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HERALD

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Mission Statement

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

Prayer for the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026 (MPC2026)

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

Guide us as we prepare for
the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026.
Teach us to listen deeply,
to discern faithfully,
and to trust where You are leading us.

We place before You the four areas we are discerning together.

Bless our families,
that they may be places of love,
faith, forgiveness, and hope.

Renew our Church,
that we may grow in communion,
participation, and joyful witness
to the Gospel.

Open our hearts to the cry of creation,
that we may care for the earth
with reverence, responsibility,
and gratitude.

Guide our life in society,
that we may seek justice, promote peace,
and stand in solidarity with the poor and
the vulnerable.

As pastoral pathways emerge
from our discernment,
may they enrich and strengthen
our local faith communities.

With Mary, Mother of the Church,
who pondered Your Word and walked in
faith, teach us to walk together in hope.

Keep us rooted in Christ,
attentive to one another,
and open to the work of
Your Holy Spirit.

May this Convention
help us live more faithfully
as one Catholic Church of Malaysia,
serving in this land we love.

Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Merdeka must unite, not divide

KUALA LUMPUR: As Malaysia prepares to mark its 69th Independence Day on August 31, the country's major non-Muslim religious body has called on Malaysians to reject racial and religious politics, warning that hatred and suspicion are eroding the trust on which national unity depends.

The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) said *Merdeka* should prompt Malaysians to reflect on whether the nation remains faithful to the values upon which independence and nation-building were founded.

"The freedom we achieved was never intended to become a licence to divide us," the Council said, in its *Merdeka* 2026 message.

Expressing concern over an escalation in political rhetoric appealing to voters along racial and religious lines, MCCBCHST warned against narratives that encourage Malaysians to view fellow citizens with fear and suspicion rather than as partners in building the country.

It was equally concerned about what it described as the increasing normalisation of bigotry and hate speech, particularly inflammatory claims portraying non-Malays or non-Muslims as threats to Islam.

Such accusations, it said, were irresponsible and contrary to the spirit of nation-building, fostering hostility among communities that have lived alongside one another for generations.

"The overwhelming majority of Malaysians, regardless of race or religion, simply wish to live in peace, raise their families, practise their respective faiths and contribute positively to the nation's progress," the Council said.

Warning that "every unchecked act of hatred chips away at the foundations of our national unity", MCCBCHST said religion should never be weaponised for political advantage or used to cast suspicion on fellow citizens.

Instead of uniting Malaysians to confront the country's real challenges, it said too much public attention was being consumed by manufactured racial and religious controversies.

These distractions divert attention from fighting corruption, strengthening institutions, improving education and healthcare, creating quality jobs and addressing the rising cost of living.

"Politics built upon slander, fear and suspicion can never produce a confident nation," MCCBCHST said, warning that short-term political gains come at the longer-term cost of weakened social cohesion and trust.

The Council said *Merdeka* should not merely commemorate independence from colonial rule, but remind Malaysians of their continuing responsibility to build a country where diversity is a strength, every citizen is treated with dignity and disagreements are resolved through dialogue.

It also distinguished assimilation and integration, stressing that Malaysia's strength does not require communities to surrender their cultural or religious identities.

Instead, Malaysians of different races, religions and cultures should be able to remain proud of their identities while sharing a commitment to the Federal Constitution, the *Rukun Negara* and the common good.

"Integration strengthens society by fostering mutual respect, trust and cooperation, allowing our diversity to become a national asset rather than a source of division," it said.

MCCBCHST also warned of the wider consequences of racial and religious polarisation.

"No country can achieve sustainable economic growth or social progress if its people are constantly encouraged to distrust one another. National unity is the very foundation for development," it said.

The Council called on political leaders to reject campaigns that exploit race and religion and instead compete on ideas, integrity, competence and policies that improve the lives of Malaysians.

It urged law enforcement authorities to act firmly and impartially against those who incite hatred or hostility, regardless of status or political affiliation. Religious leaders were encouraged to promote compassion, mutual respect and understanding, while Malaysians were urged to reject fear, misinformation and slander and refuse to become "instruments of division".

Describing the Federal Constitution as Malaysia's "common pledge", MCCBCHST said it provides the framework for the country's diverse communities to flourish together.

As Malaysia celebrates 69 years of independence, the Council said *Merdeka* must be seen not simply as an event from the past, but as a responsibility entrusted to every generation.

"The true test of our patriotism is not how loudly we proclaim our love for Malaysia, but how faithfully we protect the unity, harmony and mutual respect that have sustained our nation for decades," it said.

The Council concluded with a challenge to Malaysians: "Let this *Merdeka* be remembered as the moment we chose nation over division, truth over slander, hope over fear, and unity over hatred."



Day of Prayer for Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026

All dioceses and archdioceses in Malaysia are expected to observe a Day of Prayer and Fasting for the 2026 Malaysia Pastoral Convention (MPC) on September 4, as part of the spiritual preparation for the historic gathering. Bishop Joseph Hii, host of MPC 2026, announced on August 14 that the bishops of Malaysia had designated the day for spiritual preparation ahead of the convention.

In his pastoral letter dated August 15, Cardinal Sebastian Francis, Bishop of Penang, invited the faithful to unite in prayer as one Body of Christ, seeking God's grace, wisdom and guidance. He urged them to pray for the organisers and delegates, as well as the future of the Catholic Church's pastoral mission in Malaysia, and to open their hearts to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Archbishop Julian Leow of Kuala Lumpur also called on parishes in the archdiocese to join him online in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament on September 4 from 9.00pm to 10.00pm.

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Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre
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Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur,
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EDITOR
Patricia Pereira
editor1@herald.com.my


ASSISTANT EDITOR
Sandra Ann Inbaraj
sandra@herald.com.my


JOURNALIST
Christina Lazaroo
christina@herald.com.my


GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Amanda Mah
amanda@herald.com.my


SOCIAL MEDIA
Kevin Francis
kevin@herald.com.my


BAHASA MALAYSIA
Melania Liza Magnus
liza@herald.com.my


MANDARIN
Adelina Wong
yin4482@gmail.com


TAMIL
Perzeus James
tamil@herald.com.my


ADMIN ASSISTANT
Rachael Sharma
admin@herald.com.my

ADVERTISEMENT/SUBSCRIPTION
advertisement@herald.com.my

MEMORIAM
memoriam@herald.com.my

LETTERS
letterseditor@herald.com.my

Social Media

www.heraldmalaysia.com

@heraldmalaysia

heraldmalaysia
Herald Snapshot

@heraldsnapshot

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Growing from our mistakes and moving forward

Every weekend, like clockwork, a young girl would follow her mother to the morning *pasar*. While her mom navigated the busy stalls to buy fresh ingredients, the girl walked behind, eyes glued to her phone, scrolling away. She was physically present, but her mind was somewhere else entirely.

Then came a Saturday when her mother fell sick and couldn't get out of bed. She handed her daughter a crumpled piece of paper with a grocery list. 'Just follow this,' her mom said softly.

At the market, the girl stood in front of the vegetable stall, completely lost. Looking at the mountains of greens, she had to guess which ones her mom usually picked. After making her best choices, she walked home proudly, feeling like a responsible adult.

She unloaded the plastic bags on the kitchen table, expecting a warm compliment. But when her mom looked inside, she sighed. 'Ah, this isn't the right vegetable. Every time we go together, you're always on your phone, not paying attention to what I buy.'

Standing there with a mix of shame and disappointment, the girl realised something we all eventually learn: nobody escapes making mistakes.

Mistakes happen everywhere. Think about the student who gets stuck on the same math problem even after a tutor explains it three times. Or the altar server who rehearses for hours but still trips up during Sunday Mass. Think of the lector who accidentally reads the wrong Bible passage, or the colleague who picks the wrong strategy for a work project. Even bosses and leaders make bad calls. Mistakes are simply part of life, studies, work, and church. They aren't dead ends; they are lessons that help us grow into wiser versions of ourselves.

To grow from our stumbles, we need one essential ingredient: patience. When people mess up or disrupt our plans, it's easy to lose our cool. But as Galatians 5:22 reminds us, patience is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Just like a small seed, it takes time, water, and care to grow. Patience gives us the strength to stay calm when things go wrong, knowing that God is in control.

Along with patience, we also need to learn how to truly listen. Too often, we are so full of our own ideas and complaints that we shut others out. True listening means giving people a chance to speak. This is especially true between different generations. Elders shouldn't just expect young people to obey silently; they also need to listen to what the younger generation has to say. When we listen to each other, we bridge the gap and understand one another better.

When we refuse to listen, mistakes multiply. A leader who insists on doing everything their way suffocates the team. Real progress only happens when everyone plays a part. Whether at work, in church, or in our local community, teamwork builds true unity.

As we celebrate our nation's independence, let's take this opportunity to pray for a heart of change. Let's learn from our past mistakes, listen more deeply, and walk together into a fresh new chapter.

Amanda Mah



When following God costs something

Reflecting on our **Sunday Readings** **with The Editor**

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Readings: Jeremiah 20: 7-9;
Romans 12: 1-2;
Gospel: Matthew 16: 21-27

Nobody said following God would always make life easier. In fact, sometimes doing the right thing seems to make life considerably harder.

We forgive and are hurt again. We serve and nobody notices. We try to remain honest while others seem to get ahead by cutting corners. We pray and the situation does not change. We keep giving, caring and believing, yet quietly wonder, "Lord, is all this worth it?"

This Sunday's readings speak directly into that struggle.

Jeremiah has reached breaking point. He has done what God asked of him, but instead of gratitude, he receives ridicule. He becomes a laughing stock. Finally, Jeremiah decides he has had enough. He will stop speaking about God.

But he cannot. God's word has become like a fire burning within him. He tries to hold it in but eventually admits, "I cannot bear it."

There is something deeply human about Jeremiah. He loves God, yet struggles with what loving God is costing him.

Perhaps we know that feeling. We grow tired of doing good. We become exhausted from caring for someone who does not seem to appreciate it. We wonder why we keep serving when others criticise from the sidelines. Sometimes walking away seems much easier.

Yet something keeps calling us back. The fire still burns.

In the Gospel, Jesus tells His disciples something they do not want to hear. He must go to Jerusalem, where He will suffer, be rejected and killed.

Peter immediately objects. "God forbid, Lord! This must not happen to you."

We can hardly blame him. Peter loves Jesus. Surely the Messiah is supposed to triumph, not suffer.

Perhaps Peter's reaction is also ours. We want a Christianity in which following Jesus makes things work out nicely. We want faith to protect us from suffering, prayer to remove our problems and goodness to be rewarded.

Instead, Jesus says that anyone who wants to follow Him must deny himself, take up his cross and follow.

Jesus is not glorifying suffering or telling us to seek misery. The cross is what love sometimes costs.

It is choosing patience when anger would be easier. It is forgiving when resentment feels justified. It is remaining honest when dishonesty would benefit us. It is standing beside someone when everybody else has disappeared. It is choosing what is right when what is easier looks far more attractive.

This is where Paul's words to the Romans challenge us: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds."

The world has its own definition of a successful life. Accumulate more. Protect yourself. Prove yourself. Win. Be admired. Avoid inconvenience.

Jesus offers another way: give yourself.

Strangely, that is where we begin to find ourselves.

Jesus tells us that whoever wants to save his life will lose it, while whoever loses his life for His sake will find it. It is one of the great paradoxes of Christian life. The more tightly we cling to our comfort, ego, plans and need for control, the smaller our world becomes. When we begin to give ourselves away in love, something within us expands.

A parent sacrificing for a child understands this. So does someone caring for an elderly parent, the friend who stays when life becomes messy, the volunteer who serves quietly, the spouse who chooses forgiveness, or the person who continues doing what is right when nobody notices.

They give up something — time, convenience, pride or comfort — yet often discover something greater: meaning.

Jeremiah's fire, Paul's transformation and Jesus' cross point towards the same truth. Faith is not simply about what we believe about God. It is about allowing God to transform the way we live.

Perhaps the question, then, is not simply, "What do I believe?" but "What is my faith costing me?"

If following Christ never inconveniences us, challenges our ego, changes our priorities or asks us to surrender anything, perhaps we need to ask whom we are actually following.

Our crosses will look different. Most will not be dramatic. They will be hidden in ordinary choices: to love when love is difficult, forgive when the wound still hurts, remain faithful when enthusiasm has faded, begin again after failure and continue doing good when nobody applauds.

Beneath them all is the same invitation: do not be afraid to give your life away in love.

Because in God's strange mathematics, what is given in love is never truly lost.

Perhaps it is precisely in the things that cost us something that we discover what it really means to follow Christ — and find the life He promised.

A new chapter begins for St Leonard community

BAU, Sarawak: Years of planning, fundraising and perseverance came to fruition for the Catholic community of Kampung Atas with the official opening of the new Church of St Leonard on August 16.

Archbishop Simon Poh of Kuching officiated at the opening and blessing of the church before presiding over the thanksgiving Mass, concelebrated by parish rector, Fr Peter Liston.

Among those present were Sarawak Deputy Minister of Transport Datuk Henry Harry Jinep, Bau District Officer Eddy Nayoi and Sarawak Research and Development Movement Association (REDEEMS) president Datuk Peter Nansian Ngusie.

According to the Sarawak Public Communication Unit (UKAS), plans for a new church were first conceived in 2016 to replace the existing building, with the initial project proposal prepared in 2019.

The journey towards its completion, however, was not without challenges. Construction was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and Movement Control Order (MCO), while funding constraints also contributed to delays.

Efforts to secure financial support included the submission of architectural plans to the Unit for Other Religions (UNIFOR), which approved an initial allocation of RM100,000 in August 2020. Further applications for UNIFOR assistance continued throughout the construction period from 2021 to 2025.

The project also benefited from Rural Transformation Programme (RTP) allocations channelled through the Bau District Council and the Public Works Department (JKR).

Alongside government assistance, the community rallied behind the project. A fundraising committee mobilised contributions from Christian families, local residents, businesses, corporate organisations and individual benefactors.

Through the combined efforts of the Church, government agencies and local community, the main church building was completed in September 2025.

Its official opening now marks not simply the completion of a building, but the beginning of a new chapter for the Catholic community of Kampung Atas — a church made possible through years of patience, generosity and shared commitment. **DayakDaily**





Archbishop Simon Poh signing the plaque.

Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

August / September

- **31/8** ArchKL Grandparents & Elderly Celebration – Church of St Ignatius, PJ
- **3/9** Meeting – CWC, Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026
- **4/9** Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026 Holy Hour Live Stream – Archbishop's Chapel
- **5/9** Official Launch of Life Skills Centre
- **5/9** Confirmation – Church of the Good Shepherd, Setapak

Penang Diocese

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

August

- **28-31** CHARIS Peninsular Malaysia Service of Communion Healing and Deliverance Conference 2026 – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam

Malacca Johore Diocese

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

August / September

- **31/8** Closing Mass for *Perjalanan Salib* – Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, JB
- **1/9** Deliverance & Exorcism Office Quarterly Team Meeting – MPI, MAJODI Centre
- **5/9** Caritas MJD Spirituality Retreat – GSS Melaka
- **5/9** 140th Anniversary of St Mary Chapel, Bi-lingual Mass followed by Diocesan Launch of Regenerate Campaign PROTEC 2.0 (Year 2) – Church of St Mary, Ayer Salak, Malacca



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #285

F12 MJD NEWS UPDATES

Welcome dear friends,

The ***Pilgrim Cross*** returns to the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart Johor Bahru, before it unites with eight other crosses to become the MPC Cross. The ***Sibu Diocese,*** with her 1,000 volunteers, awaits this first-ever gathering of the Malaysian Catholic Church. To God be the glory.

Local Takes! Far from the Merdeka Dreams

We can expect the ***National Day Parade*** at Dataran Putrajaya on August 31, with free 10GB data under the Rahman Rebate Incentive.

As we dress up in the *Jalur Gemilang,* ***public conversation*** centres on the declining fertility rate (from 2.1 to 1.6 children), rising living costs, delayed marriages, and career pressures.

The ***3R (race, religion, royalty)*** compliance remains a concern. Consolidation of communal seats has become a priority over national unity.

The ***economic landscape*** appears to be resilient. The mega East Coast Rail Link is nearing completion.

Reading the Signs:
Giving from Within

On liturgical formation: Quoting *Desiderio Desideravi,* the Pope called for ongoing formation of the clergy and laity to revitalise the Church's liturgical life, which includes forming of the *"inner disposition of all the People of God".*

On the 112th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, September 27, on the theme *Even just One of these Children,* the Pope said: The cry of the displaced, especially the minors and the vulnerable, appeals to the conscience of all; their suffering does not end with their relocation.

