

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



towards redemption

Patricia Pereira

KUALA LUMPUR: Pope Leo XIV has called on Christians around the world to begin walking together towards 2033, when the Church will commemorate the 2,000th anniversary of Christ's Redemption. The anniversary, he says, should inspire Christians to deepen their unity and become credible witnesses of hope and peace in a world increasingly scarred by conflict, polarisation and division.

The Pope made the appeal on July 1 while receiving a delegation from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople at the Vatican during its annual visit for the Solemnity of Sts Peter and Paul.

His message was both simple and challenging: the road to 2033 should not be travelled separately, but together.

"May the journey towards the celebration of the second millennium of the Redemption,

in 2033, be undertaken together by all the Christian denominations of the world, rediscovering the gift and the call to be witnesses to the Risen One," he said.

While addressed to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Pope's invitation extends far beyond the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. It is a call to every Christian community to place Christ before differences and to rediscover what already unites them.

The Holy Father's appeal speaks directly to the challenges of our own time. Wars continue to devastate nations. Political and social polarisation has become commonplace. Public discourse is increasingly marked by hostility rather than dialogue. Against this backdrop, Pope Leo reminded Christians that unity is not simply an ecumenical aspiration but a Gospel imperative.

As he observed, greater cooperation among Christians flows from the Gospel itself. It is essential if Christians are to become a credible sign of peace and hope in a wounded world.

His message carries particular significance for Malaysia.

Although Christians belong to different denominations and traditions, they have often come together in prayer, humanitarian outreach and initiatives promoting the

common good. Organisations such as the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) and the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) have shown that Christians can speak with a united voice on issues affecting society while respecting one another's traditions.

Yet Pope Leo's invitation challenges us to go further.

It also resonates deeply with the Church's synodal journey. Walking together is not only at the heart of synodality; it is also the foundation of authentic ecumenism. Listening, discerning and collaborating across denominational lines enable Christians to offer a stronger and more credible witness to Malaysian society. In a nation blessed with rich religious and cultural diversity, such unity is not merely desirable — it is essential.

The Pope's remarks also build on the recent commemoration of the 1,700th anniversary of the First Council of Nicaea. He described the Nicene Creed as the foundation and guiding principle of the ecumenical journey, a model of "true unity within legitimate diversity." Before focusing on what still separates them, Christians are first invited to recognise what already unites them: faith in the Triune God,

belief in the Risen Christ and a shared mission to proclaim the Gospel.

The journey to 2033, therefore, cannot be limited to commemorative events or symbolic gestures. It must be reflected in stronger relationships between Christian communities, greater collaboration in serving the poor and vulnerable, a united commitment to peace, and a common response to emerging challenges such as artificial intelligence, environmental stewardship and the defence of human dignity.

Eight years may seem a long way off, but journeys of faith are never measured by calendars alone. They begin with a decision — a decision to pray together, to serve together and to walk together.

The question is whether Christians will simply wait for 2033 to arrive, or begin that journey now.

If 2033 is to become more than a historical anniversary, then the journey must begin today. The world will not be convinced by our words alone; it will be convinced when it sees Christians living the Gospel together. Perhaps that will be the most fitting way to celebrate the 2,000th anniversary of Christ's Redemption — not simply by remembering what Christ accomplished, but by allowing His redeeming love to be made visible through our unity.

Prayer for the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026 (MPC2026)

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

Guide us as we prepare for
the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026.

Teach us to listen deeply,
to discern faithfully,
and to trust where You are leading us.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Are we passing on the baton?

Across many dioceses in Malaysia, this is Confirmation season. Parish churches are filled with young people dressed in white, their faces reflecting excitement, anticipation and, perhaps, a little nervousness. Before their families and parish communities, they receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit and are commissioned by the bishop to go forth as witnesses of Christ.

It is a beautiful milestone. Yet perhaps the more important question is not what happens during the Confirmation Mass, but what happens the Sundays after that.

For many, Confirmation marks the end of formal catechism. Some continue worshipping faithfully, join youth groups, serve in parish ministries and grow into committed disciples. Others gradually drift away. Some return only on major feast days, while others reappear years later when preparing for marriage or bringing their own children for catechism.

The reasons are varied, and it would be unfair to suggest that young people are simply uninterested in the Church. Across the country, many continue to serve generously in choirs, music ministries, social outreach, catechetical programmes and parish organisations.

Perhaps, then, the question is not whether young people are willing to serve. The question is whether they truly feel there is a place for them.

That question surfaced during a recent online preparatory session for the Malaysia Pastoral Convention (MPC2026). Looking around the virtual gathering, one participant asked: "Where are all the young people?"

If the Church is discerning its future, should not more of its future be present in the

conversation?

The Synod has reminded us that the Church is called to walk together — to listen, discern and journey as one People of God. A truly synodal Church does not merely speak about young people; it intentionally listens to them, creates space for them and invites them to help shape the Church's mission.

One young participant offered a candid explanation. Young people, he said, do not want to feel "scammed" into taking on responsibilities. They do not want to be recruited simply because there is a shortage of manpower. They want to serve in ways that recognise their gifts, interests and calling, rather than merely filling vacancies.

His words may have sounded blunt, but they reveal something worth reflecting on.

Young people are not rejecting responsibility. They are looking for purpose, trust and ownership.

Another participant later shared a challenging thought. If we truly believe in accompanying, empowering and partnering with young people, are we prepared to let them lead — not only youth ministries, but parish pastoral councils, liturgical committees, communications, outreach and other areas of parish life?

This is not about asking experienced parish leaders to step aside overnight. The Church needs their wisdom, stability and years of faithful service. But accompaniment also requires trust. Could experienced leaders intentionally mentor younger successors, gradually sharing responsibility while continuing to guide and encourage them?

Leadership is learned by leading, not merely by observing. If we insist on experience before

responsibility, how will young people ever gain that experience?

The relatively low youth representation in preparations for MPC2026 also deserves reflection. If our national pastoral conversations are shaping the Church's future, then the voices of those who will inherit that future cannot remain on the margins. We should ask not only where the young people are, but whether they were invited, welcomed and convinced that their contributions would matter.

At the same time, this reflection is not directed only at parish leaders and clergy.

Young Catholics, too, have a responsibility. If they desire a greater voice in the Church, they must also be willing to step forward, share their gifts, remain engaged and become active partners in building the communities they hope to see.

Perhaps the image we need is that of a relay race. Every runner has a season. Every runner must eventually pass the baton. The success of the race depends not on who runs the fastest, but on how well the baton is handed over.

The Holy Spirit bestowed at Confirmation was never intended for a single ceremony or a family photograph. Those gifts were given for a lifetime of discipleship, mission and service.

A synodal Church is built by generations walking together — listening to one another, learning from one another and trusting one another.

Because the future of the Church is not somewhere on the horizon.

It is already sitting in our pews today. The question is whether we are ready to trust it.

Patricia Pereira

Listening with the heart

"I am going to die soon, and I'm very, very afraid!" — as a priest-to-be, how did I listen; with my ears, or with my heart?

During my pastoral placement, I met an old friend in his forties who was suffering from multiple organ failure. As the weeks passed, I watched his body gradually weaken. On my final day in the parish, he embraced me tightly and held on as though he did not want to let go. Looking into his eyes, I saw not only the pain of illness but the deep fear of a man standing before the mystery of death. With tears in his eyes, he whispered, "I am going to die soon, and I am very, very afraid." This encounter brought me back to my studies on anthropological eschatology, but this time, it was no longer merely an academic subject, it had become a lived reality standing before me.

In that moment, my heart broke with his. I wished I could remove his fear, take away his suffering, or promise him that everything would be alright. Yet I knew I could do none of those things. I stood there feeling the limits of my own humanity. No theological argument or philosophical explanation could erase the fear he carried. God was not asking me to solve the mystery of suffering but simply to remain with him in it. The words of St Paul in this weekend's readings came alive in a way I had never experienced before: "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us." Paul does not deny the reality of suffering. Instead, he places it within the greater horizon of God's promise. He reminds us that all creation is

"groaning" as it waits for redemption. Standing beside this dying man, I realised that his fear was part of that universal groaning, a longing for life, for peace, and ultimately, for God Himself.

I gently held his hands and simply said, "Jesus loves you. He has never left you, and He will be waiting for you." Those words did not come from careful preparation. They arose from compassion. Looking back, I believe Christ was allowing me to become a small instrument of His mercy. The Church teaches that the priest acts *in persona Christi Capitis*, in the person of Christ the Head. Christ was inviting me to make His presence tangible through compassion, listening, and hope. This experience transformed my understanding of priesthood. I realised that people do not always need answers; often, they simply need someone willing to remain beside them. In moments of fear and suffering, the ministry of presence becomes a powerful proclamation of the Gospel. Like the Good Shepherd who never abandons His sheep, the priest is called to walk with God's people through the darkest valleys, reminding them that they are never alone.

Paul's image of creation groaning also challenged me personally. Suffering is not meaningless, because Christ has entered into it. Through His Passion, Death, and Resurrection, He transformed suffering from a sign of despair into a path of hope. Even Jesus experienced anguish in Gethsemane and wept at the tomb of Lazarus. His compassion teaches me that authentic pastoral ministry is not about remaining emotionally distant but about allow-

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings with Bro Joseph Savage

15th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Readings: Isaiah 55: 10-11;

Romans 8: 18-23;

Gospel: Matthew 13:1-23

ing my heart to be moved by the suffering of others.

This encounter also reminded me that priesthood is fundamentally fatherhood. A father cannot remove every hardship from his children, but he remains present, carries their burdens, and gives them courage to continue. Likewise, I believe the priest is called to reflect the loving heart of the Father by embracing those who are frightened, comforting the broken-hearted, and patiently leading souls towards Christ. It is in these quiet moments of accompaniment that the love of God becomes visible. The priesthood is not ultimately about efficiency, success, or recognition. It is about revealing the compassionate face of Jesus to those who suffer.

Lastly, in this weekend's Gospel, Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear." I realise that these words are not merely an invitation to listen with our ears, but to listen with our hearts. If we truly have ears to hear, we will recognise Christ's voice in the cries of the suffering, the fears of the dying, and the silent groaning of humanity. It is there, in those sacred moments of compassionate presence, that the Good Shepherd continues to speak, love, and lead His people home.



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

July

- 14 Meeting – AOHD Board
- 15 Clergy Monthly Recollection
- 16 Meeting – Archdiocesan Finance
- 18 Confirmation – Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Puchong
- 18 Confirmation – Church of St Aloysius, Mantin and Church of St Theresa, Nilai
- 19 Confirmation – Church of St Joseph, Sentul
- 19 Confirmation – Church of the Visitation, Seremban
- 20-27 XII Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC) Plenary Assembly – Jakarta



PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

July

- 13 Mass – Camino de Mutiara by the Penang Island Deanery Chinese Apostolate, College General Major Seminary, Penang at 2.00pm
- 13 Meeting – Penang Diocesan Finance Committee (PDFC) at 6.00pm, Pusat Keuskupan Katolik, Penang
- 14 Meeting – Council of Priests (COP) at 10.00am Stella Maris, Penang
- 14-15 Clergy Monthly Recollection – Stella Maris, Penang
- 14 Diaconate Ordination – Bro Ashley Chau & Bro Patrick Hilary at 8.00pm, Church of Assumption, Penang
- 16 Flag Raising and Mass for Helpers and Ministers of Various Services at 6.00pm – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam
- 17 Meeting – Fr Hung Pham, SJ at 4.00pm Bishop's Residence
- 20-27 XII Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC) Plenary Assembly – Jakarta



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

July

- 16-26 St Anne's Feast - 10 days Novena – Minor Basilica of St Anne, Bukit Mertajam
- 28 Caritas Malaysia Diocesan Directors & Ecclesiastical Assistants (CM DEA) Meeting via Zoom



DIOCESE OF PENANG

PKK/BDN/2026/07/236

Notifications and Updates

He loves, He hopes, He waits. Our Lord prefers to wait Himself for the sinner for years rather than keep us waiting an instant. St Maria Goretti

1. Extraordinary Consistory of Cardinals, Vatican City

I thank you for praying for me and for all the cardinals as we gathered for this extraordinary consistory with His Holiness, Pope Leo XIV. It was truly a grace-filled moment and an enriching encounter, guided by the Holy Spirit. Let us continue to pray for the Universal Church and our mission in the world.

2. Feast of St Anne & St Joachim 2026

The Novena and Feast of St Anne this year will begin from July 17 and culminate on July 26. Let us pray for all pilgrims, volunteers, celebrants and confessors as we experience a meaningful and grace-filled celebration through the intercession of St Anne and St Joachim.

The programme for the feast is available in the various languages. <https://lnk.dev/2v253an>

3. Sixth World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly

The theme chosen by Pope Leo XIV for the 6th World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly (Sunday, July 26) – *I will never forget you (Is 49:15)* – reminds us that God's unwavering love is the ultimate answer to the isolation and neglect so often experienced by the elderly.

The pastoral kit is available here: <https://lnk.dev/75w71u4>

Message by the Holy Father: <https://acesse.one/9ygiyae>

4. Camino de Mutiara 2026 Walking Pilgrimage

Organised by the Penang Island Deanery Chinese Apostolate, this three-day walking pilgrimage will begin at the Church of Divine Mercy, Sungai Ara,

and will pass through six parishes across Penang Island. Each day will culminate in a Thanksgiving Mass, the summit and centre of their journey, where they are renewed in Christ and sent forth again in mission. Let us remember them in prayer as they embark on this spiritual journey from July 11-13.

5. Diaconate Ordination of Seminarians Ashley Stephen Chau & Patrick Hilary Sandnasamy

I am pleased to inform that the following seminarians, Bro Ashley Stephen Chau and Bro Patrick Hilary Sandnasamy will be called to the Order of Deacons on July 14 at 8.00pm at the Church of the Assumption, Penang. Let us continue to pray for them to persevere in their call to the Priesthood.

Sebastian Francis

Cardinal Sebastian Francis



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #279



Welcome dear friends,

Change or be changed. Malaysia is moving fast into the future, making big moves in technology, transport, and daily lifestyle. It is about smart travelling, smart shopping, smart saving and smart living.

The Church in Malaysia is also moving away from top-down, building-centred models toward decentralised, socially active communities, foreseeing stricter state rulings on places of worship, young believers walking away from organised religion, fewer vocations and ageing church leadership, and growing insensitivity towards minority faiths.

The synodal shift to “walking together”, the rise of BECs and house churches and the more social mission thrust are significant signs of hope.

Local takes! A stressed people

Malaysia retains her rank as the 12th most peaceful nation in the world (GPI2026).

The government is successfully executing its structural economic blueprint, but the social contract is under pressure. A stressed *rakyat* waits to see when these high-level successes will actually translate into lower daily costs and a higher quality of life.

The viralled road rage incidents, highly publicised crimes in university hubs signal an overworked, financially strained population that is losing collective patience.

Reading the Signs: Reflecting the Gospel

To the cardinals: Faith is that virtue that gives life to the Church: the grace that nourishes the branches of the one vine. The living Church is the Church that believes, and through the Holy Spirit, bears much fruit.

