

# HERALD

The Catholic Weekly

## 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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And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold.

1 Peter 1:17-18



**Our shepherds during the Easter Triduum**

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**Fr Mark's 25-year journey through the Mysteries of the Rosary**

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# Holiness for ALL

**VATICAN: Holiness is not reserved for a chosen few, but is a gift entrusted to every baptised person — a call to live a life shaped by love of God and neighbour.**

This was the message of Pope Leo XIV during his weekly General Audience on April 8, as he continued his catechesis on the documents of the Second Vatican Council, drawing from the *Dogmatic Constitution Lumen gentium*.

Reflecting on the Council's teaching, the Pope highlighted that an entire chapter of *Lumen gentium* is devoted to the universal call to holiness — an invitation extended to all the faithful to live in God's grace, practise virtue, and imitate Christ in daily life.

Holiness, he explained, is not an abstract ideal but a lived reality. From the earliest days of the Church, its highest expression has been martyrdom — the "supreme witness of faith and charity." Even today, Christians are called to bear witness to Christ with courage, offering visible signs of faith and love in the world around them.

At the heart of this call is the life of the Church itself. The sacraments, especially the Eucharist, nourish and sustain believers on this journey, gradually conforming them to Christ, who is both the model and measure of holiness. Holiness, the Pope noted, is first and foremost a gift from Christ — one that



takes root and grows when received with joy and lived with commitment.

Echoing the teaching of Pope Paul VI, he reminded the faithful that the Church can only be truly authentic when her members strive to be "holy, that is, truly worthy, strong and faithful children."

Such holiness, he said, is not merely external or ethical, but an inner transformation brought about by the Holy Spirit, conforming each person more closely to Christ. While the

Church is indeed holy by God's gift, she continues her earthly journey amid both "the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God," constantly called to grow in fidelity.

Acknowledging the reality of sin within the Church, the Pope emphasised the need for continual conversion. Each believer is invited to renew their life in Christ, trusting in God's grace, which transforms and sanctifies. This daily conversion is not a burden, but a mission — an ongoing response to

God's love.

Holiness, therefore, is not simply about moral effort. It lies at the very heart of Christian life, shaping both personal and communal identity. It is lived out in ordinary moments, in acts of love, sacrifice, and fidelity.

In a particular way, the Pope highlighted those who consecrate their lives to God through the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. Far from limiting freedom, these are gifts of the Holy Spirit that liberate the heart — freeing it from self-interest, suspicion, and division, and opening it fully to God and others.

By embracing this radical form of discipleship, consecrated men and women offer a powerful witness to the Church's universal call to holiness, pointing all believers towards a deeper participation in the life of Christ.

Even suffering, the Pope noted, finds meaning within this journey. United with Christ's passion, it becomes a path to holiness, revealing that no human experience lies beyond God's redeeming love.

Holiness, then, is not a distant or unattainable goal. It is a daily encounter with God, who enters into human life out of love and transforms it from within.

Concluding his reflection, Pope Leo XIV entrusted all the faithful to the care of the Blessed Virgin Mary, praying that she may guide and protect every step of the Church's journey towards holiness. **Vatican News**

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

# Drawing the line on racism

From time to time, I find myself scrolling through so-called “community” social media pages — spaces that are meant to inform, connect, and perhaps, even uplift. Yet too often, what I encounter instead is a troubling undercurrent of racial and religious hostility. What begins as a discussion over a minor incident quickly spirals into name-calling, labelling, and outright dehumanisation.

Terms like “Type C”, “kicap”, or even cruel descriptions tied to skin colour are casually thrown about, as though dignity were optional and respect negotiable. On one occasion, when I gently suggested that conversations remain focused on issues rather than race, I was immediately branded with the very labels I had questioned. It was a stark reminder: in such spaces, reason is often drowned out by prejudice.

What is perhaps most unsettling is not just the language, but the normalisation of it. Silence becomes complicity. Indifference becomes permission. And over time, what is repeated often enough begins to feel acceptable.

We pride ourselves on being a multi-racial, multi-religious nation — one that has journeyed nearly seven decades since independence. Yet, are we truly progressing, or are we quietly regressing? The *Malaysia Racism Report 2025* by Pusat KOMAS recorded 107 incidents of racism — the highest since its inception. While numbers alone may seem small, the report reminds us that many cases go unreported, hidden beneath the surface of daily interactions.

Racism today is no longer confined to isolated outbursts. It seeps into workplaces, classrooms, housing, and increasingly, our digital spaces. It is subtle at times, blatant at others, but always

damaging. Words, after all, shape attitudes. Attitudes shape actions. And actions shape the future.

It is within this context that recent news of the Unity Bill being revisited — as reported by *The Star* on April 8, 2026, takes on particular significance. Laws alone cannot heal hearts, but they can set boundaries for what a society is willing to tolerate. The very need to revisit such legislation signals both an urgency and an admission: that unity cannot be assumed, and harmony cannot be left to chance.

A Unity Bill, if thoughtfully framed and justly implemented, could serve as a moral and legal anchor — affirming that racism, discrimination, and hate speech have no place in our national life. Yet legislation, while necessary, is not sufficient. We cannot outsource conscience to Parliament.

Which brings us to a question we cannot afford to ignore: What are we teaching the next generation?

Children are not born with prejudice. They learn it. They absorb it from the conversations they hear, the comments they read, the jokes that are laughed at, and the silences that follow injustice. When we reduce others to labels, when we normalise exclusion, when we allow harmful rhetoric to go unchallenged — we are, knowingly or not, forming the moral compass of our children.

What example are we setting? Are we teaching them that it is acceptable to diminish another person because of race or religion? Are we showing them that identity is something to be weaponised rather than celebrated? Or are we guiding them towards empathy, respect, and the recognition of shared humanity?

The Christian message offers a clear and uncompromising answer. Every person is created in the image of God. Not some. Not a select few. Every person. To degrade another is, in essence, to diminish that divine image.

Yet, beyond theology, this is a human issue — one that calls for courage and accountability. The KOMAS report rightly describes itself as a “mirror held up to our society.” The question is whether we are willing to look into that mirror honestly.

It is easy to dismiss such incidents as the work of a vocal minority. But history reminds us that division rarely begins loudly. It grows quietly through unchecked words, tolerated attitudes, and unchallenged behaviour.

If the Unity Bill is to mean anything, it must not only be debated in the halls of power but lived out in the daily conduct of ordinary citizens. Unity is not forged through policy alone, but through practice — in how we speak, how we listen, and how we treat one another.

If we truly desire a more united Malaysia, the responsibility does not lie solely with policymakers or institutions. It begins with each of us — with the words we choose, the conversations we engage in, and the values we model.

Perhaps the call is simple, yet demanding: to speak with respect, to correct with charity, and to stand firm against what diminishes human dignity.

Because in the end, the society we build tomorrow is shaped by the values we live today. And the children watching us — listening to us — will become the inheritors of that world.

*Patricia Pereira*

## When we walk away, He finds us

The Third Sunday of Easter often brings us into the quiet, confusing space that follows the Resurrection — a time when the disciples are no longer in the darkness of Good Friday, yet not fully living in the light of Easter faith. It is in this in-between place that we encounter a deeply human response: running away when hope seems lost.

In the Gospel, we often hear of the disciples returning to what they knew before Jesus. After everything they had witnessed, they still struggled to believe that hope had truly been restored. So, they walked away. Not necessarily in fear alone, but in disappointment, confusion, and exhaustion. They returned to the familiar because the future felt too uncertain.

This instinct to walk away is something we all recognise. When life collapses around us — when relationships fail, dreams fall apart, or prayers seem unanswered — we retreat. We tell ourselves that hope was misplaced, that it is safer not to expect too much. Like the disciples, we go back to what is comfortable, even if it is smaller than the life we once imagined.

The risen Christ does not wait for the disciples to regain their courage or clarity. He comes to them in the midst of their retreat. On the shore, in the breaking of bread, in the ordinary rhythm of their lives — He appears. And in doing so, He reveals a profound truth: what feels like hopelessness is not the end of the story. In fact, it may be the very place where hope is being reborn, though we do not yet recognise it.

Hopelessness has a way of stripping us down. It removes illusions of control and forces us to confront our limitations. This can

feel like loss, even failure. But spiritually, it can also be a hidden grace. When we reach the point where we can no longer rely on our own strength or expectations, we become open to receiving hope as a gift rather than something we manufacture.

The disciples' failure to recognise Jesus at first is significant. It reminds us that hope does not always look the way we expect. They were looking for a triumphant, unmistakable victory but instead, encountered a quiet presence, a familiar voice, a simple act of sharing food. Hope had returned, but in a transformed way.

So too in our lives. When we feel that all is lost, it may be because we are holding onto a specific vision of how things should unfold. When that vision collapses, we assume hope has disappeared. But perhaps hope is simply taking a different form — one that we have not yet learned to see.

It was only when the disciples sat down for the evening meal with Jesus that their eyes were opened. They recognised Jesus through the action of the breaking of the bread and later, we hear them recalling how their hearts burnt when they heard the words of Scripture being explained to them by Jesus as they were walking. What does this tell us?

The shape of Christian hope should not be placed on persons or created things. What is described in the Emmaus Walk is the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist — and that is where our entire hope should lie. The resurrected Christ was no longer recognisable to His disciples because He was in His glorified body. However, the Word and

## Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Philip Tay, OCD

### 3rd Sunday of Easter (A)

Readings: Acts of the Apostles 2:14, 22-33;

1 Peter 1:17-21;

Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

Bread remain the same. This is also why the Mass is so significant and important in our daily “Emmaus Walk”. We may not always recognise the presence of Jesus walking with us but we should be able to recognise His presence when we go for Mass.

Attending Mass and receiving the Eucharist will not solve our problems, but it will give us the grace and courage to meet our challenges head-on. We cannot walk through life alone. Just like the two disciples, we need to allow Jesus to walk with us through the reception of the Sacraments.

Walking away, then, is not the final failure. It is part of the journey. The disciples ran, and still they were found. They doubted, and still they were called. Their hopelessness did not disqualify them; it became the very space where they encountered the risen Christ more deeply.

We are invited to be honest about the places we are walking away from; where we have quietly given up, where disappointment has settled in. But it also invites us to remain open. Because even there, especially there, Christ is already present. Hopelessness may feel like an ending. But in the light of Easter, it can be hope in disguise — the beginning of a deeper, more resilient faith, one that is no longer based on certainty, but on encounter.

# Cardinal Sebastian's cross-border visit

Christopher Kushi

KOTA BHARU, Kelantan: Amid the solemnity of Holy Week, Cardinal Sebastian Francis extended his pastoral presence beyond borders, making a meaningful visit to a neighbouring parish in southern Thailand.



Church of St Monica, Su-ngai Kolok

While celebrating the sacred liturgies with the faithful at the Church of Our Lady of Fatima of the Holy Rosary in Kota Bharu, the cardinal also journeyed to the Church of St Monica in Su-ngai Kolok, located in Narathiwat Province under the Diocese of Surat Thani. The visit highlighted the quiet but significant ties between Catholic communities separated by geography, yet united in faith.

Accompanying him were Sr Angela Wong, FMM, parish administrator of the Kota Bharu parish; Gabrielite Brother Francis Xavier Gasper of Montfort Boys' Town, Shah Alam; Gerard Yeo, Parish Finance Committee treasurer; Rosalind Wong, deputy chair of the Parish Pastoral Council; and Christopher Kushi.

Cardinal Sebastian described the visit as a natural outreach to a neighbouring parish across the bor-

der, emphasising the importance of fostering communion among the faithful in the region. Sr Angela likewise expressed hope that such encounters could pave the way for future cross-border visits, deepening bonds of fellowship and shared mission.

During the visit, prayers were offered through the intercession of St Monica, a model of perseverance in faith. Bro Gasper invoked her steadfast spirit, recalling her unwavering prayers for her son, St Augustine of Hippo, whose eventual conversion remains one of the most powerful testimonies of patient and faithful intercession.

The parish of St Monica traces its humble beginnings to 1972, when missionaries such as Fr Sacco and Fr Terry Tapay began visiting Christian families in the area, praying with them and nurturing their faith. By 1983, under the



pastoral care of Fr Henry Danieli, the community had grown to about 30 households, with Mass celebrated regularly in homes.

Recognising this growth, Fr Gustav Rosens later acquired land along the Su-ngai Kolok – Waeng Road in the early 1990s. With the support of benefactors, particularly from Germany, the present church, parish house, and facilities were constructed. The church was solemnly consecrated in August 1996 by Bishop Michael Prabhan Chaiyacharoen, marking a significant milestone in the life of the community.

However, the unrest that affected southern Thailand in 2004–2005 posed serious challenges. Travel be-

came dangerous, and participation in parish life declined. Yet, despite these trials, the parish has endured, remaining a quiet but powerful witness to resilience, faith, and the enduring legacy of St Monica.

Today, pastoral care in the region continues under the leadership of Salesian priest Fr Suksan Chaopaknam, who oversees six Catholic churches and chapels across the southernmost provinces, while the parish of St Monica is currently administered by Fr Montol Rojanasutthasakul.

Looking ahead, the parish community will celebrate its feast day on Saturday, August 22 — an occasion that promises to gather the faithful in thanksgiving and renewed hope.

**KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE**

**Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow**

April

- 21 Mass – Bentong Prison
- 24 Mass – Police Day, Cathedral of St John, KL
- 25 Mass – S.C.A.N (Youth), Church of the Good Shepherd, Setapak

**PENANG DIOCESE**

**Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis**

April

- 20 Online International Meeting of Bishops at 6.00pm – Friends of the Focolare Movement via Zoom
- 27 Meeting via Zoom – Peninsular Malaysia Finance at 10.00am
- 27 Meeting via Zoom – Malaysian Catholic Education Council at 2.30pm

**MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE**

**Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul**

April

- 21-22 Clergy Month Recollection – MAJODI Centre
- 25 Mass in BM (Vocation Sunday) – Church of the Immaculate Conception, JB

## Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #268

**Welcome dear friends.**

The Easter season continues. The *Gloria* is back. Parishes may opt for “*Sprinkling with Water*” Penitential Rite and the *Apostles’ Creed*. *Divine Mercy Sunday* invites us to the “God who never gives up on us”.

The MJD delegates prepare for the vicariate level *Malaysia Pastoral Convention Remote Preparation*.

Coming May, the bishops meet Pope Leo in Rome.

**Local Takes. The Country is Heating Up!**  
MetMalaysia warns that *scorching temperatures* may persist till June. Experts say that there’s a surge of *online racism*, weaponised by misinformation and disinformation.

The PM said that the rule of law and global order is being undermined by the “*law of the jungle*”.

Farmers: the rising costs of fertilisers and energy costs, is making them *rethink* what they grow.

Warnings are out that “*availability no longer guarantees affordability*”. The *Sinar Daily* reported that the nation faces *multiple crises* across multiple sectors including logistics, agriculture and retail.

**Reading the Signs: Hope-filled Easter Healing!**  
Easter 2026 has inspired a wealth of personal reflections from modern church leaders and historical figures, focusing on themes of *hope, peace, and renewal* amid global challenges.

- **Elder Jeffery R. Holland:** “I testify that through the redeeming Atonement and glorious Resurrection of Jesus Christ, broken hearts can be healed, anguish can become peace, and distress can become hope.”
- **Pope Leo XIV:** “The peace that Jesus gives us is not merely the silence of weapons, but the peace that touches and transforms the heart of each one of us!”
- **Archbishop of Canterbury:** “Jesus is with us in the darkness. Jesus calls us by name, and invites us to be with Him in the light of the resurrection, to trust that we are known and deeply loved.”
- **Archbishop Shane Parker:** “The resurrection of Jesus tells us that the hope we need to sustain us in this life can never be destroyed.”

