

Virtual Mass cannot replace Sunday Mass

VATICAN: Sunday Mass is not simply something Catholics watch, listen to, or fit into their schedules when convenient. It is the weekly gathering of the People of God around the risen Christ — an encounter that requires presence, participation and community.

Pope Leo XIV underscored this at his August 12 general audience, urging Catholics to rediscover the importance of gathering physically for Sunday Mass and stressing that virtual participation cannot substitute for the liturgical assembly.

“To sanctify Sunday, it is essential to celebrate the Eucharist,” Pope Leo said. “This assembly cannot be substituted by a solely virtual presence, nor can it be reduced to a merely passive gathering.”

The Pope’s words carry particular significance in a post-pandemic world where livestreamed Masses have become commonplace. While online broadcasts

remain valuable for those genuinely unable to attend because of illness, age or other serious circumstances, Pope Leo’s message points Catholics back to something fundamental: the Eucharist is celebrated by a community gathered together, not merely viewed on a screen.

“The liturgical assembly is in fact fulfilled through the active participation of brothers and sisters,” he said.

Continuing his catechesis on *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Pope Leo described Sunday as the “foundation and kernel of the whole liturgical year” and the Church’s “original feast day”.

Sunday is the *dies Domini* — the Day of the Lord — because it is the weekly celebra-

tion of Christ’s Resurrection.

Recalling St John Paul II’s teaching, Pope Leo described Sunday as the day of the Lord, the day of the Church, the day of humanity and the “day of days”. It is, he said, the “weekly Easter” through which Christ’s Resurrection is made present in the rhythm of Christian life.

This is why Sunday Mass cannot be understood merely as an obligation to be fulfilled.

When Catholics gather to listen to the Word of God, receive the Body of Christ and pray together, the Christian community “makes visible its communion with the Lord” and bears witness to its belonging to Christ and fidelity to the Church.

The emphasis on gathering is significant. Christianity is not lived in isolation, and

the Eucharist is not a private spiritual experience. At Sunday Mass, Catholics stand beside people they may know well and others they may barely know, yet together they become a visible expression of the Body of Christ.

Pope Leo also acknowledged that attending Sunday Mass is not equally easy for everyone, particularly those required to work on Sundays.

“I urge everyone to seek the best possible conditions so that even those who are unable to take time off work on Sundays may take part in Holy Mass,” he said, pointing to the responsibility of communities to help make participation possible.

The Pope placed Sunday within the wider meaning of the liturgical year, explaining that the Church’s celebrations are not simply recollections of events that happened centuries ago.

Citing the teaching of Pope Pius XII, he said the liturgical year is centred on Christ, who remains living in His Church. Through its seasons and feasts, the Church continually encounters the saving work of Christ and opens herself to His grace.

“The encounter with Jesus, who died and rose again for us, is the purpose that the Church always pursues,” Pope Leo said.

At the heart of that encounter stands Sunday.

His message therefore presents Catholics with a timely question: What place does Sunday Mass really occupy in our lives?

Is it the centre around which the week is built, or something fitted in when nothing else gets in the way?

For Pope Leo, Sunday Eucharist is neither an optional extra nor simply another religious activity. It is where the Church gathers around the risen Lord, receives Him in Word and Sacrament, and is strengthened to return to the world as His disciples.

Sunday after Sunday, the invitation remains the same: come together, encounter Christ and become, once again, the Church He sends into the world. **Agencies**



(LiCAS News/Alren Beronio)

Prayer for the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026 (MPC2026)

Lord God,
You call us to walk together as Your People,
drawn into the life of communion
of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Guide us as we prepare for
the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026.
Teach us to listen deeply,
to discern faithfully,
and to trust where You are leading us.
We place before You the four areas we are
discerning together.

Bless our families,
that they may be places of love,
faith, forgiveness, and hope.
Renew our Church,
that we may grow in communion,
participation, and joyful witness
to the Gospel.
Open our hearts to the cry of creation,
that we may care for the earth
with reverence, responsibility,
and gratitude.

Guide our life in society,
that we may seek justice, promote peace,
and stand in solidarity with the poor and
the vulnerable.
As pastoral pathways emerge
from our discernment,
may they enrich and strengthen
our local faith communities.
With Mary, Mother of the Church,
who pondered Your Word and walked in
faith, teach us to walk together in hope.

Keep us rooted in Christ,
attentive to one another,
and open to the work of
Your Holy Spirit.
May this Convention
help us live more faithfully
as one Catholic Church of Malaysia,
serving in this land we love.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

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Merdeka begins with a visit

When Mary learned that her cousin Elizabeth was expecting a child in her old age, she did not merely express concern or send good wishes. The Gospel tells us that Mary “set out and went with haste” to the hill country (Luke 1:39). She crossed the distance between them and entered Elizabeth’s home. Her love took the form of a visit.

That simple act has something to say to us as Malaysia approaches its 69th National Day on August 31, just a week away.

At this time of year, we hear familiar hopes: “May Malaysia remain peaceful.” “May our country prosper.” “May Malaysians always live in unity.”

They are sincere hopes. But peace does not endure simply because we wish for it. Unity cannot be sustained by slogans, flags and patriotic songs alone. If we want a more united Malaysia, somebody has to cross the distance between “us” and “them”.

Mary did not merely wish to support Elizabeth. She went to her.

The Visitation was not an empty social call. Mary carried Christ within her, and her presence brought joy to Elizabeth and the child in her womb. Pope Benedict XVI described Mary’s visit in *Deus Caritas Est* as a “service of charity”. She stayed with Elizabeth for about three months.

Her example reminds us that genuine love does not remain comfortably at a distance. It goes towards the other person.

Perhaps that is something Malaysia needs to rediscover: the simple art of visiting one another.

When I was growing up in the 1980s, visiting friends and neighbours during festive seasons was almost compulsory. My mother made sure I accompanied her during *Hari Raya* and other celebrations. We entered people’s homes, ate what was offered, talked and laughed. Children

played while adults sat around the same table exchanging stories.

We professed different faiths, yet nobody seemed worried that friendship might weaken our identity. Those visits taught us to respect differences without fearing them.

More than 40 years later, I wonder whether we are losing something precious.

Technology has made communication effortless. Within seconds, we can send *Selamat Hari Raya*, *Happy Deepavali*, *Merry Christmas* or *Gong Xi Fa Cai*, complete with emojis, GIFs and enough digital fireworks to illuminate the neighbourhood.

But sending a greeting is not the same as entering someone’s home.

The COVID-19 pandemic understandably taught us to keep our distance. Perhaps some of that distance remained. We became comfortable with virtual encounters, private celebrations and smaller circles. And distance has consequences.

When we stop meeting people, it becomes easier to reduce them to labels: Malay, Chinese, Indian, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, migrant, East Malaysian, West Malaysian, rich or poor.

A visit changes that.

Suddenly the “other” has a name, a family, a story, worries and hopes. Prejudice thrives on distance. Encounter makes it harder to maintain.

Pope Francis often called for a “culture of encounter”. In *Fratelli Tutti*, he reminds us that genuine dialogue requires approaching, speaking, listening and trying to understand one another.

That matters greatly in Malaysia. Our diversity is one of our nation’s gifts, but diversity by itself does not produce unity. We can live beside one another for decades without truly knowing one another. Unity must be practised.

This year’s National Day and Malaysia Day theme, *Malaysia MADANI: Kesejahteraan*

Dinikmati, speaks of well-being enjoyed by all. But national well-being cannot be measured only economically. A truly prosperous Malaysia must also be one where people feel welcome in one another’s presence and differences do not prevent friendship.

Of course, visiting can be inconvenient.

Children may spill drinks. Someone may say something awkward. Conversations may run out and everybody suddenly becomes fascinated by the *kuih* on the table.

Real relationships are rarely as tidy as our social media photographs.

But a spotless sofa cannot comfort a lonely person, and a perfectly arranged home cannot build unity if its doors remain closed. Relationships require a willingness to be inconvenienced.

So perhaps this *Merdeka*, besides flying the *Jalur Gemilang* and wishing Malaysia peace and unity, we could do something wonderfully ordinary. Visit someone.

Accept an invitation we might normally decline. Sit at a table with someone whose faith or culture differs from ours. Invite a neighbour in. Listen to a story we have never heard. Let our children know children outside their own community.

And if somebody spills a drink, smile and say, “It’s all right.”

Malaysia does not become united only through policies, programmes or speeches. Unity is also built quietly: one open door, one shared meal, one conversation and one friendship at a time.

Mary “set out and went with haste”. Perhaps we should too.

Because sometimes *Merdeka* begins when we cross the distance between us.

Sometimes, it begins with a visit.

Liza Magnus

The question only you can answer

Reading Matthew’s Gospel often feels as though we are sitting among the crowds, listening to Jesus Himself speak. Every one of us has, at some point in our lives, been asked a question that seemed simple at first, yet proved difficult to answer. In this Sunday’s Gospel, Jesus asks His disciples a question that has echoed through every generation: “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” (Matthew 16:13).

Jesus and His disciples arrive at Caesarea Philippi, a city known for its pagan temples and the worship of many gods. It was a place where different beliefs and voices competed for people’s attention. Surely it is no coincidence that Jesus chose this setting to ask His disciples the most important question of all: “Who do you say I am?” (Matthew 16:15). Notice how Jesus shifts from asking about public opinion to asking a deeply personal question. In doing so, Matthew invites every reader not merely to observe this conversation, but to become part of it. In many ways, our world is not so different. Amid countless opinions, distractions, and competing values, Christ continues to ask each of us that very same question.

The more I reflect and meditate on this passage, I begin to notice that Jesus deliberately chose a place where many gods were worshipped so that the question of His identity would stand above every other claim to truth. There, amid a city filled with impressive temples and worldly influence, stood a carpenter from Nazareth surrounded

by twelve ordinary men. Jesus was not interested in popular opinion; instead, He asked His disciples, “Who do you say I am?” It was a simple question, yet one that demanded a deeply personal answer. As Jesus’ earthly ministry drew nearer to its fulfilment, He wanted to know whether His disciples truly understood who He was — not merely what others were saying about Him. Before entrusting them with His mission, Jesus first invited them to make their own profession of faith. Jesus was no longer asking what the crowds believed. He was asking what His disciples believed. The same question is now placed before us.

After hearing the verdicts of the disciples, Jesus asked the question that truly mattered: “And you — who do you say I am?” (Matthew 16:15). Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16). In that moment, Peter was no longer repeating what others had said about Jesus. He was making a personal profession of faith. Jesus then revealed something remarkable. He declared that upon Peter’s confession of faith, He would build His Church, and that even the gates of Hades would never prevail against it. Peter’s faith became the foundation upon which Christ would continue His saving mission through the Church.

But how can we follow Christ if we do not have a personal relationship with Him? It is not enough merely to know about Christ; we must come to know Him personally. For me,

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Bro Aaron Saga

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Readings: Isaiah 22: 19-23;

Romans 11:33-36;

Gospel: Matthew 16:13-20

this is the heart of Matthew 16:13-20. Christ continues to ask each one of us: Do you truly know who I am, or do you only know what others have said about Me? A similar question appears during Jesus’ trial before Pilate. When Pilate asked whether He was the King of the Jews, Jesus replied, “Do you ask this of your own accord, or have others said it to you about Me?” (John 18:33-34). Once again, Jesus invites us to a personal response rather than borrowed opinions.

In my reflection, this passage speaks to us that our discovery of Jesus Christ must be a personal discovery. Our knowledge of Jesus must never be second-hand. A person may know many things about Jesus yet still fail to know Him personally. Faith may be deepened by knowledge, but it always begins with an encounter. Every day of our lives, this carpenter from Nazareth waits patiently for us — not merely to be admired from a distance, but to be known personally as our Lord, Saviour and Friend. Like Peter, may we have the conviction to recognise Jesus as “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” May our faith never rest on what others have said about Him, but on a living relationship with the One who knows us, loves us, died for us, and calls each of us by name.


**ARCHDIOCESE OF
KUALA LUMPUR**

CHAN/CD/06/2026

Chancery Notice

Banns of Ordination to the Diaconate

**Bro Lincoln Lee Keng Chuan, Bro Joseph Tan Yee Ping,
Bro Tony Bingkuan OFMCap & Bro Albert Arputhan a/l Maniam**

Upon the recommendation of the seminary formators and following consultation with the College of Consultors, Archbishop Julian Leow, D.D., intends to call Bro Lincoln Lee Keng Chuan, Bro Joseph Tan Yee Ping, Bro Tony Bingkuan, OFMCap, and Bro Albert Arputhan a/l Maniam to the Order of Deacon on Wednesday, September 16, 2026, at 10.00am at the Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam, Selangor.

Bro Lincoln Lee Keng Chuan hails from the Church of the Assumption, Petaling Jaya, and currently resides at the Church of the Sacred Heart, Bentong, Pahang. He began his formation in Philosophy at College General, Penang (2019–2020), and continued his theological studies at St Peter's College, Kuching, Sarawak (2022–2026).

Bro Joseph Tan Yee Ping is from the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jalan Peel, Kuala Lumpur, and currently resides at the Church of the Good Shepherd, Setapak, Kuala Lumpur. He began his formation in Philosophy at College General, Penang (2020–2021), and continued his theological formation at St Peter's College, Kuching, Sarawak (2022–2026).

Bro Tony Bingkuan, OFMCap, hails from the Church of St Michael, Penampang, Sabah, and currently resides and serves at the Gethsemani Friary at the Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras, Selangor. He began his formation in Philosophy at St Peter's College, Kuching, Sarawak (2010–2011), and subsequently pursued his theological formation at Divine

Word Seminary, Tagaytay, Philippines (2018–2019 and 2022–2023).

Bro Albert Arputhan a/l Maniam is from the Church of St Anne, Port Klang. He began his formation in Philosophy at College General, Penang (2017–2018). He then continued his formation at St Peter's College, Kuching, Sarawak (2020–2021), and completed his theological studies at The National Seminary of Our Lady of Lanka, Kandy, Sri Lanka (2024–2026).

In accordance with Canon 1051 §2, this announcement serves as a public notice concerning the suitability of the above candidates for ordination. If anyone is aware of any canonical impediment or other serious reason why any of these candidates should not be ordained, they

are requested to inform their parish priest, the Chancery, or the Archbishop without delay, in accordance with Canon 1043. Any such information may be communicated to the Chancery at chancery@archkl.org

Let us accompany these candidates with our prayers and support as they prepare for diaconal ministry and service to the People of God. May the Lord strengthen them in their vocation, deepen their love for Christ and His Church, and grant them generous hearts for faithful service in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

Fr Dr Clarence Devadass
Chancellor
Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur

August 11, 2026


**KUALA LUMPUR
ARCHDIOCESE**

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

August

- 29 MCCBCHST AGM
- 29 Confirmation – Church of the Assumption, PJ
- 30 Closing Mass for *Perjalanan Salib* – Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, KL


PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

August

- 25 Culmination of *Perjalanan Salib* in the Diocese of Penang at 10.00am – Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang
- 28-31 CHARIS Peninsular Malaysia Service of Communion Healing and Deliverance Conference 2026 – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam


**MALACCA JOHORE
DIOCESE**

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

August

- 29 Confirmation – Church of the Immaculate Conception, JB
- 31 Closing Mass for *Perjalanan Salib* – Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, JB



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #284



Welcome dear friends,

The **MPC2026** is just around the corner, with 860 delegates, consisting of cardinal, archbishops and bishops, clergy and religious and representatives of dioceses, ministries and society, gearing up for the first ever Sabah, Sarawak and Semenanjung Pastoral Convention. Putting aside church and the hard politics, *light-hearted stories* have captured local social media.

