

Share hope with gentleness

World Communications Day message urges Catholics to be voices of hope in an age of noise and division

KUALA LUMPUR: Media practitioners are called to embrace the transformative power of hope-filled, gentle communication. This was the final message by the late Pope Francis for the 59th World Communications Day themed, *Share with gentleness the hope that is in your hearts*, drawn from 1 Peter 3:15.

In his message released on September 24, 2024, Pope Francis warns against the misuse of communication for ideological manipulation or division. He invites Christian communicators to become witnesses of hope, engaging others not by overpowering them, but by listening deeply and speaking respectfully.

"We are called to a style of communication that is humble, prophetic, and free of bitterness," the Pope wrote. His words remain a compelling call — especially now, in a time of global conflict, misinformation, and social fragmentation.

"Whether we post, preach, write, or speak — we are all communicators of the Gospel. The heart of Christian communication is not noise. It's witness especially of Truth, Love and Hope," said Cardinal Sebastian Francis, President of the Episcopal Regional Commission for Social Communications (ERCSC) of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei.

"In our society, how we communicate matters just as much as what we communicate. Words can build bridges or burn them," said Daniel Roy Santiago, the chairperson of ERCSC, "Hope is communicated not through aggression, but through authenticity and compassion," added Daniel.

"The Pope is not just speaking to journalists," one Catholic communicator shared. "He's speaking to parents, catechists, youth leaders — anyone who shares the faith, especially in a world so hungry for good news."

To read the message, go to bit.ly/4jf98MZ.



Malaysian Catholics embrace the call to gentle communication

The theme for this year, drawn from 1 Peter 3:15, *Share with gentleness the hope that is in your hearts*, speaks powerfully to Malaysia's multiracial and multifaith setting, where communication must be thoughtful, respectful, and focused on building bridges across differences.

Across Malaysia, World Communications Day is being marked with reflection, prayer, and renewed commitment to using media for unity, not division.

This year the Episcopal Regional Commission for Social Communications (ERCSC) of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, prepared a suite of resources for dioceses and parishes. These include:

- A prayer booklet (in English and Bahasa Malaysia)
- A video explanation of the Pope's message
- A poster promoting the Church's role as a voice of hope

and reconciliation

All resources were widely shared across dioceses to support parish-based activities (bit.ly/3FnaoQ6).

Diocesan Celebrations

There were also several dioceses who hosted events to commemorate World Communications Day.

In the *Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu*, over 30 Catholic media practitioners gathered on May 17 at the Archdiocesan Catholic Centre for a reflection session based on the theme. The session concluded with Mass celebrated by Msgr Nicholas Stephen.

On June 1, Archbishop John Wong presided over the diocesan celebration at the Church of St Catherine in Inanam, where representatives from parish social communications

ministries entered carrying their parish banners during the entrance procession.

In the *Diocese of Keningau*, the diocesan radio, Radio Online Kekitaan (ROK) aired a series of interviews over nine days with Catholic media practitioners reflecting on Pope Francis' message, culminating on June 1.

Meanwhile, in the *Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur*, parish communicators were invited to the opening and blessing of Cahayasuara, the diocesan communications centre. The event included a short historical presentation, the signing of a commemorative plaque, and a keynote address by ecclesiastical assistant Fr Dr Clarence Devadass, who introduced new diocesan-parish collaboration initiatives.

There was also a prizegiving for the winners of the art competition held earlier based on the theme.

HERALD

The Catholic Weekly

ESTABLISHED 1994

Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre
5, Jalan Robertson, 50150, KL
Tel / Whatsapp: 03-20268291

Jointly published by the
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Diocese of Malacca Johore,
Diocese of Penang and
Diocese of Keningau

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Catholic Social Teaching is for everyone

The modern tradition of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) — the toolbox of principles the Church calls us to draw upon to build the just social order — was instigated by Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903). We now have a new pope, Leo XIV, who is reminding us of this corpus of teaching as a resource as the world is torn by war and faces the challenge of a new digital industrial revolution.

This Catholic Social Teaching tradition, however, is not just for Catholics. It can be studied and applied by all people of goodwill because it is a true philosophy of society, rooted in principles such as the common good, the dignity of the human person, subsidiarity and solidarity. Catholic Social Teaching transcends the normal political binaries.

This great tradition is effective in bringing together people of all backgrounds to tackle difficult social problems, and how it does so was the subject of a recent *Catholic in America* podcast (May 19) with internationally renowned economist Jeffrey Sachs.

A gift to the world

Sachs, who is Jewish, is a Harvard-trained economist and member of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences who has advised two popes (John Paul II and Francis) in the development of papal social encyclicals. He sees in Catholic social teaching a great gift of the Church to the world, and he thinks Catholics should not be sheepish about proposing CST principles to shape public life — not because they are the teachings of a religious community, but because they are true.

Pope Francis sought out Sachs because of

his work on sustainable development as the former was drafting his encyclical *Laudato Si' (On the Care of Our Common Home)*, which was published ten years ago. The Holy See gathered experts from a variety of disciplines to consider what it means to steward creation while also respecting the human person.

In a world that pits humans against the environment, how can the church point the way forward? The great gift of *Laudato Si'* was to apply the principles of Catholic social teaching to the problem of creation care. The result was the concept of integral ecology, which does justice to both persons and the environment, because everything is connected.

Sachs and I discussed how both the words economics and ecology, have the same Greek root word, *oikos*, which means household. Hence the English title of the encyclical calling us to steward our common home.

Economics should put first the well-being of the family and the household. The political community is a family of families, and economic life should promote distribution and social justice, as well as the common good. But while providing for human needs and managing scarce economic resources, we must also work together to promote environmental stewardship and care for our common home. That's a responsibility that transcends every household, community, and nation.

Laudato Si' was addressed not just to Catholics, but all people of goodwill, and ten years later it continues to shape the thinking of people from all different backgrounds about how to properly care for creation.

Pope Leo XIV's call

Although Sachs and I recorded our

conversation before Pope Leo XIV's election, the latter is again rekindling interest in Catholic Social Teaching. In his May 16 address to the papal diplomatic corps, Pope Leo XIV stressed that we are called to pursue peace, especially eliminating the violence and destruction that comes from conflict and war.

But to achieve peace, he said, we must act justly, and doing so requires knowing the truth. He stated: "It is the responsibility of government leaders to work to build harmonious and peaceful civil societies. This can be achieved above all by investing in the family, founded upon the stable union between a man and a woman, a small but genuine society, and prior to all civil society. In addition, no one is exempted from striving to ensure respect for the dignity of every person, especially the most frail and vulnerable, from the unborn to the elderly, from the sick to the unemployed, citizens and immigrants alike."

Like Francis, Pope Leo XIV is articulating Catholic Social Teaching's rich philosophy of a just social order built on the *oikos* of family life and the dignity of every human person. In a world hungry for a way to break out of the false binaries of politics, the principles of Catholic social teaching provide real hope.

We need not hide this gift under a bushel but instead, as non-Catholics such as Sachs exhort us, we should bring it confidently into every corner of social life. **Jason Adkins, OSV**

Jason Adkins is host of the new Our Sunday Visitor podcast called "Catholic in America," which explores topics related to the missionary imperative of faithful citizenship in our time.

A deep longing for unity

In today's readings, we hear a deep longing for unity — unity with God, unity with one another, and unity in truth and love. It's a unity that isn't abstract or just a nice spiritual idea. It's a unity born through real effort, real pain, and real faith — and it's what Jesus prays for before facing the Cross.

St Stephen, in the First Reading, is being stoned to death. And yet, in the middle of that violence and hate, he gazes into heaven and sees Jesus. What does he do? He doesn't curse his killers. He doesn't beg for his life. Instead, he prays to be united with Jesus and even forgives those attacking him. That kind of faith, that kind of unity with Christ, is not soft or easy. It's costly. But it brings peace, not just to Stephen, but also — eventually — to a man named Saul, who stood there approving his death. Saul, who would become Paul, because of the witness of that unity.

In the Gospel, Jesus prays for all of us — not just for His disciples at the Last Supper but for you and me today in our world, in our parishes, our BECs, our families. He says, "That they may be one, just as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You." Jesus wants our unity to reflect the same deep relationship of love within the Trinity — a unity rooted in self-giving, in listening, in mercy.

But we live in a time where unity can be hard to be attained. There's just a lot of noise. We are constantly bombarded with messages online and in real life that divide: *Us versus them. Right versus wrong. My*

truth versus your truth. And in this year's 59th World Communications Day, Pope Francis speaks right into this: he invites us to rediscover "the language of the heart" — a way of communicating that brings people together instead of pushing them apart.

He quotes St Paul: "Speaking the truth in love" (Eph 4:15). That's not just about being nice.

It's about learning how to speak with truth and tenderness. And more importantly, how to listen — to listen deeply, patiently, humbly. Pope Francis reminds us that "listening is the first act of communication." In our homes, in our WhatsApp groups, on Facebook, at the *Mamak's* shop or *Kopitiam* — are we listening? Or just reacting?

In Malaysia, where we live side by side with people of many races, cultures, and beliefs, unity is not an ideal. It's a necessity. And as Christians, we are called to be a sign of that unity — not by force or pretending we are all the same, but by loving sincerely, communicating respectfully, and living with open hearts.

The Pope also warns us about artificial intelligence — not in fear, but with caution. He reminds us that while technology can help us communicate faster, it cannot replace the warmth of human connection. He says: "Machines can imitate us, but they cannot feel with us." That's such an important reminder — especially for young people glued to screens. Real unity requires real people. Real encounters. Real hearts.

As we approach Pentecost next week, we remember how the Holy Spirit united

Reflecting on our Sunday Readings

with Fr Sixtus Pitah OFM

7th Sunday of Easter (C)

Readings: Acts of the Apostle 7:55-60;

Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20;

Gospel: John 17:20-26

people who spoke different languages. Not by making them the same, but by helping them understand one another. That's the kind of unity we are invited into. Not uniformity, but harmony.

So today, let's take Jesus' prayer seriously. Let's be people who don't just consume messages but communicate life. Let's speak with our hearts, forgive like Stephen, listen like Jesus, and build unity wherever we are — in our families, our parish, our communities, and even online.

And maybe, like the final words of Revelation say, our hearts too can cry out: "Come, Lord Jesus!" — not because the world is perfect, but because we long for the unity He brings.

"Unity begins with one open heart willing to love beyond comfort." May that heart be ours today.

Friar Sixtus Peter, OFM is the Vice Chairman of the Episcopal Regional Commission for Social Communications (ERCSC) Catholic Bishops' Conference of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei (CBCMSB)

CTAM celebrates Teacher's Day with Mass and mission

PETALING JAYA: The Catholic Teachers' Association Malaysia (CTAM) celebrated its annual Teacher's Day on May 17, 2025, at the Church of St Francis Xavier. The event began with a sunset Mass presided over by Archbishop Julian Leow, followed by a talk from guest speaker Franklin Morais, an educationist and PhD candidate.



Guest speaker, Franklin Morais

The liturgy deeply reflected the vocation of teaching, with Archbishop Julian highlighting the Cross and Christ's love as central to the identity of Catholic educators. He stressed that teachers are bearers of Christian — and universal — values, shaping not only minds but hearts within their classrooms.

The Mass was concelebrated by CTAM's ecclesiastical assistant, Fr Alvin Ho, SJ. Before the final dismissal, all teachers were invited to the altar to receive a blessing from the archbishop.

Following the Mass, the celebration continued with a talk aligned with this year's theme: "Teachers Driving Education Reform." Franklin Morais drew upon Scripture to highlight the transformative role of Christian educators, emphasising wisdom, renewal, and identity in Christ. His message reinforced that teachers are not merely transmitters of knowledge but catalysts for change, called to inspire transformation in students and society.

Participating in the Mass, talk, and fellowship was a profound experience for me



The teachers with Fr Alvin Ho SJ.

— not only as a Catholic but as someone deeply passionate about education. I believe teaching opens both doors and minds. As educators, we help shape the future.

At the end of every lesson, my goal is simple: that each student leaves having learned something new. **Josephine Dionisappu**

KUALA LUMPUR ARCHDIOCESE

Diary of Archbishop Julian Leow

June

- 7 Meeting – KLAPT
- 7 Confirmation – Church of the Divine Mercy, Shah Alam
- 8 Confirmation – Church of St Francis Xavier, PJ
- 9 Meeting – Sri Seronok Board of Directors
- 12-15 CHARIS Humanitarian Forum and Fair – Singapore

MALACCA JOHORE DIOCESE

Diary of Bishop Bernard Paul

June

- 4 Meeting – Diocesan Finance Council
- 7 Confirmation – Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Johor Bahru
- 9-11 18th ECMI Commission Meeting 2025 – Sacred Heart Cathedral, Kota Kinabalu
- 13 Mass at the Mariapolis for the Singapore Focolare Community – MAJODI Centre
- 14 1st Vicariate Pastoral Councils Assembly – Church of St Louis, Kluang
- 14 Confirmation – Church of St Louis, Kluang
- 15 Confirmation – Church of St Theresa, Masai

Malacca Johore Diocese News Update #224

Dear friends,

The Easter people went about proclaiming the good news. They saw good. They welcomed good. They did good. As the Acts of the Apostles says: "They put fresh hearts in the troubled, the suffering and the persecuted". When one is able to see good, goodness, and good people, then we see God. To see good is to see God

Local takes: Fatal accidents are never ending. Party strife and in-fighting continues. Broken promises claim doctors. More and more frauds and abuses are uncovered in government agencies. Illegal temples, "gerai's" and extensions are under scrutiny. Factory workers struggle to make ends meet in Kulim, the heart of Silicon Malaysia. The Malay Muslim NGOs are calling for the "May24Rally", claiming race and religion are under threat.

Interesting statements in our midst: Zaid called on May24Rally to highlight the full promise of Malaysia- a country free of mafia operators and where law & order rule. Indonesia's Ulama stated that the term "kafir" on non-Muslim is unacceptable in a multireligious country where people of all religions are "saudara".

"The Spirit Is Here" Times: With two weeks under his belt as Pope, Leo XIV has already shown himself to be a mild yet focused bridge-builder, with a soft spot for the underdog and a passion for the poor. At his inaugural Mass, in the homily, he signalled his priorities:

- a) that there was no room in the Catholic Church for "religious propaganda" or power plays, and instead called for unity.
- b) that economic system that exploits "the Earth's resources and marginalises the poorest" must be condemned.
- c) that he was not chosen for the role of head of the Catholic Church, but as a "brother, who desires to be the servant of your faith and your joy."

A Thought For The Week: Three Bricklayers
 Three people were laying bricks. A passerby asked them what they were doing. The first one replied, "Don't you see I am mixing the cement?" The second one said, "Don't you see I am laying bricks?" The third one said, "I am building a beautiful monument." Here were three people doing the same thing who had totally different perspectives on what they were doing. They had three very different attitudes about their work. And would their attitude affect their performance? The answer is clearly yes. Lesson from the bricklayers: Excellence comes when the performer takes pride in doing his best. Every job is a self-portrait of the person who does it, regardless of what the job is, whether washing cars, sweeping the floor or painting a house. "The quality of the work and the quality of the worker are inseparable."