**A Thought for the Week: God’s Wings**  
After a forest fire in Yellowstone National Park, forest rangers began their trek up a mountain to assess the inferno’s damage. One ranger found a bird literally petrified in ashes, perched statuesquely on the ground at the base of a tree. Somewhat sickened by the eerie sight, he knocked over the bird with a stick. When he gently struck it, three tiny chicks scurried from under their dead mother’s wings.

The loving mother could have flown to safety but had refused to abandon her babies. Then the blaze had arrived and the heat had scorched her small body, the mother had remained steadfast... because she had been willing to die, so those under the cover of her wings would live.

*A lesson from the mother:* Sacrifice! Self-giving. A life for lives. A life for perpetuation. Reminds us of God’s giving.

**QnQ? Q asks? What is human dignity? Is it the same as identity?**  
There is a telling phrase used in the Acts of the Apostles to describe this new Jewish sect that is *upsetting the old-world order* in Thessalonica. Christians there were dragged before the city council and referred to as “the people who have been *turning the whole world upside down....* They have broken Caesar’s edicts” (Acts 17:6–7).

No one is called before the city council for mere inner beliefs or new attitudes unless they are also upsetting the social order. Almost all of Jesus’ healing and nature miracles were a *rearranging of social relationships and therefore of social order*. By eating with the underclass, touching the untouchables, healing on the Sabbath, and collaborating with upstarts like John the Baptist down at the river, He turns the traditions of His society upside down.

Jesus refuses to abide by the honour-and-shame system that dominated the Mediterranean culture of His time. In an honour-and-shame system, a person’s status, self-image, and meaning are primarily achieved through *how others see them*.

The system around Jesus didn’t ask individuals to think in terms of “Who am I really before God?” (as Jesus did), or “What do I feel about myself?” (as our culture might), but rather, “How does my village see me?” Many cultures to this day are built on some kind of honour-and-shame system. A person’s meaning is almost entirely tied up in how their family and friends see them. It’s a highly effective means of *social control*. **Richard Rohr**

**The Spirit @ Work:** “Without the Holy Spirit, God is far away... With the Holy Spirit, the Gospel is the power of life.”

**Something to tickle you:** “The hand is the hand of God. The nail is the nail of God. And as the hands of Jesus opened for the nail, the doors of heaven opened for you.” **Max Lucado**

**Bishop Bernard Paul**

*This year, HERALD focuses on the Easter Triduum celebrations across Malaysia, drawing from the homilies and witness of our shepherds. As we reflect on these sacred moments, may we be inspired to live as an Alleluia people — rooted in hope, renewed in faith and generous in love and service.*

# Our Shepherds at

## Archdiocese of Kuching

KUCHING: Archbishop Simon Poh called on the faithful to reflect deeply on Christ's sacrifice and to become instruments of peace in his Good Friday and Easter messages, as Christians marked the solemn season and journeyed towards the joy of the Resurrection.

Describing the suffering, crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ as the ultimate expression of God's love for humanity, he emphasised that Christ's sacrifice reconciled humanity with God and stands as a powerful witness of love, forgiveness and obedience.

Reflecting on the crucifix, Archbishop Simon reminded the faithful that it is not merely a religious symbol but a constant call to live a life of sacrifice, compassion and mercy. The image of Christ on the cross, he said, challenges believers to love selflessly, forgive generously and serve others wholeheartedly.

He also pointed to Jesus' final words — "Father, forgive them" — as a profound reminder that Good Friday is ultimately about reconciliation. The faithful, he added, are called to mirror this spirit in their daily lives, especially in a world marked by division and conflict.



Archbishop Simon Poh baptizes a catechumen during the Easter Vigil of the Holy Night.

Echoing the appeal of Pope Leo XIV, the prelate urged all people of goodwill to pray for peace, recognising that Christ continues to suffer in those affected by violence, hatred and war.

In Sarawak, where Good Friday is observed as a public holiday, Christians gathered in large numbers for prayer and liturgical celebrations. The occasion also drew messag-

es of unity and goodwill from state leaders, highlighting the importance of harmony and mutual respect in a multi-religious society.

As Christians moved from the solemnity of the cross to the joy of the Resurrection, Archbishop Simon expressed hope that Easter would renew faith and inspire all to build a more compassionate and peaceful world.

## Diocese of Sandakan

SANDAKAN: Bishop Julius Dusin Gitom led the faithful of the Diocese of Sandakan through the sacred celebrations of the Easter Triduum, reflecting on the themes of communion, sacrifice and new life in his homilies on Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil.

During the Holy Thursday celebration at St Mary's Cathedral, Bishop Julius highlighted the deep significance of the Last Supper,



Bishop Julius Dusin blesses the people with holy water during the Easter Vigil of the Holy Night.

reminding the faithful that Christian life is rooted in community. He emphasised that believers are called not only to gather as one body in Christ, but also to listen attentively to the Word of God, serve one another in humility, and be nourished by the Eucharist. Referencing the washing of the feet, he said the gesture goes beyond ritual, calling all to a deeper "cleansing of the heart" so as to live out Christ's commandment of love in daily life.

On Good Friday, the prelate invited the faithful gathered at the Church of St Mark,

to reflect on the meaning of the Cross amid human suffering. He noted that while those present at Christ's Passion reacted with fear, violence and confusion, Jesus remained calm and faithful, transforming suffering into an act of love and salvation. The bishop cautioned against the danger of hardened hearts, stressing that the true tragedy lies not in suffering itself, but in failing to recognise God at work within it. He urged the faithful to embrace the Cross as a source of transformation, choosing forgiveness, truth and love, even in times of trial, while praying for peace in a world marked by conflict.

The Easter Vigil at St Mary's Cathedral was marked by joy and thanksgiving as the Church proclaimed the Resurrection. Bishop Julius reminded the faithful that Christ's victory over death brings hope and new life, even as many in war-torn regions continue to suffer. He encouraged prayer for peace and gratitude for the gift of faith, highlighting that the risen Christ remains present in daily life — in families, communities and moments of both struggle and joy.

Drawing from the Gospel account of the women at the empty tomb, he affirmed that encounters with the risen Lord continue today, strengthening believers to persevere in faith and hope.

## Diocese of Sibul

SIBU: The Easter Triduum at Sacred Heart Cathedral began with the Holy Thursday Iban Mass, where a meaningful gesture highlighted the spirit of service and love as married couples washed each other's feet. The act symbolised mutual humility and self-giving love in marriage, reflecting Christ's commandment to "love one another." Presiding over the Eucharist, Bishop Joseph Hii later offered a special blessing for the couples, praying that their unions be strengthened by faith, unity and sacrificial love, affirming marriage as a vocation of service within the Church.

On Good Friday, a deep silence enveloped the cathedral as the faithful gathered for the Iban Service of the Lord's Passion. The liturgy led the congregation into deep reflection on the mystery of the Cross. During the veneration, the proclamation "Behold the wood of the Cross" echoed through the church, drawing the faithful into prayerful surrender. Bishop Joseph reminded them that Christ's Passion was not a moment of defeat, but an outpouring of divine love and obedience to the Father. The faithful were invited to embrace their own crosses with faith, allowing suffering to be transformed into love and hope.

The Triduum culminated in a vibrant Easter Sunday celebration, as the cathedral filled with worshippers rejoicing in the Resurrection of Christ. The liturgy resounded with hymns of victory, proclaiming life over death and hope over darkness. A symbolic highlight was the distribution of Easter eggs by Bishop Joseph, representing new life and the empty tomb.

As the faithful were sent forth, they were encouraged to carry the light of the Resurrection into their daily lives, witnessing to the enduring hope and joy of the risen Christ.



Bishop Joseph Hii unveils the cross on the Friday of the Passion of the Lord.

## Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu

KOTA KINABALU: A spirit of solemn reflection and joyful renewal marked the celebration of the Easter Triduum at Sacred Heart Cathedral, where Archbishop John Wong presided over the liturgies that led the faithful through the mystery of Christ's Passion, death and Resurrection.

The Triduum began on April 2 with the Mass of the Lord's Supper, commemorating the institution of the Eucharist and the priesthood. In his homily, Archbishop John emphasised the Eucharist as the source and summit of Christian life, calling the faithful to deepen their participation in this sacred mystery. The washing of the feet, a central rite of the liturgy, reflected Christ's humility and servant leadership, reminding believers of their call to serve one another with compassion and

selflessness. The Blessed Sacrament was later transferred to the altar of repose, inviting quiet adoration.

On Good Friday, the faithful gathered in silence and reverence for the Celebration of the Lord's Passion. The solemn reading of the Passion narrative set the tone for reflection on Christ's suffering and death. Archbishop John highlighted that Jesus' sacrifice was the ultimate expression of love and obedience to the Father, urging the faithful to respond through lives marked by forgiveness, humility and compassion. The veneration of the cross drew worshippers forward in quiet devotion, concluding with Holy Communion as the Church awaited the hope of the Resurrection.

The Easter Vigil brought a profound sense of joy and renewal, as nine catechumens were baptised and welcomed into the Church. Reflecting on the Resurrection, the archbishop



Archbishop John Wong washes the feet of one of the faithful on the Thursday of the Lord's Supper.

described it as the victory of light over darkness and life over death. He encouraged the newly baptised to remain steadfast in faith

and called on all the faithful to renew their baptismal promises, living as witnesses of hope.

# the Easter Triduum

## Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur

KUALA LUMPUR: Archbishop Julian Leow, in his Easter Vigil homily at the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, reminded the faithful that the Vigil is the “holiest of all nights,” a celebration rich in signs and symbols that draw the whole person into praising God. At its heart, he said, is the mystery of Christ’s Passion, Death, and Resurrection — God’s saving act for all humanity.

Reflecting on the readings, Archbishop Julian traced the story of salvation history — from creation out of nothing to humanity’s fall — pointing to the fulfilment of God’s plan in Jesus Christ. Despite humanity’s re-

peated rejection of God, His love remained constant. “He sent His only Son, and yet we crucified Him,” the archbishop noted, adding that sin continues to wound the world today.

Addressing the question of why God chose such a sacrificial path for salvation, he explained that the Christian worldview offers a deeper understanding of life’s origins and purpose. While science explores how the universe began, it cannot fully explain why it exists. Faith, he said, reveals a greater truth: that all creation points to a divine intelligence and purpose.

Acknowledging the brokenness of humanity, Archbishop Julian said that sin stems from choosing selfishness over selflessness. Yet, through forgiveness, God offers the op-

portunity for renewal and reconciliation. He emphasised that Christianity responds to life’s deepest questions, affirming that humanity is created by God — to know, love, and serve Him.

He urged the faithful to seek God’s will and to respond freely to His love. “Without freedom, there can be no love,” he said, noting that while free will allows people to turn away from God, it also enables them to choose Him.

Concluding his homily, the archbishop called on the faithful to rejoice in the Resurrection, reminding them that death could not hold Christ. He encouraged all to choose Christ daily and to live in the light of His victory, until they meet Him face to face.



Archbishop Julian Leow inserts the grains into the Paschal Candle during the Easter Vigil of the Holy Night.

## Diocese of Penang



Cardinal Sebastian Francis administers the Sacrament of Confirmation to a candidate during the Easter Vigil of the Holy Night.

KOTA BHARU: The Sacred Triduum at the Church of Our Lady of Fatima of the Holy Rosary in Kota Bharu, Kelantan, unfolded as a deeply prayerful journey, as Cardinal Sebastian Francis led the faithful through reflections on love, sacrifice and the promise of new life in Christ.

On Maundy Thursday, the cardinal emphasised that Jesus not only taught love but revealed it through His entire life. Reflecting on the Last Supper, he highlighted three central themes — liberation, communion and service. Christ, he said, becomes the true Paschal Lamb whose sacrifice frees humanity from sin. The Eucharist is not merely a ritual but an encounter with a love that continually chooses us, while the washing of the feet reveals a self-giving love that serves without condition. He urged the faithful to live this command of love through forgiveness, service and unity, especially in moments of difficulty.

On Good Friday, the focus turned to the Cross as the ultimate expression of sacrificial love. The cardinal reminded the congregation

that Christ’s suffering was not defeat but a victory of love. By taking upon Himself the sins and failures of humanity, Jesus transformed the Cross into a sign of hope and redemption. He encouraged the faithful to stand before the Cross with trust, recognising that Good Friday is not the end, but the path that leads to the Resurrection.

The Easter Vigil marked the triumph of light over darkness. Proclaiming the Resurrection, Cardinal Sebastian reminded the faithful that Christ’s rising is a declaration that love never fails and that God never abandons His people. He challenged them to move beyond fear, guilt and the burdens of the past, and to embrace their identity as a people loved and forgiven by God.

Addressing those preparing to receive the sacraments, he called them to a renewed life in Christ, while urging all present to “rise” from sin, unworthiness and past wounds. The Triduum celebrations concluded with a resounding message: in Christ, hope is alive, and new life is always possible.

## Diocese of Malacca Johore

PLENTONG: Bishop Bernard Paul led the Sacred Triduum celebrations at the Church of St Joseph, offering reflections that invited the faithful to deepen their understanding of Christ’s Passion, Death and Resurrection.

On Holy Thursday, the bishop centred his homily on the theme “We Are Not Alone,” reflecting on what he described as the “loneliest moment” in the life of Jesus Christ. Abandoned by His disciples, Jesus nevertheless left behind enduring signs of His presence — the Eucharist, the priesthood, and the washing of the feet. These, he explained, are not mere rituals but living reminders that Christ remains with His people. “Remember, reflect and relive,” he urged, encouraging the faithful to encounter Christ through these sacraments.

On Good Friday, Bishop Bernard explored the theme “A Christless Cross or a Crossless Christ,” drawing from the insights of the late

Archbishop Fulton Sheen. He warned against two distorted expressions of faith: one that seeks Christ without sacrifice, and another that embraces suffering without love. True Christianity, he said, is found in the crucifix — the Cross with Christ — which reveals a God of mercy, sacrifice and compassion. He called on the faithful to examine their lives and restore what may be lacking in their relationship with God.

During the Easter Vigil, the bishop reflected on “The Empty Tomb” as the central sign of the Resurrection. Challenging the congregation, he noted that the first witnesses did not see the moment of rising but believed upon encountering the empty tomb. He urged the faithful to move beyond “dead beliefs, dead works and a dead past,” and to embrace new life in Christ. The Triduum celebrations concluded with a call to live as Easter people — those who not only believe in the Resurrection but embody it in their daily lives.



Bishop Bernard Paul washes the feet of an elderly man during the Thursday of the Lord’s Supper.

## Diocese of Keningau

KENINGAU: The Sacred Triduum was observed with deep reverence at the Rumah Retret Keuskupan Keningau Tatal (RRKKT), led by Bishop Cornelius Piong.

On Holy Thursday, the bishop reflected on two powerful expressions of Jesus’ love: the table of the Last Supper and the towel used in the washing of the disciples’ feet. The table, he said, signifies communion and shared life, while the towel represents humility that embraces others despite their weaknesses.

He called on the faithful to embody these signs in their daily lives — to gather at the table in the Eucharist, within their families, and in service to those in need. “Come to the table,” he urged, stressing that true dis-

cipleship must be rooted in humility, without which one cannot fully follow Christ.

The solemn Good Friday liturgy invited the faithful into deeper reflection on Christ’s Passion. Bishop Cornelius posed a central question: why was Jesus willing to endure suffering and death?

He explained that the answer lies in Christ’s unwavering fidelity to the will of the Father and His boundless love for humanity. Through this faithfulness and love, humanity is freed from the power of sin. The bishop encouraged the congregation to respond by cultivating the same virtues — remaining steadfast in faith and showing genuine love for others, especially in times of trial and sacrifice.

The Easter Vigil then culminated in the proclamation of the Resurrection — the

heart of the Christian faith. The liturgy recalled how the risen Christ was first encountered by women at the empty tomb, a powerful sign that He is alive and present among His people.

