

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.



(MCYD 2025 filepic)

Be shepherds of Hope, Unity, Integrity

VATICAN: Addressing more than 400 bishops from 38 countries gathered for the Jubilee of Bishops on June 25, Pope Leo XIV delivered a powerful reflection on the heart and character of a bishop, calling them to be models of holiness, unity, and courage — especially in confronting abuse within the Church.

Speaking inside St Peter's Basilica, Pope Leo reminded the bishops that before being shepherds, they are first sheep — members of Christ's flock — who must be profoundly renewed by Jesus, the Good Shepherd. "We must conform ourselves fully to His heart and to the mystery of His love," he said, adding that their lives should be "firmly grounded in God and completely devoted to the service of the Church."

Echoing the theme of the 2025 Jubilee, "Hope does not disappoint," the Pope emphasised the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity as the foundation of a bishop's ministry. Faith, he said, enables a

bishop to persevere like Moses, who saw the Promised Land from afar. Hope inspires closeness to the people, especially those burdened by suffering, institutional failures, or disillusionment. And charity — described as the "office of love" — must animate all pastoral action.

"Whether preaching, visiting communities, listening to priests and deacons, or making administrative decisions, all that he does is inspired and motivated by the charity of Christ the Shepherd," Pope Leo said.

He underscored that bishops must not offer "easy solutions," but instead create communities that live the Gospel with "simplicity and solidarity." In moments of deep societal and personal struggle, he said, "the bishop is close... helping people not to despair — not just with words, but with his presence."

The Holy Father also emphasised the bishop's role as the "visible principle of unity" in the local Church. Building communion within the diocesan presbyterate and with the universal Church requires pastoral prudence, humility, and a willingness to listen and engage in dialogue — qualities the pope tied to the principle of synodality.

Pope Leo encouraged bishops to be men

of communion, "so that every priest, without exception, may sense the fatherhood, brotherhood, and friendship of his bishop." Citing the Second Vatican Council, he said bishops must also cultivate human virtues such as sincerity, patience, discretion, fairness, and the ability to empathize with joy and suffering alike.

At the heart of the address, Pope Leo made an urgent and clear appeal for bishops to be "firm and decisive" in confronting all forms of abuse, especially involving minors. "Such situations cause scandal," he warned, "and must be dealt with in full respect of the legislation currently in force."

He tied the Church's credibility in this area to bishops' personal integrity, particularly their call to live a life of celibacy and chastity. Celibacy, he explained, is not merely abstaining from marriage, but living "chastity of heart and conduct," thereby presenting an "authentic image of the Church, holy and chaste in her members as in her head."

The Pope's extensive catechesis also included a call to evangelical poverty — a life marked by simplicity, generosity, and detachment from wealth and power. Bishops,

he said, should live in a way that reflects the conditions of the majority of their people, becoming "a father and a brother" to the poor, who should always feel welcome in their presence and home.

"Like Jesus," he said, "the bishop has been anointed and sent to bring good news to the poor."

The Jubilee event began with bishops processing through the Holy Door — a symbol of Christ the Saviour — before celebrating Mass at the Altar of the Chair, presided over by Cardinal Marc Ouellet, retired prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops. After Pope Leo's address, the bishops joined him in reciting the Creed in Latin, renewing their profession of faith with the successor of Peter.

The Pope concluded by entrusting the bishops to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saints Peter and Paul, praying that they may receive "the graces they need most" to serve with integrity, unity, and love.

"Dear friends," he told them, "a bishop is a witness to hope by his example. This will be the case only insofar as he is conformed to Christ in his personal life and apostolic ministry." **Agencies**

But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.
Gal 6: 14-15



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Trump's bombing of Iran is dangerous and immoral

“My proudest legacy will be that as a peacemaker and unifier,” President Donald Trump proclaimed during his second inaugural address in January.

Six months later, in the early hours of a June Sunday, the US military — under Trump's direct orders and without congressional authorisation — launched coordinated airstrikes on Iran. Targeting nuclear facilities in Isfahan, Natanz, and Fordo, the attack marked a dramatic escalation in the Israeli-Iranian conflict. B-2 stealth bombers, submarine-fired missiles, and bunker-busting munitions were deployed. The White House framed the action as a necessary strike against Iran's nuclear threat.

But this assault is a dangerous and morally indefensible move — a failure both strategically and ethically. It immediately made Americans less safe. Iran retaliated the following day by firing missiles at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, home to thousands of US troops. Though the attack was intercepted, it underscored the grave risks of unilateral military escalation.

Lawmakers were quick to condemn the strike. Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia reminded the public that Congress alone holds the power to authorize war. “We were not consulted,” he said. “Not before, not during — only after.”

Yes, Iran's regime is repressive, its uranium enrichment programme provocative, and its support for proxy militias destabilising. Yet for over 30 years, five US presidents — including Trump in his first term — chose diplomacy and international pressure over direct military intervention. That restraint recognized what Trump's current approach ignores: bombs rarely bring peace, and often

sow deeper chaos.

We've seen this before. In 2003, the U.S. invaded Iraq based on false claims of weapons of mass destruction. The result? Over 4,000 US troops dead, hundreds of thousands of Iraqi civilians killed, regional instability that still reverberates, and a permanent stain on America's moral standing.

This latest move echoes that catastrophic misjudgment. And once again, the rationale is vague. Vice President JD Vance admitted on national television that intelligence can't confirm whether Iran's nuclear stockpile was destroyed, or even located at the bombed sites. If uranium was relocated beforehand, enrichment and weaponisation could now proceed in secrecy — faster, and farther from oversight.

Catholic just war tradition provides a crucial moral lens here. It insists that war must be a last resort, launched only in response to a grave and imminent threat, and carried out in a way that is proportionate and likely to succeed. On all counts, Trump's action falls short.

Diplomatic channels had not been exhausted. There was no clear or imminent threat. The outcome remains murky, and may well backfire. This is not just poor policy; it's a moral failure.

Pope Leo XIV, speaking just hours after the strikes on the feast of Corpus Christi, called the escalation “alarming,” warning that “war does not solve problems; it amplifies them and produces deep wounds that take generations to heal.” He urged global leaders to “stop the tragedy of war before it becomes an irreparable abyss.”

Despite White House claims that the US was striking Iran's nuclear program — not Iran itself — this distinction rings hollow.

The coordination with Israel was extensive; Axios reported that Israeli forces, at Trump's request, disabled Iranian air defenses in the days leading up to the strike. And Trump himself undermined his own messaging by posting on social media essentially calling for regime change.

This moment invites a deeper question: Is the just war framework still morally sufficient in the nuclear age?

Popes from John XXIII to Francis have increasingly answered “no.” John Paul II argued that in the nuclear era, war has become obsolete as a tool for peace. Francis has gone further, calling not just the use but the possession of nuclear weapons immoral. When destruction is indiscriminate and long-lasting, even proportionality becomes ethically impossible.

That's why the Church is moving beyond just war theory — toward an ethic of Gospel nonviolence. Jesus never endorsed violence to defend righteousness. He preached peace, healed enemies, and warned that those who live by the sword would die by it. This is not passivity; it is radical moral clarity.

Trump's decision to strike Iran is not just a strategic gamble. It is a betrayal — of history, of Catholic teaching, of our shared hope for peace.

We call on Catholics, especially those in leadership, to speak clearly. Let the Vatican dispatch diplomats to Washington. Let bishops and pastors teach the cost of violence. Let theologians challenge the “peace through strength” illusion. Peace cannot be built on the ashes of preemptive war.

There is another way. It is harder. It is slower. But it is more enduring — and it is the only path consistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. **NCR Editorial Staff**

Labouring for the Church in hope

Ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest. (John 10:2)

As a people of God, we are not afraid to ask for material things. However, if God's answer to our prayers seems to be late, delayed or even ignored, our human attitudes come into the picture - the anger, frustrations, disappointments and so on. Still, God gives us the freedom to choose, just as in our own answer to the salvation offered. To put it simply, our ‘Yes’ to God will only be meaningful if we have the freedom to say ‘No’.

As a conference of Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei, our harvest is diverse and in this diversity is where our unity lies, which is emphasized in our mission of Church, the focus on social action, and the ministry for migrants and itinerants (Migrants, Refugees, Victims of Human Trafficking). To labour for these struggling churches is what we need to ask God. The labourers for this harvest.

However, the prayer to be for labourers in today's Gospel must come with surrender because prayer is about surrendering and not just stopping as expecting some answer or miracle to happen. Prayer also has to come with a healthy dose of faith. Just as Abraham got up and let everything go to start new in unknown territory (Gen

12:1). For us to be called to labourers or to gather the harvest in the mission field, we must constantly remind ourselves of this attitude and the call to mission as in Isaiah 61. Also in today's Gospel, our Lord emphasizes to His appointed seventy-two, that with the reminder of Isaiah 61, there must be detachment, because in the life of a missionary Church, it is not about comforts but about letting go and growing where we are planted; in relation to Pope Francis on this year of hope: Believe in hope. Hope is a humble stubborn seed that transforms. Therefore, in our service to gather the harvest, we must transform the harvest to be shared. Our discipleship, our responsibility, our servant-leadership, the responsibility of ministries, either in the parish, diocese or even as a conference, even more as a federation, reflects the bountiful harvest to be gathered at the end of the day.

Sometimes there is that other extreme where we only want the easy way and we find that excuse through prayer, prayer only, no action, for some it is understood, prayer helps us to be effective labourers in gathering the harvest. Prayer transforms into action. We are spiritually nourished so that they can be spiritually challenged. To labour for the rich harvest is to be

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Aaron Alammalay

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Readings: Isaiah 66: 10-14;

Galatian 6:14-18;

Gospel: Luke 10:1-12, 17-20

spiritually challenged.

Our labour to gather the rich harvest is supposed to be the helping hand of the Church but always at the heart is Christ because, we are not building ministries to reduce us into some social working or social action society, then it would just be some other secular initiative or another NGO. Through our ministries we build the Church, through ministries we encounter Christ, again, through our diversity, culture and background, we participate and become empowered to be a communion of faithful in our journey guided by the Holy Spirit and through our journey through our ministries and in the life of the Church, we bring with us the Light of Hope, that same light of hope Who asked Peter, Who also asks us ‘Who do you say I am’, we have a choice to this answer, its either God or nothing. Only we ourselves know what we are to answer or our own confession towards our relationship with Christ and in the harvest we gather.

Tribunal roadshow on marriage, annulment and Church teachings

KUALA LUMPUR: The Peninsular Malaysia Ecclesiastical Tribunal (PMET), in collaboration with the Catholic Lawyers' Society, the Archdiocesan Mental Health Ministry, and the Emmaus Counselling Centre, has embarked on a tribunal roadshow to provide the faithful with a deeper understanding of the Catholic Church's teachings on marriage, annulment, and pastoral care.

This initiative aims to shed light on the Church's teachings on marriage, dispel common misconceptions, and offer pastoral and psychological support to those facing marital challenges. As an outreach effort, the roadshow seeks to engage with individuals who may have questions about the validity of their marriage, those struggling with marital difficulties, and even those who have undergone civil divorce and are uncertain about their standing in the Church.

The roadshow includes informative sessions led by Fr William Michael, the Judicial Vicar of PMET, civil lawyers, and mental health professionals, covering topics



such as:

- The Sacrament of Marriage: Understanding the Church's vision of marriage as a lifelong covenant.
- Procedural laws governing civil divorce: Outlining the legal grounds and conditions under which a marriage may be terminated through civil proceedings.

- Healing and Reconciliation: Addressing emotional and psychological aspects with professional support.

The collaboration with the Catholic Lawyers' Society ensures that attendees receive accurate legal perspectives, while the Archdiocesan Mental Health Ministry and Emmaus Counselling Centre offer

professional counselling and emotional support. Together, these parties are committed to accompanying individuals with compassion and understanding, recognising the sensitive nature of marital struggles and the healing journey that follows.

The tribunal roadshow has already been well-received in its initial sessions, with many participants expressing gratitude for the opportunity to seek guidance in a supportive environment. Due to the positive response, we are pleased to announce that in the second half of the year, we will continue the roadshow to more churches across the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur.

We invite all members of the faithful — whether married, divorced, or simply seeking knowledge about Church teachings on marriage — to attend these sessions. The roadshow is an opportunity for the Catholic community to come together in faith, learn about the annulment process, and find pastoral care in their journey towards healing and reconciliation.

KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

July

- 7-11 Meeting – Catholic Bishop's Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei
- 12 Opening and Blessing of The Life Journey Wellness Centre
- 12 Confirmation – Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras
- 13 Confirmation – Church of St Joseph, Sentul
- 13 Confirmation – Church of the Holy Family, Kajang

PENANG DIOCESE

Diary of Cardinal Sebastian Francis

July

- 7-11 Meeting – Catholic Bishop's Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei

MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

July

- 7-11 Meeting – Catholic Bishop's Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei
- 12 Meeting – MJD 4D Team (Discover, Discern, Decide, Design) in Kluang
- 13 Parish Pastoral Assembly – Church of the Holy Family, Ulu Tiram

Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #229

Dear friends of MJD,
 With the completion of the Perjalanan Salib at the Church of the Holy Spirit, Melaka, the Cross made its way to the Church of St Andrew, Muar from July 5 to August 2.

Local takes: A dumping ground or a gateway? Once rejects, factory overruns, excess and surpluses were dumped in third world countries. Malaysia once became a dumping ground for pharmaceuticals, foodstuffs, vehicles and machineries. Now we have become a garbage bin for e-wastes. An estimated thousand containers per year arrive at our ports, falsely declared by importers. Dumping burdens: new electricity tariffs, sparing households using less than 1000 kWh and the revised SST to take effect on 1st July.

A Year Six boy relates: in the 1972 sultry heat, I strolled down a red gravel road to my uncle's house, a weekly pilgrimage. Every visit to the Bukit Jalil estate, about 500m from my home, meant stepping into the cool shade of the towering rubber trees, the sweet aroma of jackfruit and cashew nuts and my uncle's big bungalow. But the books, the magazines, the newspapers and his storytelling were the gateway to the world of stories, knowledge and imagination. Are we responsible for what we import?

AI Times: Technologically advanced. Wars, strife and destruction continues. Pope Leo reiterates what Pope Francis said: AI is, above all else, a tool. By definition, tools point to the human intelligence that crafted them and draw much of their ethical force from the intentions of the individuals that wield them. In some cases, AI has been used in posi-

tive and indeed noble ways to promote greater equality, but there is, likewise, the possibility of its misuse for selfish gain at the expense of others, or worse, to foment conflict and aggression.

Acts of arson which damaged or destroyed historic churches; spray-painting and graffiti of satanic messages; rocks and bricks thrown through windows; statues destroyed (often with heads cut off); and illegal disruptions of Mass have increased in the US, reported so far is 507 attacks.

A Thought For The Week: Stealing Tapioca
 An Indonesian judge, Marzuki was to judge an old lady who pleaded guilty of stealing some tapioca from a plantation. In her defence, she admitted that she stole for her sick son and hungry grandchild. The plantation manager wanted her punished as a deterrent to others. The judge, after much deliberation, told her: "I'm sorry but I cannot make any exception to the Law and you must be punished accordingly". She faced a fine of Rp 1 million (RM230) or a jail term of 2½ years, according to the law. She wept as she could not pay the fine. Then the judge placed Rp 100,000 (RM26) into his hat, and said: "In the name of justice, I fine all present in the Court Rp.50,000 (RM13) each as dwellers of this City for letting a child starve until her grandmother is compelled to steal to feed her grandchild. The Registrar will now collect the fines from all present." The Court collected Rp 3.5 million (RM910), including the fine collected from the plantation manager. The fine was paid off and the rest was given to the old lady!
The lesson from the courts: Kindness prevailed over law or being right. Jus-

tice without mercy is revenge.

Something's Happening Near You:
 1. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei meets at MAJODI from July 7-11.

