

# Carrying HOPE across Asia



Patricia Pereira

**KUALA LUMPUR:** With a small cross placed in their hands and a bishop's blessing spoken over their mission, the hundreds of delegates from across Asia were sent forth at the close of the Great Pilgrimage of Hope (GPH) 2025 — not to lead from above, but to walk beside their communities as true companions. In this simple yet powerful commissioning, they discovered again the heart of their call: to be signs of hope in a world longing for God's nearness.

As they departed on November 30, they carried a renewed mandate — to journey with the peoples of Asia in the same tender, listening spirit with which Jesus walked with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Their gaze now turns towards 2033, when the global Church will mark two thousand years since the Passion, death, and Resurrection of Christ. And towards that horizon, Asia moves forward together, trusting that God is already preparing new paths of grace and renewal across the continent.

Organised by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), the GPH, held at the Light Hotel in Seberang Jaya, Penang, gathered delegates from 32 countries across Asia and beyond. For four days beginning Nov 27, the congress became a powerful synodal encounter, a space where long-established



(photo/Penang Diocese Social Communication)

and newly emerging communities, large and small, paused to pray, discern, and dream together about sharing the Gospel in ways that honour Asia's rich diversity of cultures, stories and spiritual traditions.

The pilgrimage opened with a heartfelt call from Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, who urged delegates to embrace humility, openness, and hope, rejecting the fear-driven grasp for power he likened to "Herod." Instead, he invited the Church in Asia to be like the Magi: pilgrims who seek, listen, learn, and adore. True hope, he reminded the assembly, is not optimism alone, but a theological virtue that moves believers toward compassion and courageous love. (ref: 'Walk a different way' - HERALD, Dec 7)

This spirit infused every moment of the congress. Far from a top-down mission, the GPH celebrated evangelisation born of respect, encounter, and genuine friendship with people of all faiths. Delegates were inspired to see that sharing the Good News in Asia is not about preaching from afar, but about walking alongside others — honour-

ing their stories, tending to their wounds, and responding to the deep longing for meaning, justice, and belonging that pulses through every community.

Through workshops, keynote addresses, impact sessions, rallies, and cultural exchanges, delegates explored the breadth of Asia's Catholic experience: centuries-old communities, young Churches still taking root, persecuted groups persevering in hardship, and believers navigating the quiet loneliness hidden within Asia's vast digital metropolises.

Amid this diversity, one message rang clear: evangelisation in Asia cannot be proclaimed from a distance, it must grow through relationships, quiet encounters, and attentive hearts. Faith here is carried not in monuments but in stories, memory, and the wisdom of ancestors. In this environment of listening and lived experience, the Gospel finds its most natural home.

FABC President, Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrão, reminded delegates that synodality is not merely an organisational model but a spiritual posture. "We journey as fellow

pilgrims with all the other pilgrims in Asia," he said, calling for dialogue, humility, and the courage to walk beside people long before speaking about Christ.

Over days of shared prayer and conversation, a sense of purpose and possibility grew among the participants. The hunger for God in Asia runs deep, and the yearning for justice is real. Young people are seeking meaning and hope with heartfelt intensity. Delegates were inspired to recognise God in unexpected places: among migrants and refugees, within interfaith friendships, in the courage and resilience of the poor, in the wounds of a divided world, and in the quiet heroism of everyday life and ministry — signs that God is already at work, calling the Church to walk boldly into the future.

Leaders spoke clearly about the road ahead. It demands new humility, new courage, and new companionship: walking with the poor, with women, with young people, and with all who stand at the margins seeking a place at God's table. The Church in Asia is called to be more synodal, more welcoming, and richer in relationships — a Church that heals, builds bridges, uplifts, and protects.

As the Great Pilgrimage of Hope 2025 came to its close, one truth shone ever brighter: the story of Jesus is ready to be told in new and creative ways in Asia — through lives that carry His hope into the world. As the Church journeys towards 2033, God is already stirring something fresh across the continent, gently shaping hearts and renewing communities. The faithful have now returned home not merely as participants, but as companions on the way — ready to walk with their people, to listen, and to spark hope wherever they go.

See more on pages 4, 5 & 10



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# Reflections on the 17th Sabah State Election

Polling for the 17th Sabah General Election has concluded, and as expected, it revealed some very interesting insights. With 596 candidates from 24 political parties contesting 73 constituencies, this election made history.

Among these candidates, I was particularly grateful to see the emergence of young Christians such as Ewon Benedik, Arthur Joseph Kurup, Nelson Wences, Roger Amandus, and Adrian Alexander. Many of them have contributed significantly to the Church and other places of worship. Although not all emerged victorious, their presence opened the public's eyes, showing that in five years, they could be trusted leaders.

One unique aspect of Sabah's politics is that voting trends often prioritise the qualities of individual candidates over party affiliation or broader political issues. A case in point is Dr Anil Jeet Sing, who became the first Indian to contest and win the Kunak state seat. He achieved this remarkable feat despite being a non-Muslim candidate in an area largely dominated by Muslim Bumiputeras. I believe the *rakyat* supported him largely because of his long-term development vision, including plans to expand the existing Kunak port into a container port capable of boosting economic activity, a vision that speaks directly to the needs of Sabahans.

Yes, this is exactly what Sabahans need. We all share the same hopes — for our land to progress, for our economy to thrive, and for our families to prosper, not through mere

promises from political leaders, but through concrete action. My parents always taught me to choose candidates who are close to the Church, diligent, and have a people-oriented spirit. The candidate I voted for did not win — I had supported him because he is young and promising — but I am genuinely happy for the winning party. Why was I not upset or angry? Because the victorious candidate in my area is a good Catholic, and I welcome his victory with an open heart.

Still, I am concerned that many people remain hesitant to embrace young and new political candidates. Many of Sabah's veteran politicians should have retired by now, and it is vital for the people of Sabah to encourage more young leaders to step forward in the next state election. I was also heartened by the eagerness of Sabah's youth to exercise their democratic rights and shape the state's political future. While Undi18 was first implemented in the 2022 general election, Sabah's young voters at that time only participated in parliamentary contests, as the state election had already been held in 2020.

I would also like to thank the parish priests who temporarily paused activities to give parishioners the opportunity to go out and vote.

When a friend from the Peninsula asked me why Sabahans rejected federal-based parties in this election, I said the reasons are widely reported in the news. For me personally, it reflects long-standing frustrations: the unresolved 40 per cent special grant, the MA63 agreement, selective prosecution in

rampant corruption cases involving Sabah's assemblymen, frequent disruptions to essential services like electricity and water, deteriorating roads, unequal distribution of national wealth, and the continual neglect of Sabah's needs by the federal government.

The voters have spoken, and they will speak even louder next time. The 2025 Sabah election proved that Sabah is no longer a deposit box, a trophy cabinet, a talking point, or a bargaining chip in Parliament.

With the election concluded and a new Cabinet formed, it is time to move beyond politics and unite with purpose to build a better future for our state. The new Sabah Cabinet may not satisfy all supporters, but it holds the potential to stabilise the state government in the long term.

As the voices of voters have been heard, it is essential to set aside partisan differences and focus on the practical challenges ahead. Let us work together with the new Cabinet, praying for and supporting them as they implement their development agenda and vision for Sabah.

To the new state leaders, especially Christian leaders, I urge you to live out your promises: enhance infrastructure, strengthen healthcare, attract investment, create jobs, maintain public safety, protect the environment, and uphold Sabah's rights as outlined in the Malaysia Agreement 1963.

As we move forward, may our State, our leaders, our government, and all our people be guided, protected, and blessed.

*Liza Magnus*

## When joy finds us in the waiting

Advent is a season of longing, of waiting for what the heart knows is coming, even when the eyes cannot yet see it. On this Third Sunday of Advent, traditionally called Gaudete or "Rejoice" Sunday, the Church invites us to pause in the midst of our preparation and notice the quiet stirrings of joy that rise from hope. Today's readings form a unified call of encouragement for weary hearts, reminding us that God's promises are trustworthy, even when their fulfilment feels delayed.

In the first reading, the prophet Isaiah paints a breathtaking vision: "The desert and the parched land will exult; the steppe will rejoice and bloom."

This is not merely poetic imagery. Isaiah was speaking to a people living in exile, surrounded by disappointment, fear, and uncertainty. They had grown accustomed to dryness—both literal and spiritual. Yet God promises transformation. Where there is barrenness, life will burst forth. Where there is weakness, strength will flourish. Where there is sorrow, everlasting joy will crown the people.

Isaiah's message reassures us that joy is not something we manufacture; it is something God brings into the deserts of our lives. Joy becomes possible not because conditions are perfect, but because God enters the imperfect spaces with power, tenderness, and faithfulness. Our deserts — our loneliness, grief, restlessness, unfulfilled dreams, fractured relationships — are the very places God chooses to make bloom.

The second reading from the Letter of James speaks directly to the experience of waiting. "Be patient, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord." James uses the example of a farmer who must wait for the precious harvest, trusting that the rains will come in their proper time. The farmer

cannot rush the process; the soil must rest, the seeds must germinate, and growth must unfold invisibly before it becomes visible.

This patient waiting does not mean passivity. It means choosing hope, even when we are tempted to give up. It means nurturing the soil of our hearts with prayer, forgiveness, and perseverance. It means trusting that God is at work beneath the surface of our lives, even when we cannot yet see the fruits.

James also counsels us to "make our hearts firm," a phrase that calls us to steadfastness. In a world that encourages instant gratification, Advent teaches us the holiness of patience, the kind that strengthens, shapes, and transforms us. Waiting becomes sacred when we understand that God is forming us in the waiting.

The Gospel presents a striking scene: John the Baptist, imprisoned and facing uncertainty, sends his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are You the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Even John, the fiery prophet, the fearless herald, experiences doubt. His question echoes the questions of every human heart that struggles to reconcile God's promises with life's challenges.

Jesus does not respond with theological arguments or grand declarations. Instead, He points to signs of God's power breaking into the world: "The blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised."

Jesus' message is simple: Look at what God is doing. Salvation is unfolding, even if not in the way John expected. Jesus invites John (and us) to see with new eyes, to recognise God's presence, often in small, quiet, unexpected ways.

John's doubt reminds us that faith is not the absence of questions. It is the courage to bring our questions to Christ. His moment of

## Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with the Editor

### 3rd Sunday of Advent (A)

Readings: *Isaiah 35:1-6, 10;*

*James 5:7-10;*

*Gospel: Matthew 11:2-11*

uncertainty becomes a moment of revelation: God is still at work; joy is still possible; hope is still alive.

As we journey through this Third Sunday of Advent, we are invited to reflect:

- Where are the deserts in our lives that need God's blossoming?
- What promises of God do we find hardest to wait for?
- Where might Jesus already be working in ways we have not yet recognised?

Gaudete Sunday calls us to rejoice, not because everything is perfect, but because God is near. Joy is not a fleeting emotion; it is a deep confidence that God's light is stronger than our darkness. It is the assurance that Christ enters our world and our hearts with healing and renewal.

The readings remind us that Advent joy is both gift and invitation. God promises transformation, but we must prepare our hearts. God assures us of His faithfulness, but we must trust in His timing. God reveals His presence, but we must learn to see it.

As we enter the final stretch of Advent, may we embrace a joy that is rooted in hope, strengthened by patience, and awakened by the signs of God's quiet miracles around us. May our hearts, like the desert in Isaiah, bloom again with the beauty of God's coming. And may we — forgiven, renewed, and strengthened — walk toward Christmas with the joyful certainty that Emmanuel, God-with-us, is near.



**KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE**

**Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow**

**December**

- 27 Mass – Feast day, Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, KL,
- 27 Mass – Feast day, Church of the Holy Family, Kajang
- 28 Mass – Closing of the Jubilee Year, Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, KL



**PENANG DIOCESE**

**Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis**

**December**

- 16 Meeting – Penang Diocese Seminarians, Bishop’s Residence at 9.00am
- 21 Mass – Jubilee of Hope and Christmas Celebration, Church of the Immaculate Conception, Penang at 5.00pm
- 24 Mass – Christmas Eve Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang at 11.00pm
- 25 Mass – Christmas Day Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam at 9.00am
- 28 Mass – Closing for Jubilee Year of Hope 2025, Cathedral of the Holy Spirit, Penang at 5.30pm



**MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE**

**Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul**

**December**

- 16 Zoom meeting Caritas – Malaysia Diocesan Directors & Ecclesiastical Assistants (CM DEA)
- 16 Penitential Service – Church of Holy Family, Ulu Tiram
- 17 Penitential Service – Church of St Joseph, Plentong
- 18 Penitential Service – Church of the Immaculate Conception, JB
- 22 South Johor Clergy Christmas Fellowship
- 24 Mass – Christmas, Church of St Joseph, Plentong
- 28 Mass – Closing for Jubilee Year of Hope 2025, Sacred Heart Cathedral, JB

# Four decades of mercy and hope

SUBANG: The Catholic Prison Ministry of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur marked a profound milestone on November 9, celebrating 40 years of faithful service at Kelab Golf Negeri Subang. More than 330 guests gathered in gratitude and unity, honouring a ministry that has carried Christ’s hope and mercy to the incarcerated and their families for four decades.

From the moment guests arrived, they were welcomed warmly and gifted a commemorative ceramic mug, an emblem of gratitude for the shared journey. The hall soon came alive with music, nostalgia, and the joyful reunion of volunteers past and present, many reconnecting after years apart. What began as an anniversary dinner quickly felt like a homecoming.