On the Asian Church's gift to synodality:

Cardinal Grech reminded them to offer their experiences of dialogue with the other religions, cultural diversity, the often minority status of Christians, closeness to the poor and places where the Holy Spirit is at work to the world.

On the sufferings in the world:

1. In recent months, children in *Lebanon* have been bearing the brunt of the country's compounded crises, facing alarming rates of casualties, mass displacement, severe food insecurity, and deep psychological trauma.
2. The *Venezuela* earthquakes recorded 1,400 aftershocks, 5208 dead, and more than 16,000 injured.
3. The *UN* reported 645 million people faced hunger in the world in 2025, representing 7.8 per cent of the global population.
4. The Earthquake in *Flores,* Indonesia, killed 38 people, also prompting the diocese to cancel the Catholic festival of the Golo Koe Maria Assumpta Nusantara.

Thought for the Week:
The Battle Ground

The Eagle does not fight the snake on the ground. It picks it up into the sky and changes the battleground, and then it releases the snake into the sky. The snake has no stamina, no power, and no balance in the air. It is useless, weak, and vulnerable, unlike on the ground where it is powerful, wise, and deadly.

Lesson for the week: Don't fight the enemy on his grounds. Change the battlegrounds like the Eagle. Take your fight into the spiritual realm by praying, and when you are in the spiritual realm, God takes over your battles.

QnQ? Q asks: There are many free offers. Are they good?

"A free lunch is only found in mousetraps."

Life often offers us cheese without showing us ***the trap.*** Promises of easy success, effortless happiness, or instant gratification are rarely what they seem. Behind every "free lunch" lies a hidden cost — sometimes our integrity, our peace, or our freedom.

True blessings, however, never come through deception. They grow from patience, honesty, and faithfulness. Even grace — the one thing truly free — still asks that we open our hearts in trust.

So, here's the discernment question to keep asking ourselves: "Is this a gift, or a trap disguised as one?"

What costs nothing often takes the soul in subtle ways

The Spirit @ work: "The power of the Spirit fills the whole universe, but He gives Himself only to those who are worthy, acting in each according to the measure of his faith." ***St Basil the Great***

Something to tickle you: "The quality of a country's social and political life is measured particularly by how it allows families to live well, to have time for themselves, and to cultivate the bonds that keep them united." ***Pope Leo XIV***

Bishop Bernard Paul

A faith inherited, a mission to continue



Bishop Julius Dusin blessing the statue of Our Lady.

SANDAKAN: For 143 years, generations have prayed, served and found a spiritual home at St Mary's Cathedral. On August 15 and 16, that legacy came alive again as parishioners of different generations and cultures gathered to celebrate the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Cathedral's feast day under the theme, *143 Years of Faith, One Family, One Mission.*

The celebrations began on an energetic note with the parish's first 5km fun run, drawing over 500 participants. Young and old ran, walked and laughed together, turning the event into a lively expression of the parish theme — one family journeying together.

The feast was preceded by the traditional nine-day Rosary Novena from August 6 to 14, followed each evening by Mass and fellowship, drawing the community together in prayer and devotion to Mary.

A highlight of the feast was the traditional bringing down of the statue of Our Lady from the Marian grotto. This year, the Crowning of Mary took place at the frontage of the cathedral, enabling the wider community to participate before the statue was carried into the church.

In his reflection, Bishop Julius D. Gitom spoke of the meaning of the Assumption and Mary's enduring place in the life of the cathedral. As patroness, he said, Mary has accompanied and interceded for the community throughout its 143-year journey, always leading the faithful closer to her Son.

He reminded parishioners that the theme was not merely commemorative, but a call to continue the mission entrusted to them. In the spirit of a synodal Church, they were called to journey, listen and serve together. Like Mary, whose generous "yes" opened the way for God's plan, the faithful were invited to renew their own "yes" through compassion and service, particularly towards those in need.

Beside the sanctuary, the *Perjalanan Salib,* which will make its final journey to the Malaysia Pastoral Convention in Sibu in September, offered another reminder of this call. Together with the statue of Mary, it pointed to a faith that remains steadfast in times of difficulty and finds its strength in Christ and the Eucharist.

At the bilingual Malay and Chinese thanksgiving Mass on August 16, parish priest Msgr David A. Garaman gave thanks not only for 143 years of faith, but also for the perseverance and unity of a community drawn from different races and cultures.

Looking towards the future, he expressed the hope that St Mary's Cathedral would continue to be a home where people encounter Jesus and journey together as one family and one mission, guided by Mary.

The festivities reflected that diversity. Seven beats of the traditional gong signalled the start of the celebration, followed by the cutting of the anniversary cake, performances, a lucky draw and an exhibition by the Parish Creation Justice Ministry.

Parishioners aged 80 and above were also honoured, recognising those who have witnessed decades of the Cathedral's history and remain part of its living story.

Four cultural camps representing the Chinese, Kadazan-Dusun, Indonesian and Filipino communities showcased traditional costumes, music, dance, food and heritage. Bishop Julius, priests, Religious and parishioners moved among the camps, sharing in the richness of the cultures that make up the parish family.

As St Mary's Cathedral marked 143 years, the celebration became a meeting of generations, cultures and stories — and a reminder that the faith inherited from those who came before must now be lived and handed on.

With Mary continuing to point the way to her Son, the hope is that future generations will inherit not simply a beautiful Cathedral, but a living faith and a community that welcomes, listens, serves and walks together in hope. **Evelyn Jock**

Recalling a faith that survived persecution

Bernard Anthony

MELAKA: Sugarcane lining the grounds of the historic Assumption Chapel in Lorong Praya is not simply a feast-day decoration. It recalls a time when Catholics in Melaka, according to local tradition, gathered secretly in sugarcane fields to celebrate Mass and preserve their faith during persecution.

That memory of faith and perseverance formed a fitting backdrop as the chapel celebrated the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on August 16.

Fr Aaron Alammalay of Muar was the celebrant and preacher for the 5.00pm feastday Mass, which drew parishioners to the historic chapel.

Before Mass, Fr Aaron blessed the beautifully decorated hand-carried float bearing the statue of Our Lady of the Assumption. The faithful then joined in a short procession around the chapel, praying the Rosary as parishioners took turns carrying the float in honour of Mary.

Along the procession route, sugarcane stalks tied to the chapel fence recalled a tradition closely associated with the feast. The custom honours early Catholics who, according to local tradition, celebrated Mass secretly in sugarcane fields to avoid persecution during the Dutch period.

In his homily, Fr Aaron reflected on this history of a Catholic community whose faith had been tested but endured.

Following the end of Portuguese rule in 1641, Catholics who remained in Melaka, including the Kristang community, faced a period when the practice of their faith was restricted under Dutch rule and many were forced to worship discreetly.

Yet the faith survived. Catholics continued to celebrate the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, sustained by clergy who remained faithful shepherds and by generations of believers who trusted in Christ and His promise of eternal life.



Parishioners carrying the float in honour of Mary before the Mass.

Fr Aaron connected their perseverance with the Solemnity of the Assumption, describing Mary as a sign of Christian hope.

Mary's Assumption, he explained, was not an ascension by her own power; rather, she was taken into heaven by God. Her Assumption points to the fulfilment of God's promise of eternal life, while Mary herself continues to lead the faithful to her Son.

He also placed the Assumption within the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Jesus, the New Adam, is the source of humanity's salvation, while Mary, the New Eve, represents redeemed humanity. Having shared in the suffering of her Son, Mary now shares in the glory of His Resurrection.

Christ is the first fruits of the Resurrection, while Mary's Assumption offers a glimpse of what His redemption ultimately promises humanity.

Fr Aaron highlighted three qualities in Mary essential to Christian discipleship: humility, obedience to God's will and purity of life. Her Assumption testifies that human life redeemed by Christ is destined not for death, but for communion with God.

For Catholics whose ancestors preserved the faith through difficult times, the Assumption therefore carries a particularly powerful message. Suffering and persecution do not have the final word. Christ has conquered death, and in Mary, Christians are given a glimpse of the destiny promised to those who remain faithful to Him.

The chapel itself bears witness to that enduring faith. Established in 1850 as a small wooden structure and rebuilt in brick around 1918 – 1919, it continues to preserve the spiritual heritage handed down through generations.

The sugarcane lining the procession route therefore serves as a bridge between past and present — a reminder of Catholics who once had to practise their faith in secrecy and a celebration of their descendants who can now gather openly to profess that same faith.

After the Eucharistic celebration, parishioners gathered on the chapel grounds for dinner and fellowship.

Flame of Love Penang elects first coordinating team

PENANG: The Flame of Love (FOL) Movement in the Diocese of Penang has elected its first diocesan coordinating team following its inaugural Annual General Meeting on August 15 at the Minor Basilica of St Anne.

The five-member team comprises Patricia Chin as diocesan coordinator, Felicity Felicia Goh as secretary, Yogeetha Rajar as treasurer, and Esther Ooi and Lenie Nagarajan as committee members. Sr Mercie Lai FMDM serves as spiritual adviser.

Yogeetha is from the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, while the other team members are from the Minor Basilica of St Anne.

The movement was approved by Cardinal Sebastian Francis on June 2, 2025, and received official recognition from the Diocese of Penang on May 26 this year.

The newly elected team will coordinate the movement's activities across the diocese and promote a deeper prayer life, particularly within families, through devotion to Mary and a desire to lead souls to Christ.

Addressing the 28 participants at the AGM, Fr Nelson Joseph, spiritual adviser of the Flame of Love Movement – Malaysia, encouraged members not to allow feelings of inadequacy to prevent them from serving God.

"If you feel you are ill-equipped but are willing to be used, then God will really use you," he said.

Drawing on the Gospel account of the boy who offered five loaves and two fish, Fr Nelson reminded members that God can multiply whatever they are willing to offer for the good of others.

FOL Penang currently has 26 registered members, with the majority from the Minor Basilica of St Anne. Other members come from the Church of the Sacred Heart in Kulim, the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit and the Church of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in Ipoh.

The AGM concluded with lunch and a fellowship quiz organised by Sr Mercie.

The Flame of Love of the Immaculate Heart of Mary devotion originated in Hungary and later spread to South America, Canada and the United States before reaching Malaysia and Singapore about five years ago. Today, the movement is present in more than 70 countries and was recognised by the Archdiocese of Singapore in 2023.

Assumption at 240
Greater things ahead



PENANG: A 240th anniversary naturally turns attention to the past. But as the Church of the Assumption in George Town marked this milestone, the message was firmly about the future — honouring a faith inherited across generations by ensuring it remains alive for those yet to come.

Penang's oldest Catholic church celebrated the anniversary on August 15 with a thanksgiving Mass presided over by Cardinal Sebastian Francis. Concelebrants included City Parish clergy Frs Edmund Woon and Arulnathan Joseph, together with Fr Joachim Robert, Fr Jacob Wong MI and Fr Joseph Meng from China.

In his homily, Cardinal Sebastian reminded the congregation that the anniversary was not simply about celebrating what had been achieved, but looking ahead with hope.

Drawing from the Gospel, he repeatedly emphasised the words: "You will see greater things."

For a church with 240 years behind it, those words pointed towards a mission far from finished.

Cardinal Sebastian stressed the importance of reaching out to young people, strengthening communities and ensuring the Church remains a place where people encounter faith, hope and one another. He encouraged the faithful to build communities where no one feels alone and to carry Christ beyond the church walls.

Fr Edmund similarly described the anniversary as a moment of gratitude and responsibility.

"We need to prepare for the future," he said, reminding parishioners that the Church is ultimately not its building, but the people who give it life.



Cardinal Sebastian Francis blessing the memorial plaque.

That future rests on a remarkable inheritance.

The Assumption's story began in 1786 when French missionary Fr Arnold Garnault MEP arrived with a pioneer Eurasian Catholic community and established the island's first church dedicated to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

From a modest church on Church Street, the community moved to its present home on Farquhar Street under Fr Claude Manissol MEP in 1860. The building was expanded in 1928 with two side wings forming its present cruciform shape.

From these beginnings, the Assumption became an important centre for the growth of the Catholic faith across Penang and the northern region.

Its history is also closely linked with Catholic education. In 1825, Bishop Jean Baptiste Boucho, then parish priest, established a Catholic Free School. His later invitation to the La Salle Brothers and Sisters of the Holy Infant Jesus contributed to the establishment of St Xavier's Institution and the former Convent Light Street in 1852.

The church endured two world wars. A memorial plaque recalls its connection with the 1914 Battle of Penang, honouring French sailors from Le Mousquet for whom Fr Louis Duvelle MEP celebrated a Requiem Mass. During the Japanese Occupation, the church remained largely closed apart from a few services.

From 1955 to 2003, the Assumption parish served as the cathedral and "Mother Church" of the Diocese of Penang before the Bishop's seat moved to the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit. In 1988, it joined the Churches of Our Lady of Sorrows, St Francis Xavier and St John Britto to form the City Parish.

The anniversary also honoured the Eurasian community whose story has been inseparable from the Church of the Assumption since its founding. A commemorative plaque unveiled and blessed in the church garden pays tribute to generations whose faith and service helped lay its foundations.

That heritage was also heard through the church's historic pipe organ. Procured from Morton and Moody in England in 1914 and installed in 1916, it remains the second-oldest playable pipe organ in Malaysia. Restored in England in 2013, it continues to accompany worship today.

The church underwent a major 14-month restoration beginning in September 2016 and reopened with a rededication Mass on January 1, 2018, together with the adjacent Penang Diocesan Museum.

Today, the Church of the Assumption remains a significant house of worship along George Town's Street of Harmony, reflecting Penang's long tradition of different faith communities living alongside one another.

Anniversary celebrations included fellowship, a cake-cutting ceremony and a "Eurasian Fiesta" organised by the Penang Eurasian Association, which concluded on August 22 with an evening concert featuring the historic pipe organ and sacred music.

Yet amid the weight of 240 years of history, Cardinal Sebastian's words gave the anniversary its forward-looking challenge: "You will see greater things."

The parish has witnessed a small community take root and flourish, generations pass through its doors, Catholic education grow and faith endure through war and social change.

But a legacy of faith is not preserved by history alone. It remains alive when each generation receives it, lives it and hands it on.

That is the challenge now — not simply to preserve what earlier generations built, but to continue what they began.

After 240 years, the Assumption's story is still being written, with faith and hope in the "greater things" yet to come. **Buletin Mutiara/Aaron Lim**

A nine-day journey into the heart of the *Memorare*

PETALING JAYA: "Never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection… was left unaided." For generations, Catholics have found comfort in these words of the *Memorare.* During the nine-day celebration of the Feast of Our Lady of the Assumption from August 8 to 16, the Church of the Assumption invited the faithful to look beyond the familiar words and rediscover what they reveal about trust, prayer and Mary's unfailing invitation to turn to Christ.

Each day brought the community together for Holy Hour, Rosary, Novena, Chaplet and Mass, with guest celebrants drawing from the words of the *Memorare t*o explore Mary's role as mother, intercessor and faithful disciple who always leads us to Christ.

"God chose a whisper, not something loud," said Fr Gilbert James OFMCap, reflecting on Mary's quiet obedience in carrying the Word made flesh. Amid the noise of the world, Mary helps us recognise the voice of God and points us towards Jesus with confidence and trust.

That confidence was reflected at the Wedding at Cana. Even when Jesus said His hour had not yet come, Mary trusted Him completely, telling the servants: "Do whatever He tells you." Her example reminds us that prayer requires not only asking, but trusting and remaining open to how God chooses to respond.

Fr Gregory Chan reflected on the words of the *Memorare,* "inspired by this confidence," reminding the faithful that Mary, as Mother of the Lord, continually intercedes for her children. Our prayers may be imperfect, but they are never insignificant before God.

Fr Dominic Tan described the Assumption as the culmination of Mary's life of faithfulness and obedience. "She is an example of ultimate obedience," he said. Marian devotion, he reminded the faithful, never ends with Mary. She continually leads believers towards Jesus and the everlasting joy promised by God.

That promise is especially important when people feel burdened by their failures. Fr Xavier Andrew reminded the congregation that wrong choices do not place anyone beyond God's mercy. God does not reject us, he said, and neither should we "disqualify" ourselves because of our past. God's mercy is greater than our mistakes, and our mistakes do not have to define us.

