



Patricia Pereira and Elvina Fernandez

PENANG: Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle's stirring keynote address set the tone for the opening of the Great Pilgrimage of Hope 2025, challenging Asia's Catholic Church to rediscover authentic Christian hope, embrace humility, and dare to "walk a different way" like the Magi.

Speaking to nearly 1,000 delegates from across Asia, the Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization delivered what many described as the "pastoral heartbeat" of the gathering, the largest assembly of Asian Church leaders in two decades.

Cardinal Tagle began by clarifying a central theme of the pilgrimage, Christian hope. "Hope," he stressed, "is not optimism, not mere wishful thinking, not an escape from real life." Drawing from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, he described hope as a theological virtue, a divine gift that purifies motives, strengthens perseverance, and aligns the heart with God's Kingdom.

"Christian hope," he said, "purifies our hearts so that the neighbour is loved as God loves."

He invited delegates to reflect deeply: *What sustains me in trials? What motivates my choices? Is my charity truly for God, or for my own advantage?* True hope, he insisted, teaches believers to endure faithfully and remain open to God's surprising paths.

In one of the most striking parts of his message, Cardinal Tagle contrasted the pilgrimage of the Magi with the immobility of Herod, presenting them as two ways of living faith.

The Magi, he said, represent humility, openness, discernment, and joy. "They accepted their ignorance," the cardinal noted. "They listened. They sought help. They moved." Guided by the star and Scripture, they found joy in

the smallness of Bethlehem and offered gifts "fit for a Messiah Who will suffer."

Herod, however, "did not move." Cardinal Tagle warned that power, whether political, spiritual, or institutional, can become a weight that prevents listening and discernment. "If you have power, you have weight," he said. "And if you have weight, it is difficult to move." Herod's fear, he added, became "contagious," spreading anxiety and stagnation.

"Hopeless people are not joyful," the cardinal remarked. "They cannot tolerate joy in others."

He concluded with an impassioned invitation to all Asian Catholics, "We need more Magi, pilgrims who seek, listen, learn, and adore. We need fewer Herods, those trapped in fear, power, and despair. Come join Jesus' pilgrimage."

Cardinal Tagle's keynote opened a four-day gathering from November 27 to 30 at the Light

Hotel, Seberang Jaya, that has brought together close to 1,000 delegates from 32 countries, including 10 cardinals, over 100 bishops, 155 priests, 74 religious sisters, 8 deacons, and 422 lay leaders. The event marks a significant moment as the Church prepares to close the Jubilee Year of Hope in 2025 and look towards World Youth Day Seoul 2027 and the Synod on Synodality in 2028.

In his welcome address, Cardinal Sebastian, Bishop of Penang, described the gathering as "a true springtime of hope" for the Church in Asia. Reflecting on the theme, *"Journeying together as peoples of Asia... and they went a different way"*, he urged delegates to walk together in synodality and allow God to lead them beyond familiar pathways.

"We Asians are storytellers at heart," he said. "And the greatest story ever told, Jesus Christ,

continues in us today through the power of the Holy Spirit."

Cardinal Sebastian reminded participants that Asia's diversity is both a gift and a responsibility, calling for fraternity rooted in the continent's deep spiritual heritage.

The Minister of National Unity, Datuk Aaron Ago Dagang, also addressed the assembly, praising the Church's long-standing commitment to dialogue. "Diversity is not an obstacle but a source of strength," he said. He encouraged religious communities to act as "hubs of cooperation, not isolation," and urged Asian societies to "understand, respect, accept, and celebrate" one another.

Bishop George Pallipparambil SDB, Chairman of the FABC Office of Evangelisation, further framed the moment in light of Asia's cultural mosaic. "Asia is extraordinary in its diversity," he said, yet united by respect for elders, community life, and spirituality. The pilgrimage, he added, is an invitation for the Church to renew its calling to be "salt, leaven, and light" for the world.

During the opening Mass, presided over by Cardinal Sebastian, he urged delegates to become "storytellers, dreamers, and visionaries" led by the Holy Spirit. Drawing from the 2006 Asian Mission Congress, he insisted that the Church must continue living and proclaiming the story of Jesus in ways that resonate with Asia's cultures.

"A faith incapable of inculturation is not a genuine faith," he warned.

He concluded with a prayer for courage and openness as the Asian Church approaches significant global events: "Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus."

With Cardinal Tagle's candle-lighting ceremony marking the official launch, the *Great Pilgrimage of Hope* unfolded with days of dialogue, prayer, and discernment. Delegates departed with a united message: to walk together in hope, renewed by the Spirit, grounded in fraternity, and ready, like the Magi, to take a different way forward.



The delegates praying in silence before commencing the Conversations in the Spirit.

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**EDITOR**

Patricia Pereira
editor1@herald.com.my

**ASSISTANT EDITOR**

Sandra Ann Inbaraj
sandra@herald.com.my

**GRAPHIC DESIGNER**

Amanda Mah
amanda@herald.com.my

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

Kevin Francis
kevin@herald.com.my

**BAHASA MALAYSIA**

Melania Liza Magnus
liza@herald.com.my

**MANDARIN**

Adelina Wong
yin4482@gmail.com

**ADMIN ASSISTANT**

Rachael Sharma
admin@herald.com.my

ADVERTISEMENT/SUBSCRIPTION
advertisement@herald.com.my

MEMORIAM

memoriam@herald.com.my

LETTERS

letterseditor@herald.com.my

Social Media

www.heraldmalaysia.com



@heraldmalaysia



heraldmalaysia
Herald Snapshot



@heraldsnapshot

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

When integrity falters, a nation trembles

The unfolding scandal engulfing the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) has shaken not only the sporting world but the nation's moral conscience. What began as an initiative to strengthen the national team through naturalised "heritage players" has, instead, revealed troubling lapses in ethics, governance, and integrity. FIFA's findings — heavy fines, the suspension of seven foreign-born players for falsified documents, and orders for deeper investigation — now force us to confront uncomfortable truths about leadership and accountability in Malaysia.

This story may revolve around football, but its implications run far deeper. It exposes the dangers of a culture where due process is treated as optional, where expediency eclipses honesty, and where governance becomes a matter of form rather than substance. At its heart, the scandal is a moral failure — a reminder that integrity is not a decorative value but the foundation upon which trust, credibility, and the common good depend. Once compromised, everything begins to crumble.

Catholic social teaching places integrity at the core of moral leadership. Jesus' words cut through any attempt to trivialise wrongdoing: "Whoever is faithful in little is also faithful in much; and whoever is dishonest in little is dishonest also in much" (Lk 16:10). Whether the falsified documents arose from negligence, incompetence, or deliberate manipulation, the outcome is the same — a breach of trust that tarnishes the nation's image and exposes systemic weaknesses in oversight and governance.

FIFA highlighted glaring inconsistencies in documentation that should have undergone rigorous verification. Such failures suggest not isolated oversight but a troubling institutional culture where accountability is blurred and

proper checks appear secondary to achieving rapid results. When leaders choose shortcuts over truth, the consequences ripple far beyond the pitch.

Good governance is not merely about compliance or administrative box-ticking. It is a moral obligation rooted in justice. Structures must exist to safeguard truth, transparency, and fairness. Without them, institutions become vulnerable to misuse, the powerful are shielded, and the vulnerable are sidelined. To dismiss this scandal as a "technical error" is to ignore the deeper structural flaws that allowed such irregularities to proceed unchecked.

But perhaps the most troubling dimension of this saga is not what it reveals about football — but what it reveals about us as a nation.

While these players secured fast-tracked citizenship approval based on dubious paperwork, thousands of ordinary people — including children born on Malaysian soil — remain stateless. Their families spend years navigating complex bureaucratic pathways, submitting documents repeatedly, appealing decisions, seeking help from lawyers, NGOs, MPs, and ministers, sometimes with no progress at all. They endure uncertainty, stigma, and emotional strain as they wait for something as basic and as dignified as rightful citizenship.

Meanwhile, in this scandal, approvals appear to have been granted with astonishing speed.

This is not merely an administrative inconsistency. It is a moral injustice.

Citizenship reflects belonging, identity, and the inherent worth of every human person. When it is granted swiftly to those who benefit national prestige but withheld from vulnerable communities — orphans, indigenous children, abandoned infants — something is profoundly wrong. It raises painful questions: Whose dignity matters? Who is seen? Who is sidelined?

Catholic social teaching insists on the equal dignity of every human person. Favouritism, discrimination, and prioritising the powerful over the powerless stand in direct contradiction to the Gospel. As a nation, we cannot claim moral credibility if we continue to tolerate such disparities.

This scandal must therefore become more than a moment of public outrage. It must become a turning point — a call to reform the systems, structures, and leadership cultures that failed so visibly. We must demand:

- Transparent, thorough investigations into the scandal;
- Clear accountability for those responsible;
- Stronger governance and oversight mechanisms within FAM and related agencies;
- A fair, consistent, and compassionate approach to citizenship applications;
- A renewed national commitment to integrity at every level of leadership.

Crises such as this, painful as they are, can become opportunities for renewal. They expose weaknesses that must be healed. They remind us of values that can never be compromised. Hope, in the Christian sense, is not naive optimism but a call to action — a commitment to advocate for justice, defend the voiceless, and rebuild what has been broken.

May this scandal awaken in us a deeper desire for truth, accountability, and moral courage. May it inspire leaders who choose integrity over convenience, and institutions that serve with transparency and justice. And may we continue to stand with every person still waiting — often silently — for the dignity they rightly deserve. For only when integrity stands firm can a nation truly rise.

Patricia Pereira

Rediscovering true hope this Advent

I am sure that many, if not most of us, have seen movie trailers of some kind, either on TV, online or in the cinema. Movie trailers are meant to give us a glimpse of what the movie is all about. It gives us enough clips to try to entice us to watch the movie. Sometimes a trailer will contain all the exciting parts of the movie and sometimes it reveals almost nothing. A good trailer will always have a balance of both elements.

The season of Advent is like a movie trailer. Every week, we see different details or elements being revealed to us as we try to piece together the entire end product, which is Christmas. In a sense, Advent is not only a time of waiting but also a time of hope. Even though we celebrate Advent year after year and we encounter the same readings, these readings are not archaic and definitely not stagnant. As St Paul tell us in his letter to the Romans, everything that was written long ago was meant to teach us something about hope.

Hope is not a mere fleeting emotion; hope goes beyond what we can feel or see. There will be some who will say that, as the years go by and more and more disasters happen, there seems to be less and less hope. This erosion of hope is accelerated by the fact that we don't know when Christ will come again. The issue here is not the erosion or loss of hope. Rather, I see it as a disposition of misplaced or misdirected hope. We have to distinguish between Christian hope and worldly hope.

This is not to say that placing our hope on the world is wrong. What God has created

is always good, but placing our hope solely on temporal things is insufficient. The philosopher Pliny the Elder said that hope is the pillar that holds up the world. This tells us that the perspective of the world on hope is good. However, when we allow ourselves to rely solely on the hope of the world, we will slowly slip into complacency. We tell ourselves that worldly hope is sufficient. This is the cause of our downfall as children of God.

We should direct our hope to things that are divine. We need to constantly remind ourselves that we are only pilgrims passing through the world, our ultimate destination is Heaven. In the Gospel today, we see John the Baptist reprimanding the Pharisees and Sadducees for their hypocrisy. His words may seem harsh but sometimes, we need to be harsh in order to wake someone up from their slumber. The people of Israel had grown complacent, thinking that as long as they had Abraham as their ancestor, they were saved from retribution.

What John the Baptist said to them was a message of hope. If we look carefully, we can discern three things that can help us to continue hoping. The first is something that can be found throughout Scripture — repentance. Repentance is not just about turning away from vices, but it is a total rejection of what is evil. The second element is producing the appropriate fruits. Jesus tells us that we will know the tree by its fruit. What kind of fruits are we producing? We know that trees

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Fr Philip Tay, OCD

2nd Sunday of Advent (A)

Readings: Isaiah 11:1-10;

Romans 15:4-9;

Gospel: Matthew 3:1-12

bear fruits for others to enjoy; a tree cannot eat its own fruits. The fruits that we bear are supposed to be beneficial to the people around us. Finally, do not be presumptuous. Just because we have been baptised, it doesn't mean we automatically go to Heaven. We need to work at it.

To me, this message is not meant to dampen our ardour but to give us hope, knowing that when we look towards Heaven, our hope will be placed there instead of on the passing things of the world. However, we can only do this if we acknowledge our need for God. When we come to fear the Lord, knowing who we are before God, we will strive to reorient our lives to one that is righteous and in conformity with God's will. This is how we will be judged when Christ comes. The Prophet Isaiah reminds us that Christ will come to judge with integrity and not by appearances. The world will always judge us by how we look, but not always by what we do. The good that we do today can be easily forgotten the next day.

As we come to the close of the Jubilee Year of Hope, let us continue to direct our hope heavenwards instead of in the things of the world. Everything will eventually pass, but what is divine will never pass because God is one who will never disappoint us.

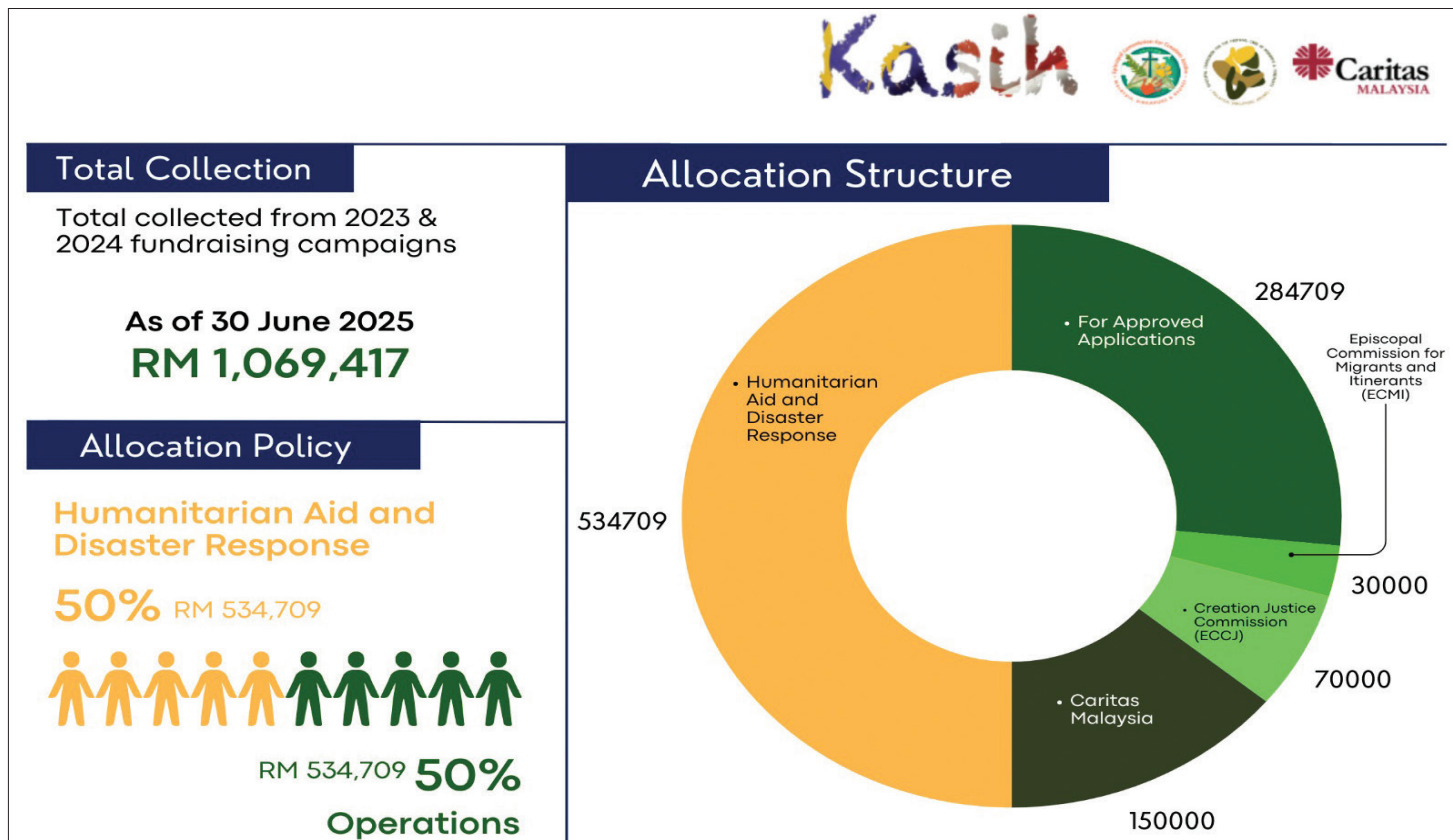
Allocation of the KASIH fund

PENANG: The KASIH Fund was born from a simple but urgent conviction shared by the bishops of Malaysia: that the Church must respond more effectively, more consistently, and more collaboratively to the cries of the poor, the vulnerable, migrants, and the wounded earth. What began as a shared desire at the Catholic Bishops' Conference evolved into a national initiative that unites every diocese behind the mission of Integral Human Development.

