

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

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.
Col. 3:1-2



Raising men anchored in Christ

■ P4



KK clergy retrace martyrs' journey in Jubilee Year

■ P7



Telling Jesus' story, one line at a time

■ P12

Called to build a better world

KUALA LUMPUR: As the Malaysian Catholic Church continues its journey toward the Malaysian Pastoral Convention (MPC) 2026, parish communities, ministries, and Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) are being called to deepen their engagement in four key pastoral focus areas: Family, Church, Ecology, and Society.

For 2025, the Church placed particular emphasis on Ecology and Society. In line with this direction, the Malaysian Catechetical Commission (MCC) announced the theme for Catechetical Sunday 2025: *We can make the world a better place.*

The theme chosen for this year's celebration was announced earlier by Bishop Joseph Hii Teck Kwong, *pic*, Episcopal President of the Malaysian Catechetical Commission (MCC). Rooted in St Paul's

exhortation to the Philipians (Phil 2:4) and Jesus' commandment to "love one another" (Jn 13:34), the theme serves as a powerful invitation for Catholics to live out their faith in ways that impact both people and the planet.

The theme reflects a growing emphasis within the Church on promoting social justice and environmental stewardship through catechesis and formation at all levels.

"As Christians, we are called to do our part to make the world a better place," said Bishop Joseph in his message to the faithful. "This involves addressing root causes of poverty, inequality, and violence, and promoting systemic change through political engagement, fair labour practices, and care for the environment."

Bishop Joseph also underscored the urgency of environmental stewardship, citing Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* as a rallying



call for collective action to address climate change and ecological degradation.

Education and catechesis, he emphasised, play a vital role in shaping individuals who will rise to meet these challenges.

"Education begins at home," Bishop Joseph said. "Parents are the first catechists to their children, and they, along with parishes, BECs, Catholic institutions, and organisations, must help equip the next generation to face the challenges of our times."

To assist parishes in celebrating Catechetical Sunday, the MCC has distributed a range of resources, including the Catechetical Sunday Message, Rite of Commissioning for Catechists, e-Poster, and a Catechetical Sunday Kit. These materials are designed not only for use today but also throughout the month of August to promote deeper reflection and

engagement.

This year's celebration also marks a shift in the Church's liturgical calendar: Catechetical Sunday has officially moved from the fourth Sunday of January to the first Sunday of August, following a directive issued by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia on October 7, 2024.

Bishop Joseph concluded his message with a note of gratitude to all those involved in the ministry of catechesis: "On behalf of the Bishops of Malaysia, I extend my deepest gratitude to parish priests, catechetical coordinators, catechists, parents, guardians, and all involved in this ministry. May Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, lead and guide us."

As the Church in Malaysia observes Catechetical Sunday 2025, it does so with renewed purpose — to form disciples who not only know the faith, but live it courageously and compassionately, for the good of the Church, society, and creation.

Turn to Page 5 for the Catechetical Sunday 2025 message.



Step into a day where faith came alive, creativity met catechesis, and a community united around the heart of Catholic life – the Eucharist.

See Page 5 for the story on the KL South District Eucharistic Congress.

(photo/SFA Media team)

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

When outrage rules

It began, as these things often do, with a video clip from a high-profile concert. A well-known married CEO was caught on camera, not with his wife, but with another woman. The footage spread rapidly, and within hours, social media had passed its verdict. Memes blossomed, jokes snowballed, and commentary — scathing and relentless — fuelled a digital firestorm. The internet had found its latest spectacle, and many joined the frenzy with unrestrained glee. Be honest — were you one of them? Did you join in the commentary, or pass along the memes with a laugh to friends and family?

To be absolutely clear, the CEO's public failure of fidelity is not something to minimise or excuse. Betrayal in marriage is a serious matter, one that damages trust, relationships, and moral credibility. As Christians, we are committed to the sanctity of marriage and to upholding the truth about human dignity and faithfulness.

But acknowledging wrongdoing does not justify mob justice.

The episode is a sobering reminder of how quickly we abandon the Gospel's call to charity when social media hands us the illusion of consequence-free judgment. The digital culture thrives on exhibitionism, instant affirmation, and harsh condemnation. It does not seek witnesses in the Christian sense — it seeks influencers. As St Augustine noted in his commentary on 1 John 1:2, a "witness" is, in Greek, a martyr — one who suffers for the truth. Not one who builds a platform on someone else's collapse.

And this leads us to a pressing question: How can we, as Catholics and as the Church, engage with social media without becoming complicit in its moral distortions?

We are not called to retreat from public discourse. Social media, like any form of communication, can be used for good. It can foster authentic relationships, shine light on injustice, and invite others into deeper communion. But it must not become the dominant space where our moral instincts are formed. If we try to share the Gospel through the same mechanisms that reward outrage and exhibitionism, we risk diluting its power and distorting its message.

In a recent *Commonweal* book review, Professor Eugene McCarragher noted that institutions — including education and even the Church — are increasingly at risk of being shaped by a culture dominated by materialism, performance, and utility. Social media, he suggests, does not form us in virtue but in reaction. In response, the Church must commit to forming believers who are not tossed about by the storms of digital culture, but rooted firmly in the enduring truths of the Gospel.

We don't need better platforms. We need better witnesses — those who live the Gospel with integrity, even when no one is watching. Martyrs not necessarily in blood, but in daily courage: men and women who patiently and consistently choose truth, mercy, and love over popularity or vengeance.

When we participate in the digital mob, even against someone who has acted wrongly, we risk becoming what Augustine called "cutters off" — those who divide rather than heal, who shout rather than listen. Sin must be named, yes. But the Christian way is to speak truth with love, not with mockery. Scandal is real. So is sin. But so, too, is redemption. And the Gospel commits us to the hope of restoration — not public humiliation.

Pope Paul VI's words in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*

still resonate: "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." If our digital voices are not grounded in a life transformed by the Resurrection, then they will ring hollow — no matter how clever or viral our content becomes.

It is time to rekindle the fire of the "dynamite inherent in the Church's message." The Gospel is not a polished marketing slogan — it is the radical, life-altering truth of God's love, revealed in the empty tomb. If the Church seems silent or sidelined in today's world, perhaps it is because we have buried that dynamite under safe phrases and institutional comfort.

As one wise pastor said, a Church rooted in the Incarnation must communicate in incarnate ways — by being present in people's lives, not just on their screens. That is where authentic evangelisation happens: in the slow, quiet work of love and accompaniment, not in the frenzy of judgment and ridicule.

So, when the internet erupts in scorn, as it did over this recent scandal, maybe the most Christian response is not a share or a post, but a pause. Maybe it's choosing not to amplify the spectacle. Maybe it's praying — for the CEO, for his wife and children, for the woman involved, for everyone who watched and commented. And maybe it's looking inward, examining where we, too, fall short and need grace.

Let us not become passive consumers of scandal, nor loud distributors of shame. Let us be witnesses. Even if it means stepping out of sync with the digital crowd. Because in that quiet space — where judgment gives way to mercy and spectacle to sincerity — the Gospel can once again be heard.

Patricia Pereira

Vanity, wealth, and the richness of God

"Vanity of vanities! All is vanity." These striking words from the book of Ecclesiasticus open today's readings with a sense of heaviness and futility. The author — often identified as Qoheleth or "the Teacher" — expresses a deep weariness with the world's pursuits, especially the toil and labour that seem to amount to so little. A person works hard all their life, only to leave everything behind to someone who did not earn it. What was the point of all that striving?

This is a theme that transcends centuries. In every generation, we are tempted to believe that our worth is tied to our productivity, our possessions, our status, or our legacy. The Teacher isn't denying the value of work, but he exposes the danger of making it the ultimate goal. When wealth or success becomes an end in itself, it breeds anxiety, restlessness, and, ultimately, emptiness. Our souls are not satisfied by accumulation, but by communion — with God and with others.

Jesus echoes this truth in today's Gospel from Luke. A man approaches Him with what seems like a reasonable request: "Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." But Jesus refuses to intervene in the dispute, instead issuing a warning: "Take care to guard against all greed, for though one may be rich, one's life does not consist of possessions."

Then comes the parable of the rich fool — a man who enjoys an abundant harvest, tears down his barns to build bigger ones, and

tells himself he can now "eat, drink, and be merry." But that very night, God calls him to account: "You fool, this night your life will be demanded of you; and the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong?"

The man in the parable isn't a villain. He's not cheating, stealing, or abusing others. He's simply living by the world's logic: store up, plan ahead, enjoy life. But Jesus reveals the tragedy of a life spent only for the self, a life disconnected from the deeper call to relationship and generosity. His error isn't in his success — it's in his self-centredness and his false sense of security.

It is easy, even for the devout, to fall into the trap of thinking that more wealth, more success, or more comfort will lead to peace. But the Gospel confronts us with the truth: when our hearts are set on earthly treasure, we risk losing the treasure that truly matters. As Jesus concludes, "Thus will it be for all who store up treasure for themselves but are not rich in what matters to God."

What does it mean, then, to be "rich in what matters to God"? St. Paul gives us a clear answer in the second reading from Colossians. He exhorts us: "Seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." Our true identity, Paul says, is hidden with Christ. We are not just creatures of earth, but citizens of heaven. Therefore, we are to "put to death" what is earthly in us — immorality, greed, lies, and the divisions that separate us from one another.

The Christian life is not about rejecting

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Fr George Packiasamy

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Readings: *Ecclesiasticus 1:2; 2:21-23;*
Colossians 3: 1-5, 9-11;
Gospel: Luke 12:13-21

the material world but reordering our desires. Greed, Paul reminds us, is a form of idolatry—it replaces God with things. We are to put on the new self, renewed in the image of our Creator, where "there is no Greek or Jew...but Christ is all and in all." In other words, our relationships, our priorities, and our identity are to be grounded in Christ, not in wealth, status, or tribal affiliations.

These readings challenge us to ask hard questions. What do I value most? Where do I find my security? Have I become too focused on storing up earthly treasure — money, achievements, accolades—while neglecting the things that last: love, mercy, faith, and justice?

None of us is immune to the pull of vanity. We all feel the temptation to chase after things that ultimately cannot satisfy. But the Good News is that Jesus offers us something more lasting: a share in His divine life, a purpose that transcends this world, and a peace that no possession can provide.

Today's readings invite us to shift our gaze — from what is fleeting to what is eternal, from vanity to meaning, from self to God. They remind us that we are made for more than barns full of grain — we are made for the Kingdom of Heaven.

KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

August

- 9 Jubilee Mass for Individuals with Special Needs – Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, KL
- 9 Annual General Meeting – ACLAC
- 9 Confirmation – Church of the Good Shepherd, KL
- 10 Confirmation – Church of the Sacred Heart, Jalan Peel

PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

August

- 7 25th Sacerdotal Anniversary – Fr Joseph Heng Chon Sin, Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Krubong, Melaka

MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

August

- 5 Quarterly Team Meeting – Deliverance & Exorcism Office
- 7 25th Sacerdotal Anniversary – Fr Joseph Heng Chon Sin, Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Krubong, Melaka
- 9 Caritas MJD Board Meeting followed by Annual General Meeting

Cardinal Sebastian pays courtesy visit to Kedah Menteri Besar

ALOR SETAR: In a display of interfaith solidarity, Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang, paid a courtesy visit to Kedah Menteri Besar, Datuk Seri Muhammad Sanusi Nor, and senior PAS ulamas in Alor Setar on July 20. The Sunday afternoon gathering, held at the Menteri Besar's office, was marked by warm exchanges, shared reflections, and a strong call for unity across religious lines.

The meeting — also attended by Kedah PAS ulama chief Syeikh Mohamad Rodi Abdul Rahman — highlighted the importance of fostering relationships between civic and religious leaders. Over *mee goreng* and *teh tarik*, Cardinal Sebastian and Datuk Seri Sanusi shared not just a meal, but a vision for deeper collaboration and understanding.

"This is not just a social call," said Cardinal Sebastian, who oversees Catholic dioceses in the northern states, including Kedah. "It is a moment of spiritual and civic bonding. Faith, hope, and love must guide us to justice and to see each other as brothers and sisters."

The cardinal brought gifts as tokens of goodwill — a woven Penan basket filled with local food items such as *sambal*, coffee, and jackfruit chips, as well as a mosquito-repelling candle. He also presented a copy of the Abu Dhabi Declaration on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together, a landmark 2019 document co-signed by the late Pope Francis and Grand Imam Al-Tayyeb that promotes interfaith understanding and peaceful coexistence.

Cardinal Sebastian expressed deep appreciation for the Kedah government's efforts in maintaining religious harmony, and emphasised the Catholic Church's long-standing presence and contributions in the state. He reflected on the Catholic



Cardinal Sebastian Francis and the delegation from the Diocese of Penang with the Kedah Menteri Besar and senior PAS ulamas after their meeting on July 20.

community's roots in Kedah, tracing back to 1781 with the arrival of settlers from Phuket, Thailand. He also highlighted historic churches such as the Church of St Michael, Alor Setar (established in 1925), Church of Christ the King in Sungai Petani, and Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Kulim, along with mission schools and chapels that continue to serve as pillars of faith and service.

"This gathering is a testament to the bonds we forge when faith and civic leadership work hand in hand," the Cardinal said. "Kedah is a state rich in culture and history, and it is this diversity that makes us stronger."

The visit was part of Cardinal Sebastian's broader outreach to PAS-led states. He had previously met leaders in Kelantan and Perlis, signalling a continued effort to build bridges between Malaysia's faith communities.

Accompanying the cardinal was a delegation from the Penang Diocese, comprising Msgr Henry Rajoo; Fr Michael Cheah; Fr Desmond Jansen; Deacon Paul Kang; Deacon Dave Kameron; Marianne

Kameron (New Thessalonian Apostolate); Sr Lucynia Jeprin (Bahasa Apostolate), and Christopher Kushi.

Personal stories shared during the gathering highlighted how local Catholics have formed lasting friendships with people of different religious backgrounds. These anecdotes served as powerful reminders of the social and cultural value of interfaith connection.

Looking ahead, Cardinal Sebastian announced plans to initiate more interfaith dialogues throughout the region, inviting communities to engage in open discussions that promote empathy, mutual understanding, and cooperation in addressing societal challenges.

"As we move forward, let us strive for greater understanding and friendship among our communities," he urged, ending the event on a hopeful note.