1. A *“raised palm or hand”* gently stops traffic or says thank you while crossing streets or changing lanes. Malaysian cultural trait!

2. A *Malaysian stranger* stayed with a Chinese tourist, whose car broke down and was stranded for two hours, till a tow truck arrived. Malaysian hospitality.

Some commented *“power of the hands”* and *“who says Malaysia is not safe?”* Interestingly, people in touch with people see encounters that make them smile.

Local Takes! Unbelievable!

The *National Unity Minister* said “Malaysia’s experience in managing religious, cultural and ethnic diversity can offer valuable lessons to the international community in advancing interfaith understanding, peace and social harmony.”

The monks of the *century-old Sakyamuni Caves Monastery*, at Gunung Kanthan, Perak, which is marked for eviction, are appealing to the Federal Government to preserve this hillside natural heritage.

Unstable political coalitions and politicians have created greater room for the country’s *royal institutions to influence government formation*, observers say.

A *95-year-old Nan Yang kopitiam in Segamat, Johor*, is mulling legal action against a Facebook page for spreading

misinformation that it served pork, confusing *mee pok*; with a pork dish.

The 2023 National Health and Morbidity Survey reported that Malaysia carries one of the **highest obesity rates in Southeast Asia**: 54.4 per cent of adults overweight or obese, 21.8 per cent clinically obese,

Reading the Signs: Helping Hands

The *Pope’s international charity: The helping hand* to the world’s suffering carried out through the Dicastery for the Service of Charity, knows no geographical boundaries. Pope Leo said: *“Charity must not be delayed.”*

To the young people at Assisi, Pope Leo said: “Build a civilisation of love, not division” and explained that *“Gospel radicalism is ‘the opposite of fundamentalism: it does not make us blind and violent, but sensitive and attentive,’ and welcoming towards all”*.

To the Franciscan youth at Assisi, the Pope said: *Read the Scriptures with the Master to interpret our times*, and to make decisions as we walk in His footsteps. We are here to *overcome resignation and fear, to untangle the doubts that hold us back* just as they held back the Apostles. Write new pages of history.”

Thought for the Week: The Precious Stone

A wise man was travelling in the mountains when he found a precious stone in a stream. The next day, along the way he met a hungry traveller. When the wise man opened his bag to share his food, the hungry traveller saw the precious stone and asked for it.

The wiseman, without any hesitation, gave it to him. The traveller left rejoicing in his good fortune. He knew the stone’s worth, how it would provide him a lifetime’s security.

But after a few days, he came back to

return the stone to the wise man. “I have been thinking,” he said. “I know how valuable this stone is, but I give it back in the hope that you can give me something even more precious. *Give me what you have within you that enabled you to give me this stone.*”

The lesson from the wiseman: Peace frees. Generosity gives. Contentment shares. They do not covet.

QnQ? Q asks: Compassion means to suffer with. How can one become compassionate?

There are six situations in the Gospel that reveal human fragility — hunger, thirst, loneliness, exposure, sickness, isolation — part of every human life. When we respond to these needs in others, we acknowledge our own vulnerability. *Compassion begins when we accept that we too are fragile.*

The Gospel does not give us complicated spiritual programmes. It gives us *simple keys*. The Kingdom is opened not by greatness but by smallness. Not by power but by presence. Not by status but by service.

The Son of Man will gather all — that fills us with wonder. He will judge — that awakens holy fear. But He has already placed the *keys to the Kingdom* in our hands. **Food. Water. Welcome. Clothing. Presence. Visit.** Use them to glorify the Lord.

The Spirit @work: The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of goodness: do not grieve Him by your evil actions and thoughts, and so deprive yourself of the defence His light affords you.” *Diadochus of Photice*

Something to tickle you: Human dignity is defined as an unearned gift from God that transcends utility, efficiency, and technological power

Bishop Bernard Paul

Transforming lives through love

NEGERI SEMBILAN: Behind prison walls are not simply prisoners, offences or sentences, but human beings with stories, struggles and the possibility of beginning again. It was this conviction that brought about 90 volunteers of the Archdiocesan Prison Ministry together at the Church of St Aloysius, Mantin, on August 8 for their third Annual Prison Mass.

With the theme *Transforming Lives Through Love*, the gathering was a reminder that prison ministry is ultimately a ministry of encounter – of recognising the dignity of every person and believing that no life should be defined solely by its past.

The Eucharist was celebrated by parish priest, Fr Christopher Wilvaraj, with Fr George Packiasamy and Fr Clarence Devadass concelebrating.

In his homily, Fr Clarence invited volunteers to look beyond the act of simply visiting those in prison. Prison ministry, he reminded them, is about encountering Christ in those they accompany, bringing hope where it may have been lost and helping restore a sense of human dignity.

It is also a journey of mutual transformation. Those who enter prisons intending to bring Christ to others may discover that Christ is already there, waiting to encounter them in the people they meet.

That message took on a deeply human dimension after Mass when Muhammad Hafizi Kasim, a former prisoner who is now pursuing his PhD, shared his life journey with the



Prison Ministry members during the commissioning and renewal of their commitment to serve.

volunteers.

His testimony offered a powerful reminder that a person's worst chapter need not become the conclusion of his or her story. With opportunities, encouragement and people willing to believe in them, lives can be rebuilt and new chapters written.

The gathering continued over lunch and fellowship, followed by sharing sessions and activities. Lt Col Dr Enock Amalanathan (R) delivered a motivational talk, while workshops provided volunteers with further opportunities for learning, reflection and growth in their ministry.

The day was also an occasion to recognise the many people who make the ministry possible. Appreciation was extended to Fr Christopher for generously making the church and its facilities available and for the parish's warm hospitality, as well as to the speakers, facilitators and volunteers who contributed to

the gathering.

At the heart of the day, however, was a simple Gospel truth: everyone is worthy of dignity, compassion and the possibility of redemption.

Prison ministry asks volunteers to walk into places that society can easily forget and encounter people whom society may have already judged. It challenges them to see beyond labels and mistakes to the person who remains a beloved child of God.

And perhaps that is where *Transforming Lives Through Love* becomes something deeper than the theme of an annual gathering. Transformation does not happen only to those behind prison walls. It happens to those who choose to accompany them too.

For whenever we serve another person with compassion, without judgement and with hope, we make room for God to work – in their lives, and in ours.



Grieving for someone you love

PETALING JAYA: Grief is the natural response to losing someone or something precious. Whether it is the death of a loved one, the loss of health, a relationship, employment, or financial security, every loss changes us. While some recover more quickly, others experience deep sorrow and despair. Yet, although grief is part of every human life, few of us have been taught how to grieve well.

In today's fast-paced world, we often avoid talking about pain and loss. We are encouraged to stay busy, be strong, and move on. But grief cannot be rushed. Unlike the movies, where sadness fades within moments, real grief takes time. Healing comes gently, one step at a time. The death of a spouse, child, parent, sibling, or close friend can leave an emptiness that words cannot express. Albert György's sculpture *Melancholy* beautifully portrays this reality — a solitary figure with a hollow space where his heart once felt whole. It reminds us that grief is the painful price of deep love.

Grief touches every part of our lives — emotionally, physically, socially, and spiritually. It is not a straight path but a journey with many ups and downs. There is no "right way" to grieve. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross described grief in five stages — denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance — but each person's journey is unique.

Why do we grieve? Because we have loved. As Queen Elizabeth II wisely said, "Grief is the price we pay for love." The good news is that grief does not have the final word. With the support of family, friends, faith, counselling, and grief support groups, healing is possible. Although life may never be the same, it can become meaningful again. We do not move on from our loved ones — we learn to move forward while carrying their love in our hearts.

If you are grieving the loss of someone you love, you do not have to walk this journey alone.

The SFX Grief Ministry warmly invites you to join our 14-week SFX Grief Support Programme. In a safe, caring, and faith-filled environment, you will find understanding, encouragement, hope, and practical tools to help you rebuild your life.

The programme is open to anyone who has experienced the loss of a loved one, including a spouse, parent, child, sibling, relative, or close friend.

For more information, please contact SFX Grief Ministry, Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya, or call Karen 012-3717060.

Big turnout at OLF's cancer screening

KUALA LUMPUR: Dewan Fatima at the Church of Our Lady of Fatima (OLF), Brickfields, was transformed into a bustling health screening centre on Sunday, August 9, as almost 200 people turned up for a wide range of cancer screenings.

A 10-tonne mobile screening unit stationed in the church car park provided a private and dedicated space for breast cancer examinations, while other screenings were conducted in the hall.

A steady queue began forming about an hour before the programme started. The numbers swelled after each Mass as parishioners made their way to the screening centre. Scheduled to run from 8.00am to 3.00pm, the programme was extended until 3.30pm to accommodate the overwhelming response.

Parishioners and non-parishioners of different ages and backgrounds took advantage of the opportunity to have their health checked. Particular attention was given to senior citizens, those from the B40 income group and foreign workers, ensuring that essential screening services reached those



A medical professional draws blood from a participant for testing.

who might otherwise have limited access to them.

The Community Screening Day was organised by OLF in collaboration with the National Cancer Society of Malaysia (NCSM), which brought a 24-member team comprising doctors, staff and volunteers. A volunteer doctor from OLF also assisted with the screenings.



Participants paying close attention during the procedure briefing.

OLF and its parish administrator, Fr Andrew Manickam, expressed their gratitude to Petronilla Joseph and NCSM for their support in making the screening programme a success. Their contribution, particularly in raising awareness about cancer and making free screening accessible to those in need, was deeply appreciated.

The initiative was among several activities organised by the parish in conjunction with the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, celebrated on July 26.

A special Eucharistic Celebration for grandparents and senior citizens was held on July 27, followed by a lunch organised by the parish's Amazing Greys Ministry. The next activity planned is an outing for seniors, with details to be announced soon.

Through these initiatives, OLF seeks to give practical expression to this year's theme for the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, "I will never forget you" — reminding seniors that they remain cherished, remembered and very much a part of the life of the Church.

Going deeper into the Word of God

Francis Leong

KUANTAN: More than 40 parishioners gathered at the Church of St Thomas the Apostle on August 1 for a six-hour *Bible Encounter* formation session aimed at deepening their understanding and appreciation of sacred Scripture.

The formation was facilitated by Sr Margarete Sta Maria FdCC, who led participants beyond simply reading the Bible towards understanding Scripture within the life, faith and tradition of the Church.

Beginning with an introduction to the Bible, Sr Margarete explored its origins, purpose and importance in the Christian life. She reminded participants that the Bible is not merely a collection of ancient writings but the living Word of God, through which He continues to speak to His people.



Reading Scripture, therefore, is not simply an intellectual exercise, but an encounter with God and an invitation to allow His Word to shape one's life.

A significant part of the formation focused on *Dei Verbum*, the Second Vatican Council's dogmatic constitution on Divine Revelation. Participants explored how God reveals Himself to humanity and

how this revelation is received and handed on through sacred Scripture and sacred Tradition.

The session also examined the relationship between Scripture, Tradition and the teaching ministry of the Church, as well as the Canon of the Bible and how its books came to be recognised as sacred Scripture. These topics provided participants with a clearer understanding of why

Catholics read and interpret the Bible within the faith and Tradition of the Church.

The afternoon concluded with a reflection on Creation and Sin, based on the Book of Genesis. Participants were invited to look beyond the familiar biblical accounts and reflect on what they reveal about God's love for creation, human dignity and freedom, sin, and

humanity's relationship with God.

The formation was particularly relevant to those participating in the parish's 100-Week Bible Course, which has been helping parishioners read Scripture more systematically and discover its richness. The session enabled them to connect their ongoing study of the Bible with the wider teachings of the Church.

Through her clear, engaging, and practical presentation, Sr Margarete encouraged participants not only to study Scripture but also to pray with it and allow the Word of God to take root in their daily lives.

Ultimately, the formation offered a simple but important reminder: knowing Scripture is not an end in itself. The deeper invitation is to encounter the God Who speaks through His Word — and to allow that encounter to gradually transform the way we live.

Bible month inspires parishioners to live God's Word

PORT DICKSON: Sacred Scripture moved from the lectern into the homes and daily lives of parishioners at the Church of the Immaculate Conception during its month-long celebration of Bible Month 2026 in July.

Organised by the parish Bible Ministry, the celebration centred on the theme, *Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path* (Psalm 119:105), with liturgical celebrations, Scripture formation and activities involving parishioners of all ages.

The month began with buntings bearing the theme verse displayed around the church, inviting parishioners to reflect on the place of God's Word in their lives.

On the second Sunday, the Holy Bible was solemnly enthroned, with a lamp placed beside it symbolising Christ, the Light of the World, and the Word that guides His people.

In his homily, parish priest Fr Edwin Peter encouraged the faithful to move beyond simply hearing the Scripture readings proclaimed at Mass.

"Open your Bible or Bible app during Mass, follow the readings attentively, and spend a few moments reflecting on what God is saying to

you," he said. "The Word of God becomes alive when we listen with our hearts."

At the end of each Mass, Fr Edwin blessed Bibles brought by parishioners and encouraged them to make Scripture reading part of their daily lives.

The third Sunday focused on the call to "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22). Parish youth led a Scripture procession accompanied by candle bearers, while parishioners from different generations placed their handprints on a commemorative bunting as a sign of their commitment to receive, live and proclaim God's Word.

Fr Edwin also challenged Catholic families to give the Bible a central place in their homes.

"Enthroned the Bible in your homes," he urged. "Let every family gather regularly around God's Word. When families pray together, Christ Himself becomes the centre of family life."

The Masses concluded with a Bible Prayer of Commitment, renewing the congregation's pledge to become faithful witnesses of the Gospel.

Bible Month culminated with the parish's *Grandparents' Day* celebra-

tion on the fourth Sunday. Inspired by Psalm 145:4, "One generation shall praise your works to another," the celebration highlighted the important role grandparents play in passing on the Catholic faith.

In a touching gesture, grandchildren wrote prayers of thanksgiving for their grandparents on a large prayer canvas. Grandparents also received specially designed prayer cards in appreciation of their witness of faith.

The Bible Ministry also organised activities to make Scripture accessible and engaging. Altar servers took part in an interactive Bible quiz, while members of the Prajurit (Army) community participated in a Bahasa Malaysia Bible quiz. Winners received Bibles to encourage continued reading and reflection.

A Bible formation session led by Fr Surain Durairaj explored the Book of Job and the mystery of suffering. Reflecting on Job's steadfast faith, Fr Surain reminded participants that suffering does not diminish God's love or presence.

"The Book of Job teaches us that even when we cannot understand our suffering, we can continue to trust God's faithfulness," he said. "Faith is not built on having all the answers but on believing that God remains with us through every trial."

As Bible Month drew to a close, the Bible Ministry expressed the hope that its message would continue well beyond July, inspiring parishioners to read, pray and live God's Word each day.

The month served as a reminder that sacred Scripture is not simply a book to be read, but the living Word that transforms hearts, strengthens families and guides the Church's mission.

The challenge now is to carry that Word beyond Bible Month — becoming not only hearers but doers, allowing it to remain "a lamp for our feet and a light for our path."