To guide both, today's world and Church's mission: The antidote to

individualism and to fractures, is the Gospel: a Church that offers a sense of belonging, soothes the wounds of our time, avoids forms of integralism and polarisation; a Church that makes visible its Samaritan face, with Christians who are not spectators of social ruin, but wise architects who rebuild the city of all.

To achieve peace: Peace is achieved when people invest in peace. Steve Killelea, an Australian philanthropist who founded the Global Peace Index (GPI) offered three concrete ways:

- First, more diplomacy.
- Second, when dealing with localised conflict, it is important to understand the grievances and address them.
- Third, better people's livelihoods.

A Thought for the Week:

Robert Fulchum, working at a countryside resort, was getting weary of eating the same lunch every day. In addition, the cost of the lunch would get deducted from his paycheck. It got on his nerves.

He found Sigmund Wollmann, a German Jew, a survivor of Auschwitz, to express his anger and frustration at the hotel owner. The happy, contented Sigmund, a night auditor there, heard him.

Sigmund eventually spoke: Listen! Listen, Fulchum! You know what's wrong with you? It's not the food! It's not the boss! It's not this job! You think you know everything but *you don't know the difference between an inconvenience and a problem.*

If you break your neck...if you have nothing to eat if your house is on fire — you have a problem. Everything else is an inconvenience. Life is inconvenient. Life is lumpy.

A Lesson from Robert Fulchum: I call this the Wollmann Test of Reality. Life is lumpy. And a lump in the porridge,

a lump in the throat and a lump in the breast are not the same lump. One should learn the difference."

QnQ? Never enough! Not good enough! What makes people like that?

***"If you offer bread to those who are not hungry, they will ask why it was not neatly sliced."* (Hafa#39's Merer)**

Hafa's Merer recognises a sting in the above proverb: “Giving generously only to receive a complaint in return.” It reflects those who have never known scarcity, who often cannot perceive the gift itself. They see the presentation, not its meaning. It is not ingratitude, but it is a deeper cognitive phenomenon, when abundance is assumed, the threshold for gratitude rises until it cannot be reached. The hungry person sees bread.

The person who has never been hungry sees bread and all the ways it falls short of expectation. The Buddhist spoke of ‘the hungry ghost’, perpetually unsatisfied from wanting.

In each case, the invitation is the same: *cultivate the eye that sees the gift before it sees the gap.*

The Spirit @work: “He pours light into our minds, arouses our desire and gives us strength...”

“As the soul is the life of the body, so the Holy Spirit is the life of our souls.” **St Peter Damian**

Something to tickle you: For an algorithm, an error is a flaw to be corrected; for a person, however, an error can be a catalyst for profound change. A person's future is not calculable, but depends on one's freedom — elevated by the inexhaustible grace of God — and on the relationships cultivated.” (Leo's MH par. 12)

Bernard Paul

Bishop Bernard Paul

Building communion, not just content

Sandra Ann Inbaraj

SINGAPORE: Building communion — not merely creating content — was the central message that resonated throughout the annual meeting of the Episcopal Regional Commission for Social Communications (ERCSC), as Church communicators from Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei gathered from June 15–19 to reflect on the Church’s mission in an increasingly digital world.

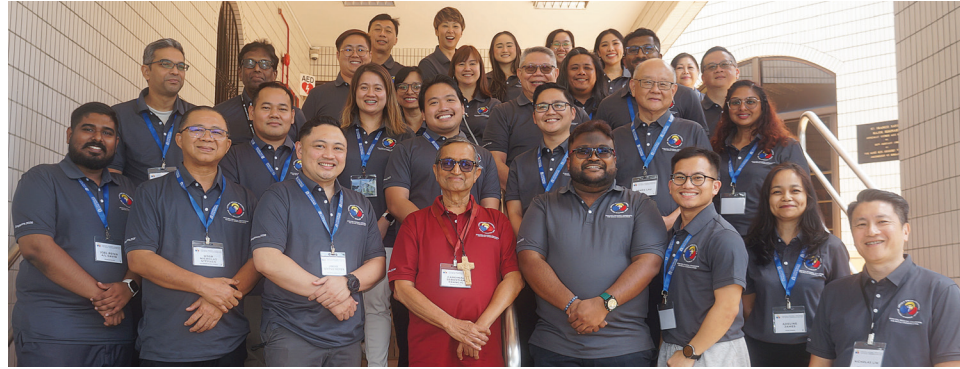
The meeting opened with dinner on Monday, June 15, during which Cardinal William Goh met the delegates, offering his greetings and hospitality.

The next day, Cardinal Sebastian Francis, President of the ERCSC, reminded delegates that Church communications is fundamentally a ministry rooted in communion. Citing *Gaudium et Spes*, he challenged participants to reflect on why the Church communicates, stressing that its purpose is not simply to disseminate information but to foster relationships, build trust and lead people to Christ.

“The role of Church communications is mission-driven,” he said, explaining that authentic communication requires listening and dialogue rather than mere broadcasting. Drawing a distinction between corporate and ecclesial communications, he noted that while organisations seek to build trust, reputation and organisational culture, the Church communicates to bear witness to Christ, strengthen communion, and shepherd the faithful in truth.

He concluded by reminding delegates that communications is a ministry that fulfils the Church’s mandate to “go forth” and proclaim the Gospel.

Cardinal Sebastian also thanked Sandriana Anne of the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu for serving as secretary before announcing the appointment of Alexander Jacklya from Brunei to the role. Looking ahead to the Malaysia Pastoral Convention in Sibu this



September, he highlighted the unity of the nine bishops of Malaysia in speaking and working with one voice. He also expressed appreciation to Cardinal William Goh and the Archdiocese of Singapore for their hospitality, recalling his formative years in Singapore during the 1960s.

AI must serve human dignity

The opening keynote was delivered by Fr Terence Kesavan, seminary formator and Head of Academics in Singapore, who also serves in several Church advisory and formation roles related to digital communications and catechesis.

Drawing on Pope Leo XIV’s *Magnifica Humanitas* and the 2026 World Communications Day message, Fr Terence explored the growing influence of artificial intelligence and its implications for Church communications. He urged communicators to approach AI with prudence and discernment, ensuring that technological tools always uphold human dignity and remain at the service of evangelisation rather than replacing authentic human encounter.

The session was followed by a “Conversation in the Spirit” facilitated by Gerald Lee, assistant to the Archbishop (Pastoral Alignment), allowing delegates to prayerfully discern the opportunities and challenges AI presents for the Church’s communications mission.

Shared challenges, shared mission

Reports from diocesan communications teams, Catholic media and SIGNIS highlighted common challenges including limited manpower, funding constraints and time pressures. Despite this, delegates expressed growing willingness to collaborate, particularly in preparing communications for the Malaysia Pastoral Convention in Sibu (Sept 9–13).

Towards an integrated communications ministry

A key formation session was led by Daniel Yong, director of Media Relations for the Archdiocese of Singapore, who challenged participants to rethink communications, not as isolated content production but as an integrated pastoral ecosystem.

He said many Church communications efforts remain fragmented, with inconsistent messaging and outdated information across platforms. To address this, he proposed developing a “single source of truth,” supported by coordinated planning, regular content review and audience-focused messaging.

Daniel also introduced a practical communications framework beginning with defining objectives, identifying audiences, crafting a clear core message, selecting appropriate channels and setting measurable indicators of success.

Before joining Church communications, Daniel worked as executive director of Global

Media at Marina Bay Sands and spent 14 years as a broadcast journalist and television producer with CNBC.

Telling stories that evangelise

The focus then shifted to storytelling through video, led by Linus Koh, founder and creative director of St Max Story & Media.

A father of six and award-winning filmmaker, Linus has spent over two decades in media evangelisation and has produced more than a thousand Catholic videos in the past seven years.

Linus reminded delegates that the communicator’s primary responsibility is to foster unity. He encouraged Church communicators to “go where the people are,” rather than expecting audiences to come to the Church.

He urged dioceses to identify and train young people as missionary storytellers and to uncover the many hidden stories of faith within local communities.

Planning for regional collaboration

ERCSC president Daniel Roy outlined key regional initiatives, including preparations for the FABC SOCCOM meeting. Dioceses were assigned responsibilities for communications materials for World Communications Day 2027, while a bilingual countdown campaign for the Malaysia Pastoral Convention will begin in July.

Upcoming initiatives include an AI webinar by the Dicastery for Communication, media literacy training and the FABC SOCCOM meeting in October.

Reaching a new generation

The final session featured the *To Be Honest* podcast team, who shared strategies for engaging younger audiences through authentic storytelling, trend awareness and multi-format content. They highlighted millennials’ preference for relatability and Gen Z’s demand for authenticity.

Delegates also developed communications strategies for World Youth Day in South Korea.

The meeting concluded with a podcast recording featuring Cardinal Sebastian Francis and other leaders reflecting on *Dignitas Humanitas* and its implications for Church communications.

The next ERCSC annual meeting will be held in Sandakan from June 21–25, 2027.

Discovering the beauty and meaning of the Holy Mass

PENANG: A deeper appreciation of the Holy Mass was the focus of a faith formation session titled *The Mass Explained*, held at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit on June 17. Conducted by parish priest, Fr Raymond Raj, the two-hour session drew 187 faithful who gathered to explore the meaning and significance of the Church’s central act of worship.

While many Catholics participate in the Mass regularly, they may not always fully appreciate the richness and symbolism behind its prayers, gestures and rituals. Through his insightful presentation, Fr Raymond invited participants to rediscover the beauty of the liturgy and the profound gift of the Eucharist.

Drawing from Scripture, Church teachings and the wisdom of the saints, including relevant quotes from St Padre Pio, St Francis of Assisi,

St Teresa of Avila, St John Marie Vianney and St John Bosco, Fr Raymond explained that the Mass is the highest form of worship for Catholics, with the Eucharist as its heart. He guided participants through the four parts of the Mass: Introductory Rites, Liturgy of the Word, Liturgy of the Eucharist and Concluding Rites, highlighting the spiritual significance and purpose of each part.

A special focus was given to the Church’s teaching on Transubstantiation — the mystery in which the substance of the bread and wine becomes the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ during the Eucharist. Fr Raymond reminded participants that the Mass is far more than a ritual; it is a sacred encounter with the living Christ. In every celebration of the Eucharist, Christ speaks to His people through the

Scriptures, offers Himself in sacrifice, gathers and unites His Church, and sends the faithful forth on mission.

He also explained the purpose and emphasis of the weekday and Sunday Mass readings, as well as the role of the homily in helping the faithful understand and apply God’s Word in their daily lives. Emphasising the communal nature of the Eucharist, Fr Raymond reminded participants that the Mass is not a private devotion but the Church’s sacred celebration of Christ’s saving sacrifice and abiding presence. He concluded by encouraging the faithful to draw strength, comfort and healing from the Eucharist, especially when they come before the Lord with their burdens and seek His grace and consolation.

Fr Raymond encouraged parishioners to prepare themselves prayerfully before attending Mass by reading the day’s Scripture readings in advance. Doing so, he said, enables the faithful to enter more deeply into the liturgy and appreciate the celebration more fully.

He also emphasised the importance of participating actively in the liturgy, maintaining a spirit of reverence, and remaining in the pew until the final blessing has been given. Offering practical guidance on the do’s and don’ts of attending Mass, he reminded participants to arrive early, dress modestly and appropriately as a sign of respect for God, and avoid actions that could distract others from prayer.

Drawing a relatable comparison, Fr

Raymond noted that just as people make every effort to arrive early at the airport to avoid missing a flight, Catholics should likewise arrive early for Mass to quieten their hearts and prepare themselves to celebrate the Eucharist worthily.

Sharing on personal experiences, including the values and teachings passed down by his parents, practical examples, his learnings from the seminary with moments of humour, Fr Raymond made the session very engaging, meaningful and memorable for all present.

The question-and-answer session that followed reflected the enthusiasm and interest of the participants. Many expressed their appreciation for the clarity and depth of Fr Raymond’s sharing, saying that they gained a renewed understanding and deeper appreciation of the Holy Mass.

Fr Raymond concluded the session with a thought-provoking question: “Did I attend Mass?” or “Did I participate in the Mystery of Christ?” This served as a meaningful reminder that the Mass is not simply an obligation or a routine, but an invitation to enter more deeply into Christ’s love and saving sacrifice.

The session ended with many parishioners expressing their hope for more talks and faith formation programmes in the future, to enable them to continue their journey of growing in faith and deeper understanding of Catholic teachings and traditions. **Jaslin Krishnan & Grace Tan**



A parishioner posing a question during the session.



Parish leaders build bonds across languages and cultures

PENANG: Leaders from the English, Tamil and Bahasa-speaking communities of the Church of the Holy Name of Mary, Permatang Tinggi, came together for a day of prayer, formation and fellowship during a parish team-building programme themed *One Body in Christ*.

Organised by parish priest, Fr Louis Loi, the formation was held at the Angsana Teluk Bahang Hotel on June 20 and brought together 52 leaders representing the parish's various ministries.

Designed to strengthen relationships and foster greater collaboration, the programme combined faith-based reflections with interac-

tive team-building activities that encouraged participants to deepen their understanding of Christian leadership and shared mission.

Participants described the experience as enriching and inspiring, noting that it strengthened their appreciation of the unity that exists despite differences in language, culture, age and ministry.

One participant reflected that the activities revealed how, although they came from diverse backgrounds and served in different ministries, they were united by an unbreakable bond in Christ. "We are not meant to walk alone but to support, encourage and empower one another

as one community," the participant shared.

Another said the programme reinforced the understanding that faith extends far beyond attending Sunday Mass. "It is about living the Gospel every day through the way we love, serve and relate to others."

Others said the experience deepened their appreciation that Christian service is rooted in humility, compassion and love. Every act of service, whether large or small, becomes meaningful when offered for the glory of God and the good of one's neighbour.

Several participants also shared that the formation renewed their commitment to parish

life and inspired them to become more active in serving the community. They left with a stronger conviction that all Christians share the same mission — to bring God's love, hope and mercy to those around them.

The participants expressed their appreciation to Fr Louis for bringing together the parish's different language communities in a spirit of communion and collaboration. They also voiced hope that the parish would organise a longer follow-up team-building retreat, allowing leaders to continue strengthening relationships and growing together as one Body in Christ.

Stephanie Ng

PETALING JAYA: Delegates from across Malaysia gathered for the Malaysian Catechetical Commission (MCC) Meeting from June 22–25 at the CCM Ecumenical Centre, hosted by the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. Representatives from all nine dioceses in Malaysia, together with observers from the Archdiocese of Singapore, the Apostolic Vicariate of Brunei, and the National Catechetical Office (NCO), came together to reflect, discern and chart the future of catechesis in the region.

The first day began with the celebration of the Eucharist presided over by Most Rev Julian Leow Beng Kim, Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur, who welcomed the Episcopal President of the MCC, Rt Rev Joseph Hii Teck Kwong and the delegates and observers. In his homily, Archbishop Julian reflected on John the Baptist, whose key mission was to prepare the hearts of men and women to know and receive Jesus. In the same way, the main task of catechists is to lead their learners to Christ.