A deeply moving moment came when His Excellency Archbishop Wojciech Zaluski, the Apostolic Nuncio, presented a letter of blessing from Pope Leo XIV to Catholic Prison Fellowship Association president Gnadass Amaldass. The Holy Father’s message affirmed the ministry’s sacred mission to uphold human dignity and to be instruments of God’s compassion behind prison walls.

Distinguished guests, including



From left: Gnadass Amaldass, Archbishop Julian Leow, Fr George Packiasamy, and Archbishop Wojciech Zaluski cutting the Anniversary cake.

Archbishop Julian Leow, Fr George Packiasamy, and Dr Gary Liew, graced the celebration. In his address, Archbishop Julian encouraged the ministry to look ahead — strengthening not only pastoral care for those imprisoned but also preventive education for the wider community, helping to build a more just

and compassionate society.

The beautifully handcrafted anniversary cake stood as a symbol of faith and hope, its colours and intricate details telling the story of transformation, from confinement to freedom in Christ. The touching recorded message from Sr Catherine O’Sullivan, the ministry’s founder, reminded all of the humble beginnings that blossomed into a movement of healing and restoration.

Gnadass expressed deep gratitude to all who had laboured in love, past leaders, ecclesiastical assistants, chaplains, and especially the volunteers whose dedication is the heartbeat of the ministry. Their service was honoured with Certificates of Appreciation for 20 years of commitment, along with Outstanding Contribution Awards to individuals who went above and beyond in their mission.

The evening concluded with a joyful lucky draw and much appreciation for Kenneth Shermen Kolandasamy and his organising team, whose meticulous planning ensured a memorable celebration. The presence of representatives from the Penang and Malacca Dioceses added to the spirit of fellowship across the three dioceses.



## Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #252



Welcome dear friends,

The Diocese of Penang hosted *The Great Pilgrimage of Hope 2025*, with 900 delegates from 32 nations. We came. We met the Lord. We went different ways. An electrical and energising experience. It was storytelling time with preachers, liturgies, small group reflections and words in songs.

**Local Takes. Cracks widen.**

*Aliran commented:* Malaysia is becoming a place where it is easier to divide people than to uplift them. Where it is easier to impose control than to inspire confidence. Where it is easier to argue over identity than to fight corruption, improve education, strengthen institutions or build a fair economy.

The *Sabahans* have spoken that they want political stability while preserving their own political identity.

The *Dewan Rakyat* reported a total of 55.7 per cent of children reportedly spent between one and four hours using the internet each day last year, with 60.7 per cent of these young users reported to own their own personal devices.

The *High Court* held that the abduction of Pastor Koh in 2017 was executed in a coordinated, structured manner, consistent with trained personnel.

The *Home Ministry* reported: More than 2,000 children are being held in immigration depots across the country.

**Church In The World: Making a Difference**

Pope Leo to the small Church in Türkiye: God chose the way of littleness, descending into our midst. In this littleness is the Church’s true strength, and not her resources or structures, nor do the fruits of her mission depend on numbers, economic power or social

influence.

Pope to the Lebanon Church which is diverse, united by the Levantine Arabic and the language of hope: Hope enables one to start again at being peacemakers and reconcilers, to live together, working together for a shared future without fleeing out of convenience.

**A Thought for The Week: Japan Meets India**

The Taj Hotel Group once invited Mr Masai Imai, a Japanese consultant, to conduct a workshop. The staff was sceptical — what could someone with no hotel experience teach them?

Mr Masai began with a walk — not a talk.

He led the team to a laundry room that had a beautiful view. “Why waste this as a laundry? Move it to the basement and convert this to a guest room — today,” he said. The manager hesitated, offering to include it in the report, but Mr Masai insisted: “*Not tomorrow. Now.*” And they did.

Next, in the pantry, he rolled up his sleeves and started washing plates. The staff watched, stunned. “*Too many plates lead to delay and clutter,*” he explained. “In Japan, we call this Muda — waste from excess or delay. Pack the extra plates and send them elsewhere now.”

Instead of preparing reports, Mr Masai encouraged immediate action — *cutting waste, simplifying processes, and maximising efficiency.*

On the final day, he told a story: a Japanese and an American hunter are chased by a lion. The Japanese paused to wear running shoes. The American says, “That won’t help, we must reach the car!” The Japanese replies, “*I just need to run faster than you.*”

*The lesson from Mr Masai:* In today’s competitive world, you don’t have to be perfect — you just have to be better than

the rest, even by a few steps. Progress is about practical thinking and staying a few steps ahead.

**QnQ: Q asks: Why is there so much regret for missed opportunities?**

1. There is a mechanism called fear of better.

2. A young disciple asks Socrates, “What is the secret to finding the perfect love?”

Socrates replied, “Walk through this field of wheat. Your task is to pick the single best stalk of wheat you can find. However, there is one rule: You must keep moving forward, and you can never turn back.”

The disciple sets off. He sees a large stalk, but thinks, “Maybe there is a bigger one ahead.” He leaves it.

Later, he sees a beautiful golden stalk, but thinks, “The field is long; surely there is a perfect one waiting.”

He reaches the end of the field and realises he has picked nothing.

Socrates tells him, “That is the nature of love. *By constantly looking for better ahead, you fail to appreciate the good that is right in front of you, until the opportunity is gone.*”

3. Are you looking for the perfect choice, or are you looking for a choice that you can make perfect?

**The Spirit @ work:** The Spirit comes with the tenderness of a true friend and protector to save, to heal, to teach, to counsel, to strengthen, to console.” *St Cyril of Jerusalem*

**Something to tickle you:** When it is obvious that the goals cannot be reached, don’t adjust the goals, adjust the action steps.

*Bernard Paul*  
Bishop Bernard Paul

The Great Pilgrimage of Hope (GPH), held from November 27 to 30, was a vibrant four-day celebration filled with keynote addresses, inspiring talks, and meaningful encounters.

**PATRICIA PEREIRA, ELVINA FERNANDEZ, AMANDA MAH and KEVIN FRANCIS share key highlights — including moments captured in pictures — from this memorable journey of hope.**



# The Great Pilgrimage

Cardinal Charles Maung Bo, Archbishop of Yangon, outlined five guiding lights for the Church's synodal journey, emphasising a spirit of hope, unity, and joyful witness for Catholics across Asia.

Describing Asia as a “great mosaic, united in diversity,” he reminded the faithful that Christian life is nurtured through listening, sharing, and simple acts of love. Drawing on the vision of the prophet Daniel, Cardinal Bo noted that even in moments of uncertainty, God's presence is revealed in the ordinary — in weary mothers, migrant workers, and young people lost in their screens. Echoing Pope Francis, he urged, “Let the Good News start with a smile.”

He then presented five principles for Asia's synodal path:

**Listening with the Heart:** True listening transforms communities. Cardinal Bo urged believers to listen attentively, not just with ears but



## Five principles for Asia's synodal path

with the heart, creating spaces of care, attention, and hope.

**Leadership as Service:** Authentic authority comes from humility and service, not status. Leaders must lift others up, practising compassion and servant leadership at all levels of Church and society.

**Diversity as a Gift:** Cul-

tural, linguistic, and social differences are blessings. The Church is called to be a bridge-builder, embracing the Spirit speaking through all voices rather than allowing divisions to take hold.

**The Poor at the Centre:** Jesus is present among the marginalised and overlooked. Walk-

ing with the poor, migrants, and displaced allows believers to encounter Christ directly and deepens the Church's mission to serve with love, compassion, and solidarity.

**Youth Alive and Engaged:** The Church must meet young people where they are, providing spaces for joy, creativity, and leadership. “A Church that walks with the young never grows old,” he said, stressing that investing in youth ensures the enduring presence of Christ across Asia.

Concluding, Cardinal Bo, the former president of FABC, reminded the faithful that worldly trends and distractions are fleeting, but God's love endures. “Our journey together as Asia is one of love, fellowship, and humility. When we listen, serve, celebrate diversity, care for the poor, and walk with the young, Jesus will return to Asia.”



## A vision for dialogue and synodality

dialogue, synodality, and the shared vocation of Christians in a diverse continent.

Reflecting on Asia's cultural, religious, and generational diversity, Archbishop Simon urged the faithful to listen, discern, and respond to the signs of the times, drawing inspiration from the Magi's journey to Christ. He highlighted the FABC's triple dialogue — religions, cultures, and the poor — while advocating for broader inclusion of youth, women, migrants, refugees, and marginalised groups in the synodal journey.

Archbishop Simon stressed that synodality is a way of life: internally, it calls for shared discern-

ment among bishops, clergy, and laity; externally, it extends to collaboration with other religions and care for creation. Using the term “neighbouring religions” reflects Asia's lived experience of friendship, shared festivals, and daily coexistence, fostering harmony and mutual respect.

Looking ahead to 2033, the 2,000th anniversary of the Resurrection, he invited the Church to renew its mission, especially by supporting families, empowering youth, and forming leaders. “Young people are not only the future,” he said, “they are the present, carrying within them the seeds of divine life for Asia.”





# of Hope 2025



## Encountering Christ anew

“Faith is more than knowing about Jesus—it is encountering Him personally and allowing that encounter to transform our lives,” said Archbishop Raphael Thattil, Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church. Addressing delegates on the theme *A Call for a Renewed Encounter*, he invited the faithful across Asia to deepen their relationship with Christ in a way that inspires love, action, and

credible witness.

He outlined three key dimensions of this renewed encounter.

- Personal – meeting Jesus as a living presence who knows and loves us.
- Renewed – allowing our faith to be refreshed and rekindled, even for those who have walked with Christ for years.
- Transformative – letting encounters with Christ reshape character, purpose, and identity.

Drawing on the Catholic charismatic movement in India, Archbishop Thattil shared how countless individuals rediscovered direction and meaning when they encountered Christ in a genuine and personal way.

He also reflected on Asia’s unique context, a continent marked by immense cultural and religious diversity and where Christians remain a minority. In

such a landscape, he stressed, only those who have truly encountered Christ can authentically share Him. “We cannot speak of Jesus unless we have first experienced Him ourselves,” he said.

To nurture this encounter, he encouraged practices rooted in daily Christian life: prayer, meditation on Scripture, participation in the Eucharist, acts of service, and compassion for the poor and marginalised.

He further identified key priorities for strengthening the life of faith in Asia:

- Interreligious dialogue as a pathway to peace.
- Inculturation to express the Gospel through local cultures.
- Synodality to build a more collaborative and inclusive Church.
- Engaging youth with hope, courage, and authenticity.



● Using media and communication creatively for evangelisation.

● Empowering laypeople to reach communities where clergy may not be present.

● Responding to the deep spiritual hunger felt across the continent.

Concluding his address, Arch-

bishop Thattil invited the faithful to live and share their faith with renewed joy. “Let this continent become a great harvest of faith for the third millennium. Through renewed encounters with Christ, may we become witnesses of His love in word and deed, trusting that faith will take root in Asia and bear fruit for the world.”

## Quotes from some of the speakers

During Mass, when the faithful proclaim the Mystery of Faith — “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again” — these words must go beyond liturgical recitation and become the lived story of each believer. We hope that 2033 will give flesh and conviction to that proclamation, so that what we proclaim in the Eucharist is reflected in our lives. The Jubilee is not only a remembrance of the past but an active encounter with God’s saving work in the present and future.

The past is real, but He is risen, and that gives us a future. Eternal life in God’s kingdom is true, and the kingdom is a living community that includes us. We remember not only the past but the future. If we forget the future, we lose the present — that is hope. Jesus is not a fiction; His resurrection is real, and it is our future. Without that future, how can we journey faithfully today?

**Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle**



Asia’s gift to the universal Church lies in its capacity to show how people encounter Jesus in everyday life, through tenderness, culture, and lived spirituality. The humanity of Jesus makes Him relatable and tangible; there is no path to His divinity apart from His humanity. In a region rich with stories, symbols, and embodied faith, this presents a pastoral opportunity: by sharing how Asian communities meet Jesus — in family life, in suffering, in acts of solidarity and joy—believers can help the world encounter a Christ who is both fully human and fully divine. **Cardinal Pablo Virgilio David**

Like the Magi who returned home by a different way, we too must return with new sight, new courage, and new priorities. If these days end only in memory, we have failed. But if they lead to change of heart, action, and communion, then this Pilgrimage becomes a seed for Asia’s future.

Let us return with humility, ready to learn from one another; with courage, ready to share Christ with gentleness and joy; with companionship, walking with the poor, migrants, women, youth, and all who seek a place at God’s table; and with hope, trusting that God is shaping Asia through our faithful service.

Let this be our commitment: to walk together, to listen deeply, to serve generously, to witness joyfully, and to go a different way — Christ’s way.”

**Cardinal Filipe Neri Ferrão**



(Photo/Penang Diocese Social Communication)

# Sg Petani parish marks 100 years

Anne Haslam

SUNGAI PETANI: The Church of Christ the King was filled with thousands of faithful as the parish commemorated its centenary and the Feast of Christ the King.

The milestone celebration was graced by the Bishop of Penang, Cardinal Sebastian Francis, who concelebrated the Mass with Bishop Emeritus Antony Selvanayagam, Monsignors Henry Rajoo, Stephen Liew, Jude Miranda, parish priest Fr Victor Louis, and some 20 priests and deacons from neighbouring parishes. Busloads of pilgrims and visitors from far and near thronged the church grounds to share in the momentous occasion.

The celebration was preceded by a nine-day novena beginning November 14, each day reflecting on a different theme. The novena culminated in a deeply moving multilingual Mass on Nov 23, marking the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

In his homily, Cardinal Sebastian called on the faithful to move forward as visionaries, following the courage and foresight of the parish's forefathers who first planted the seeds of faith in Sungai Petani.



