

The Catholic Weekly HERALD

Mission Statement

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

TERHAD

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You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.

Romans 8:9



ERLC meeting focuses on reverence, formation and liturgical unity

■ P5



Human dignity at the heart of the Church's mission

■ P7



Young hearts set ablaze at BHC

■ P16

Receive Christ

live like Christ

VATICAN: Every celebration of the Eucharist should transform Catholics into people who think, love, forgive and serve as Christ Himself did, Pope Leo XIV said, during his Wednesday General Audience on June 24, reminding the faithful that the Mass is far more than a weekly obligation — it is a life-changing encounter with the living Christ.

Continuing his catechesis on the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Pope reflected on the central place of the Eucharist in the life of the Church, describing it as "a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity" and the inexhaustible source from which Christians draw divine life.

Every celebration of the Eucharist, he explained, is meant to shape believers into people who think, love, forgive and serve as Christ Himself did.

"Let us draw with faith from this source of divine life and allow ourselves to be transformed by the mystery we celebrate," the Pope urged.

Far from being passive spectators at Mass, Catholics are called to participate fully in the sacred mysteries. This means not merely watching what takes place at the altar, but actively listening to the Word of God, receiving Christ in Holy Communion, and uniting their own joys, struggles, hopes and sufferings with Christ's perfect sacrifice to the Father.

Quoting *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Pope Leo recalled that the faithful "learn to offer themselves and, day by day, to be consumed, through Christ, in unity with God and among themselves."

He also highlighted the inseparable bond

between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, noting that together they form one single act of worship. God first speaks to His people through the Scriptures before nourishing them with the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Holy Father explained that the Eucharist not only deepens each believer's relationship with Christ but also strengthens the communion of the Church. By receiving the one Bread, Christians are drawn into deeper union with Christ and with one another, becoming one Body in Him.

"By incorporating us into Christ," the Pope said, "the Eucharist teaches us to adopt the very way of life of the Lord Jesus, marked by the free gift of self."

Such self-giving love, he noted, offers a powerful antidote to the forces of division that continue to fracture the world, communities, families and individual hearts.

The Eucharist, therefore, is not meant to

end with the final blessing. Its fruits should become visible in daily life — in greater patience within families, honesty in the workplace, compassion for those in need, forgiveness after disagreements and generous service to others. The mystery celebrated at the altar is meant to continue through the lives of those who receive Christ.

Concluding his catechesis, Pope Leo encouraged Catholics to approach every Eucharistic celebration with renewed faith, allowing its grace to shape not only their worship but also the way they live.

"Let us draw with faith from this source of divine life and allow ourselves to be transformed by the mystery we celebrate," he said.

His invitation serves as a reminder that every Mass is far more than a sacred obligation. It is an encounter with the living Christ, who continually forms His people into His Body so that they, in turn, may become His presence in the world. **Vatican News**

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

Rebuilding the grammar of "we"

Recently, I came across a reflection on Pope Leo XIV's encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* by Maurizio Martina, Deputy Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations. While his essay explored the encyclical from the perspective of global governance and international cooperation, it was its title that stayed with me: "Rebuilding the Grammar of 'We'."

It is a simple phrase, yet one that speaks powerfully to one of the greatest challenges of our time.

His reflection prompted me to ask a different question: What does rebuilding the grammar of "we" look like here in Malaysia? We may not be negotiating international treaties or shaping global diplomacy, but every parish, every family and every Catholic community has the opportunity — and responsibility — to choose "we" over "me".

Pope Leo reminds us that the deepest crisis confronting humanity is not merely political, economic or technological. It is a crisis of relationships. We are slowly forgetting that we belong to one another.

His encyclical addresses war, poverty, hunger, migration, climate change and artificial intelligence. These may appear to be separate issues, but they all point to the same underlying question: Have we lost the ability to think beyond ourselves?

Malaysia may be spared the devastation of war, yet we are not immune to the temptation to retreat into our own comfort zones. We live in a multicultural and multi-religious nation where unity cannot be taken for granted. It must be nurtured intentionally. Every day, we are invited to see one another not through the lens of race, language, nationality or social status, but as brothers and sisters sharing one common humanity.

This is perhaps most evident in our encounter with migrants.

Thousands of migrant workers have left their homes and families to build our roads, harvest our crops, clean our offices and care for our elderly. Many also worship alongside us every Sunday. Yet it is easy to see them merely as workers, statistics or even problems to be managed, rather than as persons with names, families, dreams and dignity.

Thankfully, many Catholic communities in Malaysia have chosen a different path.

Across the country, migrants are not simply recipients of pastoral care; they are active members of the Church. They proclaim the Scriptures, sing in our choirs, teach catechism, serve in parish ministries and enrich our liturgies with the gifts of their cultures and traditions. Our parishes become more fully Catholic — not despite this diversity, but because of it.

This is precisely what synodality invites us to embrace.

The Synod on Synodality has reminded us repeatedly that the Church is called to walk together, listening to one another and ensuring that everyone has a place at the table. Synodality is not merely about meetings, consultations or pastoral planning. It is about cultivating a culture of belonging.

The grammar of "we", therefore, asks searching questions. Who feels excluded from our parish? Whose voice is seldom heard? Are language barriers preventing participation? Do the elderly, persons with disabilities, indigenous communities, migrants and young people truly feel that this is their Church too?

The same principle applies to another major theme of *Magnifica Humanitas* — artificial intelligence.

The real question is not whether AI is good

or bad. It is whether technology will help us become more human. If AI is driven solely by profit, efficiency and competition, it reinforces the grammar of "me". But if it is guided by compassion, justice and the common good, it can strengthen the grammar of "we". Technology must always remain a servant of humanity, never its master.

Ultimately, the grammar of "we" is the grammar of the Gospel.

Jesus never gathered isolated individuals; He formed a community. He taught His disciples to pray, "Our Father," not "My Father." He crossed barriers of race, religion and social status, welcoming the stranger, touching the outcast and identifying Himself with the least among us. His life was a continual invitation to widen the circle of belonging.

As the Church in Malaysia continues its synodal journey and prepares for the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026, perhaps this simple question deserves our honest reflection: Are we truly becoming a Church of "we"?

Rebuilding that grammar will not begin in the United Nations or the halls of government. It begins in our homes, our parish communities and our daily encounters with one another. Every act of welcome, every bridge built across differences, every decision to listen rather than judge, and every choice to place the common good above personal preference helps restore that forgotten language.

Perhaps the smallest word in this editorial is also the most important.

For the future of the Church — and indeed of our nation — will belong not to those who insist on "me", but to those courageous enough to live the Gospel's enduring language of "we."

Patricia Pereira

Hidden to the proud and revealed to the humble

The Scripture readings today present a profound spiritual truth: God's Kingdom is hidden from the proud but revealed to the humble.

This passage from the Gospel of Matthew marks a turning point in Jesus' ministry. After facing rejection from many towns and religious leaders, Jesus praises the Father because the mystery of God's Kingdom is revealed, not to the self-sufficient, but to the humble and receptive. Jesus declares that "You have hidden these things from the wise and the learned and have revealed them to little ones" (Mt 11:25).

The message of the Kingdom is hidden from the "wise" and revealed to "little ones." The term "little ones" does not simply refer to children in age, but to those who acknowledge their dependence on God. They are humble, teachable, and trusting. Rather than relying on their own wisdom and strength, they open their hearts to God's grace. They include the disciples, the poor, sinners who have repented, and ordinary people who welcomed Jesus with faith.

The "wise and intelligent," on the other hand, represent those who believe they have no need for God. They are proud and self-reliant, convinced of their own righteousness and understanding. In Jesus' time, many religious leaders were experts in the Law and Scriptures. They possessed great knowledge about God, yet many failed to recognise Jesus as the Messiah. They were confident in their own interpretations, expected a different kind of Messiah, and were unwilling to change their views when confronted with God's revelation

in Christ.

Jesus therefore challenges the Scribes and Pharisees who knew the Law and the Scriptures but failed to recognise the One to whom the Scriptures pointed. He is not condemning intelligence or learning; rather, He is warning against intellectual pride. The truth is hidden not because God wishes to exclude anyone, but because pride blinds the heart and prevents one from receiving God's revelation.

The words of Jesus continue to challenge us today. Many people are highly educated and well-informed, yet remain distant from God. The obstacle is often not a lack of knowledge but a lack of humility. When we approach God with humility, what is hidden becomes revealed.

The first reading from the Book of Zechariah reinforces this message. The prophet announces the coming of the Messiah. The people of Israel expected a powerful king who would defeat their enemies through military strength. Instead, God sends a King of humility who comes riding on a donkey. The donkey symbolises peace and humility. The Messiah's power is expressed not through domination but through service. God's salvation enters the world in a way that challenges human expectations and worldly pride.

The second reading from St Paul's Letter to the Romans develops this theme further by contrasting life according to the flesh with life according to the Spirit. Those who live according to the flesh place themselves at the centre of their lives. They seek security in their own desires, ambitions, and achievements. Those who live according to the Spirit allow

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Ryan Innas Muthu

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Readings: Zechariah 9: 9-10;

Romans 8: 9, 11-13;

Gospel: Matthew 11:25-30

God to guide and transform them.

The Spirit cannot fully dwell in a heart dominated by pride, self-centredness, and self-sufficiency. Rather, the Spirit finds a home in hearts that are humble and willing to surrender to God. Through the Spirit, believers participate in the very life of Christ and are empowered to live according to God's will.

One of the greatest challenges facing Christians today is the call to humility in a culture where self-promotion, competition, status, and recognition are desires of the ordinary person who wishes to rise above others. However, Jesus teaches us to become like little children — humble, trusting, and dependent on God. Humility helps us recognise that our talents, successes, and opportunities are gifts from God. It also enables us to learn from others, to serve others and to remain open to correction and forgiveness.

True humility is not weakness but strength rooted in God's grace. It means carrying our daily crosses with faith, sacrifice, and love for others. In a world that encourages self-exaltation, Jesus invites us: "learn from Me; for I am gentle and humble in heart" (Mt 11:29). By learning humility from Christ, we become the "little ones" to whom the Father reveals the mysteries of His Kingdom and grants the peace and rest that only He can give.

Standing firm in Christ amid spiritual battles

Veronica and Andrew Lim

KUALA LUMPUR: A total of 114 participants from 16 parishes across the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur gathered at the Church of the Sacred Heart on June 20 for a Spiritual Warfare seminar organised by the Archdiocesan Mission of New Evangelisation for Christ (AMNEC).

Through a series of engaging presentations, Catholic speaker and evangelist Benedict Savarimuthu helped participants better understand the realities of spiritual warfare and how Christians can face life's challenges with confidence through the power of Christ.

Drawing from Sacred Scripture and Church teaching, Benedict spoke on the reality of spiritual warfare, emphasising that the Christian journey is not merely a physical or emotional struggle but also a spiritual one. Participants were encouraged to remain rooted in prayer, the Sacraments, God's Word, and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The sessions were marked by attentive participation, reflection, and a spirit of openness as attendees sought to understand the workings of spiritual warfare and the ways God equips His people to stand firm against the challenges of life.

The impact of the seminar was evident in the many positive testimonies shared by participants. Diana Robert from the Church of the Visitation, Seremban, described the session as "an eye-opener and an enlightenment for my spiritual life," adding that it answered many questions about the spiritual warfare she had experienced both personally and in her surroundings. "I came home recharged, renewed, and eager to share what I learned with my family and friends," she said.

Daniel Arputham from the Church of the Holy Family, Kajang, spoke of the impact the seminar had on him. "I had a great day. I will remember this forever. Benedict's faith and sharing inspired me, and I felt that Jesus was speaking through him, calling souls back to God. It touched me in a way I



have never experienced before," he shared.

Jeanette Tan and Edna Rajah from the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Puchong, described the seminar as "practical, enlightening and empowering," while Sacred Heart parishioner Ellen Kang said the experience was "spiritually reawakening" and deepened her awareness of God's presence and power in daily life.

Several participants also noted that the event provided valuable new insights into a subject that is often misunderstood or overlooked. For many, the day served as a timely

reminder that spiritual warfare is a reality for every Christian and that victory is found in Christ through faith, prayer, and perseverance.

Bringing the seminar to a close, AMNEC coordinator Andrew Lim invited participants to continue their faith journey through the AMNEC-CCO Faith Series. He encouraged them to draw closer to Jesus, make Him the centre of their lives, and embrace their identity as missionary disciples, called to share the Gospel and fulfil Christ's Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).



KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

July

- 6-9 Plenary Meeting – Catholic Bishops Conference Malaysia, Singapore & Brunei, Majodi Centre
- 11 Confirmation – Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras
- 12 Confirmation – Church of St John Vianney, Tampin
- 12 Confirmation – Church of the Holy Family, Kajang
- 14 Meeting – AOHD Board
- 15 Clergy monthly recollection



Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #278



Welcome dear friends,

The highly anticipated, first ever unified **MPC2026** draws nine Malaysian Arch/Diocese to Sibul from September 9-13 in the spirit of synodality, listening, grassroots participation and spiritual renewal.

The **18-month national cross-pilgrimage**, the *Perjalanan Salib*, that has journeyed to the remotest places, the peripheries and city centres, will merge into one, single united cross, symbolising our oneness as Malaysians and Catholics.

The Pilgrim Cross will leave the Church of the Immaculate Conception, JB for the **Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, JB** on August 8. At the recent **MJDPC**, the leaders were reminded that BECs are an integral component of PPCs and synodal parishes. The BECs remain the main voice of the people.

Local takes! The Rakyat is watching Malaysia is currently *navigating a pivotal phase* defined by economic restructuring, intense political realignments, and shifting societal expectations.

The **key concerns**, as expressed by leaders, are mastery of the mother-tongue, unity against divisive racial and the 3R trolls, public housing issues, safety concerns, post-COVID economic stress, and heightened digital literacy data protection to deter scammers and hackers.

State elections are next, with Johor's election set for July 11. What people say: "We need a reset, but not the Reset of an Opposition leader because he is also part of the old system."

The law minister seeks the public to pressure their respective MPs to support a constitutional amendment **separating the roles of attorney general (AG) and public prosecutor (PP)**, which has been delayed by absentee MPs at the last attempt.

Reading the Signs: Facing What's Ahead.

On Authentic evangelisation: It does not spring from strategies or techniques, but from a personal encounter with Christ cultivated in prayer, silence and contemplation. It begins with the Lord's invitation to bring into the light what has first been received in the intimacy of the heart.

On international order: The one which was painstakingly constructed following WWII, founded on UN Charter, the primacy of international law, renunciation of war and peace which was at the heart of policies, appears to be relegated to the margins.

On growing interest in the Catholic Faith: This trend is noted among young adults seeking truth, meaning and spiritual depth. The recent study published by the Archdiocese of Chicago showed two broad factors: a personal search for goodness, truth, inner peace and purpose, and an attraction to the Catholic Church's liturgy, teachings and 2000-year tradition.

A Thought for the Week: Deep Roots.

At the local cafe, a writer and a farmer were talking about the farmer's soybean and corn crop; about the abundant rain and the great yield. The writer was saying: All this rain is making your crops shoot up, surely! The farmer replied: My crops are now vulnerable.

The writer asked what he meant. The farmer continued: Sure, a drought can be devastating, but when it rains so much, the plants are not required to push their roots deeper into the earth in search of water. The roots remain near the surface. If a drought hits and begins to dry out the earth, it also dries out those shallow roots. The plants then die quickly."

A good plant needs deep roots that can withstand what happens above the ground."

The lesson from the farmer's crops: If the roots are deep and strong, the tree needn't worry about the wind or any drought.

QnQ? What keeps us feeling confined, trapped or imprisoned?

"Some prisons have no bars, no locks, and no guards — only the CHOICES we make every day." This quote powerfully reframes "prison" not as something imposed from outside, but as **something we construct and maintain** through our daily decisions.