Emphasising the centrality of the Resurrection, the celebration affirmed that faith, hope and love in Christ are not in vain. As reflected in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (15:14), without the Resurrection, Christian proclamation would be empty; yet through it, believers are assured of new life and enduring hope.

Together, the liturgies of the Triduum led the faithful from the table of service, through the cross of sacrifice, to the joy of the empty tomb — a journey that continues to shape and renew Christian life to this day.



Bishop Cornelius Piong venerates the cross during the Friday of the Passion of the Lord.

# Sacramental preparation for children with special needs



**Judyanne Marie Yap Siew Pheng**

KUALA LUMPUR: The Catechesis for Learners with Special Needs Ministry, a sub-ministry of the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan Catechetical Ministry (KLACM), organised a formation programme titled *Children with Special Needs and the Sacraments* on March 28 at the Church of the Sacred Heart. Now in its third consecutive year, this initiative reflects KLACM's ongoing commitment to making catechesis more inclusive for children with special needs. The session was well attended, with about 40 catechists and parents participating.

The programme began with breakfast, providing participants with an opportunity to connect in a warm and welcoming environment. This was followed by a series of presentations. The first was delivered by Angel Bateman on the topic *The Sacraments and Inclusion*. Her session was honest and impactful, emphasising the rights of all Catholics, including those with special needs, to receive the sacraments.

In the second session, Ignatius Lee, a psychologist by profession, provided a foundational and theoretical understanding on the types of teaching-learning styles to consider when supporting learners with special needs

and what accommodations and adaptations have to be made for lessons to be meaningful.

The third and last session was presented by Tiffany Seetha and Constance Yuen, both catechists supporting learners with special needs in their parish. They provided step-by-step examples of preparing learners with special needs for the sacraments of Confession, Eucharist and Confirmation. The speakers were noted for their enlightening and engaging presentations, and a strong commitment to supporting children with special needs in their sacramental journey.

Participants of the session greatly benefitted from this workshop-styled formation. Later, they shared meaningful reflections on how the sessions has helped shape their understanding and approach to catechesis for children with special needs.

Marie Ann, who came all the way from the Church of St Anthony, Teluk Intan, Perak, said that she was deeply inspired by the message of inclusivity: "I was really inspired by the emphasis that every child is included and called by God. It reminded me that our role is not to change the child, but to adjust our approach so they can encounter Jesus in their own way." She also realised the importance of tailoring teaching methods to each child: "For me, it's not about spoon-feeding or

tough love. It's about understanding each child and giving the right support."

Another participant, Clarissa Raymond, highlighted the value of encouraging independence among learners: "I would let them learn by themselves." She also stressed that there is a need for balance in teaching methods saying, "We cannot be tough on them, nor can we spoon feed them."

According to Josephine, from the Church of Christ the Light, Kepong: "I will surely have a different perspective on how I am going to relate with a child with special needs. I am going for the don't give up approach and to continue to teach, although there may be no full response from the child."

As the programme came to a close, one message resonated clearly among all who attended — inclusion is not an added effort but is at the very heart of catechesis. When we choose compassion over convenience and adaptability over rigidity, we create spaces where every child can truly encounter Christ. With renewed understanding and some practical skills in hand, the participants returned to their families and communities not just as catechists or teachers, but as facilitators with a sense of belonging — ensuring that every child, regardless of ability, knows they are valued and deeply loved by God.

## ABC community marks Lent with inclusive devotion

KUALA LUMPUR: In the quiet, reflective spirit of Lent, the Assisi Beloved Community (ABC) of the Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras, gathered for a deeply meaningful and prayerful morning on March 15. At 9.30am, children with special needs, together with their families, came as one community to journey through the Way of the Cross — walking not only in remembrance of Christ's passion, but also in faith, love, and unity.

Led by ABC coordinator Ann Trissa, the session gently guided participants through the solemn moments of Christ's suffering and sacrifice. Set within the church grounds, where all 14 Stations of the Cross are beautifully placed, the experience became both immersive and reverent, inviting each participant into a deeper encounter with the Lord.

Rather than remaining in one place, the group moved physically from station to station. This simple yet powerful approach allowed both children and adults to engage more fully, transforming each reflection into a lived experience. Every step became a prayer; every pause, a moment of grace.

Parents and guardians walked alongside the

children, offering steady support, encouragement, and love. Their presence ensured that no one journeyed alone, fostering a spirit of care and belonging that truly reflected the heart of the community.

As the group progressed, the space was filled with quiet prayers, gentle guidance, and shared moments of reflection. Despite the demands of the journey, there was a palpable sense of peace and unity — a reminder that faith, when lived together, becomes both strength and solace.

The gathering stood as a beautiful witness to inclusion in action. It showed that the path to God is open to all, and that with patience, compassion, and understanding, every individual can encounter Christ in a meaningful way.

As the session came to a close, families left with hearts renewed — carrying not only the memory of the Cross, but also the deeper realisation that Lent is a journey of love, support, and shared hope.

With this same spirit, the ABC community continues to look forward to nurturing both faith and fellowship, walking together as one body, one family, in Christ. **Bryan David**



## Serving compassion with every meal

KUALA LUMPUR: On Palm Sunday, as the Church commemorated Christ's humble entry into Jerusalem, a quiet yet powerful act of love unfolded at the Church of the Risen Christ. A community outreach initiative titled *Meals Shared from Martha's Kitchen* brought together hearts and hands in service, with one simple yet profound mission — to prepare and share a warm meal with 200 friends in need.

From the early hours of the morning, members of PIHDM from the parishes of Risen Christ and St Joseph gathered in the kitchen, united in purpose and spirit. What began as a task soon became a beautiful expression of fellowship. The space came alive with energy, laughter, and the comforting aroma of home-cooked food — each stir of the pot and careful preparation infused with love and intention.

The meal prepared was both hearty and thoughtful — a banana leaf spread of *sambar tauhu sambal*, fried cabbage, stir-fried long beans, fried chicken, *papadam*, and cupcakes for dessert. Yet beyond the dishes themselves, what was truly served was something far greater. Each packet was prepared with care, handed out with warmth, and received with quiet gratitude — a reminder that dignity and kindness go hand in hand.

This outreach was more than an act of char-

ity; it was a living reflection of the Gospel. On a day that speaks of humility and self-giving love, the volunteers became instruments of that very message. In offering a simple meal, they offered presence, compassion, and the reassurance that no one is forgotten.

For many recipients, the banana leaf meal was more than nourishment — it was a taste of home, a moment of comfort, a sign that they are seen and valued. In that shared space, barriers faded, and what remained was a deep sense of human connection.

The collaboration between members of different parish communities beautifully embodied the spirit of Palm Sunday — a coming together in humility, service, and love. It was a reminder that the Church is most alive when it reaches outward, when faith is expressed not only in prayer, but in action.

*Meals Shared from Martha's Kitchen* continues to stand as a quiet yet powerful witness to what is possible when a community chooses to care. It reminds us that transformation does not always come in grand gestures, but often in the simplest of acts.

Indeed, sometimes the most meaningful gift we can offer is not something extraordinary, but a warm meal, shared with love — a gesture that nourishes not only the body, but the soul. **PIHDM (Risen Christ and St Joseph)**

# Racism crisis demands action now

PETALING JAYA: The launch of the *Malaysia Racism Report 2025* by Pusat KOMAS on March 30 has once again cast a spotlight on the persistent and evolving realities of racism in the country, calling for greater courage, accountability, and sustained reform.

Now in its 11th year, the annual report documents 107 incidents of racism — the highest number recorded since its inception — reflecting both increased visibility and deep-rooted structural challenges that continue to shape Malaysian society.

The launch gathered representatives from government, civil society, diplomatic missions, and the media, underscoring the shared responsibility in addressing racial discrimination and fostering national unity.

In his opening address, Pusat KOMAS director, Jerald Joseph, described the report as more than a record of incidents. “It is a mirror held up to our society,” he said, urging political leaders to move beyond racial anxieties and short-term political gain. He called on stakeholders



Representatives from the government and civil society with the *Malaysia Racism Report 2025*. (Pusat KOMAS facebook)

to demonstrate the courage needed to build a more inclusive Malaysia.

The report highlights how racism continues to manifest across multiple layers of society — from everyday interactions to institutional settings. Of the 107 cases recorded, a significant proportion emerged from public discourse and parliamentary debates, revealing how rhetoric and policy narratives can reinforce divisions.

Notably, Parliament accounted for 43 cases, or 40.2 per cent of the total, with incidents often driven by racial majoritarianism, xenophobic language, and religious fearmongering.

Beyond the halls of power, the report underscores how discrimination remains embedded in daily life. Cases involving workplaces, education, and housing highlight the lived realities of many Malaysians who continue to face prejudice in subtle

yet deeply impactful ways.

Speaking on behalf of the KOMAS team, Yogavelan Balamurli emphasised that racism in Malaysia is not isolated but systemic, shaped by policies, narratives, and everyday practices. Addressing it, he said, requires more than acknowledgement — it demands sustained institutional reform and public accountability.

Deputy Minister of National Unity, YB Tuan Yunuswaran Ramaraj, acknowledged the complexity of the issue, warning that even isolated incidents can erode trust built over generations. He urged politicians and Members of Parliament to take greater responsibility in lowering tensions and promoting inclusive discourse.

He also reaffirmed the government's commitment to policy reform, including exploring the establishment of an Independent Harmony Commission and advancing needs-based approaches under the MADANI framework.

The report's analysis of Budget

2026 further highlights the need for equitable resource allocation. While noting a gradual shift towards needs-based policies, researchers stressed that more must be done to ensure marginalised communities are not left behind.

Grounded in a human rights-based framework, the *Malaysia Racism Report 2025* draws on media monitoring, official records, and verified public reports. It seeks not to assign blame, but to encourage constructive dialogue and evidence-based reform.

As Malaysia approaches seven decades of nationhood, the report serves as a timely reminder that building a just and inclusive society requires more than documentation. It calls for collective commitment — from government, civil society, and the public — to confront systemic challenges and work towards genuine unity.

To read the report in full, go to: <https://komas.org/download/Malaysia-Racism-Report-2025.pdf>

## Sisters in Christ bring hope to Kg Belihoi

MANTIN: A group of 14 members from Sisters in Christ recently embarked on a meaningful outreach to Kg Belihoi, bringing not only essential aid but also hearts ready to serve and encounter Christ in others.

Travelling in four cars from Kuala Lumpur, the group gathered at the Church of St Aloysius, where Fr Christopher Soosaipillai warmly welcomed them. They were accompanied by Sr Margarete Sta Maria, FdCC whose presence added depth and guidance to the journey.

After preparing essential rations for 20 families, the group made a short 20-minute journey into the village. There, amidst the simplicity of rural life, the outreach took

on a deeply prayerful spirit. The recitation of the Rosary set a quiet, reflective tone for the evening.

The highlight was the celebration of the Eucharist, concelebrated by Fr Christopher and Fr Philip Tay, OCD. Celebrating Mass within the village community became a powerful reminder of Christ's presence — uniting all in faith, hope, and love.

Following the Mass, rations were distributed to the families, each encounter marked by gratitude and warmth. The evening continued with a simple fellowship meal, strengthening bonds between the Sisters in Christ and the villagers of Kg Belihoi.

The group expressed heartfelt appreciation to the many generous do-

ners whose contributions — both in cash and in kind — made this outreach possible.

As the evening concluded at 7.00pm, the group bid farewell and returned home with hearts full, grateful for the encounter, renewed in faith, and inspired to continue serving. They arrived safely in Kuala Lumpur by 9.00pm, giving thanks to God for His protection.

The group also expressed sincere gratitude to their outgoing Spiritual Director, Fr Christopher, for his dedicated leadership, and warmly welcomed Sr Margarete as their new Spiritual Director.

As Scripture reminds us: “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40).



## Kristus Aman parish builds lifesaving skills

KUALA LUMPUR: The Medical Emergency Response Team (MERT) ministry of the Chapel of Kristus Aman recently organised an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training session for volunteers and parishioners.

The training marked an important first step in equipping the community with essential life-saving skills. Conducted by Kevin Peter Ryapan and Nalliah Vellasamy, certified First Aid Trainers from St John Ambulance of Malaysia, the session drew the participation of 40 attendees.

The programme was structured in three parts. It began with a slide presentation introducing the

basics of emergency response. This was followed by a hands-on session where participants practised hands-only CPR using training dummies. To simulate real-life scenarios, participants worked in pairs under the close supervision of the trainers.

The final segment featured a demonstration by Kevin on the proper use of the AED device, providing participants with practical knowledge and confidence to respond in emergencies.

At Kristus Aman, the AED device is located on the chapel floor for easy access. The training concluded with a presentation of tokens of appreciation to the trainers by Dr Patricia Lim, chairperson of MERT.



## Permatang Tinggi parish centre progressing on schedule

PERMATANG TINGGI: Construction of the new Parish Activity Centre at the Church of the Holy Name of Mary is progressing smoothly and remains on schedule. Work on the RM3.5 million project — inclusive of furniture, fixtures and equipment (FF&E) — began in January 2026 and is expected to be completed

by September 2026. Parish priest Fr Louis Loi expressed hope that the centre will be ready in time for the parish feast day celebrations.

The new two-storey facility will primarily house classrooms for catechism, while also serving as a venue for faith formation and other parish activities. The construction cost has been generously

borne by the same company that previously built the new church. However, the parish still requires RM1.5 million for refurbishment works.

Located at the rear of the church grounds, the new centre is set to enhance the parish's capacity for formation and community life. **Bernard Anthony**



# Rising in faith: A parish's Easter journey

Amanda Mah

KUALA LUMPUR: The legacy of the late Fr Pierre Decroocq, MEP, lives on in the very stones of the Church of the Risen Christ, the Chapel of Christ the King, and the Chapel of the Holy Spirit. His founding conviction — “To Rise is Possible” — continues to shine as a guiding light, inspiring this year's Easter celebrations and reminding the faithful that God's empowering grace is ever at work in their lives.

Fr Decroocq played a pivotal role in the building of the Church of the Risen Christ in Jalan Ipoh. Blessed by Bishop Dominic Vendargon on May 9, 1971, the church was named in accordance with Fr Decroocq's deep devotion to the Risen Christ, shaped by his many personal encounters with the Lord. He later became its first parish priest, shepherding a community rooted in the hope and promise of the Resurrection.

This year, the parish feast celebrated on Easter Sunday, marked the culmination of a meaningful spiritual journey — one that unfolded through themes of mercy, perseverance, and the transformative power of Christ's sacrifice.

Leading up to the Easter Vigil,



Fr Lawrence Andrew SJ celebrating the Mass with Fr Frederick Joseph concelebrating.

the community entered into a three-day reflection to centre the soul in prayer and renewal. The opening day, themed *Grace for Today: Trusting in God's Mercy*, was led by Fr Lawrence Andrew SJ, who reflected on the dignity of the human person. Drawing from John 12:1-11, he reminded the congregation that to honour one another is, ultimately, an act of trust in God's infinite mercy.

The second day centred on the eternal nature of God, *Walking by Faith, Living in faith and perseverance* — the ‘I Am Who I Am’ (Exodus 34:6-7). The message was clear: mission is born from the gifts of faith and grace, sustained by

a God who remains faithful for a thousand generations.

The third day, themed *Hope for Tomorrow*, focused on a hope that carries us forward. It invited the faithful to embrace hope as a constant companion, rooted in the assurance that nothing can separate us from God's love. With Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the reflection pointed toward a deeper, lasting peace within.

The observance of the Paschal Triduum brought the theology of the parish into sharp focus through the insights of Msgr James Gnanapiragasam. Msgr James reflected on the wisdom of St

Alphonsus Liguori, noting that Jesus did not merely leave behind a set of rules, but a new commandment: “Love one another as I have loved you.” He highlighted three “beautiful truths” revealed during the Passover:

1. His Presence: A promise to stay with His people always.
2. His Constancy: An enduring love for those in the world.
3. His Totality: A love that gave everything until the very end.