Clara Guzman



A Cross, a journey and a new generation

KUALA LUMPUR: For several days, the Cross became a teacher. As the Church of St Anthony, Pudu welcomed the *Perjalanan Salib* from August 6 to 11, its young faithful were given an opportunity not simply to learn about the Malaysia Pastoral Convention (MPC2026), but to discover that they, too, have a place in the journey of the Church in Malaysia.

Through creative and interactive stations prepared by their catechists, the children explored what MPC 2026 is about and, importantly, why it matters. They were introduced to a Church that is called to celebrate, listen and walk together — clergy, religious and laity, young and old — discerning how God is calling the Catholic community in Malaysia to live its faith and mission today.

The *Perjalanan Salib* offered a powerful symbol of that journey. The nine crosses travelling through the nine dioceses of Malaysia represent communities separated by geography, language and culture, yet united by one faith and one mission. Ultimately, they remind the faithful that although our experiences may be different, we belong to one Body of Christ.

The children were also introduced to the four pastoral areas at the heart of MPC2026 — Family, Church, Society and Ecology.

Through engaging activities, they reflected on the family as the first place where faith is encountered and lived; the Church as a community

where everyone is called to participate and serve; society as the place where Christians are called to be witnesses of justice, peace, compassion and harmony; and ecology as God's creation entrusted to our care.

Perhaps the most important lesson, however, was one that could not be contained in any activity or station: the future of the Church is not something that begins when these children become adults. They are already part of the Church today.

Their questions matter. Their faith matters. Their voices matter. And the values planted in them now — faith, compassion, responsibility, care for creation and concern for others — will shape the kind of Church and society they help build tomorrow.

The parish expressed its gratitude to the teachers and all who contributed their time and creativity to make the experience meaningful for the children.

As the *Perjalanan Salib* continues its journey, may it leave behind something deeper than memories and photographs. May it awaken in young and old alike a renewed desire to walk with Christ and with one another.

And may these young hearts remind the whole Church that MPC 2026 is not simply an event we are preparing to attend. It is an invitation to become, together, the Church Christ is calling us to be — in our families, our parishes, our society and in our care for our common home.



A parishioner placing her handprint on the commemorative bunting.

Five churches unite through badminton fellowship

Gabriel Johnny

PETALING JAYA: Badminton became a bridge between Christian communities on August 8 as five churches came together for the *Second Inter-church Badminton Fellowship 2026*, combining friendly competition with an opportunity to strengthen friendships across church boundaries.

The event was organised by the Church of Our Lady of Fatima (OLF), Brickfields, with the support of parish administrator Fr Andrew Manickam, together with the YMCA.

Participating churches were the Church of the Holy Rosary, Brickfields; Church of Jesus Caritas, Kepong; Tamil Methodist Church, Kuala Lumpur; Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya; and OLF.

Held at Bukit Bintang Secondary Boys School in Petaling Jaya, the fellowship brought together more than 50 participants and volunteers. The team competition comprised



Men's Doubles, Women's Doubles and Mixed Doubles.

The initiative builds on the inaugural Inter-church Badminton Fellowship organised by the YMCA in 2024, which sought to bring Christians from different churches together through sport.

Throughout the day, the badminton court became a meeting place where participants could compete, laugh and get to know one another

beyond their respective church communities. While there was plenty of determination on court, the emphasis remained on camaraderie, friendship and fellowship.

Jesus Caritas emerged as the overall champion, with St Francis Xavier, finishing second and OLF taking third place.

The organisers expressed their appreciation to the participating churches, players, volunteers



and supporters who contributed towards the success of the event. Special thanks were also extended to the YMCA for sponsoring lunch and supporting the initiative.

Participants welcomed the opportunity to meet fellow Christians in a relaxed and enjoyable setting and expressed hope that the fellowship would continue next year.

The *Inter-church Badminton Fellowship* showed how something as simple as sports can create opportunities for encounter and friendship. By playing together, sharing a meal and getting to know one another, Christians from different communities experienced, in a simple but meaningful way, the unity they share in Christ

Sports Day celebrates inclusion, teamwork and community spirit

PETALING JAYA: Cheers, laughter and a spirit of togetherness filled Cheng Moh Field in PJ Old Town on August 1 as Pusat Jagaan Istimewa Nathanael held its Annual Sports Day 2026, bringing together students, parents, teachers, volunteers and supporters.

The centre, under the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development's Ministry for Special Needs, welcomed 25 participants for a morning of sporting activities, with about 60 people gathering to support and encourage them. AOHD acting director Aaron Koh was also present to share in the celebration.

The Sports Day was organised by Gunavathi Thurchinamuthy, coordinator of Pusat Jagaan Istimewa Nathanael, together with a dedicat-



ed team of teachers and volunteers who worked to ensure a safe, enjoyable and memorable experience for all.

The programme began with a parade and the singing of the national anthem, *Negaraku*, followed by an opening prayer and welcoming remarks. Participants, proudly

representing their respective team colours, then took part in a series of telematch events designed to encourage teamwork, communication and cooperation.

Individual events, including running and javelin throw, allowed participants to put their abilities to the test and demonstrate deter-

mination and perseverance. A particularly heartwarming part of the morning was the parents' games, as mothers and fathers enthusiastically joined in the fun, adding to the sense of family and community.

Beyond competition and medals, the Annual Sports Day was an opportunity to celebrate inclu-

sion, confidence and the abilities of every participant. For the children and individuals with special needs served by the Ministry for Special Needs, activities such as these provide opportunities to develop social and motor skills, build confidence, experience teamwork and, importantly, enjoy the simple pleasure of taking part alongside others.

The event concluded with a medal presentation, with Aaron presenting medals to the participants in recognition of their efforts, sportsmanship and perseverance.

Ultimately, the day was not about who ran the fastest or threw the furthest. Every participant had stepped forward, taken part and given their best — and that was an achievement worth celebrating.

CHERAS: The shuttlecocks flew, the competition was keen and the cheers rang across the courts, but the biggest win of the day was not measured by trophies. At the *Fourth Annual BEC Inter-Zone Badminton Tournament 2026*, parishioners of the Church of St Francis of Assisi (SFA) discovered once again how sports can bring people together and strengthen the bonds of a parish family.

Held at Tops Arena, Empire Bandar Damai Perdana, Cheras, the tournament brought together members from different BEC Zones for a day of friendly competition, fellowship and sportsmanship.

Parish priest, Fr Paul Cheong OFMCap, officially launched the tournament and led participants in the opening prayer. His presence was a reminder that, while players came ready to compete, the gathering also offered an opportunity to build

BECs rally together on and off the court



friendships and strengthen relationships across the BECs.

Participants of different age groups competed in the singles and doubles

categories, displaying skill and determination while encouraging and respecting one another on and off the court.

Zone Understanding emerged as the overall Inter-Zone Champion 2026, reflecting the team's strong participation, commitment and teamwork. Champions and runners-up received their prizes, but the spirit of camaraderie shared throughout the tournament ensured that everyone had something to take home from the day.

The smooth running of the tournament was made possible by many hands working behind the scenes. Chief umpire David Kurian, was thanked for his leadership and coordination, while appreciation was also extended to all umpires, including those from the Church of the Sacred Heart, for ensuring that the matches were conducted fairly and professionally.

The organising team, BEC leaders, Zone representatives, volunteers, families and supporters were also acknowledged for their contributions.

For BECCOT Ignite Youth lead, Calvina Maria, who was part of the organising effort, the experience was itself a lesson in community and service.

"Organising an event like this reminded me that we can achieve so much when we work together, support one another and serve with a willing heart," she said.

When the final shuttlecock had fallen, and the courts grew quiet, what remained were the friendships strengthened and the memories created.

The trophies may mark who won the tournament, but its lasting victory was seeing different BEC Zones play, serve and grow together as one parish family.

Adeline Teh

PENANG: Close to 40 current and aspiring parish prayer group leaders from Kedah, Penang and Perak gathered at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit on August 1 for a full-day formation programme on *Understanding Healing and Deliverance*.

Organised by the CHARIS Penang Diocese Service of Communion, the programme aimed to equip participants with a deeper understanding of healing and deliverance ministry and prepare them to serve with greater discernment, compassion and responsibility.

Throughout the day, the presenters from the CHARIS Penang Diocese core team, Stephen Rodrigues, *pic*, and Leoreen Heah Rodrigues, expounded on the aspects of this ministry using Scripture and stories from the Bible. Drawing from multiple real-life encounters spanning more than thirty years, they illustrated key principles and shared snippets of germane experiences that further validated the relevance and need for this ministry today.

The first half of the day kicked off with a deep dive into Scripture regarding the

CHARIS equips leaders for healing and deliverance

ministry of Jesus in preaching, healing and deliverance, referencing Luke 4:18 where Jesus proclaims, "The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, for He has anointed Me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free." This ministry of healing and deliverance was further handed on to the Apostles, the Seventy and thereafter to us, His Church, today.

Scripture and case studies from the Gospels, the *Acts of the Apostles* as well as incidences today were used to explain how people can be afflicted, the areas of the affliction, manifestations, the torment they endure and, in many cases, how urgently they seek healing and deliverance. It was strongly expressed that

not all symptoms are the result of spiritual affliction and that proper medical consultation and care should first be explored before seeking prayers for healing and deliverance.

During the second half of the day after lunch, the formation focused on the practicalities of correctly understanding the situation of someone seeking help and the gathering of useful background information. Preparation of the person seeking prayers for healing and deliverance further includes the process of repentance and renunciation, going for Confession and Holy Mass, meditating on relevant Bible verses, and growing in faith in the powerful Name of Jesus Christ. Accompanying team members need to be compassionate encouragers and sharers of hope to the person who may be in despair.

Thereafter, there was guidance on how team members should prepare for and conduct prayers of healing and deliverance under the direction of an experienced team leader. Practical tips, how-to pointers and

cautionary notes were also shared based on learning from past cases.

The final section of the day emphasised the reminders to prayer groups that praying and ministering should not be alone and that members are to work in teams. The various stages of affliction were illustrated, and teams were informed that they need to know their limits and to refer cases accordingly when needed.

CHARIS Penang Diocese works in alignment with the Penang Diocese Healing & Deliverance Ministry led by Deacon Charles Lazaroo, who carved out time to be present during this formation programme. He affirmed the team's effort to educate and equip leaders with foundational knowledge and guidance for this ministry.

Through feedback received, participants expressed confidence, better preparedness and newly inspired readiness to help others needing healing and deliverance when situations present themselves.



The art of Christ-like listening

KUALA LUMPUR: In a world where people are often quick to speak, advise, respond or judge, participants at a two-day seminar were invited to rediscover something increasingly rare: the art of truly listening.

The *Christ-like Listening* seminar, organised by the Archdiocesan Mission of New Evangelisation for Christ (AMNEC), was held on August 8 and 9 at the newly established AMNEC Hub at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jalan Peel.

Led by Maltese priest, missionary, retreat leader and author Fr Dominic Sultana, the seminar brought together participants from different parishes and ministries for two days of learning, reflection, prayer and fellowship.

The seminar focused on an essential but sometimes overlooked aspect of evangelisation and pastoral ministry — the ability to listen deeply, accompany others wisely and foster meaningful conversations about faith.

Participants were encouraged to discern where God may already be at work in an-

other person's life, ask questions that open hearts, respect healthy boundaries and allow conversations to lead towards a deeper encounter with Christ.

Through talks, reflections, practical exercises and group sharing, participants explored what it means to develop a Christ-like attitude towards listening. Genuine listening, they learnt, requires presence, empathy, patience and openness — without immediately trying to provide answers or "fix" the other person.

The seminar also highlighted the close relationship between listening and evangelisation. Before sharing the Good News, Christians must first be willing to hear another person's story. Attentive and non-judgemental listening can create the space in which a person feels welcomed, valued and loved.

One of the key lessons was simple: "Listen to hear, not listen to speak."

Participants were also introduced to the



Participants listening attentively to Fr Dominic Sultana.

importance of the "sacred pause" — moments of silence during a conversation that need not be hurriedly filled with words.

"Sacred pauses are not empty; they are filled with God's presence," participants were reminded. Such moments allow room for the Holy Spirit to work, both in the person speaking and the one listening.

Christ-like listening, therefore, is not merely a communication technique. It is a

way of loving. When Christians listen with the heart of Christ, they make room for another person to be heard and for God to be encountered.

The seminar concluded with a renewed call to become disciples who proclaim the Gospel not only through what they say, but also through their presence, compassion and willingness to listen. **Veronica and Andrew Lim**

Letters to Editor

Dear Editor,

I was quite surprised to read the recent letter in *HERALD* (July 26, 2026) calling for Latin to be included in our English-language Masses. While I respect the writer's appreciation of Latin and its place in our Catholic tradition, I would like to offer a different perspective.

I attended a Mass recently where parts of the liturgy were sung in Latin. I must admit that I came away feeling somewhat irritated and, more importantly, alienated from the celebration. This experience made me reflect on whether introducing Latin into an English Mass would really help our congregations participate more fully in the Eucharist.

I grew up with Latin in the Mass. As altar boys in the 1960s, we had to respond to the prayers in Latin. We also sang the *Gloria* and *Pater Noster* in Latin. So Latin is cer-

tainly not unfamiliar to me, and I can appreciate its beauty and its rich place in our Catholic heritage.

But I wonder: what is the purpose of bringing Latin into a Mass that is otherwise celebrated in English?

There is no doubt that Latin can sound beautiful, particularly when sung by a good choir. However, in my experience, it can sometimes turn the liturgy into a musical dialogue between the priest and the choir, while the rest of the congregation struggles to follow the words. Some try to imitate the singing; others simply listen or look around, unsure of what to do.

The danger is that the congregation becomes an audience rather than participants.

The Mass is not a concert or a performance. It is the prayer and worship of the whole community. We come together to listen to God's Word, to pray, to give thanks and to participate in the Eucharistic cel-

ebration. The language used in the liturgy should help people enter into that experience rather than create another barrier.

This is especially important when we think about our young people and children. Many are already finding it difficult to connect with the Church. If parts of the Mass are conducted in a language they do not understand, we risk making the liturgy feel even more distant and unfamiliar.

I am not suggesting that Latin has no place in our worship. There are occasions when its use can be both beautiful and meaningful. I have always enjoyed hearing *Tantum Ergo* sung in Latin. Yet, for me, it can be even more meaningful when we sing *Down in Adoration* in a language that everyone understands and can participate in wholeheartedly.

Tradition certainly has an important place in the Church. But tradition should serve the purpose of bringing people closer to

God and closer to one another. We should be careful not to allow our appreciation of beautiful traditions to unintentionally turn the congregation into spectators.

For me, the question is therefore not whether Latin is beautiful. It certainly is. The question is whether its use in an English Mass helps the whole congregation to pray, understand and participate more fully.

I sincerely hope that, in considering any proposal to introduce more Latin into our English Masses, our Church leaders will place the active and meaningful participation of the entire congregation at the heart of the decision.

After all, the beauty of the Mass is not simply in what we hear. It is in what we experience, pray and celebrate together.

Vincent Raj
via email



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Philippine bishops mandate Creation Day in all parishes

MANILA: The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has directed every parish and ecclesial community in the country to celebrate Creation Day on September 6, warning that the worsening ecological crisis is having deadly consequences for vulnerable communities.

In a pastoral letter dated August 12, the CBCP reiterated its instruction that Creation Day, also known as the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, be observed on the first Sunday of September each year.