From the first appeal to the faithful, the response was generous. The people of God recognised that KASIH is not another programme but a shared expression of solidarity — a way for the whole Church in Malaysia to stand with those at the margins. Caritas Malaysia was asked to assist the Conference as the administrator of the fund, helping to organise the campaign, receive contributions, and provide transparent reporting.

As the collections grew, the bishops refined a clear allocation structure: one portion dedicated to humanitarian relief and rapid response in times of crisis, and another portion supporting the operational and mission needs of Caritas Malaysia, the Episcopal Commission for Creation Justice (ECCJ), and the Episcopal Commission for Migrants and Itinerants (ECMI). This balanced approach ensures that immediate needs are met while also strengthening long-term capacity to accompany communities, advocate for justice, care for creation, and support migrants and refugees.

Today, the KASIH Fund continues to reflect



the heart of the Church — a Church that listens, accompanies, and acts. Its usage is guided by principles of transparency, equity, and impact. Funds will support humanitarian assistance, community outreach, environmental initiatives, formation programmes, and essential mission-

related operations. Through careful stewardship, every contribution is channelled toward concrete acts of mercy, justice, and hope.

The story of KASIH is still being written. What we present here — the figures, the allocations, the images — represents more

than financial stewardship. It is a testimony of how the Church in Malaysia, together with her people, chooses to walk with those at the margins, transforming generosity into genuine human development, and making KASIH (love) — visible in action.

KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

December

- 5-8 **Feast Day – Church of the Immaculate Conception, Penang**
- 10 **Meeting – Sri Seronok Board**
- 11 **Meeting – Archdiocesan Finance**
- 12 **Meeting – College of Consultors**
- 13 **Wisma Visitation Launching**
- 13 **CFM Christmas Hi Tea**

MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

December

- 9 **Penitential Service – Church of Divine Mercy, Skudai**
- 10 **Penitential Service – Church of Christ the King, Kulai**
- 11 **Penitential Service – Church of St Theresa, Masai**
- 14 **Masses in English and Tamil – Church of Divine Mercy, Skudai**



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #251



Welcome to dear friends,

Beautifully the Eucharistic Congress ended at the Church of St Louis, Kluang. It was a day to reflect unity, to celebrate the Synodal journey of the eight North Central Johore communities. The theme of the congress was *Together. To Gather.*

The nationwide second collection on the Second Sunday in Advent (December 6-7), coordinated by Caritas Malaysia, is for “KASIH”, the social mission works in the nine arch/dioceses.

World Youth Day was celebrated on the Feast of Christ the King at parish level.

Local Takes. All Rosy or Rotting?

The *ETS linking Johor Baru and Kuala Lumpur* begins its run on December 12.

Commentators say: The *short-changed Sabahans*, who have been neglected for decades to become the poorest state and deprived of the 40 per cent resource revenue are preparing a poll shock.

No cover-up on the *FIFA - FAM controversy* said the PM.

See the *Indira Gandhi protest* as a relationship matter, and not as a religious issue, protested prominent Malaysians.

The UNHCR experts have sounded *an alarm over alleged continued exploitation*, deception, and deepening debt bondage involving Bangladeshi migrant workers in Malaysia.

A Statistics Department release mentioned that 190,304 marriages and **60,457 divorces** were registered here.

The *Sinar Daily* highlighted the worrying rise in *teenage pregnancies* in Malaysia, whose young lives and future hang in the balance.

Rising personal bankruptcies here are straining households, undermining productivity and weakening investor confidence.

Church In The World: Making a Difference:

1. *Our Treasures Within*, a picture book for children inspired by Pope Francis' call to recognise and share God-given gifts. Created by Peter and Paul Reynolds, it encourages children and families to reflect on how their talents can contribute to others.

2. When 300 children were kidnapped by masked and armed attackers recently, the US President threatened a rapid military intervention in Nigeria, which has been placed on the list of unsafe countries, in response to what he calls “*a persecution of Christians.*”

3. Pope Leo XIV met *online with over 15,000 teenagers* gathered in Indianapolis, Indiana, and invited young Catholics to grow in friendship with Jesus Christ, use technology healthily to deepen their faith, and avoid using political categories to speak about the Church.

4. The Jubilee had already attracted 30 million pilgrims. Now, all eyes are on the *Jubilee of the Resurrection in 2033*, which will mark 2,000 years since the dawn of Christianity itself.

A Thought for The Week: Stranded Starfish

A writer was walking along his favourite beach. A dancing figure in the distance caught his attention. He quickened his steps to get closer. It was not a dancer, but a young man bending, picking and throwing something into the ocean.

He called out, “Good morning! What are you doing?” “The young man replied, “*Throwing starfish into the ocean!*” The writer asked, “May I ask why are you doing that?” The young man replied, “The sun is up! The tide is going out! *If I don't throw them in, they'll die.*” Upon hearing this, the writer commented, “Ahead of you are miles and miles of beach and many, many starfish out there! You can't possibly make a difference!”

The young man just picked up another

starfish, threw it into the ocean. When it plopped into the water, he said, “*It made a difference to that one!*”

The lesson from the young man: Make a difference where you are! Begin with the one closest to you. Make a difference to the one before you.

QnQ: Q asks: What do most people fear?

1. Most people are *afraid to speak three of the most spiritual words* in the world: “I don't know”. We think spirituality is about having answers, systems and explanations. But very often, the holiest moments in life are not when we explain mystery, but when we stand inside it.

2. “*I don't know*” is the soul bowing to a Reality greater than itself. When we say: “I don't know why this happened,” we step out of the illusion of control. When we say, “I don't know what God is doing, we stop reducing God to our plans”.

3. In that space, *something shifts*. Silence becomes a teacher. Confusion becomes a kind of altar and not knowing becomes a *doorway into deeper trust*. Psalms 139:6 “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.” The other name for God is *Mystery*.

The Spirit @ work: By nature, the Spirit is beyond the reach of our mind, but we can know him by his goodness.” St Basil the Great, bishop

“**Something to tickle you:** The poor are not passive recipients of charity; they are bearers of hope, teachers of resilience, and witnesses to the Gospel's power.

Bishop Bernard Paul

CDM going beyond parish walls

Roland Victor

PENANG: The Church of Divine Mercy (CDM), Sg Ara, held its annual Parish Assembly recently, bringing together more than 160 parishioners comprising ministry members, BEC/ministry leaders, youth, families, migrants, and seniors. Guided by the theme *Walking Together as Pilgrims of Hope*, the assembly provided a meaningful space for prayer, listening, and communal discernment as the parish prepares its direction for 2026 while aligning with the wider Malaysian Church in the lead-up to the Malaysia Pastoral Assembly (MPC) 2026.

The assembly began with an opening prayer led by Deacon Richard Wilson, followed by welcoming remarks from PPC chairman, Zeckry Chan. He expressed gratitude to all ministry leaders and volunteers for their dedicated service throughout the year, highlighting the parish

initiatives built around the four key focus areas of Family, Church, Ecology, and Society. He also expressed his appreciation for the parish's growing spirit of mercy, particularly in how the community has become more welcoming and inclusive of parishioners with special needs, including children.

Finance chair, Suresh Chandra, then presented an update on the parish's financial situation. He explained that operational costs have risen significantly due to maintenance needs, utilities, and the ageing church infrastructure. He also touched on upcoming plans to upgrade the wake room and the water-proofing project.

In his pastoral address, parish priest, Fr Michael Raymond OFM Cap, reflected on the parish's strengths and its areas for renewal, beginning with key updates for 2026.

He highlighted the Malaysia Pastoral Convention (MPC) 2026, noting the Church's move from

a Peninsular-focused approach to fully embracing the dioceses of East Malaysia. With the theme *Celebrate, Listen, and Walk Together*, the MPC calls the Catholic community to journey as one Church.

He also spoke on *Perjalanan Salib*, an 18-month national pilgrimage preparing Catholics for the MPC. The Cross will travel through all parish zones in May 2026, marked by zone Masses and grassroots participation — a reminder that the Church walks together in faith and hope.

Fr Michael urged the parish to step beyond its comfort zone, expanding outreach beyond internal activities. This includes stronger collaboration with Caritas and the possible revival of the Learning Centre to serve the wider community. He acknowledged the struggles of young families balancing work, time, and faith formation.

Calling the parish to remain rooted in Mercy and renewed in



Fr Michael Raymond OFM Cap addressing his parishioners.

Mission, he encouraged a shift from “What can the parish do for me?” to “What can I offer to build up our parish community?”

A central part of the assembly was the small-group breakout session. Parishioners engaged on three guiding questions. Group facilitators were given the opportunity to present after the breakout session. Participants expressed gratitude for the strong community spirit evident in parish activities, such as support for pilgrims visiting CDM, addressing children with special needs, sign language Masses, *gotong-royong* events, catechetical programmes, and the growing involvement of the migrant community.

Tesalonika, from Indonesia, provided a feedback report, expressing gratitude for CDM as welcoming towards migrants, and says she feels more at home with the Masses in Bahasa Malaysia. The Indonesian group proposed a monthly gathering with local

parishioners to increase integration, as well as the willingness of members to clean the church after Mass, participate in cooking events, and engage in church and liturgical events.

The assembly concluded with updates on the long-awaited Multipurpose Community Centre (MPCC), a major pastoral project years in the making. Parishioners were briefed on the building's progress, timeline, and upcoming milestones.

The project, which began with feasibility studies in 2017, has since gone through extensive technical reviews, design revisions, and regulatory approvals. With full clearance from the Penang Island City Council, relevant ministries and diocesan authorities obtained in early 2025, the parish is now ready to enter the construction phase.

Estimated at RM11.6 million, the project will kickstart fundraising with the *What is Christmas* musical on December 6–7 at College General, Tanjung Bungah.

A Q&A session followed, during which parishioners raised questions about the potential use of the building by the wider community, cost, and security, as well as other general and liturgical topics. The assembly concluded with a renewed spirit of unity and hope. The gathering concluded with prayer and a closing hymn, as Fr Michael entrusted the parish community to God's guidance, inviting all to continue walking together in mercy, mission, and faithful collaboration.



United and moving forward in the Spirit

KUALA LUMPUR: A combined Parish Pastoral Assembly (PPA) was held for the Church of Christ the Light, Desa Jaya, Chapel of Christ the King, Selayang, and Chapel of Our Lady of Lourdes, Sungai Buloh recently. The event brought together the parish community — including the parish priest, ministry leaders, parishioners, and the Canossian Sisters — in a spirit of listening, dialogue, and discernment.

United in faith and love, participants shared their experiences and insights to support the continued growth of the parish. Despite the diversity of languages and backgrounds, the assembly reflected a shared commitment: to move forward together as one community, guided and inspired by the Holy

Spirit.

PPC chairs, Angeline James from Christ the Light and Melvin Moses from Christ the King, together with Fr Peter Anthony, presented updates on past PPA feedback and the implementation of action plans. A review highlighted significant achievements from 2023–2025, especially in the focus areas of **Youth, Family, and Leadership**. Among the successful initiatives were retreats, camps, BEC home Masses, spiritual journeys, and parish-wide bonding activities — each strengthening the fabric of our parish community.

The 65 participants were divided into groups under the same three themes: Youth, Family, and Leadership, comprising a healthy

mix of ministries and lay members. The assembly began with moments of silence before the Lord, followed by an opening prayer invoking the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Participants reflected on questions such as:

- What is my experience of our parish?
- What has been helpful? What needs improvement?
- How do I feel about my parish journey?
- How do our structures — BEC, PCC, PPC, PFC — support or hinder our call to be a synodal parish?

Through open sharing and discernment, valuable insights and constructive feedback were offered — guiding the parish council and parish priest in shaping the vision for a more vibrant, Christ-centred parish over the next two years.

During the Q&A session, Fr Peter addressed various concerns with patience and openness. He encouraged everyone to remain positive, to listen to the Holy Spirit, and to continue journeying together as a family of faith, building a synodal Church grounded in communion, participation, and mission.

The assembly concluded on a hopeful and uplifting note, inspiring current and future leaders to serve with renewed zeal for the growth of our parish.



Participants sharing their insights during the Conversation in the Spirit.

Encountering the saints through relics



Parishioners viewing the relics on display.

PENANG: An exposition of relics was held over two days at the parish hall of the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit recently. The event was a collaborative effort between the Cathedral and the Our Lady of Lourdes Relic Committee under the Penang Diocese Catechetical Commission.

Interest coupled with curiosity got the parishioners to come and see and to view the various relics on display.

One of them, who came, Jael Tan, said that “It was amazing,

with some unexpected saints. Saints which I had never heard of before — it was good to know about them, and I'll go and read more about them.”

This exposition made visible and tangible what sainthood and the divine within each one of us is all about.

May all who came to the exposition be inspired to look to the saints and the lives of the saints as role models — to be in the world but not of the world.

Deacon Andrew Loh

Understanding the spirituality of Advent

Lucille Dass

PENANG: A total of 124 parishioners attended a formation talk on the *Spirituality of Advent* conducted by Fr Raymond Raj, parish priest of the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit.

At the outset, he professed his preferred style of delivery “through dialoguing.” The Socratic method of teaching came to my mind. So, through a range of related questions, he elicited, explained, emphasised, and unpacked the significance of the Advent season with great zeal in just a little over one hour. Some key questions posed were: What is the meaning of Advent? Who is Jesus to you? How do you prepare yourself for Advent? Who celebrates Advent? What does the word Christmas mean? Answers were then probed to ensure basis of understanding before further elucidation.

“The term Advent comes from the

Latin *Adventus* which means coming or arrival and in Greek it is *Parousia*, meaning the coming of a royal ruler. In Christian theology *Parousia* has come to mean the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to judge the world at the end of time,” he noted. Harking back to the Old Testament scriptural verses – Isaiah 7:14; Jeremiah 23:5; Amos 4:12; Micah 5:2 – he continued, “The coming of Jesus Christ was foretold by prophets 2000 years ago.” He reiterated the twofold character of Advent for a clearer understanding – “First Coming of God focuses on the Incarnation; the Second Coming focuses on Judgement.”

He also questioned and cleared cobwebs that clouded some minds on the themes of Advent Scripture readings. The themes of waiting in hope, peace, joy, and love that underlie the weekly readings are meant to enhance our spiritual preparation. The Advent wreath with

the symbolically coloured candles reflect these thematic virtues while the 5th candle – Christ Candle – white to reflect purity, is placed in the centre because Christ is the centre of Christmas and ‘Christmas’ means Christ’s Mass, he elucidated.