Something's Happening Near You:

1. The PSO MJD will be conducting a **Safeguarding of Minors Workshop** on July 5 (9.00am - 1.00pm) at Majodi Centre for Tamil-speaking parents, youth leaders and catechists.
2. **Two Pillars, One Mission:** a stay-

in camp exclusively for single men and women, aged 18 and above. At the Church of St Philip, Segamat, from June 27 - 29. Contact: Kevin 017-7574490 or Clarence 017-7433817

3. Online programme on **Ageing with grace - Living life to the fullest** (John 10:10) with gerontologist Dr Cecilia Chan, counsellor-caregiver Justin Victor and psychiatrist Dr Fabian Dass, on July 13, 8.00pm-10.00pm.

QnQ! Q asks? "WHAT IF" points us to another side of reality?
 What if everything going wrong was actually going right? What if that rejection was a redirection? What if our struggles were shaping up for something bigger? What if the setback was part of the setup?
 "Trials we go through and the blessings we receive are the same thing. Those trials are lessons you can learn from, and those learnings are blessings." **Tyler Perry**
 "God turns you from one feeling to another and teaches by means of opposites so that you will have two wings to fly, not one." **Rumi**

The Holy Spirit @work: I would say it simply: No one can give that which he doesn't personally possess, which means we cannot transmit the Holy Spirit in an effective way, rendering the Spirit perceptible, if we ourselves aren't close to the Spirit. **Pope Benedict XVI**

Something To Tickle You: When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves." **Viktor E. Frankl**

Bishop Bernard Paul

Health care with heart touches St Jude's parishioners

Mercy Almeida Stellus

RAWANG: Health care isn't merely about sterile clinics and hefty fees; it's fundamentally about people – their vulnerabilities, their strength, and their inherent right to well-being. This profound truth resonated deeply at the Church of St Jude on May 18, as parishioners and non-parishioners alike experienced an extraordinary act of community care.

The Parish Integral Human Development Ministry (PIHDM), under the guidance of parish priest, Fr Simon Labrooy, and assistant parish priest, Fr Jonathan Rao, orchestrated a heartwarming Bone and Joint charity event. This initiative was made possible through a remarkable partnership with Dr Naveen Thiagarajah (Dr Wiin), Head of the Advanced Bone Joint Unit at the Advanced Bone Joint Clinic, and his dedicated team of doctors and nurses.

Dr Wiin, a visionary who established the state-of-the-art Advanced Bone & Joint Centre in November 2023, is driven by a mission to provide comprehensive care for

joint issues and sports injuries. His philosophy centres on blending evidence-based medicine with a personalised touch, aiming to empower patients to achieve optimal musculoskeletal health. His unwavering commitment and compassionate approach have earned him widespread trust and respect within the medical community and among his patients.

"Health care should be a right, not a privilege," Dr Wiin passionately stated, emphasising that access to expert care for pain-free movement should be universal, irrespective of financial standing or social background. When asked about the choice of St Jude's Church as the venue for this charitable endeavour, his response was deeply insightful.

"We decided to do the charity event at this parish because of your deep commitment to serving the community in tangible ways," Dr Wiin explained. "We observed how your congregation doesn't just talk about caring for people — you actively create opportunities to meet real needs. This aligns perfectly with our medical mission to bring quality joint care to underserved populations. More-



Nurses conducting a health check with parishioners.

over, we share your holistic view of service — addressing both spiritual and physical wellbeing. This partnership allows us to care for the whole person, which is at the heart of good medicine."

The impact of this collaboration was palpable. Witnessing the grateful smiles and heartfelt blessings bestowed upon Dr Wiin by elderly patients leaving his consultation room painted a vivid picture of his noble spirit. Augustin Dassan, a parishioner and one of the beneficiaries, expressed his sincere gratitude to the PIHDM and Dr Wiin for organising the event.

Even as the day progressed, the stream of individuals seeking Dr Wiin's expertise continued. A parishioner from the Church of St Ignatius, Petaling Jaya, arrived punctually with his son, both expressing their relief and satisfaction at receiving valuable advice from the doctor. Numerous other patients echoed their contentment with the thorough treatment and insightful guidance they received.

A wave of joy washed over many parishioners from the B40 income group upon

learning they would receive free treatment at Dr Wiin's clinic. Others departed with a RM150 treatment voucher, making essential care significantly more accessible.

"We're not just fixing joints — we're restoring dignity," Dr Wiin remarked, his determination unwavering despite the long hours. His commitment extended beyond consultations, as he and his team generously provided free food packets for lunch to all attendees.

The charity event, which commenced at 10.00am, concluded at 7.00pm, a testament to the dedication of Dr Wiin and his team. As he bid farewell, a happy Dr Wiin exclaimed, "70 is not enough, tomorrow, I'll push for more," encapsulating the profound sense of purpose that fuelled this remarkable act of compassion.

This event at St Jude's serves as a powerful reminder that healthcare, at its core, is about human connection and extending a helping hand. It underscores the transformative impact that can be achieved when medical expertise and community spirit converge, leaving a lasting legacy of care and hope.



PIHDM members with the Advanced Bone Joint Clinic doctors and nurses.

A visit to Second Chance Community Home

KUALA LUMPUR: Prison Ministry is more than simply visiting inmates for Bible sharing or counselling. It is about walking with them on the long road to recovery, rehabilitation, and reintegration into society. After serving their sentence, many former inmates are placed in halfway houses — transitional spaces that offer structure, support, and hope. These homes are crucial in helping individuals rebuild their lives and avoid falling back into old patterns of addiction or criminal behaviour.

On May 10, members of the Prison Ministry from the Church of the Holy Family, Kajang visited the Second Chance Community Home (SCCH) in Old Klang Road, Kuala Lumpur. The visit aimed to better understand the role of halfway houses and the correctional programmes offered to residents. Notably, SCCH operates in collaboration with the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP) from the same parish.

The group received a warm welcome from the eleven residents of SCCH, who live together in a clean, peaceful, detached home nestled in serene surroundings. The inmates are part of the *Pembebasan Banduan Secara Berlesen* (PBSL) programme, an initiative by the Prison Department that allows prisoners with less than three years remaining on their sentence to complete the final phase of rehabilitation under supervised release,

provided there are no repeat offences.

The visit began with a spirited time of praise and thanksgiving through uplifting Christian songs, setting a joyful and hopeful tone for the day.

SCCH director Daniel Lew shared his personal testimony, recounting his own journey of restoration after experiencing a fall from grace. Deeply moved by God's mercy, he found purpose in serving others and, in 2007, began working closely with the Prison Ministry. That collaboration would eventually inspire him to establish Second Chance Community Home under the guidance of SSVP.



Volunteers from the Prison Ministry with residents of Second Chance Community Home.

"SCCH offers holistic rehabilitation programmes," Daniel explained. "Beyond basic shelter, we provide counselling, Bible sharing, emotional support, skills training, and employment opportunities. These are all crucial elements in helping residents break the cycle of crime and addiction."

John Kor, chairman of the Prison Ministry, commended SCCH for providing not just a physical home, but also emotional and spiritual care to former inmates. He illustrated this point with a moving personal story: His daughter once rescued a critically injured puppy from the roadside. Despite multiple surgeries and ongoing medical

costs, she refused to give up on the dog. Her love and persistence gave the animal a second chance at life. "In many ways," he said, "we, too, ask God for a second chance. This Home gives that chance to people."

Steevan Arokiasamy, National Past President, and Audrey Freeman, current Vice-President of SSVP, also shared heartfelt testimonies. They spoke about how God's unwavering love becomes real in times of hardship and how redemption is possible for anyone who calls upon Him.

During the session, several residents of the Home shared their own moving experiences—stories of abandonment, anger, and spiritual emptiness transformed by the love and acceptance found at SCCH.

A shared lunch prepared by the residents provided an opportunity for deeper fellowship and personal connection. Hygiene kits were distributed to the residents, and a token donation was presented to support the Home's ongoing efforts.

It is deeply commendable that, while SSVP at the Church of the Holy Family in Kajang works tirelessly to improve the lives of underprivileged children at their charity home, they also extend compassion to prison inmates through SCCH — offering not just a second chance, but a new beginning rooted in love, dignity, and hope. **Herbert Gomez**

With Mary, we are Pilgrims of Hope

Bernard Anthony

BAGAN DATOH, Perak: The Chapel of Our Lady of Fatima marked its patronal feast with a week-long celebration from May 9 to 16, culminating in a solemn Eucharistic celebration on May 17.

The modest 63-year-old chapel, recently renovated into a more contemplative and prayerful space, drew a large congregation from near and far, testifying to the enduring devotion to the Blessed Mother.

The theme for this year was *With Mary, We Are Pilgrims of Hope*. Each evening in the lead-up to the feast day featured Novena prayers, with the celebration climaxing on Saturday evening with a packed chapel. The Rosary and final Novena prayers preceded the Eucharistic celebration, presided over by Fr David Lourdes, parish priest of the Church of St Anthony, Teluk Intan. He was assisted by Deacon Richard Wilson.

In his opening remarks after the Introductory Rites, Fr David highlighted the essence of true devotion. "A devotee is someone who shares an intimate and personal relationship with Mary or a saint, just as we do with our parents," he said. "As we celebrate this feast, let us deepen our lives with Mary. I want to experience her life as my own."

Quoting Pope Leo XIII, Fr David reflected on the sense of mystery in faith. "We may know God is present, yet not always feel Him in our hearts. That's okay — let



The statue of Our Lady of Fatima brought in procession after the Mass.

God reveal the mystery to you," he said, encouraging the faithful to seek grace through Mary's intercession.

The homily was delivered by Deacon Richard, who drew from Scripture to emphasise obedience to God's Word. "Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it," he said. "True joy comes when we listen to His voice and obey. God clothes us in grace, restores our dignity, and heals our wounds."

Citing Revelations, Deacon Richard reminded the assembly that "God makes all things new." He urged the faithful to seek blessings not in the wrong places but in the Eucharist, in the Church, and in community life. "Ask yourselves: what area of your life

needs healing?" he said. "Surrender your pain to Jesus. Trust and believe — God can heal."

Following the Mass, the congregation, led by Fr David and Deacon Richard, processed through the estate roads with a float carrying the statue of Our Lady of Fatima. The evening concluded with Benediction at the chapel at 9.00pm.

On behalf of the Feast Day Committee, organiser John Joseph expressed gratitude for the fine weather and the peaceful, prayerful spirit of the occasion. He extended thanks to Fr David, Deacon Richard, donors, volunteers, and all who contributed to making the celebration memorable. "We are blessed to witness the love and devotion shown to Our Lady of Fatima," he said.

The evening festivities continued with a sumptuous communal dinner in the chapel grounds, promoting fellowship and unity among the faithful. Tokens of appreciation were presented by Peter Au to the altar servers, Fr David, and Deacon Richard in recognition of their service.

Throughout the celebration, many parishioners offered personal petitions to Our Lady of Fatima, seeking her intercession and giving thanks for God's blessings. The feast not only reaffirmed devotion to Mary but also celebrated the vibrant faith life of the chapel community, now revitalised through recent renovations.



Some of the faithful during the feast day celebration.

Enhancing ties with a visit to a Sikh temple

KUALA LUMPUR: Members from the Church of Christ the Light visited the Gurdwara Sahib, a Sikh temple Saturday, May 17.

The visit was organised by the Parish Ministry of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, in collaboration with other religious groups around Kepong, Batu Caves and Selayang areas.

At the temple, they were welcomed by Inderjit Singh who gave a briefing about Sikhism. Then, Mandeep Sign led the group on a tour of the temple.

Special thanks to Rajalingam, the chairman of the nearby Hindu temple, Thirumurugan Alayam, who made the necessary arrangements for a fruitful visit.



The members learning about Sikhism at the Gurdwara Sahib on Saturday, May 17.

Covenanted for Christ community launches KL branch

SUBANG JAYA: On the evening of May 10, the Covenanted for Christ Community (CfCC), which has existing branches in Taiping and Penang Island, celebrated a significant milestone with the official launch of its Kuala Lumpur branch. The ceremony took place at the Church of St Thomas More.

Carrying the powerful theme from Zechariah 4:6, "It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord," the evening was a moving testimony to God's faithfulness and the Spirit-led journey of CfCC. Recognised officially by His Eminence Cardinal Sebastian in 2014, CfCC is a Covenant Community committed to living out a Christ-centred, Spirit-led, and community-rooted faith.

The celebration was graced by several honoured guests, including Archbishop Julian Leow, Msgr Patrick Boudville (Spiritual Director of CfCC KL), Deacon Clement Samuel (Ecclesiastical Assistant of CfCC, Penang Diocese) and his wife, as well as representatives from the Servants of Yahweh Covenant Community, CHARIS



The members of the Covenanted for Christ Community with Archbishop Julian Leow, Msgr Patrick Boudville and Deacon Clement Samuel.

KL, and St Thomas More parish. Also in attendance were members of CfCC's outreach ministries: Friends in Action for Christ (FIAT) and Christ's Youth in Action (CYA). Their presence was a powerful affirmation of the unity and collaboration that underpin CfCC's mission.

The evening began with a communal dinner, setting the tone for warm fellowship and connection. This was followed by a spirited time of praise and worship,

reflecting the shared passion and joy of all gathered. Vincent Lim, Presiding Elder of CfCC, delivered a welcoming address that recounted the community's journey and emphasised its ongoing mission of unity and evangelisation.

The official launch was marked by Deacon Clement Samuel reading the formal letter of establishment from Archbishop Julian, officially recognising CfCC Kuala Lumpur. This was followed by a spiritual

commissioning of CfCC KL Elder, Tony Felix, signifying the start of a new chapter in the community's mission.

A touching moment during the evening was the special Mother's Day blessing led by Archbishop Julian, who prayed over all the mothers present, honouring their faith, sacrifice, and vital role in shaping the next generation.

In his address, Archbishop Julian also reminded the community of the importance of communion within the Church, and the need to use every charism given by the Holy Spirit for the building up of the parish, diocese, and the wider Church.

As CfCC KL steps into this new beginning, the words of Zechariah remain a guiding light: the journey ahead will not be achieved by human strength alone, but through the transformative power of the Holy Spirit. With grateful hearts, the community gives thanks for this milestone and looks forward in anticipation to what God will continue to do — through CfCC KL, for His glory and the advancement of His Kingdom.

Talk sparks awareness, action against human trafficking

KUALA LUMPUR: The Archdiocesan Office for Human Development (AOHD) organised a talk titled *Human Trafficking, Modern-Day Slavery and Empowering the Survivors* last month at the newly renovated Cahayasuara. The event drew more than 90 participants from various churches, non-governmental organisations, and the general public.

The keynote speaker was Anson Thomas from India, a former Customs Officer and national hockey player who left his government job after feeling a divine calling to serve the most vulnerable. Armed with a Bible and unwavering conviction, Anson ventured into India's red-light districts to reach out to women and girls trapped in brothels, seeking to rescue and rehabilitate them.

Despite facing threats to his life and resistance from politicians and law enforcement, Anson persevered in what he believes to be God's work. Over the years, he has rescued some 800 young women and girls, helping



The panel of speakers.

them find safety and rebuild their lives.