Throughout the novena, parish priest, Fr Leonard Lexson, returned to one powerful word in the *Memorare:* "Never." No sincere prayer is unheard or unaided. God's grace, healing and mercy are never exhausted, and His people need never live as "spiritual beggars".

The Assumption itself points towards this Christian hope. In Mary, the faithful see that death does not have the final word, but opens towards the promise of new life in God.

On the final day, Fr Leonard reflected on the *Magnificat,* describing Mary's great hymn of praise as a revolutionary song and her "manifesto to the world" — proclaiming a God who lifts up the lowly, remembers His mercy and remains faithful to His promises.



Parishioners during the Eucharistic Celebration.

The nine-day celebration concluded with young and old joining a procession bearing the statue of Mary, publicly expressing their love and devotion to the Mother of Jesus.

Yet the feast ultimately pointed beyond the procession and even beyond Mary herself. The message of the nine days was one of confidence, hope and trust: when life becomes noisy, uncertain or difficult, Mary continues to whisper the same words she spoke at Cana — "Do whatever He tells you."

And, as the *Memorare* reminds us, we never journey alone. **Assumption Communication Ministry**

From leaders to shepherds

Markus Lim

CHERAS: What does it truly mean to lead a Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC)?

That question was at the heart of the Church of St Francis of Assisi's BEC leaders and Zone Leaders Retreat on August 8 at the St Padre Pio Room, where participants gathered not simply to learn how to manage their communities better, but to rediscover why they were called to serve.

Themed *Rooted in Christ, United as One,* the retreat invited leaders to step away from the routines of meetings, activities and responsibilities and return to the foundations of BEC life — Christ, community and mission.

Nixon Ng Bujang and Damian Prakash guided participants through reflections centred on Christian leadership, reminding them that a BEC leader is not merely an organiser or administrator, but a disciple called to accompany, unite and shepherd a community.

Nixon described BECs as the heartbeat of the Church in the neighbourhood — places where faith is lived through genuine relationships, fellowship and care for one another.

He challenged leaders to look beyond attendance figures and programmes and ask a deeper question: Are our people truly connected to one another and to Christ?

The message was clear: people do not commit to programmes; they commit to people. A vibrant BEC therefore begins with relationships — knowing people, listening to them, walking alongside them and creating a community where everyone knows they belong.



BEC leaders reflecting on their challenges and sharing practical ways for the BECs.

Building on this, Damian explored the vocation of BEC leadership through four dimensions — ***Sacred, Steadfast, Sharing*** and ***Shepherd,*** or the 4S.

Sacred reminds leaders that their responsibility is not simply another position to be filled, but a calling rooted in Christ. Christian leadership begins with allowing one's faith to shape the way one serves and witnesses to others.

Steadfast speaks of remaining faithful even when service becomes tiring, difficult or unnoticed. It calls for perseverance — serving not for recognition, but because the mission entrusted to each leader matters.

Sharing recognises that the mission of a BEC cannot rest on one person. Every member has gifts and a role to play. Leadership therefore means empowering others, sharing responsibility and creating opportunities for members to participate in the life and mission of the community.

Shepherd captures the pastoral heart of BEC leadership. Leaders are called not only to care for those who already participate, but also to notice those who are absent, welcome those who hesitate and reach out to those who have drifted away.

Such shepherding requires prayer, presence and compassion. It means noticing when someone stops coming, recognising when a family is struggling and reaching out rather than waiting for them to return. As participants were reminded, people often need to experience belonging before faith can take deeper root.

Together, the 4S offered a practical vision of leadership: recognise the sacredness of the call, remain steadfast in service, share responsibility and shepherd people with compassion.

The retreat also emphasised that healthy BECs cannot be measured simply by how many activities they organise, but by whether people feel welcomed, accompanied and inspired to participate in the Church's mission.

Through group activities and discussions, participants reflected on challenges within their own BECs and zones, exchanged experiences and explored practical ways to translate the days insights into action.

Also present was SFA parish priest, Fr Paul Cheong, OFMCap, who reminded leaders to keep alive the fire and passion that first moved them to serve. Structures and programmes may help a BEC function, but it is this inner fire — sustained by faith and love for people — that keeps a community alive and missionary.

The retreat concluded with Mass, bringing the day's reflections back to their source and centre — the Eucharist. It was a fitting reminder that BEC leadership begins not with programmes, strategies or positions, but with Christ.

Ultimately, the retreat was not about finding better ways to "run" a BEC. It was about renewing the hearts of those called to serve one.

The invitation was clear: be rooted in Christ, steadfast in service, willing to share the mission and ready to shepherd others.

When leaders rediscover that calling, BECs become communities where people do not simply gather, but belong; where they do not simply attend, but care for one another; and where Christ is carried beyond the walls of the church and into the neighbourhood.

When hands become instruments of God

PETALING JAYA: Sometimes, building bridges begins with learning a new language. For 16 students at the Church of St Francis Xavier, that language was Bahasa Isyarat Malaysia (BIM) — equipping them not only to communicate, but to connect more meaningfully with the Deaf community.

The students completed BIM Level 3 on August 1 following a final evaluation that tested their signing skills through storytelling and their receptive skills through voice interpretation — abilities developed throughout their BIM journey.

In recognition of their dedication and commitment, Fr Michael Chua, ecclesiastical assistant for the Catholic Ministry for the Deaf (CMfD), and Aaron Koh, acting director of the Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD), presented them with Certificates of Completion.

The group is the first batch to complete Level 3 since the COVID-19 pandemic. BIM classes organised by CMfD comprise three levels, with Level 3 marking the completion of the full course.

Yet completing the course does not mean the learning ends. Rather, it opens the way to a new journey — one in which the skills acquired can help overcome barriers, foster inclusion and bring the Deaf and hearing communities closer together.

As the 16 graduates move forward, the hope is that their hands and voices will become instruments of God — building bridges of communication, understanding and friendship between the Deaf and hearing communities.



A student demonstrating his signing skills in front of the tutor.



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KL South district hosts Marian rally

Bernard Anthony and Cecilia Grace



KUALA LUMPUR: Some 1,100 faithful from across the Kuala Lumpur South District gathered at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jalan Peel, on August 16 for the district's Marian Rally, held in conjunction with the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Centred on the theme, *Do Whatever He Tells You* (John 2:5), the rally brought together parishioners from the Church of the Holy Family, Kajang, the Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras and Sacred Heart of Jesus, together with Catholics from other parishes.

Jointly organised by the three KL South parishes, the rally sought to honour Mary's faith, humility and obedience to God, while strengthening unity among the faithful as one family in Christ.

The evening began with hymns of praise, followed by the Rosary and Holy Hour. The celebration culminated in Mass presided over by Msgr Stanislaus Soosaimariam, with Fr Michael Chua, Fr Philip Chua, Fr Paul Cheong OFMCap and Fr Raymond Pereira concelebrating. The homily was delivered in English, Bahasa Malaysia, Mandarin and Tamil.

Reflecting on the readings for the Solemnity, Fr Michael reminded the congregation that Mary's Assumption points Christians towards their ultimate destination — eternal life with God.

"Mary was assumed into heaven by the power of God, and she points us to our destination, which is God," he said.

He noted that people can become so preoccupied with their difficulties that they lose sight of God's presence. Mary's life, however, reveals that God remains at work even amid suffering and uncertainty.

"Life has its challenges and problems, but God tells us that our story has not ended," he said, adding that the Assumption is a sign that God's promises will be fulfilled and that victory over evil belongs to Him.

Following Mass, the faithful joined a 50-minute candlelight procession through the surrounding neighbourhood. A decorated float bearing the statue of Our Lady led the procession as the congregation sang Ave Maria, drawing the attention of bystanders along the route.

The rally concluded with a final blessing by Msgr Stanislaus, who thanked the clergy, organisers and faithful for participating. The celebration continued with a fellowship dinner, while many remained in quiet prayer at the Marian shrine.

Through prayer, the Eucharist and fellowship, the three parishes renewed their commitment to follow Mary's example by responding generously to God and directing their lives towards Christ.



Priests and faithful walk together in prayer during the candlelight procession.



The woman behind the titles: Discovering Mary anew

KUALA LUMPUR: An exhibition celebrating the life, virtues and enduring witness of the Blessed Virgin Mary offered the faithful an opportunity to encounter her not simply through familiar devotions, but through the story of a woman whose faith, courage and obedience continue to inspire Christians today.

Held in conjunction with the Kuala Lumpur South District Marian Rally, the four-day exhibition on the *Life of Mary and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary,* also known as the Litany of Loreto, was open to the public from August 13 to 16 at Dewan Louis Guittat, Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jalan Peel.

Through artwork, images, explanations and multimedia presentations, visitors were taken on a journey through Mary's life, from her birth and calling to her Assumption into heaven. The exhibition also explored the rich symbolism behind the titles attributed to Mary in the Litany of Loreto, helping visitors understand how each reflects her virtues, faith and place in the story of salvation.

Among the titles highlighted were "Gate of Heaven", "Queen of Patriarchs" and "Mother of Good Counsel", together with about 20 other Marian titles.

A video presentation, *The Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary Explained,* proved especially popular with children, making the meaning of the Litany accessible to younger visitors.

Adding a special dimension to the exhibition was the involvement of parishioners themselves. Catechists, young people and even children as young as 12 served as exhibition guides, explaining the displays and sharing what they had learnt with visitors.

The exhibition was itself a reflection of a community working together. Members of the RCIA, Legion of Mary, catechists, catechism students and altar servers of Sacred Heart parish collaborated to transform Dewan Louis Guittat into an inviting exhibition space.

Catechist Maria Vethanayagam said the combination of artwork, images and explanations helped visitors gain a clearer picture of Mary's life and a deeper understanding of the Litany.

In this way, the exhibition went beyond telling Mary's story. It invited the faithful to see in her life an example for their own discipleship: to trust when the road ahead is uncertain, to serve without seeking recognition, and to say "yes" to God with faith and courage.

For those who walked through the exhibition, the titles of Mary in the Litany were no longer simply words recited in prayer. Each became an invitation to contemplate the woman behind the title — and, through her example, to draw closer to Christ. **Bernard Anthony**

Walking with Mary, bringing blessings to families

MENTAKAB: Devotion to Mary and a call to strengthen family life marked the 63rd parish feast of the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, celebrated from August 13 to 16.

The four-day celebration brought together parishioners and pilgrims for Masses, novenas, the Anointing of the Sick, a procession and fellowship, with reflections centred on Mary's faith, mission and example.

Fr Jonathan Rao of Rawang, the main celebrant and preacher on Aug 13 and 14, reflected on *Mary in the Social Teachings of the Church* and *Mary's Face in Ecology.*

On Aug 15, Fr Gnanaselvam Berentis of Klang celebrated the 11.00am Mass with the Anointing of the Sick, concelebrated by Fr Christopher Soosaipillai of Mantin and parish priest Fr Terrance Thomas. Elderly and infirm parishioners received the sacrament and prayers for healing and strength.

Nine novenas to Our Lady of Perpetual Help were also held at various times throughout the day.

Several hundred parishioners and visiting pilgrims gathered that evening for the feast day Mass, themed *Mary, Mother of Our Families.* Fr Christopher, a former parish priest of Mentakab, was the main celebrant, with Fr Stephen Ng CDD and Fr Terrance concelebrating.

Returning to the parish after 20 years, Fr Christopher expressed his joy at celebrating the parish feast and the Solemnity of the Assumption with the community and invited the faithful to pray especially for families.

In his homily, he reflected on Mary's Assumption and recalled the parish's own journey of faith, from its earlier church near the present Tadika St John to the current church building, completed in 2000.

He pointed to Mary's visit to Elizabeth as an example of faith that reaches beyond oneself. Despite the uncertainty and challenges, she faced after saying yes to God, Mary went to Elizabeth carrying Christ within her and bringing joy and blessing.

Fr Christopher urged families to rediscover the importance of listening — to God and to one another, particularly to children.

Parents, he said, are called to listen without being judgemental and to recognise the pain and struggles their children may be experiencing. Through such listening, they can become a blessing to them.

He also recalled a recent visit to 30 Orang Asli families in Kampung Tekir, where participants walked with a statue of Mary as part of a blessing of the community. During the visit, a 63-year-old man remarked that the walk reminded him of Mary's journey to Elizabeth — listening to God and bringing blessing and joy to others.

"Listen to God, listen to one another and let the blessings flow," Fr Christopher told the congregation, praying that through Mary's intercession, families would experience renewed hope, faith and joy.

The homily was delivered mainly in English, with brief portions in Bahasa Malaysia and Tamil, while Fr Stephen offered a reflection in Mandarin.

At the conclusion of Mass, Fr Terrance thanked Fr Christopher and Fr Stephen, both of whom had previously served the Mentakab community, as well as Fr Gnanaselvam and Fr Jonathan for their contribution to the feast day celebrations.

The faithful then joined a 40-minute candlelight procession through parts of Mentakab town, praying the Rosary as the Blessed Sacrament and a statue of Our Lady were carried in procession. At several points along the route, Fr Christopher blessed the people and the town with the Blessed Sacrament.

The procession concluded at the church with Benediction.

Parishioners, pilgrims and migrant communities later gathered for dinner at Tadika St John, sharing a meal that reflected the cultural diversity of a community united by a common faith and devotion to Mary.



The 63rd parish feast concluded on Augt 16 with Sunday Mass under the theme *Mary, Mother of the Church,* celebrated by Fr Christopher and concelebrated by Fr Stephen. **Bernard Anthony**

Our shepherds speak: Hopes for MPC2026

With the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026 just 10 days away, we asked our shepherds to share their hopes for this historic gathering — and for the journey the Church in Malaysia will undertake together beyond Sibu.



I hope that MPC2026 will be a platform to unite all Catholics from Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak. My hope is that the Church in Malaysia can celebrate the diversity of cultures and regions as one body of Christ. I also hope all participants will attend MPC with an open mind, embracing our diversity while recognising that we are one — where no one is the best, and no one is left behind.

Archbishop John Wong, Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu

My hope for MPC2026 is that it will be a grace-filled moment for the Church in Malaysia — a time for us to come together in prayer, communion and genuine listening, and to allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in discerning the path God is preparing for His Church.



Like Nathanael, I invite everyone to "Come and see" — to come to Sibu not simply for a convention, but to encounter the Risen Christ personally and allow that encounter to renew our faith, strengthen our communion and deepen our missionary spirit.

May we leave MPC2026 with renewed hope and hearts on fire with the Holy Spirit, ready to return to our dioceses, parishes and communities to proclaim with our lives: "You are the Son of God!" May this gathering become one of the "greater things" the Lord is preparing for the Church in Malaysia.

Bishop Joseph Hii, Diocese of Sibu

I congratulate the Malaysian Church for holding the first ever Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026 (MPC2026). It is a historic first National Synod of the Catholic Church in Malaysia where laity, religious and clergy from both East and West spend time together to listen, share and walk the path of being a missionary church.



The term "Synod" or "Synodality" is not only a gathering of church leaders to discuss issues affecting the Church. Rather, it describes the life and mission of the Church characterised by communion, listening, sharing and proclaiming the gospel.

This is a way of being church where everyone can take part in an ongoing conversation and dialogue for mission. Synodality is an instrument to help us evangelise.

The people of God is the subject, not the object of synodality. To make this happen, we need to change mindset, educate and transform laity, religious and clergy so that the Malaysian Church can truly be a synodal church that speaks to, with and from the people of God.

Bishop Richard Ng, Diocese of Miri

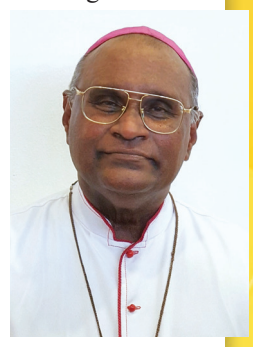
Through the Malaysia Pastoral Convention, I hope the faithful will deepen their understanding of the Church as a witnessing community — one in which everyone embraces a true spirit of communion, cares for one another and remains steadfast in bearing witness to Christ.



Bishop Cornelius Piong, Diocese of Keningau

My hope for the MPC2026 can be expressed in three words:

To see ***TOGETHERNESS***: our unity of peoples, cultures and ethnicities bonded by the image of Christ we share, expressed in worship, works and wisdom.



To work ***TOGETHER***: our way of building community for the Kingdom with a sense of "together in the Holy Spirit we can".