Fr Victor Louis receiving the papal blessing from Cardinal Sebastian Francis.

He urged Catholics to manifest the love of Christ through their witness, mission, and communion, embracing fully the life of the Trinity.

He emphasised the call to build a community rooted in unity, diversity, equality, harmony, freedom, and beauty — a reflection of the “new heaven and new earth where righteousness dwells.” The prelate stressed that such a foundation is necessary to confront the shadows of today's world: modern-day slavery, exploitation, division, and all forms of oppression. “We must pray and ask the Holy Spirit to fight this battle with us,” he said.

Honouring the legacy of the parish pioneers, Cardinal Sebastian highlighted the contributions of many who shaped the Catholic presence in the region, including Fr Dominic Vendargon (later Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur), Fr Anthony Dorret, Fr Maurice Joseph, Fr Lucien Catel, the Infant Jesus Sisters, the De La Salle Brothers, and numerous priests and religious who laboured tirelessly for the mission.

The celebration also coincided with the 40th World Youth Day, during which Fr Simon Anand reminded the faithful that Christian witness is not merely a human ef-



Exhibition of the historical items.

fort but a divine mission entrusted to us by the Holy Spirit. It is a grace-filled calling to make Christ visible through our words, actions, and attitudes.

Cardinal Sebastian concluded his homily by leading a meditative chant of the Gospel verse, “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” The prayer was offered especially for prisoners, those on death row, and all sinners — a moment that deeply resonated with the congregation.

Fr Victor and PPC chairman Peter Chong expressed heartfelt appreciation to all who played a part in organising the centenary

celebration. Cardinal Sebastian also presented Fr Victor with a framed papal blessing from Pope Leo XIV in honour of the occasion.

To commemorate the 100-year milestone, the parish produced a souvenir magazine and set up a special exhibition and photo booth. Souvenirs were distributed to parishioners and guests, while limited-edition 100th anniversary t-shirts were made available for purchase.

The evening concluded with a sumptuous dinner, cultural performances, and a dazzling fireworks display at the parish hall and grounds, a fitting finale to a century of faith, community, and mission.

## Selayang Baru Catholics celebrate Feast of Christ the King

SELAYANG BARU: Hundreds of Catholics came together at the Chapel of Christ the King from November 20 to 23 to celebrate the Feast of Christ the King, experiencing moments of grace, reflection, and deep community spirit.

The celebrations began on Nov 20 with Fr Albet Arockiasamy from Tampin preaching on the theme, *Christ the King: Celebrating Our Lives as One Body of Christ*. He reminded parishioners that the Church is called to be a living, missionary presence in the world — touching hearts, transforming lives, and moving beyond routines. The day also marked the blessing of the new tabernacle, a symbol of God's abiding presence, with around 200 parishioners witnessing this sacred moment.

On Nov 21, Fr Christopher Wilvaraj Soosaipillai from Mantin reflected on *Christ the King: Participation of Families as One Church*, encouraging families to pray together and to lift vocations in prayer. The day also celebrated Fr Christopher's 29th sacerdotal anniversary, drawing around 350 faithful, in shared joy and gratitude.

The following day began with a Mass for the elderly and sick, presided over by Fr Mark Michael from Sungai Siput, under the theme *Christ the King: Accompanying Us with Mercy and Love*. Many received the Anointing of the Sick, experiencing comfort, healing, and the tender love of Christ.

The feast reached its pinnacle on the evening of Nov 22 with a



Fr Mark Michael (centre) with Fr Peter Anthony (right) and Deacon Anthony Robert leading the procession.

solemn Mass attended by over 650 parishioners and pilgrims. Celebrated by Fr Mark, with concelebrants Fr Peter Anthony and Fr Michel Dass and assisted by Deacon Anthony Robert, the Mass reflected on true communion in the Eucharist and the call to allow Christ to reign fully in our hearts, above worldly distractions. Fr Mark urged everyone to pray with sincerity and focus, reminding families of their crucial role in nurturing the faith of the next generation.

The celebrations were further enriched by a candlelight procession around the chapel grounds, featuring the Blessed Sacrament and the statue of Christ the King. Fr Michel blessed the faithful at three stations, giving all an opportunity to adore the Lord and receive His abundant grace. Adoration and Benediction followed, deepening the participants' encounter with Christ's loving presence.

Fr Peter and PPC chairperson Melvin Moses expressed heartfelt gratitude to the priests, parishioners, and volunteers whose dedication brought the celebrations to life. Special thanks were extended to the Liturgy team, Flower Ladies, Catechetical team, Youth, Technical team, SSVP, Creation Justice team, Finance team, BEC leaders, core teams, and caretaker Anbu, whose efforts made the event truly meaningful.

The feast also celebrated milestones of faith: Fr Mark's 25th sacerdotal anniversary, commemorated with a joyful cake-cutting ceremony, and two young communicants receiving Holy Communion for the first time during the Thanksgiving Mass on Nov 23. The celebrations concluded with a community dinner, a testament to fellowship, love, and gratitude, leaving all participants uplifted and inspired by the presence of Christ in their lives. **Bernard Anthony**

## Seniors learn about Wills and legal authorisation

KULIM: Many people overlook the importance of preparing a will or legally authorising someone to act on their behalf, yet these are crucial steps in safeguarding one's family and legacy. Recognising this need, the Senior Citizens Committee of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus organised a special educational programme on *Will Writing and Legal Authorisation*. The initiative was led by chairperson Mary Anne Loh, vice chairperson Desmond Fernandez, and the committed committee members who ensured the event ran seamlessly.

The session opened with a prayer and Gospel reflection led by Annie Ignatius, centring on the theme *The Kingdom of God is Among Us* (Luke 17:20-35), reminding participants that thoughtful preparation in life mirrors our spiritual readiness. Desmond then welcomed everyone, introducing the guest speaker, Kumari Krishna, a practising lawyer, and setting the tone for an engaging and insightful

discussion.

The programme aimed to educate parishioners on the practical and legal importance of drafting a will and designating a trusted person, whether an executor or beneficiary, to manage one's affairs. Kumari guided attendees through the process with clarity and expertise, explaining legal procedures, highlighting common mistakes to avoid, and offering actionable tips to ensure that families are protected.

Participants expressed their appreciation for the church's initiative, recognising the session as a valuable resource that addresses an often-overlooked yet essential aspect of family life and planning.

The event concluded with words of gratitude from Fr Desmond Jansen, who thanked Kumari and the organising team for their dedication. Light refreshments were served, giving attendees the opportunity to connect, share experiences, and foster a spirit of community. **John Kuppasawary**



Kumari Krishna explaining the importance of drafting a will.

KUCHING: Young Catholic choristers from Singapore placed sacred music at the heart of their recent pilgrimage to Kuching, exemplifying a growing revival of traditional liturgical singing among youth across the region. Guided by the simple yet profound ethos of pray, play, work, the St Gregory the Great choir, filled each day with worship, fellowship, and encounters that deepened their love for the Church and her sacred heritage.

The 20-odd choristers, who serve at the Sunday 6.00pm Mass at the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd in Singapore, began their four-day journey with an early-morning ascent of Mount Singai in Bau. Along the forested trail, they prayed the Stations of the Cross before gathering at the hilltop chapel to chant the Divine Office and celebrate Mass with Fr Delphin Ndungu, SDB. The climb set the tone for the days ahead, a pilgrimage of body and spirit, marked by humility, gratitude, and song.

Their itinerary wove together moments of worship, cultural immersion, and ecclesial history. The choir visited the Sarawak Cultural Village, toured the Archdiocesan History Gallery, and prayed at the Cathedral of St Joseph, Kuching. At the First Friday Mass celebrated by Archbishop Simon Poh, they lifted their voices in praise and offered Kuching Catholics a meaningful symbol of unity: a Holy Door brick from the Archbasilica of St John Lateran in Rome.

“The brick is a tangible connection between our Mother Church in Rome and the Cathedral in the Archdiocese of Kuching,” said music director Alphonsus Chern. “We offer it to the faithful here as a token of our friendship and esteem.”

The heart of their musical mission blossomed at the Church of St Peter, Padungan. Welcomed warmly by rector Fr Vincent Chin, the choristers explored the parish’s magnificent neo-Gothic church

# Singing faith across borders



before joining the resident Sunset Mass Choir for a memorable celebration of the Eucharist. During Communion, the St Gregory choristers presented two motets: *Ave Verum Corpus* (Hail True Body), composed by Alphonsus in honour of the Sacred Presence, and *Tu es Petrus* (You are Peter), by Palestrina, marking the 500th anniversary of the Renaissance master’s birth.

As the closing procession moved down the nave, both choirs and congregation joined in a triumphant rendition of the Jubilee hymn *Pilgrims of Hope*, filling the church with a prayer that echoed far beyond its walls. The St Gregory Choir also presented Fr Vincent with a gold reliquary adorned with the triple tiara and crossed keys, a sign of collegial affection and shared mission in the Lord.

Fr Vincent later shared that he “felt the congregation participate most actively in singing during the Mass,” noting how sacred music had drawn everyone deeper into communal prayer. Choir master Stephen Chin echoed St Augustine’s timeless reminder: “To sing well is to pray twice,” adding his hope



Fr Vincent Chin showcasing the gold reliquary.

that the collaboration would inspire more young Catholics to offer their musical gifts in service of the liturgy.

The pilgrimage concluded with a joyful Chinese dinner, where both choirs bonded over stories, laughter, and faith — ending the evening with a heartfelt singing of *Negaraku*, a simple but profound gesture of unity and

gratitude.

What began as a journey across borders became an encounter of hearts, proving once again that sacred music is more than art — it is a bridge of hope, a school of prayer, and a language in which the young faithfully proclaim, *Soli Deo Gloria* — to God alone be the glory.

## Spiritual treasure at Kampar parish

KAMPAR, Perak: The Church of the Sacred Heart recently unveiled a special plaque beside its reliquaries (containers for holy relics), listing the six saints whose relics are housed within the church. Through a simple scan of the QR code on the plaque, parishioners and pilgrims can discover the lives, faith, and enduring legacy of these remarkable saints, drawing inspiration for their own spiritual journeys.

This year, the parish celebrated the Jubilee of the Sacred Heart, marking 350 years since Jesus revealed Himself to St Margaret Mary Alacoque. In this momentous year, parish priest Fr Simon Anand was granted the privilege of bringing a sacred relic of St Margaret

Mary Alacoque from the Vatican to Kampar in April 2025. Parishioners were deeply blessed to venerate this great saint, whose devotion to the Sacred Heart continues to inspire countless hearts toward love, reparation, and service.

The other relics also carry great significance for the parish’s ministries and communities. St Maximilian Kolbe, patron saint of prisoners, strengthens the prayers and presence of those involved in the Prison Ministry, offering spiritual support before visits to prisons and detention centres. St Frances Xavier Cabrini, patroness of migrants, brings a special blessing to the parish’s diverse migrant communities, many of whom face challenges and hardships,

reminding them that they are never alone in God’s care.

The church remains a place of open welcome, inviting parishioners and pilgrims alike to adore the Sacred Heart of Jesus present in the tabernacle, and to venerate these holy relics kept in the right wing of the church. Here, the faithful can pause, reflect, and draw strength from the examples of saints who lived lives of courage, compassion, and unwavering faith.

Kampar’s Church of the Sacred Heart is a living testament to the power of devotion, the continuity of faith across centuries, and the invitation for every believer to encounter God’s love in prayer, veneration, and community.

**Bernard Anthony**



The plaque next to the relics.

## Carollers commissioned for Christmas ministry

SANDAKAN: In conjunction with the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, 180 parish carollers were commissioned on November 23 at the

Church of St Joseph. The celebration brought together carolling groups from St Mary’s Cathedral and was coordinated by the parish carolling committee.

Parish priest Fr David Garaman presided over the Mass, reminding the carollers that they are pilgrims on a holy journey. Commissioning, he said, is not merely a ceremony but a true sending-forth for mission as they proclaim the birth of Christ the King.

Fr David urged the carollers to sing prayerfully and with reverence, to understand the meaning behind each Christmas hymn, and to treat every home visit as an opportunity to bring blessings. Entering people’s homes, he emphasised, is a privilege, one that allows grace to flow not only to the families visited but also to the carollers themselves. He expressed gratitude for their time, effort and dedication, and prayed that they may have a safe and blessed pilgrimage, carrying Christ’s message of joy and peace to every household.

In response, the carollers renewed their commitment and readiness to become evangelisers of the Good News through their

ministry.

After Mass, the carollers gathered at the parish hall for a recollection and fellowship. They were reminded that carolling is a joyful mission in which they become missionaries of Christmas cheer, sharing Christ’s love with every home. Through harmony and teamwork, they reflect the unity of the Church. Carolling, they were told, is not about being pitch-perfect, but about joy, humility and service, offering time and presence without expecting anything in return. When carollers sing with love for Christ and from the heart, their carols become prayers that uplift, console and inspire. In this way, carolling becomes a living expression of hope, light, faith and the true spirit of Christmas.

The parish carolling committee closed the gathering with words of appreciation, reminding everyone that carollers are called to be prayerful singers, grateful pilgrims and joyful bearers of Christ’s peace. **Cris Aban**



Fr David Garaman blessing the carollers after Mass.

# The beginning of a lifelong relationship with Jesus



KULIM: Thirteen young students from the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus received their First Holy Communion on November 8, marking a significant milestone in their faith journey. The Eucharistic celebration was presided over by the parish priest, Fr Desmond Jansen.

The celebration was made especially meaningful through the active involvement of both the communicants and their families.