Anson emphasised that not all victims of trafficking are uneducated or poor. Many were educated young women who moved to big cities in search of better opportunities, only to fall prey to traffickers. To raise awareness, Anson even enlisted athletes and celebrities to walk the streets with him and

connect with children and families living in these areas. His work earned him the *CNN and Reliance Industries Real Heroes Award* in 2009. He also produced a film based on his experiences, titled "Pledged to Protect."

Following the talk, a panel discussion moderated by Elise Arya Chen of Young Lives brought together experts with

extensive experience in tackling human trafficking. The panel included Anson Thomas; Jerald Joseph, former SUHAKAM Commissioner; Adrian Pereira, Executive Director of the North-South Initiative (NSI); and Alya Zulaikha, former Programme Officer of Tenaganita.

The discussion explored various forms of human trafficking across India, Malaysia, and Southeast Asia. Speakers shared their experiences working with survivors and engaging with stakeholders, including government bodies. The session also shed light on the challenges advocates face, systemic shortcomings, and policy gaps, underscoring the urgent need for public awareness and collective action.

Participants found the session enlightening and impactful. Many described it as an eye-opener to the grim realities of human trafficking, particularly within the Malaysian context, and expressed appreciation for the tireless efforts of those working to combat this modern-day slavery.

Crossing mountains on a journey of hope

KUANTAN: The Golden Eagles soared high across the Main Range (Titiwangsa Mountains) on a spiritual journey to a Jubilee pilgrimage centre in the east coast.

The elderly of the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist boarded the bus for the four-hour journey to the Church of St Thomas the Apostle on May 6.

It was certainly no easy journey for the group of 41 elderly pilgrims, most in their 70s and 80s. Yet, it became a deeply prayerful experience as parish priest, and the youngest among them, Fr Gerard

Theraviam, led the way with Morning Prayer (Lauds), a blessing prayer, and the Rosary, turning the ride into a moving spiritual pilgrimage.

At the church, the pilgrims deepened their spiritual journey with Vespers (Evening Prayer), the Rosary, and silent adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Parish priest, Fr George Packiasamy, shared the rich history of the church, including its first baptism in 1906. He later celebrated Mass with Fr Gerard Theraviam as concelebrant.

In the evening, the Golden Eagles en-

joyed dinner and fellowship with parishioners of St Thomas. Fr George then led them on a night walk through the award-winning Kuantan Art Street, featuring 75 vibrant mural paintings by local artists that beautifully reflect the identity of Kuantan and Pahang.

In welcoming the pilgrims of hope, Fr George emphasised that the jubilee offered a unique opportunity to "attain salvation and understand how God's holiness can transform us," while also "helping Catholics deepen their trust in God's love and mercy." He added, "It serves as a reminder that no matter our past, we can always begin anew with renewed faith."

The Golden Eagles invited two young eaglets to join in the overnight pilgrimage, embodying Pope Francis' call in his Bull of Indiction for the Ordinary Jubilee of 2025, *Hope Does Not Disappoint*, to "draw close to the young, for they are the joy and hope of the Church and the world!" Golden Eagles coordinator, Christine Suan, explained that their participation was aimed at strengthening the covenant between generations.

The journey from the west coast to the east coast, winding through scenic land-

scapes and the vibrant art street walk, truly embodied Pope Francis' words: "In passing from one city to another, contemplating the beauty of creation and masterpieces of art, we learn to treasure the richness of different experiences and cultures, and are inspired to lift up that beauty in prayer to God, in thanksgiving for His wondrous works."

The jubilee year has ignited the Golden Eagles to engage in various activities, including organising the Jubilee of the Sick and Elderly and joyfully witnessing Fr Jonathan Rao's priestly ordination. Some members also participated in the Jubilee Walk, a spiritual journey of faith, reflection, and unity through the central district of Kuala Lumpur during Lent.

The Church of Kuantan was the second pilgrimage site for the Golden Eagles, following their visit to the Church of St Francis of Assisi in Cheras on March 11, where they took turns carrying the cross for the Way of the Cross. Plans are underway to continue their pilgrimage as a community of Christ, with visits to two more jubilee centres in the archdiocese — the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Port Dickson and the Church of Jesus Caritas in Kepong. **Bob Ho**



The pilgrims praying the Rosary.

Mother Day's celebration at Taiping chapel

TAIPING: The Catholic community of Our Lady of Fatima Chapel in Kg Pokok Assam came together to celebrate Mother's Day with the theme, *Hope Never Disappoints*.

The parish priest, Msgr Stephen Liew, emphasised the profound significance of hope, referring to it as the guiding light of faith that illuminates our lives with the presence of Jesus. He pointed to the symbolic lamp hanging beneath the ceiling at the centre of the Church, reminding the congregation that hope remains a visible and constant beacon for all who enter.

The Mother's Day celebration united various church movements, including the Catholic Nurses, Legion of Mary, St Vincent de Paul Society (SVDP), BECs as well as housewives and grandmothers, who came together to sing hymns in honour of Mother Mary. The event began with hymns, the recitation of the

Rosary, and the Novena prayer, paying homage to the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose feast day on May 13 is also the patronal feast of the chapel.

Family members gathered to support and join the celebration, fostering a warm and joyful atmosphere. The occasion was further enlivened by a grand potluck fellowship, with families contributing a variety of homemade dishes, creating moments of laughter, bonding, and sweet memories that will be cherished for years to come.

Organising chairman Francis Xavier extended his heartfelt gratitude to Msgr Stephen, the organising team, sponsors, and all attendees for their participation and contributions, which made the event a resounding success. "Thank and Praise God," he concluded, affirming the community's unity in faith and celebration.



The mothers cutting the cake.



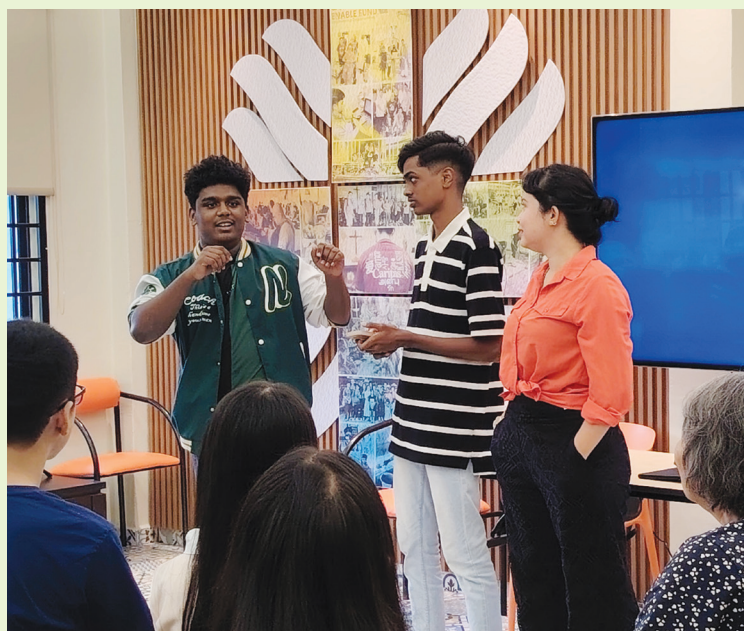
Enhancing storytelling in Social Missions

JOHOR BAHRU: Caritas of the Diocese of Malacca Johore (MJD) conducted a two-day *Photography and Videography Workshop* on May 10 and 11 in Johor and Melaka respectively, aimed at equipping ministry members with skills in visual storytelling to better document the work of social missions.

The workshop was organised in response to a growing need to capture the human stories behind Caritas initiatives — beyond reports and logistics. Often, impactful events were left undocumented or lacked visuals that could communicate the heart of the mission. Recognising this gap, Caritas MJD brought together 60 participants from various Church ministries for this training.

Participants were introduced to both the technical and narrative aspects of photography and videography. Through hands-on sessions and real-time feedback, they learned how to create purpose-driven content that reflects the values of compassion, dignity, and resilience embodied in Caritas' outreach efforts.

The sessions were led by two



The participants sharing what they had learnt.

seasoned professionals from Penang, Asher Leo and Michael Chong, who bring with them extensive experience in Church-related projects, brand campaigns, and creative storytelling.

Organisers expressed hope that this initiative will pave the way for a committed team of volunteer photographers and videographers

to support Caritas MJD's future events and the broader work of the Church's social ministries.

"When love is seen, it multiplies," a Caritas MJD representative noted, adding that the goal is to ensure that the voices and stories of the communities served are effectively captured and shared.

A pilgrimage of hope for GSC's children

KUALA LUMPUR: The children from the Church of the Good Shepherd's (GSC) Tamil-speaking community embarked on a meaningful pilgrimage last month. It began at the Church of the Immaculate Conception (CIC), Port Dickson, and continuing to the Church of St Francis of Assisi Church in Cheras.

At CIC, the children experienced a special Rosary Walk, praying for the people those closest to their hearts. They also had the chance to learn about the history of the church, and the theme of "Pilgrims of Hope" was beautifully explained in Tamil by the organiser, making it easily understood and relatable for the young pilgrims.

Upon their arrival at SFA after lunch, they were warmly welcomed and received pilgrim kits.

The children took part in the veneration of relics and listened to the story behind the church's unique glass doors. This session was interactive and engaging, allowing the children to reflect more deeply on their faith.

After tea, the children explored the 14 Stations of the Cross around the church compound. The day ended with a closing prayer, marking the conclusion of a faith-filled experience.

On the journey back to GSC, the bus was filled with joy and laughter as the children shared their thoughts and reflections.

Catechists and youth leaders kept the spirit alive by asking questions from the Bible and discussing what they had learned during the pilgrimage, making it not just spiritual but also fun and educational. **GSC Tamil Apostolate**



The children admiring the relics in the Chapel of Portiuncula at the Church of St Francis of Assisi, Cheras.



Rosary walk at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Port Dickson.

Letters to Editor

The dark side of Church pilgrimages: A cautionary tale

Dear Editor,

As a lifelong Catholic, I had always viewed pilgrimages as sacred journeys offering spiritual growth, reflection, and connection to holy sites. When I found a pilgrimage offer in my church bulletin, it seemed like the perfect opportunity to fulfil a long-held dream.

The trip, organised by a Catholic agency, promised both religious enrichment and comfortable accommodations. I was particularly reassured when I confirmed in advance that the hotels would have air conditioning, even in winter. Trusting their assurances, I paid the high fee and joined the group with great anticipation.

However, the reality fell far short of my expectations. The accommodations were uncomfortable, with stuffy rooms and a lack of promised amenities. I later discovered that the same itinerary was being offered by other agencies at a significantly lower cost — more than 40 per cent less. This discrepancy led me to question the integrity of the tour and whether the organisers were prioritising profit over pilgrims' experiences.

More disheartening was the realisation that the pilgrimage, while marketed as a spiritual journey, seemed driven more by commercial interests than faith. It became clear that some Catholic tour operators may exploit pilgrims' trust and

devotion for financial gain. The contrast between the advertised experience and the reality left me feeling disillusioned and betrayed.

This experience was a wake-up call. I learned not to blindly trust organisations — even religious ones — without doing proper research. It's essential to verify details, ask pointed questions, and consult reviews or testimonies from past participants. A religious label does not guarantee honesty, and scammers can exist even within trusted circles.

I now urge fellow Catholics to be cautious when planning pilgrimages. Don't rely solely on faith in the organisers. Scrutinise the costs, question the services

offered, and compare with other providers. Protecting your spiritual journey from being overshadowed by commercial exploitation is vital.

Ultimately, what was meant to be a spiritually enriching experience turned into a sobering lesson about the commercialisation of religious travel. Pilgrimages should be about deepening one's faith, not navigating financial traps. This experience has made me more vigilant and committed to ensuring that my faith journeys remain true to their sacred purpose, free from the corruption of greed.

Ms Tan
via email



Send your letters to ► letterseditor@herald.com.my

The Editor, HERALD, 5 Jalan Robertson, 50150 KL | Please include your name and address. Letters without name and address will not be entertained.

NEWS IN BRIEF

De Lima reclaims seat in congress after years in detention

MANILA: Leila de Lima celebrated her return to the Philippine Congress after the results of the midterm elections on May 12 were confirmed.

"They tried to take everything away from me: my freedom, my voice, my dignity, even my right to serve. But here I am. Because truth finds a way. Justice finds a way. And the people, when given a choice, know how to fight back," De Lima said, celebrating her win.

Elected with the Mamamayang Liberal party (ML), she plans to be part of the opposition minority bloc in the House of Representatives, where she could play a leading role.

An activist and former senator and minister of Justice, she was one of the main opponents of Rodrigo Duterte, now in detention at the International Criminal Court in The Hague for his heinous "war on drugs".

The 65-year-old was unjustly imprisoned in 2017 and held for 2,454 days on slanderous charges of complicity with drug trafficking. [AsiaNews](#)

Chinese diocese unveils statue of Jesuit missionary

FUZHOU, China: The Diocese of Fuzhou has unveiled a statue of Italian Jesuit missionary Fr Giulio Aleni to mark the 400th anniversary of his arrival in the region. The statue, placed outside the Cathedral of St Dominic, was revealed by Bishop Joseph Cai Bingrui following a two-day seminar (May 16–17), according to *Fides*.

Aleni, dubbed the "Confucius of the West," arrived in Fuzhou in 1625 and is credited with founding the Jesuit mission in Fujian Province. Born in Brescia, Italy, in 1582, Aleni joined the Society of Jesus in 1610 and spent 40 years in China, starting in Beijing before settling in the south.

Scholars from China, Hong Kong, and Italy gathered to discuss Aleni's legacy as a missionary, scholar, astronomer, and mathematician. Aleni adopted the inculturation methods of fellow Jesuit Matteo Ricci and wrote over 20 works in Chinese, including the influential *The True Origin of All Things* (1628) and *a life of Jesus* (1635).

Aleni reportedly built more than 20 churches and baptised around 10,000 Chinese. He died in 1649 and is buried at the Mount of the Cross in Fuzhou. [ucanews.com](#)

Christian marriage disqualifies woman from caste-based benefits

MADRAS, India: The Madras High Court has ruled that a Dalit woman, V. Amutha Rani, forfeited her Scheduled Caste (SC) status by marrying under the Indian Christian Marriage Act, thus disqualifying her from holding a seat reserved for lower castes.

The petitioner argued that Rani, by marrying a Catholic in a church and baptising her children, had effectively converted to Christianity and was no longer entitled to caste-based benefits. Justice L. Victoria Gowri accepted the argument, stating that Rani had renounced her "socio-cultural identity" as a Dalit.

Rani's lawyers contended she had never been baptised and married in church as a non-Christian, which Catholic law permits. However, church records reviewed by the court suggested otherwise.

Indian law reserves SC benefits for Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists, excluding Christians and Muslims of Dalit origin. Critics, including Jesuit lawyer Fr A. Santhanam and Supreme Court advocate M. P. Raju, have denounced the ruling as flawed and discriminatory.

A Supreme Court case seeking to extend SC benefits to Dalit Christians and Muslims remains pending, awaiting a report from a government-appointed panel. [ucanews.com](#)

Church denounces arrest of indigenous people

MANILA: Catholic bishops across the Philippines have joined tribal leaders and advocacy groups to denounce the arrest of ten indigenous residents of Palawan who were defending their ancestral lands against private development threats.

The individuals, all from the island village of Bugsuk in Balabac town, were arrested on May 15 and charged with "grave coercion" after allegedly opposing a government official's inspection related to a private development project. Following a public outcry, they were released on bail two days later.