QnQ! Q asks? Can we avoid pain and suffering?
 1. Carl Jung said: "The foundation of all mental illness is the unwillingness to experience legitimate suffering." Benjamin Franklin said, "Those things that hurt, instruct. 'It is for this reason that wise people learn not to dread but actually to welcome problems and actually to welcome the pain of problems."
 2. Most of us are not so wise. Fearing the pain involved, almost all of us, to a greater or lesser degree, attempt to avoid problems. We procrastinate, hoping that they will go away. We ignore them, forget them, ["cancel" them] pretend they do not exist. We even take drugs to assist us in ignoring them, so that by deadening ourselves to the pain we can forget the problems that cause the pain. We attempt to skirt around problems rather than meet them head on. We attempt to get out of them rather than suffer through them.
 3. This tendency to avoid problems and the emotional suffering inherent in them is the primary basis of all human mental illness" **Scott Peck**

The Holy Spirit @work: Without the Holy Spirit, God is far away... With the Holy Spirit, the Gospel is the power of life. **St Athanasius**

Something to tickle you: Every time I take a step in the direction of generosity, I know I am moving from fear to love.
Bernard
Bishop Bernard Paul

A feast of prayer, reflection and hope

Bernard Anthony

TELUK INTAN, Perak: The Church of St Anthony came alive from June 6 to 15, as more than a thousand faithful gathered to commemorate its 131st parish feast with the theme *Pilgrims of Hope as a Community*.

The 10-day celebration was marked by novenas, Masses, preaching, a candlelight procession, and fellowship drawing parishioners and pilgrims from across the country to honour one of Malaysia's most beloved saints.

The first six days of the novena were held at the Basic Ecclesial Community (BEC) level, fostering prayer and reflection within the neighbourhoods. On Day 7, parish priest Fr David Lourdes presided over the Mass, reflecting on the theme *Caring for God's Gift of the Earth*.

From June 13 to 15, guest preacher Fr Victor Louis, from the Church of Christ the King, Sungai Petani, delivered a series of stirring homilies. His Day 8 message, *With St Anthony: Listening Deeply, Walking Boldly, Living the Gospel*, urged the faithful to align their lives with the teachings of Christ and the example of St Anthony.

On Day 10, Fr Victor reflected on the feast's anchor theme, calling on all present



Fr Victor Louis incensing the statue of St Anthony.

to be "pilgrims of hope in God, as a community for others."

The feast reached its pinnacle on Day 9, where an estimated 1,400 devotees took part in the evening celebration that included the novena, feast Mass, candlelight procession and Benediction.

Fr Victor, who was the main celebrant,

was joined by Fr David Lourdes as concelebrant and Deacon Richard Wilson assisting. Preaching on the theme "Becoming the Light of Christ," Fr Victor drew inspiration from Scripture, highlighting that "light" is mentioned over 250 times in the Bible — from God's first command in Genesis to the final vision in Revelation.

Relic of St Anthony draws thousands to KL

KUALA LUMPUR: The Church of St Anthony welcomed a first-class relic — a piece of St Anthony's flesh — brought from Padua, Italy. The occasion, coinciding with the saint's feast day, drew throngs of pilgrims from across Malaysia and abroad, many bearing testimonies of miracles, healing, and newfound faith.

The relic transformed the parish into a vibrant centre of prayer, thanksgiving, and devotion. Pilgrims came in droves — seeking, thanking, weeping — moved by the saint's enduring intercession. For many, it was a long-awaited encounter with a beloved patron who had walked with them through life's storms.

Among them was Valerie Foo, 40, from Taman Tun Dr Ismail. Her presence at the feast was almost accidental — or providential. "I was supposed to be at a dinner with friends, but plans fell through. I had randomly seen the novena post on Instagram earlier and felt a nudge to come," she shared. "Now I know why."

Once distant from the faith, Valerie credits St Anthony — the patron saint of lost things — for helping her find more than just misplaced items. "A friend introduced me to the novena. She had to leave after, and I took her spot inside the packed church and

stayed for Mass. I got to see the relic. It felt like a divine appointment."

Valerie, who struggled for ten years to complete her Certificate in Legal Practice, spoke of the saint's quiet strength through every setback. "Four years before my convocation, my mother collapsed. One thing after another. But somehow, St Anthony kept me going."

For Diana Cyril Sundar, 32, from Tamil Nadu, India, the church in Pudu holds personal significance. "I prayed here in 2020, just before my delivery. The church was closed due to the pandemic, so I prayed from outside. Doctors said I needed a C-section, but I asked for a normal delivery — and it happened."

A regular at the Tuesday novena, Diana recalled more answered prayers. "I lost my job during the pandemic. I prayed here for employment — and got a job at the very company I wanted. St Anthony always prays for us."

Her devotion stretches back to her school days. "In my 12th standard, I was in an accident and couldn't write properly during my exams. But after attending the novena in Vellore, I passed. This year, I made it for all nine days again, praying for something close to my heart. I know he hears me."



A pilgrim praying in front of the relic.

"Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world.' Today, He calls us to be the light and salt of the earth," he said, referencing Matthew 5:13-16.

Fr Victor also tied in the celebration of Father's Day, praying that all fathers may be a guiding light to their children.

The traditional candlelight procession featured the statue of St Anthony placed on a decorated hand-pulled carriage, accompanied by Rosary recitations in various vernacular languages. The 45-minute procession moved smoothly through the surrounding streets before returning to the church for Benediction.

Fr Victor invited those carrying candles to proclaim, "Christ, the Light," and to commit to being a light to others.

The celebration concluded with a sumptuous dinner at 9.00pm, attended by parishioners and guests in a festive atmosphere marked by decorations, music and fellowship. The faithful gave thanks to God for the fine weather and the opportunity to celebrate together.

"This feast has strengthened our bonds as a community of faith," said one parishioner. "It reminded us to live as pilgrims of hope — not just during the feast, but in our daily lives."

Pilgrimage to Pulau Carey

KLANG: On June 14, the BEC members of St Faustina from the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes Klang, embarked on a pilgrimage to the Chapel of St Anthony in Pulau Carey in conjunction with the Feast of St Anthony of Padua.

The 40-minute journey was filled with quiet anticipation and spiritual hope. Pilgrims travelled with hearts open to encountering God, eager to honour the beloved patron saint of lost items and hopeless causes.

The Eucharistic celebration was presided over by Fr Eugene Benedict, parish priest of the Church of Sts Peter and Paul, Banting. His homily reflected on the life of St Anthony, highlighting the saint's humility and simplicity as examples of true service. He reminded the faithful that forgiveness, as lived by St Anthony, remains the cornerstone of Christian life.

Fr Eugene also drew attention to the Jubilee Year 2025 logo, portraying four stylised figures journeying toward a cross anchored in the sea. Each coloured figure represents a different type of engagement seen within parish communities:

- Blue: individuals who work alone, often sincere, but isolated.
- Green: those who serve only with close friends, sometimes forming cliques.
- Yellow: people who work well in their own groups but remain apart from others.
- Red: larger organised bodies such as NGOs, sometimes operating independently of the parish.

Fr Eugene encouraged everyone to remember that, while all are moving toward Christ, symbolised by the cross, the journey must be made together. "We are not meant to walk alone. Jesus is our anchor. We are the Church, united in purpose, mission, and love."

The celebration concluded with the singing of the Jubilee Year hymn, followed by a warm fellowship dinner hosted by the local parish. It was a time of joyful communion, reflection, and shared gratitude. **Anita Santhini Mani**

Alexander Ray, 35, will never forget the 2013 feast. Assigned far from home for an internship in Batu Gajah with no nearby church, he was uncertain and anxious. "I applied for a placement in Nilai, but there was no confirmation."

During the novena, he gave alms and was invited to carry the saint's chariot during the procession. "Tears rolled down my face. I placed all my hope in St Anthony."

The following Monday, he received word — a placement had opened up in Nilai. "It was considered impossible. But with St Anthony, nothing is impossible." That miracle helped him complete his degree, and he's returned to the novena and feast every year since.

Gladys Helen, 65, a legal assistant, began her novena on June 6 with a humble offering of buns — a tribute on her late father's birthday. "St Anthony has always been our family's patron saint, dating back to my grandfather in Kampung Maya near Salak South."

Gladys shared how, after suffering a stroke, she returned to work much earlier than expected. "Many couldn't believe it. But I know it was through St Anthony's intercession. I've passed this devotion on to the younger ones in the family."

The novena and feast carried the theme, *Hope does not disappoint*. Archbishop Julian Leow presided over the first Mass of the nine-day novena, with subsequent celebrations led by various priests including Fr Frederick Joseph, Fr Christopher Soosaipillai, Fr Albet Arokiasamy, Fr Edwin Peter, Fr George Harrison, Fr Simon Labrooy, and Fr Leonard Lexson. Parish priest, Fr Clarence Devadass, and assistant priest, Fr Michel Dass, concelebrated each day.

The occasion also marked the launch of preparations for the 115th anniversary of the Church of St Anthony. A series of year-long activities was announced, including a family day, pilgrimage to Padua, visits to local pilgrim churches, a hymn and logo competition, outreach projects for the needy, and church refurbishment. Devotees may contribute towards the cost of new pews by contacting the parish office. **Elvina Fernandez**

Catechesis in a changing world

Stephanie Chia

KUCHING, Sarawak: The Malaysian Catechetical Commission (MCC), which advises the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia on local catechetical matters, convened its annual meeting from June 9 to 13. This gathering brought together clergy, religious and lay representatives from each of the country's nine dioceses to share experiences, discuss common challenges and collaborate on resolutions at a national level.

The meeting was presided by Rt Rev Joseph Hii, Bishop of Sibiu and Episcopal President of the MCC, with Dr Steven Selvaraju from the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur serving as chairman. The delegates were also joined by observers from the Archdiocese of Singapore and the Apostolic Vicariate of Brunei, who added their perspective and experiences to the depth of the discussions.

Catechesis in a Changing World

In his keynote address, Bishop Joseph Hii reflected on how the three-fold ministry of Christ as priest, prophet and king is continued by the Church today through the liturgical and catechetical ministries. He recognised that the strong foundations of the catechetical commissions today were due to predecessors who made efforts to ensure the work of catechesis, of helping people understand the faith, would be carried out well, not just in their time, but for future generations.

Thus, he encouraged those present to reflect on how our current catechetical ministries could answer the needs of our generation, with all the challenges that come from ecological destruction, rising secu-



The delegates with Archbishop Simon Poh after the Eucharistic Celebration.

larisation, advancements in technology and subsequent change in the social landscape, without changing the character of catechesis, which is the echoing of the faith of the Apostles.

Finally, he added his hopes that this commission could become a regional commission including Singapore and Brunei, so that we could work toward better collaboration across the region.

The discussion that followed the keynote address echoed his sentiments with delegates sharing their challenges in catechising and living their faith due to religious restrictions from civil authorities and increasing secularisation of the people. It was agreed that the work of catechesis, of spreading the good news and teaching the faith in various ways was more vital than

ever in the coming years and more could be done to support the formation needs of those who faced religious restrictions in their region.

Facing the Challenges in Our Ministries

Following that, delegates were invited to share the experiences of their respective dioceses – their programmes, the challenges they faced, as well as their creative solutions and steps for the future. The sharing of experiences was not just about the reporting of what was done, but about celebrating the successes of each one, learning about and from one another, as well as encouraging each other on this challenging journey. This sharing sparked a lively discussion among the delegates, many of whom expressed how encouraged and in-

spired they were by each other's stories — realising that while needs and resources differ, mutual support and learning can help our ministries grow and move forward.

The meeting then continued with discussions on various matters involving the catechetical ministries in Malaysia. Key items for discussion included the Malaysian Catechetical Series (MCS), a series of ten catechism books used as the main text for catechism classes in Malaysia, development of supplementary topics for Form 5 catechism, the resources and liturgical rites used for the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) and the issues surrounding baptism and reception of baptised non-Catholics. The resolutions from the meeting will be brought to the Bishops' Conference for deliberation.

Catechetical Sunday – All the faithful are called to catechesis

In addition to discussing key issues, the Commission also deliberated on the celebration of Catechetical Sunday for the coming year. Catechetical Sunday, which had been celebrated on the last Sunday of January until last year, was moved to the first Sunday of August this year. This move was made to give diocesan and parish catechetical ministries more time to plan for the celebration, in addition to the commissioning of catechists.

While the rite of commissioning is important, the focus of Catechetical Sunday, based on the Church document *Provido Sane Concilio* (Better Care for Catechetical

Teaching), is actually to bring awareness to all the Catholic faithful that everyone is involved in the work of catechesis: to make Christ present and to echo His teachings in our families, our work, our Church and our world today. Hence, catechetical ministries are called to promote the work of catechesis, not just on Catechetical Sunday, but throughout the whole month of August.

With this in mind, the Commission chose the theme: *Be Christ to Others*, inspired by Matthew 25:40 – “Truly, I say to you: just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of Mine, you did it to Me”. This theme was also chosen based on

the strategic focus on social realities, which is one of the areas of concern to be discussed at the Malaysia Pastoral Convention in September next year.

The main itinerary of the Commission meeting ended with the election of new office bearers for the coming three-year term from 2025 until 2028.

Concluding Remarks

The meeting concluded with closing remarks from Bishop Joseph Hii, who highlighted the dignity of the ancient ministry of catechist in the Church and expressed his hopes for the commissions to continue developing the effectiveness of this ministry that helps others discover Christ and grow according to God's will. He voiced his gratitude to the delegates from the Archdiocese of Kuching, who hosted the meeting and all present who had made the effort to come together for this time of sharing.

Other Activities

In addition to the discussions on catechetical matters, the Commission meetings are also a platform for delegates to encounter the context and culture of the host diocese, allowing everyone present to experience for themselves the joys and challenges in the life of the local Church.

This meeting was no exception, as the hosts of this meeting invited delegates to visit the newly built Church of St Peter in Padungan during one of the breaks in the meeting. Delegates admired the beautiful gothic style of architecture and the multiple stained-glass windows on every wall at the

Church of St Peter – while the parish priest, Fr Vincent Chin, expressed his gratitude for all the funds that had poured in to help build the church – truly a work of divine providence.

In addition to the visit to the Church of St Peter, delegates were also invited to join Archbishop Simon Poh for Mass in the Parish of St Theresa in Serian, which covers a large area including 103 Mass centres and over 45,000 parishioners. It was truly an eye-opening experience for some of the delegates, especially those from smaller dioceses, to see so many coming together for Mass on a weekday night to celebrate the harvest festival.

This celebration, steeped in tradition and integrating many of the local practices, was a beautiful expression of inculturation, where culture enriches the faith of the people and faith illuminates their traditional practices with the spirit of the Gospel. Through these two visits, delegates could truly experience the faith and cultural richness of the people of Sarawak.

We'd like to express our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to our host, the Catechetical Commission of the Archdiocese of Kuching, for hosting the meeting and organising the programmes; Archbishop Simon Poh for his support and hospitality, the priests and parishioners of the Church of St Theresa's Parish and the Church of St Peter for their hospitality and all who have extended their hand to welcome us on our visit.

The next MCC meeting will be hosted by the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur in 2026.



The delegates deliberating during the meeting.

Faith-based video series to combat consumerism launched

PENANG: A decade after Pope Francis released *Laudato Si'*, his landmark encyclical on environmental stewardship and social justice, its call to action continues to resonate—this time from the heart of Penang.

On May 21, the Penang State Creation Justice Commission (CJC) unveiled the first in a seven-part video series addressing consumerism as a major driver of environmental degradation. The initiative is part of a broader effort to bring Pope Francis' message of ecological conversion into everyday life, particularly within the Catholic community.

"This isn't just about reducing plastic bags or switching off lights," said Magdalene Chiang, a resource person with the Penang CJC. "It's about examining the culture of convenience and consumption that quietly shapes our choices and harms our environment."