In his homily, Fr Desmond

emphasised the importance of maintaining a strong faith in God and encouraged the children to participate regularly in the Sacrament of Confession as part of their ongoing preparation to receive Holy Communion. He also expressed his gratitude to the children's catechism teacher for preparing them for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.

Finally, the parish priest addressed the young communicants, saying:

"Today is not a final destination, but the beginning of a lifelong journey with Jesus. I encourage you to return to His Holy Table frequently and continue attending Mass every Sunday. Uphold your faith, and it will truly flourish."

The parish congratulated its newest communicants and prayed that the grace they received would continue to nourish and strengthen them throughout their lives. **Jane Sandanasamy**

## A journey into the Eucharistic miracles

KUALA LUMPUR: The parish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (SHC) was graced with a deeply moving spiritual experience through the *Exhibition on the Eucharistic Miracles of the Catholic Church*, held from November 7 to 23. For more than two weeks, parishioners and visitors were invited to embark on a journey of faith and wonder, encountering the miraculous ways in which Christ has revealed His real presence in the Blessed Sacrament throughout history.

This initiative, lovingly introduced by parish priest Msgr Stanislaus Soosamariam, sought one simple yet powerful purpose: to enrich the faith of parishioners toward the Eucharist, the very heart of our Catholic worship. In a world filled with distractions and noise, the exhibition aimed to

draw souls back to the quiet, awe-inspiring miracle that unfolds at every Holy Mass.

The event welcomed a diverse and vibrant gathering of the faithful. Among the attendees were parishioners of SHC, members of the Myanmar Catholic community, pilgrims from the Church of the Immaculate Conception Port Dickson, and children participating in the First Holy Communion camp.

Their presence transformed the exhibition into a beautiful tapestry of cultures, ages, and backgrounds yet united by one Eucharistic Lord.

Many who attended testified to experiencing moments of deep spiritual consolation.

Some described feeling the tangible presence of the Lord, with

goosebumps and an overwhelming sense of peace during the sessions. Others shared that their love and reverence for the Holy Mass and the Eucharist had grown significantly, renewing their commitment to Eucharistic devotion and adoration.

These heartfelt responses echoed the true success of the exhibition: hearts were touched, faith was strengthened, and souls were drawn closer to Christ.

The exhibition was prayerfully prepared and hosted by the catechists and altar servers of the parish, who worked tirelessly under the guidance of the parish priest. Their dedication, creativity, and spirit of service allowed the event to unfold gracefully and fruitfully.

Visitors were first welcomed with a compilation video high-



A server explaining about some of the sacred vessels used at Mass.

lighting what happens during the Holy Mass, accompanied by documented Eucharistic miracles from around the world. This was followed by a meaningful display of artworks created by catechists and catechism students, each piece offering a unique reflection on the mystery of the Eucharist.

In a time when spiritual hunger marks the lives of countless

believers, events like this shine as powerful reminders that Christ remains alive, present, and ever-ready to meet His people in the Sacrament of His love.

May the flame of Eucharistic devotion continue to burn brightly in every parish, drawing all hearts ever closer to Jesus, truly present in the Most Holy Eucharist. **Altar Servers, SHC**



## Advent reflections inspire parish seniors

KLANG: Hope and joy filled the chapel of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes recently, as 51 members of the Senior Citizens ministry gathered for a special Advent recollection, embracing the theme: *Walking with Hope, Living with Joy*. The air was quiet yet expectant, hearts open to the message of Christ's coming.

Fr Gregory Chan led reflections on *Hope That Endures*, gently guiding participants to examine their lives and receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Each moment became an invitation to pause, reflect, and prepare one's heart for the true gift of Christmas.

Fr Gnana Selvam Berintis then shared his insights on the Advent season and celebrated Mass, enveloping the gathering in prayer and meaning. His words and presence helped the members connect more deeply with the mystery and promise of Christ's coming.

The recollection concluded with fellowship, laughter, and shared stories, filling hearts with warmth and encouragement. As the members departed, they carried with them a renewed sense of hope, a spirit of joy, and the gentle reminder that Advent is not just a season to await Christ, but a journey to walk with Him every day.

## Celebrating faith and talent

SITIAWAN: The Catechetical Concert of the Church of St Francis de Sales was held to celebrate and showcase the gifts and talents of the parish's catechism students. The event drew parents, catechists, parish members, and parish priest, Fr Stanley Antoni, who joined in the joyful occasion.

Held on November 29 at the parish hall, the concert opened with a warm welcome from the coordinator, followed by an opening prayer by Fr Stanley. Students from Year 1 to Form 5 captivated the audience with a variety of performances, including sketches, skits, group singing, and a welcoming dance, all centred on the theme *We can make the world a better place* (ref Philippians 2:4).

Behind the scenes, volunteers from the parish community played an invaluable role, assisting with stage preparation, hall setup, and refreshments, ensuring the smooth running of the programme.

The concert was met with great enthusiasm and appreciation. Students performed with confidence and creativity, embodying the spirit of the theme and highlighting the joy of learning and living their faith.

The Catechetical Ministry



Performances by the catechism students.

extends heartfelt gratitude to Fr Stanley, catechists, parents, volunteers, and all students for their dedication, effort, and participation. With such support

and engagement, the ministry looks forward to organising more enriching and inspiring programmes in the years to come. **Punithamarya Anthony**

# Nativity scene returns to Melbourne

AUSTRALIA: The City of Melbourne has reinstated its traditional nativity scene, reversing several years of what critics labelled a “woke” approach to Christmas celebrations.

The decision has been welcomed by church leaders, councillors and residents who say the move restores common sense to the city’s festive programme.

Deputy Lord Mayor Roshena Campbell, who led the push for its return, said she was delighted to revive one of Melbourne’s most cherished Christmas traditions. “I am thrilled we are bringing the nativity scene back so everyone can share in the Christmas story,” she said. “We are proud to be the Christmas capital — from the Myer Christmas windows to city-wide light displays — and now the nativity scene will once again play its important role.”

The nativity scene — depicting newborn baby Jesus in the manger, with Mary,

Joseph, the Three Wise Men and animals — was installed at Federation Square on December 7. It returned as part of an expanded programme of decorations and weekly Christmas carolling at City Square, which reopens today alongside the launch of the new Metro Tunnel.

The nativity scene was quietly dropped from Christmas celebrations several years ago, prompting accusations that the council’s leadership considered it insufficiently inclusive for people of other faiths. A senior Town Hall source said the council was now “de-woke” under Campbell’s deputy leadership. “There’s finally some common-sense leadership here,” the source said. “We were even too woke for baby Jesus to get a mention during Christmas — the celebration of the birth of Christ.”

Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne Peter Comensoli said he was “thrilled” by the decision, noting that nativity scenes



(Herald Sun)

have been central to Christian celebrations for centuries. “The image of Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus speaks of hope, joy and peace — a message urgently needed

in today’s world,” he said. “The humble circumstances of Jesus’ birth remind us of the needs of those on the margins.”  
**Agencies**

As flooding and landslides continue to devastate parts of Southeast Asia, Catholic and Christian parishes and organisations have stepped up in unity to “alleviate the suffering of the victims.”

In **SRI LANKA**, Cyclone Ditwah, which struck on November 27, triggered severe flooding and landslides, leading to a national state of emergency. More than 300 people have died, over 200 remain missing, and nearly 20,000 homes have been damaged. Over 100,000 people — many internally displaced—have sought shelter in emergency centres. Large parts of the country are without running water and electricity, with the eastern region and Colombo among the worst hit.

Fr Basil Rohan Fernando, National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in Sri Lanka, described the country as “under water,” noting the immense suffering and widespread loss. While more than 24,000 officers are involved in rescue efforts, several areas remain unreachable.

Church institutions, religious communities, and Christian organisations have united to house the displaced and provide immediate relief. Caritas has activated its nationwide network, with volunteers offering aid regardless of ethnicity or religion. Beyond material support, the Church is offering psychological and spiritual care. “A gesture of love, affection, and closeness means a great deal,” Fr Fernando said. “Listening and human warmth are a testament to God’s love for every person.”



## United in relief efforts

In **INDONESIA**, the situation is equally dire. At least 800 people are confirmed dead and more than 550 remain missing after Tropical Cyclone Senyar caused widespread flooding and landslides across West Sumatra, North Sumatra, and Aceh. Entire villages have been washed away, and more than a million people are displaced as rescuers struggle to reach remote areas.

Friar Yoseph Norbert Sinaga, Provincial Superior of the Capuchin Friars in Sibolga, said many areas remain isolated. The friars have mobilised all available resources — evacuating residents, providing emergency

aid, and accompanying the displaced across the diocese. Water and electricity shortages have deepened the crisis, with access to clean drinking water becoming a critical concern.

The Capuchins, who have served the region for over a century, have opened their monastery and novitiate to shelter more than 200 vulnerable people. They have also appealed for nationwide solidarity, with Franciscan communities responding swiftly. “Now our brothers and sisters need immediate help,” Friar Sinaga said. “Later, we will also try to help rebuild their homes.”

**Vatican News**

## Holy See closes 2024 with a surplus of RM7.7 million

VATICAN: The Secretariat for the Economy has released the Holy See’s 2024 Consolidated Financial Statements, reporting a surplus of €1.6 million (RM7.7 million), a marked turnaround from the €51.2 million (RM245.7 million) deficit recorded last year.

The report notes a significant improvement in the Holy See’s financial direction, though it emphasises that full long-term sustainability remains a gradual process. The deficit was reduced by nearly half — from €83 million to €44 million (RM398 million to (RM211 million) — thanks to a €79 million (RM379 million) increase in revenues, largely from donations and hospital management, along with continued cost-control efforts that helped offset inflation and rising personnel costs.

Financial management performed particularly well, generating €46 million (RM220 million) in positive results — surpassing 2023 levels — mainly through capital gains realised with the support of the Investment Committee. These gains played a crucial role in covering the operating deficit.

Excluding hospital entities, the Holy See closed the year with a surplus of €18.7 million (RM89.7 million). However, the Secretariat urges caution, noting that the improvement is tied to an increase in donations and a one-off accounting effect from the sale of long-held investments. Continued progress will need to be demonstrated in the coming years.

The report also highlights how expenditures reflect the mission of the Holy See. Of the €393.29 million allocated to the Apostolic Mission and Pontifical Funds (excluding hospitals), 83 per cent is concentrated in five priority areas. The largest share — 37 per cent (€146.40 million, RM702.7 million) — supports local Churches in difficulty and contexts of evangelisation. Other key sectors include worship and evangelisation (14 per cent), communication of the message (12 per cent), Apostolic Nunciatures (10 per cent), and charitable service (10 per cent).

The remaining 17 per cent funds additional activities such as ecclesial life, historic assets, and academic institutions. **Vatican News**



This picture shows an aerial view of villagers wading through the mudflow to find a shelter in the aftermath of flash floods in Tukka village, Central Tapanuli, North Sumatra province, on December 3, 2025. (LiCAS News)



Sri Lankan flood-affected people clean their mud- and water-covered home in a flood-affected village in a suburb of Colombo, Sri Lanka. (Ansa)

The Great Pilgrimage of Hope (GPH) offered Church leaders across Asia a rich programme of learning and reflection. Central to the event were interactive 'Impact Sessions' aimed at inspiring and equipping participants — and we feature some of these sessions here.

# Living the Gospel together



Reports by Richard Chia and Elvina Fernandez



## How to live as a Christian in a pluralistic community

“We accept the reality that we [Catholics or Christians] are the minority. In many parts of Asia, we are a micro-minority. We are the salt of the earth, not the whole material.” With these words, Archbishop Emeritus Thomas Menamparampil, SDB, opened his reflection on how Christians today live alongside peoples of other religions. “We are living in a post-colonial era, where cultural and national pride are often exaggerated,” he noted.

He highlighted a common perception: “Christianity is often thought to represent the West, because many missionaries came from Western countries, and our traditions and culture have adopted their ways — in clothing, food, and more. As a result, we are often identified with the West. Yet Christianity originated from the East — from West Asia. While many of our faithful are educated or formed in the West, this can leave us feeling uprooted in our own societies.”

Archbishop Menamparampil, who is the retired prelate of the Archdiocese of Guwahati in Assam, India, encouraged self-examination and urged Christians to identify with the religious and Asian values central to our civilisations — values of reconciliation, harmony, and peace. By embracing the cultural dimension of our faith and growing close to the core concerns of society, we can touch the soul of

the community. He described this approach as “whispering the Gospel to the soul of Asia,” inviting believers to cultivate intimacy with the society around them.

Cardinal Giorgio Marengo, IMC, the Apostolic Prefect of Ulaanbaatar, shared his experience of living in Mongolia since 2003, reaffirming Archbishop Menamparampil’s vision of whispering the Gospel. For him, “whispering the Gospel” means sharing the deepest part of our heart with someone we know intimately. This approach, he said, reflects the attitude of a true evangeliser, whose message at its core is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Cardinal Marengo spoke of his journey into the heart of Mongolia, discovering the rich and multi-layered reality of the Mongolian people — their history, culture, language, music, food, arts, politics, and economy — and how these elements shape a nation. Even after two decades, he humbly acknowledged that he is still learning.

He reflected on the invitation to enter a deeper level — to step into the beautiful, mysterious, and sacred space of another culture. To share the Gospel authentically, one must attune to the heartbeat of the people and discover the elements of grace within their culture. It is a lifelong journey, gradually uncovering the many layers that define a society, and walking gently within its sacred spaces.