"All parishes and ecclesial communities in the Philippines shall celebrate 'Creation Day' on the first Sunday of September each year," the bishops said.

Parishes and communities have also been directed to use the formulary and biblical readings of the newly approved *Missa pro custodia creationis* instead of the usual Sunday in Ordinary Time liturgy.

The letter was signed by Archbishop David William V. Antonio of Nueva Segovia, chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Liturgy, and Bishop Gerardo A. Alminaza of San Carlos, bishop in charge of integral ecology under the Episcopal Commission on Social Action, Justice and Peace.

The bishops said the ecological crisis has become an increasingly urgent pastoral concern because of its impact on vulnerable com-



File photo of climate activists and environmental advocates led by the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PMCJ) and the Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD) march around the Elliptical Road in Quezon City. (LiCAS News/Jire Carreon)

munities.

"We are gravely distressed about the ever-deepening urgency of this issue and the deadly impacts it has on the most vulnerable people of our communities," they said.

Recalling the CBCP's 2003 warning that the desecration of God's creation "is a matter of life and death", the bishops expressed alarm over the destruction of local ecosystems and a global climate emergency that continues to batter the Philippine islands with increasingly intense typhoons.

They also asked pointedly: "How is it possible that the appeals of *Laudato Si'* and *Laudate Deum* continue to be ignored?"

The bishops described the Creation Day liturgy as an opportunity for "repentance, lamentation, thanksgiving, and renewed 'ecological conversion'" that should continue throughout the Season of Creation.

Updated translations of the new Mass formulary and lectionary texts will be introduced this year, with currently available language versions authorised for temporary use until fi-

nal confirmation is completed.

The bishops stressed that Creation Day is not simply an environmental observance but an expression of Christian faith in God as Creator. Citing St Paul's *Letter to the Colossians*, they recalled that in Christ "were created all things in heaven and on earth" and that all things were created through Him and for Him.

The observance, sometimes referred to as the "Feast of Creation in Christ", has roots in the Eastern Christian tradition and also carries an ecumenical dimension, with Christian Churches around the world marking the Season of Creation.

In 1989, Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I proclaimed September 1 a day of prayer for creation in the Orthodox Church. In 2015, Pope Francis established September 1 as the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation for the Catholic Church, with the Season of Creation continuing until October 4, the feast of St Francis of Assisi.

"May our liturgical celebrations of this holy day bear abundant fruit in all parishes across the Philippines, praising God as Creator and embodying the prophetic vision of *Laudato Si'*," the bishops said.

They expressed hope that the celebration would help Catholics "rediscover the centrality of Creation in our Christian faith and everyday life". **LiCAS News**

New book celebrates 25 years of Catholic Women's Ministry in Thailand

BANGKOK: A new book documenting 25 years of Catholic women's ministry in Thailand is highlighting how women have quietly transformed families and communities through service, advocacy and social outreach.

Titled *Look, My Lady!*, the book was launched at a Catholic bookstore in Bangkok by the Women's Section of the Catholic Committee for Social Development and Catholic Social Communication Thailand. Dozens attended the event, while hundreds joined online.

The publication traces the work of the Women's Section of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand (CBCT) across the country's 11 dioceses and the Thai Catholic Women's Association.

Dr Chantana Ungchusak, director of the CBCT Women's Section, said the book seeks both to preserve the organisation's history and give greater visibility to women whose work has brought change at the grassroots.

"This is not just a record of activities," she said. "It is a historical testimony to how Catholic women have quietly transformed families, villages, and society."

The book combines Church teaching on the dignity and vocation of women with stories drawn from communities across Thailand. Catholic writers spent time listening to women and documenting their experiences through short stories, features, documentaries and essays.

Catholic Social Communication Thailand executive director Fr Joseph Anucha Chaiyadej said the title was inspired by the Eighth Station of the Cross, where Jesus consoles the women of Jerusalem.

He said it carries a message for women who devote themselves to caring for others: to recognise their own dignity and value and remember to care for themselves as well.

Contributing writers said their encounters with women working among vulnerable communities deepened their understanding of Catholic social ministry. Their stories include women confronting poverty and marginalisation, efforts against human trafficking, ministry to prisoners and their children, and the sacrifices of earlier generations of Catholic social workers. **LiCAS News**



Speakers discuss "Look, My Lady!" during its launch at a Catholic bookstore in Bangkok. (LiCAS News/CSCT)



Over 5,000 join India's National March for Life

CHENNAI: Over 5,000 people gathered at Stella Maris College in Chennai on August 9 for India's fifth National March for Life, highlighting a growing grassroots Catholic movement promoting the protection of human life.

Hosted by the Archdiocese of Madras-Mylapore and organised by CHARIS India under the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI), the gathering brought together families, students, lay volunteers, clergy and Church leaders from across the country.

A significant development this year was the establishment of Pro-Life Cells in every parish of the host archdiocese. The initiative creates a network of trained lay volunteers to accompany families and promote awareness of the dignity and protection of human life at the parish level.

Archbishop Francis Kalist of Pondicherry-Cuddalore, episcopal adviser to CHARIS India and CBCI Pro-Life in-charge, said the movement had been driven largely by lay Catholics.

Having guided the March since its inception five years ago, he recalled that families and lay volunteers had raised concerns about life issues even before they were formally discussed within the CBCI.

Cardinal Antony Poola, Archbishop of Hyderabad and CBCI president, said the Church has a responsibility to defend those unable to speak for themselves, particularly unborn children and elderly people vulner-

able to euthanasia.

He urged dioceses and Catholic institutions to ensure that their commitment to protecting life is translated into sustained action.

Also present were Archbishop George Antonysamy of Madras-Mylapore, president of the Tamil Nadu Bishops' Council; Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly Speaker J.C.D. Prabhakar; and Dr Paul Dhinakaran of Jesus Calls Ministry.

Activities included a five-kilometre Run for Life near Marina Beach, a Pro-Life Exhibition featuring organisations involved in advocacy and family support, and a seminar attended by thousands of young people.

The gathering concluded with Mass offered in remembrance of children lost to abortion and as an expression of renewed commitment to protecting human life.

At the close of the event, the National March for Life banner and an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe were handed to representatives of the Archdiocese of Hyderabad and the Telugu Catholic Bishops' Council.

Hyderabad will host the sixth National March for Life on August 8 and 9, 2027.

Five years after the initiative began, organisers say its focus is increasingly moving beyond an annual national gathering towards sustained action in parishes, families and communities — placing lay Catholics at the heart of building a culture that values and protects life. **Vatican News**

Pope calls religious to 'wake up the world'

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV has called on women and men religious to counter the "globalisation of indifference and powerlessness" through the love and mercy of Christ, while urging them to help a new generation discover God's call to consecrated life.

In a video message marking the 70th anniversary of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) in the United States, the Pope offered his "prayerful good wishes" to participants gathered for its 2026 Annual Assembly.

Reflecting on the assembly's theme, *Many Charisms, One Spirit, One Call*, Pope Leo emphasised the need to foster unity among religious institutes despite their different histories, communities, charisms and missions.

"All Christians are called to be builders of Christ's communion, formed in a synodal Church in which everyone cooperates in the same mission according to their own charism and ministry," he said.

The Pope said religious, shaped by their experience of community life, are called to become "experts in synodality" and to discern together where the Holy Spirit is leading consecrated life.

The diversity of charisms given by the Spirit throughout history, he added, enables consecrated people to "make the mission and mystery of the Church visible in our world."

Pope Leo expressed gratitude for the contribution of religious institutes to evangelisation, education and care for the poor, stress-



Participants of the 2026 Annual Assembly marking the 70th anniversary of the founding of the "Leadership Conference of Women Religious" in the United States. (LCWR photo)

ing that their distinctive charisms remain vital to the Church's mission.

"The Church needs you and all of the diversity and richness of the forms of consecration and ministry that you represent," he said. Through the witness of lives centred on Jesus, religious can "contribute to waking up the world."

Such witness, he said, can confront the "globalisation of indifference and of powerlessness with the remedy of Christ's love and mercy."

Turning to vocations, Pope Leo said fostering new religious vocations remains essential to the future of consecrated life. Despite increasing secularisation, he pointed to a continuing and even "growing hunger for God,"

particularly among young people rediscovering their faith.

He therefore urged religious communities to engage young people personally and help them recognise God's call.

"Seek ways to introduce them to your way of life, and help them to hear the voice of the Lord, who speaks to us in the depths of our hearts," he said.

Young people, the Pope added, should be encouraged to respond courageously to God and discover the joy that comes from following His call.

Concluding his message, Pope Leo assured participants of his prayers and entrusted the assembly and the communities they represent to the intercession of Mary. **Vatican News**

Zanzibar Cup: Riding the winds of peace

ZANZIBAR, Tanzania: Kitesurfers from different nations will take to the waters off Zanzibar on August 23 for the sixth edition of the Zanzibar Cup, an international race and regatta that seeks to turn sporting competition into an opportunity for peace, fraternity and fellowship.

Organised by Italian physician Dr Stefano Conte in partnership with the Tanzanian authorities, the event brings athletes together not simply to compete, but to promote sportsmanship, solidarity and friendship

across cultures and nationalities.

Conte's connection with Zanzibar began in 2010, when he travelled to the Tanzanian archipelago on what was initially a "working holiday". He provided free medical care to local communities while pursuing his passion for kitesurfing, drawn by Zanzibar's warm waters, steady winds and coral reef-protected coastline.

Over time, he began asking how he could contribute to the island beyond his medical work. The answer was the Zanzibar Cup

— an international competition that could showcase Zanzibar as a sporting destination while creating opportunities for local communities through tourism and international cooperation.

Drawing on his experience with the Italian Sailing Federation, Conte proposed Zanzibar's first international kitesurfing competition. The government supported the initiative and became a partner in the project.

The inaugural event in January 2024 attracted about 20 competitors and one sponsor. Since then, it has grown to draw some 40 to 50 athletes and between 10 and 15 sponsors, while gaining greater international visibility.

For Conte, however, the Zanzibar Cup is not simply about who crosses the finish line first.

Speaking to *Vatican Radio*, he described sports as a universal language capable of bringing people together and helping them appreciate different cultures and backgrounds. Inspired by the messages of Pope Francis and Pope Leo XIV, he has sought to build the competition around peace, fraternity, respect and solidarity.

His guiding principle is simple: "Love

your brothers and sisters as you would like them to love you." Conte believes embracing such an attitude could help create a more peaceful world.

Sports, he said, also teaches values that extend beyond competition — discipline, respect for rules, perseverance and humility. Drawing on his experience in paediatric cardiac surgery, Conte recalled that some of the finest surgeons he encountered were also among the most humble, reinforcing his belief that genuine competence does not require arrogance or self-promotion.

Kitesurfing combines elements of surfing and sailing, with riders standing on boards while propelled across the water by large controllable kites. Conte stressed that although the sport carries risks when practised incorrectly, it can be safely enjoyed with proper instruction and suitable conditions.

Conte hopes the competition will continue developing into a major international sporting event without losing the purpose that inspired it: using sport to build bridges rather than barriers between people.

That vision is summed up in the event's motto, "One for all, all for one" — a reminder, Conte said, that everyone shares a responsibility to support one another and work towards a more peaceful and united world.

Vatican News



A highlight during the Zanzibar Cup 2024.

HarperCollins expands Catholic publishing with new imprint

NASHVILLE, USA: HarperCollins Christian Publishing (HCCP) has launched Harper Catholic, a new imprint aimed at expanding its publishing for Catholic readers, authors, parishes, booksellers and organisations.

Announced on August 10, the imprint will be led by associate publisher Kristi McDonald, *pic*, who brings over 15 years of experience in Catholic publishing, including 14 years at Ave Maria Press.

McDonald said the launch comes as HCCP recognises both the changing needs of Catholic readers and opportunities to serve the Church in the United States and globally.

"We're seeing new converts coming into the Church, Catholics rediscovering their



faith, and readers at every stage looking for resources that can help them go deeper," she told *EWTN News*.

That growing spiritual interest, she said, has created a need for books that can deepen faith, address meaningful questions and accompany Catholics in everyday life.

Harper Catholic builds on the success of Catholic Bible Press, HCCP's first Catholic imprint, which publishes editions including the New

Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition and the New American Bible, Revised Edition.

According to McDonald, Catholic Bible Press has experienced strong growth over the past six years, demonstrating demand for quality Catholic resources.

"Harper Catholic builds on that strong foundation by expanding our Catholic publishing programme beyond Bibles," she said.

The new imprint plans to publish across a range of areas, including spiritual classics, theology, devotionals, memoirs, cultural engagement and works by contemporary Catholic voices.

McDonald said the aim is to produce books that are "accessible, faithful, relevant, and intellectually substantial" for Catholics of different generations and at various stages of their spiritual lives.

"The goal is to reflect something of the richness and breadth of Catholicism itself while remaining attentive to the real questions and spiritual longings people are bringing to their faith today," she said.

At the heart of the venture, McDonald added, is a desire "to share the truth and beauty of the Catholic faith with the world

through powerful writing and authentic, trustworthy voices."

Harper Catholic also hopes to provide a home for established and emerging Catholic authors while offering readers resources that help them deepen their relationship with God, participate more fully in sacramental life and encounter Christ in everyday experience.

McDonald described the imprint as a long-term commitment by HCCP to Catholic publishing.

"The success of Catholic Bible Press has given us a strong foundation and shown us what is possible when we serve Catholic readers with excellence and intentionality," she said.

Harper Catholic is currently accepting proposals from authors and agents, with its first acquisitions and publishing plans expected to be announced in the coming months. **EWTN**



Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Assembly, 2025



Sarawak Regional Pastoral Assembly, 2024



Perhimpunan Pastoral Wilayah Sabah, 2025

The journey is not to Sibü, but beyond it

Patricia Pereira

The Malaysia Pastoral Convention (MPC2026), to be held in Sibü from Sept 9 to 13, has been years in the making. Across the nine dioceses of Malaysia, the journey has involved assemblies, conversations, prayer, listening and discernment, all leading towards this historic gathering of the Malaysian Church.

Yet Sibü was never meant to be the destination.

Only weeks earlier, bishops and delegates from across Asia gathered in Jakarta for the 12th Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) under the theme, *The Call to Synodal Conversion and the Mission to Be Bridges and Bridge-Builders in Asia*.

In many ways, Jakarta has become a providential prelude to Sibü. Through prayer, silence, Conversation in the Spirit and communal discernment, participants sought to experience the synodality they were discussing.

That distinction matters because it is possible to organise meetings without becoming a listening Church, just as it is possible to produce pastoral plans without becoming more pastoral. We can even hold consultations while quietly hoping that no one says anything that challenges our own ideas.

As Fr Dr Clarence Devadass, Associate Secretary of the FABC and Executive Secretary of its Commission for Synodality, observed during the Jakarta assembly, synodality must become "a way of life, not another programme".

Perhaps those words capture both the promise and the challenge facing the Malaysian Church as MPC2026 approaches.

Why should MPC2026 matter to us?

Some Catholics may understandably wonder what MPC2026 has to do with them. Will it simply produce another document? Will parish life continue as before? Will ordinary Catholics notice any difference?

They are fair questions, but perhaps there is a deeper one to ask: What is the Holy Spirit already trying to do among us?

MPC2026 is not simply an event for those travelling to Sibü. It is part of a journey that has involved Catholics across the country, and it concerns every baptised person.

