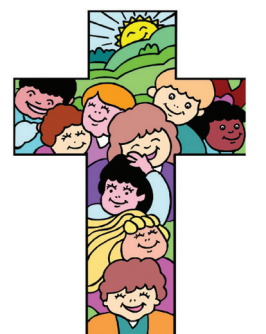
We have faith in our friends too. Faith in God is a little bit different, though.

It is a gift He gives us so that we can believe in Him.

When we are baptised, God gives us the gift of faith.

Then it's up to us to use it. We use that gift when we decide to believe in God and what He tells us in the Church and the Bible.

Love
Aunty Eliz





YOUNG MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

EXPLORE FAITH COMMUNICATION IN ROME



Pope Leo XIV takes a photo with the young faith communicators at the General Audience on September 17, 2025. (Vatican Media)

VATICAN: Fifteen young communicators from 11 countries gathered in Rome from September 12–19, 2025, for the residential week of Faith Communication in the Digital World, an initiative of the Dicastery for Communication. The programme, which runs from May 2025 to March 2026, equips participants with tools to share the faith in today's digital culture through weekly online sessions, collaborative projects, and in-person formation.

Participants — hailing from Kenya, Nigeria, Canada, the Philippines, Palestine, Poland, Croatia, Italy, India, Uruguay, and the United States — spent the week immersed in formation, prayer, and practical activities. They explored Church documents on communication, including *Towards Full Presence* and *Communio et Progressio*, to deepen their understanding of how the Gospel can be shared online.

The programme seeks to inspire creative evangelisation, encourage collaboration, and help participants appreciate how new generations engage with digital media. During the Rome gathering, the group attended Pope Leo XIV's General Audience, visited the papal basilicas, the Vatican Necropolis, and the Vatican Radio museum, and celebrated Mass at the Basilica of St Clement with Msgr Lucio

Adrián Ruiz, Secretary of the Dicastery. They also met Prefect Dr Paolo Ruffini and reflected on the theology of communication through sessions led by Nataša Govekar, Director of the Theological-Pastoral Department.

Daily prayer and guided reflection played a central role, allowing participants to listen to the Word of God and share insights together. The week coincided with the Jubilee of Consolation, giving them the opportunity to join Pope Leo XIV's prayer vigil in St Peter's Basilica.

For Miral Atik, media manager of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the experience was transformative: "This gave me hope that some actions we take today, even if they seem small, can bear fruit in the long term. Being a communicator is not just a job—it is a vocation."

Rachel Wong, from the Archdiocese of Vancouver, reflected on the power of fraternity in a divided world. Inspired by the Pope's message, she stressed the need to "dissolve bitterness and hatred" through love and reconciliation.

The initiative highlights the Church's commitment to forming a new generation of communicators ready to evangelise in the digital age and foster authentic communion across cultures and continents. **Vatican News**

ST CARLO ACUTIS' RELICS FIND PERMANENT HOME AT WYD SEOUL 2027 CHAPEL

SOUTH KOREA: The relics of St Carlo Acutis were solemnly enshrined at the World Youth Day (WYD) Seoul 2027 Local Organising Committee (LOC) chapel on September 17.

Auxiliary Bishop Job Yo-bi Koo of Seoul presided over the Mass in the LOC office building chapel, which gathered priests, volunteers, and young faithful.

Organisers described the celebration as a profound moment of grace.

Acutis (1991–2006), known as the "Influencer of God," has been hailed as the Catholic Church's first millennial saint.

Remembered for using technology to spread the Gospel, his life continues to inspire young people preparing for World Youth Day.

In his homily, Bishop Koo urged the faithful to look beyond fleeting measures of success.

He said true joy does not come from "the latest smartphone or the most 'likes'" but from holiness, which he called "the only path to lasting happiness."

The prelate emphasised that happiness flourishes "not in a self-centred life, but in a God-centred life."

Quoting Acutis, he added: "In the sun, you get a tan, but before the Eucharist, you become a saint — for it transforms our souls."

Bishop Koo invited volunteers to draw strength from the chapel itself, now a place of prayer and renewal for those serving WYD.

He also encouraged them to "make life not a waste, but a masterpiece," reminding young Catholics that sanctity means living faithfully the gifts God has given, not imitation.