It's more insidious — it's invisible, comfortable, and self-sustaining. Every habit, avoidance, resentment, or limiting belief we indulge daily, unconsciously, becomes **another brick in our own cell**. It shows up in **learned helplessness**, identity fusion ("I'm just not a disciplined person" becomes self-concept); choice blindness (unnoticed wasteful routines), social conditioning ("what will people think"), procrastination, people-pleasing, or fixed mindsets that create mental loops.

The **core insight from psychology:** *Freedom isn't the absence of constraints. It's recognising which constraints are real vs self-imposed, and then exercising one conscious choice at a time. The invitation is to refuse the yoke we keep putting back on ourselves.*

The Spirit @ Work: "The Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church. He brings forth different charisms... and creates unity."
Pope Francis

Something to tickle you: No one can single-handedly bear the weight of the challenges the world is facing, just as no one is so weak that they cannot play their part, for 'power is made perfect in weakness' (2 Cor 12:9) *Magnifica Humanitas*, 13.


Bishop Bernard Paul



PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

July

- 6-9 Plenary Meeting – Catholic Bishops Conference Malaysia, Singapore & Brunei, Majodi Centre



MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

July

- 6-9 Plenary Meeting – Catholic Bishops Conference Malaysia, Singapore & Brunei, Majodi Centre
- 11 Mass – 100th Anniversary, Church of St Henry, Batu Pahat

BEC assembly challenges youth to evangelise in the digital age

Kevin Francis

PETALING JAYA: More than 100 members of the parish BECCOT and BECAT teams, and youth representatives from across the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur gathered at the Church of St Ignatius for the Archdiocesan BECCOT-BECAT Assembly 2026, placing young people and digital evangelisation at the centre of the Church's mission.

Organised by the Archdiocesan Basic Ecclesial Communities Animating Team (ABECAT), the assembly was themed *Our Youth, Our Digital Missionaries*, drawing inspiration from St Carlo Acutis, the first millennial saint who used digital technology to share the faith while remaining deeply rooted in the Eucharist.

The day began with praise and worship led by Jasper Raj from the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist, followed by the enthronement of the Word of God and the proclamation of the Gospel by youth representatives, highlighting the central role of Scripture in BEC life.

In her opening address, ABECAT chairperson Rita Krishnan empha-



Archbishop Julian Leow with Fr Mitchel Joseph and Rita Krishnan launching the new BEC Handbook 2026.

sised the importance of renewing BECs through greater youth involvement.

"We are here to listen to one another, discern together, and allow the Holy Spirit to guide our communities," she said.

Participants were divided into discussion groups to work through a case study on resolving disagreements in an ethical and constructive manner. Reflecting the assembly's digital focus, the exercise incorporated technology and online collaboration tools. Discussions were linked to the principles of Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, highlighting

the need for responsible and human-centred use of technology.

A formation session by Fr Mitchel Joseph, ecclesiastical assistant for ABECAT, reminded participants that BEC is not simply a programme but a way of life centred on relationships, faith-sharing, and community building.

"Parish life is not the same as BEC life," he said, urging participants not to become overly focused on activities and events at the expense of fostering genuine Christian community.

Quoting John 15:5, Fr Mitchel encouraged participants to remain connected to Christ and to view chal-

lenges as opportunities for growth and discipleship.

A key feature of the assembly was the synodal-style "Conversation in the Spirit" session. Participants reflected on their experiences within BECs and explored ways to encourage greater youth participation. Many young people expressed a desire for BECs to become more welcoming, relevant, and participatory. They hoped to be entrusted with meaningful roles in leadership and mission rather than being viewed merely as helpers.

Later in the day, Archbishop Julian Leow launched the new BEC Handbook 2026 and delivered a reflection on *The Pastoral Dimension of Digital Evangelisation*.

Thanking the youth for their openness and honesty, Archbishop Julian stressed that young people are not an afterthought in the Church.

"Missionary work is the responsibility of both the young and the old. We need each other, and the Church needs the gifts of every generation," he said.

Reflecting on the life of St Carlo Acutis, the archbishop described him as a model of holiness for the digital age. While immersed in technol-

ogy, Carlo remained centred on the Eucharist and used digital platforms to bring others closer to Christ.

Archbishop Julian also referred to Pope Leo XIV's encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, noting the Holy Father's warning that artificial intelligence and machines can never replace the human person or make moral decisions on humanity's behalf. He cautioned against the misuse of technology to spread misinformation, deepen divisions, and fuel conflict.

"Technology is a gift when used for truth, goodness, and evangelisation," he said. "It must never replace authentic human relationships, prayer, community, and moral discernment."

The newly launched BEC Handbook 2026 provides updated guidance on BEC formation, leadership, governance, and community life, offering a practical resource for parishes throughout the archdiocese.

As the assembly concluded, participants left with renewed enthusiasm to build vibrant, inclusive, and missionary BECs where faith is lived, shared, and proclaimed both in neighbourhood communities and in the digital world.

Sharing the love of the Sacred Heart with the Orang Asli

TEMOH, Perak: In conjunction with the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a group of Catholics from Kuala Lumpur journeyed to the Orang Asli village of Batu Empoh, Temoh, for an outreach programme.

Held on June 13, the gathering brought together about 50 Orang Asli Catholics, both children and adults, at the village chapel. The visitors were welcomed by Mijor, the Orang Asli Catholic lay leader, whose dedication continues to nurture the faith life of the local community.

The afternoon began with a prayer service conducted in Bahasa Malaysia and English. As a picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was displayed, participants reflected on the rich symbolism of the Sacred Heart — the flame, thorns, cross, and the wound from which blood flowed — each a reminder of Christ's boundless love and sacrifice for humanity.

The reflection invited the com-

munity to turn their hearts to Jesus, whose Heart, pierced for our sins and burning with mercy, remains a source of healing, hope and strength. Participants were encouraged to deepen their devotion to the Sacred Heart and to find comfort in the Lord, who never ceases to love His people.

As a lasting reminder of the celebration, the holy picture of the Sacred Heart was presented to Mijor for the chapel. The community was encouraged to make frequent use of the chapel as a place of prayer, silence and encounter with God.

After the service, participants exchanged the sign of peace before gathering for fellowship over refreshments. Conversations flowed easily as visitors and villagers shared stories, laughter and friendship.

The programme also included games and activities for the children. Balloon-blowing and ball-kicking games were enthusiastically re-

ceived, while sand art and colouring activities encouraged creativity and participation. Many children returned home with small prizes and gift packs prepared by the visiting group.

The outreach was a reminder that the Church is called to accompany and support one another in faith. Additional donations of clothing were distributed among the families in the village, extending practical assistance to those in need.

The warmth and gratitude of the Orang Asli community were evident throughout the day. As they applauded the visitors in appreciation, they were gently reminded to give thanks to Jesus Christ, from whom all blessings flow. In response, the community joyfully offered their applause to the Lord.

Earlier that morning, the Kuala Lumpur group attended Mass at the Church of St Mary, Tapah, celebrated by parish priest Fr James Pitchay. In his homily, he encouraged them to continue the Church's mission of reaching out to the poor, marginalised and forgotten.

"Be like Mary, who loved and served Jesus to the very end. As you have experienced God's love through acts of charity, go forth and share that same love with others," he said.

The outreach served as a meaningful bridge between urban and rural Catholic communities, transforming faith into action through prayer, fellowship and service. **Bernard Anthony**



Journeying with the Cross, renewed in faith

KUALA LUMPUR: The Chapel of Kristus Aman became a place of prayer, reflection and spiritual renewal as it hosted the *Perjalanan Salib* (Journey of the Cross) from June 9 to 16 as part of the nationwide spiritual preparation for the Malaysia Pastoral Convention 2026 (MPC2026). The arrival of the *Salib* was marked by a welcoming Mass and prayer service, drawing parishioners of all ages into a deeper encounter with Christ's sacrificial love and the hope found in His Cross.

Throughout the week, various parish ministries and groups organised a rich programme of prayer and reflection, including the Rosary, Divine Mercy devotion, Taizé Prayer, Eucharistic Adoration, Scripture reflection, family prayer gatherings, and the Stations of the Cross. These moments invited the faithful to contemplate the Passion of Christ and discover its

relevance in their daily lives, family relationships, communities and missionary calling.

The reflections centred on the themes of synodality, society, family and ecology, encouraging participants to discern how they are called to journey together as God's people and to be faithful stewards of His creation. The prayerful week fostered a spirit of unity, deepened faith, and inspired many to participate more actively in the life and mission of the Church.

As parishioners gathered around the Cross in prayer and reflection, they were reminded that the Christian journey is one of walking together in faith, carrying one another's burdens, and bearing witness to Christ's love in the world. The experience left many spiritually enriched and renewed in their commitment to live out the Gospel in their homes, workplaces and communities.



The Orang Asli children participating in a colouring activity.

ERLC meeting focuses on reverence, formation and liturgical unity

Fr Robert Leong

JOHOR BAHRU: Members of the 28th Episcopal Regional Liturgy Commission (ERLC) gathered at MAJODI for their annual meeting, beginning with an opening Mass where executive secretary Fr Vincent Chin challenged participants to “go the extra mile,” echoing the Gospel’s call to strive for holiness rather than remaining within one’s comfort zone.

Traditional Latin Mass

In his opening address, Cardinal William Goh, president of the ERLC, reflected on the growing interest in the Traditional Latin Mass among some Catholics in Singapore.

Cardinal William emphasised that the Catholic Church permits the celebration of the Traditional Latin Mass (Extraordinary Form). However, he observed that inadequate celebration of the Ordinary Form (*Novus Ordo*) in some places has contributed to some Catholics seeking greater solemnity elsewhere. He stressed the need for better liturgical formation of seminarians and clergy so that the Mass is celebrated with dignity, beauty and reverence.

“When the liturgy is celebrated properly and with solemnity, people naturally encounter the Lord and remain within the Church,” he said, adding that the liturgy should never be reduced merely to pedagogy or doctrine but should lead believers into a genuine encounter with God.

Pastoral initiatives and liturgical updates

The Commission also discussed the pastoral implications of transferring certain solemnities that fall on Saturdays or Mondays to the following Sunday, a practice already adopted in some countries. Cardinal William said the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei (CBCMSB) would need to carefully consider the implications before making any decision.

On the proposed *Feast of Creation*, the



Cardinal agreed with the Commission’s view that it should not be celebrated on Sundays, to avoid confusion between the worship of God and appreciation of creation.

Members also received an update on the *Joint Lectionary Project* being undertaken by the Bishops’ Conferences of Australia, Ireland and New Zealand, which is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2028 before being submitted to the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments for approval. The ERLC recommended that the CBCMSB monitor developments rather than immediately adopting the same implementation timeline.

Christian Initiation and Masses with Children

Fr Simon Ho briefed the Commission on the revised Order of Christian Initiation of Adults recently introduced in the United States and shared reflections on the historical development of the Mass with Children. Members expressed concern that while many catechumens receive sound doctrinal formation, they often lack a deeper understanding of the liturgical rites they celebrate.

Regarding Masses with children, Fr Simon noted that the special Eucharistic Prayers formerly included in the Roman Missal for children under the age of nine were removed when the revised Roman Missal came into use in 2011. These prayers are now contained in a separate liturgical book.

Diocesan reports, liturgical formation and sacred music

Representatives from each diocese shared updates on their liturgical programmes and initiatives, providing an opportunity to exchange ideas, resources and best practices. A common concern emerging from these reports was the need for stronger formation to help Catholics understand, appreciate and participate more fully in the Eucharist. The availability of quality translations of liturgical texts also remains an ongoing challenge.

The Commission affirmed that the ERLC Liturgical Music Committee continues to play an important role even after completing the revision of the *Sing Your Praise to God* (SYPG) hymnal. Members encouraged continued collaboration with the Kuala Lumpur Archdiocesan Liturgical Commission in collecting and promoting local liturgical compositions. Recent workshops and hymn composition competitions were highlighted as effective ways of discovering new talent and fostering appreciation for sacred music.

Clarification on liturgical practices and rubrics

During the question-and-answer session, members discussed various liturgical practices that can either strengthen or undermine the unity of the faithful. Fr Cosmas Lee encouraged ministers to deepen their understanding of the “spirit and truth” of the liturgy through careful study of the Church’s

liturgical texts.

The Commission also reaffirmed existing norms regarding multilingual celebrations. While the Mass should ordinarily be celebrated in a single language, other languages may appropriately be used for the readings, Prayer of the Faithful and certain hymns. Members reiterated that no part of the Eucharistic Prayer or other approved liturgical texts should be repeated in different languages, nor should celebrants add, omit or alter the approved texts of the Mass.

The meeting also considered the hand gestures used by concelebrants during Mass. As the current rubrics of the Roman Missal do not prescribe a uniform practice in every instance, no common gesture was adopted.

Looking ahead

The gathering concluded with prayers and blessings for Fr Simon, who will soon leave for Rome to pursue a Licentiate in Sacred Liturgy.

Participants also visited the Diocese of Malacca Johore Museum and the newly completed Church of St Theresa in Masai, before conveying their sincere appreciation to the Diocese of Malacca Johore for its warm hospitality and excellent organisation of the gathering.

The next ERLC meeting will be hosted by the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu from July 14–17, 2027.

Called to holiness in the midst of daily life

KLUANG, Johor: “All are called to holiness!” This simple yet powerful message formed the heart of a spiritually enriching talk by Fr Norris Seenivasan, SJ at the Church of St Louis recently. Attended by 27 parishioners, the session, *Introduction to Spirituality: The Universal Call to Holiness*, highlighted the Church’s teaching that holiness is not reserved for priests, religious, or canonised saints. Rather, it is the vocation of every baptised Christian.

The session invited participants to reflect on how God’s call to holiness can be lived out amid the demands, responsibilities, and challenges of everyday life.

Many people associate holiness with great saints, religious leaders, or those who have dedicated their lives entirely to prayer. However, Fr Norris highlighted that the Church teaches otherwise. Quoting the Second Vatican Council’s *Lumen Gentium*, he reminded participants that all the faithful, regardless of their state in life, are called by God to holiness.

Pope Francis had further emphasised this universal call in *Gaudete et Exsultate*, where he encouraged Christians not to settle for a mediocre spiritual life but to strive for the fullness of life that God desires for them.

A key focus of the talk was lay spirituality. Holiness is not something that happens apart



from daily life. Rather, it is lived in the ordinary circumstances of everyday existence. The world in which lay people live and work is not an obstacle to holiness but the very place where God’s grace can be encountered.

Central to this journey is prayer. Fr Norris repeatedly stressed that the spiritual journey is not possible without prayer. Prayer is more than reciting words; it is entering into a personal relationship with God. Since God is love and desires a personal relationship with each person, prayer becomes an encounter that gradually transforms the human heart.

Yet many people find prayer difficult. The demands of daily life and the pressures of the world can make a commitment to prayer seem impossible. Nevertheless, Fr Norris offered a

comforting insight: the very desire to pray is already a sign of God’s presence. Before we reach out to God, He has already taken the initiative and drawn us towards Himself.

Participants were encouraged to develop a consistent prayer life, even if it begins with only a few minutes each day. Setting aside a regular time for prayer helps anchor the day in God’s presence and opens the heart to His grace.

The talk also highlighted an important truth: every task can become prayer. What matters is not necessarily the nature of the task but the spirit with which it is carried out. When daily activities are approached with dedication, devotion, and an awareness of God’s presence, even ordinary responsibilities can become part

of one’s spiritual journey.

Another important theme was discernment. Christians are often faced with choices between different good options. Discernment involves prayerfully reflecting on these choices and seeking God’s will. It requires attentiveness to the movements within the heart and a recognition of whether these movements lead one closer to God or away from Him.