His question on who Jesus is to us is inextricably linked to how we prepare ourselves for Advent. Many praiseworthy responses were made to the two questions.

“Sadly, many don’t see Jesus as God, but as a policeman, Santa Claus, or a magician, who will fulfil their wishes. The young think of Him as a friend and as such, He will surely overlook their sins. There are also some CEO (Christmas-Easter-Only) Christians,” he remarked knowingly. For an experience of efficacious personal transformation and renewal during Advent, he stressed, “For inward preparation of your heart and mind: pray; fast (rec-



Fr Raymond Raj answering questions posed by the participants.

ommended); give of yourself; read and meditate on the Word of God; participate in Mass regularly; make an examination of conscience; make your confession and repent accordingly. Remember: Spirituality is the focus of Advent. And Christ must be born in your heart during Christmas vigil.”

Fr Raymond closed with three enlightening quotes on Christmas by luminaries of faith and hope from the past: Archbishop Fulton Sheen, St Teresa of Calcutta, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The partial quote by St Mother Teresa – ‘It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you’... – resonated with me as it did with those I spoke to.

Among them was Juanita Shum. She was deeply touched and shared this beautiful little story, “The quote brought back memories of us having invited a young, homeless and lapsed Catholic to our home to have Christmas dinner with us. He was sleeping in the street, beaten up, and had a broken leg. He was spiritually and emotionally lost; rejected by his family. We welcomed him, hugged him and loved him as one of us. He was touched. That Christmas two years ago, as he sat at our table, it was like Jesus sitting at our table. The real meaning of Christmas came alive for us. Today, he has a job, is reunited with his family, and goes to church. Praise God!”

JOHOR: The Church of St Elizabeth, in the fast-growing town of Kota Tinggi, celebrated its 71st parish feast on November 9, bringing together parishioners and pilgrims from near and far. According to parish priest Fr Martinian Lee, the church is the only one in Malaysia named in honour of St Elizabeth of Hungary.

The evening feast began with Adoration, the Rosary, and the Litany of St Elizabeth of Hungary, leading into a 6.00pm multilingual Mass. Fr Martinian, who also serves as parish priest of the Church of the Holy Family in Ulu Tiram, was the main celebrant. He was joined by his assistant, Fr John Anandan OFM, Cap, and Fr Matthew Bun from Plentong, with Deacon Steven Wong assisting. The church was packed for the solemn occasion.

In his homily, Fr Martinian reflected on the blessings and challenges of modern life. “Today we

Kota Tinggi parish marks 71st feast day



Fr John Anandan OFM Cap giving bread to parishioners.

live in a time of technology and modernisation,” he said. “We have everything we need. Yet, the more we possess, the more selfish we can become. Social media encourages showing off, but generosity of both

love and resources can feel burdensome.”

He pointed to the statue of St Elizabeth of Hungary in the church, depicting her as royalty holding bread that miraculously transformed

into roses. Despite her noble status, St Elizabeth chose a life of austere simplicity and devoted herself to caring for the poor. Her husband, initially sceptical, was moved by this miracle and came to support her charitable mission.

Fr Martinian encouraged parishioners to emulate St Elizabeth’s example, saying it is not wrong to have wealth, but one should not be controlled by possessions. He suggested using a portion of one’s resources to help those in need. He also highlighted her obedience to God, humility, and faithfulness, even amid personal hardships. St Elizabeth died at the age of 24 and was canonised by Pope Gregory IX in 1235.

After Mass, Fr Martinian thanked all involved in the feast day preparations and welcomed

pilgrims from Kuala Lumpur and beyond. He introduced Fr John and Fr Matthew and invited everyone to a dinner fellowship. The blessing of bread followed, with three baskets blessed by Fr John and Fr Matthew. Proceeds from the donated bread will go to the parish POHD to assist the poor, reflecting St Elizabeth’s spirit of charity.

A 10-minute video presentation showcased St Elizabeth’s life and the parish’s colourful history since its establishment in 1954, now under the administration of the church in Ulu Tiram. Parishioners also surprised Fr Martinian with a cake to celebrate his 7th sacerdotal anniversary. St Elizabeth prayer cards were distributed, and many spent quiet moments before her decorated statue, seeking her intercession. **Bernard Anthony**

Generation Alpha thrives at church sports day

PORT DICKSON: Energetic, cheerful, and digitally connected, the children of Generation Alpha showcased their spirit at the Children’s Sports Day 2025, organised by the Catechetical Ministry of the Church of the Immaculate Conception. Held at Taman Komuniti Awam, the event united faith, family, community, and fun in a vibrant celebration.

The day kicked off with participants aged 5 to 17 gathering in their five sports house teams — Blueberry, Strawberry, Banana, Grapes, and Kiwi. They quickly launched into a series of exciting competitions, including tent decorating, cheerleading, formation marching, spoon races, ball games, bean bag and ring tosses, space

hopping, hula hooping, skipping races, sprints, and obstacle courses. The children displayed not only athletic skill but also cooperation, encouragement, and strong camaraderie. The event ended as parish priest, Fr Edwin Peter, presided over the prize-giving ceremony. He reminded the young participants that true success lies not

only in winning but also in giving their best, persevering through challenges, and living out Christian values through play and teamwork.

While sportsmanship was the focus of the day, the event also highlighted the character of Generation Alpha (born 2010–2025), the first generation to grow up fully in a digitally connected world. Catechists noted that events like Sports Day help children balance screen time with real-world experiences of physical activity, teamwork, faith, and community, fostering meaningful formation beyond what digital platforms can offer.

St Carlo Acutis, canonised on April 27, 2025, continues to inspire this generation. Through his creative use of technology to document Eucharistic miracles while deepening his devotion to prayer and the Eucharist, he exemplified how

Generation Alpha can be tech-savvy, committed disciples of the Gospel.

Studies also show that Generation Alpha is socially and environmentally conscious, providing the Church with opportunities to teach Catholic Social Teaching and care for creation. Reflecting this, the Sports Day was organised plastic-free, with reusable utensils and no single-use plastics, allowing participants to actively live out stewardship while enjoying a morning of fun and fellowship.

The five sports house teams competed in friendly rivalry, showing sportsmanship and support, reflecting the Church’s commitment to holistic growth. Events like this help Generation Alpha balance digital and real-world experiences while deepening faith, community, and care for creation. **Susan Teng Yee Ling**



Generation Alpha of the Church of the Immaculate Conception celebrating their victory at the Children’s Sports Day.

KUALA LUMPUR: Worldwide Marriage Encounter (WWME) Malaysia marked its 45th national convention with a vibrant gathering of couples from across the country, including the English and Mandarin-speaking communities. The two-day event, held at the Church of St Francis of Assisi (SFA), combined structured sessions, pilgrimage, and fellowship, providing participants with an opportunity to connect, commit, and celebrate.

Nearly 100 participants attended, including couples from Selangor/Wilayah, Penang, Perak, Johor, as well as Kota Kinabalu and Melaka. The event was blessed with the presence of SFA's parish priest, Fr Paul Cheong OFM, Cap, Fr Gerard Theraviam, Fr Andrew Wong CDD, and Deacon Paul Kang.

The first day began with an ice-breaker to set a warm and welcoming tone. A special jubilee visit with the SFA church team highlighted the convention's connection to the spirituality of St Francis of Assisi. Three core sessions, led by the National Ecclesial Team (NET) Ivan and Jenny Ngoh, and Friar Joe Matthews OFM, Cap, focused on deepening the lifelong journey of marital conversion — from surface changes to profound shifts in beliefs, values, and hearts aligned with God.

Participants explored seven limiting "locks," such as viewing feelings as weaknesses, and were introduced to experiential "keys," reframing feelings as gifts. Sessions outlined the stages of relationships — from romance to power struggle to matured love — reminding



WWME Malaysia marks 45th National Convention

couples that conflicts often revolve around connection, priority, and respect. Emphasis was placed on recognising God as the "third partner" in marital conflicts, nurturing a "couple bubble," and fostering a community that supports fidelity, authenticity, and healing.

Throughout the day, couples engaged in listening, sharing, and spiritual reflection, strengthening bonds with each other and the wider ME community. The evening Mass at the chapel included a renewal of marriage vows and veneration of parish relics, followed by a lively communal dinner at the hall.

Participants shared their reflections on the convention. One

couple remarked, "We appreciated learning about the interdependent stage in a relationship. It is inspiring to know we can move from a power struggle into matured love and experience romance once again." Another added, "The small group sharing was the highlight. Couples shared openly and vulnerably, reminding us that we are not alone. It is beautiful to have a space of trust and belonging."

The day concluded with a gala dinner themed *Warm Hugs and Grateful Hearts*, where friendships were rekindled, and new bonds formed. The NET paid tribute to past contributors through a touching video and song, while state teams

presented entertainment, and prizes were awarded for the longest-married couples and ordained priests. Even Fr Gerard Theraviam and Friar Joe Matthews showcased their musical talents with piano and song.

A special announcement added to the celebration: WWME was officially recognised as an International Association of the Faithful by the Vatican, revealed by former international ecclesial team couple Daniel and Shelley from Singapore. The event also saw the launch of the newly designed National WWME website (wwme.org.my), generously sponsored by Edwin and Clarence Yin.

The second day focused on the formation session, *From First Love to Lasting Fire*, helping participants discern the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Teams also elected new leadership for 2026-2027. Jeffery and Agnes from Johor were appointed as the new national coordinating couple, with Ivan and Jenny, James and Mandy from Selangor, and Joseph and Christine from Penang filling board positions.

The 45th national convention reaffirmed WWME Malaysia's mission of nurturing marriages through faith, community, and ongoing support, leaving participants inspired and equipped to continue their journey of love and conversion.

Catechists equip themselves to safeguard children

KUALA LUMPUR: Sixty-two catechists from across the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur participated in an online *Child Protection Policy* training on November 22. The session in English was conducted by Raymond Jagan of the Committee for Child Protection under the Professional Standards Office (PSO). Simultaneously, a parallel Tamil session, led by Sumathi Annamalai and Edmund Balthazar from the PSO, was attended by 15 Tamil-speaking catechists.

Catechists in the archdiocese are strongly encouraged to attend this training and obtain the corresponding certification as part of the ongoing

implementation of the Archdiocesan Child Protection Policy. The policy aims to safeguard all minors entrusted to catechists, particularly during weekly catechism classes and other activities. It provides a clear framework, procedures, and code of conduct to ensure the safety and well-being of every child, while also protecting catechists from the risk of false allegations.

To make the training widely accessible, the Archdiocesan Catechetical Centre (ACC), in collaboration with the PSO, has been offering virtual sessions since 2021. These cover key topics including *Awareness of Child Protection, the*

KL Archdiocesan Child Protection Policy, Reporting and Handling of Complaints, and Malaysian Legislation on Child Protection.

Participants found the awareness sessions especially enlightening. Trainers clarified that child protection encompasses not only safeguarding children from sexual abuse but also addressing other forms of maltreatment, such as physical abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect. Catechists were reminded to be attentive and responsive to any disclosures of abuse or neglect, even if they occur outside the parish context.

The sessions also provided detailed explanations of the essential elements of the Child Protection Policy, including a standard reporting procedure aligned with Malaysian law and applicable across all parishes. Participants gained insight into the legal foundations supporting the policy, and the questions raised reflected their genuine concern for children's welfare and deep commitment to the Catechetical Ministry.

Since 2021, the Catechetical Centre and PSO have organised 21 training sessions, reaching over 1,000 catechists. Additional online sessions are planned for 2026 in English, Bahasa Malaysia, Tamil, and Mandarin. Parishes wishing to arrange on-site sessions for their catechists may contact the Archdiocesan Catechetical Centre via email catechetical@archkl.org.

Pioneering Catholic mental health ministry launched



SUBANG JAYA: A six-month journey of faith, dedication, and God's grace, which began on May 17, culminated with the commissioning of the pioneer group of the Malaysian Catholic Community Mental Health Ministry at the Church of St Thomas More on November 8.

This ministry, a collaboration between the Catholic Counsellors, Therapists, Psychologists, and Psychiatrists of Malaysia (CCTPPM) and Health Equity Initiatives — both founded by Dr Xavier Pereira in 2017 — aims to bring healing, compassion, and hope to communities across Malaysia.

The sunset Mass presided over by parish priest, Msgr Patrick Boudville, who is also the ecclesiastical assistant for

CCTPPM, was a heartfelt celebration, honouring the commitment of the first ministers. Despite only half the team being present, the event reflected the spirit of unity, service, and prayer that has guided this ministry from the start.

Participants expressed their gratitude and inspiration: the training and mentorship from Dr Xavier equipped them with knowledge, compassion, and courage to serve, while fellowship with parishioners created a sense of belonging and shared mission.

As they go forth to serve Catholic and non-Catholic communities alike, these ministers carry the light of Christ's love, offering hope and healing wherever it is needed. Truly, this journey has been a testament to faith in action.

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Celebrating World Day of the Poor

Church of the Visitation, Seremban

The Ministry of the Poor (MOP) of the Church of the Visitation marked the occasion with a warm, joy-filled celebration dedicated to honouring and uplifting those in need. Earlier that morning, MOP members animated the English Mass, during which special blessings were offered in conjunction with the day's observance.

The event welcomed MOP adoptees, members of the Orang Asli community, and others experiencing economic hardship. In his opening remarks, the assistant parish priest of the Church of the Visitation, Fr Kenneth Gopal, OCD, emphasised that the World Day of the Poor is not only an opportunity to support those in need, but also a reminder of the inherent dignity of every human person. He stressed that the day is meant to celebrate all people — regardless of skin colour, race, or religion — reflecting the Church's commitment to unity, compassion, and inclusiveness.

Elizabeth Chong, leader of the MOP, warmly welcomed the attendees and expressed her heartfelt gratitude for their presence. The gathering continued with a delicious lunch and tea, lovingly served by MOP members, with assistance from the Visitation parish Women's Ministry.

A variety of activities were held throughout the afternoon. A representative from TEKUN gave a talk on business opportunities, guidance, and support services available for aspiring entrepreneurs. Former adoptees also shared their personal journeys on stage, recounting their struggles and celebrating their achievements, offering inspiration and hope to all who listened. One former adoptee demonstrated her artistic skills by guiding primary and nursery children in creating arts and crafts from recycled materials, while teenagers participated enthusiastically in a



Children creating arts and crafts using recycled materials.

motivational session led by other successful former adoptees.

Following the talks, attendees of all ages joined a series of fun-filled games organised by MOP, with support from the Visitation youths. Laughter and excitement filled the air as many participants walked away with prizes.

Before concluding the celebration, families were invited to select and take home quality pre-loved clothes, shoes, handbags, and bedding sets, carefully sorted in advance by the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP), Creation Justice Ministry, and MOP. The SSVP also distributed party packs to the children, while MOP provided each family with cash vouchers.

MOP expressed heartfelt gratitude to all volunteers from the various ministries, whose generosity, service, and joyful spirit helped bring warmth and cheer to those in need on this special day.



A lady assisting a child with colouring.

Chapel of St Joseph, Bukit Tagar

The Chapel of St Joseph in Ladang Nigel Gardner opened its doors to welcome 21 local poor families, including three migrant families.

More than 45 people, mostly non-Catholics from the surrounding estate areas, were warmly received into the chapel. The outreach programme began with a prayer session centred on caring for those in need, followed by the Litany of Hope.

A group of Catholics from Kuala Lumpur joined the gathering and led the prayers in Bahasa Malaysia and English. Alexander, from the Church of St Paul the Hermit in Bestari Jaya, prayed a decade of the Rosary in Tamil. They were accompanied by two other Catholic lay leaders, led by Anthony Dass.

The KL group also shared a reflection in both Bahasa Malaysia and English. They reminded all present that Christians are called to put faith into action through care, compas-

Church of St Michael, Ipoh

Caritas of the Church of St Michael extended its outreach this year to Asrama Shalom Marian, Seri Bahagia, Joyful Homes, Goodwill, MPKSM Sejahtera, Jagaan Mesra, and the Simee Home for the Aged, among others — a reminder that the mission of compassion reaches far beyond the walls of the church.