To remember our call ***TO GATHER***: our mission to sow, to feed, to nurture, to bring in the harvest and extend His Kingdom, glorifying the Lord

May we be a light in the darkness.

Bishop Bernard Paul, Diocese of Malacca Johore

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude and reverence to the Lord for the inaugural Malaysia Pastoral Convention, scheduled to take place in Sibu, Sarawak from September 9 to 13.



The primary objective of this important assembly, which will include representatives from all nine Catholic dioceses across Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak, is to offer us the opportunity to "Celebrate our faith, Listen, and walk together in a spirit of communion, participation, and mission."

I hope and I trust that the Malaysia Pastoral Convention (MPC2026) will inspire a genuine conversion and transformation of hearts, motivating us to transition from being passive attendees of the church to becoming proactive bridge-builders within our communities. However, the true measure of success for this gathering is not based on the size of the convention or the number of participants, but rather on its influence on our individual lives, our local communities, and the direction we take as a Malaysian Church.

Praying for the success of MPC2026.

Bishop Julius D. Gitom, Diocese of Sandakan

• *More in the next issue*

From Tradition to Transformation

Synodality in a Multicultural Church – Insights from Malaysia

At a time when the Catholic Church is asking what it truly means to "walk together", Dr Charles Bertille's *From Tradition to Transformation: Synodality in a Multicultural Church – Insights from Malaysia* offers a timely and distinctly Malaysian contribution to the ongoing conversation.

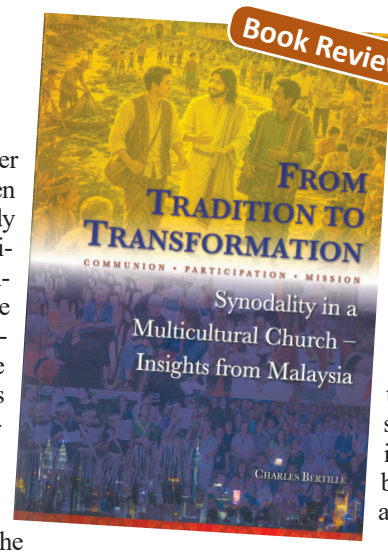
The book comes at an important moment for the local Church. As Malaysia prepares to listen and discern together through the Malaysia Pastoral Convention, the challenge is no longer to understand synodality as an idea. The more difficult question is how it can become a lived reality in a Church shaped by different cultures, languages, traditions and communities.

Bertille is particularly well placed to address this question. A Malaysian lay missionary with more than three decades of full-time Church ministry and extensive experience accompanying local Churches across Asia, he brings together deep theological reflection, vast pastoral experience and a profound commitment to the formation and participation of the laity. His years as executive secretary of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei have also given him a close perspective on the Synod process in the region.

This is not a book that approaches synodality merely as a new ecclesial framework or pastoral programme. Drawing on surveys and interviews involving bishops, clergy, religious and laity across Malaysia's three regions, it asks what synodality actually looks like in the real life of the Church. Its discussion of "centre and periphery", together with its sociological perspectives, helps us appreciate the Church's unique character: unity need not mean uniformity.

That insight is especially relevant in Malaysia. Our Church encompasses diverse ethnicities, languages, cultures and traditions, indigenous communities, migrants, and urban and rural realities. Synodality, therefore, must emerge from the lived realities of our people and from a willingness to listen across differences.

A recurring theme is the place of the laity. The question is not whether lay people can be given more tasks; they already carry enormous responsibilities. The deeper challenge is whether they are genuinely recognised as co-responsible for the Church's mission. This calls for a change in ecclesial culture: from speaking to listening, from deciding for others to discerning together, and living out the new reality.



Perhaps one of the book's more intriguing insights emerges from its presentation of Christ through the voices of those interviewed. Here, faith and culture meet in a particularly concrete way, inviting reflection on how the Gospel takes flesh within the experiences of the faithful.

Like every scholarly work, the book does not claim to offer the final word. Its value lies in opening an important conversation at a decisive moment for our local Churches.

Ultimately, *From Tradition to Transformation* is not simply a book about synodality. It is a book about the kind of Church we are becoming. It is about how we can journey together as God's people.

The question is not whether the Malaysian Church understands synodality. The question is whether we are prepared to become synodal and how to achieve that goal.

Tradition gives the Church its roots. Transformation stimulates those roots to new growth. Bertille's book invites us to listen attentively, discern prayerfully and walk together more faithfully. **Emeritus Professor Ng Kwan Hoong**

The book is priced at RM60 and is available at the Daughters of St Paul (WhatsApp: 011-3106 0104 / email: *dspklbookstore@gmail.com)*

Jordan prepares to mark 2,000 years since Christ's Baptism

AMMAN: Jordan has begun preparations to commemorate the 2,000th anniversary of the Baptism of Jesus Christ in 2030 at Bethany Beyond the Jordan, also known as Al-Maghtas.

Jordanian Prime Minister Jafar Hassan signed agreements on August 12 to develop land adjoining the Baptism Site, following directives from King Abdullah II.

The US$120 million development will include a museum dedicated to Christ's Baptism, a village for pilgrims and visitors, and ecological walking trails. The projects will be undertaken in accordance with UNESCO recommendations to protect the World Heritage Site.

Jordan is coordinating the preparations with Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem; the Council of Church Leaders in Jordan; Auxiliary Bishop Iyad Twal, Latin Patriarchal Vicar for Jordan; and Churches and Christian institutions worldwide.

Organisers hope the commemoration will draw millions of Christian pilgrims and visitors to the place where Christ was baptised in the Jordan River and began His public ministry.

Jordan has welcomed four popes — St Paul VI in 1964, followed by St John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis — whose visits affirmed the country's biblical and religious significance.

During a May 18 meeting with King Abdullah and Jordanian Church leaders, Cardinal Pizzaballa said the Baptism of Christ was not merely an event of the past, but "an eternal moment that still speaks to each of us".

"In it, we see the humility of the Son of God, who entered the waters of Jordan to sanctify creation and open to all of us the way of salvation," he said.

The cardinal described baptism as a beginning — both of Christ's mission and of the new life offered to every Christian.



Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, processes with church leaders outside the Catholic Church of the Baptism of Christ in Bethany Beyond the Jordan. (OSV News photo/courtesy Catholic Centre for Studies and Media, Amman, Jordan)

He expressed hope that the 2030 commemoration would become "a prophetic sign of unity, peace and living faith for the whole world", rather than simply a remembrance of the past.

Hassan said the anniversary would reflect Jordan's message of coexistence, mutual respect, peace and human fraternity. He added that the government would mobilise its resources to support the occasion and strengthen Jordan's place as a land of religious heritage and a global destination for Christian pilgrimage. **OSV News**



Church leaders welcome Indian court ruling protecting elderly

NEW DELHI: Catholic leaders have welcomed a Supreme Court ruling affirming that senior citizen tribunals may evict children or grandchildren from a property when necessary to protect an elderly person's dignity, safety and right to maintenance.

The ruling arose from an appeal by Ravi Kant Gupta, whose 81-year-old mother was forced to leave her inherited home in Lucknow and move into an elderly care facility.

Gupta alleged that his son and daughter-in-law had prevented his mother from living in the house. He subsequently sought their eviction through a tribunal established under the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007.

Although the tribunal ordered the couple to vacate the property, the Allahabad High Court overturned the decision, ruling that the tribunal lacked the authority to issue eviction orders.

In its August 4 ruling, released on August 17, the Supreme Court held that eviction could be ordered when required to enforce the rights and protection of senior citizens.

A bench comprising Justices P.S. Narasimha and Alok Aradhe said the Constitution envisages a social order that protects vulnerable people and enables every person to live with dignity throughout life.

The 2007 law, the judges said, seeks to ensure that advancing age does not become synonymous with "neglect, insecurity or indignity". They ruled that eviction could form part of enforcing an elderly person's right to maintenance and protection.

Fr Robinson Rodrigues, spokesperson for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, said the judgment would serve as a strong deterrent against the mistreatment of elderly people.

He added that the ruling clarified that senior citizens facing abuse or neglect could seek immediate protection from tribunals without enduring lengthy legal proceedings.

Fr Babu Joseph SVD, a former spokesperson for the bishops' conference, said the decision reinforced India's longstanding social tradition of respecting and caring for elderly family members.

However, he expressed concern that this culture of care was declining, causing considerable suffering among senior citizens.

Many Indian parents transfer their property to their children only to face neglect later, he said, describing the situation as "a travesty of justice" that the ruling sought to correct. **ucanews.com**

Japanese bishop urges deeper ecological conversion



TOKYO: Bishop Paul Daisuke Narui, *pic*, has called for deeper ecological conversion and stronger environmental education, particularly among young people, ahead of the Season of Creation.

Reflecting on this year's theme, *Living Water*, the head of the *Laudato Si'* Section of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan urged Catholics to examine their lifestyles and recognise the interconnectedness of all life.

"As those entrusted with caring for and governing the whole world, which was created as very good, are we living in a way that is worthy of this calling and in accordance with the will of the Creator?" he asked in a letter dated August 15.

Bishop Narui warned that human activity continues to disrupt natural water systems, contributing to severe rainfall, droughts, flooding, pollution and rising seawater temperatures.

In Japan, he said, increasingly heavy torrential rains and typhoons have shown that water, while essential to life, can also become a serious threat when development disregards the environment.

Drawing attention to the bishops' 2025 document, *An Invitation to Integral Ecology*, he noted that about 60 per cent of water pollution in Japan originates from domestic wastewater. This, he said, demonstrates how everyday habits can either harm or protect the environment.

The bishop called for ecological education that equips young people with practical ways to help safeguard clean water for everyone.

"We must create opportunities for children growing up in the age of AI to learn and gain experiences that will help them cherish the preciousness of life and its interconnectedness," he said.

Bishop Narui encouraged the faithful to turn small acts of care into a wider commitment to creation, guided by the hope that renewal remains possible.

"The water of life that God gives flows without ceasing, healing the earth we have wounded and renewing life that seemed lost," he said. **RVA**



Different voices, one Malaysian Church

As MPC2026 approaches, the Church in Malaysia is called to listen across different cultures and pastoral realities — not to make every diocese the same, but to discern how their diverse gifts can serve one shared mission.

Patricia Pereira

The Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026 carries the hopes of generations of Malaysian Catholics who believed that the Church must remain open to renewal by the Holy Spirit. When the convention meets in Sibu from September 9 to 13, attention must reach beyond reports and presentations to the lived faith of people in city parishes, estate communities, *kampungs,* mission stations and longhouses.

The Church in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak developed within different histories and circumstances. Each region has faced its own challenges, discovered its own pastoral strengths and sought ways of helping the clergy, religious and laity share responsibility for the Church's mission.

In Peninsular Malaysia, the *Aggiornamento* of 1976 and the Pastoral Conventions of 1986, 1996, 2006 and 2016 addressed Christ-centred communities, formation, families, youth, lay participation, dialogue, Basic Ecclesial Communities and service to society. Each convention sought to read the signs of its time and discern how the Church could respond faithfully.

Sabah developed its tradition of communal discernment through PAX, pastoral assemblies and the Diocesan Organisational Pastoral Plan. Launched in 1997, DOPP translated the vision of a communion of Christ-centred communities into pastoral structures and shared priorities. It encouraged participation through diocesan and parish pastoral councils, BECs, ministries, formation programmes and social outreach.

This tradition continued through the assemblies of Kota Kinabalu, Keningau and Sandakan and their regional gathering before MPC2026. These processes enabled the Church in Sabah to reflect on its mission within a context shaped by indigenous cultures, vast geographical distances, rural communities and a strong communal expression of faith.

In Sarawak, post-Vatican II synods and pastoral councils encouraged the formation of local clergy and catechists, the indigenisation of the liturgy and greater responsibility among the faithful. Kuching, Sibu and Miri subsequently developed pastoral processes in response to their cultures, languages and geographical realities.

In September 2024, the three dioceses gathered for the first Sarawak Regional Pastoral Assembly. It was a historic moment for Catholics who had long served within their respective dioceses but were now discerning together as one Catholic Church in Sarawak.

These developments were not identical, nor were they meant to be. MPC2026 brings them into one national conversation — not to make one region the model for the others, but to enable them to receive one another's gifts and discern a shared mission.

Synodality in the Malaysian context

Synodality has particular significance in Malaysia because ours is a Church of considerable cultural, linguistic and geographical diversity.



File photo of the National Pre-Synod Malaysia in 2022.

An urban parish may grapple with migration, secularisation, family pressures and young adults drifting away from the Church. Distant mission communities may face shortages of priests and catechists, difficult travel and irregular access to the sacraments. Indigenous communities bring concerns involving language, culture, ancestral land and care for creation.

Even within one diocese, the needs of a large city parish may differ from those of an estate community, rural chapel or remote mission station. Malaysia's 2022 pre-synod reports reflected these varied realities. The nine archdioceses and dioceses did not offer identical accounts, but together they revealed the breadth of Catholic life in the country.

The concerns and priorities of the dioceses may therefore not be similar. Nevertheless, unity does not require uniformity. National discernment should not reduce different experiences to one generalised response.

A synodal Church listens to these differences and searches for what the Spirit may be revealing through them. It asks not only, "What can we teach the others?" but also, "What might we need to learn from them?"

The strength of BECs and communal faith in one region may inspire renewal elsewhere. Indigenous communities can deepen the Church's understanding of culture, community and creation. Urban parishes may offer insights into migrant ministry, interreligious dialogue and evangelisation in an increasingly digital and secular society.

The exchange must work in every direction. Peninsular Malaysia does not simply offer its experience to Sabah and Sarawak; it must also be willing to receive from them. Sabah and Sarawak are not peripheral voices invited into a predominantly Peninsular discussion. They are equal partners whose experiences are essential to understanding the identity and mission of the Malaysian Church.

Similarly, a challenge faced by one diocese should concern the whole Church. When a rural community lacks regular access to the sacraments, indigenous people struggle to preserve their identity, migrant families feel invisible, or young Catholics in the cities quietly leave the Church, these are not merely local problems. They belong to all of us.

We do not walk together by pretending that everyone faces the same circumstances. We walk together by ensuring that no part of the Church faces its challenges alone.

Four pillars grounded in real life

The four pillars of MPC2026 — Family, Church, Society and Ecology — provide a shared framework without denying local priorities.

Family concerns the home where faith is first encountered, but also the place where financial pressures, generational differences and changing values are felt most deeply.

Church concerns whether our communities enable people to belong, participate and use their gifts. It challenges parishes to consider whether lay participation is genuinely welcomed, whether young people are trusted and whether those who feel overlooked have a place among us.

Society reminds Catholics that discipleship cannot end at the church doors. Faith must shape the way we respond to poverty, injustice, migration, corruption, religious and racial divisions, and every threat to human dignity.

Ecology calls the Church to recognise the connection between care for creation and care for people. In Malaysia, this includes the protection of forests, rivers, seas and ancestral lands, as well as the daily choices made by families, parishes and institutions.

These pillars will not be expressed in exactly the same way in every diocese. They unite the Malaysian Church around a common mission while allowing each local Church to respond to the realities before it.

Listening for a shared mission

The delegates travelling to Sibu must carry not only diocesan achievements, but also the questions people hesitate to ask and the experiences rarely recorded in reports.

Behind every pastoral priority are real people: the parent worried that the children have abandoned the faith; the young adult who feels there is no place for difficult questions; the exhausted parish volunteer; the priest serving distant communities; the person with a disability who wants to contribute; and the Catholic who quietly stopped attending because no one noticed.

These are not problems surrounding the Church. These people are the Church.

Pope Francis described synodality as "an exercise of mutual listening" involving the entire People of God. Listening does not mean that every suggestion must be accepted. It means that no voice should be dismissed before it has been prayerfully heard and discerned.

The recent FABC Plenary Assembly in Jakarta described synodality as "a path of conversion that is directed towards mission". The deepest question facing MPC2026 is therefore not whether enough information has been gathered, but whether we are willing to be changed by what we hear.

We hope this breadth of listening will be reflected in the overarching Pastoral Statement to be jointly issued by the archbishops and bishops of Malaysia. It should recognise the distinct realities of Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak while offering a common pastoral direction for the country.

It should also provide guidance on how the discernment in Sibu will be translated into the life of dioceses, parishes, BECs, ministries and families. A statement may express an inspiring vision, but its lasting value will depend on whether its words shape pastoral decisions, relationships and priorities.