Drawing from the teachings of St Ignatius of Loyola, Fr Norris explained the experiences of consolation and desolation. While consolation brings peace, joy, and a deeper love of God, desolation is marked by spiritual darkness, restlessness, and discouragement. Yet even moments of desolation can become opportunities for growth when approached with wisdom and faith.

The session concluded with a simple but powerful reminder: God has already taken the initiative in calling each person to Himself. The path to holiness is not about extraordinary achievements but about responding faithfully to God’s grace through prayer, daily commitment, and a willingness to seek His presence in every aspect of life.

For those present, the talk served as a timely reminder that holiness is not beyond reach. It begins with a response to God’s call and is nurtured through prayer, discernment, and faithfulness in the ordinary moments of daily life.

Ann Gratian

Four languages, one Spirit

BUKIT MERTAJAM: Catholics from four language-speaking communities came together for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Rally organised by the Diocese of Penang, gathering at the Minor Basilica of St Anne for a day of prayer, formation and renewal in Tamil, English, Mandarin and Bahasa Malaysia.

The rally began with vibrant praise and worship in all four languages. As the prayer service commenced, a shofar was sounded to proclaim the presence of Christ, the King of Kings. Leaders of charismatic prayer groups from parishes across the diocese processed with streamers and flags before gathering joyfully at the altar.

Adeline Teh, head of the CHARIS (Catholic Charismatic Renewal International Service) Penang Diocese Service of Communion, welcomed participants and officially opened the 2026 Charismatic



The participants during one of the praise and worship sessions.

Renewal Rally with a prayer. The sessions were facilitated by clergy, religious and lay speakers.

Centred on the theme, *Come, Holy Spirit, Renew Your People* (Psalm 104:30), the first session explored the meaning and biblical foundations of Baptism in the Holy Spirit, the renewal of charismatic gifts through the sacraments, and living daily un-

der the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

The second session focused on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, helping participants distinguish between natural talents and spiritual gifts, understand their role in evangelisation, and appreciate the importance of discernment and spiritual maturity in exercising charismatic gifts.

After lunch, participants gathered in separate language groups for the third session, which addressed healing and deliverance in accordance with Catholic teaching, including physical, emotional and spiritual healing, as well as the dangers of extremism and teachings contrary to Church doctrine.

The rally then reconvened in the

basilica for Eucharistic Adoration and healing prayers. Participants prayerfully accompanied the Blessed Sacrament as it was carried in procession among the faithful.

The event concluded with a Mass presided over by Cardinal Sebastian Francis. Reflecting on the disciples' journey to Emmaus, he reminded the faithful that Christians are called not to remain in Emmaus but to return to Jerusalem, symbolising the believer's continual journey towards deeper discipleship and mission.

Through active participation in prayer, praise and worship, many experienced spiritual renewal, healing and fresh graces, returning home strengthened in faith and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The rally concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by organising chairman cum rally coordinator Sebastian Pillai. **CHARIS Penang Diocese Service of Communion**

Journey of the Cross inspires faith across parish and beyond

PENANG: The parish community of the Church of the Immaculate Conception (CIC) experienced a season of grace and spiritual renewal as they hosted the *Perjalanan Salib* (Journey of the Cross) from June 7 to 21. The two-week pilgrimage was marked by prayer, communal unity, and a sense of reverence.

The journey began on June 7 as CIC received the *Salib* from the Church of the Risen Christ. The Mass at 11.30am was significant, coinciding with the Feast of *Corpus Christi*. Parishioners knelt during the procession where the Blessed Sacrament was brought for adoration, setting a holy tone for the days to follow.

Throughout the week, the parish's various ministries took turns animating evenings of prayer and devotion. The Prayer group led the Holy Hour, inviting parishioners into a time of quiet reflection and adoration. The Liturgical ministry created a serene atmosphere through



Msgr Jude Miranda and his team from the Church of the Immaculate Conception handing over the *Salib* to Deacon Paul Kang and his team from City Parish.

a candlelit Taizé prayer service.

The BECs gathered to pray the Way of the Cross, focusing on the Stations of the Resurrection and highlighting the hope and joy of the Easter message.

The language apostolates led the Intercessory Prayers in four languages, reflecting the multicultural nature of the parish. The Family and

Integral Human Development cluster concluded the week of devotions by bringing families together to pray the Rosary, entrusting the joys, challenges and sanctity of family life to the loving care of the Sacred Heart.

The *Perjalanan Salib* was not contained within the church building; it travelled outward, bringing Christ's presence to schools, hos-

pitals, and neighbouring communities.

Over the following days, the *Salib* journeyed to several institutions and communities, bringing with it moments of prayer, reflection, and spiritual renewal. At Stonyhurst International School, students and staff were given a special opportunity to encounter Christ through Mass, personal veneration, and the Rosary. Upon its return to CIC, the catechism and youth ministries filled the parish ballroom with a praise and worship session followed by a time of reflection.

The pilgrimage then continued to St Joseph Chapel, Hong Seng, and later to Mt Miriam Cancer Hospital, where patients, health care workers, and visitors found comfort and hope through personal veneration, reflection, the Way of the Cross, and the celebration of the Eucharist. In these settings, the Cross became a powerful reminder of Christ's healing presence and abiding love.

The Cross was subsequently hosted at College General Major Seminary, where seminarians and formators spent several days in prayer and contemplation. Its stay culminated in Mass celebrated by Archbishop Julian Leow in conjunction with the Feast of the Vietnamese Martyrs and the College feast day, adding further significance to the occasion.

As the pilgrimage drew to a close, the *Salib* returned to CIC for a final day of personal prayer and quiet reflection, allowing parishioners one last opportunity to spend time before this powerful symbol of faith. The two-week journey concluded with Mass, during which the CIC community entrusted the *Salib* to representatives of City Parish. With grateful hearts, parishioners bid farewell, praying that the *Salib* would continue to inspire faith, hope, and unity wherever its pilgrimage would lead next. **Nicholas Khor**

Stewarding God's creation through community

PETALING JAYA: Responding to the call of *Laudato Si'* to care for our common home, the Family Life Ministry of the Church of St Ignatius, together with the Parish

Integral Human Development Ministry, successfully organised the *Laudato Si' Car Boot and Preloved Sale* on Sunday, June 14 at the covered car park of the Costantini Training Centre.

The idea for the event was first conceived in October 2025 as a practical response to the late Pope Francis' invitation for all Catholics to become responsible stewards of God's creation by reducing waste, promoting recycling, and embracing more sustainable lifestyles. More than simply a marketplace, the event became an opportunity for parishioners to live out their faith through responsible consumption and care for the environment.

Registration opened at the end of April, and by the end of May, all four car-boot lots and ten table stalls had been fully booked. Additional complimentary spaces were also allocated to several other parish groups, reflecting the collabora-

tive spirit of the parish.

Participants personally managed their own stalls, offering a wide variety of quality preloved and new items including clothing, shoes, handbags, antiques, electrical goods, home décor, kitchenware, DIY items, books, toys and many other treasures waiting to find new homes. By extending the life of these items, participants helped reduce unnecessary waste while giving others the opportunity to purchase affordable goods.

The Family Life Ministry's crafters added to the welcoming atmosphere with a food and beverage corner serving freshly prepared porridge, East Malaysian savoury rice, homemade cakes, desserts and refreshing drinks. Throughout the morning, parishioners gathered over coffee and meals, renewing old friendships, making new ones and strengthening the bonds of the parish community.



Fr Martin Then CDD posing with some members at the sale.

Although the weather was exceptionally hot and parking presented its usual challenges, the enthusiasm of both vendors and visitors never waned. The steady stream of parishioners throughout the morning reflected a shared commitment to the initiative and a willingness to support one another while caring for God's creation.

The *Laudato Si' Car Boot and Preloved Sale* beautifully demon-

strated that caring for our common home begins with simple, practical choices made together as a faith community. Through fellowship, sustainability and shared responsibility, the event embodied the mission of the Family Life ministry to nurture families spiritually, socially and pastorally, while encouraging every parishioner to become a faithful steward of the gifts entrusted to us by God. **Michael Yip**

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Human dignity at the heart of the Church's mission

Bob Ho

PETALING JAYA: The mission of the Church is not merely to care for those in need but to restore the dignity that God has bestowed on every human person.

This was the central message of a one-day Integral Human Development formation programme organised by Caritas Malaysia for the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

Drawing on Scripture and the Church's living tradition, Caritas Malaysia national office director Fr Fabian Dicom emphasised that human dignity is not based on wealth, status, achievement, or social standing.

"Dignity is given, not earned," he said. Referring to Genesis 1:26, where God creates humanity in His image and likeness, Fr Fabian explained that every person possesses an inherent dignity because each reflects the image of God.

"This is why the Church insists that every human life, including the unborn, is sacred," he said.

Fr Fabian also reflected on the baptism of Jesus in Luke 3:21-22, when the Father's voice proclaimed, "You are My beloved

Son; with You I am well pleased." Through Baptism, Christians share in that same identity as beloved children of God and are called to participate in Christ's mission.

He pointed to Jesus' mission statement in Luke 4:18-19: bringing good news to the poor, freedom to captives, sight to the blind, and liberation to the oppressed.

"Like Jesus, we are called to bring good news, healing, and liberation," he said. "Faith is not just belief; it is action. We are called to make love visible."

Fr Fabian also introduced the ten core principles of Catholic Social Teaching, which have been brought into renewed focus through Pope Leo XIV's encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*.

Reflecting on present-day realities in Malaysia, Fr Fabian highlighted the struggles of families facing rising living costs, young people anxious about their future, migrant workers who remain vulnerable despite their contributions, elderly persons experiencing loneliness, and communities affected by floods and environmental degradation.

"These are not isolated stories," he said.



The participants during one of the group discussions.

"They are what the Church calls the signs of the times."

He stressed the need for a Church that remains close to the poor, listens attentively, reads reality seriously, and has the courage to ask difficult questions.

"Malaysia needs a Church that restores dignity and gives people reason to hope again," he said. "A Church that helps people not only survive but truly flourish."

In his closing remarks, Archbishop Julian Leow, summarised Integral Human Development in six simple words: "I am you and we are everyone."

"It is not 'they are the poor' or 'they are the migrants,'" he said. "We are they. We are the ones who must respond because we are part of the solution — and part of the problem if we do nothing."

The archbishop added that a prophetic Church cannot remain silent or uninvolved.

"The future of humanity is in each other. To help one another is to help the whole of humanity," he said.

He also encouraged participants to emulate political scientist Dr Francis Loh, who often "turun padang" to understand first-hand the realities faced by the poor. Earlier in the day, Dr Loh, a Caritas Malaysia board member, shared his insights on poverty in Malaysia.

Held at Loyola Hall, Church of St Francis Xavier, the formation programme included interactive group reflections and a See-Judge-Act exercise based on real-life cases.

Caritas Malaysia is the official social mission arm of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, bringing together nine diocesan Caritas and human development offices, religious congregations, and Catholic organisations in service of the poor and vulnerable.

Catholic Social Teaching: Faith in Action

PETALING JAYA: Caritas Malaysia national office director, Fr Fabian Dicom, described Catholic Social Teaching (CST) as "the Church's wisdom about how faith relates to life in society."

He explained that CST is rooted in the Gospel, guided by human reason, and remains open to dialogue with the world. As a living tradition, it helps the Church interpret contemporary social realities in the light of faith and respond to the challenges facing humanity.

Fr Fabian noted that CST did not emerge all at once. Rather, it developed gradually over time as the Church responded to changing historical, social, economic and political circumstances. Today, it provides a moral framework that guides Catholics in promoting human dignity, justice, peace and the common good.

The first and foundational principle is the **Life and Dignity of the Human Person**. Every human being is created in the image and likeness of God and possesses an inherent dignity that cannot be diminished by poverty, disability, age, social status or even personal failings. This principle calls Catholics to defend human life at every stage and to reject all forms of discrimination, exploitation and injustice.

A second principle is the **Call to Association**, which recognises that human beings are inherently social. People flourish in relationships and communities, beginning with the family, which is the basic unit of society. Decisions affecting individuals should always take into account their relationships with family members, friends and the wider community. This principle encourages the creation of welcoming and inclusive communities where everyone feels valued and heard.

Closely linked to this is the principle of **Rights and Responsibilities**. Every person has the right to access basic necessities such



Fr Fabian Dicom

as food, shelter, education, healthcare and meaningful work. At the same time, these rights carry corresponding responsibilities to respect the rights of others and to contribute to the common good of society.

CST also emphasises the **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable**. While every person has equal dignity, special attention must be given to those who are most in need. This principle calls Christians to stand with the poor, migrants, refugees, disaster victims and all who are marginalised, ensuring that their needs are not overlooked.

Another important principle is the **Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers**. Work is not merely a means of earning a living but a participation in God's ongoing creation. Workers should therefore be treated with respect and provided with fair wages, safe working conditions and opportunities to support their families with dignity.

The principle of **Solidarity** reminds Christians that they belong to one human family. Regardless of nationality, race, culture or religion, people are called to care for one another, especially those who suffer. Solidarity challenges individuals and communities to stand with those affected by

war, poverty, injustice and discrimination.

In recent decades, the Church has increasingly emphasised **Care for God's Creation**. The Earth is a gift entrusted to humanity and must be protected for future generations. Caring for the environment is, therefore, both a moral and spiritual responsibility that includes reducing waste, protecting natural resources and promoting sustainable lifestyles.

Fr Fabian also highlighted the principle of **Subsidiarity and the Role of Government**. Decisions should be made at the most local level possible, allowing individuals, families and communities to participate actively in shaping their lives. However, higher levels of authority, including governments, have a responsibility to intervene when necessary to protect justice, safeguard rights and promote the common good.

Another essential principle is the **Promotion of Peace**. Peace is not simply the absence of conflict but the presence of justice, respect, dignity and right relationships. Catholics are called to be peacemakers by promoting dialogue, reconciliation, non-violence and mutual understanding.

Finally, the principle of **Participation** affirms that every person has both a right and a responsibility to contribute to society. No one should be excluded from decisions that affect their lives. The Church encourages the active involvement of all people, including women, youth, the poor and persons with disabilities, in community life and decision-making processes.

Fr Fabian said these ten principles continue to guide Catholics in living out their faith in practical ways. Rooted in Scripture and shaped by centuries of reflection, Catholic Social Teaching challenges believers to build a society where human dignity is respected, justice is upheld, creation is protected and every person is given the opportunity to flourish. **Bob Ho**

Preserving heritage, improving comfort

KAMPAR: Parish priest, Fr Simon Anand, and his team have embarked to fully air-condition the historic Church of the Sacred Heart in Kampar, Perak.

Work began on June 15 and is expected to take three to three-and-a-half months to complete. During this period, the church building will be temporarily closed to facilitate the installation of three 30HP rooftop air-conditioning units with ceiling-mounted ducting. The project also includes the construction of reinforced concrete slabs for the compressors, electrical wiring, and other related infrastructure works.

Fr Simon has informed parishioners that all Masses and other spiritual activities will be held at the adjacent Mercy Hall while the upgrading works are underway.

He explained that the project is an important investment in the future of the parish, aimed at creating a more welcoming and prayerful environment for both present and future generations. Despite the use of wall-mounted fans, many parishioners have found the church increasingly uncomfortable, particularly during late morning and afternoon celebrations. Some have shared that the intense heat makes it difficult to concentrate fully during Mass and other liturgical services.

While the parish has already raised part of the required funds, additional financial support is still needed to complete the project. Fr Simon has appealed to parishioners, benefactors, and visitors to contribute towards the initiative, noting that the improvements will benefit all who gather at the church for worship and community life. **Bernard Anthony**

President sees hope in WYD Seoul 2027

SEOUL: South Korean President Lee Jae-myung has described the 2027 World Youth Day (WYD) in Seoul as a powerful message of hope for a world marked by conflict, division and uncertainty.