Bishop Jose Colin Bagaforo of Kidapawan, president of Caritas Philippines, decried the incident, emphasising that indigenous rights are enshrined not only in national law but also in the core of human dignity. "We cannot stand idly while indigenous families are being threatened and pushed out of their ancestral domains," he said. "Their rights must be respected at all times, not bulldozed in the name of so-called development."

He called on the Office of the President and relevant government bodies to investigate the incident and stop any unlawful encroachments.



Philippine police arrests 10 residents in Balabac, Palawan province, on charges filed by a former government official on May 15, 2025. (Ucanews Photo/Brigada News FM-Palawan)

Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos stressed that the issue transcends land disputes: "This is about safeguarding lives, protecting biodiversity, especially in Palawan, our last ecological frontier, and upholding our moral duty to future generations."

Echoing these sentiments, Bishop Socrates Mesiona of Puerto Princesa called the arrests "a grave injustice" against people simply seeking to live and work on their rightful lands.

The long-standing conflict involves a private development allegedly backed by

San Miguel Corporation. The company has been accused of sending armed personnel to displace residents from 38 hectares of ancestral land, including vital fishing grounds. The affected community includes 96 families.

"This is a fight for justice, not just for Marihangin, but for all indigenous and marginalised communities facing corporate greed and historical wrongs," said Randy Cirio, president of PAKISAMA, a national federation of family farmer organisations. [ucanews.com](#)

South Korean Church clings to hope for Korean peace

SEOUL: Eight decades after the Korean Peninsula's division, the Catholic Church in South Korea remains a steadfast advocate for peace and reconciliation with the North.

Bishop Simon Kim Jong-Gang, president of the Korean Reconciliation Commission, led a recent pilgrimage to Kyodong Island, near the North Korean border. There, bishops prayed for peace while walking along the barbed-wire fence that has symbolised separation since the 1950–53 Korean War.

"No letters, calls, or emails can cross the border," Kim said, lamenting five years of complete silence between the North and South. Yet he remains hopeful that North Korea might reopen to international visitors.

In the North, the Church was decimated during the war. Though an estimated 4,000 Catholics remain, they are restricted to a government-controlled association that does not recognise papal authority.

Despite challenges, the Church has promoted peace through international



The Catholic Church in South Korea is one of the few voices promoting reconciliation between the two countries. (Courtesy of South Korean Bishops' Conference)

conferences and partnerships, such as the 2022 Washington event on religion's role in Korean peace and joining the *Partnership for a World Without Nuclear Weapons* in 2024.

Bishop Kim admitted that younger South Koreans are less enthusiastic about reunification, concerned about economic burdens.

Still, he emphasised that only by overcoming division can Korea achieve lasting social and political stability.

"Christ calls us to live as brothers and sisters," he said. "When we take courageous steps towards peace, future generations will reap the benefits." [CNA](#)

Pope Leo XIV appeals for end to hostilities in Gaza

VATICAN: "I renew my appeal to allow the entry of dignified humanitarian aid and to put an end to the hostilities, whose heartbreaking price is paid by the children, elderly, and the sick."

Pope Leo XIV made that appeal towards the conclusion of his first General Audience in St Peter's Square on 21 May.

In his remarks to Italian pilgrims, he said, "The situation in the Gaza Strip is increas-

ingly worrying and painful."

The humanitarian emergency in Gaza is at a breaking point, according to international organisations. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), supported by the UN, is warning of an imminent famine.

According to aid agencies, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza has intensified as Israeli airstrikes on May 20 resulted in many Palestinian deaths, including children, amid ongoing military operations that have killed tens of thousands of people since October 2023.

Despite Israel permitting a limited number of aid trucks into Gaza, international criticism has mounted, with calls for Israel to halt its military campaign and ease aid restrictions.

Moreover, the United Nations has expressed concern for the unprecedented destruction of housing in Gaza. [Vatican News](#)



Internally displaced Palestinians from the northern Gaza Strip (ANSA)



God's love is generous, not calculating

VATICAN: The Gospel parable of the "wasteful sower" who casts seeds on fertile soil as well as on a rocky path "is an image of the way God loves us," Pope Leo XIV told visitors and pilgrims at his first weekly general audience.

The parable can strike people as odd because "we are used to calculating things – and at times it is necessary – but this does not apply in love," the pope told an estimated 40,000 people gathered in St Peter's Square May 21.

Pope Leo read his full prepared text in Italian and also read the summaries of the talk in English and in Spanish.

At the end of the audience, Pope Leo drew attention to ongoing Israeli military operations in Gaza and its limitations on the delivery of humanitarian aid to the area.

"The situation in Gaza is increasingly worrying and agonising," he said. "I renew my heartfelt appeal to allow the entry of sufficient humanitarian aid and to end the hostilities, the heartbreaking price of which is being paid by children, the elderly and the sick."

The pope also told the crowd that he could not conclude the gathering without remembering "our beloved Pope Francis, who exactly one month ago returned to the house of our Father."

It had been more than three months since the Vatican hosted a weekly general audi-

ence; Pope Francis met pilgrims and visitors Feb. 12 and was hospitalised two days later. He died April 21.

Mercy Sister Maria Juan Anderson, coordinator of the Bishops' Office for US Visitors to the Vatican, which is housed in the Casa Santa Maria of the Pontifical North American College in Rome, told *Catholic News Service* that the office distributed 1,800 free tickets to the pope's first audience – "a record!"

"We had eight priests hearing confessions for two and a half hours" as visitors came to collect their tickets May 20 and get information about the audience, the Vatican and the new pope, she said.

Pope Leo arrived in the popemobile for the audience, riding through the crowd in St. Peter's Square and stopping often to bless infants, tracing the sign of the cross on their foreheads.

The pope began his audience explaining he would continue the series of talks his predecessor had begun on the Jubilee-related theme, *Jesus Christ Our Hope*.

Focusing specifically on the parable of the sower from the Gospel of Matthew 13:1-17, Pope Leo said Jesus' parables were stories "taken from everyday life" but meant to lead listeners "to a deeper meaning."

The parable of the sower, he said, is about "the dynamic of the word of God and

the effects it produces. Indeed, every word of the Gospel is like a seed that is thrown on the ground of our life."

The soil where the seed in the parable lands "is our heart, but it is also the world, the community, the church," he said. "The word of God, in fact, makes fruitful and provokes every reality."

What happens to the seed depends on the quality of the earth it lands on, he said.

"But first and foremost, in this parable Jesus tells us that God throws the seed of his word on all kinds of soil, that is, in any situation of ours," the pope said. "At times we are more superficial and distracted; at times we let ourselves get carried away by enthusiasm; sometimes we are burdened by life's worries, but there are also times when we are willing and welcoming."

"God is confident and hopes that sooner or later the seed will blossom," Pope Leo said. "This is how he loves us: he does not wait for us to become the best soil, but he always generously gives us his word."

When people see how God loves and trusts them, the pope said, it should encourage them to be "better soil."

Pope Leo urged people to ask God for the grace to welcome his word in their lives, "and if we realise we are not a fruitful soil, let us not be discouraged, but let us ask him to work on us more to make us become a better terrain." CNS

Vatican warns about fake Pope quotes, videos

VATICAN: All the speeches and messages Pope Leo XIV has given since becoming Pope on May 8 are available on the Vatican website. All supposed quotes and videos should be checked before sharing, *Vatican News* said.

The *Vatican News* site published the warning in several languages on Wednesday after a 36-minute "deep fake" – AI-generated – video was posted on YouTube.

The post, which used manipulated video of Pope Leo and an AI-generated voice with an accent that is not Pope Leo's, praises Ibrahim Traoré, the military ruler of Burkina Faso.

Vatican News said the post was "produced using footage from Pope Leo XIV's audience with journalists on Monday, May 12. A 'morphing' technique was used – that is, transforming the image so that the movement of the lips matches the AI-generated words."

The video is the latest example of social media fakes attributed to the new Pope.

A popular meme circulating on Facebook, Instagram and other social media features a photo of Pope Leo from May 8 and the fake quote: "You cannot follow both Christ and the cruelty of kings. A leader who mocks the weak, exalts himself, and preys on the innocent is not sent by God. He is sent to test you. And many are failing."

According to *Snopes.com*, the fact-checking website, the earliest posting of the supposed quote was May 14, but there is no evidence anywhere that the Pope said it.

The Vatican website, www.vatican.va, offers papal texts, including the texts of video messages, in multiple languages, often including Italian, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Polish, Arabic, Chinese and Latin. OSV

Religious sister appointed Secretary of Dicastery for Consecrated Life

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV has appointed Sr Tiziana Merletti, former Superior General of the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor, as Secretary of the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. The Dicastery is responsible for orders and religious congregations, as well as secular institutes.

As Secretary, Sr Merletti will serve under Sr Simona Brambilla, who was appointed to lead the Dicastery in January – becoming the first woman ever to lead a Vatican department.

From 2023 to 2025, Sr Brambilla had served as Secretary of the Dicastery, the role now held by Sr Merletti.

The Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Consecrated Life is Cardinal Angel Fernández Artime.

Sr Tiziana Merletti was born on September 30, 1959, in Pineto, central Italy. In 1986, she made her first religious profession in the Institute of the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor. She earned a degree in Law in 1984, and in 1992 obtained a Doctorate in Canon Law from



the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome.

From 2004 to 2013, she served as Superior General of her religious Institute. She is currently a Professor at the Faculty of Canon Law at the Pontifical Antonianum University in Rome and works as a canon lawyer with the International Union of Superiors General.

Sr Merletti is the third woman to hold the position

of Secretary within a dicastery of the Roman Curia, following Sr Alessandra Smerilli at the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, and her predecessor Sister Simona Brambilla.

With Pope Francis' Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*, lay men, women and religious can now lead dicasteries and become prefects, a role that had previously been reserved for cardinals and archbishops.

During Pope Francis' pontificate, the percentage of women working in the Holy See and the Vatican City State rose from about 19.2 per cent to 23.4 per cent. ICN

Bishops demand end to land grabs, exploitation

VATICAN: Catholic bishops from Europe and Africa have issued a powerful joint statement warning that Africa is once again becoming a "battleground for external interests" – particularly around land, resources, and Europe's climate policies.

In the declaration, released ahead of the May 21 EU-AU foreign ministers' meeting, COMECE (the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union) and



Women religious watch on a monitor outside the cathedral as Pope Francis leads a prayer meeting with priests, religious and seminarians February 2, 2023, in *Our Lady of the Congo Cathedral* in Kinshasa, Congo. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

SECAM (the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) criticized the shift in European priorities from solidarity and poverty eradication to self-serving geopolitical and economic strategies.

"Africa is being asked to sacrifice its ecosystems and communities to help Europe meet its decarbonisation goals – through massive land deals, carbon offset plantations, and toxic industrial agriculture," the bishops said. "This is not partnership. This is not justice."

They warned that the EU's \$169 billion (RM816 billion) Global Gateway investment plan was replicating "extractive patterns of the past," privileging corporate interests over the real needs of African communities. "Land, water, seeds and minerals – the very foundations of life – are once again being treated as commodities," the statement added.

The bishops demanded an end to the export of hazardous pesticides banned in Europe, greater investment in agroecology, and decisive action to stop land grabbing, which fuels conflict and migration.

COMECE's spokesman Alessandro Di Maio said the statement received "positive reactions" from EU leaders and would be part of the agenda during the May 23 audience with Pope Leo XIV.

"Africa needs justice, not charity," the bishops stressed. "It needs a partnership based on respect, environmental stewardship, and human dignity." OSV

Why the Council of Nicaea still matters — 1,700 years later

This year, the universal Church celebrates the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, the first ecumenical council intended to address all the Churches of Christianity.

What happened at Nicaea in A.D. 325? And why is that still so important today?

Calling the Council

Seventeen hundred years is a considerable length of time, even in the history of mankind, and it may seem like a very reactionary and ultra-conservative state of mind to refer to an event so distant as being anything which concerns our present-day life and affairs. Still more will this appeal to the modern-minded as being the case, if we announce to them that a decision, made in the year 325 of our era, is to be accepted at full face value even now. Yet that is exactly what we do and that is the issue which at this moment comes before us.

Nicaea remains as important as ever for our understanding of God and the core statements of Christian belief.

The First Council of Nicaea was convened by Emperor Constantine in A.D. 325. The bishop of Rome at the time, Sylvester, did not attend the council, but sent delegates in his stead. While it would be wildly anachronistic to consider Sylvester a pope in the manner of the modern papacy, in the fourth century the bishop of Rome was already recognised by most local Christian communities as a “first among equals” (*primus inter pares*); though he lacked jurisdictional authority over other Christian sees or local churches, appeal was often made to the bishop of Rome when disputes arose between churches.

The location of Nicaea itself — in Asia Minor, only 40 miles from Byzantium, which would become Constantinople and usurp Rome as the capital of the Roman Empire under Constantine five years later — is an indicator of where much of the political and ecclesial authority of Christianity rested at the time. In other words, it was not in Rome. In fact, before the rise of Islam in the seventh century, the presence of large Christian communities throughout the Middle East meant Christianity’s geographical centre was significantly farther to the east than most of us realise.

The Nuts and Bolts

Over 300 bishops participated in the council, almost all from the East. Emperor Constantine (also in attendance) footed the bill for the proceedings, which took place from May through July. The precipitating theological conflict was an ongoing dispute in some Eastern Christian communities among differing views on the nature of Christ.

The chief antagonist was Arius, a presbyter from Alexandria who resisted the notion that Jesus was co-equal with God and that Jesus had existed for all eternity, arguing instead that Jesus was a created being and subordinate to God the Father. Opposing him was Archbishop Alexander of Alexandria (and, eventually, Athanasius, his successor), who held that the Logos, or Son, had existed for all eternity, generated from God the Father but not subordinate to or created by God the Father. The working out of that issue and a number of ancillary theological propositions is what Nicaea is primarily known for today.

The practical results of the council included the following: the promulgation of a common statement of belief (our *Nicene Creed*); the rejection of certain heresies regarding the



A wall fresco depicting the First Council of Nicaea in the Sistine Hall of the Vatican Library. (CNS photo/Carol Glatz)

nature of Jesus, particularly Arianism (and the subsequent exile of Arius himself); the establishment of some early precepts of canon law; agreement on a common date for the celebration of Easter; practical determinations for handling repentant sinners and recalcitrant bishops; and the establishment of a precedent for handling ecumenical gatherings in the future.

The use of an ecumenical council to promulgate such decisions was a momentous development for the Church, and it is one of the reasons why the Council of Nicaea has pride of place in Church history, along with the Council of Chalcedon, in the estimation of most Christian historians and theologians.

Arianism, Modalism and the Nicene Creed

We are reminded of Nicaea almost every Sunday at Mass when we recite the Nicene Creed (in many places the Apostle’s Creed is used during Lent and the Easter season), affirming the core beliefs of every major Christian denomination. For the council fathers at Nicaea, the first and most important question was: Does Jesus the Son descend from God the Father, in the sense that He is a created being that is somehow subordinate, as Arius and his followers argued?

No, said the gathered bishops after much debate; Jesus is, to use the language of the Creed, “begotten, not made, one in being [*homoousios*] with the Father.” The same for the Holy Spirit, who is co-equal with the other two persons of the Trinity and thus fully God—though, truth be told, the Holy Spirit wasn’t a primary focus of Nicaea.