The Malaysian Church will not arrive in Sibu speaking with one accent or carrying identical concerns. But if its many voices are heard with humility and discerned in prayer, they can help us recognise the one voice that matters most — the voice of the Holy Spirit calling us forward together.



When dementia doesn't matter



Dancing with Dementia

Dr Cecilia Chan

I must admit that I am writing this today to release my own frustration. I have reached a point where I feel as though I have come to a roadblock. Everywhere I turn, the doors seem firmly shut.

Recently, I attended a Geriatric Conference in Kuala Lumpur. During a conversation with a highly respected and compassionate geriatrician, she shared something that has stayed with me. Her hospital's CEO had instructed her to spend no more than ten minutes with each patient because, in today's healthcare system, time is money.

Ten minutes.

How can anyone properly assess an older person in ten minutes, let alone someone who may be living with dementia? Dementia assessment is not a checklist. It requires listening, observing, understanding the person's history, and often speaking with family members. It cannot be rushed.

Meanwhile, our government geriatricians are carrying overwhelming caseloads that continue to grow as Malaysia's population ages. We all know that dementia cases are increasing. We all acknowledge that the need is real. Yet our healthcare ecosystem continues to respond as though it is someone else's problem.

When families finally realise something is wrong, where do they go? Who is there to help them? Countless Malaysians are living with cognitive impairment without ever receiving a diagnosis or the support they desperately need. We need to ask ourselves why.

Working closely with communities has given me the privilege of witnessing the daily realities of people living with dementia and the family members who care for them. Their struggles are often invisible to society, but they are very real.

I also see another uncomfortable truth.

Many healthcare professionals care for people living with dementia every day without receiving adequate education or training in dementia care. During one workshop, I was shocked to hear nurses express the belief that people with dementia no longer have feelings — that because they may not remember what happened, restraint or rough treatment would not matter.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

A person living with dementia may forget an event, but they rarely forget how that event made them feel. Fear, humiliation, loneliness and pain remain long after the memory itself has faded.

I watch physiotherapists struggle because conventional rehabilitation approaches often fail in dementia care. Patients are frequently labelled as "uncooperative" when, in reality, the therapy has not been adapted to the way a person with dementia understands the world. As a result, many lose the opportunity for meaningful rehabilitation — not because they cannot improve, but because we have not learned how to help them.

Home care providers often do their best with the knowledge they have, yet many receive little or no formal education in dementia care.

What amazes me is this: a barista spends months learning how to prepare the perfect cappuccino, yet professionals entrusted with caring for some of the most vulnerable members of our society often receive little specialised training to provide one of the most complex forms of care imaginable.

Recently, I met with several academic institutions to discuss developing a formal dementia care programme to bridge this enormous gap. Their response was understandable but discouraging. There is little demand, they said. It is not marketable. It is unlikely to be profitable. I understand that universities must meet enrolment targets and financial goals, but if we only teach what is profitable today, who will prepare our workforce for the realities of tomorrow?

Our religious communities could become some of the most powerful places of hope by creating welcoming, dementia-inclusive congregations and helping to remove the stigma that surrounds this condition. Yet several religious leaders have shared their hesitation with me. They fear that the very word "dementia" will discourage participation and make people uncomfortable.

That, perhaps, is the greatest tragedy.

We are not afraid of dementia itself.

We are afraid of talking about it.

So today, I find myself standing at this roadblock, wondering where we go from here.

What does it say about us as a society when those who are most vulnerable remain unseen? What does it say about us when profit determines education, politics determines priorities, and stigma determines whether people receive compassion?

Malaysia is ageing. Dementia is not a future problem — it is our present reality.

The question is no longer whether dementia matters.

The real question is whether the people living with it matter enough for us to act.

Because history will not judge us by how advanced our healthcare system was or how prosperous our economy became. It will judge us by how we treated those who could no longer speak loudly for themselves.

Dr Cecilia Chan *is a Gerontologist and Dementia Advocate and Activist. She can be contacted via WhatsApp (013-4384388).*

When a parent is struggling, what do we see?



Inclusion Matters

Desiree Kaur

Have you ever seen a parent struggling with a child at church?

Perhaps the child is making noises during Mass. Perhaps they are pacing up and down the aisle, covering their ears, rocking, crying, or refusing to sit still. Perhaps the parent is desperately trying to calm them while simultaneously trying not to disturb everyone else.

What is the first thought that crosses your mind?

Why can't she control her child?

Why did they bring him if he cannot sit through Mass?

Why don't they just take her outside?

Or is your instinct to wonder: *Are they okay? Can I help?*

Because while we are watching that parent struggle for a few minutes, most can't fathom the thoughts, worries and fears that plague them.

There may be embarrassment. Shame. Guilt.

Everyone is looking at us.

We are disturbing the Mass.

Maybe we shouldn't have come.

Perhaps my child doesn't belong here.

Sometimes parents of neurodivergent children become very good at reading a room. We notice the looks. We notice when someone turns around. We notice the sighs. We notice when another family shifts a little further away.

And sometimes, even when nobody says anything, we silently torment and judge ourselves.

Am I doing enough?

Should I have handled that differently?

Am I failing my child?

Parenthood comes with worry for everyone. But raising a child who navigates the world differently comes with a plethora of uncertainty. There are appointments, therapies, school meetings, assessments and decisions. There is advocacy. There is explaining your child repeatedly to people who may not understand them. So, keeping our child in catechism or bringing them for Mass, can feel daunting for some to a point, we shy away completely.

And somewhere underneath all of that is often a much bigger fear.

What will happen to my child when I am no longer here?

For many parents raising neurodivergent children, parenting does not necessarily follow the trajectory society expects.

We often imagine our children growing up, completing their education, finding employment, living independently and building lives of their own. But some neurodivergent individuals will require lifelong support.

The parent you see struggling with a five-year-old today may still be advocating, supporting and caring for that same child when they are 20, 30, 40 or 50 years old and beyond.

As the child grows older, the parent grows older too.

Then the questions become harder.

Who will understand my child when I am gone?

Who will know that a behaviour others find difficult may actually be communication?

Who will notice when something is wrong?

Who will advocate for them?

Who will make sure they are safe?

Who will love my child when I die?

These are incredibly painful questions for any parent to contemplate. Yet for some families, this is the harsh reality we must face. We face it with smiles because we still want to give our child happy memories and positive experiences. But silently we cry when no one is looking.

Children of God

We often speak about welcoming everyone into the Church. But welcome is more than allowing someone through the doors.

True inclusion asks whether people feel that they belong once they are inside.

A neurodivergent child who cannot sit quietly throughout Mass is still a child of God.

A teenager who communicates differently is still a child of God.

An autistic adult who needs lifelong support is still a child of God.

And the exhausted mother or father standing at the back of the church, wondering whether everyone wishes they would leave, is also part of the Body of Christ.

So, what can the Church do?

Let's begin by listening.

Listen to parents when we tell you what our children need. Don't assume you know.

Ask what might make catechism more accessible. Understand that some children may need movement breaks. Consider sensory needs during Mass and parish activities. Find ways for those who communicate differently to participate.

Most importantly, recognise that inclusion does not end when childhood ends.

Our neurodivergent children grow up.

We understandably place considerable emphasis on including children in catechism and preparing them for the Sacraments. But what happens afterwards?

Where do they fit in the Church when they become adults?

Can they continue participating meaningfully in parish life? Can they serve according to their abilities? Can they form friendships within the community? Can they experience belonging beyond programmes specifically created for people with disabilities?

And when their parents become elderly or eventually die, will there still be people within the parish who know them?

Not merely know about them.

Know them.

Know their name. Know how they communicate. Know what makes them happy. Know when they are uncomfortable. Know that they have gifts to offer the Church too.

Sometimes, it is something small

The good news is that inclusion does not always require a programme, committee or policy.

Sometimes, a parent struggling at Mass does not need someone to fix anything.

We simply need to be seen.

A gentle nod.

A smile.

A tap on the shoulder.

A quiet, "You're okay."

Someone making space beside them instead of moving away.

Someone greeting their child rather than staring at them.

Someone saying after Mass, "It was good to see you today."

These gestures may seem insignificant to the person offering them. But to a parent who has spent years wondering whether their child is welcome in different spaces, they can mean everything.

We are all carrying our own chaos. We arrive at church with worries about work, money, relationships, children, ageing parents and private grief. It is easy to become so consumed by what we are carrying that we fail to notice that the person beside us is carrying something too.

Yet our faith continually calls us towards one another.

Perhaps before we judge the child making noise during Mass, we could look at the parent beside them.

Perhaps what you see is exhaustion. Perhaps embarrassment. Perhaps they are desperately trying to hold themselves together.

And then ask yourself:

What does this person need from me right now?

It may be nothing more than kindness.

Perhaps the question is not simply whether our churches welcome neurodivergent people.

Perhaps the question is whether we do.

When a child struggles during Mass, do we see disruption, or a child trying their best to navigate an environment that may be overwhelming?

When we see an exhausted parent, do we see poor parenting, or someone doing everything they can for the person they love?

And when that parent carries the question that so many parents of neurodivergent children are afraid to ask aloud — Who will love my child when I am gone?

Perhaps, as a Church, our answer should be: ***We will.***

Desiree's *advocacy for all abilities began in 2017 after her son Haans was diagnosed with autism. Frustrated by the lack of accessible information, she took the initiative to educate herself, earning a Master's in Special Education. A former PR practitioner, she went on to establish Project Haans, a website supporting Malaysia's special needs community. She also co-hosts the Kita Family podcast with four other mothers of neurodivergent children.*

Seeing the World a Little Differently



Christina Lazaroo



What is normal? For some, normal means doing things the way others do, speaking the way others speak, and behaving in ways society expects.

For Emma Anthony, that question took on a new meaning three years ago while she was at a camp. A mother approached her with a simple request. Her son had autism. It was his first time attending such a programme, and communicating with unfamiliar people did not come easily. Would Emma keep an eye on him?

She welcomed him, spent time with him and encouraged others to do the same.

By the end of the camp, the boy who had barely spoken found the confidence to share what had long been in his heart.

"It really helps when someone looks at you like a normal person and treats you like a normal person rather than someone who's underprivileged or lesser than normal."

Emma still remembers those words.

"I realised that you can actually make a difference in a person's life by the way you treat them," she says. "So why not make a difference?"

Today, the 22-year-old biomedical science undergraduate at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) is the founder and executive director of *Reach Out and Rise* (ROAR), an autism initiative promoting understanding and inclusion. A parishioner of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Ipoh, she recently added another milestone by writing *The World Through Luna's Eyes,* an interactive sensory storybook for children.

Her advocacy has also taken her beyond Malaysia. She was selected as a Malaysian representative for the World Leadership Forum in Warsaw, Poland, where she spoke about autism and the experiences of neurodivergent individuals. She will continue that conversation at the ASEAN Leadership Forum in Indonesia later this year.

Redefining "normal"

"I realise that compared to 10 years ago, there's been a rapid increase in the number of neurodivergent individuals, but awareness is still very poor, especially in Malaysia. Many parents struggle and many people still see it only as a disability."

Society, she says, can become so focused on a diagnosis that it forgets the person behind it.

"What is normal? We all have our own personalities, behaviours and attitudes. Sometimes we label people as abnormal simply because we've never seen that behaviour before, or because it's different from what we're used to."

When an autistic child covers their ears, rocks back and forth or struggles to sit still, the instinct is often to correct the behaviour. Emma believes the better response is to ask why.

"Instead of immediately asking them to stop, maybe try to understand why they're doing it in the first place," she says. "Are they overwhelmed? Are they angry? Are they trying to communicate something? When you understand the root of the problem, then you can respond with compassion."

Seeing through Luna's eyes

Inspired by the boy she met at camp, Emma wrote *The World Through Luna's Eyes,* a book to help children recognise and manage overwhelming sensory experiences.

"I knew that storybooks were the way to go because when children read, they imagine themselves as the main character."

Through Luna, young readers are invited to step into the world of a child who experiences everyday situations differently. The story gently explores sensory overload and emotions while introducing practical coping strategies. Colouring pages, reflection activities and interactive exercises encourage readers to engage with Luna's experiences. The book also includes guidance for parents, teachers and caregivers.

"I didn't want it to be just a storybook. I wanted it to be an educational tool as well."

One of her favourite pages comes at the end, inviting children to create their own world. It is a safe space for them to discover who they are rather than who others expect them to be.

"Many times, we try to make neurodivergent children fit into our world," Emma says. "But we should also allow them to discover their gifts, express themselves and grow into the person God created them to be."

Before publication, the book was reviewed by the Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health of Hospital Kuala Lumpur and has since been endorsed by the hospital. Since then, more than 500 printed copies have found their way into homes, educational centres and health care settings.

During a book sale, a doctor approached her saying he had grown up as a neurodivergent individual with autism. Too often, he said, people tried to shape him into someone else instead of accepting him for who he was. Emma's book, he believed, encourages adults to stop trying to make children fit someone else's expectations and instead help them discover their own strengths.

A Church where every child belongs

Emma hopes more Catholic communities in Malaysia will continue growing in this spirit of welcome.

She acknowledges that for many parents, attending Mass can be stressful. Loud music, bright lighting, crowded spaces and unfamiliar routines may overwhelm children with sensory needs. Sometimes, the greatest fear is not the environment but the reaction of those around them.

"I believe a lot of times parents don't show up to church because they're afraid of what people might think," she says. "They're worried people will see their child as a disturbance."

Her message to those families is both honest and compassionate.

"Don't be ashamed of your child," she gently says. "You're going to Mass because you want to encounter the Lord. Your child belongs there too, because they are part of the Body of Christ."

Emma is equally convinced that the responsibility does not rest with families alone. Parishes, she believes, must become communities that are willing to listen before they assume. Rather than deciding what families need, she encourages parishes to ask simple questions: Are you alright? Do you need anything? How can we help?

Sometimes, those conversations are the first step towards genuine inclusion. Practical changes can also make a difference. Noise-cancelling headphones, quieter spaces where families can continue participating in the liturgy, and greater awareness among parishioners can all help children feel more comfortable at Mass.

Yet Emma believes inclusion begins by recognising that every child has gifts to offer the Church.

"I think the Church could be a beautiful place where we all come together and channel our different gifts, where everyone can be themselves in their own unique way."

Emma recalls a child with autism in her own parish who is among the top-performing students in his school. Others she has met are gifted artists, musicians or possess remarkable attention to detail. Rather than focusing on what autistic children struggle to do, she hopes parishes will recognise what they can do.

"If they're great at drawing, maybe they can help with murals or artwork. If they find it difficult to sit still during Mass, they could consider becoming an altar server."



From faith to action

Emma understands the value of belonging because she experienced it herself. Having served as an altar server for eight years, she says the ministry deepened her appreciation of the liturgy.

Growing up, her faith taught her that kindness is more than good manners. It is a way of following Christ.

"My faith has built me always to be kind towards other people," she says. "Just like Christ died on the cross because He loved us so much, why not pass it on and treat other people the way you would like to be treated?"

That spirit continues to shape ROAR, where Emma and her team provide autism training, organise programmes pairing volunteers with autistic children, and work with doctors and psychiatrists to support families. Through art exhibitions, autistic children are also given opportunities to showcase and sell their artwork, celebrating their talents while raising funds for charity.

Emma sees *The World Through Luna's Eyes* as one step towards helping society and the Church look beyond labels and recognise the dignity, vocation and gifts of every person.

She hopes readers will come away with a better understanding of neurodivergence and see every child as a person before they see a diagnosis.

So, what is normal?

Perhaps it is not about being the same as everyone else. In the eyes of God, every person is created with dignity, loved beyond measure and entrusted with gifts to share. The challenge is not to make people fit our idea of normal, but to learn to recognise the beauty of the person standing before us.

About the book

The World Through Luna's Eyes is available on Amazon or directly from Emma Anthony for RM15 (excluding delivery). It is also available at the National Library of Malaysia in both physical and digital formats. To purchase a copy, contact Emma through *@theworldthroughluna_eyes*

About ROAR

Reach Out and Rise (ROAR) is an autism initiative founded by Emma Anthony and supported by Hong Leong Foundation. ROAR strives to promote understanding, inclusion and acceptance of neurodivergent individuals through training workshops, volunteer programmes and collaborations with healthcare professionals. For more info visit *@roar_hlf*

The footprints a priest leaves behind

...The Church Mouse



When a priest dies, the tributes tend to follow a familiar pattern.