On Good Friday, the theme *The Power of the Blood* was reflected upon by Msgr James, who, drawing on the teachings of John Chrysostom, highlighted the profound connection between the blood of the Passover lamb in Egypt and the blood that flowed from the side of Jesus Christ, revealing the fulfilment of God's saving plan.

“The devil sees not the doorpost, but the lips of the faithful who receive His blood,” he noted, explaining that this sacred flow — water and blood — signifies the birth of the Church through Baptism and the mysteries of the Eucharist.

The Easter celebrations offered a roadmap for living out the faith in a modern context. During the Vigil, Msgr James encouraged the faithful to “go back to Galilee.” He described Galilee as the place

where the disciples first encountered Jesus — a place to reread one's life through the lens of the Cross. He urged the community to rediscover their baptismal energy and relight the fire within, especially when they feel they have lost their way.

On Easter morning, Fr Lawrence held up Mary of Magdala as a pillar of tenacity. He noted that even while it was “still dark” — symbolising the struggles of war, hatred, and betrayal in the world — something new was happening. The Resurrection, he argued, provides the strength to banish hatred and the courage to bring the light of Jesus to others.

As the feast day drew to a close, parish priest Fr Frederick Joseph expressed deep gratitude to Fr Lawrence Andrew SJ and Msgr James Gnanapiragasam for their tireless service.

He also addressed the evolving landscape of the parish, specifically welcoming the growing Bornean community in West Malaysia. Fr Frederick emphasised that being a “good Catholic” involves accepting change gracefully and maintaining a spirit of radical hospitality. In the spirit of Fr Decroocq's original vision, the parish remains a place where “rising” is not just a hope, but a shared reality for a diverse and growing family of faith.

## Rebuilt in Christ, renewed in hope

PENANG: *Alleluia! Christ is risen!* Echoing the OFM Friars' message in the parish bulletin and the Easter 2026 video titled, *Marked. Called. Rebuilt*, the faithful are reminded that Easter is not merely an event to be observed, but a living hope to be embraced. Life has triumphed over death.

For a parish named after the Risen Christ, Easter is a profound reminder of identity — a people of hope. It proclaims that no darkness is beyond God's light, and no brokenness beyond His healing. The empty tomb stands as a powerful witness: life has overcome death.

From the Cross comes the call; in the light of the Resurrection, that call is heard more clearly — a call

to trust, to hope, and to live anew.

Beginning Monday of Holy Week, the parish of Risen Christ Catholic Church journeyed into the mystery of the Cross of San Damiano, where Christ speaks, calls, and invites St Francis of Assisi to rebuild His Church. This call was not merely physical, but a profound spiritual invitation to renew the Church from within.

The San Damiano mini talk series, conducted by Friar John Soh, OFM, pastoral assistant, guided the faithful in uncovering the rich symbolism of this extraordinary cross. Through reflections on the Face of Christ, His wounds, the figures of Mary and John, the minor characters, the rooster, the figures at the

foot of the Cross, and its inscription, participants were led more deeply into the mystery of Christ's Passion and the hope of Easter.

Each evening began with Vespers and concluded with Compline, creating a prayerful rhythm that invited the congregation to reflect, contemplate, and enter more fully into the spirit of Holy Week.

Having spent three sacred evenings in listening, learning, and prayer, the parish entered the Easter Triduum with a deeper faith, embracing Christ's call to rebuild His Church. Holy Thursday was thus observed with renewed meaning, as the faithful walked with Him from the Last Supper, through the Cross, and toward the joy of the Resurrection.

After the Mass of the Lord's Supper, with the Washing of the Feet and Silent Adoration, a particularly moving and spiritually enriching *Tenebrae* service was held. Derived from the Latin word meaning “darkness” or “shadows,” *Tenebrae* is a solemn Holy Week liturgy that commemorates Christ's Passion through Scripture readings and the gradual extinguishing of candles on a candelabra, until only one remains — symbolising Christ's death and burial as the disciples scatter.

The service concludes with the *strepitus* — a loud, sudden noise evoking the earthquake at Christ's death, the sealing of the tomb, and the confusion of that moment. The congregation then departs in



Friar Crispus Mosinoh OFM blessing the people with holy water.

silence, carrying with them the weight of the Passion and the quiet anticipation of the Resurrection to come.

The service, designed as a meditative passage into the darkness of Holy Saturday before the light of Easter, invites the faithful to enter deeply into the emotional and spiritual weight of Christ's suffering, betrayal, and death.

The parish observed Good Friday in keeping with the traditions of the Church, with the faithful prayerfully participating in the Stations of the Cross and the solemn Good Friday Service.

The Easter Vigil, eagerly anticipated, saw the parish welcome new members into the Catholic family — 18 candidates received Baptism (adults, children, and youth), five were confirmed, and one was received into full communion. Each was presented with a beautiful San

Damiano Cross as an Easter gift, a fitting symbol of their new life in Christ.

Easter Sunday, the parish's feast day, was celebrated with great joy, marked by an infant baptism. A festive luncheon followed the Mass, bringing together parishioners in a spirit of community, fellowship, and celebration, with entertainment provided by members of the parish.

The parish team, led by parish priest Friar Crispus Mosinoh, OFM, together with his assistant Friar Cosmas Francis, OFM, and pastoral assistant Friar John Soh, OFM, deserve our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation for their dedication in making this a deeply prayerful and joy-filled celebration of the most sacred week of the Church's calendar.

*Pax et bonum* (peace and all good) as St Francis of Assisi would have so fittingly greeted the faithful. **Stephanie Cheong**

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# Faiths unite at the Table of Peace

WASHINGTON: In the midst of escalating conflict in the Middle East, a Catholic parish in Washington offered a powerful witness to unity by hosting an interfaith peace meal that brought together Jews, Muslims and Christians in a spirit of dialogue and hope.

Organised by Holy Redeemer Parish, the gathering titled *Celebration at the Table of Abraham* — welcomed about 60 participants from the three faith traditions, united by their shared roots and desire for peace.

Parish pastor Fr David Bava said he “felt called to do something” as violence intensifies across the region. Drawing inspiration from Pope Francis’ 2021 visit to Iraq, he reminded those present that Abraham stands as a common father in faith for all three religions.

“It is fitting that we come together... to pray for peace as children of Abraham,” he said, echoing the Pope’s words, adding that the evening meal was held in that same spirit.

The gathering featured readings from the Book of Genesis and the Quran, recounting the story of Abraham and Sarah welcoming strangers — a theme reflected in the evening’s hospitality and fellowship. Participants shared a simple meal of traditional



Fr David Bava, pastor of Holy Redeemer Parish in Washington, speaks at an interfaith gathering hosted by his parish March 26, 2026. The gathering was titled, “Celebration at the Table of Abraham: An Interfaith Peace Meal for Jews, Muslims and Christians.” (OSV News photo/Mark Zimmermann, Catholic Standard)

dishes while engaging in conversation and building relationships.

“We come to this table not to erase our differences, but to offer them as gifts,” Fr Bava told attendees. “We come to learn from one another and to share what is most

precious to us — the faith that God is one, merciful, and desires peace.”

The event coincided with significant moments in the religious calendars of the three faiths, highlighting a shared season of reflection and renewal.

Fr Bava also pointed to the enduring relevance of *Nostra Aetate*, the Second Vatican Council’s landmark declaration on relations with non-Christian religions, which calls for greater understanding and collaboration among faith communities. He noted that the Church continues to affirm that peace-building efforts are strengthened — not hindered — by shared spiritual roots.

The evening included interfaith prayers, testimonies, and reflections. One participant, Scott Wright of Pax Christi, shared his experiences visiting conflict zones in the Middle East, encountering both Israeli and Palestinian families affected by violence, and witnessing firsthand the urgent need for peace.

Representatives from each faith tradition also offered prayers, including a joint invocation for peace and healing inspired by Pope Francis’ visit to Ur.

Among those present was Imam Talib M. Shareef, who described the gathering as “a model for embracing our shared humanity and living together in peace.”

As the evening concluded, Fr Bava encouraged participants to carry the spirit of the gathering forward: “We go from this table as pilgrims on the same road. We will walk it together.” OSV News



AI apps are seen on a user’s mobile phone. (Unsplash photo)

## Seoul archdiocese plans AI-integrated services for Catholics

SEOUL: The Seoul archdiocese in South Korea has announced plans to revamp its information services to better integrate with Artificial Intelligence (AI) services, drawing inspiration from St Carlo Acutis.

The initiative titled *Carlo Project* is led by the archdiocese’s Information Technology Office to prepare for future pastoral environments and the AI era.

Fr Kim Kwang-doo, director of the archdiocesan technology office, emphasised that the project will prepare the Korean Church to create AI-based services capable of “independently providing information.”

For AI-powered information management and dissemination, “data organisation is essential,” Fr Kim said while adding that “making these preparations is a key task.”

The project has drawn inspiration from teenage St Carlo Acutis (1991-2006), who

died of leukaemia at the age of 15, and was known for his devotion to the Eucharist and for using digital media to promote Catholic devotion

The archdiocese currently operates multiple information systems, including its news service, parish management systems, diocesan management systems, and the websites and servers of various departments and institutions, resulting in fragmented data.

It stated that its data on activities such as catechism, volunteer work, and participation in pastoral programs are not integrated with other systems, thereby limiting the provision of efficient service to the faithful.

The project, which will launch by May this year, is envisioned in two phases to integrate AI agents and all archdiocesan data,

providing a holistic service for the faithful.

After the launch in May, the archdiocese-appointed consultants will speak to the faithful, and based on the results, they will start building an integrated database and renovating the archdiocese-run Good News website between 2027 and 2028.

The Good News site was founded in 1998 and is slated to celebrate 30 years of service for the faithful.

The initiative also aims to promote the 2027 Seoul World Youth Day (WYD), which Pope Leo XIV is slated to attend.

It will also provide online support programs and promote the WYD “1 billion Rosary prayers” campaign.

The archdiocese said it aims to overhaul its administrative systems from 2029 to 2031, which forms the second phase of the project. [ucanews.com](http://ucanews.com)

## Logo and motto announced for Leo XIV’s visit to Spain

VATICAN: “Lift up your eyes!” That is the motto of Pope Leo XIV’s upcoming visit to Spain, scheduled for June 6 to 12 of this year.

The motto is taken from verse 35 of the fourth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, the whole of which reads, “Do you not say, ‘In four months the harvest will be here’? I tell you, look up and see the fields ripe for the harvest.”

The words are Jesus’s own to his disciples, offered after the famous account of Jesus’s encounter with a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well in the Samaritan town of Sychar.

A statement from the press office of the Holy See released on April 7 announced the motto and the logo for the June journey.

A report published to the official *Vatican News* portal explained that the motto “is an invitation to look beyond our daily con-



cerns and rediscover the presence of God while opening ourselves to others.”

“It is a call to hope and contemplation,” *Vatican News* reported, “encouraging people to go beyond themselves and to rediscover unity, beauty and charity as concrete expressions of a shared life.”

“This gesture of ‘lifting up our eyes,’” the statement continued, “also expresses the attitude with which the Church in Spain wel-

comes the Holy Father’s visit: with open hearts, ready to walk forward together.”

The logo, designed as an open circle in motion, is “formed by human figures joined together and oriented upward,” *Vatican News* explained. “The emblem expresses community, encounter and mutual support,” the official portal also said.

“This does not mean only being together,” the statement continued, “but also



walking together towards a common purpose.”

A stylised image of Our Lady is a central feature of the image, representing “the heart of the movement — a maternal presence that welcomes and directs every gaze toward God, as a sign of unity and hope for all people.” *CruX*



# The road to PMPC II

This is the thirteenth in a series tracing the stories, people and milestones of the Catholic Church in Malaysia. In the previous instalment, we saw how PMPC I (1986) set key directions for renewal — calling for a shared vision of Christian community and deeper dialogue as the Church prepared for the third millennium. This vision was further shaped at the FABC Fifth Plenary Assembly in Bandung (1990), where “A New Way of Being Church” was embraced, paving the way for continued reflection and preparation for PMPC II in 1996.

## Richard Chia

The 1990s marked a defining chapter for the Church in Peninsular Malaysia, culminating in the much-anticipated Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Convention (PMPC) II in 1996. By 1993, the Church had already begun laying the groundwork for what would become a four-year process of reflection, study and consultation. Structures were carefully put in place at inter-diocesan, diocesan and parish levels, signalling a collective commitment to renewal that was both organised and deeply intentional.

A significant milestone came in July 1994, when the bishops of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, together with the Conference of Religious Major Superiors, gathered at the major seminary in Singapore. Over two days of study centred on the theme “Towards a Common Understanding of Church as Communion,” participants engaged in profound reflection on the nature and mission of the Church. These discussions revealed an urgent need for a shared ecclesial vision — one rooted in unity, collaboration and communion.

From these reflections emerged a clearer sense of direction. The Church recognised the need to re-examine its pastoral priorities, methodologies and formation processes, while strengthening inter-diocesan cooperation and fostering closer collaboration between bishops and religious communities.

This spirit of renewal soon extended more widely. In March 1995, similar formation sessions were organised for the Councils of Priests and Senates across the three dioceses in Peninsular Malaysia, with continued discussions taking place during monthly priestly recollections.

The momentum continued into 1996, with a five-day formation programme bringing together clergy from across the peninsula. These sessions sought to bridge the vision of the Second Vatican Council with the lived realities of the Malaysian Church, particularly in building vibrant Christian communities rooted in what had come to be known as “A New Way of Being Church.”

## Diocesan Assemblies

In April 1995, members of religious communities underwent a similar process of formation, focusing on the theme “Church as Communion.” Together, these efforts reflected a Church not merely preparing for a convention, but actively reshaping its identity — a Church learning to journey, discern and grow as one.

As preparations intensified for the diocesan assemblies, the Church turned its attention to the voices of the faithful. In March 1995, questionnaires were distributed widely among the laity, inviting honest reflection through three simple yet probing questions:

- What is my experience of Church?
- How do I experience Church within my BEC, organisation or parish ministries?

- How do I perceive the experience of others within this same Church?

These questions opened the door to a remarkable process of listening. Across parishes and communities, the faithful shared candidly — not merely about structures and programmes, but about lived faith, belonging, struggles and hope.

When more than 800 participants eventually gathered for the three diocesan assemblies, a clear and consistent message emerged: the urgent need for formation. Again and again, in testimonies and discussions, the call for deeper faith formation surfaced as the Church’s foremost priority.

What the laity sought was not simply more programmes, but a more intentional and sustained approach. There was a strong appeal for formation that was systematic, professional and holistic — one that nurtured both spiritual depth and leadership capacity. The desire was to move beyond occasional, piecemeal efforts toward a long-term vision of growth.

Many recalled with appreciation the three-year training programme for lay leaders in the 1980s, which had formed and commissioned some 200 lay ministers. That experience stood as a reminder of what was possible when formation was taken seriously and carried out with purpose.

From these assemblies, it became evident that formation could no longer be seen as optional or secondary. Instead, an integrated formation of clergy, religious and laity was to be given renewed priority. Existing

## HOME NEWS

HERALD March 26, 1995

### At the Inter-diocesan Council of Priests meeting



SHARING their experience at the meeting in Penang.

## Reflecting anew on the spiritual journey

AGGIORNAMENTO... an Italian word which means “bringing up to date.” For the whole month of August in 1976, all the bishops and priests in Peninsular Malaysia met at the College General Major Seminary in Penang for the Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Convention (PMPC) to update the Church following the Second Vatican Council.

At the end of that historic meeting, the bishops and priests came out with a plan to form Christ-centred Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs). They also identified four major concerns — unity or dialogue within the Church hierarchy, ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue, on-going formation and concern for the poor. A fifth point, concern for the youth, was added at the PMPC follow-up in 1986.