In the spirit of unity, the parishioners of SMC, young and old alike, came together to prepare meals for the residents of these homes as well as for walk-ins from the streets. On the eve of the celebration, more than 100 volunteers gathered to prepare the ingredients. It was truly a beautiful sight to witness so many parishioners offering their time and hands in service.

The cooking session began at 6.00am on November 16, with volunteers preparing the dishes. Throughout the day, many came forward to cook, to serve, and to welcome walk-ins. More than 100 guests from the

streets joined us for a warm meal prepared especially for them. A lively three-piece band brought joy and entertainment, adding a festive spirit to the gathering. Meals were also packed and distributed directly on the streets of Ipoh, ensuring that those unable to come were not forgotten.

In our efforts to care for creation, nothing went to waste. Most of the food scraps were set aside for composting. Our teenagers eagerly took part, learning not only how to compost but also how this simple act contributes to caring for our planet.

It was truly an eventful and grace-filled day for the parishioners of SMC, one that reflected Christ's call to love, serve, and uphold the dignity of every person. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the parish priest of SMC, Fr Aloysius Tan, for his guidance and to all the members of CARITAS SMC for facilitating this meaningful event. **Jennifer Alberto**



The young and old peeling eggs for the meal.

and concrete support for the poor. The reflection noted that "we can learn from the poor, who despite their struggles and lack of voice in society, continue to live with hope. We, in turn, must show empathy by reaching out, interacting with them, and revealing God's love."

The reflection further emphasised that regardless of religion, race, nationality, or background, "we are all created by the One God." Catholics, therefore, are called to build relationships grounded in respect and humility with those on the margins of society.

After a group photo, guests enjoyed a tea fellowship. This was followed by a balloon game, with many participants receiving small prizes. A colouring activity for the children brought much joy, as each child received a prize for their effort.

A total of 450kg of essential food items — including toothbrushes, bath towels, and pillows — was also distributed to the 21

families.

The organisers expressed hope that the poor would experience a sense of belonging, leaving not only with memories of kindness but also with a deeper feeling of warmth and connection with the Church.

Although the chapel opens only once a year for the feast of St Joseph, it is currently used weekly by an independent Christian group for worship. Alexander shared that the chapel was established some 65 to 70 years ago to serve the Catholic estate workers and their families. Today, however, there are no local Catholic families remaining, except for two or three migrant Catholics — a situation attributed largely to the lack of evangelisation.

In contrast, the independent Christian group has steadily built their presence and community through consistent weekly gatherings and charitable activities over the past few years, utilising the Catholic chapel as their base. **Bernard Anthony**

Church of St Thomas, Kuantan

The Church of St. Thomas the Apostle welcomed over 200 guests, including local impoverished families, migrant communities, and members of the Orang Asli.

After the morning Mass, guests were served a hot meal prepared by parish volunteers at the church's Soup Kitchen, enjoyed together on the church grounds. To entertain the children, a clown performed a lively magic show and handed out colourful balloons on a specially erected stage. Despite intermittent rain throughout the day, attendees remained until the end.

In the evening, approximately 500 participants gathered for the Parish Family

Day Thanksgiving Dinner at the parish community hall. Parishioners, benefactors, and friends from various faiths and Christian denominations shared in friendship and fellowship, celebrating gratitude for God's abundant blessings over the past year.

The success of both events highlighted the dedication and unity of the parish family. Under the guidance of parish priest, Fr George Packiasamy, and with the full support of organising teams, ministry members, and generous parishioners, the celebrations reflected a living expression of faith in action.



The children having a fun time with the clown.

Jubilee of Choirs celebration at CDM Shah Alam

SHAH ALAM: Inspired by the celebration of the Jubilee of Choirs in Rome, the Church of the Divine Mercy (CDM), came together to honour the ministry of music through a day of formation, prayer, fellowship, and praise.

CDM is blessed with eight choirs serving faithfully at various Masses throughout the year, and this celebration was a meaningful opportunity to gather all voices in unity and gratitude.

The day began with a formation and

recollection session attended by about 100 choir members from all CDM choirs. Deacon Philip Asirwalam led the formation, addressing the joys, challenges, and realities of choir ministry today.

This was followed by a time of prayer and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, led by parish priest, Fr George Harrison. Many described this moment as deeply prayerful and renewing.

Participants then gathered in the cafeteria



TAP learning centre's mission continues

PETALING JAYA: The Myanmar TAP Learning Centre, operating on weekdays at the Assumption Family House, marked another milestone of hope and transformation as parishioners, benefactors, volunteers, and members of the Catholic Business Fraternity (CBF) gathered to celebrate its ongoing mission of educating refugee children.

The centre, known as TAP (The Arch Place), is a non-profit initiative established by CBF/Assumption Parish. It continues to rely on the generosity of donors, sponsors, and well-wishers to sustain its programmes. All classes are conducted by dedicated volunteers who offer their time once or twice a week to ensure the children receive consistent learning support.

For years, TAP has focused on nurturing and educating refugee children — particularly from the Myanmar community — believing firmly that education and love can break barriers and transform lives. The celebration was a testament to the remarkable progress the children have made through this parish-based initiative.

In conjunction with International Children's Day on November 20, the Myanmar students showcased their talents through lively performances of song, dance, and drama. Earlier that morning, they were treated to a storytelling session of *Chi Cat Comes Home* by one of the volunteer teachers, known to the children as Aunty Van.

The children also received a special gift: copies of *Chi Ki* and *Ben O* storybooks sponsored by Elaine Kok from the Assumption parish choir. Adding to the joy of the day, crafter Suzanne taught the children how to create heart-shaped balloons, which brought great delight to the young participants.

Also present at the celebration was Archbishop Julian Leow and Assumption's parish priest, Fr Leonard Lexson.

The Myanmar TAP Learning Centre extends its heartfelt gratitude to all benefactors, volunteers, partners, and friends whose generosity and love continue to make this mission possible.

CHS parishioners bring prayer and care to unattended graves

PENANG: About a week after All Souls' Day, parishioners from the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit (CHS) visited unattended graves at the Western Road Cemetery, placing crosses and flowers handmade from pandan leaves, and offered prayers for the Souls in Purgatory.

This initiative, started in 2024, reflects CHS's commitment to building an inclusive, caring, and united parish, especially recognising elderly parishioners who may not be able to visit the cemetery on All Saints' or All Souls' Days.

Preparation began in mid-October, with appeals for pandan leaves and invitations for parishioners to help fold them into crosses and flowers. This allowed even those unable to join the cemetery visit to participate meaningfully. Over four sessions, more than 100 parishioners contributed, folding some 2,500 crosses and 80 flowers.

On the day of the visit, parishioners gathered at the CHS Cafeteria at 8.00am, braving light rain. After a sending-off prayer by Deacon



CHS Parishioners praying at the unattended graves at the Western Road Cemetery.

Andrew Loh, 50 parishioners carpooled to the cemetery. Miraculously, the rain stopped just as they arrived. Each parishioner received a handmade cross or flower and a prayer card with prayers in three languages. Groups were formed, with the elderly covering graves near the cemetery arch while youth and young



for tea, where a simple cake-cutting ceremony commemorated both the Jubilee of Choirs and 20 years of service in CDM.

The evening continued with Holy Mass, fully animated by the CDM choirs, who took on all service roles with joy and reverence. At the end of Mass, a heartfelt memorial honoured choir members who have passed on — beloved individuals whose music and spirit remain close to our hearts.

After Mass, the attendees proceeded to the

St Theresa Cafeteria for dinner. Nearly 500 people gathered for *The Living Hope Musical*, a collaborative performance by all eight CDM choirs.

The musical began at 8.30pm and concluded shortly after 10.00pm. The audience — made up of both parishioners and visitors — was moved and delighted by the performance, which carried the central message that Jesus is our Living Hope, in line with the Jubilee Year of Hope. **CDM Facebook**

St Joseph's Catechetical Award Ceremony

SENTUL: The Church of St Joseph held its Catechetical Award Ceremony on November 16, gathering roughly 200 families for an event organised by the Catechetical Ministry. This year's theme, *Shine the Light of Hope*, guided the celebration of faith, learning, and service.

The ceremony opened with prayer and messages from teachers Nelson, Jane, and parish priest Fr Frederick Joseph, each emphasising the shared responsibility of nurturing the young in faith. A plaque of appreciation was presented to the priest before a milestone video showcased key moments from the catechetical year.

Students were recognised in the Catechism Appreciation segment, which honoured commitment, wisdom, active participation, compassion, and friendliness. A legacy award was also presented to acknowledge the longstanding dedication of catechists serving in the ministry.

Performances from Standards 1 to 6 and Forms 1 to 4 — including songs, dances, cho-

ral pieces, and a yoga presentation — added colour and joy to the occasion.

A key highlight was the presentation of the five spiritual awards across all levels:

St Teresa of Calcutta Award; St Paul the Apostle Award; St Thomas Aquinas Award; St Martin de Porres Award, and St Francis of Assisi Award. These honours recognised not only understanding of the faith but also the values lived out by students who attended consistently and embraced their spiritual journey.

Winners of the Bible Knowledge Competition and Bible Challenge were also celebrated before the ceremony concluded with a photo session and a tribute video honouring the catechists.

The Catechetical Award Ceremony 2025 stood as a meaningful reminder that every act of service — teaching, guiding, and encouraging — helps to shine the light of hope in the lives of the young. **Juliana Philip**



it is a humbling and noble act to visit and pray at these graves. Everyone felt glad to be able to help and pray together." An elderly parishioner added, "We are truly blessed with good weather and the dedication of so many youth and young adults. Their commitment to visit even the more difficult areas after the rain is deeply touching. We could not have reached these graves without them."

Deacon Andrew Loh reflected that visiting unattended graves is a moment of communion between the departed souls and us, a chance to express care and remembrance. St John Paul II reminded us that "Praying for the souls in purgatory is the highest act of supernatural charity."

By 10.30am, all 2,500 crosses and 80 flowers had been placed on unattended graves and niches. Parishioners returned safely to CHS just before a thunderstorm swept through at 11.00am, hearts lifted by the shared experience of prayer, service, and solidarity with those who have gone before us.

adults spread out to reach larger and harder-to-access areas. They carefully searched for graves lacking candles or flowers, placing crosses and flowers, and then praying together for the departed.

The sight of many unattended graves was moving. One youth shared, "Although it is sad,

Liturgical singing requires 'a deep spiritual life'

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV praised the "precious" ministry of liturgical music and told choir members from around the world that their service at the altar must be sustained, above all, by a deep life of prayer.

The Pope celebrated Mass in St Peter's Square for the Jubilee of Choirs on the solemnity of Christ the King, telling choristers and musicians that their vocation is to lead God's people into the mystery of worship.

Pope Leo described singing as a uniquely human way of expressing what words alone cannot say.

"Music can give expression to the whole range of feelings and emotions that arise within us from a living relationship with reality," he said, adding that "singing, in particular, constitutes a natural and refined expression of the human being: mind, feelings, body, and soul come together to communicate the great events of life."

For Christians, he continued, liturgical song is more than performance. "For the people of God, song expresses invocation and praise," he said. "Liturgical music thus becomes a precious instrument through which we carry out our service of praise to God and express the joy of new life in Christ."

The Pope underlined that choir members exercise a genuine ecclesial service, especially in the liturgy.

"You belong to choirs that carry out their ministry primarily in liturgical settings. Yours is a true ministry that requires preparation,



Choristers are not performers but part of the praying assembly. Their task is to lead the faithful closer to God.

commitment, mutual understanding, and, above all, a deep spiritual life, so that when you sing, you both pray and help everyone else to pray," he said.

This ministry, he added, "requires discipline and a spirit of service, especially when preparing for a solemn liturgy or an important event in your communities."

Pope Leo urged choristers not to see themselves as performers set apart from the congregation but as part of the praying assembly.

"The choir is a small family of individuals united by their love of music and the service they offer. However, remember that the com-

munity is your larger family," he said. "You are not on stage, but rather, a part of that community, endeavouring to help it grow in unity by inspiring and engaging its members."

He acknowledged the ordinary tensions that can arise in any group but said that even these can become a sign of the Church's pilgrimage through history.

"We can say to some extent that the choir symbolises the Church, which, striving toward its goal, walks through history praising God," he said. "Even when this journey is beset by difficulties and trials and joyful moments give way to more challenging ones, singing makes

the journey lighter, providing relief and consolation."

Citing both St Augustine and St Ignatius of Antioch, the Pope presented the choir as a sign of synodality and unity in the Church in which diverse voices become a single hymn of praise.

"In fact, the different voices of a choir harmonise with each other, giving rise to a single hymn of praise, a luminous symbol of the Church, which unites everyone in love in a single pleasing melody," he said.

Pope Leo also encouraged musicians to study the Church's teaching on sacred music and to resist the impulse to draw attention to themselves rather than to God.

"Strive, therefore, to make your choirs ever harmonious and beautiful, and a brighter image of the Church praising her Lord," he said. "Study the magisterium carefully. The conciliar documents set out the norms for carrying out your service in the best possible way."

"Above all, dedicate yourselves to facilitating the participation of the people of God, without giving in to the temptation of ostentation, which prevents the entire liturgical assembly from actively participating in the singing," he added. "In this, be an eloquent sign of the Church's prayer, expressing its love for God through the beauty of music. Take care that your spiritual life is always worthy of the service you perform, so that your ministry may authentically express the grace of the liturgy."

Victoria Cardiel, CNA

Reciting the Creed must shape how we live



Pope Leo XIV signs a document in this file photo. (Vatican Media)

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV, in his document *In Unitate Fidei (In the Unity of Faith)*, released on November 23 to mark the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, urged Christians to reflect on what they truly believe each time they recite the Creed. He noted that throughout history, violence has been justified in God's name, often presenting a fearful, punitive image of God instead of a merciful one.

The letter, issued ahead of his visit to Turkey to commemorate the anniversary of the Creed with Orthodox and Protestant leaders, highlights the shared foundation Christians have in the Nicene Creed. Pope Leo acknowledged the historical addition of the filioque clause in the Western Church and noted its omission by recent

popes during ecumenical services, as part of ongoing dialogue with the Orthodox Church.

Affirming the Catholic Church's commitment to Christian unity, he said the Nicene Creed remains a central reference point. He prayed for the Holy Spirit to renew faith, hope, and charity among Christians, emphasising that the Creed reveals a God who is close and active in human life.

Pope Leo urged believers to use the Creed as a moment for examination of conscience, asking themselves whether God is truly at the centre of their lives, how they treat creation, and whether they share justly the goods of the earth. He reminded Christians that faith in the Incarnation calls them to encounter Christ in those in need. OSV News

Canon Law meet addresses key issues in religious life

INDIA: The Commission for Canon Law of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (CCBI) organised a three-day national conference recently for provincials and superiors general of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life in Paalana Bhavana, Bangalore. The gathering brought together 66 provincials, 14 general councilors, and 7 superiors general from across the country, as well as one Abbot General from Sri Lanka.

The conference opened with a solemn Eucharistic celebration presided over by Archbishop Dr S. Antonysamy, DCL, chairman of the Canon Law Commission. This was followed by the inaugural session, during which the archbishop delivered the keynote address on the synodal implications for authority in religious life.

Across seven thematic sessions, the conference addressed key canonical and pas-

toral areas of religious life, including the formation of candidates, the administration of temporal goods, safeguarding issues, excommunication, transfer and departure processes, the three kinds of dismissal, and the relationship between bishops and religious.

Archbishop Dr Peter Machado DCL, vice president of the CCBI and archbishop of Bangalore, celebrated Mass for the participants and highlighted the importance of humility and servant leadership in ecclesial governance.