Synodality at the heart of catechesis

The meeting proper, chaired by Dr Steven Selvaraju, began on day two.

In his keynote address, Bishop Joseph drew parallels between the harvest festivals of *Kaamatan* and *Gawai* and the Church's celebration of Pentecost, noting that all three celebrate gratitude, community and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

He encouraged catechetical leaders to embrace synodality by journeying together through listening, sharing and discerning the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

"Catechesis is not merely the transmission of knowledge," he said, "but an encounter with the living Christ."

Bishop Joseph also reminded delegates that catechists themselves are enriched through those they teach, highlighting the reciprocal nature of the ministry. He further encouraged the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence as a tool to support the Church's mission while emphasising that Christ must always remain at the centre of catechetical ministry.

Six national priorities identified

Using a new collaborative diocesan reporting format introduced by Deacon Clement Samuel and Jeanne J. Saw of the Penang Diocesan Catechetical Commission, the MCC identified six key priorities for catechetical development nationwide:

Catechetical leaders urged to foster a spirit of synodality

1. Standardise catechist's formation nationally;
2. Address the shortage of catechists systematically;
3. Deepen parent and family engagement;
4. Accelerate the use of digital catechesis; Establish a clear roadmap for the
5. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS); and
6. Standardise reporting and data collection.

Delegates agreed that greater parent and family involvement remains both the most pressing and the most achievable priority. Among the proposed initiatives were structured parent formation programmes and family-centred activities aligned with the Church's liturgical seasons.

The National Catechetical Office also reported encouraging progress on the Malaysian Catechetical Series (MCS) Supplementary Topics, which now include catechist guides and expanded multilingual reference materials.

Development is also underway for the MCS Parent's Guide, a series of ten books designed to help parents accompany their children's faith journey through family conversations, activities and reflections.

Encouraging signs of growth

Several dioceses reported a significant increase in the number of adults seeking baptism, offering hopeful signs that many continue to encounter Christ and seek membership in the Church.

The Commission also prayerfully discerned the theme for Catechetical Sunday 2027, selecting *ONE in Christ* (Galatians 3:28).

Recognising Malaysia's rich diversity of languages, cultures and communities, delegates agreed that the theme powerfully expresses the unity all Catholics share through Baptism and in Christ.

Responsibilities for preparing the Catechetical Sunday resources —including the pastoral message, poster, translations and commissioning rite — were distributed among the dioceses and coordinated through the National Catechetical Office.



Bishop Joseph Hii, president of the Malaysian Catechetical Commission, addressing the delegates.

Expanding the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

The Commission also devoted considerable attention to the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS), a Montessori-based approach to faith formation for young children.

Delegates shared inspiring testimonies of children, some as young as three years old, developing deep prayerfulness, attentiveness and a personal relationship with God through the programme.

Recognising its positive impact, members discussed expanding CGS formation and making it more accessible throughout the dioceses.

Preparations were also discussed for the MCC's participation in the Malaysian Pastoral Convention (MPC) to be held in Sibu from September 9 – 13, 2026, where an exhibition booth will showcase the history and ministry of catechesis in Malaysia.

Renewing catechesis for today's Church

In his closing address, Bishop Joseph expressed gratitude to the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, in particular Archbishop Julian, for hosting the meeting and thanked all delegates and observers for their active participation.

Reflecting on the discussions, he observed that while many children faithfully receive the sacraments, a significant number drift away from parish life after Confirmation.

"This reality challenges the Church to continually renew its methods of catechesis," he said, "forming lifelong disciples who continue to grow in faith".

He also highlighted two recurring concerns throughout the meeting — the shortage of catechists and the limited involvement of parents — and urged dioceses to address both with urgency and creativity.

Bishop Joseph further encouraged the Church to recognise and celebrate the vocation of catechists, noting that in many communities, retired catechists continue to be respectfully addressed by their title, reflecting the esteem in which the ministry is held.

Above all, he reminded the gathering that synodality is not simply a programme but a way of life rooted in baptism.

"All the faithful — bishops, priests, religious and laity, including catechists, parents and children — are called to participate actively in the Church's mission of communion, teaching and service," he said.

After four days of prayer, Eucharistic celebrations, fellowship and fruitful discussions, delegates departed with renewed hope and a strengthened commitment to continue their mission as catechetical leaders in their respective dioceses.

The next MCC meeting will be hosted by the Diocese of Sandakan from June 7–10, 2027.

Addressing the invisible cuts of the digital age

Marilyn Gerard

KUALA LUMPUR: As digital technologies become increasingly woven into everyday life, the need to cultivate healthier and more intentional online habits has never been greater. Recognising this challenge, the Women Ministry of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur (AOHD), in collaboration with SIGNIS Malaysia, recently organised a seminar titled *Addressing Invisible Cuts: Safeguarding Our Digital Wellbeing*.

Held at the Cahayasuara auditorium, the seminar brought together participants to reflect on the often-overlooked impact of digital technologies on mental, emotional and social wellbeing. Through engaging presentations and discussions, attendees were encouraged to become more mindful and responsible digital citizens in an era of constant connectivity.

Karen Arukesamy, media and communications specialist and president of SIGNIS Malaysia, highlighted how technology has transformed the way people interact with media and one another.

"What we repeatedly see online has the power to shape how we think



SIGNIS Malaysia president, Karen Arukesamy sharing on making wise decisions online.

and behave. Many digital harms do not begin with major incidents but with small habits that become routine and go unnoticed. Every click, share, comment and reaction contributes to the digital environment we all live in," she said.

Karen noted that convenience, while beneficial, can gradually influence behaviour without people realising it. Actions that begin as conscious choices often become automatic habits over time. She also pointed out that technology increasingly performs tasks once carried out mentally, potentially diminishing attentiveness and critical thinking.

"Responsible digital citizenship begins with a simple principle — pause before you click, verify before

you trust, and think before you share. Digital wellbeing is ultimately a human issue. It affects our attention, relationships, communities and future," she said.

She cautioned that familiarity with technology can create a false sense of security and reduce scrutiny. "Awareness alone does not make us safe. Consciousness requires effort. We must actively make wise choices online."

Karen encouraged participants to adopt practical digital safety measures, including verifying links and sources, using strong passwords and two-factor authentication, reviewing privacy settings regularly, reporting scams, balancing screen time, and helping family members and friends

navigate the digital world safely.

The seminar also featured a session by Raymund Jagan, a registered counsellor and member of SIGNIS Malaysia, who explored the psychological impact of social media and digital platforms.

"We used to be consumers of media. Today, we have all become content creators and distributors," he said.

Raymund explained that social media platforms often stimulate the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with anticipation and reward. The uncertainty of receiving likes, comments and shares can lead users to repeatedly check their devices, reinforcing potentially addictive behaviours.

He also discussed the role of oxytocin, a hormone linked to trust and social bonding, noting that while it strengthens relationships, it can also make individuals more susceptible to accepting online information without sufficient critical evaluation.

"People naturally seek connection and belonging. Unfortunately, this can sometimes lead them to trust information online too easily," he said.

Encouraging participants to be more present in their daily lives, Raymund challenged them to "live

in the moment, not record the moment," urging them to focus on meaningful experiences rather than constantly documenting them for social media.

He also proposed community-based play sessions for children as a practical way to reduce screen dependency and reconnect young people with outdoor play and nature. Church compounds, with their safe and open spaces, could serve as ideal venues for such initiatives.

Raymund further introduced the concept of "friction-maxxing", which involves intentionally embracing small inconveniences rather than seeking constant ease and instant gratification. By developing greater tolerance for discomfort, individuals can strengthen self-discipline, improve focus and cultivate a healthier relationship with technology.

The seminar concluded with a call for greater personal responsibility in shaping healthy digital habits. As technology continues to influence every aspect of modern life, participants were reminded that safeguarding digital wellbeing requires not only awareness, but also conscious action, discipline and a shared commitment to building safer and healthier online communities.

Standing in solidarity

PETALING JAYA: The Church of St Francis Xavier commemorated International Widows Day on June 21 for the fourth consecutive year, gathering widows from across the Klang Valley for a day of prayer, fellowship, and encouragement. Organised in collaboration with the AOHD Bereavement Support Group, this year's theme was *Standing in Solidarity*.

The gathering began at Canisius hall, where Fr Richard Anthony Samy SJ led a prayer and blessing for all widows present. The prayer, prepared by one of the widows, deeply moved many in attendance. It reflected the quiet struggles widows carry each day — grieving the loss of a spouse while continuing to care for their families, making difficult decisions alone, and shouldering responsibilities with courage and love. It was also a reminder that widows are not defined by loss, but by the faith, dignity, resilience, and strength with which they continue to live and serve.

Following the blessing, participants shared a fellowship lunch. Light-hearted interaction topics, including funny habits, misplaced belongings, and favourite television shows, helped widows connect nat-

urally with one another. Those with matching answers received a dessert to bring home.

The afternoon continued with games and activities that strengthened support and connection among the widows. One activity invited each participant to write a short message of encouragement on a bookmark card, drawn from her own widowhood journey. At the end of the event, the bookmarks were exchanged randomly, allowing widows to bring home words of hope written by another widow. The activity reflected the spirit of the ministry — creating friendship, support, and solidarity among women who truly understand one another's journey.

Towards the end of the gathering, several participants shared how the ministry had impacted their lives. Marilyn Gerard reflected on the strong bond of sisterhood formed within the widows' community. "We pray together and walk together in this journey. Some days you may feel okay because someone in this group has been praying for you, without you even knowing. When one of us has a hard day, we can pick up the phone and know someone will always be there. That itself is

healing," she shared.

Marilyn also described widows as "silent warriors", speaking of the quiet resilience carried by many women. "People often think warriors are fearless and strong, but deep down inside, do you know how much fear they carry? Yet despite the fear, they still choose to stand and move forward. We are mothers, daughters, daughters-in-law, grandmothers, and caretakers. No matter how much loss has broken us — to the extent that we can no longer function — we still choose each day to keep going. We are not just widows — we are silent warriors."

As the gathering came to a close, the spirit of *Standing in Solidarity* was deeply felt among all who attended. Amid prayers, conversations, laughter, and tears, widows found comfort in being surrounded by women who truly understand the weight of loss and the courage it takes to carry on. The gathering became a reflection of faith, resilience, and sisterhood, where weary hearts found renewed hope to move forward once again. Together, they stood not as victims of grief, but as women of dignity, courage, and hope — silent warriors journeying side by side.

For more information, contact Caroline Tay, coordinator of Widow to Widow Ministry at 012-6018185.



Kristus Aman women's retreat – called to transformation

GENTING HIGHLANDS: Twenty-eight women from Kristus Aman parish gathered at Villa Dominic from June 19–21 for a spiritually enriching retreat themed *Women – God's Vessel of Transformation*. Guided by Sr Angelin Gnanapiragasam, FMDM, participants embarked on a faith-filled journey through the lives of three remarkable women in Scripture — Mary, the Mother of Jesus, Mary of Bethany, and Martha of Bethany.

Drawing from the witness and virtues of these women, Sr Angelin invited participants to reflect on their own vocation as disciples, encouraging them to cultivate hearts rooted in prayer while remaining committed to loving service. Through her engaging presentations, vibrant personality and deep scriptural insights, she challenged the women to embrace God's transforming grace in their daily lives.

The retreat provided opportunities for prayer, personal reflection and sharing, enabling participants to deepen their relationship with God

and gain fresh perspectives on their faith journey. As they reflected on the examples of Mary and Martha, they were reminded that authentic Christian discipleship calls for both attentive listening to the Lord and generous service to others.

A highlight of the retreat was an outreach activity in which participants lovingly sewed chemo pouches for children undergoing cancer treatment. Through this simple yet compassionate gesture, the women translated prayer into action, becoming instruments of God's love and care for those who are suffering.

On their journey home, the group stopped at the Church of St Jude, Rawang, where they participated in Sunday Mass celebrated by Fr Jonathan Rao, bringing their retreat experience to its spiritual culmination in the Eucharist.

Inspired by the lives of the women in Scripture, participants returned home with a shared commitment to become vessels of God's love, hope and healing in their families, communities and the wider world.



Caritas MJD calls for greater missionary outreach

Philip Packium

MELAKA: Caritas Malacca Johore Diocese (MJD) reaffirmed its commitment to serving the poor and vulnerable while calling for greater missionary outreach during its Annual General Meeting, June 20, attended by 46 participants.

Executive Director, Andrew Leo, presented an overview of Caritas MJD's ministries, explaining how the organisation's various arms work seamlessly to serve different sectors of the Church community. Describing the approach as "different strokes for different folks," he said the common goal is to ensure that no segment of society is left behind.

Andrew noted that under the leadership of Bishop Bernard Paul, Caritas MJD has been structured as a vibrant organisation that seeks to encounter, empower, enlighten, and evangelise through its social mission.

Among the ministries under the Social Mission umbrella are the Parish Office for Human Development (POHD) ministry, the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP), Creation Justice, the Migrant Ministry, and the various homes operated within the diocese.

The SSVP and POHD ministries continue to address the holistic needs of individuals, guided by the belief that "no work of mercy is foreign to the ministry". Their outreach ranges from sourcing motorised wheelchairs and hospital beds, to providing laptops for underprivileged students, organising the annual Back-to-School programme, coordinating outings for FINs, distributing food weekly to the homeless, assist-

ing with personal documentation, and providing transportation for medical appointments.

The meeting also heard from Dr Maria Lee, head of the Creation Justice Ministry, who shared ongoing efforts to help parishes become more environmentally sustainable by adopting best practices in ecological stewardship. Her presentation highlighted practical initiatives to transform parish communities into eco-compliant parishes.

Reports from Fatima Home, Canossa Home, and Villa Paulos indicated that while the homes continue to face operational challenges, they remain stable and are serving their residents well through the dedication of staff and volunteers.

A highlight of the meeting was the recognition of the Montfort Youth Centre (MYC), which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. Widely acknowledged as one of the diocese's most successful social ministries, the Centre continues the vision of St Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort by empowering disadvantaged youth through technical and vocational education.

Courses currently offered include Culinary Arts, Graphic Design, Welding, Information Technology, Agriculture, Electrical Studies, and Automotive Engineering. An appeal was made for greater support in encouraging eligible young people, particularly those from lower-income families, to enrol in the Centre's upcoming July intake.

In his closing address, Bishop Bernard expressed his gratitude to all involved in the diocesan social mission for faithfully living out the Gospel through concrete acts of service.



Bishop Bernard Paul speaking to the Caritas members of the diocese.



Participants sharing their thoughts in one of the sessions.

Recognising that the Church's social mission is sustained largely through the generosity of the faithful, he reminded members that stewardship, transparency, and accountability must remain hallmarks of every ministry.

The bishop also encouraged Caritas members to move beyond simply managing projects by embracing a more synodal approach, grounded in the pastoral method of "See, Judge, Act."

"See the reality, judge with the lens of Christ, and act with wisdom and love," he urged.

To strengthen awareness and participation in the Church's social mission, Bishop Bernard proposed that parishes organise formation

sessions, workshops, Lenten and Advent programmes, outreach activities, and awareness campaigns that help parishioners better understand the work of Caritas.