Whether we are parents raising children, young adults searching for purpose, parish volunteers, clergy, religious, professionals,

students, retirees or someone who quietly occupies the same pew every Sunday, this journey matters because the Church's mission belongs to all of us.

Synodality is often described as "walking together", but this involves learning to walk at one another's pace, refusing to leave behind those who struggle to keep up and recognising that the person beside us may see something we have overlooked.

That requires conversion, and the conversion required begins with ourselves.

Am I prepared to admit that I do not always listen as well as I imagine? Can I recognise that someone with whom I disagree may also carry a part of God's truth? Am I willing to exchange certainty for discernment, control for trust and personal preference for the common good?

These questions are not reserved for bishops, priests or parish leaders. They belong to all of us because a synodal Church can only emerge when its people are willing to listen, learn and be changed.

Building bridges in Malaysia

The FABC's call to become bridge-builders resonates deeply in Malaysia.

Our Church speaks many languages and embraces many cultures. It stretches from large urban parishes in Peninsular Malaysia to longhouses and *kampung* communities in Sabah and Sarawak. Some Catholics worship in magnificent cathedrals, while others gather in simple mission chapels. Yet every Sunday we proclaim the same Creed, receive the same Eucharist and belong to the same Body of Christ.

Perhaps bridge-building, therefore, is something we must continually practise within the Church itself before we can credibly offer it to the wider world.

We build bridges when clergy and laity recognise one another as partners in mission, when young people are trusted and given genuine responsibility, and when persons with disabilities are welcomed for the gifts they bring. We build them when migrants, indigenous communities and those on the margins are recognised not simply as recipients of ministry, but as fellow disciples and missionaries.

A bridge cannot be built from only one side. Someone must always be willing to take the first step.

Four pillars, one mission

The four pillars of MPC2026 — Family,

Church, Society and Ecology — show why this journey touches every one of us. They are the places where Christian discipleship is lived every day.

Family is where faith first takes root. Long before children encounter formal catechesis, they learn what Christianity looks like by watching how the adults around them pray, forgive, love and treat one another. In an age when screens compete with conversation and families face enormous pressures, synodality begins around our own tables when we learn to listen before judging, accompany before criticising and make room for Christ in our relationships.

Church challenges us to become communities where people know that they belong. A synodal parish cannot revolve around a familiar few while everyone else remains a spectator. Clergy and laity, young and old, newcomers and long-serving parishioners all have gifts to bring. Our Basic Ecclesial Communities, ministries and parish councils should become genuine schools of communion where people encounter the living Christ through one another.

Society reminds us that discipleship does not end at the church doors. Malaysia needs Catholics whose faith shapes the way they conduct themselves in workplaces, schools and neighbourhoods. We are called to be people of integrity, compassion and courage who build friendships across racial and religious boundaries, stand alongside those who struggle and defend the dignity of the poor, the migrants and the vulnerable.

Ecology reminds us that creation has also been entrusted to our care. Our rivers, forests, seas and rich biodiversity are gifts to protect for generations yet unborn. Caring for our common home is part of loving God, loving our neighbour and accepting responsibility for those who will inherit the earth after us.

These four pillars are closely connected. Healthy families strengthen the Church, a vibrant Church serves society, a just society respects creation, and caring for creation safeguards families and future generations. Together, they remind us that Christian discipleship cannot be confined within church walls.

The convention begins when it ends

Perhaps the most important question about MPC2026 is not what delegates will bring to Sibü, but what they will bring home.

Will families listen to one another differ-

What will remain when the speeches are over, the delegates return home and MPC2026 becomes part of history? Jakarta's call to synodal conversion challenges the Malaysian Church to ensure that Sibü becomes a catalyst for a deeper way of listening, discerning and living our shared mission.

ently? Will parish councils discern more prayerfully? Will young people be entrusted with real responsibility? Will those who have felt overlooked discover a place for themselves? Will our concern for the poor, for society, and for creation become more visible?

The success of MPC2026 will not ultimately be measured by attendance, photographs, speeches or even the eloquence of its final document. It will be measured months and years later, when people begin to notice that something has quietly changed in the way we are Church.

When the convention concludes on Sept 13, delegates will return to their dioceses, but that is when the real work begins. It will continue in our families, parishes, Basic Ecclesial Communities, workplaces, classrooms and neighbourhoods, wherever Catholics try to listen more deeply, discern more prayerfully and live the Gospel more courageously.

Jakarta has reminded us that synodality is not simply about walking together. It is about allowing Christ to teach us how to walk together.

Sibü gives the Malaysian Church an opportunity to take another important step, but the responsibility cannot be delegated to those who attend the convention. What is discerned in Sibü must eventually find its way into ordinary Catholic life — into the decisions we make, the people we welcome, the voices we listen to and the way we live our faith.

That is why the journey does not end when the final Mass is celebrated and the delegates leave Sibü.

In many ways, that is where it begins.

The destination is a Church renewed by the Holy Spirit: a Church that listens before it speaks, accompanies rather than excludes, builds bridges across differences and recognises that every baptised person has a place in its mission.

Sibü is an important milestone on that road. The journey beyond it belongs to us all.

From crowd to community: 50 years of BECs

Patricia Pereira

Fifty years is long enough for something to become familiar — sometimes, perhaps, too familiar. August 2026 marks the 50th anniversary of Basic Ecclesiastical Communities (BECs) in the Malaysian Church. Yet many lay Catholics, and perhaps even some clergy, may not realise that we have reached this milestone.

There have been no great countdowns and, in many places, perhaps no golden jubilee banners or celebrations. The anniversary could quite easily come and go without many of us noticing.

Perhaps there is something appropriate about that. BECs were never meant to be spectacular. Their story has largely been written quietly in living rooms and neighbourhoods, through visits to the sick, support for grieving families, prayers shared together and the simple act of noticing when somebody has not been around for a while.

But the fact that this anniversary can arrive almost unnoticed should also make us pause. Perhaps BECs have become so familiar that we have stopped asking why they exist.

A golden jubilee should therefore be more than an anniversary to celebrate. It should be an opportunity to remember the dream and ask: After 50 years, have we become the Church that BECs were intended to help us become?

“We are a crowd, not people”

The story takes us back to the historic 1976 *Aggiornamento* of the Church in Peninsular Malaysia, when bishops, priests, religious and laity gathered to discern what kind of Church they were being called to become after the Second Vatican Council.

Decades later, Bishop Emeritus Antony Selvanayagam of Penang recalled the unsettling consensus that emerged from that gathering: “We are a crowd, not people.”

It was a remarkably honest diagnosis. Catholics could gather under one roof every Sunday, receive the Eucharist together and still remain strangers.

Bishop Selvanayagam later reflected that Sunday Mass alone was not enough to sustain a strong and living faith. What keeps faith alive is people caring for and loving one another. He considered the building of communities through BECs so important that he described them as the Church’s “real lifeline”.

Half a century later, that diagnosis still deserves our attention. We can sit beside the same people at Mass for years and never learn their names. We can exchange the Sign of Peace every Sunday yet know nothing about the burdens they carry. We can even belong to several parish WhatsApp groups and still remain strangers.

The challenge of 1976 therefore becomes a question for 2026: Are we still sometimes a

crowd, or have we truly become a people?

Not something we attend, but something we become

For many Catholics, BEC has become part of the rhythm of parish life — prayer gatherings, rosaries, faith-sharing, Christmas celebrations and potluck meals. When someone dies, the BEC often rallies around the grieving family, and when parish information needs to reach people quickly, the network proves invaluable.

These things matter. But there is a danger when BEC becomes simply another activity on the Catholic calendar.

The original vision was much bigger. BEC is not simply something we attend. It is something we become.

Its true measure lies not only in what happens during meetings, but between them. Does someone notice when a parishioner is hospitalised or when an elderly person suddenly disappears from Mass? Does someone recognise when a family is struggling? When a young Catholic drifts away, do we complain that young people are no longer interested, or care enough to listen? Are newcomers welcomed? Can someone wounded by the Church find a community willing to hear the story without judgement?

That is where BEC happens — in the ordinary Christian decision to notice another person.

Who is our neighbour?

After 50 years, we should also ask whether our BECs have sometimes become too inward-looking.

Malaysia is wonderfully diverse. The people beside us may be Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Christian of another tradition or of no particular faith. A BEC can become very good at caring for Catholics while forgetting that the Gospel sends us beyond ourselves.

The elderly Muslim couple nearby who need help are our neighbours. So are the lonely, struggling families, migrants and those living on the margins. If our neighbourhood suffers from neglect, pollution or waste, that too concerns us.

Mission does not always begin somewhere far away. Sometimes it begins across the corridor or three houses down.

Perhaps one measure of a mature BEC is therefore not merely how well its members know one another, but whether the neighbourhood is better because Christians live there.

Synodality at street level

There is something providential about celebrating this golden jubilee now. In recent years, Catholics have become familiar with the language of synodality — communion, participation and mission; listening, discernment and walking together.



Yet

perhaps the Malaysian Church has been carrying the seeds of synodality within its BECs for half a century without always calling it that.

At its best, the BEC is synodality at street level.

People gather around the Word of God and listen to one another. Lay people share their faith and lives, gifts are recognised and responsibilities are shared. The mission of the Church is understood as belonging to every baptised person, not only to the clergy.

The question, then, is not whether BECs remain relevant in a synodal Church, but whether we have fully realised their potential.

That challenge belongs to clergy and laity alike. If BECs become merely convenient parish administrative structures, their ecclesial purpose is diminished. If lay people see them simply as meetings organised by somebody else, the same thing happens.

A communion of communities has to be owned by the whole People of God.

From the neighbourhood to Sibu

This golden jubilee comes barely a month before Catholics, representing the nine dioceses of Malaysia, gather in Sibu for the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026.

We will *Celebrate, Listen and Walk Together*, discerning where God may be leading the Malaysian Church through *Family, Church, Society and Ecology*.

These are big themes, but eventually they have to become ordinary life.

Family becomes real when communities accompany people through the joys and difficulties of family life. Church becomes real when nobody is anonymous and everyone recognises that they have a place and responsibility. Society becomes real when Catholics cross racial, cultural and religious boundaries and stand alongside those on the margins. Ecology becomes real when care for creation enters our everyday choices and neighbourhoods.

MPC2026 may discern nationally, dioceses may establish pastoral directions and parishes may develop programmes, but somebody eventually has to live them.

That somebody is us.

Perhaps BECs can become one of the places where the fruits of Sibu travel from the convention hall into Malaysian homes and neighbourhoods.

The next 50 years

The Malaysia of 2026 is vastly different from that of 1976. People move frequently, families live in condominiums and gated developments, work schedules are demanding, and digital relationships increasingly shape our lives.



In some BECs, another reality is difficult to ignore: the same faithful people have carried the community for years while younger Catholics are often missing.

Our response cannot simply be, “Why don’t young people come?”

A more synodal question would be: Have we listened to why they don’t?

BEC structures may need to evolve. New forms of community may emerge. That should not frighten us. Structures can change; the Gospel purpose cannot.

For beneath all the changes of the past 50 years lies a human need that has not disappeared: we need to belong.

We can have hundreds of contacts in our phones and still be lonely. We can know what is happening thousands of kilometres away while remaining unaware that someone three doors down is struggling. We are constantly connected, yet many people feel unseen.

Against that reality, the BEC carries a quietly radical Christian message: You are not anonymous here. We know your name. We notice when you are missing. Your story matters, your gifts are needed, and when life becomes difficult, you do not have to walk alone.

The dream is not finished

Perhaps, then, August 2026 should not simply be a birthday celebration for BECs. It should also be an examination of conscience.

Fifty years ago, the Malaysian Church recognised that it could not simply gather Catholics into church buildings; it had to build them into communities.

That work remains unfinished.

The greatest tribute we can pay those who began this journey is not merely to remember what they built, but to rediscover what they dreamed: a Church where nobody remains anonymous; where faith travels from altar to home, from home to neighbour, and from neighbour into society; where clergy, religious and laity recognise a shared responsibility for mission; a Church small enough to know your name, yet open enough to welcome the stranger.

The words recalled from 1976 still challenge us: “We are a crowd, not people.”

Fifty years later, perhaps the most meaningful way to celebrate this golden jubilee is to ask: Are we still a crowd, or have we truly become a people?

As the Malaysian Church prepares to *Celebrate, Listen and Walk Together* towards MPC2026, the anniversary of BECs reminds us that walking together does not begin in a convention hall. It begins much closer to home — across the corridor, at the next house or around a dining table.

It begins when somebody notices somebody else.

Fifty years after the journey began, the question is no longer simply whether we still need Basic Ecclesiastical Communities.

It is whether we are willing to become the community they were always meant to create.



The priest who counted his blessings

Fr Robin Andrews (Sept 19, 1937 – Aug 12, 2026)

Patricia Pereira

PENANG: When Fr Robin Andrews was ordained in 1964, he asked God for what seemed to him a generous gift: ten years to serve as a priest. God gave him more than six decades.

On August 12, 2026, Fr Robin passed away at the age of 89, bringing to a close a priestly journey marked by quiet faithfulness, gentle humour, gratitude and a deep love for the people he was called to serve.

Those who knew him remember a gentle, soft-spoken and approachable priest, someone who offered practical wisdom, particularly on family life and relationships, and whose warmth and infectious smile made people feel at ease.

Perhaps he described himself best during his 80th birthday celebration in 2017: "I always wanted to be a simple, humble and happy priest."

Those few words could well serve as a summary of the life he sought to live.

A vocation nurtured at home

Fr Robin traced the beginnings of his vocation to something simple: family prayer and the daily recitation of the Rosary.

Telling his parents that he wanted to enter the seminary was not easy. The family had already given two children to religious life. Yet his parents gave him their blessing

and support, and in 1955, he entered the seminary.

He was ordained a priest on April 12, 1964.

Looking back six decades later, Fr Robin recalled that at his ordination, he had prayed that God would allow him to remain a priest for at least ten years. At the celebration of his 60th sacerdotal anniversary at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Pulau Tikus, on November 13, 2024, he marvelled at how generously that prayer had been answered. Ten years had become 60.

He did not know then how much longer the Lord would give him, but he knew how he wanted to receive whatever remained: with gratitude.

A priest for the people

Fr Robin's priestly ministry took him to numerous communities across the Diocese of Penang.

In 1971, he was appointed parish priest of the Church of St Louis, Taiping, before becoming parish priest of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Pulau Tikus, in 1973. In 1975, he undertook postgraduate studies in Moral Theology in Manila for two years.

His formation would later be shared with future generations of priests. In 1989, he began teaching Fundamental Moral Theology at College General.

His ministry also included service to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. In 1991, he became Diocesan Coordinator for its Divine

Mercy Team and was appointed Animator of the Penang Covenant Community.

He returned to the Church of the Immaculate Conception as parish priest in 1992, also overseeing Fatima Kindergarten. In 1996, he was appointed parish priest of the Church of St Patrick, Kuala Kangsar, and Administrator of the Church of St John the Baptist, Sungai Siput.

In 2001, he became a member of the College of Consultors, and in 2002 began what would become one of the most cherished chapters of his priesthood — his ministry at the Church of St Joseph, Batu Gajah. He also served as a member of the Council of Priests.

He remained in Batu Gajah until his retirement from active ministry in 2014, after which he became priest-in-residence at the Church of St Michael, Ipoh. In January 2020, he moved to the Little Sisters of the Poor in Penang.