"The theme chosen for World Youth Day Seoul 2027 speaks powerfully to our time," Lee said in an exclusive statement released to *Fides*, the Vatican's missionary news agency.

"At a moment when conflict and division continue to test the foundations of peace and coexistence, it reminds us that hope is stronger than fear," he said.

On June 15, Lee met Pope Leo

XIV, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican Secretary of State, and Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States and International Organisations.

Pope Leo XIV is expected to attend the international gathering, scheduled to take place in Seoul from Aug. 3–8, 2027. Hundreds of thousands of young people from around the world are expected to participate.

"The Pope's presence in Seoul will remind us that moral leadership, compassion and dialogue remain indispensable in a fractured world," Lee said.

He noted that today's youth face

unprecedented challenges but also possess extraordinary opportunities.

"Their generation will help shape how humanity responds to division, inequality, technological transformation and the urgent task of building a more peaceful future," he said.

Lee described WYD as a unique opportunity for encounter among peoples and cultures, reaffirming South Korea's commitment to welcoming pilgrims from every continent.

He expressed hope that the gathering would help young people deepen their faith, forge lasting friendships and rediscover the



South Korean President Lee Jae-myung meets Pope Leo XIV.

value of solidarity across borders and cultures.

The president also stressed that WYD is not a political event but a global celebration of faith and unity. He voiced hope that participants would return home carrying

the spirit of hope, solidarity and dialogue.

"If they do, World Youth Day will leave a legacy far beyond Korea — a legacy of courage, friendship and peace for generations to come," he said. ucanews.com



JAKARTA: The president of Indonesia's bishops' conference has encouraged former seminarians to find joy and fulfilment in their chosen vocations, reminding them that true happiness comes not from

Find joy in your calling, former seminarians urged

status or recognition but from within.

Bishop Antonius Subianto Bunjamin, OSC, *pic*, delivered the message during a June 20 reunion of alumni from Mertoyudan Minor Seminary at Graha Pemuda.

The Bishop of Bandung spoke during a Eucharistic celebration attended by about 150 alumni of the seminary in Magelang, Central Java. While some graduates went on to become priests, others pursued careers in education, business, government, civil society and various professions.

"Many people offer different paths

to happiness. The path each person discovers is his or her own path to happiness," Bishop Anton said in his homily.

He stressed that happiness is not determined by one's position, vocation or achievements, but by an inner sense of purpose and contentment.

With his characteristic humour, he invited participants to reflect on the choices they had made in life.

"What is the point of becoming a priest if you are not happy? What is the point of becoming a representative if you are not happy? What is the point of remaining single if you

are not happy?" he asked.

"Whatever your situation, whether you are single, a priest or something else, the important thing is to be happy. And happiness must come from within yourself."

Reflecting on the song *Don't Worry, Be Happy*, popularised by Bobby McFerrin, Bishop Anton also spoke about the dangers of excessive anxiety and fear about the future.

"People become unhappy because they worry too much about things that have not yet happened," he said.

While acknowledging that concern about the future is natural, espe-

cially when people feel unprepared, he cautioned against allowing worry to dominate one's life.

"Everyone has problems in life. But when we worry, the number of problems doubles. The problem itself remains, and then we add worry on top of it. Yet worry does not change reality. What changes reality is effort and hard work."

Concluding his reflection, Bishop Anton returned to the central message of his homily: "Live happily, wherever you are and whatever circumstances you may face." **LiCAS News**

Pakistani Catholics encouraged to live their faith amid intolerance

LAHORE: As religious minorities in Pakistan continue to face discrimination and rights violations, the country's Catholic bishops are encouraging the faithful to remain hopeful and steadfast in their faith.

"Everyone should have this right," said Fr Bernard Emmanuel of the Archdiocese of Lahore, national director of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), the human rights arm of the Pakistan Catholic Bishops' Conference.

His remarks come as Pakistan continues to grapple with intolerance toward religious minorities. In its September 2025 report, the

US Commission on International Religious Freedom urged the US State Department to redesignate Pakistan as a "Country of Particular Concern" due to what it described as "systematic, ongoing and egregious" violations of religious freedom.

The report cited attacks against Christians, Hindus and Ahmadiyya Muslims, while also raising concerns over the misuse of Pakistan's blasphemy laws, often used to settle personal disputes and target both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Fr Emmanuel acknowledged that such abuses create difficult circum-

stances for minority communities. He stressed that the Church remains committed to helping Catholics deepen their faith and witness.

He noted that Catholics in remote northern regions often face particular challenges in practising and preserving their faith. To address this, the CCJP forms local leaders who can support communities and help them navigate social and religious pressures.

The commission also provides training, conducts research and publishes reports on human rights issues affecting religious minorities, particularly women and girls.

At the grassroots level, trained volunteers build trust through simple activities and personal engagement with families.

"We start with games, puzzles and conversations. We spend time with them and gain their trust," Fr Emmanuel said.

He noted that the commission is gradually seeing the fruits of its efforts as more people grow in confidence and seek support.

"They grow in faith. Many once felt there was no one to help them, but now they approach us. People are gaining trust and hope," he said.

Fr Emmanuel added that parents play a crucial role in passing on the faith to the next generation.

Don't be afraid," he said. **OSV News**

Catholic bishop receives top Buddhist honour in Cambodia



Bishop Olivier Schmitthaesler meets with Venerable Khim Sorn, third deputy supreme patriarch of Cambodia's Mohanikaya Buddhist order on June 13, 2026. (Ly Sovanna/Catholic National Office for Social Communications in Cambodia)

PHNOM PENH: Cambodia's Buddhist leadership has conferred a prestigious honorary title on Bishop Olivier Schmitthaesler, Apostolic Vicar of Phnom Penh, in recognition of his decades of fostering cooperation between Buddhist and Christian communities.

The French-born missionary received the title: *Akka Mahāupā kabuddhasāsanūpatthambhakar* — roughly translated as "Elder Great Lay Supporter and Upholder of the Buddha's Dispensation" — during a June 13 ceremony at Wat Botum Vatey in the Cambodian capital.

The title was conferred by Supreme Patriarch Nun Nget of Cambodia's Mohanikaya Buddhist order and presented at a ceremony presided over by Venerable Khim Sorn, the order's third deputy supreme patriarch.

The honour builds on a distinction

awarded in 2022, when Buddhist leaders recognised the bishop as a *Maha Upasaka* for promoting dialogue, cooperation and social development between Cambodia's Buddhist majority and small Catholic minority. The new title represents an even higher level of recognition.

Speaking at the ceremony, Khim Sorn highlighted Cambodia's constitutional commitment to religious freedom and harmony. While Buddhism is the state religion, he noted that the Constitution guarantees freedom of belief and encourages peaceful coexistence and mutual respect among faith communities.

Buddhist leaders said the award recognised Schmitthaesler's long-standing contributions to education, humanitarian outreach and community development in partnership with Buddhist institutions. **EWTN**

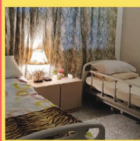
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Writers help reveal truth, humanity and God

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV has urged writers to use the power of words to foster truth, deepen humanity, and open hearts to God, saying their work creates “spaces of freedom and authenticity” where hope, peace and divine grace can flourish.

Addressing writers from around the world gathered in Rome on June 24 to mark the centenary of the Vatican Publishing House (*Libreria Editrice Vaticana*), the Pope described writing as a vocation that shapes both individuals and society.

“We need you,” he told them. “We need your imagination, your narrative creativity, and your lively thinking. We need these to create spaces of freedom and authenticity, within which divine grace can make the promise of consolation and peace resound.”

The Vatican Publishing House was established in 1926 to promote and preserve the Church’s intellectual and spiritual heritage.

Reflecting on the nature of writing, Pope Leo identified three essential dimensions of the writer’s vocation.

First, he said, writing is an act of truth because it reveals who people are, what they



Pope Leo XIV addresses writers from around the world (Vatican Media)

believe and hope for, and the future they long to build. Yet truth is never something to be possessed, he cautioned, but something that continually draws and transforms those who seek it.

“We are never masters of the truth,” he said. “If anything, it is the truth that conquers us.”

He encouraged writers to inspire others to pursue truth by remaining faithful seekers themselves.

Secondly, the Pope described writing as an act of humanity. Through literature, readers encounter lives, experiences and perspectives beyond their own, cultivating empathy, compassion and solidarity.

“We develop an imaginative empathy that enables us to identify with how others see, experience and respond to reality,” he said, noting that without such empathy there can be no genuine solidarity or mercy.

Stories, he explained, allow readers to “live” many lives beyond their own, broadening their understanding of others and helping them recognise that no single perspective contains the whole truth.

Finally, Pope Leo said, writing ultimately concerns God because God reveals Himself within human history and experience.

Quoting Cardinal Timothy Radcliffe, he recalled that every sincere effort to wrestle with life’s deepest questions — love, justice, freedom, suffering and death — leads people closer to Christ, “the one who is most human of all.”

“When we delve into the very depths of our humanity, we are not far from God,” the Pope said. “There, in the midst of very human stories, God reveals Himself.”

He added that throughout Scripture, God speaks through events, encounters and personal stories, continuing to work through people’s lives and relationships today.

Concluding his address, Pope Leo echoed the appeal of Pope St Paul VI to artists: “We need you.”

He thanked writers for using their gifts to sow seeds of reconciliation, encounter and friendship, encouraging them to continue enriching both culture and faith through their work. **Vatican News**



A layperson cannot deliver homily at Mass

VATICAN: The Vatican’s Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments has reaffirmed that only ordained ministers may deliver the homily during Mass, rejecting a request from the German Bishops’ Conference to allow laypersons to preach, even in exceptional circumstances.

In a letter dated June 17, 2026, addressed to Bishop Heiner Wilmer, President of the German Bishops’ Conference, the Dicastery declined a petition submitted on March 30 seeking permission for a duly commissioned layperson to preach in place of the homily during the celebration of the Eucharist.

While acknowledging the pastoral concerns behind the request, the Dicastery stated that such an exception cannot be granted through an indult. *[An indult is “a special (and often temporary) favour*

granted to a physical or moral person by the Apostolic See (or the local ordinary) which confers faculties contrary to or beyond the prescriptions of the law.”]

It explained that the reservation of the homily to a priest or deacon is not merely a disciplinary regulation but arises from the very nature of the liturgy itself.

The Vatican reiterated that the homily forms an integral part of the Liturgy of the Word and is intrinsically linked to the proclamation of the Gospel. As such, it constitutes an exercise of the *munus docendi* (teaching office) entrusted to ordained ministers through the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

The letter further stressed that the proclamation of God’s Word within the liturgical celebration is inseparable from the sacramental mission of ordained ministers and from the unity between Word and

Sacrament in the Eucharistic celebration.

The Dicastery also underscored the need for the ongoing formation of priests and deacons so that their homilies may effectively nourish the faith and spiritual lives of the faithful.

At the same time, it noted that Church law already provides numerous opportunities for laypeople to proclaim and share the Word of God outside the homily and outside the celebration of the Eucharist. Such forms of preaching and catechesis remain an important part of the Church’s mission and may be entrusted to qualified lay faithful in accordance with canon law.

The clarification reaffirms the Church’s longstanding teaching that the homily during Mass is reserved to ordained ministers and cannot be delegated to laypersons, even in exceptional circumstances. **Vatican News**

CHICAGO: A new nationwide study has revealed a growing interest in the Catholic faith, particularly among young adults searching for truth, meaning and spiritual fulfilment.

Published on June 18 by the Archdiocese of Chicago in collaboration with 19 other dioceses, the study surveyed 2,127 participants in the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) between February and May 2026. The participating dioceses reported record levels of enrolment in adult faith formation programmes.

The findings indicate that many people are approaching the Catholic Church through a personal spiritual journey rather than through family tradition or marriage. Participants cited a desire for goodness, truth, inner peace and purpose, along with an attraction to the Church’s liturgy, teachings and rich two-thousand-year tradition.

More than a quarter of respondents (28 per cent) reported having no prior religious affiliation before beginning their journey towards the Catholic faith. Others came from Protestant communities or were baptised Catholics completing their sacramental initiation.

Search for truth draws many to Catholicism

Researchers found that spiritual motivations far outweighed political, cultural or social considerations. Seventy-seven per cent of respondents expressed a desire to grow in virtue, 76 per cent sought a deeper understanding of truth, and 72 per cent said they were searching for greater inner peace.

The study also highlighted the increasing influence of digital evangelisation. Many participants credited prayer apps, podcasts, online videos and social media content with helping them learn about Catholicism and deepen their interest in the faith.

Despite the encouraging trend, respondents identified several challenges along the path to joining the Church. Among younger participants, particularly those from Generation Z, common concerns included feeling spiritually unprepared, uncertainty about being accepted within parish communities and anxiety about participating in the liturgy.

The report urges dioceses and parishes to strengthen efforts in personal accompaniment, provide clearer pathways for those exploring the faith and offer ongoing formation



A file photo shows a catechumen being baptised during the Easter Vigil. (OSV News/Texas Catholic Herald/James Ramos)

after individuals are received into the Church.

According to the study’s authors, the findings point to a significant shift in how people encounter Catholicism today. Increasingly,

they are drawn, not by cultural inheritance but by a personal quest for truth, meaning and a deeper relationship with God. **Vatican News**



Forty years of renewal, one Church on mission

Richard Chia

The year 2016 dawned with a sense of anticipation for both the universal Church and the Church in Malaysia. Two significant milestones, unfolding on different stages, would converge around a common theme: mercy.

Just weeks earlier, on December 8, 2015, Pope Francis had opened the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica, inaugurating the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. Announced through the papal bull *Misericordiae Vultus*, the Jubilee invited Catholics worldwide to rediscover the merciful face of God and would continue until Nov 20, 2016.

As pilgrims streamed through Holy Doors across the globe, the Church in Malaysia was entering a new chapter. On Jan 12, 2016, the Diocese of Malacca Johore welcomed its third bishop when Bishop Bernard Paul was ordained and installed as successor to Bishop Emeritus Paul Tan.

His appointment came at a time of profound social and cultural change. A *HERALD* report published on Jan 4, 2016, observed that Bishop Bernard's episcopal ministry would differ significantly from that of his predecessors, Bishop Emeritus James

Four decades after *Aggiornamento* first set the Church in Peninsular Malaysia on a path of renewal, the Fourth Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Convention (PMPC IV) gathered 618 delegates to celebrate its journey, assess present realities, and chart the way forward.



The Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Assembly IV in MAJODI Centre, October 2, 2016.

Chan and his immediate predecessor, Bishop Emeritus Paul Tan. He was entrusted with shepherding an increasingly educated and relatively affluent Catholic community in a

world where spiritual and moral values were being challenged by materialism, secularism, and rapid advances in the life sciences that raised complex ethical questions.

Yet these challenges were not unique to Malacca Johore. They reflected concerns being experienced throughout the global Church. In many ways, the Jubilee of Mercy arrived at a providential moment, offering a spiritual response to the uncertainties of the modern world.

In *Misericordiae Vultus*, Pope Francis called Catholics to rediscover the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy and the Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy. Far more than a list of charitable acts, they offered a practical blueprint for Christian discipleship, challenging believers to make mercy visible in daily life, relationships and society.

As 2016 unfolded, this call to mercy resonated deeply within the Malaysian Church, shaping pastoral priorities and inviting Catholics to respond to contemporary challenges through the lens of compassion and service.

Looking back, it is striking how the beginning of Bishop Bernard Paul's episcopal ministry coincided with a Jubilee dedicated entirely to mercy. What may have seemed a coincidence at the time now appears a fitting reminder that amid changing circumstances and new challenges, the Church's mission remains rooted in the merciful heart of Christ.

From Oct 2 to 5, 2016, the MAJODI Centre in Johor Bahru became the setting for another significant moment in the history of the Church in Peninsular Malaysia. A total of 618 delegates gathered for the Fourth Peninsular Malaysia Pastoral Convention (PMPC IV), held exactly 40 years after the landmark *Aggiornamento* of 1976.