With both civic and religious leaders expressing commitment to ongoing dialogue and partnership, the meeting marked not just a symbolic gesture, but a meaningful step toward a more inclusive and harmonious Kedah. **Agencies**

Malaysian nun elected to global leadership of Infant Jesus Sisters

KUALA LUMPUR: A Malaysian religious sister has been elected to the General Council of the Sisters of the Infant Jesus — Nicolas Barre, marking a historic moment of recognition and responsibility for the Malaysian delegation. Sr Celina Wong, (*pix inset*) a seasoned and well-respected member of the Institute, was elected as one of three General Councillors at the conclusion of the congregation's 31st General Chapter, held from June 14 to July 7 at the La Salle Generalate in Rome.

Themed *If you only knew the Gift of God!*, drawn from John 4, the General Chapter brought together 48 delegates from 14 countries, who engaged in a deeply spiritual and collaborative process of discernment. Sr Celina's election to the General Council signifies both the growing role of Asian religious leadership in global ecclesial communities and a tribute to the contributions of the Malaysian province.

Sr Celina will serve alongside newly elected Superior General, Sr Marina Motta (Italy), and fellow councillors Sr Kitty Ellard (Ireland) and Sr Beatrice Abega (Cameroon). Together, they will guide the Institute over the next six years, leading it through strategic action plans in four



The 48 delegates from 14 countries at the General Chapter held in Rome. The Malaysian contingent comprised of five capitulants.

key areas: Care for Our Common Home; Governance and Structure; Finance; and Journey with Lay Collaborators.

Preparations for the Chapter began last year in Spain, with representatives from across the globe engaging in dialogue and

prayer. Delegates gathered insights from local communities through a synod-inspired questionnaire, ensuring grassroots voices — especially those from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe — shaped the final discussions and decisions.

The Malaysian contingent comprised five capitulants, who will now return home to spearhead local implementation. From Aug 7–9, they will convene with other members of the Provincial Chapter at the Echo Chapter in Malaysia, facilitated by Fr Dr Clarence Devadass. This national gathering will serve to contextualise and localise the chapter outcomes before broader implementation across the country by the end of 2025.

In her address, Sr Marina Motta urged the sisters to be living witnesses of hope and joy, drawing on the spiritual wellspring offered in the Gospel encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Quoting their founder, Nicolas Barre, she reminded the assembly: "Let your hearts be opened with a holy joy as you contemplate your happiness and the excellence of your vocation."

Notably, Sr Daniel Ee, also from Malaysia, previously served as Superior General — highlighting Malaysia's strong tradition of leadership within the congregation. Within the Asian continent, there has been an informal spirit of rotating leadership, with various provinces offering service in turn. Sr Celina's appointment continues this legacy of shared commitment and service from Asia to the wider Institute.

Christopher Siddharth

PENANG: The Shekinah Glory Renewal Group (SGRG), a trans-parochial Catholic Charismatic Renewal group under the Diocese of Penang, recently organised a two-day Catholic Men's Conference at the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (NBVM) in Butterworth.

The conference was held in conjunction with the Jubilee Year of Hope, carrying the theme *Anchored*, inspired by Hebrews 6:19a: "We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul." Over 150 men from seven dioceses across Malaysia, as well as the Archdiocese of Tokyo, participated in the event.

SGRG was blessed to welcome three distinguished speakers for the conference — Msgr Bruno Cosme, MEP, from Cambodia; Fr Adrian Adiredjo, OP, from Indonesia; and Jude Antoine, *pic*, from Malaysia, SGRG's spiritual advisor. It was a rare and enriching opportunity to hear priests speak on topics related to men, each offering unique perspectives shaped by their diverse backgrounds and experiences.



Through the conference, SGRG aimed to form Catholic men after God's own heart — reviving and strengthening their faith, addressing the real issues and challenges men face today, and highlighting the many vocations of men both in the Church and in everyday life. This message was consistently echoed during promotional visits to various parishes across the Diocese of Penang.

The Catholic Men's Conference commenced with an opening Mass celebrated by Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang. In his opening address, Cardinal Sebastian formally declared the conference open and set the tone for the days ahead.

Following the Mass, the conference continued with the first plenary session titled *How Can I See in Another Way?* by Msgr Bruno Cosme. During his introduction, the significant contributions of the Paris Foreign Missions Society (MEP) to the Catholic Church in Malaysia were gratefully acknowledged. Drawing from his missionary experience in Cambodia, Msgr Bruno shared powerful reflections for men and fathers. He emphasised that God can bring resurrection to our broken lives and help us overcome past failures; that anchoring our self-worth in Christ opens the way for greater revelations; and that we must ask God to open our eyes and heal our spiritual sight.

The next plenary session, *From Fear to Freedom*, was delivered by Fr Adrian. With



his energetic presence, engaging stories, and sense of humour, he quickly captivated the audience.

Fr Adrian shared that fear often arises when something we deeply value feels threatened. He went on to explain the concept of the "hedonistic treadmill," where the pursuit of short-term gratification can lead to long-term consequences such as debt, broken relationships, and health issues. True freedom, he emphasised, comes from living in truth and love — and from becoming Jesus' best friend.

The final plenary session of the day, *Iron Sharpens Iron*, was delivered by Jude Antoine. He addressed the common tendency among men to suppress their emotions and frustrations out of fear of appearing weak. However, Jude cautioned that bottling up anger and unforgiveness can have far more serious consequences than occasional emotional outbursts — it can take a toll on the body and lead to life-threatening health issues. He urged the men to release the anger and unforgiveness in their hearts. The session concluded with a time of adoration and inner healing, allowing participants to respond deeply to the message.

On the second day, Msgr Bruno led a session titled *Discerning Your Calling*. He reminded the participants of Hebrews 6:19, which speaks of hope as an anchor for the soul. Msgr Bruno encouraged the men to embrace their calling — not to sin, but to live with hope and joy, to listen with understanding, and to pour out love and prayer like a precious fragrance before God.

Next was Fr Adrian's session, *Life of Grace: Strength and Courage*. He illustrated his message through powerful stories of faith and transformation, including Blessed Bartolo Longo, OP — a former Satanic priest who became deeply devoted to the Rosary; Cardinal Nguyễn Văn Thuận, a Vietnamese prelate who spent 12 years in prison and became a symbol of hope; and Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, OP, whom Pope John Paul

II called a "Man of the Beatitudes."

The sixth and final plenary session, *Leading Men to the Best*, was presented by Jude. He outlined the seven stages of spiritual growth and shared the seven ways in which God tests individuals before calling them to become effective men of God and true servants of His mission.

Between plenary sessions, the men participated in selected 45-minute workshops focused on key areas relevant to their lives. Grounded in Church teachings and Scripture, these workshops were facilitated by members of SGRG. Topics included *Christian Entrepreneurship*; *How to Balance Ministry and Work Life*; *How to Live a God-Centred Married Life*; *What is God's Plan for a Single Man?*; *Freedom from Addictions and Bondages*; and *You Don't Need a Loan, You Need the Lord*.

The conference concluded with a Mass of the infilling of the Holy Spirit, celebrated by Msgr Bruno and concelebrated by Fr Adrian. Throughout the event, healing was evident as men felt comfortable to open up and be vulnerable among their peers. They responded deeply to God's presence during the Praise and Worship sessions and talks. As the days progressed, the men increasingly shared and supported one another, finding a safe space to discuss issues they might not feel comfortable addressing with women.

The participants demonstrated a strong hunger to deepen their faith, laying the groundwork for similar future activities focused on men's spiritual growth. The Catholic Men's Conference was a resounding success, with many men visibly touched by God and eager to continue their faith journey.

SGRG extends heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to making this event possible: the women of SGRG; all vendors; NBVM parishioners; Jude Antoine; Msgr Bruno Cosme; Fr Adrian Adiredjo, OP; the clergy of the Diocese of Penang; Fr Dominic Santhiyagu (parish priest of NBVM) and Cardinal Sebastian Francis.

Some comments

"The Men's Conference was a timely encounter as a family of Christ, together with our brotherhood of men. It was indeed inspiring and soul-stirring to have a safe space to be vulnerable and share life experiences, learn from each other, and be open on our struggles as fellow men. From topics on entrepreneurship, singlehood as well as married life. There were nuggets of wisdom we took home that served as great reminders on how to live a purposeful life better as Christian men. This conference was something very much needed at this point of time." **Joshua Jerome Robert, Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Diocese of Penang**

"One of the key takeaways for me was the session on *Seven Ways God Will Test You Before He Uses You*, using the life of Joseph as an example. It reminded me that God uses our trials and challenges to shape us for His purpose. One phrase that deeply resonated with me was: "You can't give what you have not received or experienced." It's a powerful reminder that before we can truly serve or lead others, we must first allow God to fill, shape, and transform us through our own experiences and relationship with Him." **Dennis Chandran, Franciscan Chapel Centre, Archdiocese of Tokyo, Japan**

"I had a memorable time at this conference and it was timely too. Listening to the many talks, I noticed a high level of authenticity and honesty in the speakers. The programme was truly Spirit-led. The entire programme focused on helping men see their role and God's purpose in their lives. What was equally resonating was the feeling that all men go through the same struggles. So, it felt like we weren't alone. I am happy I made the decision to join and clearly, I can now see God's hands in my life, and I am reminded that in my role as a Godly-Man, I have a responsibility to be a beacon of hope to all that I meet, beginning with my family." **Michael Xavier, Church of St Thomas More, Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur**



District congress ignites love for the Eucharist

Magdalena Jayne Louis

CHERAS: CHERAS: The Church of St Francis of Assisi was transformed into a vibrant hub of faith and spiritual renewal as it hosted the Kuala Lumpur South District Eucharistic Congress, drawing parishioners and guests from nearby parishes for a day of reflection, learning, and adoration centred on the Blessed Sacrament.

Aimed at deepening appreciation for the Eucharist, the congress brought together the Catholic community from St Francis of Assisi, the Church of the Sacred Heart, and the Church of the Holy Family in an expression of unity, synodality, and spiritual growth.

One of the standout features of the congress was the Eucharistic exhibition, an immersive and educational

journey into the beauty and meaning of the Eucharist. Divided into three unique sections, the exhibition was designed to engage attendees of all ages.

The journey began at the Theatre Room, where a 15-minute audio-visual presentation offered multilingual reflections in English, Bahasa Malaysia, Mandarin, and Tamil. Curated by the RCIA ministries of all three parishes, the videos featured moving personal testimonies and catechetical insights. This approach ensured that the district's culturally diverse faithful felt seen, heard, and spiritually nourished.

Visitors then descended to a quiet, contemplative space enhanced by soft prayer music, dim lighting, and thoughtfully chosen Scripture verses. This prayerful ambiance offered a needed pause for personal reflection amidst the day's activities.

At the heart of the event was the exhibition hall, filled with colourful and creative artwork by catechism children. These visual expressions captured the beauty of the Eucharist — from depictions of the Last Supper and modern-day celebrations of the Mass to illustrations of Eucharistic miracles from around the world.

Adding a unique and engaging element to the exhibition, children dressed as saints such as St Clare of Assisi, St Tarcisius, Blessed Carlo Acutis, and St Dominic Savio, mingled with attendees, sharing stories about the lives and spirituality of the figures they represented. These interactive encounters offered visitors deeper insights into the saints' devotion to the Eucharist and their roles in Church history.

The exhibition also featured infographics, interactive boards, and educational displays that explored Eucharistic theology, symbolism, and liturgical significance — blending creativity with catechesis in a way that captivated both young and old.

The success of the exhibition was made possible through the collaboration of catechists and volunteers from all three parishes. This spirit of interparish partnership demonstrated synodality in action — working together as one body, one faith, united in Christ.

At 5.00pm, the faithful gathered for Holy Hour, a time of silent adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. In that sacred space, hearts were lifted in reverence and stillness, creat-



Archbishop Julian Leow leading the congregation in venerating the Blessed Sacrament during the procession.

ing a deeply moving encounter with the Real Presence of Christ.

The congress concluded with a Eucharistic celebration at 6.00pm, presided over by Archbishop Julian Leow, who led a short procession with the Blessed Sacrament around the church grounds — a public act of devotion and witness to the faith.

In his homily, Archbishop Julian reflected on the Gospel and the need to embody both Mary's contemplative heart and Martha's spirit of service.

"Our discipleship must flow from a heart that listens. Prayer must lead us out of the church and into the world," he said.

He referenced the First Reading — Abraham's encounter with the Trinity — and reminded the congregation that "God can do the impossible."

"The Eucharist is what strengthens us, especially when we serve the lost, the lonely, the little and the least."

Homilies in Mandarin and Tamil were delivered by Fr Philip Chua and Msgr Stanislaus Soosaimariam, respectively, ensuring that all communities were ministered to in their

heart languages.

At the conclusion, Fr Bonaventure Rayappan, senator of the district, explained the meaning behind the congress theme. "Jesus has given us the Eucharist, our salvation. We, the People of God, walk together in unity toward eternal life. This is not the end of our celebration — but the spark that sets us on fire."

He congratulated the organisers for their magnificent efforts, noting that the congress had reignited a love for the Eucharist within the district.

The Kuala Lumpur South District Eucharistic Congress was not merely an event — it was a transformative spiritual journey, a lived expression of synodality, faith, and unity. From the voices of children to the wisdom of shepherds, from creative displays to quiet prayer, the congress reaffirmed the Eucharist as the source and summit of Christian life.

As Archbishop Julian beautifully summed it up: "Mary (being) and Martha (doing) must be united. Everything must be in sync — us, our BECs, our communities, and the world. We are one bread, one body, one people — united in love through the Eucharist"



One of the "saints" sharing his life story to interested listeners.

Catechetical Sunday, August 3, 2025

We can make the world a better place (Phil 2:4)

The theme for this year's Catechetical Sunday gives us the most challenging question: What can we do as Christians to make the world a better place? We listen to the Apostle Paul's advice, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil 2:4). Paul is urging the Christians at Philippi to love one another. In verse 4, he emphasised that as Christians, we should be unselfish, concerned about the needs of other people, not just our own needs. In other words, we must be willing to share with others and care for others.

The Catholic perspective on making the world a better place is deeply rooted in the teaching of our Lord Jesus in the Scripture and in the teachings of the Church, emphasising the importance of love, service, and moral responsibility. This approach encourages individuals to engage actively in their communities and to foster a spirit of compassion and justice. At the heart of Catholic teaching is the commandment to "love one another" (Jn 13:34). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

emphasises that love of neighbour is inseparable from love of God (CCC 1878). Catholics are called to promote social justice, which involves addressing the root causes of poverty, inequality, and violence. The Church teaches that true justice goes beyond mere charity; it requires systemic change, engaging in political processes, supporting fair labour practices, and advocating for policies that protect the environment.