Much of the Church — especially in Western parts of the empire who became Christian — remained influenced by Arianism for decades and even centuries, but the heresy eventually succumbed to history.

A second question addressed what has been variously called monarchianism, modalism or Sabellianism. This heresy was, in the eyes of the Church of the third through fifth centuries, an attempt to collapse the three persons of the Trinity into one — God the Father, who acted in different modes or performed different functions or showed different manifestations of di-

vinity. Followers of Arius — stressing the difference between God the Father and Jesus the Son — accused Alexander of Sabellianism for insisting on their equality.

A follower of monarchianism or the other aforementioned variations might say that God the Father creates; God the Son redeems; God the Holy Spirit sanctifies. In other words, it’s all God, we just see different aspects of God and give God different names when we observe God acting in different ways. Not so, said the bishops at Nicaea. Even if every theologian admits our language for the Trinity — in terms of persons or essences or unities or functions and more — is by nature imprecise and approximate, for the Nicene bishops as much as in any other area, the language still mattered. There is one God; that God exists in three persons.

Even today, East and West remain divided over Western Christianity’s addition of the famous “filioque clause” to the Creed beginning in the sixth century, stating that the Holy Spirit proceeds “from the Father and the Son.” Even if theologians now agree that both sides mean more or less the same thing, the words remain different.

A Common Date for Easter

A more concrete result of the Council of Nicaea was the establishment of a common date for the celebration of Easter, recognised as the Church’s primary feast and a point of desired unity for all Christian communities. That result was confounded 12 centuries later when the Catholic Church chose the Gregorian calendar over the Julian one in 1582, separating East from West. The date of Easter in some years can differ by as much as five weeks between Eastern and Western Churches (almost all Protestant denominations follow the Roman Catholic calendar regarding Easter).

While the consensus at Nicaea on a common date can be seen as a remarkable expression of the desire for Christian unity, the decision may also have been an attempt to decouple Easter from the Jewish celebration of Passover, as the date of the commemoration of the latter in Judaism is determined by a similar but slightly different calculus. While Scripture makes it clear that the events of Jesus’ death and resur-

rection were closely tied to the Jewish celebration of Passover, our differing calendars don’t always reflect the connection.

Returning Sinners to the Flock

A relatively minor detail — but one with significant repercussions in sacramental history — dealt with at Nicaea was the question of the status of Christians who had fallen into public sin. Could they be welcomed back into the Christian community? If they were ministers in the Church, were the sacraments they administered somehow defective or invalid?

It was a question that bedeviled the early Church for centuries, particularly during periods of persecution, when some Christians apostasised but then later attempted to return to the community. The canons promulgated at Nicaea made it clear that a consensus was developing among the Church’s bishops: Sinners can come back. There might be public penances, but they can come back.

Historical theologians will point to decisions such as these as important in our development of the sacrament of reconciliation over time — the notion that even grave sin can be forgiven by God and through God’s Church.

Nicaea and the Future

The late Pope Francis had openly expressed the hope that the Christian churches can agree on a common date for Easter again. By happy coincidence, this year and in 2028 it will fall on the same day in almost every Christian church, be it Protestant, Catholic or Orthodox. Will the 1,700th anniversary of that council be the occasion when the Christian Churches can settle this beef?

Perhaps the greatest impact of Nicaea is not theological in nature, but ecclesial. It showed that the Christian community, wracked though it was by theological, political and social divisions, was capable of coming together in a way modelled by Scripture itself in the *Acts of the Apostles* — and in that walking together, capable of hearing each other out and reaching a consensus on important issues. We have a word for that these days, too. Is it too much of a stretch to call Nicaea a consummate example of synodality at work? **James T. Keane, America**

Pope's prayer intention for June



The revolution of compassion: Learning from the Heart of Christ

These days, it's not uncommon to see people still wearing masks on the streets or in crowded places. For me, it's a stark reminder of that harrowing time when the world was gripped by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The memory is still fresh: empty highways, shuttered shops, families grieving in isolation. And yet, amid the fear and fragility, something else quietly emerged — something beautiful.

The entire world was united in a fight against an invisible enemy, and it brought to light deeply moving expressions of compassion. Neighbours left groceries on doorsteps. Strangers donated oxygen tanks. Doctors, nurses, and frontliners worked until they collapsed. Social media became a platform for stories that reminded us, even in the darkest times, compassion is an integral part of our DNA.

This global crisis unveiled a powerful truth: compassion is not just an emotion - it is an action that transcends boundaries and unites us all. Even now, long after lockdowns have ended, the mask has become more than a safety precaution. It is a quiet symbol — a reminder that we belong to each other.

Which is why this month, Pope Francis' prayer intention strikes so deeply:

That the world might grow in compassion — "Let us pray that each one of us might find consolation in a personal relationship with Jesus, and from His Heart, learn to have compassion on the world."

A living legacy: Pope Francis and the heart of compassion

As we pray this intention, our hearts are heavy with grief at the passing of Pope Francis - a shepherd who, more than any other in our time, embodied compassion in word, deed, and presence. He knelt before refugees to wash their feet, embraced the sick and disfigured without hesitation, dined with the homeless, and tirelessly reminded the Church to "go out to the peripheries."

His papacy was a living testimony that mercy is the name of God and compassion the mission of Christ. In him, the world glimpsed what it means to be both radically human and divinely inspired. He was, and remains, the epitome of a compassionate disciple. His death leaves a silence — but not a void. The Spirit he ignited continues in us. His legacy is not merely in documents or reforms, but in hearts awakened and hands moved to serve. We honour him best by continuing the revolution of tenderness he began.

Why Compassion? Why Now?

Because the world is bleeding — from wars, climate disasters, forced migration,



PRAYER PRISM

Fr Fabian Dicom

economic inequality, and the ever-deepening isolation of the human heart. In such a world, compassion is not weakness. It is resistance. It is the revolution of tenderness that Pope Francis so often spoke of.

He saw clearly, when we lose compassion, we lose our humanity.

The many faces of compassion

Psychologically, compassion is more than empathy — it's empathy with action. It's not only feeling with someone but being moved to respond. Neuroscience confirms that compassion activates different neural pathways than pity. Pity keeps distance. Compassion steps in.

Emotionally, compassion requires the humility to feel — to be vulnerable, to allow another's suffering to touch us. It is not about fixing others but about being present to them.

Socially, compassion dismantles the invisible walls we build between "us" and "them." It challenges systems that benefit the few and abandon the many. In a society driven by competition and self-preservation, compassion refuses to see the poor, the refugee, the mentally challenged, or the forgotten as burdens.

Spiritually, compassion is the beating heart of the Gospel. It is not an option for the Christian — it is the very shape of our discipleship.

The compassion of Jesus: Radically present, fiercely loving

Again and again in the Gospels, Jesus is "moved with compassion."

When He sees the crowd hungry and lost, "like sheep without a shepherd," He doesn't just preach — He feeds them (Mark 6:34).

When the widow of Nain weeps over her only son, Jesus is moved to raise the boy — not to prove power, but because her pain moved Him (Luke 7:13).

The Good Samaritan - an outsider, theologically wrong, socially suspect — becomes the example of divine compassion because he stopped, saw, touched, and acted (Luke 10:33).

Even on the Cross, Jesus looks with compassion on His persecutors: "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34).

Jesus' compassion is not soft sentiment. It is scandalous, counter-cultural, boundary-breaking love.

What blocks compassion?

We all have the seeds of compassion. They are woven into our very nature. Think of how instinctively we comfort a crying child or reach out to someone in pain. But what stops us?

Fear: That we'll be overwhelmed, taken advantage of, or look foolish.

Busyness: Compassion requires time - and time is the first casualty of our driven world.

Judgment: We withhold compassion when we decide who is "deserving" of our help.

Systems: Economic and political structures reward efficiency, not mercy.

We are compassionate by nature

Despite the pain and polarisation around us, we must never forget this: people are still choosing to care. Volunteers show up after disasters. Strangers donate to those in need. Health care workers still go above and beyond. Youth organise climate strikes not for themselves, but for future generations. Parents sacrifice daily for their children. Friends sit with one another through depression and grief.

These aren't isolated moments — they are glimpses of who we are. They remind us that even when systems fail, human hearts can rise. Compassion is not a rare virtue — it is our truest calling.

A Church of compassion: Where do we go from here?

Let us be clear: the Church is not lacking in compassion. Across Malaysia and the world, Caritas teams serve the poor, migrant ministries accompany the displaced, and countless parishioners visit the sick, feed the hungry, and care for the grieving. We must honour this sacred work.

But the call of Pope Francis — and the cry of our wounded world — invites us to go deeper.

We are being asked to become not just agents of compassion, but a culture of compassion. That requires transformation at every level:

1. Shift from charity to kinship

Charity gives from a place of abundance. Compassion enters the place of suffering. What if our ministries didn't just serve "the poor" but walked with them, listened, and built lasting relationships that humanise and transform both sides?

2. Empower the People of God

Compassion is not the task of clergy or religious alone. Every baptised person is anointed to be a healer, a reconciler, a presence of mercy in their families,

workplaces, and neighbourhoods. What if parish formation focused not just on doctrine or liturgy, but on forming compassionate disciples?

3. Let compassion shape our decisions and structures

What if every Church decision — from parish budgets to national pastoral priorities — began not with spreadsheets, but with people? Imagine if our pastoral councils and diocesan synods first asked: "Whose pain are we ignoring?" "Whose dignity will be lifted — or denied — by this choice?" When compassion becomes the lens through which we evaluate policies, spending, and structures, the Church stops managing and starts accompanying.

4. Create spaces of healing

Our parishes can become sanctuaries for those grieving, struggling with mental health, carrying trauma, or just needing someone to notice. What if every church had a "listening corner," a healing circle, or a team trained in compassionate accompaniment?

5. Let the margins evangelise the centre

The pandemic revealed that the most life-giving stories often come from the edge — the migrant worker, the street vendor, the elderly alone. What if we allowed these stories to shape our theology, our liturgies, our priorities?

The final word:

Compassion as mission

The pandemic showed us what we are capable of when we are united by vulnerability and love. It revealed that compassion is not a luxury but a necessity — for the world, for the Church, for the soul. We must not lose what we learned.

Let the mask, still worn by some, remind us of the fragility of life — but also of the strength of love.

Let the memory of COVID not only haunt us, but humble us — and renew in us the conviction that we belong to one another.

To be compassionate is not to become someone else — it is to become who we truly are:

Made in the image of the God whose name is Mercy.

Rooted in the Heart of Jesus, pierced yet beating.

Alive to the Spirit who moves us not only to weep, but to act.

May the Church — every one of us — become a living parable of compassion in a world that so desperately needs it.

Fr Fabian Dicom is the National Director of Caritas Malaysia

The media nuns - Connecting faith and the world

Kristen Priya Krishnan

Anniversaries are meaningful milestones in both personal and communal life. They invite us to pause, reflect, and give thanks to the Lord and for how He has walked with us on the journey of faith. For the Daughters of St Paul in Malaysia, this 60th anniversary is a moment to remember the many graces received over the years. Every achievement and step forward is a gift from God. It is also a time to honour the Sisters who have faithfully laboured in the Lord's vineyard, and to acknowledge all those who have supported them in their mission and journey.

The Sisters come from various walks of life for a common mission – using their many talents to spread the Good News through media. The book centres that they run in Kota Kinabalu and Petaling Jaya, as well as the regular mobile book exhibitions that they set up at parish and diocesan events, are wonderful signs of their commitment in helping to spread the Good News.

Their presence in Malaysia reflects a tangible response to Jesus' call to "go into the world and proclaim the Good News." Through their talks, as well as the dissemination of faith-based books and publications, the Sisters have touched many lives – particularly those unable to travel or pursue higher education. Through these written materials, individuals are empowered to deepen their faith, grow in their knowledge of God, and strengthen their love for their neighbours.

On March 19, 1965, sixty years ago, Sr M Rosa Azurin, Sr Grace Lee and two Filipina FSPs (Figlie Di San Paolo) started this community in West Malaysia by renting a small apartment. On 8 September 1971, the community of Kuala Lumpur became part of the Philippine Province, and on January 5, 1975, the Philippine-Malaysia Province was officially constituted. It was not an easy undertaking, but it was always guided and accompanied by the breath of the Spirit. The greatest gifts were vocations: beautiful young women who welcomed the Pauline charism with joy and great love. And, another gift was the Cooperation, who accompanied the journey of the communities in Malaysia, representing for the sisters the goodness and providence of the heavenly Father. The priests and lay people have deeply loved and strongly supported the Pauline mission in Malaysia. These two foundations were also characterised by poverty, courage, faith, and the desire to meet the needs of a Church that was still young, offering an important support to her evangelising and pastoral activities, more than thirty-six years now has passed since January 25, 1989.

The Daughters of St Paul set foot on Borneo soil in 1961. The community had accepted vocations as early as 1963. From Jesselton (Kota Kinabalu) the Sisters occasionally travelled to Singapore for book missions. As they were unable to open a house in Singapore, the Sisters accepted the invitation of Msgr Dominic Vendargon of Kuala Lumpur to open a house in his diocese on Mar 19, 1965. The first community of three (Srs Rosa Azurin, Grace Lee, Assunta Labay) arrived from the Philippines and Sabah at different times and initially stayed



The Sisters are trained to give media animation whenever they can and wherever they are.



at a rental flat in Brickfields. This community, together with the Jesselton community, joined the communities of Taiwan to form the China-Malaysia Delegation on Mar 20. The Sabah House was closed on June 21, 1971. The Sisters then moved to their permanent residence at 161, Jalan 5/60, Petaling Gardens, Petaling Jaya on Dec 6, 1968.

The work of conversion began with a book mission at the Church of the Holy Rosary, Kuala Lumpur on Easter Sunday on Apr 18, 1965. With the arrival of their first brand new Austin, the sisters were able to travel throughout the whole peninsular and Singapore for mission. The sisters also received permission to hold a book mission at the University of Malaya on Apr 21, 1965 where there was a large gathering of Young Christian Workers (YCW). Visits to families began on Apr 22, 1965, at the homes of the Sisters' neighbours in Brickfields. The Sisters also visited schools in June 1965, offices in September, factories and industrial plants around Petaling Jaya in November. The Sisters were well trained to give media animation such as film, video, radio, and book reviews whenever they could since it was part of their apostolate.

The first media centre (Pusat Buku Santo Paulus) located at Yayasan Ann Koai, Jalan Ampang was blessed by Archbishop Emeritus Tan Sri Dominic Vendargon on Aug 20, 1989 and opened officially for service on Sept 15. In 2002, the Sisters closed the Ampang Media Centre due to high rental, floods, bank/business establishments moving out of the area. The media centre (now known as Paulines Sdn Bhd) was relocated to 162 Jalan Gasing, Petaling Jaya. It was blessed by Msgr Daniel Lim on Nov 26, 2003.

The local publishing apostolates began in 1977 with the printing of two titles: My ABC Colouring Book by Sr Grace Lee FSP and Little Prince I – Want-My-Way from FSP Boston and illustrations by C Mongo for school diffusion.