The anniversary marked four decades of renewal, discernment and growth. Many who had participated in *Aggiornamento* were no longer alive to witness the occasion, while numerous pioneers of PMPC I in 1986 had since grown old or returned to the Lord.

Yet their legacy endured. Gathered at MAJODI was a new generation of Church leaders and faithful, inheritors of a vision first articulated in 1976. Their presence testified to how far the Church had journeyed over four decades.

From *Aggiornamento* to PMPC IV: A vision fulfilled

The growth of the convention reflected the growth of the Church itself. The *Aggiornamento* of 1976 brought together 126 priests. PMPC I in 1986 attracted 171 participants. PMPC II in 1996 drew 390 delegates, while PMPC III in 2006 welcomed 550. By 2016, PMPC IV had grown to 618 participants, the largest gathering yet.

This growth was not driven by a dramatic increase in the number of priests or religious. Rather, it reflected the rising participation of the laity. Over the years, lay Catholics had increasingly embraced their role in the life and mission of the Church, embodying the vision of Vatican II and the call to shared responsibility among the People of God.

Of the 618 delegates at PMPC IV, 205

were clergy, religious and seminarians, while 395 were lay faithful. The laity formed the clear majority, a striking contrast to the priest-centred gathering of 1976.

The demographic profile painted a picture of a vibrant and diverse Church. Participants under 30 accounted for 20.5 per cent of the assembly, while 9.6 per cent were aged 70 and above. The remaining 69.9 per cent represented the broad middle generation, with an average age of 48. Male delegates made up 52.4 per cent and female delegates 47.6 per cent of the lay participants.

Equally significant was the breadth of representation. Delegates came from the four principal language groups — English, Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese and Tamil.

Minority communities, including indigenous peoples and the hearing-impaired, were also present. Their participation reflected a Church increasingly conscious of its diversity and committed to ensuring that every voice had a place at the table.

Forty years after *Aggiornamento* first called the Church to renewal, PMPC IV stood as a powerful witness to what had been achieved. It demonstrated that the Church in Peninsular Malaysia was no longer defined solely by its clergy and religious, but by the active participation of the entire People of God.

The message was unmistakable: the Church belongs to everyone, and everyone has a role in its mission.

What is the Spirit saying to the Church today?

The four-day convention was shaped by keynote presentations and reflections that invited delegates to look both inward at the life of the Church and outward at the realities of Malaysian society.

The three bishops of Peninsular Malaysia each offered a distinct yet complementary vision for the future.

Bishop Bernard Paul of Malacca Johore began with Isaiah 54:2: *Enlarge the space for your tent*. His message was a call to think beyond familiar boundaries and embrace a broader vision of God's Kingdom.

"We often see only our little churches," he observed, "but fail to see the Catholic Church, and beyond that, the Kingdom of God which is even greater."

He challenged delegates not to limit God's possibilities to their own circumstances. The Holy Spirit, he said, was calling the Church to move beyond where it stood and to participate in the renewal of Christ's Church.

Archbishop Julian Leow of Kuala Lumpur focused on the challenges facing Malaysia and the role of Christians in society.

"As Malaysians, we find ourselves today

at the crossroads," he said, "whether to continue to prosper as one unified nation or go the way of chaos, disunity and destruction."

He highlighted concerns ranging from social issues, family life and financial scandals to environmental degradation, racial and religious tensions, and education. In response, he reminded delegates that the Church could not remain silent.

"The Church has a social responsibility to speak up for the voiceless in society," he said. "She must be the conscience of society and the moral compass that steers the ship through the sea of relativism and error."

Bishop Sebastian Francis of Penang, now Cardinal Sebastian Francis, centred his reflection on spirituality and communion. He urged delegates to remain attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and to foster a spirituality of communion within the Church.

"The Holy Spirit has convinced us that each one of us, and all of us together as Church, are the Body of Christ, called, chosen and sent on mission," he said.

His keynote culminated in a question that resonated throughout the convention: "What

is the Holy Spirit saying to the Church of Peninsular Malaysia today, in the here and now?"

Adding a broader social perspective was Dr Francis Loh, former professor at Universiti Sains Malaysia and lecturer at College General, Penang. In his presentation, *Malaysia: New Economy, New Society, but No New Politics Yet ... Whither the Church?* he painted a broad picture of the nation's changing social, economic and political landscape.

Drawing on demographic and economic data, he highlighted the growing significance of Christian Bumiputeras within the Malaysian Church and reflected on the Church's historical contributions in education, healthcare and social services. He also pointed to emerging challenges such as poverty, dependence on foreign labour, limited Christian presence in tertiary institutions, and the need for greater youth engagement and interreligious dialogue.

The keynote presentations were followed by workshop sessions where delegates reflected on the Church's contributions to Malaysian society over the previous 40 years and considered what a Spirit-filled Church

would require of clergy, religious and laity in the years ahead.

The discussions revealed a rich diversity of views. Some participants admitted they had been unaware of many of the issues raised, while others voiced strong support for the vision presented. Particularly moving were the contributions from differently-abled delegates, many of whom expressed appreciation for being welcomed and included.

As PMPC IV drew to a close, delegates gathered for the concluding Mass and a moving Ceremony of Light. The symbolic commissioning invited participants to renew their commitment to carry Christ's light back to their parishes, ministries and communities.

Holding their candles aloft, they were reminded that the light they carried was not something newly received but something already present within them.

"The light is not something new," Bishop Bernard told the assembly. "The light has always been in you. The light is within each one of you. Let it be an awakening for you."

It was a fitting conclusion to a convention that celebrated four decades of renewal while challenging the Church to move forward with faith, courage and hope.

Pope's prayer intention for July

The gift of being human

Created in the image of God

God created humankind in His image; in the image of God, He created them; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27).

The opening pages of Scripture present a vision of the human person that remains as relevant today as ever. Before there were nations and borders, economies and political systems, before people were divided by race, religion, or social status, there was one fundamental truth: every human being was created in the image and likeness of God.

This lies at the heart of the Christian understanding of life and human dignity. Every person carries something of God's own imprint. Human dignity is not earned through intelligence, success, or social standing, nor is it lost through illness, disability, dependence, or old age. Dignity belongs to every person because it comes from God. We possess it not because of what we do but because of who we are.

This conviction forms the foundation of Catholic Social Teaching. Every principle that the Church proposes for social life — the common good, solidarity, participation, the preferential option for the poor, and care for creation — rests upon the belief that every person possesses an inherent and inviolable dignity. Human rights flow from human dignity, and human dignity flows from the fact that every person is created in the image and likeness of God.

The Scriptures repeatedly affirm the sacredness of human life. The psalmist marvels that God knit him together in his mother's womb and that he was "*fearfully and wonderfully made*" (Ps 139:13-14). In the New Testament, the mystery of human dignity reaches its fullest expression in the Incarnation. "*The Word became flesh and lived among us*" (Jn 1:14). By becoming human, Christ united Himself in some way with every person and revealed forever the immeasurable worth of human life.

St John Paul II, in *Evangelium Vitae*, reminded the Church that the Gospel is fundamentally a Gospel of life and that every human life is sacred and inviolable.

More recently, Pope Leo XIV, in *Magnifica Humanitas*, invites the Church and the world to recover a sense of awe at what it means to be human. The human

person, he reminds us, is never merely an individual among billions or a unit within an economic or technological system. Every person is a mystery to be contemplated, a gift to be welcomed, and a life entrusted to our care.

To recognise this is also to appreciate the gift of human life itself. Every stage of life has its own beauty. The child in the womb already carries hopes and possibilities uniquely his or her own. Children awaken love, young people search for meaning, adults contribute in countless ways, and the elderly enrich us with memory and wisdom. Even in moments of frailty and illness, human life does not lose its worth because every life remains a reflection of God's image.

When human worth is measured by usefulness

Yet many societies increasingly look at human life through a different lens. Human worth is often measured by usefulness, efficiency, and economic contribution. People are valued for what they produce, consume, or contribute. This way of thinking slowly changes the way we look at one another.

When usefulness becomes the measure of value, some lives begin to appear less worthy of protection. The unborn child may be seen as a burden. The elderly may be regarded as a social problem. Persons with disabilities are sometimes viewed as less productive. The poor are dismissed as failures, while migrants become statistics rather than persons with names and stories. Those who are terminally ill may even be encouraged to see death as a solution to suffering.

The Church firmly rejects this way of thinking because human dignity can never be measured by utility. A person's worth does not increase because he is productive, nor diminish because she becomes dependent on others. Human dignity rests on something far more secure: every person has been created in the image and likeness of God and is therefore worthy of reverence and protection.

Respecting life in all its stages

This conviction explains why the Church consistently defends human life from

conception until natural death. The Church's defence of unborn life is not rooted in ideology but in a clear understanding of the human person. Catholic moral theology teaches that, from the moment of conception, a new human life begins and must be respected and protected as a person. From this first instant, the embryo possesses an inviolable dignity and deserves the same fundamental respect accorded to every member of the human family.

The Church's concern for life, however, does not end with birth. Respect for life is consistent and comprehensive. It embraces every stage and condition of human existence. This is why the Church calls for peace and rejects war as a means of resolving conflict. It is why the Church increasingly questions the use of the death penalty and opposes human trafficking, torture, and every form of exploitation and dehumanisation. Human beings are never objects to be manipulated, used, or discarded. They are persons who bear the image of God.

The Church's teaching on euthanasia flows from this same vision of the human person. Catholic moral theology distinguishes between allowing death to take its natural course, and intentionally causing death. Human dignity does not disappear because a person becomes dependent, frail, or terminally ill. The value of a person's life is not diminished by suffering. The Christian response is therefore not to hasten death but to accompany those who suffer with compassionate care, effective pain management, loving presence, and the assurance that no one is abandoned or made to feel that his or her life is no longer worth living.

Yet the question of human dignity does not end at the bedside of the dying; it extends to the new social and technological realities that are reshaping our understanding of what it means to be human. Pope Leo XIV's reflections in *Magnifica Humanitas* are especially timely because humanity now stands at the threshold of an age increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence. AI undoubtedly offers enormous possibilities for health care, education, communication, and



Prayer Prism

Fr Fabian Dicom

scientific research. Yet it also raises important questions about what kind of society we are becoming.

Will workers be discarded because they are no longer economically useful? Will decisions about health care and social services increasingly be left to algorithms?

Pope Leo cautions that technological

progress without moral wisdom can reduce human beings to objects of efficiency and calculation. The challenge of our time is, therefore, not simply to build more intelligent machines but to ensure that technology remains at the service of the human person and the common good.

Cultivating a culture of reverence for life

Malaysia itself presents us with situations that call for a renewed commitment to the dignity of every person. We continue to hear of abandoned babies, domestic violence, human trafficking, mental health struggles among young people, the exploitation of migrant workers, and the loneliness experienced by many elderly persons. Environmental degradation and increasingly frequent floods often affect the poor most severely, reminding us that respect for life also includes protecting the conditions necessary for human flourishing.

Perhaps one of the greatest threats we face is not direct hostility towards life but a growing indifference to human suffering. We become accustomed to stories of violence, displacement, and exploitation because they appear before us so often.

The Gospel invites us to resist this indifference. Jesus consistently moved towards those whom society ignored. He touched the leper, welcomed children, restored the dignity of sinners, and identified himself with the hungry, the sick, the imprisoned, and the stranger. "*Whatever you did to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did to Me*" (Mt 25:40).

The Pope's prayer intention for this month invites us to pray for "*the respect and protection of human life in all its stages, recognising it as a gift from God.*"

Prayer, however, must lead us towards a way of living.

Perhaps the task before the Church today is to cultivate a culture of reverence for life. This culture must be infused into every aspect of our life and mission — our preaching and catechesis, our schools and families, our social ministries and public witness, our use of technology, and the way we treat those who are weak, vulnerable, different, or easily pushed to the margins of society. Respect for life cannot be reduced to a single issue or confined to occasional campaigns. It is a way of seeing. It is learning to recognise in every human face the image of God.

Ultimately, the challenge before us is to recover a sense of wonder before the mystery of being human. Every person we meet is more than a category, a consumer, a worker, or a statistic. Every person is an image of God; a life called into existence by love and sustained by grace. To recognise this is to recognise that every human life, from conception until natural death, is a gift from God. And every gift deserves reverence, protection, and love.



People collect containers to be filled with food at a soup kitchen in Havana, Cuba, on January 15, 2024. The kitchen is serving a growing number of Cubans struggling to make ends meet amid the country's ongoing economic crisis. (OSV News photo/Yander Zamora, Reuters)

Fr Fabian is the National Director of Caritas Malaysia

Stella Maris welcomes home its first priest

Tianne Ramona Pereira

KUALA LUMPUR: About 380 students, teachers, staff, members of the Board of Governors, and representatives of Yayasan Tan Sri Dominic Vendargon gathered as one Stella Maris family for a special Mass of thanksgiving, celebrating the ordination of Fr Philip Asirwalam. Concelebrated by school chaplain Fr Alvin Ho SJ, the Mass was held on June 18 at Stella Maris International School, Medan Damansara.

The celebration was especially meaningful as it marked the first time students from Stella Maris Pudu, Stella Maris Ampang and Stella Maris International School came together as one family for a Eucharistic celebration. The occasion also carried a special sense of joy and pride, as Fr Philip, a former Stella Maris student, returned to his alma mater as a priest. His homecoming served as a powerful reminder that the seeds of faith planted in school communities can, through God's grace, blossom into a lifelong vocation of service to

the Church.

In his homily, Fr Philip reflected on the Lord's Prayer from the Gospel of Matthew, reminding the congregation that prayer is not about using many words or trying to persuade God to do what we want. Instead, prayer is about surrendering ourselves to God's will. "Prayer changes our hearts to align with His," he shared. "It is for His glory and His will."

Fr Philip also spoke about the importance of forgiveness, reminding everyone that being made in the image of God does not refer to physical appearance, but to reflecting God's qualities through our lives. "We are called to be loving, kind and forgiving," he said.

Drawing from his own journey, Fr Philip shared that he once sat in the same pews as the students before him. As a Stella Maris student in Pudu, his path to knowing Christ began through the opportunities and experiences provided by the school community. "Sometimes as students we may feel forced to attend Mass," he said with a smile, "I too felt the same, but I chose to

come with an open heart."

He fondly recalled the annual school themes that guided and strengthened students in their faith journey, encouraging them to become witnesses of Christ in their daily lives. He also paid tribute to the many priests who came to celebrate Mass for the Stella Maris students and who played a significant role in shaping his faith, particularly the late Fr O.C. Lim SJ and the various priests from the Church of St Anthony. Through their example, dedication and pastoral care, they revealed to him different glimpses of Christ's love and inspired him on his own journey of faith and vocation.

Reflecting on life's challenges, Fr Philip encouraged students never to be afraid of approaching Jesus, especially through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. "Go for Confession," he urged. "That is where we allow God's grace to fill our hearts."

One of the most memorable moments of the homily came when he reminded students about the difference between conflict and hatred. "It's okay to 'fight' with your friends," he said. "A fight is a result of misunderstanding, but hate is a result of no love. And God is love."

Fr Philip also spoke passionately about the growing need for priests and religious sisters in Malaysia. He encouraged students to remain open to God's call, wherever it may lead them. "Be open to what God is asking of you. Glorify Him, so that others may experience the love of God through your life."

At the conclusion of Mass, B.Gen (Rtd) Dato' Richard Robless, chairman of Yayasan Tan Sri Dominic Vendargon (YTDV) congratulated Fr Philip on his ordination and described him as an inspiration to the students gathered. He noted that Fr Philip



embodied the very values and qualities he had spoken about throughout his homily and thanked everyone for coming together to celebrate this historic occasion — the first priestly ordination from the Stella Maris family. Describing it as a proud and momentous occasion for the entire Stella Maris family, he expressed hope that Fr Philip's journey would inspire many more young people to deepen their faith and remain open to God's call.