The privilege of changing lives

Of the many places in which he served, Batu Gajah held a particularly special place in Fr Robin's heart.

Looking back on those years, he once joked that if he had become a dentist, his work would have been confined largely to looking into people's mouths. As a priest, however, he had been given the extraordinary privilege of entering people's lives and witnessing their transformation.

Behind the humour was a profound understanding of priesthood.

For Fr Robin, ministry was about people — accompanying them through joys and struggles, strengthening families, helping relationships heal, bringing people closer to God and, sometimes, simply being present.

Parishioners remembered him as approachable and practical, particularly in the advice he offered about relationships and family life.

Forgiveness was one theme to which he repeatedly returned.

At his 80th birthday Mass at the Church of St Michael in 2017, he preached about the need to nurture relationships with God, others and ourselves through forgiveness. Forgiveness, he reminded the congregation, could not merely remain an intention. When forgiving another person seemed impossible, the struggle itself had to be brought to Jesus in prayer.

"We must continue to forgive as much as possible, and set no limits as God doesn't limit forgiving us," he told them.

It was the counsel of a pastor who understood that faith had to find its way into the complicated realities of everyday human relationships.



A grateful heart

One of Fr Robin's endearing practices was to write down the blessings he received throughout his life.

It was a simple habit, but one that revealed much about the man and the priest.

Rather than dwelling on what he lacked or on the difficulties he encountered, he trained himself to recognise grace.

"A grateful heart is a happy heart," he would say.

That gratitude remained evident as the years passed.

At his 60th sacerdotal anniversary in 2024, Cardinal Sebastian Francis paid tribute to Fr Robin's joyful witness, observing that despite the challenges he had encountered, he had remained a happy priest. His energy, clear voice and infectious smile, the cardinal said, reflected the primacy of God's grace in his life.

The cardinal also reminded those present that priesthood could not finally be measured simply in anniversaries: "It's not about 10 years, or even 60 years — it's forever."

For Fr Robin, those words carried an added poignancy.

Not retired, but "re-fired"

Even ageing became something Fr Robin could approach with humour and hope.

After retiring from active parish ministry, he refused to regard retirement as a retreat from life. Speaking to fellow retirees at his 80th birthday celebration, he urged them not to think of themselves as "retired", but as "re-fired".

To be "re-fired", he said, was to approach life with renewed energy, vigour and "oomph".

It was vintage Fr Robin: simple, humorous, practical and hopeful.

He understood that vocation does not disappear with age, that Christian witness has no retirement date, and that every season of life offers another opportunity to praise God and serve others.

Ten years became a lifetime

Fr Robin Andrews lived long enough to see his modest prayer at ordination answered six times over.

But the true measure of those years lies not in their number.

It lies in the seminarians he helped form, the parishioners he accompanied, the families he counselled, the communities he served, the relationships he helped mend, the Eucharists he celebrated, the people he encouraged and the countless ordinary encounters through which a priest quietly becomes part of the lives of his people.

He wanted to be a simple priest. He wanted to be a humble priest.

And because he knew that everyone already carried burdens of their own, he wanted to be a happy priest so that, as he once put it, he would not "add to your problems".

There is something deeply beautiful about such an uncomplicated aspiration after more than six decades of ministry.

While celebrating the 60 years of his priesthood, he acknowledged that he did not know how many more years the Lord would give him. He was simply thankful for every moment.

Now that long journey has reached its earthly end.

The priest who carefully wrote down the blessings of his life has himself become part of the blessing remembered by those whose lives he touched.

And perhaps the words he so often lived by offer the most fitting farewell: "A grateful heart is a happy heart."

May Fr Robin Andrews, faithful and joyful servant of the Lord, rest in peace.

"Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind."
(Romans 12:2)



Thinking Aloud

Susai Anthony Muthu

Living like hermits in a world at our fingertips

Every generation inherits a different world and faces challenges unlike those of its predecessors. Our grandparents endured war, economic hardship and uncertainty that demanded courage and resilience. The generation that followed, the baby boomers, rebuilt societies with optimism and industry, believing that hard work, education and sacrifice would provide a better future for their children. Generation X then witnessed the transition from an analogue world to a digital one, adapting to computers, the internet and mobile communication while still remembering when life moved at a gentler pace.

Today's younger generations have inherited something unprecedented. With a device that fits into the palm of a hand, we can speak instantly across continents, consult vast libraries of knowledge, explore cultures we may never physically visit and learn almost any skill imaginable. Families separated by oceans can now see one another in real time. Information that once required hours in a library can be found in seconds.

These are extraordinary achievements, and they deserve gratitude rather than suspicion.

The Catholic Church has never regarded authentic scientific or technological progress as something to fear. Faith and reason are companions, not rivals. Human ingenuity reflects something of the Creator, and every genuine advance that promotes human dignity and serves the common good can be received with thanksgiving.

Yet every blessing carries responsibility. Wealth can become greed when detached from generosity. Freedom can descend into selfishness when separated from truth.

Knowledge, without wisdom, can foster pride. Technology belongs to the same pattern. It is one of the great gifts of our age, but it also has the power to reshape how we understand ourselves and how we relate to one another.

The changes are rarely dramatic. More often, they enter our lives so gradually that we hardly notice them.

Many of us remember when the arrival of the postman was an event worth anticipating. A handwritten letter carried something that an electronic message cannot fully reproduce. The handwriting itself revealed the writer. Every sentence represented time deliberately given to another person. Birthday cards were chosen carefully; Christmas cards remained displayed throughout the festive season. Some of us still keep old cards and letters because they preserve not only words, but memories.

Today a birthday can be remembered by an automated reminder and a greeting sent within seconds. Photographs circle the world almost instantly. None of this is wrong. Indeed, such conveniences have allowed families and friends to remain close across great distances.

But it is worth asking whether speed has quietly changed the way we express affection. The question is not whether handwritten letters are morally superior to electronic messages. It is whether convenience can sometimes replace thoughtfulness, and whether efficiency can crowd out the small sacrifices through which love is expressed.

Love, after all, has never been measured by speed. It is measured by presence.

Telephone conversations are increasingly

replaced by short messages. Invitations arrive electronically. Family photographs live in digital albums. Even moments of silence are often interrupted by the instinctive urge to reach for a phone.

Again, the problem is not the device. The question is whether our tools have made it easier to communicate without truly encountering one another.

Here lies one of the great paradoxes of modern life. Humanity has never possessed so many means of communication, yet genuine conversation can seem increasingly difficult to find. We are constantly connected, but not always deeply connected. We may know what someone ate, where they travelled and what they watched, while knowing very little about their fears, disappointments, hopes or loneliness.

Communication and communion are not the same thing.

Communication exchanges information. Communion asks more of us: attention, patience, listening, vulnerability and the willingness to share not merely our thoughts but our lives. A message can tell us where someone is. Presence may reveal how that person truly is.

This distinction lies at the heart of Christianity. God did not save humanity from a distance. In the Incarnation, He entered our world. Jesus walked with His disciples, shared meals with friends, blessed children, touched those others avoided, comforted the sorrowful, and wept beside the tomb of Lazarus. God's love is revealed not simply through words, but through presence.

This question has become even more

urgent as artificial intelligence enters ordinary life. Pope Leo XIV, in his 2026 encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* (*Magnificent Humanity*), urges that technological progress be judged by whether it safeguards the primacy and dignity of the human person. Technology can heal, connect, educate and serve; but it must remain a tool in human hands, guided by conscience, freedom and responsibility.

That insight is especially important when we think about the young. They did not create the digital world; they inherited it. They deserve neither ridicule nor condemnation for using the technologies that surround them. They deserve parents, grandparents, teachers and pastors who will accompany them wisely, helping them appreciate both the remarkable possibilities and the hidden dangers of life increasingly mediated through a screen.

Our task is not to reject technology but to humanise it: to ensure that convenience never replaces compassion, efficiency never overshadows encounter, and communication remains at the service of communion.

If every generation has its defining challenge, perhaps ours is this: to embrace extraordinary technological progress without losing sight of the extraordinary dignity of the human person — created in the image and likeness of God, and destined not for isolation, but for loving communion with Him and with one another.

Susai describes himself as neither an accomplished nor a regular writer, but someone who occasionally puts his thoughts to paper, thinking aloud as it were.

Earlier this year, my financial planning firm interviewed me in a podcast about how to break free from the "sandwich generation" cycle.

The irony was not lost on me. I was being asked to speak about something I was very much in the middle of.

For the past ten years, my father has been living with me. At the same time, my daughter has just entered Foundation, taking her first steps towards adulthood and greater independence.

One generation is becoming increasingly dependent on me, while another is gradually becoming more independent.

And I find myself standing between the two.

In February, Dad's health took a turn for the worse when he was diagnosed with a minor stroke. I am truly grateful that he could still walk when he was finally discharged. What followed, though, was a cascade of medical appointments as other health issues emerged. Each health concern seemed to branch into another appointment, another specialist, another hospital visit.

There are days when I feel as though the hospital has become my second home.

The experience has made the reality of the sandwich generation much more personal to me. We often think of it primarily in financial terms — the rising cost of healthcare, supporting ageing parents while providing for our children, and preparing for our own retirement.

But being sandwiched is about more than just money.

It is also about time, energy, emotions and capacity. There are only so many hours in a day, and only so many decisions one can make before feeling exhausted. There can also be a quiet sense of guilt when you feel you are not doing enough for your parents, your children, your work — or even yourself.

So how do we navigate such seasons of

life?

I am still figuring it out, but perhaps the first step is to prepare before the crisis comes.

Financially, we need to plan not only for retirement, but also for dependency.

We tend to think about financial independence as the point when we no longer need to work. But perhaps we should also ask: What happens when our parents can no longer care for themselves? What happens if health care needs increase?

Are our insurance, savings, emergency funds, and retirement plan sufficient? Have we had conversations about money, care and our wishes while everyone is still well enough to have them?

And just as we prepare ourselves, we need to teach our children financial responsibility so that they will be better prepared when their own turn comes.

I also have to face the uncomfortable truth that one day I may be the one dependent on others for care when my physical and mental faculties begin to decline.

I have taken for granted the ability to remember things easily — or at least more easily than my dad does now. These days, I organise his medicine box because the number of different pills and drops has simply become too complicated for him to manage on his own.

It is such a mundane task, yet it reminds me to be grateful. One day, I too may need someone to organise my medicines, make my appointments or remind me of things I once managed effortlessly.

Emotionally, we need to accept that we cannot do everything.



Faith and Finance

Hazel Ong-Archibald

This has been one of the harder lessons for me.

Caring for family can make us want to be available all the time. Yet there are limits to what one person can carry. Sometimes being responsible means asking for help, accepting help, and allowing others to share the load.

Being a good daughter or mother does not mean being endlessly available. We can care deeply without believing that everything depends on us.

Perhaps this is where community becomes so important. We need people around us — not only when there is a crisis, but before one comes.

I am grateful that Dad is still able to participate in parish activities, including the recent Alpha course. I did not join the course myself, but I was comforted knowing that my BEC members who did were looking out for him. They noticed him, checked on him, and made sure he was not alone.

It reminded me that caring for an ageing parent does not have to be a one-person responsibility.

And spiritually, I am learning to let go of the illusion that I am in control.

When my father was first diagnosed, there were many things I could organise: appointments, transport, medications and practical arrangements. But there were also many things I could not control.

Faith does not mean that difficult seasons will not come. It means we do not have to walk through them alone.

Perhaps this is also where I need to rethink what it means to "escape" the sandwich generation.

Some seasons cannot be escaped.

They can only be walked through.

We can prepare financially. We can build emotional resilience. We can ask for help and make wise decisions for the future. But ultimately, there will always be circumstances beyond our control. That is where God comes in.

As I stand between my father and my daughter, I am beginning to see this season differently.

My father was once responsible for me. Now, in a different way, I am responsible for him.

And my daughter is watching.

Perhaps what I hope she sees is not a mother who managed everything. I hope she sees someone who learned to care without losing herself, to plan without being consumed by fear, to ask for help without shame, and to trust God when the road ahead is uncertain.

The sandwich generation is not simply about being caught between two generations.

Perhaps it is about being a bridge between them.

And perhaps our task is not always to find a way out, but to learn how to stand faithfully in the middle — wisely, compassionately and with grace — while trusting God to carry what we cannot.

Hazel is a Licensed Financial Planner with over two decades of experience in investment, insurance, and estate planning. Since year 2000, she has been guiding individuals and families towards financial stability. Hazel is passionate about integrating Catholic values into personal finance, helping others achieve their financial goals while living a life of generosity and trust in God's providence.



Fr Philip Chua

When life falls apart

Learning to begin again

There are moments when everything seems to fall apart. A sudden illness. The loss of someone we love. A painful betrayal. The collapse of a relationship. A traumatic experience that leaves us questioning everything we once believed to be certain.

Such moments do more than disrupt our plans — they can shake the foundations of who we are.

When trauma enters our lives, we often tell ourselves that, with enough time, we will eventually “get back to normal.” Yet healing does not always mean returning to the person we once were. Sometimes it means standing in unfamiliar territory, wondering how to begin again.

Perhaps the more honest question is no longer, “How do I get my old life back?” but “Who am I now, and how do I move forward?”

Trauma changes more than circumstances

Trauma can alter our sense of identity and safety, erode our trust in others and leave us uncertain about the future. Even when life appears normal on the outside, something within us may have shifted.

Many survivors describe trauma as living in a house that still stands after an earthquake. The walls remain, but the structure has been altered.

Others may see us returning to work, caring for our families and carrying on with daily responsibilities. What they cannot always see is the emotional exhaustion, hidden grief or quiet struggle to make sense of a life that no longer feels familiar.

These are not signs of weakness. They are human responses to overwhelming experiences.

A different kind of rebuilding

The life of St Francis of Assisi offers a striking example of rebuilding after life's foundations have been shaken.

As a young man, Francis dreamed of wealth, honour and becoming a celebrated knight. But war, imprisonment, illness and disappointment shattered those ambitions.

Rather than trying to recreate the life he had lost, Francis gradually discovered a new way of living. His transformation unfolded through silence, prayer, reflection and openness to God. He allowed his experiences to reshape his understanding of what truly mattered.

His story reminds us that healing is not always about restoring the past. Sometimes it is about discovering a new purpose within a changed reality.

Healing is not erasing the past

Healing does not erase painful memories or remove every scar. It changes our relationship with them.

The risen Christ still bore the wounds of the Crucifixion. They were not erased; they were transformed. They no longer represented defeat but became signs of love, hope and redemption.

Likewise, our emotional wounds need not define us forever. With time, support and grace, they can become places where compassion deepens, resilience grows, and wisdom emerges. Pain does not have the final word.

The courage of small steps

Recovery rarely comes through dramatic breakthroughs. More often, healing begins

quietly. Getting out of bed on a difficult morning. Taking a short walk. Accepting help. Keeping a counselling appointment and returning to prayer after a long silence. Simply making it through another difficult day.

These may seem like small actions, yet they can require tremendous courage. When life feels overwhelming, we do not need to solve the entire future. We need only enough strength for the next step.

Healing is not measured by speed, but by the gradual movement towards wholeness.

The healing power of silence

Trauma can leave us without words. Some experiences seem impossible to explain and some grief cannot be adequately described.

Yet silence need not be empty. Quiet reflection, meditation or prayer can create space where pain is acknowledged without judgement.