Another critical aspect of making the world a better place is environmental stewardship. The Church recognises the moral imperative to care for creation, as articulated in Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*. This document calls for a collective effort to address environmental degradation and climate change, urging Catholics to adopt sustainable practices and advocate for policies that protect the planet for future generations by fostering a sense of responsibility towards the environment.

Education plays a vital role in shaping individuals who are committed to making a positive impact. Education must begin from home, and parents play the most impor-

tant role to educate their children in their young age by instilling values of compassion, integrity and service in children and youths in the family and also in the catechetical classes. Catholic institutions and organisations play the important role to prepare future leaders who are equipped to tackle societal challenges. This holistic approach to education is essential for nurturing a generation that prioritises the common good and seeks to create a better world.

In his general audience at the Vatican on Dec 30, 2020, Pope Francis emphasised the importance of recognising our shared humanity and acting with gratitude and kindness as fundamental ways to make the world a better place. He encouraged individuals to see each other as kin, promoting a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood among all people. He also highlighted the role of gratitude in leading an authentic Christian life. He believed that being "bearers of gratitude" can significantly contribute to improving the world. By expressing thanks and appreciation, individuals can cultivate a positive environment that

encourages kindness and generosity.

In his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis articulated a vision of global fraternity, where everyone is called to work together for the common good. He stressed that building a better world required collective effort and a commitment to social justice, urging people to act with compassion and to advocate for the marginalised. He emphasised that in the common home, we all live as one family and proposed concrete actions to restore the world. He spoke of the dark clouds that are looming over the world today. The paths of hope that will lead us out of these dark clouds consist of Love, Justice, and Solidarity. These three virtues are sprinkled throughout the encyclical, which gives us some insight into the social teaching of the Church applied to concrete situations.

During this Jubilee Year of Hope, Pope Francis called us to be pilgrims of hope, and he encouraged everyone to choose love in a world beset with wars, social injustices, and various forms of violence. "We choose love, and love makes our hearts fervent and hopeful. Love can be expressed

in kindness, he said, "that opens hearts to acceptance and helps us to become more humble." Humility, he continued, "lends itself to dialogue, helps us to overcome misunderstandings, and generates gratitude."

It is undeniable that to make the world a better place is very difficult to achieve. For some people it is impossible to achieve. Jesus told His disciples; "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God." (Mk 10:27). These words of Jesus give us hope to do the impossible tasks if we have faith and put our trust in Him. Jesus said; "For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." (Matt 17:20). The Lord assured us that with God all things are possible. We can make the world a better place by the grace of God. We pray that the Holy Spirit inspires all Christians to be agents of peace, justice, and compassion, transforming the world into a reflection of God's kingdom. **Fr Boniface Kimsin**

One parish, one family celebrating in simplicity

Rufina Maria

SUNGAI SIPUT: The Church of St John the Baptist was filled with laughter, love, and joy as we came together for our parish Family Day, held on July 13. Joyfully planned and led by the parish youth group, the event brought together people of all ages for a day of warm fellowship and shared celebration.

The day began with the Eucharistic celebration at 8.00 am, followed by the gathering at our parish hall. Just as we were about to start, it began to rain. Many of us saw it as a sign of God's blessing on our celebration. Our two young emcees, both from the parish youth, warmly welcomed everyone as we opened the day with a prayer and grace

before the meal.

One of the highlights of the day was the potluck. In today's fast-moving world, where food can easily be delivered with just a tap on an app or bought ready-cooked from shops and restaurants, it was truly heartwarming to see our parishioners take the time and effort to prepare home-cooked meals. The variety was amazing, from Malay, Chinese, and Indian dishes to Western treats, along with interesting snacks, and desserts. The table was full, and so were our hearts and stomachs.

The event continued with lively performances by our catechism children, including singing, dancing, and poem recitation. Games like 'balloon popping' brought smiles, especially as parents and children teamed up. It was beautiful to witness families helping one another, focusing not on winning but on enjoying the moment.

Another crowd favourite was 'What's Inside the Box', a fun guessing game where participants reached into a mystery box while



Mothers trying to blow the balloon.

the crowd cheered them on. Children gave hints out of pure joy and encouragement. Items included grass jelly, lemongrass, and soaked basil seeds, all suited for different age groups.

We also had 'Musical Cup', a thrilling version of musical chairs, and a word-guessing game where children gave clues for their parents to guess the answer. It was a joy to watch their teamwork.

Throughout the celebration,

performances and games flowed smoothly, thanks to our enthusiastic emcees who kept the crowd engaged with joy and energy.

Before the event ended, we handed out simple door gifts for all: men, women, and children.

Though small, they brought wide smiles that filled our hearts with happiness. We concluded with a prayer, feeling grateful for the simple joy of being one family in Christ.



A parishioner trying to guess what's inside the box.

A spirit-filled Marriage Encounter weekend

KUALA LUMPUR: The Marriage Encounter (ME) Selangor/ Wilayah Persekutuan recently held their 189th ME Weekend at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre, with 10 couples and 2 priests participating in this life-changing experience.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter Movement has long been dedicated to enriching marriages by teaching married couples a simple and effective communication technique to explore important areas in their marriages. This communication technique is done in a spirit of love and understanding so that couples can deepen their love for each other.

The weekend was for couples to focus on each other exclusively. At the end of the Marriage Encounter weekend, many participating couples agreed that they had become better listeners to their spouses. In a conducive environment away from daily distractions and interruptions, couples rediscovered the beauty of



Archbishop Julian Leow, together with the facilitators, participating couples, and priests Fr George Harrison and Fr William Michael, giving the Marriage Encounter (ME) sign.

their relationship.

For Vikram and Mariette, from the Church of St Ignatius, Petaling Jaya, the weekend was "refreshing and insightful," helping them open their hearts to one another. "It made us acutely aware of one another's needs and how to respond with openness and gentleness. We highly recommend ME to any couple who wants to rediscover the beauty in

each other."

David and Anne, from the Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras, shared how finally saying "yes" to ME was "the best thing we've done for our marriage." They were reminded of the early days of their relationship, saying, "It's good to know, see and hear my spouse again!"

Benignus and Cheryl, from

the Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya, described the weekend as a sacred time that rekindled their romance. "We became more aware of God's grace working in our relationship. As we renewed our commitment to each other, the love, joy and peace we felt was like a slice of heaven." They believe that through their love, they now have the "couple power"

to touch others' lives.

Eric and Emily, also from the Church of St. Ignatius, reflected on their 25-year journey in marriage. "Somewhere along the way, things became routine. We realised we had taken each other — and even God — for granted." They called the ME Weekend a wake-up call and encouraged other Catholic couples to attend. "You owe it to yourself to take your marriage to the next level. You can't go wrong!"

Angeline and John from the Church of Jesus Caritas, Kepong, described the weekend as a journey of rediscovery. "It gave us a safe space to open up, reflect and rediscover each other — not just as husband and wife, but as best friends and teammates. We left with lighter hearts and a deeper understanding."

For details on upcoming Marriage Encounter Weekends, please contact James at 019-3562321 or Mandy at 012-3718756 or email us at wwwmeselwil@archkl.org to register

Covenant Communities strengthen brotherhood at FMCC gathering

PETALING JAYA: The Servants of Yahweh Covenant Community (SOYCC), with strong support

from the Covenant for Christ Covenant Community (CFCC), hosted the 2025 Fellowship

of Malaysian Covenant Communities (FMCC) from July 18 to 20 at the Armada Hotel.

This annual fellowship brought together 32 brothers from seven covenant communities across Malaysia — Sibu, Kuala Lumpur, Kuching, Papar, Kota Kinabalu, Penang, and Sandakan. FMCC, held on a rotating-host basis, provides a platform for covenant communities to connect, share, and grow in faith and brotherhood.

Throughout the three-day event, elders and potential elders engaged in deliberations on key matters affecting their communities. The programme included

team-building activities, praise and worship, night prayers. Holy Mass was celebrated within the hotel's meeting room, uniting the participants in the Eucharist, and conversations in the spirit centred on the homily by Archbishop Julian Leow, who posed the question 'Who is your neighbour?'

The gathering concluded with the ceremonial handover of the FMCC baton to the Light of Jesus Christ Covenant Community (LJCCC) of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, who will host the next FMCC in 2026. **Abbot D'Cruz**



Delegates of the 2025 Fellowship of Malaysian Covenant Communities with Archbishop Julian Leow.



KK clergy retrace martyrs' journey in Jubilee Year

Fr Terans Thadeus

KOTA KINABALU: In conjunction with the Jubilee Year of Hope, Archbishop John Wong led the clergy of the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu on a two-day Clergy Pilgrimage of Hope from June 23 to 24. The pilgrimage retraced the footsteps of Msgr August Wachter and the Mill Hill missionaries who were martyred. This year marks the 80th anniversary of their disappearance and death after World War II.

The pilgrimage began with *Lauds* at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Kota Kinabalu, where the priests, together with the archbishop, invoked God's grace for a renewal of their ministry with courage and steadfastness. United in spirit and purpose, they prayed: 'God our Father, we begin our pilgrimage this Jubilee Year of Hope... Fill us and our priestly ministry with courage amidst all the trials and difficulties.'

From there, the clergy travelled to St Michael's Church in Penampang — the very site where Msgr Wachter, five missionaries, and three local servants were arrested by Japanese soldiers on May 19, 1945. Standing on this historic ground, the clergy offered gratitude and veneration for the martyrs' courage and faith, praying, 'We thank you for giving them unwavering hope and courage in the face of death'

The pilgrimage then proceeded to St Joseph's Church in Papar, where the detained missionaries were held for about a week before being ordered to march to Tenom. Although parts of the 63-mile journey may



Msgr August Wachter



Archbishop John Wong with the clergy of the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu.

have been made by train or trolley, the trek was gruelling — especially for the ageing Msgr Wachter and the ailing Fr Unterberger. United in prayer, the clergy asked, 'Fill us with their spirit of perseverance.'

At Holy Rosary Church in Limbahau, the pilgrims remembered Fr Franz Flür, who was arrested by the Japanese on May 20, 1945. They prayed that his martyrdom would serve as a lasting inspiration for all priests to live and serve with conviction and love. Likewise, at St Patrick's Church in Kinuta, the clergy honoured the memory of Fr Anton Raich and Fr Anton Paulmichl, who were also arrested and later killed (Fr Anton Raich). They prayed that the legacy of their



Fr Johann Unterberger



Fr Franz Flür



Fr Anton Raich

faith would continue to inspire their own priestly lives.

The pilgrimage culminated at St Anthony's Church in Tenom, near where Fr Anton Paulmichl, succumbed to exhaustion and malaria on June 20, 1945. It was in this region that the remaining missionaries and their companions are believed to have been executed in early July 1945. The clergy offered prayers for the repose of their souls, entrusting them to God's eternal peace: 'We



Fr Anton Paulmichl

pray that their souls, and the souls of all missionaries and priests who served Sabah, may rest in your eternal peace.'

Throughout the journey, Fr Cosmas Lee guided the reflections, drawing inspiration from Pope Francis' Bull of Indiction for the Jubilee Year of Hope. 'Their sacrifice reminds us that Christian hope shines brightest in times of darkness,' Fr Cosmas reflected. 'In this Jubilee, we not only remember the past, but also renew our mission with courage.'

The pilgrimage was not only a commemoration but also a spiritual renewal for the priests, rekindling their call to be witnesses of hope in a world still marked by suffering and division. **Catholic Sabah**



St Mary's Cathedral welcomes back Fr David Garaman

SANDAKAN: St Mary's Cathedral Parish joyfully welcomed the return of Fr David Garaman as parish priest, effective July 1, 2025. His homecoming was marked with a special pot-bless fellowship on July 15, which also coincided with his 49th birthday.

The celebration, organised by the Parish Pastoral Council in collaboration with the BECs, ministries, and various parish groups, was a heartfelt show of unity and thanksgiving.

Fr David, a native of Kg Tempenau, Lahad Datu, was ordained on December 31, 2010, at St Dominic's Church, Lahad Datu — a historic occasion as it marked the first priestly ordination in the Diocese of Sandakan since its establishment in 2007. He previously served as a deacon at St Mary's Cathedral before his ordination.

This is Fr David's third pastoral assignment to St Mary's Cathedral Parish. He previously served as its parish priest from January 1, 2018, guiding the parish through the COVID-19 pandemic with initiatives such as livestreamed Masses, online meetings, and the implementation of strict health protocols. Most recently, he was assigned to Holy Trinity Church, Tawau.

Bishop Julius Dusin Gitom warmly welcomed Fr David's return and reminded the faithful that the reassignment of clergy is part



of diocesan life, ensuring the pastoral and spiritual needs of the community are met. He encouraged parishioners to support Fr David and his team in their shared mission.

In his speech during the celebration, Fr David expressed his deep gratitude for the warm welcome and his joy at reconnecting with the parish community. He reaffirmed his commitment to serve in obedience to the bishop's appointment and, echoing the Church's call to Synodality, urged all parishioners to journey together in unity — with the bishop, assistant priests, and Parish Pastoral Council — in building a vibrant and inclusive Church. **Evelyn Jock**

Inanam parish looks forward to priestly ordination

KOTA KINABALU: Inanam Parish will soon witness a priestly ordination as one of its own, Canisius Benjamin, 32, from Kg Bambangan, Inanam, was ordained a deacon on June 24.

The ordination Mass was presided over by Archbishop John Wong and concelebrated by 36 priests from the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu.

Canisius, the eldest of five siblings — three boys and two girls — was born on December 5, 1993, to Benjamin Santee and Scholastica Lim. He received his early education at SRJK (C) Cheng Hwa in Papar and later completed his secondary studies, including Form Six, at SMK Kolombong.

In 2014, he worked as an office assistant

before discerning his vocation and entering the CDC Aspirant Year formation programme in 2015.

He began his seminary formation with the Initiation Year at St Peter's College, Kota Kinabalu, and subsequently pursued his Philosophy studies at College General, Penang, until 2018. The following year, he served his regency at St Michael's Church, Penampang.

In 2020, he resumed formation in theological studies at St Peter's College Major Seminary in Kuching, which he completed in 2024. To further prepare for priestly ministry, he underwent pastoral immersion at Blessed Sacrament Church in Labuan and later at St Simon's Church in Likas.



Deacon Canisius Benjamin with Archbishop John Wong.

Pilgrimage to Kuching

Lieutenancy of Malaysia Penang of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem

PENANG: The Lieutenancy of Malaysia Penang of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem organised a pilgrimage to Kuching in conjunction with the consecration of the Church of St Peter on June 29.