## Taking the Church forward in a synodal way

Fr Dr Clarence Devadass, of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, spoke candidly about synodality and its role in the life and mission of the Church. He reminded participants that this is a time for listening, sharing, and discerning together, with the guiding question: “What can I do when I get back?” Synodality, he emphasised, is about becoming agents of change in our homes, parishes, dioceses, and communities.

behind; participation invites every baptised person to share their gifts, embracing diversity; and mission reminds the Church to bring God’s love, especially to those at the peripheries. “Synodality is not an end in itself, but a pathway to transformation and renewal.”

He stressed the importance of listening to one another and to the Holy Spirit, suspending judgement, and resisting the urge for instant solutions. “Synodality is not parliamentary democracy or majority rule; sometimes the Spirit speaks through the minority voice.” Consultation must be sincere and meaningful, not token gestures.

Fr Clarence acknowledged cultural barriers in Asia, including linguistic diversity, deep respect for hierarchy, patriarchal structures, and a tendency toward silence and avoidance. These must be addressed if synodality is to flourish. Servant leadership, he noted, requires humility and accessibility.

Synodality, he reminded participants, is not limited to 2028 nor dependent solely on Pope Francis. “It is a renewal of the Church’s identity as the People of God. Through baptism, all share in the threefold ministry of priest, prophet, and king, making every member a stakeholder in the Church’s mission.”

He spoke of synodality as a force for unity, witness, and relevance, responding to contemporary challenges while remaining faithful to doctrine. Expanding the tent, he added, means not only welcoming more people, but also opening the hearts of those already inside. Synodality calls for universal participation, dialogue, and engagement — moving the faithful from passive recipients to active agents of faith.

Fr Clarence concluded by urging participants to carry the spirituality of synodality into daily life, embodying it in their communities. The session ended with a synodal gesture of prayer: the participants recited the Lord’s Prayer in their own languages, representing all the countries present.



He clarified that synodality is not a “band-aid” solution, a project, or a management strategy — it is a spirituality, a way of being Church. “Since 2021, the word ‘synodality’ has appeared in many events and documents, often without real change. True synodality requires conversion — of mindsets, relationships, processes, and structures. It is not about adding burdens, but about infusing the spirit of synodality into what is already being done.”

Fr Clarence highlighted the three pillars of synodality: communion, participation, and mission. Communion calls the faithful to journey together without leaving anyone



Archbishop Felix Machado shared insights from his time at the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue (formerly the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue), highlighting the challenges Catholics face in evangelisation, proclamation, and sharing the Gospel across diverse cultures and faiths. He discussed

## Evangelisation in a multi-cultural and multi-religious Asia

a study conducted by the Dicastery on approaches to dialogue with people of other religions, which was explored in a series of sessions held around the world.

The first session in Rome invited prominent leaders from other faiths, members of the World Council of Churches, and representatives of Pentecostal and Evangelical Churches. While intended as a listening session, it became heated, reflecting the complexity of interfaith dialogue. Subsequent sessions in Toulouse, France, and Bangkok, Thailand, culminated in the creation of the document *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World*.

Produced with collaboration from the World Council of Churches and the World Evangelical Alliance, the document serves as a guide for Catholics in dialogue and mission. Archbishop Machado shared key points from the text, noting its preamble: “Mission belongs to the very being of the

Church. Proclaiming the word of God and witnessing to the world is essential for every Christian.” He challenged participants with a vital question: “Is it possible to proclaim the Gospel to the vast majority of Asians, who are so diverse culturally and religiously?”

Quoting Pope Francis, Archbishop Machado emphasised that “the mission of the Church is a mission of hope.” He also referenced Pope Leo IV’s vision for evangelisation, deeply rooted in Vatican II and its predecessors, highlighting the critical role of the laity. Lay people, he stressed, are not guests in the Church but full members of the People of God, called to live their vocation in every area of society — proclaiming and witnessing the Word of God.

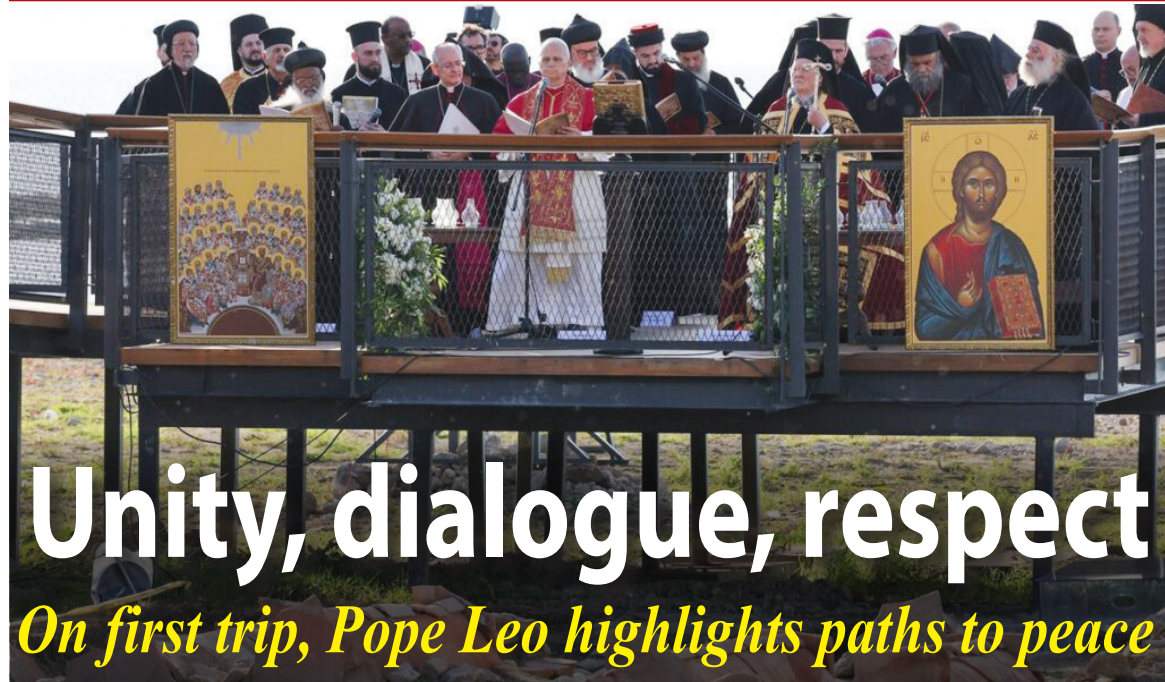
The archbishop outlined five key components of evangelisation, drawn from Vatican II:

- Witness

- Promotion of human dignity
- Inculturation
- Interreligious dialogue
- Proclamation of the Gospel

He further elaborated on principles for proclaiming the Gospel, citing Pope Benedict XVI’s address in Latin America: “The Church does not engage in proselytism.” Rather, the Church grows through attraction. Pope Francis echoed this, explaining that “mission is God’s work. There is no need for gimmicks or tricks. The Lord’s mandate to go forth and proclaim the Gospel comes from within, driven by love and attraction.”

Finally, Archbishop Machado offered practical guidance on how Christians can engage in evangelisation, drawing inspiration from examples in Scripture. His reflections emphasised that sharing the Gospel is a call rooted in humility, relationship, and love, rather than force or strategy.



# Unity, dialogue, respect

## On first trip, Pope Leo highlights paths to peace

VATICAN: Visiting two countries over six days on his first foreign papal trip, Pope Leo XIV preached unity, dialogue and respect for differences as the only paths to peace.

Spending time with Catholics, other Christian leaders and top Muslim clerics in Turkey November 27-30 and Lebanon November 30-December 2, the Pope made formal speeches about how believing in God as the father of all means recognising one another as brothers and sisters.

But he also set aside time in a packed schedule for private talks, lunches and late evening meetings with the leaders.

“The more we can promote authentic unity and understanding, respect and human relationships of friendship and dialogue in the world, the greater possibility there is that we will put aside the arms of war, that we will leave aside the distrust, the hatred, the animosity that has so often been built up and that we will find ways to come together and be able to promote authentic peace and justice throughout the world,” he told reporters flying back to Rome with him Dec 2.

The three iconic moments of the trip were his prayer with top Christian leaders Nov 28 at the site of the Council of Nicaea, his visit to the Blue Mosque in Istanbul Nov 29 and his prayer Dec 2 amid the rubble of the Beirut port explosion in 2020.

### Nicaea commemoration

The whole trip was planned to commemorate the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea and its drafting of the Creed that mainline Christian communities still recite today.

Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople hosted the ecumenical prayer service and the common recitation of the Creed on a platform overlooking the ruins of a Christian basilica in Iznik, site of the ancient Nicaea, about 80 miles southeast of Istanbul.

With the Greek Orthodox patriarchs of Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem or their representatives and with representatives of other Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant churches, Pope Leo said that at a time when humanity is “afflicted by violence and conflict,” the world “is crying out for reconciliation”.

“The desire for full communion among all believers in Jesus Christ is always accompanied by the search for fraternity among all human beings,” he said. “In the Nicene Creed, we profess our faith ‘in one God, the Father’. Yet, it would not be possible to invoke God as Father if we refused to recognise as brothers and sisters all other men and women, who are created in the image of God.”

### Blue Mosque in Istanbul

The desire to reach out and form relationships with others also was

on display when Pope Leo, like his two immediate predecessors, removed his shoes and entered the so-called Blue Mosque in Turkey’s capital; he spent about 20 minutes inside but did not appear to pause for prayer as Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis had done. Instead, he listened to Askin Musa Tunca, the mosque’s muezzin who calls people to prayer five times a day, explain the building, its construction and how Muslims pray. And the pope asked questions.

The Vatican press office said afterwards that Pope Leo visited the mosque “in a spirit of reflection and attentive listening, with deep respect for the place and for the faith of those who gather there in prayer”.

### Site of the Beirut port explosion

On his last morning in Beirut, he laid a wreath, lighted a candle and prayed silently at a memorial to the more than 200 people killed when improperly stored chemicals exploded at the port; the blast also injured some 7,000 people and left an estimated 300,000 people without homes.

Standing amid mountains of rubble, piles of burnt-out cars and heaps of tattered clothing and cloth, the pope was joined by family members of those killed and by people still bearing the scars of injuries they suffered that day.

They carried photos of the loved ones they lost and signs appealing for the government to seriously investigate who was at fault for



Pope Leo XIV waters an olive tree after he and other religious leaders planted it during an ecumenical and interreligious meeting in a tent at Martyrs’ Square in Beirut December 1, 2025. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

allowing the chemicals to be stored there.

A young woman, crying, asked Pope Leo for a hug, which the pope gave her before putting his hand on her head and blessing her.

At Mass afterwards, he said, “I prayed for all the victims, and I carry with me the pain, and the thirst for truth and justice, of so many families, of an entire country.”

And after Mass, before heading to the airport, he told the people, “During these days of my first apostolic journey, undertaken during

this Jubilee Year, I wanted to come as a pilgrim of hope to the Middle East, imploring God for the gift of peace for this beloved land, marked by instability, wars and suffering.”

Even when it seems peace is far off, Pope Leo said, “I invite you to lift your gaze to the Lord who is coming! Let us look to Him with hope and courage, inviting everyone to set out on the path of coexistence, fraternity and peace. Be artisans of peace, heralds of peace!” **Cindy Wooden, CNS**



Pope Leo XIV kneels to speak to a boy holding a photo of a loved one lost in the deadly explosion in 2020 at the port in Beirut December 2, 2025. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)



## At the tomb of St Charbel

Pope Leo made history. He became the first pope to visit the tomb of St Charbel Makhlouf, a towering religious figure known as the “miracle monk of Lebanon”, who was canonised in 1977.

The 19th-century saint, a Maronite monk and priest, lived as a hermit for 23 years and despite not writing or preaching publicly, gained worldwide fame through the numerous miracles attributed to him.

Standing beside his tomb at St Maron’s monastery, Pope Leo asked for the intercession of St Charbel to deliver communion and unity for the Church and peace for the world.

“But we know well, and the saints remind us, that there is no peace without conversion of hearts,” the Pope said. “May St Charbel, therefore, help us to turn to God and ask for the gift of conversion for all of us.” **NCR**

Speaking to 15,000 young people in Lebanon, Pope Leo urged them to become “artisans of peace” and the generation that can rebuild a nation devastated by war, economic collapse and emigration. His message — the most energetic moment of his trip — encouraged youth to use their hope, time and enthusiasm to shape Lebanon’s future.

Many young attendees, affected personally by violence and instability, said they longed for a message of peace. The Holy Father stressed that genuine peace comes from mercy, not political interests, and assured them that Lebanon “will flourish once again.” He called on young people to work together for justice, development and a renewed future for their country. **Agencies**

## Youth called ‘to be artisans of peace



Pope Leo XIV watches a performance by youth holding illuminated globes during an event in Bkerki, the seat of the Maronite Church, in Lebanon December 1, 2025. (AP/Domenico Stinellis)



Patricia Pereira

This Christmas, Kelvin Roy, a young man from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes in Ipoh, shows that the spirit of the season is not measured by what we buy, but by what we create and share. With nothing but creativity, faith, and recycled materials, Kelvin crafted a nativity scene that is as inspiring as it is eco-friendly, a reminder that beauty, joy, and love can come from the simplest of things.

Now based in Petaling Jaya and working in the import-export trade, Kelvin transformed his passion for DIY and design into a meaningful expression of faith and stewardship for creation. From the base to the rooftop, every part of the structure was made using repurposed cardboard, paper, and natural materials. Inspired by the principles of *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' encyclical on caring for our common home, Kelvin wanted his project to reflect respect for the environment and the beauty of giving

new life to discarded items. By creatively transforming materials that might otherwise have ended up in the trash, he demonstrates how small actions can contribute to a more sustainable and thoughtful way of living.