The celebration served as a powerful reminder that vocations are nurtured through faith, community and the quiet encouragement of those who walk alongside us. Fr Philip's journey from a Stella Maris student to being a priest stands as a testament to what can happen when a young person responds generously to God's call. It is a reminder that great vocations often begin in ordinary classrooms, school chapels and daily acts of faith.

For the students gathered for this Mass, perhaps the most powerful message was this: the boy who once sat where they now sit, once walked the corridors of Stella Maris, dared to open his heart to God, and that simple 'yes' led him to now return as a priest. His journey stands as a living reminder that God continues to call ordinary people to do extraordinary things for His Kingdom.



KOTA KINABALU: The Catholic community in Kota Kinabalu celebrated a moment of grace and thanksgiving on June 20 as Sr Aemy Soo Mei Ling became the fourth daughter of the archdiocese to make her perpetual profession as a member of the Daughters of St Paul (FSP). She follows in the footsteps of Sr Agnes Wong (1990), Sr Anna Yap (1994) and Sr Shirley Chong (2002), continuing a legacy of religious vocation from the local Church.

The Eucharistic celebration at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart was presided over by Archbishop John Wong and concelebrated by Msgr Nicholas Stephen, Fr Moses Yap OFM, Fr Michael Modoit, Fr Jeffri Gumu and Fr Wilson Francis.

The Rite of Religious Profession took place after the proclamation of the Gospel. In a solemn and moving ceremony, Sr Aemy publicly professed her vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, offering her life completely to God in service of the Church and the Gospel. During the Litany of the Saints, she lay prostrate before the altar, symbolising her total surrender to God's will and her desire to follow Christ

wholeheartedly.

Following the profession of vows, Archbishop John invoked God's blessing upon the newly professed sister, while the profession document was signed by Sr Aemy, Provincial Superior Sr Purificacion Barrientos, and witnesses Sr Lourdes Bagalay and Sr Roseling Siaw. As a sign of her definitive incorporation into the Pauline family, Sr Purificacion pinned a corsage on Sr Aemy and welcomed her with a fraternal embrace, followed by warm greetings from her fellow Daughters of St Paul and family members.

One of the most anticipated moments came after Communion when Sr Aemy received her missionary mandate. She was assigned to serve in Bangkok, Thailand, a new chapter in her vocation journey and a reminder of the missionary spirit that lies at the heart of religious life. She was presented with the Holy Bible, symbolising

Kota Kinabalu celebrates its fourth Daughter of St Paul



the Pauline mission of proclaiming Christ through the means of social communication. A congratulatory message from Superior General Sr Mari Lucia Kim was also read, welcoming her into the worldwide missionary family of the Daughters of St Paul.

A simple reception followed in the parish hall, where family members, friends, religious, seminarians and parishioners gathered to celebrate this joyful occasion. In her thanksgiving speech, Sr Aemy reflected on God's faithfulness throughout her vocation journey and expressed gratitude to all who had accompanied her along the way. She later offered a thanksgiving song before the community shared in a festive meal and viewed a video highlighting her journey of faith and discernment.

Born in Penampang in 1989, Sr Aemy was baptised together with her parents and two sisters during the Easter Vigil in 1999 at Sacred Heart Cathedral. She entered the Daughters of St Paul in the Philippines in 2014 and made her first profession in 2019 in Lipa. In preparation for her perpetual profession, she spent time in Rome in 2025 together with Sr Laurin Kowal, who made her final profession in Taiping on June 13.

Sr Aemy's perpetual profession stands as a beautiful witness to God's continuing call in the local Church. Her generous "yes" serves as an inspiration to young people, reminding them that when they entrust their lives to God, He can lead them on a journey far greater than they could ever imagine.

Sr Anna Yap fsp



Sr Aemy poses with the clergy and members of her immediate family after the Mass on June 20, 2026 at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Kota Kinabalu. Photo credit: KK Archdiocesan SOCCOM

“Now, what did I come here for?”

A dear friend of mine often quotes the late great Bette Davis’ famous quip “Old age ain’t no place for sissies” when we chat about some new infirmity or other. And it rings incredibly true. Getting older requires immense physical and mental resilience as one navigates change, loss, fear of the future and the sheer effort of maintaining the momentum of living.

Before I go on, let me get this out of the way: I must admit I bristle at any reference to “ageing gracefully”. Every age should be “graceful”, shouldn’t it? Shouldn’t we say to the impulsive 20-year-old “adult gracefully” or to the sullen teenager “adolesce gracefully”? So enough of this “ageing gracefully”. I’ll choose to age how I age, thank you.

Change

The most challenging and obvious change is one’s own ageing body. As the oft repeated quip goes, “you know you are old when almost everything hurts and what doesn’t hurt doesn’t work.” I lie in bed, first thing in the morning and say ... “Here I am, Lord, let me tell You what hurts today so You can help me with it.”

I have a dodgy left knee as a result of a torn meniscus. One of the doctors I consulted said, “You know, if you look at the elderly in a crowd in Mid Valley Megamall (why Mid Valley Megamall??), 60 per cent of those over 70 have a torn or displaced meniscus.” I can only surmise he was trying to be *consoling*. I recently took a vaccination for shingles, and the doctor said, again *consolingly*, that the elderly have far fewer negative reactions to the shingles vaccine than those who take the vaccination at a

younger age. At last... thought I, foolishly ... an advantage of my advanced years! Two days later when I was bent over like Quasimodo and every step I took felt like walking through molasses I realised there really is *nothing* to celebrate about an ageing body.

Loss

The most devastating loss and one which never diminishes in its ability to inflict pain, is the loss of my loved ones. Not morbidly but, to be honest, quite cheerfully, I find comfort in the fact that each day brings me closer to seeing them again.

The loss I feel keenly is of independence and, you know, *chutzpah* / bravado. I avoid going out at night because just the thought of it fills me with trepidation, for reasons I have not yet fathomed. The prospect of going alone to a new mall necessitates planning, preparations and directory searches Vasco da Gama or Christopher Columbus prior to their voyages would be proud of.

Fear

I guess one would expect that the biggest fear at this age would be the fear of dying. But no. My faith takes care of that. For me, it is the fear of serious, debilitating illness, the fear of dementia and loss of my faculties. Fear of falling is an ever-present fear. The fear that St Anthony will stop helping me find the things I lose on a daily basis. Honestly, I would misplace my shadow if it weren’t attached!

And sadly, when I read stories of how scammers prey on the fears of the elderly, I



And in the end...

Marge Martinez

know I am not alone in the fear department.

Self-care

This refers to the aforementioned “sheer effort of maintaining the momentum of living.” A Woody Allen quote applies here “You can live to be a hundred if you give up all the things that make you want to live to be a hundred!”

I struggle with maintaining a healthy weight so, my diet (or lack thereof!) needs to be a daily preoccupation. To support my knees, my physiotherapist tells me I need strong quads, strong glutes, strong hamstrings, strong calf muscles, strong ankles and heck! They haven’t invented a pill you can take to make this happen. So, my living room décor now includes a step-up thingy, a balance gizmo, various weights, resistance bands colour coded by level of resistance... a veritable medieval torture chamber of delights. It doesn’t end there... you have to remember to take a pharmacopoeia of supplements, you have to moisturise not just your face but areas of your body which are intent on drying out and resembling a prune, you have to strengthen your lungs with breathing exercises, you have to do intricate hand, finger and brain exercises that improve your brain plasticity (a term I was delighted to discover, God bless Instagram, only recently).

And people wonder why I look so befuddled when they ask me “So Marge... how do you spend your time??”

The answer is, “Excuse me, at this age,

just staying alive takes up all my time.” (Cue *Saturday Night Fever* sound track.)

I have found being a septuagenarian predisposes me to introspection and reflection much more than at any other of my previous decades. I write in a journal daily, mainly because if I didn’t, I would probably struggle to remember what I did yesterday! And I recently found, to my joy, that practising handwriting is one of the things one can do to stave off mental decline! Hooray.

The seventies is also the decade in which I find my dependence on the reassuring presence of God and His Blessed Mother growing exponentially.

And in the end...being thankful to God for everything is all one needs to make it through another day.

For all Thou hast given, *Deo gratias*.

For all Thou hast withheld, *Deo gratias*.

For all Thou hast withdrawn, *Deo gratias*.

For all Thou hast permitted, *Deo gratias*.

For all Thou hast prevented, *Deo gratias*.

For all thou hast forgiven me, *Deo gratias*.

For all Thou hast prepared for me, *Deo gratias*.

For the death Thou hast chosen for me, *Deo gratias*.

For the place Thou art keeping for me in heaven, *Deo gratias*.

For having created me to love Thee for eternity,

Deo gratias, Deo gratias, Deo gratias.

(Augustine Cardinal Mayer OSB)

Marge loves retirement because of the time it gives her to read. To play Word Games. To learn new words. To wait upon the Lord and let Him move in her life.

BE OUR GUEST

Revealing Jesus through welcome

By Marie Ann Dawson



I am not a specialist in neurodiversity. I write simply as a mother who walks this journey every day, and as a catechist who hopes our faith communities can become places where every child encounters the transformative love of Christ.

Recently, I attended a seminar on *Evangelising Catechists* organised by the Penang Diocesan Catechetical Commission (PDCC). As catechists gathered to reflect on our mission of bringing others to Christ, I found myself pondering a question close to my heart: What does true evangelisation look like for neurodivergent children and their families?

As the parent of a neurodivergent child, I have come to realise that an evangelising catechist does far more than teach facts about Jesus. He or she reveals Jesus through patience, compassion, understanding, and a willingness to accompany children on their unique journeys of faith.

My daughter has become one of my greatest teachers. Through her, I have learned patience, perseverance, humility, and a deeper understanding of unconditional love. Raising a neurodivergent child brings moments of joy, growth, frustration, exhaustion, and grace. It has challenged my assumptions and stretched my trust in God in ways I never expected.

There have been times when I found myself watching not the lesson at the front of the room, but the faces around my child. Parents of neurodivergent children become skilled at reading expressions. We notice the curious looks, the impatience, the misunderstandings, and occasionally, the beautiful moments of simple kindness. Sometimes, before our child is welcomed into a community, we silently wonder:

- Will my child be accepted?

- Will others see beyond the behaviour?
- Will I have to explain, once again, what others do not understand?

These are questions many families carry quietly in their hearts.

One of the greatest lessons my daughter has taught me is that behaviour is often communication. Behind an outburst, refusal, shutdown, or meltdown is usually a child trying to express something they do not yet have the words to say. This lesson has shaped not only my parenting but also my ministry. It has challenged me to move beyond asking, “Why is this child behaving this way?” and instead ask, “What is this child trying to tell me?”

Scripture reminds us that while people look at outward appearances, God looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). Every child who enters our churches, classrooms, and parish communities is first and foremost a beloved child of God. Before we notice a diagnosis, a sensory challenge, or a developmental difference, we are called to recognise the dignity God has already placed within that child.

Pope Francis has often reminded us that the Church must be a place of accompaniment, mercy, and welcome, especially for those who may feel excluded or overlooked. The Church consistently teaches that every person possesses an inherent dignity because each is created in the image and likeness of God. This truth applies equally to neurodivergent children. Their worth does not depend on their ability to sit still, follow instructions, communicate conventionally, or learn at the same pace as others. Their dignity comes from God alone.

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these”

(Matthew 19:14).

These words invite us to examine whether our attitudes and expectations help children draw closer to Christ or unintentionally place obstacles in their path.

I sometimes wonder how Jesus would respond to a child who struggles to sit still, becomes overwhelmed by sensory stimulation, or expresses emotions differently from others. The Gospels give us a clear answer. Jesus never turned away those whom society found difficult, inconvenient, misunderstood, or different. Instead, He drew them close. He saw beyond labels and expectations to the person before Him.

Before a child can receive a lesson, he or she must first feel safe, accepted, and loved. A warm smile, a gentle word, remembering a child’s name, or showing patience during a difficult moment can communicate Christ’s love more powerfully than the most carefully prepared lesson.

Children may forget worksheets and activities, but they will remember how they were made to feel.

As catechists, parents, and parish communities, there are simple ways we can support neurodivergent children. Clear visual instructions, predictable routines, flexibility, and open communication with families can make a tremendous difference. These are not merely educational strategies; they are acts of Christian welcome. They help children encounter Christ through the love of His people.

At the same time, neurodivergent children have much to teach the wider Church. Many display remarkable honesty, perseverance, creativity, authenticity, and resilience. They remind us that spiritual growth does not always follow a predictable path and that

God’s grace cannot be measured by outward performance. Their presence challenges us to become more patient, compassionate, and attentive to the many ways God works in human lives.

An inclusive parish is not built solely through programmes or policies. It is built through relationships rooted in Christ’s love. When parents, catechists, clergy, and parishioners work together, children experience the Church as a place where they truly belong. They learn that they are valued not because they fit a particular mould, but because they are loved by God.

An evangelising catechist does more than teach about Jesus. He or she reveals Jesus through patience, compassion, and a willingness to accompany neurodivergent children on their journey of faith. When every child feels welcomed, understood, and loved, catechesis becomes more than instruction. It becomes an encounter with Christ.

Every child who enters our churches carries the image of God and a unique gift for the Body of Christ. When we welcome neurodivergent children with patience, understanding, and love, we do far more than make room for them. We reveal the face of Christ and allow the Gospel to come alive in our communities.

And in welcoming every child, we may discover that Christ has been waiting for us there all along.

Marie Ann is a mother, catechist and educator. This reflection draws on her experience as a parent navigating neurodivergence and catechesis.



Fr Philip Chua

Words can wound or heal

Words are never “just words.” They carry emotional, psychological, and spiritual power far greater than many people realise. A single sentence can heal a wounded heart, restore hope, or strengthen someone who is struggling. Yet words can also wound deeply. Harsh criticism, insults, gossip, sarcasm, rejection, and angry speech often leave invisible scars that endure for years. Many people carry emotional pain throughout their lives not because of physical wounds, but because of words spoken in childhood, marriage, friendships, school, or even within the Church.

From a mental health perspective, words help shape a person’s emotional reality. The human brain is profoundly influenced by repeated language and emotional experiences. A child who constantly hears, “You are useless,” “You disappoint people,” or “You are not good enough,” may gradually accept these messages as part of his identity. Long-term exposure to negative words can contribute to anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, fear, emotional insecurity, and even trauma. By contrast, encouragement, affirmation, gentleness, and understanding foster emotional safety, resilience, and confidence. People flourish in environments marked by loving, respectful, and accepting speech.

Modern psychology also highlights the importance of “inner dialogue” or “self-talk.” Many people repeat negative messages to themselves every day:

- “I will never change.”
- “Nobody truly loves me.”
- “I always fail.”
- “I am not worthy of love.”

Over time, these thoughts become deeply rooted beliefs. True healing often involves not only changing external circumstances but also renewing the mind and replacing inner condemnation with truth. Whatever a person repeatedly hears — whether from others or from himself — gradually shapes the way he sees life.

This is why the Gospel places such importance on human speech. Jesus teaches that our words reveal the true condition of our hearts. In Matthew 12:34, He says: “For

out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

Words are not merely communication tools; they are mirrors of the soul. A heart filled with bitterness, pride, anger, jealousy, or hatred will eventually express itself through speech. Conversely, a person rooted in God will naturally speak words of truth, kindness, patience, encouragement, and peace.

The Gospel also reminds us that words carry spiritual and moral consequences. Jesus warns: “On the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak” (Matthew 12:36).