In November/December 2001, the Sisters co-published the Alkitab / Berita Baik with the Bible Society of Malaysia with an initial run of 5,000 copies sponsored by Gaetano Gagliano of Italy.

The first cassette album produced by the Sisters was *Lord Jesus, Please Stand By Me*, the fruit of the Liturgical Songwriting competition held in conjunction with the 25th foundation anniversary of the Daughters of St Paul in Peninsular Malaysia in 1990. It was followed by a second



The Pauline Mission took off with a book mission at the Church of the Holy Rosary, Kuala Lumpur on Easter Sunday, April 18, 1965.



album entitled *Teach Me Your Way*. In later years they were produced in CD format.

The first video reproduction was *Mary of Nazareth*, a film by Jean Delannoy in May 1996. It became quite popular when it was promoted to the parishes.

From 1970 onwards, the Sisters got involved in the Church of the Assumption through activities such as editing the parish newsletter, putting up a parish library on Sundays and helping in the parish choir on Sundays and feast days. From 1983 – 1985, Sr Carmela Braganza helped to set up the audiovisual sector at Majodi Centre Plentong at the request of then Bishop James Chan.

From 2000 onwards, the Sisters were involved in the Archdiocesan Social Communications Commission, Regional Commission for Social Communications Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei, Malaysian Catechetical Commission, National Catechetical Office, Archdiocesan Bahasa Malaysia Apostolate Committee, Basic Ecclesial Community, Archdiocesan Vocational Promotion Team, KL Archdiocesan Council of Religious and Malaysian Council of Religious Superiors.

As of March 2025, the community boasts 13 perpetual professed Sisters, three temporary professed, one postulant and one pre-postulant. Thirteen are from Sabah, two from Sarawak and two from Perak. Eight are in the Philippines, one in Thailand, and one in Spain. The rest are either in Sabah or in Petaling Jaya. Thankfully the Lord has sent two vocations from the Diocese of Penang: Sr Elizabeth Jothee of Silibin, Ipoh and Sr Laurin Kowal of Taiping.

After attending an orientation of the life and mission of the Pauline Family on Mar 9, 1975 at the Daughters of St Paul Convent in Petaling Jaya, 16 participants decided to go commit themselves to form a group to share in the Pauline Mission.

Over the last 60 years, the Association of Pauline Cooperators have been involved in apostolic activities such as Bible enthronement in homes, book diffusion in local and outstation parishes, conducting film/video analysis in schools and parishes, participating in World Communications Day activities, serving in the Pauline Media Centre, assisting in the publication of the bimonthly newsletter of the parishes, printing of Christmas Cards and Prayer Cards for diffusion, and co-organising fundraisers (coffee mornings, bazaars) for the media apostolate.



From 1970 onwards, the Sisters got involved in the Church of the Assumption through activities such as editing the parish newsletter, putting up a parish library on Sundays and helping in the parish choir on Sundays and feast days.

It is Confirmation season for the youth of the Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur. Seventeen-year-olds from parishes in KL and PJ will be culminating their faith journeys of 12 years at their Confirmation Masses. While to some, the most pressing agenda is what they will be wearing, mostly unbeknownst to them, these teens will be making two of their biggest choices of their faith lives.

One is the decision to go forth as adult Catholics, confirmed in their faith, and expected to bear good fruit. The other, is the choice of their companion on this faith journey: their godparent. While some will have the same godparent who cradled them as babies at the baptismal font, others, because of a variety of circumstances, will be choosing new godparents.

While most youth will differ to their parents in this choice, it is imperative that both confirmands and parents truly understand the role of a godparent. A prospective godparent isn't simply a stand-in parent or a goodtime friend. According to No 872 of the *Code of Canon Law*, "Insofar as possible, one to be baptised is to be given a sponsor who is to assist an adult in Christian initiation, or, together with the parents, to present an infant at the baptism, and who will help the baptised to lead a Christian life in harmony with baptism, and to fulfil faithfully the obligations connected with it."



Word in Progress

KAREN-MICHAELA TAN

This isn't just fun and games. I know it too well because I bear the sometimes burden of guilt for not being the kind of godparent I would now like to be. After I was baptized and confirmed as a young adult through the RCIA programme, the daughter of the family closest to my parents, also chose to enrol in RCIA. I had, at that time, been a bona fide

Catholic for maybe three years, and was a facilitator in the RCIA programme at the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist. When I told my RCIA coordinator of my friend's request that I become her godmother, the erstwhile Franciska Savarimuthu cautioned me that even though I had lived as a Catholic all my life, as a three-year confirmed Catholic, I was still young in the faith. I still said yes to my friend, and by 26 was godmother to a young woman only two years my junior.

The twenties is a time for many things: choosing to stay or leave jobs, making friends one may take with you for a lifetime, getting your heart broken... More importantly however, is that although people are deemed to have reached adulthood by 21, the brain's frontal lobe, which is responsible for executive functions such as decision-making, planning, and inhibitory control, continues to develop until the mid-twenties. This period of development is crucial for shaping one's

personality, decision-making abilities, and behaviours. Meaning humans don't make the wisest decisions at this point of life.

A two-year lead in career and adulthood is not a huge head start, and I was too busy living and growing to realise that I was not fulfilling my sacred responsibility to my goddaughter. We were lucky that neither of us had a crisis of faith during these years. We weathered our thirties well enough and stayed close enough for me to ask her to godmother my daughter. She was certainly a more conscientious godma than I was, but mentoring and supporting someone in the faith can only be done when godparent and godchild are in constant touch. Good luck on that when the sweet-smiling infant becomes a tetchy tween and then an earbuds-wearing teen who comments on their friends' Insta but never reads messages from parents or godparents!

My goddaughter's migration also means that she is unable to return for my teen's Confirmation. This led me to suggest a string of names as replacements: BEC friends my teen served with in the parish, former catechists, Catholic friends. I shared my experience, and said that an older person would be more of a help as my kid found her footing in the faith. But, I also cautioned her about choosing an adult so old they'd have only a short time with her.

Her choice of godfather was the man she affectionately refers to as her 'boss', the head of the hospitality ministry at the parish she serves at. The gentleman is

father to one daughter, an only child, the same as her. My teen was ecstatic when he agreed. In explaining her choice to me she said, "I am happy being taught by and taking orders from Mr CK as a hospitality minister, so I know I will listen to his advice. He has served a long time in his ministry so I know he has strong foundations in service and faith. As father to an only daughter, he understands what we are like. He is not so old that he is in danger of imminent death, and not so young that he has career responsibilities. Most importantly, I can ask him things and he will always give me the correct answers." The kid has obviously given it a lot of thought.

Parents with children who will be confirmed should give the issue of godparents as much thought. As should adults who have been asked to be someone's godparent.

Godparenting is like the Mafia. Once you are in, you're in. No excuse you make is going to absolve you of this sacred duty. It is a bond you will share with your godchild until the day one of you dies. So, think about it. If you're doing this for the nice pictures, or because you were flattered to be asked, really discern if you will be up to the moral and religious obligations of this task. Because a godparent is forever.

Karen-Michaela Tan is a poet, writer and editor who seeks out God's presence in the human condition and looks for ways to put the Word of God into real action.

Discernment in the age of forwarded messages

There are many straightforward people these days. They are the ones who will straight away forward you the latest message they receive in their WhatsApp groups or other social media platforms — without a second thought.

Unfortunately, many of these messages turn out to be fake news, unverified claims, or, worse still, scams. Some include links that promise financial benefits from so-called charities or government programmes. In reality, these are traps designed to deceive and defraud people of their hard-earned money.

As a Catholic financial planner, I see the damage these messages can do. People fall for false investment schemes. Retirees hand over sensitive banking information to scammers posing as government officials. Families donate to fraudulent causes, thinking they're helping the poor. Often, the perpetrators wrap their messages in the language of urgency, goodwill, or even faith. And all it takes is one click, one moment of trust, to open the door to financial harm.

This Sunday, the Church celebrates World Communications Day, an occasion that Pope Paul VI instituted in 1967, recognising the growing influence of media and its potential to shape the human heart and society at large. The theme chosen each year by the Holy Father calls us to reflect on the ethical and spiritual responsibilities that come with communication — whether through the press, television, or now, more than ever, social media platforms.

The late Pope Francis, in his messages for this day, frequently emphasised the need for truth, listening, and dialogue. In a world filled with disinformation, polarisation, and superficial communication, the Holy Father reminded us that communication is a sacred act. It has the power to build bridges or to destroy trust.

So, what does this have to do with money?

Everything.

Financial communication is a part of everyday life. From forwarded messages about "government grants" to investment tips going viral on social media, to the way we speak about money with our children — our financial lives are shaped by the information we consume and share. If our communication is not rooted in truth, discernment, and concern for the well-being of others, then we risk turning our finances into a source of confusion, fear, or even sin.

World Communications Day is an invitation to reflect on the ethics of what we say and share, especially in the digital space. For Catholics, this means becoming not only consumers of information but also stewards of truth. We are called to be as careful with our words and shares as we are with our wallets. And when those two worlds intersect — as they often do online — the need for discernment becomes even more urgent.

Here are some practical ways we can live out this calling:

Pause Before You Forward

In the world of instant messaging and viral content, the temptation to click "forward" without a second thought is strong. But as Christians, we must pause and ask: Is this message true? Is it from a trustworthy source? Could it cause harm or confusion? Just as we are taught to avoid spreading gossip, we should avoid sharing messages that might mislead others, especially when money is involved.

Verify Financial Claims

Scammers are getting more sophisticated. Some messages claim to be from well-known banks, government agencies, or



Faith and Finance

HAZEL ONG-ARCHIBALD

even Catholic charities. They use logos, official language, and persuasive stories to gain your trust. Always double-check any financial message, especially those asking for money, personal information, or urgent action. Go directly to the organisation's official website or call their verified phone number.

Educate Others with Patience

Many of those who forward these messages do so with good intentions. They believe

they are helping others by spreading opportunities or warnings. Instead of reacting with frustration, we can gently guide them toward more discerning habits. Take the time to explain how scams work. Share articles or Church teachings on media responsibility and financial stewardship.

Use Digital Media to Evangelise Financial Wisdom

Social media can be used not just to warn about scams but to promote solid financial principles rooted in our faith. Sharing resources on budgeting, saving, avoiding debt, and giving generously can be a form of digital evangelisation. Catholic financial ministries, diocesan outreach programs, and lay professionals all have a role to play in spreading financial literacy — not as a secular skill alone, but as part of a life of virtue and responsibility.

Reflect the Gospel in Your Finances

Ultimately, our financial decisions — including what we support, promote, or reject online — should reflect the values of the Gospel: justice, charity, prudence, and hope. When we're tempted by flashy investment promises or guaranteed returns, we must ask: Is this honest? Is this ethical? Is this aligned with a spirit of

stewardship? Our communication and our money must both serve the truth.

World Communications Day reminds us that we are not passive receivers of information. We are communicators — whether we have one follower or a thousand. Each of us has the power to shape the financial and spiritual well-being of those around us, simply by choosing what we say, what we share, and how we respond.

In his 2021 message for World Communications Day, the late Pope Francis called for "clear and honest communication that does not try to overwhelm, but rather seeks to connect." That is a powerful invitation not only for journalists and content creators but also for everyday Catholics navigating the noisy world of online messages and digital deception.

Let us take this occasion to recommit ourselves to financial integrity and responsible communication. Let us be known not just for being straightforward, but for being wise, prudent, and grounded in the truth of Christ.

In a world flooded with noise, may our voices be ones of clarity. In a world full of schemes, may our witness be one of stewardship. And in a world hungry for hope, may our communication — in words, clicks, and currency — point always to the source of all truth and abundance: the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Hazel Ong-Archibald is a Licensed Financial Planner with over two decades of experience in investment, insurance, and estate planning. Since year 2000, she has been guiding individuals and families towards financial stability. Hazel is passionate about integrating Catholic values into personal finance, helping others achieve their financial goals while living a life of generosity and trust in God's providence.



Fr Ron Rolheiser

Jesus — checking our emotions

There is a poignant scene in the series *The Chosen* which, irrespective of our reaction to it, demands reflection.

This is the scene: Just before curing Peter's mother-in-law of a fever, Jesus has a private conversation with Peter's wife. He begins by telling her that he knows how close they are to each other as husband and wife and then expresses his sympathy to her for the fact that his call has effectively taken Peter out of their house. Then in a gentle tone he asks her how she feels about this. Her answer assures him that, while there is pain, she (like her husband) will willingly make the sacrifice.

Among other things, this sheds light on the fact that when one individual (like Peter) leaves all to follow Christ, he doesn't pay the cost alone. Those close to him also pay a price. What did it cost the wives of apostles when Jesus called their husbands?

Moreover, this incident (albeit expressed fictionally here) sheds some needed light on how Jesus is not indifferent to the emotional crucifixions we sometimes undergo in order to respond to his call. It assures us that Jesus understands and gives us divine permission not to feel guilty about the pain we feel.

No doubt many will challenge the value of this scene from *The Chosen* since it is not

historical (in so far as we know) but merely a fictional creation. Did the historical Jesus ever have this kind of a conversation with Peter's wife or the wife of any of his apostles?

However, whether or not this scene is historical is not the point here. The point is that Jesus would not have been callous or indifferent to the pain of the wives and others whom the apostles left behind to follow him.

Mostly we avoid probing this question because we tend to take too literally some of Jesus' sayings about leaving behind father, mother, wife, and children to follow him. For example, at one point Jesus says this: "If you come to me but will not leave your family, you cannot be my follower. You must love me more than your father, mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters—even more than your own life!" (Luke 14:25-27). Perhaps even colder and more callous in its literal expression, is this Gospel text: "He said to another man, 'Follow Me.' The man replied, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' But Jesus told him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead. You, however, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.' Still another said, 'I will follow You, Lord; but first let me bid farewell to my family.' Jesus replied, 'No one who puts a hand to

the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.'" (Luke 9: 60-62)

It is easy to misunderstand what Jesus is saying here about not looking back while following him. The images he employs are stark, cold, and emotionally brutal. But these are images, not literal spiritual counsels. The hard, brute emotional choices that one must sometimes make in fidelity to the Gospels might aptly be named as emotional crucifixion. In choosing Jesus we also choose the cross and there is real death, and the pain involved here cannot be softened or explained away.

However, and this is crucial to grasp, the choices we make to renounce ourselves and give ourselves over in genuine self-sacrifice are not made at the psychological or emotional level. Those choices are made at a deeper level, a moral level, where something deeper than our emotions and feelings rules and can for the sake of a deeper meaning and a deeper happiness, override the emotional and the psychological. Thus, when Jesus says, if you come to me but will not leave your family, you cannot be my follower, he is addressing our deepest moral centre, that place inside us where we ultimately choose right from wrong and meaning from emptiness. He is not addressing our emotions. He is not challenging us to

an unhealthy emotional stoicism.

In challenging us to give up everything to become his disciple, Jesus is not dismissive of the emotional and psychological pain that this will cause us. When he invites us to take up his cross and follow him, he understands this will be an emotional crucifixion. But, in offering us the challenge, at the same time, he gives us permission to feel without guilt the brute affective pain of that choice on our emotions. He is not challenging us to a cold, inhuman stoicism, where for the love of God we are not supposed to feel the pain of losing precious relationships and precious freedoms. Like the Jesus in *The Chosen*, compassionately checking with Peter's wife as to where her emotions were vis-à-vis what Jesus is asking of them, Jesus is offering each of us the challenge of self-renunciation and at the same time checking with us how we are dealing emotionally with it.