Today, as we prepare for the 20th anniversary of *Aggiornamento*, the Peninsular Malaysian Church is once again examining itself to forge a vision for the Church towards the year 2000.

“The *Aggiornamento* was a challenge to a new awakening on the part of the Church,” said Fr. Anthony Thomas. “Personally, it was a challenge to wake up and change my attitude to be relevant to the time.”

Vatican II’s call to renew the Church was expressed in the local Church through the *Aggiornamento*, the parish priest



Fr. Thomas

Fr. Bretaudiu

of the Church of the Visitation, Seremban told *HERALD*. “It was a renewal — not just changing but a challenge to the Church to be relevant to the times and cultures of the people,” he said.

“The result was an openness to people of other faiths and a desire to implement and celebrate our faith according to our cultures.”

He said a very important decision of the meeting was the Church’s option for the poor, showing that the Church is outward-looking and living a faith which is closely related to the realities of life.

Fr. Peter Bretaudiu, MEP, said what struck him most at the *Aggiornamento* was the sincerity of the bishops and priests to implement the orientation of Vatican II, which was essentially to build communities.

He said the priests recognised the core needs of the Church in Peninsular Malaysia, one of which was transforming parishes

into communion of communities.

However, the meeting concentrated too much on the structural aspects of the Church but not the spiritual side, added Fr. Bretaudiu, the parish priest of St. Anthony’s in Kuala Lumpur.

“There was a lot of input by foreigners (from the East Asian Pastoral Institute in Manila) on different aspects, and sharings on how the Church is to be renewed but very little reflection on the local spirituality of the people,” he said.

“It was a matter of feeding the head but not enough time to digest and reflect deeply on how to apply the renewal in a Malaysian context.”

“With the 20th anniversary of the *Aggiornamento*, we have a chance to reflect on the shortcomings, especially the lack of unity in implementing the vision and leadership problems in the dioceses for its implementation.”

— By Andrew Soh

### Much more to do



God? We have a lot of work to do if we are to make this PMPC '96 a success. — *Mgr. Daniel Lim, parish priest of St. John's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur*

### Alive to the signs



THE clergy, Religious and laity need to be constantly updated to face today's challenges. Working together, moving with the signs of the times and voicing out the needs of the marginalised make the Church real, alive and participatory. This means we should not be Sunday Catholics. — *Fr. Stanislaus Venostiarine, parish priest of the St. Jude's Church, Rawang*

# Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Convention II (1996)

The Second Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Convention (PMPC II) unfolded over the Merdeka Day weekend, from August 30 to September 2, 1996, at the MAJOWE Centre in Plentong, Johor — a setting that mirrored both national reflection and ecclesial renewal. It brought together 390 leaders — bishops, clergy, religious and lay faithful — a significant increase from the 171 participants at PMPC I. This growth was intentional, reflecting a conscious effort to widen participation, particularly among youth and women, signalling a more inclusive vision of Church.

Anchored in the theme, *I will be your God, and you shall be My people* (Jeremiah 7:23), PMPC II was not merely a gathering, but a moment of deep listening and discernment. The convention began with a careful review of the lived realities of the Church — its joys, struggles and hopes — before moving into a reflection on the signs of the times and, more importantly, a collective attentiveness to the voice of the Lord. From this process emerged a renewed commitment: to respond as a “New Way of Being Church.”

To ground this discernment within broader realities, two invited experts offered insights into the contemporary context — addressing the challenges of modernity in Malaysia, as well as the dynamics of globalisation and liberation in East and South-East Asia, particularly their implications for growth, poverty and inequality. These perspectives helped situate the Church’s mission within

a rapidly changing world.

The outcome of PMPC II was articulated in a final statement that reaffirmed the Church’s central priority — the Core Need of building Christ-centred communities. These were complemented by five related needs:

- Unity among bishops, priests, religious and laity.
- Integral, holistic and ongoing formation for all the People of God.
- Dialogue with Christians and people of other faiths.
- Integral human development of the

poor.

e. Ministry for youth.

Recognising emerging pastoral realities, two additional needs were introduced — pastoral care for families and the growing importance of social communication.

In his keynote address, Archbishop Anthony Soter Fernandez called the Church in Peninsular Malaysia to journey forward with purpose as it approached the third millennium. He outlined four key directions:

- Journeying together in faith;
- Recognising the People of God as a people called to holiness;

- Reviewing life in the light of the Church’s evangelising mission; and
- Responding to the demands of the times through an authentic spirituality for all.

The convention’s final message, “A Message to the People of God in Peninsular Malaysia,” captured the essence of this shared experience. It spoke of a Church journeying together in faith — a journey that enabled participants to articulate a clearer vision of Church, while recognising that this vocation must be lived out within the rapidly transforming realities of Malaysian society.



# WE ARE ALL RESPONSIBLE!



## RCIA and the Christian community

At the recent Easter Vigil, thousands of adults were initiated into the Church in Malaysia and all over the world. In the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur itself, about 687 persons were baptised. To many, this may seem like just another happening in the Church. However, seen with the eyes of faith, it can be said that God has been doing an amazing thing. Thousands of people have just become members of the Catholic Church.

### A springtime for the Church

Since the introduction of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) in Malaysia in the 1980s, a large number of people have journeyed through the initiation process and have become Catholics. It is why the bishops of Peninsular Malaysia once described this phenomenon as a “springtime for the local Church” (HERALD, March 18, 2001). There is no doubt that the implementation of the RCIA as the formal process of initiating adults is considered one of the most important developments in the Church since the Second Vatican Council.

However, even after all these years, most Catholics are still not aware of the significance of the RCIA and that they have an important role in the process. This is why I made the effort, in the last few articles, to explain the nature and structure of the RCIA, discussing the different periods and steps in the process. Now, I will focus on the crucial aspect of the Christian community’s role in the RCIA.

Therefore, in this and the following series of articles, I will examine the theological and pastoral perspectives on this important subject. In essence, together we will look at what the Church says about the community’s involvement in the catechumenate and how members of the community can become involved in the RCIA. It is hoped that the articles would help create a greater awareness among Catholics about their responsibility for the RCIA and the role they can play in the initiation of new members into the Church.

### Where do we start?

We have to begin with the Second Vatican Council. The years prior to and following the

Council were a time of change and renewal for the Catholic Church. Among others, the Council presented the image of the Church as the People of God, in which the active participation of all her baptised members — clergy, religious and lay persons — is essential for the life and mission of the Church.

### What does Vatican II say?

It was also the Council that directed that the adult catechumenate be re-established in the Church (*Sacramentum Concilio*, 64). In doing so, it called for the participation of all the baptised. The Vatican II document, *Ad gentes*, highlights this point:

“This Christian initiation, which takes place during the catechumenate, should not be left entirely to the priests and catechists, but should be the concern of the whole Christian community, especially of the sponsors, so that from the beginning the catechumens will feel that they belong to the people of God” (*Ad gentes*, 14).

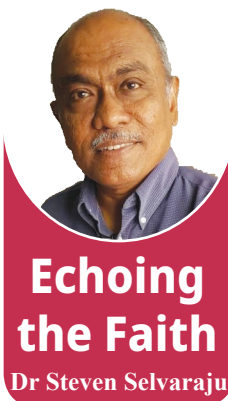
Later, in the decree, *Presbyterorum ordinis* (PO), the Council Fathers state again the importance of the community’s participation which:

“... ought not merely to promote the care of the faithful within itself but should be imbued with the missionary spirit and smooth the path to Christ for all people. But it must regard as its special charge those under instruction and the newly converted who are gradually educated in knowing and living the Christian life.” (PO, 6).

Therefore, the Council made it clear that members of the Christian community are to participate in the mission of the Church to proclaim the Gospel and make Christ known to those seeking to know Him. As part of this mission, the community is to take under its special care those being initiated into the Catholic Church.

### What does the RCIA say?

After the Council, the team of experts placed



### Echoing the Faith

Dr Steven Selvaraju

in charge of preparing the liturgical rites of the RCIA injected into the document the Council’s call for the participation of the Christian community:

“The People of God, as represented by the local Church, should understand and show by their concern that the initiation of adults is the responsibility of all the baptised. Therefore, the community must always be fully prepared in the pursuit of its apostolic vocation to give help to those who are searching

for Christ. In the various circumstances of daily life, even as in the apostolate, all the followers of Christ have the obligation of spreading the faith according to their abilities.

Hence, the entire community must help the candidates and the catechumens throughout the process of initiation: during the period of pre-catechumenate, the period of the catechumenate, the period of purification and enlightenment, and the period of postbaptismal catechesis or mystagogy” (RCIA, 9).

With this, it is made clear by the Church that there exists a crucial relationship between the Christian community and the adult catechumenate. Nowhere is this more evident than in the parish, which is considered the most immediate and visible expression of the community in the Church. Within the parish, Catholics are encouraged to participate in the RCIA by accompanying those seeking membership in the Church. Conscious and active participation by the members of the parish community can help those undergoing initiation to grow and mature in their identity as Catholics.

### What is different?

The call for community participation in the adult catechumenate presents a drastic shift in the way adults are initiated into the Church. Before the introduction of the RCIA, an adult who wished to become a Catholic was provided with ‘private’ instructions by the parish priest or by someone delegated

by him or made to attend an ‘inquiry class’ together with others wishing to become Catholics. Once he or she was deemed ‘ready’ to receive the sacraments, the person was baptised. This important sacramental celebration, however, would generally take place in isolation from the rest of the community, except for the presence of godparents, friends and family members.

With the RCIA, however, the initiation of adults is now considered a ‘public’ way of initiating people into the Church. Basically, it means the entire Christian community has to be concerned and involved. Both in its General Introduction and in the rites proper, the RCIA document outlines the different ways in which the community should fully and actively involve itself in the initiation process. The involvement begins at the Period of Evangelisation and Precatechumenate and continues throughout the entire catechumenal process right up to the Period of Mystagogy.

In this regard, the Church invites members of the community to “always be fully prepared in the pursuit of its apostolic vocation to give help to those who are searching for Christ” and reminds them that, “all followers of Christ have the obligation of spreading the faith according to their abilities” (RCIA, 9). Note the words: “always be fully prepared...” and “have the obligation...”. These are serious words indeed!

### Conclusion

I hope that in this article, I have managed to interest the reader in becoming aware that as a member of the Church, he or she has a responsibility toward the adult initiation process. In the next few articles, I wish to examine in greater detail as to the community’s role in initiating new members into the Church.

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# Fr Mark's 25-year journey through the Mysteries of the Rosary

Rufina Maria

KUALA KANGSAR: On March 25, the faithful gathered at the Church of St Patrick to celebrate the silver jubilee of Fr Mark Michael's priesthood. The solemn celebration, which began at 6.00pm, coincided beautifully with the Feast of the Annunciation, the very feast on which Fr Mark was ordained twenty-five years ago, making the occasion even more meaningful.

In preparation for this prayerful celebration, Fr Mark had organised Holy Hours on the Fridays before the Way of the Cross in his parish, inviting the faithful to prepare for the jubilee spiritually.

The celebration began with the recitation of the Rosary, followed by a solemn Eucharistic celebration with Fr Mark Michael as the main celebrant, and Fr Vincent Paul as concelebrant.

Over thirty clergy were present, including priests from the Diocese of Penang, the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, and the Diocese of Malacca Johor, together with seminarians, deacons, and religious sisters. Pilgrims also travelled from Fr Mark's

hometown of Butterworth and other places to be part of the celebration.

The liturgical ministries were meaningfully shared among the four parishes currently served by Fr Mark, namely St John the Baptist, Sungai Siput, St Patrick, Kuala Kangsar, St Mary Magdalene, Ulu Bekor, and St Anthony, Chemor. The entire celebration reflected a solemn and prayerful atmosphere, without entertainment or drama, in keeping with Fr Mark's emphasis on reverence in the Eucharistic celebration.

In his homily, Fr Mark reminded the congregation that the jubilee was not about him, but about Christ the Priest. He emphasised that the celebration focused not on his sacrifice or faithfulness, but on Christ's sacrifice and faithfulness, centred on the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ given for all humanity.

Reflecting on his twenty-five years of priesthood, he described the journey as a roller coaster ride filled with challenges and growth, constantly drawing a priest deeper into the mystery of Christ and calling him to live authentically.

Fr Mark then linked the journey of the

priesthood with the mysteries of the Rosary. He explained that the early years after ordination resemble the Joyful Mysteries. A newly ordained priest is filled with enthusiasm and the desire to serve, finding joy in celebrating the liturgy and reaching out to the faithful. Yet this stage can also carry idealism, where the priesthood appears smooth and fulfilling before deeper realities unfold.

He continued with the Sorrowful Mysteries, describing this as a necessary stage of maturity. Priests may encounter criticism, misunderstanding, and rejection when they stand firm for Gospel values. The temptation to compromise may arise, yet priests are called to courageously uphold the truth of Christ. This phase, though painful, mirrors the Passion of Christ and purifies the priest's ministry.

From this emerges the Resurrection experience. After remaining faithful through struggles, priests begin to see the resurrected values of Christ in their ministry. Challenges give way to renewed conviction and deeper faith, bringing transformation and strengthening the priest's witness.

Fr Mark then spoke about the Luminous Mysteries as a journey toward wisdom. At this stage, a priest becomes wiser, not otherwise, seeing beyond superficial expectations and living for God alone. This wisdom, shaped through experience and prayer, calls for honesty, courage, and constant conversion, allowing the love of God to shape one's life and ministry.

Following the post-communion prayer, Fr Mark delivered his thanksgiving message. He expressed gratitude to the Almighty, remembered his late parents, and acknowledged his family members who were present. He shared that he entered the seminary at the age of 19 and recognised



the strong foundation of faith planted by his parents, who gave priority to Mass and prayer without compromise. He reflected that these early seeds of faith played a vital role in nurturing his vocation and humbly remarked that after twenty-five years, there was still a long way to go.

Bookmarks were then distributed to those present as a token of remembrance. Fr Mark also invited the faithful to take a flower home and place it at their home altar, encouraging them to pray for their personal intentions. He shared his belief that jubilee celebrations are moments of grace and miracles.

After the Mass, a fellowship was held at the parish hall where parishioners and guests shared a meal together. Fr Mark warmly greeted and mingled with the community, creating a joyful atmosphere of thanksgiving and fraternity.

The celebration concluded in a spirit of gratitude and joy, marking not only twenty-five years of priesthood but also a journey of faith, sacrifice, and faithful service. The faithful were reminded that at the heart of the priesthood stands Christ Himself, guiding His servants to deeper faithfulness and joy in His presence.



(photo/Boon Tiong)

## Altar ladies – Quiet hands, sacred beauty

The day began like any other. I arrived at my parish, the Church of St Joseph, Batu Gajah, for the Easter Vigil rehearsal that morning, expecting the usual rhythm of preparation.

But something caught my attention. At a quiet corner of the church, a few ladies were already at work. Their hands moving gently, carefully cutting stems and arranging flowers. Each placement done with intention, as though every bloom carried a prayer.

Red, pink and white petals came together in harmony. Each leaf thoughtfully positioned, forming not just an arrangement but a silent offering.

In that moment, I paused. A question arose within me.

How often do we notice the hands that prepare the altar before we arrive, the quiet dedication that transforms a simple space into something sacred, something alive?

Among them was Madam Magdalene Wong.

One of the pillars of the altar ladies' ministry, a face well-known in the church.

After the rehearsal, I sat with her for a brief conversation, a simple exchange, yet one that left a lasting impression.

"Aunty, I always see you in church... aren't you tired?" I asked. She looked at me with a gentle smile and replied.



The altar ladies in action.

"I have been doing this since the age of 20. It has never been a burden. It is a service... and we are blessed to serve the Lord and His Church."

Her words were simple, yet deeply moving. In that quiet moment, I found myself reflecting: Am I truly fulfilling my responsibility to the Church?