The relics are now permanently housed in the LOC chapel, which will be open for veneration during the WYD Open Mass every second and fourth Friday, and third Wednesday of the month, at 7.30pm.

On September 16, the Catholic Peace Broadcasting Corporation and Peace Newspaper also declared Acutis their second patron saint and blessed a new statue to be installed at their headquarters. **LiCAS News**



The relics of St Carlo Acutis displayed at the World Youth Day Seoul 2027 Local Organising Committee chapel. (LiCas News Photo/Committee for Communications, Archdiocese of Seoul)



Bishop Job Yo-bi Koo blesses the new statue of St Carlo Acutis at the headquarters of the Catholic Peace Broadcasting Corporation. (LiCas News Photo/Committee for Communications, Archdiocese of Seoul)

CHOOSE THE RIGHT BALLOON

TANGKAK: Eighteen young candidates received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Bishop Bernard Paul during the centennial and feast day Mass at the Church of St Matthew on September 21

The candidates came from the parishes of Segamat, Muar, and Tangkak. The celebration brought the community together, with Bishop Bernard presiding at the morning Mass, concelebrated by Fr Jason Wong and Fr Aaron Alammalay.

Bishop Bernard invited the assembly to keep the candidates in prayer as they took this important step in their faith journey.

In his address to them, Bishop Bernard exhorted the candidates to remain steadfast in their faith. "To be true Christians, you must complete the race," he said, "not be shaky or weak Christians." To illustrate his point, the bishop used the simple yet powerful image of a balloon. Holding up an uninflated balloon, he said it was soft, empty, and without form. Then he inflated it, showing how it took on shape, character, and content.

"You have a choice," he told them. "Choose the right balloon — one that is full and with content — not empty. Allow the Holy Spirit



Bishop Bernard invites confirmands to live spirit-filled lives

to blow into you, just as a balloon needs air to have shape and life. Let God's breath fill you, cleanse you, and empower you with a new heart, new zeal, and new life. The Holy Spirit will teach you what is right and wrong." He then challenged the young people to

examine their lives: "Are you self-indulgent, or are you self-giving? We are called to share our time, talents, and resources — not just to ask what we can receive, but to give of ourselves generously."

Bishop Bernard encouraged the candi-

dates to be bold disciples of Christ and to bear good fruit — the Fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

He also reminded them of the "3G" of Christian living:

Grace — Recognising that God is with us and is at the centre of our lives. God's grace is His unmerited favour, mercy, and kindness, which we are called to share with others.

Gratitude — Cultivating a thankful heart wherever we go, acknowledging God's presence and blessings.

Givers — Becoming people who give of themselves. "If you love Jesus, go and feed His sheep," the bishop urged, calling all Christians to care for and share with those in need.

After Mass, Bishop Bernard presented the certificates of Confirmation to the newly confirmed, and met with some of the candidates and their parents in the church foyer. The celebration concluded with a lunch fellowship in the parish hall, allowing everyone to share in the joy of the day. **Bernard Anthony**

THAT YOUTH TURN FAMILY STRUGGLES INTO INSPIRATION FOR INNOVATION

THAILAND: The social hackathon is a one-of-a-kind platform, started in Thailand, where high school students aged 13–19 are empowered to investigate chronic social issues, design creative solutions, and pitch for funding before mentors and experts.

Rooted in the Synod of Catholic Bishops in Asia and inspired by Pope Francis' call in his encyclicals, the initiative invites young people to "hack" real-world crises — from climate change and migrant labour to family and digital-life challenges.

Winners do not just get applause but receive real project funding to turn their dreams into reality.

The Maryvit hackers chose the theme "Family is the foundation of society," believing that the strength of communities begins at home. Their idea was warmly received at the hackathon — and won them the highest funding of the season, 125,000 THB (RM 16,370.61), to turn their concept into reality.

One year later, on stage, addressing fellow hackers in season two of MISSION POSSIBLE in Thailand, the same students came back not as competitors but as role models, offering a heartfelt message to inspire the new generation of hackers.

"I was once in your place before and I know exactly how hard it is to choose a topic and deliver a complete pitch within just four minutes," Tiyada Chomdearn, a Maryvit hacker from season one, recalled.