Calling for a shift "from a maintenance Church to a missionary Church," he encouraged the faithful to remain attentive to the needs of their local communities, listen compassionately to the cries of the poor, and remain open to new ideas and initiatives rather than becoming complacent.

The Annual General Meeting concluded with Bishop Bernard imparting his blessing upon all present, sending them forth to continue transforming faith into action through the Church's social mission.

Parish mission rekindles faith and strengthens community

IPOH: A month-long parish mission at the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes concluded on June 26 with a celebration that drew large numbers of parishioners.

Throughout the month, the mission reached not only the parish church but also the Bernadette Centre and the parish's four chapels through a series of Masses, faith talks and reflection sessions. The final six days featured daily Rosary recitations, Eucharistic celebrations, inspiring talks, Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction, preparing the faithful for the mission's closing celebration.

The concluding evening began with the Rosary, followed by the Eucharistic celebration. A deeply moving period of Eucharistic Adoration followed, during which the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick was administered before the celebration concluded with Benediction.

Parishioners began arriving as early as 6.00pm, filling the church with an atmosphere of joyful anticipation. Many shared that the mission had rekindled their faith and strengthened their sense of belonging to the parish community.

The mission was led by two Redemptorist missionaries from India, Fr Christopher Barnabas CSsR and Fr Johnson Jebanesar, CSsR, whose lively and inspiring preaching encouraged the faithful to deepen their relationship with the Holy Trinity and grow in devotion to Mary, Mother of God. Their practical and faith-filled reflections resonated with parishioners throughout the month.

Parishioners also expressed their appreciation to parish priest, Fr Robert Daniel, and assistant parish priest, Fr George Vaithynathan, for organising the mission, describing it as a grace-filled initiative that brought renewed spiritual vitality to the parish.

Reflecting on the experience, many regarded the month-long mission as a blessing that united the community in prayer, worship and faith formation, while echoing the central message proclaimed throughout the mission: "Everyone is precious in the eyes of God."

Patrick Louis



College General marks Feast of St Philip Minh with the Salib

TANJUNG BUNGAH: College General celebrated the Feast of St Philip Minh and his Companions on June 19 with prayer, reflection and fellowship, honouring the former seminarians who returned to Vietnam after their priestly formation and were later martyred for the faith. They were canonised by Pope St John Paul II in 1988.

The celebration was made even more meaningful by the presence of the *Salib* Malaysia, which had arrived at the seminary two days earlier. The cross was received from Mt Miriam Cancer Hospital by Rector Fr Ryan Innas Muthu, Dean of Studies Fr Surain Durai Raj, seminarians and staff before being placed in the Chapel of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The feast day began with a reflection by Fr George Vaithynathan, assistant parish priest of the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Ipoh, who drew on the seminary's 2026 theme, *A joyful community of disciples rooted in Christ*.

He reminded seminarians that authentic Christian joy is found not only in moments of happiness but also amid suffering and chal-



Guests reading about the College General martyrs.

lenges. Reflecting on the formation journey, he highlighted four interconnected virtues: walking humbly, fostering fraternity, listening deeply and serving wholeheartedly. The programme continued with Vespers, Holy Hour and Mass.

Archbishop Julian Leow, who presided at the Mass, reflected on the relevance of the martyrs' witness in today's world. While Catholics in Malaysia do not face the same persecution endured by the Vietnamese martyrs, he said the faithful are nevertheless called to

remain courageous and steadfast in living out their faith.

Recalling his own years as a seminarian at College General, Archbishop Julian noted that it had been 24 years since his priestly ordination. He contrasted the white cassock he once wore as a seminarian with the red chasuble he now wore as celebrant, symbolising the sacrifice of the martyrs and the call to courageous discipleship.

This year's celebration was especially meaningful as College General welcomed the faithful, par-

ticularly the families of its seminarians, to join in the festivities. Many parents travelled from across the country to celebrate with their sons, while members of religious communities and representatives from parishes and institutions where the seminarians had served during their pastoral placements were also in attendance, underscoring the shared commitment to nurturing future priests.

Parents described the celebration as both moving and encouraging, expressing gratitude for the seminary's formation team and the faith-filled environment in which their sons are discerning their vocation. Seminarians likewise said the presence of their families made the feast especially meaningful, reminding them that their vocation is sustained not only by God's grace but also by the love, prayers and accompaniment of the wider Church.

After the Mass, guests enjoyed fellowship over refreshments, including rambutans and mangoes harvested from the seminary grounds, while seminarians presented cultural performances that added to the festive atmosphere.

MINOR BASILICA OF ST.ANNE, BUKIT MERTAJAM, PENANG

FEAST OF ST. ANNE 2026

Walking Together With Saint Anne

NOVENA & MASSES SCHEDULE



DATE	TIME			SUB-THEME
DAY 1 17 JULY 2026 FRIDAY	10.00AM (E)*	3.00PM (BM) 5.00PM (T)	7.00PM (E) 9.00PM (M)	BUILDING TRUST
DAY 2 18 JULY 2026 SATURDAY	10.00AM (E)*	3.00PM (BM) 5.00PM (T)	7.00PM (E) 9.00PM (M)	FOSTERING INCLUSIVITY
DAY 3 19 JULY 2026 SUNDAY	8.00AM (T) 10.00AM (E)	12.00PM (M) 3.00PM (BM) 5.00PM (T)*	7.00PM (E)* 9.00PM (M)*	UNITY IN DIVERSITY
DAY 4 20 JULY 2026 MONDAY	10.00AM (E)*	3.00PM (BM) 5.00PM (T)	7.00PM (E) 9.00PM (M)	CARE OF OUR COMMON HOME
DAY 5 21 JULY 2026 TUESDAY	10.00AM (E)*	3.00PM (BM) 5.00PM (T)	7.00PM (E) 9.00PM (M)	YOUTH EMPOWERMENT
DAY 6 22 JULY 2026 WEDNESDAY	10.00AM (E)*	3.00PM (BM) 5.00PM (T)	7.00PM (E) 9.00PM (M)	ACCOMPANIMENT
DAY 7 23 JULY 2026 THURSDAY	10.00AM (E)*	3.00PM (BM) 5.00PM (T)	7.00PM (E) 9.00PM (M)	REACHING OUT
DAY 8 24 JULY 2026 FRIDAY	10.00AM (E)*	12.00PM (K) 3.00PM (BM) 5.00PM (T)	7.00PM (E) 9.00PM (M)	LIVING SYNODALITY
DAY 9 25 JULY 2026 SATURDAY	7.00AM (E)* 9.00AM (M) 11.00AM (T)	1.00PM (BM) 3.00PM (HEALING RALLY)	7.00PM (MULTI-LINGUAL) (OPEN AIR) 8.30PM PROCESSION	WALKING TOGETHER WITH ST. ANNE
DAY 10 26 JULY 2026 SUNDAY	7.00AM (T)* 9.00AM (E) 11.00AM (M)	1.00PM (BM) 3.00PM (T) 5.00PM (E)*		THE CRY OF THE EARTH IS THE CRY OF THE POOR

BM: BAHASA MALAYSIA E: ENGLISH M: MANDARIN T: TAMIL K: KADAZAN || * THIS MASS WILL NOT BE LIVE-STREAMED



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Vietnam celebrates first beatification on home soil

CAN THO: More than 70,000 Catholics gathered at Tac Say Church in the Diocese of Can Tho in Vietnam's Mekong Delta on July 2 for the beatification of Fr Francis Xavier Truong Buu Diep — the first beatification ceremony ever held in the country.

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, serving as the special envoy of Pope Leo XIV, presided over the Eucharistic celebration.

Concelebrating were Archbishop Marek Zalewski, cardinals and bishops from Vietnam, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, together with some 2,000 priests. Tens of thousands of religious and lay faithful also participated.

At the start of the Mass, Bishop Peter Le Tan Loi formally petitioned for the beatification of the Servant of God, Fr Francis Xavier Truong Buu Diep. Following the reading of a brief biography, Cardinal Tagle proclaimed in Latin the Apostolic Letter of Pope Leo XIV officially declaring him Blessed.

In his homily, Cardinal Tagle invited the Church in Vietnam to give thanks for the gift of its new Blessed



Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle presided over the beatification Mass of Fr Francis Xavier Truong Buu Diep at Tac Say Church in the Diocese of Can Tho, in southern Vietnam, on July 2, 2026. (RVA Photo/Truyền thông HĐGMVN)

and reflected on the Beatitudes, particularly Christ's promise to those persecuted for the sake of righteousness.

Drawing on the Gospels of Matthew and John, he said authentic discipleship means remaining faithful to Christ amid persecution and suffering.

"The life of Blessed Francis Xavier Truong Buu Diep invites us to respond to God's love in our daily lives," he said.

The cardinal described martyrdom as bearing witness to Christ through one's words, actions and intimate relationship with God. He said Blessed Diep exemplified joy, courage, compassion and steadfast faith by choosing to remain with his people despite grave danger.

Cardinal Tagle noted that the new Blessed ministered not only to Catholics but also to the poor and people of other faiths, refusing to abandon his flock during times

of persecution.

"The world today needs witnesses to the truth," he said, urging the faithful to reject messages that fuel conflict and war, and instead become instruments of truth, reconciliation and hope.

Before the final blessing, Cardinal Tagle conveyed Pope Leo XIV's congratulations and Apostolic Blessing to the Church in Vietnam. He also recalled the Pope's appeal during the June 27 Consistory of Cardinals: "Let us not accept defeat in the face of violence. Let us courageously bear witness to the Lord in the heart of the world."

In his closing remarks, Bishop Peter Le Tan Loi thanked the thousands of pilgrims who travelled from across Vietnam and abroad, as well as representatives of other faiths, clergy, religious and civil authorities, for participating in the historic celebration.

He said the beatification should mark not the end of an event but the beginning of a renewed commitment to emulate Blessed Francis Xavier Truong Buu Diep through lives of hope, charity and service to the Vietnamese people. **RVA**

Vatican confirms excommunication of SSPX bishops, declares schism

VATICAN: One day after the traditionalist Society of St Pius X (SSPX) consecrated four bishops without the permission of Pope Leo XIV, the Vatican issued a decree declaring the excommunication of all bishops involved in the ceremony and stating that the group is in schism.

Published on July 2 by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, the decree specified that the consecrating bishops, Bishops Alfonso de Galarreta and Bernard Fellay, as well as the four bishops consecrated, Bishops Pascal Schreiber, Michael Goldade, Michel Poinsinet de Sivry, and Marc Hanappier, have incurred excommunication *latae sententiae* for performing the consecrations.

These excommunications, according to canon law, can only be removed by the pope.

The decree also warned Catholic clergy and lay faithful not to adhere to the SSPX's "schism," under penalty of automatic excommunication.

The dicastery, in an explanatory note, lamented that doctrinal discussions between the Holy See and the SSPX, since the time of St Paul VI, have not resulted in the society's full communion with the Holy See.

The note also stated that SSPX clergy "administer the sacraments illicitly and that the sacrament of penance administered by them and the marriage assisted by them are invalid."

Pope Francis had granted SSPX

priests special permission to hear confessions and conduct marriage ceremonies as part of his outreach to the group.

The Vatican stated on May 13 that the consecrations would be a schismatic act, resulting in automatic excommunication for the consecrating bishops and those consecrated. Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin later called the SSPX's act "schismatic."

Pope Leo XIV even issued a final appeal to the society not to proceed with these consecrations.

"In this spirit, and filled with Christian affection, I plead with you and ask you with all my heart: Please turn back," Leo wrote in his letter.

In 1988, after Archbishop Marcel



Lefebvre, the founder of the SSPX, consecrated bishops without a papal mandate, the Vatican responded two days later, notifying him and the consecrated bishops of their automatic excommunication.

The SSPX exclusively celebrates the Traditional Latin Mass and has rejected certain teachings and reforms of the Second Vatican Council, particularly regarding religious freedom and the Church's approach to other faiths. **EWTN News**

Calcutta statutes strengthen parish financial governance

KOLKATA: Archbishop Elias Frank has introduced revised statutes governing Parish Finance Committees (PFCs), establishing a stronger framework for financial transparency, accountability and oversight across the Archdiocese of Calcutta.

The new statutes replace guidelines issued in 2014 by Archbishop Thomas D'Souza, then archbishop of Calcutta, and provide clearer rules on committee membership, responsibilities and financial decision-making.

Under the revised framework, every parish must establish a finance committee comprising four to six members, with preference given to qualified laypeople with financial

expertise. Close relatives of the parish priest are barred from serving, and all appointments require the archbishop's approval, ensuring the committee's independence.

The statutes also define how parish priests are to work with their finance committees. They are required to consult the committee when preparing annual budgets, reviewing financial statements and considering significant financial decisions.

New spending thresholds have also been introduced. Parish priests must consult the committee before approving one-off expenditures between 15,000 and 25,000 rupees (approx. RM650 and RM1,100). For capital projects, major repairs

or the purchase of assets costing between 25,000 and 50,000 rupees (approx. RM1,100 and RM2,100), the committee's consent is required. Larger expenditures, as well as property sales, leases and the acceptance of certain donations, also require approval from the archdiocese's financial administrator.

The statutes include enforcement provisions stating that actions taken in violation of these requirements may be deemed invalid and could leave parish priests personally liable for any resulting financial losses.

The reforms come amid growing concern over parish financial governance. The document refers to complaints of alleged fund mismanagement and notes that an

inquiry committee was established in 2024 to investigate allegations involving a parish priest at the Church of St Teresa. The outcome of the investigation has not been publicly disclosed.

Observers say the revised statutes are intended to strengthen parishioners' confidence by introducing clearer financial controls, greater transparency and broader consultation. Although the framework acknowledges that not all parishes currently have finance committees and does not mandate a comprehensive asset register, supporters believe it marks a significant step towards strengthening financial governance and accountability throughout the archdiocese. **Matters India**

South Korea passes laws to support Seoul WYD 2027

SEOUL: South Korea has taken another major step towards hosting World Youth Day 2027 after Seoul lawmakers approved



two ordinances providing official government backing for the global Catholic gathering.

The Seoul Metropolitan Council passed the Seoul Metropolitan Government Ordinance on Support for the 41st Seoul World Youth Day 2027 and the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education Ordinance on Support for the 41st Seoul World Youth Day 2027 during its June 24 plenary session.

The government support ordinance passed 47-4 with eight abstentions, while the education ordinance was approved 48-6 with seven abstentions.

The legislation establishes the legal and administrative framework for preparations, enabling close collaboration between the Seoul Metropolitan Government, the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education and the local organising committee.

The ordinances cover accommodation, transport, food, safety, medical services, sanitation, volunteer management, inter-agency cooperation, cultural programmes, tourism and the use of school facilities. Earlier this year, South Korea's National Assembly also passed the Act on Support for International Cultural Events to support WYD 2027.

Officials said the education ordinance will allow schools, including gymnasiums, to accommodate large numbers of pilgrims.

Fr Joseph Lee Young-je, planning director of the Seoul WYD Local Organising Committee, welcomed the legislation as a significant milestone.

"The two ordinances passed by the Seoul Metropolitan Council provide essential legal and administrative foundations for the successful hosting of Seoul WYD," he said.