A delegation of 28 Knights and Dames, led by our Lieutenant, Dr John Luis Chen, undertook the pilgrimage from June 27 to 30. The visit began with a tour of St Joseph's Cathedral, where the group received a briefing on the origins and growth of Christianity in Sarawak.

Mass was then celebrated at the Chapel of St Peter's Major Seminary, following a warm welcome and introduction by the rector, Fr Patrick Heng. The pilgrims also visited the Carmelite Monastery, where they were graciously received by Archbishop

Emeritus John Ha, who shared insights into the monastery's history.

Next was a visit to Benuk Long-house Village, an hour away where we gathered at St Matthew's Chapel. A very warm welcome was accorded by the Village Head and his Committee Members. We witnessed a local welcome dance and were feted on sumptuous local food at the parish centre.

On Sunday morning, we visited the Kuching Cultural Village. Later we proceeded to St Peter's Church for the Mass. It was very crowded with pilgrims from all over Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei.

Overall, it was a blessed experience to be at the consecration of the new church with a supplementary better understanding of the rich culture of our brothers and sisters in Sarawak.



Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang

KUCHING: Thirty-two pilgrims, led by Fr Gnana Selvam Berentis, *inset pic*, and the Senior Citizen Ministry (SCM) of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes (OLL), Klang, participated in the opening ceremony and consecration Mass of the new St Peter's Church in Padungan, *pic*, on June 29.

Upon arrival in Kuching, the group visited St Peter's College Seminary, and Fr Selva celebrated Masses at several churches, including St Joseph's Cathedral (Taman Budaya), St Stephen's Church (Bau), St Agnes Tsaou Church (Kampong Grogro), and St Anne's Church (Kota Padawan). The spiritual highlight was the Mass at the newly consecrated St Peter's Church, celebrated the following morning.

It was a great honour for Fr Selva to be the first priest to celebrate Mass at the newly consecrated church on the morning of June 30. This significant occasion, specially arranged by Fr Selva and St Peter's parish priest, Fr Vincent Chin, marked both Fr Chin's 40th sacerdotal anniversary and his 70th birthday — making the event even more meaningful for OLL SCM members.



On the second day, pilgrims experienced a heartwarming moment at St Agnes Tsaou Church. Just before Mass, parishioners welcomed the group with a captivating and graceful tribal dance. The evening continued with more performances, a festive dinner, and an exchange of gifts between the local community, and the OLL SCM group.

It was a nostalgic and emotional reunion for Fr Selva and the parishioners, as he had served his Sunday pastoral ministry there throughout 2018.

One of the most memorable moments for the OLL SCM members was the warm hospitality at Kampong Grogro, where more than 80 delicious local dishes were lovingly prepared by parishioners dressed in vibrant traditional attire. The deep appreciation for Fr Selva was clearly felt, and the OLL pilgrims were warmly embraced as part of the community.

The night continued with joyful singing and dancing, culminating in heartfelt farewells. This pilgrimage was a deeply spiritual and culturally enriching journey — one that the OLL SCM members will treasure for years to come.



The group with Fr Patrick Heng at the Chapel of St Peter's Major Seminary.



The group at the Chapel of St Matthew.

Pilgrims receive insight into the Crucifixion through icon painting

SIBU: The St Teresa Oratory, one of the pilgrimage centres in the Diocese of Sibu, received over 130 pilgrims from St Anthony Church in Sarikei. The group was accompanied by the assistant rector, Fr James Ting.

Upon arrival they were warmly welcomed by members of the Sibu Neocatechumenate Way community together with Fr Edward Raymond, a Neocatechumenate priest.

A Neocatechumenate brother, Hilbert Untam briefed the pilgrims on the history of the Oratory followed by a detailed explanation of the Oratory's fresco icon painting, "The Crucifixion" in Iban language.

This icon, painted by Kiko Argüello, founder of the Neocatechumenal Way, presents a profound theological meditation on the crucifixion of Jesus.

It depicts Jesus Christ taking upon Himself the sins of the world, offering forgiveness to sinners, and bestowing the Holy Spirit. The cross is shown as the Tree of Life, planted on Calvary. Upon it, Christ fulfils the words of the Gospel: "The Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." He lays His head on the cross, fully submitting to the will of the Father. His outstretched arms signify complete abandonment to God.

At the foot of the cross stand Mary and the disciple John. Jesus addresses Mary, saying, "Woman, behold your son," and to John, "Behold your mother." Mary extends her hands in a gesture of welcome. In embracing John, she embraces every Christian. The womb that bore the Son of God now embraces all humanity. She becomes our Mother — offering the Holy One in order to receive the sinner.

The base of the cross rests above a dark cave, symbolically containing the skull of Adam, representing the redemption of all humanity from original sin.

In the background are the walls of Jerusalem. Jesus, the Man of Sorrows, bears upon Himself the sins of the people. He dies outside the city, carrying with Him the glory of the old temple. In His crucified body, He inaugurates the new temple and offers true worship to the Father — a sacrifice of love.

The congregation then observed the Holy Hour with the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament by Fr Edward followed by recitations of the Rosary and Divine Mercy prayers.

Fr Edward was also available for pilgrims who wanted to have confessions.



The pilgrims with the icon painting, "The Crucifixion"

Catholic forum urges stronger Church role in sustainability

NEW YORK: Catholic leaders, youth advocates, scholars, and civil society actors from across continents convened in Manhattan on Sunday for the New York Catholic Social Forum, calling on the Church and its partners to take a more active role in addressing global inequality, environmental destruction, and political dysfunction.

Held at Manhattan University, the forum marked key anniversaries: the tenth year of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' landmark encyclical on the environment; the 80th anniversary of the United Nations; and the pope's historic 2015 address to the UN General Assembly. It also coincided with the UN's ongoing High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Organised by IMCS Pax Romana and its partners, including the International Youth Training Centre (IYTC), ICMICA Pax Romana, International Young Catholic Students, and the Dorothy Day Center at Manhattan University, the gathering tackled the theme: *UN Sustainable Development Goals, Catholic Social Teaching, and Global Governance*.

The event opened with a prayer by Titi Ghale, followed by welcoming remarks from Manhattan University's Dr Kevin Ahern, who affirmed the university's "long-standing commitment to Catholic social movements and its mission to educate for justice and peace."

Setting the tone for the day, Anselmo Lee of the IYTC Steering Committee said the forum was "not just an anniversary but a moment of accountability." Recalling the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and Pope Francis' call to care for creation, Lee emphasised the need to confront deepening crises.

He urged participants "to analyse the gaps and failures of the current governance system and, inspired by Catholic social teaching and Pope Francis's vision, propose concrete, prophetic actions."

IMCS Pax Romana President William Nokrek described the forum as "timely and meaningful," and said it was a moment "to renew our shared mission to promote justice, peace, and care for our common home, inspired by the spirit of the Jubilee Year."

In the first panel, speakers examined systemic barriers to achieving the Sus-



A file photo of Environmental activists display a banner calling for action on climate change as they arrive on St Peter's square prior to Pope Francis's Sunday Angelus prayer on June 28, 2015 at the Vatican. (LiCas News photo/Gabriel Bouys)

tainable Development Goals (SDGs), highlighting the exclusion of civil society and the dominance of corporate interests in UN spaces.

Dr Pamela Chasek of the International Institute for Environment and Development warned of "the increasing corporate influence over UN negotiations and the worrying exclusion of grassroots voices."

Barbara Adams of the Global Reflection Group urged a broader vision for sustainability that addresses inequality, saying current structures are "failing to address systemic inequalities."

Youth advocate Dr Sameh Kamel of the Major Group for Children and Youth lamented "the lack of progress on most SDG targets" and called for deeper faith-based engagement at local and global levels.

The second session focused on Catholic responses to these challenges. Lee called on Church-linked civil society organisations (CSOs) to form alliances beyond Catholic circles to amplify their prophetic voice.

Mariko Komatsu of Hiroshima Diocese highlighted the moral urgency of nuclear disarmament, saying Hiroshima's experience is "a living reminder of why peace is essential to development."

Suman Ghale of IMCS Asia Pacific

presented ongoing Catholic-led campaigns that connect community organizing with the UN development agenda.

Closing the forum, Roshan Lobo, Secretary General of the International Young Catholic Students, said the day's conversations should translate into action across Catholic networks.

Speakers issued several concrete recommendations, including SDG audits at the parish and diocesan level, greater inclusion of Global South voices in global forums, fossil fuel divestment in favour of sustainable investments, and stronger partnerships between Church institutions and grassroots movements.

Dr. Ahern captured the urgency of the moment: "In a world facing deepening inequalities and environmental crises, Catholic social teaching offers both moral clarity and practical pathways forward."

Organisers committed to publishing a New York Social Agenda for Action summarizing the forum's findings and confirmed upcoming gatherings — including the World Summit for Social Development in Doha this November and the 2027 SDG Summit and World Youth Day in Seoul.

"We look forward to seeing you again in Doha for the next gathering of hope and action," Nokrek said in closing. LiCAS News

NEWS IN BRIEF

Haze crisis returns: Southeast Asia suffocates once again

KUALA LUMPUR: Thick haze has returned to Malaysia as smoke from over 1,200 fire hotspots in Sumatra, Indonesia, drifts across the region. Several areas in Malaysia have recorded unhealthy Air Pollutant Index (API) levels, prompting concerns of another major transboundary haze episode.

This recurring crisis, driven largely by illegal land clearing for palm oil and timber plantations, reflects longstanding failures in enforcement and regional cooperation. Despite the 2002 ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution, weak implementation and lack of legal enforcement have rendered the pact ineffective.

In 2025, as in past years, firefighting efforts remain under-resourced, and political sensitivities continue to block stronger cross-border action. The haze poses serious health risks, including asthma, cardiovascular disease, and premature death, while also harming the environment and disrupting economies.

Malaysia's King Sultan Ibrahim has urged public vigilance and stronger enforcement to prevent open burning. The Education Ministry is considering school closures if conditions worsen.

Experts call for ASEAN to adopt binding enforcement mechanisms, support environmental courts, and hold corporations accountable. Without urgent, coordinated action, Southeast Asia will remain trapped in a man-made environmental and public health crisis. ucanews.com

LA Catholics launch fund for immigrant families

LOS ANGELES: Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles has launched the Family Assistance Programme, a new fund aimed at helping families facing hardship due to recent immigration raids, Angelus reports.

"This programme will provide direct support to families suffering financial hardships because of the current climate of uncertainty and fear," Archbishop Gomez said at a press conference at St Patrick's Church.

The fund — the first of its kind in a US Catholic diocese — will support parish-based outreach efforts that deliver groceries, medicine, and other essentials. Aid will be distributed through local parishes, which best understand their communities' needs. Assistance is available regardless of religious affiliation.

Many businesses have pledged strong support in the form of gift cards, funds, toys and cash donations.

The launch comes amid heightened fear following ICE raids across Southern California. Though a judge recently paused the 'roving patrols,' anxiety remains high.

Michael Molina of the Catholic Association of Latino Leaders, which also pledged \$10,000, said: "Never did I think I'd see Catholics afraid to go to church or send their kids to school."

Archbishop Gomez wrote on the LA Immigrant Support site: "The vast majority of 'illegal aliens' are good neighbours, people of faith, and essential contributors to our economy and communities." ICN

Record high abortions in Ireland spark concern

DUBLIN: Abortions in Ireland surged to a record 10,852 in 2024, a 62.8 per cent increase from 2019, the first year after abortion was legalized. This marks an 8.16% rise from 2023's total of 10,033, according to the Department of Health.

Bishop Kevin Doran of Elphin and Achonry criticized the government for doing "nothing to reduce the numbers of abortions," saying it appears indifferent to why women seek them or the consequences. He added, "Abortion harms women and babies alike."

Doran also raised concerns over restrictions on conscience rights for healthcare workers and laws penalizing peaceful protest, stating that many pro-life citizens feel "disenfranchised."

He warned that arguments once used to justify abortion are now being used to push for assisted suicide and euthanasia. "It is absolutely clear now how right we were," he said.

The report follows UK statistics showing that nearly 1 in 3 conceptions in England and Wales ends in abortion. CathNews

Children's hospitals halt transgender procedures Following Federal Action

WASHINGTON: Several children's hospitals across the US have stopped performing transgender surgeries on minors due to executive actions by President Donald Trump and new federal regulations. Institutions in California, New York, Washington D.C., Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Colorado have adjusted or shut down their transgender programmes.

One notable closure is the Centre for Transyouth Health and Development at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, now facing a lawsuit from a woman who says she was fast-tracked into transition at age 12. The clinic cited federal pressure as its reason for

closing.

Other hospitals, including Stanford Medicine, Kaiser Permanente, Children's National Hospital in D.C., and University of Chicago Medicine, have followed suit, halting surgeries and drugs for minors. The University of Pittsburgh Medical Centre, NYU Langone, and Denver Health have also complied.

Between 2019 and 2023, nearly 14,000 gender-transition procedures for minors were recorded, including around 5,750 surgeries. This data likely underrepresents the full scope.

In January, Trump signed an executive order barring federally funded

hospitals from offering transgender procedures to anyone under 19. In response, hospitals have begun shutting down these programmes amid regulatory risk and legal challenges.

Critics say this move protects children from irreversible harm. Ethicists like Mary Rice Hasson and Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk argue such interventions violate human dignity and fail to address underlying issues. They advocate for compassionate psychotherapy instead of medical transition.

While applauding the closures, Hasson warned that many hospitals are simply waiting for a political shift to resume these services. CNA

More than milk

Breastfeeding and the Catholic mission to nurture life in Malaysia

Dr June Joseph

Each year, during the first seven days of August, global alliances observe World Breastfeeding Week. In 2025, the theme is: *Prioritise Breastfeeding: Create Sustainable Support Systems*. While the call to action is often directed at healthcare providers and advocacy groups, this year's observance invites the global Church to reflect more deeply: How do we, as Catholics, support women who carry life, nourish life, and hold families together? What would it mean to view breastfeeding not merely as a personal choice or medical recommendation, but as a communal, moral, and spiritual commitment — one that merits attention within our parishes, ecclesial communities, and ministries?

More Than Nutrition

Breastfeeding is a sacred gift of creation — the first and most intimate expression of love between mother and child. Yet in Malaysia, as in many parts of the world, this ancient and natural act is often misunderstood, stigmatised, or overlooked. Although health authorities rightly advocate exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, many Malaysian mothers struggle to meet this recommendation—not for lack of effort, but because of persistent structural, social, and cultural barriers.