Rev Prof Merlin Rengith Ambrose DCL, the executive secretary of the Canon Law Commission in the CCBI, served as a resource person for the session on Safeguarding Issues in the Religious life and Catholic Church, and meticulously coordinated the entire national conference. All the participants expressed deep appreciation for this noble initiative of the Commission for Can-



on Law in CCBI and the systematic coordination of the entire event. They recommended organising a similar conference in North India and requested that such formative programmes be held in the upcoming months.

The National Conference concluded with a panel discussion focusing on canonical challenges in religious institutes, secular institutes, and societies of apostolic life. **Fr Dr Dola Vengani Rao**

From Silos to Solidarity:

Caritas Malaysia charts a new path for integral human development

JOHOR BAHRU: From October 27–29, Majodi Centre became the heartbeat of a Church seeking renewal. More than 60 representatives from diocesan Caritas teams, episcopal commissions, religious congregations, and Catholic NGOs gathered for the Caritas Malaysia National Assembly 2025 — a milestone many described as “a reawakening,” “a Pentecost moment,” and “the beginning of a new way of being Church.”

Centred on the theme *From Silos to Solidarity: A Collaborative Space for Integral Human Development (IHD)*, the Assembly invited the Malaysian Church to rediscover its identity, strengthen its unity, and deepen its commitment to those on the margins.

A Call to Walk Together

In his opening address, Bishop Bernard Paul, President of Caritas Malaysia, called for conversion, communion, and co-responsibility.

He urged ministries to move beyond fragmented efforts and embrace a shared mission rooted in the Eucharist and expressed in solidarity with the poor, the migrants, the sick, and the vulnerable. “This Assembly is an invitation to walk together,” he said

Scripture at the Centre: A Spiritual Awakening

The next morning began with spiritual grounding led by Fr Alvin Ng, SJ, who guided participants through Luke 4:18. He invited them to examine attitudes, blind spots, and unconscious biases, and challenged the Church to move:

- from *equality to equity*,
- from *equity to liberation*,
- and from *service to compassionate accompaniment*.

His reflections reminded the Assembly that ministry must begin with inner transformation. Mission without contemplation, he cautioned, risks becoming mere activism.

A Christ-Centred Vision of IHD

A cornerstone of the Assembly was the theological reflection offered by Fr Paul Dass, SJ, *pic*, who framed IHD through a deeply



Christological lens.

Fr Paul stressed that IHD is not rooted primarily in economics or social policy, but in the very person of Christ.

“To speak of human development is to speak of becoming more like Christ. ‘Human’ is a Christological word.”

He emphasised that the Church’s social mission is not optional charity, but a core expression of Christ’s incarnation — a call to restore dignity and promote the fullness of life.

Fr Paul reminded participants that those living in “sub-human conditions” hold a privileged place in the Church. IHD, he said, is:

- restorative,
- holistic,
- grounded in dignity,
- and directed towards fullness of life.

The poor, he noted, do not merely receive assistance — they reveal the face of Christ and shape the Church’s priorities.

He called for a shift: from assistance to accompaniment, from projects to transformation, from service delivery to communion.

“We are not service providers. We are the Body of Christ, revealing God’s tenderness to those rendered less than human.”

This session became a theological anchor for the Assembly.

Seeing the Realities Before Us

A mission-mapping exercise led by Fr Fabian Dicom and Catherine Wang highlighted both the challenges and opportunities across Church ministries. Participants recognised several obstacles, including siloed and



Panellists offering insights into the challenges and pastoral realities facing the community today.

fragmented efforts, overlapping initiatives without coordination, passion without structure, short-term charity overshadowing long-term formation, and formation approaches focused more on information than genuine encounter.

At the same time, the exercise revealed opportunities for growth: complementary strengths across dioceses, openness to collaboration, a shared desire for common purpose, and readiness for a unified approach to Integral Human Development (IHD).

A values-based “Line Game” further helped participants surface biases and build trust, laying essential groundwork for future collaboration.

Communion as a Way of Life

In a synthesis session, Fr Fabian underlined that communion is not simply an idea, but a way of living the Gospel.

He reminded participants that:

- The Eucharist must lead directly to the streets.
- Malaysia’s diversity is a modern-day Pentecost.
- The poor are not burdens — they are bearers of truth.
- Communion demands humility, honesty, and conversion.

His final conviction resounded: “The margin must become the centre.”

Shaping the Future Together

On the final day, participants collaborated in mixed groups to design models for a national platform for Integral Human Development (IHD). Through gallery walks, peer review, and dot voting, a clear consensus emerged on the Church’s key needs: a coordinated mission, shared formation, pooled resources, stronger communication structures, and leadership that actively includes the marginalised.

These discussions and insights crystallised into five national commitments:

- **Shared Formation,**
- **Shared Mission,**
- **Shared Resources,**
- **Shared Voices, and**
- **Shared Prayer.**

Collectively, these commitments lay the foundation for the envisioned National IHD Platform 2028, a unified and coordinated structure designed to strengthen the Church’s social mission and foster lasting collaboration across dioceses, commissions, and ministries.

Closing: A New Beginning

In his closing remarks, Bishop Bernard Paul offered a concise roadmap for the Church’s journey forward.

He reminded participants that genuine transformation begins within, noting that “there are two realities: those who comment, and those who accompany,” and calling the Church to always choose the latter.

He then outlined the three levels of mission

- Me-the-Missionary (identity),
- Ministry-with-Method (intentionality), and
- Mission-for-Solidarity (co-responsibility) — emphasising that the Church must strive to live out the third with greater conviction.

Stressing the need for unity of purpose, he added that “collaboration without coordination leads to confusion,” urging ministries and dioceses to work in greater harmony.

Concluding with a blessing, Bishop Bernard reminded the participants that although they arrived as strangers, they now depart as fellow pilgrims, commissioned to go forth and build pathways of solidarity.

The Assembly ended with Mass followed by a joyful Solidarity Night hosted by Caritas Malacca Johore, celebrating Malaysia’s cultural and ecclesial diversity.

A Church Rooted in Relationship, Sent for Transformation

Feedback from participants described the Assembly as inspiring, unifying, and transformative. Many returned home with deepened conviction that the Church’s social mission must be rooted in listening, collaboration, and solidarity.

The 2025 Assembly marks not an ending, but a new beginning, an invitation to become a Church where every person is a gift, where the poor help shape the mission, and where communion becomes the future of Caritas Malaysia.



Participants voting for a national IHD collaborative model.



Bishop Bernard Paul, president of Caritas Malaysia, presiding over the Mass to close the assembly.

Seeds of peace in the soil of conflict

Pope's prayer intention for December

December arrives, and the world prepares to close another year marked by war, displacement, political tension and humanitarian despair. Into this landscape, the Holy Father offers a prayer intention that is both a cry and a challenge:

“For Christians living in areas of war or conflict, especially in the Middle East, that they may be seeds of peace, reconciliation and hope.”

This intention comes at a time when Christian communities in several conflict zones are facing unprecedented vulnerability. Their numbers are shrinking, their churches have been attacked, and their future remains uncertain. Yet, precisely in these fragile places, the Pope sees the possibility of Gospel seeds - small, humble, and capable of transforming barren soil.

A Year of Deep Wounds

In recent months, the suffering of Christian communities in conflict-ridden regions has become painfully visible.

In the *Gaza Strip*, Christians represent less than one per cent of the population - a tiny and exposed minority. Churches have been damaged, families displaced, and whole neighbourhoods scarred. Yet Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, offered a striking reflection: because the Christian community is not seen as a threat by either side, they are uniquely placed to serve as bridge-builders, helping all parties imagine a post-war future rooted in shared humanity (*AP News*, Oct 6, 2025).

What does this look like in real life?

One powerful example comes from *Asia Abu Shomar*, a nurse, midwife, and paramedic at Caritas Jerusalem's Al-Qarara Medical Point in Khan Younis. For over twenty years, Asia has served her community, but her courage shone most brightly during the recent bombings. When families fled in panic and buildings crumbled, *she refused to abandon her post*. With explosions echoing through the night, she transformed a small clinic into a sanctuary — treating the injured, comforting mothers in labour, calming terrified children, and making sure no one felt alone in the darkness.

“Giving with love, even in the face of fear, is what keeps us all alive,” she said in a Caritas interview.

Asia's witness echoes another figure from our tradition: *St Francis of Assisi*, who in 1219 crossed battle lines during the Crusades to meet the Sultan of Egypt. He did not go as a warrior but as a man of peace, choosing dialogue over hostility. Asia's quiet presence — steady, humble, compassionate — reflects that same Franciscan courage in a modern warzone. (<https://www.caritas.org/jerusalem/emergency/a-story-from-caritas-jerusalem/>)



PRAYER PRISM

Fr Fabian Dicom

light-amid-the-darkness/)

Elsewhere in the region, the suffering is equally intense.

In *Syria*, the long, grinding conflict continues to empty Christian neighbourhoods. On June 23, 2025, a suicide bombing during Mass at St Elias Church in Damascus killed at least 25 worshippers — the deadliest attack on Syrian Christians in years (*Washington Post*, June 23, 2025). In some districts, the Christian population has fallen from around eight per cent to as little as two per cent. One village in Deir ez-Zor is now home to only seven elderly Christians - fragile witnesses of a once-flourishing community (*Le Monde*, Sept 17, 2024).

Across the world, the 2024 Open Doors report notes that **365 million Christians** now live under high-level persecution - many in conflict zones. These are not statistics. They are families, stories, faces.

Where Seeds Are Still Being Planted

If we listen carefully, the most compelling testimonies from conflict zones today are not heroic speeches but quiet, faithful acts. In Gaza, Christian families opened their homes to Muslim neighbours whose houses had been reduced to rubble - sharing food cooked over open fires, tending to the wounded, and surviving together. This is the peace that grows from shared suffering and human solidarity (Premier Christianity, 2025).

A scholarly study on Christian peace-making in Gaza notes four simple but powerful practices:

- **solidarity** with the wounded,
- **humanitarian care** without discrimination,
- **challenging cycles of vengeance**, and
- **educating children** towards hope (*CRDA Journal*, 2024).

These acts are small seeds - but they are sown in scorched earth and thus carry immense moral weight.

Another image from last Christmas captured global attention:

At an Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, the parish placed *a figure of the Baby Jesus amidst broken stones and rubble* — the debris of war. This “crib of rubble,” featured by Reuters and Al Jazeera, became a symbol of two powerful truths: that Christ is born into the world as it is, not as we wish it to be; and that hope can emerge even from destruction.



Foreign workers hold up documents for inspection by the Immigration Department during a raid on a housing camp for construction workers in Cyberjaya, in Malaysia's Selangor state, June 7, 2021. (BenarNews/S. Mahfuz)

It was a visual proclamation that **God's presence chooses the margins**, the wounded streets, the places where peace seems impossible.

These moments are not news headlines. They are Gospel moments.

They remind us that the mission of the Church in conflict zones is not to dominate, but to remain faithful — to be present, compassionate, and available.

This is what a seed looks like.

The Challenge for Us in Malaysia

We might admire these stories from afar. But the Pope's prayer intention invites us to recognise the deeper truth: **their wounds are not foreign; they are ours**. When one part of the Body suffers, the whole Body suffers.

Malaysia is not a warzone. Yet we are not free from seeds of division, suspicion, and fear - in our politics, social fabric, religious perceptions, and even within our Church communities.

If Christians under bombardment can become seeds of peace, **what prevents us — living in relative stability — from doing the same?**

Perhaps we need to rediscover three truths.

1. Peace begins with proximity

Christians in conflict zones do not survive in isolation. They survive because they stay close to the wounded. They move toward suffering, not away from it.

Our own “conflict zones” in Malaysia are quieter but very real:

- undocumented migrants,
- refugees without protection,
- indigenous families displaced,
- those trapped in poverty,
- people discriminated against or rendered invisible.

The Gospel calls us to draw near.

Proximity is the beginning of peace.

2. Hope grows when language becomes gentle

The first violence in any conflict is verbal.

Suspicion. Stereotyping. Dehumanising the other.

Christians in Gaza and Syria show that gentle speech is an act of resistance against hatred.

In Malaysia, we must ask:

What seeds are we planting with the words we speak - in our homes, online, in our parish groups?

Our language can create pathways of peace or walls of separation.

3. The Church must be a sanctuary, not a fortress

Christians in the Middle East survive not because they have political protection, but because their churches remain open - welcoming Muslims, the displaced, the traumatised, the grieving.

A Church that welcomes becomes a seedbed for peace.

A Church that closes its doors becomes irrelevant.

If our parishes embodied this spirit, our nation would feel different.

A Shared Hope

The witness of Christians in conflict zones reminds us that peace rarely comes through power.

It takes root through small, persistent acts:

- a reopened clinic,
- a shared meal,
- a crib made of rubble,
- a gentle word,
- a refusal to hate,
- a commitment to justice.

These are seeds entrusted to God — and seeds, once entrusted, carry life we cannot yet see.

A Closing Invitation

This December, as the Church in Malaysia joins the Holy Father's prayer, may our hearts be stretched toward compassion, solidarity, and conversion.

Let us carry in prayer the Christians of Gaza, Damascus, Aleppo, Mosul, Bethlehem, South Sudan, Nigeria, Myanmar, and every place where the Body of Christ bleeds.

And may their perseverance help us see our own mission more clearly.

May their courage inspire ours.

May their wounds soften our hearts.

May their hope strengthen our hope.

And may their fragile but persistent peace awaken in us a deeper desire to be Christ's presence in our land.

“Let us pray that Christians living in areas of war or conflict, especially in the Middle East, might be seeds of peace, reconciliation and hope.”

May this prayer become our way of life.



Palestinians, who were displaced to the southern part of Gaza at Israel's order during the war, make their way along a road in the central Gaza Strip as they return to the north on October 10, 2025, after a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza went into effect. (OSV News photo/Mahmoud Issa, Reuters)

Fr Fabian Dicom is the National Director of Caritas Malaysia

By Fr John Mi Shen

dozed off one spring day and dreamt of Old Nang. It has already been nine or ten years since he left this world.

After the initial shock and sadness of hearing about his accident, his memory gradually settled into the quieter corners of my mind — surfacing only now and then when I recalled my days in Xiao-Li, the small rural parish in my diocese back in China, where I served for a year before coming to *Radio Veritas Asia*.

But this Qingming morning (also known as Tomb-Sweeping Day, a major traditional Chinese festival observed around April 4 to 6 each year), he walked right into my dream — as if gently reminding me, “Father, don’t forget Xiao-Li. Don’t forget us.”

Those were the exact words he told me the day I left the village.

I woke up with a full heart and knew I had to write something for him — something simple, true, and warm — just like Old Nang himself.

The man everyone called “Old Nang”

Everyone in Xiao-Li called him Nang, a nickname given out of affection. He was the gatekeeper of the church, a tall man with dark skin, usually covered in factory soot, and completely unconcerned about how he looked. Many of his teeth were missing, and he never bothered with dentures. When he laughed — which he often did — those few remaining teeth made his smile even more real, more human.

He smoked a lot. And once his cigarette was lit, his stories — and his laughter — would fill the room. His voice was rough and deep, the kind that came from years of hard work and long days at the iron-casting factory. But it was a voice you could never forget.

When I asked why people called him “Old Nang,” he scratched his head and said with a grin,

“Maybe because I always look a bit messy... like a nang nang.”

It was his way of laughing at himself — open, honest, with no pretence at all.

That was the beauty of him.



One day I hope to sit with Old Nang and share a steak

My morning alarm, my evening companion

Our daily encounters were simple but memorable. Every morning before sunrise, as he left for work, he would shout under my window:

“Father, I’m heading out!”

Then came the squeaky sound of his old bicycle fading down the road. That was my alarm clock for a whole year. After I left Xiao-Li, I often felt something missing in the mornings — until I realised it was that loud, affectionate wake-up call.