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

"Change is the only constant in life." - Greek philosopher Heraclitus (535 BC – 475 BC)



As I was Contemplating

FR GERARD THERAVIAM

Talk about flux and change! The last few weeks have been just exactly that in the life of the Church.

An ailing Pope Francis who seemed to be getting better and then had his last Alleluias on Easter Sunday and then succumbed to death on Easter Monday...The conclave that had had so many riveted, with so many predictions and expectations... And then, almost out of the blue, emerged Pope Leo XIV, a relatively unknown and recently appointed cardinal chosen as our new leader. Right now, his every word and move are being scrutinised to see if he will follow in the way of Pope Francis or will his papacy have a different slant.

It would seem that my emotions have been pulled in different directions recently – sadness and resignation at Pope Francis' illness and death, and an unfinished grief that still lingers, and then the anticipation and surprise at someone quite unexpected emerging as our new leader, and the joy that has emerged in slowly discovering the person of Pope Leo. All this in a world that is hit by economic uncertainty, war, famine and suffering in so many parts, along with the joys and hopes that are all part of Life!

There are times when we might wish things would stay the same and not change! But that doesn't happen! There is constant change and one needs to adapt or get left behind in a time warp! We need to live in the present moment, not dwell in the



File photo of Pope Francis appoints as new cardinal US-born prelate prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, Robert Francis Prevost during the Ordinary Public Consistory for the Creation of new Cardinals at St Peter's Square on September 30, 2023 in Vatican. (Vatican Media)

past or be anxious for the future. One day at a time! Transitions happen all the time and the genius of humanity is that we are able to change along with the realities that also change. We need to Let go, and Let God! With transition comes transformation – if we can be open to the Holy Spirit re-creating us to become a better version of our selves.

Yet, change is hard for some people, especially if they feel secure in a particular phase and are wary of the new, perhaps believing that the new is somehow less favourable or good. The converse can also be true for people who have been unhappy or suffering in a phase, where change brings hope for the future.

"To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot." (Eccle 3:1-2)

Transitions!

Certainly, when we look back at the difficult phases of our lives, we can see that God was indeed there for us, but in those periods it may have been hard to discern his presence. And as we go along in life, we grow in confidence and hope.

We are a pilgrim people and we see in the Old Testament that God constantly reminded His people that he was there with them. "It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed." (Deuteronomy 31:8)

There are times where God may seem absent or silent but we need to trust that His hand is indeed upon us. The Good Shepherd does not abandon his sheep even when they go through the dark valleys. We just need to cling on to Hope and know that we are in God's hands.

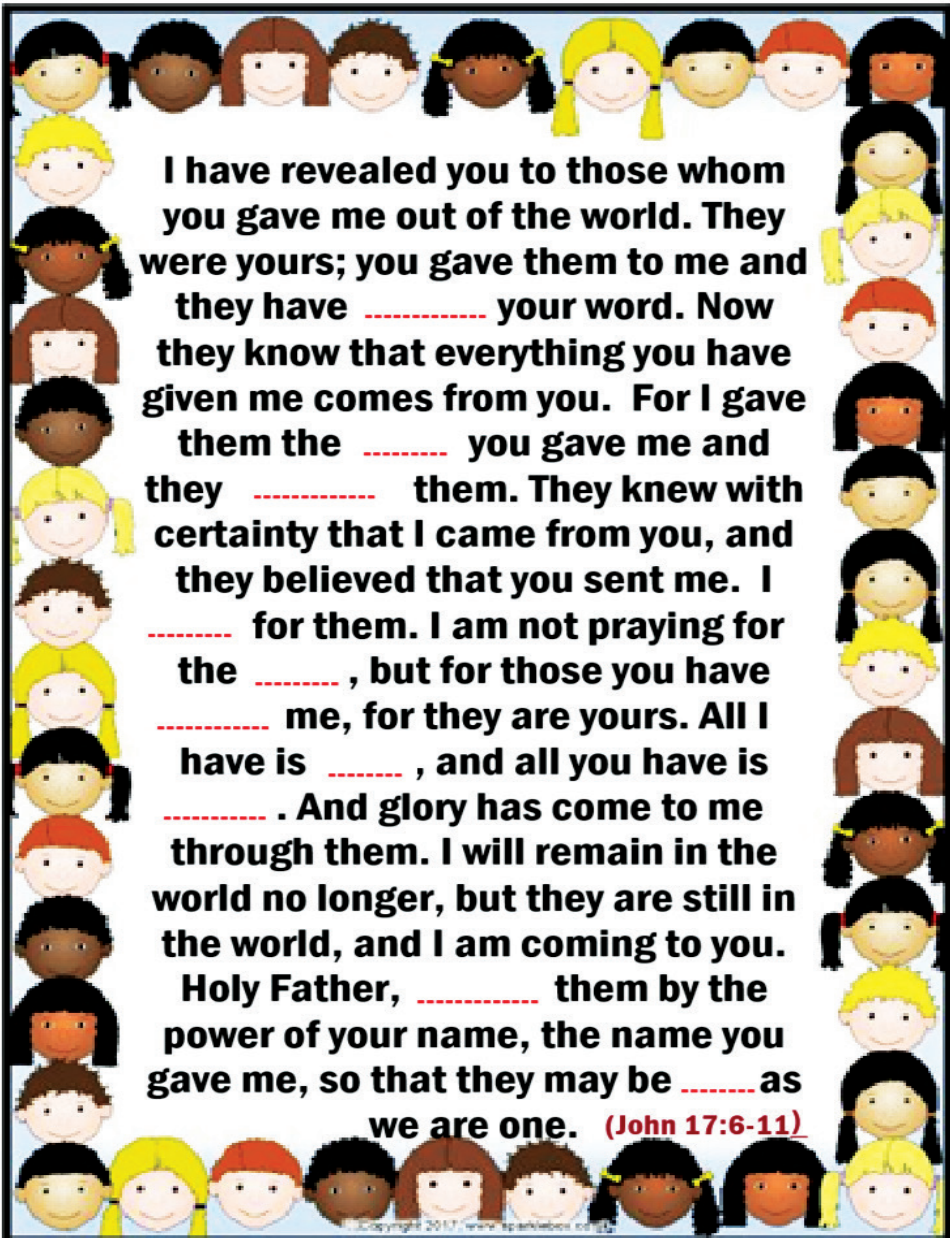
As we look forward to the unfolding papacy of Pope Leo, we entrust him to the Lord, recognising him to be God's choice for the present time. For those who worry about the directions he may lead the Church towards, we need to see that God's Holy Spirit is in ultimate control. He certainly will not be a clone of Pope Francis – he brings into his office his own gifts and experiences, as well as the discernment he will have to exercise as he balances the unchanging truths of the faith with the changing times and circumstances. I pray he will build on the legacies of all the previous popes and faithfully and fearlessly lead the Church as it lives out her mission in the world at this present time, in this Jubilee year of Hope. Hope does not disappoint! (Romans 5:5)

God bless the Pope Leo!

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

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



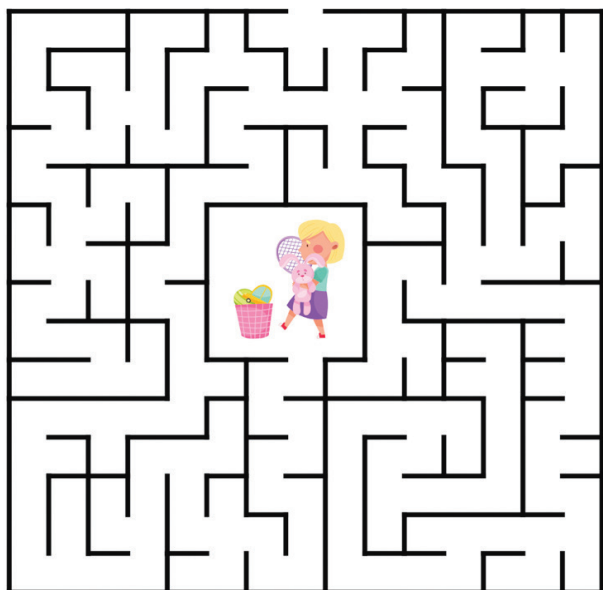
I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the you gave me and they them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I for them. I am not praying for the, but for those you have me, for they are yours. All I have is, and all you have is, and all you have is And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be as we are one. (John 17:6-11)

- accepted
- obeyed
- protect
- yours
- given
- one
- words
- mine
- pray
- world

HELPING HANDS



Doing your part to help is always appreciated! See if you can find your way to the child putting her toys away.



Dear children,

On the night He was betrayed, Jesus prayed for all of those who would put their trust in Him.

In His prayer, Jesus said, "Father, I pray that they all may be one as You and I are one. Just as You are in Me and I am in You, may they also be in us."

Jesus wanted all of His followers to be one.

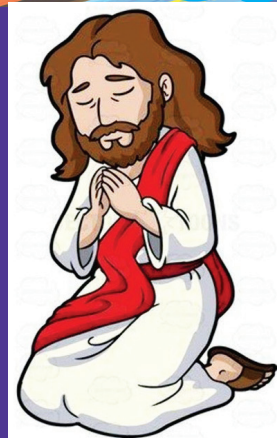
Children, we may be different in the way we look and we may speak different languages.

We may have different customs and traditions, but if we have put our trust in Jesus, He wants us to be one in Him, just as He is one with the Father. We must put aside our differences and be united in Him so that the world may know His love.



Let us pray to Jesus so that we may be united in our love for one another — just as we are united in our love for Him. Amen.

Until we meet again, be good okay?



Aunty Eliz

I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. (John 17:9)

Let's Colour





Sharing kindness

through a simple meal

KUALA LUMPUR: “May 4th was no ordinary Sunday. For us, it marked the day of our *Bible Knowledge Project: Giving Food to the Needy*. We selected this project because it allowed us to be directly involved in the act of giving — especially since one of the requirements was that the food had to be prepared by us.

“There were two of us, both 14 years old, and we decided to prepare a simple breakfast of sandwiches and hot dogs — something within our skills and budget, and required only minimal help from our parents.

“To bring our plan to life, we approached the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP), Conference of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. SSVP distributes monthly aid to registered individuals, including funds for rent, medicine, and education. When available, donated provisions are also handed out. We asked for their support and permission to serve breakfast on May 4, and they kindly agreed.

“With approval from our Bible Knowledge teacher, we began preparations. On that Sunday morning, we were up early, making enough food

for around 20 families. By 8.00am, we were at the SSVP room, setting up before the families arrived at 8.30am.

“As people came in, we greeted them with smiles and served each one a tuna sandwich, a hot dog, and a bottle of water. We also contributed a packet of *mee hoon* and biscuits to the provisions they received. Many were pleasantly surprised by the breakfast, and their warm smiles and genuine gratitude touched our hearts deeply.

“Though the meal was simple, the experience was profound. We felt a sense of warmth and fulfilment knowing we could make someone’s day just a little better.

“By 11.00am, we had served everyone. With some extra food left, we handed them out to nearby cleaners and RELA personnel, who were also appreciative.

“We are truly glad we chose this project. It reminded us that kindness doesn’t need to be grand to be meaningful. A sincere thank-you to SSVP for making this experience possible and for allowing us to serve the community in this small yet heartfelt way.”

Mekel and Hannah are Year Nine students at SMIS Damansara, passionate about community service and making a difference through small acts of kindness.



‘I hope more people will become Catholic’

Students react to Pope Leo XIV

WASHINGTON: For Catholic students in the United States, the election of Pope Leo XIV as the first American pope on May 8 filled them with excitement and hope.

Or, as one student put it: “Everyone just freaked out.”

Catholic middle school students attending the Diocese of Arlington’s annual BASH event held at Bishop O’Connell Catholic High School shared memories of the day with Roselle Reyes, news correspondent for *EWTN News In Depth*.

Bahkita Karenga, a Catholic school student in the Diocese of Arlington, Virginia, remembered the excitement of finding out during the school day. Students were “screaming,” “jumping and laughing,” and giving hugs.

“It was so beautiful because at that moment, it didn’t really matter which sport you played or which friend group you were in or which trend you were following,” Karenga reflected.

“Everyone was just a young Catholic kid, and everyone was excited that we have a new leader.”

Karenga remembered how “everyone joined in” singing the national anthem to-

gether after they found out.

Pope Leo XIV: ‘Salvation does not come about by magic but by grace and faith’

“America represents a lot of different people coming together, so I think [Pope Leo XIV will] really try to make everyone’s voice across the world feel heard, and I think that’s good as a new pope,” Karenga added.

Hopes for ‘revival’

Students shared their hopes for what Pope Leo XIV will bring to the world.

Arlington Catholic student Benjamin Lee observed that Leo is known “from a lot of places around the world” and said he hopes this will “attract” more people to Catholicism.

The pope grew up in Chicago and spent about a dozen years as a missionary in Peru and has dual citizenship.

“I hope that more people will become Catholic through that, knowing that he is the first American pope,” Lee said.

“He’s also Peruvian,” said Catholic student Alison de River. “I’m Peruvian, too, so it makes me really happy.”

Another student, Andreas Millrad, said he hopes Pope Leo XIV will bring about a

“revival.”

“I hope Pope Leo XIV will bring a new revival to the US to help everyone come to Jesus, learn who He is and what He can do for us,” Millrad said.

One Catholic school student, Patrick Aogauer, expressed hope that an American pope will show the universality of the Church.

“I really hope that his new papacy will expand the Catholic Church and show Americans that, yes, it’s universal,” he said.

‘A frenzy’

Students recounted how special it was to experience such a historical moment with their classmates.

Millrad remembered that “everyone just freaked out” when they learned the new pope was Cardinal Robert Prevost from the US.

“Everyone went into a frenzy,” Millrad said. “It was incredible.”

“I feel really proud that we have our first American pope, and that it feels like we’re all united,” Millrad continued.

As they were watching the conclave, Millrad said his classmates discussed how

they’ve never had an American pope.

“I feel like it was such a blessing being able to see this, such a historical moment and share it with all my schoolmates,” he added.

Jennifer Meszaros, a local Catholic who attends Our Lady of the Blue Ridge Parish, reflected on how Pope Leo gives young Catholics a deeper connection to the Vatican.

“I think it brings the Vatican closer to these kids, gives them something tangible, and they can relate to,” Meszaros said.

“Chicago, they know that,” she continued. “He plays tennis, they play tennis.”

For her part, Meszaros said she hopes the new pope will bring “youth movement back to the Church, which we desperately need for the future of our Church.”

Bishop Michael Burbidge of Arlington, Virginia, reflected on the “enthusiasm” from young people reacting to the new announcement.