In an increasing number of urban families, mothers return to work just weeks after giving birth. Many workplaces — especially in the informal sector — offer little to no privacy for expressing milk, and flexible work arrangements remain uncommon. For migrant mothers and those in the B40 income group, the challenge is even greater, as they often lack access to healthcare, reliable support networks, and the financial security needed to sustain breastfeeding for the recommended duration. In some communities, breastfeeding is wrongly perceived as outdated or even shameful — something to be hidden behind closed doors.

These challenges strike at the very heart of women's health and family wellbeing. Breastfeeding protects children from infections and malnutrition; it is hailed as the most powerful low-cost public health strategy and the first vaccine every child deserves. It also supports a mother's physical and emotional recovery, while reducing long-term risks of chronic illness for both mother and child. Be-

yond its medical benefits, breastfeeding carries profound theological significance: it is a sacred expression of generous, life-giving love — a mother offering her very body so that another may live.

Motherhood, Dignity and the Body

Catholic Social Teaching upholds the inherent dignity of every person and the sacredness of the human body. In this light, the Church is called to be a countercultural voice in a world that often objectifies and diminishes women's bodies. Instead, we must restore a culture that honours the maternal body — not as something to be hidden or undervalued, but as a vessel of nurturing, strength, healing, and divine purpose. As St John Paul II wrote in *Mulieris Dignitatem*, "In conceiving and giving birth to a child, the woman discovers herself through a sincere gift of self" (MD 18). This self-giving is not only deeply human but profoundly sacred, and it calls for recognition, reverence, and support within our parishes and communities.

Here, I argue that breastfeeding is not only natural, but also profoundly theological. It mirrors the Eucharist, in which Christ offers His body for the life of the world. Similarly, a mother gives of her own body — often quietly, without recognition — in a daily act of sacrificial love. In doing so, she participates in the mystery of self-giving that lies at the heart of our faith. The ancient image of Maria Lactans — the Nursing Madonna — reminds us that the infant Jesus was once nourished at the breast of a young woman in Nazareth. In that tender, everyday moment, heaven touched earth through the intimacy of motherhood. This is why the Church must find concrete ways to affirm, protect, and support breastfeeding — as part of its broader mission to uphold the dignity of life and care for the most vulnerable.

The Malaysian Challenges and Opportunities

In Malaysia, efforts to promote breastfeeding have gained momentum in recent decades, particularly within the healthcare system. Yet breastfeeding practices remain deeply shaped by class, culture, and context. Many working mothers discontinue breastfeeding early due to inadequate or absent workplace policies. Young mothers — especially those without partners or extended family — often lack the guidance and emotional support they need. Among Orang Asli and other remote popula-

tions, disparities are stark. These communities face limited access to consistent healthcare, cultural dislocation as they transition to semi-urban or urban environments, undernutrition and food insecurity, and displacement or land insecurity that disrupts traditional caregiving and support systems.

Migrant and refugee women are among the most vulnerable. Confronted by economic hardship, legal precarity, and social exclusion, they face significant barriers to breastfeeding — leading to poorer health outcomes for both mothers and their children.

This is a call for the Church to more fully embody its mission of care and solidarity. Within Catholic communities, our parishes and ministries are not only places of worship — they are also spaces of accompaniment and support. At a child's baptism, the family is welcomed into the life of the Church, and with that welcome comes a shared responsibility to journey together in faith. This journey includes recognizing and supporting the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of mothers, particularly during the early, often tender months of nurturing new life.

Honouring a mother's decision to breastfeed and care for her child begins with creating pastorally compassionate forms of support within our parishes. A clean, quiet space for nursing, encouragement from women's ministry leaders, and thoughtful hospitality during Mass can make a meaningful difference for mothers and young families. These simple gestures help ensure that mothers feel seen, supported, and truly welcomed in the life of the Church.

A Call to the Malaysian Church

This moment calls not only healthcare professionals but also parish priests, catechists, and lay leaders to respond with compassionate care. The Church in Malaysia can gently guide conversations about women's health — upholding Catholic teaching while remaining deeply attentive to the lived realities of families. Supporting a mother to breastfeed with confidence is more than a health issue; it is an act of mercy. In doing so, she reclaims her body as a gift and embraces her vocation as sacred.

The Church also plays a vital role in affirming the dignity of motherhood by advocating for workplace protections, recognizing the unique needs of domestic and migrant mothers, and promoting inclusive care economy policies. Our commitment to the sanctity of

life must extend beyond birth to embrace the daily realities of nurturing and sustaining that life. Breastfeeding is not merely a private matter — it touches the entire Catholic community and is rooted in our shared belief that every life deserves care, dignity, and compassion.

Honouring the Mothers Among Us

As Catholics, we are called to be a people of compassion, justice, and truth. To honour breastfeeding is to honour the body, the family, and the remarkable resilience of mothers who nourish life each day.

May this annual World Breastfeeding Week inspire our parishes to become places where mothers feel genuinely supported, children are warmly welcomed, and every act of care reflects God's boundless love. In the daily sacrifices of mothers, we see the Gospel made real.

Practical Actions for the Church

1. Normalise and Celebrate Breastfeeding

- Integrate annual Masses dedicated to pregnant and new mothers.
- Provide discreet, supportive spaces for nursing in parish halls or companion rooms.
- Use feast days — such as Marian celebrations or those of Sts Perpetua and Felicity — to honour maternal health and breastfeeding.

2. Educate Without Guilt

- Invite local experts and Catholic physicians to lead parish talks.
- Address not only breastfeeding techniques but also the emotional and spiritual support mothers need.
- Counteract formula marketing by promoting the Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes through social media and parish bulletins.

3. Support the Most Vulnerable

- Provide hygiene kits and baby essentials for mothers in the B40 group, migrants, and single mothers.
- Partner with Caritas Malaysia and other NGOs to offer safe spaces and peer support.
- Train volunteer "breastfeeding angels" to accompany and support mothers in need.

4. Advocate for Structural Change

- Encourage longer maternity leave, mandatory lactation facilities across all workplace sectors, and greater recognition of caregiving economies as essential to human fraternity.
- Urge Catholics, especially those in leadership roles, to champion policies that promote maternal wellbeing.

Dr June Joseph is a Catholic public health researcher and educator working at the intersection of faith, maternal-child health, international diplomacy and justice. She is passionate about Catholic-rooted programs on women's dignity, breastfeeding advocacy and nutrition during the first 1000 days of life. She is an Honorary Senior Fellow with the University of Queensland, Australia and can be contacted for collaborations at j.joseph@uq.edu.au



Star filepic

Pope's prayer intention for August

Where coexistence breaks down: A cry for communion amid division

“Let us pray that societies where coexistence seems more difficult might not succumb to the temptation of confrontation for ethnic, political, religious or ideological reasons.”
- Pope's Prayer Intention August 2025



PRAYER PRISM
Fr Fabian Dicom



When Coexistence Fails, People Die
We don't have to look far to understand why this month's prayer intention matters. Gaza is bleeding. Sudan is being torn apart by brutal ethnic cleansing. Myanmar remains crushed under the weight of military oppression and racial injustice. Ukraine continues to be devastated by political and ideological warfare. Across the world, societies are crumbling where mutual coexistence once seemed possible. This is not just about war. This is about what happens when we no longer believe we can live together. When identities become weapons. When fear triumphs over fraternity. When power is worshipped and dialogue discarded. This is the temptation the Pope warns us against — a temptation very much alive in our world today. A temptation to choose confrontation over compassion, dominance over dialogue, and ideology over encounter. And here's the truth we often resist: these global wounds have local reflections. Malaysia is not immune.

Malaysia: The Fragile Illusion of Harmony
Malaysia, we often say, is a multi-racial, multi-religious, multicultural success story. It is the line we repeat in tourism ads and national speeches. But we know that is only half the truth. Because beneath our “harmonious diversity” lies a deep anxiety — often unspoken but always felt. Political power is frequently drawn along racial and religious lines. Access to land, housing, education, and even identity cards reflect structural inequality. Religious conversions, indigenous rights, refugee protection, and migrant labour continue to be contentious and polarising issues. The recent public discourse on the status of certain communities — be they Christian Orang Asli, Rohingya refugees, or Hindu temple-goers — reveals just how fragile our coexistence truly is. We may not be at war. But the battle for dignity, equity, and true communion is far

from over. And here is where the Church must examine herself. **A Church That Cannot Remain Silent** If we in the Church speak about love but remain silent about injustice, we have betrayed the Gospel. If we preach unity in Christ but practise segregation in our parishes and pastoral planning, we are complicit in the very divisions we denounce. If our catechism classes and pulpit preaching avoid naming racism, religious supremacy, xenophobia, and systemic inequality, then we are not forming Christians — we are breeding cultural Christians, who sing hymns on Sunday and ignore their neighbours' suffering the rest of the week. The Church cannot afford to be neutral. Neutrality in the face of oppression is not peace — it is surrender. We are called to be salt and light, not fence-sitters.

The Gospel: A Dangerous Invitation Jesus did not play it safe. He healed the outsider. He praised the faith of foreigners. He dined with traitors and touched the untouchables. He spoke truth to religious power and chose love over legalism. He was not crucified for being neutral. He was crucified because he disrupted the boundaries of purity, power, and privilege. To follow Christ is to follow that same dangerous path — a path that makes room at the table for those we are told to fear or exclude. This is not a soft or sentimental coexistence. It is costly communion. Pope Francis called this a “culture of encounter.” Not just polite dialogue, but a radical openness to the other, especially when it is inconvenient, uncomfortable, or controversial.

A Prophetic Church for a Fractured Nation What would it look like for the Church in Malaysia to truly live this prayer?

It would mean being more than a religious institution — it would mean becoming a prophetic presence. It would mean:

- Speaking out when laws or policies marginalise entire communities.
- Partnering with mosques, temples, and secular organisations to defend human dignity.
- Opening our spaces to refugees, stateless children, and the poor — not as charity, but as justice.
- Preaching against racism, not just in the world, but in our pews.
- Training our clergy and catechists to talk about the hard issues — not just salvation in heaven, but liberation on earth.
- Embodying One Body of Christ that is multi-ethnic, multilingual, and multi-voiced — not just in theory, but in how decisions are made, how leadership is shared, and how resources are allocated.

Imagine parishes where every liturgy includes prayers for the displaced and persecuted, not just the sick and dying. Imagine diocesan offices that consult marginalised communities before planning projects. Imagine a Church that models what national unity looks like — not through slogans, but through structures. This is what it means to be Church. Anything less is cosmetic Catholicism.

Hope from the Ground Despite everything, there are seeds of hope. And they are not coming from the top — they are sprouting from the margins. Young people forming interfaith solidarity groups to respond to floods. Indigenous leaders who integrate traditional wisdom with Catholic social teaching to defend their lands. Women of different faiths cooking meals side by side after disasters. Migrants who, despite being treated as invisible, gather weekly for prayer, for hope, and for one another. This is not just social work. This is ecclesiology in action. This is where the Church is most alive. And this is where we must go - not as saviours, but as companions. As learners. As siblings.

The Temptation We Must Resist In times of fear, the temptation to retreat is strong. To build walls. To protect our kind. To defend our doctrine at the expense of our humanity. But this month's prayer intention invites us to another way — the way of Christ. Let us not succumb to the temptation of confrontation: ethnic against ethnic, religion against religion, ideology against ideology. Let us not weaponise our beliefs. Let us not worship power. Let us not hide behind silence. Instead, let us choose the narrow path of love, the difficult work of coexistence, and the prophetic mission of communion.



May the Church in Malaysia not be known for its buildings, its numbers, or its traditions. May it be known for its courage. For its embrace of the other. For its refusal to bow to division. And for its relentless pursuit of a Kingdom where no one is left out.

Let this be our prayer. Let this be our witness.

Fr Fabian Dicom is the National Director of Caritas Malaysia



Tianne Pereira

Telling Jesus' story, one line at a time

From Broadway lights to church altars, this journey is anything but ordinary. While most stars were chasing the spotlight, Bruce Kuhn took a different curtain call, one that's led him from dazzling theatre stages to quiet sanctuaries in churches and cathedrals, where he now performs the greatest story ever told.

Bruce isn't just any ordinary actor. He once stood under the bright lights of *Les Misérables* on Broadway, played to packed houses and taught theatre at top schools. But today, you're more likely to find him, still leaving the crowd in awe and performing solo in a church near you.

That's exactly how we were fortunate enough to meet up with him. He recently took Singapore and Malaysia by storm, performing 10 shows across both countries in a whirlwind tour that left audiences amazed, moved and stunned by the sheer artistry of a one-man show where the script is Scripture. Mid-interview, he grins and quotes Picasso, "Bad artists borrow, great artists steal."

His performance of both the Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles, word for word, scene by scene is unlike anything you've seen in church theatre. No costumes. No props. No supporting cast. Just Bruce, standing before a crowd, weaving through the life and teachings of Christ with such conviction, such precision and presence, that the pews felt like the dusty roads of Galilee. Let's just say he steals your attention from the second he walks on stage.

And here's the thing — there's never a dull moment.

Whether you're a teen who's never cracked open a Bible or someone who knows the verses by heart, you'll find yourself pulled into the story like you're actually there. The passion. The drama. The humour. The pain. It all hits differently when Bruce is the one telling it.

So who is this man behind the voice? When I asked him to describe himself off-stage, away from the lights, he didn't miss a beat. He quoted Proverbs 20:11, "Even a child is known by his deeds." "I'm a father. A husband. My fruits are in how I raise my children and how I love my wife," he said simply.

Bruce was born and raised in the United States, but now lives in the Netherlands, which he describes as a place of "beauty and calm." So why the big move from 'Broadway to Bethlehem'? In one word - love. "When I fell in love, I discovered a whole new world. I made changes. I was about 40 when I got married, late, by most standards. And suddenly, Broadway felt... engineered. But this, this was real. This was where my heart was."

And it's in that same spirit that he performs. You don't get the feeling he's acting, you get the sense he's inviting you into something. Into someone.

"I don't memorise," he said, when we asked how on earth he remembers hours of Scripture. "I live in the moment. I tell my students this too. Don't memorise lines. Just pump the story into your brain, again and again. Feel it. Know what happened. If you remember the events, the words will follow."

As someone who teaches the Bible and has done theatre, the more I can't help but appreciate the talent — what Bruce does is next-level. He remembers the Gospel in order, with no script, no cues and no one to feed him lines if he slips. It's just him and the Word.