Titled *Beyond the Cart*, the first video draws inspiration from Mary Madaleine's book of the same name, inviting viewers to reflect on how purchasing decisions are not just economic transactions, but moral acts. The video features the quote from *Laudato*



Si': "Purchasing is always a moral and not simply economic act," underscoring how everyday habits contribute to larger ecological challenges.

The series is designed to educate and inspire action among Catholics by linking consumer behaviour with environmental impact. It aligns with pastoral directions from the 2024 Peninsular Malaysia Regional Pastoral Assembly, which called for "a spirituality which rejects the culture of consumerism and upholds creation justice."

Each video in the series will tackle a different facet of consumerism — from the historical roots of mass production to the modern pressures of fast fashion, online

shopping, and AI-driven advertising. The CJC emphasises practical, faith-rooted responses, encouraging viewers to embrace simplicity and intentional living.

"This video is both an awareness tool and an invitation," Magdalene explained. "We want to help people rediscover the joy of having enough, and to see consumption through the lens of conscience and care."

The Creation Justice Commission, which focuses on ecological evangelisation, hopes the series will serve as a versatile resource. The videos can be used in catechism classes (CEC), RCIA programmes, or as part of a parish-wide reflection series, with each short film followed by group discussion or

personal reflection.

The full series is expected to be completed by the Season of Creation later this year. The initiative echoes the message of *Laudato Si'* — that systemic change begins with individuals and communities making intentional choices, rooted in faith and guided by the Gospel.

Quoting Jesus' words from Luke 12:15 — "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions"—the series reminds viewers that mindful living is not only spiritually enriching but urgently necessary in a time of ecological crisis.

The first video is now available on the CJC's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@PgCJCPenangState>, with a QR code provided for easy access.



● The author of 'Beyond the Cart', Mary Madaleine is a parishioner of the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist in Kuala Lumpur.



Aaron Lim

GEORGE TOWN: It was a time of gratitude and thanksgiving for the clergy and lay faithful in the Diocese of Penang as they commemorated the Jubilee of Priests celebration.

Held on June 17 which coincided with the monthly clergy recollection, more than 40 priests currently serving in the diocese gathered at the Church of the Assumption (City Parish) for this momentous occasion.

Cardinal Sebastian Francis, the Bishop of Penang, celebrated the Eucharist which honoured the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The prelate quoted from the Eucharistic Preface on The Priesthood of Christ and the ministry of Priests, whereby Christ "chooses men to become sharers in his sacred ministry through the laying of hands."

In drawing connection to the readings, he reminded the priests of their identity as shepherds after the heart of Christ which are

Penang Diocese celebrates the Jubilee of Priests

tasked to tend and pasture God's sheep with love.

After the post-communion prayer, Cardinal Sebastian then led the priests of the diocese in reciting the act of consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which was followed by the placing of candles at the Sacred Heart statue as the priests pledged their commitment towards the ministry.

This was followed by the establishment of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal of the Diocese of Penang with the reading of the decree and signing of the commemorative plaque by Cardinal Sebastian.

The celebrations then continued with the congregation together with all priests adjourning to the St Xavier's Institution Hall for a dinner fellowship.

They were feted to sumptuous dishes whilst witnessing a variety of performances prepared collectively by the various parishes across Penang Island Deanery.

A special video presentation featuring all priests of the diocese was then presented with the different parishes and ministries expressing their appreciation to their shepherds.



Charity Walk raises over RM30,000 for underprivileged students



The Post Centennial Committee handing the cheque to Sr Christie Ho FdCC.

SEGAMAT, Johor: A charity walk organised by the post centennial committee of the Church of St Philip successfully raised RM30,913 to support underprivileged students residing at the Canossian Home in Segamat.

The fundraising event aimed to assist students from the B40 income group in their pursuit of education. The initiative received overwhelming support from donors both locally and abroad, including contributions from Malaysia, the United States, Germany, and Singapore.

A cheque representing the amount raised was presented to Sr Christie Ho of the Canossian Convent during a simple ceremony held at the parish after Mass. The presentation

was made by organising chairman, Louis Vincent, with post centennial committee chairman Benedict Pang and parish priest, Fr Paul Wong, in attendance.

The committee expressed gratitude to all benefactors and supporters whose generosity made the initiative a success. Special appreciation was extended to Benedict Pang, James Paul Raj, and Joseph George for their dedication and teamwork in organising the event.

The post centennial committee thanked everyone who contributed, reaffirming its commitment to uplifting the educational journey of students in need through ongoing acts of compassion and service. **Richard Joseph**

St Aloysius Mantin celebrates a legacy rooted in hope

Selva Manogary

MANTIN, Negeri Sembilan: The bells of the Church of St Aloysius rang louder than ever recently to celebrate: 125 years of unwavering faith, unity, and service echoing across Mantin and beyond.

Founded in 1899 by Fr Anton Catesson (MEP), the parish has grown from humble beginnings into a vibrant spiritual home. This year's quasicentennial celebration, themed *Pilgrims of Hope: Honouring Family, Ecology, Church and Society*, was a testament to its enduring legacy. Spanning five days, the celebration brought together generations of Catholics in prayer, reflection, action, and festivity.

The journey began on June 2 with a novena, Mass, and anointing of the sick, led by parish priest Fr Christopher Soosaipillai, setting the tone for a deeply spiritual observance.

On June 19, the church filled with the spirit of family — both biological and spiritual. A bilingual Mass celebrated by Fr Sin Wee OCD, Fr Christopher Loh OCD, and Fr Christopher Soosaipillai reminded the congregation of their shared identity in Christ.

"We are gathered as one family in faith," preached Fr Sin Wee. "United by the love of Christ and the community He has built here, we are called to walk together — as brothers and sisters."

The focus shifted to ecology on June 20, where Fr Jonathan Andrew Rao of the Church

of St Jude, Rawang, just five months into his priesthood, delivered a powerful call to action.

"Creation is not a backdrop to our lives; it is a divine gift. As Catholics, caring for the Earth is not optional — it is our mission," he declared, his message resonating in English, Tamil, and Mandarin through Fr Christopher Loh's translation.

June 21, the actual Feast Day of St Aloysius, was the celebration's crowning moment. A majestic Mass — concelebrated by a host of priests including Fr Clarence Devadass, Fr Albet Arockiasamy, Fr Xavier Andrew, Fr Nicholas Ho OCD, Fr Edwin Peter, Fr Martin Then CDD, Fr Sin Wee, and Fr Christopher Soosaipillai — culminated in a

grand Eucharistic procession across the church grounds.

In his homily, Fr Clarence emphasised that the Eucharist does not end at the altar: "We are to be living monstrances, carriers of Christ's light, love, and mercy into the world."

For the first time, the statue of St Aloysius was carried in solemn procession — a deeply moving moment for the community. Occurring on the Feast of Corpus Christi, the celebration attracted hundreds from near and far, their prayers lighting the night in a display of collective devotion.

June 22, the final day, marked the beginning of a new chapter. A soulful Tamil Mass, celebrated by Fr Gnana Selvam, brought the

congregation into deep reflection. Drawing inspiration from Fr Naden and the Orang Asli community, he spoke on ecology and faith: "God is in the past, present, and future. Trust in Him."

The day's most defining moment came when the Church of St Aloysius, Mantin and the Church of St Theresa, Nilai signed a joint declaration to become Ecological Parishes. This commitment responds to Pope Francis' call in *Laudato Si'* for an ecological conversion.

"Today, we honour our Creator not only with incense and chant, but with action," said a parish spokesperson. "We pledge to protect what God has entrusted to us — our common home."

The celebration closed with Mass on Corpus Christi, celebrated by Archbishop Julian Leow with Archbishop Emeritus Murphy Pakiam concelebrating. With solemn blessing and joyful praise, the parish was commissioned into a new century of mission.

As the lights dimmed and the final notes of the choir faded, a quiet yet profound truth settled over the community: this was no ordinary anniversary.

The 125th Feast of St Aloysius Mantin was a landmark of heritage, a beacon of identity, and a bold step into a future defined by faith, family, and responsibility. From historic processions to environmental pledges, the parish proved that while its roots run deep, its branches stretch even further.



The statue of St Aloysius carried in procession. (photo/Jeffrey Chee)

A grace-filled journey to the East-Coast

SLIM RIVER, Perak: The Chapel of St Anthony in Slim River came alive with prayer, praise, and profound joy on June 21 as the Catholic community marked a unique triple celebration: the chapel's feast day, the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, and Father's Day.

The day began with a Novena to St Anthony, the Rosary, and the Angelus at 4.30pm, drawing pilgrims and parishioners from near and far. The evening Eucharistic celebration was presided over by Fr Vincent Paul, Chapel Administrator and parish priest of the Church of the Most Holy Redeemer, Tanjung Malim.

In his homily, Fr Vincent reflected on the deep spiritual significance of Corpus Christi, linking it to the Gospel account of the multiplication of the loaves and fish. "Jesus did not just satisfy physical hunger—He stirred hearts," said Fr Vincent. "He invited the people to share. That's what the Eucharist is about—sacrifice, generosity, and self-giving."

Fr Vincent highlighted how Jesus' gift of the Eucharist is a call to imitate His total self-

giving. "God never keeps things for Himself," he said. "We're often tempted to only look after ourselves and our families. But the feast of Corpus Christi challenges that. It's about giving without holding back—just like Jesus did."

He also emphasised the unique belief of the Catholic Church in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. "To receive the Body and Blood of Christ requires faith and reverence. Jesus gave us this sacrament so we can remain united with Him and bring His presence to others."

Turning to the chapel's patronal feast, Fr Vincent spoke about the life of St Anthony of Padua, one of the most beloved saints in the Catholic world. "What made him such a powerful preacher and miracle worker was his deep closeness to Jesus," he said. "He invites us to stay close to Christ in all things."

Following Mass, a 35-minute solemn Eucharistic procession made its way through the streets of Slim River. Fr Vincent carried the monstrance bearing the Blessed Sacra-



The pilgrims with Frs Christopher Loh, OCD and Simon Agbo at the Church of St Thomas the Apostle, Kuantan.

Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel



All are invited to join the Carmelite Sisters
At the Eucharistic celebration in honour of
Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Date: 16th July, 2025 (Wednesday)

Time: 6.00 p.m.

Venue: Carmelite Monastery of Jesus, Mary & Joseph
Lot PT8061, Kg Pasir, Jalan Rasah
70300 Seremban, Negeri Sembilan
West Malaysia.

Theme: Mary Mother of Hope, Steadfast Faith, Pure in Love

NEWS IN BRIEF

Thailand-Cambodia border tensions escalate

BANGKOK: Tensions between Thailand and Cambodia are rising over the Emerald Triangle border region following a military standoff and growing concerns about cybercrime. Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra blamed Cambodia for failing to curb human trafficking and scam centres, citing a disputed UN report claiming these contribute 40–60 per cent of Cambodia's GDP. In response, Thailand shut all 17 border crossings and cut cross-border electricity and internet links used by criminal groups and Cambodian security forces.

Cambodia dismissed the claims as reckless, with Prime Minister Hun Manet warning of countermeasures and closing two border posts. Meanwhile, over 5,000 Cambodians return from Thailand daily, amid fears of stranding over 1.5 million nationals in the country.

Trade and travel have been heavily disrupted, risking US\$15 billion (RM63.5 billion) in expected trade this year. Talks between both governments have failed, and Cambodia is urging the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to intervene, as it did in the 2013 Preah Vihear dispute. Thailand, however, insists on resolving the issue through the Joint Boundary Commission. ucanews.com

Francesco Ielpo named new Custos of the Holy Land

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV has confirmed the election of Friar Francesco Ielpo as the new Custos of the Holy Land, succeeding Friar Francesco Patton, who served since 2016. A 55-year-old Italian from Northern Italy, Ielpo has long been involved in promoting pilgrimages and supporting the Franciscan mission in the Holy Land. He previously served as delegate of the Custos in Italy and president of the Holy Land Foundation.

The Custody of the Holy Land, based in Jerusalem's Old City, oversees Franciscan presence across the Middle East and supports global commissariats promoting pilgrimages and pastoral work.

In a letter to the friars, Minister General Friar Massimo Fusarelli emphasised the urgency of the mission amid the region's violence, calling the friars to be "witnesses and workers of reconciliation and peace" and commending their steadfast presence "as brothers and minors, not mercenaries who flee." AsiaNews

Court upholds Christians' right to pray

CHENNAI: Christians in Uttar Pradesh welcomed a June 20 court order directing authorities to fairly consider requests for prayer gatherings. The Allahabad High Court affirmed that holding religious prayers is legal and protected under the constitution, provided public order is maintained.

The ruling came after petitions from Christians who said they were denied permission and falsely accused of forced conversions. Pastor Sukesh Kumar said police often file baseless charges, making legal relief difficult and costly.

Pastor Joy Mathew praised the order, saying it empowers Christians to challenge arbitrary denials. Despite over 400 anti-conversion cases filed under a strict 2021 law, none have been proven. Uttar Pradesh recorded 209 anti-Christian attacks in 2023. ucanews.com



Japan bishops warn of militarism, urge peace

TOKYO: Marking 80 years since the end of World War II, Japan's Catholic bishops issued a powerful message titled *A Journey of Peace: Bearing Hope*. Released on June 17, it warns against the growing normalisation of violence under the guise of "humanitarian intervention" and "self-defence." The bishops call on Catholics, especially the youth, to defend a legacy of peace grounded in justice, memory, and spiritual renewal.

The bishops voiced concern over ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, Myanmar, and Africa, where war continues to destroy lives and communities. They condemned the use of moral justifications to legitimise violence and called on the global Church to remain a prophetic voice for peace.

Closer to home, the bishops lamented Japan's increasing military spending, construction of missile bases in Okinawa, and moves to reinterpret Article 9 of the Constitution. They echoed fears among elderly Okinawans who see troubling parallels with the lead-up to past wars, asking: "Is Japan really on the path to peace?"

In a rare self-reflection, the bishops acknowledged the Church's past failure to oppose wartime aggression in Japan, noting how it once invoked just war theory to appear patriotic. They called for honest repentance and a renewed



Civilian-built monuments for those who died there during World War II are pictured on the island of Iwo Jima, which is now officially called Ioto, on April 7, 2025. (LicAs News photo/KIM KYUNG-HOON / POOL / AFP)

witness to peace in solidarity with future generations.

They also emphasised the importance of memory as the number of living World War II survivors dwindles. Young people, they said, must take up the responsibility of remembering and protecting the legacy of peace.

Reaffirming the Church's stance against nuclear weapons, the bishops cited Pope Francis' 2019 Hiroshima mes-

sage and urged Japan to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. They welcomed the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Hidankyo, the A- and H-bomb survivors' organisation.

In conjunction with the 2025 Jubilee Year the bishops called on the faithful to be "pilgrims of hope," working for justice, reconciliation, and healing in a world still torn by conflict and fear. LiCAS News

Forum reaffirms role of Catholic laity in public life

JAKARTA: The Indonesian Catholic Community Forum (FMKI) has reaffirmed its mission to strengthen the role of Catholic laity in civic and political affairs during its 12th Special National Meeting. The event gathered 195 participants from FMKI chapters nationwide, along with representatives from lay organizations, diocesan lay commissions, and Church-affiliated groups.

Yanuar Nugroho, academic and former Deputy II at the Presidential Staff Office, warned of shrinking democratic space and urged FMKI to grow beyond a discussion platform into an organised lay movement. He called on Catholics to be active, responsible citizens, not passive observers, especially in the face of

weakened media and suppressed public dissent.

The meeting focused on three main goals: transforming FMKI through a national seminar, drafting general guidelines, and forming a 27-member working body to steer institutional reform. This body will finalise legal preparations to register FMKI as a legal entity and lead the transition period until the next national meeting in 2026.