He came home late every day, usually after Mass. The parishioners loved gathering in my small room after evening Mass — laughing, joking, teasing each other with local nicknames that I couldn’t understand at first. Xiao-Li had its own humour, warm and rustic. When everyone left, Old Nang would patiently explain to me the nicknames and the funny stories. Those evenings made Xiao-Li feel like home.

But slowly, the late nights made me ill. I started coughing for weeks. And that was when Old Nang quietly stepped in. He became not only my morning bell, but also my evening drum. When it got late, he would clap his hands and tell everyone,

“Alright, time for Father to rest!”

After the others left, he would bring me a pot of hot water so I could soak my feet before bed. It was such a simple act. But simple acts speak louder than words, don’t they?

A rough shell with a gentle heart

One autumn, I casually mentioned how pretty the persimmon tree in the churchyard looked.

He said nothing. After the harvest season, I found all the bright orange persimmons neatly arranged on my windowsill. That burst of colour in the chilly air made me feel incredibly cared for.

His heart was sincere in the quietest ways. One of the most demanding priests in our diocese chose Old Nang to stay with him during his final days. For a man known to be extremely strict, that choice said everything.

Not long after I left Xiao-Li, I heard the news of the accident that took his life. It hurt in a way I still cannot fully describe.

The dream

In my dream, he had a thick cotton jacket on, smiling that familiar toothless smile. In his hands was a heavy cast-iron steak pan — the kind with grill lines. He handed it to me. It was so heavy I woke up with a start.

I remembered the pan right away. He had brought it for me from the factory.

“Our factory makes pans for export,” he declared proudly then.

“I told the boss our priest studied abroad and he knows how to cook steak. So I brought you one.”

I had asked him, “Have you ever eaten steak?”

He laughed shyly.

“No... but Father, when you make steak with this pan, please tell me!”

I promised him I would. But the truth was that I didn’t know how to make steak back then, and Xiao-Li certainly didn’t have steak anywhere. It became a promise I could never fulfill. Maybe that’s why he appeared in my dream — still carrying that pan.

A hope that goes beyond this life

Today, as I write this, I feel grateful — grateful that Old Nang visited me in my dream. I believe he is now in the Father’s House, healed, happy, and full of joy. I also believe that heaven surely has the best steak imaginable. And one day, I hope to sit with him in that place and, as Jesus said, “drink the new wine in my Father’s kingdom” (Mt 26:29).

Until then, I will hold close both the pan he gifted me and the memories he left behind — simple, warm, and full of life.

Fr John Mi Shen is the Programme Director of RVA. He also serves as the Executive Secretary of the Office of Social Communications, FABC.

An Advent reflection on the ultimate gift

As the year winds down and December unfolds, a recognisable hum of activity begins. The world prepares by decorating houses. Shopping lists are drafted, online carts are filled, and homes are adorned with lights and decorations. The world's message is clear: Christmas is coming, and you must make provision for consumption, celebration, and the curated image of joy.

The Church, in her wisdom, has a different take. We, too, enter a season of preparation called Advent. But our preparation is of a radically different rhythm, mood and spirit. It is not a frantic rush toward a deadline, but a quiet, intentional journey and hopeful anticipation toward a divine encounter. At Christmas, we first receive, welcoming the most extravagant gift ever given to humanity. The entire human race is the recipient of the most extravagant gift ever given. Yes, every person, every heart, is counted among its recipients.

The Divine gift and the Divine giver

St John perfectly encapsulates the Christmas mystery: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son..." (John 3:16). Here we see the perfect, inseparable link between the Giver and the Gift.

The Giver is God the Father, whose very essence is love, mercy, and kindness. The Gift is Jesus Christ, His only Son, the Word Made Flesh.

The "value" of this Gift is infinite because the Giver is infinitely good. We would not, and could not, accept this Gift if we believed the Giver to be cruel, capricious, or manipulative. We can open our hearts to Jesus precisely because we trust in the sweet and kind nature of the Father who sends Him.

This brings us to the crucial question of Advent: If God has taken such care in giving the perfect Gift, how must we, as recipients, prepare to receive Him?

Preparing the manger of the heart

A gift of such divine intimacy cannot be thrust into a soul cluttered with the sharp debris of resentment, the dust of neglect, or the rot of sin. He comes to us as a vulnerable infant, and He will not force His way in. He waits for an invitation. The spiritual works of Advent are the process of issuing that invitation.

This is the "conversion of heart and soul" we are called to. It is far more demanding than any shopping trip, yet it costs nothing but our pride and our time. This preparation involves:

1. The Silence of Prayer: Amidst the noise of commercials and Christmas carols, we must carve out moments of stillness. In silence, we can hear the gentle knock of the Divine Infant on the door of our heart (Rev 3:20). This is not about long, complicated prayers, but about creating a daily space to say, "Come, Lord Jesus. I am waiting for you."

2. The Confession: The Sacrament of Reconciliation is the ultimate Advent housecleaning. It is the process of sweeping out the sin that clutters our souls and making room for grace. To go to Confession is to actively prepare the manger, stripping away the old garment and replacing it with the fresh garment of God's mercy and forgiveness.

3. The Almsgiving: Advent is a time to practise being a "sweet and kind" giver, imitating our Heavenly Father. This goes beyond writing a cheque. It is the gift of our time to the lonely, our patience to the frustrating, our forgiveness to those who have hurt us, and our resources to those in need.

When we give in this way, we form our hearts into the shape of the Great Giver, making them more capable of receiving His love.



Seeking truth in all things

DEACON ANTHONY CHUA

The soul of the gift lies in the giver's intent

The jarring discord between these two preparations can be a source of great stress for Catholics. We feel the pull of cultural obligations while sensing the soul's deeper yearning for something more.

On the one hand, the secular world accelerates toward Christmas with urgency and on the other, the Church invites a slower, quieter path. The tension between outward busyness and inward stillness can leave

the faithful feeling torn — longing to honour the sacred while being swept into the noise.

This year, perhaps we can bridge this gap by reflecting on a simple, profound truth we all understand: the value of a gift is inseparable from the heart of the giver.

It calls us to emulate the Giver. We are invited to become gifts ourselves — offering presence, compassion, and the labour of love to those around us. For too long, the focus has leaned toward presents, while the deeper invitation — to give with character, with integrity, with beauty — has been neglected.

A timepiece without time shared

Consider your own experiences. Have you ever received an expensive present from someone you particularly don't get along with or you never fully trusted or liked? The gift, regardless of its cost, feels hollow, perhaps even uncomfortable. It is rejected or set aside because we cannot separate the object from the person who gave it. Conversely, a child's handmade card or a simple gesture from a beloved friend can move us to tears because it is infused with the love of the giver.

I recall a friend who received an expensive watch from his superior as a parting gift for his years of service. It was a beautiful

timepiece, yet I never saw him wear it. When I asked about it, he quietly avoided the question. Only later did I learn that he had never truly gotten along with his colleague and superior. The gift, though materially valuable, lacked the warmth of genuine relationship. It served as a reminder that the heart behind the gift matters more than the gift itself. Without authentic connection, even the most extravagant offering can feel hollow. This experience deepened my conviction that our giving must be rooted not just in generosity, but in sincerity, respect, and love.

Sanctifying our earthly preparations

This reflection is not a call to abandon gift-giving. The tradition is a beautiful imitation of God's generosity. Instead, it is an invitation to let our external preparations flow from our internal conversion.

In Jesus, the message and the messenger are one — both the Message of salvation and the Messenger who delivers it.

He does not merely speak of love — He is love incarnate. He does not only proclaim the Kingdom — He embodies it in every gesture, every healing, every act of mercy. His life is the proclamation: the Word made flesh dwelling among us. In Him, the gift and the giving converge. To encounter Jesus is to receive both the truth He teaches and the presence through which that truth is made real.

At Christmas, this truth takes on particular weight. If the character of the giver is lacking — if there is no sincerity, compassion, or integrity — then even the most expensive gift feels hollow. But when the giver carries Christ within, the gift becomes sacramental, a visible sign of invisible grace. In such giving, the person and the present are one, and the offering becomes a true encounter with love.

A legal practitioner by profession, Deacon Anthony Chua is a permanent deacon of the Diocese of Malacca Johore.

As the Jubilee Year of Hope draws to a close and the first candles of Advent are lit, and we begin preparing for the festivities for Christmas and the New Year, I find myself exhaling. Slowly but surely. What a year it has been.

This is the last piece from me this year and I wanted to take some time to reflect, not so much on just the season of Advent but on the entirety of the year and more importantly to ask myself— what has this Jubilee Year really changed in me?

The Church calls the Jubilee a time of renewal, restoration, release, and return to God, and in many ways that's what my year has been. During a recent homily, some questions the priest raised struck a chord with me and I decided to reflect on the questions he posed.

Is God at my centre?

It has been difficult to put God in the centre of my life this year and I find that I have parked God at the sidelines on most days.

Here's how I am going to explain what I mean... Imagine my life as a basketball game. Before the "basketball game of life" started this year, I told God to cheer for me and wait for me on the sidelines. During the game, I got impatient, I got frustrated, I got pushed, I got tired, I stumbled, I got knocked about, I tripped, fell, and felt lost numerous times.

And when I finally admitted defeat, with a wrecked spirit and bruised body, dragging my hurting knees and aching heart off the court,



Mustard Seed Journeys

JOANNE WONG

I saw Him. God — just waiting there for me where I had left Him.

I got angry with God — why didn't He see me and help me throughout the game? Then through my heart's eyes, I saw that all the while, He was cheering for me, telling me to get up, rushing to help me when I tripped — but I pushed Him aside, telling Him I got it. I saw Him asking me to

take a break, waving snacks and refreshing water — but I told Him to wait, that He didn't understand, but I needed to hustle, needed to win. When I fell, He offered His hand to pull me up, but I pushed Him aside, told Him I could get up on my own and told Him to just wait for me.

Just like in the famous "Footprints" story, He was there all along. If only I had placed Him in the centre of the "basketball game of life" at the very beginning, things would have been so different. I know life will not always be smooth sailing, even with God at my centre, but I know that through all things, He will be able to refresh me, restore me, renew me, encourage me, and protect me, weaving His grace and peace into my life.

Do I put Him first in the midst of everything?

Not always, sadly. Sometimes, God is first. Sometimes, survival is first. And I know that God knows how I struggle with that. But what matters is that even on the days when my prayer is simply, "Jesus, please help me get

A hope-filled Jubilee year

through this." He receives it as an offering.

Advent is a reminder for me to reorder things, to put Him first — not because of guilt but because I am thankful. Not because God demands more, but because my soul actually needs more of Him and I am so, so blessed by all He has provided.

Have I grown in hope this Jubilee Year?

Hope feels different now than it did say 20 years ago. Back then, hope felt like excitement about the future. Now, hope is the decision to trust God through the ups and downs of life that sometimes make no sense. Hope has become my anchor.

I look back at this year and I see moments that stretched me, moments that humbled me, and moments that healed me. I see how my hope has grown steadily like a fire, not all at once. And maybe that is how we grow in hope — quietly, deeply, without realising it until we pause long enough to look back.

Am I a bearer of hope?

The Jubilee calls us to receive God's mercy, to return to God with renewed hearts, to seek reconciliation and healing, to rebuild relationships and renew trust in God's love and providence and to strengthen and share our hope.

And I look back and wonder if I have given hope to others this year. I don't know if I have made any significant changes in anyone's life, but I think it's in the little things that I have done; choosing to be patient with my kids after a long day; gently encouraging a friend; praying for someone who is sick or hurting...

there is so much that I can still do to be a bearer of hope and that's something I will work on.

Continuing the Jubilee

So, as Advent begins and the Jubilee year (and 2025) draws to a close, my heart is just filled with gratitude. Gratitude for the ways God has held my family and me together. Gratitude for the strength I didn't know I had. Gratitude for the grace that has carried me through days I didn't think I could manage. Gratitude for all He has provided. Gratitude that in everything, God remains trustworthy.

Perhaps the best gift I can offer Jesus this year is a renewed desire to see Him, seek Him, and to centre my life and my family's life on Him.

Despite the end of the Jubilee, I am also choosing to continue to carry forward the blessings of the Jubilee — hope, mercy, renewal — into the coming year.

I may not always get things right, but I want to keep trying because God has been faithful, patient, and present. I believe that, despite how life turns out in the New Year or in the years to come, God still writes beautiful endings even when the middle chapters are messy. Happy Blessed Christmas and Happy New Year in advance — May God continue to be our hope and light always.

Joanne Wong is on a journey towards having faith the size of a mustard seed. She welcomes thoughts and suggestions on how to have a closer walk with God. Email her at joanne.wpm@gmail.com



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Speaking truth in parables

Jesus was once asked why He spoke in parables. His answer is more than a little curious: *I speak in parables . . . lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn again, and I should heal them.*

At first glance, it would seem that Jesus is being deliberately vague so that people would not understand the truth — and so could remain ignorant and obstinate.

The opposite is true. His studied imprecision is a gentleness, a deep compassion that recognises that because people's lives are complex, the truth should only be spoken in a certain way. How?

It is not enough just to have the truth. Truth can set us free but it can also freeze hearts further if it is presented carelessly. Here's a poignant example:

Novelist Joyce Carol Oates once published a book called *Them*. Although a novel, the book is based on the life of real person, a young woman whom Oates once taught in a college classroom and to whom she gave a failing grade.

Sometime after she had given this young woman a failing grade, Oates received a letter from her. The woman shared much of her own story, which was very checked and painful. She had come from a bad

home, been abused as a young girl, and had spent a number of years trying to deal with her wounded self through mindless and anonymous sex.

At the time she wrote this letter, she was trying to pull herself out of both her past and her destructive patterns of coping. In her letter she complained bitterly that she was not helped much by the class she took from Oates. Here, with a few slight redactions, is an extended quote from her letter:

"You once said in one of your classes: 'Literature gives form to life.' I remember you saying that very clearly. And now I want to ask you something: 'What is form? And why is that better than the way life happens by itself?'

I hate all that, all those lies, so many words in all those books. What form is there to the way things happen? I wanted to run up to you after class and ask you that question, cry it out at you, shout it into your face because your words were wrong! You were wrong!

And yet I envy you. I have envied you since I first saw you. You and others like you. Your easy way with words and people. The way you can talk to others, like friends.

One day, before class, I saw you walking into the building with another teacher, the two of you, well-dressed, talking, smiling,

like that was no accomplishment whatsoever. And another time I saw you driving away from school in a blue car.

And I hate you for that. For that and for your books and for your words, and for your knowing so much about what never happened in any perfect form.

I even see your picture in the newspapers sometimes. You, with all your knowledge, while I have lived my life already, turned myself inside out and got nothing out of it. I have lived my life and there is no form to it. No shape.

I could tell you about life. I and people like me. All of us people who lie alone at night and squirm with a hatred we cannot get straight, into a shape. All of us women who give themselves to men without knowing why, all of us who walk fast with hate, like pain, in our bowels, terrified. What do you know about that?

Like the woman I am sitting across from right now in the library as I write this letter. She is fat, heavy, thick cream-coloured fat-marbled old legs, cracked with varicose veins. People like her and me know things you don't know, you teachers and writers of books.

We are the ones who wait around libraries when it is time to leave and sit drinking coffee alone in the kitchen. We are the ones

who make crazy plans for marriage, but have no one to marry. We are the ones who look around slowly when we get off the bus; but don't know what we are looking for.

We are the ones who leaf through magazines with coloured pictures and spend long hours sunk in our own bodies; thinking, remembering, dreaming, waiting for someone to come and to give form to so much pain. And what do you know about that?"

Yes, what do we know about that, we teachers, preachers, and writers of books? Her letter tells us why Jesus spoke in parables.

The truth can set us free. Indeed, it can give form to life. But can also be spoken unthinkingly, without heart, and then it serves mostly to rub our own inadequacy and shame into our face.