He laughs when we ask if any show stands out. "Does forgetting your lines count?"

It was Toronto, full house and Bruce blanks — completely. He just stands there. Another time he learned the Gospel in Dutch, then couldn't remember it in English and he had to translate it back into English on the fly during a show," he recalls, still a little wide-eyed about it.

But perfection isn't the point. Presence is. "None of us really knows how Jesus said the things He said," Bruce points out. "And sometimes people come up to me after a



show and say, 'Jesus didn't say it that way.' And I ask, with no sarcasm intended, 'How do you think He said it?' That's when the conversation really starts."

"We often like our Jesus a certain way. But too many people have tamed Jesus," he says. "We like the loving, forgiving Jesus. But we forget, Jesus hated evil more than we do."

It's one of the reasons Bruce's portrayals feel so alive, he doesn't soften the edges. He lets Jesus be fully human and fully divine. And the crowd leans in every time.

So, has performing the Gospel changed him? Cue to another classic Bruce moment, with a straight face he says. "Oh yes, I walk around holy. Radiant. A tongue of fire over my head." Then, he laughs. "I didn't grow up very religious. We weren't really practicing Catholics. But one day, a friend who was an evangelist, convinced me that Jesus Christ was crucified and that He resurrected. That's a fact. I couldn't shake it. So I started wondering, 'Who is this Jesus?' And that's when the journey began."

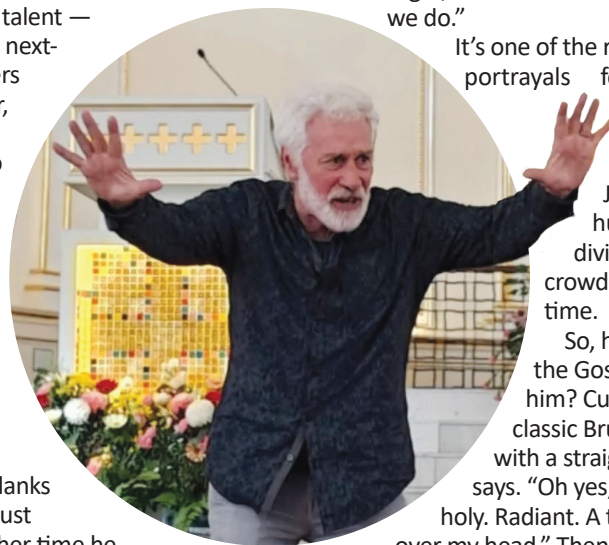
When the lights dim and the story ends after each show, Bruce's hope is simple, that

something eternal lingers. "It's not about me" he said. "What matters most is that people leave feeling the Holy Spirit move and walk away with a deeper curiosity to discover who Jesus really is." He even quoted psychologist Dr Jordan Peterson, saying: "Motivation can be implied by actions, so you can guess somebody's mind and motives." Then added, "Am I doing this for an Oscar nomination? No." When you think about it, this really is ministry, not a performance for fame.

So what's next for this doting father of two? "I'm working on the Gospel of Mark," he shared. "I've also got bits and pieces of other biblical narratives in the works." Before we wrapped up, we had to ask how he was enjoying Malaysia. "Oh, this isn't my first time!" he said brightly. "I love the food here, especially the teh tarik."

To us the sweetest part of the conversation wasn't about the show, or the travel, or even the faith it stirs. It was every time he mentioned his wife, whom he referred to often, with the same glowing smile. "She's the sweetest thing," he said, eyes lighting up, as if talking about her for the first time - like a man still smitten. It is clear, he is in love. And just like that, you realise that Bruce Kuhn's greatest performance isn't on stage. It really is in the way he lives.

If you ever get the chance to catch Bruce Kuhn live, take it. You'll laugh, you'll reflect and maybe, just maybe, you'll meet Jesus in a whole new way.



Cathedral of St John the Evangelist parish priest, Fr Gerard Theraviam, Shawn Lourdasamy and Bruce Kuhn.

The gift of puppies

I like dogs. I am taken by their exuberance, their honest love for their masters, the fidelity they show, and how enthusiastic they are about little things. That said, I never was a fan of small dogs, until I ended up with a toy poodle. My colleague had been on her way to a hair appointment when she passed a pet store. A puppy in the display window caught her eye and she traded a hair cut for a pet carrier, supplies and a little brown fuzzball of a toy poodle.

Her husband was not pleased. Especially when he came home late at night and was accosted by a tiny thing attempting to eat his ankles. Battle lines drawn, it was mere months before my desperate colleague asked if anyone could foster the dog while she was away on a long business trip. Her husband had threatened that if she left the dog in their apartment, it would ominously not be there when she returned.

Since the trip was just over a week, I offered to pet sit. I remember coaxing it out of its carrier and saying to my husband that there was no danger of my falling in love with the shaggy thing. It was way too small, and way too furry. Little Curly, innocent of my judgement, enjoyed her time with us. She had never been out of her owner's apartment, but learnt to skip up the stairs of a double-storey house. She was vocal in her wonderment when she saw rain for the first time, running out to eat raindrops as they fell from the stormy sky. But it was the way she raced around the park chasing leaves that made me start thinking that a small dog had its merits.

It was an easy thing for me to agree to adopt Curly after her owner returned

and regretfully said there was no way she could take the dog back to the apartment. My husband tagged on 'Sue' to Curly, and the little brown poodle became CurlySue, after the Jim Belushi movie about a street-smart young orphan.

Far from being rascally or conniving, our CurlySue was a bright, intelligent thing, a true credit to her breed. She was 17 when she died, her heart giving out in her sleep, a few months after my mother passed.

Nineteen months after my mother's passing, my father died. He was the place that my sun rose and set. Through the loss of no longer having mum at home to greet me, and no little dog whose paw I would hold when I woke in the middle of the night and tried to fall back asleep, my dad had become the last bastion of unconditional love.

The death of a parent like that changes a person. Since his death, I lost a lot of my gusto for life. I have withdrawn, supposedly to reflect, meditate and pray, but truthfully, it is more because I find interaction shallow and more annoying than pleasurable.

A few months after CurlySue's death I missed the presence and personality of a little dog around the house so much that I joined numerous dog adoption and rescue sites to see if I would be lucky a second time around. I was in search of a poodle specifically because I am asthmatic, and poodles are one of a handful of breeds whose fur is hypoallergenic. Through well-meaning friends I met a few poodle crosses, but neither dog nor human liked the other enough for a commitment. A trip all the way to Johor to meet a standard poodle

brought me face to face with a dog so shut-in that pity was the only emotion I could feel for it.

One person deemed my household and I the perfect fit for their year-old female poodle as the couple said their long working hours was unfair to their pet. They came to lunch at my place and handed over dog and all her worldly possessions. Only for the husband to call a few hours later saying the wife couldn't stop crying and could they please have their Coco back. It was a toss-up as to who was more traumatised: poodle, couple or my teen who was beginning to bond with Coco.

The horrid frozenness of heart after my dad's passing made me tell my husband that I was desperate enough for a poodle to buy one. The man of the house pointed out that ridiculous amounts of money notwithstanding (pedigreed poodles can have price tags of up to RM5,000), nothing would ensure a dog that I bought would be as good a fit for us as CurlySue, who was turned over free. He also reminded me of my no-buy principle because purchasing animals really does fuel the pet trade.

On April Fool's Day, one day before my father's birthday, a friend told me that her dogsitter was taking care of four young dogs which were bought from a breeder to prevent them from being forcibly mated and bred. Two of them were poodles. I begged the sitter to let me meet them, and because my bruised heart couldn't bear the thought of taking one and leaving the other bewildered, we ended taking both poodles home.

The rascals have been more trouble in their few months with us than CurlySue

was in her whole life. They are resident paper shredders, couch eaters and a training conundrum because when you have two scallywags running around, you're hard pressed to know who didn't use the litter tray.

And yet, the pups have breathed hope and new life into my family and me. The little gambolling things remind us that new life brings new experiences and new ways of being happy. In all my stumbling, ill-formed prayers for acceptance, strength and grace to carry on living in a way that would honour my father, I never prayed for a dog, thinking it a trite, frivolous ask.

But my Father in heaven knows me more than I know myself, and He knew that the answer to "Where are you God when I am hurting?" is a warm pile of licky puppies. To those who downplay the hand of God in this gift, I remind that God gave to Job twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10). I have no need, want (not to mention no space for) 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys. I mourned one poodle's loss. Two poodle puppies and their bright eyes are exactly what God knew I needed to restore me.

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



Word in Progress

KAREN-MICHAELA TAN

Hail Mary Full of Grace, let me find a parking space

When I moved into a new place about two months ago, my first order of business was to ensure my altar was setup before anything else could happen. A very simple altar – a medium frame of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, an heirloom from my late grandmothers' house; a Pieta, bought by my uncle also for my grandmother; a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, and a small cross made from an olive tree; something I'd picked up on my travels. Satisfied with the outcome of the altar placement, and arrangement my artefacts, I sent a picture of the setup to my cousin, which sparked a very interesting conversation: "We Catholics always put the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, before we put Jesus at the centre of our daily lives."

She is not wrong, though. We sat over lunch subsequently and went through a list of the most unusual sainthoods there are. There is a patron saint for almost anything: hangovers, unattractive people, coffee, oversleeping, beer, and the most bizarre yet – fear of sounds that go BOOM! No, this is not an exaggeration, yes, these are actual patronages of saints. We were very amused and highly tickled by this, but the deeper question remained: When do we go to Jesus?

See, both of us grew up in a very Marian centric household. Anything and



To be honest

MARTIN ARUL

everything was Mary first, followed by a list of saints our moms drilled into us. Some of the usual suspects were, of course, St Jude, St Anthony and St Anne. For a major part of our lives, we made pilgrimages to these churches on their feast days, so much so it is etched in our core memory when the specific months approach.

The fundamentals of Christianity is definitely Jesus, centred around the Holy Eucharist, and we are

not taking that away from Him. But what struck us was how difficult it is to have a relationship with Jesus because He was "out of reach" and supplemented by His beloved mother, and an army of saints to assist Him, and us, in our time of need.

I did not think much of it then, but as I simmered in this thought after I left lunch that day, it became strikingly apparent. When I am in trouble or feeling weary, I call on the Virgin Mary for consolation. Fondly, I call her "Mom", and would have full conversations with her while I am out and about, one would think I needed professional help. The concept of "Talking to Jesus" seems almost too irreverent or sacred for us to even consider, because, why would we bother the "Man Upstairs" about trivial things like "I think my boss is going to have a go at me today, I messed up". After all, He needs to listen to millions of people worldwide, and surely,

my problems are too measly for Him and could be handled by one of His many assistants?

We surely are not alone in this as many, many Catholics I know whip up the infamous "Hail Mary full of grace, let me find a parking space" prayer when driving to the likes of Taipan or Bukit Bintang. It is truly fascinating to see us invoke the intercessions of everyone around, but struggle to sit in the quiet of Jesus.

In Scripture (Mt 11:28), Jesus says "Come to Me all you who labour", and again in scripture (Jn 6:35), it is written "I am the bread of life". Yet, most of us struggle to have that relationship with Jesus, who is our Saviour. Surely, we are not called as the pagans to parade our prayers (Mt 6:7), but we are called to pray in the quiet of our hearts and our room, earnestly and fervently to our Father above (Mt 6:6).

Our Christian brethren from the other denominations, however, have this 'Jesus and Me' relationship all figured out. In fact, looking into our own backyard, we have our Charismatic group of Catholics who also have this down to a tee. They are able to treat Jesus like the friend He was meant to be. Is this because they do not put the Blessed Virgin and all other saints front and centre of their daily lives? Is it because they do not have the concept of sainthood? Or is it because they have the want for a relationship with Jesus?

I guess what I am trying to say is, we are blessed with the privilege to invoke a plethora of saints to assist us, but Jesus

is still who we look to. Albeit, most of us have different relationships with religion and Jesus, it is He whom we look to to give us ultimate salvation.

Contrary to popular teachings in catechism, and in most (if not all) our families, Jesus is more accessible to us, and we do not need to hide ourselves in guilt or shame. He died for our sins and for our salvation, to take us as sinners and cleanse us from our iniquities. I hope this message reaches out to all the young Catholics who are struggling with the pressures of the world, meeting people from different faiths and beliefs, and knowing what our faith calls us to do. It took a lot of self-discovery, reading, and understanding to be able to articulate this so that you may know, despite having an army of saints we seek intercessions from, the focus of our faith is Jesus.

The world out there can be brutal; people will belittle you and make remarks on your belief. Understand one thing, though, we are not here to say we are right, but to focus on the journey of how you get to Jesus, and that is in becoming living symbols of true Christianity in love, peace, and service to God and neighbour, while living harmoniously with people from all beliefs.

Martin Arul is a believer who questions everything that is wrong, believing that everyone is equal in the eyes of God, and one must live as a Christian more in deeds than in words, outside the conformities of the building of the Church.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Suicide and Jesus' descent into hell

In a book entitled *Peculiar Treasures*, the renowned novelist and spiritual writer, Frederick Buechner, reflects on the character of Judas, the man who betrayed Jesus with a kiss and then died by suicide.

Buechner, who had lost his own father to suicide, speculates on the reasons why Judas died by suicide. Referring to an ancient Church tradition, he suggests that perhaps Judas chose suicide out of hope instead of despair, that is, he felt damned and counted on Jesus' mercy after death, thinking that perhaps "hell might be his last chance of making it to heaven."

Then, imagining Jesus' descent into hell, Buechner writes: "It's a scene to conjure with. Once again, they met in the shadows, the two old friends, both of them a little worse for wear after all that had happened, only this time, it was Jesus who was the one to give the kiss, and this time it wasn't the kiss of death that was given." (Jeffrey Munroe, Reading Buechner, InterVarsity Press)

As Christians, as every article of faith in our Creeds state, we believe that after His death Jesus "descended into hell." What's meant by that?

The popular conception of this in the language of our catechesis, in our iconography, and in Christian piety, might be summarized this way. After the sin of Adam and Eve, 'original sin,' the gates of heaven were closed, so that from the time of Adam and Eve until the death of Jesus, no one could go to heaven. However, in His death, Jesus atoned for our sins and during the time between His death on Good Friday and His resurrection on Easter Sunday, He went to that place in the underworld, Sheol, where all the good people who had died throughout

history were waiting and He led them into heaven. This was His "descent into hell."