Yulius Setiarto, FMKI National Secretary and member of the House of Representatives, called the gathering a concrete step toward building FMKI as a strategic platform for lay engagement in society and politics. "This is more than a routine event; it's a foundation for long-

term growth and relevance," he said.

Fr. Hans, executive secretary of the Indonesian Bishops' Conference's Laity Commission, welcomed the institutionalisation of FMKI as a sign of synodality. He described the forum as a vital expression of the Church's political apostolate, requiring professionalism and serious commitment.

Fr. Yohanes Dwi Harsanto of the Archdiocese of Semarang affirmed FMKI's renewed identity as the "common home" of Indonesian Catholic laity. He expressed hope that the revitalised forum will unite diverse lay voices and foster a politically aware, solution-oriented community rooted in Catholic social teaching. LiCAS News

Choir directed by **Dr. Casey**

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SGL RM 12,500

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- Choir singing during Masses & concerts in Roman parishes
- Visit to the Tomb of Bl. Carlo Acutis in Assisi
- Basilica of St. Francis & Basilica of Saint Clare, Assisi
- Holy Doors at the 4 Major Basilicas (St. Peter's, St. John Lateran, St. Paul Outside the Walls, St. Mary Major)
- Vatican Museums, Sistine Chapel & Holy Stairs
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- St. Francis Cathedral 圣方济各主教座堂
- Zhong Yi Church 崇一堂
- Hao Jia Zhuang Church 郝家庄堂
- Our Lady of the Mountain 卢县, 圣母山
- Sanyuan Cathedral 三原总堂
- Tongyuanfang Church 通远坊
- Zhang Erce Church 张二册天主堂
- Xi'An Seminary 备修院
- Wuguanfang Church 武官坊

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Participants of the 12th Special National Meeting of FMKI pose for a group photo in Depok, Indonesia, June 2025. (LiCas News photo/FMKI)

Political leaders must fix wealth gap, promote religious freedom

VATICAN: The huge economic divide between rich and poor today is unacceptable, with so much wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, Pope Leo XIV said.

Political leaders have a responsibility to promote the good of the entire community, especially by defending the vulnerable, the marginalised and the poor, he told speakers and members of parliament attending a Rome conference about democracy and interfaith dialogue during the Jubilee of Governments.

“Sound politics,” he said, promotes “the equitable distribution of resources,” which “can offer an effective service to harmony and peace, both domestically and internationally”.

The Pope met with the group during an audience at the Vatican June 21. The group was made up of people attending the June 19-21 Conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Rome. The conference brought together speakers and members of parliament with representatives of religions, governments, international organisations, faith-based and civil organisations, and academia.

In his speech, the Pope said they have a “responsibility to promote and protect, independent of any special interest, the good of the community, the common good, particularly by defending the vulnerable and the marginalised.”

“This would mean, for example, working



Pope Leo XIV addresses people attending the Conference of the International Inter-Parliamentary Union during an audience in the Hall of Benediction at the Vatican June 21, 2025. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

to overcome the unacceptable disproportion between the immense wealth concentrated in the hands of a few and the world’s poor,” he said. “Those who live in extreme conditions cry out to make their voices heard and often find no ears willing to hear their plea.”

“This imbalance generates situations of persistent injustice, which readily lead to violence and, sooner or later, to the tragedy of war,” he said, calling for a more equitable distribution of resources.

Pope Leo also underlined the importance of religious freedom and interreligious dialogue.

“Political life can achieve much by encouraging the conditions for there to be authentic

religious freedom and that a respectful and constructive encounter between different religious communities may develop,” he said.

“Belief in God, with the positive values that derive from it, is an immense source of goodness and truth for the lives of individuals and communities,” he added.

“In order to have a shared point of reference in political activity, and not exclude ‘a priori’ any consideration of the transcendent in decision-making processes, it would be helpful to seek an element that unites everyone,” which, he said, is found in natural law.

“Natural law, which is universally valid apart from and above other more debatable beliefs, constitutes the compass by which to

take our bearings in legislating and acting, particularly on the delicate and pressing ethical issues that, today more than in the past, regard personal life and privacy,” he said.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights also “can contribute greatly to placing the human person, in his or her inviolable integrity, at the foundation of the quest for truth, thus restoring dignity to those who do not feel respected in their inmost being and in the dictates of their conscience,” he added.

Lastly, Pope Leo said, politics cannot ignore the challenge of artificial intelligence. “On the contrary, it is called to respond to many citizens who rightly look with both confidence and concern at the issues raised by this new digital culture.”

“The degree of civilisation attained in our world and the goals you are charged to achieve are now facing a major challenge in the form of artificial intelligence,” which will be of great help to society as long as it “does not undermine the identity and dignity of the human person and his or her fundamental freedoms”, he said.

“Artificial intelligence functions as a tool for the good of human beings,” he said, and it should not diminish or replace people.

“Our personal life has greater value than any algorithm, and social relationships require spaces for development that far transcend the limited patterns that any soulless machine can prepackage,” he said. CNS

Sport reflects God’s beauty and builds community

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV presided over Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica to close the Jubilee of Sport and mark the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity. Speaking before thousands of athletes, he reflected on the spiritual dimension of sport, saying every good human activity, including sport, reflects God’s infinite beauty.

He emphasized that sport offers more than physical achievement — it invites self-giving. The Pope reflected on the Italian cheer “dai” (“give”), urging athletes to give of themselves, not just for victory, but for teammates, coaches, supporters, and

even opponents. Sport becomes empty, he said, when it centres only on ego.

Drawing from Pope St John Paul II, an athlete himself, Pope Leo described sport as a celebration of life, friendship, and dialogue. He warned, however, that modern society—marked by isolation, digital distraction, and unhealthy competition—risks losing these values.

Sport, he said, can counter these trends. It promotes teamwork over solitude, real-life interaction over virtual disconnection, and humility over perfectionism. It teaches us how to lose and accept our human limita-

tions, helping hearts remain open to hope.

He rejected the myth of flawless champions, noting that true athletes are those who fall and rise again. He pointed to Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, an avid sportsman set to be canonised in September, as a model of daily training in both sport and sainthood.

Closing his homily, Pope Leo urged athletes to mirror the love of the Triune God in all they do and to entrust themselves to Mary. True victory, he said, is not in medals, but in attaining eternal life. **Vatican Media**



Athletes bring up the offertory gifts during the closing Mass for the Jubilee of Sport. (Vatican Media)

Jubilee of Seminarians: Be passionate about priestly life

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV welcomed more than 4000 seminarians and formators to St Peter’s Basilica for their Jubilee June 24 morning, and gave them a meditation on the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the priestly life.

The Holy Father told seminarians they are called to bear witness “to Christ’s gratitude and gratuitousness, to the exultation and joy, and the tenderness and mercy of His Heart, to practise a style of welcome and closeness, of

generous and selfless service, allowing the Holy Spirit to ‘anoint’ their humanity even before ordination”.

He emphasised, too, the importance of formation “centred on the heart”, of learning “to love as Jesus loved”. This must be done through the development of the interior life, the first work of discernment, and involves returning to the heart, where we find “traces of God” and where God speaks to us.

Pope Leo said that formation of the interior life involves recognising the deepest sentiments of the heart, “which help you discover the direction of your life.” He noted that the “privileged path” that leads to interiority is prayer, because without an encounter with God, “we cannot truly know ourselves”.

And he invited them to invoke the Holy Spirit frequently, “so that He may shape in you a docile heart, capable of perceiving God’s presence” in nature, art, literature, music, and science.

“Above all,” Pope Leo said, “learn how to listen, as Jesus did, to the often-silent cry of the little ones, of the poor and the oppressed,

and of the very many people, especially young people, who are searching for meaning in their lives.”

The Holy Father called on seminarians to learn to preserve and meditate on the events of their lives, as Mary did, in order to learn “the art of discernment”.

Finally, Pope Leo invited seminarians to be meek and humble of heart, as Jesus was; and like Paul, to adopt the sentiments of Christ in order to grow in human maturity, and to reject all pretence and hypocrisy.

The task of seminarians, the Pope said, is to “never settle for less, never be satisfied, not be passive recipients, but to be passionate about the priestly life, living in the present and looking to the future with a prophetic heart”.

Before leading them in the proclamation of the Nicene Creed, Pope Leo expressed his hope that seminarians might deepen their relationship with Christ, asking Him to make their hearts like His Sacred Heart, “which beats with love for each of you and for all humanity”. ICN



Pope Leo XIV greets seminarians during their Jubilee (Vatican Media)

Hospitality that leaves a mark and draws others to Christ

People often come to know Christ because of the influence of one person — and sometimes they walk away for the same reason. All too frequently, those who encounter the Church through a negative experience end up distancing themselves from the faith altogether. The stakes are high. And the solution might be simpler, and more radical, than we think: Christian hospitality that reflects the Gospel.

An Unexpected Invitation

In 2010, I was like many Catholics who drifted away from the Church during college. For three years, I lived like an atheist — until I encountered Christ through a Protestant church. A well-known pastor from Texas shaped my understanding of the Gospel in a way that ultimately led me back to Catholicism and full-time ministry. I never stopped listening to his sermons, even as my journey took me home to Rome.

Fast forward to 2023. I was working for ‘Walking with Purpose’, a Catholic women’s Bible study ministry. I had just co-authored *Passionate Discipleship* and was heading to Dallas to film videos. As I planned the trip, a thought lingered: What if I reached out to that church that once changed my life?

I was nervous. After all, I’m a Catholic. Would they ignore me? Judge me? Think I was going to hell? Still, I typed out a simple message: “I’m a Catholic author and speaker. Your church has had a profound impact on my faith. I’d love to stop by and personally thank you.”

I didn’t expect a response. But five minutes later, my inbox dinged. The woman managing their info email replied warmly and invited me to meet her for coffee.

What I Didn’t Expect

That coffee invitation turned into much more. She picked me up at the airport and brought me to the church campus. I was given a full tour, introduced to the pastoral and theological staff — people who had al-



ready read my book *Rekindled*, which details my journey from Protestantism back to Catholicism. They sat down with me, asked thoughtful questions, and listened with genuine interest.

The pastor himself took time to meet me, talk briefly about family life and Christian unity, and accepted my books and thank-you note. My gracious hostess even brought me to my hotel afterward.

They owed me nothing. I’m not famous. I’m not Protestant. I don’t live in Texas. I will never join their church or donate to their ministry. And yet, they welcomed me extravagantly. It wasn’t showy or transactional — it was simply their way of life.

A Model for the Church

Sitting in my hotel room afterwards, I was stunned. I had just received the kind of welcome that changes people. It left a mark. It made me think: What if Catholic churches were known for this?

It’s not that Catholic parishes are incapable of kindness. Many communities are deeply caring. But in the cultural imagination, and too often in reality, Catholic hospitality is the exception, not the norm.

Before my visit, I mentioned my nerves to a fellow Catholic. She joked, “A Protestant wouldn’t need to worry about reaching out to a Catholic church. We wouldn’t have answered the email.”

Ouch. But not entirely untrue.

We all know the stereotypes: the angry “rosary lady” scowling from the back pew, or the territorial parishioner guarding her seat with unspoken hostility. These caricatures may be exaggerated, but they point to a deeper issue: we are not always known for our warmth.

Stories That Shouldn’t Be Common

I’ve heard too many stories like these: A college student wanders into a Catholic chapel seeking answers. No one speaks to him. He leaves and finds meaning in psychedelics instead.

A grieving widower is met with silence at his parish after losing his wife. He finds consolation in a Protestant community and never returns to the sacraments.

These are not isolated incidents. They reflect a widespread pattern of unintentional neglect. Many Catholic parishes are thriving with vibrant ministries and welcoming people. But far too many others are failing to be the place of healing and hope that our faith calls us to be.

Catholicism: The Fullness of Truth

This failure is heartbreaking because the Catholic Church possesses the most beautiful, sacramental, truth-filled expression of the Christian faith. Its Scriptures revive souls. Its sacraments pour out grace. Its rich tradition offers meaning and hope to all people.

Yet many are missing out on this treasure — not because they disagree with its teachings, but because of inhospitable or indifferent encounters at the local level. They came looking for Christ and were met with coldness.

It’s true that parishes face real challenges: priest shortages, limited resources, aging infrastructure, and entrenched bureaucracy. But these challenges cannot become excuses. The Gospel demands more of us. It demands that we treat every person as if Christ Himself were present.

What’s Getting in the Way?

Why do we fall short of this Gospel-shaped hospitality? The reasons are many, but two stand out: cynicism and hurry.

• The Poison of Cynicism

In both the world and the Church, brokenness abounds. Scandals, disappointments, and betrayals make it tempting to become hardened. Over time, we adopt a cynical posture. We become sarcastic, sceptical, even jaded. We start to think that people can’t change, that efforts don’t matter, that idealism is naïve. We mask this as “realism,” but it corrodes our capacity to love. Cynicism makes us cold. It keeps us from welcoming others with joy or investing in relationships with hope. It chokes out the fruits of the Spirit — kindness, patience, gentleness — leaving behind a faith that is dutiful but dead.

• The Curse of Hurry

Our culture worships productivity. We measure success by how much we get done in a day. This frantic pace bleeds into parish life. Volunteers are stretched thin. Clergy are overwhelmed. Ministry feels more like tri-

age than shepherding.

As John Mark Comer writes in *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, “Hurry is a form of violence against the soul.”

It also kills hospitality. We can’t love people well when we’re rushing past them. Love takes time. It interrupts our schedule. It’s inefficient.

The question we must ask is simple but difficult: Are we too busy to love well?

Returning to the Gospel

The solution isn’t strategic planning or better systems. It’s simpler — and deeper: repentance and renewal. We must return to the Gospel with fresh eyes and open hearts.

Many of us have grown numb to the beauty of salvation. We’ve forgotten what it felt like to be rescued by grace. We go through the motions of faith, comfortable and complacent.

But Christ wants to shake us awake. He invites us to rediscover our need for Him, to remember what He’s done, and to believe again that He changes lives — including our own. When we live in light of the Gospel, we become people who naturally embody His love, patience, and welcome.



Small Acts, Big Impact

We don’t need a church-wide overhaul to start living differently. It starts with you and me — in small moments, small choices, small acts of love.

Greet the person you don’t recognize. Smile at the stranger in the pew. Say “yes” when it would be easier to say “not now.” Slow down long enough to see the person in front of you.

These moments matter more than we know. They can be the difference between someone staying or leaving. Between despair and hope. Between a life without God and a life forever changed by Him.

The Reputation We Were Meant For

Hebrews 13:2 says, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” Perhaps it’s angels. Or perhaps it’s future saints — just waiting to be welcomed into the family of God.

This is the reputation the Catholic Church was meant to have. Not just as the Church of theological richness, but as the Church of warm, generous, life-giving welcome. You don’t have to be a staff member or a leader to make it happen. You just have to be open.

Hospitality that leaves a mark isn’t flashy. It’s not complicated. It’s just Gospel love, lived out one person at a time. **Mallory Smyth, Catholic World Report**



Pope's prayer intention for July

Formation in discernment: Listening, reflecting, acting

Introduction: A Bangkok Epiphany

Last month's Caritas Asia regional meeting in Bangkok was meant to be days of strategic planning and business sessions. We had gathered to discuss vision statements, set timelines, and approve budgets. Yet it was an unplanned intervention by Victor Genina, the Director of Integral Human Development of Caritas Internationalis in Rome that for me became the heart of our gathering. He reminded us that no plan, however well crafted, can flourish without prayerful discernment: "We must listen first to what the Spirit is telling us, then read the signs of our time in that light." In that moment, I recognised how easily — even within the Church — we can forget that every plan, every programme, every pastoral initiative must grow out of prayerful listening.

Victor's words echoed in my heart: "How is the Spirit calling us? How are we reading the signs of the times?"