We need to speak our truth in parables. Truth is not something we can play with, fast and easy.

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



The Psalms as living prayer

I was delighted to read Fr Ron Rolheiser's column on 'The Psalms as prayer' (*HERALD*, November 9, 2025). His insights reaffirmed my long affinity with the psalms. For me, the psalms are more than liturgical recitations — they are prayers that bridge the ancient and the present, uniting what was then with what is now. Each time I proclaim a psalm during Mass, I am drawn into a moment of reflection, where communal worship becomes more personal. My love for the psalms is rooted not only in their lyrical beauty but also in their timeless ability to speak to the human experience and always giving hope!

During the Liturgy of the Word at Mass, a cantor sings each strophe of the psalm, while the assembly joins in by repeating the antiphon (refrain) after the First Reading in a responsorial form. This is a meditation on the Word of God, inviting us to listen, ponder, and respond. It allows me to encounter the Word of God not only through song but also through spoken prayer, transforming passive listening into active participation. With focused attention, I find myself not merely reciting

ancient verses but entering into a dialogue with God. The psalm often mirrors the experiences of my life, and it is in these moments that Scripture becomes deeply personal.

Our Lord Jesus and His Apostles grew up learning and praying the psalms. I had a Jewish friend who informed me that he is able to attend Mass and will participate until the end of the psalms as the First Reading is taken from the Old Testament and Book of Psalms is shared by both Jews and Catholics. My favourite psalm is Psalm 23 verse 1-2, "The LORD is my Shepherd; There is nothing I shall want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside still waters". This is a psalm of trust and comfort, and we can make it our personal prayer by discerning "Lord, thank you that You are my Shepherd guiding me and because of Your steadfast care, I will not want for anything, I am safe."

In the YouTube Channel, there is a moving video titled "Psalm 23: The Lord is my Shepherd – Dave & Lauren Moore – National Eucharistic Congress Closing Mass". In this recording, the entire stadium

falls into a profound stillness — many eyes closed, as people reflect on the beauty and comfort of this beloved psalm. Lauren Moore invokes the psalms with the words and melody providing a deep reverence and shared moment of prayer and contemplation.

I have found it helpful to memorise some of the psalms that I have found most meaningful so that I can always have them with me. Moreover, the psalms are rich in theological depth. I try to repeat and memorise some antiphons; it is short and reflective. Psalm 25: "Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul". Psalm 102: "Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee". Psalm 104: "Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great". Such verses anchor my understanding of God not as distant or abstract, but as intimately involved in the human story. During Mass, when these words are proclaimed, they do more than inform — they transform.

The poetic nature of the psalms also appeals to my love for language and communication. As someone who values

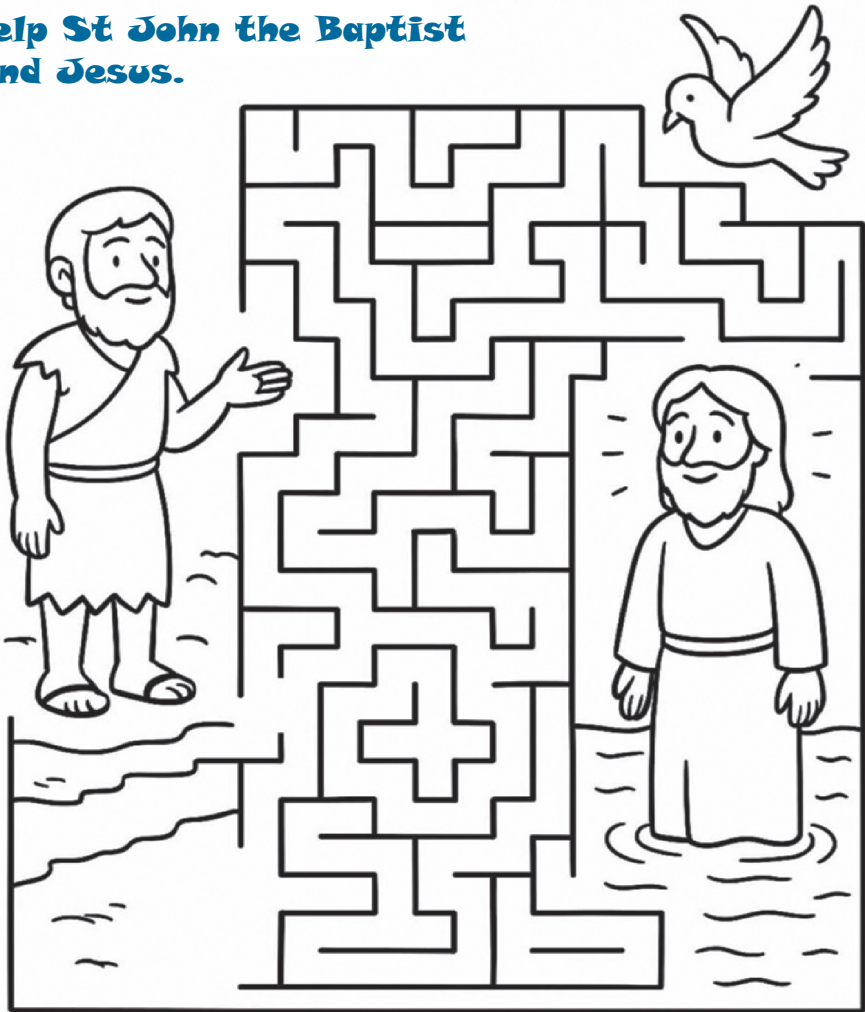
clarity and impact in communication, I find the psalms to be a masterclass in expressive depth. They teach me that words, when inspired and intentional, can move hearts and stir souls. This is especially evident during Mass, where the psalm is often sung. The musical setting elevates the text, allowing it to resonate not just intellectually but emotionally. In those moments, I wish the psalm continues!

As Fr Ron Rolheiser rightly said, "What makes the psalms so apt for prayer is that they do not hide the truth from God and they express the whole gamut of our actual feelings. They give honest voice to what's actually going on in our minds and hearts. The psalms are a privileged vehicle for prayer because they lift the full range of our thoughts and feelings to God".

In a world often marked by noise and distraction, the psalms offer a space for stillness and contemplation. They invite me to slow down, to listen, and to be present. During Mass, when the psalm is proclaimed, I often close my eyes and let the words come over me. In this sacred pause, I find peace. **Christopher Kushi**

Little Catholics' corner

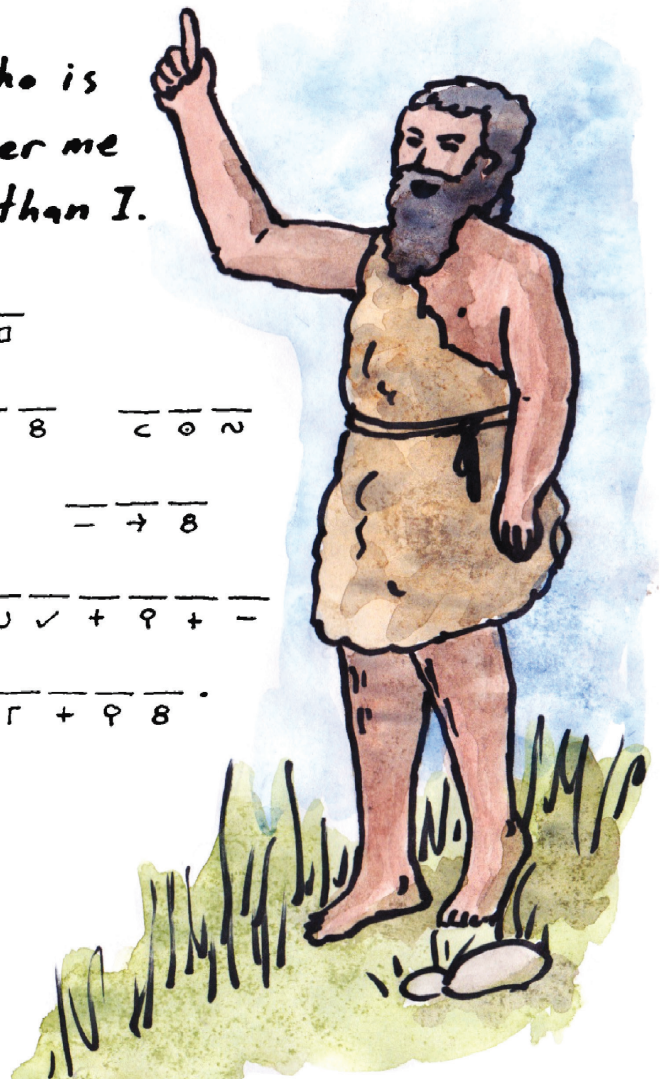
Help St John the Baptist find Jesus.



The one who is coming after me is mightier than I.

→ 8 Δ + □ □
 x η √ - + 1 8 c θ 2
 Δ + - → - → 8
 → θ □ c U √ + ρ + -
 η < γ γ + ρ 8

What did Saint John the Baptist say about the one who was coming after him? Use the code to find out!



HIDDEN PICTURE: JESUS' BAPTISM

Find these objects hidden in the picture below: book, clown's hat, fork, leaf, needle and thread, ring, plate, snail, star



η x γ 8 γ → + □ < θ √ ρ U - ~ Δ c i
 A B D E F H I L N O P R S T U W Y Z

Dear children,

Do you always keep your room neat and clean? Are all your toys picked up? If you knew someone important was coming to visit you today, would you have to rush home to make sure everything was in order?

I can still remember what happened if my mother found out that company was coming.

She called all the children together and assigned each of us the jobs that we were to do. When we were finished, she checked to make sure that not a speck of dust remained.

Can you imagine what it would have been like around our house if we had been expecting somebody really important, someone like a king or queen?

Well, this is what our Bible Lesson this Sunday is about. The coming of a King. Not just any king — the King of Kings! Jesus!

The Gospel reading

this second week of Advent tells us that in the days before Jesus began His ministry, a man called John began preaching and telling the people to prepare for the coming King.

When John told people to prepare for the King, he didn't mean that they should go home and clean their house and cook a delicious meal.

He meant that they should prepare their hearts. How? By repenting of their sins and turning towards God.

Children, it is important for you and me to make our hearts ready for the coming King too.

We do that by confessing our sins and asking God to forgive us.

If we do this, the Bible tells us that He will forgive us and make our hearts clean. Then we will be ready for Jesus when He comes.

Love
Aunty Eliz



WYD Seoul 2027 publishes official prayers shaped by young people, rooted in synodality



SOUTH KOREA: The Local Organising Committee (LOC) for World Youth Day Seoul 2027 has released the gathering's official prayer, marking what organisers describe as the spiritual starting point for the global Church's three-year journey toward the event.

The text was published on the Feast of Christ the King, a day when local churches around the world traditionally celebrate World Youth Day.

The LOC said the timing serves as an invitation for young people and faith communities to begin preparing for the 2027 meeting in Korea.

The prayer draws from the theme "Take courage! I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). It calls young people to trust in Christ's enduring victory and to live the Gospel in a spirit of hope, unity, and mercy.

According to the LOC, the text highlights five movements: thanksgiving for God's universal invitation, entrustment to the Father, proclamation of Christ's triumph of love and forgiveness, invocation of the Holy Spirit as Korea's "Flame of Love," and a commitment to the synodal journey.

The prayer also seeks the intercession of Our Lady, patroness of Korea, and the patron saints of WYD Seoul 2027.

Organisers said the prayer was the fruit of a broad participatory process initiated by the LOC bishops.

Instead of drafting the text through experts alone, they opened a synodal process that brought together young people, clergy, religious, and lay collaborators.

A two-day retreat, prepared across several months, served as the main venue for consultation and discernment.

Seventy-seven participants — including Korean and international youth, priests, religious, and LOC staff — took part in thematic reflections, prayer, group sharing, and structured writing sessions.

Digital and on-site voting tools helped the group agree on the first unified draft.

After the retreat, the LOC drafting team refined the text and collected further feedback through online consultations.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea reviewed and approved the revised draft during its Autumn General Assembly before submitting it to the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life.

The Dicastery encouraged the LOC to ensure that the voice of young people remained central and later confirmed the final version.

Archbishop Peter Soon-taick Chung, chair of the LOC, said WYD Seoul 2027 comes "at a moment when the Church is being called to rediscover authentic synodality — to walk together, to listen, and to discern."

"Korea, with its history rooted in the search for truth, love, and peace, offers a meaningful place for young people to reflect on the courage we must rekindle within ourselves to pursue these values in solidarity," he said.

Fr Francis Hee-cheon Lee, director of the LOC Volunteers Directorate, emphasized that the prayer is meant to guide the entire preparation period.

"This is a prayer for young people and for everyone who accompanies them — not only for the days of the World Youth Day gathering, but throughout the entire period of preparation," he said.

"My hope is that, by praying it often, we may open our hearts to the grace God desires to pour upon the Church in Korea, upon our society, the universal Church, and the whole world," he added.

Cardinal Kevin Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, welcomed the publication of the prayer on the Solemnity of Christ the King.

"I thank LOC Seoul 2027 for the gift of prayer to young



people around the world and for choosing to make public the official prayer of WYD Seoul 2027 on the Solemnity of Christ the King," he said.

He noted that the prayer's release on the Solemnity of Christ the King aligns with the day when local Churches worldwide observe WYD.

He encouraged young people to unite in their communities and with their bishops in a shared appeal for peace, fraternity, and hope.

Dr Gleison De Paula Souza, secretary of the Dicastery, added: "May young people experience the power that comes from prayer, and offer their friends, families, and educators a witness of life in the Gospel."

The LOC hopes the prayer will be used widely in youth meetings, parish activities, diocesan events, and moments of accompaniment in the years leading to 2027.

By praying together "with one voice," the LOC said, communities around the world can open themselves to God's grace and take part spiritually in the pilgrimage toward WYD Seoul. **LiCAS News**

Back in October, a group of youth, consecrated men and women, and priests representing dioceses and religious communities across Korea gathered to draft the official prayer for World Youth Day Seoul 2027 (WYD Seoul 2027).



CICPD altar servers embark on Jubilee Year of Hope pilgrimage

KUALA LUMPUR: The altar servers from the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Port Dickson (CICPD) went on a pilgrimage to the Church of Jesus Caritas, Kepong (JCC) and later to the Church of the Sacred Heart, Jalan Peel, for a joint altar servers programme. The spiritual journey offered the young servers an opportunity to deepen their faith, strengthen fellowship, and rediscover the significance of their ministry at the altar.

The pilgrimage began at JCC, where the group received a warm welcome from Capt Anselm and his team. They led the servers on an insightful tour of the church, sharing the parish's history and unique features. One of the highlights was Capt Anselm's sharing on the life and virtue of St Maria Goretti, whose unwavering



purity and forgiveness left a deep impression on the young participants.

After the enriching experience at JCC, the CICPD servers continued their journey to

the Church of the Sacred Heart, where they visited the Eucharistic Exhibition. The exhibition offered a profound exploration of the Church's Eucharistic tradition — its miracles, history, and theological depth. Many of the

servers shared that the exhibition helped them appreciate even more the privilege and responsibility of serving at the Lord's altar.

The pilgrimage also fostered strong bonds of fellowship among the altar servers, who spent the day learning, praying, and growing together in their vocation.

Gratitude was extended to the parish priests of the respective churches. The servers also thanked the dedicated volunteers and parishioners who supported the pilgrimage in various ways.

As they returned home, the CICPD altar servers carried with them renewed zeal, deeper understanding of their ministry, and strengthened hope in Christ — embodying the spirit of the Jubilee Year of Hope.