There are the photographs, the obituary, the list of parishes served and the milestones: the church extension, new parish hall, fundraising campaign, pastoral centre or renovation completed during his years in the parish.

Then come the stories.

And often, the stories tell us far more about a priest than the official record ever can.

One person remembers his infectious laugh. Another recalls how he could make an entire table laugh. A former altar server remembers being scolded for arriving late — and laughing about it years later.

Someone else remembers a priest who turned up at the hospital at an ungodly hour simply because a parishioner was frightened and needed someone to pray with.

These are the little footprints that remain.

Every priest leaves a different kind of imprint. Some are remembered for their personalities.

They were natural people-persons. They knew parishioners by name, remembered family circumstances and somehow knew when someone was going through a difficult patch.

Such priests become woven into the personality of a parish itself.

Years later, people may still say: "Father would have loved this," or "Father would have had something to say about that." The priest may be gone, but his voice, humour and manner remain part of parish life.

Others leave a more visible legacy.

They are the builders and organisers — the priests who arrived at a parish, looked around and decided something needed to be done.

Perhaps the church was too small. The parish needed a new hall. The roof needed replacing. There was no proper catechetical centre.

And so the fundraising began.

Behind every new building are parish meetings, budgets, contractors and probably more than a few headaches in the presbytery.

But when the dust settles, there is something to show for it.

Long after the priest has moved on or died, parishioners continue to use the facilities he helped create. Children attend catechism in a room he fought to build. Parish groups meet in a hall he helped finance.

That is a legacy too.

But there is another kind of priest — the strict one.

Most parishes have known one.

He had rules. He had standards. He noticed when the altar cloth was not properly arranged, when the choir was unprepared or when a meeting started 15 minutes late.

He was not necessarily the priest everyone wanted to have dinner with.

Some parishioners may have found him intimidating. Others may have considered him difficult. A few may still remember an encounter with him years later and wince.

Yet even such priests can leave important footprints.

Discipline is not necessarily a bad legacy. A priest who insisted that the liturgy be celebrated properly, parish finances handled responsibly or catechism taken seriously may have been unpopular at the time but respected later.

Sometimes the priest who irritated people into getting things done is remembered with a grudging smile.

Of course, there is a difference between firmness and harshness. A priest can be demanding without being dismissive, and authoritative without making people feel small.

When discipline is not accompanied by charity, the footprint can become a bruise rather than a blessing.

Perhaps this is why the most lasting priestly legacies are not simply about being "nice" or "strict". They are about how a priest made people feel, especially when they were vulnerable.

Did he listen?

Did he make time?

Did he visit the sick when there was nothing he could do except pray?

Did he know how to sit beside a grieving family without filling the silence with unnecessary words?

Did he make a young person feel that the Church had a place for him or her?

These are not achievements that can be listed neatly in a parish annual report. There is no column for "people comforted" or "lives quietly changed".

Yet these may be among the most important things a priest accomplishes.

A priest can also leave a legacy through the people he inspires.

The altar server who was encouraged to take his faith seriously. The parish volunteer who was trusted with responsibility for the first time. The young person whose vocation was recognised by a priest who asked, "Have you ever thought about becoming a priest?"

Sometimes one sentence can travel much further than a sermon.

And then there are the priests who leave us with a little laughter.

Perhaps they had eccentric habits, a love of good food, a teasing sense of humour or a favourite chair in the parish office.

Such details may seem small, but they are often the memories people treasure most.

After all, Catholics do not mourn priests only as clergy. We mourn people we knew.

We remember the voice, the gestures, the jokes, the homilies, the temper, the kindness, the impatience, the wisdom — and sometimes the quirks.

That is why two parishioners can remember the same priest quite differently.

One remembers a warm and generous pastor. Another remembers a formidable disciplinarian. A third remembers the man who got the new parish hall built. A fourth remembers a priest who visited her father in hospital.

Someone else remembers being told off by him in 1987 — and can still recount the incident almost word for word.

All of them may be telling the truth.

Perhaps the real legacy of a priest is not whether everyone remembers him in exactly the same way. Few human beings are that simple.

It is whether, through his personality, strengths, shortcomings, work and witness, he left something behind that continued to matter.

Buildings eventually need repairs. Parish programmes come and go. Plaques gather dust. New priests arrive and new priorities emerge.

But the people remain.

If a priest has helped someone come closer to God, encouraged someone to remain in the Church, comforted someone in grief, challenged someone to grow or simply made a difficult season of life a little easier, then his footprint has travelled further than he may ever have imagined.

Perhaps that is the most fitting way to remember a priest.

Not simply by what he built, how strict he was or how popular he became, but by what remained in the hearts of the people after he had gone.

For in the end, the most important things a priest builds are not made of bricks and mortar.

They are built in people.

And those are the footprints that can last the longest.



Encountering Faith

Thomson Emmanuel

Why was I created into a broken world?

Sometimes, life just feels heavy.

Things do not work out the way we hoped. We experience disappointment and frustration, and wonder why we keep trying. Beyond our own lives, the world offers little comfort. Wars drag on. Cruelty is inflicted without remorse. Innocent people suffer while those responsible sometimes seem to walk away untouched.

Yet amid all this, we still recognise beauty — in nature, human kindness and unexpected moments of love. Something in creation continues to draw us, as though reminding us that the world was not meant to be this way.

It is in this tension between beauty and brokenness that a deeper question surfaces:

Why is life like this? And sometimes, more painfully, why was I even born into this?

This is where we encounter the Christian teaching on original sin. Adam and Eve fell. Humanity's relationship with God was wounded. Generations later, we are born into the consequences.

An understandable objection follows: I did not choose this. So why am I part of this story?

If God is love, why create me in a world already wounded by sin?

Not personal blame

Original sin does not mean God looks at a newborn child and declares: "You are already personally guilty."

We do not inherit Adam and Eve's personal guilt. What we inherit is a wounded human condition.

We desire love, yet struggle to love perfectly. We recognise what is good, yet do not always choose it. We long for peace, yet discover conflict around us and within ourselves.

Original sin is therefore less an accusation than a diagnosis.

It names the wound without blaming us personally for causing it.

What we inherit

None of us chooses the family or circumstances into which we are born. A child born into a family where trust has already been broken did not cause that fracture, yet experiences its consequences.

Original sin describes something similar on the scale of the human family. Humanity was entrusted with genuine freedom, and that freedom was misused. The consequences reached beyond the first human beings.

It helps explain why the world can be breathtakingly beautiful and painfully broken at the same time — and why human beings are capable of extraordinary compassion and astonishing cruelty.

Why create us at all?

But if God knew humanity could fall, why create us? The Christian answer begins not with sin, but with love.

God did not create because He needed us. He created because love gives of itself. Our existence is a gift. We were made for relationship and ultimately for communion with God.

But love requires freedom.

A relationship that cannot be refused is not really love. Humanity was therefore given genuine freedom — freedom capable of choosing God, but also of turning away from Him.

The fall was not inevitable, but it was possible. The freedom that makes love possible also makes rejection possible.

God moves towards us

Yet God did not create humanity, watch us fall and then walk away.

The story of Scripture is one of God continually moving towards wounded humanity.

Eventually, He enters the broken world Himself.

In Jesus Christ, God does not repair humanity from a distance. He takes on our humanity and knows hunger, grief, betrayal, rejection, suffering and death.

But Christ does not simply share our suffering. He comes to redeem us.

St Paul presents Christ as the new Adam. Where humanity's relationship with God was wounded through disobedience, Christ opens a new path through obedience, grace and self-giving love.

Christianity therefore does not end with Adam.

It leads to Christ — and resurrection.

Made for restoration

We were not created for brokenness. We were created for communion with God. And when that communion was wounded, God did not abandon His purpose for us.

This is why Baptism is not punishment for something we personally did wrong. It is a gift — our entry into the new life Christ offers. Grace does not destroy our humanity or freedom. It heals and restores them.

Nor are we simply people trapped in somebody else's ancient mistake. We are invited to participate in God's work of restoration.

Every time we forgive when resentment would be easier, choose compassion over indifference, defend someone's dignity, bring peace into conflict or remain faithful when walking away would be easier, something of that restoration becomes visible.

Grace enters the broken places through lives willing to cooperate with it.

Why you exist

Perhaps, then, the question is not only: Why was I created into a broken world?

Perhaps another question follows: What does God desire to do through my life within this broken world?

We were not created for the brokenness. We were created for God.

Even amid wounds we did not choose and suffering we cannot always understand, our lives can become places where grace enters the world.

The deeper mystery is not simply why God allowed humanity the freedom to turn away from Him. It is why, after humanity did so, God continued to pursue us.

The answer is love.

We were created because love desired to be shared. We are redeemed because Love refuses to walk away.

Original sin tells us why the world is wounded.

Christ tells us the wound is not the end of the story.

Thomson Emmanuel Wong *is from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Klang. He enjoys exploring the depth, beauty, and meaning of the Catholic faith, inviting readers to discover its richness with fresh eyes and a deeper appreciation.*



Fr Dr Clarence Devadass

When the details eclipse the Divine

The Holy Mass, at its heart, is the moment where heaven leans close to earth, where Christ becomes truly present, and where the People of God are gathered into one Body.

It is meant to be the sacrament of unity, the place where differences dissolve in the presence of the One who gives Himself completely.

Yet today, especially in the online world, the very celebration intended to unite us has become a point of disunity. What should be a moment of grace has become, for many, a battleground of opinions.

Discussions about the Mass have grown louder, sharper, and more polarising. Instead of drawing us together, they often push us apart.

Across social media platforms, blogs, and comment threads, we see endless debates about rubrics, postures, gestures, wording, vestments, and even the angle of the priest's hands. Everyone has something to say, and everyone feels entitled to say it.

Priests are not exempt from this scrutiny, nor are they immune from participating in it. While every member of the Church has the right to voice concerns, something tragic happens when the external details become the entire focus.

When a part becomes the whole, the view becomes myopic. We forget the centre, the mystery, the grace and end up arguing about the edges.

Perhaps the saddest development is this: the Eucharist, intended by Christ to unite His people, has become, for many, a source of division. The table of the Lord, where Christ gives Himself entirely, is overshadowed by disagreements about externalities.

How heartbreaking it is that the sacrament of unity becomes the subject of fragmentation. The Mass is not meant to divide. It is meant to heal, reconcile, and bind us together in charity. When debates about details fracture communion, we betray the very gift Christ offers us.

The Church has always taught that the liturgy is both external and internal. The external elements (gestures, words, vestments, posture) serve the internal reality. They point beyond themselves to the mystery they express. But when the external becomes the obsession, the internal is overshadowed.

Today, discussions often revolve around how the Mass is done rather than why it is celebrated. We argue about the priest's hands but forget the presence of Christ. We debate the placement of the chalice but ignore the miracle that occurs upon the altar. We critique the tone of the homily but fail to listen to the voice of God speaking through His Word.

When we fixate on the external, we lose the internal. And when the internal is lost, the Mass becomes hollow; beautiful perhaps, precise perhaps, but spiritually thin.

The Mass is the place where God pours out grace. It is the place where the faithful encounter the living Christ. It is the place where heaven opens, and the Church on earth joins the worship of the saints.

This encounter is not primarily about what we see with our eyes but what we receive in faith. The Eucharist is not merely bread and wine transformed; it is Christ Himself, His love, His mercy, His healing, His strength.

When we come to Mass, we come to be changed. We come to be nourished. We come to be forgiven. We come to be sent forth as witnesses of the Gospel.

But if our minds are consumed with evaluating the priest's gestures, critiquing the choir, or policing the behaviour of others, we cannot receive this grace. Our hearts become distracted, our attention divided, our spirit unsettled.

The encounter becomes secondary to the analysis. The tragedy is not that people care about the liturgy. The tragedy is that in caring about the details, they sometimes lose the encounter.

The Mass is a symphony of signs, symbols, words, and actions. Each part matters, but no single part is the whole. When we elevate one aspect, a gesture, a phrase, a preference, to the level of absolute importance, we distort the liturgy.

Rightfully, the Mass is not ours to manipulate. But it is not ours to weaponise. It is not ours to personalise. It is the Church's treasure, handed down through centuries, shaped by tradition, guided by the Holy Spirit.

To focus on one detail at the expense of the whole is to miss the beauty of the liturgy's unity. The Mass is not a collection of isolated actions; it is a single act of worship, a single movement of grace, a single offering of Christ to the Father.

When we allow the part to become the whole, we lose the harmony. And when the harmony is lost, the encounter suffers.

What is needed today is not more debate but deeper contemplation. Not more criticism but more reverence. Not more division but more unity. We must recover the interior gaze, the ability to see beyond the external to the mystery within.

This gaze is formed through prayer, silence, humility, and openness to the Holy Spirit. It is nourished by Scripture, strengthened by devotion, and purified by charity. When we enter the Mass with an interior gaze, the external details fall into their proper place.

They serve the mystery rather than overshadow it. They guide us toward Christ rather than distract us from Him. The Mass becomes once again what it is meant to be: an encounter with the living God.

Ultimately, the liturgy is not only about what happens on the altar but what happens in us. We are called to become living monstrances, bearers of Christ's presence in the world. The grace we receive in the Eucharist is meant to transform our actions, our relationships, our choices, and our witness.

If we leave Mass unchanged, then the details we fought over were meaningless. If we leave Mass without charity, then the rubrics we defended were empty. If we leave Mass without Christ shining through us, then we have missed the point entirely.

Fr Clarence *serves as the parish priest of the Church of St Anthony and is also the Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.*



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Reflections and poems on heartbreak

When I reflect on the spirituality I was raised on, I'm deeply grateful. No spirituality is perfect, but what I have been given through our rich Christian tradition stands up to the challenges of life and of faith. But if I had one criticism, it would be this: For all its richness, Christian spirituality hasn't always given us permission to own and deal with our own complexity. At least in its popular expression, it has not always taken seriously how complicated it is to be a human being.

It's no simple task. As Nicole Krauss writes in her novel, *The History of Love,* we live with the "insoluble contradiction of being animals cursed with self-reflection, and moral beings cursed with animal instincts." Yes, we are creatures of dust carrying the breath of God.

In our deepest centre we bear the *Image and Likeness of God,* but that is not to be imagined as some beautiful icon stamped in our soul. No. It's fire, divine fire. In each of us there is a breath of infinity which keeps us congenitally restless, gives us hungers we can never fully satisfy in this life, and, as the biblical writer Qoheleth says, keeps us forever out of sync with the seasons. As St Augustine famously wrote: "*You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.*" As humans, we are pathologically complex and restless.

And here's what that can look like in a life of faith.

When you read Therese of Lisieux's *The Story of a Soul,* you see a paradox, a near contradiction. On the one hand, she embodies wonderfully what Christian detachment is meant to be. She's a paradigm of selflessness. Yet, she's also strongly attached to certain things, like her family, and could fall into a minor depression if there was a missed visit by her family. Therese was a complex woman, not a saint without struggles, and her honest sharing of those struggles is one of the reasons why her writings touch people deeply.

The same is true of the renowned scientist, spiritual writer, and mystic, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Here's how he defined himself (in words to this effect): "I was born into this world with two great loves, love of God and love of the world. When I think of God, it takes my breath away; but when I look at the world and its pagan beauty, it also takes my breath away. My life is a struggle between genuflecting before the divine and genuflecting before the pagan."

I give this background as a way of introducing and recommending a recent book by Maria Schriver, *I Am Maria – My Reflections and Poems on Heartbreak, Healing, and Finding Your Way Home.*

Many of us are familiar with Maria Schriver as a member of the famous Kennedy family and as the former First Lady of the State of California; but her memoir book introduces her to us in a very different way. This is not a celebrity writing a memoir based on her popularity. This is a book of depth, in effect, a contemporary of *The Story of a Soul.*

Schriver articulates the struggle of a sensitive soul as she shares her own journey, both as a woman of the world and as a woman of faith. Like Therese of Lisieux, she is healthily detached, even as she clings to some things in this world. Like Teilhard de Chardin, God and faith can take her breath away, even as do some earthy consolations in this world. She takes both her body and her spirit seriously and names, with honesty, the tensions she lives with because of that. She manifests a deep piety, even as she is healthily iconoclastic. She carries these tensions well.

Her journey is one of hope and of realism, all at the same time. For example, she ends her poem, *My Morning Meditation,* with these words:

Sure, things scare me, like being alone for the rest of my life
But if that's what happens, so be it
I will continue to surround myself with beauty
So I can access the beauty, the spiritual, the feminine part of me.