It reminded me of Pope Francis' July prayer intention: "For formation in discernment. Let us pray that we might again learn how to discern, to know how to choose paths of life and reject everything that leads us away from Christ and the Gospel." In a world saturated by noise — fake news, competing agendas, personal anxieties — discernment is not optional. It is essential. But what does it really mean, and how do we form ourselves to discern well?

1. Foundations of Discernment: Prayer, Scripture, and the Heart

Pope Francis' Wisdom - Prayer

In his catechesis and speeches, Pope Francis has repeatedly stressed that discernment is rooted in prayer and intimacy with God. "Prayer is an indispensable aid to spiritual discernment, especially when it involves the affections... it allows us to enter into intimacy with the Lord," he taught. He reminded us that discernment applies not only to big decisions but also to the daily choices we make: how we live, love, serve, and grow.

Sr Fatima Emmanuel, founder of Samaritan Hope Home, echoes this by pointing to John 15:5: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me, you can do nothing." She adds, "We need to cultivate a close relationship with Him to know His will for us."

Scripture as Our Guiding Light

God's Word is our truest compass in the art of discernment.

Fr George Harrison, parish priest of the Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam, recalls a moment that shaped his journey: "You must pray and discern well your call," his parish priest once told him. That advice opened his heart to a deeper truth: discernment must begin with God - and with wisdom.

"Wisdom," he says, "comes from God, revealed in Scripture to help us walk justly."

To discern is to see what lies beneath the surface, to sense what's hidden or unclear.

Fr George points us to Proverbs:

"Wisdom is a tree of life to those who hold her fast" (3:18),

and "On the lips of the discerning is found wisdom" (10:13).

When we hold fast to God's Word, we begin to see with His light.



PRAYER PRISM

Fr Fabian Dicom

Conscience and Critical Reflection

Sr Theresa Chew FdCC, a Canossian sister trained in spiritual accompaniment, highlights that discernment is the ability to distinguish right from wrong and demands a well-formed conscience. "It helps us prioritise effectively, align choices with our values, and understand situations more consciously," she says. Her method includes critical thinking, attentiveness to spiritual movements, prayer, and openness to different perspectives. The conscience, thus shaped, becomes the ground on which the Spirit sows seeds of clarity and truth.

Fr Paul Dass SJ, a Jesuit priest committed to spiritual formation and pastoral care, emphasises the need to "sift through the movements of our hearts" so that we may choose in line with the Holy Spirit. For him, the fruit of good discernment is an ever-deepening growth in faith, hope, and love. "This is how we measure discernment. This is how we will know that we are carrying out God's will in our lives."

In a Church facing real social, political, and ecological challenges, the call to discernment becomes not just spiritual — but urgent. Especially in Malaysia, where religious and cultural diversity, economic inequality, and ecological degradation converge, the ability to listen deeply to the Spirit is a vital pathway for the Church to respond prophetically and compassionately.

2. Daily Practices: From Routine to Revelation

Embracing the Ordinary

Christina Wang, a lay consecrated member of the Focolare Movement shares a transformative insight: "I used to think discernment was only about big decisions... but now I see it as allowing God into my everyday life." She describes 'inviting' God into her daily decisions, like setting up the table, washing dishes or even how she makes her bed in the morning. Through this, discernment becomes not only a decision-making process but a relationship — a continual conversation with God in the ordinariness of life.

Melanie Siaw, a peacebuilder from Friends Peace Teams, deepens this understanding: "I have learned to welcome and appreciate doubts and questions from my curious heart, as wonderful pathways to living a life grounded in discernment." She describes how she listens for inward guidance from God in silence, testing insights with spiritual

companions: "Is the insight arising from love and truth or from my distress?" For her, discernment is a joyful, unending cycle of attentiveness, response, and reflection.

Catherine Wang, programme manager of Caritas Malaysia and a member of the Focolare Movement, reflects: "Discernment is the space where Love takes the lead." For her, discernment is about pausing long enough to truly listen. It's in the silence, the waiting, the wrestling, that the Spirit gently speaks. A white dove in an old picture she once saved reminds her of the Holy Spirit — whispering, patient, and kind. And each time we choose to love, even in small ways, she says, "we are already discerning."

Clearing the Noise

Jude Manikam, a companion on the journey of faith, recalls voices that have shaped him: M. Scott Peck's call to honesty, Anthony de Mello's invitation to attention, and Ron Rolheiser's emphasis on reflection. These

become steps for discernment: be honest with yourself, clear the inner noise, and reflect deeply. Jude asks, "Where is God in all this?" and then, "What can I do about it?" His questions echo the Ignatian method of discernment, where desolation and consolation become signposts of God's presence or absence.

Accompaniment and Community

Fr Paul Kee CSsR, a gifted homilist who brings compassion, wisdom, and practical insight, reminds us that discernment is not a solitary act: "Stay close to people who help you grow in faith." Whether family, friends, or spiritual mentors, they help us clarify, challenge, and confirm our choices. As Pope Francis highlighted in his vision of synodality, the Spirit speaks through the community.

3. Communal and Synodal Discernment: Walking Together in the Spirit

Reading the Signs of the Times

Franciscan Friar Fr Esmond Chua OFM reflects on St Francis of Assisi, who, beyond simply opening the Bible, discerned through "situations, circumstances, and creation." For us, this means allowing the Spirit to speak through current realities — climate change, migration, poverty, polarisation. Melanie Siaw's approach mirrors this: discerning not only within oneself but with awareness of the community and the wider world.

Victor's reminder at the Caritas gathering becomes more urgent: unless we listen to the Spirit and read the signs of the times in that light, we risk becoming bureaucratic rather than prophetic.

Synodal Gatherings as Schools of Discernment

Communal discernment, such as in synodal

consultations, invites us to hold tensions, to wait for the Spirit to speak through consensus. As Jude says, it is not always clear, but it is always meaningful. Sr Theresa affirms that this process fosters personal growth and communal transformation. It brings life-changing impact when done sincerely and inclusively.

From Listening to Action

Fr Esmond reminds us: discernment is both active and contemplative. It is not enough to say, "Let me pray about it," and vanish. "Grace cooperates with nature," he says. We must look, listen, and then act. Our response to the Spirit must bear fruit in decisions, priorities, and courageous steps forward - even when the path ahead is uncertain. Action becomes the final expression of our trust in what we have prayerfully heard.

4. Risks, Sacrifices, and the Courage to Choose

Letting Go and Trusting

Discernment often invites us to let go of what is comfortable or familiar in order to choose what is life-giving. Sr Fatima reminds us that this includes the courage to walk paths that require trust and sacrifice. Fr Paul Kee emphasises that discernment involves asking, "Is this choice helping me grow in love, faith and truth? Is this choice leading me to become more like Jesus?" Letting go, then, is not about rejecting what is good, but choosing what brings us closer to Christ.

Trust and Obedience

Sr Fatima echoes 1 Thessalonians 5:24: "The one who calls you is faithful, and He will do it." Obedience is not passive submission but active trust in God's unfolding plan. Fr George affirms: "A good discernment will never fail you; it will only take you through the right path, a path of attaining clarity and wise living."

Living with Uncertainty

We will not always have clarity. Jude admits, "I'm not sure how it will turn out, but I will try to walk the path God is inviting me to walk." This vulnerability, when embraced in faith, becomes strength. Melanie shows how each act becomes a feedback loop for further discernment. Every moment becomes a new step in the journey.

Conclusion: Formed to Discern, Empowered to Act

Formation in discernment is formation of the heart. It is not merely a technique but a way of life: listening in prayer, wrestling with Scripture, consulting companions, reading the world's groanings, and finally, acting with courage and hope.

As Pope Francis once prayed, may we continue to learn "to discern, to choose paths of life and reject everything that leads us away from Christ and the Gospel." May his legacy live on in us - in our listening hearts, our discerning spirits, and our bold actions for love and justice.

And may the Church of Malaysia, like that day in Bangkok, remember that every strategy, every initiative, must flow from the Spirit's invitation to listen, reflect, and act in Christ's name. This is how we become not just planners - but pilgrims of the Spirit.

Fr Fabian Dicom is the National Director of Caritas Malaysia





Mother Mary gently leading me along the way just like how she leads us to Jesus [I prayed many Rosaries along the way...]



Some unique and hilarious stuff along the way.



My Camino Angel.



Crossing a river in the forest.

Cynthia Fernandez

One of the most popular and sacred pilgrimages in the world is the Way of St James, leading to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain — home to the Shrine of the Apostle James. Pope Alexander once declared it one of the three great pilgrimages of Christendom, alongside Jerusalem and the Via Francigena to Rome.

The Camino Primitivo, or “Original Way,” is the oldest known route to Santiago. I walked a section of this historic path, starting in Lugo, a Galician city, covering the final 100 km required to qualify as a pilgrim.

The Seed of the Journey

Sometime in mid-2024, the thought of walking the Camino took root in my heart. I had heard about it from friends, though I didn’t know much about the pilgrimage itself. Then, at a Bible session last year, Msgr James Gnanapiragasam shared—during a tea break — that he had recently completed the Camino. When I expressed my interest, he encouraged me to try the minimum 100km stretch. I was inspired by his recommendation and reminded that age is no barrier to pilgrimage.

Excited, I suggested the idea to my sisters — that we do a “Sisters Camino” together in May. Everyone was enthusiastic, having heard about it from their own friends. But by January, one by one, they had to pull out. Still, being a Jubilee Year, I was determined to follow through with my initial plan.

I had no idea what I was getting into, no route, no preparation. I began searching for a local organiser and, by grace, found a group scheduled for the same timeframe. Though I had missed their deadline, I signed up anyway.

Preparation and Departure

In February, I began training — mostly on my own, and once a week with three newly found friends who were also joining the same pilgrimage. We broke in our hiking boots with proper socks, hoping to avoid blisters. A checklist was shared, and over time, I gathered everything I needed: energy bars, medication, dry-fit and waterproof clothing, and even packed a hiking pole, just in case.

On the day of departure, I was ready to leave everything behind and begin this sacred journey, with my 15kg bag, from my doorstep to the Tomb of St James. On the way to the airport, I prayed, surrendering the next 10 days to God, trusting fully in His grace and mercy.

Arrival in Spain

After a long journey from KLIA, I arrived at Santiago de Compostela around 9.00pm. The sky was still bright. A one-hour taxi ride brought me to Lugo. When I reached the apartment, I was greeted by the sweet song of a magpie in the tree outside — it filled me with joy and a deep sense of welcome, as though God Himself was gently whispering, “You are not alone.”

That night, I received my Pilgrim Passport (Credencial) — a crucial document to record

My Camino de Santiago: A Jubilee Year Pilgrimage

my journey. I would need to collect at least two stamps per day from churches, cafés, or accommodations along the final 100km. Upon registration, a QR code confirming my pilgrimage was sent to my email.

Starting in Lugo

The next morning, after a restful sleep, I prayed *Lauds* with my two Camino Amigos. After breakfast, we attended the 10.00am Sunday Mass at Santa María Cathedral in Lugo. With its majestic mix of Romanesque and Gothic architecture, the cathedral has stood since the 12th century — a symbol of Galicia’s enduring faith. The Mass, celebrated in Spanish, was attended by families, the elderly, and pilgrims. I followed along using the English text on my phone.

Later, we walked the full loop atop the Muralla Romana de Lugo, a two-km stretch of ancient Roman walls, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The view over the city was serene. As we walked, we enjoyed the music of local bands playing bagpipes, drums, and tambourines. Folk dancers, young and old, filled the atmosphere with celebration. It was the perfect prelude to the spiritual journey ahead.

Hitting the Camino Trail

The next morning, our Camino officially began with 9.00am. Mass in the Chapel of the Virgin of the Big Eyes, Lugo’s beloved patron saint. After Mass, we met fellow pilgrims from Malaysia — what a joyful coincidence!

As we stepped out of the cathedral, I spotted scallop shells on the pavement, soon followed by yellow arrows — guiding us downhill, under a tunnel, and past a Roman bridge, now a pedestrian path. I noticed kilometre markers counting upward, tracking our progress.

The first day’s walk was relatively short but profoundly moving. Though I saw few other pilgrims, the scenery, wildflowers, forested trails, and rolling hills, was breathtaking. The Camino markers were easy to follow, and we met the Malaysian pilgrims again at a rest stop.

Days on the Road

Each day, I followed the familiar shells and arrows, completing a designated number of kilometres. Our accommodations varied



— hotels, rural homes, and cozy flats — all including breakfast and dinner. The local people were incredibly warm and quick to help whenever I seemed unsure. On Day 4, after walking 23km, I realised my accommodation was still an hour away and the pickup wouldn’t arrive for two and a half hours. So, I continued walking. Along the way, I met my Camino Angel — a Sister from the Daughters of St Mary of Providence. She graciously insisted on taking me to my homestay, nestled in the countryside. We resumed our walk together the next day, and before parting, she shared a beautiful message from St Luis Guanella, their founder: “Whoever walks with God walks happily, always going with joy in life.”

Walking solo worked well for me. The quiet was a gift — time for self-reflection and connection with God. Each trail revealed a different landscape: gravel roads, forest paths, farmland, medieval bridges, Roman roads. The terrain shifted from paved to dirt, from climbs to peaceful descents. Often, I walked alone for long, undisturbed stretches — just me, nature, and God. Ancient churches from the 8th to 12th centuries would appear unexpectedly, and I would pause to pray for the souls resting nearby.

The Final Stretch

On Day 6, we began early, anticipating a longer walk and many more pilgrims on the trail. The excitement was contagious. As we resumed our journey from the previous day’s endpoint, the atmosphere became more festive. Pilgrims greeted one another with “Buen Camino”, some stopping for photos or snacks. I reached the 10,000km marker, a surreal milestone. It felt both encouraging and daunting.

Fatigue had set in, but with it came a deeper lesson:

Resilience isn’t always loud. Sometimes, it’s the quiet voice that whispers, “I can do this,” even when everything inside says otherwise. I felt like a child asking, “Are we there yet?” — but I kept going.

As we neared Santiago de Compostela, the joy and emotion were palpable. Pilgrims from around the world, each on their own journey, converged toward this sacred city. There were

ladies handing out Tarta de Santiago and chocolates, Galician bagpipers, and street drummers filling the streets with celebration.

I was overwhelmed with gratitude. I had arrived — safe, sound, and injury-free. Every step had led to this sacred moment.

Arrival at the Cathedral

At the Pilgrim’s Office, I presented my stamped Pilgrim Passport and QR code. The volunteers verified everything before issuing my Compostela, the traditional Latin certificate affirming my pilgrimage for spiritual reasons. I also received a Certificate of Distance, listing my starting point and total kilometres walked.

Then, in the chapel, I offered a tearful prayer of thanksgiving, remembering God’s presence through every moment of the journey. A presentation of The Beatitudes of the Pilgrim offered a final reflection before the evening Pilgrim’s Mass at the cathedral — packed with fellow pilgrims and locals alike.

The Final Mass and Farewell

The next day, we attended an English Mass at the chapel, celebrated by Fr Manuel (Manny) Domingo. I was invited to read the Responsorial Psalm. Fr Manny began by asking us to share our countries, routes, and modes of travel — on foot, bicycle, or horseback. During the Prayers of the Faithful, we lit candles and voiced our prayer intentions aloud.

Later, I returned to the Cathedral and was fortunate to witness the majestic Botafumeiro — a 1.5-metre-high thurible swung across the Cathedral in a 65-metre arc. Afterwards, I visited the Tomb of the Apostle St James, located beneath the Main Altar. It was a sacred moment of closure.

Coming Home, Heart Full

As I sat at the airport awaiting my flight home, my heart was overflowing with gratitude — for the courage to follow through, for the grace to complete this journey, and for the pilgrims I met along the way — Two sisters who took time off from babysitting; a brother-sister duo concerned for their sick mother back home; a 69-year-old Japanese woman who walked solo for two weeks with her backpack and had just celebrated her birthday; students who played music to encourage others; a family accompanying their elderly mother in a wheelchair; young families with children.