As we gather to celebrate Easter, the joy of the Resurrection, the triumph of light over darkness; these women have long been living out its message.



An altar lady carefully arranging flowers before the lectern.

In the stillness of the morning, through petals and greenery, they proclaim without words: Christ is risen. Life has bloomed anew.

Their work may not be announced, their efforts may go unseen, but their love is reflected in every arrangement, felt in every corner of the church they so faithfully adorn.

They are the quiet servants of beauty, the gentle artists of devotion and the faithful hands behind the altar of the Lord.



This floral arrangement, lovingly crafted by the altar ladies that surrounds the Paschal Candle.

Perhaps this is the true spirit of Easter; not only found in grand celebrations, but in humble acts of love, carried out faithfully and without seeking recognition.

Today, we remember them. We thank them. We honour them. Our dear altar ladies who are the unsung heroes of our Church.

May the joy of Easter, the promise of new life, and the light of the Risen Christ continue to bless their hands and their hearts in all that they do. **Monica Steffani**

Love powers ordinary activities from cooking a meal for your family to courageous feats such as offering to die in place of another, as St Maximilian Kolbe did.

Love helps me focus on what is good and right most days, most times, but every now and then, I use fear to make decisions. You know the surreptitious voice that directs me to lock my doors and check again, or not to take calls from unknown numbers.

Fear is useful to some degree. However, the litany of fears we carry around in our heads are more than about scammers or robbers. We worry about our jobs. We worry about our children.

But I believe that all our fears are rooted ultimately in the fear of death and permanent oblivion.

The ego's instinct is to resist oblivion. It's just inconvenient that we have a limited number of orbits around the sun. So, we try to resist oblivion by creating bigger footprints on this planet i.e. by owning bigger, better and more. We pretend that bigger footprints mean more life.

More control. A bigger house. A bigger car. More clothes. Latest e-gadgets. We buy more than we need. Sounds familiar? My ridiculous ego even tells me the more books I own, the more real I become.

I am brand-neutral generally, except



## Connecting the Dots

Ann Teoh

# There is no fear in love

for my shoes, but for some people, certain brands of handbags, watches, or even phones, elevate their sense of worth and give them a sense of control.

I am all for social media for friendships and sharing common interests but social media are now branding and flexing platforms. While

some influencers seek subscribers to monetise their online presence, others post photos and harvest 'likes' to hedge against being forgotten.

Meanwhile, the office workaholic fears the planet will stop spinning if she doesn't respond to one more work email at 8.00pm, or clear one more copy at 9.00pm. Don't ask me how I know.

Are such fears valid? Will we become "zero" the moment we stop the frenzy of trying to remain relevant and/or important? Will we be obliterated? Yes. But, also no.

The irony of this fear (of becoming nothing) is there is nothing to fear, really. Yes, I could be nothing but I am only nothing without God.

In the Gospel of John Chapter 15, Jesus said, "The branch cannot bear fruit by itself but has to remain part of the vine, so neither can you if you don't remain in Me. I am the vine and you are the branches. As long as you remain in Me and I in you, you bear much fruit..."

Jesus added: "As the Father has loved Me, so I have loved you; remain in My love. You will remain in My love if you keep My commandments, just as I have kept My Father's commandments."

As such, trusting and remaining in God's love seems to be the only sensible and effective response to the fear of obliteration. It is also the only sane response of anyone who believes that Jesus Christ has redeemed us. We just celebrated Easter, didn't we?

It is insane to believe that God loves us, has redeemed us, and still live in fear. If we believe death has lost its sting, buying more things to counter death is futile.

Trappist monk Thomas Merton shared an interesting exchange he had with his Jewish friend Robert Lax in *The Seven Storey Mountain*. Lax converted to Catholicism several years later.

Lax asked Merton: "What do you want to be, anyway?"

"I don't know; I guess what I want to be is a good Catholic," Merton replied.

"What do you mean you want to be a good Catholic?" Lax challenged him. "What you should say is that you want to be a saint."

"How do you expect me to become a saint?" Merton asked.

"By wanting to," Lax said simply.

"I can't be a saint," Merton protested. "I can't be a saint."

"All that is necessary to be a saint is to

want to be one," Lax insisted. "Don't you believe that God will make you what He created you to be, if you will consent to let Him do it? All you have to do is desire it."

The next day, Merton told their University of Columbia English professor, Mark van Doren: "Lax is going around saying all a man needs to be a saint is to want to be one."

"Of course," van Doren replied.

I, too, only wanted to be a good Catholic...until I read Merton. I don't know why I was not that ambitious. Maybe it is my understanding of what a saint is.

When Merton berated himself, "All these people were much better Christians than I. They understood God better than I. What was I doing? Why was I so slow, so mixed up, still so uncertain in my directions and insecure?" I thought Merton was in his 20s, but I have touched 60.

I was blessed to be able to meditate a little bit more about this at a retreat at Maranatha recently. I truly believe that as long as I remain connected to the Vine through obedience to His commandments, I will remain in His love. And there is no fear in His love.

*Ann lives in Petaling Jaya. She believes we will see God's lacework of truth, beauty and goodness when we connect the dots He gives us.*

Guest Columnist: Deacon Louis Martin

## Marriage: A covenant worth fighting for

Marriage is not merely a human arrangement but a sacred and enduring covenant — a divine bond instituted by God. It is meant to reflect love, fidelity, and lifelong commitment. At its deepest level, it is a calling — a vocation where two lives are drawn into a shared journey of grace, sacrifice, and communion.

Yet today, marriages are facing unprecedented challenges. Despite nuptial inquiries, marriage preparation courses, and sound Church teaching, many unions falter. This reality is not limited to Christians alone, but is experienced across cultures, races, and religions.

Understanding the common causes of marital breakdown can help couples recognise early warning signs and take proactive steps toward healing and growth — not with fear, but with renewed awareness and intention.

One of the most significant issues is poor communication. When couples struggle to express their thoughts and feelings, misunderstandings arise, conflicts remain unresolved, and emotional distance grows.

Financial stress is another major strain. Disagreements over spending, budgeting, and financial priorities can easily create tension and erode harmony within the home.

Infidelity deeply wounds the trust that is foundational to marriage. The betrayal often leaves lasting emotional scars, making reconciliation difficult without sincere effort and healing.

A lack of intimacy, both physical

and emotional, can lead to feelings of loneliness and disconnection. When this bond weakens, individuals may begin to seek comfort elsewhere.

Frequent conflicts and the inability to resolve disagreements in a healthy manner gradually weaken the relationship, allowing resentment to take root.

Differences in values and life goals — whether related to faith, family, career, or lifestyle — can create ongoing friction if not addressed with openness and mutual respect.

External pressures such as work stress, family responsibilities, and health challenges can also take a toll, especially when couples fail to support one another during difficult times.

Serious issues such as substance abuse and domestic violence can devastate a marriage, often leading to separation as individuals seek safety and stability.

A lack of commitment or effort to nurture the relationship can result in apathy, while unrealistic expectations may lead to disappointment when marriage does not align with idealised notions.

Over time, some couples simply find themselves growing apart, losing the shared connection that once united them. Even challenges related to children and parenting differences can create tension and division within the family.

### Strengthening the sacred bond

While these challenges are real, they are not insurmountable. With intention, humility, and grace, couples can build strong, resilient marriages — not by

avoiding difficulties, but by learning how to journey through them together.

At the heart of this is recognising, as Jesus teaches, that marriage is a sacred covenant — not just a contract — and therefore calls for perseverance, sacrifice, and faithful love.

Couples are encouraged to foster open and honest communication, expressing their needs with compassion and listening with understanding. Using "I" statements rather than blame helps to create a safe and respectful space for dialogue.

Financial transparency is equally important. Setting shared goals and regularly discussing financial matters can strengthen trust and reduce unnecessary stress.

Building trust and commitment requires consistency, honesty, and the willingness to admit mistakes. Trust is not built overnight, but through daily acts of fidelity, patience, and care.

Couples should prioritise intimacy, recognising that both emotional and physical closeness are sacred aspects of their union. Simple gestures, quality time, and meaningful conversations can gently restore connection.

Learning healthy conflict resolution skills is essential. Disagreements should focus on the issue at hand, not personal attacks. Patience, humility, and the willingness to compromise remain key.

It is also important to align values and goals, ensuring that both partners are journeying in the same direction, especially in matters of faith and family life.

During times of stress, couples must

support one another, turning challenges into opportunities for unity rather than division.

When difficulties become overwhelming, seeking professional or pastoral guidance is not a sign of failure, but of courage and commitment to healing.

Above all, couples must maintain a strong sense of commitment, constantly returning to the vows made before God, family, and the Church — vows that are not just spoken once, but lived daily.

### A call to love

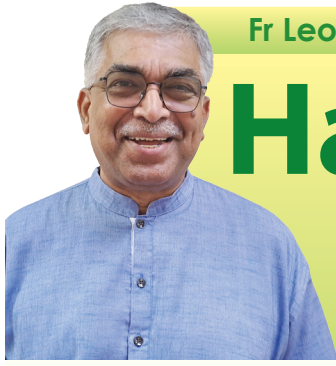
Marriage is not about perfection, but perseverance. It is about choosing, every day, to love, to forgive, and to grow together — even when it is difficult, even when it requires sacrifice.

As St Paul reminds us in Colossians 3:14: "Put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

To "put on love" is to make a conscious decision — to let love guide every word, every action, and every response. It is this love that sustains, heals, and ultimately perfects the marital bond.

For in the end, it is not grand gestures, but the quiet, faithful choices of each day that keep love alive.

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Fr Leonard Lexson

# Have we become enslaved to our electronic gizmos?

**H**ave we become enslaved to our electronic gizmos? These widgets seem to dictate the way we live our lives to a point where even our worship is compromised. While the Church welcomes digital technology in the celebration of the Eucharist — provided it fosters reverent attentiveness and active participation — there must be real checks and balances on its usage. For the Church to remain effective and relevant today, she must be discerning, not overly dependent, lest we rely on a “dead thing” to give us life.

## Dependence, distraction, and forgotten prayers

I have come across comments on how current and relevant churches are for using LED screens and how easy it is to participate in the prayers and hymns. When there is a technical glitch or power failure, we seem to be “lost for words.” Recently, during the renewal of baptismal promises, when the faithful were asked, “Do you renounce Satan and... all his empty promises?”, silence fell as eyes were fixed on the blank screen. A simple, profound “I do” from the heart was not forthcoming as they unconsciously depended on the screen to give them the cue.

This mechanisation dulls our minds, breeding laziness in memorising prayers and hymns. Scripture urges us: “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (John 15:7) — a call to internalise God’s Word for fruitful prayer, not outsource it to screens. As the psalmist declares, “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11), memorisation guards our worship from spiritual sloth. Today, the phone and

digital projection have replaced our ability to remember even basic prayers at Mass. Outside of Mass, where it concerns the Sacrament of Reconciliation, a growing number of penitents reference their mobile when they enter the confessionals. I can understand when they have made a list of the sins they are to confess, but to be enslaved to the phone for everything is very concerning. Worse, they can’t grasp terms like “decade of the Rosary,” “penance,” “act of contrition” or “profession of faith.”

From being an aid, the phone has also become an outright distraction and annoyance to the celebration of the Eucharist. No matter how many times the faithful are reminded to put away or silence their mobiles, there are those who disregard and disrespect the call for sacred silence and sacred space. Young and old alike are using their mobiles scrolling on social media, sending messages, playing games and taking photos, videos and answering phone calls during Mass. God is displaced and disregarded in His own house. We gather in God’s holy dwelling place and cannot give due honour and glory to God who calls us to “worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24) as a community of believers.

## From hymnal to screen: Losing heart-memory

Digital projection was unheard of in the past, but we had a hymnal as our source reference during Mass. The hymnal had the prayer texts of the Mass, but hardly anyone would refer to it for the prayers — most knew them by heart. The hymnal served its purpose when it came to singing at the various parts of the Mass. After a period, most of us would remember the hymns by heart. We would even know at which section the hymn was.

When the commentator said, “Turn to J46,” we knew it was “A Call to Christians”; or when we sang “On the Paten,” we knew it was C11. Prayers and hymns became second nature.

I remember the time when my class was preparing for our First Holy Communion back in the 1960s. Fr Jean-Marie Coucheron, then the parish priest of the Church of Our Lady of Fatima in Brickfields, drilled into us the importance of memorising all the prayers at Mass. He was zealous in making us recite all the prayers by heart to receive First Holy Communion. To pass the test, he would call us one by one to recite the *I Confess, Gloria, I Believe, Holy Holy Holy, Our Father*.... And we were only seven-years old. Guess what? The entire class passed. Besides, we even mastered the Rosary because our parents made sure of that. Memorising Scripture arms us against temptation, as Jesus did: “It is written” (Matt 4:4-10) — a model for us to engrave God’s Word in our hearts for worship and battle. We are called to “address one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart” (Eph 5:19), not to screens.

When projection set its sway into the Mass, there began the slow disengagement of active, conscious, and full participation of the community at Mass. Our eyes are focused on the screen, so unknowingly, the altar loses its centrality. Even today, when the presider engages in dialogue with the faithful at Mass and the words are projected onto the screen, the response from the assembly is somewhat not toward the presider but at the screen. Unknowingly, the LED screen becomes the new altar. Digital technology is juxtaposed with sacred space, and if we are not careful, it can replace sacred space if nothing is done to address it.

## Real presence over virtual reality

I recall many years ago at a Eucharistic Congress in Cebu, Philippines, with approximately 12,000 in attendance at a very large atrium. Cardinal Tagle addressed the assembly and, from his tone of voice, seemed agitated. He spoke of the Real Presence and asked if He was real to us. Obviously, we said yes. With a composed disposition, Cardinal Tagle then asked why we were staring at the large screen when he was present physically before us. All eyes quickly turned to the Cardinal’s “real presence”... guilty as charged. He reminded us never to replace “Real Presence” with “Virtual Reality.”

Real Presence is incarnational: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), engaging all our senses in the mystery of form and matter. “For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col 2:9) — this draws us into bodily, communal worship, not isolation. Real Presence does not distance us from who we are or where we are but makes us aware of our true identity. Real Presence challenges us to strip ourselves of indifference and isolation. Virtual reality fosters isolation that can take us away from engaging in the exchange-dialogue of life.

Let us reclaim heart-deep worship — to move away from over-dependence on digital technology and learn to use our body, mind, heart, soul and spirit to participate actively, fully and consciously in glorifying God.

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Fr Ron Rolheiser

# And time started over

**W**ith the resurrection of Jesus, time started over. Simply put, up until Jesus rose from the dead all things that died stayed dead. After Jesus’ resurrection, nothing stays dead anymore. Time has begun anew.

Luke’s Gospel account of the resurrection begins with the words “on the morning of the first day”. This is a double reference. He is referring to Sunday, the first day of the week, but he is also referring to the first day of a new creation. With the resurrection, time has started over. In fact, the world measures time by that day. We are in the year 2026 since that morning when Jesus rose from the dead.

From the beginning of time until Jesus’ resurrection, everything mortal died and remained in death. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, in the story of Adam and Eve and their fall from grace, we are given to believe that originally humans were not intended to die. In this view, death entered the world through the sin of our first parents. Today, for sound theological and scientific reasons, the Adam and Eve story is considered, like the other “in the beginning” stories in Genesis, to be more metaphorical and archetypal than literal. To be human is to be mortal.

Irrespective as to whether you take the Adam and Eve story literally and see death because of their sin or not, the bottom line

is the same: From our first parents onward, everything that died stayed dead.

That changed with the resurrection of Jesus. When God raised him from the dead, creation was changed at its very roots. Nature changed. A dead body was brought to new life. Impossible? Yes, except that time started over! There was a new first day, a new Genesis, a second time when we can say, “in the beginning”.