"At first, we thought pitching was the hardest part," Siravit Jaijang, another season one hacker, added. "But who would have thought — winning and then actually making it real turned out to be even harder! We had zero background in app development, but we had something more important — hearts ready to make society better and more livable."

From pitch to product

The students began their pitch with a striking insight: in many families today, members live under the same roof but feel disconnected. Parents and children often spend more time looking outward — at school, work, or online

— than listening to one another.

"Why do we sometimes feel like we live in the same house, but in different worlds?" they asked.

Their answer was to design a digital tool to rebuild connections inside the home.

With 125,000 baht (RM16,370.61) in funding from MISSION POSSIBLE, the team embarked on a four-stage journey, starting with self-learning and coding practice, then building prototypes, and eventually seeking collaboration with an ICT faculty at a national university.

At first, they tried to build the app on their own using Thinkable — a platform that enables app development without coding knowledge — but quickly hit limitations.

That challenge became a turning point. Determined to succeed, they learned more advanced programming tools with guidance from older ICT students to finally transform their vision into a working product.

Bond Up: features for stronger families

The app they created, Bond Up, is built entirely around strengthening the family unit. Each feature is designed not just as a tool, but as a way of sparking conversation and reducing misunderstandings at home:



Student hackers from Maryvit Sattahip School receive seed funding from Archbishop Anthony Weradet Chaiseri, then president of the Catholic Education Council of Thailand, July 2024. (LiCAS News Photo/MISSION POSSIBLE)

- **Shared Calendar:** so every family member can see one another's schedules, helping parents and children plan shared meals, trips, or downtime together.
- **Milestone Tracker:** a digital memory book where families can record achievements big and small, from birthdays and school milestones to simple weekly dinners.
- **Private Group Chat:** with video and voice options in a secure space where screenshots are disabled, ensuring conversations stay safe and personal.
- **Financial Management Tools:** giving transparency to household budgeting, saving, and spending, so money issues don't become barriers to trust.
- **Knock Knock (What's the matter?):** a safe space for any family member to signal that

they need to be heard, creating a gentle way to ask for help.

"It began with one important question: why do we sometimes live in the same house, yet feel like we're in different worlds?" Tiyada explained. "But the pitch on stage, even receiving funding, was only the beginning. The real challenge came afterward: designing the logo, fixing features, writing code, trial and error, all the way through to developing an application that could truly be used."

Pushing a dragon jar

The journey was anything but easy. The students had to balance schoolwork with hours of debugging, learn programming languages from scratch, and redesign their user experience multiple times.

At one point, Siravit admitted it felt like "pushing a giant dragon jar up Mt Everest." But each time discouragement crept in, they thought about the families who might benefit if they persevered and kept going.

After months of consultation, planning, and prototyping, their persistence paid off. Bond Up is now officially available for download on both iOS and Android.

Together we MAKE a better world POSSIBLE

For the Maryvit Sattahip team, what began as a four-minute pitch has become a tool that may help countless families rebuild communication and trust.

As MISSION POSSIBLE expands to the Philippines at Assumption Antipolo next month, this group of student hackers' journey is proof of the MISSION POSSIBLE synodal spirit: truly listening to youth, daring them to dream, and funding those dreams into reality. **June Nattha Nuchsuwan, LiCAS News**



Students from Maryvit Sattahip School work together on developing their award-winning "Bond Up" family app. (LiCAS News Photo/Maryvit Sattahip School)

Fr William Pillai

A journey from seeking truth to shepherding souls



Fr William Pillai, 60, of the Malacca Johore Diocese, passed away on September 19, 2025, at Institut Jantung Negara, Kuala Lumpur. He had been receiving treatment for a heart condition over the past several months before being called home to the Lord.

Born Muraletaran a/l Gopalakrishna Pillai on May 1, 1965, in Kuala Kangsar, Perak, Fr William was raised in a Hindu household, he was a seeker from a young age, longing to discover the truth about God and the meaning of life. His search led him to the Catholic faith, and he was baptised on April 6, 1996, at the Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya. Around the year 2000, he sensed an even deeper call — one that would ultimately lead him to the priesthood.

His application to join the seminary was accepted by Bishop Paul Tan Chee Ing, SJ, then bishop of the Malacca Johore Diocese. He did his priestly formation at the Pontifical Beda College in Rome. After completing his studies, he was sent to the Church of St Henry, Batu Pahat, where he was ordained deacon on April 13, 2021, by Bishop Bernard Paul. Less than a year later, on February 22, 2022, he was ordained priest and appointed assistant parish priest of the Church of St Henry, Batu Pahat.