Every encounter added richness to my journey.

Final Words

Make the decision. Do the Camino. You won’t regret it. You’re stronger than you think.

Be faithful, Christ-like exemplars

Two giants of the Christian faith I look up to went home to glory in recent months. Jimmy Carter, who died on December 29 last year, was the 39th President of the United States from 1977 to 1981 while Pope Francis who passed on April 21 this year had served as the Papal Pontiff for 12 years since March 2013.

Both were men of God who lived their faith as best they could, showing the world what it means to be a faithful follower of Christ. To me, both sought to bring faith, hope, love, peace and reconciliation to our broken world.

Jimmy Carter faithfully served his church, Maranatha Baptist Church in Plains, Georgia as a catechist of adults for many years. As President of the United States of America, he successfully negotiated the Camp David Accords, a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel signed in 1978. After his presidency, he started the Carter Centre to promote human rights and was best known for helping to build houses for the nonprofit Habitat for Humanity.

Pope Francis brought a compassionate loving embrace of the needy, the poor and marginalised, the prisoners, the migrants and refugees, men, women and children and many others who needed his loving touch to show them that they were loved by God and that they were remembered. He reached out to those left aside and ignored, both within and without the Church. He brought a strong focus to uniting the different streams of the Christian faith and in urging the many diverse religions of the world to come together as people of peace in our world

ruined by prejudice, enmity, hatred and violence.

I wonder how we can embody the legacies of these two faithful exemplars of faith, hope, love, peace and reconciliation in Jesus Christ in our circles of influence, whether in our parishes and local churches, our schools, colleges and workplaces, our tamans and kampung, and our society at large?

Who, in our mundane commonplaces – be it our families, our young people, our bosses and colleagues, our parishes, our BECs, our Bible Study groups, etc – are the men and women of faith, hope, love, peace and reconciliation that we can look up to and who inspire us to be faithful servants of God wherever we are? Can you identify such people of faith and doers of good in your midst?

Who are the exemplars who look after the young ones in the faith and carry the Gospel message into our neighbourhoods, the alleys and byways? God has set them apart (i.e. “consecrated”) be they priests or pastors, catechists, Sunday School teachers, Bible teachers or evangelists and many others who lovingly and caringly look after the needs of the Lost, the Little, the Last, the Least and the Lonely. They are our living visual examples of faithful ones who are the doers of God’s work in our midst.

In Scripture, I am reminded of the great prophet Moses who had his assistant



Growing in Christ

TAN KONG BENG

Joshua and who prepared him to lead God’s chosen people and who met God face-to-face in the Tent of Meeting (Deuteronomy 31: 14-15).

I recall Barnabas who went in search of Paul in Tarsus and who brought him to a joint-ministry among believers in Antioch (Acts 11: 25-26). This same Barnabas had introduced Paul to the Christian leaders in Jerusalem who were wary and sceptical of him (Acts 9: 26-27). This Paul (or Saul as he was once known) was previously their

most fervent persecutor and now a strong believer in the Christ who had spoken to him on the Damascus Road (Acts 9: 1-9).

I remember Paul the Apostle speaking of himself as a “father” in warm and encouraging words to young Timothy, his co-worker in his missionary endeavours, emboldening him in his ministry in the Ephesian church (1-2 Timothy). We also see Paul writing to his co-worker, Titus, urging him to be a lover of good (Titus 1: 8) and to do good works (2:6) as an example to the Church in Crete so that they might devote themselves to good works (3: 8, 14).

Finally, let us look to the Lord to walk in His footsteps that we might be a people of faith, hope, love, peace and reconciliation to others by being compassionate and showing mercy to others as in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37).

In this well-known parable, Jesus tells this penetrating story of compassion and showing mercy to a lawyer who sought to justify himself, “And who is my neighbour?” he asked Jesus.

A man (most likely a Jew) was waylaid by robbers who beat him up and left him half-dead on the road. Along came a priest and then a Levite. Both avoided the badly injured robbery victim. An unnamed Samaritan came by. He was a half-Jew, despised and considered ethnically and religiously unclean by his Jewish cousins. On seeing the injured man lying there on the roadside, the narrative informs, the Samaritan had compassion on him. This Samaritan brought the seriously hurt man to an inn and took care of him. He then pays the innkeeper to care for the injured victim and promises that he would return to pay all the costs incurred.

Jesus asked the lawyer who he thought was a ‘neighbour’ to the injured man. The lawyer replied, “the one who showed mercy to the wounded man”. And Jesus said to the lawyer, “You go and do likewise.”

May the Lord show us the exemplars of faith and doers of good in our midst for us to be inspired to join them and together, by God’s grace, we go and do likewise, showing compassion and mercy, for the greater glory of God.

After many years in Christian service, Tan Kong Beng is seeking a new season of vocation and life lived in God’s ways. He worships and serves in Subang Jaya Gospel Centre.



GETTING SIDETRACKED

Agnes Ong

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a Catholic in possession of a good seat in the church pews during Sunday Mass might, at some point during the sermon, have their mind wander far from the pulpit.

And if you’re a good Catholic, you know exactly what I mean.

That was what happened to me during the last Mass on Pentecost Sunday - until something the priest said caught my attention.

He quoted: “My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?” (John 14:2)

That line stopped me in my tracks, not because it was familiar but because it resonated deeply with me.

You see, for the past three years, I’ve often stayed in shared rooms whenever I travel alone.

Stepping Out of My Comfort Zone

Three years ago, I made a deliberate decision to take a career break to indulge my love of learning while travelling.

As I prepared to step away from the job I had loved for 14 and a half years, friends and former teammates challenged me to stretch beyond my comfort zone, not just intellectually but also in how I navigated the world.

So, I said yes. Yes, to venturing without fixed itineraries. Yes, to uncertain travel routes. Yes, to trying new forms of accommodation – including dormitories

(dorms) and couch-surfing –something I had often dismissed before.

Dormitory Living, Then and Now

Dorm living now is very different from when I first started travelling close to 25 years ago.

In the 1990s, right up to the early 2000s, dorms for budget travellers were mainly dank, dark, and gritty, the bathrooms barely tolerable. Bunk beds came with stained, thin, bug-infested mattresses.

The “security” comprised laughably flimsy, weak locks and many dorms were located in sketchy, poorly lit areas of the city.

Clearly, it is not an ideal choice of accommodation in any way, shape or form for any traveller. For women travelling solo, the risks felt magnified.

Since then, dorm living has undergone significant improvements.

First, most dorms offer women-only rooms, typically accommodating 4 to 12 people, depending on the size of the hostel.

Second, they are conveniently located in central, walkable neighbourhoods or near public transport, such as buses or rail.

Third, some offer a great way to meet and socialise with other travellers, especially if one stays in a youth hostel where there are planned activities. At one youth hostel in Barcelona, I joined a morning city tour. Later that same day, I learned how to make a simple Spanish dinner of pinchos with people staying at the hostel.

My room in the Father’s House



In addition, dorms may provide kitchen access, enabling residents to prepare simple meals or enjoy a quick snack, thereby minimising food budget.

Other improvements include lockers for private use and security cameras in the common areas. While these are not foolproof, they are a vast improvement over what had existed before.

Finally, there’s the affordability factor. Dorms are still one of the most budget-friendly options for solo or long-term travellers. Low cost, great locations, and a built-in community make them a practical choice for frugal travellers.

Longing for a Room of My Own

Despite all those advantages, the truth is, nothing compares to having a room of your own.

This is because a private room means peace and quiet. And rest.

It means not having to be alert every waking moment, keeping an eye on your belongings or assessing the vibe of strangers around you.

It means silence when you want or need it. And being able to finally exhale after being “switched on” for days.

There were days when I did throw in the towel on dorm living, checking myself into a private room because I hungered deeply for privacy.

Having a space that’s mine that asks nothing of me and a door I can close to sit in

solitude and stillness is bliss.

Jesus Prepares a Room

That is why what Jesus said resonated deeply with me.

He said: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you may also be where I am.” (John 14:3)

In Jesus’ time, most ordinary people didn’t have rooms of their own. They would have lived in one or two-room homes. Only the wealthy could afford private rooms.

So, when Jesus says He is preparing a room for me – not a narrow bed in a crowded dorm room with sliding pod doors or flimsy bed curtains, but a room of my own! – that touched me deeply.

To my way of thinking, it tells me I am no longer anonymous, a stranger, or poor. That I am expected, wanted and valued.

That I am seen.

Jesus goes beyond that. He’s not just giving me a space in the Father’s house. He is also personally preparing it and promises to take me there Himself.

I mean, wow. Just wow!

That, in itself, is a staggering epiphany for me because it answers my personal need to belong and be private. And for peace.

Imagine a room prepared by my Lord, who knows me best and wants me to be with Him.

I am truly blessed.

Agnes Ong is a self-professed curious traveller and lifelong learner with a lamentable tendency to get into sidetracked experiences. She aspires to explore as many historical UNESCO sites as possible, funds permitting. Agnes has a travel-slash-work-slash-dump everything IG at @agnes_gets_sidetracked



Fr Ron Rolheiser

What to do when there's nothing you can do

What do you do when a wound or a loss leaves you hopelessly disconsolate and there's nothing you can do to amend the situation?

As well, what do you do or say when you are trying to console someone who is paralysed by loss? For example, what do you say to someone who is keeping vigil at the bedside of a loved one who is dying young? What do you say to someone who has just lost a loved one to suicide?

What do you do or say when you are helpless to do anything practical to amend a fractured situation?

The poet Rainer Marie Rilke once received a letter from a man who had just lost a loved one, was fighting despair, and was desperately searching for anything to keep his heart from breaking.

Rilke sent him these words: "Don't be afraid to suffer — take your heaviness and give it back to the earth's own weight; the mountains are heavy, the oceans are heavy." (Sonnets to Orpheus) These words echo words from the Book of Lamentations (3,29) where the sacred author tells us that, sometimes, all you can do is to put your mouth to the dust and wait.

Sometimes, all we can do is to put our mouths to the dust and wait! Sometimes,

we must give the heaviness of our grief back to the earth itself.

It's curious that we can accept those words and the patience they ask for when the pain that afflicts us is physical rather than emotional and psychological. For instance, if we have an accident and suffer a badly broken leg, we simply accept that, no matter the frustration, we will be incapacitated for a number of weeks or months and there's nothing that can be done about it. We simply must accept the situation and let nature take its course. To our detriment, we don't often accept emotional and psychological fractures in the same way. When our heart is broken, we want a fix in short order. We don't want our heart on crutches or in a wheelchair for some weeks or months.

Well, not all losses and heartbreaks are the same. There are losses that are less paralyzing, where despite a bitter blow to the heart, there are already elements of consolation and healing present. We experience this, for example, at the funeral of a loved one who lived and died in such a way that, despite losing her to death, at a deeper level we already feel a certain peace, even in her departure.

But there are losses where, for a period afterwards, there is no consolation and

there are no words (however true and faith-filled they may be) which take away the bitterness and pain of our loss. For example, I have seen this at times at the funeral of someone who died by suicide. In that raw moment, there is nothing that we can do or say that will lift from the dust the hearts of the loved ones who are left behind and grieving. The words that are needed, words which express our faith and our hope, will be helpful later, but they lose their existential power when the grief is so raw.

I remember a funeral I attended several years ago. The woman to whom we were saying an earthly farewell had died of cancer, still young, in her early fifties. Understandably, her husband was disconsolate. At the reception after the church service, one of his close friends, trying to cheer him up, said to him: "She's with God; she's in a better place." Despite being a man of faith and having just walked out of a church service that publicly celebrated that faith, his response was: "I know you mean well; but that's the last thing I need to hear today."

The words of faith we speak to each other in the face of bitter loss and death are true. This woman, no doubt, was in a better place. But in a moment of raw grief, words will not have much emotional or psychologi-

cal impact.

So, what can we offer others in situations like these? What can others offer us when we are paralyzed by grief?

We can offer our helplessness, our muted selves, our inability to say or do anything that will take the heaviness away. And perhaps nothing is as fruitful in a tragic situation than the empathy that flows out of mutual helplessness. We might still utter the words of faith, but we need to accept that they will bear their full fruit only later.

What our grief-muted selves are saying in moments of helplessness is what both the Book of Lamentations and the poet Rilke are saying: Sometimes, all you can do is to put your mouth to the dust and wait - and by doing that you will be giving your heaviness back to the earth itself.

Paradoxically, the acceptance of heaviness can be the one thing that can lift our spirits.

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

I recently attended a series of talks on caring for the Earth and the effects of global warming. Ironically, this was during yet another set of days when the sun was scorching hot and there seemed to be no respite from the heat, except to retreat indoors, preferably with the air-conditioning on. At other times, we have lots of rain, so much that our concrete cities are unable to cope with flash floods and the damage they cause. Really, if anyone doubts the reality of global warming (and yes there are many in this category!), they just need to come and experience our current heatwave and then comment. But sadly, there are the naysayers — after our recent talk in the parish, we received a WhatsApp questioning the whole notion.

While earlier popes alluded to environmental concerns, Pope Francis brought Care for Creation to centre stage in the Church through his encyclical *Laudato Si'* in 2015. It invited the world, and not just Catholics, to consider the reality of the Cry of the Earth as he invited us to look around the earth and its conditions and consider carefully our role as stewards, rather than exploiters of creation. He reminded us all that we are connected with each other, with the natural environment, and with those who will come after us. What was important was that he also linked it to the Cry of the Poor, who were the most affected by the climate crisis.

He called us to ask with humility: "What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?" He offered a vision defined by the conviction that "...we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it."

At that point, it seemed as if there was a



As I was Contemplating

FR GERARD THERAVIAM

heightened response to the crisis at international as well as at local levels. It seemed to capture the attention of the international as well as local stage — conferences and resolutions and protocols were set in place. It looked as if we were waking up but sadly, the COVID-19 Crisis came along and our attention was cast elsewhere and the momentum was lost. While governments, communities and individuals

have moved somewhat, it seems as if current immediate economic gain seems to triumph instead of a more serious look at long-term impact of our current actions.

In 2023, Pope Francis released *Laudate Deum*, a follow-up document to highlight the urgent need for a more sustained response to the ecological crisis in the light of the climate crisis and developments in the last eight years. The follow-up itself was unprecedented but the reality was that the world was not really listening and acting fast enough! As Pope Francis declared, "the world in which we live is collapsing and may be near breaking point".

There have indeed been a lot of talks at inter-governmental levels annually on the issue of climate change. While there has been some progress, the principles agreed on have not yet been implemented, and national interests are too often placed before the common good.

So how does this translate at a parish level?

One of the goals that was articulated at our last parish assembly was the need to conscientise our parishioners of our role in Ecology by refusing and reducing our excessive consumption, reusing, recycling and repurposing - being good stewards of the Earth. Later this year we intend to declare ourselves as an 'Ecological Parish'

The Cry of the Earth

just as the Archdiocese declares itself as an Ecological Archdiocese, putting ourselves firmly on the journey, recognizing that 'Rome wasn't built in a day' and we will gradually take a step-by-step approach. Much of our efforts will have to be on creating mind-set and attitudinal changes — people need to be convinced and then empowered to be eco-warriors.

We have had a small but active *Laudato Si'* Ministry. While initially it educated parishioners largely through the online bulletin. Whether this was successful is questionable as sadly, few actually read it attentively although we did screen some videos before mass too. However there have actually been efforts at recycling and upscaling stuff, sometimes for bazaars that have brought in funds. It has also make us start composting, although I found that while I sort out my trash, put aside my bags and wash my reusable plastics to recycle and also have a compost container in my kitchen, our cleaner was taking the easier way out by throwing out my compostable refuse together with the general garbage. Thus I realise there is a need to educate people at all levels as to the 'why' of our efforts. And yes, it involves the path that may be more laborious but if people understand why, then only will they participate in our efforts.