Evelyn Jock

SANDAKAN: Eighty-six young people, aged 15 to 17, joyfully received the Sacrament of Confirmation on November 15 during a Eucharistic Celebration presided over by Bishop Julius Dusin Gitom. The celebration was filled with gratitude and joy as catechists, sponsors, parents, and the parish community witnessed a new generation strengthened and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The candidates completed two years of formation using Levels 9 and 10 of the Malaysian Catechetical Series. Book 10, which marks their final stage of preparation, focuses on Confirmation, the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the mission to be witnesses of Christ — sharing the Good News of salvation and God's enduring love. Catechists accompanied the youth, not only in doctrinal learning but in building a strong foundation of faith. One catechist expressed how "moved and relieved" she felt to journey with the young people "more deeply" up to their Confirmation, praying that the seeds of faith planted in them will continue to grow.

In his homily, Bishop Julius shared his joy at seeing the candidates dressed in white — symbolising purity and a readiness to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit. He invited them to reflect on the sacrament and the grace they were about to receive, reminding them that the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit bear fruit only when lived out daily.

He explained that wisdom helps them see life through God's eyes and respond with love; understanding enables them to recognise God's purpose, even in disappointments and unanswered prayers. Counsel guides them to make good decisions and share God's Word whether in Sunday School, at school, at work, or wherever God sends them. Fortitude gives courage to remain faithful in trials, trusting that God is always near. Knowledge deepens appreciation of truth and helps them see God's hand in all



things. Piety nurtures devotion, affection, and trust in God. And fear of the Lord is not fearfulness, but reverence, humility, and a desire never to offend God's love.

Bishop Julius reminded the young people that, having been strengthened by the Holy Spirit, every Christian is called to bear witness to the Gospel. A true disciple, he said, "cannot bear the thought of seeing friends without salvation," and is moved by the Spirit to share Christ with others.

Before concluding Mass, he expressed his heartfelt thanks to the catechists for their dedication, to the sponsors and parents for their love and support, and to the choir for uplifting the celebration with beautiful hymns.

Voices of Faith: Reflections from Our Newly Confirmed Youth

After years of formation, the young candidates preparing for Confirmation took time to reflect on their spiritual journey. Many shared how the sacrament has deepened their faith, strengthened

their relationship with God, and inspired them to live more intentionally as disciples of Christ. Their testimonies remind us that Confirmation is not only a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit but also a lifelong call to live faithfully, serve joyfully, and witness God's love in every aspect of life.

For **17-year-old Arianne Amanda Fung**, Confirmation brought a deep sense of joy and closeness to God. She shared that while Confirmation was not the only goal of her catechetical journey, the years of learning about Scripture and the Holy Trinity helped prepare her heart. Receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit strengthened her faith and helped her remain steadfast in the Church. Arianne says she sees Jesus in her daily prayers and in her service as a hospitality minister — work that fills her with pride and gratitude as she contributes to the parish community.

Fifteen-year-old Bryan Dee described his Confirmation as a meaningful milestone — one filled with excitement, purpose, and

responsibility. The sacrament made him feel more connected to God and the Church, reminding him that the Holy Spirit guides and strengthens him in every circumstance. Bryan believes Confirmation has empowered him to grow as a committed member of the Church, encouraging him to serve others and live his faith with integrity. He sees Jesus in the people around him — his family, friends, teachers, and parish community — and in the guidance and peace he receives during life's challenges. His service as an altar server and church warden has taught him responsibility, humility, and the joy that comes from serving.

For **16-year-old Michael Liaw Yung Leong**, Confirmation brought happiness, gratitude, and a deeper sense of inner peace. He shared that the Holy Spirit has drawn him closer to Jesus and inspired him to share the Good News with others. His catechetical formation strengthened not only his understanding of the faith but also his commitment to live as a fully initiated Catholic, ready to carry his mission into the world.



Cardinal Sebastian Francis and the priests praying over the confirmands.

Be dreamers and visionaries

IPOH: Twenty-seven candidates were presented by the parish priest of the Church of St Michael, Fr Aloysius Tan, to the Bishop of Penang, Cardinal Sebastian Francis, for the Sacrament of Confirmation on November 15. The group comprised confirmands from both the Chinese and English catechetical classes.

In his homily, Cardinal Sebastian urged the young people to be "visionaries and dreamers," echoing the words of Pope St Paul VI: "Where there is no vision, leaders will die." He reminded them that as baptised Catholics, their dreams and visions must always be rooted in God's promise of "a new heaven and a new earth."

Reflecting on the Pentecost event, the Cardinal recalled the moment when the apostles, gathered in the upper room, were

filled with the Holy Spirit through strong winds and tongues of fire. Empowered by this outpouring, Peter — speaking as the Church's first pope — declared to the crowd outside: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams." (Acts 2:17)

Now that the confirmands have reached the age where they can make responsible decisions, Cardinal Sebastian encouraged them not only to pray and trust that God will bring their dreams and visions to fulfilment in His time, but also to act. Prayer, he said, shapes desire; desire forms thought; thought becomes word; and words, when rooted in faith, lead to real and meaningful action — for God and for the world.

Remembering Sr Colette Selvam, IJ

CHERAS: On November 21, 2025, the IJ Sisters, together with the family, relatives, former pupils, and countless individuals whose lives she had touched over six decades of service, gathered in the Cheras Convent Chapel to bid a final farewell to Sr Colette Selvam, an IJ Sister for 64 years.

Sr Colette was, in every sense, a teacher at heart. She dedicated 23 years to formal school teaching and another 25 years to non-formal education in places where she believed young people needed hope the most — Montfort Boys' Town in Shah Alam, Montfort Youth Centre in Melaka, St Joseph's Home in Penang, and the IJ Learning Centre in Mak Mandin, Butterworth. She continued reaching out to students for as long as her health allowed.

Her love for music was another gift she shared generously. In Seremban, she opened her school choir to many non-Catholic students, especially during Christmas. Through their voices, she quietly shared the Good News of Christ's birth with those around her.

Throughout her missionary life, Sr Colette poured herself into the work of human development. It was difficult for her, in later years, to accept that she could no longer move independently or minister actively. Yet even as illness confined her, she learned to "let go" and allow the Lord to accompany her differently — a surrender she embraced with quiet grace. She suffered silently, faithfully, until the end. Many who knew her offered heartfelt tributes. Martin Jalleh, writing on Facebook, quoted Matthew 25:34-36, 40 and summed up her life beautifully:

"Fare thee well, good and faithful servant of the Lord, Sr Colette Selvam. You lived the Beatitudes! You loved the poor! You laughed with them! You learned from them! You lifted



up the downtrodden! You left a legacy of service to the least and the last!"

He added that for many years, Sr Colette chose to live and serve among the slum communities of Mak Mandin, Butterworth — a place where she became a beacon of hope. Fr Edmund Woon also shared his memories of a woman who shaped many lives. He first met her in 1979 when teaching at Convent Seremban.

"She taught English and music," he recalled, "and was instrumental in organising the musical play Hiawatha, which even the Yang di-Pertuan Besar of Negeri Sembilan attended on opening night." As a teacher, she was firm yet gentle, always concerned not only with academic achievement but with the character and growth of each student.

Her commitment extended into parish life. Sr Colette initiated The Journey Bible study programme, which deepened the faith of many and forged lifelong friendships.

Years later, their paths crossed again in Mak Mandin, where she founded a learning centre for children. There, she taught English, nurtured confidence, and modelled a way of living rooted in love. Recognising the essential role of parents, she also empowered mothers to improve their livelihood, self-worth, and relationships. Many still remember her fondly as the "Mother Teresa of Mak Mandin."

Her mission also drew parishioners into service, enriching their lives as much as the community she served.

Sr Colette was, to many, a gentle and welcoming light — a quiet presence who saw dignity in every person. Her life was a gift from God, and God has now lovingly called her home after a mission well fulfilled.

Thank you, Sr Colette, for a life lived wholeheartedly for others.

MEMORIAM

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13th Anniversary
In Loving
Memory of

Betty Sivasothey
nee Scully

From the Lord:
07-07-1926

To the Lord:
01-12-2012

"Look, he is the God of my salvation:
I shall have faith and not be afraid,
for Yahweh is my strength and my song,
he has been my salvation".
Isaiah 12:2"

Always remembered and deeply missed by
sons, in-laws, grandchildren,
great-grandchildren and friends.

In Loving Memory of Our Parents

27th Anniversary

10th Anniversary



Betzy John

Departed:
4.1.1999



E. K. John

Departed:
11.12.2015

A memorial mass will be celebrated at the
Church of the Assumption, Petaling Jaya on
December 11, 2025 at 6.00pm.

Dearly missed by
Children, Grandchildren and all loved ones.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

25th Anniversary

2nd Anniversary



Vincent Gabriel
Pereira

Departed:
4 December 2000



Gregory Lily Pereira

Departed:
5 December 2023

"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who
believes in me will live, even though they die"
John 11:25.

Fondly remembered by
Dr Xavier Pereira, Dr Emmanuel Pereira,
Dr Sharuna Verghis, Rita Morris, Molly Anne,
Michael Raja, grandchildren, relatives and friends.

9th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of
Stanley Gomez

1 Corinthians 2:9
What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined, what God
has prepared for those who love him.



Arrived from the Lord:
13th August 1942
Returned to the Lord:
9th December 2016

He never looked for praises.
He was never one to boast.
He just went on quietly working
For the ones he loved the most.
His dreams were seldom spoken.
His wants were very few,
And most of the time his worries
Went unspoken, too.

He was there...a firm foundation
Through all our storms of life,
A sturdy hand we held on to
In times of stress and strife,
A true friend we could turn to
When times were good or bad.
One of our greatest blessings,
The man that we called Acha.

Dearly missed by Kenneth, Pauline, Felicia,
and loved ones.

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15th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of



Gracy @ Grasy
Marshal Fernandez
19/9/1940 – 12/12/2010

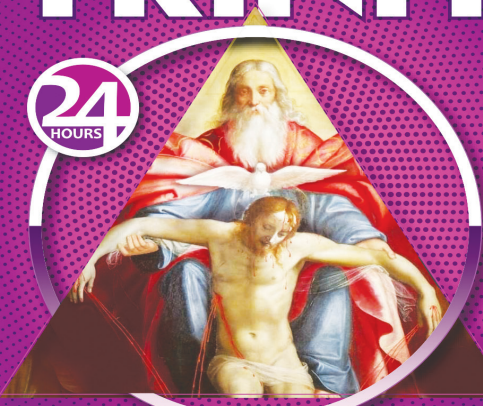
Amma, you were a precious
gift, and we failed to
appreciate it till you left,
and now, we search for you
in everything we do.

Rest in peace, Amma.
Deeply missed, loved and
cherished by loved ones.

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†
1st Heavenly Anniversary
In Loving Memory of
My Beloved Mum,
Madona M. M. Pereira
(Mrs Antony)
27 May 1948 – 24 November 2024

Mum, it has been a year since God called you home,
yet my heart still longs for your voice, your prayers,
and the warmth of your embrace.
This year has been filled with tears and memories,
yet also with gratitude for the beautiful mother you were.
I miss you so deeply that sometimes it's hard to breathe.
Though my tears fall, I find comfort knowing you rest safely
in the arms of our Lord, surrounded by His light, His angels,
and His unending peace. I entrust you to His mercy,
believing we will meet again in His heavenly home.
Till then, I will carry you in my heart
Forever my mother, forever my guiding angel.
Loved beyond words, missed beyond measure.
Your loving daughter Claina Antonette a/p Antony

Caritas Enable Fund Empowering lives through practical support

JOHOR BAHRU: The Caritas Enable Fund, approved in March 2023, is a key social mission initiative of Caritas MJD, dedicated to uplifting individuals and families from the B40 income group across the Malacca Johore Diocese. Rooted in compassion and guided by Catholic social teaching, the fund bridges critical gaps in education, mobility, vision care, and hearing support — enabling the most vulnerable to live with dignity, independence, and renewed hope.

The Enable Fund was established with a clear mission: to empower disadvantaged households by improving their access to education, employment, mobility, and essential healthcare tools. By addressing practical needs—such as a laptop for a student, a motorised wheelchair for a differently-abled individual, or a pair of spectacles for someone struggling with vision—the fund seeks to enhance quality of life and reduce barriers that trap families in cycles of hardship.

The Enable Fund focuses on needy individuals and families residing in Melaka and Johor and B40 households, specifically those in the B2 category (monthly household income below RM2,786). This ensures that limited resources reach those experiencing the greatest socio-economic challenges.

The Enable Fund provides practical, needs-based support to improve daily living for disadvantaged individuals and families, focusing on four key areas: education and employment through laptops or tablets for students and adults; mobility through motorised or manual wheelchairs that enhance independence; vision through spectacles or cataract lenses to restore clarity and functionality; and hearing through hearing aids that reconnect individuals with their community and improve communication.

The Enable Fund follows a transparent, parish-driven process beginning with on-site



Left: A lady being fitted with a hearing aid. Right: A recipient with his new laptop.

verification by the Parish Office for Human Development (POHD), Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP), or Caritas-affiliated ministries, with at least two representatives assessing each case. Once verified, applications are submitted online and reviewed by the Caritas MJD team. Upon approval, Caritas either procures the required item or provides a grant to the applying ministry, which then handles the handover and obtains a signed acknowledgement from the beneficiary to ensure accountability.

To ensure meaningful and sustained support, ministries conduct follow-ups at three and six months after the item is delivered, maintaining regular communication with beneficiaries to track progress and identify emerging needs. Caritas also encourages ministries to document stories through articles or short videos, highlighting the challenges faced and the positive impact of the assistance provided.

Since its launch, the Enable Fund has signif-

icantly improved the lives of individuals and families across the diocese. In 2023, support included seven laptops and two motorised wheelchairs; in 2024, ten laptops, twenty-two spectacles, and one hearing aid were provided; and in 2025 to date, nine laptops, two manual wheelchairs, two spectacles, and one hearing aid have been distributed — reflecting steady growth and meaningful outreach year by year. These numbers represent much more than items — they signify restored confidence, renewed opportunities, and dignity for families striving against adversity.

The Caritas Enable Fund continues to play a vital role in the Malacca Johore Diocese, offering concrete, life-changing support to those who need it most. With the collaborative efforts of parishes, ministries, and generous donors, Caritas remains committed to walking with the poor, recognising their inherent worth, and enabling every person to live a fuller, more empowered life.

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Two ordained to the diaconate in the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur

KUALA LUMPUR: The Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur joyfully celebrated the ordination of two new deacons on November 19 at the Church of St Anthony, with clergy, religious, family members, and parishioners gathered in prayerful support.

Bro Philip Asirwalam and Bro Anthony Robert were ordained to the Sacred Order of the Diaconate, marking a significant milestone in their vocational journey.

In his homily, Archbishop Julian Leow highlighted the role of a deacon as a minister of service in the areas of liturgy, the word, and charity. He explained that deacons are called to proclaim the Gospel, assist at the altar, baptise, witness marriages, preside over funerals, and care for the poor, sick, and marginalised through pastoral outreach.

Deacon Philip Asirwalam is from the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Jalan



The newly ordained deacons assisting Archbishop Julian Leow during the Mass.

Peel, and currently serves at the Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam. Deacon Anthony Robert is from the Church of St Jude, Rawang, and now serves at the

Church of Christ the Light, Desa Jaya.

At the conclusion of the Mass, the newly ordained deacons expressed their gratitude in English and Tamil to all who had

supported them. Archbishop Julian also thanked God, reminding the faithful that “we all have been chosen; we all have a mission” and encouraging everyone to discern their own calling by responding to the needs around them, both individually and as a community.

Deacons Philip and Anthony began their formation in philosophy at College General, Penang (2018–2019), and continued their theological studies at St Peter’s College, Kuching (2021–2025).

Their ordination strengthens the Archdiocese’s mission as they embark on ministry with humility, dedication, and a spirit of synodality, serving the community with Christ-like compassion. A blessing to their home parishes and the wider Church, we continue to pray for them as they continue their journey towards the priesthood.