For people of faith, prayer offers the reassurance that even when words fail, we are not alone. Healing often begins not with having all the answers, but with learning to be present to what is.

Learning to trust again

One of trauma's deepest wounds is the loss of trust — in others, ourselves and, sometimes, even in God.

Trust returns slowly through experiences of safety, compassion, honesty and acceptance. Healing cannot be forced. It grows when we encounter people willing to walk beside us with patience rather than pressure and understanding rather than

judgement.

Becoming someone new

Perhaps healing is not about becoming the person we once were. Perhaps it is about discovering who we can become.

Life's wounds can change our priorities. We may become more compassionate because we have known suffering, more patient because we have learned to wait, and more forgiving because we have experienced our own need for mercy.

This does not mean trauma is good or suffering should be minimised. It means that even after profound loss, growth remains possible.

For Christians, this hope rests in God's grace — the assurance that no brokenness lies beyond His healing love. The Book of Revelation offers this promise: “Behold, I am making all things new” (Revelation 21:5).

Whether rebuilding begins with therapy, supportive relationships, prayer or simply finding the courage to face another day, every step towards healing matters.

Life may never return to what it once was. Yet, with hope, perseverance and grace, it can still hold meaning, purpose and beauty. Sometimes beginning again is not the end of our story. It is where a new one begins.

Fr Philip serves as the ecclesiastical assistant for the Archdiocesan Mental Health Ministry. He is also a registered and licensed counsellor, as well as a certified counselling supervisor with Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Spirituality and steadiness

Something in us is dissatisfied with the ordinary. There's something in the ordinary that can lead us to think that predictable routines, domestic rhythms, and commitment to duty weigh us down, swallow us up, and anchor us outside the more rewarding waters of passion, romance, creativity, dance, and celebration.

We often vilify the ordinary. I remember a young woman, a student of mine, who shared in class that her greatest fear in life was to succumb to the ordinary, “to end up content, a little housewife and mother, happily doing laundry commercials!”

If you're an artist or have an artistic temperament, you're prone to this kind of feeling. That's one of the propensities of an artist. Doris Lessing, for example, once made the comment that George Eliot could have been a better writer “if she hadn't been so moral.” What Lessing is suggesting is that Eliot kept herself too anchored in the ordinary, too safe, too secure, too far from the edges.

Kathleen Norris, in her biographical work *The Virgin of Bennington*, shares how, as a young writer, she fell victim to this kind of ideology: “Artists, I believed, were much too serious to live sane and normal lives. Driven by inexorable forces in an uncaring world, they were destined for an inevitable, sometimes deadly, but

always ennobling wrestle with gloom and doom.”

An ennobling wrestle with gloom and doom! That does have a seductive sound to it, particularly for those of us who fancy ourselves as artistic, intellectual, or spiritual. That's why, on a given day, any of us can feel a certain condescending pity for those who achieve simple happiness. Easy for them, we think, but they're selling themselves short! That's the artist inside of us speaking. You've never seen an artist doing a laundry commercial!

Don't get me wrong. Not all of this is bad. Jesus, Himself, said that we do not live by bread alone. No artist needs that explained. He or she knows that safe routine, dram duty, and a mortgage that's been paid, alone do not necessarily make for heaven. We need bread, but we also need beauty, colour, and celebration.

Doris Lessing, who was a great artist, joined the communist party as a young woman but later left it after she'd matured. Why did she leave? One phrase says it all. She left the communist party, she says, “because they didn't believe in colour!”

Life, Jesus assures us, is not meant to be lived in black and white, that is, as simply an endless cycle of rising, showering, going off to work, responsibly doing a job, coming home, having supper, getting things set for the next day, and then going

back to bed.

And yet, there is much to be said for that seemingly dram routine. The rhythm of the ordinary is, in the end, the deepest wellspring from which to draw joy and meaning. Kathleen Norris, after telling us about her youthful temptation to side-step the ordinary to engage in the more ennobling battle with gloom and doom, shares how a wonderful mentor, Betty Kray, helped steer her clear of that pitfall. Kray encouraged her to write out of her joy as well as her gloom and to “dismiss the romance of insanity as a sham.” As Norris puts it: “She tried hard to convince me of what her friends who had been institutionalised for madness knew all too well: that the clean simple appreciation of ordinary, daily things is a treasure like none on earth.”

Sometimes a different mentor teaches us this. When we regain our health and energy after having been ill, off work, and out of our normal routines and rhythms, nothing is as sweet as returning to the ordinary — our work, our routine, the normal stuff of everyday life. Only after it has been taken away and then given back, do we realise that the clean, simple appreciation of daily things is the ultimate treasure.

Artists, though, are still partially right. The ordinary can weigh us down, and

keep us outside the deeper waters of creativity, of romance, of colour, and of the wildness that lets us dance. But, that being admitted, anchors and weight also have a positive function. They keep us from being swept away. They anchor our sanity. They keep us steady. The rhythm of the ordinary is perhaps the most powerful anchor of all to hold us in sanity.

Paul Simon, in a 1970s song entitled, *An American Tune*, sings about coping with confusion, mistakes, betrayal, and other events that shatter our innocence. And he ends that rather sad ballad quite peacefully with the words: “Still tomorrow's gonna be another working day, and I'm trying to get some rest. That's all I'm trying, is to get some rest.”

Obedience to that imperative helps anchor our sanity. There's much to be said about being a contented, ordinary person, anchored in the rhythms of the ordinary, trying at the end of the workday to get some rest.

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

LITTLE CATHOLIC'S CORNER



"Who do you say that I am?"

You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood have not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father."

What were Peter and Jesus saying in today's Gospel reading? Look in the mirror to find out!

Peter's Confession of Christ

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



- Some people thought that Jesus was _____ the _____.
- Others said he was Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the _____.
- Jesus asked, "Who do _____ say that I am?"
- Simon Peter answered, "You are the _____, the Son of the living God."
- Jesus said "This was revealed to you by my _____ in _____."
- "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my _____."
- "I will give you the _____ of the kingdom of heaven."
- Jesus warned his _____ not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

disciples	Christ	John	church	prophets
you	Father	heaven	keys	Baptist

LET'S COLOR!

JESUS LOVES YOU



We can tell our friends about Jesus through our good deeds, kind words, and loving actions.

Dear children,

Have you ever tried to describe someone you love to your friends? You might tell them the person's name and explain why that person is special to you.

In today's Gospel reading from Matthew 16:13-20, Jesus asked His disciples a very important question. He wanted them to think about who He really was.

Jesus asked, "Who do people say that I am?"

The disciples answered, "Some say You are John the Baptist. Others say You are Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."

Then Jesus asked them, "But who do you say that I am?"

Simon Peter answered with great faith, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Peter understood who Jesus truly is. Jesus is more than a great teacher or prophet. He is the Christ, the Saviour sent by God, and the Son of the living God.

Jesus told Peter that God the Father had revealed this truth to him. He then gave Peter a special mission, saying, "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church." This is why Catholics remember Saint Peter as the first leader of the Church.

Even today, people may ask, "Who is Jesus?" Like Peter, we can answer with faith, "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Children, we can also help others know Jesus through our kind words, good deeds, and loving actions. Let us ask Jesus to strengthen our faith so that we can follow Him faithfully and share His love with everyone.

Remember: Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. (Matthew 16:13-20)

Love,
Aunty Melly

youth

Young African Catholics turn faith into climate action

NAIROBI, Kenya: For a growing number of young Catholics across East Africa, caring for creation is not simply an environmental cause. It is an expression of faith — lived out through planted trees, cleaner communities, climate education and advocacy for a more sustainable future.

At St Ignatius Parish in Kenya's Diocese of Ngong, 25-year-old Brian Chacha regularly encourages parishioners to roll up their sleeves for tree planting and environmental clean-ups.

"The goal is to remind people that caring for creation is not a one-day event but an expression of our faith and a year-round commitment," he said.

As part of the *Laudato Si'* Movement in Kenya, Chacha leads discussions on recycling and clean energy while using social media to mobilise volunteers for environmental activities.

"Tree cover helps reduce the impacts of climate change," he said. "It also restores biodiversity, improves air quality and conserves water catchment areas."

Inspired by Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'*, the global movement brings together over 900 Catholic organisations

and more than 10,000 trained leaders, known as animators. Its presence has grown across Africa, including Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Rwanda, Burundi, Zambia, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The urgency is particularly acute in East Africa, where about 80 per cent of the population is below the age of 35. Many young people have witnessed the consequences of a changing climate as prolonged droughts and devastating floods destroy crops and pasture, worsening hunger and uncertainty across the region.

Their concerns were among those heard when over 100 bishops from nine countries gathered in Nairobi from July 19 to 26 for a plenary meeting of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA).

"The youth are knowledgeable; they have a keen awareness of what is happening," said Bishop Peter Kimani Ndung'u of Embu, vice-chair of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops' Commission for Youth.

"They have spoken. As bishops, we have listened to them."



Members of the *Laudato Si'* Kenya chapter clean up Nairobi National Park. (RNS/Fredrick Nzwili)

The bishops subsequently committed to prioritising greater youth involvement in the Church over the next four years.

Pope Leo XIV has continued the ecological emphasis of Pope Francis, describing environmental justice as a "duty born of faith". Across East Africa, care for creation is increasingly becoming part of Catholic pastoral life — and young people are often leading the way.

In Tanzania, 25-year-old climate justice advocate Regina Magoke of St Ambrose Tagaste Parish in the Archdiocese of Dar es Salaam founded the Green Sphere Initiative to empower young people and communities to care for the environment.

Through her *Green Earth for Sustainable Future* campaign, launched in 2024, she has helped plant thousands of trees in schools and participated in beach cleanups to reduce plastic pollution and protect marine ecosystems.

"For me, every tree planted and every shoreline cleaned is an act of hope, faith in

action and a commitment to caring for our common home," she said.

Ashley Kititsya, Africa director of the *Laudato Si'* Movement, said young people bring urgency, creativity and digital skills to the climate conversation.

Where they are genuinely given room to participate and lead, she said, concern is increasingly translated into concrete action — from campaigns against pollution to renewable energy initiatives and greater scrutiny of whether Church investments reflect Catholic teaching on care for creation.

Allen Ottaro, a founding executive of the Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa, said the Church has a unique opportunity to form a generation that understands its relationship with the natural world.

Closely accompanying young people in the vocation of caring for our common home, he said, can help create "a just and inclusive society where ecosystems thrive".

NCR

KLUANG: Nineteen young Catholics took an important step in their journey of faith on August 8, answering Christ's call to move beyond the safety of the familiar and entrust their lives more deeply to Him.

Gathered at the Church of St Louis, Kluang, the young people, from across the North Central Vicariate of the Diocese of Malacca Johore received the Sacrament of Confirmation during a trilingual Mass presided over by Bishop Bernard Paul. Concelebrating was St Louis parish priest, Msgr Peter Ng.

The 19 confirmands comprised six from the Church of St Louis, four from the Church of St Anthony, Chaah, and nine from the Church of St Peter, Mersing.

In his homily, Bishop Bernard reflected on the Gospel account of Jesus walking on water and Peter stepping out of the boat, drawing a parallel between Peter's experience amid the wind and waves and the faith journey awaiting the young confirmands.



From the boat into a life of faith

Like Peter, he said, they are called by Jesus to step out in faith, even when the storms and uncertainties of life surround them.

As long as Peter kept his eyes fixed on Jesus, he was able to walk across the water. But the moment his attention shifted to the fierce wind and waves around him, fear

took over, and he began to sink.

Bishop Bernard urged the candidates to keep their eyes firmly fixed on Christ and guard the faith they had received. He cautioned them against allowing worldly anxieties, temporary comforts and superficial attractions to distract them from Christ, their true anchor.

He also encouraged them to make personal prayer a regular part of their lives. There would inevitably be moments of doubt, fear and uncertainty, he reminded them, but these were precisely the moments when they should follow Peter's example and cry out: "Lord, save me!"

Christ, the bishop reminded them, is always ready to reach out His hand, steady them in the storms of life and give them the strength to continue their journey.

The candidates then renewed their baptismal promises before being anointed with Sacred Chrism and sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

After Mass, the newly confirmed received their Confirmation certificates before joining Bishop Bernard and Msgr Peter for a celebratory cake-cutting.

The gathering was a reminder that Confirmation is not a graduation from faith formation but a commissioning to live that faith with greater courage and responsibility. **Helena Wargis**

SARAWAK: What happens when young people arrive for a retreat and discover there is no detailed programme telling them what to do at every turn? For 19 young people from the Sri Aman Parish Youth Ministry (PYM), the uncertainty became part of the lesson: sometimes serving Christ means noticing what needs to be done, stepping forward and taking responsibility without waiting to be asked.

The youth, from the Church of the Holy Family, Betong, and Church of Our Lady Queen of Peace, Simanggang, participated in the Servants & Music Ministry Retreat 2026 from August 1 to 2 at the Catholic Memorial and Pilgrimage Centre (CMPC), Mount Singai.

Conducted by Fr Henry Jimbey with the theme *Loyal to the End*, the retreat offered participants a different approach to formation. Rather than being given detailed instructions throughout, they were encouraged to take the initiative, shoulder responsibility and discover what it means to serve willingly.

At the heart of the retreat were two simple but searching questions: Why am I still in the Catholic Church? Why am I still serving?

These questions invited the young people to look beneath their activities and responsibilities and examine the motivation behind their service. Ultimately, they were reminded that ministry cannot simply be about completing tasks or holding positions; its purpose and centre must always be Christ.

Sharing and reflection sessions were complemented by games and group activities that tested participants' knowledge of the Bible, Church life and the challenges facing ministry today. The activities also provided opportunities to strengthen friendships, teamwork and leadership.

One of the most meaningful reflections centred on Jesus washing the feet of His disciples. By tying a towel around His waist and kneeling to serve, Jesus demonstrated a model of leadership rooted not in position or recognition, but in humility and love.

Participants were reminded that "Jesus is our pillar in the Church" and that when the direction of their lives is rooted in Him, they can continue serving with faith and



confidence.

The two-day experience challenged the young people to look again at why they serve and, perhaps more importantly, whom they serve.

As they left Mount Singai, the call was not

simply to return home inspired, but to put what they had experienced into practice — to notice where they are needed, step forward without always waiting to be asked, and remain faithful in serving Christ and His people.

WYD Seoul 2027

With one year to go before World Youth Day (WYD) Seoul 2027, preparations are moving from groundwork to full implementation across pilgrim services, accommodation, transport, safety, medical care, communications and international cooperation.

WYD Seoul will take place from August 3 to 8, 2027, bringing young Catholics from around the world to South Korea. It will be the second WYD in Asia, after Manila in 1995, and the first in a country where Christians are a minority.

Archbishop Peter Soon-taik Chung of Seoul, President of the Local Organising Committee (LOC), said the coming year would focus on completing preparations and ensuring that young people experience "the hospitality and solidarity of Korea and Seoul."

Walking with Young People

Cardinal Kevin Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, stressed that young people are increasingly at the heart of preparations.

He invited bishops and youth ministry leaders worldwide to "walk alongside young people towards Seoul 2027", helping them experience the pilgrimage as an authentic encounter with faith, ecclesial communion and Jesus.

Tree-Planting Campaign

The LOC has also launched the Breath of Life Tree-Planting Campaign, encouraging young people worldwide to plant trees and share their participation online. Inspired by *Laudato Si'*, the initiative follows a similar campaign for WYD Lisbon 2023, when nearly 18,000 trees were planted.