So at the parish, we have a KlothBin to collect old fabric to be recycled, in addition to the recycling area for metal, glass, plastic and paper as well as IT recyclables but sadly here, some people just throw out stuff without sorting it and it can often leave a mess!

There has also been much interest in our garden and greening the church compound, which encouragingly has had some youth joining us in our efforts recently.

It has been an uphill task to get people to wash plates at the coffee morning instead of using paper or God forbid, polystyrene containers. People have got so used to

convenience, rather than doing the right thing. Some have started to bring their containers to *tapau* food home and that is encouraging. I personally have shopping bags and food containers and a tiffin carrier in my car and I see that in many others too.

We intend to use solar energy and harvest rainwater in our new building but that is still a work-in-progress. We have used giant fans in the cathedral rather than attempting to install expensive air-conditioning, given our high ceilings.

However, the bigger thing will be to refuse and reduce our excessive consumption. The phenomenon of online shopping has brought about convenience (but a lot of packaging!) but it also fuels buying as a result of greed rather than need. Can I ignore the alluring advertising and say NO to superfluous expenditure — and share the savings with the poor? Can I avoid the brand names that have unsustainable production practices? Can I do without luxuries and conveniences? Not easy at all, but we MUST begin to adopt sustainable lifestyles.

Is all this 'Too little, too late'? Yet, in this Jubilee Year of Hope we need to continue looking forward positively. Pope Francis reminds us that we must continue to hope, because to "say there is nothing to hope for.. would mean exposing humanity, especially the poorest, to the worst impacts of climate change."

Hope does not disappoint! (Romans 5:5). All this is by no means wishful thinking but based on our faith and conviction that the risen Christ reconciles all creatures to himself. Let us journey on together with Mother Earth and all creation.

Fr Gerard Theraviam is the Parish Priest of the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist in Kuala Lumpur, as well as the Spiritual Director to the World Community for Christian Meditation, Malaysia.

Little Catholics' Corner

Dear Children,

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus sends out seventy-two disciples to tell the people in the towns that He is coming, and to heal the sick.

He tells them that they should pray to the Lord of the harvest.

Jesus compares the souls of the people to a harvest. He needs people who will go out into the world and gather souls for Him. He tells the people that they should pray that God will send out these labourers.

Do you know who these people are? They are the priests and other missionaries who work to bring people to Jesus.

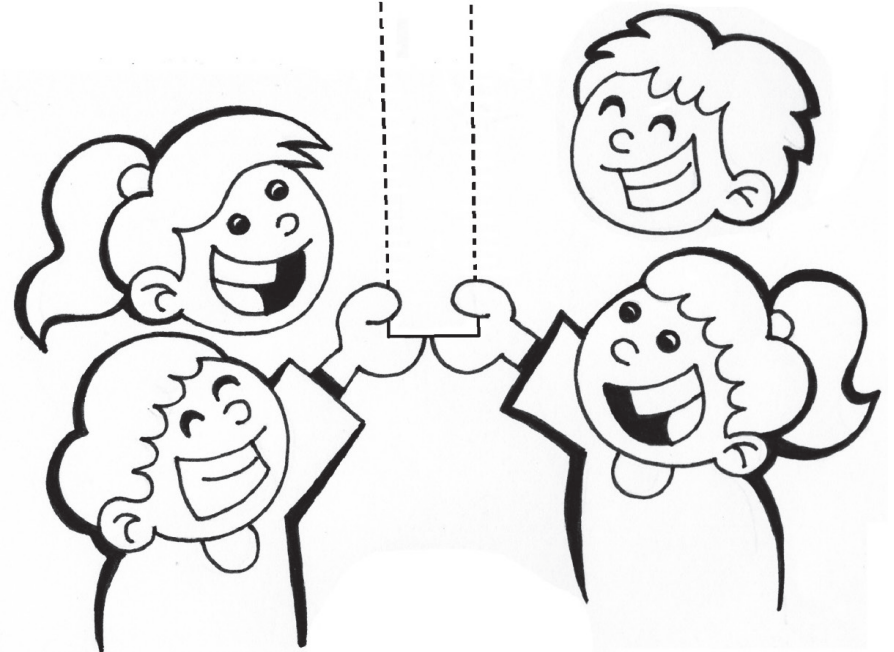
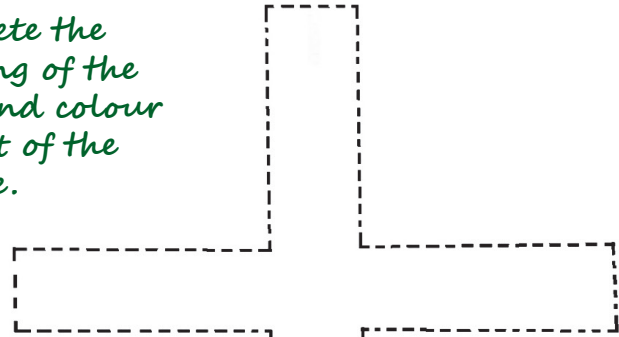
Do you think that God might be calling you to be a labourer in the harvest of souls?

Pray every day that you will know how you can best serve God.

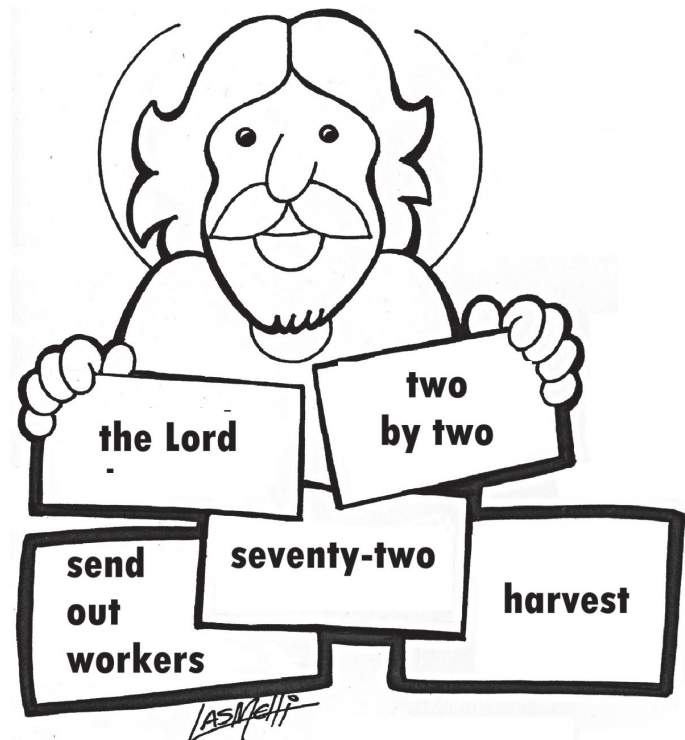
Also pray that God will send many holy priests and missionaries into the world.

Love
Aunty Eliz

Complete the drawing of the cross and colour the rest of the picture.



Fill in the blanks with the correct words from the word bank below.



Match-Up Puzzle: Jesus Sends out the 72 Disciples

Jesus gave the seventy-two disciples some instructions as He sent them out to the towns.

Can you find the right words to finish the phrases?

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Go your way; behold, I send you out as • | • road |
| 2. in the midst of • | • wolves |
| 3. Carry no purse, no bag, no • | • sandals |
| 4. and salute no one on the • | • you |
| 5. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this • | • wages |
| 6. And if a son of peace is there, your peace shall rest upon him; but if not, it shall return to • | • lambs |
| 7. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his • | • house |



1. lambs 2. wolves 3. sandals 4. road 5. house 6. you 7. wages

After this the Lord appointed others and sent them ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, "The is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask of the harvest, therefore, to into his harvest field.

(Luke 10: 1-2)



BRINGING THE WORD TO LIFE: 29th National SPM Bible Quiz

KUCHING: A spirit of faith, fellowship, and friendly competition filled the air at St Joseph's Private Secondary School on June 14, as 26 teams from across Kuching came together for the regional round of the 29th National SPM Bible Knowledge (BK) Quiz.

Anchored by the verse from *Acts 1:8* — “But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” — the event echoed the call to be modern-day witnesses of Christ through knowledge of Scripture.

The event kicked off with an opening prayer by Fr Stanley Goh, SJ, Regional Quiz Coordinator, followed by words of encouragement from Mr. Thomas Huo, representing the Federation of Christian Mission Schools in Malaysia (FCMSM). Students from SMK St. Joseph's Young Christian Students (YCS) led participants in praise and worship, centering the day on Christ.

Participants first sat for a written multiple-choice test on the Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles. Following this, they gathered in teams at the school atrium for the oral rounds. The oral segment tested their understanding through short-answer questions, speed rounds, and contextual analysis, offering a thorough and engaging examination of the two Biblical texts.



All participants and volunteers for the 29th National SPM BK Quiz.

After a day of intense competition, five teams emerged as winners, securing trophies and spots in the National Finals, scheduled for July 12, 2025, at Catholic High School, Petaling Jaya.

Despite the challenges, the atmosphere remained joyful and uplifting, as students

demonstrated their dedication and enthusiasm for Scripture. Volunteers, quiz officials, and supporters contributed to the warm and encouraging environment — a testament to how the Word of God continues to unite and inspire.

As the top five teams prepare to represent Kuching at the national level, the hope is that their journey with the Word will not end with the quiz but deepen into lifelong discipleship. May their knowledge, faith, and witness continue to reach the very ends of the earth.

EMPOWERING YOUNG ADULTS: CHOICE 108 WEEKEND

KUALA LUMPUR: More than just a weekend away, CHOICE 108 became a turning point for many — an experience of healing, growth, and rediscovering God. Thirty-four young adults between the ages of 24 and 40 gathered at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre (APC) for CHOICE weekend batch 108 recently. The three-day retreat focused on self-discovery, decision-making, and spiritual renewal.

The programme, tailored to the real struggles faced by young adults today, offered a safe space to pause, reflect, and reconnect with one's inner compass. Through workshops and small group sharing, participants were invited to examine their values, life choices, and direction with honesty and faith.

“It was an incredibly enriching experience that truly helped me reconnect with myself. I gained valuable insights and practical tools for discovering life's purpose. I left feeling refreshed and re-centred after just a few days,” shared Clarita.

Beyond personal growth, the weekend also fostered deep community and genuine connection. Facilitators and team members created a warm, welcoming environment that allowed participants to be vulnerable, authentic, and open. Many came in with fear, anxiety, or uncertainty — but left feeling



loved, supported, and seen.

Aaron Ambrose reflected, “For six years, I struggled to take that step towards change. This year, I finally said yes to CHOICE — and it changed everything. I was surrounded by people like me, guided by facilitators who shared their stories. My fears slowly melted away. I no longer struggle with social anxiety. My heart feels light. I didn't just find friends — I found family.”

For some, CHOICE became a space of divine clarity and spiritual awakening. Through the programme, many found peace with questions they had carried for years.

“CHOICE was my wake-up call,” said Sharel. “God used that weekend to answer

questions I'd been carrying for over 20 years — about my identity, purpose, and vocation. I came in distant from Jesus, but I left with a heart that is softer, braver, and open to His love. And through the people I met, I found more than support — I found a family in Christ.”

Juanita George Selvaraja echoed a similar experience: “In just 48 hours, I felt a deep connection with God I hadn't experienced in years. The fellowship, the worship, the sense of unity—it reminded me I'm not alone in this walk. The CHOICE camp wasn't just a retreat — it was a powerful encounter with God.”

For others, it was a weekend of unexpect-

ed joy and renewed purpose.

Adrian Thomas summed up his experience with a verse from John 15:16:

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.”

“I left CHOICE 108 with heartfelt lessons, joyful conversations, jokes, and deep connections with people from all walks of life. From serious reflections to unexpected palm readings (yes, that happened!), I walked away not just with memories, but with a renewed perspective and a deeper sense of God's purpose in my life. Thank you, CHOICE. Truly, this was a weekend that candled my doubts and ignited my faith.”

The retreat closed with heartfelt sharing, laughter, and renewed hope as participants reflected on how they had been moved, changed, and called forward. Many left with lasting friendships, a deepened relationship with God, and a commitment to living more intentionally. CHOICE 108 became a meaningful step for young adults seeking to live boldly, love deeply, and move forward with clarity, courage and a sense of belonging. **Monica Madonna, Kevin Anthony and Shireen Pereira**

Ashley Shammah Edward

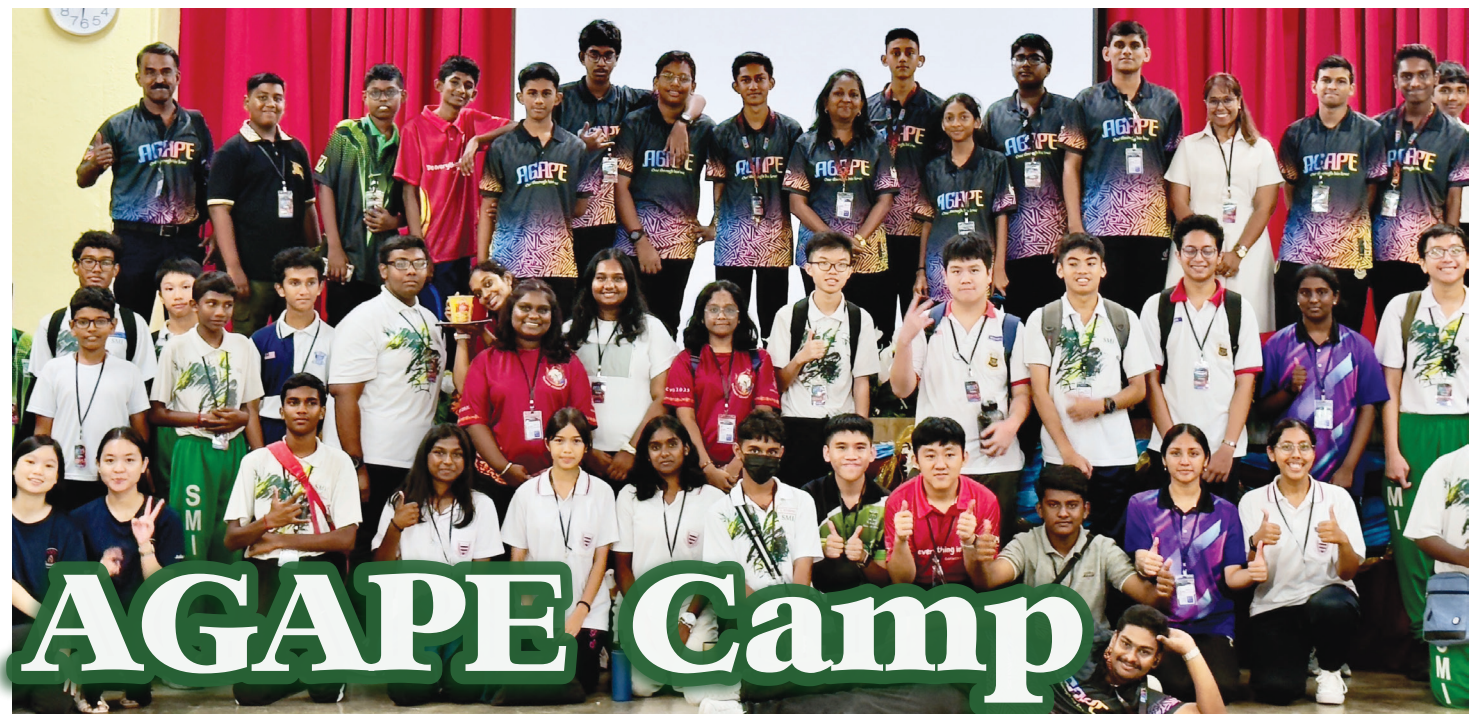
IPOH: After a 10-year hiatus, the Catholic Society of St Michael's Institution (SMI), organised the *AGAPE Camp: One Through His Love*. This day-long camp welcomed youth aged 13 to 19 from both Christian and non-Christian backgrounds, drawing participants from various schools: SMI, Methodist Girls' School (MGS), SMK Main Convent, SMJK Ave Maria Convent, SMK Anderson, and SMJK Sam Tet. A total of 70 students came together in fellowship and faith.