Carl Rogers suggests that "what is most personal is often what is most universal."

Schriver shares deep personal struggles which we immediately recognise as universal.

And she is ever the artist in sharing them, deep and intimate, yet never exhibitionist.

She never makes you want to turn your eyes away, the mark of a good writer.

When I first read Henri Nouwen, I had a sense of being introduced to myself: How does he know me that well? Is he writing just for me? If you are someone who struggles with a sensitive soul, you will have that same experience reading Schriver's book.

Someone once said this about the late singer Karen Carpenter. When you hear her sing, you have the feeling that she is singing just for you and singing directly into your ear. Maria Schriver's book will give you that same sensation.

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

LITTLE CATHOLIC'S CORNER

Dear children,

Have you ever had to do something difficult even though you really didn't want to? Maybe you had to say sorry, share your favourite toy, or keep trying when something was hard.

Sometimes doing the right thing is not easy. In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches us that following Him means loving God even when the journey is difficult.

Jesus told His disciples that He was going to Jerusalem, where He would suffer and die, but that He would rise again on the third day.

Peter did not want Jesus to suffer. He told Jesus that this should never happen! But Jesus reminded Peter that God's plan is sometimes different from what we expect.

Jesus then said, "Take up your cross and follow Me."

Jesus does not mean that we should carry a real wooden cross. He means that when life is difficult, we should keep trusting God and choose to do what is right and loving.

Our "crosses" can be small things — being patient, forgiving someone, helping our family, sharing, saying sorry, or doing the right thing even when nobody is watching.

When we follow Jesus with love, even when it is difficult, we are walking with Him.

This week, when something is difficult, don't give up or choose the easy (but maybe, wrong thing).

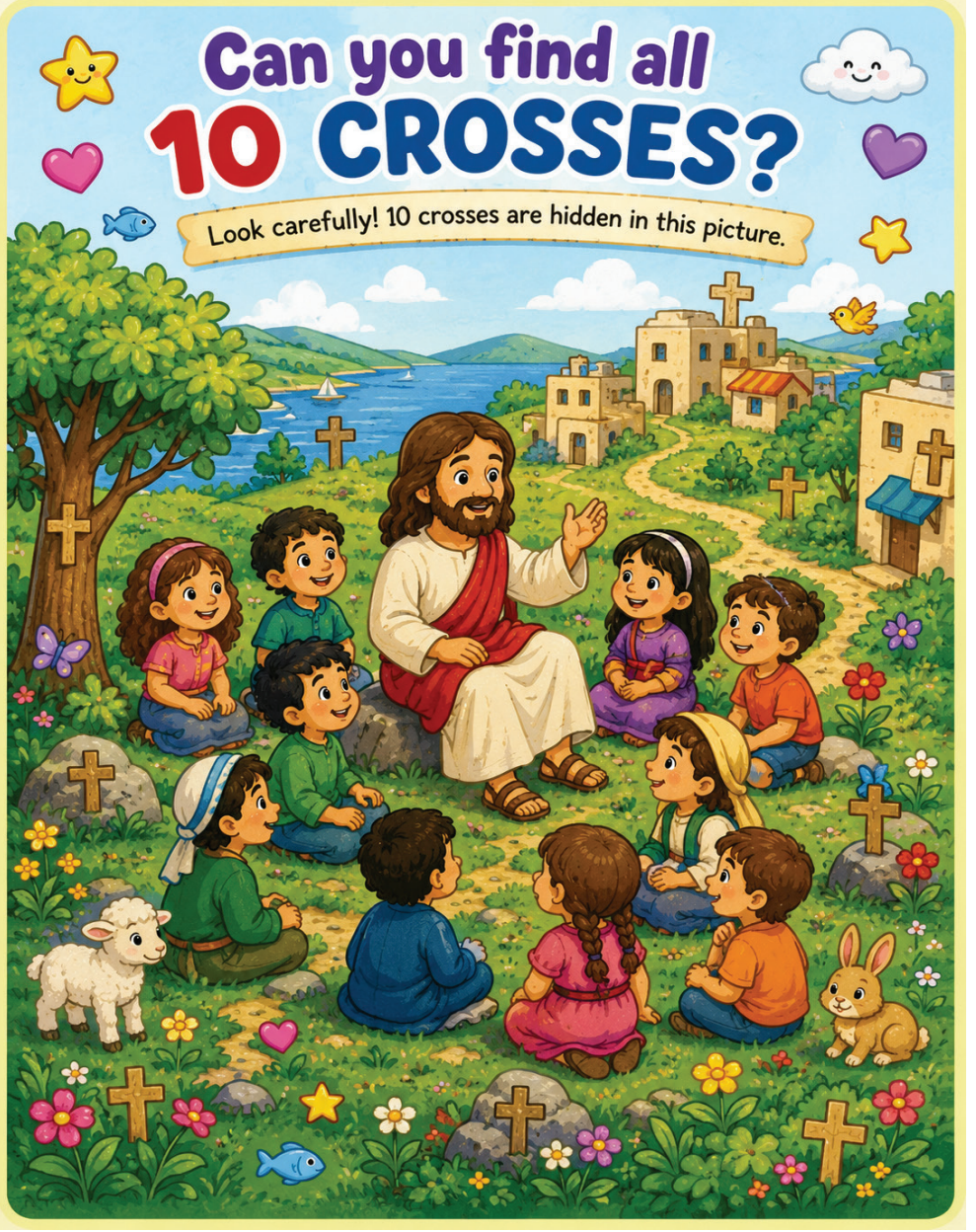
Instead, ask yourself: *"What would Jesus want me to do?"* Then choose love, patience, forgiveness and kindness.



Love, Aunty C

Can you find all 10 CROSSES?

Look carefully! 10 crosses are hidden in this picture.



Carry Your Cross Matching Game

Instructions: Draw lines to match these everyday challenges with the loving response Jesus wants.

Situation	What can I do?
Someone hurts my feelings	Help
Mum asks me to help	Pray and stay calm
My friend has no snack	Say sorry
I make a mistake	Share
I feel angry	Forgive

When we carry our cross with love, we follow Jesus every day.

Follow Jesus!

H	K	G	R	Q	F	G	U	X	J	Z	T	B	Y	G	C	E	K
I	G	E	C	T	L	O	V	E	D	T	C	X	W	L	D	V	J
A	K	I	N	D	R	N	M	Z	Q	S	V	C	F	O	Z	P	Y
V	F	U	Q	J	E	W	M	R	B	G	F	E	W	R	A	V	W
R	J	O	P	H	E	L	P	C	I	L	N	Z	P	Y	O	N	M
V	M	S	R	K	K	W	X	S	H	A	R	E	R	J	U	V	N
L	J	B	K	G	C	U	P	E	T	E	R	Q	A	Q	C	Y	M
O	E	P	Y	R	I	I	Y	L	H	O	W	D	Y	I	M	B	Y
M	S	D	K	S	U	V	U	P	I	Z	K	Z	I	B	U	A	B
F	U	N	K	B	Y	A	E	F	C	R	O	S	S	K	S	G	C
J	S	E	T	K	Z	V	J	H	N	P	Q	B	H	X	W	E	K
J	Q	Y	C	V	Y	O	W	B	Q	Q	U	Y	T	V	N	L	F

Find the following words in the puzzle.

Words are hidden → and ↓ and ↘

JESUS	HELP	PETER
CROSS	SHARE	GLORY
LOVE	KIND	
PRAY	FORGIVE	

YOUTH





Finding stillness

Stephanie Menggu

A journey of renewal

PAHANG: To rest, renew, and reconnect — these intentions guided the recent *Lifecamp*, a retreat organised by the Lifeline Young Adults Ministry of the Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya. Starting on the Feast of the Transfiguration, retreatants ranging from students to young professionals followed the example of Jesus and His apostles to journey up the serene hills of Janda Baik to the Maranatha House of Prayer for a time of spiritual renewal.

Under the guidance of Fr Hung Pham, SJ, retreatants were immersed in a weekend of Ignatian spirituality. Fr Hung invited the group to notice their 'crowds' — the internal noise of anxieties and distractions that contended with God's gentle invitation to stillness. These reflections helped retreatants view themselves with the same compassion Jesus felt for the multitude, fostering a spirit of self-kindness that set the tone for the entire retreat. As retreatant Ezra Quek shared, "The small quiet moments after each session when you truly open up your heart to the Lord and to your fellow campers… That safety and comfort made a lasting impact".

The experience deepened as reflection moved into symbolic action. One exercise involved being blindfolded and led along the winding paths around Maranatha, mirroring the spiritual journey of trusting in God's guidance even in obscurity. Participants also reflected on Zacchaeus, pondering the themes of perspectives and conversion. Separately, they meditated on the Parable of the Sower, recognising that the seeds of God's word are sown in every "soil" of our hearts.



Identity and creation took centerstage during a mask-making session. Working in pairs, participants experienced the vulnerability of the creative process, a metaphor for God's unique craftsmanship. Reflecting on this activity, Kessel Tan shared, "My greatest takeaway from this retreat is that I don't have to have my whole life figured out because God loves me and He wants to work with me to build the perfectly imperfect life He envisioned."

The retreat also explored the story of the Prodigal Son, discovering a more nuanced understanding of reconciliation in the parable. A Mass of Reconciliation followed, where participants anointed one another with oil, strengthening their communal bonds.

As the retreat drew to a close, Fr Hung reflected on the metaphor of a chick hatching from an egg — a lesson on timing and courage, highlighting how growth cannot be rushed. For Felicia Paula, the retreat brought clarity: "*Lifecamp* showed me how to face reality, accept my struggles, and trust God. What the world made me believe was a problem, I now see as a grace — the grace to put God first."

Leaving the 'mountain', retreatants returned home carrying the strength of shared faith. Reflecting on the community, Caroline stated, "In life, it's important to have a group of friends who love God, keep Him at the centre of our lives, and walk together hand in hand on this pilgrimage through the earth." We returned to our daily lives not just refreshed, but deeply renewed.

Follow us at @lifelinesfxpj on Instagram to know more about the community.



'I will be with you'

A promise for the journey ahead

KUALA LUMPUR: For 17 young Catholics, receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation on August 9 was not the end of months of preparation, but the beginning of a deeper commitment to live their faith. Gathered at the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jalan Peel, they came with different experiences, questions and struggles, but shared a common desire to grow closer to Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to guide the next chapter of their lives.

The cohort comprised 14 youth from the home parish, one from the Church of the Holy Family, Kajang, and two from the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Puchong.

Archbishop Julian Leow presided over the Eucharistic celebration, anointing each candidate with Sacred Chrism and completing their full initiation into the Catholic Church. Their journey was anchored in the theme of their Confirmation Camp, *I will be with you till the end of time* (Mt 28:16–20), a promise that took on deeper meaning as they reflected on their own experiences of faith.

For many of the confirmands, the months of preparation became an important period of questioning, discovery and spiritual growth. They described their faith journeys as something of a "rollercoaster ride", marked at times by doubts and personal struggles. Yet the preparation gave them a safe space to ask difficult questions, confront uncertainties and develop a more personal relationship with Christ.

The youths expressed their gratitude to their catechists and parish priest Msgr Stanislaus Soosaimariam, whose guidance helped them better understand their faith and the significance of the sacrament they were preparing to receive.

A defining part of the journey was the Confirmation camp. Away from the distractions of everyday life, the youths were given time for prayer, reflection and honest conversations about faith. Sessions led by Msgr Stanislaus addressed many of the questions and doubts they had been carrying, challenging them to look at their lives from a different perspective and recognise where God had been present all along.

The camp also drew the confirmands closer to one another. A group initially made up of individuals from different parishes gradually developed a strong sense of friendship and belonging. They discovered that faith is not meant to be lived in isolation, but within a community where people accompany, encourage and strengthen one another.

The youth said they had also gained a clearer understanding of the Holy Spirit and His role in their lives. Looking back on their own struggles, they came to recognise that Jesus had remained with them even during moments when they had failed to notice His presence.

Through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, they now hope to live their faith with greater courage and purpose — making Christian values part of their daily choices, serving others and discerning what God asks of them.

For the Class of 2026, Confirmation is therefore not a graduation from catechism or the conclusion of their faith formation. It is a beginning. Carrying with them Christ's promise, "I will be with you till the end of time," they step forward determined to continue growing in faith, remaining humble in service and making God's love visible through their words and actions.

Growing in faith, stepping up to lead





BESTARI JAYA: In a world filled with distractions, pressures and competing voices, young people need something — and Someone — they can hold on to.

That was at the heart of the Youth Formation at the Church of St Paul the Hermit (SPH), where about 40 young people gathered for a day of faith, fellowship and discovery centred on a simple but powerful invitation from Jesus: *Abide in Me, and I in you (John 15:4).*

Themed *ABIDE,* the formation day invited the youth to reflect on what it means to remain rooted in Christ while navigating the realities and challenges of everyday life.

The sessions were led by Fr Cyril Mannayagam, assisted by Seminarians Daniel and Xavier, who accompanied the participants through spiritual reflections, interactive activities and group sharing.

Rather than seeing faith as something confined to Sunday Mass or church activities, the young people were encouraged to recognise Christ as the foundation from which they live, make decisions, build relationships and face challenges.

The programme also built on the parish's recent leadership formation, helping participants understand that Christian leadership begins not with titles or positions, but with a heart grounded in Christ and willing to serve.

Through lively group activities and honest conversations, the youth were given opportunities to listen to one another, work together and share their own experiences of faith. The activities strengthened friendships while reminding them that the journey of faith is never meant to be walked alone.

The day also created space for fellowship and connection, allowing participants to discover that the Church is not simply somewhere they go, but a community in which they belong and have a part to play.

The message of *ABIDE* was ultimately one of both rootedness and mission. Jesus' invitation to "abide in Me" is not an invitation to remain comfortable or passive. When young people remain connected to Christ, they are strengthened to step forward with courage, compassion and purpose — in their families, schools, workplaces, parishes and communities.

As the formation ended, the challenge was clear: what was experienced during those few hours must continue beyond the programme.

The seeds have been planted. They now need to be nurtured through prayer, community, service and opportunities for young people to take responsibility and grow.

The parish expressed its appreciation to Fr Cyril, Seminarians Daniel and Xavier, the event coordinator, volunteers and all who helped make the formation day possible.

Above all, the day was a reminder that young people are not simply the future of the Church. They are already part of its life and mission today.

And when they learn to abide in Christ, they do not merely grow in faith — they discover the courage to become the disciples and leaders the Church and the world need.



From baptismal promise to personal 'Yes'

KLANG: Confirmation is not the end of catechism or simply another milestone to be checked off. It is a young Catholic's personal "yes" to God — and for 22 young people at the Church of the Holy Redeemer, that "yes" took on new meaning as they received the Sacrament of Confirmation on August 15.

Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, Most Rev Julian Leow, presided over the Mass, during which the confirmands renewed their baptismal promises and were anointed with Sacred Chrism, receiving the Gift of the Holy Spirit.

In his homily, Archbishop Julian reminded the candidates that Confirmation was their personal affirmation of the promises first made on their behalf by their parents and godparents at Baptism.

Using the image of a child progressing from milk to solid food, he told the young people that they had reached a stage in their faith journey where they must learn to understand, live and proclaim the Word of God for themselves.

Archbishop Julian cautioned that some young Catholics drift away from the Church after Confirmation, no longer praying or attending Mass. He urged the candidates not to treat the sacrament as a formality.

"It is not just going through the motions. It is not just ticking the boxes," he said, encouraging them instead to understand more deeply why Christ died on the Cross to reconcile humanity with God.

Reflecting on Jesus' call to "be perfect" as the heavenly Father is perfect, the archbishop explained that perfection does not mean being without sin. Rather, it is a lifelong journey of growing in the qualities of God — compassion, forgiveness and love — strengthened by the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord.

He also spoke candidly about the consequences of turning away from God, explaining that eternal separation from Him is ultimately the consequence of human freedom rather than divine rejection.

"God never sends anyone to hell. He allows us to go if that is our choice," he said, urging the confirmands to choose what is right and remain close to God throughout their lives.

During the Rite of Confirmation, Archbishop Julian extended his hands over the candidates and prayed that the Holy Spirit would strengthen them with His gifts. Each confirmand then came forward to be anointed with Sacred Chrism, marking a significant step in their journey of faith.

For the 22 young Catholics and their families, the celebration marked the culmination of months of catechetical preparation. Yet the archbishop's message was also a reminder that Confirmation is not a graduation from faith.