"I started this project in early October, working every night after 8.00pm, spending two to three hours each day. It took me three months to complete," Kelvin shared. With no prior experience in cement work or structural design, he turned to YouTube tutorials to learn the necessary skills, experimenting and refining his techniques along the way. His goal was not only to build a nativity set, but to show that creativity, care for the environment and faith can go hand in hand.

The journey was not without challenges. Shaping the hill structure with cement proved difficult, requiring patience and precision, while painting the hills to appear realistic demanded careful blending of colours. Kelvin also collected dried grass from his backyard, letting it dry for nearly two

weeks to form a natural roof, adding a touch of authenticity to the scene. There were moments of doubt, when he considered taking a simpler approach using manila or mahjong paper, but his commitment to the project's vision kept him motivated.

The completed nativity measures approximately 77cm in length, 50cm in height, and 40 cm in width. Remarkably, Kelvin spent less than RM50.00 on the entire project, including lights and paints, proving that meaningful, sustainable creativity doesn't have to come at a high cost. His work is a vivid reminder that recycling and repurposing materials can create beauty while caring for our environment.

Beyond the craftsmanship, Kelvin's nativity carries a heartfelt spiritual message. "My Christmas message is simple," he said. "By using recycled materials for decorations, we care for the environment and give new life to items that might otherwise be discarded. Creating something with your own hands brings far more joy than simply buying it

from a shop."

Kelvin hopes his nativity scene will inspire others — especially those who may feel that store-bought decorations are out of reach — to explore DIY creations or even gift them to families whose homes might otherwise be bare this Christmas. "Imagine the happiness when we share a handmade decoration with someone who might not have any at all," he added. His project reflects a deep respect for both God and creation, showing that faith, creativity, and sustainability can come together in meaningful and practical ways, spreading joy not just to ourselves, but to others as well.

In a world increasingly dominated by mass-produced decorations and consumerism, Kelvin's nativity scene is a gentle reminder that Christmas can be celebrated with mindfulness, creativity, and generosity. It embodies hope, stewardship, and the true joy of giving, proving that even small efforts, guided by faith and love for God's creation, can leave a lasting impact.



The Catholic Lawyers' Society (CLS) of Kuala Lumpur came together, yet again, for another memorable event to embark on the Advent journey with Hope by gathering and spending time with the Temuan Orang Asli community at Kg. Belihoi, Mantin, Negeri Sembilan on November 30.

This Advent project was a collaborative effort between some individual members of the society who frequently visit the said Orang Asli village, whereby they usually hand out provisions to the community twice every year. This time it was even more special when the CLS decided to come on board for this charitable cause and get involved in handing out provisions

and Christmas gifts to all the families and children in the Orang Asli Settlement.

There was never a dull moment with the CLS around, as our very own in-house Santa Claus, David Charles, came in full Santa gear, and the kids were greatly entertained with all the fun activities organised for them, the Piñata being the highlight. There was resounding excitement heard and they warmed up quickly to the lawyers and all present.

After the games, a hearty lunch was served, with a variety of dishes and even cakes and brownies to sweeten this joyous

gathering cum Christmas celebration. This was followed by the head of the Orang Asli community, Tok Batin Langkap's invitation to the Catholic lawyers' and all those present to move into a space called "Rumah Besar Kessu" (*Kebangkitan Yesus*), a mini community hall, where there was a session of singing of Christmas carols by the Catholic lawyers, followed by a song performance by the Orang Asli kids which brought true joy and festive spirit to everyone present.

A special message was given by Tok Batin Langkap emphasising how grateful he was for the presence of the Catholic lawyers' and for them to do this noble project and spread some festive cheer to them, and crediting Anita Ferns for her consistent contributions to their welfare and upkeep. He considers her as his daughter, and they share a special bond which was truly heartwarming. He added that Advent is a time of reflection and waiting ultimately for the Saviour's birth. He also reminded everyone to be considerate and not be too merry as some of their fellow folks were sick and unable to be present for the gathering due to their infirmities or illness.

The event, which was spearheaded by

Anita all these years, was a successful one with the team of Catholic lawyers who came in full force to support this event. There were many beautiful moments captured where the lawyers present helped serve food, joined in the games, sat with the kids and adults on the floor to eat with them, to sing carols, and to ensure the Orang Asli felt at ease with them. The Orang Asli kids quickly warmed up to them with faces beaming.

The most fulfilling moment of the day was the handing out of Christmas gifts to the children, thoughtfully chosen for the kids according to their age groups and gender, with toys, dolls and festive items among the gifts handed out. The children were filled with happiness.

The adults were also very touched and grateful for the handing out of provisions to them — dry items like rice, cooking oil, *mee hoon* and many other necessities purchased from the supermarket to feed their big families.

Christmas is about giving Hope and sharing the joy of the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Everyone was delighted to share the hope, peace and joy with the Orang Asli community in Kg Belihoi.



The lawyers entertaining the Orang Asli children.

## Advent light shines in Kg Belihoi

Have you ever felt invisible, insignificant, looked down upon, or pushed aside for others who seem more important or valued than you?

Recently, I found out that out of a group of people who were interviewed for a particular event, my portion of the interview was cut off and left out due to a lack of space in the article, while the contributions of others with more prominent titles and accolades were included. I had also been recently asked if I could speak at an event, only to later find out that the organising committee had decided to choose someone else with a more prestigious title to do so instead.

As a lay missionary with no highly acclaimed credentials nor important letters before or after my name to back me up, it has been easy for me to be overlooked and undervalued, dismissed or misunderstood, and left on the sidelines due to the ambiguity of who I am and what I do. It has also been difficult to see others getting more attention and recognition by virtue of what seems more valued in the Church and society, despite me trying my best to follow God's will and plan for me, and be faithful to my unique and sometimes unconventional calling.

"Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her,



**Word Made Fresh**

NICHOLAS LYE

# Overlooked and Undervalued

"for you have found favour with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name Him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High." (Luke 1:30-32)

What has given me some comfort and encouragement is reflecting on Mary's own unique and unconventional calling. I can only imagine how she must also have been overlooked and undervalued

as a woman in a culture that elevates men over women, and furthermore, dismissed or misunderstood as a mother carrying a child born outside of marriage. Even when she had finally given birth to the Son of the Most High, she hardly received any visitors, except for a few shepherds and some wise magi from the East who were part of the minority who truly valued such a world-changing event.

Still, Mary continued to remain faithful and steadfast in her personal vocation. She somehow remained convicted to the important role she had been given, despite how others might have viewed her, and went on to eventually bring forth the greatest gift God has given us — in the person of Jesus Christ.

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit exults in God my saviour! He has looked upon His servant in her lowliness,

and people will forever call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, Holy is His Name!" (Luke 1:46-49)

Through Mary, and God's constant encouragement and guidance, I have learnt not to rely on others for my worth and value, not to depend on external recognition or praises to determine if I am good enough. Instead, I am learning to be the first person (other than God) to recognise and claim the worth and value which God has given me, and to believe in the great works God has and shall continue to do through my own unique life and path.

Like Mary, who I believe would have been appreciative and grateful for the presence of Joseph, the shepherds and the wise magi who could appreciate her true value and role, I am also learning to notice many others on the ground who have actually been thanking and affirming me for what I do and who I have been for them, some of whom come from places beyond the Catholic Church, and even in secular settings. Through them, I am reminded that I do not have to please everyone, nor reach out to everyone, but simply be the unique gift that I am to those whom I am more specifically meant to reach out to according to God's greater plan and purpose.

As we continue to prepare for the coming of Christ in this Advent season, perhaps we could look into areas of our lives where we

may feel overlooked or undervalued, not only by others around us, but even more so by our own selves, who may look down at our own value and worth. Perhaps we can be encouraged by Our Lady, who recognised her own value and purpose first, even before others could. Perhaps we can also look to Jesus, whose coming into the world was also overlooked and undervalued by many, until such time when His true value and purpose was revealed to those ready to receive Him.

May this Advent season help us reclaim our true worth and value in the eyes of God, so that we too, like Jesus, can be valuable and life-changing gifts to others as we remain steadfast and faithful to our own unique identity and calling, even if it may not be so widely recognised or valued by those we were not meant for.

Ultimately, God is the One who truly sees who we truly are and how much we are truly worth, and it is up to us to continue seeing ourselves through His eyes, and not only through the eyes of others, and embrace the personal God-given value and gift He has given us to serve His people and build His kingdom.

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

## When detours happen, trust and hope in God's plan

In his devotional classic, *The Imitation of Christ*, Thomas A. Kempis famously wrote, "Man proposes, but God disposes." What it means is that we can make plans but at the end of the day, God decides what actually happens.

My trip to Portugal in early May was one such event. It was a 12-day trip to the Andalusia region in Spain, followed by Lisbon and Sintra in Portugal.

When I was researching for the trip, I learnt that the most convenient way to get to Sintra was by train. However, when I reached Lisbon, there was a strike — and all trains to Sintra were suspended. What a shame indeed! I did not want to waste time and resources looking for an alternative mode of transportation and decided to drop my hopes of visiting Sintra's stunning castles and historic palaces.

Since my plans to visit Sintra did not proceed as planned, I had to look for an alternative destination to fill up the time.



**Faithfully Speaking**

JULIE LIM SEET YIN

Whilst looking for options, I discovered that there was a public bus that runs between Lisbon and Fatima. The journey took approximately 1 hour 40 minutes which makes it perfect for a day trip! I quickly bought a return ticket.

To give a bit of context, when I was planning the trip, I decided to skip the famous Shrine of Fatima, or Santuario de Fatima in the Portuguese language, thinking that I'd save that for a proper pilgrimage someday. But clearly, God had other plans.

When the bus from Lisbon reached Fatima town, the Shrine of Fatima was only a 600 metre walk from the bus station. And walking in the beautiful spring weather was pleasant indeed.

Fatima town has been designed and developed for the many pilgrims who visit the shrine daily and even more during the annual Feast of Our Lady of Fatima in May. There are various types of accommodation, restaurants,



*Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima in the large grounds of the Shrine of Fatima.*

and rows of shops selling religious articles, especially that of Our Lady of Fatima.

The Shrine of Fatima comprises of three monumental structures, i.e. Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity, Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima and Chapel of the Apparition.

I had timed my visit so that I could attend the English-language Mass at the Chapel of the Apparition. Coincidentally, the conclave had concluded the day before where Pope Leo XIV was elected the 267th successor of St Peter. During the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest paused and was trying to recall the name of the newly elected Pope when the congregation exclaimed, "Pope Leo the Fourteenth!"

Being the Jubilee Year of Hope, the Shrine

had prepared a Pilgrim's Itinerary for pilgrims to do a pilgrimage walk beginning at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary of Fatima, next to The High Cross, moving on to the Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity and ending at the Little Chapel of the Apparitions.

I discovered that beneath the Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity, there are chapels, a confessional with priests listening to confessions in different languages, and even a museum. A commemorative exhibition for the centenary of the Association of Servites of Our Lady of Fatima was ongoing at that time.

I am glad that I visited the Shrine of Fatima on my own as I could explore the place without being hurried around as would have likely happened if I had joined a pilgrimage group. I could pray inside each basilica, marvel at the architecture, and walk the grounds of the Shrine — all in my own time. I only wished I had more time to explore the surrounding areas and visit the village of Aljustrel where the three Fatima children, Francisco, Jacinta and Lucia were born. Perhaps this is a calling to organise another pilgrimage to Fatima.

In conclusion, the takeaway from my unexpected pilgrimage to the Shrine of Fatima is that when God disposes, He disposes what is best for us. We only need to place our trust in Him because He offers us a hope that does not disappoint.

*Julie Lim Seet Yin believes that a satisfied life measured by one's heart, mind and soul is better than a successful life measured by worldly yardsticks. She can be reached at: limseetyin@gmail.com*



*Basilica of the Holy Trinity has a seating capacity of close to 9,000 people.*



*Reconciliation rooms where priests listen to confessions in different languages.*



Fr Ron Rolheiser

# How do we know God exists?

Recently I was listening to a religious talk show on the radio when a caller asked: How do we know that God exists? A good question.

The radio host answered by saying that we know it through faith. That's not a bad answer, except what needs to be teased out is how we know this through faith.

First, what does it mean to know something? If we believe that to know something means to be able to somehow picture it, understand it, and imagine its existence, then this side of eternity, we can never know God. Why?

Because God is ineffable. That's the first and non-negotiable truth we need to accept about God and it means that God, by definition, is beyond our imagination. God is infinite and the infinite can never be circumscribed or captured in a concept. Try imagining the highest number to which it is possible to count. God's nature and existence can never be conceptualized or imagined. But it can be known.

Knowing isn't always in the head, something we can explicate, own in a picture, and give words to. Sometimes, particularly with things touching the deepest mysteries in life, we know beyond our head and our heart. This knowing is in our gut, something felt as a moral imperative, a nudge, a call, an obligation, a voice which tells us what we must do to stay true. It's there we know God, beyond any imagina-

tive, intellectual, or even affective grasp.

The revealed truths about God in scripture, in Christian tradition, and in the witness of the lives of martyrs and saints, simply give expression to something we already know, as the mystics put it, in a dark way.

So, how might we prove the existence of God?

I wrote my doctoral thesis on exactly that question. In that thesis, I take up the classical proofs for the existence of God as we see these articulated in Western philosophy. For example, Thomas Aquinas tried to prove God's existence in five separate arguments.