He expressed hope that, together with the Act passed by the National Assembly in March, the measures would strengthen cooperation between national and local authorities.

The legislation requires the Mayor of Seoul to implement a comprehensive support plan covering venues, safety, disaster preparedness, transport, accommodation, catering, medical services and tourism. It also provides for volunteer recruitment and training, promotional and cultural programmes, and the establishment of a consultative body bringing together government ministries, education authorities, local districts and the organising committee.

Church and government agencies will now finalise operational plans covering pilgrim accommodation, school facilities, crowd and traffic management, emergency medical services, volunteer coordination, and contingency measures for heatwaves and heavy rain. **ucanews.com**



A Church comes of age

Richard Chia

For Archbishop Peter Chung, the creation of the metropolitan archdiocese was never simply an administrative milestone. It was a call to prepare the local Church for a new era.

Less than a year after his appointment, he presented what would become one of the most significant pastoral documents in the history of the Church in Sarawak. Released at Easter 1977, his 49-page pastoral letter, *Our Task and Our Responsibility*, was far more than a reflection on the past. It was a candid assessment of the Church's strengths and weaknesses, coupled with a compelling vision for its future.

Rather than celebrating the achievements of the newly established archdiocese, Archbishop Peter challenged the faithful to recognise that the work had only just begun.

The Church, he believed, had entered a new chapter. The missionary foundations laid by generations of Mill Hill missionaries had borne abundant fruit, but the responsibility for nurturing that harvest now rested increasingly in the hands of the local Church.

Taking an honest look

Archbishop Peter's assessment was refreshingly honest.

He recognised that while Catholics generally remained faithful in their religious practice, the quality of parish life varied considerably. Rural communities often displayed a stronger sense of fellowship and shared responsibility, while urban Catholics, though devout, tended to be more individualistic and less engaged in community life.

He believed vibrant parish communities did not emerge by chance. Effective parish councils, active lay participation and collaborative leadership were essential if parishes were to flourish. Where parish councils were weak or non-existent, he urged that they be renewed or established without delay.

The archbishop also recognised that the Church's mission could no longer depend primarily on its clergy.

Lay apostolates were already thriving in the larger towns, but many villages — particularly in Sarawak's remote interior — lacked sufficient lay leaders to sustain parish life. The future, he believed, depended on forming committed lay men and women who could become collaborators in evangelisation and pastoral ministry.

Education presented another pressing challenge.

Following the transfer of Catholic

The story so far ...

The story of the Church in Borneo is one of remarkable growth and steady maturation. In earlier instalments (*HERALD*, Feb 15 and March 8, 2026), we traced its journey from Apostolic Prefectures to Apostolic Vicariates in 1952, when Pope Pius XII appointed Bishops Jan Vos and James Buis to shepherd the growing Catholic communities of Sarawak and North Borneo. Just over two decades later came an even greater milestone.

On May 31, 1976, Pope Paul VI established the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Kuching, with Kota Kinabalu and Miri as its suffragan dioceses. Bishop Peter Chung Hoan Ting was appointed the first Metropolitan Archbishop of Kuching, becoming the first local bishop to lead the Church in East Malaysia.

It was a defining moment that symbolised a Church no longer dependent solely on foreign missionaries, but increasingly guided by the faith, leadership and commitment of its own people.

schools to government administration, formal Christian religious instruction had disappeared from classrooms. Responsibility for passing on the faith now rested squarely with the Church. This required trained catechists, suitable facilities for catechism classes, and a well-developed catechetical programme capable of nurturing future generations of Catholics.

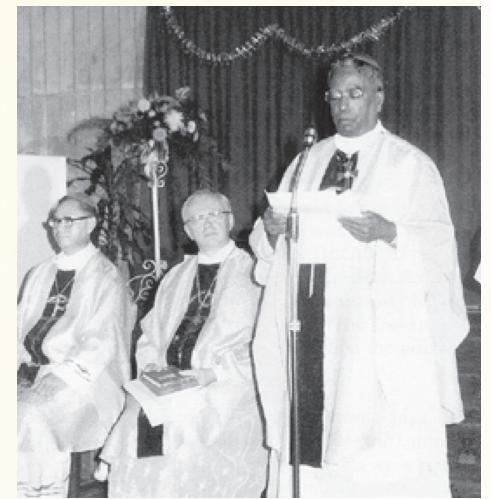
Although adult conversions continued to flourish in rural areas, Archbishop Peter was concerned by their noticeable decline in urban centres. The changing social landscape, he realised, demanded fresh approaches to evangelisation.

Yet, perhaps, no challenge weighed more heavily on his heart than the growing shortage of priests.

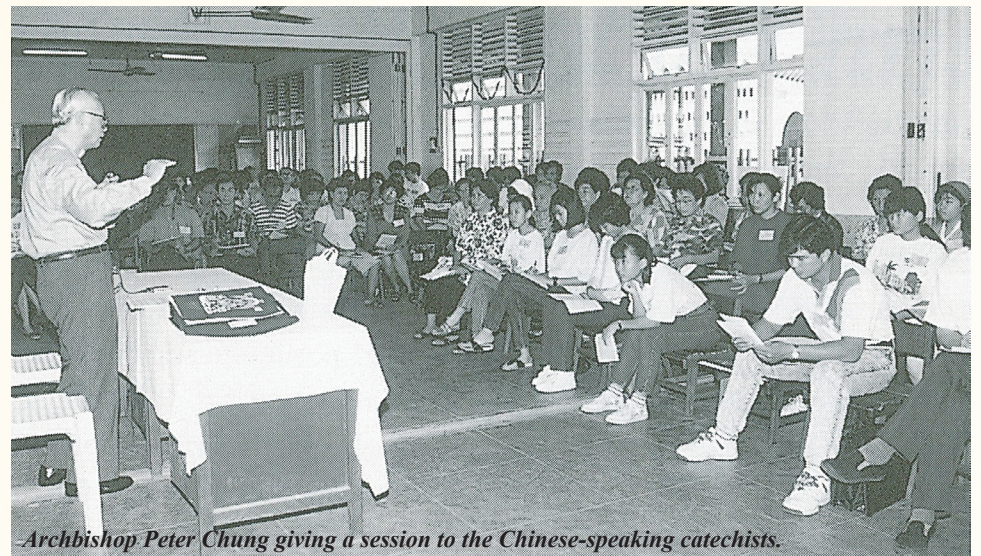
The gradual departure of foreign missionaries meant that local clergy were increasingly stretched across vast geographical areas. Catechists and lay pastoral workers would inevitably assume greater responsibility in supporting the Church's mission, making their proper formation and financial support an urgent priority.

The need to foster local vocations was equally pressing. While many young women generously answered God's call to religious life, vocations to the priesthood and male religious congregations remained insufficient to meet the needs of the expanding Church.

Financial independence presented another significant hurdle. The establishment of the metropolitan archdiocese also marked the gradual end of reliance on overseas missionary funding. If the Church was to flourish, its people would need to become active partners, not only in ministry but also in sustaining its mission financially.



Archbishop D. Vendargon of Kuala Lumpur reading out the Bull raising the Vicariate of Kuching into an Archdiocese, November 26, 1976. Seated next to Archbishop Peter Chung is Apostolic Delegate G. Moretti.



Archbishop Peter Chung giving a session to the Chinese-speaking catechists.

Five priorities for the future

Having honestly examined the realities facing the Church, Archbishop Peter proposed a clear pastoral roadmap.

Above all, he insisted that the missionary spirit must never be allowed to fade. The Church could not become inward-looking or complacent simply because new ecclesiastical structures had been established. Every parish, every family and every Catholic remained called to proclaim the Gospel.

He urged the faithful to confront pastoral challenges not with discouragement but with perseverance, courage and prayer.

He reaffirmed the urgent need to cultivate local vocations, convinced that the long-term future of the Church depended on priests and religious emerging from among its own people.

He called upon Catholics to build a financially self-supporting Church, recognising that true maturity required not only spiritual commitment but also material responsibility.

Most importantly, Archbishop Peter reminded the faithful that the mission of the Church belonged to every baptised Catholic. Evangelisation was not the exclusive work of bishops, priests or religious. The laity were called to become genuine partners in building the Kingdom of God.

The bishop's role, he wrote, was not to accomplish this mission alone, but "to coordinate and channel the energies of the whole Catholic community."

That invitation reflected the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, which had called the entire People of God to share responsibility for the Church's mission.

A vision that bore fruit

History would prove Archbishop Peter's vision remarkably farsighted.

During the first decade of his episcopate, the Catholic population in Sarawak grew from approximately 80,500 to more than 120,000 faithful. Although the number of Mill Hill missionaries declined steadily from 30 to 15, the number of local diocesan priests almost doubled from 10 to 19 — a significant milestone in the development of an indigenous clergy.

His leadership extended far beyond statistics.

Archbishop Peter strengthened diocesan structures, encouraged closer collaboration between clergy, religious and laity, fostered respectful relationships with civil authorities and other faith communities, and promoted the inculturation of the Gospel among indigenous peoples such as the Iban and Bidayuh. Under his guidance, the Church also expanded its educational, catechetical and social outreach, laying foundations that would continue to shape the archdiocese for decades.

By the mid-1980s, the Archdiocese of Kuching had emerged as a confident local Church — resilient, missionary and increasingly self-reliant.

Yet its success brought with it an unexpected consequence.

The faster the Church grew, the greater the demands placed upon its limited resources. More Catholics meant more parishes, more mission stations and more communities longing for the sacraments. The young local Church had come of age, but it now faced perhaps its greatest test: how to continue expanding when the number of priests remained painfully few.

That challenge would define the next chapter in the remarkable story of the Church in Sarawak.

Next: A Church growing beyond its means



The archbishop being welcomed by kampung folks.

VATICAN: A world scarred by war, division, loneliness and a growing loss of hope dominated discussions as 178 cardinals gathered in the Vatican for the opening of an extraordinary consistory on June 26.

Meeting for the first time in a synodal format under the leadership of Pope Leo XIV, the cardinals reflected on the question: "In what kind of world are we called to proclaim the Gospel?" Although the discussions in the Vatican's Paul VI Hall were held behind closed doors, the Holy See Press Office released a synthesis of the deliberations.

The cardinals described a world increasingly marked by political tensions, social fragmentation and violence, warning that misinformation and digital communication often deepen polarisation instead of encouraging genuine dialogue.

They also expressed concern over growing hostility toward religious and ethnic minorities, including rising anti-semitism and persecution of Christians in various parts of the world.

Many participants pointed to extreme individualism, the weakening of family life and widespread loneliness affecting both young people and the elderly. They linked these trends to broader social problems, including suicide, drug abuse, youth crime and organised criminal activity.

According to the Vatican summary, many cardinals also noted a growing sense of mistrust toward institutions, democracy and the future itself, compounded by economic uncertainty, falling birth rates and a loss of transcendent values.

Migration emerged as another major topic. While acknowledging the challenges migration presents, the cardinals called for humane, Christian responses rooted in solidarity and effective integration. Several groups emphasised that migrants can become a source of renewal and blessing when welcomed with openness.

Environmental degradation, corruption and the pressures of urban life were, likewise, identified as contributing to the hardships faced by many communities.

Despite these concerns, the discussions were marked by hope and a renewed sense of the Church's mission.

The cardinals stressed that the Church must



Cardinals confront a wounded world at synodal consistory



Pope Leo XIV offers Mass in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. (Vatican Media/Simone Risoluti)

become an ever more welcoming "mother", capable of recognising its own shortcomings while offering healing, reconciliation and accompaniment. Parish communities, they said, remain essential places where people can encounter Christ and one another.

They also reaffirmed that the Church's credibility rests not merely on its words but on its closeness to those who suffer, enabling it to speak with moral authority on human dignity, peace and the common good.

Young people, the cardinals observed, continue to search for meaning and show a deep hunger for the Gospel. The Church must accompany them with hope, authentic witness and practical support.

The Vatican synthesis also highlighted synodality as "a providential path" for helping

both the Church and humanity discern responses to today's challenges. Charity, particularly through the witness of lay faithful, was identified as a powerful form of evangelisation.

The cardinals also pointed to signs of hope in popular piety, Catholic education and the faithful witness of Christians, especially in places where they are a minority. Ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, together with prayer, were recognised as essential instruments for promoting peace and overcoming division.

The day's proceedings opened with the chanting of the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, followed by addresses from Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re and Cardinal Baltazar Enrique Porras Cardozo, who presided over the session.

In his opening address, Pope Leo invited the cardinals to help him discern the Church's mission amid today's complex realities.

A biblical meditation by Cardinal Grzegorz Ryś framed the discussions through the parable of the Good Samaritan. He described modern humanity as deeply wounded by violence, loss of dignity and what he called "a tsunami of loneliness", urging the Church to imitate the Samaritan by responding with compassion, closeness and self-giving love.

After the working groups presented their reports, Pope Leo thanked the cardinals for their contributions and reaffirmed the importance of dialogue and participation.

Reflecting on the widespread suffering of today's world, he said the Church's response must be to invite people into genuine communion — not only through the sacraments but also by creating spaces where people can encounter one another and experience God's love.

"If we are not blind," the Pope said, "it is true that there is so much suffering."

The June 26 session concluded with the Angelus before discussions resumed later that day and continued on June 27. The extraordinary consistory brought together both cardinal electors and non-electors, with 178 of the Church's 241 cardinals taking part. **EWTN News**



VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV has defended his decision to hold the extraordinary consistory of cardinals in a synodal format, acknowledging that the approach is unfamiliar to many but insisting it is the path by which the Church will "grow in communion."

Addressing 178 cardinals at the opening of the two-day gathering on June 26, the Pope encouraged them to embrace the working-group format wholeheartedly, even though it departs from the traditional style of consistories.

"I am well aware that, for many of us, this is not the usual way of conducting a consistory," he said. "Enter into this ecclesial exercise with confidence. We learn synodality by practising it, and we learn together to grow in communion."

Pope Leo XIV defends synodal consistory as path to deeper communion

The Pope's remarks came amid concerns voiced by some cardinals following the first synodal-style consistory in January, when several participants reportedly felt discussions were overly structured and left little room for open debate.

To address those concerns, this meeting includes a dedicated session for free dialogue at its conclusion, along with a confidential email channel through which cardinals may submit personal observations directly to the Pope.

In his opening address, Pope Leo outlined four key themes for reflection: viewing today's world through the eyes of faith; fostering a "civilisation of love" amid conflict and division; exploring the principles of his social encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* through a synodal style of shared responsibility; and implementing the Synod on Synodality in response to the world's many wounds.

He stressed that synodality is not simply a new method of governance but "an attitude, an openness and a willingness to understand." Far from weakening authority, he said, it strengthens communion while encouraging broader participation and helping pastors exercise leadership in a more evangelical way.

The Pope also emphasised that the

consistory is not solely concerned with the Church's internal life but with strengthening its witness in a troubled world.

"Our view of the world, peace, the common good and synodality must help us proclaim the Gospel with greater fidelity and credibility," he said.

Appealing for the cardinals' support, Pope Leo said he needed them to accompany him with honesty, freedom and fraternity.