This may sound severe, but it reveals how deeply God values human dignity. Words can become instruments of grace or instruments of destruction. Gossip ruins reputations. Mockery humiliates others. Lies destroy trust. Angry speech damages relationships. Many broken marriages, friendships, workplaces, and even divisions within the Church begin not with violence but with uncontrolled speech.

The Epistle of James (3: 5–6) compares the tongue to a small fire capable of burning down an entire forest. Though small, it can cause enormous destruction. One irresponsible comment can undo years of trust. One public humiliation can shape a child’s emotional development. One cruel online remark may deepen a person’s loneliness and despair.

Modern mental health research increasingly emphasises emotional regulation and intentional communication. A person who lives in constant anger harms not only others but also himself. Prolonged hostility and bitterness affect stress levels, relationships, physical health, and emotional stability. A heart consumed by criticism and negativity eventually becomes exhausted. The Gospel’s call to guard our speech is therefore not only a spiritual command but also a path toward psychological well-being.

Another challenge today is the lack of compassion in online communication. Social media enables people to speak instantly without reflection. Hidden behind screens, many become harsher, more judgmental, and less empathetic. Gossip, public shaming, sarcasm, and hateful comments have become commonplace. Yet behind every screen is a

person created in the image of God. Christians are called to ensure that their online words reflect Christ rather than the anger of the world.

The emotional atmosphere within families is likewise shaped by words. Homes filled with criticism, shouting, sarcasm, and emotional coldness often produce fear and insecurity. Children raised in such environments may later struggle with anxiety, anger, emotional withdrawal, or difficulty trusting others. By contrast, homes marked by encouragement, listening, forgiveness, and respectful communication become places of healing and stability. Parents bear a particular responsibility because their words often become the “inner voice” their children carry throughout life.

At the same time, silence can also be a form of healing. Modern life is filled with noise, arguments, social media conflict, and impulsive reactions. Yet Scripture teaches the wisdom of restraint. Sometimes holiness consists not in saying more but in knowing when not to speak. Silence creates space for prayer, reflection, discernment, and emotional regulation. Not every thought deserves to be spoken, and not every argument requires a response.

Jesus Himself demonstrated holy silence. During His Passion, He did not answer every insult or defend Himself against every accusation. His silence revealed strength, self-control, and trust in the Father. In an age of instant reactions, silence can become a powerful spiritual discipline.

The Gospel does not merely ask Christians to “speak positively.” Christ calls for inner conversion. The transformation of speech begins with the transformation of the heart. A person who draws close to God through prayer, Scripture, the Eucharist, and repentance gradually becomes gentler, more patient, truthful, and compassionate. The fruits of the Holy Spirit naturally appear in speech: kindness replacing cruelty, peace replacing aggression, and encouragement replacing condemnation.

Words also possess the power to heal. A sincere apology can mend broken relationships. Words of forgiveness can

free someone burdened by guilt. A simple encouragement can strengthen a discouraged person. Even small phrases such as:

- “I understand you.”
- “I forgive you.”
- “I will pray for you.”
- “You are not alone.”

Can become instruments of God’s grace. People may forget sermons and explanations, but they often remember the words spoken to them during their darkest moments.

In a world where messages, comments, and social media posts spread instantly, our responsibility becomes even greater. One careless statement can damage a reputation, increase anxiety, or deepen emotional wounds. Christians are called to reflect not the anger of the world but the voice of Christ.

Before speaking, we might ask:

- Is it true?
- Is it necessary?
- Is it loving?
- Will it bring healing or harm?
- Does it reflect Christ?

These simple questions can protect relationships, preserve peace, and prevent unnecessary suffering.

Ultimately, both the Gospel and modern mental health research point to the same truth: words shape lives. They influence how people see themselves, how relationships develop, and how communities function. Words can become instruments of healing or weapons of destruction.

Christians are therefore called not merely to avoid harmful speech but actively to bring hope, truth, kindness, peace, and life to others.

As Colossians 4:6 reminds us: “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt.”

Sometimes the most sacred gift a person can offer another is not talent, success, or knowledge, but a gentle word that reflects the heart of Christ.

Fr Philip serves as the ecclesiastical assistant for the Archdiocesan Mental Health Ministry. He is also a registered and licensed counsellor, as well as a certified counselling supervisor with Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

What makes for a father?

Fifty-six years ago my father died, late on a December night. As clearly as I remember his death, I remember the bitter cold. Within a day the temperature dipped to minus forty degrees Fahrenheit.

I was still young; too young (I thought, at the time) to lose a father. Later, I’d realise I was wrong. Nobody is too young to lose a father, although losing your father before certain things can be given and received can leave its scars.

We, the family of this father, were lucky enough. We had plenty of preparation for his death. He died after a year-long battle with cancer and he died with his faith, generosity, and humour intact; and he had given us his blessing. Moreover, he died without bitterness, grateful, blessing life. There are worse ways to die and there are worse ways to lose one’s father. In our family prayers we had always prayed for a happy death. Some months after his death, after some warmer weather, I realised he had died a happy death.

But this reminiscence on *Father’s Day* more than fifty years after that bitterly cold day, is not meant as a eulogy (something he would be uncomfortable with), nor as a homily on what constitutes a happy death. It’s intended as a reflection on what constitutes a father, a dad, and how we are connected, formed, and

sometimes deformed by such a figure.

What is a father? What is a father meant to do, beyond simply being a biological partner in bringing us to birth? How does his care or neglect, his love or his indifference, affect us?

Various schools of psychology and anthropology suggest that your father and your mother have very different roles in the formation of your person. It’s the mother who is your symbiotic link to life and it’s from her, much more so than from your father, that you get your sense of being loved, wanted, cradled, and cherished. Among all mammals, it’s the mother who must metaphorically lick the newborn and free it from whatever constricts it at birth. The mother, after birth, opens your body to life. It’s she who gestates, carries, and then cradles and nourishes the child. No child or adult at some level of consciousness ever forgets this and our sense of being loved or not is very much linked to our mothers.

But it’s the father who gives the child both the permission to enjoy life and the challenge to discipline. It’s the father who must, especially by the way he himself lives, model for the child the correct combination of pleasure and renunciation. It’s from him, more so than from the mother, that the child learns the combination of release and

control, submission to constraints and the freedom to walk one’s own path.

And this task is key in initiating us into adulthood, in helping to lead us beyond being the little boy or the little girl, towards becoming the adult, the man or the woman. A father must do this, first of all, by showing us in his own life how one’s energy for love and one’s energy to confront and protect should form a harmony so that the chaotic energies inside us are contained, focused, blended, and creatively opened for the service of God and others. A father must show how enjoyment and creativity blend with necessary self-renunciation and how our energy for love and our energy to fight to protect community (especially its weakest members) can work in tandem so that they are not enemies. A father must teach us how to be both a lover and a fighter.

My own father, imperfect like all human fathers, didn’t always find, nor radiate, the perfect balance between enjoyment and discipline, lover and fighter, enjoyment and self-abnegation. As one of his sons, I then also do not always know how to walk that tightrope, and sometimes there’s a sloppiness in my life between laziness and overwork, love and anger, self-indulgence and masochism. Sometimes I can protect

community and sometimes I can’t even protect myself.

However, most times I have my father’s steadiness, beyond the slopping around. I had a good dad. He both loved and fought, though sometimes he was too hard on himself and sometimes he thoroughly enjoyed his life.

I’m more than fifty years after that minus forty degrees temperature day when he died and sometimes my spirit still feels the cold of that day and then I’m a little boy, a pre-adult, alone, waiting for my father to lead me to adulthood, unsure of how to integrate enjoyment and discipline.

But, when I search for my father, for his spirit, not among the bones of ancestors, but among the communion of saints, I find him walking still the delicate tightrope he walked in life, and his spirit reaches back to help me in my struggle with love and confrontation, with enjoyment and renunciation, and then I feel a little more steady as an adult.

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

LITTLE CATHOLIC'S CORNER

Dear children,

In today's Gospel, Jesus thanks God the Father for helping little ones understand His love. Jesus is not saying that being smart is bad. Instead, He is teaching us that we should have humble and trusting hearts, like children. When we listen to God with faith and love,

we can come to know Him better. Jesus also gives a special invitation to everyone. He says, "Come to Me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest." Sometimes we feel tired, worried, sad, or afraid. We may have problems at school, arguments with friends, or things that make us anxious. Jesus wants

us to bring all these worries to Him. When Jesus says, "Take My yoke upon you," He means that we should follow His way of living. A yoke is a wooden beam that helps animals work together. Jesus is telling us that we do not have to carry our troubles alone — He will help us. When we walk with Jesus, He gives

us strength, peace, and comfort. Jesus reminds us that He is "meek and humble of heart." He is gentle, kind, and patient with us. No matter what we are going through, we can always turn to Him in prayer and trust that He truly cares for us.

Love, Auntie C



Carry Your Worries to Jesus

Write or draw things that make you worried, sad or tired inside each rock.



DECODE THE MESSAGE

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

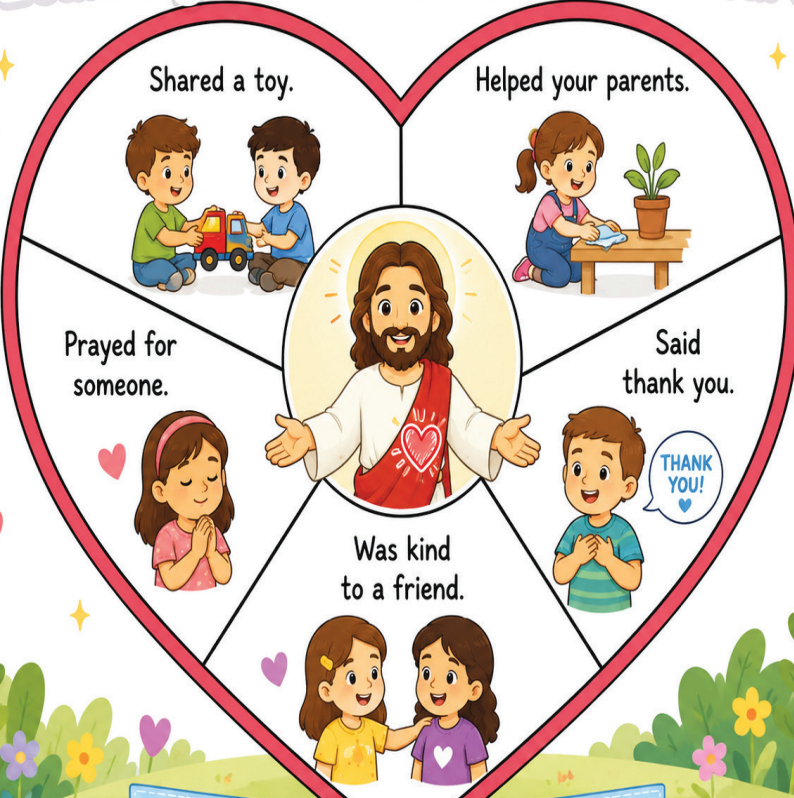
Message from Jesus:





Your answer:

Learning from Jesus' humble heart



Shared a toy.

Helped your parents.

Said thank you.

Was kind to a friend.

Prayed for someone.

Colour a section after completing these actions.

YOUTH

Young hearts set ablaze at BHC

Aidan Alexander Franklin

PENANG: The Burning Hearts Conference (BHC) was aimed at encouraging more young people to seek their vocations faithfully and respond to the call of sainthood.

The theme was based on the words of St Catherine of Siena, *Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire*. Hosted by Seeds Ministry, it was held from June 12- 14 in the Minor Basilica of St Anne.

The conference began with Mass celebrated by Bishop Bernard Paul, who spoke on the importance of young people discerning their calling, as our vocations do not only benefit us but are used to build up the Church.

The evening's opening keynote address was given by Cardinal Sebastian Francis, who spoke on falling in love with the clarity of the vision and mission of St Catherine of Siena, and included the importance of navigating the ever-materialistic and hedonistic world while being docile to God's plan over one's life.

The second day was long and intensive but fulfilling. It began with a worship session, followed by an impact session on responding to the call to holiness, reminding participants that we are strangers on earth and that heaven is our true home.

After a short break, the first forum, split by gender, had panellists from various religious orders sharing their vocation journeys to inspire and guide participants in discerning their own calling. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with participants engaging attentively and asking insightful questions.

The following impact session focused on acedia, spiritual laziness or numbness towards the Lord, and the session concluded with a powerful moment of surrender

through worship.

The day then moved into breakout sessions, where participants attended one of four sessions tailored to different stages of discernment. These sessions provided new insights and clarity, and for some, a deeper conviction of their calling. Overall, the sessions were aimed at addressing the different stages participants might be at in their discernment, and helping them take the next step in their journey.

Upon registering, participants selected the session most applicable to them.

The first session was, *Discernment 101*, it was for those who are new to the idea of discernment.

The second session, *Seeking Divine Direction*, was for those who are in the process of discerning and seeking some guidance on their journey.

The third session, *Stepping out in Faith*, was for those who are almost at the tail end of their journey and needed to make a decision.

The fourth and final session, *Wrestling in Discernment*, was suitable for those who have reached the tail end of their journey but are not satisfied with that which they had discerned. It was a blessed time and all the participants managed to get new insights on their journey and some were even convicted of their calling.

The highlight of the evening, *Burning Hearts Encounter*, began with a worship session that set a reverent tone for what followed. The presence of the Holy Spirit was felt by all, visibly stirring the participants and preparing their hearts for the moments ahead.

After worship, Jonathan Charanraj, one of Seeds Ministry's full-time lay missionary, spoke on our hearts as the compasses in our journey to heaven. He posed a reflection question which was ultimately the core of his talk: "Where are our hearts in our journey with God?" He used the passage of the disciples on the Road to Emmaus to connect with the participants' experiences of discernment.

The Blessed Sacrament was exposed for this talk and time of ministering. To have the presence of Christ in the room with us in the form of the Blessed Sacrament was a privilege we, as Catholics have, like no other. It was a deeply moving and sacred evening, where the graces of God were poured out upon every participant as they lingered in reverent adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

That evening, participants were invited to surrender all their fears and iniquities to the Lord, and to ask the Lord to set their hearts on fire. Participants came forward and touched the cloth draping from below the Monstrance; many took this moment desiring to let go and meet Christ in the Eucharist.

After this time of surrender, participants were invited to write down what their hearts burned for on sticky notes, and were invited to paste them on a white board at the front. This allowed participants to spend intimate time with the Lord, asking what He desired for each of them and writing it down as a sign of commitment.

The evening ended with celebrations and

worship, where all of the participants and serving team reaffirmed their trust in God, and the joy in the room was palpable — praise God for so many incredible encounters with Him!

The final day began with worship, followed by an impact session on our lives being like clay in the hands of God the potter: moulded, shaped, and strengthened through moments of trial, just as clay is hardened by fire.

After a short break, the final forum was held, featuring a religious sister, a consecrated lay single, and a married couple, who shared insights on living out their unique vocations faithfully. This was followed by the final impact session, which encouraged participants to be radical witnesses of the Gospel and to go forth with urgency to share God's love.

After lunch, Mass was celebrated by Fr Joachim Robert, whose homily echoed the earlier reflections on vocation, reminding us that God uses our vocation as a means to build up the Church, and that young people are invited to discern His loving call with faith and courage. The conference concluded with a celebration of Seeds Ministry's 10-year anniversary.