Here's one of those arguments: Imagine walking down a road and seeing a stone and asking yourself, how did it get there? Given the brute reality of a stone, you can simply answer, it's always been there. However, imagine walking down a road and seeing a clock still keeping time. Can you still say, it's always been there? No, it can't always have been there because it has an intelligent design that someone must have built into it and it is ticking away the hours, which means it cannot have been there forever.

Aquinas then asks us to apply this to our own existence and to the universe. Creation has an incredibly intelligent design and, as we know from contemporary physics, has not always existed. Something

or someone with intelligence has given us and the universe a historical beginning and an intelligent design. Who?

How much weight does an argument like this carry? There was once a famous debate on BBC radio in England between Frederick Copleston, a renowned Christian philosopher, and Bertrand Russell, a brilliant agnostic thinker. After all the give and take in their debate, they agreed, as atheist and believer, on this one thing: If the world makes sense, then God exists. As an atheist, Russell agreed to that, but then went on to say that, ultimately, the world doesn't make sense.

Most thinking atheists accept that the world doesn't make sense; but then, like Albert Camus, struggle with the question, how can it not make sense? If there isn't a God then how can we say that it is better to help a child than to abuse a child? If there isn't a God, how can we ground rationality and morality?

At the end of my thesis, I concluded that existence of God cannot be proven through a rational argument, a logical syllogism, or a mathematical equation, albeit all of those can give some compelling hints regarding God's existence.

However, God is not found at the end of an argument, a syllogism, or an equation. God's existence, life, and love are known (they are experienced) inside a certain way of living.

Simply put, if we live in a certain way, in the way all religions worthy of the name (not least Christianity) invite us to live, namely, with compassion, selflessness, forgiveness, generosity, patience, long-suffering, fidelity, and gratitude, then we will know God's existence by participation in God's very life — and whether or not we have an imaginative sense of God's existence is of no importance.

Why do I believe in God? Not because I'm particularly persuaded by proofs from great philosophical minds like Aquinas, Anselm, Descartes, Leibnitz, or Hartshorne. I find their proofs intellectually intriguing but existentially less persuasive.

I believe in God because I sense God's presence at a gut level, as a silent voice, as a call, an invitation, a moral imperative which, whenever listened to and obeyed, brings community, love, peace, and purpose.

That's the real proof for the existence of God.

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

## Creating a better work environment

Every organisation, large or small, strives to attract and retain good people. Today, many companies recognise that what keeps employees fulfilled goes beyond salaries and benefits. A pleasant work environment, meaningful relationships, and a sense of shared purpose form what modern management calls "emotional salary." Yet a healthy workplace is never built by policies alone. Like any relationship — friendships, family life, or community ties — creating a positive work atmosphere is unquestionably a two-way street. It takes the cooperation, goodwill, and daily choices of each member of the organisation.

The word cooperation, rooted in the Latin *co-operari*, literally means "to work together." It is a life skill, and as the Royal Spanish Academy puts it, a process of joining forces toward a common good. Throughout my corporate journey, I have been blessed to work in teams where, despite pressures and friction, there was also genuine enjoyment. In fact, a friend and colleague once summed it up perfectly: "In this company, you don't necessarily win, but you do enjoy yourself." That simple phrase captures a deeper truth — when people work with fairness, peace, and charity, the workplace itself becomes a space where individuals thrive and teams flourish.

Justice means performing our duties with integrity. Peace calls us to build unity rather than conflict, and charity compels us to help others, acknowledge the good, and be humble enough to apologise.

These virtues, quietly lived, shape the soul of any organisation.

Recently, during a course on "Keys to a

Successful Digital Transformation," I was reminded that every meaningful change begins within the individual. Transformation does not start with software or strategy; it begins with the human heart. The testimony of Daniel Padin, pioneer of Argentina's supermarket e-commerce industry, reflected this beautifully. His story echoed the lyrics of Pablo Ordoñez's "Signos de amor," which urges us not to hide our beauty, our joy, or our ability to love. The message is clear: to transform our organisations, we must first dare to transform ourselves.

This transformation includes cultivating joy — an often-overlooked virtue in the professional world. Joy, at its core, is born from giving. It is compatible with hardship, deadlines, and even failure. Joy does not deny the existence of challenges; it simply refuses to surrender to them.

For the Christian professional, joy expresses itself in three ways:

- A smile toward God, trusting in His love;
- A smile toward ourselves, accepting our imperfections with humility;
- And a smile toward others, welcoming colleagues with warmth rather than dwelling on their faults.

As Chesterton once wrote, "It's easy to be sad; it's difficult to be light-hearted." Sadness, from selfishness, discouragement, or lack of hope, drains the soul. Joy, on the other hand, renews it. St Mother Teresa captured this beautifully in her Nobel Peace Prize speech when she encouraged the world: "Smile at one another." A smile may seem small, but its effects can be profound.

Why does joy matter so much at work? Because we spend many hours of



(Unsplash/Vitaly Gariev)

our lives there. Work done without joy becomes drudgery. But work done with joy becomes creative, collaborative, and life-giving. Joy builds trust. It uplifts those around us. It reveals a heart that is open, grateful, and ready to serve.

Cultivating joy at work does not require grand gestures. It begins with small, intentional habits:

- Practise daily gratitude. Writing down three things you are thankful for reshapes your perspective.
- Serve selflessly. Helping a colleague in need brings lasting joy and strengthens bonds.
- Reconnect with nature. Weekend walks, fresh air, and quiet reflection restore energy and balance.
- Nurture your spiritual life. Prayer, meditation, or inner silence recentres the heart.
- Build authentic relationships. Meaningful conversations, genuine concern, and shared community create belonging.

Joy is not a reward; it is a way of living. It emerges naturally when we work with love,

when we treat others with respect, and when we approach challenges with hope rather than fear. In a world often weighed down by stress and negativity, choosing joy is an act of courage. It says to others: life is meaningful, work can be fulfilling, and goodness is possible — yes, even on Monday mornings.

When we combine cooperation, joy, and personal transformation, we become catalysts of change. We help shape workplace cultures where people feel valued, where teams support one another, and where growth is shared. And in doing so, we also shape ourselves — becoming more patient, more compassionate, and more fully alive.

So let us move forward with courage. Let us row against the current if we must. By transforming our own attitudes, we help transform our organisations, one smile, one gesture, one act of kindness at a time. Together, we can create workplaces where joy takes root, where cooperation flourishes, and where every person is empowered to become a sign of love in the world. **Hugo Saldaña Estrada, Exaudi News**

# Little Catholics' corner

## The Gifts that Jesus Brings

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

When John, who was in \_\_\_\_\_, heard about the deeds of the \_\_\_\_\_, he sent his \_\_\_\_\_ to ask him, "Are you the \_\_\_\_\_ who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"

Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The \_\_\_\_\_ receive sight, the \_\_\_\_\_ walk, those who have \_\_\_\_\_ are cleansed, the \_\_\_\_\_ hear, the dead are \_\_\_\_\_, and the \_\_\_\_\_ news is proclaimed to the \_\_\_\_\_.

Blessed is anyone who does not \_\_\_\_\_ on account of me."

*(Mat 11:2-6)*

raised deaf poor one prison good Messiah  
disciples blind stumble leprosy lame

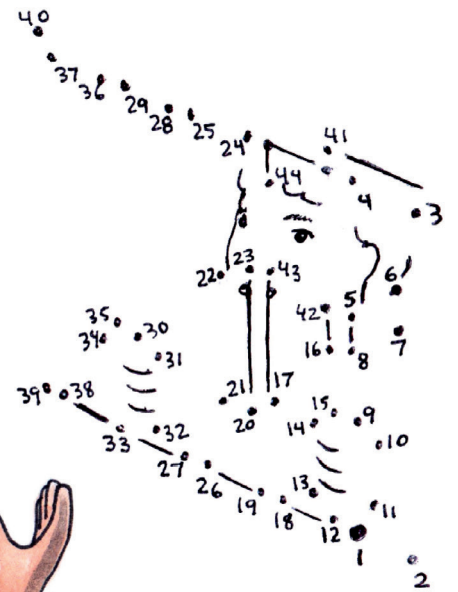
## What Happens When Jesus Comes?

In today's Gospel reading Jesus tells the disciples to tell John the Baptist what He does. What happens to whom? Match up the people with what happens to them.

- |                |                                   |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| the blind •    | • are raised up                   |
| and the lame • | • have good news preached to them |
| lepers •       | • hear                            |
| the deaf •     | • are cleansed                    |
| the dead •     | • receive their sight             |
| and the poor • | • walk                            |



Answer: The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.



*Saint John the Baptist was the messenger who prepared the world for Jesus' coming.*

*Where was he in today's Gospel reading? Connect the dots to find out! Then you can finish colouring in the picture.*

Answer: St John was in prison.



Dear children, Today is the third Sunday of Advent. That means that half the wait is over! If you have an Advent wreath, this is the week to light the pink candle. Pink is the symbol of the joy we have because we're halfway to Christmas. In today's Gospel, Jesus tells the people that John the Baptist was a prophet and messenger. A prophet is someone who tells the truth. In the Old Testament the prophets told God's people the truth about God.

St John was a prophet because he told the people that the Messiah, or saviour, was coming soon, and that they needed to repent for their sins. St John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus by calling people to repentance. You can help prepare for Christmas by thinking and talking about how Jesus came to earth on the first Christmas. Can you tell somebody the story of the first Christmas today?

Love  
Aunty Eliz



Dear God, Thank You for Jesus! We know that every good gift we receive comes from you and the greatest gift is eternal life brought down to us through your Son. Father, we thank you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



## Beacons of Hope

# JOURNEYING WITH YOUTH

**P**ETALING JAYA: On the evening of November 22, the Church of St Francis Xavier (SFX) opened its doors for *Beacons of Hope: Journeying with Youth* held under the Petaling District Council's Pilgrims of Hope 2025 initiative.

To accompany young people in creating a hope-filled future is one of the four Jesuit Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs). The other three UAPs are: to show the way to God, to walk with the poor and the excluded, and to care for our common home. Jointly organised across various SFX ministries — Lifeline; Life Teen; Yang Diutus; Catholic Students Society and Social Communications Ministry, the event aimed to bridge generations, bringing youth, adults, and seniors into one shared space of faith, conversation, and creativity.

The evening started with a delicious spread of *nasi lemak*, sandwiches, and homemade cakes. During dinner, Loyola Hall was abuzz with four interactive activity stations for participants to connect and collaborate. At the 'TikTok reel' corner, Berchmans Altar Servers Society took the lead in creating videos to capture memories of the evening. The 'Community Paint Together' station brought together parishioners of all ages, inviting them to join in a collective artistic

experience. Every brushstroke reflected the unique perspectives of young and old alike, symbolising the unity and creativity fostered within the parish community. The lesson of this activity was not lost — working together across generations created a more powerful and inclusive impact.

Meanwhile, the photobooth with 'Luce & Friends' characters offered the young and old a chance to snap keepsakes with the official mascot for the Catholic Church's 2025 Jubilee Year. Interactive displays showcased youth perspectives on being Catholic using mobile apps and digital screens, thus opening a window for older parishioners to see how young people expressed their faith. These activities transformed the evening into a joyful, collaborative experience — one where learning, laughter, and faith were shared across generations.

The event began with a Praise & Worship session led by Yang DiUtus Ministry, creating a joyful and reverent atmosphere for the evening. As a prelude to the talk by parish priest Fr Alvin Ng, SJ, the SFX ministries presented a short video capturing inter-generational conversations between SFX parishioners about key challenges and issues facing the youths in the church.

After the video, Fr Alvin delivered an enlightening talk that became the evening's spiritual anchor. He reminded the congregation that every stage of life calls for our

best—that age is not a limitation but a vocation.

"Youth is not merely the future; it is the 'now' of God," said Fr Alvin. He urged them to step off the balcony of observation, to avoid confusing comfort with true joy, and to resist living life behind screens. Fr Alvin cited the video's inter-generational message to illustrate practical ways parishes can support youth formation and participation today. He also called for all generations to commit to active participation in parish life — each offering gifts that the community needs today.

### Passing of Light and Faith

After the talk, SFX teens galvanised the audience with an engaging 'Rain & Rhythm' group dance performance. The evening culminated in a group sing-along of 'Pass It On', a symbolic moment where voices rose in unison to celebrate the passing of light and faith from one generation to the next.

Beacons of Hope at SFX PJ clearly showed how parish communities can be living beacons—bridging past and future, preserving treasured traditions, and empowering a Synodal Church where every voice matters. The evening was a reminder that when youth, adults, and seniors gather with intention, the Church becomes a sign of hope for the nation and for generations yet to come.

### From our BECs:

"It was an enjoyable, inspirational event and the fine mix of different age groups was superb. The Praise & Worship was my favourite part. 'Pass It On' sing-along session was absolutely brilliant with such a strong message!" — **Grace Nair, Good Shepherd Section 5 BEC**

"It was heartening to see so many young people at Loyola Hall, along with the older parishioners whom I am more familiar with. The evening was such a wonderful opportunity for the youth to take charge, reassuring us the older folk that they are already responsible leaders and truly our beacons of hope." — **Ann Teoh, SS2 St Michael BEC.**

### From our Youth

"I felt so touched seeing our senior citizens trying to bond with us, in the same way we try to bond with them. Even though building that connection takes time, but the evening showed me that it can happen" — **Natassia, CSS**

"Beacons of Hope seemed like the beginning of something we have been waiting for. As youth, we need adults who will walk with us, understand us, and give us the space Jesus gave. We will always need guidance, and I truly hope this is where that journey finally begins." **Rebecca Chin, Lifeline**



## Theology of the Body

Honestly, before TOB I was confused. Why learn about the body? But all that changed when I began this journey. It was eye-opening. We went back to the beginning, where God created man and woman to multiply and fill the earth. But it is more than just having children; it is about LOVE, when we bring Christ to others.