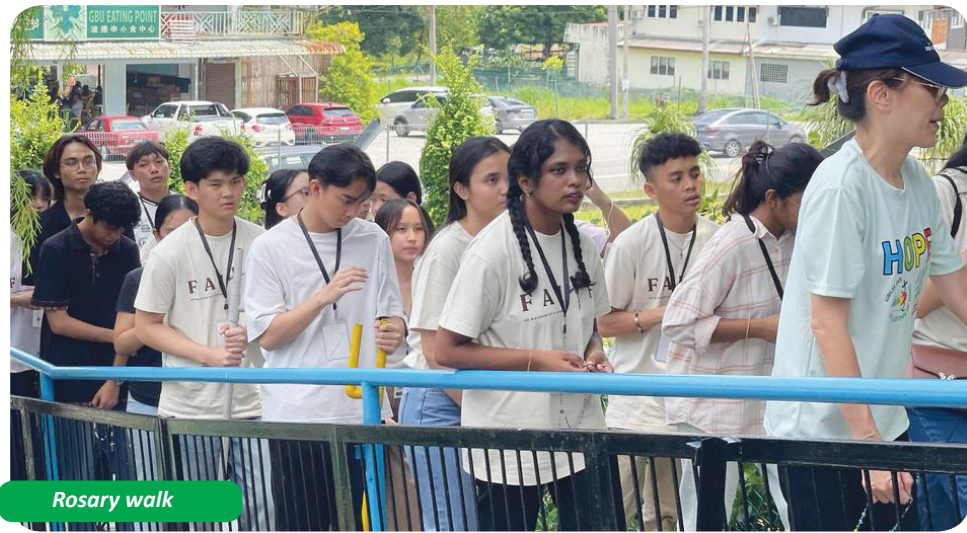
“There is a real excitement because it represents that the Lord has spoken to us,” Burbidge said.

He “gave us a new shepherd,” Burbidge continued. “I think young people are responding well to that.”

A spirit-filled day of faith and fellowship



The youth lighting the candles.



Rosary walk

PORT DICKSON: Sixty-two youth pilgrims from the Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya, many of whom are students from a nearby university campus visited the Church of the Immaculate Conception (CIC).

Approximately 60 per cent of the pilgrims hailed from East Malaysia, bringing with them a beautiful diversity of culture and spirit.

Their pilgrimage to CIC began with a multilingual Mass. The liturgy was especially significant as it coincided with three celebrations: Good Shepherd Sunday, Mother's Day and their pilgrimage journey. It was a day filled with grace, unity and purpose.

Following the Eucharistic celebration, the youth were warmly welcomed by the parish community. The parish's young people led the welcome speech and introduced the special features prepared for the pilgrims.

One of the most touching moments was the active participation of the pilgrims in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It was deeply moving to witness so many youth approaching the confessional with sincerity and openness.

The highlight of the pilgrimage was the Rosary walk. During the walk, the youth were given tea light candles and invited to reflect on the meaning of faith. Each participant wrote a word of hope beneath their candle to symbolise their faith and dreams for the world. Later, they lit their candles at the grotto as everyone prayed the Rosary,

asking for the intercession of Mother Mary. At the same time, a para liturgy was held, during which all the petitions were offered up in prayer. Though the activity took some time, it was clear that the youth were fully immersed and deeply moved by the experience.

The youth pilgrims looked good and were well-coordinated in their attire. They wore two meaningful T-shirts. One read, "Serve where the Lord has planted you," reminding them to serve others wherever they are, just like Jesus, and to be witnesses of His love in the place God has placed them. The other had the verse Romans 6:23, "The wages of

sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord," encouraging them to return to God when they fall and to find hope in His forgiveness and the eternal life offered through Christ.

It was truly a joy and privilege to host these young pilgrims. Their enthusiasm, reverence and open hearts reminded us of the hope and promise alive in the younger generation of our Church.

We thank the team from the Church of St Francis Xavier, PJ, for choosing to journey with us, and we continue to pray for each youth as they carry the light of Christ into the world. **Julie Amos**



CTK YOUTH MINISTRY COMPOSES HEARTFELT TRIBUTE SONG FOR MOTHERS



Above: The youth dedicating their song to the mothers. Below: The mothers gather for blessing.

SELAYANG: In a touching celebration of Mother's Day, the youth from the Christ the King (CTK) composed and dedicated a song titled *Enggalin Thaye* (Our Mother) as a tribute to all mothers in the community.

This initiative, deeply rooted in faith and gratitude, was made possible through the unwavering support of Fr Peter Anthony, parish priest of Christ the King Chapel. Revered as a spiritual father and mentor, Fr Peter has consistently empowered the youth, guiding and encouraging them to express their faith and creativity through meaningful acts. His encouragement was instrumental in the successful creation of this song.

The lyrics were penned by Vasu, a long-time music mentor and teacher at the chapel, known for his humility, dedication, and tireless efforts in teaching Tamil liturgical songs and psalms. His lyrical contributions reflect not only poetic beauty but also deep emotional reverence for the role of mothers.

The graceful melody was composed by Iniyathan, an active youth member

and talented church musician. Amazingly, the tune came together in just two hours — a testament to his musical gift, passion, and devotion. With the full support and enthusiasm of the CTK youth, the song was refined and brought to life in a way that moved the hearts of all who heard it. Many mothers were visibly emotional, some moved to tears, as the song echoed the deep love and appreciation their children hold for them.

"This song is not just a performance; it is a prayer of love and thanksgiving for the sacrifices, strength, and unconditional care our mothers have shown us," said a representative of the Youth Ministry. "It's our way of saying, 'We see you, we love you, and we honour you.'"

The CTK Youth Ministry continues to play a vibrant role in parish life, demonstrating that faith, creativity, and community go hand in hand. Their musical tribute, *Enggalin Thaye*, will surely remain in the hearts of many as a beautiful reminder of a mother's love—divine, tireless, and everlasting. **CTK Youth Ministry**

Three new Venerables: two missionaries in Ecuador and one Indian bishop

VATICAN: A woman and two men of peace — this is how to describe the lives of the three new Venerables whose decrees of recognition were approved on May 22 by Pope Leo XIV during an audience with Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints.

Two of them offered their lives in martyrdom for the faith — a violent death in the Ecuadorian rainforest while defending the rights of Indigenous peoples.

A Bishop with a missionary soul

Alejandro Labaka Ugarte, born in 1920, was from Beizama in northern Spain. From a young age, he felt a call to be a missionary. After being ordained a priest in 1945, the superiors of the Capuchin Order — which he had entered in 1937 under the religious name Bro Manuel — sent him to China.

About ten years later, he and other missionaries were expelled by the Maoist regime. He then went to Ecuador, where he served as a parish priest and held various other roles, including that of apostolic prefect, actively involved in evangelizing the Huaorani people.

In 1984, Bro Manuel was consecrated a bishop and continued his mission among the Indigenous, also establishing contact with the Tagaeri ethnic group. It was a time of intense tension. Oil companies moved through the region like predators, clearing forests in search of black gold.

For Bro Manuel, now Bishop Ugarte — known for his ability to mediate and reconcile — the priority became protecting the rights of the Tagaeri. It was during this mission that he met Sr Inés.

A religious sister among the Indigenous

Sr Inés Arango Velásquez was 40 years old when, in 1977, she took part in the first missionary expedition of the Capuchin Tertiary Sisters of the Holy Family to Aguarico, Ecuador. A native of Colombia, she was born in Medellín in 1937 and entered the congregation in 1955, completing her formation there.

After her perpetual vows, she dedicated herself to teaching and, once in Ecuador, travelled to various communities, eventually becoming a superior. She devoted herself to evangelising the Huaorani under the guidance of, among others, Bro Manuel. Sr Inés also became deeply aware of the dire situation facing the Tagaeri, who had become targets for oil and logging companies.

Killed in defence of the least

As bishop, Bro Manuel hoped to avoid a violent confrontation with mercenaries from these companies by personally initiating dialogue with the Indigenous people.

He was joined by Sr Inés, and both — fully aware of the risks involved in approaching a tribe known to be hostile to outsiders — were flown by helicopter on the morning of July

21, 1987, to a designated meeting point. The next day, another helicopter arrived to pick them up, but instead found their bodies — pierced with spears and arrows.

For both of them, it was a conscious offering of their lives in fidelity to their mission, as also reflected in the letter Sr Inés had written the day before their departure, which read almost like a last testament. Their deaths left a powerful impact and have contributed to an enduring reputation for holiness that continues to this day.

Bishop and Peacemaker in India

The story of the third Venerable is that of the Indian Matthew Makil, bishop and founder of the Sisters of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Born in 1851 in Manjoor to a well-off Christian family, he became a priest in 1865 and served in parish ministry until he was appointed Vicar General of Kottayam in 1889.

Three years later, he founded a religious congregation whose primary mission was the education of girls. His pastoral ministry was vibrant and dynamic, eventually leading to his appointment as Apostolic Vicar of Changanacherry in 1896.

He actively promoted catechetical formation, school education, the creation of religious organisations and associations, and the fight against poverty, which afflicted much of society at the time. He also encouraged vocations to consecrated life.

Moreover, he did not allow himself to be discouraged by local conflicts, which at times flared up violently, between the “northerners” (who considered themselves descendants of the community founded by St Thomas the Apostle) and the “southerners” (who saw themselves as successors of Mesopotamian migrants). Bishop Matthew Makil was guided by his episcopal motto: “God is my hope.”

With his calm and conciliatory manner, he worked tirelessly to bring peace between these two rival communities. His efforts culminated in a proposal submitted to the Holy See in 1911 to divide the Vicariate of Changanacherry into two distinct vicariates: one for the “southerners” and one for the “northerners.”

Pope Pius X accepted the proposal and created the Vicariate of Kottayam for the “southerners,” entrusting its leadership to Bishop Makil, the architect of the initiative.

Bishop Matthew Makil dedicated himself fully to this mission until his death in January 1914, following a brief illness. **Vatican Media**



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“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine”
Isaiah 43:1-3

In Loving Memory of
George S. Joseph
10th Anniversary



13 October 1925 - 3 June 2015

Beloved husband, father, father-in-law, grandfather, great-grandfather, uncle & friend.

In Loving Memory of
Celine Arokiasamy
1944 - 2013



A century ago, you departed, but your essence lingers in the poetry of our memories.”

In loving memory of



Roslin Ambu
(Called to the Lord on 25 January 1980)



Periatnamby Ambu
(Called to the Lord on 6 June 2024)

Forever remembered with love and gratitude. Your unwavering faith, kindness and strength continue to guide us. Though years have passed, not a day goes by without thoughts of you. We take comfort in knowing you are reunited in the presence of our Lord.

“Well done, good and faithful servant... Enter into the joy of your Lord”
Matthew 24 :23

Lovingly remembered and deeply missed by your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and all who hold you dear in heart and prayer.

This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life.

Psalm 119:50

40 Days
In Loving Memory of
Our Beloved
Aida Torculas Gomes



Born: 23.05.1964
Departed: 27.04.2025
May she rest in peace

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
2 Timothy 4:7
Lovingly remembered by family and love ones.

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Mission societies called to be ‘Missionaries of Hope’

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV called on the global missionary community to renew their zeal for evangelisation, urging them to be “missionaries of hope” in a world yearning for peace, justice, and unity. Addressing over 140 delegates from the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) gathered in Rome for their annual General Assembly, the Holy Father delivered a message rooted in his own experience and deep pastoral vision.

The audience, held in Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace, included national directors from more than 120 countries and officials from the Dicastery for Evangelisation.

“I thank you for your dedicated service, which is indispensable to the Church’s mission of evangelisation,” Pope Leo said. “I can personally attest to its value from my own years of pastoral ministry in Peru.”

The Holy Father emphasised the importance of the four Pontifical Mission Societies — the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the Society of the Holy Childhood, the Society of St. Peter the Apostle, and the Pontifical Missionary Union — describing them as “primary means of awakening missionary responsibility among all the baptised and supporting ecclesial communities in areas where the Church is young.”

He praised their work in promoting catechetical programmes, building churches



Pope Leo receives Pontifical Mission Societies in the Vatican (Vatican Media)

and schools, supporting seminarians and religious vocations, and fostering missionary formation at all levels of the Church. In particular, he commended their efforts to engage children and young people through education, formation, and protection.

“Our world, wounded by war, violence, and injustice, needs to hear the Gospel message of God’s love and to experience the reconciling power of Christ’s grace,” the Pope said. “The Church is increasingly called to be a missionary Church — one that opens its arms to the world, proclaims the Word with joy, and becomes a leaven of harmony for humanity.”

Two core themes underpinned the Pope’s message: communion and universality. He reminded those present that the Church is, first and foremost, a communion of believers, united in the Trinity and enlivened by the Holy Spirit.

“As societies committed to sharing in the missionary mandate of the pope and the college of bishops, you are called to further promote the vision of the Church as a communion of believers,” Pope Leo said. “Indeed, it is in the Trinity that all things find their unity.”

He cited the words of St Augustine, *In Illo uno unum* (*In the One, we are one*), which he

chose as his motto both as a bishop and as pope. “Christ is our Saviour, and in him we are one — a family of God beyond the rich variety of our languages, cultures, and experiences.”

This awareness of communion, the Pope said, leads naturally to a universal outlook — one that pushes the Church to move beyond the boundaries of local concerns. “The richness of knowing Jesus Christ is not meant to be kept but shared,” he added. “It urges us to transcend the confines of parishes, dioceses and nations, and to reach every people and nation with the joy of the Gospel.”

The Pope also took the opportunity to encourage the national directors to prioritise visits to dioceses, parishes, and local communities, helping to nurture a missionary spirit at the grassroots. He expressed his gratitude for their efforts in promoting World Mission Sunday, celebrated globally on the second-to-last Sunday in October, describing it as “an immense help to the Church in mission territories.”

The Pope encouraged all present to embody this spirit of hopeful evangelisation. “You are to be missionaries of hope among all peoples,” he concluded, before imparting his Apostolic Blessing and entrusting their work to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Each participant also received a rosary blessed by Pope Francis. **Agencies**

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Kyiv and allies welcome Pope Leo’s Vatican peace talks offer

VATICAN: US President Donald Trump, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and several of Kyiv’s European allies — including Paris and Berlin — gave a positive response May 19 to Pope Leo XIV’s offer to host negotiations between Ukraine and Russia at the Vatican, according to Italy’s prime minister.

President Trump, President Zelenskyy, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, Finnish President Alexander Stubb, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen held a joint phone call following a separate conversation between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

During the call, “the Holy Father’s willingness to host peace talks at the Vatican was viewed positively,” Meloni said in a statement.

The call, she added, aimed “to work toward the immediate opening of negotiations between the parties, in hopes of securing a cease-fire as soon as possible and laying the groundwork for a just and lasting peace in Ukraine.”

In remarks to representatives of Eastern Christian churches recently, Pope Leo XIV offered to mediate global conflicts, including the war in Ukraine.



Pope Leo XIV receives a gift from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during a meeting at the Vatican May 18, 2025. (CNS/Vatican Media)

“The Holy See is available for enemies to meet and look each other in the eye, so that nations may regain hope and the dignity that belongs to them — the dignity of peace,” he said.

Referencing the many ongoing conflicts around the world — “from the Holy Land to Ukraine, from Lebanon to Syria, from the Middle East to Tigray,” in Ethiopia, “and to the Caucasus” — Pope Leo lamented the violence and called for efforts

toward peace.

“I will do everything I can to help peace take root,” he vowed. Over the weekend, he also received US Vice President JD Vance in a private audience.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, confirmed the pope’s willingness to host a “direct meeting” between Ukrainian and Russian leaders, according to media reports. **LCI** (<https://international.la-croix.com/>)