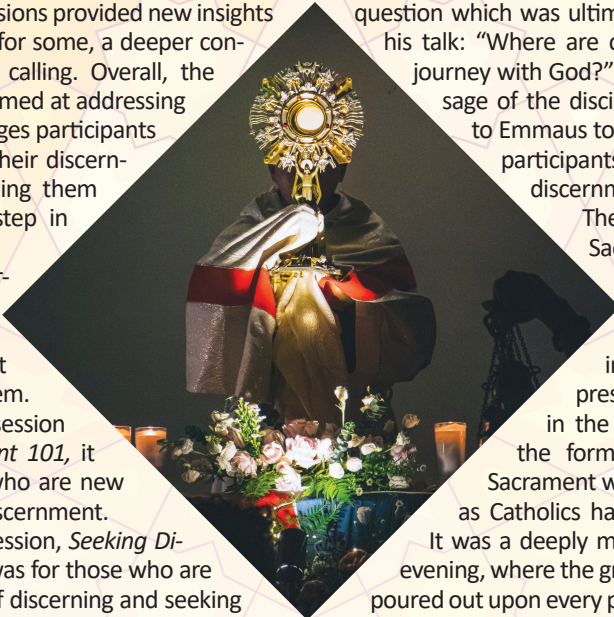
Dear readers, as you read this short reflection, I encourage you to reflect:

Where is God calling me?

Where is my compass pointing me towards, and what are the distractions affecting the magnetic pull of my compass?

As we walk the path of discernment, may we always find comfort in the Lord, knowing that He is with us until the end of time. May we constantly seek His love and seek Him for everything. May He be the reason for our lives, for without Christ, what do we have?

To God be the Glory now and forever always, Amen. *Ave Christus Rex!*





Joseph Asim

SHAH ALAM: On, June 17, the Peace Hall of Wesley Methodist School, Bandar Seri Coalfields, became a hub of spiritual rejuvenation and community building as it was the venue for the Catholic Varsity Students (CVS) Mass and fellowship.

The event successfully drew 80 students from various local tertiary institutions — UiTM Shah Alam, UiTM Puncak Alam, UiTM Puncak Perdana, Centexs and MSU.

The programme was organised by the parish BECAT (BEC Animating Team), with support from BECCOT (BEC Coordinating Team)

and the local BEC St Philip Minh.

The primary objective of the gathering was twofold: to allow parish priest, Fr George Harrison, to get to know the varsity students on a personal level, and to bridge the gap between the students and the parish community through the network of BECs.

The evening commenced with a devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, as the students led the recitation of the Rosary in Bahasa Malaysia.

Following the prayer, the students broke out into smaller circles for a group sharing session. Facilitated by BECAT coordinator, Charles Mervyn, alongside members



of BECAT and BECCOT, the sharings centred around the month's BEC reflection theme: *Church: Living Synodality*, explored in the context of youth studying away from their families.

The reflection was tailored specifically to the realities of youth and varsity students who are navigating life and faith while studying away from home. Through the "Conversation in the Spirit", the session became deeply moving, as many students were visibly touched by the honest and heartfelt stories shared by their peers.

After the group discussions, student representatives reflected on living synodality by

sharing how each person's gifts and talents can serve the community.

The spiritual pinnacle of the programme was the Holy Mass celebrated by Fr George in Bahasa Malaysia. In his homily, Fr George expressed his deep joy and admiration for the youths, noting that he personally witnessed "synodality very much alive" during their energetic and heartfelt group discussions.

The evening concluded on a high note with a warm fellowship session, allowing the students to bond over refreshments before returning to their respective campuses with renewed spirits and a stronger sense of belonging.

RAWANG: I was given the opportunity to attend the Theology of the Body (TOB) Camp at the Church of St Jude recently.

One of the biggest things I learnt throughout the camp was the concept of FTFF; that true love should be free, total, faithful, and fruitful. I found this especially meaningful because we live in a world where love is portrayed in so many different ways, especially to teenagers. There are many confusing messages about what love should look like, so having a clear framework rooted in Catholic teaching gives both parents and young people something solid to guide them. I really love this concept and honestly wished I had known it growing up.

As a catechist and parent, I was also curious to learn more about the role parents play in the emotional and spiritual development of their children through the lens of TOB. During the parents' session, one moment that really stayed with me was when Sr Retta Savarianan FdCC spoke about *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs* and asked parents where they felt they were currently at in their lives.

Many parents still operate at the lower levels, focusing mainly on survival, responsibilities, and daily pressures, and had not really reached a stage where they could focus on emotional connection, self-growth, or self-actualisation.

What struck me even more was the discussion about love between spouses and within the family. I realised that many parents themselves may never have been taught or shown what authentic love looks like. In many Asian families, love is often expressed through responsibility, sacrifice, expectations, and dis-



Theology of the Body Camp

cipline rather than through emotional openness, affirmation, or communication.

Parenting is often shaped by concerns about what society, relatives, or the community may think, rather than helping children understand themselves, their relationship with God, and their dignity as persons.

This made me realise that many parents are also carrying their own upbringing, struggles, wounds, and ways of seeing the world with them. Even within the same family, siblings can grow up with completely different perspectives and experiences. It reminded

me that parenting is deeply influenced by each person's own life journey and emotional experiences.

One image that stayed with me throughout the camp was the idea of peeling the layers of an onion. The outermost layers are often the hardest; our own defences, assumptions, expectations, and worldview shaped by our upbringing, environment, culture, and life experiences. Before parents can fully understand their children, there first needs to be space for them to understand themselves.

I noticed that the students were very engaged and attentive throughout the camp as the topics were shared and discussed.

What I appreciated most was how the sessions encouraged students to begin by understanding themselves — who they are, how they see themselves, and what experiences have shaped them. It highlighted an important truth: identity is not formed only by our own thoughts about ourselves, but also by the people, society, culture, friendships, expectations, and environments around us.

Teenagers today are constantly navigating the tension between "who I am" and "who others expect me to be." Society, peers, social media, school culture, family expectations, and relationships all play a role in shaping how they see themselves and what they believe love, worth, identity, and acceptance should look like.

Reflecting on this made me realise how important it is for young people to have spaces where they can pause, reflect, and better understand themselves in the light of God's love and truth. The TOB camp created opportunities for many of these conversations to begin.

I left the camp reflecting not only on the teachings of TOB itself, but also on how deeply our experiences, upbringing, family dynamics, and environment shape the way we understand love and relationships.

More importantly, I left reminded that authentic love begins not only in learning new concepts, but also in learning to see ourselves and one another with greater honesty, compassion, and dignity. **Juliana Philip**

MEMORIAM

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In Loving Memory of

Edith Dicom nee Basnayake

25.9.1944 – 4.7.2024

“God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him”
1 John 4:16

A loving mother, grandmother and mother in law.
Teacher at heart, generous in actions and religious in soul.
We celebrate her life!
May her soul rest in peace.



**8th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of**

Martine Therese Lai Pin Lee
(05.05.1955 – 04.07.2018)

“I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me.”
(Philippians 4:13)

Deeply missed and remembered by family members.



**In Loving Memory of
Belonammah A/P Saverimuthu**

20th November 1943 – 5th July 2021

In Remembrance of the 5th anniversary of her returning to the Lord on 5th July 2021.

Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her. May her soul and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.



**23rd Anniversary
In Loving Memory of**

G Alphonse Gomez
Departed: 09-07-2003

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.”
– 2 Tim 4:7

Always remembered and loved by your children, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, relatives and friends.



In Loving Memory of

LINDA ANN A/P P. KOLANDAI

18 August 1950 – 24 June 2026

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” 2 Timothy 4:7

Passed away peacefully, leaving behind family members, relatives and friends to mourn her loss

**FOREVER MISSED,
FOREVER LOVED**

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



**14th Anniversary
In Loving Memory of**

KENETH K. SIVAPRASAD
(26 November 1972 - 3 July 2012)

“We know that time heals all, yet the pain still lingers in our hearts. We begin to remember not just that you died, but that you lived. Your life gave us memories too beautiful to forget. And left a place no one can fill. We miss you dearly and forever will.”

Deeply missed and fondly remembered by,
Loving Wife, Daughter, Mother,
Brother & Sister-in-law, Uncles, Aunties, Cousins,
Nephews, Nieces, and a host of relatives and friends.



**1st Year Memorial
In Loving Memory of**

Stephen Francis Fernandes

Dec 3, 1959 – July 2, 2025

A year has passed, but your love, wisdom and gentle spirit remain with us every single day.

Deeply missed and forever remembered by your wife, children, siblings, relatives and friends.

May your soul rest in peace.



**3rd Anniversary
In Loving Memory of
Our Beloved Father**

GNANAMANI DORAISAMY

23rd July 1940 – 2nd July 2023

“Those we love don’t go away, they walk beside us every day.”

Appa you are deeply missed and are always in our hearts.

MALAPARAMBA, India: The Jesus Youth movement is mourning the passing of Jesuit Fr Abraham Pallivathukal SJ, one of its pioneering spiritual guides and a beloved father figure to generations of young Catholics.

Affectionately known as “Palliyachan” (beloved priest-father), he was called home to the Lord on June 20 at Christ Hall in Kerala’s Kozhikode district. He was 86.

Fr Pallivathukal played a pivotal role in the formative years of Jesus Youth, accompanying countless young people through prayer, spiritual guidance, and personal encouragement. His gentle presence, deep faith, and genuine concern for others helped shape the movement’s growth in India and beyond.

He was also instrumental in strengthening the Full Timers initiative, inspiring many young people to dedicate part of their lives to missionary service and evangelisation. Over the decades, he became a trusted spiritual father whose wisdom and compassion touched thousands.

Following his death, tributes poured in from priests, religious, and lay faithful across the world. Many remembered him not for grand achievements, but for his ability to make each person feel seen, valued, and loved.

Dr Beena Manoj, a senior member of Jesus Youth, described him as a father figure who taught her “to love Jesus and live a life of gratitude.” Recalling the death of her father in 1995, she remembered Fr

A shepherd of youth, a father to many



Pallivathukal’s comforting words: “As long as I am alive, you should never think that you have no father.” “He kept his promise,” she said. “Everybody felt they were Achan’s favourite.”

Others recalled his extraordinary gift for relationships. Midhun Paul Elavunikkum Thottiyil, international coordinator of Jesus Youth, said Fr Abraham remembered not only names but also the stories, struggles, and families of those he accompanied.

“He was a true pastor who carried people in his heart,” Midhun said. “His passing is a great loss.”

Swami Sachidananda described him as “a true disciple of Christ” and “the backbone of the Charismatic movement,” while Fr M.K. George,

former provincial of the Jesuit Kerala Province, remembered his enduring joy and optimism even in frail health.

“His love for life and passion to share joy remained forever,” Fr George said. “He will remain for me a supreme example of someone whom God touched.”

Throughout his priestly ministry, Fr Pallivathukal served in many roles — retreat preacher, spiritual director, Jesuit superior, rector, administrator, parish vicar, and director of the children’s magazine *Snehasena*. Yet it was his ministry of accompaniment that left the deepest mark.

As one of the pioneers who nurtured the early growth of Jesus Youth in Kerala, he helped lay the foundations for a movement that has since spread to more than 40 countries. Countless members continue to cherish memories of retreats, conversations, and moments of guidance that strengthened their faith and shaped their vocation.

Though Fr Pallivathukal has completed his earthly journey, the seeds of faith he planted continue to bear fruit in the lives of those he inspired. His legacy lives on in a generation of young people who learned from him not only how to serve God, but how to love others with the heart of Christ. **Matters India**

Church in Thailand mourns pioneering Catholic lay leader

BANGKOK: A remarkable chapter in Catholic lay leadership in Thailand came to a close on June 20 with the death of Joseph Prachuab Trinikorn, co-founder and former president of the Catholic Business Executives and Professionals (CBEP). He was 81.

Widely admired for his integrity, vision, and unwavering commitment to the Church, Prachuab inspired generations of Catholic professionals and entrepreneurs while helping strengthen Thailand’s ties with the global Christian business community.

“It is with great sadness that we mourn the passing of one of our most highly respected lay leaders,” said George Varakorn Techamontrikul, current president of CBEP. Describing Prachuab as “a role model and an inspiration,” he recalled a man whose quiet dedication and steadfast leadership laid the foundation for the organisation’s growth over the past three decades.

“He was a man of few words, but his actions spoke powerfully,” Varakorn said. “He devoted himself wholeheartedly to the mission of CBEP and led it far beyond what we could have imagined.”

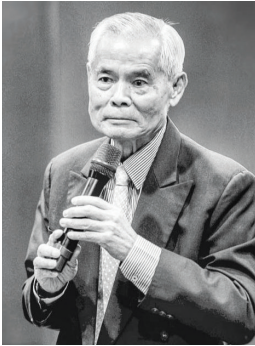
Among the milestones of his leadership was the landmark international conference *Cure the World*, which

demonstrated how faith-filled values could shape ethical business leadership and social responsibility.

Prachuab also played a pivotal role in connecting CBEP with UNIAPAC, the International Christian Union of Business Executives, making Thailand the first country in Asia to participate actively in the global network. His vision helped position Thai Catholic professionals within the wider international Christian business community.

Even in his final months, his commitment to service never diminished. Despite declining health, he took part in the UNIAPAC Asia Tour 2026, reflecting a lifelong dedication to God, the Church, and the mission he cherished.

For many, Prachuab embodied the vocation of the Catholic lay faithful — integrating faith, professional excellence, and service to society. Longtime friend and colleague Chamniern Vorratnchiphon described him as a leader who brought professionalism, strategic thinking, transparency, and sustainability to numerous Church initiatives while demonstrating how Christian values could be lived authentically in the business world. **LiCAS News**



Invest in peace, not war

VATICAN: The world is becoming increasingly less peaceful, with conflicts escalating, drone warfare expanding rapidly and military spending far outpacing investment in peacebuilding, according to the 2026 Global Peace Index (GPI).

Presenting the latest report at the Australian Embassy to the Holy See on June 22, Steve Killelea, founder and executive chairman of the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), urged governments to invest more in diplomacy, conflict prevention and human development, rather than relying primarily on military solutions.

"We can invest in war, but that does not actually create peace," Killelea said. "Peace

is achieved when people invest in peace."

First launched in 2007, the Global Peace Index measures the level of peacefulness in 163 countries using indicators that assess ongoing conflict, societal safety and security, and militarisation. Killelea said the index provides governments with reliable data to evaluate whether their policies are contributing to peace or fuelling instability.

"If you can't measure something, can you truly understand it?" he asked.

The 2026 report paints a troubling picture. Global peacefulness has declined for the twelfth consecutive year, with more countries involved in external conflicts than at any point in recent history. Drone attacks

have surged by more than 11,500 per cent between 2018 and 2025, while deaths from internal conflicts have risen six-fold since 2007.

Killelea also noted a dramatic decline in negotiated peace agreements. Whereas 23 per cent of conflicts in the 1970s ended through peace accords, only four per cent did so during the 2010s.

He attributed the trend partly to the growing number of unresolved, low-intensity conflicts that continue to simmer and eventually escalate into larger wars.

The rapid advancement of technology has further complicated the situation. Drones and artificial intelligence are transforming modern warfare at a pace that governments and international regulations struggle to match.

Warning of the ethical dangers posed by autonomous weapons, Killelea said AI systems can generate false positives without human oversight, potentially resulting in innocent lives being lost.

Despite record levels of military expenditure worldwide, he noted that only an estimated 0.1 to one per cent of defence spending is directed towards building peace.

To reverse the trend, Killelea proposed three priorities: strengthening diplomacy, addressing the root causes of local conflicts by understanding people's grievances, and improving livelihoods so that communities have greater hope and stability.

Despite the sobering statistics, he insisted



Global Peace Index Presentation in Rome at the Australian Embassy to the Holy See (From the left: Ambassador Keith Pitt, Steve Killelea)

there is reason for hope.

"I think we can take hope in the fact that many countries will wake up and realise they're not bulletproof," he said.

Killelea also praised Pope Leo XIV's repeated appeals for peace, dialogue and reconciliation, saying today's world urgently needs credible voices capable of inspiring nations to choose peace over violence.

"I think at the moment we need some prophets of peace," he said. "I think Pope Leo can take on that mantle." **Vatican News**



A Ukrainian soldier yells as a missile is launched towards the Russian-occupied Donetsk region of Ukraine.

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