Fr William had a passion for catechesis. In 2023, he was transferred to the Church of St Theresa, Masai, where he continued his Tamil studies, strengthened outreach

to Tamil-speaking parishioners, including catechetical formation. That same year, he was appointed Assistant Head of the MJD Catechetical Office.

He later served as assistant parish priest of the Church of St Louis, Kluang. Parishioners noticed how his Tamil had improved significantly. When St Louis, Kluang was named a Pilgrimage Centre for the Jubilee Year 2025, Fr William joyfully welcomed pilgrims alongside Msgr Peter Ng, offering faith-sharing and pastoral care to all who came.

Beyond parish life, he also contributed to the wider Church, serving as the Bishop's Delegate to the Malacca Johore Mission Schools Committee (MJ-MSC) and as diocesan representative to the Malaysian Catholic Education Council (MCEC) and the Federation of Christian Mission Schools Malaysia (FCMSM).

Fr William will be fondly remembered for his Christ-centred life, his zeal for evangelisation, and his constant invitation to deeper conversion — a true metanoia, a change of heart and life in Christ. His journey from seeker to shepherd is an inspiration to all who long to follow God's call, wherever it may lead.

The funeral Mass was celebrated on September 22 at the Church of the Holy Family, Kajang, where family, friends, parishioners, and fellow clergy gathered to give thanks for his life and priestly service.

In his homily, Bishop Bernard Paul reflected on the gift of "rest" that Fr William now enjoys. He reminded the faithful that death, while painful for those left behind, is ultimately a passage into God's peace. "Fr William Pillai is now at rest," he said. "To his family, friends, parishioners, and brother clergy who knew and loved him, his message is clear: Think of me as one at rest. There is no need to weep for me. I have no pain, no troubled thoughts, for I am just at peace."

The bishop reminded the congregation that while death is a private affair, a funeral is a public moment when the community gathers to mourn, pray, and find closure. "The funeral liturgy," he said, "gives space for grief to be held, even if just for a brief interval, as we take part in this final act of letting go." Death, he added, is "a private letting go for one, yet an invitation for the many — the family, friends, and community — to let him go to the One who loves him far more than we do."

Acknowledging the pain of loss, Bishop Bernard pointed to the hope of faith, quoting St Paul: "Whether you live or die, you belong to the Lord" (Romans 14:8) and reminding the faithful that "death has no power over him anymore" (Romans 6:9). Fr William, he said, has "run the good race" and "fought the good fight" — his earthly mission is now complete.

The bishop concluded with an insightful reflection on the mystery of life and death, reminding the faithful that our life on earth is a preparation for eternal life. "We want life on our own terms. We want our loved ones to stay. But the Lord says: it is finished. Not your ways, but My way." Quoting Leonardo da Vinci, he added, "While I thought that I was learning how to live, I have been learning how to die."

Fr William's life was precisely that — a preparation for eternity, a faithful walking toward the One who called him. Today, he is at peace, having given his life in service to Christ and His Church.



File photo of Fr William Pillai during Easter Vigil. (Church of St Peter, Mersing facebook)

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In Loving Memory of



Doreen Mary Sequerah

1 October 1956 – 5 October 2024

Her Smile

Though her smile is gone forever and her hand we cannot touch, we still have so many memories of her that we loved so much.

Her memories are now our keepsakes which with us will never part. God has her in His keeping, we have her in our hearts. Sadly missed, but never forgotten.

Deeply missed by
Husband, children, grandchildren and loved ones.

20th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



John Baptist Yeo Ah Han Called to the Lord: 07-10-2005

*"In God's care you rest above,
in our hearts you stay with love.
We will always love and remember you."*

Deeply missed and fondly remembered by
Family, relatives and friends.