"I need your support: strong, explicit and public. I need to feel supported by you as by brothers," he said, urging them to listen attentively to the experiences of local Churches, recognise signs of hope, and confront difficulties and resistance with courage.

The Pope reaffirmed his conviction that the Lord is leading the Church towards "a more evangelical way" of sharing responsibility, adding that the credibility of its witness and the fruitfulness of its mission depend on this journey.

His emphasis on consultation marks a contrast with the later years of Pope Francis, during whose pontificate extraordinary consistories were suspended after 2014 and many cardinals called for greater opportunities to advise the pope.

Pope Leo said the dialogue between

the pope and the College of Cardinals is among their most important responsibilities, describing sincere advice as "an act of communion."

"We are not guardians of particular interests," he reminded them, "but disciples and witnesses of the Kingdom of God."

Earlier that morning, during Mass in St Peter's Basilica, Pope Leo linked synodality and collegiality to Christian fraternity, describing them as expressions of the unity shared by all the baptised.

He urged the cardinals to imitate the apostles especially Sts Peter and Paul by witnessing to the faith in freedom, fostering peace and unity, and embracing harmony through obedience to Christ.

In a striking reflection on the Petrine ministry, the Pope concluded by describing his leadership in terms of service rather than command.

"In helping me in this task," he told the cardinals, "you will find in me one who asks, not commands."

He added that "the authority of primacy belongs to the one who listens and only then leads, to the one who learns and only then teaches, always following the one and only Teacher." **EWTN News**

Christina Lazaroo

Long before Sr Aemy Soo Mei Ling ever considered becoming a Daughter of St Paul, the congregation had already become part of her life. It appeared subtly through the books she loved as a child, and later, through a series of encounters that kept drawing her back to the Paulines. As she recently professed her perpetual vows as a Daughter of St Paul, Sr Aemy looked back on a journey that had begun long before she recognised God's invitation.

Born in 1989 into a non-Catholic family in Penampang, Sabah, Sr Aemy was introduced to the faith through her mother, who was the first in the family to embrace the Catholic faith. Even before she became a Catholic, she recalled having an unexplainable thirst for God. One birthday, her mother gave her a crucifix pendant. At the time, it seemed like a simple gift, but looking back, she now sees it as one of the earliest signs of God's invitation.

During the Easter Vigil in 1999, she was baptised, together with her parents and two younger sisters, at Sacred Heart Cathedral, Kota Kinabalu.

"I felt strongly that I belonged to God and that I was His. I wanted and desired to give myself as an offering to God, though I still did not fully understand what it meant."

A year after her baptism, another encounter left a lasting impression. During the launch of a cassette album by the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (FSIC), she found herself captivated by the joy of the nuns who had given their lives to God. One nun's warm smile prompted a question that lingered in her heart.

"I asked my mother if becoming a nun was a good thing."

Her mother's answer was both encouraging and realistic.

"Of course it is good, but remember, it is not easy. Being a sister means giving up everything, even your family."

Those words stayed with her. So did the gentle invitation of Sr Carmen (FSIC) who told her, "If God calls you someday, come and look for me."

As the years passed, Sr Aemy continued growing in faith while pursuing her own dreams. She completed a Diploma in Commerce and hoped to become a kindergarten or primary school teacher. Yet beneath those aspirations, she constantly asked, "Lord, what is Your will for me?" Even while helping in her father's business and

serving in the Kids of the Kingdom ministry at Sacred Heart Cathedral, she sensed that God was nudging her towards something more.

Another thread was gently weaving itself into her story.

As a child, she had been drawn to Bible storybooks and prayer books without realising that many had been published by the Daughters of St Paul. During her years of discernment, she continued encountering the congregation wherever she went. The repeated encounters gradually led her to ask a deeper question.

"I began asking, 'Lord, is there something unique about the Daughters of St Paul? Is there something more You want me to discover?'"

The answer came unexpectedly during the thanksgiving Mass celebrating the silver jubilee of two Pauline sisters in 2009. As the Gospel of the Rich Young Man was proclaimed by Archbishop Emeritus John Lee, one sentence pierced her heart.

"Sell all that you have, give to the poor, then come and follow Me."

She would later describe those words as the first clear seed of her vocation.



The invitation, however, did not remove her fears.

"Fear is normal," she said. "But the desire to belong to God was stronger

than the fear."

Choosing religious life meant surrendering not only her own plans but also trusting that God would care for her family. After years of prayer and discernment, she officially joined the Daughters of St Paul in Sabah on the Feast of the Epiphany in January 2014 before leaving for the congregation's pre-novitiate house in the Philippines a month later. She was 25 years old.

Her mother readily gave her blessing.

"If this is what you like, and what God wants you to do, then I cannot say no. I will support you."

For her father, letting go of his eldest daughter took longer. Acceptance came gradually through conversations over the years. One encounter remains especially close to Sr Aemy's heart. During formation, she became ill and wondered whether God might be asking her to return home. Instead of encouraging her to leave religious life, her father simply urged her to take care of herself, even offering remedies to help her recover.

"If you are sick, how are you going to serve?" he reminded her.

For Sr Aemy, those words marked a significant turning point in her father's acceptance of her vocation.

Thirteen years of formation also brought challenges she had never anticipated. The greatest was not adapting to a life of prayer or apostolic ministry, but learning to live in community with sisters from different cultures, personalities and backgrounds.

"The conflicts are always there," she admitted. "We learn to see each other's gifts, to recognise what one has that another does not, and to complement one another. It requires patience and tolerance, but it also makes community very beautiful."

During her novitiate, prolonged periods of prayer helped her deepen her relationship with Christ and confirm the call she had been discerning for years. On June 24, 2019, she professed her first religious vows at the Lipa Novitiate House in the Philippines, describing it as a profound joy to belong completely to Christ.

Her formation continued through study and mission. While pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Communication, she also participated in evangelisation in villages, parishes and mission areas across Malaysia and the Philippines, bringing the Word of God and Pauline publications to communities hungry for hope. Those encounters strengthened her conviction that she had found her place in the Pauline mission of proclaiming Christ through media and social communications.

Today, as a perpetually professed Daughter of St Paul, Sr Aemy continues the vision of Blessed James Alberione, proclaiming the Gospel through media and social communications. Now serving in Bangkok, Thailand, she hopes her own journey will encourage others, especially young people, to remain open to God's plan.

She also hopes they will not see religious life as a rejection of love, but as one of the many ways of loving wholeheartedly.

Looking back, Sr Aemy sees how God had been patiently guiding her through each stage of her life, often in ways she only understood much later. From her mother's witness to the books that nurtured her faith, from moments of uncertainty to the joy of religious profession, each became part of God's invitation to follow Him.

"Now I can truly say this is what my heart truly seeks. It is the Lord whom my heart desires. In Him, I have found where I truly belong. He alone is enough. God alone suffices."

Compassion shines through Caritas community bazaar

KOTA TINGGI, Johor: Despite heavy rain, the second Caritas community bazaar at the Church of St Elizabeth drew an encouraging response as parishioners and visitors came together in a spirit of generosity to support refugees, migrant workers and other vulnerable families.

Organised by the parish's Caritas POHD, the bazaar aimed to raise funds and provide practical assistance, particularly for Rohingya refugees and migrant workers living within the local community.



The church grounds buzzed with activity as visitors browsed through a wide variety of donated items, including school supplies, toiletries, curtains, pre-loved clothing, toys, bags and shoes. The items were generously contributed by parishioners, friends and benefactors, reflecting the community's willingness to share with those in need.

In addition to purchasing items, many also made cash donations, enabling Caritas POHD to provide essential food and daily necessities to families facing financial hardship. Every

contribution, whether in cash or in kind, became a tangible expression of Christian charity and solidarity.

A free health screening, offered during the event, was another highlight. Besides providing basic health checks, it underscored the importance of preventive health care, especially for those with limited access to medical services.

The bazaar also featured a lively children's programme organised by the parish catechists. Through games and interactive activities, underprivileged children from the surrounding community enjoyed a day of fun, laughter and friendship. Equally encouraging was the active participation of the parish's young people, who volunteered their time and talents while learning the values of compassion, generosity and service.

Supported by catechists, parents and numerous volunteers, the bazaar became much more than a fundraising event. It was a parish-wide expression of faith in action, bringing together people of all ages to serve others with joy and generosity.

Reflecting on the event, the organising



team expressed gratitude to everyone who contributed their time, resources and prayers. Encouraged by the strong community support and the positive impact on those served, Caritas POHD hopes to build on the success of this year's bazaar and continue reaching out to those most in need.

Through acts of generosity and service, the bazaar became a tangible witness to the Gospel, bringing hope, dignity and encouragement to those facing hardship.

What do you remember when someone asks you about a feast day in your parish? Is it the tents, the chairs, the decorations, or the food? How much do we truly know the patron saints we celebrate when we champion traditions like giving buns in their name? Too often, feast days risk becoming centred on logistics and appearances. We measure success by how grand the setup looks, how many people are fed, or how elaborate the programme is. While these elements create atmosphere, they can easily overshadow the deeper call of the Church: to bring Christ to the margins.

This year's Feast of St Anthony at the Church of St Anthony, Kuala Lumpur, reminded us that true celebration is not measured by grandeur but by grace, not by spectacle but by service. At its heart was a gesture of compassion that set everything in motion. "St Anthony came to see me," the words of a homebound elderly woman, as she held the relic of St Anthony from Padua, echo as a testament to the essence of celebrating a saint. That tender moment captured a living encounter with Christ through the love and service of His people.

What made this feast truly meaningful were the personal encounters of grace. One parishioner shared how, after losing her grandparents and not having active Catholic parents, she felt alone. Yet during the novena, she discovered that the Church was her family. Despite cultural pressures that once made her feel excluded, she experienced inclusion and unity, knowing the parish would stand with her even in her solitude.

Another encounter came from a family



Catholic Digest

Elvina Fernandez

Beyond tents and buns

visiting from Fiji, who purchased candles to take home. They spoke of naming their son after their parish priest as a way of honouring his service. Their story challenged us to reflect on how we honour our priests and live obedience and service in our own communities.

There were moments of tenderness too. A child, seeing a parishioner kneeling in prayer after Communion, gently kissed her hand. In that simple gesture, she felt as though Christ Himself had come to meet her in her brokenness. Another parishioner, seated in the Sacred Heart wing opposite St Anthony, realised she no longer needed to "claim" a side of the church. Instead, she saw through St Anthony's eyes, learning to be like Christ.

Volunteers working on feast content were struck by St Anthony's humility. They realised that devotion is not about outward symbols or brown outfits, but about pointing always to Christ.

The relic veneration brought its own powerful witness. A man in a wheelchair, struggling to move, pushed himself forward to venerate the relic. His determination was a testimony of faith stronger than words. A cancer patient undergoing chemotherapy saw the parish's social media post and came to buy candles to support the needy. His selflessness was St Anthony's compassion alive today.

These encounters remind us that feast days are not about spectacle but about grace. They are about the small, hidden moments where Christ meets His people. They are about the lonely finding companionship, the sick finding comfort, and the poor finding support.

The feast also revealed how the parish community and its many teams came together to bring meaning to this faith journey. From the choir that lifted voices in praise, to the hospitality teams who welcomed pilgrims, to the youth who animated the celebrations with energy, every group played its part. Together, they carried the light of Christ and the presence of St Anthony to those in need and to the pilgrims who came seeking hope. It was a living witness that faith is not only celebrated but shared, and that unity in service is the greatest gift a parish can offer.

And yet, the deeper lesson of this feast is not only about what the parish did together, but about what each of us is called to do every day. St Anthony's life reminds us that sainthood is not reserved for the extraordinary few. Each of us is called to be a saint in our ordinary lives — through kindness, humility, forgiveness, and service. To be a saint is to point to Christ in the way we live, in the way we treat others, and in the way we carry His light into the world.

When a child kisses the hand of someone praying, when someone thinks of the poor despite his own suffering, when a wheelchair bound man struggles forward to venerate a relic, these are glimpses of everyday sainthood. They remind us that holiness is not distant or unattainable. It is lived in the small acts of love that point others to Christ.

Too often, our attention during feast days drifts toward the practical details — the flower arrangements, how beautiful the tents are, how many chairs are set up, the parking spaces, the toilets, and the food distribution. While these

things have their place, they must never become the measure of success. What truly matters is our personal encounter with Jesus and the way we extend His love to others.

It is about whether the lonely feel accompanied, whether the sick feel visited, whether the poor feel supported, and whether the community grows closer to Christ. It is about whether we, as individuals and as a parish, are willing to live as saints in our daily lives, pointing always to Him.

A feast day should leave pilgrims returning home not simply satisfied with good organisation, but filled with joy because they have received His love, experienced His presence, and found hope in the compassion of the community.

When we centre our feast day on compassion and service, the parish lives out the saint's mission and Christ's command to love. May every feast day in our Church be measured not by grandeur but by grace, not by spectacle but by service, and not by decoration but by discipleship. And may each of us, in our own ordinary ways, embrace the call to holiness, becoming saints who point to Christ in all we do.

So the question remains: are we walking in our saint's footsteps, where Christ is seen and heard before us? And do we truly know our saints and honour them by living as they would, treating others as they would?

Elvina is passionate about connecting Scripture with contemporary realities. Through her writing, she seeks to inspire belonging, empower the community, and make faith accessible in everyday life.

Grace after meals: Remembering to give thanks

Growing up, family meals in my home always began with a familiar ritual: saying grace before eating. That pause before the first bite reminded us that food is never just food; it is provision, blessing, and gift. Yet, looking back, I realise how seldom we spoke of grace after meals. How many of us pause to give thanks once the plates are cleared, our stomachs are full, and the day carries on?

The practice of grace after meals is not a modern invention. Scripture itself points us toward it. In Deuteronomy 8:10 we read: "When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land He has given you." Gratitude here is not only about asking before receiving — it is about remembering after being satisfied. A meal becomes a cycle of blessing: we begin with prayer, partake with joy, and conclude with thanksgiving.

Before and after

Most households, like mine, emphasise grace before meals. It's ingrained from childhood — practical, easy to remember. Children are taught to fold their hands, bow their heads, and recite words of thanks before eating. But once the meal is over, once our hunger is met, the ritual often ends. The dishes are washed, the table is cleared, and life resumes. In our hurry, grace after meals slips quietly into forgetfulness.

This neglect reveals something about human nature. We are quick to ask, but slower to remember. We anticipate blessings eagerly yet hesitate to acknowledge them once they arrive. Grace before meals is not only about thanking the cook — it is about recognising the unseen chain of provision: farmers, workers, transporters, and ultimately God, who sustains all.

Grace after meals, however, is about gratitude for nourishment already received — for strength in our bodies and peace in our souls. It honours God's provision in every season. Even leftovers become reminders of divine generosity. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "My grace is sufficient for you." That sufficiency extends even to the simple satisfaction of a meal.

Why it matters

Grace after meals deepens our awareness of abundance. It teaches us humility, reminding us that fullness is never guaranteed. It sanctifies the ordinary, turning daily routines into sacred encounters. And it expands gratitude beyond beginnings — helping us remember that thanksgiving belongs not only at the start but also at the end.