The name "AGAPE" captured the essence of the camp — a love that is unconditional, selfless, and divine. Its mission was to help young people discover the true meaning of love through God's eyes. In a world that often reduces love to fleeting emotions, AGAPE sought to reintroduce the theological weight of love as described in 1 John 4:8 — "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."

The day began at 7.00am with laughter, excitement, and joyful anticipation. The organising committee, always on their toes, extended a warm welcome to everyone, ensuring that the atmosphere was lively and inclusive. After an opening prayer by Teacher Advisor Puan Komathi and welcoming speeches, participants engaged in ice-breaking activities that fostered instant connections. Even at that early stage, it was clear that the Holy Spirit was at work.

A talk by Fr Stanley Antoni from the Church of St Joseph, Bagan Serai, challenged the youth to reflect deeply on their lives. He invited them to openly share the struggles they faced as young people today: social pressure, addiction, gender confusion, depression, gossip, and anxiety. These honest answers revealed the spiritual battles many are quietly fighting. Fr Stanley then guided them in thinking through these issues from a Christian perspective — focusing on how their attitude, actions, and faith could turn darkness into light. Their responses were creative, insightful, and full of hope.

The highlight of the morning was the celebration of the Holy Eucharist at St Michael's chapel, led by Fr Stanley. The moment was sacred and intimate, the air filled with incense and reverence. His homily, based on Matthew 5:34-37, struck a chord with everyone present. He reminded the youth: "Wrong is wrong,



ONE THROUGH HIS LOVE



no matter who you are. There is no such thing as 'you're too young'—truth doesn't change. Yes means yes, and no means no." His passionate delivery moved the room deeply — a testament to the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Next, an exhilarating Bible Hunt had hearts racing and minds working in teams. Afterward, the committee presented a short play titled *Unseen Hands*, about a sceptical boy whose friendship with a de-

vout Catholic girl leads him to find faith in God. The play was humorous yet meaningful, reminding us of our call to be fishers of men and salt of the earth.

The afternoon featured enriching sessions, starting with Gordon Jude Seneviratne, who led group discussions on "Loving Your Neighbour". He used interactive activities to explore the importance of compassion and inclusivity, sharing his personal experiences that

resonated deeply with the participants.

Following that was a heartfelt session by Ashley Cesca Shammah, titled *Unconditionally: You Are Loved More Than You'll Ever Know by Someone Who Died to Know You*. She gave the youth reflective questions, involved their group leaders, and shared her powerful testimony. Her authenticity brought many to tears, and several participants later expressed how much her talk had touched their hearts.

As the day neared its end, the OMPH Youth Ministry led a time of praise and worship. Hands were raised, voices soared in unison, and hearts united in gratitude and awe. The presence of God was palpable.

The camp concluded with the distribution of tokens of appreciation to challenge winners and guest speakers, followed by a joyful group photo session.

AGAPE Camp: One Through His Love was more than just a camp — it was a spiritual awakening. It reminded everyone that no matter the trials and tribulations we face, God's love is constant and unending. Through His love, we are made one. Even our struggles, when surrendered to Him, are woven into a greater plan for our lives.

Scholarship offer for Southeast Asian Catholic Youth

HONG KONG: St Francis University (SFU), a Catholic and government-recognised tertiary institution in Hong Kong, is offering full scholarships to Catholic students from Southeast Asia, providing them with an opportunity to pursue undergraduate studies in a faith-based academic environment.

The St Francis Scholarship for Southeast Asian Catholic Youth is aimed at supporting deserving students who demonstrate both academic potential and financial need. It reflects SFU's commitment to "Service with Love," and to nurturing a new generation of leaders grounded in Catholic values, social responsibility and global competence.

Promoting Faith, Knowledge and Social Mobility

The scholarship offers full tuition coverage for selected bachelor's degree programmes at SFU beginning in September 2025. Successful applicants will also benefit from on-campus learning-based

placements, which combine academic development with hands-on experience in various university departments.

SFU hopes the initiative will foster upward mobility among Catholic youth from the region, while encouraging cross-cultural collaboration between local and international students.

"This scholarship affirms our belief that education can transform lives and communities," said a representative from SFU. "We are committed to forming young people who will serve society with integrity and compassion."

Fields of Study

The scholarship supports undergraduate programmes under the university's Techno-Humanities Business Cluster, an interdisciplinary approach combining business, technology, humanities and the social sciences. Eligible programmes include:

- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Language and Culture.

- Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Translation Technology.
- Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons).
- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Artificial Intelligence.
- Bachelor of Science (Hons) in Digital Entertainment Technology.
- Bachelor of Social Sciences (Hons) in Social Care.
- Bachelor of Social Sciences (Hons) in Psychology.

Eligibility Criteria

To qualify, applicants must:

- Be a citizen of a Southeast Asian country;
- Be a practising Catholic;
- Be a high school graduate or possess equivalent qualifications;
- Fulfil the university's academic and English language entry requirements.

Additional Opportunities

Students who excel during their on-

campus placements may also receive a studentship, which offers financial assistance for living expenses while gaining valuable work experience in a structured, supportive environment.

Application Timeline

- Applications open: Now
- Application deadline: July 31, 2025
- Programme begins: September 2025

Building a Global Catholic Community

SFU believes that by welcoming Southeast Asian students into its learning community, the university will strengthen its Catholic identity while promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding.

The scholarship initiative is open to youth from all Southeast Asian countries, including Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and others.

For enquiries or to apply, email: give@sfu.edu.hk

‘Slaughter of innocents’ in suicide bombing at Syrian church



A civil defence member inspects the damage after a blast rocked the St Elias Church according to witnesses, in the Dweila neighbourhood of Damascus, Syria, June 22, 2025. (OSV News photo/Firas Makdesi, Reuters)

SYRIA: An Islamist suicide bombing at a packed Damascus church that killed at least 20 and injured dozens of worshippers June 22 has sparked international outrage. Sectarian violence continues to plague Syria’s new leadership seven months after toppling Bashar Assad’s regime.

A jihadist entered St Elias Greek Orthodox Church in the Dweila district of Damascus during a Sunday Divine Liturgy when he opened fire on parishioners and then detonated his explosive vest. Local media reported that children were among the casualties. Destroyed church pews were covered in debris and blood.

“People were praying safely under the eyes of God,” said Fr Fadi Ghattas. “There were 350 people praying at the church.” Syrian Information Minister Hamza al-Mustafa condemned the assault, calling it a terrorist attack, for which the government has accused the Islamic State, but no claim for the bombing has so far been made.

The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem condemned the attack June 23.

“It is with profound shock and deep revulsion that we received the tragic news of the suicide bombing at St Elias Church,” church leaders in Jerusalem said in a statement issued by the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land.

“There is no justification — religious, moral, or rational — for the slaughter of innocents, least of all in a sacred space. Such violence under the guise of faith is a grave perversion of all that is holy. This is an act of unspeakable evil — a crime against humanity and a sin before God,” the statement said, adding: “This attack is also a direct assault on the right to worship in peace and safety.”

This “barbaric act,” as Holy Land church leaders called it — and other incidents continue to badly shake Syria’s historic Christian and other minority communities who have been victims of sectarian violence in recent months as the de facto Islamist government of President Ahmed al-Sharaa struggles to exert authority over the country.

Observers describe the attack as the first of its kind in years amid concerns about extremist sleeper cells in the aftermath of the 13-year civil war. However, analysts also criticize the make-up of the new government’s defence ministry and security services containing Syrian and foreign jihadists in key roles.

Catholic leaders and religious freedom advocates express concern for Christians in Syria as they

point to a climate of worry and emigration and a lack of inclusion in the new political structure while attacks on minorities take place.

Earlier in June, Syriac-Catholic Archbishop Jacques Mourad of Homs said Syria’s diverse religious and ethnic groups feel vulnerable and without a voice. IS kidnapped and held him captive when he was a monk and priest before he escaped five months later in 2015. The Catholic prelate is a strong advocate for prayer and interreligious dialogue.

“The people of Syria live without dignity, and without trust in each other, in the government and in the international community. This has become a heavy weight,” Archbishop Mourad told the pontifical charity Aid to the Church in Need.

He said while the new government has made some conciliatory gestures to Christians and others, even some majority Sunni Muslims feel anxious about armed Islamist militias on the streets.

“For the Syrian people it is strange, it is foreign to them and to their traditions, they have never been confronted by such a rigid form of Islam, and there is a certain social discomfort,” Archbishop Mourad said.

“Syria has always been a land of diversity, a place of encounter for Muslims, Christians, Druze, Kurds and others. But despite the government’s efforts to distance itself from its Islamist roots, its control remains patchy. Salafists are still active in parts of the country,” he explained.

In March, pro-government fighters carried out revenge killings on hundreds of Alawites, an offshoot of Shiite Islam and members of Assad’s religious community, in Syria’s western coastal region.

Meanwhile in April and May, more than 100 Druze, another religious minority, were killed in clashes with Islamists in two Damascus suburbs and a southern governorate.

Years of economic sanctions and civil war have left many Syrians impoverished. Archbishop Mourad emphasised that the church continues to provide hope and humanitarian aid to Christians and other Syrians “to survive this time of hunger, thirst, and lack of everything.”

He said the church must have a role in the new Syria. “We feel a responsibility for building a future for our country. We want to participate and share in it.” Dale Gavlak, OSV

MEMORIAM

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22nd 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 Our Parents



Francis Fernandez
12th Anniversary

Departed: 08-07-2013



Gertrude Fernandez
5th Anniversary

Departed: 08-06-2020

Deeply missed by children and their spouses, grandchildren and great-grandchildren

In Loving Memory of
Belonammah A/P
Saverimuthu



20th November 1943 –
5th July 2021

In Remembrance of the 4th 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.

7th 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.

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.
John 5:24

2nd Anniversary
In Loving Memory of our Beloved Father



GNANAMANI DORAISAMY
23rd July 1940 – 2nd July 2023

It has been two years since you left us Appa, your spirit has remain ever present guiding us, protecting us and keeping the family together with your unconditional Love. We miss your smile and laughter. Losing you has been the hardest part of our journey.

We Love you forever and miss You Appa. Rest in peace

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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.

World economists issue urgent call for action on debt crisis

VATICAN: A ground-breaking new report by world-leading economists calls for urgent action and systemic reforms to tackle the escalating debt and development crises affecting billions worldwide.

The Jubilee Report: A Blueprint for Tackling the Debt and Development Crises and Creating the Financial Foundations for a Sustainable People-Centred Global Economy, was launched on June 20 at the Vatican. Authored by Pope Francis' Jubilee Commission - a group of over 30 leading global experts led by Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz and former Minister of the Economy of Argentina, Martín Guzmán, it calls for urgent relief, restructuring and reform to make the international financial system, fairer, more just and more aligned with human dignity.

The Jubilee Year in the Catholic Church focusses specifically on debt, forgiveness and tackling injustice and inequality.

The report follows Pope Francis' repeated calls for global debt relief, being carried forward by Pope Leo XIV, and brings together for the first time a combination of sound economic expertise with the moral responsibility to act. It powerfully illustrates why the debt crisis plaguing our global financial system is also fuelling a development crisis.

Fifty-four developing countries now spend 10 per cent or more of their tax revenues just on interest payments. Across the developing world, average interest burdens have nearly doubled in the past decade — diverting resources away from essential investments in health, education, infrastructure, and climate resilience, and depriving millions of life-saving care, nutrition and employment.

This does not have to be the case: Solutions exist that are both economically sound and



(ICN/Debt Justice)

beneficial to all.

A key initiative of this Jubilee Year in the Catholic Church, the report presents a moral and practical vision for the entire world: that global finance should serve people and the planet -not punish the poor to protect profits.

As global market uncertainty grows and refinancing options diminish for debt-distressed nations, we have an opportunity to chart a bold and practical path forward, arguing that - through shared responsibility - we can avoid a lost decade for development and climate action and instead support economic recovery and long-term development.

Recommendations include ways to fix the current crisis:

- Extend COVID era debt relief initiatives, with the participation of profitable private lenders
- Stop bailing out private lenders with public money, to encourage them to stop lending recklessly
- Offer bridging loans and other finance to support countries in crisis in the short-term, as has been done before.

● Steps to prevent a debt crisis in the future:

Create a bankruptcy process for countries in debt crisis - just like the bankruptcy processes that exist to private companies facing debt distress.

End the bailouts for banks and change English law, which allows an encourages reckless lending and borrowing 'bad' deals (removing bailouts will help both sides consider the consequences)

Prioritise the quality rather than quantity of loans, focussing on long-term, stable lending for development - not expensive and risky lending for short-term political and financial gain. Re-design loan contracts to increase resilience and encourage long-term growth.

Pope Leo XIV declared at his inauguration on 18 May 2025: "In this our time, we still see too much discord, too many wounds caused by hatred, violence, prejudice, the fear of difference, and an economic paradigm that exploits the Earth's resources and marginalises

the poorest." (18 May 2025, "Homily at Inauguration Mass")

The report's findings was discussed at the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development in Seville, Spain, June 30-July 3. It will also be discussed at key global gatherings including the United Nations General Assembly in New York City in September and the G20 Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, in November.

Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz said in the *Financial Times*, "There is growing consensus among experts that the current debt system serves financial markets, not people. This threatens to condemn entire nations to a lost decade - or worse. Now is the time for responsible action."

Minister of Economy for Argentina (2019-2022) Martín Guzmán said: "The debt crisis is crowding out investments in health, education, and climate and is making the economic and social situation dramatic in many developing economies. Pope Francis' call was a moral act of timely leadership. In this Jubilee year, a coalition of the willing must act to tackle the debt and development crises or else inequality of opportunity will rise and instability will spiral with worldwide medium-term destabilising consequences." ICN

MCCBCHST backs restoration of judicial power, urges reforms before GE16

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) has expressed strong support for calls to amend Article 121(1) of the Federal Constitution and restore judicial independence.

In a press statement dated June 20, MCCBCHST welcomed the proposal by Perikatan Nasional (PN) Chief Whip Takiyuddin Hassan, who urged the government to reinstate the original wording of Article 121(1). Before the 1988 constitutional amendment, the Article clearly vested judicial power in two High Courts. The amendment replaced this with wording that makes the judiciary's power subject to laws passed by Parliament.

MCCBCHST said the amendment had weakened judicial independence and that restoring the original text is both "timely and necessary." The Council added that the amendment bill could be easily drafted

by reversing the changes made under Act A704.

The interfaith body also supported Takiyuddin's call to reform the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC), arguing that current provisions under the JAC Act 2009 allow undue executive influence. At present, the Prime Minister can override or delay judicial appointments by refusing to forward names proposed by the JAC to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

MCCBCHST proposed that this power be transferred to the Chief Judge to uphold the separation of powers.

"The Judiciary must function as an independent and equal arm of government. It cannot be subject to executive control," the statement read.

The Council further reminded the government of its campaign promises to undertake institutional reforms. It noted that similar calls have come from the Bar Council, civil society, and even members of royalty.

Responding to Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's remark on the challenge of convincing elites to support reforms, MCCBCHST stated that both the Unity Government and PN collectively hold more than the two-thirds parliamentary majority needed to pass the amendments. "There is no excuse for delay," it said.

While the government has cited achievements such as the reinstatement of the Parliamentary Services Act and several legislative amendments since 2023, MCCBCHST stressed that these do not substitute for more critical structural reforms. These include separating the roles of the Attorney General and Public Prosecutor, making the MACC fully accountable to Parliament, and restoring judicial independence.

"The time to act is now," MCCBCHST urged. "These reforms were promised in the GE15 manifesto. They must be implemented before the 16th General Election."

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