Rather, strengthened by the Holy Spirit, it is an invitation to begin living that faith with greater conviction, responsibility and courage.



WYD Seoul 2027

Across the world, parishes and dioceses have already started preparing young people to participate in the pilgrimage to South Korea — which, despite being the first non-Christian majority country to host World Youth Day — has a unique Catholic history with the witness of thousands of Christian martyrs who were killed for their faith.

Fr Michael Duck Young Kong, a parish priest at St Mary of the Cross Catholic Parish in Mordialloc, Australia, has been giving talks to the Catholic Youth Australia group and Melbourne's archdiocesan preparation team on the history and culture of Catholicism in Korea.

He has also turned to social media to help young people prepare, drawing on his Korean heritage to share language tips and what young pilgrims can look forward to when visiting to one of Asia's largest cities.

"I think the first impression many young Catholics will have when they arrive in Korea is the sheer energy of Seoul — its pace, scale and intensity," he said. "Seoul is a vibrant, modern city, and that can feel overwhelming at first, but I actually see that as part of the gift of pilgrimage. It is an invitation to receive what is unfamiliar with an open heart and a spirit of gratitude."

Fr Kong said he is hopeful that "God will awaken something deep and lasting in the hearts of young people through World Youth Day in Seoul" through an encounter with "a living Church, a universal faith and holiness," adding that World Youth Day could become "a moment for every young participant to respond to the vocation to which they have been called."



A pilgrimage in the footsteps of Korea's martyrs

The Catholic Church in Korea has a distinct identity shaped by "the witness of lay believers, by martyrdom and by a long history of perseverance under pressure," he said.

With no priests at first, the early Church in Korea was led by young lay believers who gathered in secret to study Scripture and live out the Gospel. They strived to continue their life of faith even amid harsh persecutions that spread over one hundred years, leading to many martyrs. Pope Francis beatified 124 Korean martyrs during his apostolic journey to Seoul in 2014 and Pope John Paul II canonised 103 martyr saints.

"Pilgrims will feel a strong sense of piety, communal faith, and public witness," Fr Kong said, expressing hope they will leave Seoul "with a stronger faith, and with a greater desire to say 'yes' to God in their daily lives." **OSV News**



(Kompas ID/Basarnas)

Flores Catholics turn from celebration to solidarity

LABUAN BAJO, Indonesia: At least 38 people were killed and thousands displaced after a 7.7-magnitude earthquake struck Indonesia's Flores Island early on August 15, triggering landslides, collapsing buildings and blocking roads across several regencies.

The disaster struck as Catholics across Flores were preparing to celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

At Ritapiret Major Seminary in Sikka, seminarians, priests and religious sisters fled as the building shook and parts of the structure were damaged. One priest reportedly suffered a broken leg after jumping from a second-floor window.

At St Paul Major Seminary in Ledalero, 27 Divine Word seminarians were due to make their perpetual profession. After part of the chapel ceiling collapsed and the reception hall was damaged, the Mass was postponed and moved outdoors under a temporary tent.

Despite the disruption and threat of further tremors, the seminarians proceeded with their profession, entrusting their missionary vocation to God as communities across Flores confronted loss and uncertainty. The celebration became a sign of faith and perseverance amid the disaster.

Hours after the earthquake, the Diocese of Labuan Bajo cancelled the remaining events of the Golo Koe Maria Assumpta Nusantara Festival 2026, including its closing Mass, concert and cultural performances.

Bishop Maksimus Regus said the decision was taken out of concern for public safety and in solidarity with those affected.

"We choose not to continue the celebration, but to stand together in solidarity and accompany those who are facing difficult circumstances," he said.

Urging Catholics to remain calm and follow official instructions, the bishop called on them to transform the festival's spirit into concrete acts of compassion.

"The festival may stop, but the spirit of brotherhood, solidarity and care must continue," he said.

Now in its fifth year, the Golo Koe Festival is one of eastern Indonesia's major Catholic and cultural celebrations. Its theme, "Walking Together, Healing the Earth", assumed deeper meaning as festivities gave way to prayer, relief efforts and solidarity.

Church communities across Flores have been urged to prioritise safety and support families who lost loved ones, homes and livelihoods. Authorities also warned residents to avoid damaged buildings and remain vigilant for further aftershocks.

For Catholics in Flores, the Feast of the Assumption was marked not by the celebrations they had planned, but by faith tested through suffering and a renewed call to stand with those in need. **Vatican News**

Carmelite priest remembered for a life of faith and formation



KOZHIKODE, India: The Catholic Church is mourning the death of Fr Jacob Ceasarius Nalpathamkalam CMI, *pic*, a respected formator, theologian, missionary and educator whose six decades of priestly ministry touched lives from Kerala to East Africa. He died on August 16 at the age of 91.

Born on March 11, 1935, in Changanassery, Kerala, Fr Nalpathamkalam joined the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate, India's first indigenous Catholic religious congregation for men, founded by St Kuriakose Elias Chavara. He was ordained a priest on May 17, 1961.

After earning a doctorate in theology in Canada, he devoted much of his ministry to the formation of seminarians, young priests and religious. Though widely respected for his scholarship, he was remembered above all as a priest who placed knowledge at the service of faith and allowed his life to become his most convincing lesson.

Fr Nalpathamkalam also played a pioneering role in the development of the CMI congregation and education in the Malabar region. Appointed the second Vice-Provincial of the St Thomas Vice-Province in 1975, he founded Silver Hills School in Kozhikode that same year.

When the Vice-Province became a full Province in 1978, he was elected its first Provincial Superior. He helped lay its administrative, pastoral, educational and spiritual foundations, guided by his conviction that education should form responsible individuals committed to faith and society.

In 1992, Fr Nalpathamkalam answered the call to missionary service in Tanzania. During his 22 years there, he served in the dioceses of Kigoma, Morogoro and Dar es Salaam, teaching in seminaries, accompanying young priests and undertaking parish ministry.

His work helped form local Church leaders marked by intellectual depth, spiritual maturity and pastoral sensitivity. After returning to India in 2014, he served for a year in Jammu and Kashmir before retiring from active ministry in 2015.

A novice master with a deep interest in the theology of St Thomas Aquinas and the spirituality of St Teresa of Avila, Fr Nalpathamkalam was admired for bringing together learning, simplicity and personal holiness.

"He spoke what he did, and did what he spoke," Fr Vellakada recalled, describing him as a loving and caring priest whose example showed others how to live religious life in the modern world.

Former student Fr Thomas Thekkel, director of Christ University, remembered him as an exceptional teacher and lifelong seeker of knowledge. Yet his influence reached far beyond the classroom, grounded in discipline, humility and fidelity to his vocation. **Matters India**

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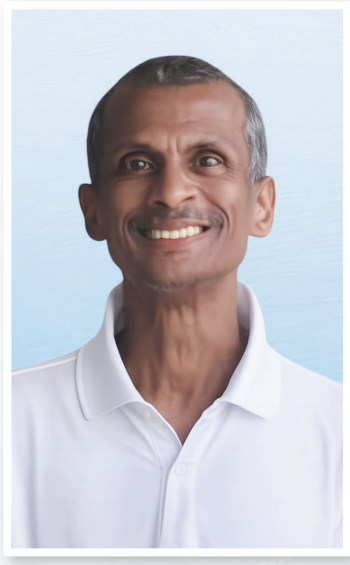

In Loving Memory of

KEVIN MOHAN PARAMESVARAN

Called home to the Lord on 31st July 2026

I will say of the Lord,
'He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God in whom I trust',
Psalm 91

FOREVER MISSED, FOREVER LOVED

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord
Let your perpetual light
shine upon him
May his soul rest in peace.

Prayer to the Blessed Virgin (never known to fail)

Oh! Most beautiful flower of mount Carmél, fruitful and fine splendour of heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin assist me in this necessity, (make your request)

Oh! Star of the Sea, help me and show me herein, that you are my mother. Oh! Holy Mother of God, Queen of heaven and earth, I humbly beseech you, from the bottom of my heart to succour me in this my necessity (make your request)
There is none Dear Mother that can withstand thy Power.

Oh! Mary conceived without sin pray for us who have recourse to thee (thrice Hail Mary) Thank you Dear Mother, for your mercy towards us..... to me and mine.



4th Anniversary In Loving Memory of

Esther Wong Voon Sim

Gifted to us:
30 March 1929
Home to the Lord:
3 September 2022

And He will raise you up on eagles' wings,
Bear you on the breath of dawn,
Make you to shine like the sun,
And hold you in the palm of His hand.

Dearest Mama/Poh-poh/Ah Mah,
Know that you are deeply missed
And forever remembered.

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The musical heritage of the Church must be preserved

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV has highlighted the importance of sacred music in the liturgy, calling for the Church's musical heritage to be preserved while fostering healthy inculturation of local traditions.

"For this reason, the composer of sacred music is called to know and preserve the musical heritage of the Church, allowing it to inspire new compositions at the service of the liturgy, while respecting contemporary sensibilities and the different cultural traditions," Pope Leo said.

In his address during his general audience at the Vatican on August 19, the pontiff continued his catechesis on the Second Vatican Council's constitution on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium.*

The general audience was his third of the month to be held inside St Peter's Basilica due to Rome's high summer temperatures.

Pope Leo discussed the Second Vatican Council's emphasis on the role of sacred music in the liturgy.

"The document states that 'The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art,'" the Pope explained.

He also explained that sacred music fosters both prayer and communion among the faithful.

"Music, indeed, is part of the liturgical action and is not merely a decorative part of the celebration," Pope Leo said. "In particular, music expresses the affective dimension of prayer, as St Augustine says: *'Cantare amantis est,'* that is, 'singing belongs to those who love.'"

"Singing also fosters communion. It contributes to the unity of hearts, overcoming differences between people and bringing everyone together in praise of God through the symphony of voices," he added.

The Pope went on to explain that, because sacred music is so important, the liturgy should be celebrated with dignity, with music that is both noble and simple. He also highlighted the role of Gregorian chant and the pipe organ in fostering devotion during the liturgy.

"The Council then attributes great value to Gregorian chant, without excluding other genres of sacred music from the celebration. Particular attention is also given to the pipe organ, while the use of other instruments is permitted 'on condition that the instruments are suitable, or can be made suitable, for sacred use, accord with the dignity of the temple, and truly contribute to the edification of the faithful,'" Pope Leo said.



Pope Leo XIV gives his apostolic blessing at the end of the general audience in St Peter's Basilica on August 19, 2026. (Vatican Media)

The pontiff also discussed inculturation in Church music to incorporate diverse cultures.

"A theme close to the Council's reform is that of inculturation, including in the field of sacred music. In particular, concerning the musical traditions of different cultures, the Council emphasises the importance of taking them seriously into consideration, as they form part of people's religious and social life."

The Pope also encouraged the faithful to participate in singing parts of the Mass to reflect the sacred mysteries being celebrated.

"*Sacrosanctum Concilium* devotes considerable attention to the theme of the active participation of the faithful," the Pope said. "As for the concrete way in which this can be achieved through the specific role of sacred music, the Constitution offers a clear answer: 'the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons, and songs' and 'reverent silence' should be fostered." **EWTN News**



Vatican garden embraces fully organic cultivation

VATICAN: A centuries-old vegetable garden beside the Mater Ecclesiae Monastery in the Vatican Gardens is transitioning to fully organic cultivation, reflecting the Church's commitment to caring for creation.

Inspired by Pope Francis' environmental encyclical *Laudato Si'*, the initiative prioritises the health of the soil and the natural growth cycles of plants rather than maximising production.

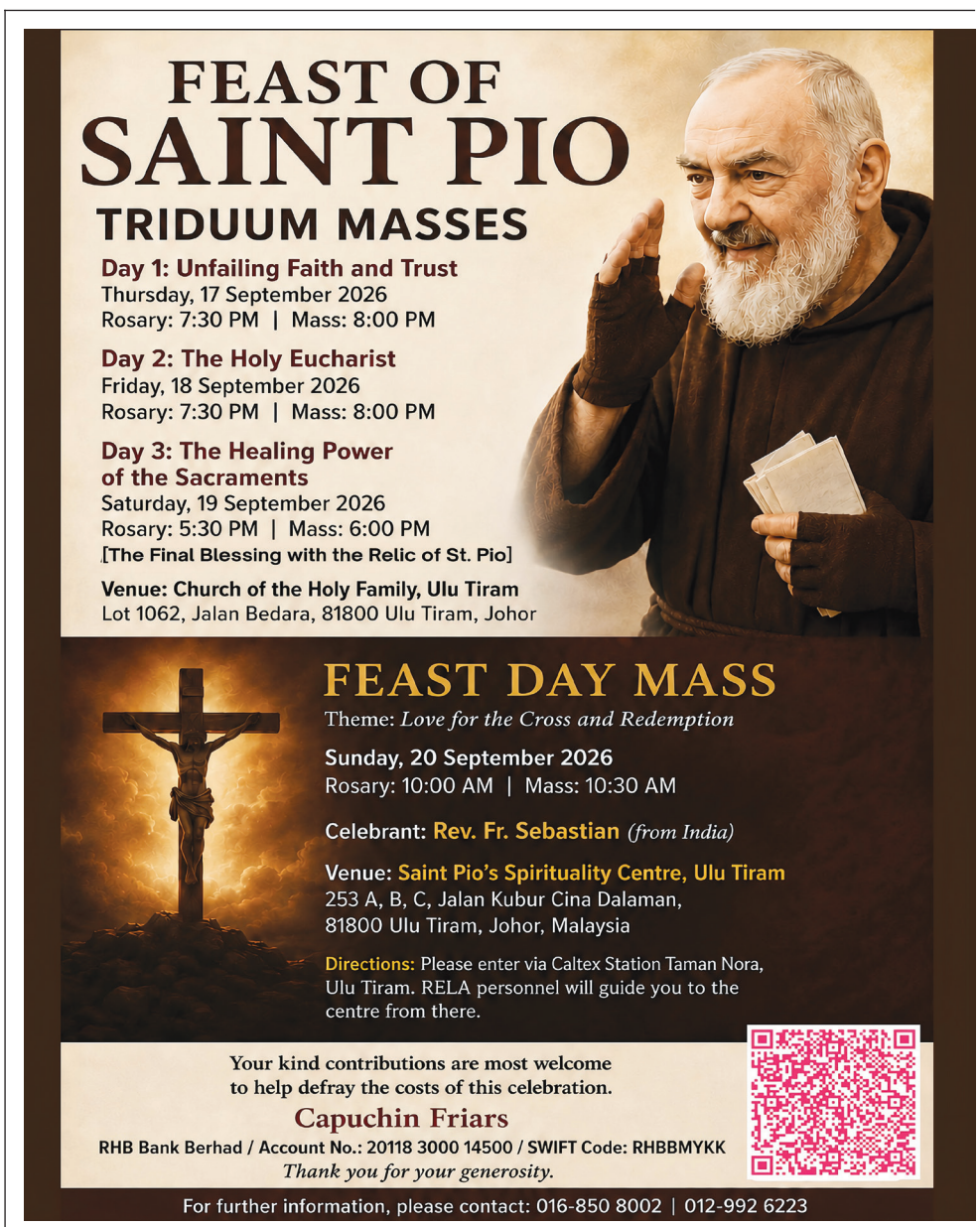
Pope Leo XIV echoed this approach when he addressed Italian agronomists and forestry professionals last November, describing care for creation as "a concrete form of charity toward our Mother Earth and toward future generations". The earth, he said, is "not a possession, but a gift", and those who cultivate it respectfully participate in God's creative work.

The garden now uses certified pelletised fertiliser selected according to seasonal needs, while crop rotation helps preserve soil fertility. Legumes such as green beans are planted to fix nitrogen naturally, and a seaweed-based fertiliser is being tested on tomatoes.

Good farming practices also help keep pests below damaging levels, reducing the need for plant-protection products. All regulated treatments are recorded in a field logbook.

Covering nearly 400 square metres across four terraces, the garden is managed by the Vatican's Gardens and Environment Service. Experienced gardener, Gilberto Bianchi, tends the plot with young workers to whom he is passing on traditional cultivation methods. Irrigation continues to be done entirely by hand.

The crops follow the seasons and include garlic, basil, chillies, pumpkins, tomatoes, aubergines, peppers, green beans, courgettes and cucumbers. The first kiwi plants were introduced this year, while winter planting includes cabbage, broccoli, spinach and lettuce. **Vatican News**



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