Stepping Stone

Anne Amaladasan

A short dialogue at the table

To bring this home, imagine a simple family scene:

Child: "We already prayed before eating. Why do we need to pray again?"

Parent: "Because now we know what the food has given us. We're full, we're nourished, and we've shared this time together."

Child: "So grace after meals is like saying thank you twice?"

Parent: "Exactly. Once for the gift we hoped for, and once

for the gift we've received."

This little exchange captures the heart of grace after meals — it's not repetition, it's remembrance.

Christ's teaching on gratitude

Jesus Himself modelled thanksgiving in the simplest of moments. Before feeding the five thousand, He took the loaves and fish, looked up to heaven, and gave thanks (John 6:11). But notice — His gratitude was not limited to the miracle before it happened. After the meal, He reminded the disciples to gather the leftovers, so that nothing would be wasted. Even fragments were treated as gifts. That act echoes the spirit of grace after meals: remembering that provision, whether abundant or modest, deserves reverence. Whether before or after meals, thanksgiving keeps us anchored in

God's provision and Christ's sufficiency.

Conclusion

Grace before meals prepares us to receive; grace after meals teaches us to remember. One without the other is incomplete. Together, they form a cycle of gratitude that resists the rush of modern life.

Closing Prayer

"Lord Jesus, You taught us to give thanks in all things. Just as You blessed the bread and fish before sharing them, and reminded Your disciples to gather even the leftovers, teach us to remember Your provision after every meal. Thank You for feeding our bodies and nourishing our souls. May our gratitude not end at the table but continue in every moment of our lives. Help us to live with thankful hearts, both before and after the blessing. Amen."

Anne embraces her call to guide individuals through Holistic Life Planning that encompasses retirement readiness and bereavement support. More importantly, she is blessed to be a caregiver, wife, and sister; and a person woven into the fabrics of her family. Through these meaningful vocations, each day unfolds as a journey of compassion, partnership and patience, lived in devotion to honouring God through the ordinary rhythms of life.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

The narrow gate

A priest I know shares this story. Recently, on their priests' retreat, the retreat director began his opening presentation with these words: we take for granted that most people are going to hell. Then he tried to ground this assertion by quoting Jesus: *"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and only a few find it."* (Matthew 7, 13-14)

On the surface, this would indeed seem to indicate that most people are not taking the road that leads to heaven but are taking the road that leads to hell.

Are most of us going to hell? Is this what's implied here? No! That's not what's being taught. This teaching of Jesus needs some parsing.

First, when Jesus says, *"but small is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and only a few find it,"* He's not talking so much about going to heaven or hell, but rather about our lives, here and now.

Indeed, we can all relate to His words that the gate that leads to life is narrow and few find it. How? By simply asking ourselves: How many times in our lives do we have a moment, let alone a lengthy season, where we are without

any depressions, without regrets, without undue restlessness, without jealousies, without frustrations, and without any sense that we are missing something in life, but rather, have a deep sense of soul that we've arrived at the deepest meaning of life, that we've found the deep secret, that there's nothing more to strive for?

Sometimes, we do have moments like this when we have passed through the narrow gate that leads to life, though mostly we are still struggling to get there.

We can experience this when we look at the lives of others. Without being judgmental, how often do we look at someone's life at the level of soul and say: He's found it! She's there! That's what a full life looks like! We say this of very few people.

Moreover, what precisely is the gate and why is it narrow?

Simply put, the gate that leads to life, to the deepest and fullest happiness of all, is the invitation Jesus gives us in the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 5-7) For Jesus, this is what makes for fullness of life, namely: to be poor in spirit; to be in touch with the world's wounds and our own wounds; to be meek; to hunger for justice; to be merciful; to be pure of heart; to be peacemakers; to suffer for what is right;

and especially to love those who hate us.

That's the narrow gate leading to life, and we struggle to pass through it because most everything in our world militates against this. Our world tells us that it's best to be rich, that meekness and empathy are weaknesses, and we may in good conscience hate those who hate us. Our natural instincts agree. Both our world and our natural instincts invite us to a wide gate where we can justly curse those who curse us and may execute murderers.

The Sermon on the Mount proposes a narrow gate, and it becomes particularly narrow at the end of the Sermon when Jesus invites us to be compassionate as our heavenly Father is compassionate and spells out what that means.

God's compassion, unlike our natural instincts, goes out equally to the bad as well as to the good, like the sun that shines indiscriminately on weeds as well as on vegetables. God loves sinners and virtuous persons equally.

And so must we. Our virtue, Jesus says, must go deeper than our natural instincts, where quite naturally, we love those who love us, hate those who hate us, curse those who curse us, and refuse to forgive someone who murders our loved ones.

The narrow gate that leads to full life is

the gate of wide compassion, that is, we pass through that gate which leads to the fullness of life, when we love those who hate us, bless those who curse us, and forgive those who murder us.

Sadly, much inside us and much inside our world resists that narrow gate.

However, when Jesus says: *"Small is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and only a few find it,"* He's not saying that most of us will go to hell and only a few will go to heaven. Instead, He is speaking about our lives right now and astutely pointing out that what ultimately makes for happiness and full life here in this world, namely, living out the Sermon on the Mount, particularly the part that invites us to love those who hate us, bless those who curse us, and forgive those who murder us.

That's a gate we struggle to pass through.

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

SOCIAL JUSTICE



Making a Difference
Tony Magliano

Tireless defender of the unborn

Years ago, I attended a pro-life conference hosted by Americans United for Life (see: <https://aui.org/>) where the late, highly distinguished French paediatrician and geneticist Dr Jerome Lejeune, *pic*, – who discovered the extra chromosome that causes Down Syndrome – was the keynote speaker. After his presentation, I asked him a most important question. I said, Dr Lejeune, when does human life begin? And with his beautiful French accent he said, "At conception, of course." And I followed up by asking him if any of his colleagues disagreed with him. He replied, "No, we all know when life begins. But we don't agree as to when new human life deserves protection."

For Lejeune, a devout Catholic who was declared "Venerable" by Pope Francis on January 21, 2021, it was scientifically and morally crystal clear that human life deserves protection at the beginning. That is, at conception! (see: <http://bit.ly/3JwXkt9>).

In discovering the extra chromosome that causes Down Syndrome, Lejeune had hoped that his discovery would lead to the cure of this developmental disorder. But an unforeseen negative consequence was that pro-abortion advocates ironically used his discovery to promote prenatal testing for Down Syndrome babies, and to convince women carrying Down Syndrome unborn

babies to abort them.

This caused Lejeune great sadness, which in turn led him to a lifetime dedicated to defending unborn infants, children with Down Syndrome, and persons with other intellectual disabilities. He argued that genetics should be used to cure patients, not eliminate them.

As an outstanding example of his selfless integrity, upon receiving the American Society of Human Genetics' William Allan Award – the highest honour in genetics – Lejeune used the occasion to condemn abortion before his scientific colleagues. Reportedly, he told his wife that on that day "I lost my Nobel Prize in Medicine."

But his loss of the Nobel Prize was topped by St Pope John Paul II's appointing him the first president of the Pontifical Academy for Life, and Pope Francis declaring him "Venerable" – heroic in virtue – hopefully on the road to sainthood.

Adding to these papal tributes, Pope Leo XIV recently praised Dr Lejeune during his meeting with members of the Jerome Lejeune Foundation, recalling Lejeune's famous saying that "Medicine is hatred of disease and love for the sick person."

Admiring Lejeune's tireless advocacy for the defenceless unborn, Pope Leo highlighted that Lejeune denounced physicians who violated the Hippocratic Oath, and who, instead, promoted this new eugenics which he called "chromosomal racism."



(pic/Jerome Lejeune foundation)

Pope Leo added that Dr Lejeune's prophetic words rang out defending the need to protect and promote the life and dignity of every human being.

And as he concluded his address to the Jerome Lejeune Foundation, the Holy Father encouraged them to continue working for the common good, which includes everyone – especially those living with frailty or disability (<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2026-06/pope-leo-xiv-jerome-lejeune-foundation-audience.html>).

In one way or another, we all possess disabilities. And so let us strive to help each other to overcome our disabilities, realising that every single person – born and unborn – is a wonderful, unique, unrepeatable gift from the Creator. All we need to do is open our eyes, minds, and hearts to know and celebrate this wonderful truth!

Tony Magliano is an internationally syndicated Catholic social justice and peace columnist. He can be reached at tmag6@comcast.net.

LITTLE CATHOLIC'S CORNER

Dear children,

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells the story of a farmer who scattered seeds on different kinds of ground. While some seeds could not grow because of the path, rocks, or thorns, the seeds that fell on good soil grew well and produced plenty of fruit. Jesus explains that the seed

is God's Word, and the soil represents our hearts. When we welcome God's Word and live it out, our lives will bear good fruit. God is always planting seeds of love, kindness, and truth in our hearts. Every time we hear the Gospel, pray, or learn about Jesus, He is planting another seed. He wants these seeds to grow so that we become more

loving, patient, forgiving, and helpful. We cannot stop God from planting the seeds, but we can choose what kind of "soil" our hearts will be. A heart that listens, obeys, and trusts Jesus will grow stronger every day. This week, try to be "good soil" for Jesus. Listen carefully during Mass, pray every day, choose

kindness, forgive someone who has hurt you, and help others without expecting anything in return. When we care for the seeds that God plants in our hearts, they will grow into the fruits of love, joy, peace, and kindness for everyone to see.

Love, Auntie C





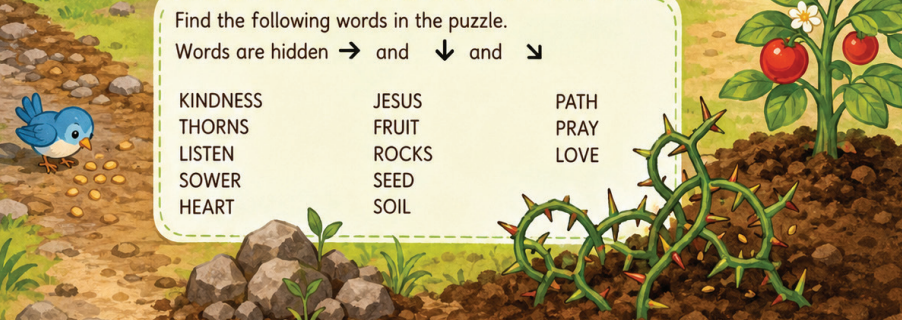
Word Search



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

Find the following words in the puzzle.
Words are hidden → and ↓ and ↘

KINDNESS	JESUS	PATH
THORNS	FRUIT	PRAY
LISTEN	ROCKS	LOVE
SOWER	SEED	
HEART	SOIL	





WHAT WOULD "GOOD SOIL" DO?

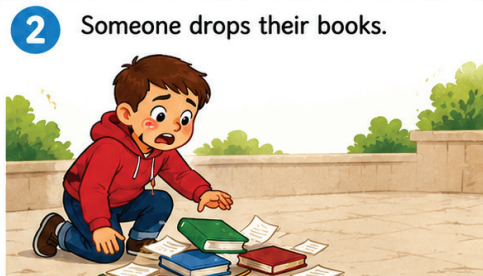


Instructions: Fill in what you will say or do in these scenarios.

1 A friend is left out.



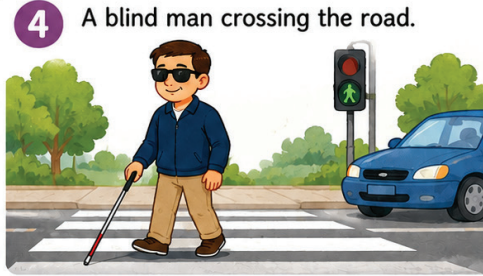
2 Someone drops their books.



3 Your sibling is upset.



4 A blind man crossing the road.





Complete the Picture

Draw the other half of the farmer scattering seeds on the field.





HIDDEN PICTURES

find & circle:

-  seeds
-  5 birds
-  4 rocks
-  2 plants with thorns
-  3 baskets of fruit



youth

Kuala Penyu Youth Day inspires



the young to live their faith

Lorryiana Peter

KUALA PENYU: A total of 119 young people gathered for the Kuala Penyu Catholic Youth Day 2.0 (KPCYD 2.0), centred on the theme, *Growing and Rooting in Faith*.

It was organised by the Catholic Youth Apostolate (KBK) of St Peter Parish, at St Stephen Kiaru Church from June 5 – 7. The three-day, two-night programme was made possible through the dedication of 17 Main Organising Team (MOT) members and 15 Local Organising Team (LOT) members, whose close collaboration ensured the success of every activity.

The programme began with a lively Welcoming Night, where participants were warmly received and introduced to the spirit of the gathering. The evening was further enlivened by the Consecration Unlimited ministry, who led praise and worship through uplifting songs and dance, creating an atmosphere of joy, unity and enthusiasm among the participants.

The second day focused on faith formation

through a series of inspiring talks. Sr Felsie Sulip Felix, chairperson of the Keningau Diocese Youth Commission, presented a session titled *Prayer and Relationship with God*. She reminded participants that prayer is the foundation of a personal relationship with God, encouraging them to make time for prayer each day and to place God at the centre of their lives.

This was followed by Roney Eming, chairperson of the Keningau Diocese Campus Ministry, who delivered a session on *Sacraments and Life*. He explained the meaning and significance of the seven sacraments in the Catholic Church and highlighted their role in nurturing the spiritual life of every Christian. He also introduced several saints whose lives continue to inspire young Catholics to remain faithful in their own journey of faith.

The day's activities concluded with friendly sports competitions in the afternoon, fostering teamwork and fellowship among participants. In the evening, they gathered for a peaceful Taizé Adoration, providing a sacred space for silent prayer, reflection and a deeper encounter with God. The contemplative prayer experience beautifully reflected the programme's theme of becoming deeply

rooted in faith.

On the final day, participants listened to two powerful faith-sharing sessions. The first was delivered by Viorey Eming, former chairperson of the Catholic Youth Apostolate of St Peter's parish. Reflecting on his own journey, he spoke honestly about the challenges and temptations that had caused him to consider stepping away from ministry. However, through God's love and grace, he persevered and encouraged the young people to remain steadfast in serving the Church despite life's difficulties.

The second sharing was given by Roney, from Kuala Penyu who previously served in St Peter before continuing his ministry at the Cathedral of St Francis Xavier, Keningau. He shared the joy and fulfilment he has experienced through serving the Church, including the memorable opportunity to meet the late Pope Francis. He also recounted his participation in World Youth Day Kraków 2016 and World Youth Day Lisbon 2023, experiences that strengthened his faith and broadened his understanding of the universal Church. He encouraged the participants to remain faithful to Christ and never compromise their faith for love, wealth or worldly pursuits.

KPCYD 2.0 concluded with Mass, celebrat-

ed by Fr Roney Mailap, which coincided with the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (*Corpus Christi*). The celebration ended with a group photograph and a fellowship gathering with parishioners and participants.

Before departing home, every participant, along with the MOT and LOT members, received a "Letter of Love and Blessing" as a token of appreciation and a lasting reminder of their journey throughout the programme. It is hoped that KPCYD 2.0 will inspire these young people to continue growing and taking root in their Catholic faith, becoming courageous witnesses of Christ within their families, parishes and communities.