We also discussed sexuality. Growing up, I saw nothing good in this world, only lust. But in TOB there is nothing to fear, because sexuality is God's perfect gift. One thing is certain: TOB has transformed my life forever. Amen! **Adrian Joel, Church of the Visitation, Seremban**

This Theology of the Body (TOB) programme answered many questions I had been wondering about but didn't know whom to ask or what to believe. For example, what should I be cautious about when entering a romantic relationship? Or, how can I sustain a relationship with anyone? The programme taught that the foundation of love is based on F (Free), T (Total), F (Faithful), and F (Fruitful) where any relationship can grow in a healthy way. TOB helped me feel confident in my own body, recognising it as a gift from God. After the programme, I feel lighter and clearer-minded because many of my questions were answered with wisdom and guidance by experienced teachers. I learned how to live a life of true freedom, choosing what is right over what I simply desire. I am very grateful to have experienced this TOB programme before entering society, as it prepares me for the challenges of life. **Jodie Tan Li Juen, Church of St Francis Xavier, PJ**

Coming into the event, all I ever thought about was the idea of being with my friends the whole day and having fun with each other. I never really thought how much this event would open up my mind to the idea of how our bodies are theologically and how God sees the things we find as "funny" or "weird". It really opened up to me a lot of aspects, mainly on love. As said by Pope JP II, love can be built on the 4 pillars, FTFF or also known as free, totality, faithful, fruitful. This can all be rooted in one word, sacrifice. TOB really taught me how love is deeply rooted in sacrifice. As a teen who deeply desires to become a husband and father one day, the event deepened my desire to take on that responsibility in the future. **Francis Allen Renacia Aquino, Church of St Francis Xavier, PJ**



## Youth Jubilee Concert

KOTA KINABALU: The *Youth Jubilee Concert: A Life of Hope* was a powerful gathering of hearts, voices, and faith, held in conjunction with the 40th World Youth Day.

This special collaboration between Holy Rosary Limbahau, St Joseph Papar, and Holy Nativity Terawi brought together youths who shared not only their talents, but their desire to witness Christ's hope in today's world.

Held at the Holy Nativity Parish Terawi Hall on November 22, the concert drew nearly 600 supporters, transforming the venue into a vibrant space of music, storytelling, and prayer.

Through four meaningful themes — family, ecology, social life, and the Church — the concert invited everyone to reflect on how hope is lived in daily life: in our homes, in our care for creation, in our relationships, and in our journey as one Body of Christ.

A reminder that when young people come together with faith and purpose, hope truly becomes alive.

## A Life of Hope



## Hitting reset on life and relationships

PORT DICKSON: In a world that moves faster by the day, many relationships have become shallow and fragile. We are constantly "connected," yet so many hearts remain disconnected — yearning for sincerity, love, and God-rooted truth. Digital noise often replaces real conversations, and the desire for image or recognition overshadows genuine friendship. Beneath it all, countless young adults quietly long for relationships that are authentic, life-giving, and grounded in faith.

The CHOICE Weekend offers a rare and precious pause — a moment to breathe, reflect, and rediscover what truly matters. For many participants, this experience becomes a turning point.

The CHOICE ENGLISH KL 109th Weekend, held from October 24 to 26, welcomed 33 young adults to the Methodist Centre in Port Dickson. Over the course of the weekend, these single adults aged 24 to 40 — from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities — journeyed together, learning, growing, and renewing their desire to build relationships that are real, meaningful, and anchored in God's love.

One young man, Edward, admitted that he arrived feeling shy, anxious, and unsure of what to expect. Yet by the end of the weekend, he

discovered not only confidence, but a sense of belonging. "Going into CHOICE blindly was honestly one of the best decisions I've ever made this year," he reflected, sharing how the deep and thought-provoking sessions helped him understand himself, his purpose, and how to stay close to God while navigating adulthood. The friendships formed, he added, continue to remind him that "we're never truly alone."

Since the 1970s, the CHOICE programme has touched and transformed lives through its simple yet powerful approach. Rooted in the Catholic faith, it nurtures meaningful relationships with family, friends, community, and God, living out its timeless motto: "To Know, To Love and To Serve." Over the decades, this mission has remained steadfast — offering young adults a space to rediscover themselves, deepen their faith, and build relationships grounded in love and truth.

This same sense of welcome and belonging was strongly felt by Myiaa, who confessed that she normally avoids stepping into unfamiliar situations. In fact, she had a secret backup plan to leave early if she felt uncomfortable. Yet from the moment she arrived, the warmth of the facilitators and the sincerity of the participants put her at ease. "I felt like I was right at

home," she said, adding that she was surprised by how quickly genuine friendships blossomed. She left the weekend "grateful, uplifted, and incredibly blessed," convinced that the CHOICE team is "truly making a real difference in people's lives."

Away from the pressures and pace of daily life, the CHOICE Weekend opens a peaceful space — one where silence speaks, hearts soften, and truth is welcomed. Through honest sharing and personal reflection, participants are encouraged to open their hearts, embrace clarity, and rediscover the beauty of authentic, God-centred relationships. For some, like Kinancy, this interior renewal came at exactly the right moment. She shared that she initially thought the retreat wasn't something she needed — only to realise it was what her heart had been longing for all along. As the eldest in her family, she often felt weighed down by expectations, but CHOICE helped her break down emotional walls, rediscover empathy, and see her life with gratitude and faith. "I'm thankful for the genuine friendships I formed," she said. "These beautiful souls have become my tribe, reminding me that with God, we are all a beautiful work in progress." **Catherine Singarair & Dereen Adren Anthony**

# Hong Kong fire, mourners demand truth



Flowers are seen in front of the Wang Fuk Court apartment blocks in the aftermath of the deadly Nov 26 fire in Hong Kong's Tai Po district on Dec 3, 2025. (ucanews.com)

HONG KONG: The death toll from Hong Kong's worst fire in decades rose to 159 after all affected housing blocks were searched, police said on December 3, cautioning that the figure may not be final.

The blaze on Nov 26, engulfed Wang Fuk Court in the city's northern Tai Po district, becoming the world's deadliest residential building fire since 1980.

Police said the number of dead may still be revised as officers had found "suspected human bones" that required forensic testing.

Mourners continued to stream to a small park near the charred buildings, placing hundreds of bouquets and notes of remembrance for the victims — the youngest of whom was a one-year-old baby, and the oldest 97.

"I hope people can come here to lay their grief to rest," said Sarah Lam, a volunteer organiser of the memorial events, adding that the victims suffered "many injustices."

"I hope the truth is uncovered swiftly... so they don't need to depart this world bearing such undeserved grievances," she said.

Sections of the park were decorated with lines of colourful origami cranes, and volunteers handed out paper and pens.

Forrest Li, 26, described the location as a "bridge," allowing "communication and the expression of grief through this unspoken connection" with the deceased.

Residents of the sole unaffected tower were allowed to return home briefly on Dec 3 to retrieve belongings.

More than 2,900 residents have been provided with temporary housing, officials said.

Authorities earlier said the blaze on the estate, which was undergoing major renovations, was likely made worse by the use of netting that did not meet fire-resistance standards.

Flames quickly covered the surfaces of the apartment blocks, which were wrapped with

bamboo scaffolding, protective netting and foam boards.

On Dec 3, Secretary for Development Bernadette Linn ordered all Hong Kong buildings undergoing major maintenance to remove their netting by Dec 6.

Police earlier arrested a total of 15 people, including construction company bosses, on suspicion of manslaughter.

A further six have been arrested on a different charge, over the estate's fire alarms, which malfunctioned at the time of the blaze, police said.

While the disaster has led to calls for accountability and reform, officials are also monitoring for any unrest linked to the incident.

City leader John Lee has warned against crimes that "exploit the tragedy."

Beijing's national security arm in Hong Kong condemned "external hostile forces [that] have seized upon the disaster to stir up trouble and incite chaos."

"All acts and words aimed at destabilising Hong Kong will be recorded and pursued for life," the Office for Safeguarding National Security wrote in a statement.

"All conspiracies to disrupt Hong Kong will have no place to hide and will be thoroughly extinguished."

Local media reported over the weekend that three people, including 24-year-old student Miles Kwan and former district councillor Kenneth Cheung, had been arrested for sedition.

A student union-run notice board at Hong Kong Baptist University — nicknamed a "democracy wall" — was blocked off on Dec 3.

The message stuck to the board, which remained visible behind tall barricades, read: "We are Hongkongers. Urge the government to respond to public demands so justice can be done."

The university has been contacted for comment. [ucanews.com](http://ucanews.com)

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"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Psalm 23

**1st Anniversary  
In Loving Memory of  
Ambrose Jesuraj**

Date of birth: 14th Feb 1937  
Departed: 16th Dec 2024



"O gentle and powerful St Anthony, be with Ambrose Jesuraj in God's eternal light. May his soul rejoice in the peace of Christ, and may we who mourn be strengthened by faith and love."

Forever cherished by family and friends.

**14th Anniversary  
In Loving Memory of**



**Dolly Antony Silva**  
13/2/1942 – 19/12/2011

Mummy, you are always in our minds and forever in our hearts. Missing you always, But forgetting you never.

Rest in peace, Mummy.  
Deeply missed and cherished by Loved ones.

**In Loving Memory  
6th Year Anniversary**

Jesus said to her, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life, whoever believes in Me, will live even though He dies, and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die.'  
(John 11:25)



**Monica Ei Roger**

Born: 9-2-1946  
Departed: 18-12-2019  
Age: 73

**A Loving wife and a caring mother.**

Leaving behind  
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36 years

Son: Paul Reuben Roger  
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May Her Soul Rest in Peace.

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# Pope Leo suppresses commission for donations to Vatican

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV on December 4 suppressed the Commission for Donations to the Holy See that his predecessor set up ten months ago.

The decision was taken after consultations with the Council for the Economy and other experts. The suppression was announced through a chirograph (a papal decree intended for the Roman Curia). The decree was signed on Sept 29 but was released on Dec 4.

Pope Francis set up the commission on Feb 11 this year to promote donations from the faithful, episcopal conferences, and other potential benefactors in support of the mission and charitable work of the Holy See.

The chirograph establishing the commission was signed on Feb 11, and made public two weeks later, on Feb 26, while Pope Francis was hospitalised at the Gemelli Policlinic in Rome.

In the new chirograph, Pope Leo writes,

“The issue of donations and fundraising for the Holy See represents an important aspect of the bond of unity and charity between the particular Churches and the Apostolic See, particularly from the perspective of the effective exercise of the Petrine ministry.”

He goes on to note that the Council for the Economy, charged with overseeing the administrative and financial structures and activities of the Holy See “has devoted particular attention” to the study of fundraising for the Holy See, and made “several recommendations aimed at reshaping the current institutional structure responsible for managing this area.”

In accordance with the procedures outlined in *Praedicate Evangelium*, after evaluating the suggestions of the Council and consulting experts, Pope Leo goes on to approve the content of the Council’s “resolution and recommendations,” beginning with the suppression of the Commission

for Donations to the Holy See.

The chirograph goes on to repeal the statutes of the suppressed Commission, and decrees that all members of the commission immediately cease their function. Further, it requires that “all assets currently belonging to the Commission be immediately transferred to the Holy See,” delegating to the President of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See the power “to proceed with the liquidation of the Commission” according to the current legislation.

Pope Leo provides for the Secretariat for the Economy, together with a working group appointed by it, to be responsible for any issues that arise from the dissolution of the Commission, instructing them to keep the Council for the Economy informed of all measures undertaken for that end.

Another working group “will be established to formulate proposals regarding the general issue of fundraising for the Holy See, along with the definition of an appropriate structure. The Council for the Economy will propose the names of the members of this group, which will be submitted to the Roman Pontiff through the Secretariat of State.” **Christopher Wells, Vatican News**

## Archdiocese of Bangalore opens new ‘Pope Francis’ migrant centre



(photo/Archdiocese of Bangalore)

INDIA: The Archdiocese of Bangalore has strengthened its outreach to migrant families with the opening of the Pope Francis Migrant’s Centre and Short Stay Home near Mathikere. Established in partnership with the Scalabrinian Missionaries, the new centre will provide pastoral care, counselling, legal assistance, skill training, emergency support, and opportunities for community building.

The centre was inaugurated on December 3, with the inauguration stone blessed by Cardinal Silvano Tomasi together with Archbishop Peter Machado of Bangalore. Speaking at the event, Cardinal Tomasi highlighted the Church’s ongoing mission amid rapid social change. “The Church is alive whenever she bends down to care for migrants. Every act of welcome is a living Gospel,” he said, commending the collaboration between the archdiocese and the Scalabrinian family as faith put into action.

Karnataka’s Minister of Energy, Shri K.J. George, shared his personal connection to

migration, recalling his family’s roots in Syria and their long journey to Kerala and later to Bangalore. “Migration is part of my family’s story... I know what it means to start again,” he said, assuring the government’s support for the Church’s efforts to build a society where “everyone, migrant or local, can live with dignity.”

Church leaders involved in migrant ministry also offered messages of solidarity. Archbishop Victor Henry Thakur, Chairman of the CCBI Migrants Commission, reminded the gathering that migrants must never feel abandoned: “The Church must be a home that listens, protects, and walks with them.”

Fr Leonir Chiarello, Superior General of the Scalabrinians, reaffirmed their longstanding mission. “For over 130 years, we have accompanied migrants with compassion and professionalism. This Centre continues that mission so no migrant is left unseen or unsupported.” **Vatican News**

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