And nothing stays dead now because Jesus is the “first fruit” of this new creation. What happened to him now happens to us. We too will not stay dead but will rise to new life. Moreover, this isn’t just true for us as humans. It’s also true for the earth itself and everything on it. Jesus came to save the world, not just the people living in the world.

St. Paul makes this clear in his Epistle to the Romans when he writes that all creation, physical creation, has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth and — it itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. (Romans 8,21-23)

Our planet earth, like our human body, is also mortal. It is dying too. As we know, the sun will eventually burn out and that will spell the death of our planet. Our planet also needs to be resurrected, and scripture assures us that it will.

What all this means stretches our imagination beyond its limits. Does this mean that animals will also have eternal life? Will our beloved pets be with us in heaven? Will plants enter heaven? Will the whole cosmos and our planet earth be transformed and enter heaven?

The answer is yes, though how this will happen is beyond our imagination. Our human mind is too limited. This is impossible to imagine, except, except that God who is the Father of Jesus Christ is ineffable, beyond imagination, and can do the unimaginable, including transforming all things into new life.

The Gospel of John has a particularly poignant text which links the resurrection of Jesus to the original creation as described in Genesis. John tells us that in his first resurrection appearance to the apostles, Jesus finds them huddled in fear inside a room with the doors locked. The resurrected Jesus goes right through the locked doors, enters their midst, greets them, shows them his hands and his side, and then breathes on them. (John 20,21)

This breathing out by Jesus parallels what happened at the original creation when God breathed over the formless void, and light began to separate from darkness and creation began to take shape.

After the resurrection, Jesus breathes on his disciples and for the second time in history light begins to separate from darkness. The confusion, fear, timidity, and the weaknesses of the apostles, their “formless void”, their darkness, begins to separate from the new light brought by the resurrection, namely, the eternal light of charity, joy, peace, patience, goodness, the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

So, it’s appropriate to say that with the resurrection of Jesus, time started over. There was a new first day where light again separated from darkness. The resurrection of Jesus is the most radical thing that has occurred since God originally said, let there be light! nearly fourteen billion years ago. The earth itself and everything on it, humans, animals, plants, and minerals, and the earth itself, are now given life beyond death.

Until the resurrection of Jesus, all things that died stayed dead. This is no longer true. Time has started over.

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

# LITTLE CATHOLIC'S CORNER

Dear children,

In today's Gospel reading, two disciples were walking together and thinking sadly about how Jesus had just been tortured and killed.

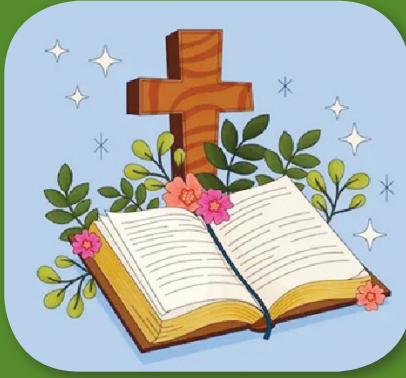
Then Jesus started walking with them — but they didn't recognise Him. He explained to them what the Scriptures had said about Him suffering and dying.

He helped them to understand what God's plan had been.

Every time we go to Mass, we hear about Jesus in the Gospel reading.

But we don't need to wait until Mass to learn about Jesus.

You can read the Bible every day. God wants us to know Him

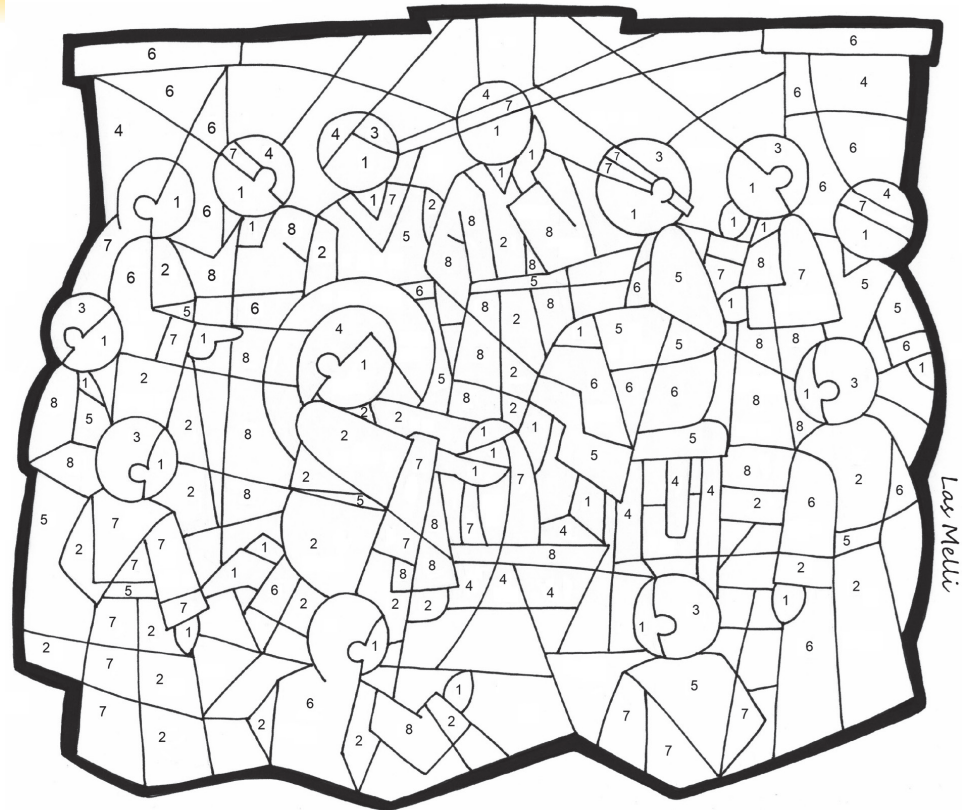


better so we can love Him more. And the more we love Him, the happier we will be. Do you have a children's Bible? Maybe your Mom or Dad can read to you from the big Bible a little every morning or night.

Reading saints' stories also helps us to know God through His friends. Try to read or listen to some of the Bible or the life of a saint every day!

Dear children, Jesus walks with you every day — even when you don't see Him. Listen to His Word, talk to Him in prayer, and you will know He is always with you. Amen.

Love  
Aunty Eliz



So, He got up from the meal, took off His outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around His waist. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him. (John 13:4-5)

Colour the picture according to the numbers

- 1. PINK
- 2. RED
- 3. GREY
- 4. YELLOW
- 5. MAROON
- 6. GREEN
- 7. PURPLE

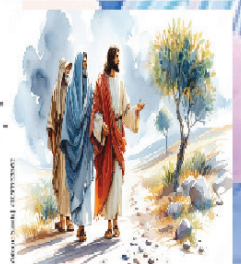
## Picture Puzzle: The Road to Emmaus

How well do you know the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus?

Figure out the order of the pictures and put the appropriate numbers in the corners.



### On the Road to Emmaus



Complete the paragraph by filling in the blanks with the correct words from the word bank at the bottom of the story.

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called \_\_\_\_\_, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, \_\_\_\_\_ himself came up and \_\_\_\_\_ along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly \_\_\_\_\_; the \_\_\_\_\_ is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the \_\_\_\_\_ with them, he took \_\_\_\_\_, gave \_\_\_\_\_, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their \_\_\_\_\_ were \_\_\_\_\_ and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.

Luke 24:13-16, 28-31 (NIV)

bread	Emmaus	eyes	opened	thanks
day	evening	Jesus	table	walked

# YOUTH

## A Pilgrimage through the heart of the Church and the city

**Tianne Pereira**

**KUALA LUMPUR:** As a preparation for Easter — a time when the Church invites the faithful to journey more intentionally through prayer, reflection, and encounter with Christ — 82 students from Stella Maris International School Kuala Lumpur's Catholic Students Society embarked on a pilgrimage to four churches in the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese Central District on March 26, turning a simple church visit into a meaningful spiritual experience of walking closer to the heart of the Church.

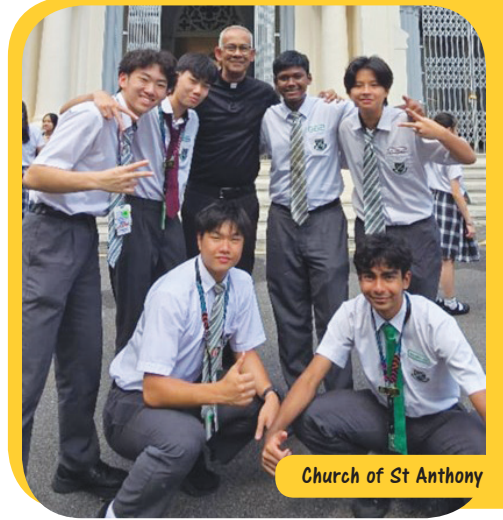
crosses, and pendants transforming them into their very own third-class relics. It was a powerful, tangible encounter with the Church's living tradition, leaving many in quiet awe.

From there, the journey continued to the Church of the Holy Rosary. As the students entered, they could not help but admire the beauty of the stained-glass windows, casting gentle hues of light across the sacred space and quietly drawing their attention to the presence of God. Here, Caroline Soon welcomed the group with a heartfelt sharing on the church's history and its establishment, while also shining a light on the growing involvement of young people within the parish community. Students were introduced to St Charbel, receiving prayer cards and holy oil as sacramentals to aid their personal devotion. A time of prayer in the St Charbel Chapel offered a moment of stillness amid the day's journey, allowing students to reflect and connect more deeply in a sacred space.

The third stop brought the group to St Anthony's Church, where they were greeted by the parish priest, Fr Clarence Devadass. His engaging narration wove together the history of the church with the broader story

of Christianity's arrival and growth in Malaysia. Students listened intently as he spoke of the church's unique Gothic architecture and its enduring and striking presence in the heart of the city. He also shared about the life and legacy of St Anthony of Padua, the church's patron saint. With time to walk around, venerate the relic of St Anthony and admire the intricate beauty of the church, students found themselves immersed not only in history, but in a living expression of faith.

The final stop of the pilgrimage was the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, the mother church of the archdiocese. Welcomed by Fr Gerard Theraviam and Bro John Robertson, the students were led in with a song, setting a joyful yet reverent tone. A thoughtfully presented video traced the history of the Cathedral, after which the students were guided through the significance of various elements within the church including the altar, the sanctuary lamp, the stained glass, and the cathedra, the bishop's chair that gives the cathedral its unique identity. A special highlight was the visit to the site of the original St John's, recently refurbished though not yet reopened, offering a glimpse into the roots of the local



Church of St Anthony

Church. Students were also introduced to the relic of St John the Evangelist, deepening their understanding of the Church's apostolic heritage.

Throughout the day, what stood out was not just the wealth of knowledge shared, but the spirit in which it was given, each church offering its own story, its own treasures, and its own warmth, yet all united in the same faith. Students encountered newly installed relics, learned about the communion of saints, and began to appreciate the continuity of the Catholic Church across time and place. For many, these were not just lessons to be remembered, but experiences to be felt.

It was deeply moving to witness students engage with such openness, reverence, and curiosity, supporting one another, asking thoughtful questions, and embracing each moment with sincerity. It is our hope that what they experienced will remain with them in a quiet but lasting way, continuing to shape their understanding, their relationships, and their appreciation for the beauty and depth of the Church.

Church of Our Lady of Fatima



The first stop was the Church of Our Lady of Fatima, where the group was warmly welcomed by parish priest, Fr Andrew Manickam and his team. What began as a simple welcome soon unfolded into a rich sharing by church leaders, who introduced the students to the history of the parish, the significance of relics and the lives of the saints. A deeply moving highlight for many was the opportunity to venerate a first-class relic. Students reverently approached, touching the relic with their own blessed items they brought including rosaries,



Church of the Holy Rosary

## Teluk Intan youth bring the Passion to life



**TELUK INTAN:** The parish community of the Church of St Anthony was deeply moved by a powerful Passion Play presented during the Holy Week celebrations.

An hour before the Good Friday service, the altar servers and youth of the parish presented a heartfelt reenactment of the Passion of Christ. The presentation drew a large congregation gathered for the service and left a profound spiritual impact on those present.

The performance depicted key moments of Christ's suffering, beginning with the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, followed by His trial, the carrying of the Cross, and ultimately the crucifixion. Each scene was portrayed with sincerity, reverence, and emotional depth, allowing the congregation to reflect deeply on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Many in the congregation were visibly moved as the Passion story unfolded, bringing the Gospel narratives to life in a powerful and relatable way.

More than a performance, it became a moment of ministry. The youth involved were

seen not merely as performers but as witnesses of faith, using their talents to evangelise and lead the community into deeper reflection during Holy Week. Their dedication and commitment reflected a vibrant and living faith among the younger generation of the Church.

Parishioner Sharon Matthew shared, "It was so real and deeply touching. I felt like I was walking with Jesus through His suffering. The youth truly brought the Passion to life — it reminded me why Good Friday is so important before we can fully rejoice in Easter."

This initiative highlights the important role of youth in the Church, especially in bringing Scripture and faith experiences to life for the wider community. It also reflects the strong sense of unity and participation within the parish.

Even as the Easter season continues, this Passion Play remains a lasting spiritual memory for the parish community in Teluk Intan, reminding all that the joy of the Resurrection is deeply rooted in the sacrifice of the Cross.

**Marie Ann Dawson**

# In a season of waiting, the Spirit descends

BATU GAJAH: During the solemn and reflective season of Lent, the Church of St Joseph became a place of both quiet prayer and joyful celebration as seven young candidates received the Sacrament of Confirmation. The ceremony was held in a spirit that beautifully combined the penitential nature of Lent with the hope and renewal that Confirmation brings.

Despite the simplicity, there was a deep sense of reverence and anticipation in the air as families, sponsors, and parishioners gathered to witness this important milestone in the lives of the candidates.

The Mass was presided over by Cardinal Sebastian Francis, who emphasised in his homily the significance of being strengthened by the Holy Spirit. He encouraged the candidates to remain firm in their faith, especially during challenging times, and to live as true witnesses of Christ in their daily lives. He also reminded them



that Confirmation is not the end of their faith journey, but the beginning of a more mature and committed relationship with God.

Fr Francis Andrew, the parish priest of St Joseph's, reminded that although Lent is often seen as a time of sacrifice and penance, the Confirmation at the parish

served as a powerful reminder of hope and renewal. It highlighted the presence of God's grace even in seasons of reflection and preparation. The newly confirmed members left the church not only with certificates, but with a deeper sense of purpose and a strengthened commitment to live out their faith.

## From altar to outreach: Serving Christ in others



BATU GAJAH: The altar servers of the Church of St Joseph (SJC) organised a meaningful outreach visit to Rumah Kebajikan Cacat, Batu Gajah recently.

This initiative was carried out as part of their Lenten commitment to live out acts of charity, compassion, and service. During the visit, the servers spent quality time with the residents, engaging in conversations, offering companionship, and sharing moments of joy and fellowship.

Donations in the form of essential items and food were also presented to support the needs of the home. The experience served as a humbling reminder of the importance of love, kindness, and gratitude, especially during this sacred season.

Through this outreach, the altar servers were able to reflect deeply on the true meaning of Lent to give selflessly, to serve others, and to follow Christ's example of love.

The SJC altar servers extend their heartfelt appreciation to their parish priest, Fr Francis Andrew, and to all who contributed and supported this initiative. May God bless everyone for their generosity and compassion.

## Opportunity cost and divine calling

### Why I chose Stonyhurst Penang

As a child brought up in a Catholic environment in Sabah, praying the Rosary every night as a family, my faith has always been the centre of my life. I believe that God has a plan for each of us. So, when I happened to attend a talk by a school from Penang back in 2023, a school guided by Ignatian values and which prides itself on being founded by a UK College rooted in over 430 years of Jesuit Catholic tradition, I felt that there was a deeper purpose behind it.