The organising committee extends its heartfelt gratitude to Fr Kennedy Nakudah, Fr Roney Mailap, the invited speakers, the Consecration Unlimited ministry, the parishioners of St Stephen Kiaru Church, sponsors, the MOT and LOT members, and all individuals who generously contributed their time, talents and support. Their spirit of service and unity played a vital role in the success of KPCYD 2.0, demonstrating that when young people work together in Christ, they can build a vibrant, faith-filled and supportive Catholic community.



MELAKA: On June 12 the Montfort Youth Centre (MYC) celebrated the Graduation Ceremony of Batch '24. This year's graduation holds an incredibly sacred place in MYC's history, beautifully coinciding with the 25th anniversary of the Montfort mission.

As the 52 graduates marched in with heads held high to receive their SKM and Montfort certificates, everyone present was reminded that today is a celebration of pure resilience, unwavering discipline, and hard work.



Montfort batch '24 embarks on a new journey



Guest of Honour, Bro John Albert SG, *pic*, moved all deeply by reminding the youth that they are raised and carried by a whole global community. He emphasised that the heartbeat of MYC will always be: "from the youth, for the youth, by the youth."

"Every departure is a new arrival," Bro John shared, challenging the graduands to reflect: "What beginning is your beginning?" He reminded them that while hard work is the foundation, true success comes from staying humble, holding tightly to your virtues, remaining open to learning, and always trusting in God's providence to navigate a fast-changing, tech-driven world.

MYC director, Joseph Philip, looked upon the 52 graduates with immense pride, thanking them for the perseverance and discipline that have shaped the remarkable individuals they are today. He left them with a powerful, lifelong anchor — the Montfortian motto: "I must, I can."

"If you fall, stand up again," Joseph urged, echoing the profound words of St Louis: "Those whom the world rejects must move you the most." He reminded our leavers to always use their success as a tool to uplift the underprivileged and to do something beautiful for those in need.

To the benefactors, sponsors, donors,

board members, staff, and parents: without your boundless generosity and unwavering trust over these past 25 years, the MYC mission would simply not exist. You did not just support an institution; you breathed life into the dreams of the youth.

As the graduands sang the Leavers Song and clapped their final thank-yous, there wasn't a dry eye in the room. Batch '24, you came here raw with potential, and you leave today as transformed light-bearers. Carry your beautiful memories with you, stay humble, and remember — wherever the world takes you, you are always Montfortians at heart.

Young people learn interview and resume-writing skills

PENANG: What should I include in my resume? What should I wear for an interview? What questions should I ask? Should I follow up with a phone call? These and other questions were answered at a recent session for young adults at Church of Divine Mercy's recent interview and resume-writing workshop, organised by CDM's Learning Centre.

The Saturday morning interactive event offered participants, mainly undergraduates and young adults, 25 years and below, the necessary skills and knowledge to write good resumes and understand the process of interviews.

It aimed to equip these fresh graduates with the input and work experience from the two speakers to give them the best possible options and scenarios of interview processes, shared Rowena Gomez, who heads the Learning Centre. The workshop furnished participants with sound practical tips on preparing resumes and attending interviews.

Facilitated by parishioners, Suresh Chandra and Karen Giom who brought with them extensive experience from working in multinational companies in Penang,

the session also addressed the doubts, confusion and do's and don'ts of interview and resume-writing techniques.

Presenter Karen Giom noted: "Participants learnt many tips for resume writing, submitting an online application, and preparing for interviews, in-person and virtually. Participants who are still in college/university also benefitted from the session as they are preparing for their internship. A plus was participants could get instant feedback during the session from the speakers who reviewed their resumes and helped them improve."

Suresh also shared examples of both good and bad cover letters, resumes, interview dress codes and how to research a company prior to the interview as well as pitfalls to avoid.

The small but focussed group showed strong interest in learning how to excel in interviews and get a job. One participant shared: it was straightforward and insightful, answered my doubts about cover letters and interview "hacks."

A similar session was held at the Cathedral of the Holy Spirit on July 4.



The speakers sharing some tips with the participants.



YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE: A NIGHT OF FAITH, FRIENDSHIP AND FOOTBALL

KUALA LUMPUR: Some 60 youth from the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus gathered for *You'll Never Walk Alone 2026*, a FIFA-themed evening that combined fun, fellowship, and faith. Dressed in their favourite football jerseys, the youth filled the hall with laughter, energy, and praise as they enjoyed an unforgettable night together on June 27.

The evening began with good food and exciting activities that encouraged everyone to connect. From penalty shootout challenges to interactive games, every moment was marked by teamwork, friendly competition, joy, and countless smiles. It was a wonderful opportunity for both familiar and new faces to build friendships, strengthen bonds, and encourage one another in a welcoming and vibrant atmosphere.

other in a welcoming and vibrant atmosphere.

As the programme progressed, the mood shifted from celebration and excitement to a more reflective encounter with God through Praise and Worship, followed by a powerful skit. Together, the youths were reminded that no matter what challenges they face in life, God is always by their side.

The evening's theme, *You'll Never Walk Alone*, served as a fitting reminder of the Christian call to journey together in faith. Participants were encouraged to continue supporting, uplifting, and walking alongside one another in Christ, carrying the spirit of community and hope beyond the event and into their daily lives. **Sharon Priya**



MEMORIAM

For enquiries, please contact:
Email: memoriam@herald.com.my
Tel: 03-2026 8291

13TH ANNIVERSARY

**KOLANDASAMY GNANAMUTHU**

Born: 26.12.1944 Departed: 16.07.2013

*Always in our Thoughts,
Forever in our Hearts...*

Always loved and remembered by beloved wife,
son, daughters, sons-in-law, daughter-in-law,
grandchildren, relatives and friends.

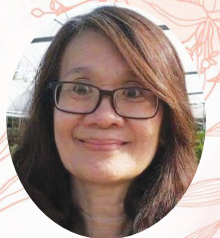
2nd Anniversary
In Loving Memory of**Philomena Victor**

27 January 1930 - 16 July 2024

*Your presence is deeply missed yet lovingly remembered.
You'll always be a part of us as we live through your
memories. Remembering you with love and grace.
Happy that you are in peace in your heavenly abode dearest
Mummy. From your beloved children and loved ones.*

We offer our prayers and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass
for her eternal repose in Christ, trusting she is wrapped in
the embrace of our Blessed Mother.

In Loving Memory of

**Annie Chan Kit Yoong**From the Lord: 9.7.1962
Called to the Lord:
13.7.2023

*Always in our
thoughts, our hearts
and our prayers.*

Dearly missed by
Children Willie and
Chi Ling, brothers,
sister, cousins,
relatives and friends.

In Memoriam
Beautiful Memory of Dad**G. A Das**

Departed: July 9th, 1972

"To Live with God Through Eternity"

From: Loving children,
sons-in-law, daughters-in-law,
grandchildren/spouses
and great-grandchildren.

They chose to stay: Two priests, one mission of love

Thousands of kilometres apart, in two of Africa's most troubled regions, two Catholic priests made the same choice.

They stayed.

Even as violence escalated, gunfire echoed through their communities and the risks became increasingly apparent, neither Fr Crépin Martial Monga of the Diocese of Bangassou in the Central African Republic, nor Fr Youhanna Al-Amin of the Diocese of El-Obeid in Sudan, abandoned the people entrusted to their care.

Within ten days of each other, both priests were shot dead.

Their deaths have become powerful reminders of the cost of pastoral ministry in places where conflict has become a way of life, and where priests often stand as the last visible sign of hope amid fear and uncertainty.

Fr Monga, pastor of St John the Baptist Parish in Zémio, was returning to the rectory on June 29 when gunmen opened fire along the road linking a Central African Armed Forces checkpoint to the parish residence. He was struck in the head and died instantly. A female parishioner travelling with him was also shot in the neck and remains in critical condition.

The motive for the attack remains unknown, and no group has claimed responsibility.

Only hours earlier, however, Fr Monga

had been doing what he loved most.

The previous day, he had baptised 175 catechumens, including 160 displaced Christians forced to flee their homes because of ongoing violence. On the morning of his death, he accompanied the newly baptised to the banks of the Mbomou River before making the journey back to the parish — his final pastoral act.

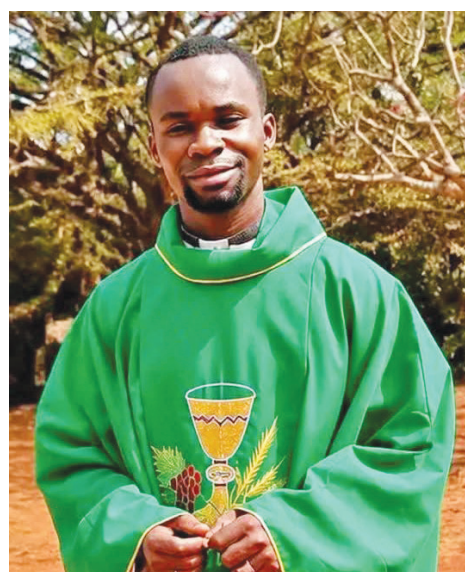
Bangassou Bishop Aurelio Gazzera described his death as "a tremendous loss" for both the local community and the diocese.

Known as a tireless advocate for peace, Fr Monga served on the local committee for Peace and Reconciliation, promoting dialogue and social cohesion in a region scarred by years of conflict. Those who knew him often remarked that his only "weapons" were the Bible and the rosary.

Just ten days earlier, another priest met a remarkably similar fate.

Fr Youhanna Al-Amin had recently been assigned to Holy Cross Parish in Kauda, in Sudan's conflict-ridden Nuba Mountains. As fighting intensified, many religious personnel had already left the area. He, however, chose to remain with his people.

When armed men entered the parish compound demanding access to church supplies, the priest stood his ground. Although he later decided to evacuate because of the worsening security situation, he never had the opportunity.

**Fr Crépin Martial Monga**

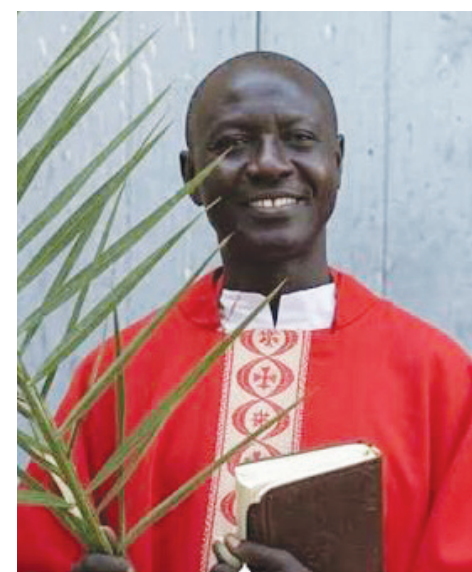
The following morning, June 19, armed men returned to the parish and shot him dead in his room. One of his security guards was also killed, while another survived.

Bishop Yunan Tombe Trille Kuku Andali described Fr Al-Amin as a priest deeply committed to the care of those entrusted to him. Aid to the Church in Need noted that even as insecurity worsened, he refused to abandon his parishioners, becoming one of the few priests who continued ministering in the region.

His ministry extended far beyond celebrating Mass. Like many priests serving in conflict zones, he brought comfort to frightened families, distributed humanitarian aid, cared for the sick and became a source of stability in a community where violence had become routine.

The stories of Fr Monga and Fr Al-Amin are strikingly similar.

Neither died while seeking recognition or acclaim. They died because they chose

**Fr Youhanna Al-Amin**

to remain close to their people. They understood that the priesthood is not simply about preaching the Gospel from the sanctuary but about accompanying God's people through their darkest moments.

Their witness echoes the words of Jesus: "The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep."

While investigations continue into both killings, their legacy is already clear.

In places where hatred sought to silence hope, these two priests responded not with fear or violence, but with compassion, courage and unwavering faith. Their lives remind the universal Church that the Gospel is often proclaimed most powerfully not through eloquent words, but through faithful presence.

In the end, they remained where every good shepherd longs to be — among their flock. And it was there, in loving service to God's people, that they made the ultimate sacrifice. **EWTN News/OSV News**

**Funeral held for Fr Crépin Martial Monga. (Fides)****Fr Youhanna Al-Amin is seen celebrating Mass in Sudan in an undated photograph. (OSV News/Courtesy of ACN)**

Synodality is a way of being Church

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV concluded the Extraordinary Consistory of Cardinals with a call for the Church to embrace synodality not simply as a method of governance, but as “a way of being Church,” urging cardinals to become builders of communion, peace and hope in a fractured world.

Closing the two-day gathering on June 27, the Pope thanked the 178 cardinals for what he described as an “experience of communion at the service of mission.”

“I carry with me not only the content of your reflections, but also the experience that made them possible,” he said, adding that seeing cardinals from diverse cultures and local Churches listening to one another had filled him with “consolation and hope.”

Pope Leo stressed that synodality is not a series of meetings or an administrative process but a spiritual way of discerning together.

“The real question is not who has the power to decide,” he said, “but how we, together, safeguard the gift that the Lord has entrusted to His Church.”

He encouraged the cardinals to continue fostering mutual listening, discernment and collaboration in their local Churches.

Reflecting on the discussions, the Pope acknowledged the many crises facing the world — war, poverty, injustice and violence — but said these stem from an even deeper wound: loneliness, broken relationships, the loss of hope and the inability to recognise one another as brothers and sisters.

He expressed particular concern for young

people searching for meaning and reaffirmed the family as a school of love, solidarity and hope. He also announced an October meeting with leaders of the Eastern Churches and bishops’ conferences to assess the reception of *Amoris Laetitia*, with families participating in the discussions.

On peace, Pope Leo reiterated the message of his social encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, saying war arises not only from conflicts between nations but also from a “culture of power” that permeates society. He called for greater dialogue, cooperation and lay participation in public life, while defending non-violence as a profoundly evangelical response to conflict.

The Pope reminded the cardinals that authentic renewal begins not with structural

reform but with communities that live the Gospel credibly.

“The Church is called to become ever more fully what it proclaims,” he said.

He also confirmed his intention to hold an extraordinary consistory annually from next year.

Before concluding, Pope Leo expressed solidarity with the people of Venezuela following the recent earthquake, assuring prayers for the victims, their families and rescue workers.

Urging the cardinals to carry the gathering’s message back to their local Churches, he concluded: “God continues to open paths of reconciliation and peace in history. We have the responsibility to walk them with courage and to help the world recognise them.”

Vatican News



Pope Leo XIV addresses cardinals gathered for the opening working session of his second consistory in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican June 26, 2026. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

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கிறிஸ்துவைப் பற்றிய நற்செய்தி உங்களுக்குள் நிறைவாகக் குடிசெல்வதாக (கொலோ: 3:16)

“The Word of Christ Dwells Among You”
(Col 3:16)

Presided by Msgr. Peter Ng Lai Huat, VGI

Date / நாள் : 25.07.2026 சனிக்கிழமை Saturday
Time / நேரம் : மாலை மணி 6.30pm
இடம் : பாமோல் தோட்டம், குளுவாங், ஜொகூர்
Venue : Pamol Estate, Kluang, Johor

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