2nd Anniversary In Loving Memory of the late



MONICA HIEW NYOK MOOI

3rd Aug 1939 - 3rd Oct 2023

**"The Lord is my Shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want" [Psalm 23]**

Deeply missed and fondly remembered by:

Children & their spouses:

Patricia Yong & Bernard Thio
Angila Yong
Beleena Yong & Raymond Goh
Catherine Yong & Benzamin Kolenus
Peter Yong

Grandchildren & their spouses:

Alexandre Thio & Divij Mathur
Thomas Thio
Gabriel Goh,
Michael Goh & Stella Oh
Nichole Goh
Leonard Benzamin
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Thank you, Holy Trinity, for guiding me through my exams and granting me the opportunity to further my studies at university level. I am deeply grateful to the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph of Cupertino, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Jude Thaddeus, St. Anne, and St. Aloysius of Gonzaga for their powerful intercession on my behalf.
Aloysius James

Church must uphold transparency, accountability

SAMPRAN, Thailand: “Transparency and accountability are non-negotiable if the Church is to be truly synodal,” declared Fr Dr Clarence Devadass, setting the tone at the FABC Bishops’ Seminar on Synodality. “Being accountable to the community is a cornerstone of Pope Francis’ reform of Church governance and a fundamental demand of authentic discipleship.”

Fr Clarence delivered these remarks during his session on *Transparency and Accountability for a Synodal Church in Asia* on the second day of the week-long seminar, held from September 22 to 26 at the Baan Phu Waan Pastoral Training Centre in Sampran.

He emphasised that openness and responsibility are key to rebuilding trust, encouraging participation, and strengthening communion within the Church across Asia.

Speaking against the backdrop of widespread corruption in the region, Fr Clarence, *pic*, who serves as an associate secretary to the FABC said the Church must remain a prophetic voice. “The Church has consistently called on governments

and institutions to uphold integrity, transparency, and accountability,” he affirmed.

He also addressed growing concerns about the Church’s credibility. “More today than before, many people have questioned the transparency and accountability of the Catholic Church due to historical, structural, and ethical concerns,” he said, pointing to clergy sexual abuse scandals, clericalism, financial opacity, and inconsistent communication as factors that

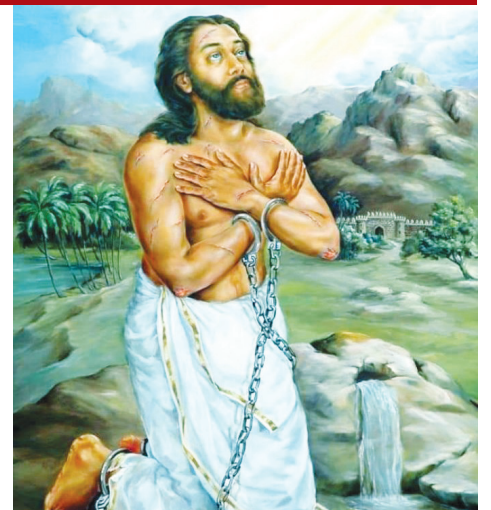


have eroded trust.

Drawing from the Synod’s Final Document, he stressed that accountability, must go beyond abuse cases to shape pastoral planning, leadership appointments, and methods of evangelisation. He called for transparency in the lifestyle of pastors, the selection of pastoral councils and finance committees, and in how the Church respects human dignity. If the Church is to be truly welcoming, he added, accountability must become a shared culture guiding decisions at every level, with those in authority carrying an even greater responsibility before God and His People.

Fr Clarence urged local churches to translate these principles into action through open financial reporting, honest communication of decisions, accessible leadership, inclusive planning, feedback mechanisms, and care for creation. Such steps, he said, are essential for the “missionary transformation” needed to expand the tent of transparency and ensure decisions and mission are rooted in discernment and participation.

He concluded by highlighting the spiritual dimension of accountability. “Transparency presupposes vulnerability. While often seen as a weakness, vulnerability actually promotes trust, growth, and human connection,” he said, inviting participants to reflect on how dioceses, parishes, and institutions can nurture a culture of accountability to strengthen the Church’s synodal journey in Asia. **RVA/HERALD**



St Devasahayam declared patron of Indian laity

NEW DELHI: Pope Leo XIV has officially confirmed St Lazarus Devasahayam, the 18th-century Indian martyr, as the patron of the laity in India, the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) announced on September 20.

The confirmation, dated July 16, was issued through the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. It comes in response to a petition submitted by the CCBI, the national body representing the Latin-rite bishops of the country.