But, whatever the literal truth in that popular conception, there's a powerful theological truth undergirding the doctrine. In essence it's this: The love and compassion that Jesus manifested in His death has the power to go into hell itself, that is, there is no "hell" (physical, psychological, or spiritual) we can create that Christ's love cannot penetrate so as to offer healing for the very wound which caused that hell itself.

God's love, healing, and forgiveness can penetrate any hell we create and heal the wound that caused that hell.

This is perhaps the single most consoling doctrine, not just in Christianity but in all religion. When we are powerless to help others or ourselves, God can still help us.

It's for this reason that Christians don't believe in reincarnation. It isn't needed. We don't need to get ourselves completely right to go to heaven. When we are powerless, God can still do for us what we can't do for ourselves.

That's a deep consolation because not everyone dies a happy death. Many of us die in anger, in bitterness, not fully reconciled with others, with unfinished business of soul. And some of us die by suicide, imprisoned in a private hell where, due to illness and wound rather than moral fault, we believe our death is our only way to life.

The doctrine of Jesus' descent into hell is particularly helpful regarding how we might understand how those who die by suicide are met by God after their deaths. For too long we have been falsely anxious about this, fearing that suicide is a grave human and moral failure, an act of despair, unforgivable



Fra Angelico, "Christ in Limbo," 1441 (Public Domain / Public Domain)

(certainly on this side of eternity). However, in most cases, it is an illness, one not freely chosen. Like cancer, a heart attack, or an accident, it takes someone out of life against his or her committed choice. For this reason, we are encouraged to no longer use the phrase "committed suicide." Nobody "commits" cancer or "commits" a heart attack. He or she "succumbs" to it. So too for most suicides.

With this in mind, we can better appreciate the image Frederick Buechner uses in speculating about the suicide of Judas' and his meeting with Jesus in hell.

In essence, this is Buechner's image: After his betrayal of Jesus, Judas descends into a private hell wherein he senses that what he has done cannot be forgiven and he is doomed forever to live in that darkness. That falsity, that illness, that fatally misguided logic tells him that going to hell is his last chance of going to heaven. So, he takes his own life.

After his death, Jesus meets him in the shadows of that misguided hell and kisses him, not in condemnation or damnation, but in unconditional love, understanding, and forgiveness.

This image, I believe, can help us understand what happens in suicide: the misguided logic of those taking their own lives, and God's loving, compassionate, forgiving, invitational descent into their private hell within which they believe their deaths are a favour to their loved ones and that "hell might be their last chance to go to heaven."

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



As I was Contemplating

FR GERARD THERAVIAM

Discovering the Word made flesh in the here and now

During the Bible Month this past July, parishes have highlighted the importance of the Bible in various ways. I delighted in pictures I saw on social media of one parish that had their children dress up as Biblical characters – cute indeed! Another has an exhibition by their catechism which I sadly missed. The cathedral had a couple of performances by American Bruce Kuhn, a former Broadway actor who brought to life not just the *Gospel of Luke* but also its sequel, the *Acts of the Apostles* through his one-man shows. I marvelled at his memory as he animatedly acted out scenes. Truly, it was the 'word becoming flesh' for me as he brought the scenes alive again, giving me food for not just thought but also prayer and reflection. Two weeks ago, when I went to Port Dickson to share on *Hope in the Bible*, I was so edified by two young boys who had their bibles opened and who turned their pages as they followed my meanderings on the theme.

However, my greatest delight in the month in terms of the Bible was my encounter with a group of young Art students from a local college who approached me through their lecturer if they could possibly do some murals for us.

They were aware that their lecturer, Harold Antony, had already installed two of his murals in the Cathedral for the Jubilee Year. (These are attracting a lot of attention as people gaze and reflect on them, allowing them to somehow allow them to touch them – but this is not the point of my story.) The fact is that these students, 23 of them, were not Catholic, save a single one. Yet they chose to offer their services to us. It was a project that they had to do as part of their course but they had lots of other options that didn't necessarily have to be art-based. Calling themselves 'Faith Painters', they came to me with their ideas, as well as to see what I might be able to suggest them to do. They were aware that we had a soon-to-be-opened building called the Magnificat Community Centre and so they wanted to work on that theme. Amazingly, they had done their research which included reading the encounter between Mary and Elizabeth in Luke's Gospel, which also includes Mary's Song of Praise - the Magnificat, named after the first word in Latin of the song. They wrestled with the text and came out with a refreshingly modern representation of what seems to be a dance by Mary and her pregnant relative, Elizabeth, as Mary sings her song of praise to God, as well as another mural of Mary with her baby, Jesus. Currently, these are still not open for the public to see as the Magnificat building has not yet got its necessary certifications but I am sure they will bring joy to people in due time. Another much bigger mural depicts the

mission themes that are being reflected on by the local church: of Church, (depicted by the likeness of St John's against the silhouettes of KL's skyscrapers) Society, Family and Ecology – all this is surrounding a beating heart with a cross – perhaps it signifies the Sacred Heart of Jesus as well as our hearts that should beat in sync with His as we go out on Mission.

For me, what is amazing is that non-Christians have chosen to discover and share the Good News to us through art, while also sharing in conversations about faith and life – Society and Church in conversation. Seeds have been sown and I hope it bears fruit thirty, sixty and a hundredfold in the hearts of the sowers as well as the hearts that receive them. The generosity of the Faith Painters was also manifests in the fact that they didn't just paint and give up their time and talent, but they have also raised over a thousand ringgit and gifted it for the Magnificat!

Art also has the power to bring the community together. Twenty-three heads and hearts put together to complete the murals surely taught them something about becoming and being community with a common goal, each bringing their gifts to the table, having to negotiate and compromise as they worked together interacting with those who were to be the recipients of their gift – the wider community.

The Faith Painters have continued a tradition of sharing a message through art. In earlier times, art spoke volumes to those who

were illiterate and unable to read the Bible. Yet all the magnificent art through the centuries allowed them to access the great stories of the Bible which nourished their faith. Today while people are educated and can read, art offers an opportunity to enter not just minds but also hearts. Art offers a window into the mystery of what is depicted, not just cold facts and figures. It allows the imagination to look beyond, creating a sense of awe and reverence, drawing us towards the Divine.

I recently invited a visiting friend to take time to gaze at our Jubilee murals – and he came back to say that while he had merely thought it pretty earlier, he had entered a new dimension of entering into the painting and allowing it to speak and touch his heart by taking time with it. It was indeed an invitation towards contemplation and prayerful introspection. Art has this power to touch our souls deeply and move us in the way of the Spirit. Indeed, entering into the artistic world can be a deeply meaningful and transformative experience, facilitating spiritual growth. We just need to slow down and pause to appreciate and experience beauty as it presents itself.

Fr Gerard Theraviam is the parish priest of the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist who believes that the arts allow us to glimpse the Divine. Currently, his attention is drawn to fundraising and tying up the details of the Magnificat Community Centre which is nearing completion.

Little Catholics' Corner

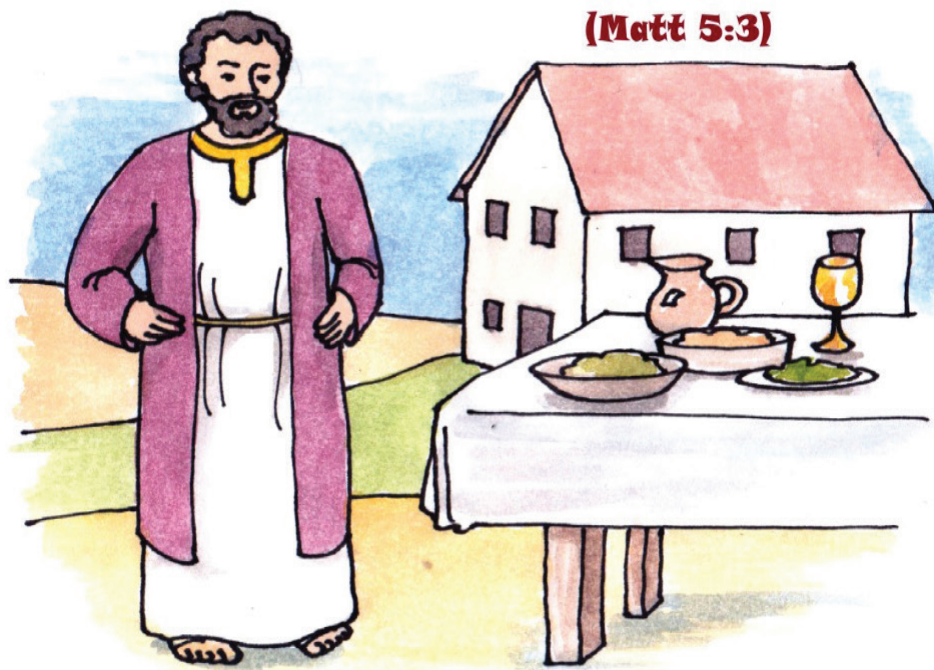
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LANDS	LARGER	REST	LIFE
PRODUCED	GRAIN	EAT	DEMANDED
BOUNTIFUL	GOODS	DRINK	THINGD
HARVEST	SAY	MERRY	PREPARED
SPACE	MYSELF	GOD	RICH

Use the code at the bottom to find out what the rich farmer in today's Gospel wasn't thinking about.

(Matt 5:3)



Answer: Blessed are the poor in spirit

1 6 3 - - 3 2 0 + 3 X 4 3

9 8 8 + 5 7 - 9 5 + 5 X

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Dear children,

We often believe that if we have more money, we will have happiness.

Some people get this very wrong. They go through life trying to collect more money, more possessions, and more of the things they believe will make them happy.

But having more of something isn't what brings us true happiness. True happiness can only be found in Jesus.

Jesus warned against this. He said, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Then He told the story of a man whose land had produced so much

grain that he had no place to store it.

Even though he had plenty, he wanted more, so he decided to tear down his barns and build even bigger ones.

Jesus said the man was a fool, for when his life was over, he would leave everything behind. He would leave this world with nothing. (Luke 12:15-21)

Children, God has promised to supply all of our needs, but He has not promised to fulfil every selfish wish. "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed." (Luke 12:15).

Love
Aunty Eliz

"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." (Luke 12:15)

Let's Colour



Las Melli

**The Parable of the Rich Fool
(Luke 12: 13-21)**



Back to school

Dominic G. Joseph

PENAMPANG, Sabah: Parents, undergraduates, and first-year university and college students attended a talk titled *Back to School: University Edition*, organised by the Parish Youth Ministry Team in collaboration with the Parish Education Committee of the Holy Nativity Church, Terawi. This engaging and thought-provoking session focused on the importance of remaining steadfast in the Catholic faith during the transition to university life.

Held on July 13, the talk aimed to inspire reflection among new students and highlight the vital role parents play in nurturing a deeper understanding of the faith. The session began with ice-breakers and a time of praise and worship, led by the Parish Youth Ministry Team, setting a vibrant and reflective tone for the event.

The special guest speaker, Sr Terecia Loukang, FSIC, — who serves as the coordinator for Catholic Student Affairs in the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu — challenged participants with a series of thought-provoking questions designed to prompt self-reflection. She asked: “Are you ready? Am I happy where I am?” She further invited the students to consider why some are easily influenced by peers and eventually convert to another religion, why others become involved in premarital relationships that lead to pregnancy, or why some fall into addiction, drop out of their studies, or drift away from the Catholic faith. She concluded by asking, “Are you ready to deepen your Catholic faith once you enter university or college?”

Sr Terecia inspired the participants by quoting Isaiah 41:10: “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

She emphasised the importance of Catho-



lic students connecting with Catholic student groups within the archdiocese in which they reside. These groups, through activities such as workshops, counselling sessions, talks, field trips, fellowship, and mission work, play a vital role in helping students stay grounded in both their studies and their Catholic faith.

Sr Terecia also reminded students to maintain regular communication with their parents and family members. “It is critical for students and parents to keep the lines of communication open. This helps parents better understand the challenges their children face at university or college and prevents unnecessary misunderstandings,” she said.

She challenged parents to reflect on their child’s readiness for higher education: “Are your children truly ready for university or college life? It’s not just about financial preparedness. Other equally important areas — physical, mental, emotional, social, and especially spiritual — must be taken into account.”

Addressing a growing concern, Sr Terecia noted: “One of the common problems among Catholic students is that they are easily influenced by other faiths and, in some cases, eventually convert.”

Faith journey and insights on campus life To offer a real-world perspective, Sr Ter-

ecia invited three former university students to share their personal experiences of being actively involved in Catholic student groups—testimonies that affirmed the impact and importance of such communities in sustaining faith during campus life.

Noel Hanzel Juvinol Joimil, 28, a Marine Science graduate currently serving with the Sabah Fisheries Department, spoke about how his formation in the Catholic faith began well before university.

“My journey in the Catholic faith started during my school years, when I was encouraged to attend seminars, workshops, talks, and various student activities organised by the Church. As an undergraduate, I did not hesitate to join a Catholic Students Group and participate in their programmes,” he shared.

Noel especially enjoyed mission work in the interior regions of the state, which left a lasting impact on his spiritual journey. “Apart from my academic pursuits, the programmes organised by the Catholic Students Group helped keep me rooted in the Word of God.” He encouraged undergraduates to adopt a holistic approach to university life, balancing academics, faith, and personal development.

Ceron Ezra Yangun, 24, a graduate in Food Science and Nutrition and a former president of a Catholic Students Group, drew

strength from Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

She presented a thoughtful analysis of how she navigated university life, categorising it into three areas: self, environment, and academics. Self covered mental health, time management, friendships, and hostel life. Environment focused on social interaction and the broader campus experience. Academics encompassed her course load and studies.

“Each of these areas can be challenging if a student tries to handle them alone. As the saying goes, ‘No man is an island.’ That’s why it’s so important for Catholic students to join and engage with Catholic student groups, where they can find guidance, community, and support,” Ceron said.

Andrea Gail, 26, a graduate in Environmental Technology, encouraged students — especially those studying in West Malaysia — to actively participate in Catholic student groups as a means of spiritual continuity and connection.

“These groups not only help us stay focused on our academic goals but also serve as effective support systems in times of challenge,” she said. Andrea also emphasised the importance of staying connected with peers from Sabah and Sarawak, creating a wider network of faith-based fellowship across regions.



Noel Hanzel, Sr Terecia Loukang FSIC and Ceron Ezra



Shirley Wanda and Andrea Gail, youth leaders at Terawi parish.



Sr Terecia with the rector of Holy Nativity Church, Terawi, Fr Michael Modoit and his assistant, Fr Bradley Belly.