Fast forward to 2025, when I had to learn opportunity cost the hard way. I was offered two scholarships: the Stonyhurst Foundation Scholarship and another that would support me all the way through university. Despite the security offered by the latter, I chose Stonyhurst, not because the other opportunity was any less valuable, but because I felt an unexplainable calling towards this path.

Being in a school where I could attend daily Mass reminded me to always place my faith first. The decision was not easy. Moving away from home into an unfamiliar environment was challenging, but I



chose to take that step, not just for myself or my family, but for Him. I trusted that when we take one step in our faith, everything else will follow.

From the beginning, Stonyhurst Penang's community has supported me wholeheartedly. The regular check-ins by my Sixth Form teachers on my progress and well-being have meant so much to me. The deeply committed teachers have shown belief in my passions and continuously encourage me to push beyond my limits.

At Stonyhurst Penang, we are not just guided academically, but also formed as individuals. We are constantly encouraged to reflect, grow, and strive to do as much as we can, being Men and Women for Others — Entering to Learn, Leaving to Serve.

Stonyhurst Penang is now offering scholarships to aspiring students—discover this opportunity and apply today via Stonyhurst Penang's website: [www.stonyhurstpenang.edu.my/the-stonyhurst-foundation-scholarship2](http://www.stonyhurstpenang.edu.my/the-stonyhurst-foundation-scholarship2). Sarah Shavahn Teh



## Our TOB experience

We joined TOB thinking it was all about the Body of Christ. Straightforward, familiar territory. Oh Boy, were we wrong! Very wrong indeed. The questions? Surprisingly sharp. It started innocently enough.

Facilitator: What is sex?

Students: Reproduction, or sexual intercourse. That's what science taught us.

Facilitator: Hmm...

At this point, you could feel the collective confusion rising in the room.

Facilitator: Sex is simply male and female, like how God created us.

And just like that, what we thought would be a straightforward session turned out to be something far more layered, and honestly, a little awkward. From the very first session, we realised that this was not going to be just some ordinary church camp. There were talks, presentations, and group discussions, along with moments where the room became unusually quiet because everyone suddenly didn't know where to look.

For those who don't know, TOB stands for Theology of the Body, a programme that helps teenagers aged 16-17 understand that our bodies have meaning and purpose, not just biologically, but spiritually and relationally. It teaches us about understanding human life, love, and sexuality, alongside being meaningful, purposeful, and deeply connected to who we are.

Initially, many of us were shy and unsure of what to expect. Discussions were careful, responses were concise, and everyone tried to look serious and mature. But as the sessions went on, the talks became more engaging, the presentations encouraged participation from everyone, and slowly, the awkward atmosphere turned into laughter and open conversations.

By Day 2, the change was obvious. Everyone was more comfortable, conversations flowed more easily, and the energy in the room felt lighter. Lunch break became one of the best parts of the programme, not just because of the food, but because it gave us time to joke around, share stories, and get to know one another better. Somewhere between meals and conversations, strangers started becoming close friends.

What made TOB special was how it taught us about love, respect, relationships, and taking care of our bodies, that is the Temple of the Holy Spirit. We learned that our bodies are gifts from God and that He loves us unconditionally. Loving freely, totally, faithfully, and fruitfully isn't just about relationships but also about respecting and caring for ourselves as God intended. At its core, this teaching upholds the inherent dignity of every person, affirming that no human being should ever be treated as an object, but always respected for their intrinsic worth.

By the end of the two days, we walked away with new perspectives, stronger friendships, and memories we will never forget. TOB turned out to be meaningful, eye-opening, and honestly, much more fun than we had expected. What we learnt went far beyond what we imagined: faith, friendship, self-respect, and discovering who we are meant to be in God's love.

We, the Form 4 students, are truly grateful to have participated in the two-day session held on March 14 and 15. We sincerely thank our teachers from the Church of the Good Shepherd, Setapak, for organising such an impactful programme. We were also honoured to have facilitators from the Archdiocese of KL who made these sessions insightful and enriching. We left the church with one key takeaway; YES, biology is true, but it's not the whole story. **Yosceline Sawaridass and Sophia Joyce**

# Noel Thangam, Cardinal Soter and the two ‘miracles’

Anil Netto

Andrew Noel Thangam – or Macha to me. He was very proud of the name Thangam – in Tamil, he would tell us, it means gold, pure gold.

The paradox was that he was never wealthy. He lived on a simple pension after a principled career as a Naval Reserve officer (when asked why he wanted to enlist, he told his interviewers he liked the uniform!) and health inspector (never took a bribe!).

The reality was he was generous to a fault, especially towards people who were more unfortunate, like the cleaners and security guards in his apartment complex. He would quietly pass them money or provide them lunch and snacks when he could. Even to the church in his last few years. How could he afford all this? Why, he stung on his own meals for much of his life.

That was Noel: he had a heart of gold that was more precious than anything else. If I were to describe him in a couple of words, it would be Gold and Gift. He was a gift to all of us in different ways. His larger-than-life presence itself was a gift.

On a personal note, not many people know that Noel was an *Aliran* member. He was not politically inclined. But he knew vaguely that *Aliran* was playing a positive role, and he wanted to be part of it, out of support for his “Macha”. Every now and then, he would ask me: “Have I paid up my annual subscription? Do I owe anything?”

And I would have to assure him that yes, he was in good standing, and there was nothing due. That was Noel, my Macha.

But we learnt a long time ago not to argue with him about God – because he would argue back, saying “your God this” and “your God that”. As a young, strong-minded adult, Noel had parted ways with the church after some misunderstanding in church.

## Cardinal Soter and Noel Thangam



It wasn't always like that. During his teenage years in Sungai Petani, the young Noel was very active in his parish, especially as an altar server. Among the servers was another boy two years his senior, the young Soter Fernandez. The two became close friends.

Fast forward to 2016, when the then Bishop of Rome, Francis, proclaimed Soter as a Cardinal. In perhaps his first Mass on his return to Malaysia, the new cardinal said a funeral Mass in Butterworth for a close friend. On hand to greet him was Noel, estranged from the church. Both engaged in banter, with Noel arguing with the cardinal about the church over some issue and Soter firing back in jest, “Go to hell!”

By 2020, Soter was critically ill. He requested one of his carers, Fr Louis Loi to make a video call to Noel. And before he passed away, Soter quietly told Louis to “keep an eye on Thangam”.

Months passed and one fine day, Fr Louis and Fr Dominic Santhiyagu, the parish priest in Butterworth, invited Noel for a *thosai* breakfast at Noel's favourite Indian joint in Butterworth. Feeling a bit awkward, Noel, asked me to tag along for this ‘*thosai* diplomacy’. A couple more meals



with the priests helped Noel feel more comfortable with the Church. Before long, Noel was back in church, his faith growing stronger and stronger. The first miracle.

A couple of years later, Noel fell critically ill, and was admitted to the ICU of a KL hospital. The doctor informed his family that his condition was critical, as his organs were slowly shutting down. The children and grandchildren rushed back abroad. I too made my way to KL. But to my surprise, I found him in the ICU, sitting up in bed. He held out his hand and led me and a couple of my relatives in prayer. The second miracle.

### The last lap

We saw the transformation in his faith over the last few years. The “your God” gradually became “my God this” and “my God that”. For instance, whenever he went out on his motorbike (even at 90!), he would say a prayer, to “ask my God to take care of me on my journey”.

It almost seemed as if the Lord had extended his life to allow him to build on his faith. In the last lap of his life, the proud Lieutenant Commander humbled himself before “his God”. The hymn *In His Time* comes to mind.

In the end, Noel literally died with his old friend Jesus because on Good Friday morning – his carer Gloria told me this – he decided to fast for the day. He only had a couple of hard-boiled eggs for breakfast, a banana, and some orange juice and biscuits at night.

An internet search revealed that when you fast with high blood pressure and a weak heart, the heart has to pump extra hard, and it eats into the reserves in your body, and then the lungs get congested.

The next morning, Easter Saturday, he was found sprawled on the floor of his bedroom balcony and rushed to hospital.

He was unconscious by afternoon. But then, a tear rolled down from his left eye, and a little while later, from his right eye. I played one of his favourite tunes, *Amazing Grace*, by Nana Mouskouri into his ear and said a little prayer for him.

A couple of hours later, the doctor pronounced that Noel had died “very peacefully”. It was 5.15pm Easter Eve, just in time for the celebration of the risen Jesus on Easter.

In his last years, Noel had made peace with many people. It was the perfect ending he would have wished for in his long and colourful life – to be sent off after Holy Week, in the presence of his dearest family, extended family and friends and veterans of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force.

The presence of serving Royal Malaysian Navy personnel, attired in the immaculate white uniform that he loved, carrying and saluting his casket, would have meant the world to him.

It was his dream, the icing on the cake, to leave amid this immense outpouring of love, at the entrance of the church he had separated himself for so long, to the notes of the solitary bugler playing *The Last Post*. Welcome home, dear Macha.

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### 7th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Edwin Lawrence

Departed: 25th April 2019

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

Seventh Year Anniversary Mass will be offered on 25th April 2026 (Saturday) at 6.00pm at the Church of the Visitation, Seremban.

Deeply missed and forever cherished by:  
Wife: Margaret  
Children: Anne, Agnes, Agatha, Anastasia and Andrew and loved ones.

## Sant'Egidio calls for compassion and action after Easter migrant tragedy

ROME: In the shadow of Easter — a season that proclaims life, hope, and renewal — the Community of Sant'Egidio has issued a heartfelt appeal for renewed rescue efforts and more humane policies, following yet another devastating migrant shipwreck in the Mediterranean.

More than 70 lives are feared lost after a vessel carrying approximately 105 people capsized off the Libyan coast on Holy Saturday. The tragedy only came to light after a handful of survivors were brought to safety. Of those on board, just 32 are confirmed to have survived.

What should have been a night marked by the promise of resurrection instead became a stark reminder of suffering — lives cut short in the darkness of the sea, dreams extinguished in silence.

This latest disaster follows closely on the heels of another tragedy just days earlier, when 19 Afghan migrants, including an infant, perished in the Aegean Sea near Bodrum, Turkey. According to the International Organization for Migration, at least 683 migrants have died or gone missing since the beginning of 2026—a number that continues to rise with unsettling regularity.

In its statement, Sant'Egidio expressed profound sorrow for the victims and their families, while warning against a growing global in-

difference. Each life lost, it stressed, is not a statistic but a human story — of hope, desperation, and the search for dignity.

“There is an urgent need for a renewed commitment to save those in danger at sea,” the community said, calling on national governments and European institutions to strengthen search-and-rescue operations across the Mediterranean.

At the same time, Sant'Egidio reaffirmed the importance of expanding humanitarian corridors — safe and legal pathways that allow vulnerable individuals to travel without risking their lives. Beyond rescue, the community emphasised the need for integration: access to education for children, language support, and opportunities for meaningful work.

For over a decade, Sant'Egidio, together with its partners, has championed such initiatives. To date, more than 8,500 vulnerable people have reached Europe safely through these humanitarian corridors — a testament to what is possible when compassion is matched with concrete action.

As the Church continues to proclaim the hope of Easter, this tragedy stands as a sobering call: that hope must not remain in words alone, but be lived out in the courage to act, to welcome, and to uphold the dignity of every human life. **Vatican News**

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# Truth must shine amid 'fake news'



Pope Leo XIV leads the "Regina Caeli" prayer in St Peter's Square on Easter Monday, honouring Pope Francis. (Vatican News)

VATICAN: In an age increasingly shaped by "fake news" and competing narratives, Pope Leo XIV has called on Christians to bear authentic witness to the truth, reminding the faithful that the light of Christ can dispel even the deepest darkness.

Addressing thousands gathered in St Peter's Square on Easter Monday, the Pope reflected on the Gospel account of the empty tomb, drawing a striking contrast between two opposing narratives — one rooted in truth, the other in falsehood.

On one hand, the women disciples, including Mary Magdalene, proclaimed that Christ had risen, bearing witness to life and hope. On the other, the guards — bribed by the leaders of the Sanhedrin — spread the claim that Jesus' body had been stolen, presenting a version that denied the Resurrection.

"From the same event... two interpretations spring forth," the Pope said — one that gives life, and another that leads to

despair.

He noted that this tension mirrors the modern reality, where truth is often obscured by misinformation, false accusations, and manipulated narratives. "The telling of the truth is often clouded by what we today call fake news," he said, warning that such distortions can confuse consciences and darken understanding.

Yet, even in the face of such challenges, the Pope stressed that truth cannot be suppressed. "The truth does not remain hidden," he said. "It comes to meet us — alive and radiant — illuminating even the densest darkness."

At the heart of this truth is the proclamation of the Risen Christ. "Christ is risen!" the Pope declared, describing it as the Good News entrusted to every Christian — not merely to be spoken, but to be lived through acts of faith, love, and integrity.

He urged believers to carry this message especially to those most affected by suf-

fering — peoples torn by war, Christians facing persecution, and children deprived of education — reminding them that the Resurrection offers hope even in the most difficult circumstances.

The Pope also reflected on the responsibility of Christian witness in a world marked by confusion and division. "Do not be afraid; go and tell," he said, echoing Christ's words to the women at the tomb, and encouraging the faithful to be courageous heralds of truth.

In a moment of remembrance, Pope Leo XIV recalled Pope Francis, who died on Easter Monday a year ago. Remembering his "profound witness of faith and love," the Holy Father invited the faithful to continue his legacy by living as radiant witnesses to the Gospel.

Entrusting all to the Blessed Virgin Mary, he concluded with a prayer that Christians may become ever brighter bearers of truth in a world longing for light. **Agencies**

## Pope appoints three Asian members to Dicastery for Communication

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV has appointed three prominent Asian Church leaders to serve as members of the Dicastery for Communication, the Vatican body responsible for overseeing the Holy See's media and communications ministry worldwide. The appointments were announced by the Holy See Press Office on April 9. Church leaders in Asia have welcomed the appointments, seeing them as a sign of the continent's growing relevance in the Church's universal mission.

The newly appointed members from Asia are:

**Cardinal Luis Antonio G. Tagle**, Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelisation, Section for First Evangelisation and the New Particular Churches

**Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrão**, Archbishop of Goa and Damão, India, and President of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences

**Bishop Marcelino Antonio M. Maralit**, Bishop of San Pablo, Philippines, and President of the Office of Social Communications of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences

Also appointed is Archbishop Ryan Jimenez of Agaña, Guam, a Filipino prelate currently serving in the Pacific region. His inclusion further highlights

the growing contribution of Asian clergy to the Church's global communications ministry, particularly in bridging cultures and engaging diverse communities across Asia and Oceania.

The Dicastery for Communication plays a crucial role in the Church's mission, coordinating how the Catholic Church communicates with the faithful and the wider world. Its responsibilities range from managing Vatican media outlets to promoting ethical and effective communication strategies globally. The body serves as a bridge between the Church's teachings and modern society, ensuring that the message of the Gospel reaches all corners of the world in a clear, engaging, and timely manner.

For the Church in Asia, these appointments signal a strengthened voice and increased representation in the Vatican's communications ministry. Cardinal Tagle, Cardinal Ferrão, and Bishop Maralit bring decades of pastoral, educational, and media experience, particularly in engaging diverse and growing Catholic populations across Asia. Their presence on the dicastery is expected to foster more culturally sensitive communication, promote evangelisation through modern media, and highlight the concerns and perspectives of Asian

Catholics in the global Church.

"The inclusion of these distinguished leaders from Asia underscores the universal nature of the Church," said Fr John Mi Shen, Executive Secretary of the Office of Social Communications of the FABC and Program Director of *Radio Veritas Asia*. "It reflects Pope Leo XIV's commitment to ensuring that all regions of the Church are heard in

shaping its communications strategy," Fr Mi Shen added.

With these appointments, the Vatican continues its effort to strengthen the Church's presence in the digital era, fostering dialogue, transparency, and outreach across continents, while amplifying the voices of local Churches within the global Catholic community. **RVA**



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