The solemn proclamation of this patronage will take place on October 15 during a Eucharistic Celebration at St Mary’s Cathedral, Varanasi. The event will coincide with the annual national meeting of the diocesan and regional secretaries of the CCBI Laity Commission, gathering representatives from dioceses across the country.

Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrão, President of the CCBI, has issued a circular inviting archbishops, bishops, parish priests, religious and lay faithful to celebrate this historic moment in every diocese and parish and to actively promote devotion to St Lazarus Devasahayam across India.

“We hope that devotion to St Lazarus Devasahayam will inspire the lay faithful in India to grow in love for God, deepen their practice of faith, and actively serve both the Church and society,” said Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrão.

St Lazarus Devasahayam (1712–1752) was a Hindu convert to Christianity and the first layman and martyr from India to be canonised by the Catholic Church. Born Neelakanda Pillai in Nattalam, Tamil Nadu, he served as a court official in the Kingdom of Travancore. Drawn to the Christian faith, he converted in 1745 and was baptised as Lazarus (Devasahayam in Tamil, meaning “God is my help”). His conversion led to persecution, imprisonment, and torture for refusing to renounce his faith, and he was executed in 1752.

He was beatified on Dec 2, 2012 at Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu, in a ceremony presided over by Cardinal Angelo Amato, SDB, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, on behalf of Pope Benedict XVI. Pope Francis canonised him on May 15, 2022 at St Peter’s Basilica, Vatican City, proclaiming him a model of courage, faith, and commitment to justice. **Matters India**



Archbishop Julian Leow (seated left) at the FABC Bishops’ Seminar on Synodality.

Philippine clergy support massive anti-corruption protests in Manila

MANILA: Tens of thousands of Filipinos — clergy, religious, and lay faithful — flooded the streets of Manila on September 21 in a massive anti-corruption rally, one of several demonstrations nationwide. The protests were triggered by President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr’s July pledge to investigate and prosecute those responsible for widespread corruption in flood-control projects across the typhoon-prone nation. Nearly 10,000 projects, some non-existent, were found to be fraudulent, costing the government an estimated \$9.5 billion.

Marcos, son of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos, urged citizens to express their anger peacefully, declaring that if he were not president, he too would march. The rally coincided with the 53rd anniversary of the declaration of martial law under his father, a period marked by massive human rights abuses and plunder.

The Philippine bishops’ conference, Manila’s cardinal, and other church leaders actively encouraged participation, framing the protests as a moral, not political, stand. The main gathering point was the EDSA Shrine, the site of the historic 1986 People Power Revolution that peacefully ousted the elder Marcos.

Conference president Cardinal Pablo Virgilio David of Caloocan rallied the crowds from a stage by the shrine. The cardinal wore white clerical attire, with a white baseball cap, and was leaning on his bishop’s staff. He



People hold placards during a protest in Rizal Park in Manila, Philippines, September 21, 2025, denouncing what they call corruption linked to flood control projects. (OSV News/Reuters/Lisa Marie David)

asked liturgists to forgive his use of the crozier (outside of Mass) to steady himself because of a weak knee.

“This staff is what we use as a hook to rescue little sheep that have fallen off the edge of a ravine,” he said, likening citizens ensnared by corruption to fallen sheep. He promised that the Church would open its doors as sanctuaries for whistleblowers and warned that the crozier could also be used to strike “wild dogs and crocodiles who’ve wasted the people’s money,” drawing loud cheers and chants of “Jail the corrupt now!”

The rally was ecumenical, featuring Catholic bishops, clergy from other Christian denominations, and even a Muslim leader, united in their call for justice. “We seek true and deep renewal, but peacefully,” David

emphasised. “This is not political, but a moral affirmation of our unified faith in the fight against the culture of corruption.”

In the days leading up to the rally, Archbishop Socrates Villegas of Lingayen-Dagupan issued a strongly worded message urging Filipinos to reflect on their own complicity. He challenged voters to stop electing proven corrupt leaders and to reject vote-buying practices. “We need a revolt, a revolt not just against a corrupt system, but against the corrupt hearts and souls within us that enable the corrupt to prosper,” he wrote.

Villegas reminded the faithful that anger and protest are not enough; personal transformation and vigilant oversight of elected officials are essential. “The system cannot change if we do not change from the soul,” he stressed. **OSV News**