HOPE RUN 2025: PILGRIMS OF HOPE

Embrace Romans 5:5, Hope Does Not Disappoint



TAWAU: In conjunction with the Jubilee of Hope Year 2025, themed *Pilgrims of Hope*, the youth from the Neo Catechumenal Way organised a fun run entitled 'HOPE RUN' recently at Holy Trinity Parish Hall.

Inspired by Romans 5:5, 'Hope does not disappoint,' this event aimed to spread the spirit of Jubilee among all parishioners. It also sought to strengthen love, particularly among Catholics, encourage placing hope in God during challenging times, and foster

a synodal approach of walking together as one big family.

The event welcomed approximately 400 participants across various programs. A Triduum was completed before the event commenced. On the actual day, an exhibition and sale featuring plants, pet fish, paintings, food, snacks and drinks were held. In collaboration with the Creation Justice Ministry to promote 'Laudato Si'; 'Used Cooking Oil' and 'Sew

& Save' booths were set up. These booths aimed to raise ecological awareness among the participants. A 'Luce & Friends' mascot cosplay presentation by children aged 5-10 was successfully performed and enthusiastically received by the audience. Hundreds of gifts, presents, and hampers were given out through a lucky draw session. The run was officiated by Holy Trinity Catholic Parish Priest, Fr David A. Garaman; together with Fr Nicholas Ong;

Parish Pastoral Council Chairman, Steven Sagunting; and Chief Responsible of the Neo Catechumenal Way, Gilbert Jack.

The Organising Chairman, Timothy Sei, thanked God and all the participants who brightened the first sports event held by the Neo Catechumenal Way community. This event received broad support from both parishioners and non-parishioners. The program concluded at 5.30pm with a closing prayer by Steven Sagunting.

Real love, real talk, real change



Attending the two-day Theology of the Body course was more than just a seminar. It was an experience that challenged the way I see myself, others, and love itself. In a world that constantly sends confusing messages about identity, relationships, and purpose, this course felt like a moment of clarity.

Theology of the Body, as introduced by Pope John Paul II, dives deep into the truth that our bodies are not just physical shells but sacred reflections of God's image. One idea that stood out to me was that we are made to love not in a superficial way, but in a way that is free, total, faithful, and fruitful. This understanding hit me hard: real love means self-gift, not self-gain.

The discussions on purity, dignity, and the meaning of human sexuality weren't about rules, they were about reclaiming the beauty of being human. It made me reflect on how we often forget the sacredness of our own identity, and how easy it is to reduce others to something less than who they truly are.

What I appreciated most was how relatable and honest the sessions were. They didn't sugarcoat anything. Instead, they invited us to wrestle with truth, even when it was uncomfortable. And somehow, through all that, I left with a deeper peace knowing that love, in its truest form, is possible, and that our bodies were created to speak that love into the world.

I didn't expect to walk away from this course feeling changed. But now I carry a new perspective, one that I hope to live out, not just understand. **Araiel Jayden (Form 4), Cathedral of St John the Evangelist**

Sealed with the spirit: A day to remember

CHERAS: On Saturday, July 12, the Church of St Francis of Assisi was filled with joy and celebration as 41 young people received the Sacrament of Confirmation. Surrounded by their families, catechists, and parishioners, they were sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit in a Mass that was more than just a ceremony — it was a powerful reminder of faith, love, and the unity we share as one Church.

Archbishop Julian Leow led the celebration with warmth and fatherly care, joined by our parish priest, Fr Paul Cheong, OFM Cap, who had faithfully guided us confirmands throughout our journey. During his homily, the archbishop didn't just speak — he connected. His message was clear and heartfelt: never lose sight of your faith, because God walks with you through every step, every struggle, and every joy. You could feel his love in every word, and many of us were moved in ways that words can't fully capture.

As one of the confirmands, standing at the front, I felt a mix of nerves, awe and peace. Some of us were quiet while others a little shaky but all of us were present in that sacred moment. When the chrism oil touched our foreheads and we heard the words "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit," it felt like more than a blessing. It felt like a promise that will walk



Confirmands kneeling in silence as Archbishop Julian prays over them.

with us for the rest of our lives.

However, this day wasn't just about us. Parents wiped away quiet tears as they recalled the memories of baptisms and First Holy Communion of their child. Catechists watched with pride, seeing the seeds of faith they had once planted now begin to bloom. Parishioners bowed their heads in prayer, knowing these young hearts had now been strengthened to stand as soldiers of Christ.

As the final hymn ended, something beautiful lingered in the air. It wasn't just joy or celebration but hope. In a world that often feels divided, this day reminded us that faith still brings people together. As one of the 41 who were confirmed, I know we're not meant to walk this path alone. Together, uplifted and united by our Church family, we go forward to carry Christ's light into the world. **Claudia Sze Lim Ak Salvestior**



Church mourns deaths in Bangladesh military plane crash



Students hold placards and pictures of a victim as they protest July 22, 2025, demanding the actual number of the death toll after an air force training aircraft crashed into a building belonging to Milestone School and College in Dhaka, Bangladesh July 21. (OSV News/Reuters/Mohammad Ponir Hossain)

DHAKA: In Bangladesh, grief and shock gripped the capital, Dhaka, after a military jet crashed into Milestone School and College on July 21, killing at least 31 and injuring more than 170.

Most of the victims were students who were just leaving class when the F-7 fighter slammed into the building, sparking a deadly fire.

Pope Leo XIV said he was “deeply saddened” to learn of “the loss of life” caused by the air force jet crash in Bangladesh.

The Pope said in a July 22 telegram that he “entrusts the deceased to the merciful love of the Almighty” and was also “praying that their families and friends may be consoled in their grief, and for the healing and comfort of the injured.”

The telegram, signed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican’s Secretary of State, said, “The Holy Father invokes upon the entire school community, and all affected by this tragedy, the divine blessings of peace and strength.”

After the crash, a portion of the school caught fire, killing dozens. Of the more than 170 injured, at least 76 people were undergoing treatment in various hospitals in Dhaka, local health authorities said.

A sense of grief and desperation engulfed Dhaka’s Uttara district as anguished families searched desperately for their loved ones.

Parents rushed between the crash site, hospitals and morgues in a frantic attempt to locate their children, the paper said.

In a July 22 letter to the Bangladesh government, Archbishop Kevin Randall, apostolic nuncio to Dhaka, expressed “profound sorrow” upon learning of the tragic

plane crash, which resulted “in the loss of precious lives, the majority of whom were children, and injury to others.”

The nuncio offered his condolences to “the bereaved families and to the entire nation,” offering “prayers and spiritual closeness.”

“May the Almighty grant eternal rest to the departed, especially the young lives so suddenly taken, healing to the injured, and strength and consolation to all who are affected by this painful tragedy,” Archbishop Randall said.

One of the parents, who was on his way to pick up his child from school when the plane crashed, said that luckily, he found his child unharmed.

Sharif Ahmed said that it was “a terrifying moment” that he “cannot express in words.”

“Children were coming out of the school with their bodies on fire, crying all around, parents were running around like crazy. I was also looking for my son. But when I found my son unharmed, he was silent for at least 10 minutes, unable to say anything out of fear,” said Ahmed.


The Bangladesh bishops’ conference also expressed condolences in a statement, urging the government to provide full support for the treatment of the injured and those who lost loved ones. Bishop Ponon Paul Kubi, the conference’s secretary general, called for prayers and urged authorities to take measures to prevent such incidents in the future.

Hundreds of students protested on July 22 near the site of the crash demanding accountability, compensation for victims’ families and the halt of training flights. OSV

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Third Anniversary
In Loving Memory



Kunjamma George
14.11.1936 - 01.08.2022

Not a day passes without we remembering your beautiful smile, your joyous laughter and above all, the love and joy you gave us. We cherish those moments.

Sadly missed by
Your loving husband, sons, daughter, daughters-in-law, son-in-law and grandchildren.

In Loving Memory of




Clarence F. Sta Maria @ Molly Tan
Departed: 4.8.2005 Departed: 12.6.2024
19th Anniversary 1st Anniversary

We lie down and sleep in peace for you alone, O Lord. Make us feel safe and secure. We miss you dearly. You are always in our thoughts and in our prayers.


Fondly remembered by son, daughter, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, and grandson.

Julie Abraham
1929 - 5.8.2022

A mother’s love lives on forever in the memories she created and the hearts she touched.



In Loving Memory of




Patrick Michael @ Bosco
31st Jan 1952 - 26th June 2010 (15th yr anniversary)

Madam Jayakanoo @ Mrs S.A Michael
17th Sep 1923 - 18th July 2014 (11th yr anniversary)


The days we shared with you were filled with grace, Two precious souls no one could replace. You brought us comfort, laughter, and light, Your love remains, still holding us tight. Since you’ve been gone, the world feels less bright, We think of you often, by day and by night. We’ve asked again and again why you couldn’t stay, Why both of you had to be called away. You showed us the meaning of kindness and care, Of living with purpose, of always being there. So now that you’re gone, how can we forget? You were the dearest hearts we’ve ever met. Though time moves on and seasons must change, Our love for you both will always remain. We hold your memories tender and near, Forever in our hearts, you are here.

Always loved and missed by Family

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

Psalm 119:50

23rd Anniversary
In Loving Memory of




Nepoans James
Departed: 07-08-2002

The Lord bless you, and keep you: the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you: the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Always remembered by loving children, grandchildren and loved ones.
May he rest in peace.

6th Year Anniversary
In Ever Loving Memory of




Sandanasamy Anthony Pillay (JPN)
Gift from God: 8th April 1934
Returned to the Lord: 7th August 2019
Wife: Late Ruth Mary Michael Pillay

Eternal rest grant unto him, Oh Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul rest in peace. AMEN.

We Love and Miss you
Forever loved & dearly missed by family members, relatives and friends.

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Church affirms deaf inclusion at Jubilee 2025 in Bangkok

BANGKOK: St Louis Church in Bangkok recently hosted a special “Open House” event for deaf and hard-of-hearing Catholics in celebration of the Church’s Jubilee 2025 theme: Pilgrims of Hope. Attendees came from Bangkok and neighbouring provinces, marking a significant step toward greater inclusion and accessibility for a long-overlooked community within the Church.

Fr Peter Bhuravaj Searaariyah, chaplain of the Deaf Catholic Association of Thailand and national coordinator for Deaf Ministry, emphasised that the event was both a celebration and a necessary pastoral response to the deep isolation many deaf Catholics experience. He noted that religious communication barriers often leave them feeling unseen, particularly during services where traditional liturgy excludes non-hearing members. “By bringing them together,” Fr Peter said, “they experience the support of community and the love of God in a language they understand.”

Fr Peter has been leading efforts to make Catholic life more accessible, including Bible sharing, retreats, sign language interpretation, and even developing a visual “picture language” version of the Bible. However, significant challenges remain. Only two of Thailand’s eleven dioceses offer real support for deaf Catholics, and there are just two trained sign language teachers nationwide,



Narong Thanomlek (left), Yindee Poonvithayakij (centre), and a fellow attendee flash the “I love you” sign during the Jubilee 2025 Open House for Deaf Catholics in Bangkok. (LiCAS News photo)

with two more in training. Narong Thanomlek, the first Catholic graduate with a degree in Sign Language Teaching from the Princess Sirindhorn Institute, highlighted the unique challenges of religious ministry in sign language. He explained that sign languages differ by country and require facial expressions and body movement — elements often missing from traditional Church practices.

The event also spotlighted powerful personal stories. Yindee Poonvithayakij, who lost her hearing at 12, recalled a traumatic moment when a priest rejected her written confession. For decades, she felt cut off from her faith.

Now, she volunteers with joy, finding healing through community.

Many deaf Catholics have stopped attending Mass due to the inability to understand or participate. Fr Peter stressed that this spiritual exclusion must be addressed, especially as the community prepares for the upcoming Asian Deaf Catholic Congress in Korea. He hopes participants will return with renewed faith and help Church leaders better grasp their needs.

He also noted the struggles of deaf children growing up in families where no one speaks sign language, limiting both communication and faith formation. Yet signs of hope are emerging. Some non-Catholics, drawn by the



Sr Waraporn Asasuk of the Lovers of the Cross of Ubon Ratchathani conducts the deaf choir as they sign a song of praise to God during the Jubilee 2025 gathering in Bangkok. (LiCAS News photo)

Church’s increasing inclusivity, are exploring conversion.

One participant expressed newfound joy after joining the group, saying they no longer feel invisible. For many, St Louis Church and its Holy Spirit Chapel have become places of spiritual refuge, offering sign language Mass, confession, and community tailored to their needs.

In this Jubilee Year, Thailand’s deaf Catholics are making their message clear: they are not forgotten — they are pilgrims of hope, proclaiming a Gospel felt through heart and hand. LiCAS News

Join our tree planting campaign

KUALA LUMPUR: Since the launch of our CSR initiative, the *HERALD Tree Planting Campaign* on September 8, we have planted 183 trees in the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary, Sabah.

This campaign goes beyond responding to Pope Francis’ call in *Laudato Si’* to care for our common home — it is an opportunity to leave a lasting legacy of love for creation.

In partnership with APE Malaysia under their ROAR (Restore Our Amazing Rainforest) initiative, these trees are transforming a once-barren patch of land into a vibrant rainforest full of life. In just five years, these saplings will stand tall as part of the forest canopy. Over the next decade, they will become a thriving habitat for gibbons, orangutans, birds, and countless other species.

Climate change is one of the most urgent challenges we face today. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global temperatures are expected to rise by 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by as early as 2030, which will result in more extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and the loss of ecosystems. Forests, however, are our natural allies in this fight. They act as “carbon sinks,” absorbing carbon dioxide

from the atmosphere and helping to mitigate the effects of climate change.

While print media remains central to *HERALD*’s mission, we also recognise the environmental impact of production. This tree-planting initiative allows us to offset that footprint while actively contributing to the global fight against deforestation, climate change, and biodiversity loss.

For just **RM35 per sapling**, you can sponsor a tree through the ROAR initiative. Your sponsorship covers four years of nurturing and care to ensure the sapling thrives.

By sponsoring a tree, you’ll help restore degraded forests, rebuild vital wildlife corridors, and support the local communities who depend on these ecosystems. This is a gift of hope, healing, and harmony with nature — a living legacy of love that will grow and endure for generations to come.

In fact, forests help absorb up to 30 per cent of global carbon emissions, playing a crucial role in the battle against climate change. By participating, you are directly contributing to this vital effort.

For more details, go to: <https://www.heraldmalaysia.com/CSR-reforestation>



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