A Cross of Peace

A unique "Cross of Peace", made using barbed wire from the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ), will also feature at WYD Seoul 2027 as a powerful symbol of peace and reconciliation. **Vatican News**

who listened to us and accompanied us along our faith journey.

On the day of my Confirmation, I felt happy, grateful and truly blessed. Having my parents, family members, friends and parish community there made the occasion even more meaningful. I was thankful for everyone who had supported, encouraged and prayed for me throughout my journey.

During his homily, Archbishop Julian Leow reminded us to live with faith, humility, love and kindness, and to come forward to serve others by witnessing to our faith each day. His words reminded me that Confirmation is not simply about receiving a sacrament, but about how I choose to live my faith afterwards.

My Confirmation has strengthened my faith and encouraged me to continue following God's teachings with greater love, kindness and commitment. I know that my faith journey does not end with Confirmation. In many ways, it is only beginning.

I pray that the fire of the Holy Spirit will continue to burn within me, giving me the courage and strength to live my faith and share it with others. **Stephanie Wong, Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras**

Confirmation is a new beginning, not an ending

BESTARI JAYA: Confirmation is not simply a milestone to be celebrated, but the beginning of a deeper commitment to Christ and His Church. This was the message at the Church of St Paul the Hermit on August 2, as nine parishioners received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Archbishop Julian Leow.

In his homily, Archbishop Julian invited the candidates to look beyond the ceremony and reflect seriously on the faith they were choosing to embrace and live.

He posed several questions for their reflection: How would they nurture and maintain a close relationship with God? How would they face the challenges that would inevitably arise along their faith journey? And, after receiving Confirmation, how would they remain steadfast in their commitment to Christ?

Drawing from the second reading, Archbishop Julian reminded

them that an authentic relationship with God draws believers ever closer to Him, strengthening their faith and deepening their fidelity.

His questions served as a reminder that Confirmation is not the end of faith formation or a graduation from catechism. Rather, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, the confirmed are called to take greater ownership of their faith and live it with conviction in their everyday lives.

After the homily, Archbishop Julian anointed each candidate on the forehead with Sacred Chrism, sealing them with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Parish priest, Fr James Gabriel, expressed his gratitude and joy for the newly confirmed and encouraged them to put the gifts they had received into action.

He urged them to serve God and the Church actively, proclaim the Good News through their words and actions, and become positive examples within their families, communities and country.

For the nine newly confirmed, the celebration marked both a joyful milestone and a new beginning — an invitation to remain close to Christ, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, and to allow their faith to be seen in the way they live, serve and witness to others.

Christopher Charles

The Spirit leads me forward

My Confirmation journey was a meaningful and special experience for me. Before the Confirmation Mass, I attended Confirmation and Alpha classes, where I learned more about my faith, prayer and what it means to live as a good Catholic.

The classes helped me understand the meaning of Confirmation, while the Holy Spirit Weekend helped my friends and me prepare spiritually to receive the sacrament. I especially enjoyed learning together with my friends and receiving guidance from our teachers, sponsors and Alpha facilitators,



World's oldest Trappist dies at 108

HONG KONG: His life stretched across 108 years, several countries, war, persecution and exile. Yet through extraordinary upheaval, one thing remained constant for Trappist Fr Benedict Chao: a vocation quietly offered to God through prayer, work and perseverance.

Fr Chao, believed to have been the world's oldest Trappist monk, died on July 31 at the Abbey of Our Lady of Joy on Lantau Island, Hong Kong, the Diocese of Hong Kong announced.

Fr Chao's remarkable life bore witness not simply to longevity, but to a faith that endured through some of the most turbulent chapters of modern Chinese history.

Born in 1918 in Chengting, in China's northern Hebei province, he entered the Abbey of Our Lady of Joy, which had been founded in the same province in 1928.

The monastery suffered greatly during the Second Sino-Japanese War, when monks were imprisoned and some were killed. Further upheaval came with the Communist revolution in 1949 — the same year Fr Chao was ordained a priest. Religious communities faced severe persecution, and the monks were eventually forced to leave their monastery.

Fr Chao became one of the last surviving Trappist monks who had lived through that period of persecution.

Exile, however, did not end his vocation.

He and other Trappist monks eventually made their way to Canada, where they lived at the Monastery of Notre-Dame-des-Prairies in Manitoba. They later spent time at the Abbey of Our Lady of the Holy Trinity in Huntsville, Utah.

It was there that the monks learned cheese-making — an unexpectedly practical skill that would later become part of their new life in Hong Kong.

Eventually, Fr Chao and his fellow monks regrouped on Lantau Island and re-established the Abbey of Our Lady of Joy. Drawing on what they had learned in Utah, the community produced milk, butter and cheese while continuing the rhythm of Trappist life centred on prayer, silence and work.

In 1974, Fr Chao was elected prior of the monastic community, serving in that role until 1998.

The Cistercian Order of the Strict



Observance, whose members are commonly known as Trappists and follow the Rule of St Benedict, marked his death by reflecting on the witness of those whose long lives are offered entirely to God through "silence, prayer, and work".

Perhaps that is the most striking legacy of Fr Chao.

His was not a life untouched by hardship. He witnessed war, religious persecution, displacement and the loss of the monastery he once called home. He crossed continents and repeatedly had to begin again.

Yet his vocation survived every change of geography and circumstance. Monasteries could be closed. Communities could be scattered. Political systems could change. Home could be taken away.

But faith could still take root again.

At 108, Fr Chao leaves behind the quiet testimony of a man whose perseverance was measured not merely in years, but in fidelity. His long journey reminds us that holiness is often built not through dramatic moments, but through the daily decision to remain faithful — to pray again, to work again, to trust again and, when necessary, to begin again.

Following Fr Chao's death, 107-year-old Sr Sebastiana Yamaguchi Teruko of Imari Abbey in Japan is believed to be the world's oldest living Trappist religious. The order also lists three other members who have reached the age of 103.

Fr Chao's earthly journey may have crossed China, Canada, the United States and Hong Kong, but beneath all those journeys was another, quieter pilgrimage — the lifelong journey of a monk towards God.

And for 108 years, he kept walking.

OSV News

MEMORIAM

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In Loving Memory of



Mariamah Savarimuthu

Departed: 22.08.2004
22nd Anniversary



Mary Emily Meerwald

Departed: 24.08.2011
15th Anniversary

In loving memory of two beautiful souls who were the heart and strength of our family. Your quiet love, gentle wisdom, and unwavering devotion held us together in ways words can never fully express. Though you are no longer with us, your love continues to live on in our hearts and in the family you so lovingly nurtured.

Forever loved, deeply missed, and always remembered.

25th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



Joackim Jeyapragasam Manikam

Departed:
23-08-2001

25 years ago,
You left us abruptly and unexpectedly,
Why you had to go,
I never fully understood
Years passed by and I relented
having completed your earthly journey,
your heavenly abode awaiting,
To this day,
Nothing heals the pain of losing you,
We miss you more than ever till we meet again,
All our love,
Our dearest appa...

Deeply missed and always remembered by wife, daughter, son, brothers, sisters and friends.

In Memory of His 9th Year of Eternal Life



John Goh Meng Fatt

From the Lord:
22nd May 1938

To the Lord:
23rd August 2017

Always remembered by
Wife Belinda,
Daughter Joanne,
Sons Benjamin (Benny) & family,
Jeffrey & family,
Relatives and Friends.



Madina Soliano
1965 - 1995

Beyond the heavenly gates, my loved one finds happiness and rest. And there's comfort in the thought that a loving God knows best..

Rest in the peace of Christ.

5th Anniversary 9th Anniversary In Loving Memory of Our Beloved



Noel Ernest Dicom

To the Lord:
1st August 2021

Josephine Dicom nee Jeganathan

To the Lord:
23rd August 2017

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

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

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

18th Year Anniversary



"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

PATRICK IGNATIUS ANUGRAHAM

Born: 21-01-1946
Returned to the Lord:
20-08-2008

Psalm 23:1-3

The Lord is my shepherd.
I shall not want.
He makes me to lie down in green pastures:
He leads me beside the still waters.
He restores my soul
He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Deeply missed by

Loving Wife:
Adeline Madeliene De Souza
Children: Ignatius (Danny), Jennifer, Joshua & Michelle
Daughters-in-law & Sons-in-law: Sharon, Carlos, Pauline & Late Steven
Grandchildren: Adelina, Anthony, John, Catherine, Mark, Ignatius, Gerard & Sarah



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Pope Leo puts AI at heart of 2027 Peace Day

VATICAN: As artificial intelligence changes the way wars are fought, Pope Leo XIV is calling for technology to be “disarmed” and placed firmly at the service of humanity and peace.

The Pope has chosen *Disarming Technology, Serving Peace. Politics as Preventive Responsibility* as the theme for the 60th World Day of Peace on January 1, 2027.

Announcing the theme on August 11, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development said it highlights the moral responsibility of those in public life as technology plays an increasingly influential role in decisions affecting humanity.

Central to Pope Leo’s concern is the growing use of AI in warfare and the danger of allowing machines or algorithms to make decisions with life-and-death consequences.

“No algorithm can make war morally acceptable,” he wrote in his encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*.

The Pope has called for international agreements to safeguard human responsibility

and humanitarian principles, particularly where human lives and peaceful coexistence are at stake.

His concern is not technology itself, but technological power detached from human conscience, moral judgement and accountability.

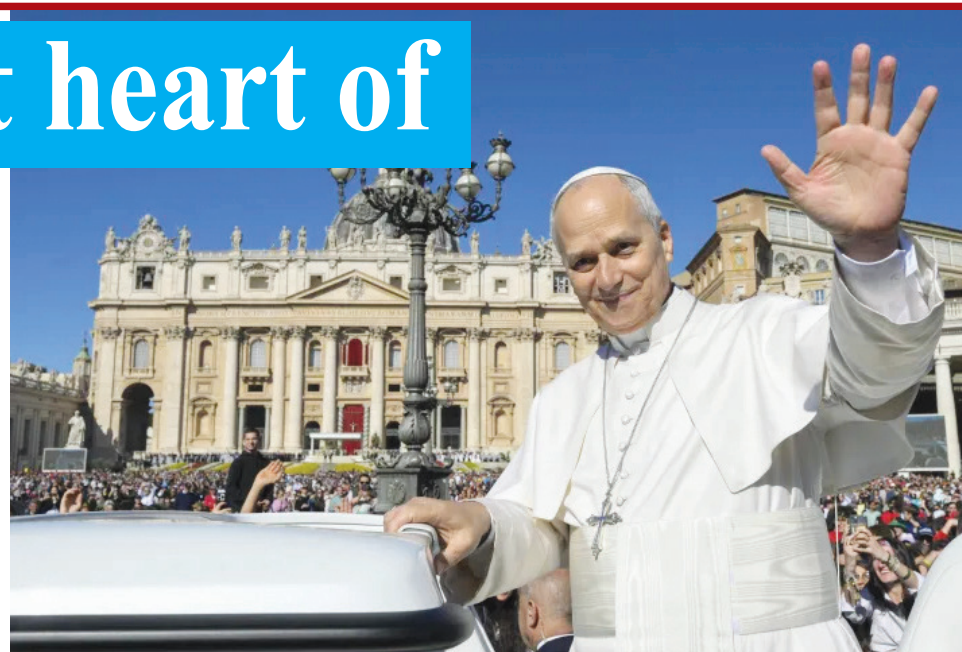
Presenting *Magnifica Humanitas* in May, Pope Leo noted that AI already influences many areas of human life and is “radically changing the way in which war is waged”.

Hence his forceful appeal: “Artificial Intelligence must be disarmed.”

“I know the word is strong,” he acknowledged, explaining that it was deliberately chosen to awaken consciences and point humanity towards a different path.

Drawing a parallel with the Church’s advocacy for nuclear disarmament, he said that just as nuclear energy must serve humanity and the common good, so must AI.

“Decisions about technology must never be separated from conscience and responsibility,” he stressed.



The second part of the theme — *Politics as Preventive Responsibility* — calls political leaders to act before technological developments produce consequences that become difficult to control.

But disarming technology alone is not enough. Peace must also be built.

Recalling his missionary experience in Peru following devastating floods, Pope Leo said rebuilding involves not simply replacing what has been destroyed, but “repairing bonds, restoring trust, and rekindling hope for the future”.

The same principle, he said, should guide AI. Technology developers, governments, institutions and societies must share responsibility for ensuring it serves the common good

rather than a privileged few.

Underlying the Pope’s appeal is an understanding of peace as deeper than the absence of war. It requires justice, human dignity, responsibility and trust.

The World Day of Peace was established by St Paul VI in 1967 and first observed on January 1, 1968. Successive popes have used the annual message to address pressing threats to peace through the lens of Catholic social teaching.

Nearly 60 years later, the challenge has entered a new technological age, but Pope Leo’s message remains fundamentally human: technology may grow increasingly powerful, but moral responsibility can never be surrendered to a machine. **Agencies**

Fresh evidence in convent land appeal

PUTRAJAYA: The Court of Appeal has allowed two Catholic mission organisations to introduce fresh historical evidence in their appeal over the ownership of land occupied by the historic Sacred Heart Canossian Convent in Banda Hilir, Melaka.

A three-member bench chaired by Justice Datuk Seri Mohd Firuz Jaffril ruled on Aug 6 that the appellants had met the legal requirements for admitting new evidence after trial, finding that they had exercised reasonable diligence in tracing documents relating to the disputed land, known as Lot 6.

Justices Datuk Ismail Brahim and Dean Wayne Daly were also on the panel.

The newly admitted evidence comprises official correspondence exchanged in 1936 between the owner of Lot 6 and the then Melaka municipality. The records, preserved at the National Archives of Malaysia, were discovered after the High Court dismissed the appellants’ judicial review in February 2025.

Mohd Firuz said the appellants could not be faulted for failing to locate archival records dating back nearly a century, particularly as the documents had been catalogued under different headings.

The court found that the documents were credible and authentic and could have an important influence on the outcome of the ownership dispute, although they need not be decisive.

The Mother Superior of the Daughters of Charity of the Canossian Institute (Malaya) and the agent of the Commission for the Administration of the Estates of the Portuguese Missions in China and Singapore are appealing against the High Court’s decision that Lot 6 belongs to the state.

The High Court had ruled that the organisations failed to establish any pre-



existing legal or beneficial ownership of the land.

The appellants maintain that Lot 6 was held under a Dutch Title Deed recorded in the Dutch Register under the name “Portuguese Convent”. They also contend that correspondence from the Melaka land authorities in 2014 and 2018 acknowledged them as the rightful owners.

According to court documents, the appellants say they have owned and occupied the land since 1905. The site houses the Sacred Heart Canossian Convent, the sisters’ residence and a chapel, and has been part of Melaka’s landscape for about 120 years.

They described the convent, located near Porta de Santiago and Bukit Melaka, as being of “great historical importance” and “a priceless heritage for Melaka and Malaysia”.

The Court of Appeal, however, rejected the appellants’ attempt to introduce a 1934 Municipal Area Map of Melaka produced by the British War Office and preserved in Singapore, finding that it was not material to the determination of ownership of Lot 6.

The fresh evidence will now form part of the appellants’ case when the Court of Appeal hears the main appeal on Sept 15. **Agencies**

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